

LOCAL AFFAIRS.

City Improvements.—Some elegant improvements are in progress in the vicinity of Rittenhouse Square, under the superintendence of Samuel Sloan, architect, after his plans. The material selected for the fronts is the Pictou, Nova Scotia, stone.

The principal feature of these improvements is the residence for Joseph Harrison, Esq., on Eighteenth street, directly opposite the Square. This is to occupy a lot 115 feet front by 125 feet deep. The whole front of the lot is occupied by the buildings, the main house alone being 53 feet front by 67 feet deep. The rest of the front is devoted to wings on either side, containing the principal entrance on the north, with a corresponding door-way on the south, looking into the Conservatory. The arch-ways over these entrances are to be surmounted by lions, sculptured in stone, of the size of life. North and south of these entrances are gateways for the carriage entrance and exit, the carriage road being continued through the grounds around the house. The architecture of the building is in the Italian style, with a height of three stories, in addition to a basement. The drawing-room will occupy the whole front of the main building, the windows overlooking the Square; its dimensions will be 22 feet by 53, in addition to the conservatory, with which it communicates. The library in the basement is similar in size and will communicate with the conservatory by a private stairway. The other rooms on the main floor are of the most spacious character, and so arranged that they communicate with each other. The house to be heated with warm water and the lower stories are made fire-proof by the adoption of iron joists. The stone work is being executed by Edwin Greble; the brick work by John Moore, and David Kramer is the carpenter. Mr. Harrison has also purchased the ground adjoining this on the east, extending through to Seventeenth, and also fronting on Locust street. These lots have a back outlet on a small street on the north, along which a range of stables extend to Seventeenth street, to be attached to a block of spacious mansions designed to occupy the Locust street front.

These mansions are to be each 25 feet front by 60 feet deep, built on the New York style, with the kitchen and family dining and sitting-room in the basement, which are to have a good elevation. This block will also be in the Italian style, constructed of the Pictou stone, four stories in height, in addition to the basement. It will present a fine architectural appearance, the two central houses and those at either end, being rendered more prominent than the others by advancing somewhat beyond the line of the block, and also by a handsome balustrade crowning the cornice. The drawing-rooms on the first floor will be 40 feet deep, communicating with dining saloons, 20 by 25 feet. The upper floors are divided into three chambers on each floor, the centre room in each case being lighted by a skylight. The grounds attached to these dwellings are spacious, and it is contemplated, in case the occupants consent, to throw the whole into a private park, to be embellished with fountains, &c., to be used in common, and also to communicate with the grounds attached to the residence of Mr. Harrison. If this beautiful design is carried out it will render this a most charming spot.

On the southeast corner of Seventeenth and Locust streets, the residence for T. S. R. Fassett, Esq., is progressing, which may be appropriately alluded to, in connection with the above improvement, as the plans have been furnished by the same architect, and the material used in the front is also the Pictou stone. The walls of the edifice are nearly complete, and the stone is superior to the previous supplies from the same quarries. This building is also in the Italian style, but is distinguished by a composite tower on the corner, 50 feet in height, the base of which contains the main entrance. The building is nearly square, being 44 by 48 feet, with a drawing-room on the first floor of 17 by 46 feet. Though apparently only two stories in height it is actually three stories, the upper one being concealed by the balustrade which surmounts the cornice. This building will be finished in the most superior manner, and heated by the hot water apparatus of Messrs. Morris, Tasker & Morris, which, having been tested in the house now occupied by Mr. Fassett, he gives it the preference over all other systems.

The above improvements will occasion an expenditure exceeding \$200,000 for materials and labor alone, which gives them an importance fully warranting a passing notice.

Street Merchants.—This class of indefatigable seekers after a living have increased rapidly within a few years. Smith, the razor strop man, was the first to inaugurate the new system of displaying his wares upon the corners of streets and other public places, and by reciting poetry, ground out to suit his commodities and tickle the ears of the "groundlings," amassed for himself a comfortable competence. Since Smith's advent, this class of merchants has become quite numerous, and all manner of wares and small notions are sold under the inspiring effusions of some genius of a poet. Small instruments for sharpening knives, and warranted to give them an edge, or cut the blade away, are offered in jingling rhyme. Soap of every hue, and made of certain secret concoctions, too valuable to be made public, is displayed on the corners, while the proprietor makes bushels of lather to show the gaping crowd its powers of "getting into the suds." Wonderful oil, which makes the lame to walk and the blind to see, (probably,) is offered at a price ruinous to the business of rheumatic doctors and oculists. Paper, which transfers to paper the leaves of flowers, and the hue of the foliage, also has its advocates, and many a countryman has his pocket released of a quarter for the sake of taking home to his dear daughter Jane the means of astonishing her friends by her skill in drawing plants, &c. The venders of matches, blacking, shoe ties, cotton, &c., form a distinctive class, the sellers being small girls and boys, who are sent out by their parents to earn money, many of whom live on this labor of their children. Some of these dealers are not over six years of age, and oftentimes towards evening they may be found in tears, and if some sympathizing individual should stop to inquire into the cause of them, they would probably find that the child had been so unfortunate as to lose the proceeds of her sales, and that if she should go home, her mother would beat her. A donation is then made by the sympathizer, and as soon as his back is turned, the eye that wept weeps no more, unless the required amount has not been raised. These peddlers have become

so numerous, and their solicitations in hotels, stores &c., so pertinacious, that the authorities should interfere to abate the nuisance. Girls of from six to fourteen years of age, are constantly subjected to the rude and obscene conversation of many to whom they try to sell, and as they become familiar with these things, their sensibilities are deadened, and their sense of honor entirely destroyed. The steps in front of the Custom House is the favorite resort of street merchants. On one end of the massive building a dealer in shells displays a rich assortment of the coverings of marine monsters, nicely polished and fitted for ornaments, while close by an enterprising lover of the canine race, offers for sale puppies of high and low degree, all warranted to be without blemish or bad tricks. The most accommodating of all the street merchants are those who toll along with large baskets, filled with porcelain, glass, and parlor ornaments, which they are willing to dispose of for old clothes, hats, rags, or almost anything that ever had a value. Hats that were fashioned in the days of our boyhood "suits them much," and coats with the high backed collar, and bishop sleeves, in vogue some twenty years ago, are the very acme of perfection. We have, also, the book merchants, now extending over the city, and various other kinds of street operations too numerous to mention.

July 31, 1856.

