

the modern workman. In the army and navy, where there is a tradition of personal responsibility and heroism; in engine driving, locomotive and stationary; and in other situations, where the safety of many recognizably hangs upon the hands of one, there has never been any difficulty upon that score. The workman does rise to his responsibilities, and on their account enjoys the more his work and the title to respect which its importance gives him. Any increased responsibility which modern building gives to the modern workman will undoubtedly find him respond; and of steel buildings as a class we may dismiss the idea that, where a danger to their length of life is known and the precautions that must be taken against it are understood, there need be any anticipation of the life being shortened because the precautions are not properly carried out.

There is still the unknown to speculate upon, and this more than anything seems to make engineering authorities pause in assuring steel buildings of the life which they say is possible to their materials. "If," their reply is summed up, "the steel frames shall remain untouched by any destructive agency of which we are now ignorant, they will stand 5,000 years. But steel, unlike granite, brick and wood, is essentially an untried element in building construction, and we must wait for the years to demonstrate how well it is going to serve us."

What this destructive agency is may yet be revealed by failure, or when a building of age sufficient for its development is pulled down. Hitherto no typical building of sufficient age has been destroyed. When such an instance occurs it will be an event of so much public importance that the post-mortem examination ought to be in the hands of a Government commission of experts and every facility given for builders of sky-scrapers to personally inspect the operation.

### ST. MARK'S, VENICE.

The warning given by the fall of the Campanile of St. Mark's at Venice, has so alarmed the authorities about the condition of the church itself that a careful survey of the building has been made and a report presented which suggests not only the insertion of new supports and stays for vaulting that is distorted, but the rebuilding of the vaults. This involves the removal and restoration of the mosaics which decorate the surface of the vaults. Mr. Reginald Blomfield has written to the *Times* to protest against this kind of restoration, which would amount to the destruction of a great part of St. Mark's as an historical monument. It is impossible to number mosaic tesserae and replace them as they were, as was done with the ashlar of Peterborough cathedral. The old material may be used, as far as it remains unbroken, and the old design followed; but as handiwork of the eleventh century it is not the same.

It is proposed also to restore the capitals of the gallery and to level the undulating floor which is understood to have been as it is for centuries. Against all this disturbance of surface Mr. Blomfield protests as unnecessary for security. The engineering proposals are sufficient with the addition of some visible stays which may offend the "unfortunate passion for neatness," as he calls it, of the Italians, but do not really interfere with either the beauty or the interest of the monument.

His protest has been taken up by the Society for the

Protection of Ancient Buildings, who have issued the following memorial to be signed with influential signatures, and will then forward it to the Italian Minister of Public Works.

To His Excellency the Minister of Public Works of Italy.  
St. Mark's, Venice.

We, the undersigned, having in view the inestimable value of St. Mark's Church at Venice as an historical monument of great beauty, submit to your Excellency that it is of vital importance that the building should be handed down to posterity intact, except for such works as are proved to be necessary to its preservation.

We feel confident that such works as underpinning, consolidation, and strengthening generally will be dealt with in a competent manner by the architect now in charge of St. Mark's, but we venture to submit that the substitution of modern reproductions for the old carving, the removal of the mosaics to the tribunes or piers supporting the central cupola, and more particularly the taking up and levelling of the old floor of the church, would not in any way whatever contribute to the security of the building, whereas such works would destroy what have been for centuries its characteristic features.

We submit that no modern reproductions, however exact, can have the same value as the original work; that, in the case of St. Mark's, the affection of educated people in all countries is concentrated on the stones and marbles themselves as they now are, and as they have ever been, and therefore that their disturbance and renewal would inflict irreparable injury on the historical value of St. Mark's, and would destroy the infinite attraction which it still has for those who care for the past.

We therefore appeal to your Excellency to direct that the proposals to interfere with the mosaics, the carving, and the floor shall be abandoned, and strictly to limit the works now being undertaken to what is proved beyond question to be necessary to the permanent stability of St. Mark's.

A few days later the following telegraphic news from Venice appeared in the *Times*:

The persons who are directing the work of restoration in the Basilica of St. Mark wish to have it known, especially in England, where criticisms have been passed on their undertaking, that, some restoration of the walls being not only indispensable but urgent, the mosaics covering them are carefully detached after an exact mould has been taken of them. After the restorations are made the mosaics are put back in their places with the greatest attention to the indications of the mould, so that not the least alteration will take place. It is, in other words, almost the same process as that for removing a fresco. A successful example of this was the removal of the famous fresco discovered a few years ago behind Tintoretto's "Paradise" in the Doge's Palace. As to the floor of the Basilica, it is a question of saving it from ruin in some parts, which are in the most deplorable condition, but maintaining intact the original colour, form, and design, the only desire being to guarantee the stability of the famous monument. All works are proposed and executed under the constant surveillance of a special artistic commission.

We may hope that, as everybody seems to be alive to the desirability of as little disturbance as possible of the building as a document, the *juste milieu* will be followed.

The same telegram states that the piling for the Campanile is complete and the foundation wall is begun. The piling has been made solid, so that the foundation wall stands on a platform of piles. The wall is 10 feet thick at the base. This does not indicate a spread of footing more than about 2 feet on each side; for the hollow wall of the shaft, with an inclined pathway to the top, can hardly have been less than six feet in total thickness.

There is no complete drawing in existence of Sansovino's Loggetta which was built at the base of the Campanile. The design is being patiently reconstructed from fragments of detail found in the ruins.