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## INTRODUCTION

### Ornamental Ironwork

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Although the most conspicuous productions of smithcraft are rarely the outcome of the ironworkers' own designs, nevertheless, ironwork translates into material A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) many artistic conceptions, and reflects A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) the A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) art of various style-epochs, and countries.

It is a well-known fact that the iron bar is the base of all lineal ornamental ironwork, however manifold the various patterns may be. A number of A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) bars can be arranged to make a trellis, or they may be made to serve as bindings and hinges, etc. The trellis, using the term in its widest sense, was the main object of technical and artistic treatment by the masters of smithcraft. The iron bars, fixed by rivets to the doors to protect them, constitute a complete lattice-work. We may say that the use of one of the three main classes of bars: flat, round, and square is a characteristic feature of a particular style. Thus, A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) Early Gothic favoured either narrow A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) or broad iron bands, and Late Gothic, in the north, the round bar. In the south, above all in Italy, the A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) Renaissance introduces the square bar, which was also preferred by Rococo smiths, particularly by the French. It was during these periods that smithwork attained to its highest perfection.

Ironwork of all kinds follows the forms of the different styles, but the transition from one style to another is slower than with other arts, and the highly imaginative lines of Late Gothic lasted well into the Renaissance, especially in Germany.

Some students have maintained that there are two different phases in the development of smithcraft, one of a more decorative character, the other architectural or tectonic. And this seems to be a correct view. But this division is equally applicable to any branch of arts and crafts. These two phases are as old as ornamental art itself. The decorative aims at enriching a surface, the tectonic limits itself to the outline or spacing of surface. The former is more dynamic and vivid, the latter more static, and gives the impression of weight and solidity. Both are best represented in their diverse characters by Late Gothic in the north, and by Renaissance in the south. Baroque and Rococo seem to unite both phases. The vertical bars of gates, for instance, represent the static and tectonic elements, whereas the frame-work, particularly the crest with its interlacing scrolls, stands for the dynamic. The different artistic conceptions obtaining in various countries have ample scope for expression in the treatment of the frame-work. The vivid forms of the north preponderate in Late Gothic, Late Baroque, and Rococo, in contradistinction to the static tectonic forms of Italian and French classical art. In the latter periods the vertical A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) and horizontal bars are enclosed in a frame displaying a wealth of A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) scroll, and other ornamental work. In former periods the frame was the

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element of stability which enclosed the richly ornamented panel in rectangular lines. Later on the reverse is the case. The panel is now the tectonic element, the frame on the other hand the dynamic. The overthrow of gates is surmounted by a crest of the most florid character, and from it scrolls and tendrils radiate in all directions.

A later development introduces a third dimension by means of the plastic treatment of the ornament, although the lineal element is never totally absent. This phase of smithcraft is at its best in the railings, grilles, and balustrades embellishing the great Late Baroque and Rococo French, English, and German sacred and profane architectural masterpieces. The same rule applies to wrought iron, and to stucco, wood, and stone ornament; namely that the frame is an essential part of the whole, but at the same time aims at enhancing the plastic impression of the panels. However, we should remember that decorative smithing was inspired by graphic art in its widest sense. Ornament in smithcraft depended on the decorative designs invented by the draughtsman. In the Gothic period the smiths chiefly drew their inspiration from illuminated manuscripts. This is evident in the metal work on the western doors of Notre Dame in Paris which was copied from the illuminated margins and initials embellishing manuscripts dating from the period of St. Louis. The whole surface is covered with large and small tendrils, flower sprays, leafage, and rosettes, the effect of which is both harmonious and classically restrained; in fact the panels and frame-work are nearly inseparably merged. One is almost tempted to consider the restraint of the classical ornament, formed by the sequence of ever-recurring spirals, as a Romanesque motif. Indeed, there can be little doubt that the inception of such designs dates back to the Romanesque period. But we should not forget how deeply mature Gothic in France was imbued with the classic spirit. The masters of cathedral sculptures (for instance in Rheims) very often adhered closely to antique patterns of which the drapery, the well-shaped heads, as well as the whole bearing of the figures, are a strong proof. The sketch-book of the French architect Villard d'Honnecourt, dating from the 13th century, has preserved various examples which lead us to conclude that they are based on archaeological studies of classical statues. Probably similar drawings served as models for the master-smiths when the Gothic was at its maturest period. But the majority doubtlessly took their models from illuminated manuscripts.

Mediaeval illuminated manuscripts were succeeded by calligraphic ornament during the Late Gothic period. The richly coloured illuminations were replaced by the pen-drawing pure and simple with all its wealth of curves and flourishes. The iron craftsmen now forged their rods in imitation of these calligraphic designs.

During the period of the Renaissance the calligraphic ornament attains to its zenith in Dürer's highly imaginative designs.

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Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) marginal embellishment of the Emperor Maximilian's prayer-book. The spirit of Late Gothic still held its own by means of its vivid designs long after the introduction of the Renaissance ornament which seeks expression in monumental and tectonic simplicity, wide canvasses and gigantic statues. The figures by Peter Vischer on the tomb of St. Sebaldus, Dürer's Madonnas and Apostles, Hans Holbein the Younger's portraits, and other examples are Gothic creations, and much of the wrought-iron work of this period is Gothic, and not Renaissance. The calligraphic style of iron ornament still retains the vitality and vividness of Late Gothic art. A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) Gothic designs. As long as the round bar predominated, Late Gothic art obtained among the blacksmiths' and locksmiths' guilds. The A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) railings (circa 1570) enclosing Maximilian's tomb in the Hofkirche at Innsbruck are a product of the same A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) spirit which inspired Dürer and his fellow-workers in designing the marginal ornament of that emperor's prayer-book. During the course of the 17th century and of the whole of the 18th century France undoubtedly led in decorative smithwork throughout Europe. Patterns were widely spread by the works of ornamental engravers. Many of the best examples of wrought-iron work perished during the wars, the general troubles of the times, and during the Revolution; much of it was re-forged to make arms. But the engravings of the period show very clearly the development of designs, A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) especially of those at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century.

Here again the masterpieces of smithcraft were not designed by the craftsmen themselves, but by architects and draughtsmen. It is A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) true that the master-smiths, especially the French ones, published patterns of decorative smithing, but these designs were rarely their own inventions, rather were they inspired by architects A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) and engravers. Some of the pattern books were published in the first half of the 17th century, such as *La fidèle ouverture de l'art de Serrurier* by Mathurien Jousse (1627, in *La Fleche*). But the main impetus was given by the books written about 1700. The engravings of the two Frenchmen Daniel Marot and Jean Berain were of the greatest importance for the development of wrought-iron work, as well as for many other branches of arts A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) and crafts. The French call this style *Régence*. The German modification of the French designs of the period is described as ribbon-work. This ribbon-work motif affords opportunities for the peculiar riot of lines characteristic of the German masters. It may be compared with Late Gothic patterns, and with the scrolls and grotesque motifs of Early Baroque before the Thirty Years' War. Whereas the French attached great value to severe surface treatment A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) and tectonic stability of ornamentation, the Germans again favoured a more lively surface treatment. The structural details of panel and frame are blurred by the exuberance of detail to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. In the same manner as the bar dominated and survived the Gothic period, so too did band-iron meet the

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requirements of A Pictorial Encyclopedia of Decorative Ironwork: Twelfth Through Eighteenth Centuries (Dover Jewelry and Metalwork) decorative smithing in later times.

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