



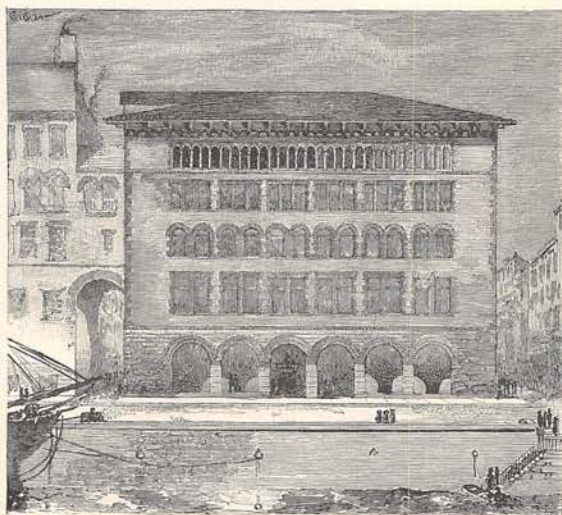
A COUNTRY HOUSE.

THE ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE OF NEW YORK.

NEW YORK never looks so well as at night in the height of a snow-storm. Its dingy brown and bricky hues become an acceptable foil to the pure white of the newly fallen snow. Every window-ledge and cornice has new moldings, the thick atmosphere which softens the glare of the electric lights, and reduces the gas-lamps to the brilliancy of a tallow candle, makes the streets and other open spaces seem immense. The drifts that waltz past the lights on the tall mast in Union Square, like innumerable swarms of gray moths, promise to outdo before morning Augustus's transformation of Rome.

In spite of its advantages of site and surroundings, New York is an ugly city. Not ugly, merely, but architecturally despicable. It is only in such weather as would make a wigwam or a ruined barn seem a desirable shelter, that our flimsy buildings can command respect. In the desolateness of a winter's night the locked and shuttered inhospitality of Fourteenth street gives it a certain air of solemnity, and at such a time we do not stop to condemn the unsightliness of the only house that opens its door to us, but dart into the sloppy vestibule, wet and cluttered with coat-shakings, and casts of boot-heels, and rinsings from umbrellas and slouched hats. The creaking of the wood-work is welcome to us, for it shows that the planks are dry. We are ready to forgive any sins that the builder may have been guilty of in the narrow corridors and surprising ups and downs of the staircase, if only his walls will stand erect, and his roof will not fly away on

the wings of the wind, or fall in and crush us under its débris. It is therefore with a profound appreciation of the present and past achievements of our architects rather than with any high-flown hopes for the future that we enter on one of these stormy nights the meeting-room of a club composed of the younger members of the profession. It is on the top floor of our Fourteenth-street house; a large, hexagonal room with walls in Pompeiian red, diversified with black shelves and close-drawn yellow window-curtains. Two great brazen chandeliers and a red-hot stove illumine the space next the door, but a cloud of tobacco-smoke hovering in the middle of the room obscures the farther end. Getting used to the smoke, as we add our coats and hats to a

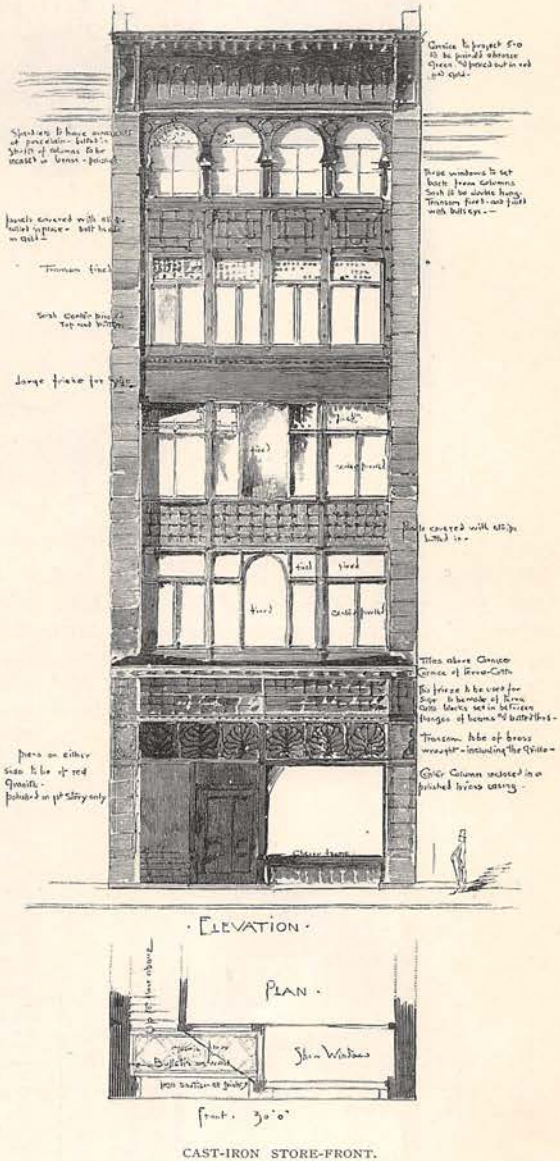


WATER-FRONT OF BONDED WAREHOUSE.

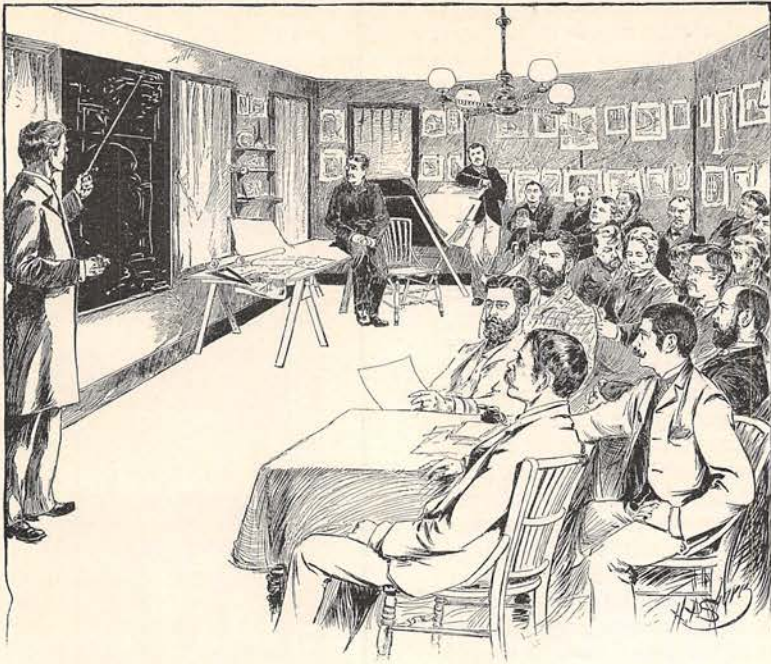
steaming pile heaped indiscriminately on a draughting table that stands in the way, we discover in front of us a collection of chairs and people sitting in them to the number of twenty or thirty, and observe that tobacco-smoke proceeds from a nearly equal number of cigars. Sitting, or reclining, on another table at the extreme end of the room, or standing in picturesque attitudes about it, are eight or ten other figures. A hum of conversation arises—the cigars are more often in the fingers than between the lips of the smokers, and apparently some question of importance is agitating the conclave. Suddenly there is a rush toward a big blackboard, that looms up on the left, and a tall shade puffing away vigorously covers it in a trice with long chalk-marks, perpendicular and horizontal and oblique, which collectively bear some resemblance to a complicated piece of scaffolding. The chalk passes from hand to hand, and the scaffolding becomes more and more complicated, without even suggesting to us what sort of building it may be meant for, until finally it is all sponged clean away to enable the latest comer to give graphic expression to his ideas. On the wall are arranged a number of drawings carefully made out on paper, and bearing some general resemblance to the sketch on the blackboard. We approach and examine them. They are designs, it seems, for iron store-fronts, such being the subject proposed for competition for this night's meeting. One of them has a Moorish arcade at top, and the discussion has been as to whether a Moorish arch is not an anomaly in iron. It has been demonstrated on the blackboard that it is and that it is not, and the controversy is still going on, but has now widened to include the merits of iron as a building material, most of the contestants maintaining that it has not any, and that the architect who gets an order for an iron store-front should send his client "to some other fellow."

Our architectural short-comings, however unimportant they may appear to the average layman, are beginning to distress the younger breed of our architects. Many of them have been to Europe, and having seen the masterpieces of their art, are not content to settle down to designing furniture or counting bricks for the rest of their lives, but want to do something worthy of comparison with the average of the work of former times. Others have been about at home ransacking the older towns of New England, and Maryland, and Virginia,

and are sure that the beaded ceiling beams, hand-wrought sashes, and tiled fire-places of pre-Revolutionary times are good things in their way and worthy of being reverently pirated. They all



deem it essential to convert the public from its predilection for evil ways of building, and as a necessary preliminary to clear up their own ideas about the better way. This is the cause that the Architectural League has at heart, nothing but a sense of duty to which could have brought so many of the members together on such a stormy evening, notwithstanding the wonderful *esprit du corps* of the



A MEETING OF THE LEAGUE.

profession, the gregariousness of youth, and the attractions of a social smoke. Like Chaucer's scholar, each of these young men is equally eager to learn or to teach. Each finds a leader or a pupil or a comrade in the League, who entertains ideas on architectural

One of these veterans of the profession now moves toward the blackboard. A good dome-like top story to head, disorderly iron-gray hair; thick eyebrows, sharp eyes; cheeks massing with neck; quick and peremptory manner—perhaps some of my readers may recognize him as a difficult person to deal with, and a stickler for the rights of his art. The dozen or more drawings are brought to him for criticism. Using the blackboard to illustrate his remarks, he begins with one in which he finds a strong projecting cornice casting a deep shadow to commend and a frieze of painted tiles to disapprove of. All is fair in love and iron architecture, he says; but the substitution of tiles for iron alters the matter. The design with the Moorish arcade is next handed up and comes in for unqualified approval, to the confusion of the strict constructionists who had maintained that it was an anomaly. The criticism is all from an artistic rather than a constructional point of view. The massing of two or more stories by cornices which divide them from others, in order to break up the great height of a city front; the treatment of a top-story as a frieze for the same reason; judicious changes of centers, placing the windows, etc., of one story out of line with those of the inferior or superior stories for the sake of variety—all these expedients and others like them, he is gratified to find used with moderation in many of the drawings. But cast-iron regular-

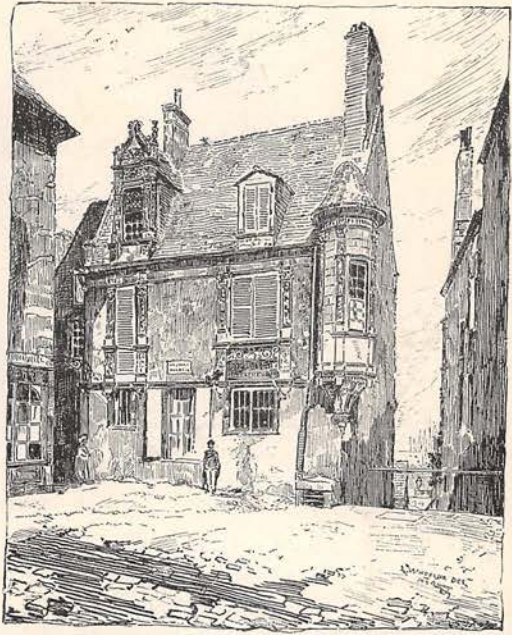


WINDMILL. AT EAST HAMPTON, L. I.

reform similar to his own. Occasionally one of the older men known to be in sympathy with them is invited to lecture on a subject chosen by himself or to criticise the drawings of the League.

ity, which one would think was in order in an iron store-front if anywhere, excites his spleen, and getting warmed up in his denunciation of it, he blazes away at it and peppers it with condemnation, until considerate thunders of applause allow him time to cool off and an opportunity to change the subject. In conclusion, he recapitulates the faults and dangers of iron construction. Iron is liable to rust, costs much yearly for paint, and is affected by vibration to an extent that is as destructive as the dry-rot in timber. It expands and contracts with every change of temperature, making cracks and fractures unavoidable when other material is used in connection with it; and it is the occasion of peculiar dangers in case of fire. Lastly, its unfitness for receiving fine form of any kind, large or small, makes the prospect of an iron architecture ever arising a very small one.

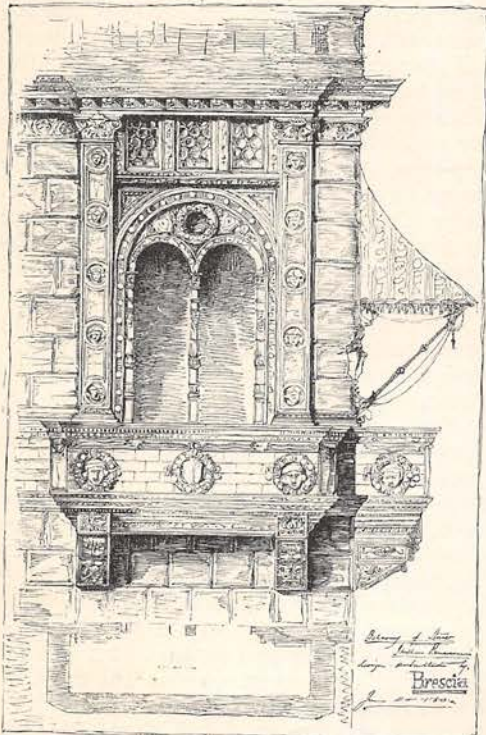
The cheers with which this conclusion is received show that iron has nothing to hope for from the young architects present. There are only one or two who appear to be at all concerned for the fate of iron architecture; the others show their artistic leanings by the fervor of their applause and by shaking hands with the happy author of the Moorish



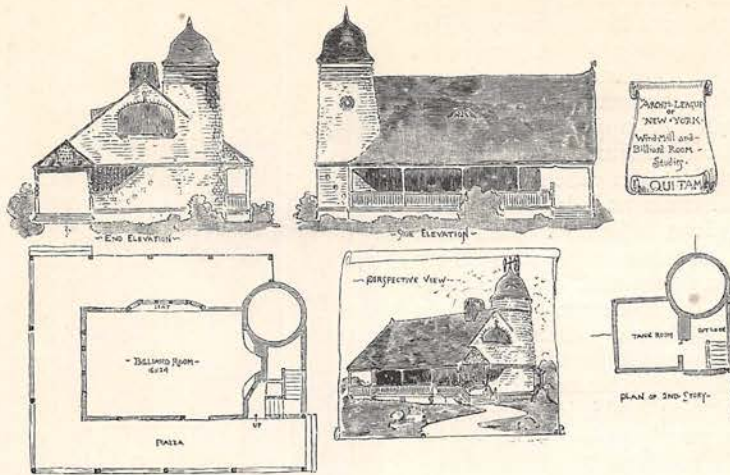
A DWELLING AT LE MANS, FRANCE.

arcade, whose pseudonym has failed to shield him from recognition. The remaining business of the meeting is transacted amid renewed confusion and fresh volumes of smoke. Up-town members search out their coats and hats and disappear after a vote of thanks to the lecturer has been passed, and at length a good two-thirds of the meeting adjourn to a neighboring retreat where argument on matters architectural may be kept up till a late hour.

The League began some two or three years ago in hap-hazard meetings in the room of one of the members. Here, while the host, in a velveteen jacket buttoned with a single immense bronze medal, ruled lines on a huge sheet of drawing-paper, one visitor told of a fine old carved mantel which he had discovered at Tommy Triplet's second-hand stone and lumber yard. Another, fresh from the Beaux-Arts, held forth on the necessity of an academical training for architects, while a third ventured to think that it might be dispensed with, and the latest comer, sauntering in just as everybody was getting ready to depart, gave utterance to some paradox which set the meeting by the ears and prolonged the session for another hour. All were then very fond of French architecture, and swore by Viollet-le-Duc, whose twenty volumes, bound in black and red, filled the handiest shelf of the book-case. Here all the young architects in the city became acquainted with one another, and found that they had a common cause and a mission which they were



BALCONY OF STONE—ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.



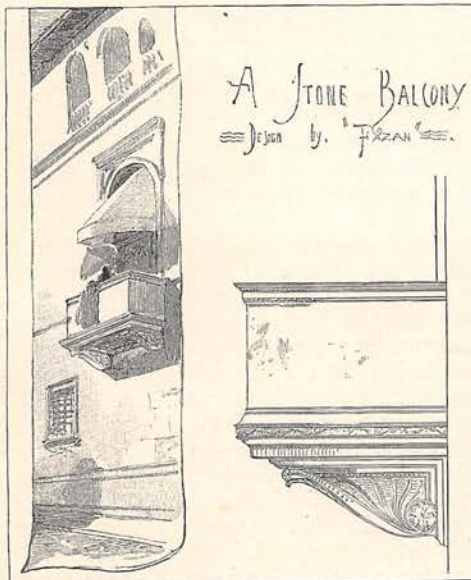
WINDMILL AND BILLIARD-ROOM.

called on to perform as a body. From chance gatherings in this room a step was made toward corporate existence by the institution of monthly meetings at the rooms of the several members, and so many were anxious to attend them that a regular club organization with fortnightly meetings and a home of its own, soon became possible. The new society met for a few times in the halls of its friends, the Salmagundians, but found permanent quarters before long in the top-story-back in Fourteenth street.

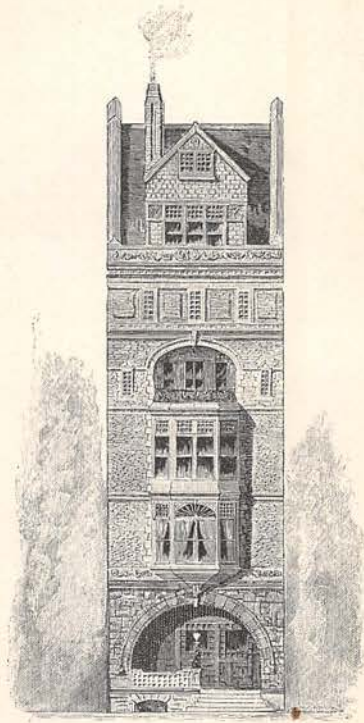
Since its final organization the League has attacked a great variety of architectural problems. Many have been as purely fanciful as castles in the clouds or the architecture of

dreams. Men who have given their entire day, perhaps, to calculating the cost of rubble work at so much the cubic yard have found a delightful recreation in designing cemetery entrances and draw-bridges to walled cities. A proposition to lay out the streets of the New Jerusalem, or to "restore" the walls of ancient Troy, would hardly come amiss to them. Occasionally one of the lecturers, falling into the humor of the thing, has set the League a fantastical problem of combining a billiard-room with a reservoir of water and a windmill to pump the water up, or the like. But there has been no lack of more serious efforts. There have been designs for college-buildings, for an Italian renaissance cornice, for chimney-tops, for a city residence, a country house, a suburban school-house, etc., etc. Some of these have been published from time to time in the "American Architect." Examples may also be found among the illustrations to this article.

No one can avoid being struck with the handsome and substantial appearance of the design for the water-front of a bonded warehouse, on page 698. It is copied from one of these sketches dashed off after the day's work is over, for a League competition. Its massive piers, the abundance of windows, and the flat-pitched, broad-eaved roof have manifest practical advantages, and they are combined in a manner to satisfy a very exacting taste. There can be no doubt of the supporting power of the massive arcade on the ground floor; nor of the sufficiency of means for ingress and egress that it affords; nor, again, of its quiet beauty. The two central arches admit the wagons which are to be laden or unladen at the platforms on each side. The plan which accompanied the orig-



inal sketch, but is not given in the cut, showed the building to be one hundred feet square, fronting on two streets, and containing a large court-yard in the middle. The upper floors are, of course, for storage. No less practical, though much more picturesque, are some of the designs for country school-houses given on page 704. The simplest would probably prove to be the best in practice. It has large windows where they would be sure to be needed; a single, ample porch, big enough to shelter the crowd of early arrivals that are always seen, before school-hours, in front of a village school; and with its bell in a penthouse overhead, instead of in a separate belfry, which always looks affected in any building but a church. If a belfry there must be, however, commend us to Mr. Barlow's; standing out as it does fair and square, and with its bulbous dome constituting itself the chief ornament of his house, it looks far too honest and too pretty to need an apology. But all that we can say for those in the remaining conceptions is that they are somewhat painful excrescences on otherwise pleasing designs. There will be many of our readers, we have no doubt, who will wish for a broad demesne and handsome private grounds, if it were only for the pleasure of building a gate-house like that below. The combination of wood and stone and plaster is very taking; and if one imagines a wisteria vine or a climbing rose trained up the mountainous slope of its roof, what could one have more fascinating at the threshold of his home than this home in miniature? The stone balcony by "Fazan" (page 702) is an example of simplicity of a different sort. It is suited to the richer city exterior, and by itself would give an air of elegance and

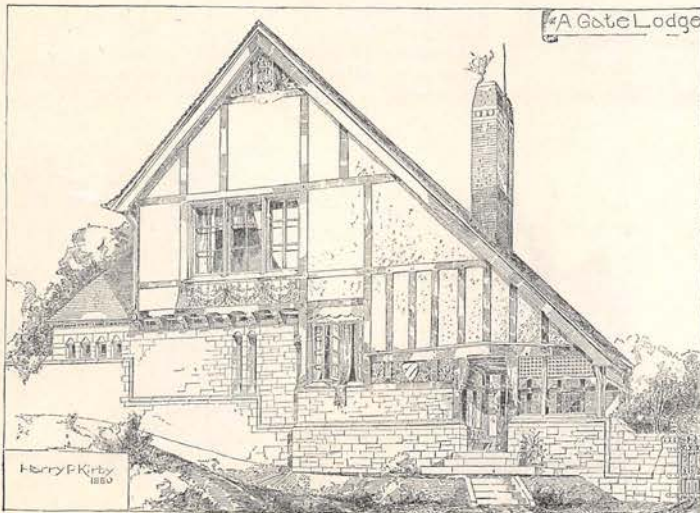


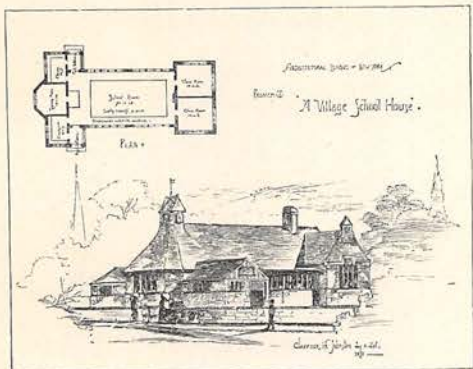
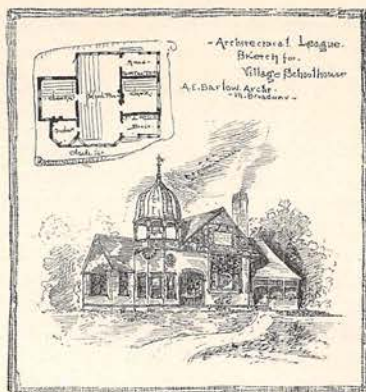
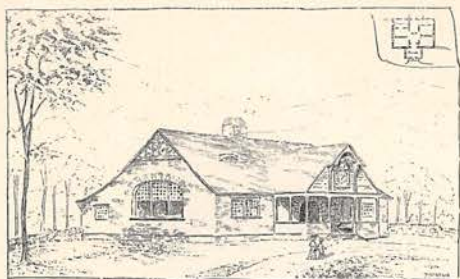
DESIGN FOR A CITY RESIDENCE.

refinement to the plainest front. The cornice on page 706 is much fuller of detail in parts of such a character that it would be difficult (though not impossible) to have it properly carried out. The designs for chimneys (page 707) are among the handsomest of all. It can safely be said of them that they would be the crowning glory of any house fortunate enough to exhale its breath by them. And it must be remembered that these are but a few

examples out of a breast-high pile of similar drawings that the League has already accumulated, dozens of which will, doubtless, yet be produced in a more solid form. For, good conceptions do not remain as embryos; they are bound to develop into facts.

The League has already had its first annual dinner. Each one of the *menus* was decorated in accordance with the prevailing fashion by one of the participants, mostly with pictures of the good things they hoped to enjoy at the feast. One art-





DESIGNS FOR A VILLAGE SCHOOL-HOUSE.

ist of giant-like appetite has loaded his bill-of-fare with tuns of wine and caldrons of potage and huge rounds of beef, and represents himself diving into the ocean to snatch from a shoal of mermaids their pet delicacy, the oyster. A Falstaffian proportion of liquid to solid was evidently looked for at the banquet; but it may fairly be said that, in reality, the ethereal predominated. Alive to the fact that a dinner is nothing without a poem, several of the members, and at least one honored guest, came provided with compositions called forth by the occasion. In this respect it was a genuine surprise party. Who would suspect a grave professor of making light rhymes full of alliterative frivolities about the acquire-

ments necessary to the ideal architect? Yet, before the graver members had ceased to count their bumpers and resolve mentally that "this would be the last," the best friend of the League, whose streak of gray hair just furnishes an excuse for the tincture of reverence in the affectionate regard of all true Leaguers toward him, felt himself constrained to deliver some such pleasantry as this:

Do you want a receipt for that capital article Known as the architect, artist and man? Of every best thing take the very best particle, Then let them beat the result if they can. The classical taste of Italian Palladio; Skill of Sir Christopher making a plan; Knowledge of mortars and bricks of a Paddy, oh; Knowledge of style of Labrouste or Duban;

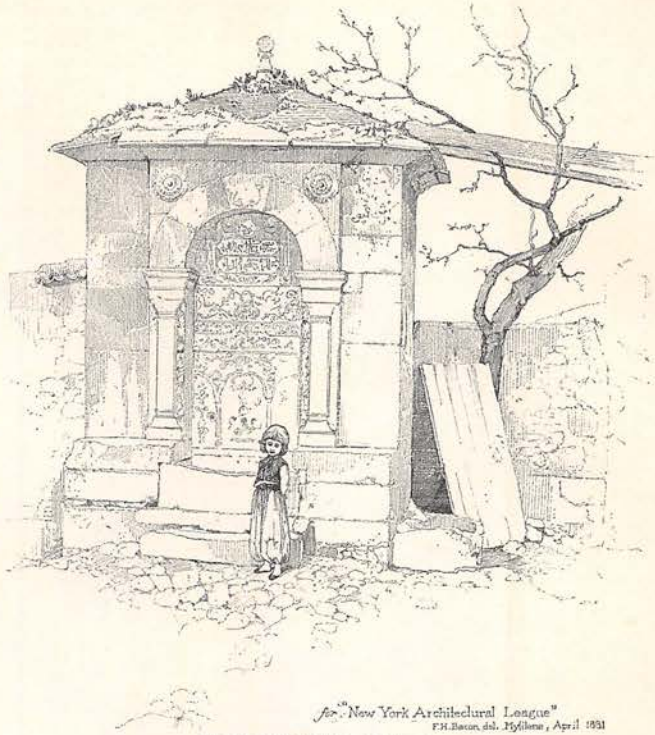


SOME OF THE

Judgment unerring of pictures and
pottery,
Patterns a Persian might paint on
a pan,
Figures for friezes or carved terra-
cotta;
Dainty designs for the face of a fan;
* * * * *
Courage, ambition, and love of the
work,
Spunk of a Yankee and zeal of a
Turk,—
Take of these elements all that's most
durable,
Cure all the faults that are not quite
incurable,
Strain, and refine just as much as
can be,
And the thing that you'll get is—
the men that you see!

and more of the same sort. If the lilt is familiar, the being described is rare and wonderful enough, one would say. Let us wait to see what the League will furnish us of this pattern.

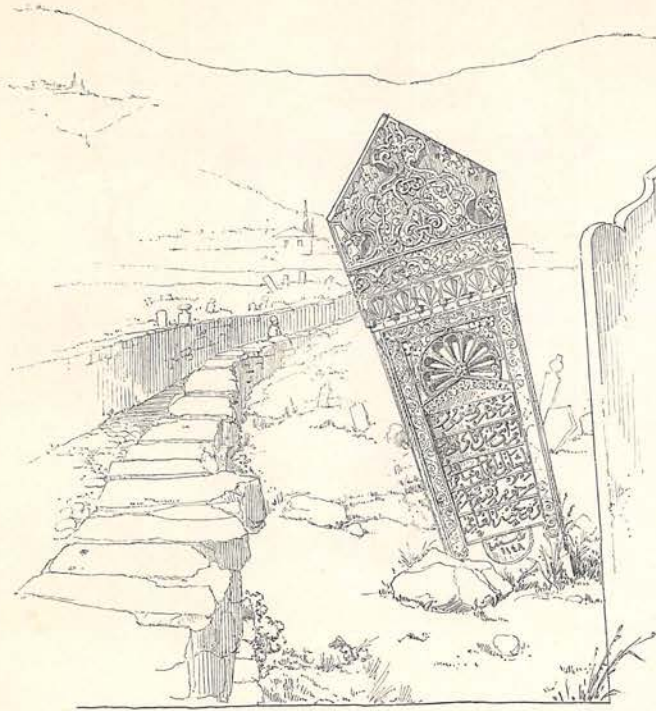
However, as before intimated, the League was not organized for merely convivial purposes. In its great object of enabling its members to advance themselves by comparing notes on all subjects that interest them, and bringing into play, by means of the fortnightly competitions, faculties and talents that would remain undeveloped by ordinary practice, the League has been successful to an unexpected degree. A good many of the older architects in the city have shown an active interest in it. Its list of lecturers comprises nearly every name of note in the profession, and the most sincere well-wishers of the society are among those who have themselves done the most to make us alive to the ugliness of our streets. It has taken something more than mere good luck to bring this about. Although the League, as a body, has as yet undertaken



for "New York Architectural League"
F.H. Bacon, del. Mytilene, April 1891
TURKISH FOUNTAIN, MYTILENE.

nothing to claim attention from non-professionals, communications from individuals which have been published in the "American Architect" have excited considerable interest even outside the profession; and those who have, so far, found no time for any work of this kind, have acquired a well-founded local reputation, which will surely widen, for thorough and capable performance of what is given them to do. A few of the earliest and most enthusiastic members have secured a much coveted opportunity for study and research in that cradle of architecture, the Levant. At long intervals, letters from them reach the League which make their less for-





For New York Architectural League.
H. Baum del. *NY Architectural League*, Dec. 1881.

TURKISH GRAVE-STONE, MYTILENE.

tunate comrades wild for a similar chance to excavate and measure and "restore" (with pencil) long-buried tombs and temples. Only a determined student would care to encounter the following:

"We are so driven and hurried just at this moment that we cannot tell one hour what we may be doing the next, running about from one gang of men to another, seeing that they don't pull down and destroy walls that they ought not, or I may be drawing away for dear life in our room down at the port, when, as the other day, down will rush one of the workmen with an incendiary note from B., saying: 'Come up quick. Turks pegging rocks at the sculptures. Bring my pistol!' And away we all scamper up the hill. The Turks all run away and the stones have not hurt much, but it is some time before we are calm. Then the workmen need to be continually watched and directed, and, altogether, things are not such as to keep one's blood tranquil. But then, at other times, one finds in the course of a single evening stroll such *trouvaille* as a solid sarcophagus lying in the quarry which some poor devil of a Gaul, looking for treasure, had spent many hours of hard labor boring holes into before he comprehended the situation; and a little further on, in the ancient channel of the stream, the piers and part of the causeway of a Greek bridge!"

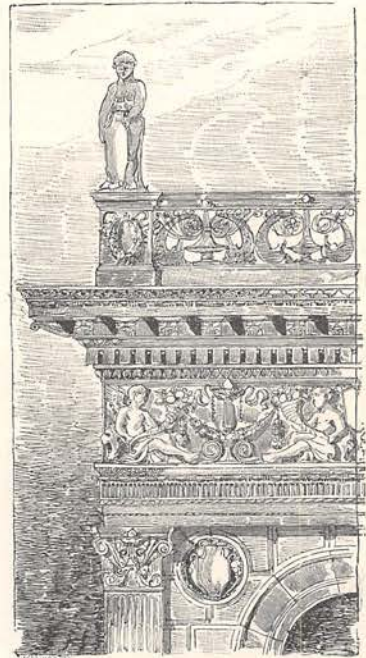
Another letter begins with a report of a still more interesting discovery:

"Assos, March 25th.

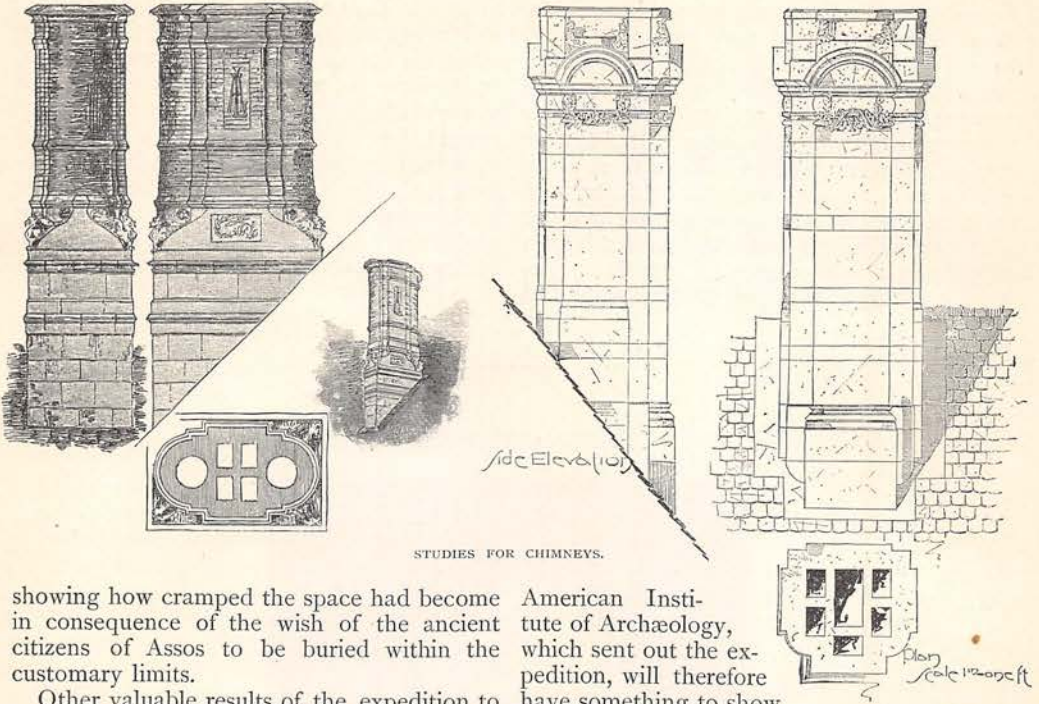
"The spirits of eight ancient Greeks, in as many black jars, are on a shelf near my shoulder, and I

must hasten and tell you what an exciting time we had yesterday. I have been digging, for the past three weeks, at the Street of Tombs, sinking pits and cutting trenches all over it, and yesterday we struck a very ancient burial spot, and spent the last two hours of the afternoon in pulling out archaic jars, full of bones, small earthen vessels, etc. They were thick as hops, and, from all indications, if we choose to keep on excavating, we could load a ship with pots, etc. Day before yesterday we found two unopened sarcophagi, and perhaps you can imagine my anticipations as I leaped into the trench, shined up my eyes on my coat-sleeve, and prepared to look sharp as the men pried up the stone lid. I know of nothing more fascinating than to be the first to peek into a tomb that has lain buried in the earth for hundreds of years. I had that pleasure the other day. Unfortunately they were only very ordinary sarcophagi, and probably very late, of Roman time most likely. The barbarians who went about cracking the large, important tombs probably scorned to open such an one."

They contained only some crumbling bones and small glass and earthen vessels, but were important from their position, for one was found *inside* a large tomb and the other just in front of the entrance,



A CORNICE PROBLEM.



STUDIES FOR CHIMNEYS.

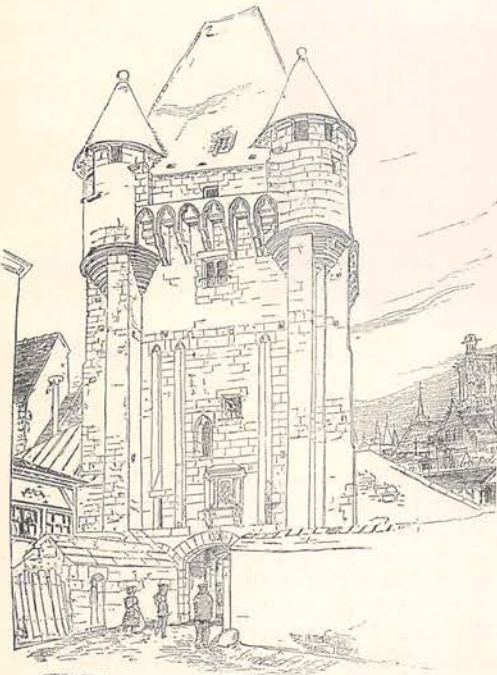
showing how cramped the space had become in consequence of the wish of the ancient citizens of Assos to be buried within the customary limits.

Other valuable results of the expedition to Assos will be a plan and restoration of the ancient Stoa, temples, baths, gymnasium, and theater, and some interesting sculptures and fragments of mosaic pavement, etc. The

American Institute of Archæology, which sent out the expedition, will therefore have something to show for its money, besides the gratification of having done a real service to art in providing these young men with an opportunity to study in the most profitable manner.

Other members of the League who have traveled abroad or at home, and made good use of their pencils and sketch-books the while, have favored us with some of their gleanings, which show what interesting bits the architectural student, led by his professional instinct, picks up on such occasions. The windmill at Easthampton is a sample of the odds and ends to be found here at home, often containing some suggestive feature capable of being worked into a very different kind of building. The Turkish gravestone, full of beautiful oriental detail, is a scantling of what may yet be found unappropriated across seas. The curious carvings upon it, in the hands of some of our New York decorators, would furnish "motives" for many a frieze and dado. The exquisite little fountain from Mytilene is worth a volume of lectures on architectural design. The old French Renaissance house, sketched by Mr. Wheeler, furnishes an excellent study for whoever would erect himself a mansion in that capricious style, and Mr. Gilbert's tower and gate-way is yet more worthy of close examination.

It is a pet scheme of the League to get up a fund for a traveling studentship, which would constantly keep two or three of our energetic young men at such work as that



OLD TOWER IN SOUTHERN FRANCE.

described in the letters we have been quoting. It is to be hoped that the effort will not fail to attract the sympathies of our many Cræsus. In other countries the government patronage afforded to art is not reserved for painting and sculpture only. Architecture comes in for some share. Here there is no free school for architectural students, and their existence appears to be ignored by those who are willing to make themselves known as patrons and promoters of art. It is, perhaps, contrary to the spirit of our institutions

to look to the nation for help in such studies, and many are of opinion that the best of schools is the office of a practicing architect. So it might be, if, as in Europe, the greatest works of the past and present were, virtually, around the corner or across the way. In this most conservative of the arts it is useless to look for progress until we can, so to speak, hitch ourselves on to the past, not by the medium of a long chain of mistaken traditions, but by real and vital contact.

Roger Riordan.

LÉON GAMBETTA.



JOSEPH GAMBETTA, THE FATHER OF LÉON.

[THE following paper, by one who for years had excellent opportunities for knowing M. Gambetta and for studying his career, was prepared during the past autumn at the special request of the editor, and its assignment was made to the present issue previous to the illness which resulted in the death of the French statesman on the first of January. It is thought best to print the paper as it was written, retaining the attitude implied in the author's occasional use of the present tense. ED.]

GAMBETTA, who was for many years the hope of French democracy, is, notwithstanding his diminished influence and the attacks of which he is the object, one of the chief men of the Republic. Michelet, in relating the tragical end of one of the great actors in the first Revolution, exclaimed: "France is yet unconsoled for his loss." Future biographers of Gambetta might repeat this exclamation were the rest of his career to belie the promise

of his earlier years. In the range of modern history there has been no public man who occupied so large a place in the heart and imagination of a great people. The idolatrous love of which he was the object grew up in a day, and during ten years did not cease to sustain him. Fortune all the while heaped upon him her favors. His very blunders seemed to carry him forward. The hostility which his success aroused among the reactionists, who