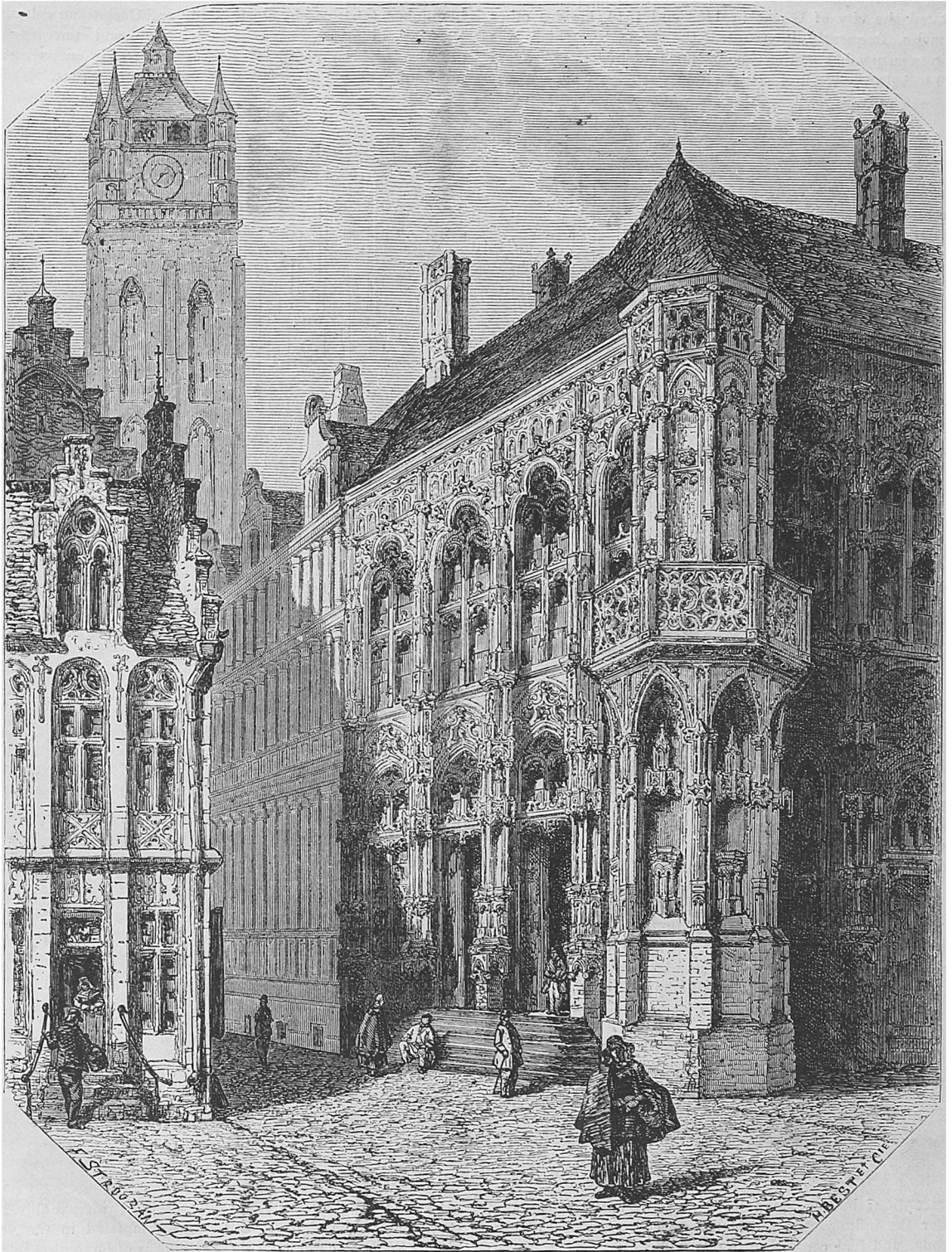


THE HOTEL DE VILLE AT GHENT.

THIS vast edifice exhibits on its various *façades* the genius of epochs far distant in point of time and altogether diverse in character. The most recent contains nine or ten stories of

One single window, in the pointed style, richly adorned with trefoil-work, rises from the base to the summit of the building. As far back as the thirteenth century, the powerful muni-



VIEW OF THE HOTEL DE VILLE AT GHENT.

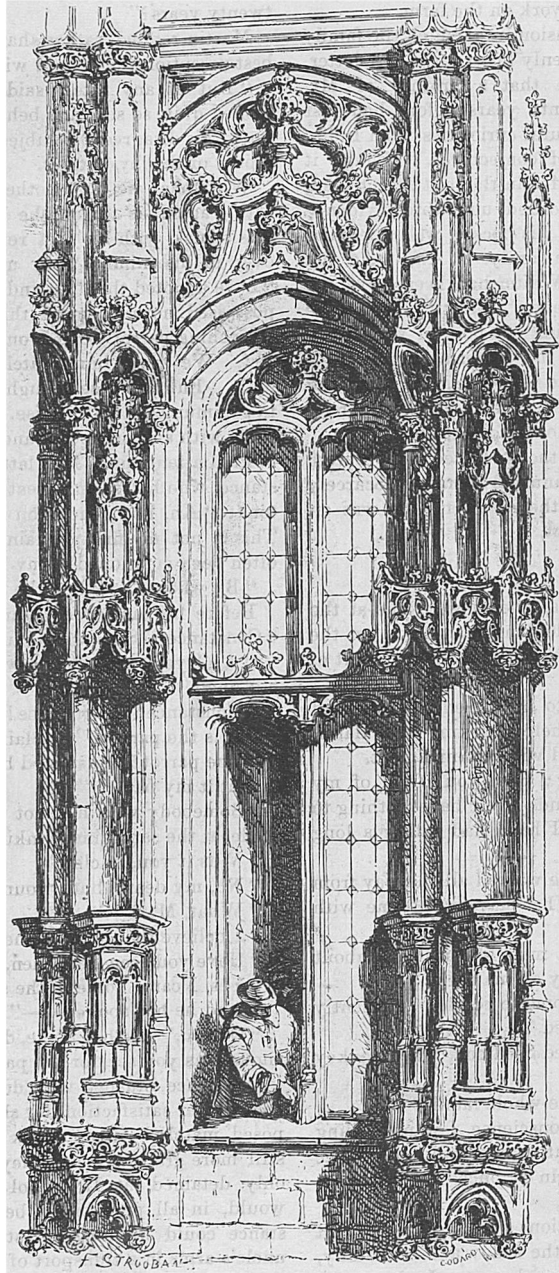
square common-place windows; another is adorned with classic colonnades of the seventeenth century. The north *façade* is one of the grandest specimens of the Gothic style.

city of Ghent possessed an Hotel de Ville, which then bore the modest title of the court-house. It was rebuilt in the following century; but the new edifice, with regard to

the architecture of which we have few particulars, was remarkable neither for its magnitude nor any other circumstance, having lasted only about a hundred years.

The first stone of the present Hotel de Ville was laid on the 4th of July, 1481. Two architects who then enjoyed high repute, Dominique de Waghemaker and Rombaut Keldermans, had prepared the plans for it. The civil commotions which agitated the city of Ghent in 1488 and 1540, besides other obstacles, frequently interrupted the building, which was entirely suspended at the time of the religious wars. From 1580 to 1618 the work of construction was carried on without

time the most forced and the least pure. As their ornamentation is executed in soft stone, it has suffered greatly from the effects of time, and it would be no easy matter now to restore it to its original beauty. The *façade* opposite the butter-market, and in the modern style, is about a hundred and thirty feet long and forty in height. There are three rows of rectangular windows with stone cross-bars, fifty-four in number, separated by Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns. Classical in arrangement, pure in style, and imposing in magnitude, this *façade* has no other defect than an excessive uniformity, which gives it a cold, monotonous aspect.



ONE OF THE WINDOWS OF THE HOTEL DE VILLE AT GHENT.

interruption; but as the pointed style of architecture was, under the influence of the classic reaction, considered barbarous, and had consequently fallen into disrepute, the more recent portions of the structure were built in the Romanic style, and even the part of one of the pointed *façades* which yet remained incomplete was finished in that style. This hybrid mixture of two such different styles of architecture is offensive to the eye of a tasteful observer. The ancient portions are in the florid or tertiary style—the richest, but at the same

In the interior of the Hotel de Ville the principal object of attraction is the chapel, which was completed in the year 1533. What is called the throne-room is of large dimensions and richly adorned. In another hall there is a very interesting collection of antiquities relating to the place. The archives of the city abound in ancient documents, some of which belong to a remote antiquity extending as far back as the eighth century—among others, a charter bearing the signature of Eginhard, secretary to Charlemagne.