

peculiar capabilities of the metals availed of, and still with the minimum of labour and expense. By engraving, as in the monumental brasses, or by the simple use of a pair of pinners, a description of ornament was produced, having the true metallic character, and yet with less labour, than is needed for a similar effect, in a casting. Our modern iron-work—especially the Gothic—betrays a complete disregard of the nature of the material. It has become bulky and massive, in a degree, more suited to stone and wood; the great beauty of the old ironwork, produced by hand, is wanting, through the absence of relief and undercutting, and the ability to supply a multitude of copies is co-existent with the almost worthless character of the work itself. It is the duty of the architect, to avail himself of every aid to the proper execution of his design; but in the present use of casting, facility of execution, and reproduction are deemed to be advantages, to which every beautiful form must bend. If, however, the former treatment of metal work were more generally understood, and the little labour required to produce an effect in wrought iron, we might hope to see a more accurate definition of the limits of the two arts; whilst it would be found, that the labour now devoted to iron work, where casting has been employed, often is actually greater, than necessary to produce a better effect, when the process is entirely by hand. In "The true Principles of pointed Architecture," Mr. Pugin has very clearly pointed out the original method, and there shewn, that with plates of metal, laid over one another, and perforated in forms, differing in each, the character of Gothic panelling is given, in a manner better adapted to the material, and with less expense than by the process of casting. The execution of larger tracery, and of foliage is not less simple. It is not only in Gothic iron-work, that the misuse of the art of casting is apparent; the scrolls and antifixæ in modern park gates, and railings are elaborate, but unsuccessful attempts to imitate a school of art, in which, at one time, the painter and the sculptor were operators.\* At the best, where the casting has been improved upon by subsequent labour, that labour is extreme, and indeed in many cases, where the pattern is costly, without being of further use, the want of manual dexterity can be the only impediment. The increasing taste for decoration will probably remedy this defect, and if the operative skill be properly directed, we may hope to see, in Gothic architecture at least, a condition of the art of design in metal work, such as the world has not yet known.

Though examples of Gothic iron-work are not very numerous, there is ample evidence of remarkable skill in the material. The railing, round the tomb of Henry VII. at Westminster, the monument of Edward IV., at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, certain canopies to recumbent effigies in Westminster Abbey, the hinges of the doors at Lichfield, and Windsor, and other examples, still existing in England, and on the continent are proofs of the fact, and will afford hints, as to the mode of working. Had the material been as plentiful as it is now, and the ready mode of reducing it from the ore been as well understood, there is no doubt, that it would have played a still more important part in the construction, and decoration of buildings. But we have iron in abundance; it has been applied to purposes, which our ancestors did not dream of; it has floated on the ocean, and carried the passenger over the strait; it does the work of men's hands, and work, which hands could not do, and has become the way on which in hours, we count the days of former times. Bridges, beams, roofs, whole houses are now made of iron; every day it is being applied to some fresh purpose, and therefore it is a material, which has influenced, and will most powerfully influence the decorative character of our architecture. Such being the case, it seems, that it may be employed in Gothic architecture. It may not be the most important item in the future style, but it is at least one, which may advantageously be used, decoratively, and constructively to a much greater extent, than it formerly was.

There can be no reason that its use should

rigidly be confined to such parts of a building as we are accustomed to see it in, as railings, locks, and hinges; though in these, there is great scope for invention, and certainly for improvement upon their modern forms. It may be applied to more fundamental constructions, without violating any real principle, and with a new field for the display of Gothic architecture. Roofs, window-tracery, slender shafts, pinnacles and crosses, spires of open-work, and font covers may be executed in it, with the best results, and without offence to the taste of any one, who really understands Gothic architecture, and whose love of precedent does not blind him to the merit of originality, and the inspiration of inventive genius. But, say the book-learned, "tracery! columns! spires! in iron!! this is contrary to all propriety, and there is no authority for it!" But, if invention is a thing, which cannot or must not be, then do we at once sorrowfully abandon the practice of the style, along with all such, as are content to forget the artist in the *virtuoso*, who venerate less the creative power of mind, than the sweepings of centuries past, who live entirely in this comparative ignorance, and have no hopes in the prospect of the future, to all the cavillers at the Gothic style, during its, in such case, short-lived existence. We have ourselves urged the examination of ancient models, but we deprecate a state of—it cannot be art—where imitation is the only end and object. Imitation is an aid to art, the matter out of which originality springs, and not the point, at which art stops short.

Those who are conversant with ancient models can hardly think of Gothic bridges, or of columns of iron, without reverting to many attempts to imitate the forms, and proportions of timber and stone, unhappily, common enough. We do not wish to see more constructions of that solid character. Columns must not be painted like stone, but have the proper appearance, and proportions of the metal employed, whether iron or brass. In metal, we shall be able to carry out the forms of slender shafts with perfect security, and consequently better effect, than is discernible in the old buildings. The desire of the Gothic architects to make these shafts perfectly secure, led them to use a material, different to that of the rest of the building; this they found in the Purbeck marble; but it was still requisite to band them at intervals to the neighbouring pier. Where these bands were omitted, the shafts have failed, as in the Temple church, where it has since been necessary to tie them with iron to the mullion. Consequently, with iron we should be able to execute slender shafts with better effect, than in the original manner. It is well, sometimes, to listen to an opponent, and we quite agree with the following remarks:—"The grove at the east end of Salisbury cathedral, which, like the banyan tree, seems to be composed of pendants from the roof, in different dimensions, rather than columns to support it; beautiful, indeed, but so fragile, that the blow of a stick, or the movement of an awkward visitor would put the whole fabric in peril. If, instead of a friable stone or marble, the shafts were made of brass, the mind would relax into that security, which is ever the first requirement of our art."\* Salisbury cathedral is a remarkable instance of the use of slender shafts, and it cannot be denied, that our satisfaction would be greater were those shafts of metal. A spire should not be, like that recently erected at Vienna, a reproduction of the forms of masonry, but should be of open work, not resembling the spires of stone at Freyburg, and elsewhere, but entirely *sui generis*, with the character of iron-work, and not with the form, and proportions of stone. On the continent, it is not unusual to find windows entirely destitute of stone mullions, the tracery being formed in iron-work. It is possible, that this idea might be turned to some account, though the absence of stone mullions is attended with a poverty of effect, the colour of the iron-work, not contrasting with that of the window, when seen from the exterior. As a matter of course, in combining iron with other materials, it will be necessary to consider the effect of colour.

Thus we think, that in iron, we have one aid to the future development of style in Gothic

architecture, one of great importance, whose advantages were not unfelt by the architects of old, and were met by them in a manner, from which we can learn much in its more extended application. Hitherto in modern architecture, where iron has been used, it has been misused, and in employing it, it must be our endeavour to invest it with the character of ornament, for which its peculiar properties best adapt it; the masonic must be carefully avoided. When once so important a material is properly treated, and with the originality, which cannot fail to be the result, we may fairly hope to see a better style, influencing all parts of future Gothic buildings. E. H.

#### ASSERTED ABUSES IN THE WESTMINSTER COURT OF SEWERS.

In a recent number of THE BUILDER we inserted extracts from the pamphlet written by Mr. John Leslie, one of the Commissioners of Sewers for Westminster and part of the County of Middlesex, in which he alleges that great abuses have existed, and do still exist, in the Westminster Court of Sewers, in the wasteful and extravagant expenditure of large sums of money, levied on the inhabitants for sewer's rates, by the building of new and the repair of old sewers. At the time we made those extracts we did not pledge ourselves to the accuracy of Mr. Leslie's statements, but gave insertion to them simply with a view to inquiry.

At a Court of Sewers recently held at the Sewers Office, in Greek-street, Soho, a most important communication was made to the Commissioners from the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and which was read to the commissioners then present, and was as follows:—

Whitehall, August 13, 1845.

SIR,—I am directed by Secretary Sir James Graham, to transmit to you the inclosed copy of a pamphlet by Mr. John Leslie, one of the Commissioners of Sewers for Westminster and part of Middlesex, to which Sir James Graham's attention has been called by representations from various parishes in Westminster, and I am to request that the Commissioners of Sewers will favour Sir James Graham with any observations they wish to make upon the allegations contained in this pamphlet.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

H. MANNERS SURTON,

Lewis C. Hertzlet, Esq., Clerk to the Commissioners of Sewers, 1, Greek-street, Soho.

Considerable discussion then ensued as to the best course the commissioners should take in reference thereto; at length it was decided that the clerk do simply acknowledge the receipt, and also state that the court will take it into their earliest consideration. It was resolved that a committee be appointed at the next court at two o'clock, "to draw up observations, in accordance with the request of Sir James Graham," and that these observations should be prepared and laid before the court at their earliest convenience. Considerable excitement seems to prevail at this court, and among the rate-payers under its jurisdiction, with respect to this question of lavish expenditure of their money; and each succeeding court will be extremely interesting to the public, particularly the very large portion now so deeply engaged in the important question of the good and efficient sewerage of the metropolis.

For some time past, a very large sewer has been in course of construction along Gloucester-road, Paddington. It was ordered at a former court, that a further length of 450 feet of this sewer be built, estimated at £2377. On the question being put that the order be confirmed, Mr. Leslie moved the following amendment:—"That the work for building 450 feet of sewer in Gloucester-road, Paddington, be not done until after a plan, section, and specification, carefully prepared, which must include every expense; and that when those plans, specification, &c., are prepared, that the work be thrown open to public competition, by advertisements in the public papers and the weekly journal called THE BUILDER."

This amendment created an animated discussion, on which the commissioners divided, when there appeared, ayes 6: Sir John Hansler, Messrs. Biffin, Chambers, Fuller, Griffiths, Leslie, Noes 6: Messrs. Cantwell, T. L. Donaldson, Eyre, Gutch, G. S. Smith, and the chairman, E. Willoughby.

\* Francis, who painted the "Dead Christ" in the National Gallery was a goldsmith. "Francis Aurifex" is inscribed upon one of his works.—Quentin Matsys painted "The Mincers," at Windsor castle.

\* Cocherell's I on Architecture at the Royal Academy.