

The Library Doors

The beautiful doors of bronze that guard access to the library invite inspection, they being a successful example of high art applied to a comparatively modern American manufacture. They are of an harmonious design, somewhat mystically treated.

The paneling of these doors is in basso-relievo, showing a lighted brazier upon a pillar, which is itself supported by a massive tripod formed of lions' paws. An owl rests at the junction of pillar and tripod, and the brazier is decorated with the heads of rams from which are pendant two medallions. All ornaments when analyzed show glimpses of old-world allegories. They are but fragments of the poem of life which the ancients could express only by symbolism. Power is typified by the three lions' paws resting on mother-earth, and also the strength and stability of that trinity which is impressed on all creation. The owl has from the earliest times stood for human wisdom: there it takes its place at the base of the pillar which supports the eternal fire and shows the intellect in its true function as supporter of the higher life.

Knowledge rests upon the earth and gains power thereby. The mind in transmuting dead facts into living truths finds them illuminated by a flame visible afar off.

There are rams' heads around the brazier, an emblem of consecration, the old thought of the offering of the firstlings of the flock.

The depending medallions and cords sustaining them are a common renaissance modification of the votive garlands found in Greek and Roman reliefs. Stamped with the lineaments of perfected womanhood, the universal type of the best in human achievement, they furnish a fitting ornament for the uplifted shrine of applied knowledge.

So the whole allegory seems one. All is of bronze, inflexible, adamantine approaches to wisdom; for such is the inexorable character of the facts upon which the truths of science must be formulated. Learning based upon facts, power gained by exercise, and light through inspiration, picture the true progression in intellectual life. Thus may our lives become inspired and serve as beacon-lights to the passing generations.

Sent to the Blackstone Library on October 13, 1896 by William Fitzroy Smith on behalf of the architect, S. S. Beman of Chicago, Illinois