

EDITORIALS.

THE Boston fire, with recollections of its predecessor, the Chicago fire, is arousing the people of many large cities throughout the country to the consideration of ways and means to reduce the probability of such extensive ravages by the fire fiend. All sorts of things and devices promising greater immunity from conflagrations are discussed—wider streets, best non-fire-conducting building materials, non-inflammable timber, improved fire-quenching apparatus, more perfect fire company arrangements, water supply, etc. The first thing is in regard to fire-proof buildings, and here the great lack is some economical method of rendering wood unflammable. This is the grand desideratum. Furnish a cheap and easy means of making wood fireproof, or even comparatively so, and fears of great destruction by fire would be at an end. Is a discovery of this extraordinarily important character beyond the compass of American ingenuity? It is to be hoped not, for so long as it is it will be difficult if not impossible to insure safety to buildings from devouring flames.

In this discussion, one thing is very manifest, the mansard roof is catching it in every direction, inside and outside and on all sides. It has become somewhat popular of late years. It has a striking architectural effect, perhaps from its semi-gothic character. But being universally if not necessarily constructed of wood, it is so peculiarly inflammable that it is generally termed a literal fire box, the chief seat of danger from conflagration and the grand nursery of devastating fires.

Municipalities and insurance companies are moving in strong opposition to the mansard, and either the renunciation of that kind of roof or its essential modification in a fire-proof direction is distinctly foreshadowed. But the fire-proof modification should be thorough, and not external merely, for here is an eastern contemporary stating the case of the mansard with fire-proof external shell, which is condemned almost if not quite as strongly as if the shell were not there. The paragraph occurs in comments upon the Boston fire—

The fire began in the rear of a large granite building, in the very heart of the city—corner of Sumner and Kingston streets—and rapidly ascended by the course of the elevator until it communicated with the *Mansard roof*. Here was a mass of wood-work, dry as a cinder, externally covered with metal or slate, and so impervious to water, rendering fire engines useless. The situation is comparable only to a "fortification" so constructed as to protect the assailing force and to render the assailed utterly powerless to return an attack.

In this case the externally fire-proof mansard is considered worse than if wholly inflammable. What then is to be done? The external fire-proof shell is certainly useful in a degree in preserving a building from catching fire from adjacent buildings. If the mansard is to be used, the remedy must consist in rendering it fire-resisting inside as well as out, so far as is reasonably practicable. This can be done to a considerable extent by using solid stick timber, plaster, concrete, brick or stone, with as little small-sized or thin timber as possible, and perhaps some iron, although it does not appear to grow in favor for buildings in which, or in the construction of which, or near which things combustible are placed, because great heat causes iron to give and warp and twist, thus proving itself not so trustworthy as at first thought might appear.

The discussions and the action of other communities in regard to this highly important matter of safety from that dreadfully bad master, unquenchable fire, are of as great interest to our citizens as to the citizens of any other portions of the country. We live in a district as arid as any in the Union during a portion of the year, many of our buildings are constructed in very large part of timber and are very combustible, especially in the hot, dry months of summer and fall, and any sensible suggestions as to the best ways of insuring perpetual safety from the devouring element ought to be welcome. We have the advantages of wide streets, a comparatively good supply of water, and buildings in most instances widely detached, although in the business portions of the city they

adjoin each other. But we have the disadvantage of the very extensive employment of lumber, and sometimes it is almost the only material used. Such extensive use of so combustible a material, where the buildings are so closely placed, ought certainly to be discouraged by the public and the municipality, that is, if it were any use making sensible municipal ordinances, and that is, again, if municipal ordinances were judicially respected in our city, instead of being opposed on every flimsy technicality.

THE Sacramento *Union* says the rapid increase of financial corruption in official life is such as to raise a serious doubt whether or not the people have any adequate means of self protection, and recommends the election of a few honest men as a corrective. That would be a very good thing, but why not elect all honest men, and let the dishonest pay taxes instead of live and fatten on them?

THEY have found out a way at New Orleans to utilize ruffianism, so that out of such a great evil some good may come. The way with the ruffians is to let them quarrel among themselves and fight it out on that line. Two thorough ruffians tried that policy recently in that city with admirable results. Here they are described by the *Missouri Republican*—

John Henry and Perry Lyons, were, years ago, friends and partners. They carried on the general ruffian business on a large scale, and were a terror to all respectable, peaceable citizens. They were always armed to the teeth, and seldom got through the twenty-four hours of day and night without a fight, and shooting and cutting somebody. In the course of time they committed several manslaughters and murders, and were always successful in making a safe retreat, or getting off on the plea of self-defense. They were unconquerable, and it seemed probable that they would be permitted to die natural deaths.

Having subjugated New Orleans, and there appearing to be nothing left in their line to do, they removed their base of operations to the plains, and finally to California. They ran the gauntlet of Vigilance Committees, and in time returned to New Orleans, apparently to enjoy the memory of their conquest in peace. A few days ago they sat down at a table in a lager beer saloon, to all appearance good friends, talking over old and more prosperous times. It had been long since they had been able to get up a cutting or shooting match with anybody, and life was a burden.

At length one of them handling a match-box pressed the lid down. It snapped. The other said: "Don't snap your pistol at me." The noise seemed to fire them both with an eager desire to be at work, and at it they went. They sprang to their feet simultaneously, and one operated with a pistol, while the other plied a long bowie-knife. It was their most successful job. They very handsomely laid each other out, to the great joy of all their acquaintances and the whole community. By their deaths these things showed what they were made for, and demonstrated that they were of some use in the world.

Nothing became them better than their taking off. It rid the world of two perfect nuisances, did it by those best fitted for such an unpleasant business, at the least expense to the public, and no living person, not even the justified officer of the law, was under the necessity of shedding their villainous blood. They became the ministers of swift and unerring justice to themselves, and it was a suitable ending to utter wickedness of life. It was a Scriptural way of doing the business too, for does not that talk of the wicked slaying the wicked? They are the most fit and proper persons to do it. Set a rogue to catch a rogue, and let the villain slay the villain are analogous and equally correct doctrines. Thus can even the vicious accomplish some purpose of utility to society, and if being done at their own expense is all the better.

There are a few persons hereabout who evidently could not do more service to the community than by promptly following the example of their New Orleans compeers in crime. Let them go ahead and bless the world by speedily leaving it in the way of taking each other off. That would help on the Millennium.

THE papers are still contending upon the subject of mansard roofs, most of them being set in determined opposition to that kind of covering to buildings, and a few having the temerity to defend the mansard as, if properly constructed, being no more dangerous than roofs generally. The *Chicago Times* furnishes a very good specimen of the red hot opposition to the dangerous "fire-traps"—

THE COST OF BAD TASTE.—If a Chicago man who is building a costly business block in the burnt region should see preparations making to erect a row of wooden tenements on the ground adjoining, he would undoubtedly make a fuss about it. He would hasten to the mayor's office, probably, and enter complaint that some dangerous citizen was building a fire-trap at the side of his new stone-front, not only endangering that structure, but preparing the conditions for a new conflagration of Chicago. He would most likely demand that the reckless fire-trap builder be stopped in his incendiary proceedings; that his wooden row be torn down; and if the police authorities should refuse to comply with his demand for the execution of a law essential to the common safety, probably he would adopt a more summary course to remove and restrain such threatened danger to his property as the building of a wooden row alongside of it would create. And probably the average public opinion would say: "This man's demand was just; wooden tenements in the heart of a dense city are dangerous, and should be removed or pulled down, and their erection should be prevented."

And yet this same enemy of fire-traps and conflagrations is himself building a structure of wood that threatens conflagration to his costly business block, and to all the surrounding blocks, ten-fold more than the wooden row which his neighbor proposed to build would have done. He is not building a wooden row at the side of his stone front, but in a ten fold more dangerous place, namely, on the top of it. He is surmounting his edifice of brick and stone with that cursed abomination of architectural barbarism, the "Mansard" roof, built of wood. In that most unsightly and purposeless architectural device which a corrupt taste ever commended to the favor of a corrupt people, he is putting twice the amount of kindling wood that his neighbor would have used in the erection of his wooden row on terra-firma. And he is piling that vast lumber yard on the top of walls four or five stories high; he is putting the kindling wood for a conflagration in the very spot where the flames of some fire in the vicinity will be most sure to seize it, and where it will be most difficult for any effort of man to stay their course.

This is what people are now witnessing in Chicago. The destruction of the city by fire induced the enactment of a very imperfect and inadequate law, prohibiting the erection of wooden tenements on the ground. In this way, some short-sighted mortals imagined that the conditions of a new conflagration of Chicago would be prevented. So thought some builders, owners, and architects, who forthwith went to work building wooden caravansaries, not on the ground, but on the tops of four and five story buildings,—not surrounding a city of stone with a city of wood, but covering it with one. The architects, who are mainly to blame for this display of barbarous taste, and more than barbarous folly, will of course turn up the points of their noses at this criticism. It is the way of a class of men who know a great deal more than all the rest of mankind together, and who are never averse to the advertising of what they knew upon people's housetops. But the statistics of losses by conflagration tell a story which will not be answered by the vaticinations of architectural picture-makers. They give testimony that is unimpeachable to the fact that the barbarian "Mansard" roof makers are the worst of incendiaries.

The Mansard roofs have cost Boston \$25,000,000," is the statement from the New England metropolis. Fully one quarter of the total loss by the conflagration in that city is thus directly charged to the account of that worst evidence of that corrupt taste in architecture which has been developed since a people first discovered the way to advertise their vices in flamboyant tracery.

Chicago, ambitious to excel other cities in their vices as well as in some of their virtues, probably has not its equal on the continent in the folly of building Babylonish hanging gardens, all in wood and sheet-iron, on the tops

of brick and stone houses. Upon our office buildings we astonish the world with scenes from the court of Jupiter. All the gods of Olympus cavort themselves on pedestals of "battered watermelon" upon our lofty house tops. Our new hotels are crowned with wooden hen-coops—suggestive of what future guests may expect for dinner. Clock dials in lofty niches which no mortal could look up to without danger of dislocating his neck, tell the time of day to angelic inhabitants of the sky. And to the same spiritual existences, though not commonly thought to be large consumers of marketable commodities, our grocers, druggists, leather men, clothiers, and so on, advertise their wares on painted-sign boards perched among the clouds. All this would be an innocent folly if it were not a dangerous one. These lofty and ridiculous top contrivances of wood are the inevitable fire-traps of a new conflagration, more dangerous in proportion as they are more inaccessible, than any wooden row of fire-traps on the ground.

So much for the opposition. Now the *Cleveland Herald* is one of those who fly to the rescue of the furiously assailed mansard, and this is how that paper goes about the business of defense—

THE MANSARD SCAPE GOAT.—We are tremendous on scape goats in this country. A calamity happens and immediately the scape goat is trotted out and his back loaded with the curses of the people, and the animal started for the wilderness. The calamity is repeated, and we see then how in our indignation against the evil popularly supposed to have been the cause of the first calamity, we have overlooked a score of other evils, each one of which, in due proportion, was responsible for the disaster.

Just now the architectural scape goat is the Mansard roof, and we notice that it is recommended no more Mansard roofs be allowed to be erected. The Mansard roof, in the abstract, is not in fault for the terrible disasters by fire in Chicago and Boston. Any wooden roofs under heaven, put upon buildings, five, six and seven stories in height, would be just as dangerous as the Mansard roof. What nonsense to hold this particular style of roof responsible. The Mansard roof is abused by being put on merely for ornament, and the story it covers not intended for service.

There is no more beautiful roof, no safer roof, no roof so economical as the Mansard roof, and so far as buildings moderate in height are concerned there is not the least possible objection to them. The Mansard roof as now used on our business blocks is always one story more than is available, and is merely to top out with. Cut down our business blocks to four stories, making one of these stories the Mansard roof, where that style of roof is employed, and we will hear no more about the dangers to be apprehended from that roof than from any other roof. The trouble in American architecture is that we do not stop building when we have got all the needed stories on, but we must put on top of all a Mansard roof, or a cupola, or a pilot house, so as to look down on our neighbors.

And in this age every handsome block is intended as a monument to the owner. It must bear his name—which is all very well unless he have a ridiculous name—and the tendency of the age is to make the last monument a little the highest. Our cemeteries prove this. We were shown through a cemetery a while since where the relative deaths of the rich men could be determined by the height of their monuments; every succeeding monument being a little higher than its predecessor. We came to the fresh grave of a very rich man, where immense foundations were laid for a monument, "which"—as one cicerone said—"it is to be the highest monument in the grounds."

When we build entirely for service, and less for show, when we cease running our buildings up to a height that no hose can reach in safety, when we make our buildings as substantial at the top as at the bottom, the question need not be discussed as to the style of roof, and we can then dismiss the Mansard roof epidemic as an American impulse and allow it, like any other roof, a fair chance.

DAYNES—SHARP.—Married in this city, on the 18th instant, by President Daniel H. Wells, Mr. Joseph Daynes and Miss Mary Jane Sharp. We congratulate the young couple on their marriage, and hope that their matrimonial venture will prove prosperous and happy.