

history that seems almost indispensable for their due appreciation and knowledge.

But that the age we live in presents features in art most striking and original, none but the most bigotted devotee to the antique can deny. The lapse of a few years has effected changes that are astonishing; mechanical contrivance has attained a degree of perfection but little anticipated by our predecessors;—producing an amount of work and quality of performance that throw the operations of simple industry entirely into the background by the comparison.

Invention is the leading feature of the day, celerity its natural concomitant. These features are exhibited in every species of art or science. Literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, engraving, mechanics, engineering,—all are influenced by them, and exhibit a marked character from their presence. Nature herself would appear to be inadequate to the task of providing necessities for our artificial requirements. The horse, most noble, patient, and symmetrical of her bounteous gifts,—the type of swiftness, strength, and beauty,—stands at a discount in competition with the fire-breathing locomotive: the breeze, once deemed sufficient to waft the wealth of the Indies to our recipient shores, now idly beats the spray caused by the revolving paddle of the steam-ship: nay, the very seasons, shorn of their prerogative of producing fruits and flowers when nature so ordained, are anticipated in their intentions and forestalled in their productions by the precociously generative powers of the hot-house and forcing bed.

In the midst of this general progression, architecture keeps pace with the arts around her, and vies with all in the brilliant competition. A few years have much altered the position of this noble profession in public opinion and in real interest. The time is gone by when unbounded patronage was lavished upon one or two favourite individuals, to the exclusion of hundreds,—the dishonour of the nation and the ruin of the art. The cheapness of professional education (much as improvement in it may be necessary), the easy means of access to innumerable and valuable works upon art and science, the opportunities for travel, both foreign and domestic, which the use of steam power has granted to the world, and the consequent intercourse with all nations, and knowledge of their styles and customs, have created within us a large body of artists, highly capable and most enthusiastic, whilst the increase of population, the spread of refinement and knowledge amongst all ranks, and the consequent increase of our requirements, private and public, have produced increased opportunities for architectural display. The favours of patronage, once bestowed upon one, are now by necessity divided amongst many. The principle once tried became unavoidably fixed, and the system of competition became established, which, if still guilty of numerous faults, has at least been the means of encouraging and exciting the spirit of invention amongst us; and the consequence is, that a total reaction in public taste has taken place; and the domestic style, best known by the *soubriquet* of the "Hole in the Wall," seems upon the eve of total extinction.

The merits and demerits of public competition we will not here enter upon; papers without end have been written upon it, and volumes will be filled with it before the system becomes perfected. Be it as it may, however, and admitting numerous abuses, the tongue and pen of disappointment will ever find arguments wherewith to lodge complaints against the fiat of justice, though the voice of public opinion be unanimous in approval of its decision. But so it is with all national institutions. The constitution of our army, navy, law, police, magistrates, all abound with defects which the searching eye of poverty, suffering, and disappointment, detect, magnify, and anathematise, though the remedy be difficult,—sometimes impossible.

The page of history may present a soothing and romantic picture of the perfections of governments long since passed away,—as of Greece, for instance; the lapse of centuries may sober down, reduce, and harmonize all spots of colour too prominent, too glaring in the agreeable composition; but could the ruins of Greece herself speak, how many a tale of penury, neglect, and injustice would they relate

even of the age when her laws, her arms, and her arts were at the zenith of their celebrity—that of Pericles!

The restoration of mediæval architecture in this country is a decided epoch in our history. The great regard now paid to the preservation of ancient works of art, and the increasing anxiety evinced for the elucidation of all matters, archaeological and antiquarian, must free us from the reproach bestowed by Horace upon the Romans for the want of this feeling; nor can it be the less consolatory to ourselves, as knowing that heretofore we have deserved censure for our indifference, to know that so great a nation as the Romans has received it before us.

But respect for the works of our ancestors should not make us forget that due to ourselves; nor does regard for antiquity preserve more than half its value when it degenerates into servile reduplication and imitation of its beauties. It is not possible to improve upon the orders or members that have been handed down to us; be it our care out of the old materials to produce such new combinations as shall suit the wants and requirements of the day we live in, and tell a tale of wealth, talent, and ingenuity to those who may succeed us.

In the practice of Gothic architecture the charge of imitation of style without spirit, the body without the soul, is brought against us. Questions, such as these, are difficult to determine, and should be received with caution. That it has long been the rage to decry modern art none can deny; but that a more enlightened view of things is now taken is equally the fact.

True it is, that the vast cathedrals which adorn the face of Europe are no longer erected, but equally true it is, that they are no longer called for, otherwise we doubt not there are numerous artists both in our own and other countries quite equal to the task of designing them. Indeed, the contrary supposition would seem an absurdity, when constructive science is brought to the height it now fills, and the various details of the style are thoroughly understood.

The various styles of Gothic architecture exhibit the wants and characteristics of their respective periods, and are a record of the feelings and sentiments of their founders. Like the inscriptions of Ancient Egypt, they present a succession of pages of hieroglyphics, mute and blank to the eye of ignorance and presumption, but eloquent, breathing, and inspiring to him who, with awe, admiration, and intelligence, approaches them in the true spirit of inquiry. To copy slavishly is paltry and unartist-like, and useless for the advancement of the art. A new spirit should be infused into our works, symbolical of our peculiar requirements; and in ransacking the stores of antiquity, we should select the beautiful and the useful only, and leave such features as present no other merit than age, to illustrate the time when men and manners were satisfied with them, and desired no more.

The criticism of the world, take it generally, is tolerably unanimous in approval or dissent; and the opinions passed by the most enlightened nations upon the principal remains of antiquity are mostly similar.

Simplicity and purity were the aim of the Greeks, and these qualities they attained to a degree that cannot be exceeded. An innate feeling assures us that their style was perfection, and as soon may we expect to hear that the harmonious common chord of the musical system is discord, as to see the shaft of criticism levelled at their sublime proportions.—On the other hand, the architecture of the Romans does not so well escape the tongue of censure. With them grandeur and richness were the features most sought after, and mistaking size for the former, and a redundancy of ornament for the latter, simplicity and breadth were sacrificed to the indulgence of this ill-judged liberality.

The numerous styles at present in use, at the same time form of themselves a grand feature of the present age; with what success they are employed is another question. We have already alluded to the facilities we enjoy for studying these various styles; we may now add that the multiplicity of our studies and extent of our knowledge is the very reason why our excellence in any one of them in particular is impeded. Necessity is the mother of invention, and it was the limitation

of knowledge with the nations of antiquity, and consequent concentration of energy to one particular subject, that gradually advanced that subject to perfection. Had Greece flourished at the present day, the Parthenon would probably not have been built. Limited in her architectural knowledge to the ponderous grandeur of Egypt, she studied the one idea presented to her until she had brought it to perfection.

Rome followed in her track. More beautiful she could not make the style, but she varied its members, multiplied its uses, and added to it a feature, which, if not her own invention, was certainly her own introduction, a feature destined to change the face of art over the whole world—the arch!

Rome, after giving laws to the world, and attaining an elevation of magnificence that made the splendour of other states indigence by the comparison,—palsied by luxury, began to totter on her throne,—and the removal of the seat of government to Byzantium paved the way for her total ruin.

The Christian churches of Byzantium embraced a style differing widely from that of the pagan temples of Rome. The Greek cross, crowned by a cupola, became the general plan of these erections, and the finishing stroke was given to the ancient architecture of Greece by the descendants of the very nation that invented it! The basilica form now became neglected, and the mosque of St. Sophia, built by Justinian, has served as the model for every minor mosque even to the present day. The wreck of the arts and literature became centred in Constantinople, and from thence their architectural features spread on every side. In Ravenna, Venice, Padua, Ancona, Parma, Piacenza, Verona, Milan, Pavia, and throughout Lombardy, they abound. France contains some fine instances, the Rhenish towns numerous ones, Cologne especially. The arch changed from the simplicity of the Roman semi-circle, exhibited many modifications, and with the other details of the style followed the larger features of plan and effect over Europe, constituting what has since been termed the Lombard style.

Persia has borrowed much from Byzantium; her style is a mixture of certain indigenous principles of her own, with the leading features of her neighbour.

The Arabs, savage and wandering at home, became lovers of art abroad, and the Saracenic remains in Spain, Sicily, Africa, &c., exhibit clearly their derivation from Persia and Byzantium. India, too, under her Mogul princes, in her mosques and mausoleas, offers another tribute to Byzantine omnipresence.

The pointed style, descendant of the same common parent, though crossed by numerous foreign features, and influenced by unnumbered circumstances (the examination and history of which will ever furnish abundant matter for the pen of discussion and inquiry), after attaining an absolute monarchy over the whole of Europe, in its turn succumbed to the neglected architecture of ancient Rome. Her principle of existence, her springs of action were exhausted, and when the societies of freemasons who possessed her secrets, who had nurtured and matured her, were dispersed and destroyed, those secrets of proportion and construction expired with them. Then it was that ignorance, under the assumed pretence of preference, affecting a love for the classic and the antique in art, roused from their long slumber the neglected forms of ancient Rome, and the style of the revival was hailed with rapture by the different nations of Europe.

How fortunate for domestic architecture was this change, the streets of modern cities can best attest. The stride now making in English art must convince all that if a St. Paul's, a Somerset House, a Blenheim, or any other of the specimens that marked the beginning of the last century, are no longer required, the capacity to execute such may still exist. Works of such magnitude are, unfortunately, but seldom demanded, yet, when called for, the response of thorough competency has not been found wanting. Take, for instance, two vast and noble specimens of very opposite styles, now erecting, namely, the Houses of Parliament and St. George's Hall, Liverpool, both an honour to the age and a lasting tribute to their talented designers, and our position must be established.

In the absence, however, of opportunities