

THE BUILDER,

NO. XIX.

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1843.

THE competition for the new Houses of Parliament was said by many at the time to be one of the most important events as to its bearing and influence on architecture and general building art that the world had witnessed for many centuries—and truly, if we may judge from the movement it has originated, if we view the spirit with which the authorities appear to be imbued, and the growing enthusiasm of their architect, as evinced in his late reports; if we contemplate the workings of the roused ambition of our artists in the pending competition of the Caricoms, and consider all the co-relative circumstances, we shall not hesitate to come to a conclusion, that if this is not a great affair for art, it ought to have been so, and that nothing but the extreme of perseverance could or can make it otherwise.

We have just observed that as far as the painter artist is concerned, especial pains, if not in a direct, yet still in an indirect sense, have been bestowed to increase his interest in his art and in the national structure—he has been stirred to it by many well-judged impulses, and not least by the promise of ample pecuniary reward. Thus, however, this sort of generous patronage of art and its professors has almost startled us—so backward and so slow have been the people of this country in all that pertains to the right culture of the true graces of civilization; and so we descend in the ladder of condescension. This is an anomalous expression, and yet we think it not an unapt one, as describing the course of our progress towards propriety. Great as the occasion is for the architect—great as it may be for the artist painter and sculptor, and great for the country in its influence through these, there is still, in our opinion, a greater good it might and may achieve if similar and corresponding pains had been, or were now to be, bestowed in reference to a class deemed lowest in the scale of those interested in this business. We mean the workmen. Yes, we repeat our words, affirming and maintaining that this is an occasion which might be made more morally influential for the advancement of the working builders, and through them, for general building art, than any scheme of special device, however craftily planned or wisely carried out.

Talk of your museums, and free admission for the public to them, to national galleries, and the like; talk of your schools of design, what museum, exhibition, or school could do the work of fostering or forming a high standard of refined feeling, taste, or judgment in our working men? Compared with the right use of the opportunity—that stimulus which the Commission of Taste, if we may so call it, has provided and administered to work through the artist mind of the superior class of professors, would work a thousand-fold more potently and beneficially if the labour mind were put under its quiet influence; and that this may be done at no cost of machinery or means, we shall venture humbly to show.

That drudgery and delving brute labour is all that the working man is expected to take share in, in the Parliament House works, we are sure is not the view of any of the leading minds concerned in that work, from the supreme power down to the master

builders or contractors; but that it is little better than this, must, we are afraid, be in part subscribed to; whereas look at the splendid opportunity which this large building, with its long ranges of rooms, vastly convertible, some two or three of them into school or exhibition rooms, with models and drawings in profusion, bating nothing of their worth, but adding wonderfully thereto by being brought to the eye and the contemplation of working men—who doubts that much, that incalculable good must result from this? Can any book, any show, any scheme of instruction, any privilege be devised, greater than this? Trust us, and trust the working men—they have hearts, and there is a safe and profitable way to influence them. By what means do you inspire your soldiers, and excite their military ardour, make them zealous guardians of their country's fame, and eager participators in her renown? You distinguish them by badge and trophy—you identify them, heart and soul, in great enterprise.

The soldier who has to win renown under the guidance of his chiefs is taught, or allowed to consider, that there are higher motives of exertion and incentives to skill, than mere money pay. Teach also the artisan that the building is more to him than a bargain for a weekly hiring, and that those concerned in the building have a more intimate connection with him, and regard for him, than for the horse in the mortar-mill, or the machine that performs certain functions of labour in the same round of daily operations. We shall return to this subject again.

When the President of the Institute of Civil Engineers (Mr. Walker) addressed his juniors, the students of his profession, and advised them to cultivate a knowledge of the practical of engineering, to fit them for the new sphere of operation into which many of them would probably be thrown by the opening demand for their talent in the colonies; and when he urged as a reason for thus advising them, that they would find in the colonies less of that practical talent upon which they are accustomed to rely in this country in the person of the experienced builder, he little thought how peculiarly applicable was that same advice to the home engineer and architect, to fit him for the new circumstances into which he is about to emerge, brought about by that new development of the world's resources which mechanical and chemical science have revealed. What to us, or to any adventurer, are the mines and forests of a colony, compared with the ever-teeming products of the mechanical mine and the laboratory? If the quarries of Pentelics, with their beautiful and inexhaustible marbles, gave birth to, or had an influence in creating a style of architecture and sculpture for Greece,—and who can doubt that they did so?—how much more may we not look for in the unfathomable depth of the quarries of creation? Glories in this our country, if humbly, and not presumingly, we turn them to account, and recognize the great source from whence they emanate, or under whose bounteous hand they have been formed—England has for the last three centuries slept—art-England and mechanic-England, that before lay still, has been awakening, and his gatherings have been indescribably large and precious, or like a new Adam, he may be said to have been placed in a second Eden, with all around that can satisfy his utmost craving. What can this Adam, this mechanic genius, want more? he wants his

Eve—and this is Art; out of his ribs, too, shall she be born. All impotent, all vain are his yearnings to reproduce a something from the past—out of the ribs of his mechanic vigour will pure, beautiful, and virgin art be born, a helpmate for him; and they two shall rule the world for a cycle of its future workings.

And there is the tree too, the tree of knowledge of good and evil—God forbid that it be not eaten of again; that human pride and self-sufficiency be not the tempting serpent, to mar the beauty of their rule and union. Not in the pride of discovery as to the past, not in the pride of proficiency as to the present, not in pride of perception as to the future; not in these, nor in one of these, must man indulge. He must be humble, and if he be not so, he will meet his downfall.

There is the antiquary, elate with little gatherings of knowledge as to the fashionings of the divinities of his worship—he invests his heroes with a mystical and prescient purpose in their every action; he traces in all their workings, in every record of their place and progress, a forehand, or forthead, of complete conception; he elevates these, his gods, in high estate of premiership—far above men of meaner, that is of later, mould, and makes their footstool for himself a place of dignity. There must be a change in this! Man and man are not, cannot be, so unnaturally opposed—peace must reign between all.

ST. GEORGE THE MARTYR, SOUTHWARK.—PROJECTED PARKS.

ON the 6th inst. a public vestry was held in the parish church of St. George the Martyr, Southwark, the Rev. John Horton, M.A., rector, in the chair.

The reverend gentleman said the vestry had been called for the purposes stated in the following announcement:

“St. George the Martyr, Southwark, June 2, 1843.—The inhabitants are respectfully informed that a public vestry will be holden on Tuesday, June 6, at twelve o'clock, for the purpose of considering the best means of averting the expense likely to fall upon the parish by the expected removal of the wall of the Marshalsea prison, in connection with the churchyard, and to adopt such measures thereon as may be deemed expedient; and in compliance with a requisition presented to the churchwardens, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning government and the parliament for the purpose of obtaining an open space or spaces for a park or public walks, for the benefit of the inhabitants of the southern districts of the metropolis.”

He (Mr. Horton) had that morning waited upon the Lord Bishop of Winchester, to confer with him on the subject alluded to in the former part of this notice. His lordship had suggested that a deputation, consisting of the rector, churchwardens, and others, should wait upon Lord Lincoln (the ground belonging to the crown), and endeavour to enter into some arrangement with him for the transfer of the property. The bishop had kindly condescended to express his wish to accompany the deputation.

After a slight discussion, several gentlemen were elected as the deputation, and full power to take any step that might appear desirable was conceded to them.

The Rev. Mr. Horton said it now became his duty to direct attention to that portion of the announcement relating to the projected parks in Southwark and Lambeth, and he would call on—

Mr. Richard Moser, churchwarden, to move the first resolution, which was—“That this vestry is of opinion that public walks and reserved spaces, suited to the exercise and recreation of the inhabitants of this parish, but more particularly of the humbler classes, are of the first importance to their moral and physical condition, as they tend to avert or alleviate disease and promote health; and, by inducing cleanliness and neatness in the families of the industrious poor, also tend to wean them