

“The Progress of the Monumental Business in a Century”

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The Progress of the Monumental Business in a Century.

Tombstones more than 200 years old are very uncommon. In the past century, vast differences in design have taken place. It would necessitate more time than I can give in a limited paper to trace step by step the varied changes of Renaissance in monumental design from the far distant past, when the Gothic with its religious symbolism and teachings so largely pervaded Church Architecture and Cemetery work. To trace the history of taste with respect to the Memorials of the dead we must visit the old places of sepulture. The earliest types, hewn out by hand of flat stones set in the ground, without basements, of various materials "quaint" and "antique" in form, "the doleful Epitaphs," "uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture." The weeping figures, Angels and Mortals, even Weeping Willow Trees, "The draped Urn." Antique Crosses; Bas Relief emblems of Death, "the skull and crossed bones," "a hideous skeleton with poised dart in hand," "reversed torches" (emblems of extinguished life), shattered columns ("hopes blasted.") Tombs made by boxing together pieces in elongated shapes, decorated with carved "patras." Tomb tables on pillars, stone or brick work. Tablets on church walls outside and in the interior. Slabs recording the names of those buried in vaults beneath, covered the old church floor with their queer inscriptions, all tending to produce a mournful depressing gloom on the visitor; even the school boy in passing the yard with eyes askance is "Whistling aloud to keep his courage up." We rejoice to know that these grief producing emblems are gradually becoming a thing of the past.

It is curious to see the hankering after Pagan forms in the monuments of the past. The shattered Corinthian column appeared to be a favorite symbol, why should we say Death shatters and ruins? A lily or rose with a broken stem also embody the idea that Death was destruction! The growth and progress in monumental architecture has been slow; but step by step advances have been made, not only in more perfected designs and graceful expression, but in the use of more enduring material. Experience and time have proved marble and stone as to their adaptation for monumental purposes; taking the lessons shown from decaying old work we have become careful and perfect in selection. Who has not looked into Trinity Church Yard, New York, and other old burying grounds with feelings of regret that such crumbling material compose so many mementos of the past, records of time honored and national historic names, much time and money wasted on work that commenced to perish as soon as erected; the gracefully designed and well executed monument in Carrara marble in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, to Charlotte Canda, (on which her vast fortune was expended) with a thousand rents and fissures; a material unsuited to exposure in the climate it is erected in, but which if executed in hard American marble of the same color, would have stood to day in perfectness. Not only have we taken vital lessons from old time structures as to the selection of material that is durable, there has also been a gradual evolution in design, a distinct and marked improvement in correlative and harmonious symmetry in proportion. Stock is not as formerly thrown together hap-hazard, but designs in geometric perfection first studied and adapted in all their parts of structure before adoption, many incorrectly proportioned monuments have been erected, many came from the Mother Land until it remained for the American monument builder to inaugurate and furnish a more perfect system in all its details governing his work. Finding his best advertisement a class of work which in the present and future shall stand a solid reputation for artistic genius lasting as the material itself.

¹Paper read by Joseph Hooper, Port Hope, Ontario, at the convention of the Michigan Marble and Granite Dealers' Association at Port Huron, Mich.

Sharp keen competition has been one of the factors in curtailing to a great extent elaborate carving in monumental embellishment, and a system known to the trade as Stencil ornamentation has largely taken its place, reducing cost of production, and also to make a cheap class of work showy, producing striking effects in dark material by which attractivity purchasers are often misled from a lack of knowledge of really good work and material. Interstice and weathering polishing has been abandoned, coarse sanding, pebbling, tooling, bushing and axing are made to answer, supplanting the long tedious polishing of these parts. Then we have still another innovation (shall I say progressive?) cheaper style in Rock faced work until we are led to exclaim: Whither are we drifting? However "Sic Valeas" (Knowledge is power) and aside from these seeming innovations in the old school work, the monument designer of the present (with all the weak points before him as seen in the older system) aims to produce a greater durability with equal effectiveness, doing away with such carved reliefs as are largely affected by the weather, their place being taken by a superior and advanced outline in contourial expression in monumental construction. The effect of a coarser finish on weatherings and projections whilst lessening the labor of the polisher yet has its attractions, standing out as it does in contradistinctive effect to the polished parts showing in dark material in a very marked manner. Then we have the "Rock-faced" work which has come but not to stay, and must from its limited uncouthness and possibilities in style be short lived, strong competition has had the effect (to a large extent especially in smaller towns) of producing a showy work as rapidly and with as little cost as possible.

We have discovered also that we need not import material for monumental purposes, in a rough, or finished state, the harder Vermont marbles have proved (by actual weather tests,) the best time enduring material used in that line. There are unlimited resources for supply now of all grades suitable for monumental or decorative work, the growth and development of quarries have kept pace with the demands of the trade, the mills ever improving in equipment and capacity suited to the varying and improving wants of the dealers. In granite this continent has been uncovering and developing its vast resources, until we have to-day native stock unexcelled in all shades of color and variety of texture from the lightest grey to the denser black in unlimited supply. A material fast superceding marble from the fact of its greater durability, having become evident, hence a growing and increasing demand for its use, marble dealers have been compelled per se to add the cutting of granite to their business. The "Marble Works" have been changed to "Marble Granite and Building Stone Yards" with Mantle, Grate and Tile show room attached.

The little workshop, with its hollow-log for hewing purposes of two inch stock only and standing around in the interior against the walls, headstones with tooled edges, six feet by two, and down to three feet by one, cut to set in ground without basing, ornamented by weeping willow trees, torches, etc., and headlines "Sacred to the memory of," rose buds and lambs, (shall I say lambs?) this is a picture of the old shop, it has passed away! And the good old days of big prices when fortunes were made out of 2 inch No 2 "Gone where the woodbine twineth," "And like the baseless gravestone, left but a wreck behind." I will not speak of the prices we got in the good old times of long — long ago! some of you know, keep quiet! say not a word! there may be a chiel among "Us fakkin notes." What became of the cash earned in them good old days of good prices; good wages, and no strikes, and when our customer set his own work? The old shop is gone! and so too is the hand cart which when a boy apprentice I was made to draw through the streets as a mule! We have now the capacious and well stocked yard with marble and granite monuments grouped in artistic display, in large var-

lety of form and shape, the sunlight dancing on the polished surfaces, capacious and roomy workshops and stock yards with derrick and lifting appliances, truck and tramway, all conveniences for the handling a heavy class of work. The double team with its silver mounted harness and platform spring wagon, the gentlemanly agent and his neat turn out all evolved from our old system of doing business. Let us take a walk to the cemetery. What a wondrous contrast is here to the burial place of 50 years ago,—then work set in the ground without any system of regularity to lean about in every shape. "With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked." With mouldering skulls and bones in sight around, great mounds tall weeds, long grass, presenting a repulsive and terrorizing effect, so that the school boy passing, "Whistled aloud to keep his courage." Now we have the well ordered and conducted modern cemetery with its printed code of rules and regulations and thorough official supervision, not only over the grounds but over all work set, that it is done in the best possible manner on well secured foundations. Grounds beautifully planned in landscape effect, with the best provision for watering, finely gravelled and shady walks and avenues, well cared for and trimmed lots, with a profusion of floral decorations. Monuments in endless variety. Sarcophagi and tablets in improved forms present an attractive appearance expressive of the harmonious, ideal in constructive grace and revealing the limitless and eternal in design. Death loses its terrors here! And the wearied marble and granite cutter surrounded by the wondrous creations of his skill and genius, throwing down mallet and chisel exclaims; "*Here let me rest.*"

"Death is the crown of life."

Were death denied, poor men would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live would not be life;
Were death denied even fools would wish to die.

During the reading of his paper Mr. Hooper read some epigrams which he had cut in the course of his work.

Monumental Notes.

The month of October is set for the unveiling of the following monuments: Statue of General Geo. B. McClellan, N. W. corner, City Hall, Philadelphia. The mammoth bronze statue of William Penn is to be hoisted into place on the top of the City Hall, Philadelphia. The monument to the Revolutionary dead at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Sing Sing, N. Y.

Nikolaus Geiger, the German artist, who is carrying out the work of the Army astragals for the Indiana Soldiers' monument has forwarded copies of his designs to the commission. The main front of the astragal will be about 18 feet deep. Each front will be 45 feet long, making a total of 180 feet. The weight of the bronze castings will exceed 60 000 pounds, and will form at its height perhaps the heaviest piece of sculpture in the world.

Among the monuments unveiled during September are the following: Monument to Capt. A. D. Harvey at Canton, Miss.; The Father Walter Monument, Mount Olivet Cemetery, Washington, D. C.; Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Williamsport, Pa.; The General Rusk Monument at Nacogdoches, Texas; First Maine Heavy Artillery Monument at Petersburg, Va.; Thirteenth Connecticut Monument, Winchester, Va.; Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Sterling, Neb.

The Brockport, N. Y., soldiers' memorial tower is situated in the new Brockport rural cemetery. It stands on an elevation, and is built of rock-faced stone. Above its foundation it is fifty-two feet high. It is eleven feet in diameter from foundation to top of doorway, ten feet from top of doorway to the observatory, and round in form; the observatory is octagonal with eight win-

dows, and room for about twenty persons. The interior has tablets, and a circular iron stairway of sixty-four steps.

The latest additions to the Soldiers' monument at Indianapolis are the two Cascades, which the architect, Mr. Louis H. Gibson, has designed to complete the artistic ensemble of the structure. These cascades will be 60 feet long in a north and south direction, and will extend 30 feet from the platform of the monument. There will be three terraces or falls. The cascades will be made of terra cotta to conform to the color of the stonework of the monument, and this material will be more readily kept clean and will not discolor. The water will be used over and over again by pumps specially arranged for the purpose. The cost of these cascades is put at \$10,000.

The Hobart Mausoleum in course of construction in Cypress Lawn Cemetery, San Francisco, Cal., will be twenty feet high and is to be in the form of a Greek temple. The entire exterior, with the exception of the four fluted columns, is to be of granite from Raymond, Cal. The capitals of the four columns will be of granite, of the Ionic order, and the columns themselves will be fluted and made of Mexican onyx. Each of these columns will be a single stone, and will be imported from Mexico. The entire exterior of the building, from the ground up, will be fine hammered. The interior will be highly polished, and the double doors will be of solid bronze. It is expected that the cost will reach between \$65,000 and \$70,000.

It has been proposed at Atlanta, Ga., by the Confederate Veteran's Association, to erect a joint monument of Generals McPherson, of the Federal army, and W. H. T. Walker, of the Confederates, who were killed within a few yards of each other in the battle of July 22, 1864. The scheme is to raise \$200,000, one-half by each side, with which a heroic double equestrian statue will be erected upon the spot where McPherson fell. General Walker is to face the north, and is to be clasping hands with General McPherson, whose face will be to the south. The project has been under negotiation for several months, and it is reported that the correspondence already held with the Federals and Confederates throughout the country gives promise of success.

On the summit of a high hill in Evergreen Cemetery, Brooklyn, N. Y., stands what is known as the sailors' monument. This monument has an interesting history, particularly so to "Jack" and his friends. The death of some unfortunate sailors in New York decided the Chamber of Commerce in 1852 to petition Congress to appropriate \$5000 for the purchase of a suitable burial plot. This was granted, the Seamen's Cemetery Association formed and the three acre plot bought. It was formally opened January 31, 1853, and immediately transferred to the Government. Every nation has its own space set apart, which is marked by granite blocks placed thirty feet from each other. The name of the country is cut on the front of each block. The United States Government seems to be the only one in the world that has provided for the decent burial of sailors of all nations. The point on which the monument is built is the highest on Long Island. It stands in the center of a grass plot fifty feet in diameter, and is inclosed by a square fence. From the top of the pedestal, which is twenty feet high, the column rises forty feet, and is surmounted by a large globe with a map of the world cut on it. On the north side of the pedestal is carved a dismantled ship, with the waves breaking over her, and on the opposite side an anchor and chain. On the west side, in bold letters, is the inscription: "For Sailors of All Nations;" and on the east side is an inscription which tells plainly how the monument was erected.