

STUDIES IN BOSTON ARCHITECTURE.

IV.

**The New House of the Algonquin Club
Commonwealth Avenue.**

The new house of the Algonquin Club, which is still in process of construction, and will be completed the coming summer, occupies a desirable site on the north side of Commonwealth avenue, between Exeter and Fairfield streets, having a front eighty-two feet wide. The façade partakes of a domestic as well as of a palatial character, on the principle that a community such as a club demands something more than a private house and something less than a public building. It was therefore thought wholly appropriate to adopt an Italian style of architecture. This style was chosen as on the whole representing the most simple and most perfect standard for a semi-public building. Following this an effort has been made to keep the building as low as possible in appearance, and with this view the members' rooms in the upper story have been placed back in a deck not visible from the street, and the building in general has been so treated that it may be conspicuous by the absence of height, although actually containing six stories. The material selected is a warm gray limestone from the Hoosier Company, Bedford, Indiana. This stone belongs to one of the three classes indorsed by the Government tests for qualities of endurance—marble, granite and limestone—and

has the virtue of growing harder with exposure to the weather. It is but little known in this part of the country, but has been extensively used in the West, though not to the best advantage. The best examples of its employment are the New York Life Insurance building and the W. K. Vanderbilt house in New York. It has been chosen firstly for its endurance and secondly for its color. Its texture makes it peculiarly well fitted to hold its own against the elements, and also makes it specially fit for carving, as it is hard and elastic and takes the tool in any direction. As to color, it may be said that it is recommended by a monumental reason, that is to say, in all monumental architecture the important fact must be considered that all shadows cast should be cast sharp and clear, and that shadows are lost on a dark stone. In this respect the same principle applies to architecture and sculpture alike. All monumental buildings abroad are of light stone. What sculptor would think of carving a brown-stone statue?

Coming to details and beginning at the ground, we find a massively constructed basement of one story, eleven feet high, projecting, and marked with heavy rustication. This sustains what may be called the middle portion, that is, the next two stories (the reading-room story and the library story), which are treated very simply and with intentional plainness, with flatter surface and lighter rustication, becoming by a gradual transition lighter as the walls rise to the sill course of the dining-room story (or fourth floor) which may be regarded as the beginning of the upper division or crown of the building. From this point up the front is much richer and lighter,

and the surfaces smoother, going from dabbled-face stone at the bottom to tool face and then to a carved face—or from the least decorative to the most decorative. The basement serves to connect the bay windows with the centre, assisting and supporting the flat interspace and presenting a solid plinth; its projection makes less obvious the base of the bay, and reduces the height of the façade. A stone terrace 52 feet long, in front of the reading-room, marks the top of the basement.

The carvings of the upper part consist, first, of niches and panels, second of garlands, wreaths and ribbons, third of panels and cupids, the whole capped with an elaborate cornice and balustrade. In the centre are two eagles in three-quarters relief, reproduced from the eagles on Raphael's house in Rome. The carving is typed on the Roman renaissance, was done by a staff of twenty men under Evans & Tombs, from full-sized models and *sur place*. The carvers have taken a great interest in the work.

The members' entrance in the centre of the front is marked by a two-story porch, Ionic and Corinthian, composed of Italian Breccia marble, which has lately arrived in this country. These shafts are admirable examples of this remarkable stone, of a general tone harmonizing with the building, and marked with veinings of black and yellow. The amount of stone used in the construction of the building and the enormous weight of individual pieces are very noticeable. Some of the blocks weigh from two to three tons each. The upper member of the cornice alone is composed of stone averaging two tons per running four feet. The stones from which the eagles are carved weigh 2½ tons each, and are built into the full depth of the wall—three feet. The cornice is built in the same way. The builder is Norcross.