



JOSEPH S. KNOWLES, - - - Editor and Proprietor.

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[For the Torch.]  
**FERNS.**

II.

"The birds make music in the trees,  
 The breezes babble as they pass,  
 And dreamily drone the vagrant bees  
 Among the blossom-haunted grass.  
 The sunbeams shimmer on flower and leaf,  
 A band of gold girds sea and sky.  
 But Time steals on, the thief, the thief!  
 And one must live and one must die!  
 You'll hear the birds, the flowers you'll see,  
 But they no more your breast will thrill,  
 And oh, how long the hours will be  
 When this poor heart is cold and still!"

'Twas spoken with a prophet's tongue!  
 Years languish, and the world grows gray!  
 Ah, never since such songs are sung  
 As were that day—as were that day.  
 H. L. SPENCER.

[For the Torch.]

**ESTHETIC EMBERS.**

BY HARRY FLETCHER.

We have been alloted with what Vitruvius calls an architectural fever. The colonel is Chairman of the Church Building Committee and, of course, we are all interested in the cause and anxious to suggest whatever in our judgment, is of value to him and his co-laborers. Not that we have ever had any special experience in church building, or that we really have any ideas of what principles should guide in the selection of a design for a Church, but that does not signify. What we want is a stylish Church, and one that will exceed anything in the neighborhood. We did think of advising the Colonel to build entirely of stone, but we found that if we carried our spire up higher than the Methodist Church spire the expense would be more than we could very well afford. We could carry it to this height, however, if we made it of wood; so we decided unanimously in favor of wood. I think that was one of the first points settled. Then we began to discuss styles, and Vitruvius was kind enough to loan us his valuable collections; of plates of old Cathedrals and Churches, and we looked through them, and argued over them, and studied this porch, and that window, and had Committee meetings at our house at all hours of the day and night.

Our landlady is an active worker too, and she is on several Committees to raise funds, and to hold fairs, and for other purposes too numerous to mention. And she wanders round the house when she is not actively engaged in the domestic duties, and brings all her energies to bear in collecting materials for bed quilts and tidies, and crocheted toilet sets, which she distributes among the ladies to work upon.

But the Colonel is not left alone by the ladies. They, too, have their advice to give on the important subject and are ready with suggestions as to the style, and size, and arrangement. Miss Agatha, the Colonel's ward, who is spending the winter here with us, is especially urgent on having a wide centre aisle; it is so elegant, and gives such an air to a Church in case of funerals, she says, and weddings,—but as young Halcarnasus, the banker, is very attentive to her of late, we think she must mean especially the latter.

Well, we studied over the different styles from Egyptian down to American, classic and gothic, Norman and Renaissance, and we came out of it with most delightfully confused ideas of what we wanted. We had selected, at least, fifty different Churches that we wished to copy, and all entirely without regard to expense. No two of these were alike, or particularly suited to our wants, but we thought they were the most stylish we could see, and well calculated to inspire all our neighbors with respect, and we had finally pretty well settled down on a combination of an English Gothic Church, with a real narthex and clovestry, and all complete, when one day the school master called on us. He had been to some of the great cities, and had, of course, looked about for information on the subject of our new Church, and he had come back full of an idea that took us all by storm, and upset all our fine theories.

Oh, said he, we have just saved ourselves from a great mistake. The old esthetical idea of Church forms and ecclesiastical architecture is all exploded, and no one thinks now of building the long narrow churches of the old Goths. The great point is to reach the masses and the true idea of a Church is the amphitheatre.

MISS AGATHA.—Oh, my cousin wrote me from New York all about their church; how the pews were circular and you could look round so easily and see everybody as they came in, and how the floor slopes towards the pulpit, and it was as nice as being in a theatre. But then they haven't any middle aisle, and so I shouldn't like it myself.

OUR LANDLADY.—And then what a deal of carpet it must take to cut in around the pews, and how much work it must be to sweep it out.

Our landlady is nothing if not practical.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.—I called on an architect who has built several of these buildings, and he will build us one of these at a very low cost, and make it very showy too. He uses a peculiar method of construction—wood, covered by galvanized iron, which makes a very cheap and yet very ornamental building; then he paints it to imitate stone, and the effect is grand.

But the Colonel put his foot down on the new idea at once. He has no particular reason for it, but he says that we must have a Gothic Church. It will be built of wood, and will have the tall spire and all, and will be as complete a copy of an old mediæval church as if it were to be occupied by real Goths. The minister would have it built of stone, neat and modest; but the minister is not popular, and so his idea is not to be carried out. True, he has studied the subject more, perhaps, than any one else, and has travelled, too, on the Continent, and has good judgment in such matters; but if he has his way in this, where will it end. So, although the Colonel and Judge Fortia never agree on anything else, they unite heartily in opposing the minister, and as he wants stone they want wood.

Vitruvius says nothing, but looks on with an ardent interest. We expect, however, that he will deliver his opinion some time when we least expect it. Meanwhile all our study and planning has been wasted upon the Committee, who seem to have settled upon a church in the extreme Gothic style, done in wood, and with the tall spire, of course.

MEN, WOMEN AND FURNITURE.—We maintain that, in reality, man has no need of furniture, and that everything he does worth doing could be done without these adjuncts. In the highest stages of civilization, men will not need either a bed, a table, a stool, or a candlestick—things which, just now, he considers to be of absolute necessity, but which one people, the most refined, the most intelligent, and the most highly civilized that has lived on this planet in historic times—the Japanese, to wit, have shown can be perfectly well dispensed with. Man proper, man in his highest condition of spiritual and physical development, is absolutely independent of furniture; sits on his heels, sleeps on the floor, eats with his fingers from dishes made of gourds and leaves, (or, if he prefers it, of wood exquisitely lacquered) paced on the ground; avoids the necessity of candlesticks by using lanterns, or by going to bed early and sleeping late; and writes on his wristbands. All the noblest art, the most exquisite decorative design, all the immortal books, have come from people or from individuals to whom "things" have been