

WHAT OF THE CHURCHES.

Men, orders, communities, nations, ages, exhibit in their creations their conceptions of beauty, grandeur, solidity, fitness and glory. From the days of Egypt, Babylon, Rome and Greece, architecture has represented the national thought. The pyramids and hanging gardens, the Coliseum and the Parthenon, portrayed culture, brute force, ostentation, and an overweening desire for fame and immortality. Those giant works, whose ruins are today the objects of amazement and immensity, might have still stood in their magnificence had it not been for the destructive forces of untiring war, so massive, so solid, so calculated were they to resist the action of the elements, and to withstand the flight of time.

In many instances these wondrous monuments were the work of one man who was the embodiment of power, or influence and of national ambition; and an Alexander could boast that he "found Rome of brick, but he left it of marble," or as in our time Napoleon the Third claimed to have "lifted Paris from the status of an insignificant city to that of the capital of the world;" and in our own United States, the original dreary slopes of the Potomac became under "Boss" Shepherd the basis of that "city of magnificent distances" which makes our splendid capital the admiration of all who visit it. Such leaders have had that spirit (even when it seemed in advance of the times) which underlies the individualism of a nation and finds its best expression in a representative man. These manifestations, too, arrest attention. They compel reproduction, either by imitation or originality, as the needed element finds its inspiration.

The capitals of the various states vie with that of the nation and with each other. Public buildings have an influence on private ones. Individuals compete, so far as means will permit; and while many abortions are perpetrated, on the whole the spirit of culture produces fitness, beauty, harmony or grandeur. Taste becomes thus purified, and an education is commenced which uninterrupted will eventually permeate all grades of society in national life.

However, it was beyond our intent to dilate upon this line of ancient or modern expenditure. The ecclesiastical or religious side presented itself, and men's works in relation thereto. Looking upon religion as more far-reaching and inspiring than national greatness or the ostentation of personal pride, thought reverted to the love and sacrifice which has been so often exhibited in that cause which has its votaries in every land whether civilized or vice versa. In the druidical era or earlier, when men were emerging from barbarism, and the sentiment of religion was even more crude than earnest, they did their utmost for the temples of their worship. Among our savage forefathers huge stones and pillars, dragged over many a weary mile with infinite toil, showed that though they had not reached the thought of splendor, they at least determined to furnish their sacred places with a grandeur and massiveness which

was at once an aspiration and a prophecy.

From these rude symbols to the awe inspiring glory of temples in India and Persia of antiquity, there is an immense domain of history which marks the development of religious thought and life. That much of this would easily be referred to the example of selected Israel seems very clear, for the Temple of Solomon outshone in idea and adornment any of its predecessors; and as his reign and glory were familiar to all the world doubtless the sumptuous ceremonial and accessories of that famed structure built by divine revelation had an abiding influence wherever religious life needed an edifice for worship, be the form thereof whatever history may recite.

The patriotism and devotion of Israel to "the city of the great King" owed much of its rise and persistence to the unmistakable power which attended the dedication of that building, upon which was lavished not only the accumulated treasures of David, but the tribute paid to Solomon in the greatness of his reign. Probably even this was overshadowed by subsequent ones which arose upon its ruins, that of Herod eclipsing in its beauty and magnitude, if not in its wealth, the great original; yet no glory, no cedar woods, no delicate sculpture, no gems could change that "den of thieves" into "an accepted house of prayer."

It also appears from our standpoint as if the inspiration of Christianity had eventually to dwarf into insignificance the most famous of religion's fane; for while Ephesus boasted of her great temple of Diana, and in Athens grand altars were erected "to the unknown God," these with countless others were being undermined by the faith of these simple worshippers of the Nazarene who, hiding in the catacombs of the Imperial city, were yet the coming power.

In later ages, upon the very citadel of superstition and senseless idolatry there arose "like an exhalation" from the papacy, in that grand center of her influence, that wonderful temple of St. Peter's, in Rome, to which devotees in all lands turn, as doth the Mohammedan to Mecca or wandering Israel to Jerusalem, the sacred city. Ask the tourist who from this land of resources wends his way on a pilgrimage to the mother country, what is there that rivets the attention beneath her somber skies or her landscapes "dressed in living green," more than any other thing? He will answer it is the ruins of her religious houses, her abbey, her priories, the crumbling walls of institutions founded by religious zeal and sacrifice, yet ground almost to powder by a fanaticism more ruthless and barbarous than those sanctified reminders of antiquity had ever thought to be. Ask again, how is it that the grand old cathedrals yet remain, to which all these organizations wasted away were yet but tributary, and the answer might be in this wise—that it would seem as if Providence had laid its finger of protection upon these consecrated places, from whence unknown yearnings and uncounted prayers had ascended to the Majesty on high. And so York and Canterbury, Litchfield and Hereford, Exeter and Chester, with West-

minster in some sense outshining all the rest, yet remain with many others, to tell of the power of that faith which, sweeping down from Bethlehem and Calvary, through the ages of persecution, yet proved that rare strength of sentiment which blossomed in stone, which lifted the sturdy tower and the suggestive spire, which fashioned their solemn aisles, their lofty roofs and stately pillars, and which gave the graces of ornament and carved work, of sculpture and stained glass, that the place of the Lord's feet might be made glorious within and without.

Although St. Paul had proclaimed that "the shadow of the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands as though He needed anything," our forefathers yet understood themselves (whether God was fully known of them or not); and when they thus lavished anything on the house of worship they were not deceived, for "had they not the example of One who sculptured the great mountains, and studded the heavens with stars, and made the curtain of sunset; He who pencilled with crimson and scarlet the petals of the wayside weeds, and gave such exquisite lustre to every tinsell on the sea shore? He could gain nothing, it was true, from the poor magnificence of their human hearts, yet He respected their offerings whether they were great or little."

But all this beauty was testimony to faith. It recognized the Supreme, it offered Him the best, just as the Catholics with their New York cathedral, commenced by Archbishop Hughes, who declined less than a thousand dollars, and just as the Latter-day Saints have done in the Temples which they have erected and dedicated to the Most High. Much may have been left undone in our churches, in our houses of prayer, but it is believed that by and by we shall begin to ornament these, to give them grandeur of architecture, to emblazon their interior, to glorify them with sculpture and stained glass, to surround them with trees and flowers, to make them comfortable and then harmonious with the spirit of a progressive, a living faith, so that when a man enters therein he will uncover his head and "put his shoes from off his feet" as if he touched but holy ground. Then will come silence, order, cleanliness, peace, so that God may be worshiped there in spirit, nay in the very "beauty of holiness."

We are being educated now. We have got somewhat beyond the severity of the Quaker regime. Bare walls have lost their attraction. Music exercises its potent spell. But our architecture and appointments are yet meagre and bare. We rush in and rush out; not recognizing the power of dedication or the presence of the divine Spirit. Our meeting houses are made too common; our tone when there is too flippant; there is not dignity enough, or quietude enough, or enough of the sense of worship. History knows of the rebound of our time from the superstition and formality of sectarianism, but the equilibrium is sure to come, and the joy of the Psalmist who expressed delight on being invited to the sacred places of his day will be the inspiration of every Latter-day Saint. Even the highest as the