

and concise degree which makes it possible at a glance to know the date of a piece of old work; and although it is quite immaterial for the designer to know what bishop or king endowed a church or build a chapel, the evolution of past architecture must be understood before a broad and sound view can be taken of the evolution that is going around us to-day, and dates are the milestones in this study. Therefore, on all accounts let us be patient and draw hard, much, truly and finely, and bear ever in mind that for us it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

So that the facts be true, and the thoughts be right, the handwriting of this lecture is a very minor consideration. Not so, in the "handwriting" of our true professional language; on the technique of our drawing, depends the amount of fact which a given sheet, nay, a given line, or a given dot may have power to convey. Take pride, therefore, in how much truth, both in degree and quantity your drawings contain, and as little pride as your temperament will permit in the intrinsic beauty of your drawings, for, therein lies a deadly snare, as every draughtsman knows to his cost.

### ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE, REAL AND IDEAL.\*

By J. S. GIBSON.

There are many amusing and curious ways of obtaining a practice, and for all of us it is a serious question to determine how to start on our career. But it is to be settled at an early stage, or else it will effectually settle us. Some cut the Gordian knot by leaving the ranks and embarking into the maelstrom of "trade"; these are wise but inartistic ones. Some rely on the artistic blindness of the general public, and run lucrative drawing manufactories on business-like lines. These are the shrewd and "practical" ones. Some have relatives who are something big in the City of finance or Society, and these push their architectural appendages in the same manner as they do shares, or officers in the army. What Lord Melbourne said about the bestowal of the Order of the Garter, that "There's no damend merit about it," we may safely say that in reference to the practice of these fortunate ones. Some drift into that refuge of mediocrity, an official appointment in a Government office, and in the Office of Works, or such-like departments, do what they can to spread the commonplace over the land; these can hardly be said to practise, either really or ideally. Some enter into competitions, throwing all their energies and skill therein, in the hope that merit will be rewarded. These are the sanguine ones, and sometimes they are not disappointed. Some enter into partnerships with clever men of business, who "manage" the clients while they manage the office. These are the timid ones, likeable fellows who think the chief end of life is to get a cornice perfectly proportioned or a skirting-board properly moulded. Some attach themselves to the land, and, backed by financiers, erect enormous piles of vulgarly commonplace type, whose chief quality is to bulk, and whose erection in some slight degree justifies the short leasehold system of land tenure; these are the wily ones. Some develop an absorbing interest in rights of light, and devote precious time to the intricacies of party structures and then pass away full of years and riches; these are the canny ones. Some renounce art and become crafty, finding that the public will pay more willingly for the abnormal than the artistic; these denounce style, balance, composition, rhythm, grace, and are sharp-sighted leaders of the blind. Some determine to live for art's sake, and usually die for it instead; these are the foolish and artistic ones.

These are but a few of the thousand and one ways of practising our profession, and each of you must one day settle this great question for yourself.

Turning to the realities of practice one may say "happy is the man who knows nothing of them," for the whims and vagaries of the client are sometimes as difficult to deal with as the prejudices of the architect.

Among the first troubles likely to assail you are the reconciliation of the wants of the client with the amount of money he is willing to spend. In this matter it is well to show as kindly as possible the impracticability of expecting 5,000l worth of accommodation for 3,000l cash. Never estimate your buildings too low; it will prove easier to have a margin to meet the changing views of your client, rather than a deficit to ask him to wipe off.

Having satisfactorily settled the money question, you can, with a merry heart, set about the designing of your house; and if your client expresses a strong preference for any unusual dis-

position of rooms, you must give this your very best consideration, for, after all, he is the person who has to live in them. If you have hit on any particularly good arrangement, do not throw it at the good man, but lead him gently to it, and thereby gain his approval, for this is more often won by strategy than by force. Always be ready with examples of similar cases, and if these are already known to your client so much the better, for then he feels on safer ground; all clients prefer experience to experiment. When discussing any question never imagine that force of language will atone for lack of reason. You will often find your client expressing his views on the architectural styles, and, if he desires you to design him a house which shall be Palladian Renaissance outside and English Gothic inside, do not regard him so much as a lunatic as one who requires careful treatment, as his appetite for styles may be omnivorous.

Having matured your design and written your specification, do not think that your worries are ended. Under the present system of competitive tendering for work, you may find yourself face to face with a builder who solemnly assures you that Smith's blue lias lime is much stronger and better than Brown's Portland cement, that drain pipes are best jointed with clay, and that footings should rest on the solid earth without the intervention of any concrete under them. Should you meet such a man no doubt you will inform him of your good old crusted prejudices, and stick to the specification. Having taken a firm standing in your dealings with a builder of this kind, maintain this attitude to the end, and you will generally succeed in getting a creditable job for your client, although at some trouble to yourself. But we must not forget that we are paid for the trouble involved in getting our buildings properly erected, as well as for designing them.

One of the surprises of practices in their early stages, is the extraordinarily easy manner in which variations can be made on contracts during execution, so that when the accounts come in they often surprise the architect more than any other person. The apparently innocent suggestion to "omit the moulded beam and side brackets" over an opening, and just "put in a couple of semi-circular arches with a column and two pilasters," has in some mysterious way, been expanded into about five pages of a bill of extras, the total of which makes the architect gasp. The only safe rule in all these matters is to make a drawing and to get a price fixed before any work is done. If, however, you have made the variation without a price having been previously fixed, you may rely upon one friend in your extremity, the quantity surveyor. He is the man who can pull you through. How he does it I do not pretend to know; perhaps he has no bowels of compassion as far as builders are concerned; perhaps there is some free masonry of which you and I are ignorant; but at any rate, he will usually succeed in making a bill more palatable to your client and yourself, and we cannot be too grateful to him for these services.

In your dealings with your client, as with your builder, make up your mind on the matter in hand, and never depart from your determination. Do not be so foolish as to expect to get your own way always; you will be a lucky man if you get it occasionally, but if you show signs of indecision of character, depend upon it, you will never get it at all. Should your client, upon any vital matter, prefer his way to yours, let him clearly know that the responsibility for success or failure rests on him.

If your work be at a distance, and frequent visits are impracticable, do not be surprised at the variations the builder will quite innocently make on your designs. Some of the most charming results are often thus accidentally obtained.

Years ago a fellow architect said to me, "It's a poor design that does not admit of improvement in execution," and the ripening experience of the translation of drawings into solids will suggest the variations that are improvements. Do not worry too much about the finish of your drawings. The work itself is the heart of the matter, and, above all things, do not over-elaborate the details of your drawings. A multiplicity of detail does not ensure a fineness of quality, and I had rather see one good architrave round every door of a house than an abundant variety of commonplace sections. You may dash off sketches of facades and interiors; many of the happiest inspirations are the most evanescent, but as you grow older you will find it harder to let your full sizes go out of the office. These are the final stages in your part of the work and by them you will be, in a great measure, judged.

The requirements of modern civilization are so varied and complex and we live at such a rapid pace, that even the practice of architecture has been invaded by "specialists" who apparent-

\* Abstract of a paper read before the Architectural Association in London.