After an interval of three years the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society has ventured upon its fourth show, but it is questionable whether the interval has been of much service, for though the Society may have gained in works of exceptional merit, it has lost in the number of exhibits, and possibly in the lapse of interest in its proceedings. It was felt in 1890 that there was great difficulty in getting together a yearly succession of works which would be up to that standard the Society had set up, especially as some well-known firms of art manufacturers had refused to exhibit upon the condition imposed—that the craftsmen's names should be given; and although it was noted with pleasure that the objections of some of those firms had been overcome, yet it was thought advisable to postpone for a year or two any further exhibition, in order that there might be time for the development of the teachings of the Society, and the production of fine craftsmanship allied to good art.

Whether the exhibits of this year generally show any marked improvement upon those of former years it is not our business to determine, nor do we feel competent to criticise, however strange some of them may seem. There is undoubtedly excellence in much of the craftsmanship, but of the art—well, to be accepted as art, one must have an enormous amount of faith, for they pass human understanding. So far as bookbinding is concerned, however, we feel no such restriction, and we may say at once that some of this year's exhibits are abominable examples of utter want of taste and want of skill. We feel more strongly certain of the latter since it is clearly demonstrable; as regards taste, we can only pity the Arts and Crafts Society if such stuff suits them. That design and execution should go hand in hand needs no argument from the Arts and Crafts Society to emphasise, but it would seem almost necessary to point out to the Society that execution should go hand in hand with design, for they have kept their noses so down to the scent of an unknown quantity that the known and demonstrable quantity has been passed by unnoticed. Whereas in former years books exhibited by binders may have lacked any distinctive feature in design, yet were respectable examples of neat and shapely workmanship, this year there are books which lack both essentials.

We had hoped that the fecundity of invention amongst the members would have led to simple forms of art work at once genuinely artistic and cheap in production, and not simply to the production of such articles as from their cost could only find a habitation in the houses of the rich; but apparently no effort has been made to bring beauty in the crafts down to simple things, or if so, only to simple things at about so many more times the ordinary cost, that places them above the reach of the masses. And if this contention is true, it puts the Society in this position, that the enormous prices paid for their work brings them into the market as producers of simply more highly priced commercial wares. In bookbinding this is especially so. A few faddists have made a great fuss about design and handicraft, and have captured work which would have ordinarily gone to a professional binder, but at prices no professional binder would dare to charge. The success of some of these has induced others to enter the field, and they justify themselves by an argument not new, and which all of us recognise, but which the modern commercial man is almost condemned for being compelled to work under: "That cheapness in art and handicraft is well nigh impossible, save in some forms of more or less mechanical reproduction. In fact, cheapness as a rule, in the sense of low-priced productions, can only be obtained at the cost of cheapness—that is, the cheapening of human life and labour; surely, in reality, a most wasteful and extravagant cheapness. It is difficult to see how, under present economic conditions, it can be otherwise. Art is, in its true sense, after all, the crown and flowering of life and labour, and we cannot reasonably expect to gain that crown except at the true value of human life and labour, of which it is the result."

Thus writes Mr. Walter Crane in the preface to the 1890 catalogue; but what has he, or the committee with which he has been associated, ever done to render more possible the juncture of art and handicraft for the great bulk of the people? Walter Crane, William Morris, and others may have striven to produce the most beautiful things by the most primitive methods, but we see no evidence of any desire to bring art within the reach of the masses; it is the commercial men who have done that, and thus earned the condemnation of a few aesthetes, who bolster up their own notions by the large sums they get from those who accept their doctrines. Walter Crane, as one of the committee of this exhibition, has aided and abetted the exhibition of some of the worst trash in bookbinding which it has ever been our lot to view. The "crown and flowering of life and labour" is represented in bookbinding by the spasmodic and crude efforts of a lady amateur, Irene Nichols; by the medallion designs of Mr. D. S. MacColl and the wriggles of Sir Edward Sullivan. These wretched objects are exhibited side by side with the tooling of Mr. F. Maillen, of Zaeheudn's, and of course they suffer by the comparison.

But let us go into detail. In case 415 there are four volumes, "Wyatt's Poems," "Surrey's Poems," and "Herrick's Works," two volumes, designed by Lewis F. Day and tooled by F. Maillen. The designs are perhaps a stage above mediocrity, but they are marred by the stem work of the designs being in dotted lines as against the solid lines of the other parts. Who ever saw the stem of a plant or tree
lighter than the leaf work? There is not a single thing in nature but tapers from its base towards its apex or extremities, but Lewis Day wants to better nature and the Creator's design in his own; and beside, instead of adopting the technique of the craft in the execution, he apparently insists upon the dotted ornament being worked out by means of single dots instead of dotted gouges, for we cannot think that such an accomplished workman as Mr. Mauillen or his experienced employer, Mr. Zaehnsdorf, would have chosen single dots as preferable to dotted gouges for working out these designs, but for positive instructions to do so. The work is more expensive but less perfect.

An "Arts and Crafts Catalogue," designed by D. S. MacColl, and bound and tooled by Miss E. M. MacColl, lies with the front board thrown open, and as there is no tooling on the inside, and the joints are bad, we can only suppose that this peculiar mode of exhibition is to hide the faults of the outer cover, because there are three other bindings under the same names which should have been so exhibited, for they are about the most eccentric in design, and the most outrageous, of all the peculiar things which have ever been put forward as book cover ornament, so far as we have been able to see. We had thought to have obtained permission for the reproduction of

"Lyrics from the Song Books of ye Elizabethan Age," designed and tooled by Irene Nichols. The design is of silver-work laced partitions, with gold tooing; the silver lines are horribly executed, the gouges being worked in all sorts of thicknesses, doubled, and together with the crooked and badly-arranged lettering, is a most wretched piece of work. "Shakespeare's Songs and Sonnets" would make even that grand old knower of human weaknesses turn in his grave, could he only see his work in the yellow morocco cover, devoid of any semblance of tasteful decoration, with tools burnt in and doubled, and the cover stained with grease.

these absurdities as frightful examples, but found that The Studio had already obtained that distinction, and those who care to see the style may find it in that art journal. We have to humbly acknowledge ourselves indebted to the kindness of some gentleman connected with the exhibition for an explanation of the design upon the "Desire of Beauty," over which we had pondered for some time in vain.

"Marion's Rondeaux" and "L'Art de former une Bibliothèque" are bound by Birdsall & Son (what about the workman's name, oh ye high priests of the Arts and Crafts?) and designed and tooled by Sir Edward Sullivan. Oh! oh! oh! and he! he! he!
You ought to see the beauty of this work as compared with that of the common professional binder.

"Beau Brocade," in repoussé leather, is a gem designed and executed by Alice Shepherd. It is bound in calf and has a broad stained border with a sunk panel in which the raised and tinted design is worked, with a few bright gold dots that give it the set-off as though it were jewelled. The book is bound by Cedric Chivers, of Bath. One of the most beautiful specimens of this class of work we have ever seen, and, in this case, a fairy among the ogres.

knows how to back; and the tools are not doubled as of yore, somebody has tooled them who is a skilled executant, albeit the work is not so bright as was Cobden-Sanderson's; we cannot forbear to pay him that tribute, and we wish he had stuck to the workmanship a little longer; he might, in these three years since the last show, have been a fairly good workman as well as artist. We suppose his next move will be as designer for the trade? We find the commercial sense is developing; it is no longer a sine quâ non for the artist-craftsman that every book shall have a separate and distinctive design, for behold, in this

"Case of books bound by the Doves Bindery, to wit, designed by T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, tooled by Charles M'Leish, forwarded by Charles Wilkinson, sewn by Bessie Hooley, clasps, Douglas B. Cockerell." Reads quite like a modern commercial binder's subdivision of labour, doesn't it? and the work looks much like it too, only there is the curious compound of the wallpaper and Cobden-Sanderson about the outsides. Without the catalogue, but for the design, we should scarcely have known this was Cobden-Sanderson's case. We do not find the foreedges protruding from the covers, somebody has backed them who case are several books alike in design, and of the others there is much of a sameness about several. Perhaps the newest of Mr. Sanderson's effects is that obtained on "Atalanta in Calydon," with broad gold lines of curved work, heart-shaped leaves and calyx endings, a bold piece of work, not at all unpleasing, though having the appearance of being blocked. We don't want to carp at this work, but surely it might not want to carp at this work, but surely it might have been possible to have prevented the bands showing through the cover as badly as they do on the back of the "Miracle de Berthe," otherwise the forwarding seems very fair.
exclusive possession of a great work of art and hides it away. Moreover, no man should make a work of art common by staring at it all the time. If I had a beautiful picture I should put curtains over it.

“Then pending the arrival of the socialistic millennium the Australian millionaire must take the place of the enlightened community?”

“Yes; I suppose he must. That, by the way, is one advantage of a book. The individual can obtain possession of a beautiful book, and he can put it away and take it out again only when he wishes to enjoy its print and illustrations. Indeed, a book is nowadays perhaps the most satisfactory work of art one can make or have. The best work of art of all to create is a house, which will prove, to my thinking, a Gothic house. A book comes next, and between a house and a book a man can do very well.”

Persian Bookbinders.

An art which is carried to a high degree of excellence in the East, but which seems in some danger of decaying, is that of ornamental bookbinding. Some notion of the skill of Oriental craftsmen in this branch of design may be gathered from specimens given in the latest issue of The Journal of Indian Art and Industry, printed and published by Griggs & Son, Ltd., Hanover-street, Peckham, S.E. The best of these specimens, says Col. Holbein Hendley, came from Ulwar, and are doubtless of Persian origin. Few approach in goodness of design and in carefulness of execution the work of Kari Ahmed and his sons, who were for some years in the employ of the chief of Ulwar. The grandsons have now succeeded to the sons, however, and in their hands the art is likely to become a mere trade. In India a man of real genius develops an art from some hints he receives from strangers, or, it may be, discovers it himself, but from jealousy or fear of destroying his monopoly teaches only the members of his own family, who may or may not share his skill, and thus in the course of a generation or two nothing remains but a shadow or parody of an exquisite production.

In the Ulwar bookbindings the ornament is somewhat after the old Grolier style, in which the colours are painted on the boards and are not inlaid. In most of the designs the pattern is produced by the use of brass blocks. The colours are then painted on with the brush. Sometimes the Ulwar artist colours the whole of the ground, and at others only part of it, so as to produce very different effects by the use of the same blocks. The effect is remarkably fine, and may be compared to the design work on some of the most beautiful productions of the more famous china manufactories. The bindings are expensive, as they are all hand-made, and a great deal of gold is used. Numerous specimens have been made for Queen Victoria and other distinguished persons. They all show more or less similarity to the best specimens of Persian workmanship, of which the binding of the Koran purchased by the Emperor Aurungzebe, and now in the Royal Library at Windsor, is a particularly interesting example.