

Alfred Werck

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ALFRED WERCK.

Swiss Artist and Craftsman in Stained Glass.

At a time when so many artists crave for new sensations creating works which so often offend the canons of good taste and intellectual significance, it is refreshing to meet one who has kept a lofty ideal of his vocation and has remained true to the "religion of the beautiful."

Stained glass claimed the attention of Alfred Werck from his boyhood. A native of Basle-country and trained in Switzerland, Germany, and France, he worked for seventeen years in England and nearly as many in the United States. To-day, the art finds him again in London at the forefront of its eminent masters.

His work is as considerable as it is fine in quality. It is an art where the real difficulties are on the artistic side, the quality of design and the choice of material. There can be no doubt that Mr. Werck carries the tradition of the early masters, drawn to them by deep affinities of nature and taste, but he does so in his own way, with a combination of medieval feeling and individual originality.

The drawing, the cutting up of the glass into various shapes, the fastening with bands of lead, the painting, in fact, the whole process is performed by his own hand.

He strives to make his heraldic panels live in our time by imparting to them, in accord with his own inventiveness, some flavour of novelty.

Always keeping in mind that a stained glass panel is intended to admit light, his chief consideration is the quality of the light that is admitted. Light and darkness play a part of the first importance in the technique of stained glass. Mr. Werck confines himself to the lead lines for the delineation of main form and the translucency peculiar to glass is thus well conserved. This is the standard of his aims.

The federal and cantonal arms of Switzerland are of special interest, the simplest as beautiful as the complicated, every one conforming to the law of heraldry and the ideals of his craft, each one a work of art that possesses simplicity, sweetness and light. The arms of Zurich, Lucerne, Schwyz, Zug, Fribourg and Soleure are instances of pure mosaic treatment. The black so prominent a tincture in many of our cantonal arms and which in coloured glass always present a difficult problem, is treated with the ease of perfect mastery.

I must confess that it is the fascinating beauty of these panels that has prompted me to write this article. Small in size, but large enough to strike a note of delightful brightness in any Swiss home as well as a constant and happy reminder of our dear homeland.

It would require an exposé of far greater pretensions than this, and the pen of a competent critic, to enter fully upon the remarkable work of Mr. Werck.

Through his hand the most intricate coat of arms becomes a masterpiece of lucidity and his panels of family arms an imprint of romantic feeling. External ornaments of shields, such as helmets and crests, mantlings, and supporters, are kept free from weakness or exaggeration and not obscured by any consideration for unnecessary details. His men in armour and his animals, real or fabulous, are executed in medieval sentiment and imagination.

But to form an adequate idea of the artist and his achievement one must visit him in his studio where a permanent exhibition of his work is on view.

The "Royal Procession of Richard II." to take at random one of these exhibits, is an expression of thought and emotion. This exquisite composition, the precise drawing of the costumes and folds of drapery, the luminous qualities of the shadows, the textures of varying radiance and brilliance well harmonized within the rhythmic outlines of the black lead, the whole admitting plenty of light and producing an effect of singular elegance and richness. To see this tableau is to breathe the spirit of the middle ages.

To my mind, the charm of Alfred Werck's work lies not merely in the grandeur of effect and the subtle blending of darkness and light, but in the superior and indisputable qualities of the design and the individuality of the craftsman. Few artists attain this completeness in anything the same degree.

Pierre Savoie.

COMMENT FAUT-IL EMPLOYER NOS LOISIRS POUR EN TIRER LE MEILLEUR PARTI?

De nos jours on doit avouer que tout-le-monde a beaucoup plus de loisirs. Nos aîeux ne connaissaient point tous les moyens dont nous accordons tant d'heures libres; et voilà déjà le problème du siècle: celui d'en tirer le meilleur parti.

Or, bien qu'il soit question de goût personnel, il s'agit à la longue de se décider entre deux choses, soit de suivre le chemin de plaisir: pour-suivre rien que sa propre convoitise (voilà le chemin qui termine tôt ou tard en ennui), soit

de vivre au comble, c'est à dire passer le temps d'une façon qu'on développe toujours sa personnalité.

Qu'est-ce qu'il faut pour y parvenir? D'abord on doit soigner et nourrir l'imagination et les idéaux pendant toute la vie: repaître l'âme de bonne musique, de poésie, de la vue de l'aube et du couchant du soleil, du chant des oiseaux, du bruit du vent et de la pluie dans les bois ou aux sommets des montagnes. Jour tout cela c'est vivre, c'est attirer à soi-même quelque chose du bon Dieu.

Puis il faut partager de tels sentiments avec des amis. Sans amis on est perdu, mais il faut choisir avec soin ses amis. Inutile d'essayer à partager les pensées intimes à quelqu'un qui fait la sourde oreille.

D'ailleurs il est encore tout nécessaire, afin de vivre au comble, de consacrer un peu de ses loisirs à aider d'autres gens. On peut donner la main à administrer une troupe de "Boy Scouts" ou une équipe de "Routiers," ou bien à faire quelque chose pour les nombreuses sociétés qui existent pour le soulagement des êtres humains. En un mot il faut subir un certain sacrifice des loisirs; on y trouvera le vrai bonheur.

Enfin il va sans dire qu'on doit soigner la santé et conserver de l'enthousiasme pour tout ce qu'il y a de bon dans la vie. A ce but on fait des promenades à pied ou à vélo en plein air, on nage, on court, on fait partie du sport, on va camper à la campagne. De telle façon on rencontre de nouveaux amis, de nouvelles pensées, et on a de temps en temps quelques moments à part pour contempler les choses éternelles — chose bien importante.

Et bien, mon ami, si tu as bien remarqué tout ce que j'ai dit, tu vas employer tes loisirs de manière à ce que tu en tires le meilleur parti!

ARMS OF GENEVA.



POST TENEBRAS IUX

Per pale dexter, or a dimidiated eagle displayed sable, imperially crowned, beaked, langued, membered, and armed gules; sinister gules, a key in pale wards upwards and to sinister or.

Crest: In a sun naissant or, the trigram I H S sable.

Motto: Post tenebras lux.

Geneva bears the displayed eagle in her ancient dignity of Imperial city.

The bishop prince of Geneva, in respect of his qualifications, had the arms of the Chapter of his cathedral, two keys of gold in saltire, emblem of St. Peter, on a field of red, sign of regal power.

The Genevese community has thus borrowed one half of its arms from the Holy Roman Empire and the other half from the bishopric, depicting the political situation before the acceptance of Protestantism by the republic, and which brings the origin of these beautiful arms to the first half the XIV century.

The demi-eagle with seven primary feathers is not exactly the so called eagle of the Holy Empire, but a local derivation as proved since 1451, by the Book of Franchises of Geneva.

The wing, which was inverted in the days of the bishopric, became erect with the complete independence of the republic. The colour attributed to the crown, beak and claws is red, while the imperial eagle presents the crown, beak and claws in gold. The imperialism depicted by the crown is reminiscent of 1032. The sun forming the crest is worthy of mention as being the first heraldic emblem of Geneva. Its origin can be traced to belated days of sun worship, practised by ancient inhabitants of the land, and once common to all the Celtic nations.

In support of the campaign "for the honour of the name of Jesus" an edict of the Council in 1471, and ratified by the Protestant councils in 1542, decreed that the name of Jesus be inscribed above the gateways of the town, hence the origin of the trigram I H S, the first three initials in Greek of the word Jesus. Contrary to popular belief, these letters are not the three initials signifying "Iesus hominum Salvator," a Jesuit motto, but really the abbreviated word Jesus, Genevese emblem since the 15th century and before the religious order of the Jesuits was founded (*).

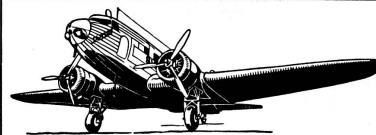
The motto *Post tenebras lux* is a beautiful and perfect complement to the trigram, and it should accompany the arms of Geneva, below the shield, whenever the crest is shown.

Heraldry, rightly, has not lost sight of Geneva's history and these beautiful arms, full of hope and promise, call to mind a great and glorious past.

May modern Geneva and all her great institutions live up to the spirit and enterprise of her ancestors and to the prestige of her past. May her crest and motto always remain the true and worthy emblem of one of the greatest cities of the world.

Pierre Savoie.

(x) See Eug. Demole, *Culte préhistorique du soleil et le Cimier des armes de Genève* (1917).



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