

Mr. Millican, Architect, then read the following remarks on the

INTRODUCTION OF MOULDED AND COLOURED
BRICK INTO STREET ARCHITECTURE.

THE remarks I am about to address to you have been rather hastily thrown together, so that I feel some apology is necessary for offering them to your notice this evening. Having been invited by the Committee of this Society to read a short paper, I have made choice of a subject which, though of so great importance as to demand for its *full* consideration *months* of untiring study, may be compressed within such limits as will render it admissible on this occasion, by merely examining its leading features, with a view rather to provoke discussion and enquiry, than to present you with lengthy details of the case, however elaborately collected, to the entire preclusion of the great advantages resulting from the expression of a variety of opinions.

My present purpose is to give a rapid sketch of the necessity for, and desirability of introducing (with a view to improvement) moulded and coloured brickwork into our present flat and lifeless street architecture, particularly the cottage buildings, which, from their plainness, are so undesirably abundant in Leicester and other manufacturing towns. You are doubtless aware that this our town stands on, and is surrounded by extensive beds of clay of the most excellent description, and of several varieties; but all equally adapted by nature for the purposes to which it is my present endeavour to promote their application, requiring only the assistance of man's hand, and the evidence of his mind impressed upon them—the life of the living clay infused into the shapeless mass of dead clay—to render that clay fit ornament for the cottages or palaces of men, or the adornment of temples even set apart for the worship of our Creator. Leicester, therefore, being undoubtedly possessed of the material (hitherto neglected) for supplying the lack of animation so deplorably prevalent throughout the brick buildings which line the streets, from the humble home of the toil-some artizan through whom her wealth is acquired, to the more aspiring and pretentious residence of the manufacturer, who seeks retirement from the hurry and turmoil of business, in the goodly squares and terraces which are rising in her suburbs; it becomes the part of man—of the artist, the architect, and the producer—to render it fit to be employed as ornament. It must, in fact, receive from man a portion of the life he has the power to impart to it. Is it, therefore, owing to the want of men who can impart *this life*, that the clay of Leicester has so long remained cold and inanimate? That this is not the case is most convincingly manifested by the beautiful carvings and other art works which have been and are

daily produced by natives of this town; though it is a source of regret that many of them have left the place of their birth, and the town which they would most gladly have decorated with the riches of their own imaginations, for *other places*, where the carver's art is—I will not say more fully appreciated—but more extensively encouraged; for artists of all kinds, though undoubtedly not the most mercenary of the human race, cannot live on the admiration alone of their genius and their works.

But further, the clay may be wrought in so simple a manner, as, the designed pattern having been once moulded, it may be multiplied to an unlimited extent by workmen of ordinary abilities, without requiring the aid of an artist, except in the invention of the original design; indeed, for this purpose, those workmen who are daily employed in casting in plaster and cement, the perishable ornaments with which so many of our public and private buildings are meritriciously decorated, might be induced to turn their attention to the production of ornament in *burnt clay*, that would be as lasting as the buildings in whose walls it might be imbedded. Having both the material and the artists necessary for its manipulation so plenteously provided to our hand, what (will be asked) is the reason we do not see so valuable a material properly applied, and its capabilities developed to their fullest extent? It is not that it is impracticable, for of the fallacy of this idea we have incontestable evidence in the great number of Italian buildings wholly indebted for their decoration to this neglected material, of which the Great Hospital at Milan is a surprising and magnificent example, its principle façade being covered with most elaborate and beautiful ornaments, foliage, heads, &c., &c.—rivalling the best sculpture in stone or princely marble. Hundreds of other existing specimens, too, will be found in "Street's Brick and Marble Architecture of Italy," from the plain square dentil (the humblest form of all) to the most beautifully enriched frieze or string course, alive with a spirited foliation, peeping at intervals from out of the shadow of the overhanging moulding, by which it is protected from accident or the tempest's unsparing influence. The *reason* is, I am reluctant to confess, the all-powerful utilitarian spirit of our age, which condemns tacitly (though, too frequently, not the less effectually) most things which will not afford either convenience or a profitable return on the outlay involved in their production; and as these are looked on as two indispensable requisites in the homes of the humbler classes (and other houses built for mere speculation), which are usually *run up* at the least possible outlay, to produce the greatest possible return; I fear to that engrossing spirit must we principally attribute the utter absence of redeeming features in the ugly blank walls, with square windows in them, which have grown to be considered the *ne plus ultra* of our street architecture. I need not, I am sure, occupy your time with a long

argument, endeavouring to prove that ornament is necessary, for that would be fruitless; but that if not necessary, it is at least desirable, you will, I am sure, on a little reflection, readily admit; for who, in the interior of his house—however sumptuous or however humble—would be satisfied without some attempt at decoration, either in furniture, pictures, or the innumerable trifles which form so unnecessary, yet so pleasing a part of our house attractions? Do not all, according to their means, aim at making the interiors of their homes more attractive than as the builders leave them? Is it not almost instinctive? for do not even insects and animals regard these matters in *their* architecture?

If, therefore, such additions are conducive to comfort or pleasure in the interior, why should they not be considered equally indispensable to, or why are they banished from, the exterior of our houses? It may be said, that we see more of the interior than the exterior, and that moreover all our friends become intimately acquainted with the former, and therefore we do all we can to make it attractive and pleasing, but surely we do not admit (as this argument implies) such a churlish and unsociable spirit, as, that we care to please no one but our friends, or to gratify any senses but our own? Is it not more praiseworthy to aim at making *that which is seen by everybody* admirable and attractive, than to confine our endeavours to those things which only ourselves and our friends see and enjoy? Others may advance, that it is folly to expose ornament to the ravages of time, accident, or the unruly elements; but does not nature, under the guidance of an indulgent Providence, teach such utilitarians a well-merited lesson in her own luxuriant ornamentation? Does she not lavishly bestow her most beautiful works in situations where they are inaccessible to all, save the soaring eagle, as well as in those within the reach and admiration of man? Are they not abundant in the fathomless ocean, and in the boundless prairie? and does she not expose her most richly coloured and most fragile production to the pelting rain and the sweeping tempest? Why, therefore, should vain man treasure up his feeble handiworks, which are but dross compared with the many tinted and everchanging flowers that he daily and hourly tramples so heedlessly beneath his feet, or gathers in wantonness, as though they were his own most trifling creations. That the spirit I am deprecating did not animate our ancestors, the interesting remains even of their domestic architecture most indisputably proves, as may be seen in Chester and other towns, both English and Foreign. If, therefore, you will admit the desirability of ornament on the *outside* as well as the *inside* of our buildings (and I cannot think many will deliberately dispute it), I will endeavour to shew in what manner and by what means it may be accomplished, not forgetting too the principal point—the expense. Those buildings wherein, from being of a temporary nature, or from their

purpose, ornament is needless, or thought to be so, the plain surfaces may be relieved—at literally no extra cost—by merely selecting bricks of different shades of colour, and placing them to form lines or patterns in the walls. It is true this would require a little thought, but considering what thought is wasted continually on schemes of folly, or dishonourable pursuits, surely that element will not be deemed too valuable to be made use of. In the next class of buildings, I would suggest that string courses and cornices may be introduced of different coloured or different shaped bricks and quarries, imbedded in the work, of which the additional cost would be so trifling as to be comparatively unappreciable. Beyond this stage we must venture into patterns of moulded and ornamented brickwork, either simple bricks with moulded ends, flat ornament produced by sinking the ground round the well-designed outline, or imitations of the productions of Nature herself, each and all of which (the design and model being once made) would be most easily multiplied, and at no more expense than in cement; only requiring that for general use, the mouldings and patterns should be of such sizes and character as would admit of their introduction into large as well as small buildings; also of several parts, in order that variety may be obtained in their disposition, and then would be opened a field for enduring and truthful decoration, the limits of which are not to be foreseen or prescribed.

The most ordinary workman, having them habitually under his notice, would acquire a facility and variety in their application, which even accomplished architects scarcely attain with the complex ornaments to which they have until lately been limited. The workmen, too, from having other than their physical abilities exerted, would be advanced to a more intellectual position than is now too generally their lot; acting as machines, building tasteless walls by mere mechanism, as it were, from morning till night, and from the morning to the evening of their existence.

Our streets, instead of being but gloomily fenced highways, to be trodden only for the convenience of business, or when paced in the pursuit of pleasurable companionship, to be hurried through without a glance of interest, would, with the improvement of public taste and spirit, become panoramas of the imagery of men's minds, and storehouses of thoughts and ideas as varied and valuable as they now are of objects unvarying and valueless. We should then linger as we passed along to mark where a more skilful hand had left its impress, or to recall possibly the memory of some of those who, having in their lifetime animated the lifeless earth, had sunk back into its cold solitude, leaving behind them these faithful witnesses of their superiority over the brutes that perish.

I cannot conclude without calling your particular attention to the beautiful manufactures of Messrs. Minton and Hollins, consisting of paving and other tiles, and mosaics, vieing with the

richest and best specimens of antiquity, both in tastefulness of design and brilliancy of colour, and which may be added to the more sober tinted clay, in the fronts of our buildings, to obviate, in part, that coldness and want of richness so very apparent in our northern climate, to those who have seen and revelled in the glorious tints everywhere pervading the picturesque scenery and the magnificent architecture of the sunny south.

Those who require practical illustration of the theory I have proposed, will find one in a house erecting by Mr. Broadbent, near to Humberstone, in which are introduced several of the modes of decoration that I have alluded to.

I will not trespass further on your time, but leave the subject open for discussion, only thanking you for your kind attention, and assuring you my labour has been amply repaid if I have caused any to give serious consideration to that which, at first sight, appears but trifling and unimportant.

THE "PILGRIM'S TOMB."

The Rev. J. M. Gresley, at the request of the Chairman, gave the following description of a remarkable Tomb in the Church at Ashby de la Zouch, known as "The Pilgrim's Tomb," illustrating his remarks by engravings, which the rev. gentleman distributed in the room.*

BENEATH the gallery in the north aisle of the Church of Ashby de la Zouch, a recumbent effigy of a Pilgrim is placed within a recess in the wall, surmounted by a depressed, ogee-shaped arch, crocketed on the exterior and cinquefoiled within, with two sets of hollow moulding, and flanked on each side of the arch by a buttress. This effigy (perhaps the only one of the kind in existence) deserves accurate examination. The Pilgrim is represented as bare-headed: the hair worn long and cut straight round, and combed down in the fashion prevalent in the latter part of the fifteenth century, to which period the monument may fairly be ascribed. The dress consists of the *sclavine*, the peculiar garb of pilgrims: this was a kind of cloak reaching nearly to the ankles, with short and loose open sleeves, from within which appear the full sleeves of the inner vest, or tunic, extending to the wrists. On the feet, which rest upon a dog, are worn short boots, pointed at the toes and loosely laced in front from a little above the instep upwards. The head of the figure rests upon two tasseled cushions, and between it and the right shoulder appears the pilgrim's broad-brimmed hat with an *escallop* or *cockle shell* in front, showing that he had

* See Illustrations facing page 29.