

JAMES MORANT LOCKYER.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us a thumbnail sketch of the premises in Tottenham Court-road recently occupied by Messrs. Heal & Son, the one example of distinguished architecture in that street of middle-class temptation. We always looked with friendly eyes on this charming building in the Italian mode, but to many it passed almost unnoticed, and few gave attention to any of its features; yet, now the building is demolished and the merits of the talented architect who designed it are set forth in print, regret may be experienced in many quarters that such a fine design was not preserved and extended to form part of the present scheme of rebuilding.

For our knowledge of Lockyer we are indebted to the notes on his career which were prepared by Professor Donaldson. Lockyer died on March 2, 1865, at the age of forty-one. He was educated at the Grammar School of Ilminster, and pursued his early training in the office of Thos. Little. In due course he passed into the office of Charles Parker, under whom he acquired a thorough knowledge of Italian art, and he completed his studies under Sydney Smirke. Eventually he took up a course of Italian study under Count Pepoli at University College to fit himself for travel abroad, and in 1845 he started on his first foreign tour. Two years before this Lockyer had begun to compile a volume dealing with Egyptian antiquities. Donaldson says:—"The exquisite accuracy with which he has drawn all the cartouches and emblematic conventional figures, the refinement and delicacy with which he has delineated the architectural and other illustrations, and the learned text founded on the researches of Herodotus, Manetho, Champolion, Lepsius, Rossellini, Burton, Wilkinson, etc., exhibit a power of concentration and scholarlike investigation with which alone such a subject can be successfully grappled."

When Lockyer returned from abroad his father gave up to him his architectural practice. He designed and executed the tower of Wrenningham Church, Norfolk, and the Parsonage house; the new chancel and memorial aisle of Tugby Church, Leicester; a house and offices in Oatlands Park. In addition, he carried into being works for Peter Robinson, Nicholay, Hayward & Clough in Oxford-street, and Messrs. Heal's premises in Tottenham Court-road, the latter especially being an exceptional example of his power to introduce into commercial architecture the graces of form and colour which are almost unknown in works of a similar class to-day. Unfortunately this love of minute detail and intricacy of colour decoration produced a weakening of his sight, until a few years before his death he became totally blind. The Institute collection contains a folio of his exquisite drawings and a cabinet filled with precious architectural mementoes.

Lockyer, in his work for Messrs. Heal & Son, grasped an important principle of shop-front design which is only now receiving tardy recognition from modern architects, namely, the disposition of solids over a large area of plate glass without loss of dignity or reasonableness of architectural effect. Greek Thomson, in works of a similar nature at Glasgow, approached his problem in a like spirit. At Tottenham Court-road Lockyer introduced an arcaded shop front with vertical lines for divisions after contemporary French models; over this, at the level of the first floor, he formed a continuous arcade, and above this a beautiful disposition of voids and solids, thereby making the second floor the most imposing story. So from the extreme lightness of the ground story the front progresses vertically to the cornice, but the eye is never deceived at any point, and accepts the spirit in which the difficult problem was successfully solved by the architect. Such subtlety in design is a rare thing nowadays, and we are too apt to condemn buildings on account of their period rather than to inquire into their inherent qualities.

But for the enterprise of our correspondent, who secured the sketch of the front, many would have been deprived of an idea of Lockyer's most distinguished work.



Premises, Tottenham Court Road, W.

By James Morant Lockyer.

THE NATURE OF THE COMMON-PLACE IN ARCHITECTURE.

A GREAT deal of modern architecture strikes all who have artistic sense as being unsatisfactory and uninteresting, but it is difficult to define the reason for our feelings, for we often have to admit that there is very little in such compositions that we can say is actually ill-designed or displeasing, and our view is rather that expressed in the saying, "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell, The reason why I cannot tell." Two broad schools of architectural thought—the Academic and the Naturalistic—have different ways of accounting for the commonplace and different suggestions of its origin. The school of which Mr. Baillie Scott and Mr. March Phillipps are brilliant advocates put down the commonplace and monotonous in architecture to the fact that we have strayed away into unnatural avenues of architectural expression in our endeavour to follow the false but appealing lure of the Renaissance, and that we have exalted the mechanical at the expense of the individualistic traits of our life.

"The main quality of the craftsman building," says Mr. Baillie Scott, "is that it is elastic and accommodating. Windows and doors can be placed where they are wanted, and the whole effect is natural, unaffected, and homely. It kindles the imagination, and is full of the unexpected quality of romance. The Classic house is a definite statement of the finite. It is a conscious piece of art which has been definitely arranged from the outside—not the natural result of internal requirements."

And, again, "The craftsman house is more subtle in its appeal. It is casual; it rambles and dissembles; and only when we have entered its wide low doorway, and become steeped in the deep and silent influences which breathe

from its walls, do we begin to realise the potency of its charm."

These sentences show what is in Mr. Baillie Scott's mind; but do they not also suggest an obvious limitation to the production of buildings of which he would approve which confines the use of the type he prefers to country houses? In our street fronts windows are placed where they are required, so much so that many fronts become a skeleton on narrow solids framing voids; nor would the "wide low doorway" be suitable or possible in a street frontage or a rambling type of arrangement that "dissembles" meet the requirements of those using a great public building.

We learn, too, that "beauty is only skin-deep in a Renaissance building; structure is everywhere concealed by superficial casings, walls and ceilings are concealed with plaster, and all the structural features of the house hidden, while the interest of the rooms is centred in fabrics, pictures, and ornaments." We do not know why casings should be condemned if they are employed consistently and properly, for it is equally right to case with one material, as it is to use another in solid blocks. Both plaster and panelling are casings, and not less admirable for being so, and Mr. Baillie Scott might be driven to admit that there is no more reason why a building should reveal the secrets of its construction than a casual acquaintance should tell one of his private concerns. Also, if honesty of construction, which is so much insisted on by the craftsman architect, is good, why is it also good that a building should "dissemble and ramble"? Surely honesty may be shown in systematic arrangement and logical and simple planning, as well as in the use and choice of materials. The one is, to our way of thinking, a superficial or material honesty, the other shows mental honesty and clarity of