PROGRESS OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

THERE is no more conclusive testimony of the state of civilization of a people, than that to be found in their Architecture.

The genius that flashes from Literature, or from Science, may be but the reiterated proof, that God has, in all ages, gifted individuals to dazzle their fellow-mortals, as meteors are sent to show that there is something still more brilliant, than that which the mind has been accustomed to view, even in the starry heavens.

Still, these emanations of monarch minds are but exceptional, at best, and are not to be taken as a prominent feature in the character of a nation.

Not so with Architecture. We behold in it the development of a people's intellectuality—the design, it is true, of one man—but, still elegancies collected from the many; and, as displayed, forming an integral part of monumental progress.

Should the Architect venture to erect something that does not meet the public taste—how soon, and how severely will the effort be decried! The poet may produce poor verses, meagre in every thing; yet the failure is not looked upon in the same light, for his abortive issue is still-born; and lives not to draw down the criticism of the future. A distortion in Architecture is, on the contrary, a monument of humiliation to stand up in judgment against the era that tolerated—rather than the Architect, who designed it.

How easily can we, in our day, discriminate between the different eras of civilization, through the vista of Architectural Styles. As, for instance, in the "dark ages," how palpable is the absence of that refined arrangement, which is born of a cultivated taste; and how distinctly do the deep shadows of its demerits individualize the dark period to which it belongs.

Architecture is the Acropolis of Egyptian, Grecian and Roman greatness, without which traditional or written testimony, alone, would fail to keep their fame alive.

Were it not for the architectural remains of Central America, would Mr. Stevens ever have been able to discover, and convince the world, that a once mighty and polished people lived and flourished, where is now worse than desolation? The Aztec race have left the solid assurance of their power in the mighty specimens of the great Art of Building, which they placed, *in memoriam*, to sentinel their past.

From all this we, in our day—anxiously constructing a Republic which we fondly hope will be the greatest that time has ever yet known—should look well to the purity of the great Art, which is, perhaps, to chronicle our past magnificence, when other lands shall claim the sunshine of prosperity in their turn.

The birth of Architecture among ourselves may be said to be of recent date. He is not an old man who can vividly remember when what were classically termed the Grecian and Roman styles alone were the models by which our Architects undeviatingly designed. And one or two books were the sole monitors to guide the youthful aspirant to the honors of the "Square and Drawing Pen."

In those days Mr. Lefever was the leading spirit in "Modern Grecian." And, indeed, there are many remains of his peculiar genius to be found in our dwellings, which may still draw forth the award of approbation from the greatest lover of novelty. That there was grace in the ornamentation of many of the works alluded to, is undisputable.

But, that the Grecian architecture is at all adapted to the demands of Domestic Building, is very questionable. It had to be tortured into a compliance with the demands made upon it; and hence, in the hands of untutored, though, in other respects, skilful mechanics, it is not to be wondered at, that the classic styles became so plastic, as to be twisted into shapes and forms that were the old worthies of Greece and Rome—who prided themselves on conservative rule—to rise from their graves, it is not to be doubted, that they would, in the intensity of their indignation, hasten back to their dread abodes, as a welcome refuge from the fearful sight. The Greek and Roman styles held universal sway in city, town and village. The country was studded with "temples," from court-houses down to bird-boxes. Every carpenter ploughed, tongued and grooved the antique into cornices with triglyphs, modules, consoles, and the like, until it came like a gamut to him; and was more musical, the more he used the scale. Outside barbarians, who wanted stylish houses built for themselves, had to put up with this style or that, or go without any, just as the Architects (?) of those primitive days decided. And, such was the Nubian darkness in which the free and independent citizens of this young Republic were then groping out a living, that every country carpenter styled himself *par excellence* an "Architect," and

"— had his claim allow'd."

But the "schoolmaster" just then set out to go "abroad," and, invoking to his side A. J. Downing, a man peculiarly adapted to the work of reform, the unpretending but useful volume on cottages and villas appeared, giving to our country houses a more rural and less fane-like style of architecture. Every one may remember when those high-roofed and ornamented gable dwellings first came, as it were, like a blessing on the land—and every one may also remember how the "old folks" squirmed at the innovation—and agreed with the carpenter architects that they were like "cocked hats."

Despite the shrugs and grimaces of the conservatives, the reform went on. Downing soon had a host of able followers, who published illustrated volumes, in monthly parts, which were greedily bought up by the public, and at once produced their effect, in the impetus given to true taste, all over the land.

The deserted followers of Greek and Roman forms, seeing shrewdly where their interests pointed, laid Benjamin and Lefever on the topmost shelf, and owned that there was something in the new "fangle." The progress of architectural taste became now very decided; and professional architects were sought after and well patronized. The stimulus had its due effect; and the appearance of our buildings, private and public, was decidedly improved. Street architecture was no longer the same monotonous repetition of stiff lines and unbending rules. The several buildings now put up assumed a variety, that gave to our cities a very pleasing appearance, as the observer's eye was continually courted by a fresh charm.

Our architects, in the full strength of their grown position, now borrowed largely from Europe; and, in consequence, the Italian and Romanesque styles began to be very general. The former, however, being best adapted to villas, was confined to the country, whilst the latter made free with our public buildings, such as railroad depots and churches.

The Byzantine, at length, was introduced. But this was rather too much for the public stomach to bear, and the lofty corbeled towers of brick had one great effect, at least, namely, to make those who were nervous still more so; and those whose nerves were strong, feel a something uncomfortable, they didn't know what, but it wasn't *pleasure*, at

the Byzantine pinnacles towering above them, apparently ready to topple down.

The Roman church was the great patron of this style—one as devoid of grace, stability, and all the other virtues of architecture, as could be found. The chief cause of the disgrace into which the pre-doomed Byzantine fell, in this country, was the venturous ignorance of young and inexperienced architects rearing those giddy towers on insecure foundations; and the consequent lapsing of their work and their reputation into one wild, worthless heap.

Doubtless some church society, that has suffered, will bear me out in this "settlement" of the style Byzantine.

The Norman, or Anglo-Norman, rather, was likewise imported, per books; and soon showed its graceful segment heads in our buildings, the largest of which, the Smithsonian Institute, at Washington, though liable to the severities of artistic criticism, is yet an object of interest, if not for perfect purity of style, at least for a happy modulation of parts; and had it been built in a different location, on rising ground, might claim admiration as the tasteful residence of some shoddy baron, whose heart might be aptly cut, in alto, on the kindred stone shields.

The church has laid its hand on this style, also; and, indeed, some of the best specimens of Anglo-Norman, which have been executed in this country, are ecclesiastic buildings.

The Romanesque and Norman are sometimes confounded—on account of their mutual feature of semi-circular heads—not alone by the spectator, but by the pseudo-architect, whose lack of professional reading is apt to lead him into unintentional eccentricities. It is not an uncommon thing to see Saxon, Norman, and Romanesque jumbled up together, in one composition, without a question of purity, on the part of the brain, that gave the mass an existence.

Passing in review these styles of modern adaptation, we have not forgotten the claims of the Gothic. To it we are indeed indebted for many designs, that are well calculated to generate a feeling of warm respect, if not of actual love for the art, that could so intensify thought and transmute dull stone into poetic beauty. However inclined the taste may be to turn, from long experience of any style, as a relief, to some other, it does not seem possible that the Gothic can ever be laid aside. It is always fresh, from the very expansive nature of its characteristics, which may be said to be kaleidoscopic. For, there is no locality; no form of site, however intricate; no clime; for which this omnifarious style is not admirably fitted. Never under any restraint, nor losing its susceptibility of tasteful treatment; in fact, there is no other style in architecture which can be at all compared to it in general adaptability.

The lighter styles, such as the Venetian, French, and Swiss, have all had their introduction to this heaven of the emigrant, y'clept the United States; and we sometimes see the three triumphantly blended in an united state of their own, through the doubtless patriotic spirit of some unsophisticated designer, defiant of all received rules, but freighted with the single idea, that this is a land of freedom, where every man has an indisputable right to think and act as he pleases. But, in a state of things such as the present, we cannot restrain blockheadism by any means, save stringent criticism; and architecture is too young among us yet, to deal severely with its votaries, however senselessly they may act. Our business is charity—leave them to time.

No matter how faulty, through want of education, the great majority of our architects may be, yet, it must be allowed, that they keep utility in view, in all their adaptations; and seldom sacrifice comfort to mere show—as is so commonly the fault, with the majority of architects, in the more settled world. Neither is there such an insane desire,

on the part of our American community, for delving up long denounced absurdities in design, and re-vamping them, to create a sensation in the building world. No, our people would not tolerate the architect, who would try to impose upon them some of the unsightly nightmares of architecture that may be seen in London. It is true, that we have had foisted on us some of the lumbering conceptions of Lombardy; but they had a short day; and will never be repeated.

To the railroad companies is due much of the credit of advancing the interests of architecture, by the erection of depots in novel styles, many of them fine specimens of their class. The large hotels followed the lead of the railroads; and gave us, in different parts of the country, some stupendous, and really magnificent palaces of sojourn.

The Government, too, commenced, and carried to completion, several large city post-offices and custom-houses, almost all of which are in the same style and plan, as though unity of system were the point aimed at. This was an error on the part of the authorities, for here they had an admirable opportunity of disseminating a taste for various styles among a people whose opportunities of seeing really good examples are at least limited.

In the neighboring Dominion, the Government, at every town, presents the traveler with its two only specimens of architecture, namely, the court-house and the jail. Here, at home, the post-office, inevitably the same, meets the eye of the observer everywhere. And thus we cannot help seeing the great distinctive features of the two governments: the one affording every opportunity of enlarging the intelligence of its people—the other fully prepared to confine it.

The introduction of iron, into architectural construction, was another great impetus to improvement; and its effects were quickly discernible, in the tearing down of numerous business buildings, and their re-erection, with all the display of ornamentation, which iron is capable of giving in the cast. This great reform was visible in our leading thoroughfares, at our ferry landings, and everywhere that metal could be made available. Buildings were put up decorated with the five orders of architecture, as seen in the Colosseum at Rome; and every style—including the most highly enriched tit-bits of taste to be had in the voluptuous Rennaissance—were lavishly displayed for our admiration.

The French Roof—or, as it is often called, the Mansard—was and is in great request. Public and private dwellings, and even stables, are covered, with this new roof; and no man, who wants a fashionable house, will be without it.

But the progress of architecture does not stop at external display. It is to be found in the interiors, also; and numerous and striking are the innovations on the comparative simplicity of the dwellings of yore. And here, let us understand, that in this indisputably "fast" country, "yore" means only a few years back on the track of time. For we have no "old houses," that is, in the European acceptation of the term. The people of that venerable Continent would not wonder at a house dating its foundation back to the time when Christopher Columbus was a youngster, going to school. Here we look, with inquisitive "want-to-know" gaze, at the house in which General Washington held his "Headquarters," some ninety years ago. How few are aware of the fact, that the oldest piece of architecture in this country was imported into New York, from Pompeii, by Mr. Delmonico, to serve as a marble porch, to adorn the entrance to his hotel, on the corner of Beaver street, in that city. Aye, there it is, somewhat more the worse for wear since its admission into our Union, than during the two thousand years of its previous retired existence.

Accompanying the progress of architecture, and ably assisting it on its onward march, was the discovery of illuminating gas; and to this may be added the rapidly increasing inventions of domestic comforts, wholly unknown to our benighted fathers, whose bliss was their ignorance; for, they sighed not after that which they never once dreamed of.

Wood, the frail material with which we have been constructing, is growing scarcer, and consequently dearer, giving way to sterner stuff to insure the duration of our buildings of to-day. This is all opportune, for we are coming by sure degrees to a style of "house-building" more in keeping with the characteristics of this country and this people, than those borrowed fossils of Europe, which, when they gave *appearance*, failed to give *comfort;* or *vice versa*. It is, then, most desirable, that we should have an enduring material, to make this style lasting; a thing to be handed down, from sire to son, through generations; a homestead, not alone for the present, but for the future.

Men are now giving more attention to the solids of construction, such as stone and iron, than they have hitherto done; and the knowledge of construction is beginning to be more thoroughly understood. It is a revealed and recognized fact, that ponderosity is not strength, but that strength is as much a manufactured article as any thing else.

It becomes, therefore, the duty of our generation of architects, to study the philosophy of this theory; and reduce it to practice; and not, like Sir JOHN VANBRUGH, be subject to the pungent epitaph which the sarcastic poet, POPE, proposed for the tomb of that then popular architect

> "Lie heavy on him, earth—for he
> Laid many a heavy pile on thee."

Next to construction, our architects have closely and clearly to study form and effect; bearing in mind, that they build permanently; and, therefore, the style of such building should be of endduring taste. Positive beauty of outline is not a mere matter of inspiration or chance. It is a studied, well-digested thought—an embodied poetry of form, the test of which is the effect it produces on the observant eye.

It would repay many a modern architect to proceed more slowly with his design; and let every line have its share of thought, bearing in mind the collateral requirements of dimensions, distance, and apparent proportions, when these are fixed facts. For it is not by geometrical lines, to a scale on paper, that such things can be manifested.

Full many a building do we see around us, looking unsightly, which promised well on the drawing-board, nay, delighted all who saw it. Why is this? Because the subjects of light and shade have been overlooked, not in the mere coloring of the drawing, but in the actual construction itself, for there are many subtleties in atmospheric action, which cannot be studied in a drawing.

In fact, if we compare the design, with the building when complete, we will find a difference of effect, that will surprise the observer.

A perspective drawing is always taken from one fixed point. Not so the building itself. We view it from many different points; and this fact, added to the atmospheric effect, before alluded to, will give some elucidation of the problem.

All this goes to impress the necessity of deliberate study in the management of a design, with reference to a successful execution of it thereafter. Then there would be less complaining on the part of those immediately interested; and the architect would feel more satisfied with his completed building.

In all cases where taste is at all liable to be violated, by the overruling of their employers, it would be well, if our architects should unhesitatingly and determinedly set their faces against such interventions. No matter what the

consequence of opposition may be; better far lose one patron, than, by yielding to his whim, lose professional character. It is not on the owner that defects of taste are blamed, but on the one whose design it is, and who is alone accountable to public criticism for the discrepancies of his works.

Vanity expresses itself in stone, as distinctly and unmistakably as in words and actions. As a proof of this, it will only be necessary to look at the cut stone fronts of the first-class houses in our cities, aped by the second and third-classes. The house is, in reality, a brick building; but a paltry effort is made to falsify the truth, and make it appear stone, by means of a veneering of that material, cut in a showy manner. This lie is most generally apparent, from the fact, that part of the side-walls may be seen, either standing out before, or peering above other houses in the block.

Another bit of stupid deceit is too frequently practised, namely, the bestowal of the appearance of height, by the construction of a false pediment. Now, as a pediment is really intended to display the gable of the roof, this falsehood is the more criminal. This, too, is unmasked, by the projection above the next building, showing—to any one who thinks such a contemptible conceit worth an exposure—that it is stayed, by long sticks or iron bars, to the roof below it; an admirable mark for storms to play against.

All such *make-believes* are unworthy of a professional man; and should not be resorted to, under any circumstances.

Blank windows—although very properly denounced by Sir William Chambers, in his "Civil Architecture"—cannot, at all times, be avoided in street fronts. There is an excuse for their introduction; but they should be very sparingly applied.

The use of the bay-window has become very general; and even two-story bays are getting into vogue. They are to be highly recommended, both as an addition to a room, and a pleasing feature on the exterior.

As regards interiors of dwellings, the height of story is something to be dwelt upon. For a narrow room, a high ceiling is unsightly; and, indeed, most of our parlors, in the best street houses, are too often sacrificed in width, for the sake of a large hall. They are, consequently, thrown out of proportion. Very high ceilings are a positive nuisance, for they involve the misery of being forced to toil up an endless flight of stairs. It is doubtful, then, wherein their advantage lies. But most people follow the lead in this, as in other fashions, for it is nothing more nor less than a mere fashion.

In the arrangements of kitchens and chambers, and their appurtenances, our architects lose no opportunity of giving elegance, convenience, and comfort in their plans; and to such an extent is this carried, that Europeans are surprised at the lordly state of our citizens' style of living. In fact, the architects of Europe do not approach ours in this respect. It is not mere display, but actual solid comfort, carried even to luxury. Nor are such houses viewed in the light of permanent family residences. Not at all, for, should the owner of any one of these get a desirable chance, he would not hesitate for an instant to sell it; and build another, with improvements.

Architecture must, of necessity, progress among a people so migratory as ours. Ever changing, ever new. The business locations of our cities are ever encroaching on the sphere of fashionable residents; and the latter, affrighted, are ever on the alert to fly to regions more remote from the vulgar ways of trade.

Thus it is with what, a short time ago, were palatial residences. The leaders of society have gone thence forever; the merchant and the boarding-house keeper have taken their places; and the archi-

tectural front, that once was the pride of its owner, would now be looked at by him with a feeling of surprise, to think how mean his ideas once were.

The public buildings, too, have a due share of this growing vanity, this inflation of wealth. Churches are not, by any means, exempt from it. On the contrary, they show a greater desire for display than their cotemporary civil buildings. The once much-admired old sanctuary, where many and many a weary pilgrim laid down, for a time, his worldly load of care and turned to GOD; and now, at last,

"Sleeps the sleep that knows no waking;"

where many a song of heavenly sound went up; and many a solemn prayer murmured through the vaulted nave—till the very walls and ceilings became baptized in blessedness—even this old abiding place of holy recollections is not exempt. Its day has gone by; its hoary clock-tower has ceased to intonate the notes of passing time; and its weary spire, that points to Heaven, seems to a younger and more thoughtless generation as an ever-lifted finger raised in reproval. Yes, it must come down. Trade has no feeling in common with its celestiality. It is out of place. Its children, to whom it was once so dear, have either removed to a new region, more fashionable now; or have left this life and sought their GOD. Nothing tarries but the cold tablets, that silently syllable the names of those whose dust lies there, without remembrance and alone. Anon, the new church rises; and lifts its pinnacled head in all the wealth of decorated architecture, sustained by massive buttresses, and pierced with many a flowered and mullioned casement, filled with glass, through which the light of day is led by gorgeously colored emblems, made to stimulate a flagging piety; and towers, baptisteries, cloisters, canopies are paneled and fretted over, until the wearied skill, that designed it all, can devise no more.

Every modern style is brought to bear on ecclesiastic architecture; and whatever religion has gained, certainly art has progressed in the movement.

The plain, square, rigid, Methodist meeting-house is a thing that was; and the florid church structure occupies its humble place. And this is as it should be. GOD delights to be honored by his children. Then why not dedicate to Him the glorious offerings of architectonic skill; and endow His house with richer ornamentation than our own? If Fashion must be led by Ambition, it is something that GOD has his share.

The secular buildings scarcely afford such a field, for our professional friends to try their pencils in, as that we have just reviewed. But, nevertheless, there is much to be done in its wide expanse. Much to be improved upon; and still more to be learned.

The system of "competition" in designing public buildings is one, concerning the advantage of which old Sir Roger De Coverly might safely observe, "Much might be said on both sides;" and that we, here, in the United States, have not yet adopted either side, might be said to be evidenced in the fact, that the calls for architects to compete are few and far between.

Reviewing those competitive displays, unbiased by the predetermined judgment of some persistent friend of one or other of the competitors, we look in vain for any thing to lead to the supposition that genius had any business there. On the contrary, we see an undue straining to meet the peculiar requisitions of the subject in hand; and as these requisitions are most generally too arbitrary, those who strictly adhere to them are sure to fail of satisfying either themselves or any one else. A positive injustice is done, too, in this matter of arbitrary rules, laid down for the strict guidance of competitors. As, for instance: All the competing plans, elevations, sections, and perspectives are required to be drawn to one scale and to be finished in one tint. Now this is very fair indeed; for, it places all on an equal platform. But it should be enforced, or it is worse than unjust. It becomes a delusion, a cheat, and a snare.

The fact is, our architects, who design for such things, do it more with a view to carry off the prize by display, than otherwise. And it not unfrequently happens, that on testing those designs they are, in their most showy parts, found to be absolutely impracticable. As to *approximate estimates*, they are a mere humbug, to use a legitimate though vulgar term; and are trumped up to suit the occasion. Still, those very estimates are often the means of carrying off the prize for a certain inferior design.

And, while on this subject of designing public buildings, the thought naturally suggests itself: Why should our American architects so generally fly to the renaissance or any foreign style, devised originally to tickle the vanity of a king who gloried in being, in consequence, styled "The Magnificent?" Ours is a Government of a PEOPLE, and not of a *Prince*. Our public buildings should establish that fact, by the decision of character and unfripperied nobility displayed on their unquestionable elevations. What should the visitor to our country say, who had seen our Ministers, at foreign courts, dressed in the dignified plainness of republican apparel, if he beheld a flimsy copy of some part of the Tuilleries made to represent one of our Government buildings? Would not his ideas of our manly simplicity be somewhat changed by the sight? And yet, in competitions, as above, such efforts are actually exhibited. Let us hope that the good American sense of those whose office it is to judge in the matter, will reprove all such puerilities by a stern rejection.

Individuals, in the adornment of their dwellings, may use the same liberty that they can take in dressing their persons. Their folly or their taste is solely their own. Not so the buildings erected for the Republic—such must not be allowed to misrepresent it.

Let architecture assume its true position among us, as the indication of our institutions, presenting always and everywhere one unmistakable front of rigid truth, under whatsoever guise of style. Let there be no meretricious ornamentation put on to create an effect of which we, as a sensible people, might be ashamed. And let all our architects understand this feeling.

It is a subject to be dwelt upon; and naturally leads to the question: Why is it, that comparatively barbarous nations have, in far less enlightened ages, invented a national style for themselves; and that our people—with all the impetus of inventive genius of a high order—should condescend to accept, or borrow one from abroad? The Moors were a people vastly inferior to our race; and yet we see the wonderful conceptions they left behind them.* Spain was overrun by them; and still, at this day, we can trace but little affinity between the Moorish and the Spanish styles of architecture. The latter avoided a slavish copy of their enemy's works, and struck out a path for themselves. The Romans borrowed ideas from Grecian models, but they established a complete and individual style of their own.

Why cannot we do the same? Why depend upon English, French, or German publications for all our ideas? It is unbecoming a country advancing so steadily in the front rank of nations as this is; and will one day be a subject of reproach.

That architecture may progress in a manner worthy of us, it is highly necessary that a knowledge of its rudiments should be acquired in our public schools. That such a science, coming so intimately home to our very firesides, should

* The Arabians were by far the most enlightened and scientific race of the ages referred to; and it was but natural that wonderful conceptions should abound wherever Saracenic influence had spread.—EDS.

be passed over unthought of in our studies, is something inexplicable. We pore over astronomy, geology, chemistry—in fact, every science but the one which we see looking upon us daily, as we pass through our streets, ready to admit its claims to admiration, yet wholly ignorant of what constitutes those claims.

Our citizens are fond of travel; and they go over to Europe and saunter up and down, viewing the architectural monuments of that great old world, and feel alternate awe and admiration take possession of their senses; but of the details of that wonderful art, which so enchains their attention, they know nothing. Of the history of its numerous styles, they could have read; but they thought the subject must be dry; and, therefore, they did not desire an acquaintance with it. Or, mayhap, pride had something to say in the matter; and hinted, that the subject was only fitted for mere mechanics. Be it as it may, certain it is, that a deplorable want of knowledge of this Mother of Arts exists even amongst our most learned men.

In England the Government fosters it, sustains it, and legislates for its advancement and protection. Professorships to teach it are established in the universities. There are manuals of its outlines in use in the schools. And no gentleman's education can be said to be complete, without at least a partial knowledge of it.

How is it with us? Our teachers, professors, and LL.D.'s are as utterly ignorant of it, as though it were a virtue to be so. No primer, no book, no chart, no guide whatever is to be found, that may tend to open a passage through which one solitary ray of light may penetrate the mental darkness.

If we really mean to make this nation what it ought to be, it is time that we should examine into the merits of this matter. It is impossible properly to patronize architecture, if we do not do so understandingly. For blind patronage is dangerous at best: and may lead to the establishment of many faulty constructions, whose defects are too permanent to be easily corrected.

Let us hope to see, not alone classes of design established by our State governments, but teachers and handbooks in every common school, and sound professorships in every college, so that the advantage of this neglected branch of learning may not be confined to those who wish to make a livelihood out of it; but be laid open to all, as a science to which man owes his first shelter and his present grandeur.

Then, indeed, may we expect to see genuine ARCHITECTS take the place of those puny peddlers of European genius, whose shrewd business tact enables them to assume the name, that Nature never intended to endow them with.

There are public buildings, now being erected in our largest cities, so disfigured with faults of style, that it is painful to the discerning eye to look upon them. But they have cost millions; and will continue to cost, until they are finished. Were a knowledge of architecture more general among our citizens, such a criminal outlay of the public money, for such a barbarous pile of blunders, would be sure to raise a cry for justice to be denounced upon the heads of those whose fault it is.

But the press is silent; and the people do not understand. Why should the press be silent? Why is not architecture, that is permanent, as worthy of close criticism as music, which is, at best, but evanescent? The answer is—that there are few, if any, of the "gentlemen of the press" who are able to venture a criticism on the subject. This should not be so; and yet so it is. If a building is about to be erected, and a newspaper desires to give a description of the intended structure, the architect's office is the place where the affair is concocted; and, most generally, the article goes into type, just as it comes from the architect's pen. But whether

it gives a fair, unbiased idea of the intended structure, cannot be discovered, until the masonry itself stands up, to testify.

If a painting is the subject to be treated of, our journalists have the whole matter well in hand. They are hypercritical on its drawing, its coloring, its *chiar oscuro*, its effects and its defects. They can tell which of the ancient masters it is, by the peculiarity of the touch. But, why should not architecture, the greatest of the Fine Arts, be at least as liberally recognized?

No, let the public have sound instruction, so that they can, at a glance, discern between pretentious quackery and genuine effort. This is the only sure way to aid the progress of architecture. Educate the eye; and you at once establish taste, governed by judgment, and supervised by discretion and truth.

Let only competent practical men sit on building committees; and let their decisions be bound by an oath, as that of any other jury. This latter requirement will be found more reasonable to all, when we consider that on their decision rests the raising and perpetuating of a monument to our credit, or our shame.

Of all things, let it be distinctly understood, that political bias shall have no hand in the appointment of an architect, or the choice of a design, for any public building whatever. Merit should be the only test of qualification; and should always insure its possessor against the intrigues of those whose political status is their sole recommendation. Public works, such as national buildings, should not be confined to the brains of a Bureau at Washington, no matter how apparrently economical such an office may be, in the eyes of the government. Individual talent throughout the land should have an opportunity of exercising outside skill on such works; and we all know, that free growth of any thing is superior to the same, when confined. So it is with brain; the free, untrammeled genius loves to display itself; while that which is under special control, and subjected to certain rules of office, is troubled with a sickly sameness, and a want of that energetic fire so necessary to its true development.

Every possible means by which the progress of architecture may be aided and abetted, should be resorted to for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, as well as the national spirit it builds up before mankind.

The delicate taste, and natural love, for all that is refined and beautiful in art, would lead the women of our country to study and delight in architecture. Why should they be debarred that privilege? There is no reason why they who seek philosophy as a study, should slight this. It is an art, so consonant with the most elevated feelings of their nature, that they must love it and cherish it above all others; for, it is founded on TRUTH, and makes GRACE and UNITY palpable to the world, as a model from which to study what life might be, were we but intent to make it so.

Why are our clergy not students and eminent promoters of architecture? The GREAT ARCHITECT of the mighty Universe, who canopied this world of ours with that cerulean dome which palsies human skill, and leaves the rapt imagination in eternal bewilderment, has shown HIS interest in architecture, and condescended to dictate in its workings. HE to whom the fullest extent of human skill is dedicated in the glorious temples erected to HIS glory—shall his ministers be ignorant of the favored art? It remains for themselves to say. This will suggest, that many a noble theme, most applicable to man's career and object, might be chosen from the details of architecture, and be brought to bear with impressive force on the minds of both preacher and parishioner, whilst their eyes rested on the solid example before them. The clear-sighted Shake-

speare saw and pronounced the fact, that there are

"—— Sermons in stones."

Yes, and eloquent sermons, too; especially when those stones, symmetrically congregated, do honor to the Great Jehovah!

The intimate history of Christianity is interwoven with that of architecture, for ecclesiastical takes the precedence of domestic forms; and the progress of the great crusade is to be found indicated by the temples erected on its path, down to our own day. They took the place of the altars of paganism. And what is more interesting than a sight of even the foundation-stone of one of these? Yes, ecclesiastical architecture, for the past eighteen hundred and sixty-six years, is, indeed, a study of intense interest. Taking at once a nobler and more spiritual form than that devoted to heathenism, the Christian Church courted that light of day which the heathen temple shunned; and raised its spires, like imploring hands, to Heaven, to send down that peace of soul the heathen never knew.

The architect of to-day is but the pioneer of one more masterly, because better educated, leading the destinies of a great art, whose claims on the attention of our age are as yet barely recognized. However, he can, even to-day, make himself felt and understood in the future, if he will simply do his duty to the mighty mistress he serves.

Money-making is no element of art. True genius may be liberally sustained; but it cannot be bought: it is unpurchasable. He that sells the honor of his art, sells his birthright; and buys the contempt of all honest men.

Steadiness of purpose should be the guiding principle of the architect. Studying well the objects to be attained in the course of his design, he must not falter from that course; but be true to his art, ever and always.

Originality is, of all things, the most desirable; and, in this new, this bride-like nationality, there is no necessity for fettering the imagination with the architectic dicta of another Continent. Then let the American architect, in all professional things be independent—free in action as in thought.

To copy is servile; and argues a mind unequal to the task of thought. Why should one copy? He, who has so glorious a field before him? Let him study out carefully the beauties and the faults of the past ages of his venerable profession; and give his mind to the inspiration of untrammelled thought, counseled by the choicest breathings of the beautiful and the sublime.

THE PHONOPHORUS, OR CONDUCTOR OF SOUND,

Is one of the important inventions of the day. It is well known that sound is transmitted better and faster along solid substances than in the open air. It is quite as well understood, that tubes concentrate and carry sound with great facility and distinctness; and the ordinary speaking-tube, in commercial and manufacturing establishments, is familiar to many thousands. The Phonophorus depends upon the general principle of the speaking-tube; and can be applied very readily to churches, lecture-rooms, private dwellings, and business places. We know of churches, wherein this instrument is applied to forming an easy transmission of sound from the pulpit to the pews of members afflicted with deafness, situated in different parts of the building, so successfully, that the slightest whisper uttered in the desk is instantly audible in the pews, many feet off, connected with it, although not perceptible, anywhere around, a very short distance from these several pews.

We are practically familiar with the effect and efficacy of this instrument and can personally recommend it. It has been lately introduced in a number of public edifices in Philadelphia; and we should think the custodians of others would be glad to hear of it. The agent for this city is Mr. Samuel K. Smith.

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MONTHLY REVIEW.

THE CATHEDRAL OF MILAN:

EXTERIOR.

As our October essay, upon the Origin of the Gothic Style, had direct reference to this celebrated fane, a short description will not be amiss.

Near the centre of that portion of Upper Italy, whence springs the peninsula composing the chief expanse of the entire country, yet well inside the main body of the continent,—some seventy-five miles north by east of Genoa, and about forty south, a trifle west, of the fork of the Lake of Como, that inverted letter Y, whose arms seem stretching out lovingly, as if to embrace, although they come not near it, — in the same general latitude, say 45° 30′ north, with Verona, Padua and sea-washed Venezia —forming almost an equilateral triangle, of eighteen miles base, with the famous battle-fields of Pavia and Lodi—to the west, within easy spy-glass of Mont Blanc; and with the outliers of the Pennine, the Lepontine and the Rhætian Alps, in full view, on the northern sweep of the horizon,—upon a beautiful and fertile plain, between, though not neighboring, the rivers Adda and Ticino, which supply its canals, but directly upon the Olona,—stands the book-mart and third city of Italy, very ancient, yet ever youthful MILAN.—Milan,—which, —founded by the Insubrian Gauls, B. C. 400, inhabited and embellished by many of the Roman Emperors, graced by the student life of Virgil, second only to Rome in population and extent,—sacked by Attila, A. D. 452, in the invasion which caused the rise of Venice,—taken in 1162, and, through the jealousies of the surrounding cities, utterly razed by Frederick I. of Germany, with the exception of the Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio,* and a few other churches, that alone marked its site among the ruins, its inhabitants being dispersed in four surrounding villages,—refilled, with all the survivors, and restored, in 1167, after the great Lombard League, by the very places, which counseled its destruction, imperial, royal, republican, royal, again

* This Church contains two small panels, one at the top of each of the folding doors, shown as part of the gates, which St. Ambrose closed against the Emperor Theodosius after his merciless slaughter of the Thessalonicans. The remarkable event itself took place at the gate of the *Basilica Portiana*, now the church of *San Vittore al Corpo*.