

Masaccio, Perugino, and others, till we reach the close of the fifteenth century. And here let me observe, that my object in calling attention to this part of the early history of art, and to the painters of the days which preceded the memorable era we are approaching, is that I think it of the greatest importance that we should understand something of the philosophy of art, and that following it in its successive stages, we may observe how it was influenced by the circumstances through which it passed, and the political powers by whom it was protected, that we may discover, if possible, something at least of what it was that gave it the brilliance and the splendour of the Medicinæ age; and that, by a comparison of circumstances, we may ascertain whether, in the movement now going on, we can recognise similar elements, or hope, by any amount of application or of patronage, to realise once more the mid-day glories of art.

With these few observations, then, we approach that period when art reached its highest pitch of excellence, both with regard to poetry of conception and to the various mechanical means through which it was embodied,—when it rose into a degree of importance inferior to none of those intellectual agencies in which the refined and the educated find so much delight, and by which the masses of the people have been influenced and impressed. And at this point of our investigation we are met by an extraordinary phenomenon in the progress of mental greatness, for we find that the three greatest painters the world ever saw were gathered together—one bright constellation—within the short space of about thirty years; they were, in fact, living and working together at the same time. Need I say that these men were Lionardi da Vinci, M. Angelo, and the prince of painters, Raphael,—men who seem to have been miracles of nature, if I may so speak, and would have been wonders in any age, to whatever pursuits they might have devoted themselves. Of these men it may be said that, like Homer and Shakespeare, they "belong to no particular age or country, but to all time, and to the universe."

The age which gave them birth, and in which they flourished, witnessed some of the mightiest changes to which the human race has ever been subjected. The fermenting activity of the fifteenth century prepared the way for the great dramas that were to be acted at the beginning of the sixteenth: a profound revolution was in course of being effected in the depths of the human heart. The shout of liberty—civil, religious, intellectual liberty—was echoed, and re-echoed, through all ranks of the people; "it was the spring-time of liberty, everywhere beginning to put forth its buds;" or rather, perhaps, it was the rustling of the forest leaves which told of a coming tempest—a tempest that was to strip off every withered leaf, and tear away every sapless branch, that it might make way for the life and vigour and freshness of a new and more lovely spring! And to this feature of the age, as an evidence of the advance that was being made in human culture, rather than to any cause that we find in the history of art itself, must be referred the surpassing excellence to which these great painters attained.

It has been said by a modern writer, that, "we hear of the spirit of the age, but in that wonderful age, *three nightly spirits* were stirring society to its depths;—the spirit of bold investigation into truths of all kinds, which led to the Reformation; the spirit of daring adventure, which led men in search of new worlds beyond the eastern and the western oceans; and the spirit of art, through which men soared even to the 'highest heaven of invention.'" Such was the age which gave birth to these great men; it was upon the crest of such a billow of the sea of time that they were borne to that height of distinction to which succeeding ages have looked up with wonder and admiration!"

T. F. MARSHALL.

NEW LUBRICANT FOR MACHINERY.—Mr. Bryson has proposed a composition for lubricating machinery, consisting of oil, sulphur, and vulcanized caoutchouc—which he considers to possess properties superior to any now in use.

* Remainder dealt with.

THE DUTY OF DISTRICT SURVEYORS. AWARD OF REFERENCE.

WITH regard to a building known as "The Railway Tavern," in the "Waterside," Wandsworth, a letter, signed W. Smith, North-street, Wandsworth, was addressed to the referees in February last, setting forth that, "whereas it is most important to all persons building or concerned in building operations within the limits of the said Act, that all buildings so to be built should be built, and all operations so to be performed should be performed, uniformly in strict accordance with the rules and directions of the said Act; inasmuch as any laxness allowed to one owner and builder in the observance of such rules and directions may tend to give the owner and builder in such case a pecuniary advantage over other owners and builders in the same district or in other districts:—

And whereas I, William Smith, having been informed that the owner and builder of the said "Railway Tavern" has not built the same in conformity with the several particular rules and directions, which are specified and set forth in the several schedules to the said Act; and as the district surveyor denies the truth of such allegation, and asserts in a letter dated 12th instant, that the said houses referred to have been built in a very substantial manner, and the Act has been carried out to the best of my judgment:—

He therefore referred the matter to the referees for their decision.

At a meeting held on the premises, the building

"Was found to be rectangular in plan, except as to a rounded corner at the south-east angle thereof; to consist of three stories above the level of the street, and of a cellar below such level, extending along the eastern half of the building; and to measure from outside to outside of its walls at and above the level of its principal entrance, in length, from east to west, 33 feet, or thereabouts, and in breadth, from north to south, 36 feet, or thereabouts: the rounded corner before-mentioned taking off about 5 feet superficial from the area of the building resulting from these dimensions. The said building was also found to have been built with all its inclosing walls as 'external walls,' but it appeared that a house, which now stands against it on the west side thereof, has been built since the erection of the building in question, whereby the inclosing wall on that side of the said building has become a party-wall, as no separate wall has been built to form the east side of the said house independently of such other wall."

The district surveyor (Mr. Hiscocks) set forth that the materials were good,—that the walls are 1½ brick in thickness throughout, except the top story, which is inconsiderable in height, 8 feet 6 inches, and is built in 1½ brick, except the north and east and west walls. It was considered, during the progress of the work, desirable to avoid any unnecessary weight upon the foundation, and also to avoid a disjoining of the plate or bond for the floor, by having recourse to piers and arches to form recesses in 14-inch work, and thereby lessen weight."

The referees determined that the building is a first-rate of the first or dwelling-house class; "and that, inasmuch as the external walls of the said building on the north and east sides, and the party wall on the west side thereof, from the level of the topmost floor up to the top of such walls, are 9 inches, and not 13 inches in thickness; and inasmuch as all the external walls and the said party wall of the said building, from the top of the footings up to the floor next below the topmost floor, are 13 inches, and not 17½ inches in thickness,—such walls have been built contrary to the rules and directions of schedule C, part 2, of the first-mentioned Act. And we do hereby determine and award that, inasmuch as the said party wall has not been raised to the height of 1 foot and 6 inches above the part of the roof of the said building adjoining thereto, such party wall is also contrary to the rules of schedule D, part 3, of the said first-mentioned Act. And we do hereby further determine and award that, inasmuch as the south and east sides of the said building stand close to a public way, and a certain sign or notice board has been fixed against and upon the south-east rounded corner of the said building, so that the top of such board is more than 18 feet above the level of such public way, the same is also contrary to the rules of schedule E of the said first-mentioned Act."

Costs, 4l. 12s. 8d., to be paid by the district surveyor.

We have received some strong statements, ascribing motives on either side in this case, but confine ourselves to the facts of the award.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY EXHIBITION.

A FILE of letters from architects are before us, complaining of the treatment they have received at the Academy: we have room for only one at this moment:—

Sir,—That there are but "very few men of standing" among the architectural exhibitors at the Academy this season, is true enough, and "pity 'tis 'tis true." It seems, however, to have been rather the Academy's own choice than its misfortune. How others have fared I know not; I can only speak for myself, and say that, after being for some time past a pretty constant exhibitor,—one whose productions have more than once been spoken of with commendation both by yourself and others, all my drawings have been this year neglected, although, not in my own opinion alone, but also that of others, they were superior—one of them very decidedly so in regard to importance and interest of subject,—to any before offered by me: wherefore I was reduced to the humiliating conclusion that those which have been admitted have been so merely because they were found by their sizes to be very convenient *gap-stoppers*, for filling-up blank spaces on the walls. With such not particularly cheering impression it was that I entered the so-called Architectural Room, but it was to quit it again with triumphant scorn, after taking survey of the things there hung up, some of the worst of which are in the very best places, and the best and most interesting thrust into the very worst.

Sir, you have been by very far too mild in your strictures on the Academy's treatment of architecture this season. It is only to your own and other architectural journals that we can look for its claims to be properly asserted, and its rights ably defended; and, believe me, the Academy is not so very thin-skinned as to care for a few flea-bites. Nothing less will do than a most hearty flagellation on its tough and crusty rhinoceros hide.

Sir, it is architecture at the Royal Academy, and not the Royal Academy itself, which it behoves you, as a public organ of the architectural profession, to encourage, to plead for, and to support. Is it, then, too much to hope that you will return to the subject, and protest, in the most unqualified terms, against the truly insulting manner,—I can give it no other name—in which architecture is treated at a Royal Academy professedly established for its encouragement and advancement, as one of the fine arts? If it be unworthy of ranking with the other two, let it be expelled—and the sooner it be turned out the better: but so long as it continues to be there recognised as one of them, let it be treated with common decency, at least, which is more than can now, with any sort of truth, be asserted.

I might sign myself a quondam correspondent of THE BUILDER, but on this occasion you must allow me to take the name of

VINDICATOR.

"The Ruined Spendthrift" (100, A. Rankley: a quiet unpretending embodiment of Goldsmith's text—

"The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claim allowed."

It wants but force to make it a good picture.

19. "The Greenwood Stream," one of those delicious shady nooks for which Mr. Crewick is so justly celebrated: the quietude and coolness that distinguish this picture will refresh the spectator, after the glare of positive colour naturally consequent to an exhibition. Other specimens of the artist's particular style are, "Summer Time" (57), "Early Spring" (150), and "Chequered Shade" (155): the latter positively invites one to walk into the picture and experience the grateful change of its influence, from the crowded and heated exhibition-rooms. 314. "Home, by the Sands" (reminding one of Collins), and 579. "A Squally Day," coast scenes, by the same artist, display as much perfection as those subjects in which he has been used to revel.

25. "Morning Prayers," W. Eley, R.A., a