

ARCHITECTURE FOR THE MERIDIAN OF CANADA.

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ARCHITECTURE, when considered simply as the art of encrusting a certain space required for our domestic convenience, presents the subject to our minds greatly divested of the complexity with which our preconceived ideas of style and proportion are apt to invest it. What is called style is merely the peculiar manner in which the people of certain countries adorned that form of building which their habits, and the circumstances of the locality rendered most convenient.

In the design of a building the convenient arrangement of the internal space ought always to be the object of primary importance. A well ordered interior will generally present some feature to give architectural expression to the exterior without the aid of meretricious ornament. A high-pitched roof, for example, which in this climate is necessary for the purpose of throwing off the snow and to deflect the rays of the summer sun, is an object of pictorial beauty from its boldness of outline. This is exemplified in some of the better class of Canadian log huts, the simple beauty of which is rarely excelled by structures of greater pretension. In the annexed example selected from a very common class, the outline is refreshingly varied by the leaning roof covering the low part of the building, the beauty of which is greatly enhanced in one's estimation by the knowledge of its being founded on principles of utility. One can see at a glance that it is the na-



LOG HUT.

tural shell of a certain definite amount of accommodation, to which a more advanced stage of development might probably add some degree of architectural embellishment. The projecting ends of the logs, at the angles of the structure, present legitimate objects for carving and other decorations, and the ends of the rafters, if made to shew boldly out at the eaves, would enhance the effect. The projecting ends of the beams supporting the upper deck of the Chinese Junk, lately exhibited in London, were carved to represent monsters' heads, highly enriched with colour and gilding.

As there appears, however, a general disposition to abandon the simple log hut without turning its capabilities to account, it is needless, perhaps, to speculate on the practicability of its further development. Unquestionably, however, the finest architecture has sprung from as small beginnings as the rudest Canadian shanty. The original type of Grecian Architecture was the wooden shed, (see illustration in January number,) every feature of which is reproduced in a highly enriched form in the more matured specimens of the style.

The caverns in which the early inhabitants of Egypt and Palestine found shelter, were converted by slow degrees, into those wonderful temples which they cut into the face of the mountain, the surpassing grandeur of which fills the beholder with admiration and awe.

Though we can scarcely hope to see a distinct style of pure architecture formed on the primitive log hut, something may be done to lead the taste of the Province into a direction which may tend to give a local character to our Canadian edifices. At present, it is true, there seems to be no preference for any specific style, but a disposition, more generous, perhaps, than wise, to give every known or conceivable class of building a trial. It requires no great knowledge of architecture to perceive that the kind of structures adapted to the habits and climate of the Chinese, would be out of place in a Canadian clearing; or the Parthenon of Athens, with its dead wall, its cumbrous columns of prescribed proportions, and its narrow dark interior, would be ill suited to the purposes of a Christian church or any public building requiring light and internal convenience. To construct windows in a Grecian temple is virtually to destroy its beauty. The priests, who alone were permitted to enter the narrow cell within the external colonade, required no other light than was afforded by the fires of the sacrifice and the scanty rays of sunshine which filtered through the small aperture in the roof. Equally incongruous would it be to surround our slim civilian dwellings with works of a defensive or military character, such as battlements on the roofs, which not only would oppose no effectual resistance to a warlike enemy, but cause an inconvenient lodgement of snow. The perpetrators of such anomalies never think of the practical absurdities of their creations, but are carried away with the dreamy notion that they are legitimately following out this, or that particular style.

Utility and reality are the fundamental principles of Architecture, and constitute the only true standard of taste. Mere fancy and the obsolete rules of the pagan schools of Greece and Rome,