

#### Improvements at the South Church.

More has been done within the last three years towards the improvement of public buildings in this city than during any equal period in its history. The City Hall—in our opinion the only really fine specimen of architecture in a public building in the “old county of Hampshire”—is a creation, hardly complete, of this period, while every Congregational Church, the Prichon Street Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Court House, have respectively been the subjects of thorough repairs, enlargement, or material modification. The interior of the Springfield churches has been changed in several instances from an aspect of great cheerfulness and inconvenience to one of elegance and comfort. These facts speak well for the increasing liberality and public spirit of our citizens, as well as for their growing taste and refinement.

The last church that has passed under the hands of the renovators is the South Congregational, located on Bliss street. This has been elaborately painted in fresco by Mr Wies, a talented German artist who has recently become a resident of Springfield. The style of the work (resembling that in the Olivet Church) is stronger, and more positive, than our eyes have been accustomed to, in this vicinity. The effect, however, under the softened solar light admitted at tinted windows is very rich, while it is just the style to “light up” pleasantly with gas. The ceiling is an elegant piece of work, from designs beautifully ornate. The artist has been less fortunate in the pulpit end of the building. A less ambitious design would have been better executed, and have produced a more satisfactory effect. As a whole, the job is one of the finest ever done in this vicinity.

The pulpit has been entirely remodeled. It will be remembered that it was formerly a most undecisive imitation of a pile of marble blocks; and it was once very naturally compared by a drossy young lady to a pile of dry goods boxes. Mr Fieder has transformed this severe and ungraceful design into a thing of beauty, and the pulpit at the South Church must be classed with that of the Olivet Church, and the pair pronounced the most beautiful in the city.

The slips and wood work of the house generally have been grained in imitation of rose wood, or black walnut, we are not very certain which. At any rate, the color is dark and rich, and accords very well with the heavy shadows of the fresco.

Added to all these improvements, and the crown of them all, is a new organ from the establishment of the Messrs Hook of Boston. A great deal of interest has been felt in this instrument, not only by the society itself, but by the community; for among all the other emulations of our religious societies, there exists an organ emulation, and a division of popular sympathies among popular builders. In this instrument, the Messrs Hook have done no injury to their reputation as first class organ builders. The organ is not a very powerful one,—a happier adaptation of power to the size of the house could hardly have been made. In the matter of quality, it is not to be compared with the organ from the same builders in Rev Mr Parsons’ church, save to show how it differs from it. The positive merits of the two instruments must be the subject of individual judgment, and cannot be decided by any recognized standard of taste. The “voicing” of the new organ is most in accordance with the modern style. It is more brilliant and showy—more boldly positive in the character of its stops, more florid (we can think of no better word) in its intimate peculiarities and general effect. The old organ (with which we bring it into comparison and contrast, because everybody does, including the makers,) is softer and richer, and, in its power to combine a large number of soft stops, is capable of an effect exhibiting those characteristics which it is not possible to produce upon the new organ. The old organ never disappoints and never tires. It fills the ear with satisfaction. The new organ delights, and will always have a multitude of admirers, as it deserves to have.

Mr Wilcox, the celebrated organist in the employ of the Messrs Hook, exhibited the instrument to a considerable number of our citizens, on Friday and Sunday evenings last, and played magnificently, as he has the power to do. While he gave his audience a limited opportunity to hear individual stops, he produced a multitude of combinations that attested as well his own skill as the effectiveness of the instrument he played.

The organ has nominally twenty-nine stops—twenty-four of which are genuine speaking stops. Those in the great organ are Trumpet Treble, Trumpet Bass, Cremona, Sesquialtra, Twelfth, Melodia Treble, Viol d’Amour, Double Open Diapason, Wald Flute, Fifteenth, Principal, Stop Diapason Bass, Open Diapason. Those in the swell are Night-Horn, Principal, Dulciana, Bourdon, Dulciana Bass, Trumpet, Dulciana Cornet, Stop Diapason, Open Diapason, Principal, Swell Bass, Bourdon Swell Bass. Architecturally, the instrument is an ornament to the church. It is stained in imitation of rosewood, with which the gilding of the front pipes contrasts very richly.

The entire expenditure upon and within the building is about \$3,500. Added to this the ladies of the society have carpeted the entire lower floor, embracing every slip, at a cost of nearly or quite \$400.

Service was renewed in the renewed house last Sabbath, when a quartette appeared in place of the former choir—a change which we trust will be adhered to so long as good singers are scarce in America as they are now, and so long as American popular taste is actually far in advance of American art.