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# THE NEW PATH.

VOL. II.]

JUNE, 1864.

[No. 2.

## AN IMPORTANT GOTHIC BUILDING.

THE new building for the National Academy of Design begins to attract some of that attention which a building so important and so peculiar in design might be expected to attract. The outside walls are so nearly finished that, by the time this number of the NEW PATH is laid before its readers, the exterior of the building can be judged almost as if complete. We find already that popular judgments are passed upon it daily.

It has been thought strange that Architectural Art should be so little regarded in America, when an interest is shown so general and so constantly increasing in painting and sculpture. But the phenomenon needs no recondite explanation. The first few pictures painted in this country excited, we know, little enough attention. It ought to surprise no one that the first attempts at Architecture have been disregarded. It may be thought that the general and growing interest in one should excite a similar interest in other arts. But—and this is a point never to be lost sight of—Architecture is not recognized as a Fine Art by those who have seen little of it.

Let it be understood that we use the word *Architecture* throughout this article as meaning the fine art called by that name. The purpose of this art is to make buildings beautiful and instructive, by permanent appliances. When any one tries to make a building beautiful or instructive in a lasting

way, he is practicing the art of Architecture.

All the fine arts are injured by subjecting them to Rules of Art; none more than Architecture. It is always hard to fix the point where the observer of rules ceases to be an artist and becomes a mere machine, but there is such a point, and beyond that, when once fixed, we may safely declare, "not art, but artizanship." As regards the art of Architecture, without establishing such a point of departure we are safe in asserting that very few buildings in our day and generation are designed to be either beautiful or instructive, and in concluding thence that there is very little Architecture among us.

Had Church's Niagara been the first picture of note painted in America, the public would not have given it a second thought, and the press would never have named its name. The forgotten pictures before it had prepared the world for better things than they; as the bodies of the slain fill the ditch that their comrades may follow and pass on to victory. So former buildings have prepared the public to notice the Academy of Design more than it noticed them; the buildings are more fortunate than the pictures in this, that they remain in the sight of men to share in the benefit of the awakening which they have caused.

The building of which we speak has evidently been designed in entire ac-

cordance with the views concerning Architecture which have always been set forth in this journal. It is the first building in this country, so far as we are informed, which has been so designed. Two main principles are involved in this design, *first* that all buildings should be designed in the mediæval spirit, in other words should be "Gothic" and not revived classic of any school; *second* that all carved ornament should be designed by the workmen who cut it, under such superintendence and instruction as the artist in charge may find necessary. The former of these principles, rightly understood, includes the latter, but it is necessary to state them separately, and therefore the words "designed in the mediæval spirit" should in this case be taken as applying to the forms and general arrangement of parts.

We propose to state briefly some of the considerations which lead us to desire that our architects should study Mediæval art, and work in the "Gothic style" to the exclusion of all other schools and systems; and to notice the Academy building as the embodiment of some of those principles which should govern the Gothic revival.

In former numbers of the *NEW PATH* a brief history has been given of the Gothic revival in England and elsewhere. The movement has progressed so far and so successfully that we can speak not merely of what we should like to see but, also, of accomplished fact.

Future ages will look, more carefully than we care to, into that temper of the modern nations which, as Europe and America settled into peace after the fall of Napoleon, led to the boundless inquiry and enterprise of our time. The change from the spirit of the middle ages to that of the

Renaissance is not greater than the change from the spirit of the eighteenth to that of the nineteenth century. A longing for exacter knowledge and an appetite for profounder research; a spirit of exploration and inquiry becoming general,—which had before been the impulse of the few,—making a world of Columbuses; an eager willingness to greet inventions and utilise them; these are the leading peculiarities of the modern world. It is not strange or accidental that the demand for a truer and healthier art should be contemporaneous with a more catholic spirit and a more intelligent view of all the circumstances about us. It could not be otherwise. It is impossible to conceive that minds so constantly exercised as are the thinking minds of our time in practical research and in inquiries pursued in a spirit neither skeptical nor credulous—it is impossible to conceive that minds so exercised could ever satisfy their requirements of Art by pompous and luxurious trifling with unbelieved mythology and unfelt allegory. We find accordingly a most positive call, a demand not to be successfully resisted and that is not resisted at all except for the moment, for realism; for the representation of things seen or heartily believed in; for the limitation of pictorial art to such representation, and of decorative art to the making beautiful that which is needed for use. This latter, then, is the demand made by the times on Architecture. The day of building palaces is past,—more than enough are left from the palace-building days gone by,—the great and costly buildings now are for Parliament Houses and Patent Offices. The day of Triumphal Arches is past,—the architects are requested to use their invention to beautify carriage gateways to our city yards and country

approaches. The day of monuments seems to be past,—we have memorial churches and schools instead; the day of costly private tombs is passing,—we have memorial windows instead.

All the architects have more or less recognized this, and, some with sighs that the good old monumental times are gone, some with joy that the new practical times are come, are at work solving problems concerning the proper arrangement and design of cottages and city dwellings and parish churches and theatres. Even the students of architecture, who have always been expected to plan impossibly grandiose buildings for sites of transcendent importance, are now more apt to take their early flights in designing brick villas or practical market-houses.

In accordance with the useful character of the buildings we raise is generally the utilitarian style we adopt. The Greek front of Ionic or Corinthian columns is no longer approved. We build our houses with such an arrangement of ground-plan as will afford good rooms and convenient succession of rooms, we raise plain walls and pierce them with windows where windows are wanted; and if out-door shelter from sun and rain is desirable, we append to our houses such verandas as will best answer this purpose. The row of columns supporting a pediment—unreasonably expensive if of marble, and a ridiculous and transparent sham if of wood, or even of brick,—answered no good purpose whatever, and was not to be counted as a significant part of the house which it was meant to adorn. It is therefore almost forgotten as a part of any private residence. Nor is it regarded with much more complacency when there is question of public buildings. In that hot-bed of the false and ridiculous in Art, Wash-

ington City, the ancient faith in the Greek colonnade still holds sway. Probably one half the cost of the very costly Patent office is in the useless columns and architrave that surround it. But all this is part of the tradition; it seems to be a settled thing that the American capital shall have to boast of as great a waste of money as any capital in Europe; how else should we satisfy our young ambition? And, at the time when these buildings were planned, no means of lavishly spending money in building was so well known as the simple expedient of bringing from afar and setting up on end the hugest possible monolithic Doric shafts. But, as we have said, this delusion has passed away, and with it, a hundred more.

Consider, for a moment, those private dwellings, whether of city or country, which have been designed by an architect or by one so self-styled. Many of them are admirable in their perfect adaptation to their purpose, and in the ingenious use of all those inventions and contrivances of the day which help to supply to the American householder the place of the good domestic servants which he cannot get. Many of them are perfectly well built of the best materials, wood and stone, brick and plaster, iron and plate glass as perfectly fitted to one another and to their respective places and purposes as could be reasonably wished. And the money spent on these fine houses is not squandered; more is spent than is needed, but it is spent *where* needed, and adds what is meant for ornament to the necessary construction. The cut stone front entrance and accessories of a city house may cost ten thousand dollars when one-tenth of the sum would give equal convenience, but the lavish expense is incurred in adorning that which could not be spared,—the

arched entrance, the porch that covers it from the weather, the seven or eight steps with heavy balustrade that lead to it,—not in rearing an useless excrecence to darken windows and profit nothing. So a stone bay or oriel window is a very expensive addition to a house,—but nothing can improve some rooms so much, and it is always a comfort and a pleasure. So plate glass is costly, but nothing else can give such sunny cheerfulness within, or such added stateliness without.

The more instructed classes of our people show an intelligent ambition—even in serving their own wishes—worthy of admiration, if not of praise. None know better than they the true economy there is in having everything as good as it can be found, and at any price necessary. None demand more positively or more willingly pay for sound material and good workmanship. The tradesmen who make fortunes in our great cities are those who furnish only the most perfect goods, at regular and calculable prices. The silversmith whose stamp on his ware is a safe guarantee, the tailor whose work is perfect in fit and finish, the mason or carpenter who may be trusted to fulfil a contract without superintendence,—these dealers can charge such prices as will enrich them speedily, we look to the sum total only, we are content that they who serve us well should find it for their own interest to do so. This disposition to recognize and appreciate at its value that which is really good of its kind is capable of being educated, and is nearly certain to be educated. We expect to see absurdities of fashion more disregarded, and affectation of all sorts more despised every day. So long, then, as the question is limited to the comfort and usefulness of buildings for private residence and business, and their adaptation to the

purposes for which they are designed, we can safely leave it to the popular instinct. Public buildings are also likely to be practically useful, wherever the local government is not—as in some great cities—a farce, and universal suffrage a curse. We still need, it is true, architects better instructed than most of those we have in the requirements of City Halls and Senate Houses; but this need is sure to be supplied.

But, to return to the Art of Architecture, the question is less easily answered, what prospect is there of an improvement in this respect? In all the arts we are far enough behind Europe, but most especially in this art of Architecture. All over Europe, schools of Architecture—generally aspiring to the rank of “new styles”—are appearing. In Germany—besides many whimsies of Halls of Fame and Walhallas, “Greek, set with busts” on shelves,—we have a very constructive and consistent system of building. Bricks of various colors and of fine surface form an enduring and easily enriched wall, round arches decorated with radiating colors in the masonry are the window-heads; when wood is used, and it constantly is, it is with a grace and ease of design gained from close study of the admirable ancient cottages of Tyrol. But in Germany, these carefully designed, practically built and rationally decorated buildings of brick or wood or both combined, are not generally the most important. Small private houses and Railway sheds and stations are built in this healthy and natural style; some of the large Railway Depots in the cities, also, as the well known building by Eisenlohr at Karlsruhe, though even this is inferior to many a six-room cottage; but generally the more important civic buildings have been built

in a cold and formal classic style, and the churches, though with them there is more variety, are seldom good or interesting so far as we have seen them or record of them, the so-called Gothic being generally the worst of all, because badly copied from the late and inferior Gothic of the cathedrals of Cologne and Friburg in Breisgau. But there is praise due to the Germans. No other modern buildings are so little reproduced from buildings of past ages, none are so entirely based upon the requirements of the present and the nature of the materials as those of which we have spoken.

In France a school has arisen of which the true merit is in the careful and complete *planning*, the accurate adaptation of buildings to their purposes and to their sites. Architecturally nothing can be more feeble and unprofitable than the Eclectic style for which so much is claimed, and which makes great pretensions to be the New Architecture of the nineteenth century. Generally classic in spirit, and looking to pilasters, engaged columns and pediments for its decoration, it grafts on to this stock whatever of Gothic or Oriental or Moresque may suit the momentary whim or supply the local need. In France, as in Germany, the more elaborate buildings are most often bad, the humbler often good. Villas and cottages, graceful in design and faultless in construction, are the work of architects whose better known and more pretentious works are as cold in feeling and as inappropriate in conception as the worst of modern times. Rue St. Honoré arcades, Louvre pavilions, the Bibliothèque St. Genevieve and Hôtels of ministers,—the Architecture of France, the Architecture of the future is not in these, but in humbler or less known work than these.

Now, a very cursory examination will convince any one that nearly all that is good in this modern building is derived directly from Gothic building, directly or at one remove. Take, for instance, the ancient framed houses, "half timbered" and filled in with brick in England and often on the Continent, wholly of wood in Switzerland and Tyrol; it is to these we owe many of the most interesting and valuable buildings of our time, not only the modern German work above alluded to, but buildings equally good in France, many in England, some few in America. And these ancient framed houses are the one type of building that has come down direct from the Gothic time to ours. There is a regular succession of half-timbered houses in England, from the fourteenth century to our own time. The Swiss chalet and the Tyrolese peasant's house are built to-day in the more secluded valleys as they were built in the sixteenth century and before that. And, of the modern work built by architects and aspiring to the name of architecture, the best is that which has been most carefully based on the original examples, amending the old principles of design only so far as a more scientific construction makes it necessary, and adding to the old cottage type only such modern details as the modern ideas of comfort require. The Grecian formalisms sometimes combined in Germany with our mediæval cottage, honeysuckle ornaments in scroll-sawed work and box pilasters with box lintels upon them, are no worse than the affectations of the Gothic spirit, pointed arches and tracery cut out of wood.

This is the only important instance we have of a style of building coming down to us from the Middle Ages, and reigning over its little kingdom without interruption. But in all the styles

the good and natural has come to us from the Middle Ages; it has been either adopted by the Renaissance, used in a modified form through the Renaissance period, and retained by us; or else rejected by the Renaissance, and forgotten until now the practical naturalism of our time has revived it. It is a safe assertion that nearly every principle of modern building is a tradition handed down from the Gothic builders. They, of course, modified previous types, and drew their inspiration from many sources; but we can trace back our ideas of building no farther than to them.

What, for instance, is our modern idea of a church? Nave and aisles; choir, either semi-circular or longer than that; transepts, perhaps; tower, attached to the east front or standing over the intersection of the transepts and nave, or flanking the apse; gabled roof without, arched ceiling or exposed roof-construction within:—all these details that go to make up a church are of mediæval arrangement and combination at least, if not of mediæval original conception.

Our houses, large and splendid or cottage-like and humble, are certainly nothing like Roman houses, or like oriental houses; they are in all respects like mediæval houses in the arrangement and uses of apartments, divided into state apartments, living rooms and offices, in the manner of lighting by windows and heating by fire-places, in the ways of access by corridors and stair-ways, in external arcades, balconies, roof-parapets, in outer door-ways, court-yards and gardens. In none of these respects were classical dwelling-houses at all like those of the middle ages, or like ours. A Roman villa of the times of the empire would be absolutely uninhabitable by modern people, would be

useless to them except as being a covered building which might be made to shelter goods or beasts. But a Venetian palace of the thirteenth century is a perfectly good and comfortable building, with commodious rooms, convenient halls and stair-ways, and noble windows well adapted for glass and for shutters, and of such size and cost as the builder chose to make it. The writer of this has lived in a Venetian palace,—when it was built people were thoughtless of closets and had not devised hot air furnaces nor gas; so there were presses against the wall, and the gas pipes recently added were visible within the room; otherwise the house was modern in every respect, and some expense,—no more than many a purchaser of a New York house thinks it necessary to incur,—would make it altogether a nineteenth century dwelling. Other such palaces have been made in all respects nineteenth century hotels. Half the travelers in Venice stop at one or the other of two fashionable hotels which are Gothic palaces of the fourteenth century. So the great houses of the Flemish merchants and the castles of the nobility of England and France, except where requirements of fortification interfered, were houses of the same general character as those in which we now reside. The great civic buildings which remain to us from the Gothic times are as well calculated to suit our purposes as they were to supply the needs that called them into being. No assembly of governing men meets now in Venice, but when again the city shall be free, the Hall of the Greater Council will require only furnishing to make it the noblest meeting room in the world, and the smaller rooms near, the apartments of the Pregardi, of the Council of Ten, and the anterooms, are as good rooms for

committees and clerks, as if their walls and ceilings were not enriched by Paul Veronese and Tintoret. No assembly of princely merchants now throngs the great Cloth-Hall at Ypres; but the Hall is there, an admirable Merchant's Exchange. The glory of the Belgian cities is gone, no longer independent states, they have little need of government buildings, but their admirable town-halls remain, adapted to almost every public use.

If we should discover somewhere a mediæval Pompeii, a buried city, its life arrested in full flush, we should find something that would differ from a modern city in nothing so much as in its beauty. The people in the Gothic times lived much as we do. Let us not, however, fall into the common error of talking of the Gothic times as a single and unchanging instant. In the tenth and eleventh centuries there were indeed few enough comforts; glass windows were rare, a few belonged to the court and to the nobility, and were transported from castle to castle and fitted temporarily into the deep stone jambs which otherwise kept the rain, by their very depth, out from the interior; household and table furniture was heavy and rude, and not very varied. But little of this deficiency was to be seen in the fifteenth century, when woodwork and ironwork were perfect in workmanship and finish, glass good and plenty, vessels, utensils and movables of all kinds various in application and ingenious in design, plate rich and costly, furniture wonderfully decorative and beautiful, and light and intelligent in construction. It would be no great hardship, but a gain in the beauty of our surroundings, if all men were obliged to make all their furniture and utensils exactly as their ancestors did in the Gothic time. Their ancestors

ate and drank and made merry as they do now, ate the same beef, and venison and wild fowl, cooked in the same way, bread like our bread, no potatoes, but salads of all kinds, beans and peas,—drank sherry under the name of *sack*, and ale and beer under their own time-honored names, (strangely spelt, sometimes) all these comforting drinks either plain, or spiced and sweetened and warmed as we do, and as Europeans do more commonly, to this day. They used chairs much like ours, and tables even more like ours, and table-cloths and dishes; they used wood-fires, and open fireplaces and andirons for them—but they also burned soft coal, with proper arrangements for its combustion. They used windows that swung on hinges, not sliding windows hung with weights, in this setting the example so implicitly followed to this day throughout the continent of Europe;—how many windows other than “French windows” are there in Paris or Munich?

We repeat,—in no respect were their cities so unlike ours as in *this* respect, that their buildings within and without were beautiful, tasteful and well designed, and richly ornamented. But this unlikeness is hard to set forth and explain. It would be easy to prove the truth of the resemblances of which we have been speaking, but of this strange difference it is hard to give any idea. What idea does it convey to a modern reader, the bare statement that at a certain time churches and houses and furniture and jewelry were beautiful, as a rule, falling short of beauty now and then only through excess of quaintness and fancifulness of design? It is perhaps somewhat understood that architecture was interesting and full of thought, and decorative at the same time; in these respects altogether different from what we now have.



We understand this, but fail to completely realize it. The observing visitor who stands for the first time in the square of St. Mark at Venice, is astonished and awed by the surpassing beauty and strangeness of that which he sees; he floats along the Grand Canal and is convinced that the whole city was once consistent in splendor with the few remnants of it; he dwells a month in the city and finds that his wonder and delight do not cease, but grow, and that with good reason since he daily finds new cause for wonder and delight; he visits Verona—Mantua—Florence, and finds that other cities were, in the Gothic time, if less stately certainly more beautiful and wearing a crown of nobler art than Venice; and yet he fails to picture to himself what the mediæval cities were like. A detached building here and there, among crowds of vulgar modern fronts, very likely put to base uses, the sole remaining witness to prosperity gone by, fails to impress the beholder as it would have in the days of its glory. Do not suppose that contrast helps its effect, it is not contrast but complement that it needs. When the building was befriended by neighbors like itself, and by the work of the three or four centuries of good art gone before it, when the streets as far as one could see, from the north gate in the wall to the south gate, lay between house fronts graceful or quaint, and carved with flowers and birds and fanciful monsters, and charged with beautiful color, either of half transparent natural stones or of painted decoration; when the carriages and litters that passed through the streets, like the furniture within the houses, were covered with carved and painted legend and device and hung with draperies embroidered with flower and leaf and all beautiful forms

of nature; when the dress of the wealthy was rich in color and brilliant with gold, and either set off the vigorous human form or concealed it with graceful drapery;—then it—the building in question—looked its best. For the time was when people sought to beautify what they used as we now seek to make convenient what we use. Not that convenience was disregarded then,—we have shown above that the mediæval spirit recognized use and comfort, luxury grew from more to more all through the middle ages. But beauty was sought for, expected, cared about. It is not necessary to suppose that every rude and violent baron was a good judge of decorative art. He might well fail to appreciate at its just value the ornament on his furniture and utensils. But at all events he and his household desired ornament, and that of the richest. Should he need a great chest for his napery and silver, he ordered his steward to procure such an one, with a hawking scene carved upon it, or, perhaps, portraits and shields of arms of his ancestors. When a convent or church required an *armoire* for the deposition of sacred and precious vessels, its panels and doors were to be painted with some sacred subject, details, in both cases, were left to the skilled and long practiced workman who did not call himself an artist, but a mechanic, who had it in his mind to surpass with every new undertaking, in some respects at least, every completed work of his own or within his knowledge, who sought to tell his story of saint or warrior as well it could be told, and to use such story to fitly decorate his work. The highest order of artistic genius, then as now, was unrecognizable by the many; then as now the best art might not please so large a number of persons as

the less powerful or subtle. But people knew what was interesting and comprehensible record,—they knew richness and novelty of design when they saw it, and graceful lines and harmonious colors,—even as they would now had they the same practical education they then had. And the better artist insensibly obtained the better reputation—even as he now can in the practice of those arts which are at all understood by the people. So the furniture of hall, bedroom and kitchen was made beautiful alike ;—so the artificers gained exhaustless power of design ;—so beautiful things were brought around every man, but the destitute of this world's goods ;—so an age often lawless and violent, always unpeaceful and unorganized, gained a partial enlightenment and gentleness through the teachings of good art.

In what did the Renaissance change the world? The Renaissance abolished this beauty so abundant and so good, and gave us the cold squared front of brick, and the frozen façade of pseudo-classic columns and pilasters. Now let us hear Ruskin for a moment:—"As each city reached a certain point in civilization, its streets became decorated with the same magnificence, varied only in style according to the materials at hand, and the temper of the people. And I am not aware of any town of wealth and importance in the middle ages, in which some proof does not exist, that, at its period of greatest energy and prosperity, its streets were wrought with rich sculpture, and even (though in this, as before noticed, Venice always stood supreme,) glowing with color and with gold. Now, therefore, let the reader,—forming for himself as vivid and real a conception as he is able, either of a group of Venetian palaces in the fourteenth century, or, if he likes better, of one of the more

fantastic but even richer street scenes of Rouen, Antwerp, Cologne, or Nuremberg, and keeping this gorgeous image before him,—go out into any thoroughfare, representative, in a general and characteristic way, of the feeling for domestic architecture in modern times; let him, for instance, if in London, walk once up and down Harley street, or Baker street, or Gower street; and then, looking upon this picture and on this, set himself to consider, (for this is to be the subject of our following and final inquiry) what have been the causes which have induced so vast a change in the European mind.

"Renaissance architecture is the school which has conducted men's inventive and constructive faculties from the Grand Canal to Gower street; from the marble shaft, and the lancet arch, and the wreathed leafage, and the glowing and melting harmony of gold and azure, to the square cavity in the brick wall."

It is in the belief that our cities need not be the homes of ugliness that they now are, and that our country houses might be more than now in harmony with the beauty of the nature that surrounds them, that we wish to see a revival of the Gothic Architecture. This is the only way to bring about the desired result, as the experience of our own times has shown. Many attempts have been made, other than in this way, to restore the art to something like its true place among the arts,—eclecticism has been tried, and the engrafting of all sorts of theories and fancies upon the pseudo-classic stock; architects and amateurs have gravely reasoned about the necessary peculiarities of a new and original style of architecture worthy of the nineteenth century; in short the objection to any studious observance and dutiful discipleship of the Gothic past,

has been general and violent, and the attempts to avoid it and substitute for it some other course of action, many. It is no marvel that eclecticism, the selection of ideas from many styles and the combining thereof, should be found wanting. Every style of architecture differs from every other in radical principles of construction and design. The attempts to combine, into one whole, dissimilar and disagreeing parts, cannot but fail of success. Also it is no marvel that the attempt at creating a new style should fail. There is no instance on record of a style or school of art being created to order by those who sought that result. Every new manifestation of artistic power adds something to all that has gone before, and determines something of the future course of art. A new school or new style is the development, generally slow and gradual, from an old one, of artistic intellect seeking new and wider forms of expression. It is evident that such development cannot be had when asked for, and that the new style will come not by seeking it but by working faithfully and eagerly in the old.

There is one school of architects who have shown ability, and obtained a certain success; those who, accepting many of the theories of the Gothic revivalists, as, for instance, the importance of naturalistic carving, the value of chromatic decoration, &c., have eschewed any attempt to build Gothic buildings, on the ground that it is never well to revive the past. The answer to this plausible objection is, briefly, this. We must use some framework, some principles of structure, in our buildings, and this framework must needs be one already used, unless we are prepared to revolutionize building altogether, and introduce a style of tie rods and gas-pipe supporting columns. If we span openings in a wall, it must

be either with lintels or arches, and, if with arches, with arches either round or pointed,—all of which plans have been followed of old, and for long ages. We say, therefore, build Gothic buildings, because the Gothic framework is beyond all comparison the most noble of all, the most varied and easily adapted to all purposes, the strongest, the most easily suited by all materials, and by far the most susceptible of decoration. There need be no fear of slavish copying, except by those who must needs copy if they build at all, and who had better be set to copying Gothic rather than pseudo-classic forms and ornaments. There need be no fear of slavish copying, because the intelligent architect will soon enough find points in which he must vary the old type, and more and more every day in which he ought to vary it. But it is only by careful study and attempted reproduction of Gothic architecture as it was, that we can ever learn what changes ought to be made and how far we can venture, in any given case, to make them.

Moreover, the principle that carved ornament ought to be studied from nature,—the principle that the workman should have to do with the design of what he executes, and the principle that decoration should always grow out of and display the construction are better carried out in Gothic than in any other style. This is evident, as there has never been another style on earth which recognized and insisted upon them all.

The reader who has had the patience to follow our exposition of our views in regard to architecture, will easily see on looking at the Academy of Design building, that it has been built in complete accordance with those views. *Firstly*, the building is so planned as to perfectly answer its purposes. The

details of the plan are not all perceptible to one who visits the unfinished interior, but the general objects of the building are sufficiently evident and even a cursory examination will suffice to show that the requirements of daily or of occasional use are sacrificed to nothing. *Secondly* the building is so designed as to perfectly express its purposes,—or at least to express nothing contrary to them, it may not be always possible to tell the beholder, by the exterior, all the important facts concerning the interior, it may not be desirable to do so at the expense—as it probably will be—of some grace of design, but at least it is possible, as this building shows, to deny nothing, to deceive in nothing, to add nothing for composition's sake which the occupants do not need.

The building has a front of one hundred feet on Fourth Avenue, and a front of eighty feet on Twenty-third Street. It is three stories high, the lowest story being partly on and partly below the level of the sidewalk. The principal entrance is in the second story and in the middle of the Twenty-third Street front; a great double flight of marble steps leads up to it, the doorway is wide and high, a richly molded and decorated archivolt spans the opening, the jams are deep and include two slender columns on each side, the whole entrance is emphasized by a high and steep gable above it; the wall in which the doorway is advances a foot beyond the face of the building and is retained by a buttress of greater projection on each side, it is this advanced wall which rises, in the gable spoken of, the whole height of the third story, reaching to the lowest member of the cornice. This great doorway is the central feature of the building, makes the shorter front really more important than the longer, and

declares the second story, (according to our nomenclature, in France it would be the *first* story, and the lowest story the *rez de chaussée*, or ground-floor,) the principal one. The rest of the wall of this principal story is occupied by windows, in size and character like those of first class city dwelling-houses. The row of three windows on the Fourth Avenue front, eight of equal size equally spaced, suggest a suite of rooms, evidently not a large hall, as the ceiling is too low. The chimneys, appearing above the cornice, hint at the number of these rooms. A visit to the interior confirms the report of the outside, along the Fourth Avenue front is a suite of four rooms, Reception Room, Library, (occupying two of them) and Meeting Room for the Council of the Academy. From the principal door goes back a wide hall, from which open three rooms, and ascend the great stairs to the exhibition galleries above. The three windows on the other side of the main door light three small rooms, ladies' dressing rooms, we are told, and ticket office for times of public exhibitions. Back of these, occupying that part of the building away from the street, is a large lecture-room or school-room.

The floor above is occupied by picture galleries. These need no windows, but are lighted from the roof. The exterior, therefore, makes no pretence of having windows nor to be in any respect like window-pierced walls of ordinary buildings; it has six circular openings filled with plate tracery,—these for ventilation,—and is otherwise an unbroken surface of smooth marble. The lowest story is entered through a small doorway on the Fourth Avenue side, which is the entrance to the schools of the Academy. But, entering, we find small rooms along the Twenty-third Street front, and these

are lighted by small windows, like windows of a private house, and we infer that the janitor has his apartment here. Descending half a dozen steps, we find the schools at last,—the descent is, of course, to get height of ceiling,—three alcoves or studios are on Fourth Avenue, lighted by immense windows, back of these a hall, back of this the room of the life school, the sessions of which are held at night, according to time-honored custom, and the room of which needs no more window space than is given it here, opening upon an inner court. Each of the three great windows of which we have spoken, is an arcade of two arches, supported, where the arches meet, on a clustered column. There is a fourth arcade like the three mentioned, the four filling the wall of the lowest story on Fourth Avenue. But the fourth arcade is not like the others, a double window devised to give the greatest possible amount of light while securing solidity of construction; one of its arches is the doorway to the schools above spoken of, the other a window lighting one of the rooms of what we have called the janitor's apartment. This is the only instance in the whole exterior where the design is not realistic. In every other point use has dictated the arrangement of the outside, here the supposed exigences of of the composition have compelled the architect to abandon his feeling for what was rational, and to combine a small door and a small window into the likeness of a large drawing-school window. It is not for us to say what could have been better done, perhaps, if the window to the janitor's room was really needed, the actual was the best way to arrange the two dissimilar openings, but the presence of this anomaly is an injury to the building, otherwise so naturally and intelligently designed.

That which we have so far found to be true of this building might have been true and still the building might not have been Gothic. We say "might have been," it is not probable that it would. There is no other style or manner of building in which rational design is easy or the consistent carrying out of it probable. In Gothic work rational design is the easiest design, and consistency seldom to be sacrificed to beauty.

Modern buildings, even when built in direct opposition to the Gothic revival, have often been well designed in this respect, and tolerably free from affectations and pretence. But these, unless Gothic, have generally been as far from beauty as near to truth;—it is not a matter susceptible of proof, except by collocation of examples, it is a matter of observation only; let the reader observe for himself, his observation will confirm ours. The more nearly a building approaches a pure Gothic type, the more chance there is that it will be at once rational and beautiful in design. The more an artist cares for the rational and is capable of the beautiful in design, the more likely he is to give in his hearty assent to the theories of the Gothic revivalist. Nay, there *is* a proof of this, in spite of what we have said above;—let any building show a singularly radical piece of rationalism in design, and it approximates to Gothic examples; if, in the building under consideration, the door to the school had been alone and simple, occupying one quarter of the length of the building by itself, while the three large double windows occupied the others, this, which we should have seen with unmingled approval, every one familiar with the architecture of the past would at once have pronounced a Gothic idea; it would have carried back the memory of the

spectator to no other buildings than the private and civic houses of Italy and the north built during the Gothic times.

The Academy of Design is, not only in this respect but in all respects, a Gothic building. The design of the exterior is not merely realistic and constructive, it is completely mediæval, and in the spirit of the central mediæval art. It is such a building as a Gothic artist of the thirteenth century might well build, should he live now in New York, study our customs and needs, and become familiar with our materials and our workmen and their ways. Or if it differ from a building so built, it is only in degree of merit; with his workmen untrained, his fellow-artists and the public generally misunderstanding, and his own skill unpracticed, the architect, we are sure, would be the first to disclaim any thought that his work is in all respects equal to the best Gothic work. That it is, in spite of all these disadvantages very good Gothic work indeed, we hold to be such high praise that we could only award it after careful consideration.

The design includes a great deal of rich and delicate carving, all, with the exception of three small pieces, executed in white marble. All of this carving is representative of facts of nature, generally of leaves. The greater part of it is gathered up into capitals of round columns,—four large capitals complete the purple marble columns that flank the main door; the fourteen windows of the principal story have two each, surmounting the grey marble shafts in their jambs; the four double openings of the lowest story have one large clustered capital each, and two corbels each, in all respects like capitals of three-quarter columns: and at the drinking fountain under the stairs to the front entrance are four more

with foliage of but little projection, being low and near the hands of the meddlesome and the careless. The large roll-chamfers of the three visible corners of the building are cut across by the string courses, and at certain of these points the roll is topped with a carved capital. The three of these capitals which are in the lowest story are of grey marble, like the greater part of this lowest story.

Besides the capitals there are carved bases to the important columns. There are two richly decorated corbels to help the lintel which spans the main door, and support the tympanum under the arch. There are moldings carved with foliage in the archivolt of the principal story, those of the main entrance being very elaborate.

We have said that this carving is generally of leaves. If we should take a perfectly plain "bell" of a capital, the bottom fitting the top of a cylindrical shaft, the sides sweeping up with a slightly concave curve to fit, at the top, a square abacus which would contain a circle somewhat larger than the section of the shaft;—and around this bell arrange leaves, of ivy, oak, chestnut or maple, or leaves and flowers of rose or lily, or ferns, or sometimes more than one plant's beauties on a single bell,—these designs of ours, perpetuated in marble, would be like the capitals of the Academy of Design. It is very much in this way that these capitals were designed;—it has been a pleasure to us, all winter, to watch the progress of the work, which has promised so much for the future both of the workmen and of the arts in America. The workmen were the designers here. At first they needed much instruction and help; when they modelled in clay, around their plaster "bells," the forms of the leaves furnished them by the architect, some

would produce very ungraceful forms, while copying accurately; some would fail to seize the vital truth of the plant, but, carving wild roses, would succeed fairly with the flowers and then give to them the companionship of simple leaves, in shape like the leaflets of the rose-tree, and not nearer than this to truth; some would combine into one capital leaves of different and disagreeing forms; numerous difficulties arose and mistakes were made, but all, be it remembered, by men who had been used, their lives long, to carve, over and over again, Corinthian capitals and Roman friezes, all from drawings showing exactly and at full size the architect's design for the ornament required. It was as a precaution against such mistakes that the plan was adopted of modelling the designs in clay for necessary modifications before they were cut in marble; with the better workmen this soon became unnecessary, but with all precautions there are capitals now standing in the building which had better been rejected, — which, we doubt not would have been rejected but for the cost, a consideration which the architect has never for a moment been able to overlook.

Considering the capitals all together they err in this, that they are less effective than they should be as ornaments of the building. Every scrap of carved ornament ought to help the whole architectural design of which it forms part; if it does not so help it will infallibly hurt the design. Of course, in carving that is intended for architectural ornament, no amount of beauty in itself will make up for deficiency in decorative use. It is certain that boldly conventionalized ornament is often more ornamental than that which is more nearly a realization of nature. Now, good conventionalizing is very good art. A certain amount of

conventionalism is necessary in every attempt to represent leaves and flowers in carved stone, for the rigid and brittle material allows of no copying but of the surface of leaves, and of no complete representation at all. But a great many truths of leaf-form and leaf-structure and leaf-growth can be told in the most severely conventional work. A good thirteenth-century carver would tell more of the facts of maple trees in a capital of stiffened and stony suggestions of leaves, hastily struck out of the block with the hammer, than can the best of our workmen now, carefully copying form, arrangement and surface, and cutting the marble as thin as he dare; moreover the thirteenth century work would be good and valuable as ornament, not a line of it thrown away, not a bright projection nor a dark recess without its effect on the whole cathedral front, while the modern work is very apt to fail utterly in this the essential requirement. There are capitals in the Academy of Design which are exceedingly good, interesting and full of truth in themselves, and, moreover, most valuable architectural ornaments. One of the four large capitals of the main entrance is as good a piece of sculptured decoration as we are likely to produce in America for a long time to come.

It may be a question whether truth to nature or architectural effect is of the more importance in Gothic sculpture, but there is no doubt that the union of the two makes perfect Gothic sculpture. We do not despair of obtaining this in our own time, not perhaps exactly in character like the sculpture either of Verona or of Paris, but as good; it is a great thing to hope for, almost too splendid a dream, but we can imagine its realization. There is one way only of achieving this result, it is to educate a body of work-

men. And the difficulties in the way are these, that the workmen are called on continually to do work in the old style, that it is difficult or impossible to keep them at good work, there is no constant demand for good work, they must accept such work as they can get. Already some of those carvers who were employed on the Academy of Design are or have been at work on Corinthian capitals, all alike, for a certain marble palace on Fifth avenue. It is discouraging enough. There is about it just this grain of encouragement, that the men certainly prefer the right thing, take an interest in their work, find enjoyment in it, in some cases have chosen to keep at it even when offered higher pay to go and cut Corinthian capitals. Many of them have been fetching from the fields and gardens leaves and flowers and plants, asking if they can use these or those in their work.

This matter of Gothic carving is farther discussed, and the means of securing farther improvements considered in the first volume of the *NEW PATH*, especially in that paper, beginning on page 130, of the series "What has been done and what can be done."

The design of the Academy building includes a great deal of color decoration. It is not with strict correctness that we apply that name to the banding with grey and white, for the contrast of grey and white is hardly an effect of color, but rather of light and shade. There is, though, an inexhaustible charm in the simplest black and white, brown and white, or grey and white stripes or cheques or plaid. The church that Michel Angelo called his bride, Santa Maria Novella at Florence, is faced entirely with black and white marble, the pilasters and piers banded horizontally, the wall-surface divided into panels or decorated with patterns

of mosaic, and the archivolt of alternate voussoirs of equal size. There is no other color about its front, which, though without the highest architectural merits, is yet made interesting and almost beautiful,—almost worthy of the treasures of art within,—by this decoration of contrasted light and dark. The bluish grey of the Westchester County marble in the building we are considering, paled as it is by the neighborhood of the darker grey-wacke, is certainly more beautiful than the black marble of Florence,—it is generally well used in this design,—notice how beautiful that otherwise almost blank wall of the third story is, lozenge-shapes in a horizontal row, zig-zags parallel to these above and below, all of oblong rectangular blocks of grey, set step-fashion, contrasted with a white ground. The curious optical delusion which these cause, an appearance of imperfect levelness in the horizontal courses of marble, only improves the effect when you are satisfied that it *is* delusion, and not bad workmanship.

Radiating voussoirs of alternate colors are an ornament always welcome. Those before us, between the carved and molded bands of their archivolt, over the main door and windows of the principal story, are the most salient and valuable part of the whole decoration in black and white. The piers between the windows of this story are divided into alternate horizontal bands of grey and white. This seems the only fitting way of arranging colors in piers like these, narrow in proportion to the building and the openings between them. The arrangement suggests and calls attention to levelled, squared, well-fitted blocks of stone,—there is a perfectly horizontal bed of dark marble, upon it a true and level course of white,—no danger of treach-



erous yielding in that careful masonry!

But grey and white is not the only contrast of color about the building, rich reds have already appeared. Notice that dark red disk above the main door-way, the triangle within the gable, Vermont slate, with the letters N. A. D. incised and gilded. We have already mentioned the four shafts of purplish Vermont marble which flank the principal entrances. There is more to come, when the building is completed let the reader look,—there are spandrels to be filled with color, and diagonal squares of color in panels under the arches of the cornice,—we think that no one will need to complain of the coldness of the building.

We have not as yet said one word of those matters which are generally the only subjects of architectural criticism,—proportion,—arrangement of parts, and style of architecture, except that we have claimed the building as purely Gothic. The general voice of the press and the public has pronounced the building a copy of the Ducal Palace at Venice; were it so, the fact would argue good taste in selection of models, for a nobler building or one better adapted to the purposes of a public building could hardly be devised. But the alleged resemblance amounts to this, only, that the building is rectangular, three stories high and flat roofed, has the upper story diagonally chequered with blocks of marble of two colors, (though the pattern is altogether different,) and a parapet of elaborate and fanciful character, neither handrail nor battlements. Concerning these points of resemblance we remark as follows:—The division into three stories and the general arrangement of the upper stories as galleries, library, &c., is that which would suggest itself at first as the natural and only satisfactory arrangement; as the upper story is used for picture galleries, and, of necessity, lighted from

the roof, side windows were useless, therefore out of place, sham windows or panels like windows were out of the question in a properly designed building, pilasters or buttresses were unneeded,—there was left only the plain wall, and, for its decoration, contrast of grey and white marble; the flat roof is a necessity, on account of the numerous and large skylights; the parapet is therefore the only point where the architect has deliberately followed the example of the Doges' Palace, and of this he had at least one other example in Venice, the Ca'd'Oro.

We do not intend to deny all reference on the part of the architect to Gothic examples. For many a year we must all do as our forerunners and contemporaries in Europe have done and are doing,—study carefully and imitate often the mediæval buildings that are left us. The edifice is evidently meant as a renewal of the way of building which prevailed in former glorious times for art, every opening is spanned by a pointed arch, except the circular ventilators in the third story; these, and the window heads of the second story are filled with plate tracery of marble; every molding is mediæval in character; the cylindrical and the clustered shafts, the spurred bases, the capitals, the corbels, the cusping of the arch over the main door,—all are Gothic, and peculiar to Gothic work, nothing like them is possible except in Gothic work. Hereafter, when the iron gates are put up and the woodwork of the windows and doors is put in; when the interior is finished and "good society" is invited to inspect it, we do not doubt that every detail both inside and out will be good Gothic. It will then be our duty to speak of the finished building, and of those details which we have not yet seen; and to point 'out by means of them and other accessible work in New York, the difference between good and bad Gothic ornament and detail.