

snail is over all. I have counted a dozen on the bole of a single tree. I have seen them hanging to the bushes and hedges like fruit. I heard a lady complain that they got into the kitchen, crawling about by night and hiding by day, and baffling her efforts to rid herself of them. The thrushes eat them, breaking their shells upon a stone. They are said to be at times a serious pest in the garden, devouring the young plants at night. When did the American snail devour anything, except, perhaps, now and then a strawberry? The bird or other creature that feeds on the large black snail of Britain, if such there be, need never go hungry, for I saw these snails even on the tops of mountains.

The same opulence of life that characterizes the animal world in England characterizes the vegetable. I was especially struck, not so much with the variety of wild flowers, as with their numbers and wide distribution. Find one of a kind, and you will presently find ten thousand. The ox-eye daisy and the buttercup that have come to us from Europe are good samples. The foxglove, the cornpoppy, the speedwell, the wild hyacinth, the

primrose, the various vetches, and others grow in nearly the same profusion. The forget-me-not is very common, and the little daisy is nearly as universal as the grass. Indeed, nearly all the British wild flowers seemed to grow in the open manner and in the same abundance as our golden rods and purple asters. They show no shyness, no wildness. Nature is not stingy of them, but fills her lap with each in its turn. Rare and delicate plants, like our arbutus, certain of our orchids and violets, that hide in the woods and are very fastidious and restricted in their range, probably have no parallel in England. The island is small, is well assorted and compacted, and is thoroughly homogeneous in its soil and climate; the conditions of field and forest and stream that exist have long existed; a settled permanence and equipoise prevail; every creature has found its habitat, every plant its home. There are no new experiments to be made, no new risks to be run; life in all its forms is established, and its current maintains a steady strength and fullness that an observer from our spasmodic hemisphere is sure to appreciate.

*John Burroughs.*

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## RECENT ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA.

### PUBLIC BUILDINGS. I.

THERE is a point of difference which marks off architecture from the other arts, and is commonly held to be distinctly in its favor. Emerson says it is "a mixed art whose end is sometimes use and sometimes beauty." More exactly, it is a mixed art whose ends are use and beauty interwoven. And this blending of the utilitarian with the strictly æsthetic insures to architecture a peculiarly unbroken life—insures that men will always build, though they may cease to carve or paint or sing. Perhaps this fact is not, however, so advantageous as is usually thought. Looking at the works produced when artistic instinct has been lost and dull gropings or mistaken aspirations have tried to play its part, and remembering that the world cannot so easily, with the advent of a better taste, rid itself of the architect's as of the painter's or the sculptor's legacy of failure, we may feel, perhaps, that it would be better if the art at times could cease entirely—could die to effort as it does die to success. But as no theoretical decision as to what might be for the best can alter the fact that building must go on, and as we know, I repeat, that its re-

sults are among the most permanent of man's creations, it is evident that in no art whatever have we so vital an interest as in this. With no art is it so essential that the people at large should be sufficiently enlightened to know good work from bad, and to encourage the good by public as well as by private effort. Doubly is this the case, moreover, since no art, be it noted, is dependent upon patronage in the same way as is the architect's. The result of ignorance in regard to architecture does not, as with the other arts, mean apathy alone and the mere loss of possible delight. It means the multiplication of wretched works that must remain for an unlimited period of time, to disgrace the memory of their generation and to corrupt the taste of later comers.

There is much good building going on at the present moment in this country, as it is hoped will be shown in these papers. If it were quite clearly perceived by the public to be such,—that is, if it were more evidently distinguished from the bad work flourishing beside it,—there would be less excuse for their preparation. That this bad work does so rankly flourish is by itself sufficient proof of a wide-

spread deficiency in knowledge, since, as I have said, architecture always comes in answer to a distinct call of patronage.

It is instructive to note in this connection the character of our recent architectural work done under government supervision. As stated in the Treasury report laid before the present Congress, no fewer than twenty-seven government buildings, many of them vast in size and costliness, have been in process of erection during the year just closed, in almost as many different cities of our land. It is safe to guess from the examples with which we are most familiar that very few of them are sensible structures, not one a really admirable work of art—safe to say that scarce a single building put up under Treasury direction since the days of Mr. Potter's service could by any stretch of courtesy be included in a list of our true successes. The various local governments of state and city have a little better record to exhibit; but it will be found that most of the works coming under the general head of "public buildings," which will here be named for praise, while intended, it is true, for public or semi-public use, yet owe their existence to the fortunate instinct of individuals or of private corporations.

There was, as Mr. White has lately shown my readers, a distant time when building as a fine art was in our country the rule and not merely the exception. While our fathers were colonists or very young republicans they built very well—sometimes beautifully, and almost always honestly, intelligently, appropriately, and with a simplicity of aim and manner that was the very reverse of affectation or vulgarity. But the years which lie between their time and ours were dead indeed to art—were characterized at first by a helpless sort of ignorance, and later on by crass vulgarity and barbarous display. It is not necessary to describe these phases in a detailed way, since I am by no means essaying to write a history of American architecture. Every reader who has used his eyes will find in his own memory types of the various sorts of failure we achieved—types which are only interesting now as standards by means of which to gauge the undeniable advance of very recent years. I may say one word, however, with regard to the kind of work that came in fashion soon after that early kind which Mr. White has praised. The remains of the "classic style" that flourished for so many years—in stone in our large cities, in pine boards and paint and stucco in our smaller towns—have long been pointed out for ridicule even by those who hold no other architectural tenet with distinctness save this as to the ludicrous folly of attempting to fit

Greek temple forms to our modern uses and our often cheap materials. Such attempts are no doubt mistaken, and their results are often ludicrous enough. Yet after all the fashion has, I think, been rather unduly berated, for it had a certain amount of at least comparative excellence. It proved that its generation admired, if but in a stupid sort of way, the finest architectural style the world has ever seen. Later on, admiration was transferred to far inferior models, while current methods of adaptation and execution remained quite as stupid and grew still more inartistic. And a poor work following a fine example though at an immeasurable distance, is better at all events than another work in which execution and ideals are alike despicable and ugly. And be the work poor as it may, there is a dignity and a simplicity about Greek forms which prevent utter barbarism or hideousness of result—which prevent, for one thing, any accent of vulgarity. There are many far worse public buildings in New York than the Custom-House on Wall street. We might easily count up those which are much better, at least from an artistic point of view. And the pillared wooden temple which does duty for church or courthouse in the village street is usually a far better thing in itself, and far more agreeable in its testimony to the taste if not to the practical wisdom of its builders, than is its later neighbor—a bastard structure with vulgarized reminiscences of many styles and no styles, and much riotous ornamentation in sanded zinc and jig-saw carving.

The ties of this our new world with the old are of such complex sorts that it would be impossible to guess, without inquiring into facts, whence may have come our impulse in any artistic path. Such inquiry will show that in our architecture we have largely followed England, though her example has not been consulted by our painters or our sculptors. England, as is well known, has been through a varied and perplexing architectural experience since the beginning of the century. First, there dawned the Greek revival, instigated chiefly by the publication of Stuart and Revett's "Athens." Then came the Gothic revival, bringing about the famous "battle of the styles" between classicism in general and mediævalism in general, and the faction fights (almost as bitter) of the mediævalists among themselves. Every phase of English Gothic had its exclusive advocates, and there were others, almost as exclusive, who enforced in stone as well as in speech and print the claims of French or Tuscan or Venetian builders as the best models for the modern architect to follow. Then, just when the main battle

seemed to have decided itself in favor of mediævalism, and when the partisans of the triumphant movement seemed to have settled into some sort of agreement among themselves,—or at least into such mutual toleration as would let them all live and work in their several ways and insure the advance of the Gothic movement as a whole,—just when its teachers and preachers began to draw breath and consider their cause gained for all time to come, began an unexpected reaction among the younger men into a love for late Renaissance work. “Queen Anne” is the term popularly used of this newest style, and may do as well as any other meaningless ticket to label its results when they must be mentioned. But no term could be historically more inexact. The builders of Queen Anne’s day—whose influence we see in our own colonial work—discreet, sober, and dignified, even when nothing more, would be the last to accept the paternity of the motley new fashion, which is in truth less English than Dutch, and less “Queen Anne” than a mixture of Jacobean and Georgian manners, and which most rarely counts among its qualities those of discretion, sobriety, and dignity.

All these successive phases in English work were imitated here in more or less faithful and more or less successful ways. Of the Grecian fashion I have already spoken. It reigned for a time as wholly as it did in England, though with variations due to our lesser wealth and our different materials. The Gothic movement, however, was not quite so cordially indorsed on this side of the water as upon the other. English Gothic forms found little favor except for ecclesiastical and collegiate work. It was only the Venetian Gothic which at one time bade fair to be really popular with us. Many important buildings were erected in this style, like Mr. Wight’s Academy of Design in New York, and the large structure on the corner of Boylston and Tremont streets in Boston. In it Mr. Eidlitz designed some of his best work, as, for example, the piano warehouse on the west side of Union Square. Messrs. Potter and Robinson, again, who at one time were the most prominent of our younger architects, have usually preferred this style, and with it have done some excellent work, notably on the Princeton College campus. But none of these buildings especially concern us here. I cannot try to praise everything good that has been done in the past—even in a past which lies close behind us. I can only endeavor to show what is being done *to-day* in ways that bid fair permanently to influence the development of our art. And Venetian Gothic with us is already, I think, a thing of the

past. Isolated examples will continue, very likely, to be built; but it will hardly count any steady adherents among the younger men in whom lie the promise of our future.

The recent “Queen Anne” fashion has been taken up here with much enthusiasm. I cannot speak, except through an acquaintance with the prints in English journals, of its very latest essays on the parent soil; but it seems to me as if, with all the wildness and folly that have sometimes marked its presence here, we have still been somewhat more sober, if somewhat less ambitious, than our brethren. Both here and there good work, too, has of course been done when the style has been discreetly dealt with. But what our share in them amounts to I can only show in later portions of my commentary.

Just now I would add that, strong as has been the influence of England on our work, it has not been so exclusive as is commonly thought—at least by Englishmen. Much of our best architecture claims a very different parentage. Italian Renaissance examples have directly inspired some of our most important essays, and modern French fashions have evidently dictated the forms of very many others. Domestic work in New York, again, is chiefly founded on the “high stoop” model, which is not English but Dutch; and though this manner of building has scarcely touched either Boston or Philadelphia, it has become largely characteristic of Washington and of our newer Western cities. And the so-called decoration adopted for it when it deviated from the simplicity of the original Dutch model and evolved the typical “brown-stone front” of New York, is not English, whatever else it may be called. The statement often made by writers in English architectural journals that there is nothing good or bad in America which has not its exact prototype with them, is very wide indeed of the truth. We have been and still are not only far more continental, but far more original in our architecture than we even realize ourselves. To ask how often this originality has been a thing to boast of, is to open up quite another question—a question which would need first of all for its decision the settlement of the time-honored problem as to whether mistaken originality or the servile copying of good examples is the more promising mood in art. Two things are, however, certain. One is that our real epoch of productivity is but just beginning; and the other is that, whatever its course may be, whether peaceful or distracted, whether resulting in failure or success, it will work itself out on lines of its own—not upon those suggested by the contest still raging on the soil of England.

Perhaps the first thing that will be expected from a writer who proposes to discuss recent efforts and future probabilities, will be a definite programme as regards this matter of style—a statement of personal preferences, with the reasons why they seem justified by the needs of our day and clime. But such a programme I by no means intend to give. My aim, I repeat, is chiefly to show what is actually being built in various departments of the art; and though no commentator, perhaps, can be quite without theories as to what *ought* to be built, yet all ideals of future success must, to be of any value, base themselves on what seems probable, or at least possible, in the given case. Present essays are of very different sorts, even within the limits of true excellence; and through them many things are day by day working themselves a little clearer to our sight. Whatever considerations of a theoretical or prophetic sort I may have to advance,—they will not be many nor dogmatic—may better, therefore, be postponed till we shall have gained some acquaintance with our current art and shall be able to use its results as terms of illustration.

Since our recent works are of many different kinds, is there any standard by which they may all be tested and their excellence, when it exists, shown to be something more than mere accordance with that personal prepossession commonly known as the “taste” of a writer, which is often either vague or prejudiced and to which I, at least, shall not appeal? Certainly there must be. All art is judged—when really *judged* at all—far more in deference to reason and to tangible, demonstrable qualities, and far less in deference to blind instinct or “feeling,” than is popularly thought. It is only a very ignorant observer who can give no logical reason for the faith that is in him before even the most ethereal, most spiritual results of art. How much more must this be true of architectural work, whose ends are those of use as well as beauty.

Old Sir Thomas Wotton, first of English writers on the subject, tells us that the architect’s task is to provide us in his structure with “commoditie, firmness, and delight.” It is popularly believed, I fear, that the last-named quality is the most important. So it might be, if we wished to regard the purely æsthetic side of the art alone. But we never *should* so wish; and, in fact, we cannot so regard it even if we would, since architectural beauty is not, as is too often thought and written, an extrinsic, superficial thing, depending altogether on ornamental features, but is inevitably bound up with the very attainment of “firmness” and “commoditie.” The really vital beauty of an architectural work

consists in its clear expression of these two qualities, and of the material way in which its parts are framed; for architecture is, like every other art, *first of all a means of expression.*

What every true work of art aims at is to express through the representation of something external to himself a meaning or an emotion which the artist feels. The external motive which is the painter’s or the sculptor’s medium he finds in some form or effect of nature. But the architect finds his in the character of his proposed building, the functions of its several necessary parts, and the qualities and demands of its material. This is to say, that the aim of his work is to show with clearness his idea of how a given structure should be built, considering its site, its size, its purpose, and also the kind of material and quantity of ornament permitted him. Thus we see that as in the other arts, so in architecture, conception is the most important thing. If the conception is adequate and is thoroughly well expressed to the eye, the result will be a good, though possibly not a beautiful, work of architecture. But if the architect is an *artist*, he will use his structural elements in ways that will not only be sensible and expressive, but æsthetically pleasing. He will secure by them those effects of composition, of color, and of light and shade, which (and not mere decoration) are his main helps toward the production of “delight.” An architect cannot, even for the mere beauty of his work, treat his structure as a painter treats his canvas—cover it entirely, leave it to play no part in his visible result. He must, whether he will or no, treat it as the sculptor treats his clay,—must work with and not upon it. He must model it, and its modeling will tell that story of success or failure which can never be merely painted or sculptured or inlaid on its surface. If his materials are not plastic beneath his hand, if he does not shape them so as clearly and beautifully to express his intentions and his feelings, if, in a word, he does not *build* a beautiful thing, he will miss his mark in spite of all possible decorative effort. Decoration may, indeed, vastly increase the distinct expression and the beautiful effect of his building, but decoration can never *make* a good work of architecture,—can rarely, even in its noblest forms and its greatest profusion, redeem one which is weak in other ways. We see, therefore, that decoration cannot even be considered apart from constructive forms. It must grow from them, depend upon them, follow their lead and enforce their speech, if it is to be architectural in fact as well as name. The building itself should provide from the outset for the adornment it is to receive, should dictate its character, give it

the lines it is to emphasize, the spaces it is to fill,—should prescribe, in a word, the voice with which it needs must speak. For not abstract beauty (to repeat) but beautiful expression is the architect's concern, in the final ornamentation as in the first planning of his work. Constructive and decorative features must strive together toward this same end, and the latter always be dependent on the former.

If these things be true,—and I think they cannot be questioned,—we feel at once the falsity of the belief to which I have referred above—the belief that building and architecture are two different things, that delight alone is the object of the latter, and (consequently upon the first decision) is to be attained through superficial decoration—through the addition of what Mr. Ruskin, who champions this belief, actually calls “unnecessary features.” From this mistaken theory, consciously or unconsciously held, have come not only most of the stupidity and vacillation of modern criticism, but much of the poverty and falseness of modern work itself. No; building and architecture are not to be divorced. The chief elements in architectural beauty, as in architectural strength and fitness, are *structural* elements. With these the builder must not only secure his “firmness,” but must make its character apparent to the eye. With these he must not only provide, but reveal, the special sort of “commodity” which has been the object of his effort. And with these he must achieve the greater part of that “delight” which he can vastly enhance, of course, by the consonant elaboration of ornamental motives, and the appropriate employment of the painter's and the sculptor's skill. A building that is structurally beautiful will please the eye,—the educated eye, I mean,—though no “unnecessary feature” be superadded. There is nothing more beautiful on earth to-day than the naked skeleton of a Greek temple after every atom of its decorative sculpture has been stripped and shattered from its place. There is nothing more admirable than a perfectly plain Gothic interior of good design. The castles of Edward I. are as fine in their soberer way as are his churches, and Albert Dürer's towers and the warehouses of Nuremberg are as fine in theirs as are her ornate house fronts. Elaboration may add a charm that their simplicity does not possess; but it needs no elaboration to make them works of architectural art. It is not because the towers of the Brooklyn bridge are plain that *they* are not works of art. It is because beauty was not considered in planning their masses, and because their constructive features do not properly explain their purpose.

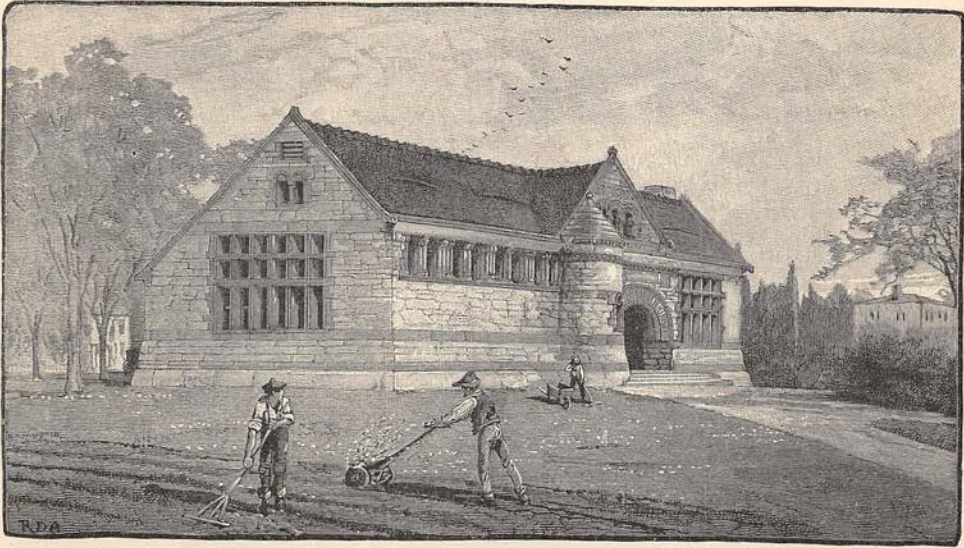
If an architect had fashioned them, he would very likely have left them as simple as they are to-day; but he would have built them beautiful in outline, and would not have fallen so far short of expressional design as to make the openings for the cables—the very why and wherefore of the towers' existence—mere casual holes cutting the cornice through. And there is no reason, save our apathy or artistic weakness, why every factory or grain elevator in the land might not be made, in its simple and humble way, a work of architecture too.

But in dwelling on the really vital law of architectural expression some critics go much too far. They demand that a building should not only be truthfully expressive, but should be this in a precise, particular, and complete way, even to the possible detriment of beauty of result. But this art, like all others, is a “system of compromises,” in which certain desirable things must often be partially suppressed in order that others may get proper recognition. And just here is one of the few points in which architecture—most human and non-natural of the arts—may take a lesson from nature's work. In building her organisms nature rarely quite conceals, and never misrepresents, her structure and her purpose by her appearances; but she does not reveal them crudely, bluntly or minutely. Her expression is often abstract, veiled, condensed,—so to say, *typical* rather than explanatory. And so may be the architect's. So must it often be, indeed, especially in these days of complex modern life when the purposes and uses of buildings differ in so many really immaterial ways. Not all structures can definitely, very few perhaps can quite explicitly, tell the observer of all the secrets of their fabric or of all the needs to meet which they were built. But all—and here is the true reading of the law—should be so far and so truthfully expressive that their fabric will not be actually misrepresented to the eye, and that when their needs are known, their architectural outcome will seem completely inspired thereby and entirely in harmony therewith. And he is the best architect who selects with the truest instinct what things he will express—who sees most unerringly which are fundamental and must be shown, and which are accessory and may be unexpressed.

Still another lesson that nature teaches—and a most important one—is that a structure, to be sensible, expressive or delightful, must be an organism, a whole, with parts many or few as the case may be, but with such unity and harmony and interdependence between them all that a single coherent im-

pression is the result. No portions of a work should seem casual, perfunctory, or immaterial. Each should seem right and proper in its own place, put there for some good and evident reason, which in the very best work will

down to guide our criticism. This is the rule that as a work of architecture is both very conspicuous and very long-lived, its aim should be "to satisfy and not to startle." The fact that a building is "striking" is often held to



CRANE MEMORIAL LIBRARY, QUINCY, MASS.

be at the same time constructional, expressive, and æsthetic.

This, then, is what we ask our architects to show us in their work,—not first of all, I am very sure, strict adherence to the precedents of some style of former days, but *rational art*. They must build sensibly, meeting as fully as possible the practical requirements of their task. They must build appropriately with regard to the nature of their site. They must build honestly, showing their material, whether noble or humble, for what it is, and making the best of it. They must build truthfully, concealing as little as possible their interior by their exterior, or the nature of their structural forms by the fashion of their surface and their decoration. And they must build beautifully, too, giving us pleasure through their composition, and, when it is allowed them, through wise ornament as well. These different aims involve, as I have said, occasional compromises and concessions; for beauty and truth and common sense are not always to be attained together. We are therefore sometimes called upon to decide in how far an architect has been justified in neglecting beauty for the sake of the sterner qualities of his art, or in securing it by some sacrifice of these. But it will always be the best kind of beauty that will come through no subordination or concealment.

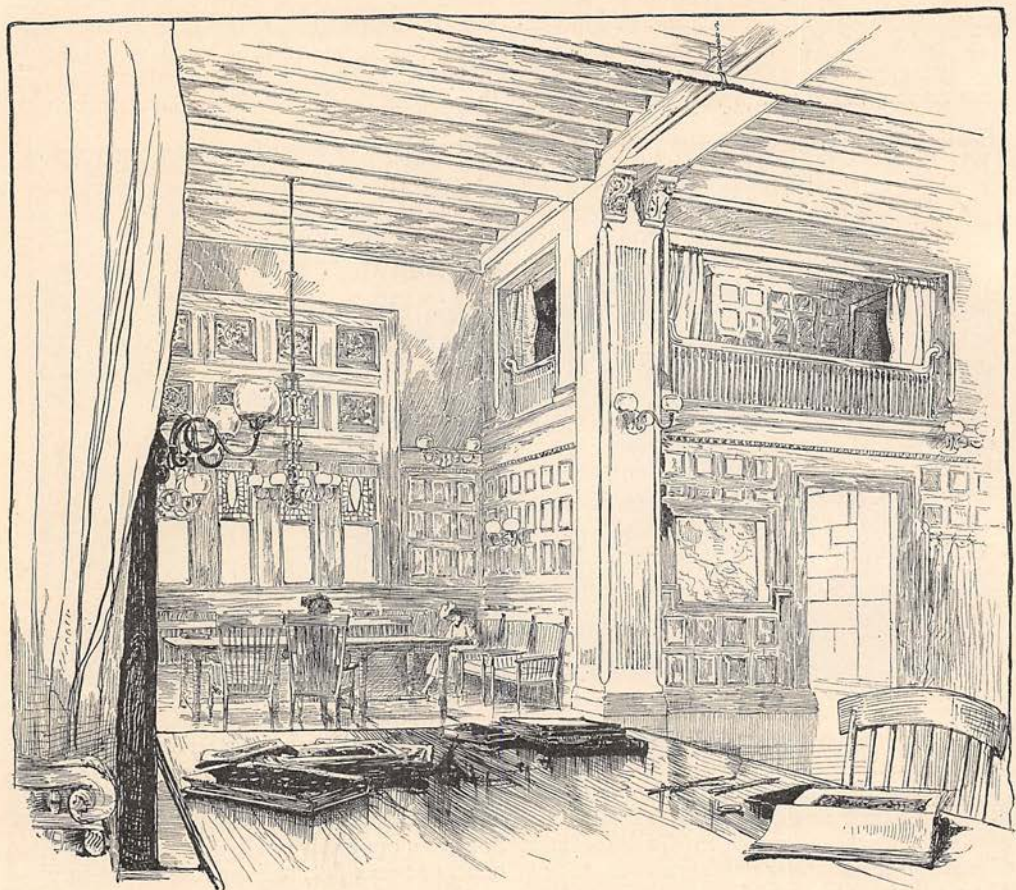
One general rule, moreover, may be laid  
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prove it fine. But the best buildings are those which, whether striking or not,—oftener not, perhaps, at least in modern work,—will seem better and better as the days go by; will not grow oppressive or aggressive or impertinent, or tame, flat, and uninteresting, in proportion as they grow familiar.

Another thing which it is well to bear in mind is, that while a building must be judged by its intrinsic and evident qualities, a wider charity should restrain our judgment of its builder. A painter or a sculptor may usually do the kind of work he pleases and in the way he pleases, hampered only by limitations in himself. But an architect is always bound—and often hopelessly thwarted and coerced—by the practical requirements of his problem, and by the tastes, the fancies or the follies of his patron. Not often does he really get a chance to show all the strength that may be in him.

Let us look now at some of our recent public structures and see what excellent types we can find among them.

I think I cannot do better than begin the list with the new Medical School building that Messrs. Van Brunt and Howe have just put up in Boston, since in it we have good architecture reduced to its simplest, barest form. I have said that a building to be good must be an organism, a whole, composed of related and interdependent parts. *Composi-*



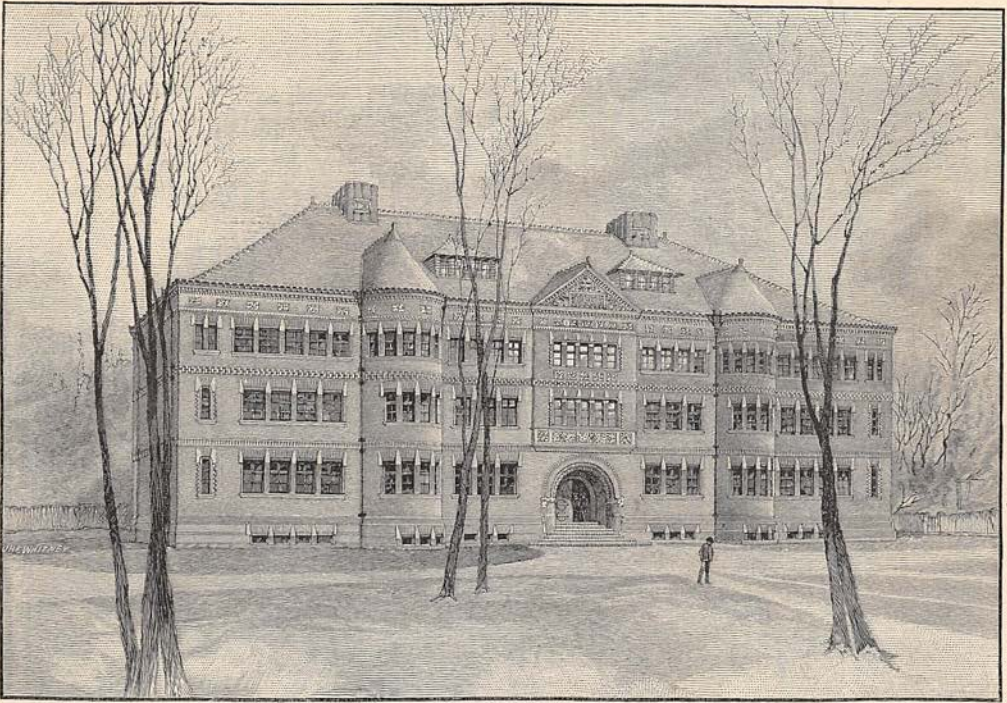
INTERIOR OF THE CRANE LIBRARY.

tion is, in fact, the architect's greatest task, and success in it the highest triumph he can gain. If the composition of his masses is scattered, ineffective, a thing of shreds and patches, and not a unity, he fails. But if the opportunity for this composition with masses is denied him altogether,—if he is obliged, as so often in our cities, to build a mere rectangular box without even a visible roof,—how shall he give his work that look of life and growth, and intelligent adaptation and expressiveness, which will mark it as an architectural conception, as an organism, and not a mere pile of brute material? But one resource is left him. He can still compose with what are called in technical parlance his *voids and solids*—with his windows and his wall spaces. Some of the most beautiful architectural composition in the world has, indeed, been done with no other constructive factors—as in the house fronts of Venice and the palaces of the Italian Renaissance time. Here, however, ornament comes largely into play, and beautiful materials do their part as

well. But it was a much humbler and more difficult problem that was set in the Boston Medical School. The task was to build a great square box, wholly of brick, with no ornamentation, and with the necessity for floods of light in the interior. Yet there is beauty in the result—architectural beauty of the strictest kind, though no atom of that “picturesqueness” which popular criticism falsely considers its equivalent. If the Boston reader will look at this building, especially at the side which faces Trinity Church, he will see what I mean by good and effective and expressive composition, achieved solely by the sensible and artistic disposal of windows and wall spaces and very flat pilasters. And if he will look—I venture to say, though such pointing of comparisons is no pleasant part of my task—at the new building for the Technological Institute, which stands near by, and in which the conditions of the architect's task were almost precisely similar, he will see what I mean by inartistic, mechanical design. Of course, had ornament been added to Mr. Van Brunt's

structure (the only traces of it now present, the little gable over the front and the vases above the cornice, are distinctly detrimental to the whole), it would have gained vastly in beauty. The eye would then have been interested and delighted as we approach the building, not merely satisfied and impressed as we view it from a distance. Take the same design, build it of fine materials, and decorate it with good ornament, and we

are so conceived and so arranged that they result in great strength and originality and dignity. The same intelligence in composition, the same good management of masses and obligatory features, often distinguishes Mr. Van Brunt's work, even when the details are not of the most satisfactory kind. Surface beauty he may miss, but the body and bones of architectural beauty he very often shows us.



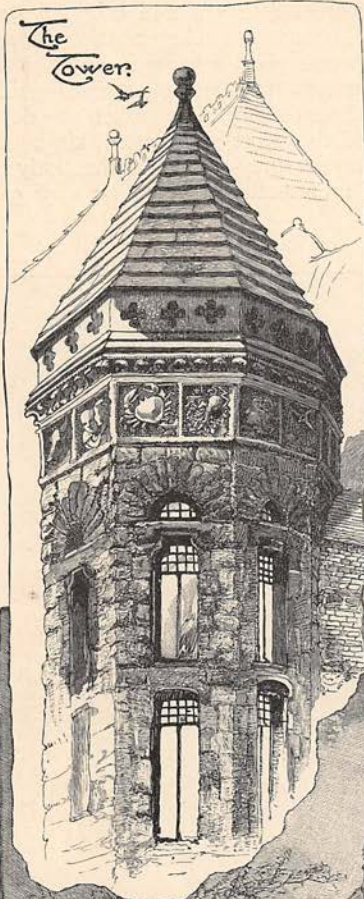
SEVER HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

should have a very beautiful building. But, naked as it stands it is a good piece of architectural composition and so a good work of art—far more satisfactory than many buildings whose profuse and charming details have been applied to an unintelligent design.

I wish I could speak from personal inspection of the new library for the Michigan University which Mr. Van Brunt has also built. It offered problems of a similar sort as to the necessity for considering practical needs alone, but it gave full scope for composition with its masses. From the drawings it seems to be a work of peculiar architectural excellence, almost wholly devoid of ornament, but admirably adapted to its purpose, and boldly, clearly and agreeably expressing its interior by its exterior. No features, large or small, exist save such as were dictated by absolute necessity; but these

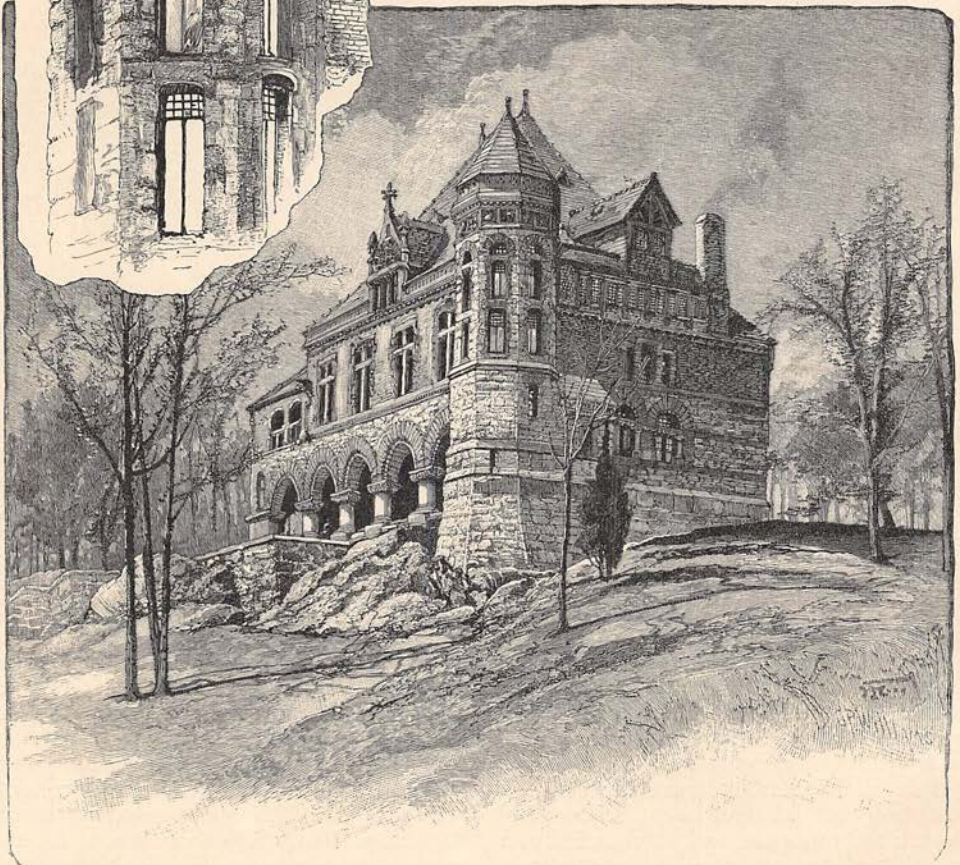
Look, now, for another instructive contrast, at the New York Post-office, where the architect had as fine a chance as heart could wish: a splendid site; practical requirements which, on such a site, need not have hampered him to any great extent; and money enough to give him noble materials and all the ornament he wanted. But what is the result? Modeling with the masses has been, indeed, attempted, but so imperfectly carried out that we do not get a single effective mass, a single powerful shadow, a single decisive line. Of composition with the voids and solids there is no trace at all; we see no wall spaces that can so be called, and the windows are distributed with monotonous, mechanical regularity. We miss, accordingly, all such impression of solidity and dignity as the eye demands in so large a building; we miss all expression of interior through exterior



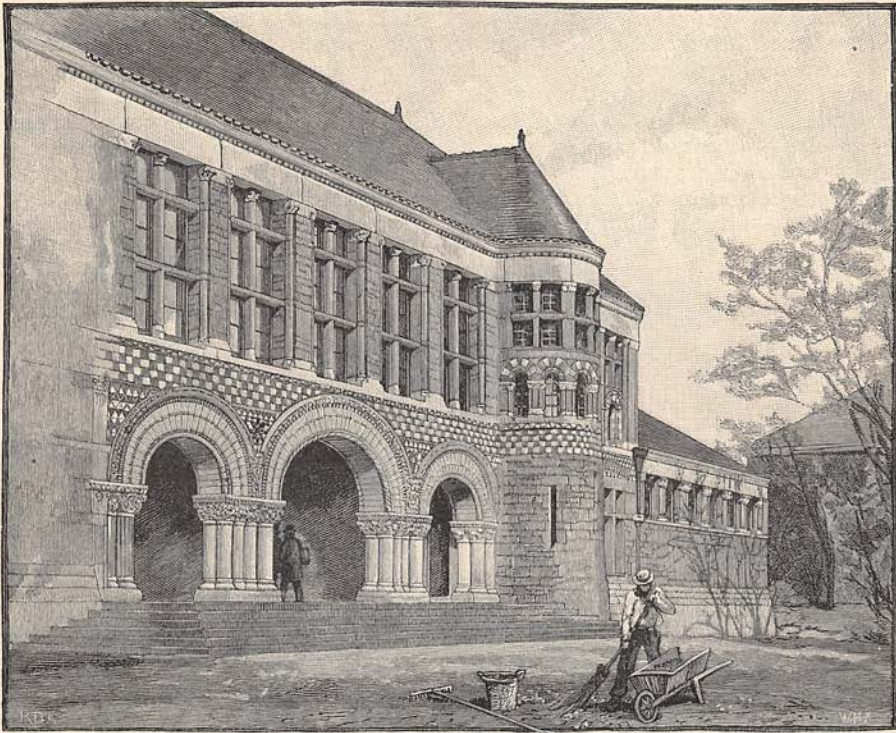


forms; we miss all proof of an artistic conception in the builder's brain; and we miss, in spite of the fact that there is no plain surface where the eye can rest, all evidence that he understood the aim of decoration. It is a big, costly, conspicuous structure; but no one calls it a work of art. And it is, I am sorry to repeat, only a type of our governmental erections. But if we would have a proof that municipalities may do even less well than the general government we may look at the new City Buildings in Philadelphia, which are worse than our Post-office because equally unintelligent, and much more showy, elaborate, and pretentious.

Take, now, an example very different from any thus far noted; take the little Crane Memorial Library which Mr. Richardson has built at Quincy. Our engraving does not show all its charm; neither its beautiful materials (light yet warm Quincy stone in the walls and dark red Longmeadow sand-stone in the trimmings) nor the details of its ornamentation. Yet I think every reader will call it an attractive work, for it is, in fact, *picturesque*. Vastly as the value of picturesqueness is overestimated in the pop-



THE AMES MEMORIAL TOWN-HALL, NORTH EASTON, MASS.



LAW SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

ular mouth, it is still often a desirable and a worthy quality when great dignity or grandeur is not demanded in a building; but only, be it noted, if it is achieved naturally and truthfully, not in forced fashions or too evidently for its own sole sake,—when it is the happy and easy result of a sensible arrangement of features really necessary or desirable in themselves. Such is the case with this little library. It is architecturally sensible, straightforward, expressive, and unaffected; and so we rejoice in the artistic instinct that could also make it picturesque and lovely. Its picturesqueness will be found to result, if we examine, from the irregular disposition of its structural parts—of the gable, the turret, the doorway, and the windows. Each of these features has come in strict and simple accordance with the demands of interior convenience. The large window lights the reading-room; the smaller, high-placed openings light the rank of alcoves; the door is made so large, from expressive if not from practical necessity, since here is a building which should distinctly invite the foot of every passer-by; the turret holds the staircase, which leads to the storage-room above, and this is lighted by the gable windows and the “winkers” in the roof. Thus much for the features themselves; but their irregular disposition is also

motivated by practical and not by willful reasons. Since the stairway must debouch upon the platform afforded by the gable, it must break the line of this; since the doorway must be so wide, its moldings must be boldly stopped against the tower—for to have shifted it further to the right would have brought it into too close contact with the great window, or have displaced this. A more timid builder would have made his doorway smaller, and so have lost his chance for forcible expression; and a less artistic one would not have known so well how to bring harmony and grace and true—not forced—originality and picturesqueness out of the irregularities which offered the best solution of his practical problem. Another point to be noted is the way in which the decorative value of color is made *architecturally* valuable—the bands of darker stone binding the various parts of the composition together, and accenting its important lines and features. The carved ornament, too, is concentrated, not dispersed, and so helps the general expression. With regard, finally, to this general expression, I will add that, though we may not at once perceive that the building is exactly what it is,—a library for free public use,—yet we know it is something of the sort; and when its purpose is told its appearance

is found most appropriate — and rather more minutely expressive, indeed, than we can often hope to see. To the delicately wrought interior of this library I shall refer when we come to speak of decoration and of "style" in general.

This is one of the most perfect of Mr. Richardson's buildings; but the same romantic, artistic, picturesque instinct is almost always shown in his art, though sometimes

rocky site overlooking the village, two important structures—the Ames Memorial Library and a Town-Hall, also a memorial offered by the same family. He was fortunate, also, in having the assistance of Mr. Frederick Law Olmstead in the arrangement of the connecting grounds and terraces, and the result is one of the most delightful groups of harmonious yet contrasting works of which we yet can boast—but a group, unfortunately, which lies off the high-

way of travel, and can only be seen at the end of a special pilgrimage.

The library is less imposing and less picturesque than the one at Woburn,—which is, indeed, rather too imposing and too picturesque,—while it is not so simply graceful and charming as the one at Quincy. It shows a less marked originality, more conventionalism in its design; and it sins a little in expression, I think, by the prominence of its tower. This, which at Quincy was given only its due importance as a staircase turret, is here carried well above the roof, and asserts itself in a manner rather out of harmony with the purpose of the building. Towers, like all other architectural features, have a meaning of their own—though the



INTERIOR OF THE SENATE CHAMBER, STATE CAPITOL, ALBANY, N. Y.

not held so well in hand by strict architectural feeling. It was only after several less completely satisfactory essays in a similar direction, indeed, that he arrived at such simplicity and truth of design as here. A larger library at Woburn was, I think, his first attempt in the Romanesque, round-arched style to which he has since faithfully adhered. So it is not wonderful that the richly picturesque and florid possibilities of this style led him into exuberance of rather too pronounced a sort. But as over-exuberance of a really strong and attractive kind is not a common failing in modern architecture, and as it is never, I think, combined in Mr. Richardson's work with affectation, forced animation, or mere display, we do not much complain of it.

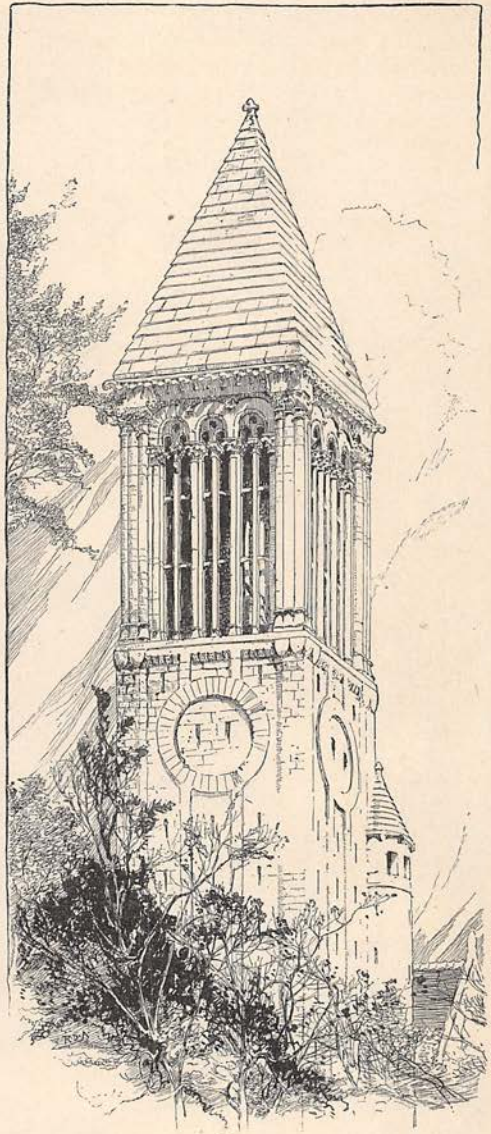
At North Easton, near Boston, Mr. Richardson was given a peculiarly fortunate opportunity in the commission to build, on an elevated

meaning of none is more commonly ignored or misconceived. A tower is first of all, in one shape or another, an ecclesiastical feature. Or it is, as in ancient castles or the palaces of Italian towns, an actual necessity for aggression or defense. Or in open forms it is a belvedere for outlook, and thus appropriate to many modern structures. Or, finally, it is a symbol of dominion and authority. This last was its function, for example, in the municipal buildings of the Netherlands, and such was its significance in the middle ages, when in more countries than one a royal permit was needed before it might be built. This, too, seems to be its proper service at the present day. As the town halls of Belgium lifted their great towers to give the hour with clock and bell and to proclaim the might of the civic arm, so ours should serve a similar practical or symbolic purpose.

Thus, while we object a little (on expressional grounds) to the tower that Mr. Richardson has given his North Easton library,—which, be it observed, is, on the whole, an excellent work that we should hardly stop to criticise were it another's and not Mr. Richardson's,—we approve the one he has added to the town-hall close at hand. The *loggia* of this building, with its massive arcade and broad open space within, is not only most effective in itself, but as expressive as is the Quincy door—marking the building as the chief gathering-place of the villagers; and the row of uniform large windows in the front well explains the presence of the great hall within. The library is built of the same materials as the one at Quincy, and the hall of dark stone below and brick above, the tower rising in admirably picturesque fashion from its rocky foundation.

Let us turn now to one of Mr. Richardson's works which is very different in site and purpose, and so, very properly, is different also in effect—to Sever Hall at Cambridge. Here a few large recitation-rooms of simple plan were required of him; and as the building stands in the college yard, dignity and not picturesqueness was well conceived to be its proper character, together with a certain simplicity and symmetry that would keep it harmonious with the older buildings close about it.

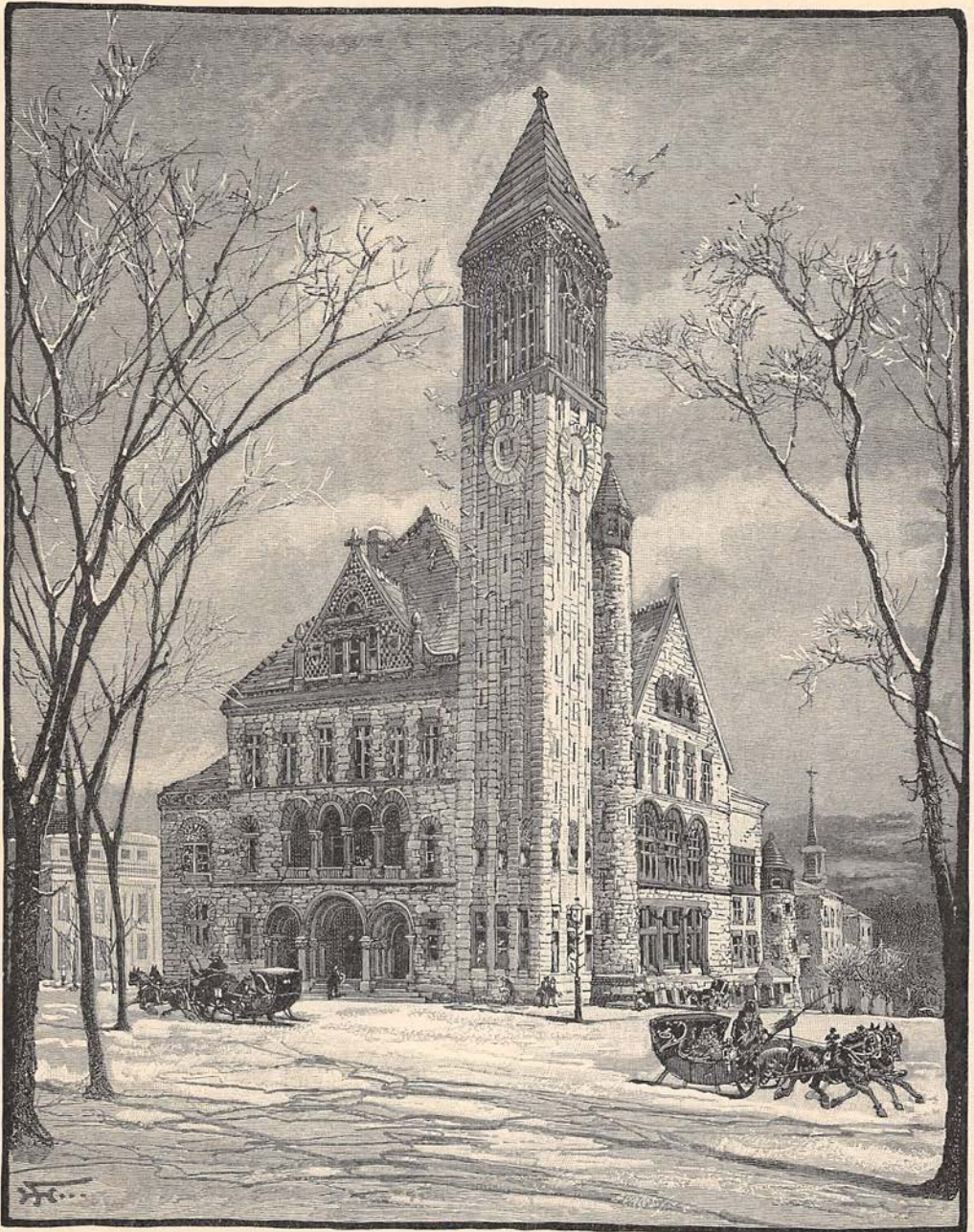
Sever Hall is, I am very sure, one of the most perfect of our recent works; and considering the nature of its excellence, it is one of the most instructive. First of all, it is instructive as showing that an architect who can be more romantic, exuberant, lavish, and ornate than any other of our builders, can also upon occasion be as quiet, as simple, as reticent, and discreet as the most conventional among them. But since he is an artist, he does not become conventional in becoming simple. There is, in truth, much more originality in the quiet success of Sever Hall than in many more striking works, whether by his hand or by another. It is not necessary to describe the building in detail, since the engraving is before us. I would only note that it is built of brick, with the decoration carved also out of brick, and with but a slight use of stone about the openings; and that the fortunate introduction of the great round arched doorway (an introduction from which many builders would have shrunk, in view of the square-headed openings which otherwise prevail throughout) is what gives a grateful touch of piquancy to the whole. I wish I could also show the reader the grouping of the windows at one end of this building to prove how simply and easily (*if* we presuppose an artist) variety may be secured, and the most perfect quietude and harmony yet prevail.



TOWER OF CITY HALL, ALBANY, N. Y.

In the second place Sever Hall is especially instructive, because though it is excellent, admirable, and beautiful, it is *not* picturesque. I have already referred to the specious attractions of picturesqueness in architecture, but must dwell upon them still a little further; for no more pernicious fault afflicts our popular criticism—and, by inevitable reaction, our current practice—than the ceaseless, irrational desire for picturesque effects.

Every one who has traveled abroad with the average tourist who professed and often really felt an interest in the architectural work of former days, must remember how entirely that interest was inspired by picturesque ef-



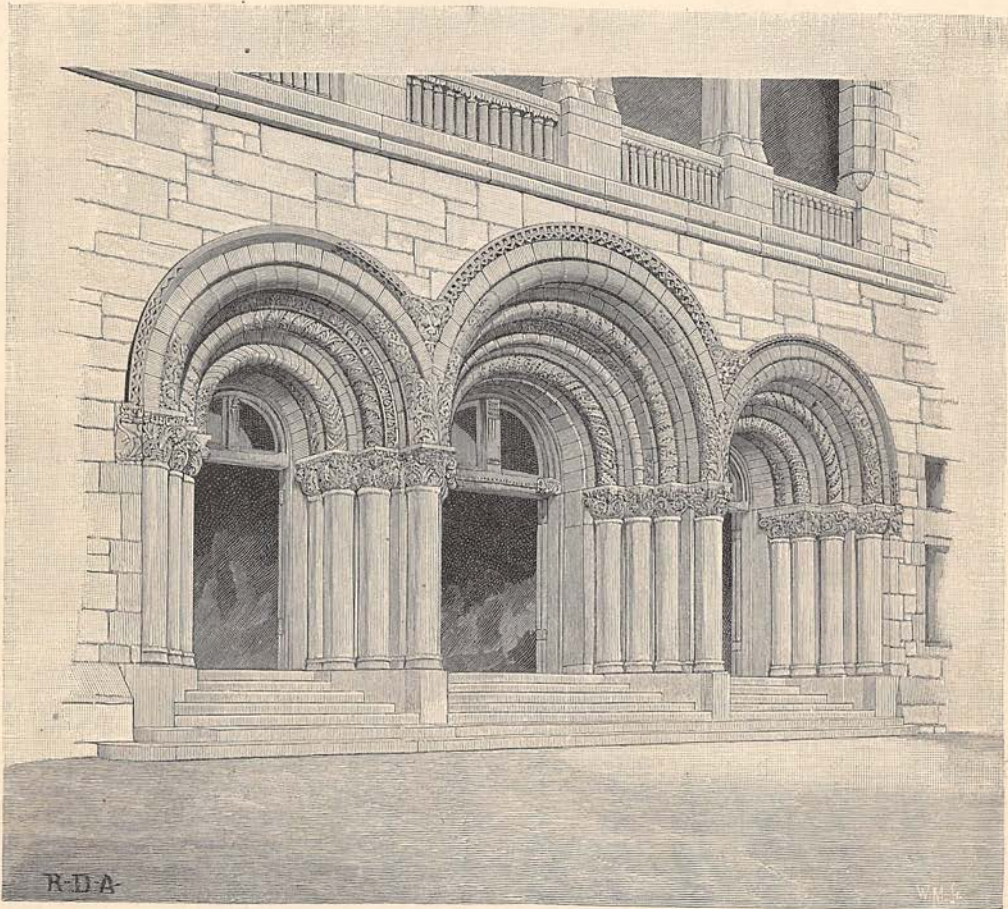
CITY HALL, ALBANY, N. Y.

fects. Sometimes these effects are, I repeat, a legitimate and immediate outcome of true architectural excellence; but more often they are accidental, posterior, wrought by the hand of time,—softening and harmonizing shapes, adding or subduing color,—and not by the deliberate purpose of the builder. Such is to a great extent the unsurpassed picturesqueness

of St. Mark's at Venice,—coloristically beautiful, but architecturally by no means one of the world's finest buildings. Such is the attraction of many a poorly designed Gothic interior; and from the touch of decay and dampness comes much of the external picturesqueness of all old buildings in our northern clime. I do not say that this coloristic, accidental, time-

wrought charm is an illegitimate object of admiration. It is often one of the greatest aids to beauty an architectural work can gain. Not always, however,—though there are doubtless

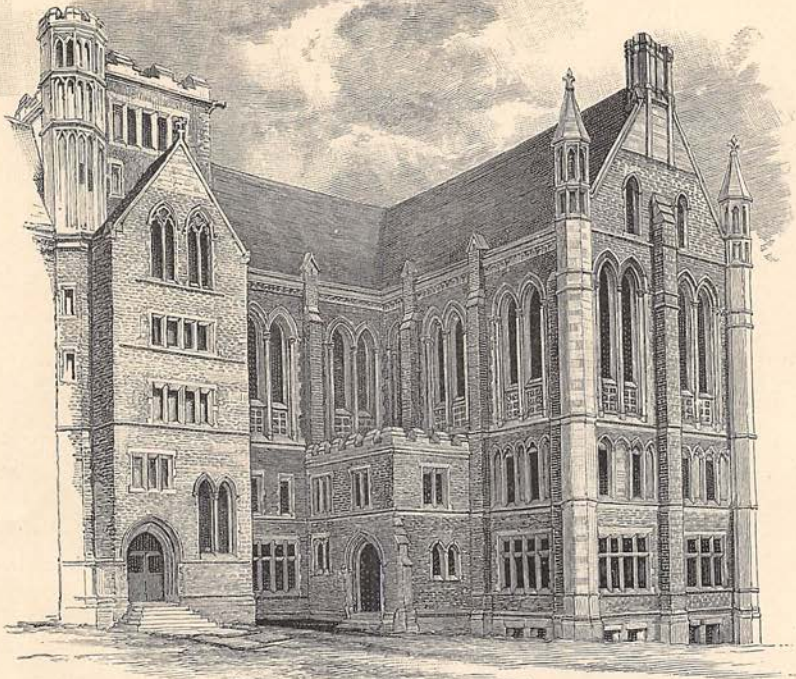
But with these facts in mind we shall see the folly of always demanding picturesqueness in a modern structure. Sometimes, as I have said, it can come naturally and appropriately,



MAIN ENTRANCE, CITY HALL, ALBANY.

persons who would prefer to see even the temples of Egypt furrowed, lichen-stained, and buried in foliage, and would fain wreath the pure columns of the Parthenon with tangled veils of ivy. And in no case should it be forgotten that such accidental picturesqueness is *extrinsic* to true architectural excellence; that a plain, whitewashed interior, which would be passed by with disdain by the average artistic traveler, is often architecturally a far finer thing than another—like the Lorenzkirche in Nuremberg, for instance—which is bewilderingly delightful to a painter's eye. It is to a painter's and not an architect's eye, indeed, that picturesqueness chiefly speaks. The two senses may, of course, be brought to bear together, and when they both are gratified delight will be immeasurably heightened.

and then it is a thing to be thoroughly admired. But oftener it must be left to the working of the hand of time, and not be forced by a perversion of architectural or decorative effort. It is the mistaken desire for its attractiveness which has led to the worst modern use of Gothic forms, and the worst vagaries of the "Queen Anne" fashion, and which has contorted so many of our country cottages into the semblance of card-board boxes put together by a Chinese child. It is this desire which has covered many buildings that might otherwise have been good with profuse, mistaken, disturbing decoration. It is this which has so corrupted our taste that we cannot appreciate simplicity, straightforwardness, common sense, and quiet beauty—those greatest because most rational and



COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY, NEW YORK.

lasting charms in architecture. Many people, I imagine, test the beauty of a building by the effect it would produce upon a painter's canvas. But no test could be more false. Very likely, some two hundred years from now, when the color of Sever Hall shall have been deepened, variegated, and mellowed by time, when accident and decay shall have eaten into its moldings and softened its lines and surfaces, and when clinging vines shall have added their variety, an artist will gladly transfer it to his sketch-book. To-day he might not care to do so; but it is architecturally just as fine a thing as it will be then. I will not dwell upon it longer, save just to note the reticent dignity of its symmetric roof treatment; for a fantastic, irrational, unquiet treatment of his roof is one of the commonest sins into which the modern builder falls—led, of course, by his straining after picturesque effects.

The new Law School building which Mr. Richardson has built just outside the Cambridge Yard is more in his typical style; richer, more elaborate, more imposing—much more ambitious, if not so simply perfect. In it he has taken a course with regard to color which

usually results in failure. It may be given as a general rule that where contrasting colors are used, the lighter should be employed for the main fabric and the darker, which always appears the stronger, for the trimmings and decorations that are the most emphatic parts. But there is no rule without exceptions. We do not quarrel with the color of this building, though dark stone has been used in the walls and a light Ohio stone in the trimmings. The quantities are so well adjusted,—the trimmings being made more prominent than usual,—and the artistic taste shown in their disposition is so true, that the result is charming.

I have thus far not spoken, except by implication, of excellence of plan as affecting excellence in architectural work. But his plan is, of course, the builder's actual point of departure, on the good disposal and proper expression of which much that is fine in his exterior must depend. The excellence they attain in this important point is one of the surest signs of the advance our younger-architects are making. I wish I could show in example how admirably Mr. Richardson has planned this Law School and then expressed

its parts; but such attempts are useless without diagrams in illustration.

Every one knows the strange instructive history of the new Capitol at Albany. Or if it is not known it may be read in Mr. Schuyler's interesting paper in this magazine for December, 1879. His criticism is my excuse, moreover, for not dwelling upon Mr. Eidlitz's share in the work or upon Mr. Rich-

ardson's treatment of the exterior. But after all with Mexican onyx framed by strips of Sienna marble. The ceiling is paneled with oak, deeply and richly carved and touched with color in the background. And there is a lavish yet delicate use of the sculptor's chisel on the stone, especially in accenting and softening the moldings of the great arcades. Many people question the wisdom of putting so much costly art into a chamber of this sort. But after all



INTERIOR, COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY.

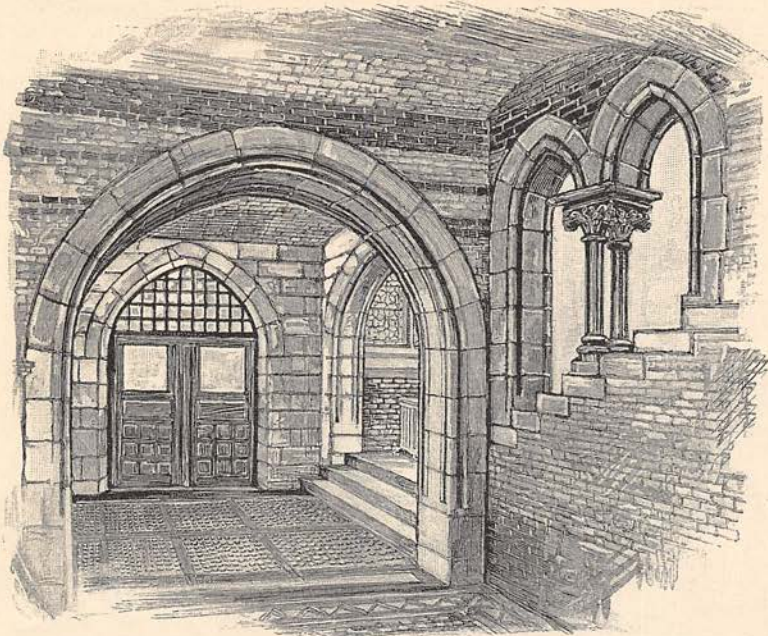
ardson's treatment of the exterior. But Mr. Richardson's interior work was scarce begun when Mr. Schuyler wrote, and so a word must be devoted to it here in spite of the necessity I feel for passing to other things than his.

The great staircase is still incomplete, but the Senate Chamber and court rooms are almost finished. The former is without doubt the most ambitious, sumptuous, and costly interior we have yet attempted—except perhaps Mr. Eidlitz's so different Assembly Chamber in the same building. But it is also one of the most successful. An engraving can give but a poor idea of the real dignity of the columns and massive arches of Sienna marble which subdivide the room toward either end, and which drew from so good a judge as Mr. Edward Freeman the remark that they were "worthy to stand at Ragusa." The decoration depends throughout largely upon splendor of material and beauty of color, and so its effect cannot be well conveyed either by black and white pictures or by words. The walls below are of Knoxville marble and above are paneled

there are worse uses to which to turn the money of a rich and extravagant people than to make it aid in the artistic education of our legislators—since from them comes so much of the patronage which will mold the future of our art. And there is no education like the habit of living amid beautiful surroundings. If economy were more apt with us to result in simple beauty, we might not thus decide; while if our extravagance were more apt to produce ornate beauty we might not be so very thankful for what Mr. Richardson has given us here—a splendid interior, which in spite of its lavish decoration must yet thank its architecture proper for the impression it produces.

The Albany Capitol stands at the top of the high hill which dominates the town. Half-way down this hill is a broad open square, and here stands the new city hall which Mr. Richardson has also built, overlooked by the Capitol but overlooking in its turn the steep streets which lie beyond. It was only a fortunate accident, I suppose, which dictated the appropriate situations of these two structures,





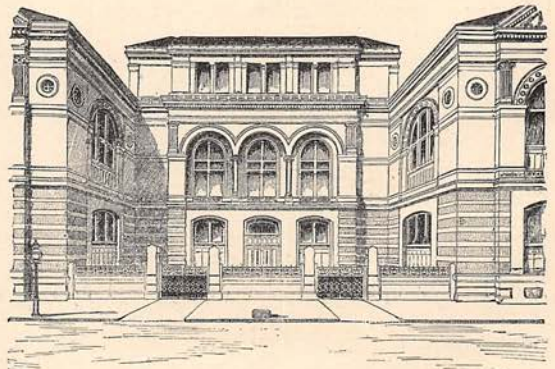
ENTRANCE TO THE COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY.

but in after years their placing may be cited as a proof of our artistic feeling.

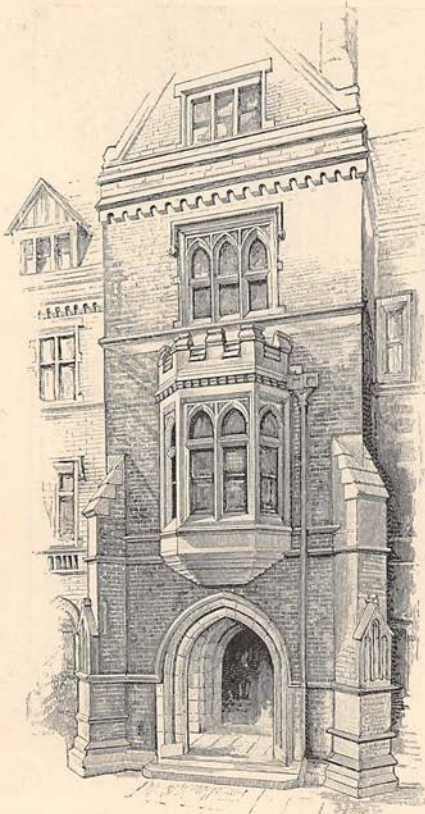
The town-hall has no affinity with the Capitol since it is throughout a creation of Mr. Richardson's own and not an adaptation of the beginnings of other men. It is a bold piece of work—unacademic, I dare say, and therefore displeasing to many eyes, but undeniably powerful and imposing. It gives us what I have heard called "a distinct architectural emotion" (that rare thing with modern work!)—and not a factitious one either, since we like it better, I think, the more we look at it. Here we have again a great porch and *loggia* expressing the building's public purpose; and here again the tower is well in place as an expressional feature—in addition to which it performs the practical service of storing in convenient ways the valuable archives of the town. Every observer may hold his own opinion as to the æsthetic success attained by the daring expedient of building the body of the tower of unbroken light stone and the open top of unbroken dark stone; but there is no question as to the skill with which the windows have been placed in its base so as to give ample light within and yet not weaken the solid appearance of the whole. What is perhaps the finest feature of the tower, however, cannot be clearly felt from an engraving: the graceful yet strong and re-assuring line formed as it broadens toward the base.

When we have studied Mr. Richardson's work in other departments, I shall try to say a word with regard to its characteristics as a whole. But now we must turn to other builders, and see what of excellence they offer.

Mr. Haight's new buildings for Columbia College are among the most interesting and successful of our recent works. Two large structures have already been erected, and a third will soon replace the old one that remains. We shall then see an extremely effective and picturesque group resulting from the intelligent and artistic resolution of a difficult problem. It was no easy task to take such a site—only a single city block—and yet secure such ample accommodation and



LENOX LIBRARY, NEW YORK—VIEW OF CENTER FRONT.



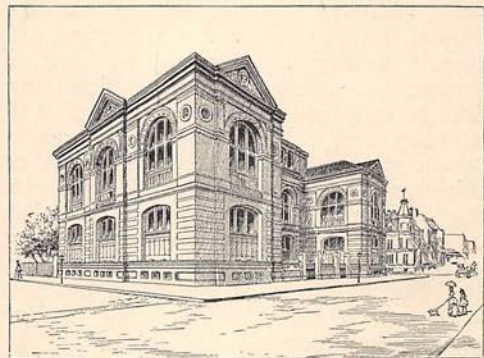
ENTRANCE TO SCHOOL OF ARTS, COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

illumination together with so much external variety and charm—so much diversity, and, at the same time so much harmony. The little college yard, too, has been preserved—fortunately, for practical reasons, and also for the sake of expressional interest. The style chosen for the work—a late type of English Gothic—is appropriate here at least, and is used with great intelligence and taste, though with a freedom which is a different thing from mere grammatical precision.

Here, again, I should like to be able to show the excellence of the planning. The class rooms, laboratories, and studies are large, convenient, and well shaped, and are fitted with appliances for ease and comfort that would surprise a student of any former generation. The corridors and staircases are admirably arranged to distribute a hurried crowd with the least confusion; and throughout there is an abundance of light not easily to be attained with such a complicated plan. Little scope was given for purely decorative effects, but such ornament as exists is admirably used to accentuate the most interesting features of the scheme—as, for example, in

the staircase arcades, one of which we have here reproduced.

The library is, however, the feature of the greatest individuality. First one enters a rectangular room, thirty-six by fifty feet, filled with stacks for books. This opens into the reading-room—one hundred and twenty feet by fifty—by means of a pointed arch, so wide and lofty that the two form indeed but a single great apartment, the arch coming toward the end of one of the longer sides of the reading-room. This is lighted by large windows above, and small ones, rather widely spaced, below, thus affording the best illumination while avoiding the shut-up feeling that comes when all the openings are above the level of the eye. The ceiling is a barrel vault, supported on either side by a semi-vault of similar section; and there is a huge fire-place at either end of the apartment. The finish here, as in other parts of the building, is of brick, slightly glazed as to surface. The color is pale yellow diversified by bands of dull red—applied in no strictly symmetrical way, but with a skill which at once emphasizes dimensions and gives a desirable accent of freedom and variety. This sort of interior finish, though common I believe in England, is rather a novelty with us, and worthy of remark since it offers a fortunate way of securing color in the fabric itself—color that is absolutely permanent as well as satisfactory. I may add that the bricks are not quite uniform in tint so that an effect of coldness and hardness of tone is avoided. But the great feature of the room is the arch of which



LENOX LIBRARY—END VIEW.

I have already spoken, flanked by the circular stairways which give access to the upper shelves. Its beauty of form and great size—thirty-four by thirty-six feet—give dignity and distinction to the whole composition, and turn what might have been a merely excellent into an extremely imposing apartment.



ALCOVE OF THE SOCIETY LIBRARY, NEW YORK.

Meeting a structural necessity—that of really uniting the two rooms—in the frankest and the simplest way, it gives us a touch of freedom, originality, and grandeur which we should never have got from an architect to whom his craft was a formulated thing of laws and precedents, and not a practical and vital art. It is built of the red brick, square in section, with plainly chamfered angles, and no touch of ornament—no beauty save that which comes from its own bold and graceful shape. I do not know of any recent interior which surpasses this in showing how true and impressive architectural beauty may be produced in the most simply structural way, provided real artistic instinct is set to work upon the problem, unfettered by the chains of conventionality and dogma. It is as *rational* a piece of work as one could well imagine, and as beautiful in its severely simple way.

Mr. Hunt's Lenox Library is a dignified building which teaches a clear lesson as to the value of a large sobriety and reticence in producing architectural nobility. This lesson was peculiarly pertinent, moreover, at the time when the building was erected, for showy and purposeless elaboration was then even more characteristic of our art than it is to-day. It was built, I think, at

nearly the same time with the Stewart residence at the corner of Thirty-Fourth street and Fifth Avenue, and the reader may be left to judge between the two.

Nor should we pass without a word Mr. Withers's Police Courts at the corner of Tenth street and Sixth Avenue—one of our few recent important essays in a florid Gothic manner, and one of the first in which coloristic variety was attempted. It has great merits—notably in the picturesque composition of its masses resulting from its intelligent adaptation to an irregular site. But its composition with voids and solids is scattered and restless, and its decoration, both in color and in sculptured detail, may be charged with the same fault. It is overdone to begin with, and what is done is not so well done as it might have been. I have said that mere architectural composition alone may make a fine building, but here we have a proof that it is easy to spoil a good design by elaborating it in mistaken ways. This same design more simply carried out, both as to color and to form, would have been a far more valuable work.

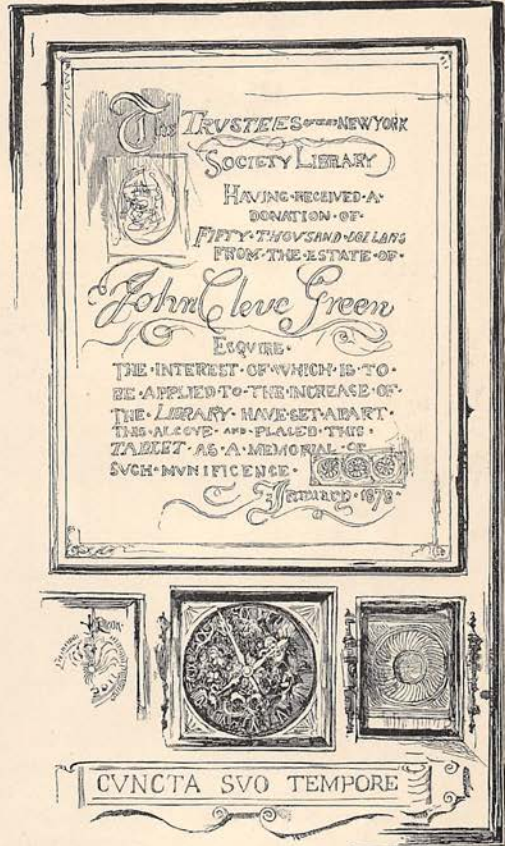
In Boston, too, there is another building, which, while it has evident faults, has yet much merit—the new Christian Association building of Messrs. Sturgis & Brigham.

This building is agreeably and picturesquely composed; and is sufficiently expressive of its interior arrangements. But the point I would especially note is the way in which it meets the necessity—so often laid upon our architects—of making a dignified structure in which the lower story must be given up to shops. The usual course is to put the doorway level with the street, and then it is difficult to attain any proper expression of the main character of the work. But here the doorway is put at the level of the principal floor, and with its broad flight of steps it not only forms an effective feature, but completely subordinates the basement. In view of such an excellence we may excuse an ill disposition of ornament. A projecting oriel window, for example, is in itself a decorative feature, and one which comes very prominently before the eye. It is, therefore, a proper field for ornament. But here it has been left completely plain, while a band of decoration has been put close beneath the cornice where scarcely any eye will find it.

At Williamstown, Mass., Mr. Cady has built a collegiate building, which is a good example of quiet work—well composed, expressive, straightforward, dignified, and yet not devoid of picturesqueness. It follows with discretion an English Renaissance type, and is a valuable example to set beside the confused, restless, inorganic structures we more often achieve when working after similar models. At Yale College, too, I am told that Mr. Cady has done some interesting work; but I am unable to speak of it either from personal knowledge or from such as may be gained by the help of illustrations.

Architecture (and not decoration, as apart from this) is here our subject; but when a bit of interior decoration has a really architectural flavor, it may detain us for a moment. This is the case with the alcove

which Mr. S. V. Stratton has lately fitted up in the Society Library building. It is a charming piece of work, and all the more valuable since we are so inclined to



MEMORIAL TABLET IN THE SOCIETY LIBRARY.

think that interior fittings need *not* be architectural, and since no idea could be more pernicious.

M. G. van Rensselaer.



# THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXVIII.

JULY, 1884.

No. 3.

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## RECENT ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA.

### II.—PUBLIC BUILDINGS—(CONTINUED).

IN this present paper I shall conclude all I have to say about those among our recent architectural works which come under the head of public buildings—excepting only churches, which demand a chapter to themselves. Since my limits are but brief, since our country is geographically unfavorable to even the most energetic observer, and since our new works succeed each other to-day with great rapidity, it must not be supposed that the list I give is at all exhaustive. I can pretend to do no more than mention the most conspicuous structures which lie within a moderate radius from THE CENTURY'S home. If, indeed, even within that radius it were possible for me to name *everything* that is good,—conspicuously or modestly good,—my task would be far less interesting than it is, and any commentary at all would be far less clearly called for. Certainly I ought to change the broad title I have chosen, unless the good things I note may be taken as types of more. If I could give a full *catalogue raisonné* of all our recent buildings which are distinctly an improvement on those that were typical a score of years ago,—especially as concerns the principles that have guided and the aims that have inspired their authors,—it would be a proof that they themselves would have no right to be called typical to-day. My excuse for writing lies in the fact that to a great extent they *are* thus typical; the fact that an ever-growing number of our architects are now doing really rational and artistic work, that the profession as a whole is getting into the right path with more or less celerity; that most of our younger architects, and many of their elders too, are striving to attain success of a similar sort to

that which has already been conspicuously achieved by some among their number. Especially will this be true when I shall come to speak of those departments in which, naturally, more work is being done than in the one here under notice—of commercial buildings, for example, and of private dwellings in town and country. But even with regard to public buildings, I am glad to say that my little list is *not* all-embracing. Of very many good things, both far away and near at hand, I doubtless have no knowledge; and even among those I *do* know there are many which, good though they be, do not present such striking individual characteristics as fit them for description here. We may, however, gather great encouragement from the mere general statement that they are honest, sensible, expressive, excellently planned, and modestly artistic structures. That is to say, they are in the strongest and most hopeful possible contrast to the majority of our similar works put up in other and not long-distant years. Particularly do many of the unambitious civic structures of the smaller New England towns deserve this praise. Town-halls and libraries and school-houses are rapidly rising in such places which are admirably suited to their purpose, which are skillfully and truthfully built, and often characterized by no small degree of artistic worth. Desperate vagaries still occur among them, it is true—Gothic and “Queen Anne” and nondescript abominations of all sorts. But year by year they are yielding place to better art. Year by year we mark, I think, an ever-growing tendency to make simple common sense the guide toward beauty as well as toward convenience and stability, instead of an adherence to some conventional

type of design and decoration, or a straining effort after obvious "originality." I may stop to note in this connection a Memorial Library which Messrs. Rotch & Tilden have built at Bridgewater, Conn., and a town-hall of Mr. Arthur Dodd's at Sharon, Mass. They are not great works of architecture, I allow; nor are they either ambitious, ornate, or "striking." But they are *good* works none the less; they are sensible, rational, and expressive, accomplishing the given task in a most adequate way, and turning necessary features to artistic account. Just by reason of their modesty, and because they are typical of many more or less successful similar essays, they seem to me important. For, as I have already said (perhaps too often for my readers' patience), we are just now laying the foundation of what we hope may grow to be a creditable development of architectural art; and for this foundation the absolutely necessary beginning is that our artists should cultivate their common sense and practical ingenuity; should rely for their main success on structure, not on ornament; should first of all be *rational*, whether in original or in imitative ways. Even in those humbler works in which wood largely takes the place of sterner materials, we may note much improvement of recent years. A little half-timbered cottage-hospital built by Messrs. Ficken & Smith at Plainfield, New Jersey, for example, is interesting as a proof that in the cheapest structure (this one

cost less than \$4000) something better may be given us than the time-honored shell sheathed in clapboards or in shingles.

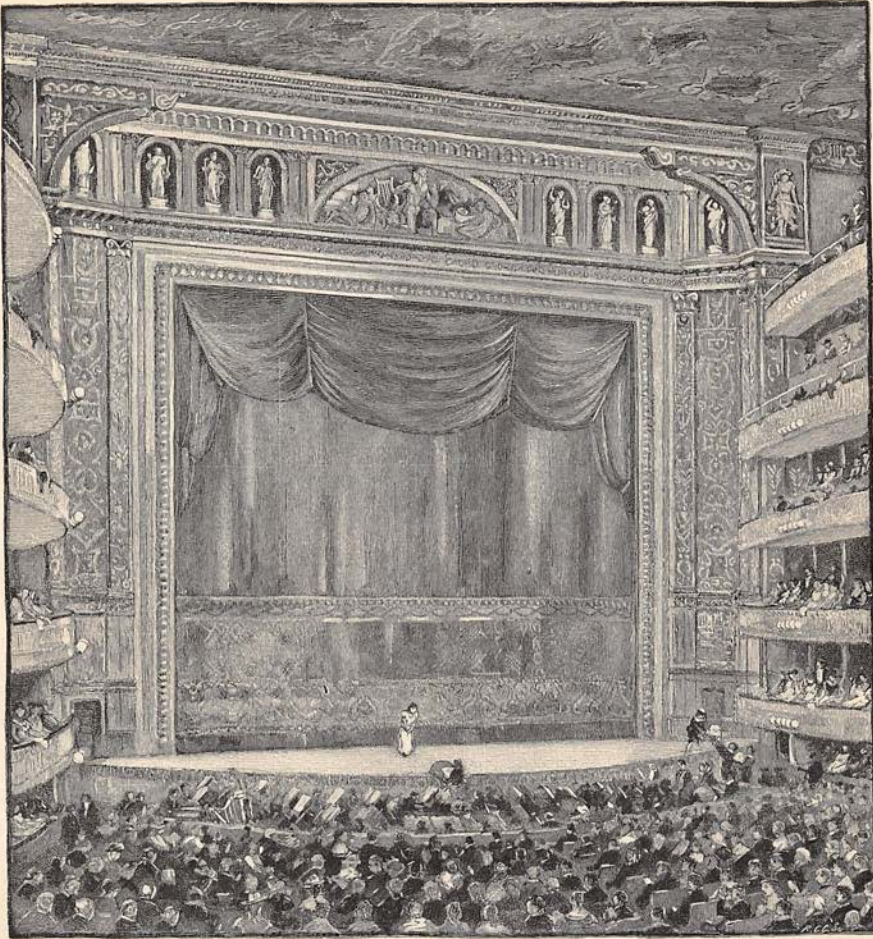
It has been a rule with me throughout that no buildings should be mentioned here which exist on paper only. But nothing is of more importance to the future of our architecture than that good art should be introduced into our simpler, cheaper kinds of work. And so I will make an exception in favor of a design which Mr. Janes, of Albany, prepared a year or two ago for a school-house to be erected in a New York village. It was so sensible, and yet so novel and so charming, that the committee could not make up its mind to indorse it, but substituted instead a brick box, to which no Philistine could take exception. Mr. Janes's design showed brick below and half-timbering and plaster above, and had a natural picturesqueness resulting from the wise arrangement of its plan and fashioning of its obligatory features. Nothing could be more simply rational or more attractive in effect than the large, round-arched windows that rose beneath the gables, their framing and mullions composed simply of oaken timbers corresponding to those of the adjoining walls. It seems strange that we, who often follow precedent so blindly and so foolishly in other directions, should be so loth to look to the past for examples when we work in wood. Only very lately have the admirable half-timbered old houses of England, France,

and Germany been consulted for hints that might be followed in our practice with the utmost profit; and even yet we see but rare instances where those hints have been cleverly followed up. And so I wish, indeed, that Mr. Janes's design had been given an actual body, for then it might here have been reproduced.

To Boston I must go back again for a moment, and speak of the Art Museum, which was built some ten years ago by Messrs. Sturgis & Brigham. As to plan, it is perhaps the best work of the sort we have yet erected, and its exterior is not inexpressive. But its chief interest lies in the fact that it was one of our first attempts in the use of strong exterior color, and the very first, I think, upon a large scale, in which terra cotta was employed for this purpose. A successful attempt we cannot call it. The color is in itself glaring and inharmonious — color which the hand of time will never soften or subdue; and the manner of its employment is rather unfortunate, taken together with the nature of the decorative forms it accents. Simple forms may be elaborately colored, but elaborate forms need greater



FRONT OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA-HOUSE, NEW YORK CITY.

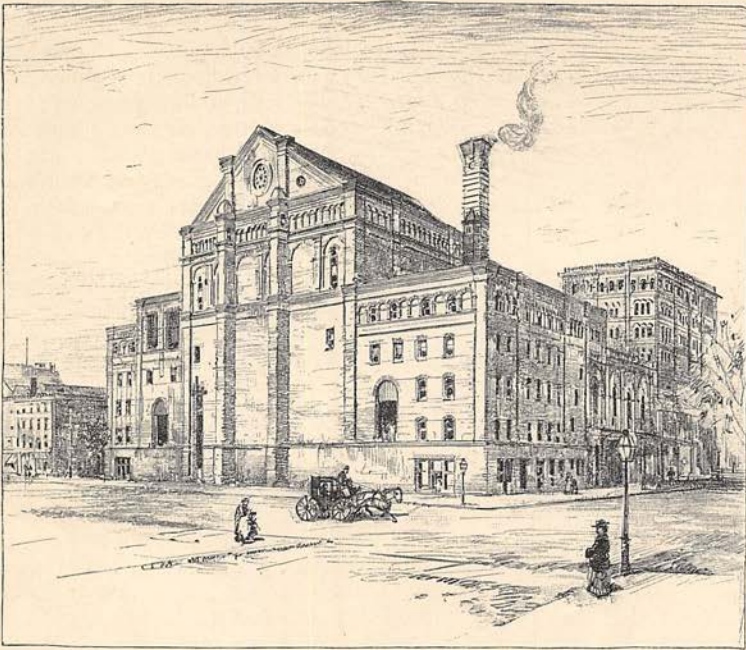


STAGE OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA-HOUSE.

chromatic sobriety ; else the result, as here, is almost sure to lack unity, repose, breadth, and clearness of expression. But we should not be hard upon a first attempt. It was a good thing for us to have the propriety of strong external color insisted upon, a good thing to have the resources of our architects increased by the addition of terra cotta to their list. It has since rapidly grown in favor, and is now used much more discreetly than in this first instance, though we can hardly claim that its full possibilities are yet revealed, or its limitations always respected in our work. Too often, for example, we use it to replace in constructional or semi-constructional features some more costly material of sturdier nature. But we may hope that our growing feeling for honesty will relegate it before long to its proper functions. If so, it may do us excellent service, for its coloristic value is great, and under our brilliant skies and in our usually pure and smokeless atmosphere

color decoration is especially well in place. Our teachers here, I think, should be those southern races who are not our physical forefathers, rather than those northern peoples from whom we trace descent. Artistic needs are spiritual, not physical, and climate and natural surroundings mold them more, perhaps, than do the instincts we inherit. And climate, moreover, is certainly a truer *material* guide in architecture than is the mere fact of kinship. As a people we are in many ways unlike our English or our Dutch forefathers — in many ways more like the eager, restless, impressionable nations of the south. And certainly our climate is neither Dutch nor English. For both which reasons, I repeat, we are more nearly concerned with questions of color than are Englishmen or Dutchmen. But more of this when we shall come to speak of style and taste and intellectual needs in a future chapter.

Now let us look very briefly at a branch



REAR OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA-HOUSE.

we have not yet approached—at theatrical architecture.

Inclosed theaters are comparative novelties in architectural history. They date only from late Renaissance days, and since those days the needs of stage and audience alike have so vastly altered that we can now get little help from Palladian precedents. Indeed, this is one department of our art in which we find, to our refreshment, that imitation plays a comparatively minor rôle. The public at large is peculiarly interested in a theater—interested, not in a languid, vicarious fashion, or for æsthetic reasons only, but because the comfort and pleasure of thousands are nightly dependent upon its success. Effort, experiment, and self-reliance are positively imposed upon its builder; for even yet our needs and wishes are being modified from year to year, and constant variations in plan and structure are demanded. So, as a sincere respect for utility and an earnest application of rational thought to practical and æsthetic problems are the true nurses of architectural excellence, we are not surprised to find in the theatrical interiors of the century our best evidence that architecture is still a living and progressing art, if not an art as easily and triumphantly artistic as it was in certain epochs of the past. In the interiors of our theaters, I say,—but by no means in their exteriors. Here to a greater degree the imitation of alien works of other days is possible to the archi-

tect, and consequently he calls the “orders” most often indolently into play to adorn (in inexpressive and inappropriate and so in inartistic ways) the exterior of buildings where inside he proves himself not incapable of real inventive power. Garnier’s new house in Paris, for example, has an interior which is in many ways most admirable; but outside, in spite of sumptuous display and marvelously clever decoration, it is an architectural sham—nothing more than a splendid piece of scene-painting done in the round instead of upon canvas.

With such a house as Garnier’s it would be unjust to compare the great new theater which has recently been put up in New York. When Mr. Cady undertook to build the Metropolitan Opera-House he accepted a task of the utmost difficulty—doubly discouraging, too, since his result was certain to be brought into some such unfair comparison. Both his site and the demands of his clients precluded the possibility of his making it a monumental structure such as all buildings of the sort should be. He was given merely brick for his material, and only a single city block to build upon,—a block, too, which has no open space about it. Even upon this block, moreover, he was not allowed to dispose his theater as he would, but was obliged to fill in every foot of ground it left unoccupied with tall, overshadowing wings destined for another use. It would,

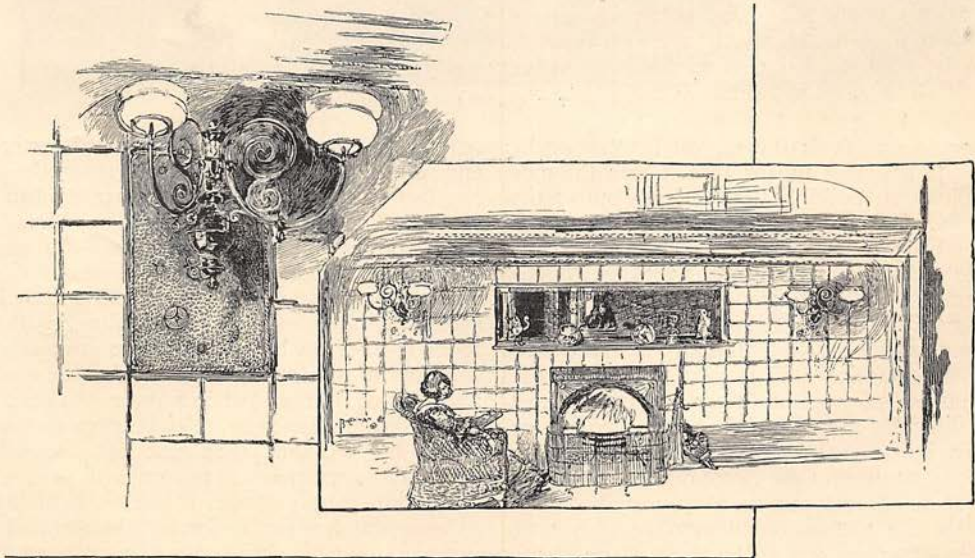


therefore, manifestly be unjust, I repeat, to ask for monumental grandeur in his house, or even for an adequate degree of external expressiveness. We can only congratulate ourselves that we have got as much as we have—an honest, unaffected, scholarly, dignified pile, as well designed in mass as was possible under the circumstances, expressive, at all events, of its structural fashioning, and happy in the composition of its voids and solids. So simple and scholarly and unaggressive is it, indeed, that I fear "the public" does not half realize the debt of gratitude it owes the architect. But would it not be well if in our other theaters the same sort of excellence prevailed? Is it not a vast improvement on such a hideous nullity as our old Academy of Music? And, on the other hand, should we not be happier if the Casino Theater had been less fantastic, and if the Eden Museum on Twenty-third street had relied on structural beauty and appropriate, subordinated decoration for its effect, instead of upon a showy accumulation of superficial details, mechanical in spirit, and thrice too plentiful for the size of its façade?

But there was one part of his exterior upon which Mr. Cady could work in a more untrammelled way than upon his principal fronts. It is to the back of the house on Seventh Avenue that I would especially direct the reader's attention. It is nothing, he may protest, but an immense and almost unbroken brick wall, nearly devoid of ornament and quite devoid of any attempt at decorative effectiveness. I believe there are even persons who claim that it is not different in

any way from the breweries which deform our suburbs. But, believe me, it is very different. Mere mass may be, of course, an immense element in architectural power, and the mass of this wall counts for much in its impressiveness. But this is because it has been intelligently handled. We are all at one in feeling that our biggest malt-houses are not impressive, are not even satisfactory as proving their real strength and solidity to the eye. But the ponderous bulk of Mr. Cady's wall is *designed*, not merely built, and designed so as to prove its strength most clearly; it has parts and features which are organic, and, though simple, are potent and expressive. Below, it is solid and unadorned but agreeable in its proportions and in the lines of the great buttresses which secure and demonstrate its huge solidity; and above, where a lighter treatment is in place, it is ornamented in a quiet but charming way. Taken for what it is, the back of an opera-house which throughout is a utilitarian and not a monumental structure, I think that a jury of architects would call it one of the best pieces of design the city has to show. And I do not despair of a day when the public will feel the distance that divides it from a typical brewery wall—all the distance that stretches between a simple work of art and an unintelligent pile of bricks. Nay, I am of so optimistic a frame of mind while contemplating the fact that one of our architects has done so well when daring to do so honestly and simply, that I can even look forward to a day when a malt-house itself may do us credit, not dishonor.

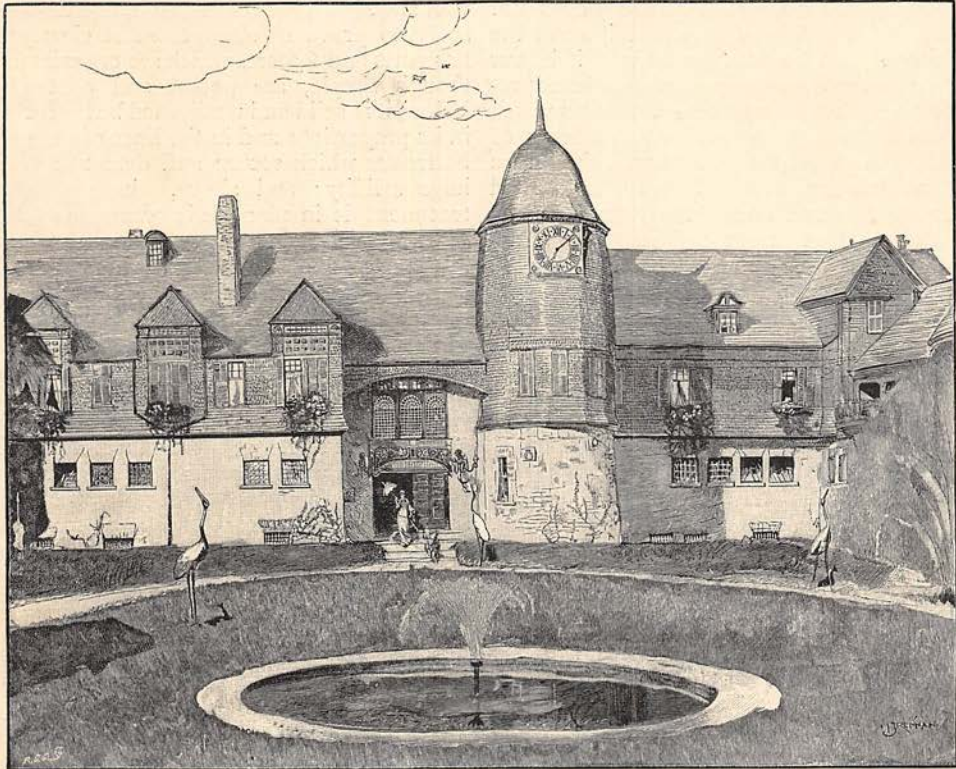
When we enter Mr. Cady's house we must



BRACKET OF HAMMERED BRASS AND SCHEME OF FIRE-PLACE—CONVERSATION ROOM, CASINO, NEWPORT.

still remember the difficulties under which he worked. The unmajestic size and simple fashion of the stairways and passages may be laid to the limitations of the site and the necessity for using fireproof materials. With nothing but iron and cement, and with no outlay permitted for sumptuous painted decoration, it would have been hard to make them either festal or elegant. Even in the auditorium itself the same charity must not

yet been decided upon as giving the best possible sweep for the tiers of boxes. Each house differs from every other; in each the architect has experimented afresh, and all leave something for the future to improve upon. If we look again at sectional views of these same buildings, we see that the artistic problem is equally far from a definite solution. It prescribes an immense rectangular apartment, surrounded on three sides by curved tiers of



TOWER OF THE CASINO COURT, NEWPORT.

forsake us. It is the largest in the world; and to say that means that it was the most difficult to build, both practically and artistically. It is not very hard to build a good small theatrical interior, unless, indeed, the site is cramped, as it often is with us. But so immense an auditorium as a lyric theater demands is among the most difficult of problems, and every added foot of space adds to the practical difficulty of providing seats where all may see and hear, and to the artistic difficulty of making the result architecturally right—neither bald in its simplicity nor so elaborate that the effect of size will disappear and the impression of its unity be lost.

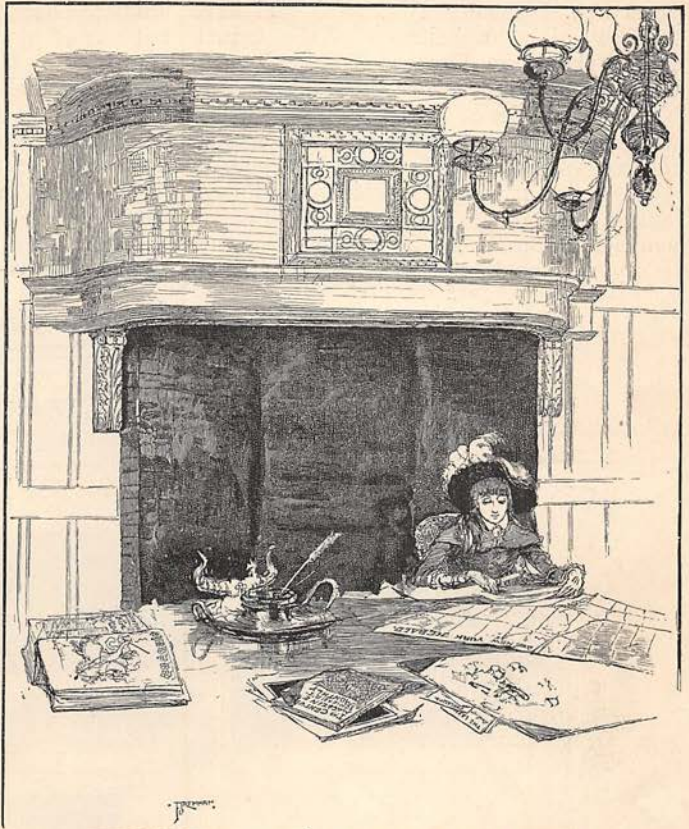
Of the practical difficulty we gain some idea when we look at the plans of the greater European houses. We see that no curve has

seats. The question is how, without interference with sight or hearing, to amalgamate these two factors and bring them into architectural accord. The so-called Italian system of building—common in Germany as well—ignores the room as much as possible, and makes the tiers themselves its sole concern. The French system, on the other hand, emphasizes the room first of all by setting great groups of columns at the four corners to give the roof a visible support, and then puts in its tiers as best it can between them. Neither system quite solves the problem. The first sins through want of constructive expression, and the second stumbles upon a rock of offense in failing to bring the horizontal line of the tiers into organic connection with the vertical lines of the roof supports. We need not stop, how-

ever, to consider which sort of semi-failure is the better, which offers the more favorable prospect for a perfect solution in the future. We are discussing Mr. Cady's house alone, and the Italian method was positively forced upon him. Only by its means could he answer the demand of his clients that each and every box should be just like its fellows—in its apparent importance, in its size, and in its facilities for sight and hearing.

In answering this demand, moreover, he was obliged to give up those proscenium *loges* with enframing columns, upon which even Italian builders rely for accent and variety in their scheme, though not for structural expression. Mr. Cady had to solve a new question when he was bidden, in a house of this great size, to run his tiers up to the proscenium wall without diversity or break. It would be too much to say that he found its truest architectural solution; that his design produces that impression of organic unity between all adjacent parts which is essential to perfect architectural composition. The ends of his tiers simply abut upon the proscenium pilasters, avoiding impingement upon base or capital, but not producing an effect of true independence and concord. But the result, if not quite satisfactory to critical analysis, is not unpleasant to the eye. And we should remember that Mr. Cady fails no more conspicuously here than do French architects when they piece in their tiers between their columns.

Great simplicity was prescribed throughout the auditorium, again, by the nature of the materials, which are here, as in the corridors, iron and cement alone. Mr. Cady placed his chief reliance for beauty on the lines of his box and gallery tiers, which repeat each other up to the very top of the house—and beautiful lines they are, both in their many sweeps and in the slight dip they take toward the stage. I may note that when the proscenium *loges* were outlawed, a divergence from the customary horseshoe form was necessitated in the tiers. Here the curve is lyre-like instead,



FIRE-PLACE IN THE LADIES' READING-ROOM, CASINO, NEWPORT.

bending forward and then backward again a little near the stage.

The chief points in the modeling of the proscenium are that the opening is, fortunately, kept square, and that the great iron girder which supports the stage wall above the roof of the auditorium plays a boldly visible part in the scheme. The ornamental detail throughout is in very low relief, and carefully studied from early Italian Renaissance models. The general effect of the interior, and of its detail as well, would vastly have gained by a more emphatic color-treatment on the part of the decorator—but with his performance we are not here concerned.

Simplicity, repose, and refinement characterize Mr. Cady's portion of the work. Since these are among the best of architectural qualities, since they are the rarest in our work (especially in buildings of this sort), and since they are those which we must first learn to appreciate and master if we would rise to success in more elaborate and ambitious ways, we can hardly be too thankful for their presence.

If the gay world at Newport had built itself a Casino some twenty or even some ten

years ago, I wonder what we should have had? Possibly an imitation of the formal, stately, classicized *Kurhaus* of some German bath. Perhaps a cousin of those fantastically hideous travesties of Oriental pleasure-houses which we find in so many small foreign watering-places. More probably still, a "Queen Anne" structure which would have looked like an agglomerate of English model-almshouses. At all events, it is safe to say we should not have had anything

intimate, cheerful, with just a touch of fantasy not out of place in a structure whose ends are distinctly frivolous—a Casino which is a mere summer-house for "society's" amusement.

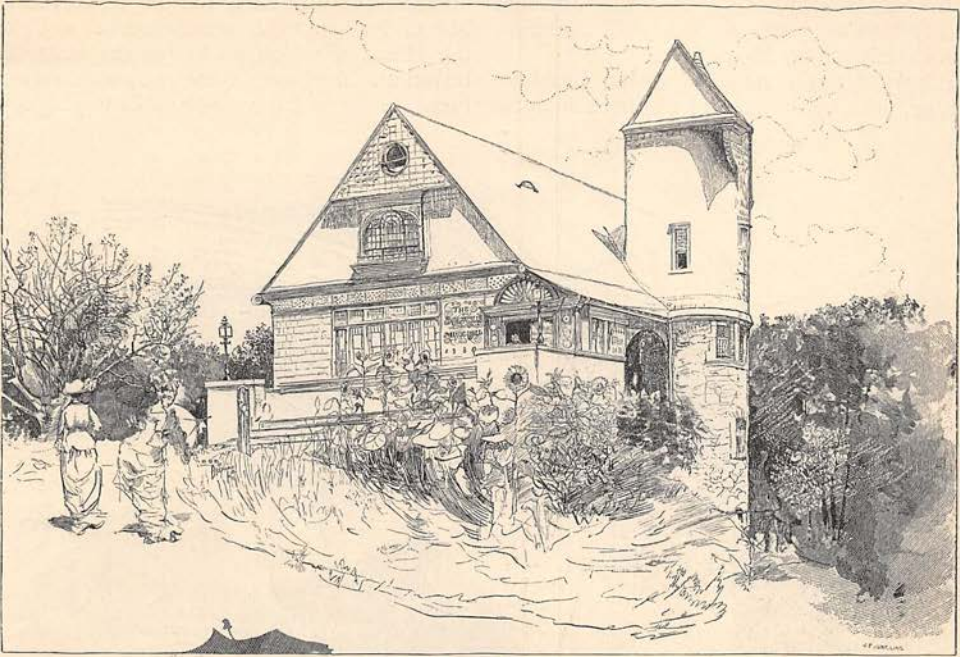
An ideal Newport Casino would, of course, have stood free from all other buildings, and have had an entire exterior to exhibit. It would have found its place upon the cliffs, and delighted us with a matchless outward view as well as entertained us with a sight of the



INTERIOR OF CASINO THEATER, NEWPORT.

so sensible yet novel, so simple yet picturesque, so useful yet charming, as Messrs. McKim, Mead & White have given us. The problem was a new one in many respects, both as to the practical ends that were proposed and as to the general expression and sentiment that were desirable to bring the building into harmony with the place itself and with the life whose central point it forms. And the architects were fortunately inspired to set their own wits to work and find a new solution based on common sense and a feeling for beauty, and not on precedent or formula. In its general expression the building is, I think, very adequate and characteristic. It is dignified enough without being formal or pretentious; rural, but not rustic; graceful,

butterfly life within its own inclosure. But with their land worth dollars an inch, even the millionaires of Newport may be pardoned for not making such a sacrifice to beauty. As it stands, the Casino shows but a single simple street façade. Only when we pass under the great archway beneath the club-rooms do we see its really distinctive features. It is hard to describe it, and I regret to say that our single view gives no idea of its attractiveness. Its low, two-storied walls, partly of brick and partly shingled, surround two large quadrangles, the first one filled with plants and flowers, and the second longer one giving space for the tennis courts. And it has the most charming sweep of latticed balcony, breaking here and there into window-



THE SHORT HILLS MUSIC HALL.

like openings giving freer outlook. Nothing could be more sensibly arranged for comfort and convenience, and nothing could be prettier or more picturesque than the general effect of its varied features—irregularly disposed, not for picturesqueness only but to meet actual needs and ends. And within, the club-rooms and restaurants are admirably planned, and are decorated with sufficient elegance to suit their occupants, but with a simplicity and airiness that mark them as for use in summer only. The so-called theater, which closes the inner quadrangle, is in reality a large galleried ball-room with a stage at one end for occasional use. Here the color decoration is in ivory and gold, making an excellent background under gaslight. It, too, is simply treated, but the carving and turning of the wood-work are executed with great delicacy and beauty.

With all the variety and picturesqueness of the Casino's exterior (by this I mean its quadrangle fronts), harmony and unity are preserved throughout—except, perhaps, in the great clock-tower which flanks the entrance arch on its inner face. This we can hardly call as local and sensible in feeling as are the other features. It is a distinct reminiscence of earlier days, a bit of imported mediævalism—a dungeon-keep, I have heard it said, and not a Casino clock-tower. Yet, as I have already protested, a bit of fantasy is not out of place in such a work, and we may

excuse this bit all the more since it gives a touch of solidity and strength that we should miss, perhaps, had it taken a lighter form.

At Short Hills, New Jersey, the same architects have built another Casino of a more modest sort, but rejoicing in a visible exterior. My readers can judge of it as well as I, however, since I too know it only through our reproductions.

The railway station is a far more recent invention than even the inclosed theater. It is a child of our own century—a child of that century in which the engineer, as opposed to the architect proper, has come to play so large a rôle. It is unfortunate that there is this distinction, even opposition, between the two professions—unfortunate that with the advent of the railway age the architect allowed to pass entirely out of his control those structures in which the engineer had of necessity to do his part. The consequence is that while this part is often performed in the most admirable way, the part which should have been the architect's falls as well to the engineer—to him who *as* an engineer cannot comprehend it, whom an architectural training alone would have fitted for its mastery. Nothing could be finer in its way than the interior of many a great station, especially in Germany or France, with its colossal, powerful, yet light and graceful iron frame-work. But such a frame-work can hardly be called architectural. It is spun, woven, wrought,

rather than truly *built*; and the adjacent parts which *are* built commonly fall far below it in excellence and beauty.

I have already spoken of our Brooklyn Bridge, which is beautiful in those features

direction—stations like the one at Worcester, Mass., for example, which means well, but the effect of which is, to say the least, un-beautiful. And even these are comparatively rare. So far as I have been able to judge, we



INTERIOR OF THEATER, SHORT HILLS MUSIC HALL.

that fell naturally to engineering skill, in the lines of its cables and wires and in the delicate spring of its long roadway,—as vital and graceful as though it were but a single tense strip of steel. But the towers—the really architectural features—are as poor as the iron web is fine. So it is with our great railway stations. Their walls and constructive features usually are bad *per se*, and have no organic relation to those other parts which we must be content to have un-architectural themselves, but which might be brought into harmony with their architectural environment. A better accord between the two professions, or a wider training which will make certain men at once architects and engineers, may yet, it is to be hoped, produce more fortunate results. Exceptions to the general rule there are indeed already, especially in Germany, where we find certain great railway termini that are built with a dignity, a simplicity, an appropriateness, and an expressiveness that deserve all praise. Unfortunately we have not much to show at home as yet, beyond abortive attempts in the same

usually vibrate between ambitiously inappropriate and ugly efforts, like the Forty-second street station in New York, or platitudes of an unambitious and factory-like description. A variant we do find, indeed, in the Broad street station at Philadelphia, but not a quite successful one. With its well-planned, comfortable, and even sumptuous interior we have no fault to find. It is a striking proof, by the way, of our growing demand for luxurious surroundings—a proof that would astonish the original creators of the Pennsylvania Railroad or the travelers of a generation ago. The exterior of the building, too, has excellence, if we consider it from an abstract standpoint; and certain among its features, prescribed by necessity, have been so fortunately fashioned as to be amply expressive,—I mean the basement, with its great arches for the admission of vehicles, and the large windows which light the waiting-room above. But the expression of the building as a whole is far from being what it ought to be. A railroad station, above all things on earth, is utilitarian. It may and should be made beautiful, but its

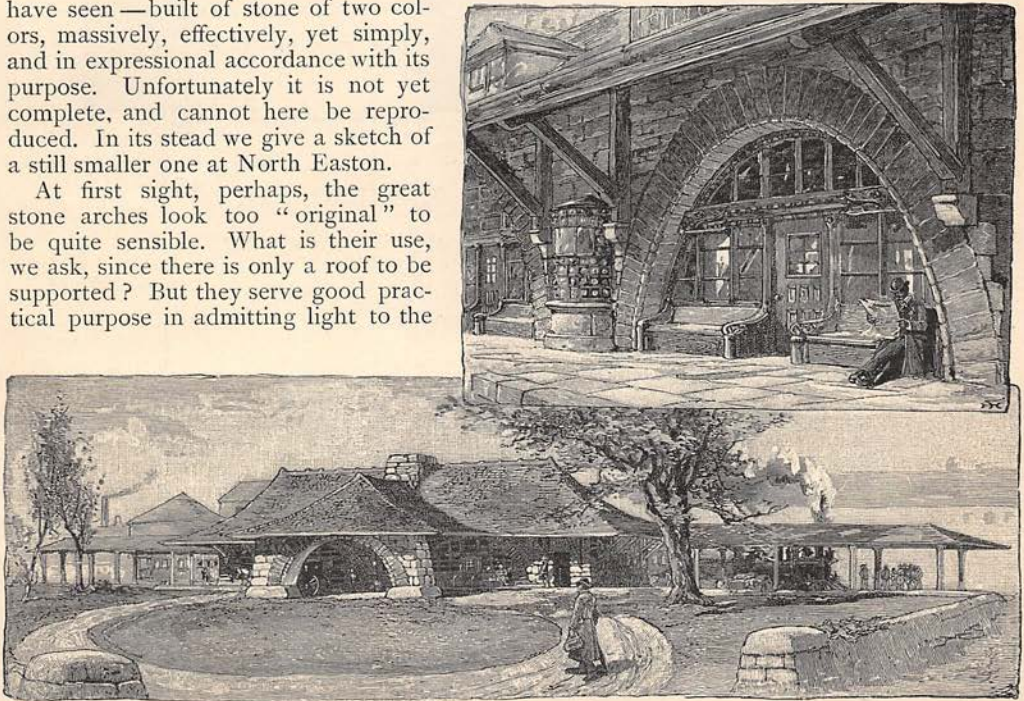
beauty should be of a simple, severe, and, so to say, business-like character. But for this Philadelphia station a florid type of Gothic was chosen, and was elaborated in the most ornate fashion. The design is good in many ways, and a great deal of the decoration is quite charming, *intrinsically considered*. But the effect is not in keeping with the structure's purpose. We gladly accept the Messrs. Wilsons' building as distinctly ornamental to a city which is in rather bad need of architectural adornment; but we cannot accept it as a laudable precedent in its own way. It is attractive, but I do not think it is very *rational*.

Our smaller wayside stations offer, of course, very much easier problems. They are merely waiting-rooms flanked, perhaps, by external sheds to protect the passengers and traffic; and there is, therefore, no question about bringing them into harmony with huge engineering efforts. Some improvement has been made in them of recent years, but there is room for more. The best among them are rarely more than pretty "Queen Anne" cottages, well arranged within, but hardly laying claim to architectural dignity. But more substantial work is coming into vogue, as we may see, among other instances, in several small stations Mr. Richardson has lately been building in New England. The one at Palmer, Mass., is the finest I have seen—built of stone of two colors, massively, effectively, yet simply, and in expressional accordance with its purpose. Unfortunately it is not yet complete, and cannot here be reproduced. In its stead we give a sketch of a still smaller one at North Easton.

At first sight, perhaps, the great stone arches look too "original" to be quite sensible. What is their use, we ask, since there is only a roof to be supported? But they serve good practical purpose in admitting light to the

waiting-rooms in spite of overhanging eaves, and they are expressively fortunate, too, as it seems to me. Is not the general effect of the building just what it should be? Do we not see that it is the roof, not the wall, which is the main thing; that here is not a place to dwell *in*, but to stop *under*; that it is not a house at all, but a *shed*—a shed made permanent, stable, sturdy, and picturesque besides? And I must enforce the point that in such work as this Mr. Richardson, who can be so exuberant at times, and at times so refined and elegant (as in Leroy Hall, for instance), changes his tone entirely, and becomes eminently business-like, uncompromising, and severe. The Palmer Station is much more ambitious than this, but it, too, is strictly utilitarian, though by no means inartistic, depending for its effect entirely upon its structural features and the contrasted color of its materials.

If we have had one class of structures which more than another has been the very type of sordid, shabby, brutal ugliness, it has comprised those hideous receptacles for a long-suffering community known as the ferry-houses of New York harbor. But even these are coming under the healing touch of art. I may note as the most striking instance a ferry-house of Messrs. Ficken & Smith's at Hoboken—a modest wooden structure, nicely



RAILROAD STATION AT NORTH EASTON, MASS.

built, tastefully decorated, and showing a street front in "Queen Anne" fashion that is pleasantly picturesque and sensible withal. Here for once we have been given a sufficiently agreeable resting-place for decent human creatures; and could there be a stronger proof that the good leaven is at work, and in a really radical way?

One word I want to say—and this, perhaps, is as good a place as any—with regard to the illustrations which accompany these papers. I should be glad indeed if they could be made *illustrative* in the fullest sense of the term, but that is quite impossible. Lovers of architecture will be aware that even drawings or photographs on the largest scale are never truly illustrative of the general effect of an entire building—so much depends upon our perceiving and feeling of its mere

brute size as well as its color, location, surroundings, and every detail of its ornament, and of what I may call its *structural finish*. How, then, must it be with pictures so small as those which fit our page? I need hardly say that they have been prepared with the greatest possible care; and yet I should be sorry to have my readers gauge the accuracy of my criticism by their evidence alone. I am not afraid that I should be found too enthusiastic in any instance if my words were considered in presence of the work itself. But I *am* afraid that I may be, if our pictures only are used as tests by eyes unaccustomed to the discrepancy between good architectural works and any flat reproduction of their forms. This much I had to say, not only in justice to myself, but still more in justice to the architects whose results have come under our notice.

M. G. van Rensselaer.



### NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO.

In the church-yard, up in the old high town,  
The sexton stood at his daily toil,  
And he lifted his mattock and drove it down,  
And sunk it deep in the sacred soil.

And then as he delved he sang right lustily,  
Aye as he deepened and shaped the graves  
In the black old mold that smelled so mustily,  
And thus was the way of the sexton's staves:

"It's nine o' the clock, and I have begun  
The settled task that is daily mine;  
By ten o' the clock I will finish one—  
By six o' the clock there must be nine:

"Just three for women, and three for men;  
And, to fill the number, another three  
For daughters of women and sons of men  
Who men or women shall never be.