

Life Aspiring through the Ages

(Richard Blossom Farley's Mural Decoration in the Reception Hall of Theosophical Headquarters, Wheaton, Illinois.)

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(New Jersey)



FROM Wheaton as a center, American Theosophists are striving to help man work out his destiny intelligently in the light of the Ancient Wisdom that has ever acted as his inspiration. Language and Art are the chief modes of life's expression, and so books are published, lectures organized, and summer school draws members together here, so that one side of life's requirements seem adequately provided. But some awakening of taste and stimulation of art is necessary before Wheaton can become a fitting harborage for the soul of man. A step in that direction was taken August, 1930, when the members in convention assembled, authorized Richard Blossom Farley to decorate the main entrance hall. An idea of the beauty and inspiration he has dreamed into being may be derived from the color plate (see frontispiece), although much of the detail and close color harmony is necessarily lost in so reduced a reproduction.

To the left, the figure of Mother Earth receives the evolving forms of life from the water, but looks upward to the Ancient Symbol set in the rays that sweep down over the steps of effort and doubt, by which men rise to achievement. On these steps are the monuments he builds as he aspires. The Christian Celtic Cross, the Buddha, the Sphinx, are plainly portrayed; while pyramid, temple, church, pagoda, and Runic Stones form a background for priest and crusader. All these are dimly seen behind the principal soaring group, of which Pythagoras and Moses form the center figures. To the extreme right, the Group of Heralds over the doorway is as fine a piece of mural work

as Puvis de Chevannes's group in the Library of Boston. This south wall represents man's contribution to the great life symphony, and forms the last and greatest picture of the series of wall spaces Farley plans to paint.

The west wall, which is broken into by two arches, is to have as a center the sun and earth, one carrying the sacred fire towards humanity and the other carrying the sword of destruction to the unfit, through the Reptilian Age. Trilobite and Dinosaur, the development of the single cell through the evolution of simple organisms, fishes and mammals, to man. The east wall, between the windows, will be the wall of the planets and stars. Snowflake forms, spores and pollen grains, as well as the Platonic solids, are used to fill up broken spaces, and give a consciousness of the continuity of circumambient life, never a vacuum, always polarities. The reception room is to be decorated with flowers and leaf forms in a narrow frieze.

Mr. Farley's ambition is to bring into one focus an impartial suggestion of all life, the past and the avenues that lead to the future, the mysteries that drive the onward multifold manifestations, from the atoms to the sums, the oneness of the endless flowers that bloom and fade on the tree of life, and he believes that the graphic can suggest more than words, for into the million melting tones of color can be woven a fabric too complicated and yet too elemental for words. May we soon see completed his supreme summation of Philosophy and Art on the walls of Wheaton!

Mr. Farley was born at Poultney, Vermont, October 24, 1875, trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Phila-

delphia when Cecelia Beaux and Wm. H. Chase were instructors in portraiture. He then went to Paris and studied under Whistler in 1898-99. He won the Fellowship Prize of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1912; the Gold Medal of the Philadelphia Art Club; the W. A. Clark Prize of \$5000 from the Corcoran Gallery in 1914, and the Silver Medal at the Panama Pacific Exhibit in San Francisco in 1915. He is represented at the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia by "Morning Mists"; at the

Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D. C. with "Fog" and "Blue and Gold"; and "The Passing Cloud" at Reading, Pennsylvania, Museum. The decoration at the New Jersey Teachers College, Trenton, New Jersey, showing the Peace Treaty with the Indians in 1758, is also one of his works; and the decoration at the Art Alliance, one of his outstanding murals. He worked at the Academy of Natural Science, studying nature's many patterns, and his murals record the results of rich experience.