

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXVI.

OCTOBER, 1901.

No. 1.

AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

BY C. R. ASHBEE, M.A.

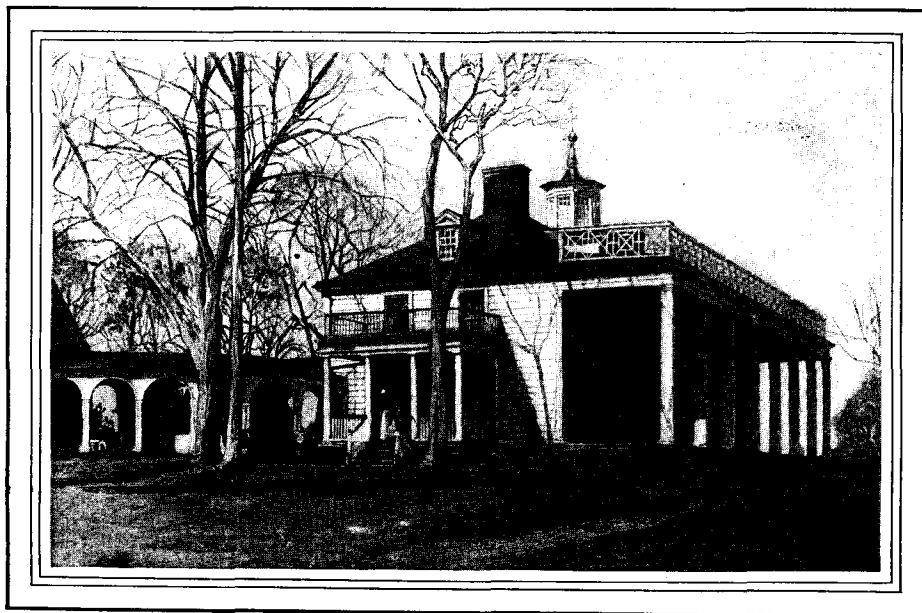
AN ENGLISH ARCHITECT RECORDS HIS IMPRESSIONS OF OUR SUCCESSES AND OUR FAILURES IN THE NOBLEST OF ARTS, AND GIVES HIS VIEWS UPON THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS.

WHEN traveling recently in the United States, on behalf of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty, I made it my endeavor to gather, in all the cities I passed through, some impression of the conscience or sentiment of the community with regard to architecture, rather than to fix in my mind the work or manner of work of any particular architect, old or modern.

The point of view is perhaps essen-

tially that of a member of the craft, but I may be forgiven the belief, which I do most strongly hold, that the dignity and the real greatness of a community are expressed by its buildings; and that those buildings more particularly show forth those nobler and finer qualities of public service, communal responsibility, generous enjoyment of life, and, in the broad sense of the word, worship.

To my thinking, too, an understanding of this by the community implies as



MOUNT VERNON, THE HOME OF WASHINGTON, A FINE TYPE OF AMERICAN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE COLONIAL PERIOD.

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much a reverence for what is beautiful in things that have been handed down in the past, as an appreciation of what is beautiful and new. The great gold dome of Bulfinch, that splendid record of Colonial Boston, and the new Public Library with the Sargent and Puvis de Chavannes frescoes, are safeguarded by the same communal sentiment, and with equal measure of regard.

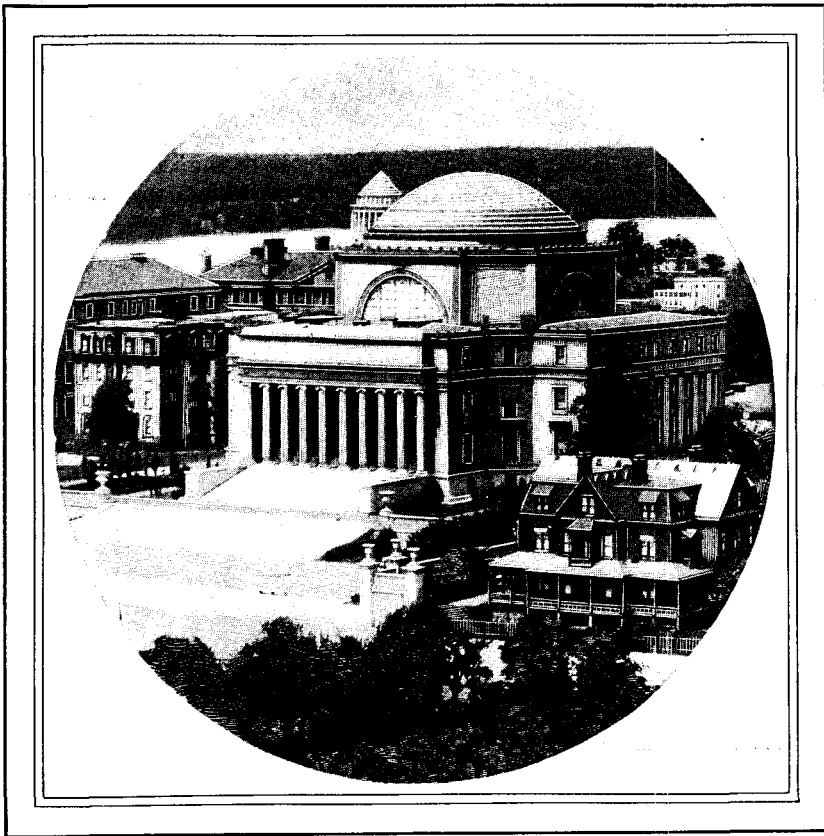
In all the cities and townlets I have passed through, there has always been some characteristic feature, the making or tending of which by the citizens would seem to represent their measure of wisdom or folly, of good taste or indifference, of enlightened forethought or untutored extravagance.

If I were asked to give illustrations, from the older American architecture, of things that have struck me as more exceptionally interesting in one place

or another, and that have received the reverent care of the community, I should quote, from many instances that occur to me, the Gibbs and Wren spires in New York and Providence, Washington's home at Mount Vernon, the Van Cortlandt house in New York, the old church at Farmington, Connecticut, and the staircase in the City Hall, New York. For the most part, these are illustrations, not only of the good taste of the original builders, but also of the appreciative care of the citizens of our own day.

THE LACK OF ARCHITECTURAL CONGRUITY.

But cases occur also to show how the forces that make for good or evil in modern American architecture and in the amenities of civic life find expression in other ways, or come into direct conflict with one another. In Phila-



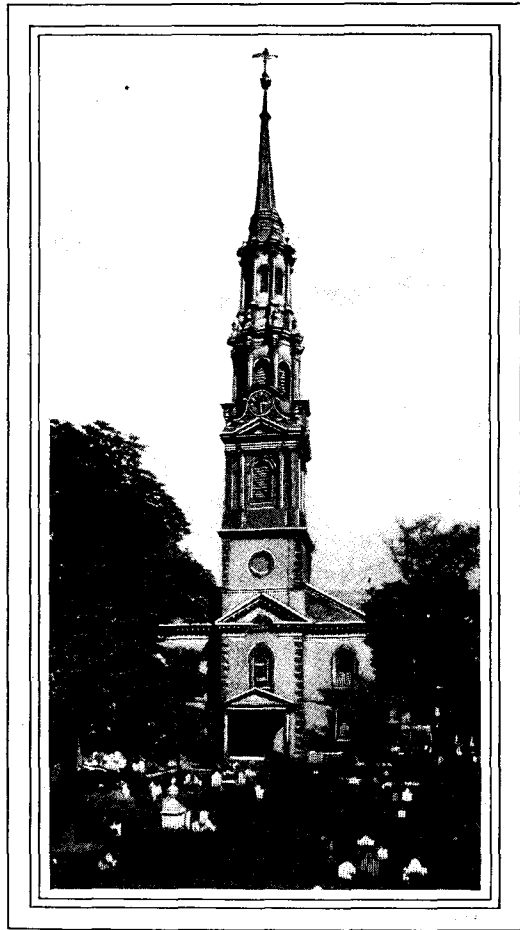
THE LIBRARY OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, A BEAUTIFUL AND DIGNIFIED SPECIMEN OF MODERN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

From a copyrighted photograph by Sidman, New York.

delphia they have, in the old State House, one of the most majestic and beautiful buildings of the eighteenth century that is to be found anywhere in England or America. A loving reverence and care has characterized the guardianship of this building; but, like a false note in a fine chord, they have allowed to be built, close by, a commercial erection of many stories that has destroyed all scale and all proportion in the State House. I have no objection personally to the steel tower, or skyscraper. If skilfully handled, and if set or grouped with others of the new type, it appears to me to fulfil a need in the modern industrial system, and that need it is the duty of the architect to supply; but I hold it to be equally the duty of the community to stipulate that one need shall not stifle another.

The great new City Hall in Philadelphia, on the other hand, is to my thinking an architectural failure, and one does not feel the irksomeness of the neighboring towers over which the worthy Father Penn is vainly trying to catch a glimpse of his prolific city. I even confess to a sneaking kindness for a certain neighboring skyscraper, an immense inverted chocolate box, upon the top of which the father of his country seems at certain evening moments eager to climb. It is such an honest chocolate box, so frankly ugly, and, owing to its frankness, almost deserving the name of architecture.

In Pittsburg, where the same blunder is about to be committed, if indeed the mischief has not already been done, stands one of the finest of America's modern buildings, Richardson's Court-house, which I believe to be his masterpiece. Inspired, perhaps, by the towers of Normandy or Romanesque France, the architect has seized the opportunity given him by the splendid site which Pittsburg affords at the junction of the two rivers, and the result is a noble building of which the city should be proud. When I was there, however, schemes were on foot for building steel



ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL, NEW YORK, BUILT IN 1764, ONE OF THE BEST REMAINING EXAMPLES OF COLONIAL CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

towers, after the manner of the Philadelphia chocolate box; and as the indifference of the present generation of Pittsburg citizens towards the things that affect the amenities of life in their city is extraordinary, Richardson's masterpiece, instead of being placed in the midst of an open space, a thing much needed in the center of Pittsburg, will probably be sunk, before long, in a cavity of steel towers, and thus, to all intents and purposes, annihilated.

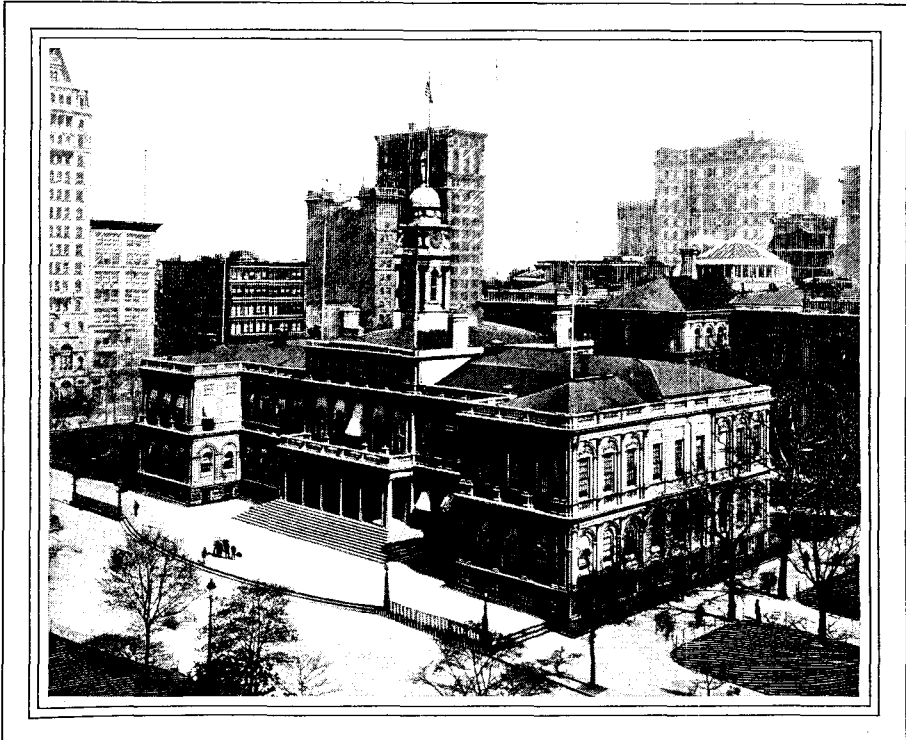
In New York the forces that make for architectural nobility, and those which, for want of a better word, I would call anarchy, stand in still sharper contrast. To my thinking, the most beautiful thing in the city is Washington Square, where the great triumphal arch, screened in its green leafage, is set

against the low, horizontal, red brick line of Dutch houses. May the guardians of the Sailors' Snug Harbor long protect them! But already, like jagged teeth in a broken comb, restless modern individual structures of little merit are shooting their way up over the cornice line. The stately Dutch tradition, which should be one of the chief glories of New York, is a thing the city can ill

what might have been obtained, had some comprehensive plan been adopted, or some municipal restriction as to height been enforced.

CHICAGO'S GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

It is, perhaps, to Chicago that we shall have to turn for a solution of the problem of the skyscraper. Inasmuch as her marsh bottom has necessitated her



THE NEW YORK CITY HALL, BUILT IN 1803-1812, A FINE BUILDING WHOSE EFFECT IS SADLY MARRED BY ITS INCONGRUOUS SURROUNDINGS.

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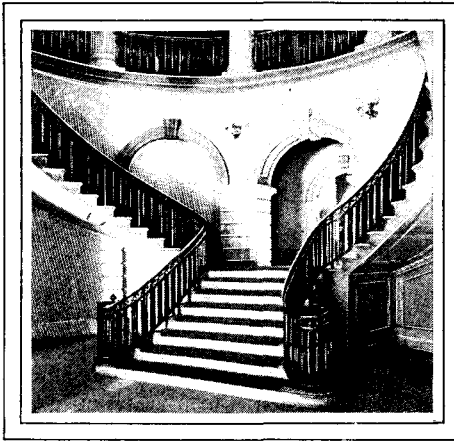
afford to lose, but it is a thing to which she appears recklessly indifferent.

When we look at the planning of an architectural unit like Washington Square—it is planned just in the same way as the great aristocratic estates in an English city were planned at the end of the eighteenth century—and compare it with the haphazard grouping of Fifth Avenue, we appreciate what is implied in the term anarchy. The new University Club is a noble building, so are several of the fine residences above and below it; but the whole effect of Fifth Avenue is insignificant beside

challenge of the problem—for a seventy foot foundation compels height—so the magnificent foreshore of the great sea of Michigan gives her the opportunity for architectural perspective. To the architect, it is a matter of vital importance that this Rialto should be preserved as the essential feature of the great city. It is interesting to note, too, how the style of the Chicago designers is being molded by these things, by steel framing, massed enrichment of terra cotta, simplicity of form, and skilful handling of surface decoration. It is impossible to regard the detail in Mr.

Sullivan's work—the doors of some of his tombs—as other than a peculiar outcome of the Chicago spirit—restless, individual, strong without hesitation, grand in conception, often superficial in execution, and, it must be admitted—though, perhaps, as much in honor as in rebuke—sometimes a little wanting in refinement.

How gladly, as an architectural judge, one would intrust the replanning of the great city to Mr. Sullivan and some of his colleagues and pupils; for then, doubtless, we should see introduced that sense of unity which the city lacks, and which makes her greatness, from an architectural point of view, seem so little. I believe it will come some day, a replanning of Chicago with the lake shore as the keynote; but not till the discov-



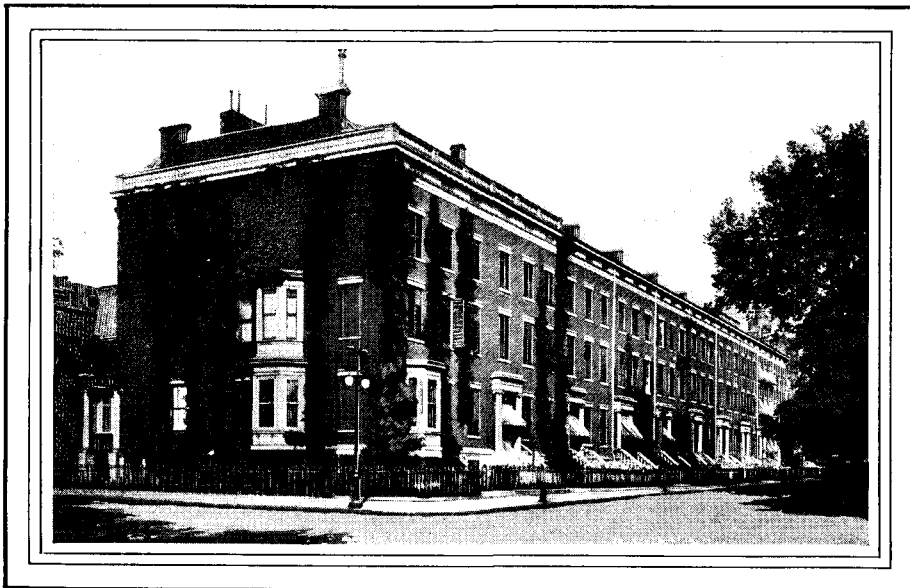
THE GRACEFUL OLD STAIRWAY IN THE NEW YORK CITY HALL.

From a photograph by Underhill, New York.

ery is made how reckless, how wasteful, how uneconomical, is the present disposition of the streets and buildings. My impression, when studying the conflict of skyscraper with skyscraper, railway with street, light with light, or even with darkness, was that, given certain areas of population and housing, almost double the accommodation could

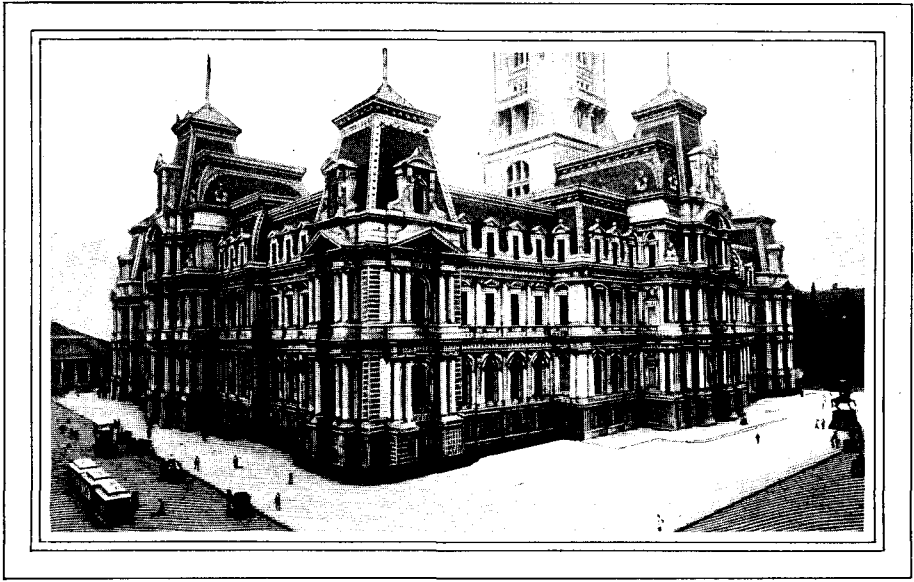
have been obtained, with more light, more air, more dignity, and great open spaces to boot, if there had been some master mind to guide the whole.

It may be said that this anarchy is the expression of democracy in architecture. Perhaps so, but democracy can also speak in other moods; for it allows itself to be led, if the right leaders come along. Look at the dome of the State House in Providence; or the art gallery



"THE LOW, HORIZONTAL RED BRICK LINE OF DUTCH HOUSES" ON WASHINGTON SQUARE, NEW YORK, WHICH MR. ASHBEY CONSIDERS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF NEW YORK.

From a photograph by Underhill, New York.



THE PHILADELPHIA CITY HALL, A HUGE AND COSTLY BUILDING WHICH IS NOT AN ARCHITECTURAL SUCCESS.

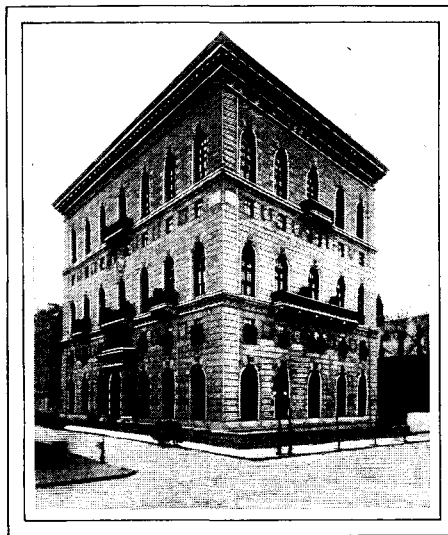
about to be built in Eden Park, Cincinnati; or the libraries in Washington and at Columbia College in New York. There the right people would seem to have been at the helm, and all these are architectural expressions of which America may be proud.

SOME FAILURES AND SOME SUCCESSES.

As an English architect who stands outside the professional pale, and whose judgment is therefore an unbiased one, I would ask those donors yet to come—and they are many—and those committees who have yet to choose, to compare with the buildings I have just mentioned certain others which have sought, but, to my thinking, failed, to express what is best in modern American life. Compare with them the tasteless Memorial

Hall at Harvard, or the helter skelter buildings at Cornell, or the new university at Chicago, that most lamentable of failures in collegiate building. The difference is surely at once evident; and behind the superficial difference lies a deeper one, something in the nature of the designer, in the committee of selection, in the manner of the contract, in the character of the donor; some streak in the stone, somewhere, which has made the building in each case, as the French would say, *pas arrivé*.

It is inevitable that the larger public buildings in the great cities should, in a short essay like this, first challenge one's attention; but the smaller, the more personal creations of individuals, may often collectively give expression to that character, that dignity, that worship of the community, with



THE UNIVERSITY CLUB, NEW YORK, ONE OF THE MANY FINE BUT MUTUALLY INHARMONIOUS BUILDINGS ON FIFTH AVENUE.

which I started. Many illustrations of these might be given, as, for instance, the quiet rows of red brick houses with the white marble steps and lintels in Philadelphia, now fast disappearing to make way for much less interesting work; the many beautiful old and modern buildings in Germantown, the most beautiful of American suburbs;

building, both productive of good and, in some instances, first class work. The one I should call the more distinctly American; the other I should call the Traditional. Neither of the terms are altogether applicable, but they may serve to convey the idea. The American boldly accepts steel as a prime element in architectural construction. It is



INDEPENDENCE HALL (THE OLD STATE HOUSE), PHILADELPHIA, ONE OF THE FINEST EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BUILDINGS TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE.

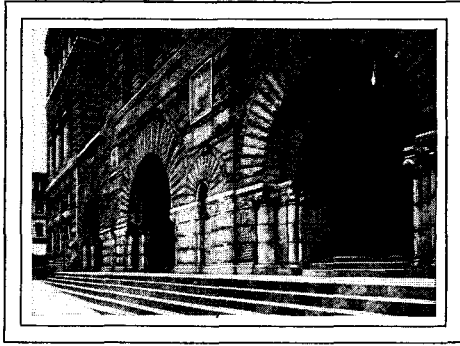
the old timber houses in the New England towns—all these speak their own, peculiar language, a finer one, to my thinking, than all the grand houses by the parks of Chicago and St. Louis. The people that lived in them somehow evolved a finer life than the nervous, restless rich men of our own day.

TWO TENDENCIES IN ARCHITECTURE.

To me, two main movements appear to be in progress in modern American

seeking about for original forms; it is often given to extravagance and eccentricities; but it shows in its best work a conscious absorption of the older forms of Europe, which it handles under newer American conditions.

The Traditional appears to me to start with an instinctive bias of an entirely different nature. It frankly links itself with the methods and forms of the earlier architecture, of American methods and forms that have their origin in England, and that seem to enter into and



THE ENTRANCE OF THE COURT HOUSE AT PITTSBURG, A FINE AMERICAN ADAPTATION OF ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE.

come out of national life, like the language or the literature. This traditional movement is antagonistic to the pedantic and conventional forms of the Beaux Arts, which it regards as an ingraft or extraneous growth in America; and it handles Gothic and classic forms, though preferably the latter, with great skill and taste.

I set neither of these movements above the other, and I confess to a certain impatience when I hear the leaders of either, among whom I am proud to number some personal friends, decrying the other's work.

Architectural forms are in themselves external; they are easy of access and can be understood by the passer by; they appeal to individual taste, and he who runs may read. But there is in the language of architecture, the spoken word of stone, also a philosophic idea, which is not so easy of understanding, and which often those who speak the best only unconsciously express. To my thinking, these two American movements are the exponents of two distinct philosophic ideas. Each in its way lays its finger on that greatest of the problems of the present century, the problem of mechanical production—mechanical production, that is, understood not as a practical, but as an ethical, question; mechanical production considered no longer in the light of what we can and might produce, but what we ought or ought not to produce.

THE QUESTION OF THE MACHINE IN ART.

The close of the nineteenth century has seen both in Europe and in America, but in America especially, a develop-

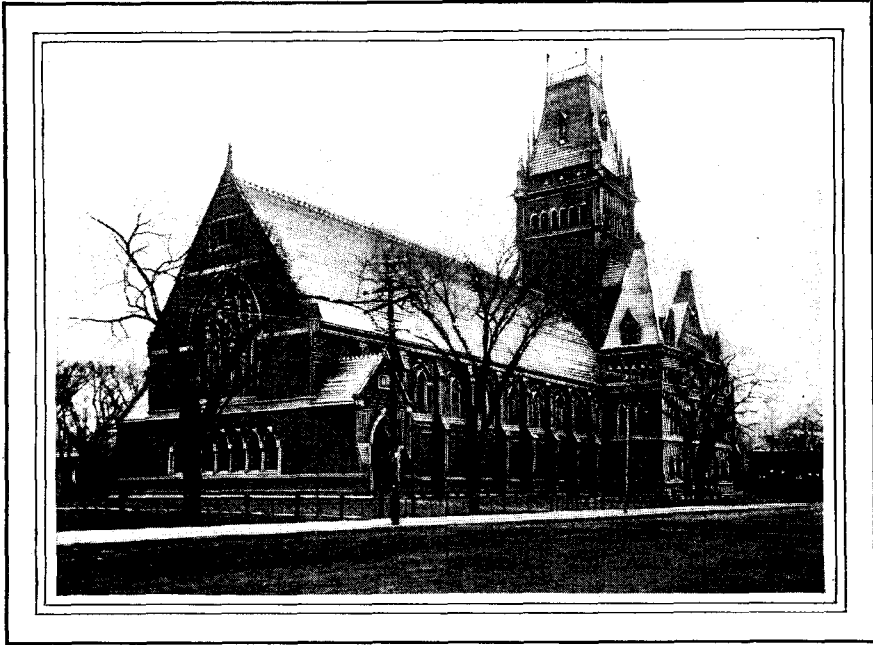
ment of machinery that has made the production of the means of further producing so easy that we wonder, as when watching the snowball gathering force and swiftness as it rolls down the hill, what the end will be. The question, however, which has not yet been fairly put, is, how far the millions of things produced by this ease are things the community really wants, or how far they represent a hitherto unconsidered waste of human life and human material. The challenging question of the century is to be: "What shall be the limitations of the machine?"

To my thinking, both schools of architecture accept the challenge, and, however hesitatingly, each suggests an answer. The traditional school says: "We stand upon the past, upon the methods and forms that have in them a soul whose expression is already proven. We seek to encourage and uphold the human individuality that made the greatness of the architecture which we accept as our model. The machine, which has entered into the minutiae of building, has destroyed this. Though we accept the machine as a necessary evil, as artists we accept it with suspicion. We consider that our work, when at its best, is the work of human individuality, the work of many different craftsmen, each with a soul and an expressive fancy of his own. The carver, the mason, the plasterer, the modeler, the smith, the painter, the maker of glass and textiles—all these folk are to speak together and in the manner of the past, subject to the general direction of the architect or designer; and they are to speak with one voice, which shall be a modern voice." In brief, theirs is the gospel of the English arts and crafts movement led by Morris, Burne-Jones, and the Pre-Raphaelites, as it expresses itself in the conditions of modern architecture in the United States.

The more exclusively American movement—I wish some one would supply a better name, for we share the same principles in England—speaks, to my thinking, in a very different way. "Human individuality," it says, "is the objective with us, just as it is with you traditional people, but human individuality understood in the sole artistic creativeness of

the architect. The machine has destroyed the handicraft; let us make no more to do about it, but accept what appears to be the inevitable. Let us throw aside suspicion of the machine, and frankly use it as our tool in every detail. Our work, when at its best, shall be the work not of a number of souls

texture, like a great many other things, really hinges. When the secretary of the Boston Arts and Crafts Society showed me examples of the Merrimac pottery, and numberless other beautiful and individual things, he said: "We understand this arts and crafts movement as an economic movement, and that is



THE HARVARD MEMORIAL HALL, AN AMBITIOUS BUT INEFFECTIVE AND UNSATISFACTORY SPECIMEN OF MODERN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

with an expressive fancy of their own, but of one master soul only, who shall play upon that marvelously complex instrument, the machine in modern industry, and make it produce a work of art—actually make this machine, despised of artists, produce a work of art! We even go farther. Let us, we say, turn out of our way to drive the machine into new channels, such as in the development of subtle patterns, the reduplication of parts, the sentiment of proportion; in all channels where we can obtain a result that shall show the direct and indirect impress of our individuality as designers upon the stuff we handle."

And the philosophy of it in either case is surely evident. It turns upon the limits of human individuality in the social order, a question upon which archi-

how it interests those of us who are not ourselves producers."

And there, most assuredly, we have the key to the whole question. Economics nowadays are bounded no longer by the horizon of exchange; people have frankly accepted the Ruskin definition of value. The human question enters, and both American schools of architecture recognize this. To my thinking, the work of the men of either school is great only in so far as they instinctively express their recognition of it in their creations.

Perhaps some day we shall see a fusion of the American and the traditional; when that day comes we shall realize a community, let us hope, not only creatively great in its present, but loyal and generous to the history and beauty of its past.

THE BUCCANEERS.

BY JOHN R. SPEARS.

THE BLOODY HISTORY OF THE SEA WOLVES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY—HOW MORGAN AND OTHER FAMOUS FREE-BOOTERS TERRORIZED THE SPANISH MAIN, LOOTING TREASURE FLEETS, SACKING CITIES, AND MASSACRING GARRISONS.



ABOUT the middle of the seventeenth century—the precise date is not recorded—one Pierre le Grand, with twenty eight companions, set sail in a big row-boat from the island of Haiti, bound on a piratical cruise.

It is likely that all Le Grand's men were natives of France. They had been living in Tortuga and Haiti, as many Frenchmen were then living in the wilds of North America, being hunters, fishermen, and backwoods farmers, all in one. But they had grown weary of the tameness of even the hunter's life in the mountains, and, with nothing better than an open boat to carry them, they went cruising in the narrow waters between Cuba and Haiti in search of Spanish merchant ships. For many days they ranged to and fro, or rolled idly on the choppy sea, seeing no vessel until they were well abreast of Cape Tiburon, at the southwest corner of Haiti, when, one afternoon, the great square topsails of a Spanish man of war rose above the horizon. To the well trained eyes of Pierre le Grand it was plain, even before her hull appeared, that this war-ship carried from thirty to forty cannon and a crew of three hundred and fifty or four hundred men. He knew, also, that the ship was from Porto Bello or Caracas, homeward bound, with silver, gold, and pearls on board to the value of hundreds of thousands of pieces of eight. It is everywhere agreed that no piratical story, whether fact or fiction, can command respect unless it has something about "pieces of eight" in it. A piece of eight meant a silver coin equal to the value of eight reals; in other

words, a silver dollar. But that doesn't sound nearly so well as "pieces of eight."

The thought of all the pieces of eight represented by the cargo of the war ship was maddening to Pierre le Grand and his men, after their long waiting; and when one desperado proposed that they attack her, the whole gang shouted delirious approval. It was sheer madness for twenty nine men in an open boat to hope to overcome four hundred on a man of war, but the pirates swore to board her and fight till dead, invoking eternal torment on those who failed to keep the oath.

The lookouts on the war vessel sighted the boat, and reported it to the admiral, thinking its appearance of sufficient importance to be brought to his attention. He was a proud and scornful man.

"What then, must I be afraid of such a pitiful thing as that is?" he said, when they warned him that the boat was probably a pirate craft. "No, though she were a ship as big and as strong as mine!"

As the sun went down, the admiral and his officers ate their dinner and then, having cleared the table, began to while away the evening by playing cards. In the mean time the pirates had eaten their scanty supper, and, with muffled oars, came rowing to the war ship. Each man had a well whetted sword and a carefully loaded pistol, save only the surgeon. He was

