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BUILDING.

Ill-judged was the allegory which placed the statues of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture as the mourners round the tomb of Michael Angelo. We do not pay due honour to Architecture if we consider her as the sister, and therefore the equal, of the imitative arts: she is their queen.—SIR FRANCIS PALGRAVE.

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The Architect.

ARCHÆOLOGICAL SUPERSTITION.



REFRESHING it no doubt is in these dull days of autumn, when even archæological research is perforce a somewhat languid process, to hear, or even to read of, the sparkling language of our venerable friend, Mr. JOHN HENRY PARKER, when he observes, as at Colchester, that the theories of some other learned person are "absolute nonsense," or that still another industrious writer is "so insane as to suppose" something which he does not consider to be quite correct. But it cannot be denied that the antiquarian views of the present day, however far they have advanced in this respect from

the old standard, are still not infrequently so provoking as to be well deserving of that emphatic and impatient contradiction which nothing but a good scolding can, even in science, adequately represent. It is the greatest charm of archæology that distance lends enchantment to every view; and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, if enthusiastic minds should occasionally plunge gladly in search of a novel sensation into the waves of wonder, and swim exultant amidst the bracing—or possibly enervating—influences of the element of dreams. To such joyous and facile hypothesists the somewhat brusque criticisms of Mr. PARKER are possibly not always pleasant; but they are unquestionably invigorating. A story is told of one of our foremost authors on the architecture of the past, that on one occasion—but only one—he was induced to read an elaborately prepared lecture to just such an audience as might have assembled the week before last at Colchester. He had something quite new to advance, or he would not have taken the trouble he did. His arguments were carefully developed, and had all the appearance of being convincing to his hearers. He concluded amidst the customary applause. But upon the subsidence of this grateful clamour, there stood up the clergyman of the parish, or some such local oracle, who serenely intimated that he had a single remark to offer. It was this—*He could assure the lecturer that he was entirely wrong.* That was enough; there was an end of the discussion. When our learned author therefore is invited nowadays to deliver a lecture to a "mixed audience," he disposes of the request off hand by reciting this little anecdote. Possibly he may nevertheless feel that the rebuke which he can now afford to laugh at was not without its salutary effect. But, at any rate, when gentlemen of research belonging to what we may call the inferior orders are found to air their speculations as freely as they sometimes do in the presence of their betters, there cannot be a shadow of a doubt that such a CARL MARTEL as Mr. PARKER is a powerful influence for good.

If, however, the reader would know what extremity of superstition and crass ignorance the sciolistic mind is still capable of exhibiting in the contemplation of the wonders of ancient building, let him attend to the following example. An evening lecturer—who is very likely *not* contradicted by the local clergyman—presents to the comparatively intelligent audience of a provincial assembly-hall not very far from the metropolis a discourse upon the Great Pyramid. Now we have been for a good many years accustomed to think that everybody knows all about the Great Pyramid. No doubt we have read of certain mystical computations, professing to discover, in the accidental proportions of the stonemason, the occult mysteries of the astrologer and the geometrician; but ingenuity is known to be able to accomplish so many marvels of this kind, only to laugh in its sleeve at one's astonishment, that we have long ago induced the ghosts of such philosophies to rest in peace even in the Great Pyramid, by the simple process of taking no account of them. But still, at a time when an Englishman is found to lay a bet that the earth is as flat as a pancake, and to move the courts of law for the recovery of the money which he had staked and lost, perhaps after all the description we have to quote of the Great Pyramid may be less astounding than amusing. What may confer upon the case still a little more interest is the circumstance that the whole discourse is actually reported at some length, and with great approbation, in the columns of "the local press," and this less than a fortnight ago.

The Great Pyramid at Gizeh has been supposed to be intended for a mausoleum; but this is altogether a mistake. True, there is a sarcophagus in what is falsely called "the king's chamber;" but it was never occupied, or meant to be, by either king or conqueror, and was, in fact, designed and put in its place for the sole purpose of furnishing a standard of measures to the millennial world. The architect of the Great Pyramid was MELCHISEDEC—the fact being recorded by HERODOTUS. The spot on which it stands is the very central point of the world's habitable surface, America and Australia included; and it is pointed out to be "a most extraordinary thing" that the architect should have so intimately known those continents

so long before they were discovered. This leads to the recollection of the fact that there are just four structures which are recorded to have been built under direct Divine inspiration, namely, the Ark of NOAH, the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Temple of SOLOMON. The Great Pyramid, in a word, adds one more to the list. The four structures named were each and all designed on the system of "the sacred cubit," and it has been hitherto supposed that they stood alone in this respect. It is now found that the Great Pyramid also is built on the same system; and inasmuch as the sacred cubit measures exactly twenty-five of our inches, this truly wonderful result is brought about, that we have only to read off its proportions in English inches and the entire history of the Christian dispensation is opened up to us on the convenient scale of one inch to a year. Four thousand and forty years ago this prophetic vision was the true and only motive of the Egyptian builders, or rather of MELCHISEDEC, in constructing the Great Pyramid. This is what is alluded to in the Scripture phrase that "the LORD set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt." And the reason why at the present day the discernment of the prophecy comes about as it has done is because the scepticism of these latter ages has at length reached a point at which nothing short of a fresh revelation can counteract its progress.

Such minor marvels as the correction of the computation of the distance of the sun (which, instead of being 95,000,000 of English miles as we were taught at school to believe, has recently been proved to be precisely what the mystical measures of the Pyramid make it out to be, namely 92,161,000), our rapt lecturer dismisses with the simple if curt reflection that MELCHISEDEC "knew a great deal more about astronomy than all the astronomers of the present day put together;" but the exposition of the prophetic chronology requires him to go a little more into detail. Fortunately he is enabled to begin at the very dawn of history. On the northern face of the Pyramid there is a descending passage; and it terminates in a deep chamber with an unfinished floor. This passage signifies the first dispensation after the Dispersion of Mankind; the deep chamber indicating the "abomination of idolatry" into which that dispensation descended, and the want of finish in the floor suggesting plainly enough "the bottomless pit" as the appropriate conclusion of it all. There is, however, a small doorway on one side, at the lower end of this passage. The position of this important opening reads off at 985 inches from the entrance; which is so exactly in accordance with accepted dates that it must rejoice all of us to learn that measurement is not found to be here corrective of received opinions in a question which at any rate has been open to doubt. From this "doorway of escape," however, another passage ascends. This is the Mosaic dispensation; and it answers to the scale to a nicety. At the precise point on this line which agrees by scale with the commencement of the Christian era, the corridor suddenly expands into the form of a capacious and grand gallery, the appropriateness of which is manifest. This commences at a distance of 1,542 inches from the little doorway of escape, which again is chronologically correct by scale. The duration of the Christian dispensation becomes now the next question, and perhaps the most interesting of all. We hope it has been correctly measured, and we will respectfully ask some Egyptologist reader to scale it off for us; but at any rate it is here set down at 173 feet and 5 inches, which will be found to correspond with the coming year 1831.

This is, no doubt, somewhat short notice, but with Dr. CUMMING still amongst us, it is perhaps not quite fair to complain. What future fate is now reserved for us after the expiring of this brief probation of five years, the lecturer does not appear to know, and perhaps it is as well he should not; but the indications of date pertaining to the leading events of Christian times past are still as clear as the rest. At precisely 33 inches from the commencement of the gallery of our faith, there is "a narrow way of descent to the bottomless pit," and of course of ascent therefrom. What this indicates needs not to be explained; but it is almost a greater wonder when we discover the fact that the mouth of this sad sideways was at first covered with a ponderous stone, which has manifestly been forced outwards with great violence. No doubt there are many later incidents which the lecturer had duly remarked upon; but those who are accustomed to the newspaper reports of such learned discourse are well aware that after a certain amount of patient stenography has been achieved, and a climax attained, there are to be perceived unmistakable indications of weariness in the record; and this is how we explain the circumstance that the only other event in Christian history which happens to be mentioned is the Battle of Waterloo. Precisely at 1,815 inches from the beginning there occurs in the gallery a sudden rise of the floor, three feet in height. Why this should be exactly three feet, or rather 36 inches, is not said; but we will respectfully hazard the suggestion that it has something to do with the great Exhibition of 1851. In other words, it seems not unlikely that the vertical rise is itself to be included in the scale measurement, which would of course give us 36 years more before the overthrow of Christianity as we suppose arrives. At any rate, the reason why the date of the DUKE of WELLINGTON'S victory comes into the record is because that event was "the destruction of the French revolutionary attempt to supersede the Christian chronology and Sabbath." Lastly, when at the end of the 1,881 inches, the gallery of Christianity comes at length to a termination, although we may not read the prophecy, the fact is this—that the floor still passes onward through a narrow opening "to further times," showing at least that the close of the Christian dis-

pensation according to the prophecies of MELCHISEDEC is not the end of the world.

We do not feel that an apology is due to our readers for having set forth at such length this extravagant farrago of sheer absurdity; for, although there may be some who can tell us more than we even care to know of the source from which a provincial lecturer has derived all this ingenious fetishism, to be served up at second or third hand at so many guineas per evening, it is only right that others should have an opportunity of seeing for themselves how the wildest superstitions yet cling about the architectural remains of the ancient world, and how the mass of commonplace people, even in England, are ready to receive them as edifying and indeed scientific information. We need scarcely remark that it is not the Great Pyramid alone which is made the subject of such spurious philosophy.

The direct mischief that is done by this kind of foolish discourse may not be great. None but uncultured people can be supposed capable of tolerating the gross childishness of such a lecture as we have quoted, and far more the palpable imposition practised upon their common sense. But indirectly the effect is more serious. In these school-board days, if the schoolmaster is to be permitted to walk abroad wearing the garments of necromancy so undisguisedly, it is high time at least that a protest should be entered against the repetition, to say nothing of the permanent record, of the inane twaddle in public newspapers. The time has surely come when even country editors should know more of architecture than this. It is one of the historical jokes of the Renaissance that an estimable Spanish ecclesiastic named VILALPANDA went so far in his enthusiasm for classic art as to declare that the Five Orders were first designed for the Temple of SOLOMON, all one above another, and all drawn by the Divine hand itself. The interpretation of the Great Pyramid, as we have recounted it, is much worse than this; and when it comes to be delivered four hundred years later, and within a few miles of London—indeed, quite as likely, in London itself—it is perhaps not to be regretted that the year 1881 promises to bring us a change.

MY HOUSE "IN" LONDON.

CHAPTER VI.—TOPS AND BOTTOMS.

KITCHEN furniture is nearly always sure to be of sound design, whether it be old or new. Take the simplest deal kitchen table, whether circular and three legged or oblong and four legged, it is manifest that both are made with the object of producing an article that shall combine the most serviceable of its kind with the least outlay, and the result is that the ordinary kitchen table is a satisfactory piece of furniture incapable of giving offence. It assumes nothing; it does the work it is put to do with a steady endurance beyond praise. If it gets dirty it does not hesitate to show its condition, and can be easily scrubbed clean without being any the worse for its ablutions. Indeed, to have by your side every morning a freshly scrubbed deal table, is a luxury in the appropriation of labour those only can fully appreciate who have enjoyed. My attention was first directed to this some years ago when on a visit to a certain nobleman, distinguished among his set for certain art proclivities. I remember well seeing his white deal drawing table brought to his room by a footman every morning, newly scrubbed, looking the very beau ideal of freshness and cleanliness. This table was every whit as plain as the plainest of kitchen tables, but somewhat lighter. There was always a plain easel of light wood (possibly deal) close by, and a cane chair; and, strange as it may sound, these pieces of furniture, so far from looking out of place on a Persian carpet, and surrounded by art treasures and valuable furniture, had from, I suppose, their very simplicity and the nature of their use—for art, say what we will, is the ultimate polish of man—a value not comparable with intrinsic worth. Nor does the charm of kitchen furniture end with the table. The Windsor chair and the dresser are designed and constructed on the same wise principle—a principle so little understood by modern architects—of the greatest utility at the least cost. Few of us can have watched with care the progress, as it is called, of modern design without noting that the failures are always or nearly always the result of pretension. In our domestic furniture and decorations Mrs. A. is determined, as it is vulgarly called, "to take the shine" out of Mrs. B., and only knows the one vulgar way of doing it, namely, by spending more money than her neighbour. In modern architecture, as may be seen in our insurance offices, shop fronts, hotels, &c., the same vulgar rivalry is at work, and thus architects too often become the slavish fools of a trade advertising mania. Now I am venturesome enough to affirm that the greatest-utility-at-the-least-cost principle is the only sure and certain road to beauty whether in furniture or architecture if, that is, we once thoroughly understand what is meant by the words *utility* and *cost*. To learn this we had better study in the bottoms and tops of houses—the basement and the attics—than in any of the rooms where guests are supposed to penetrate, and where the vulgar desire of exhibiting money's worth seems to have grown into a necessity of existence. Moreover, it is worth remarking that the commonplace kitchen and scullery furniture of to-day is to all intents and purposes much the same as it has been for centuries past, the tables, the dresser, the hanging shelves, the plate-rack, the three-legged stool are really of mediæval design, and the Windsor

chair is the only instance of the invention of modern times, having now in great part superseded the fifteenth century rush bottom chair still occasionally seen in cathedrals and churches. The Windsor chair was an innovation supported by genuine merit. Its shaped wood seat is quite as comfortable as the rush seat and infinitely more cleanly; while in construction it is not only stronger than the older example, but sizes being equal it has the advantage of being lighter. The Windsor chair may be of *higher price* than the other, but considering its superiority in point of cleanliness and durability it may yet fairly be regarded as the *least costly* of the two. The dresser is the direct descendant of the lord's buffet, and its tiers of shelves recall a certain sumptuary law of the middle ages which prescribed the number of shelves for certain ranks, the largest number going with the highest title. At the present day, if measured mediævally by dresser-shelves, the majority of ladies would be found to have assumed the rank, at least, of a countess. Dressers in the middle ages, or at any rate in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, were movables. We can still see in cottages and farm-houses the movable three-shelved dresser. In these examples, however, there are usually no cupboards, but in their place is a broad open shelf a few inches above the floor. This arrangement I like for its cleanliness sake, inasmuch as a movable dresser enables one not only thoroughly to purge the dresser—for joints of woodwork occasionally open and fill with dirt do what we will—but to wash and otherwise purify the wall behind it. To some extent this may be done with a fixed dresser, if the wall be not shut up by a wood backing. A dresser is like a plate rack, the more open it is the better. Again, if a fixture, the top shelf should not be much more than five feet from the ground. "What the eye don't see,"—we all know the saying, and in a kitchen or scullery, shelves whose tops are out of sight are pretty sure to be thick with dust, dead flies, and other impurities. My dresser is carried the whole length of the kitchen, the top shelf is 5 feet 2 inches from the floor, and although its mediæval rank is thus reduced, there being only two shelves, yet its cleanliness is established, made all the easier too by the shelves being arranged to slide in and out. Drop handles to dresser drawers are a mistake, indeed, drop handles to any drawers are objectionable. In the first place they are noisy; then the handle has a habit if suddenly pulled to leave the sockets. Box wood knob handles screwed in to box wood plates at the back of the drawer front, or hard white earthenware knobs with iron screws, such as are commonly used on cheap chests of drawers, are every way to be preferred to the drop handles as more durable and more convenient. The china or earthenware is, however, liable, under careless or impatient usage, to be chipped, cracked and broken, and therefore, although boxwood would incur the greatest immediate outlay it may yet fairly be regarded as the *least costly*. In the offices of large houses, especially country houses, there are a vast number of articles or movables, more or less of the nature of furniture, that my readers will no doubt be able to mind, all of which are artistically satisfactory. As an example, among many I may mention the common beer barrel and barrel cradle or stand, which are much used "props" to the whole idyllic school of painters, and very rightly so, for taken together they have nearly as much drawing in them as a fishing boat.

If we leave the bottom of the house and go to the top we find that the law of economy reigns above as below, and prevents the pretence that turns furniture to folly. Nurseries are liable to invasions on the part of your friends and neighbours, and are therefore not under this law. The baby, especially if it be the first, is turned into a show, and the nursery must of necessity be a show-room. The sensible wicker cradle costs too little in its natural simplicity, and so it is unwholesomely trimmed with frills and furbelows, and thus made into a costly reservoir to catch as many impurities that may be floating in the air as by dint of fold and flounce, gusset and gather, it possibly can. The cot or berceau is canopied and curtained by the same foolish desire for show before health, and so on throughout everything in the miserable infants apartments; for to be satisfied with the purely necessary and right is almost as bad as to appear poor, which we all know is a crime; but to be unhealthy, unwholesome, or a fool are merely misfortunes. "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but to write and read comes by nature." And the babbling and opinions of pretentious ignorance in these days are not a jot in advance of DOGBERRY. The forms and colours of everything in the shape of nursery furniture and decoration should be as simple and as bright and graceful as possible. A few well-selected Japanese fans—but from an old stock, for the late importations are mostly bad—might be placed beyond reach upon the walls. A mantel-piece with a kindly story, fairy or otherwise, told in the lower tiles, easy to be understood, and with another more advanced fable painted in the panels above. A picture frame,* capable of holding a series of pictures, so as to have a constant change, is another valuable feature in a nursery, for such rooms should be designed, not merely for the dawn, but for the sunrise of intellect, and the same old room, with its "ickle Bo Peep," its perpetual story of Red Riding Hood, and its everlasting Cock Robin, becomes at last a bore even to the dullest child. The nursery is the first school in this life, and the eyes of its little inmates are among the first leading channels of uncon-

* I believe Mr. Thos. Turner, of Ashley House, Bristol, has patented an admirable school frame of this character.