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THE FUTURE OF OUR ARCHITECTURE.

THE greatness of the undertaking, just completed, of bringing the two great oceans of the world nearer, and rendering their shores of easy access to each other, can scarcely be comprehended even in this age of wonders. We read, with momentary surprise, of the superhuman difficulties which have been met and overcome by our engineers, but we no more understand them than we do the character of the rugged surface of the moon, or of the intervening space which lies between that planet and our own. It is now some forty years since the Atlantic was successfully crossed by steam navigation; and during that period we have not been able to reduce the time of passage from America to Europe to less than eight days. In scarcely forty days from the driving of the last spike, the Pacific Railroad is crossed in something less than a week from eastern to western shore! But, we are not now considering the advantage of land carriage over that of water, but just commenting on the progressiveness of the magic age in which we live.

What does all this contracting of space and lessening of distance tend to? Surely it means to draw men from the distant extremes of the earth towards some centre where they can settle down in union as on a more eligible spot than that they were hitherto accustomed to.

Our contin[illegible] is that centre, and to it the European and the Asiatic peoples will flock in quest of new fields of profit other than the exhausted of centuries which necessity compels them to leave behind them.

All this influx of population and expenditure of trade will naturally give a gigantic impulse to Building. Hamlets will begin to spring, like mushrooms in a night; their growth will increase rapidly to villages—Cities will soon stand where the hamlet stood; and ARCHITECTURE will display its graces with a bounty worthy of the requisition made upon its capabilities.

Those of the old world who never witnessed our palpable growth, can form no idea of the rapidity with which civilization's tide flows onward here. To them all this may seem as wild imagin-

ing but, even we, shut up in cities, are astonished to hear of the progress making in the far western wilderness Wherever the steam-horse rushes, adventurous man is sure to follow, and communities are formed as it were by instinct.

The demand for practical skill in construction, and artistic ability in design, is the necessary consequences, and, therefore, it becomes the interest of our profession to enter seriously and at once into the requirements of the case.

The question may as well be put forward now as at any other time, for, sooner or later it must force itself upon us; are we to have a special style, native to our country and its peculiarities of soil and climate, or are we to continue to import the inventions and reconstructions, the fossils and the fooleries, of other lands, dissimilar in every thing from ours? Are we ever and always to be subject to the impertinent criticisms of foreigners, who neither know our wants nor comprehend our feelings, sedately reviewing our efforts from their own stand-point, and assuming to be judges in an art in which they are but the merest copyists themselves.

Americans are inventive in all things, apparently, but ARCHITECTURE. Can we doubt their ability even in that? No, there is but one obstacle to their progress, and that is to be found in the blind deference paid to every thing European, an unworthy cringing to the assumed authority of those no better than themselves. And what do we derive from the pitiful position our profession holds? Severity of criticism, ungenerous, illiberal, and unjust. If an occasional crumb of credit is vouchsafed to us it is done in such a patronizing manner, that we are made by it to feel more keenly our distance from the august throne from which it comes.

It is time we knew ourselves, and the urgency of rapidly growing events will force the knowledge on us.

ENGLISH CRITICS.

SINCE the days of that Revolution which found us a people, to the present day, we have been the subject of bitter criticisms to Englishmen. If we express a natural pride in our progress, it is stigmatized as boasting. If we claim ability to do any thing as well or better than others, it is deemed to be "bragging." And if we state facts which tend in any way to elevate our character as a nation, it is nothing short of lying.

It is true that our acrid critics sometimes give us credit, but the favor is like that of tendering a drink to the tortured that they may be enlivened enough to bear still more of persecution.

In looking over the third volume of an English book, called "*A History of Architecture in all Countries*, by James Fergusson, F. R. S., M. R. A. S., Fellow Royal Institute of British Architects," we found at page 436, under a heading, in small caps, of NORTH AMERICA, that this man of many letters had taken us in hand. He says: "From the time of the earliest colonization of this country, till after the termination of the war of 1812–14, there was not one single building erected in Northern America, which is worthy of being mentioned as an example of Architectural Art." Very true this, for during by far the greater portion of the time mentioned we were under the most liberal and enlightened rule of England, and too much occupied with paying taxes, to provide the buildings she was too penurious to aid us to. And when we had, under the providence of a merciful God, shaken her off, we