

THE HAMILTON TILE WORKS CO.

ARTISTIC HEARTH and FACING TILES.

MR. ADOLPH METZNER, a druggist in Indianapolis, was also a talented artist and had for many years been an enthusiastic amateur in pottery and tile making. In his back yard he had quite an institution in the way of a pottery, with a fair sized kiln and he kept a potter or two at work. He made a little of everything that was handsome and interesting, but never to sell. He made the things because he liked it, and he and his friends used them. He probably made the first floor tiles made in this country as there were then no tile works in the United States.

He finally thought that tile making would not be a bad sort of a business and he began looking around for a location. Martin Mason, and the Reutti's of Hamilton were relatives of his and informed him that the pottery belonging to the Royal Pottery Co. in Hamilton could probably be gotten. Metzner took into partnership with him Mr. Hatt, of Indianapolis, and under the name of Metzner, Hatt & Co. they bought the Royal Pottery in Hamilton, Only the real estate and kiln was available for tile work.

They started to making tiles, or tried to, but had no luck either in making good tiles or in finding a market. Hatt retired and was succeeded by J. L. Bieler of Indianapolis, not an experienced tile man, and the firm name was changed to Metzner & Bieler. The concern had the same hard old luck and they soon employed Robert Minton Taylor, a practical tile man, to manage the institution and it was incorporated as the Robert Minton Taylor Ceramic Co., Taylor however having no interest in the business. Affairs began to be still worse if possible and Taylor left. Metzner and his son Otto still pegged away trying to make tiles. There was no money to work with and things looked blue indeed. The tile making was a constant series of hard experiments and the Metzner's stood by it nobly. They would work away and get out a batch of tiles and get them in the kiln and would then skirmish around and scare up money enough to buy a load of coal and fire up the kiln and then with anxious hearts they would watch around that kiln hoping for respectable results. When the kiln was opened out would come another failure. And this thing repeated itself time and again. A less hopeful man than Metzner would have quickly given it up. But he worked along with his two sons, Otto and Max, and finally success crowned their persistent efforts and they produced enameled tiles the like of which had not been seen in this country, a splendid clay body, handsome designs, a magnificent glaze, and the true and long sought for beauty of color. They now had the tile but they had absolutely no money and no office or business help. The tiles would probably sell on sight if put before the trade but

there was not money enough to buy even a railroad ticket to Cincinnati. But the tide seemed to have turned and they managed to live.

Dr. Wild, of Chicago, was an old army comrade of Metzner's and he bought out Mr. Beiler. Mr. Julius Bunsen of Cincinnati, a nephew of the celebrated Professor Carl Bunsen, of Heidelberg University, the inventor of the celebrated Bunsen flame, was much taken with the work of the Metzner's. He saw artistic merit in it, and further than that, he saw commercial merit in it. He joined in the business and in 1884, on petition to the Court, the name of the establishment was changed to the Hamilton Tile Works Co. Mr. Wild became President, Mr. Metzner Vice President, Mr. Bunsen Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. Otto Metzner Superintendent.

The market for the new goods had not yet been opened and the concern saw some hard times, but the haven had been really reached and the ship finally sailed grandly in. Business went up and up until nothing remained to be desired and now the magnificent tiles of this establishment are the standard in the trade. Orders are unlimited, most always in excess of the capacity of the factory, and the highest market prices are received, for this concern makes no low grade goods. The tiles are sold from ocean to ocean and are chosen by the most critical buyers. It would be impossible with any kind of a picture which could be here produced to exhibit the beauty of these artistic tiles. The modeled designs and the range of colors is constantly fresh, and a view of the work of the Metzner's is always a delight to the artist. The special merit found in the tiles made by this establishment consists in the richness of color, great range of colors, originality and beauty of modeling, superior freedom from craze of surface, and that perfection of body mixture of clays which gives extreme hardness.