

Luigi Gabei

Italian architect and engineer
(1823-1879)

He was born in Rome, from a family originally from Chambéry. He undertook technical studies under the guidance of N. Cavalieri and C. Sereni; later he was a pupil of G. Azzurri at the Roman Academy of Fine Arts, where he learned "the art of architecture" .

The adhesion to the Roman Neo-Renaissance trend is evident since his first works, such as the Petrocchi tenement in via del Boschetto, nos. 3-6, restored and raised in 1858, and the Lovatti building in via Gregoriana, nos. 4-6, of 1859-1862. Between 1858 and 1867 Gabet directed the important restoration of the dome of the church of Ss. Nome di Maria and in 1858, commissioned by the banker A. Chiaveri, he erected the chapel of the Immaculate Conception in the basilica of the Ss. Apostoli, after the baroque structure of S. Cipriani was demolished.

In the 1860s he actively participated in the debate on the construction of the new Rome railway station at Termini. As an adjunct engineer of the Pontifical Railways, in 1863 he was commissioned to draw up a project for the station including the urban arrangement of the area of S. Maria Maggiore; approved at first, in 1865 the plan was shelved. In 1864-65 Gabet participated in the competition for the new headquarters of the Rome savings bank in Piazza Sciarra. After 20 Sept. 1870 he was a member of several commissions appointed to decide the urban planning of Rome.

He was part of the commission, chaired by Fr Camporese, which had the task of studying "projects for the expansion and embellishment of the city"; in the general report, delivered to the government council on 10 Nov. 1870, the expansion towards the Viminale and Esquilino hills was clearly proposed. In the same year, Gabet was part of the subcommittee of the Ministry of Public Education in charge of drawing up a list of Italian monuments of significant historical and artistic interest; this commitment continued in 1871, on behalf of the Academy of S. Luca. Of a different nature was the participation in the commission "to recognize the state of the places of punishment and prisons in Rome", established by General L. Masi on 21st Sept. 1870.

Gabet was responsible for the plans for the arrangement of the convent of S. Silvestro in Capite as the seat of the Ministry of Public Works and for the reduction of the convent of S. Lorenzo in Panisperna to the seat of the scientific laboratory of the University of Rome, drawn up in 1871-72. In 1872 he provided the drawings for the new headquarters of the Central Archives of the Kingdom near the Colosseum; but the proposal was not followed up. As part of the reorganization of the city school system, in 1870 he took care of the internal restructuring of the Roman College: in the classrooms of the Jesuit complex the first high school gymnasium of the capital was established, named after EQ Visconti, attended by the children of Gabet., Augusto and Guido, with his wife Eugenia Bennicelli.

February 20 1871 Gabet was commissioned by the President of the Senate, V. Fardella di

Torrearsa, to create the hall of Palazzo Madama, the main element of the works to adapt the building to the seat of the Italian Senate and, undoubtedly, his work better known and more successful than him. Having the small space of the second courtyard, towards via della Dogana Vecchia, Gabet opted for a solution that penalized the internal paths, obtained in narrow spaces, but which allowed the construction of a traditional cavea organism, embellished by the giant order that frames the two balconies. Completed in May 1871, the hall features elegant boiseries made of mahogany and angelino yellow, with golden capitals, bases and balustrades. The wooden ceiling was covered with a veil, painted in tempera with allegorical scenes by the hand of different painters.

Elected municipal councilor of Rome in 1873, Gabet was reconfirmed in the elections of 1878. He assiduously participated in the meetings of the building commission, part of an internal commission of the Council which had the task of pronouncing itself on the route of the Via Nazionale.

In the booklet "On the greater convenience of the opening of the Via Nazionale in Piazza di Venezia above the one for Piazza di Sciarra ... "(Rome sd, but 1874) he presented a detailed plan in which the extension of the artery would develop behind the Villa Aldobrandini and the Torre delle Milizie, resulting in significant demolitions in the area of Trajan's markets.

Also in 1874, when he became chief architect of the Technical Office of the Province of Rome, Gabet designed and directed the extension works of Palazzo Bonelli Valentini, intended for the offices of the prefecture and the Provincial Council: the council hall was built, in a new body of the building on via dei Fornari, which stylistically traces the 17th-century structure; the wing was raised in via di S. Eufemia, and the courtyard was completed.

In January 1878, Gabet participated in the second competition for the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in via Nazionale, with a project bearing the motto "Fortuna". From the same period is the proposal "of the new promenade along the Via Flaminia up to the Milvian Bridge, a project that the Town Hall had the very grave mistake of not carrying out".

He was a member of the Accademia di S. Luca from 1866 and a councilor from 1872; he was part of the College of Engineers, Architects and Agronomists and of the Society of amateurs and connoisseurs of fine arts of Rome, of which he was vice president in 1872. He resided in Palazzo Muti Balestra ai Ss. Apostoli and in Villa Lontana in Via Cassia, near Milvio bridge.

Gabet died in Rome on 22 November. 1879.

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