

THE JAMES S. GIBBES MEMORIAL ART GALLERY.

The year 1904, witnessed the completion of the James S. Gibbes Memorial Art Gallery. As the name indicates, this beautiful building is the gift of the late James Shoolbred Gibbes. He was one of a large family of that name in South Carolina, which has produced many notable men, the first Gibbes in this country being Robert Gibbes of Barbadoes, who was both Chief Justice and Governor of the Province of Carolina under the Lords Proprietors.

James S. Gibbes was born in Charleston in 1819, the son of Joseph S. Gibbes and Amelia Shoolbred. He was educated at private schools in the City, but resolving to become a merchant, he left the school-room at an early date and entered the counting-house, as it was called in those days, of Joseph Battersby & Son. He soon became their confidential clerk, and later a partner. Mr. Gibbes gradually acquired a large fortune, and was always ready to aid in any enterprise for the benefit of Charleston. He spent much time in Europe, at one time carrying his family to reside in Dresden for several years, where he passed a great part of each year with them. He was always a lover of music and art, and became more definitely interested in art after his residence in Dresden. He frequently expressed to his friends the wish to see in Charleston, a collection of pictures and a School of Art, where the young might receive such education as would help them to become artists, or to earn a living in the subordinate works of art, and which would also in some measure prepare the community for a more thorough appreciation and enjoyment of the larger galleries of this country and Europe. In pursuance of this idea, Mr. Gibbes incorporated in his last will and testament a provision, which though contingent in its nature, has in the end secured to the City the means of enjoying the advantages of which he so often spoke in his lifetime.

Dying in 1888, he left a Will and codicil, in which he devised his Estate, upon certain limitations, to his lineal descendants, but in the event that there should be a total extinction of such descendants, he provided a fund for the erection of an art building. In the original Will the testator devised the sum of \$75,000, for this purpose, in the following language:

"To Charles O. Witte, Henry A. M. Smith, and such person as may at the time be Mayor of the City of Charleston, \$75,000, to have and to hold the same in trust, for the erection and endowment of an Art Gallery and Ladies Library in Charleston, and I empower said trustees to provide as they see fit and practicable for the future regulation and perpetuation of the same. Should any arrangement be hereafter made during my life time whereby a building shall be erected on the lot on the northeast corner of Meeting and George Streets by the Art Union Association for its purposes, then I direct the said \$75,000, to be by said trustees transferred to said Association, under such agreement for its future use and application to the purposes aforesaid as shall be sufficient and suitable."

In the Codicil to his Will, this provision is stricken out, and another substituted in lieu thereof, as follows:

"I strike out and annul subdivision 7 of Section 29 of my said Will, with relation to the Art Union, and direct in lieu thereof as follows, viz.: In the event of the happening of the contingency referred to in said section, to wit, that there should be no descendant of mine, within the period limited by law, to take my property, then I give and bequeathe the sum of \$100,000, to the Mayor of the City of Charleston, at the happening of such contingency (and his successors in office), and Gabriel E. Manigault, Charles H. Simonton and F. W. Dawson to have and to hold the same in trust for the erection or purchase of a suitable building to be 'used as a hall or halls for the exhibition of paintings, and for necessary rooms for students in the fine arts, and ladies library, and it might also be amalgamated with a musical hall for a conservatory of music. I think, with economical alterations. the

present Mills house may be bought and altered to suit. I call on my fellow citizens to contribute \$50,000 more to carry out my plan to cultivate and aid in educating the young of our beloved City in painting and music."

Under the terms and provisions of the Will, after the payment of his debts, and certain specific legacies, Mr. Gibbs' entire estate was transferred by his executors to the Farmers Loan and Trust Company of the City of New York, as trustee, to be administered by that Company upon the trusts set forth in the Will, including the payment of the sum of \$100,000, to the persons named in the Codicil upon the happening of the contingency which has been mentioned. That contingency happened in the year 1899, when Mr. James S. Gibbs, Jr., the sole surviving son and the only lineal descendant of the testator died. Upon his death the Farmers Loan and Trust Co., as trustee of the Estate, instituted proceedings in the Courts of New York for the construction of the Will of Mr. Gibbs, and for direction to the Trustee in the administration of the Estate. In this suit the legacy for the establishment of an art school was contested, but it was sustained, and there was finally paid over to Charles H. Simonton and J. Adger Smyth, the then Mayor of Charleston, who were then the only survivors of the trustees named in the Codicil, the sum of \$119,322 89. These gentlemen purchased the premises located on the west side of Meeting Street, where the Charleston Opera House formerly stood, for the sum of \$15,250, and executed a contract for the erection thereon of a building to cost \$73,370, according to plans and specifications prepared by Frank P. Milburn, an architect of the City of Columbia. Pending the completion of the building the Hon. Charles H. Simonton died, and the Hon. J. Adger Smyth, who was trustee by virtue of his office of Mayor of the city, having been succeeded by the Hon. R. Goodwyn Rhett, the latter became sole trustee of the fund and of the property in which it has been invested, under the terms of Mr. Gibbs' will. A petition was thereupon filed by Mr. Rhett in the Court of Common Pleas for

Charleston County, setting forth all the facts in relation to the Art legacy, and asking the direction of the Court in regard to the perpetuation of the trust and the administration of the trust property; and thereupon the Court appointed the Carolina Art Association as a co-trustee with the Mayor of Charleston and his successors in office to hold and govern the trust property upon the lines laid down in the will of Mr. Gibbs. The building was practically completed in December, 1904, and now stands an ornament to the City of Charleston, a valuable addition to education in the fine arts, and a beautiful and enduring monument to the generous and public-spirited citizen whose name it bears.

The building is of the Doric order, and its principal charm lies in the simplicity, purity and dignity of its design. The material of the exterior is of South Carolina granite for the base, and the upper part is constructed of light gray pressed brick and Indiana limestone, and is surmounted with a red tiled roof. The main entrance, which is imposing and well placed, is accentuated by wide and easy steps, and marble terraces from the sidewalk to the entrance, with granite abutments on either side surmounted by bronze electroliers. Passing through the main entrance and vestibule the main corridor is reached. This corridor is eleven feet wide and extends back the full length of the building, but is foreshortened in effect by a cross corridor or stair half the same in width, at each end of which are additional outside entrances and marble stairways leading to the floors above. The first or ground floor is occupied by a large lecture room to the left, and a general studio to the right of the entrance corridor, which with the stair hall, takes up the entire front portion of this floor. In the rear wing there are several smaller studios, a modeling room, a clay room, toilet rooms, boiler and fuel room, all of which are lighted and ventilated, and have walls finished in suitable colors. Stairways to the second or main floor reach an arcade, which extends across the full width of the building, and separates the rear wing or gallery from the front portion of the building. This arcade is handsomely treated with

a continuous row of pilasters and beamed and recessed panelled ceiling, oak wainscoting and a tiled floor, and has three large arched openings on each side leading into the sculpture hall and gallery respectively. The sculpture hall, which is 32 feet by 43 feet, occupies the main central portion of the building, and is directly beneath the exterior dome. This is a fine room, with tiled floor, oak wainscoting and pilasters on all sides, surmounted with a heavy entablature and groined ceiling 30 feet high. The groining is subdivided with semi-circular panelled beams, embellished with plastic relief ornamentation, the whole forming a setting for a circular art glass dome 16 feet in diameter, which is on an axis with the skylight of the exterior dome above, and this, with the frescoed walls, produces a subdued and pleasing effect. At each end of the sculpture hall, and communicating through heavy oak doors with tympanum, are the executive chamber and ladies' reception room, with toilet rooms attached. These rooms are handsomely finished in oak, are wainscoted, with frescoed walls, and are highly embellished with groined and panelled ceilings. Back of the sculpture hall and intersected with the arcade, is the gallery, measuring 43 feet by 68 feet, with a ceiling 23 feet high, and occupying the entire rear wing. This room has a tile floor with marble base. Its walls are frescoed in suitable colors and proper provision made for the adjustment of pictures. There are no windows in the gallery, but it is surmounted by an immense steel skylight with an intervening skylight of prism glass, in the center of the ceiling. This in turn is subdivided into three sections forming a panel effect, being framed in with plaster beams, cornices, etc. The skylights are so arranged that there are no shadows cast on any part of the wall surface. The building is of fire-proof construction throughout, and provided with modern system of plumbing and steam-heating. The hardware, electric light and plumbing fixtures are of the highest grade, and all the necessary appliances, appurtenances and utilities of a modern gallery have been installed making it one of the best appointed and equipped of the art buildings in the South.