

The Revival of English Domestic Architecture

THE REVIVAL OF ENGLISH DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE. IV. THE WORK OF MR. ERNEST GEORGE.

In a former paper some of Mr. Ernest George's town-buildings were considered ; or, to speak more accurately, some by Messrs. Ernest George and Peto, for the credit was never claimed by the senior partner alone. Yet in going on to chronicle other houses designed by these two architects, it will be less tautologic to continue to attribute them as before to one only of their joint authors. But such reference must be taken merely as the shortened title of the firm used colloquially. At the same time one cannot help feeling that the spirit of Mr. Ernest George's most admirable water-colours, etchings and drawings, is so exactly akin to that shown in the buildings by the partners, that in all probability that aspect of the work which appeals more directly to readers of *THE STUDIO* might be credited chiefly to him. This, however, is merely surmise ; one has no right to attempt to go behind the scenes. Mr. Ernest George, loyally and invariably, refers to all his work as the joint-product of himself and Mr. Peto (or in a few earlier and later cases as the joint-work of himself and others), consequently we must do the same. For this is a point upon which the artist lays stress. "I believe," he says, "in a wise arrangement of partnership, although partnership is not usual with architects. By its means I have been saved from the worry of general business and the constant interruptions that distress an artist at his work. I think that

the buildings gain in all practical details by being more carefully and constantly supervised than they could be by an artist working alone."

In going on to record briefly the chief works erected after the designs of these architects, one is confronted more than ever with the difficulty of describing objects that owe no little of their beauty to mere size, in a few bare sentences, or representing them in an illustration, that hardly equals the dimension of a tenth part of a single brick. The man who carried about a brick as sample of his house, was scarcely equipped more meagrely than one who tries to re-edify, in imagination, solid and stately buildings. For not merely is colour absent, and the effect of light and shade, which is a still more important factor in architecture ; but reduced to quite insignificant proportions the breadth of a façade which cannot be seen as a whole within the focus of any ordinary vision, is made to appear like a toy, which can be examined minutely without shifting the eyes. Again, a satisfactory building owes no little to its environment—certainly the problem to make it accord with its surroundings, harmoniously but not too arrogantly, is one of the most difficult that confronts the architect. This again is rarely capable of proof in black and white illustration, for if you take enough of the surroundings to show the building as it appears in reality, you reduce the main subject to an accessory ; if you concentrate your attention upon it alone, and ignore the environment, then again you are not doing it justice. Nor can you distinguish the texture of the materials employed, which counts for so much



HOUSE AT ASCOT

MESSRS. ERNEST GEORGE AND PETO, ARCHITECTS