

FROM THE PEOPLE

Letters From Readers Of The Sun
On Subjects Of Interest.

OLD MARYLAND STATE HOUSE

The Repairs Made In 1877—Changes
In The Senate Chamber—The Archi-
tecture's Explanation.

[Writers to the "From the People" column are requested to make their communications as brief as is consistent with the nature of the subjects discussed. Brevity in the case of wit, and short stories are more good than long ones.]

Messrs. Editors: On Sunday, December 12 last in an article on your editorial page entitled "The Virginia State Capitol" you take occasion to say: "The interior of the old Maryland State House was greatly marred some 25 years ago by an ignorant attempt at improvement, and the people of the State never have ceased to regret the vandalism."

Since 1877, when the repairs on and in the State House were made, at sundry times inadvertent allusion to the above have found place in the pages of our local press which, had the persons interested in producing the same but taken the trouble to read the architect's report to the then Governor, as chief of the Board of Public Works, who had charge of and by whose sanction and orders all the work done was fashioned; of the circumstances necessitating the renewals then made—the marring improvements referred to—and the vandalism perpetrated possibly would appear in a light not quite so censurable nor make needful this explanation.

For those seemingly ignorant or in misapprehension of important facts I would much thank you for the publication of the following statement. That the timely work then done averted a disaster which readily might have proved more shocking than that which so calamitously had befallen the State House of Virginia is to all cognizant of its then desperate and deplorable state abundantly well known. The only surprise is that ere its startling discovery such had not already occurred. Gladly would I make the recital shorter, but to me a general survey appears necessary before I particularize.

The Legislature of 1876 had appropriated a sum of money for the excavation of a cellar and the installation of a suitable heating and ventilating plant under the old State House building; such never had existed, the first floor originally having been throughout in almost direct contact with the ground beneath, and not a particle of provision made for free access of air for the preservation of the timbers embraced in the floor construction.

Heats or open fires were for decades the only means of heating the various apartments. After that—in 1857 or 1858—building of the library annex and the construction of a more modern heating apparatus in the basement of the same a large opening was broken through the old north wall adjoining the addition, and trenches were dug in the earth beyond for the accommodation of heating pipes to the different rooms above. These trenches were just about spacious enough to permit a man to crawl through and into a darkness Cimmerian, necessitating the constant use of artificial lights for every purpose requiring inspection or work. That under such conditions the State House had not long since resolved itself into a holocaust was a surprise to the architects when employed and of necessity made familiar with such surroundings.

At that time the only accessible wall was that of the north side, already referred to, and as on investigation it appeared to start at a sufficient depth and as buildings standing on comparatively level ground usually have a uniform foundation level I naturally assumed that all that was required was the removal of the inclosed earth, and, after putting in proper window and door openings, secure a good, well-lighted and ventilated cellar. Quite the contrary was the case, and, excepting the north wall, all the balance had to be underpinned from four to five and more feet.

The first circumstance then discovered was that all the floor timbers were not merely rot, but, especially so at their wall ends, absolutely rotten, the same suggesting further examinations the same was found to be the case with the majority of those on the upper floor and in many of the walls and other timbers of the roof and to the supports. Not only had the flooring boards, worn thin by the feet of the occupants and visitors long since departed, never been taken up when needed renewal to permit or demonstrate the soundness of the joists supporting such, but three separate layers were found, one on top of the other, which at intervals, as the worn condition of the floors demanded; had recklessly been nailed, one floor upon the other. On the roof the tin covering of the same was found to have been placed in a similar manner on four or five successively worn-out layers; the lowest or undermost of which (probably the original roof) was composed of small, loose, unsoldered pieces, laid with a lap, as usual with slate or wood shingles. The shathing beneath was almost totally rotted.

The floors of the Executive Chamber (Governor's room, over the Senate chamber) and of the Court of Appeals (over the House of Delegates) had toward their centers sagged or bowed from five to six inches; they were held up by huge chains incased in clumsy wooden posts, the latter probably yet easily recalled by those then familiar with these apartments, and hung from roof trusses equally deteriorated and precarious.

The above is a requisite prelude to a proper analysis of the "ignorant attempt," etc., and the "vandalism" which the writer fancies is especially intended to apply to the as then left and since permitted to remain Senate chamber. Throughout the structure many changes and alterations had at previous times been made, and it was the particular desire and aim, as far as lay in his knowledge and power, of the architect in all repairs made to have the work, substantially such as existed previous to the summer of 1877, when he was employed.

Before the meeting of the Legislature of 1878, for whose accommodation the work night and day hurried to a completion so necessary, the then Governor of the State, Hon. John Lee Carroll, requested me to write him a report detailing what had been found requisite to do and what had been done. This report he, after reference and directing attention to the same, did me the honor to append as a supplementary document to his message.

From this report (House and Senate Documents, 1878) I, in full, quote the section specially relating to the Senate chamber: "All the plastering has been renewed; that of the Senate restored from drawings, measurements and models made from the original casts (that is, casts made from the original ornamental parts). I much regretted in this room being compelled to remove the gallery, which for want of time could not be replaced. It was in a ruinous and dangerous condition, and I would respectfully advise, if determined to reconstruct the same, it be done of a material not as perishable as plaster. Careful measurements were taken and accurate drawings prepared of every part, so that nothing will prevent its exact reproduction, if such should be decided upon."

The gallery, situated at the western end of the room, was hardly five feet wide, was finished with circled ends, and, as the Senate chamber only has a moderately high ceiling, was extremely low beneath and scarce high enough to stand upright upon it above. The entrance to it at its north end consisted of a doorway not over two feet wide and four feet six inches high, exceedingly inconvenient of ingress or of egress. The stairway leading to it, in its day equally inconcommodious for use, had long since been removed. The column shafts supporting it were of wood, as was also its skeleton construction; but all of its outer face and finish was of a species of stucco or plaster composition and through-out was cracked and crumbling to pieces. It, besides, had so often been whitewashed that the ornamental members—of which it was almost entirely composed—had lost all semblance of their original line or self.

Not only was it, as already stated, in a ruinous condition, but its removal at that time was an imperative necessity; the room itself could not be repaired as it required to be done and the gallery (as it existed) kept in position during the progress of the work, or even if made possible be sought but the startling contrast of incongruous decrepitude with a rejuvenated balance. The Board of Public Works fully realized this and held an special meeting to consider the course to pursue, and, as I insistingly advised its reconstruction should be done in materials of more substantial character than those first employed and as time was pressing to get the chamber ready for the meeting of the General Assembly, which this effort surely would retard, and, moreover, as the Board of Public Works already had gone far beyond the appropriation made for the repairs, it concluded it was better to have the removal and reconstruction of this work done at once.

time discharging of the duties of 1878 by employment as architect; ceased; among the interests prevented my further attention therewith. I had the column shafts of the gallery purposely hewed up and stored in the State House and have carefully preserved the measurements and drawings of the whole for future reference. While at these much has and very has arisen within its own (the Senate's) body regarding the removal of the gallery—how severely this disposition was must be judged by the result—no Legislature since has so far seen fit to order and provide for its rehabilitation. Now that new and spacious quarters have been provided in the place of the cramped and inadequate chamber it can well and properly be reinstated.

In the latter half of the year 1877 I night and day personally worked and labored harder for the State of Maryland in the completion of the State House repairs and its proper readiness for the General Assembly of January, 1878, than ever I did on any other work in my life—even the Christmas Day of 1877 and the New Year's Day of 1878 found me all day long at the work; and as I look back today upon what I then accomplished I wonder how I succeeded, as I did, in spite of the self-sacrificing efforts then cheerfully rendered to a sympathetic "board," the Legislature, impatient to visit its recentment on the Board of Public Works for having, as it claimed, transcended its powers in doing what it did and in exceeding the appropriation made, and also its defined objects, saw fit to punish me, the board's agent, by withholding nearly \$2,000 of my commission as architect; nor have I to this day—24 years afterward—been able to secure that equity which is due to the humblest of citizens, but which from the sovereign power can be secured only by its sovereign disposition. For four or five succeeding sessions of the Legislature I endeavored to secure the payment of this debt, for the validity of which demand (apart from the reference made regarding it by the Governor in his message of 1880 to the Legislature, wherein he expresses his surprise that such should have been withheld by the previous body) I yet hold the unsatisfied certificate stating that the sum claimed is a balance due under a contract made by them as representatives of the State of Maryland, and signed by John Lee Carroll as Governor, Barnes Compton as Treasurer and Levin Woolford as Comptroller, and composing the Board of Public Works. And further is it touched for and its payment recommended by the successor of Hon. Levin Woolford, Gen. Thos. J. Keating, whose province as Comptroller it was to examine into the justice of all claims against the State of Maryland and to report upon the merit or demerit of such to the Legislature by personal indorsement. After repeated failure to obtain that which I had spent months of ceaseless labor to honorably earn, declining on the one hand to avail myself of the proffered but greedy cent-per-cent. influence of the lobby and on the other hand rendered sick at heart by the sneering comments of would-be humorous press reporters at its season after season respiration, I at last abandoned further struggle, with its concomitant waste of time and money, concluding that if the great State of Maryland thus preferred to deal out injustice to its own citizens I would strive to survive it. Hard it is to be deprived of the earned wage, but more cruel yet to receive instead the unearned implied odium of an iconoclast.

GEORGE A. FREDERICK.

Some Pages From History.
Messrs. Editors: In an able editorial in yesterday's SUN, on the subject of matters relating to the Panama canal, past and prospective, you pay a high compliment to the patriotism of the American people, which has not at all times been applicable to all the sections. You say:

"It is true that when the United States is verging on war, or is in the midst of war, the people rally to the support of the Administration which is conducting it. Whether they like the excitement of war or whether from motives of pure patriotism, this has always been the case."

I have been a close reader of all the editorials in THE SUN for more than a year, and I am convinced that you are too thorough a historian to have forgotten some notable exceptions to your amiable compliment. I will mention the second war with Great Britain when, according to subsequent admissions of John Quincy Adams, "the pulpit and press of New England buried anathemas and curses liberally upon all those who aided or abetted the war, directly or indirectly;" when many New England papers, notably the Boston Gazette, threatened President Madison with death if he attempted to compel the Eastern States to fight in the war; when General Pennington introduced into the Massachusetts Legislature a bill calling on the Governor, Caleb Strong, to arm and equip the militia and secede from the Union; when all the New England States met together in a secret convention at Hartford, Conn., and President Madison detailed a military officer from the field to go to Hartford to watch the convention and to learn, if possible, what were its designs; when the prospects of the war were gloomy, after nearly two years of conflict, which had cost the lives of 30,000 patriots and the expenditure of \$100,000,000, and patriots in the field and at home were in deep despondency lest the Administration should fail in its efforts to uphold the honor of the nation and compel respect for its flag—and incidentally to protect New England seamen from impressment by Great Britain.

It was not then, and is not now, believed that the object of the New England convention, and of the people whom it represented, was to "rally to the support of the Administration." On the contrary, it was and is believed that the intention was to desert "the best Government the world ever saw" in its hour of dire necessity, and to turn their backs upon "the Old Flag—the Flag of Our Fathers"—in the face of an armed and defiant foe.

In the war with Mexico Franklin Pierce and some others "rallied to the support of the Administration" and did gallant service; but the beacon that followed them from New England was the hope that the Mexicans would welcome the patriots under Scott and Taylor "with bloody hands to hospitable graves."

Pardon me for digging up the dead past when we were a plain republic and States were sovereign and had never dreamed of consolidating into a "world power."
December 22. N. J. FLOYD.

Spitting In The Cars.
Messrs. Editors: I am a constant reader of THE SUN and believe its light shines in many dark places and that its rays penetrate far and wide. Will you permit me a little space to protest against the filthy habit of expectoration in the cars? I have thought a great many times I would write, but have refrained, thinking it would get better, but alas! it is only worse. There is hardly a day in the year I do not use the cars and I have plenty of opportunity to judge of their condition.

It is my custom to go to Loudon Park at Christmas time. Last year I went as usual and, coming home, got in a car which was crowded, owing to the holiday rush, but the only seat I could get was one in this filthy condition. Having paid my fare it was as much as I could endure until I got out, as it made me deathly sick. And again last summer, in an open car, I had only ridden a square when I had to ask the conductor to let me change my seat, as it was dreadful. I went again to Loudon Park this year and took what I thought was a seat free from this filth when I hap-

GEMS FROM

They each bear a crown, both th
Yet kings but receive it, while post

THE CHRISTI BY MINNA

She awoke on Chr
And she found be
Gifts of gold and e
Sapphires blue an
Filmy lace and co
Rare brocade of
Ivory, pearl and o
Treasures to deli

But a single rose of crimson
Overladen with perfume
Gave its soul to thrill her senses
And to fill the lofty room;
And she knew the love that sent it,
Kneelings, humble, unconfessed;
And she planned its fragrant beauty
In the lace on her breast.
Up and up she spr
Guided over by
Thread of faint, w
From a moun
Till she stood upon
Of the attic wh
I could see.