

men as wholesome. But we entertain not a doubt that our foreign rivals have been as much startled as ourselves by the result announced in this matter,—and that they have no more belief than we have in the preposterous figures given by the Commissioners as representing the true sum of the case.

In examining into the question whether the sentence of this Building Committee may not be, to some extent at least, modified on revision, we are met by an element of correction of which we do not choose to avail ourselves. It might be urged that among the foreign competitors are men holding the first recognized places in their respective countries,—while the leading architects of England have held aloof from this trial of strength. That is an argument that we will not urge. If England does not choose to fight, let her be beaten. If she cannot bring up her best forces, let these share in the shame of her defeat. If the artists and manufacturers refuse to lend their help in the great contest to which, under the leading of her Prince and at the strong summons of public opinion, England stands irrevocably committed, the dishonour is theirs. They are cravens,—and will fall before the forces of the world as surely as, and more disgracefully than, if they had been weaker men.

But let us see if the men who did come up to this architectural battle have been fairly dealt with.—It is essential to the integrity of a combat that it should be fought with the weapons prescribed. If one of two combatants bring a sword double the length of his adversary's, or a rifle to his rival's pistol, we should scarcely hold that the defeat of the latter is proof that he is inferior in fence or in aim. Dropping the metaphor,—let us examine how far the Committee have based their judgments on the conditions by themselves laid down.

In the first place, the advertisement of the Committee confined its demand to *information and suggestions* on "the general form of the building in plan, the distribution of its parts, the mode of access, and the internal arrangements and contrivances." They laid down "certain rules and conditions," to which "they earnestly requested the contributors to conform;" and they enforced that request by affirming that they would "be under the necessity of abiding strictly by the regulation of not acknowledging any plans which might be sent in a form inconsistent with those rules." Amongst the rules were, that the "communications from contributors must consist of a single sheet of paper, not larger than an engraving which accompanied the announcement, "with a simple ground plan" on a limited scale, and with "such elevations and sections only of the building, and on the same sheet, as might be necessary to elucidate the system proposed." To make the penalty of departure from these prescriptions more clear and emphatic, it is here repeated that "no communications made inconsistent with these conditions, or any plan prepared upon a different scale from that prescribed can be received." Of those who should best fulfil these conditions, honourable mention was to be made.—All this is laid down with such precision, that really the after-award which professes to be based on this specification becomes a most remarkable document by its side. We say it with all reverence,—but the Commissioners have stultified themselves. It might be supposed that he amongst the competitors had done best who did what was given him to do:—certainly not he who did exactly the contrary. That he should be the prize man who gave the useful practical suggestions,—not he who built *Chateaux en Espagne*, and furnished designs which it was provided by the Instructions were to be altogether rejected. The Committee have taken a more ingenious view of the matter,—and the straightforward Englishmen who were not prepared for the eccentricity have gone to the wall. The honorary mentions have been for those who have produced what the Committee did not want—and said they did not want: the competitors of whose suggestions they have availed themselves most are scarcely noticed or not at all. Splendid elevations and rich combinations that violate every one of the conditions laid down receive the prizes that were promised to the strict observance of those condi-

tions; and designs whose great merit is that they could not because of their magnificence be made applicable to the purpose intended, are made to take in the award of the Committee the place due to the designs which they have applied. Architects who have made this competition the mere pretext for advertising their fancy, instead of doing the work demanded, are set over the heads of the men who came seriously in aid of the Commission, on the very ground of their not having done so! A reward is offered for a march to the rescue,—and given for the dancing of a fandango. In the name of common sense what does this mean? The case cannot be stated in any form of words that does not produce a paradox. Why, if our English architects who limited themselves to applying their skill to do the work assigned them had been fairly informed that *tours de force* were in request—instead of warned that such could not be received—they might doubtless have done as well as their neighbours,—and stood in list B. with M. Clemputte,—who has properly entitled his design a palace. Mr. Bardwell's is a palace, too; in which the economy prescribed by the Commissioners—and, as will be seen hereafter, defied by themselves—makes no part of the account. Mr. Bardwell's plan struck us as being the very best of all among those which we were able to examine in point of mere architectural merit and scenic arrangement,—yet it has not obtained for him a place in list B.—Let us not be misunderstood. Many of these foreign designs are of great beauty, and well deserving of such rewards as had not by anticipation been already assigned to something quite different. Our countrymen, we maintain, hold the best place on the ground of the first of the documents before us,—and would have held a perfectly satisfactory one, no doubt, on the ground of the second if they had known of it sooner.

The Committee having once taken up a position on the ground of paradox, seem to like their quarters, and determine to maintain it:—but in this part of their proceedings we are not without a suspicion that we detect something more than the mere amateurship of eccentricity. Having adopted the practical suggestions and rewarded the others, they resolve to engraft on the practicality which they use a portion of the display which they honour. Between two tall architectural stools, it will be seen, the practical men go to the ground. The foreign architects carry off their prizes, and the Committee carry off their plans,—merging and crushing them beneath one great feature of their own. In this part of the matter the Committee contrive to write their self-contradiction on one and the same document. The Report which announces at once their award in the matter of the competition and their own design, states as the basis of the latter the following three considerations:—1, [the leading condition, be it observed.] "The provisional nature of the building; 2, the advisability of constructing it as far as possible in such a form as to be available, with least sacrifice of labour and material, for other purposes, so soon as its original one shall have been fulfilled, thus ensuring a *minimum ultimate cost*; 3, *extreme simplicity*, demanded by the short time in which the work must be completed."—and among "the principal points of excellence which they have endeavoured to attain" is again mentioned *economy of construction*. Unluckily, another of the points enumerated as sought to be attained is, "some striking feature to exemplify the present state of the science of construction in this country." We are comforted, however, by having the guarantee of their previous "considerations" that this "striking feature" is to be "provisional" in its character and compatible with "economy of construction." But here, alas! the imagination of the Committee, inflated by the magnificent projects on which it has been recently pondering, soars away from the rules which they had in vain laid down to confine it, and lifts above the humble galleries which they have borrowed from the practical men a huge dome, 200 feet in diameter,—twice the size of the dome of St. Paul's—greatly exceeding those of St. Peter's and the Pantheon,—far surpassing the "great features" of the imaginative men to whom they have given the

practical men's prizes.—Let us observe parenthetically here, that they might as well have given the practical men a chance for the credit of this "striking feature," instead of reserving it as a *bonne bouche* for themselves, on false pretences. But nothing of the kind, our readers will have seen, is hinted at in the requisitions of the original notice. Not one word is there said about "some striking feature to exemplify the present state of construction in this country." But to return:—Before the project of this mighty dome—which dwarfs the rest of the building to an absurdity—away goes the *economy* at once. Thirty or thirty-five thousand pounds will be required to rear this huge structure in the air. Then, the time which is left to work in seems to us wholly insufficient for such a construction:—and we warn the Committee against the awful consequences of precipitancy in putting up a vast structure like this. In an architectural point of view, the dome proposed is a very questionable feature as far as effect is concerned. As shown in outline on paper, it might be taken for a vaulted one of stone; but its real appearance will be altogether different,—will be that of a gigantic piece of open iron framework. Well, then, for the *provisional* character of this "striking feature":—and here the Committee are unwise enough to let their own intentions of *permanency* peep out in the very document which prescribes the provisionality. Having made the provisional character an absolute condition of the "leading feature," they recommend that that leading feature shall be this great dome by a hint that it will probably not be provisional. "It is to be borne in mind," say they, "that a considerable amount of" the difference in cost between this dome and "the simplest form of roof likely to be adopted to cover the same area" "may be recovered should this portion of the building be converted hereafter to other purposes, WHICH IS MORE THAN PROBABLE."—We foresee that this little paragraph, unless we can succeed in arousing public attention to it, will ultimately cost the nation a million of money. We know the whole process by experience. The dome once reared, "it were sin and waste to remove so majestic a structure." Of course it cannot remain standing there for nothing:—wings and a "second story" added would make it into a National Gallery, &c. &c.—And so comes the million of money—say a million—and the job, like the dome, introduced as provisional and become permanent.

For our own parts, if we might advise, we would, for every reason, have this structure of a noble simplicity in all its parts. Keeping the object of this great gathering in view, we would have nothing which should divert attention from the things exhibited to the building which contains them. The great purpose should not be vulgarized by any attempt to put it in costume. Limited funds and limited time cohere to the same conclusion. We would have the whole quite in the rough. All the materials should be allowed to show themselves without disguise—even that of paint. Such honest rudeness would effectually secure us from the reproach of paltriness of taste—which we may incur in attempting to make too huge a display of taste. Besides which, if the materials be left as nearly as possible in their raw state, all the more easily will they be afterwards convertible to other purposes,—as the Commissioners themselves suggested, in their original document inviting suggestions, that they should be.

EXHIBITION OF MODELS FOR THE PRIZE MEDALS TO BE DISTRIBUTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE GREAT INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION.

This Exhibition is not calculated to give a very high idea of the resources of native or foreign talent. The competition in the department to which it relates has tested principally the powers of younger artists,—the elder ones not having entered the arena; and in a number of models exceeding one hundred there is little to justify any favorable anticipation for the future. There is much in this Exhibition that we could have desired to make no acquaintance with; and some of the models, from their entire inaptitude and the peculiarity of