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PIRANESI'S INVENTION, A FLIGHT THAT NEVER WAS  
ETCHING OF THE STAIRS OF THE TEMPLE OF VESTA



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### More Steps and Stairs

By ALFRED MANSFIELD BROOKS

OUTSIDE steps and stairs were our earlier concern.<sup>1</sup> Now it is those of interiors and courtyards. We will begin with a flight that never was, Piranesi's invention, the etching of the stairs of the Temple of Vesta. No human being ever set foot on them. It is impossible to look at the picture and not wish to. They are grand beyond compare, and they are as graceful as they are grand. This combination results in a kind of intimacy which belongs, primarily, to small designs and is always the chief charm of such. They retain delicacy. Hence their grandeur is not lost in the grandiose. Peruzzi alone approached this combination in the reality of marble. They are the child of a complete understanding of the actual ruins of Rome, and the utmost penetrative imagination of its architectural genius; of a Rome finer and greater than Trajan or Constantine beheld.

Only at first glance, or after long and stupid looking, can Piranesi's stairs of Vesta be called theatric. Their every part, like all the parts of the gigantic whole to which they are the key that opens to appreciation, is a property of the most orthodox imperialism architecture ever staged. Yet it is not the many coffers of the vast dome, the many pilasters and pediments of the vast wall, the many columns bearing aloft entablature, balustrade and statue, not even the many steps of the great stairway which gives the design—invention is Piranesi's word—its commanding beauty. Rather is it

the rich harmony produced by opposition, in one and the same moment, of horizontal and vertical lines everywhere cut through and united by opposing curves. If we can manage to shut our eyes to architectural properties as such, and open the eyes of our mind to a composition of verticals and horizontals so amalgamated by curves as to remove all sense of opposition, we shall truly enter into the spirit of the thing as a whole, the soul of it—this sweeping, encircling flight.

What Piranesi did was to set the smallest and gracefulst of circular Roman temples, Vesta's at Tivoli, on a lofty circular pedestal, in the center of the circular floor, directly under the circular eye of the circular dome of the Pantheon, biggest of circular temples, and of all round buildings. Thus does he make the colossal hold and protect the small, mightiness embrace loveliness. Next, as vestibules to this loveliness, he connects the central circle of columns, with the all-enclosing wall, by other columns set in double rows on opposite radii, a diameter of the outer circle-wall. Finally, for approach to these vestibules, he shows us one of a pair of similar staircases which, right and left of the door, sweep by majestic curves, which are not arcs, from the Pantheonic entrance, as all the world knows it, to the high vestibules of the goddesses' inmost precinct of fire. The twin requisites of the creative mind as Wordsworth understood them, emotion and calm, quietude and excitation, are gloriously bodied forth in this more than human piece of artistry, the seen stairs, and those implied at the

<sup>1</sup>See article "Steps and Stairs," in the October, 1927, Journal.



SCALA MINELLI, AT VENICE  
ILLUSTRATING THE OPEN, SPIRAL STAIRWAYS OF MEDIEVAL TIMES

## MORE STEPS AND STAIRS

unshown left. It is kingly in the Carlylian sense. Actually and imaginatively it *can* in that it does do what it sets out to do.

Let us next look at a group of architectural wonders, like in kind to Piranesi's if not in degree, which men have brought out of the realm of imagination, as Piranesi did not, into the realm of matter, stone and marble, to be actually gone up and down. It may well be questioned if the annals of architecture have been punctuated by a more entrancing episode than the open, spiral stairways of medieval times. Among these the Scala Minelli are unforgettable, for never has the ever-ascending bend of stair-design been more emphatically accented, or worked out with greater success along lines of simple elegance. A circular, brick-walled well is combined with a spiral, open arcade of marble. The result is an extraordinary effect of solidity and airiness, couched in terms of delightful contrast. As a running pattern the lovely shafts and arches stand in vigorous relief against the darkness within. Even the contouring of capitals and the profiling of archivolt are picked out clearly. But most interesting among the many interesting points of this noble bit of the builder's art is the way in which structural method and ornamental design are made one and the same.

An oblong panel is sunk into the end of each marble stair, and each of these panels begins where the one below leaves off. Thus do they form a continuous border of rectangles which repeat, on larger scale, and in different material and color, dark and light, clay and marble, the bricks of the wall itself. Thus is the closed theme of wall declared complete and that of the open, the arcade, introduced—one with sufficient emphasis and the other without undue abruptness. Then comes the major, vertical element of shafts, and the minor of railing, both based on a subtle scheme of linked pairs which means that only the colonettes of the railing are in pairs while the columns, seemingly paired, are actually grouped in threes. This is because the outer column of every pair is one of the next pair, up or down. Notice with what thoughtful prevision the designer has marked the varying importance of column and colonette. Columns which support arcade and well-wall, and colonettes which carry the handrail only. The former have true bases, and are variously set as a man's feet when he goes forward and up a flight of stairs. The latter are balusters, which mostly stand in pairs on the end of each step. Yet these, too, are set with a kind of irregular regularity, after the manner of climbing feet.

Look now at the capitals of column and colonette. In them perhaps is the finest touch of all. Those on the columns have their abaci set horizontal. So also their neck-mouldings. But those of the colonettes have both neck-mouldings and abaci set at a slope to accord with the handrail which they support. Here is the real spiral note of the entire design, the broken line of



COURTYARD STAIRS OF FRANCIS I, AT BLOIS  
REFLECTING RENAISSANCE POMP, POWER, AND STATELINESS

colonette-abaci and neck-mouldings, dashes as it were, emphasizing the continuous line of the rail.

Last come the crowning arches of the arcade which, in turn, form the foundation for the brick-work of the well, each, in upward order, rising above its neighbor but, in actual height, no more than its neighbor. Certain, yet delicate contrast, repetition and variation, are so managed as to assure its identity to each part, or detail, and still merge all parts, all details, in the unity which is the whole. Wherever the eye looks there are both beginning and end; change and unchangeableness throughout. A perfect symbol, if ever, of the eternal flux of nature and her invariableness. The outcome of it all, a work of art as organic as if it had grown up naturally out of the ground like a tree, and not been built up on it, artificially, by a man. Such work makes plain the truth that "all great art is praise," and inclines thoughtful men to something kin to adoration.

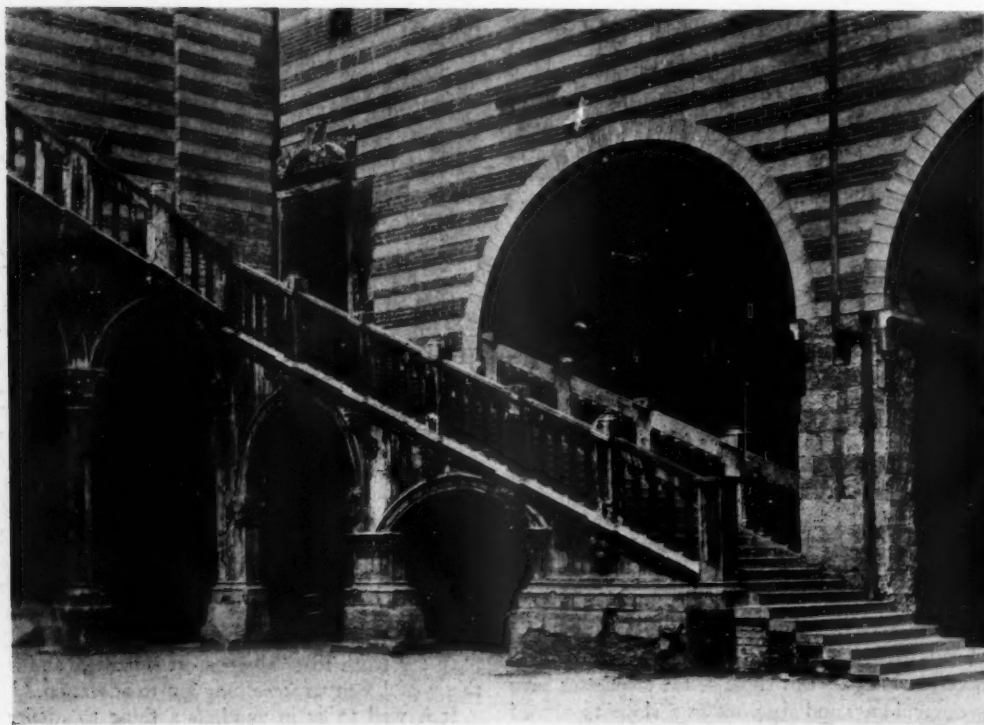
It is well to fix in mind, as a thing to admire, that prodigious achievement, the court-yard stairs of Francis I at Blois along side the Scala Minelli, so much better

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suited for lodgment in the heart—a thing to love, lovely. All that the pomp of kings, power of wealth, and stateliness of the Renaissance could accomplish is here achieved. The marvel of Blois is as great as its beauty is doubtful. The essential difference between it and the Menelli is that the Menelli looks on the outside what it actually is inside, and Blois does not. The pillared and balconied well of the Blois stairs does not develop naturally from the internal structure of spiral steps but is an ill-fitted, though resplendent, angular encasement of such steps. There is no sense of an irresistible, upward curve as in the Venetian instance, but only a jerky angularity of lines which one is always surprised to find are off parallel when he has naturally assumed that they are parallel. Slants forever beginning anew as if started wrong. Inclined lintels, and strongly marked mouldings, for which there is no ostensible reason, that suddenly stop as if the builder had become aware of their unreasonableness. A whole made up, so to speak, of innumerable misguided attempts couched in superb terms. In fine, there is not so much as a hint of inevitability about this famous composition. That inevitability which stamps as perfect every excellence of art. The danger here lies in mistaking the ornate, the sumptuous, the ingenious, the tremendous,

for the fine. For proof that the Renaissance could compass beautiful stairs of the spiral type one has only to glance at the Scala Regia of the Farnese Palace. Banal as are its details, triglyph and fleur-de-lys frieze, and dropsical balustrades, the plan, mass and movement of the whole fairly pulse with life and shine with grace.

But intimacy is not the only important quality of Gothic stairs, nor were they all spiral. For witness, there is that grand flight in the court of the Old Market at Verona. None was ever grander. They breathe magnitude. They give an impression of size utterly in excess of anything which their dimensions warrant. Long and high, these stairs invite ascent rather than discourage it. What scale they assume as, rising from their solid base, one realizes that the twentieth step must be reached before the first ramp passes onto the bridging arches, and more than twenty more before the second or upper ramp starts for the top. Block out with a bit of paper the vast, right-hand arch across which the first ramp cuts, or any one, or two, or all of the supporting arches, and see how the whole design is dwarfed and becomes a dull thing. Notice the variety of the arch forms, round, pointed, flattened, but all delightful, and each gracefully subservient to the delightful whole, because each is what it should be in



A GRAND FLIGHT IN THE COURT OF THE OLD MARKET, VERONA





SCALA REGIA OF THE FARNESE PALACE  
A RENAISSANCE TYPE OF SPIRAL STAIRS ACHIEVING BEAUTY



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its particular place. See how the strengthening piers of the balustrade are corbelled under the string, becoming bossy ornaments where such are equally required for strength and looks. Note, too, the sloping string on which the sturdy pillarettes and pilasters stand. No breaking this string into step-ends as is so prettily done with the Scala Minelli. Both ways are right, but for the more imposing design of Verona the architect chose wisely.

Recently an architect of more importance than learning said to me: "A sloping string! It isn't done." I cited the stairs under consideration and Michelangelo's for the Senate in Rome. He murmured something about the danger of following precedent blindly. The point he missed was the rightness of anything in the right place at the right time. The Verona stairs offer an instance of everything in the right place at the right time.

Pole-wide is an expression not strong enough to describe the difference between the stairs we have been looking at and those which lead to the organ loft of St. Maclou in Rouen. Anything daintier, statelier or more overflowing with fancy was never conceived by the mind of man, or carved by human hands. Small creatures of many kinds, leaves of many sorts, fauna and flora all its own, nestle and twine in the traceries and parapet of the stair-well which is all tracery and parapet, a miniature three-storied, open-work tower on a solid, richly paneled foundation. For variety of detail and sharpness of execution, chaste as rich, this thing is unsurpassable. As a whole it is exquisitely proportioned. It is light as air and heavy as stone. It is anything but restrained, yet it is restrained. The same cannot be said of the amazing and fascinating, flying, spiral stairs which lead, right and left, to the rood of St. Etienne du Mont. It is the truth, Paris has not anything more remarkable to show. These stairs twine about the columns, like a snake climbing a tree, so tightly do they cling. The curves, whether seen from below, looking up to the curiously cut soffits of the steps, or from a distance sufficient to make the whole visible *uno ictu*, are the curves of a circus master's whip, or of swift rising smoke out of a strong-drafted chimney. The plan and structure are alive with motion; rapid, eddying motion. And every detail, down to the very least, is likewise conceived in the spirit of restlessness. The former, the whole, like a hurrying wave. The latter, the detail, like seething froth upon the broad, ever-changing breast of such a wave.

It is wonderful that creations so essentially alike can be so different—the spiral, rood stairs of St. Etienne and the spiral organ stairs of St. Maclou. But the essence of resemblance ends with their structural conception, for whereas in St. Maclou the ornament is an integral part of the structure, in St. Etienne it bears little if any relation to it. The open-work of the parapets in St. Etienne resemble sailor's knotting. It is ingenious

rather than suitable or lovely. It is like elaborate, worsted crochet. These panels are, as it were, pieces of lace cut to fit certain openings and, then, inset. Panel and panel have no closer relation to one another than squares in patchwork. All of which is the opposite of what one sees in the St. Maclou organ stair. In a word the spiritlessness of mechanicalized art, very wonderful though it be, has taken the place of free-hand affection. St. Maclou is made alive by the spirit. The letter has killed St. Etienne but left a corpse at once interesting and, in its way, beautiful.

Of stairs in the open there is no end. Like all others, they divide into the grand and grandiose or simple and intimate. Of grand, civic they are, it is probable that the Spanish Steps will come instantly to mind and take a first place with most readers. To the worldly, and where have the worldly figured more conspicuously than in the Eternal City, this flight holds an analagous relation to that which is held by the Sacra Scala in the hearts of the faithful. In the thought of all men one stands for penance and humility. The other for splendor and, incidentally, a beauty not wholly their own because of the age-long custom of the flower vendors of Rome to



THE SPANISH STEPS AT ROME  
GRANDEUR ALONG WITH INTIMACY



STAIRS LEADING TO THE ORGAN LOFT OF ST. MACLOU IN ROUEN  
DAINTY, STATELY, OVERFLOWING WITH FANCY



THE AMAZING AND FASCINATING, FLYING SPIRAL STAIRS  
WHICH LEAD, RIGHT AND LEFT, TO THE ROOD OF ST. ETIENNE DU MONT

## MORE STEPS AND STAIRS

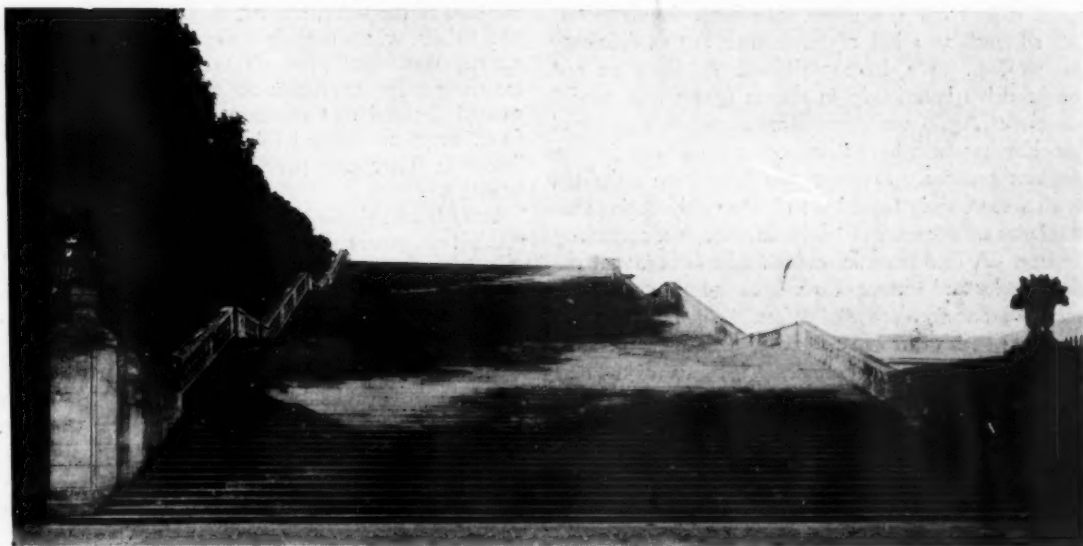
gather their most fragrant and perfect bloom in limitless profusion upon the lowest ramp. It is ever a nice question, that of how far the association of extrinsic beauty with any work of the builder's art may merge in our minds with that work itself and, thereby, cause it to be credited with beauty which it does not intrinsically possess. It is at this point that architecture and landscape architecture melt together, and the decoration with flowers and greens of all built places, from cathedral to chapel, palace to cottage, and not less the planting done about them, acquire an importance not generally suspected and much less generally admitted.

An interesting feature of the design of the Spanish Stairs is their dominant angularity which tells as curvature. On plan and in elevation, lines and surfaces, whether horizontal, upright or sloping, are predominantly straight or flat and everywhere meet in angles. This gives them an athletic sort of grace which is unique. And never was a very high and complicated climb by ramps of various length, width, and slope provided with better-placed landings. The psychology of these flights is that of all finely conceived flights, the sight of a broad place on which to wait for breath, to rest and look about being always kept before the eyes of the climber—psychology entirely left out of the famous Hundred Steps at Versailles, on which one feels as he starts up that there will be neither rest on the way, nor any end to his toil. Burke's words are applicable. Designs vast in their dimensions only are always the sign of a low and vulgar imagination. Not so with the Spanish Stairs. They are grand, but upon their grandeur a certain intimacy rests, a spirit of humanity is impressed.



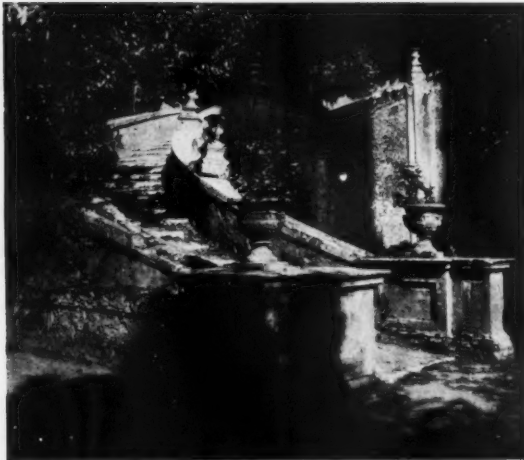
A CHARMING EXAMPLE OF INTIMATE STAIR-BUILDING  
ONE OF MANY SCATTERED THE LENGTH OF ITALY

The Hundred Steps at Versailles are grandiose, boastful, and as completely milked of the spirit of humanity as is conceivably possible anything planned in the mind and built by the hand of man can be.



THE GRANDIOSE AND BOASTFUL HUNDRED STEPS AT VERSAILLES





FREE-STANDING STEPS OF THE VILLA D'ESTE  
SINCERE IN DESIGN, WROUGHT OF SIMPLEST MATERIALS

We will close with a refreshing glance at two examples of intimate stair-building; examples taken at random from many similar, though none more charming, scattered the length of Italy. Both are relatively small. One is on a more elaborate scale than the other because it has an open balustrade instead of a wall. That of the Villa d'Este is free-standing. It swings clear from the top and moves with ineffable grace to the bottom. Or, if you will, vice versa. The other, more imposing, is closed at the right side, hugging a curved bulk-head and, therefore, is not free-standing. Both are themselves fit, and fit for their environment, but the steps of the Villa d'Este are positively lovable. Never were nature's marks of wear and tear, evidences of the unimaginable touch of time, more alluringly and more gracefully concealed by nature's everlasting renewal of moss, magnolia and oleander. Sincerity of design in what is so obviously useful, wrought of simplest material, amidst the foliate loveliness of nature's environment, are here at their best, name it as we like, Classical, Renaissance, Italian, Virgilian, but know it beautiful.

## Our Industrial Art

### DESIGN IN THE MARKET PLACE

By RICHARD F. BACH

ON the trite observation that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing Huxley commented: Show me then the man who is out of danger. To a great extent our difficulties have been due however, not so much to a lack of information as to a deficiency in wisdom. We have wallowed in facts, as one might delve luxuriously in census figures and rainfall diagrams. Again, we have arrived at certain very useful conclusions which have found ready application in subsequent practice. In short, we have been delighted with a thoroughly factual world, too rarely noting that rainbows are not made of solid stuff, though of surpassing beauty. A few there have been who have noted the faulty color and texture of our facts and have sought to remedy an obvious spiritual defect. Some of these have preached and others have labored, their angle of vision constantly widening as they struggled forward, so that it is now a safe assertion to make that our manufacturers, the better ones among them certainly, are willing to bank on design as an asset in their product and are able to produce well-designed objects of industrial art.\*

But marketing these things is a different matter. Only rarely does the manufacturer have direct contact with the

user or consumer. The product once completed, the control of its destiny is taken out of the hands of its maker and consigned, not without justifiable qualms, to the care of the seller, retailer, department store or side street shop, where entirely different types of mind and activity come into play. These are occupied not in creative production, not in the manipulation of material toward the end that use may be served in attractive form; they are engaged solely in making merchandise "move." They are purveyors or suppliers of commodities.

Crudely stated, the seller of merchandise is interested primarily in getting rid of it at a profit. More reasonably stated, he seeks to do this, subject to two important considerations: that the selling price be attractive and that the article sold give satisfaction. It is this last that brings his customer, the very popular "ultimate consumer," back repeatedly and persuades him to regard that particular establishment as reliable. Between the crude and the reasonable statement of the case lies much territory, traversed by rivers of doubt and valleys of decision, the exploration and conquest of which is also the story of the development of intelligent merchandising of articles falling in the category which here engages our interest.

The retailer literally was forced to embark upon this adventure first, by a rapidly spreading dissatisfaction on

\*See Journal of the American Institute of Architects, April, May, 1928.



## OUR INDUSTRIAL ART

the part of the public with the inadequate design of a multitude of uninteresting objects designed for home furnishings and other industrial art purposes, and, secondly, by the keen competition among retailers themselves. It was not long before a rigorous stock-taking, prompted by suggestions from schools of retailing and inspired by demonstration work in museums of art, revealed a serious shortcoming in methods of selling. It was discovered that while tack hammers and cotton batting could be sold on the strength of material, manufacture and price, lamp shades and wall paper and rugs and furniture required a different emphasis. By simple subtraction (and abstraction, too) remove the design, and what is left? Plainly, it must be design that sells the goods, and therefore design is an important "selling point."

Needless to say, numerous stores came to this conclusion more or less simultaneously, so that design became by force of circumstances a real factor in the keenest trade competition; a most salutary state of affairs and one that would have seemed visionary even three decades ago. The retailer's discovery, which is also that of all agencies functioning in the selling role, has led him to see that the item "satisfaction of the customer," which, incidentally, he now styles simply as "service," implies that the customer shall be pleased not only with construction, wearing qualities, utility generally and price, but also with the design. There, in short, the real kernel of his service comes to view.

Note, in result, the improvement in store advertisements which have taken on an institutional character, and also the decided advance in window and other display. And note also the fact that numerous special exhibitions are held of arts old and new, consisting often of pieces for sale, yet to show which sales floor space valued at so many dollars per square foot per week has been set aside and heavy advertising carried. These are factors in the building up not only of sales appeal to meet competition, but chiefly of prestige. The store now wishes to impress the customer, present and potential, with the fact that it regards highly "customer preference" in favor of design and is able to assure him of the strongest infusion of high quality design that the price will permit.

This implies, however, much more than well-designed merchandise and skilful display. It involves the training of personnel. Poor sales talk will destroy the merit of a commodity more quickly than no sales talk at all. Granted that the customer is a well of uncertain depth—and what customer in his own estimation is not?—the salesperson must know how to plumb his depths and so stir his interest and arouse his desire that closing the purchase will be no more than a necessary formality. Now a good coal shovel or a fuse plug will sell itself, but there may be endless doubts about a chair or teapot or lamp (in fact, about most lamps there should be). The task of the salesperson is not only to sell a piece of seating furniture

or a device for brewing tea; he sells an attractive object of industrial art. His presentation of the commodity must include, therefore, some information and advice concerning its design and its ability to harmonize with other items in a given household environment. How master this kind of selling? It was a new undertaking for the store; in fact, it became a real problem in retailing.

The difficulty was met, as it had to be, by education. The stores and schools of merchandising extended their work in personnel training to include instruction in this important phase of selling, namely, in terms of design. The real opportunity in this direction came, however, to the museums of art (though too few have availed themselves of it) and in one of our great museums there are now held several series of lecture-demonstrations\* in which the customary jargon of dates and periods is replaced by close-to-the-soil discussion of design, an expansion of the kind of information the saalestaff should have at command in any department that handles commodities which profit by good appearance. The case method is used, in that the principles of design are demonstrated on a comparative basis, museum pieces set against regular store stock and both analyzed.

This kind of instruction has been freely made use of with certain almost phenomenal results, due of course to the simplicity and effectiveness of the expedient—improved information may not be an expedient in the ordinary sense, yet it came to such use in the stores—and the great need for just such equipment to meet the requirements of a heretofore inarticulate customer who seemed to have achieved vast funds of wisdom regarding design almost overnight.

It may now be assumed that, given better designed merchandise and given a saalestaff equipped to present adequately the artistic aspect of the stock and given also improved advertising and highly effective window display, the store's position had been greatly improved in relation to the public and that the road to prosperity (of course, barring price wars) was now clear.

One begins to feel that an ointment without the proverbial fly in it can hardly be a good ointment. The fly is present here, too. He takes the form of the commercial "buyer," whose mind had got sadly out of the habit of considering anything but making the stock "move." His life was devoted to obtaining certain commodities at a certain price, showing them as short a time as might be necessary to dispose of them, and selling them at another price considerably higher. If the merchandise "moved" under normal conditions (whatever that may mean in business) the accrued profit proved the success of his department and he was, therefore, a good buyer.

He had no training, in the vast majority of cases, except in the school of experience; and such experience in the retail field has not always been calculated to develop

\*Study Hours for Practical Workers, held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

principles of design, leading him to rely upon cleverness rather than upon caliber, urging him to find resource in novelties and garishness on the one hand, and to lean heavily upon accepted forms called staples, on the other.

Improved public taste and resultant improvement in store methods find an obstacle in this buyer, who must still show a cash profit for his department. He is loath to go back to school to learn about design and he must be approached entirely from the business side, which now states that the store is interested not only in a cash profit but also in the prestige that accrues from the satisfaction and pleasure derived by the customer both from solid material and construction, and from good appearance of the article sold. For some time the buyer was adamant, but what his store's insistence could not achieve, the repeated rejection of ugly merchandise by his customers soon brought about. A considerable number of buyers literally have gone back to school. The results are apparent everywhere, as any large department store display will attest.

A further aid is offered them in the form of style advisers. These are experts in design, sometimes attached to a department, sometimes controlling a whole establishment. Their work is to serve as touchstones of design quality. Some now go to market with the buyer and bring their reactions into play there before orders for quantity are placed. First regarded askance, these advisers have shown themselves to be very effective in raising the level of design in various types of products, this despite the fact that good style advisers are rare and adequate means of training them are only now being developed.

It may be said that all this has to do with purveying, with selling, not with producing, with making; and that only in the latter is design constructively approached. But that is not the whole story; for it is true that if the store does not appreciate design, it buys accordingly and at a lower level of artistic quality. The consumer buys on a selective basis and chooses the best he can find, depending upon his information and taste. Meanwhile, the manufacturer has no great incentive to make better things and, granted the ambition to do so, dare not risk his investment on designs that will not "get by" the buyer.

But as soon as the consumer made his better taste apparent by rejecting ugly things, the store's problem became acute, analysis showed up the weak spot, objections were carried to the manufacturer, who smilingly admitted that he had been ready for a long time to make improvements in design, but—

At present writing the prospect is a fine one. On all sides there is teamwork and so design is on the mend. In fact, stores in some cases are assuming considerable authority in their interpretation of design; they engage high-salaried art directors, collaborate closely with manufacturers in developing new merchandise and in many other ways are constructively advancing the cause of design. What effect all this will have upon the growth of a new style is an interesting question, but such an effect will undoubtedly be registered as a corollary to the present activity in favor of better design and the reliance upon design as a "selling point." A far cry from the old maxim of the market place: let the purchaser beware, *caveat emptor*.

## Choice

By LOUIS LA BEAUME

WE ALL have a sneaking feeling that life would be comparatively simple were it not for the fact that man has been afflicted with the Power of choice. The privilege of Free Will carries with it such heavy obligations! Theologians cheerfully tell us that man is blessed above the beasts by the possession of a Divine Spark which enables him to choose unerringly the path to bliss; and to avoid with the same certainty the turning that leads down to perdition. "Only hearken to that small inner voice called Conscience," they say, and the choice between right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness may be made in the twinkling of an eye. My eye? Whose eye? We've all of us tried it time and time again; and failed. That still small voice has ventriloquial qualities and its siren tones and dulcet timbres often lead us, alas,

straight into the poisonous swamp. Sometimes too, there is so much static, that we can't make out a word and instead of being still and small, the voice is so loud and raucous as to add obscenely to our confusion. No, the power of choice isn't what it is cracked up to be; and the "voice" instead of giving us the right "hunch" only magnifies our dilemma.

Let us leave the field of morals, however, where perhaps Architects have never felt entirely at home. Let us consider how this infernal faculty of choice has messed things up for us along our architectural pilgrimage. Long, long ago of course the situation wasn't so bad, but we have reached a high pitch of civilization and with each century that has passed, the burden of possible choices has grown heavier. If our wills have grown freer, our temptations certainly have multiplied,

## CHOICE

until it may be fairly said that we are in an awful state of confusion. How simple and happy and care free in the light of our own vacillations, do the lives of those old architects of Assyria and Egypt, Greece and Rome seem to be. Naive they were of course, but they didn't know it when they were. As for us, when we're naive we're naive on purpose, and purposeful naiveté is a strain. Single-minded they were, too; not flurried or worried or hurried, not pulled this way or that by the imps of Fashion. Their fathers and their fathers' fathers had worked out a system which their world approved, and they blissfully toiled within the limitation of that system. One idea at a time seemed enough for them, if the idea were good enough, and who will deny that we think their ideas were very, very good? Have we not attempted to show our admiration for them a thousand times? They squeezed all the juice out of their few ideas, that there was in them, and then they lay down and died, little dreaming that we, coming after, would begin squeezing all over again.

It was much the same with Mediaeval builders in Western Europe. They had a simple faith, which wasn't at all the same thing as cocksureness, but which nevertheless kept them hewing to the line until the line was as perfect as that kind of line could be. They didn't worry very much about what was being done in China or Yucatan. But then of course they didn't know very much about China or Yucatan, so perhaps they don't deserve much credit for that. The point is, though, that they were happy because they weren't harried by the problem of Choice. They died serene, in the belief that they had finished their work. That the thing they had set out to do was done.

The case of the Italians was a little more complicated, for sophistication and self-consciousness were fermenting in them, and though they started out gaily enough they began, later on, to be bothered in somewhat the same way in which we have been bothered. In a way they brought their troubles on themselves; or rather they dug them up in the Forum. They kept looking back over their shoulders and wondering if the path other men had traveled would bring them into the Right Place. They had a good deal of veneration for the dead Romans, as we have. The truth is, though, that we've improved on their reverence for dead architects and we include the Italians with the Romans, along with the Greeks and the Frenchmen of the Middle Ages, the Elizabethans, the Georgians and even some very early Americans. It's a pious trait. Though the saying is, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," perhaps we don't go quite so far as to declare that the only good Architect is a dead Architect. That would savour too much of the layman's point of view.

Moreover to be quite frank we haven't altogether made up our minds. Choice is too difficult. We

admire so many things so much. It's hard to be didactic in these matters and we have reached a stage in our civilization where tolerance and a wide catholicity of taste is the very hall-mark of culture.

There have been times of course, and those times not so very long past, when we have held rather positive convictions. We were very hot for the Romanesque a while ago, and then we began to realize that the style was a little uncouth. A little uncouth? Why, it seemed barbarous compared to the elegances of the High Renaissance. We were developing, and having read history we decided to develop in the right direction. We were quite passionate about it; and then suddenly we realized that Passion and the High Renaissance weren't exactly synonymous. So we switched off, or back to certain phases of Gothic. We were exercising our Free Will all right, but it was nervous work. Further back into the Gothic we went and there some good men seemed to stick. Some more sensitive, artificial or fragile natures, however, recoiled and snapped forward to the Eighteenth Century to find in the exquisite refinement of the Adam Brothers the delicate manna to feed their Souls. Sturdier natures, the kind that like or used to like a good sound post, fixed their mature, deliberate, and for the time being unfaltering choice, on the stately dignity that served as a background for Beaux like Nash, and belles at the court of George the Third.

We have exercised our powers of choice more freely even than any of us a generation ago thought we should. We believed we had dropped the Romanesque for good and all, but now that we know it better, we like it better. It fits so beautifully those mystic romantic moods, which are but one of the characteristics of our century. Surely this second choice is a beautiful one, and would seem to indicate that we have a good deal of character. It will serve till we begin to question whether or not we have that kind of character. We feel a little Spanish too sometimes, but not always, not continuously. And we are recurrently Roman especially when we contemplate the majesty of our Democratic state. Is it so easy to make the right choice? There are so many lovely flowers by the wayside. So many lovely ladies at the fair.

Every now and then some prophet tells us that we are about to stop philandering and settle down to wife with our American ideal. He points to some cliff-like man receding into the sky and says, "The new architecture is here." Well, maybe so. They don't build them so high anywhere else. But are these new things all our own, or are they still a little Gothic or a little contemporary German, a little something else? Do they really mark the end of our travail of choosing?

The temptation to be a little Swedish or a little Finnish or a little Danish will trouble us for a while. For we know too much to be ourselves.



# The Jethro Coffin House on Sunset Hill Sometimes Called the Horseshoe House

**W**HENEVER we see or hear of an old house that is being "restored" a vague sense of uneasiness tugs at our heart strings. Ever since Harry Shepley told us about rebating the lower sash to take the parting bead, leaving only 1/32 of an inch clearance between the meeting rails, we can't help wondering if Fiske Kimball and McKim, Meade and White, and all those authorities, are wise to this refinement as well. Then there's the question of the relation of the "glass planes" to the clapboards, whether to pin the frames with maple dowels from the nearest hardware store, or nail them with hand-wrought iron nails made especially for the job by the village blacksmith, and many other knowing touches that only the loving care of the true antiquary can give.

For over a year now the "Oldest House" in Nantucket has been going through a violent upheaval. It will contain hardly a sliver of its original timbers after the present restorations are completed. A few crumbles of the original plaster still adhere to the rude hand-forged

*Being a somewhat faithful account of the Recent Restorations*

By HUBERT G. RIPLEY

To which is appended Sundry and Divers Notes carefully selected with more or less accuracy from various sources:

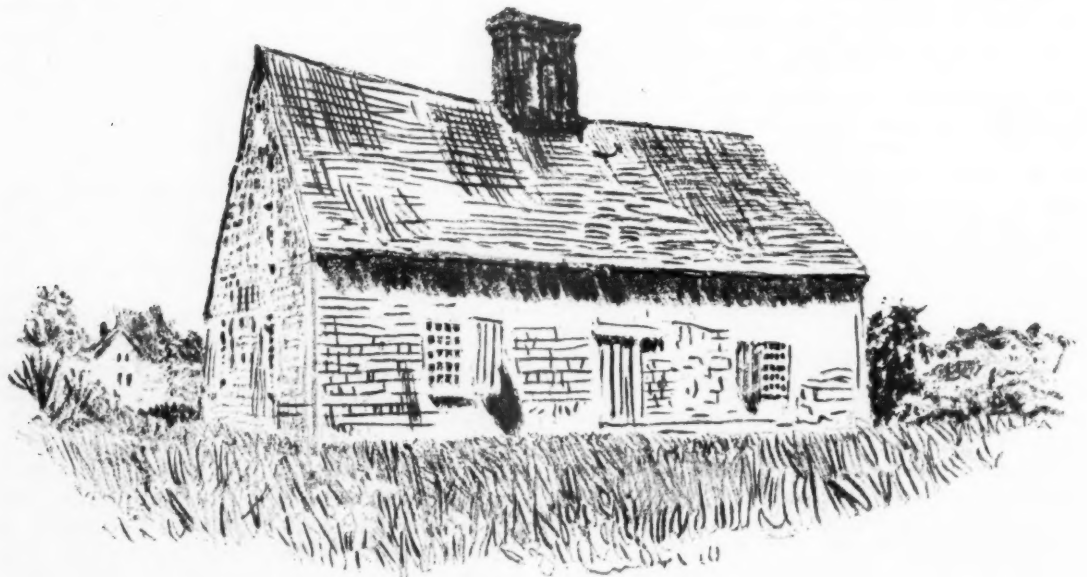
Adorned with Sketches in pencil and wash for the edification of Antiquaries and Others, made on the Spot by the Author.

*"You made me what I am today,  
I hope you're satisfied"*

laths, and the brick walls of the old chimney still stand sturdily. This clam shell mortar is a remarkably good material, by the way, of a whiteness and texture that, were it generally known (and exploited), would revolutionize the interiors of our cafeterias and bungalows. The clam shell plaster industry in its heyday was a thriving business in Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and points along the coast where clams were plentiful, and limestone far from indigenous.

Since the clam has come into its own in recent years, it is strange that it has not occurred to Big Business to utilize the vast accumulations of shells that have been piling up, caused by the ever-increasing demands of restaurants, hotels and night clubs, to say nothing of the billions of clams annually consumed by private families throughout the length and breadth of the land.

We must not, however, let our enthusiasm for this beautiful clam lime lead us too far; the charm of the native brick is only second in interest. These bricks are an orange cadmium, with that rounded edge effect



THE HORSESHOE HOUSE PREVIOUS TO ITS RECONSTRUCTION

## THE JETHRO COFFIN HOUSE

that is so fashionable this season. They measure 10" by 4 1/4" by 2 1/2". Many of them remain, although the chimney itself has been restored and repaired from time to time. A Bulletin of the Nantucket Historical Association rather dryly states that there is no explanation of the large inverted  $\cap$  on the southern face of the chimney, which has caused the house to be called the Horseshoe House. It seems to us simple enough and a very natural thing to do, if merely used as a distinguishing mark or decoration, although we learned its true meaning in casual conversation anent the repairs, with some of the Quality of the Town. It seems that the house was begun at a time when witches were rife in New England, and as everybody knows, witches have a distinct affinity for riding up and down chimney flues on broomsticks. They have, however, a great aversion for certain mystic signs and cabala; the horseshoe happens to be a very potent anti-demoniac, and as such it was cunningly wrought in the exterior masonry where it still stands as a warning to all aerial raids. Witches and djinns may fly up the huge flue, but even the hardiest fibbertigibbet or vampire would give this house a wide berth.

The exact date of the house is somewhat obscure, but it may be placed between the years, 1685 and 1695. The Coffin family have selected the year 1686, and, perhaps to avoid unpleasant argument, that date is generally accepted. Among the names of the first ten purchasers in the record of the 2nd of July, 1659, Tristram Coffin, Sr.,

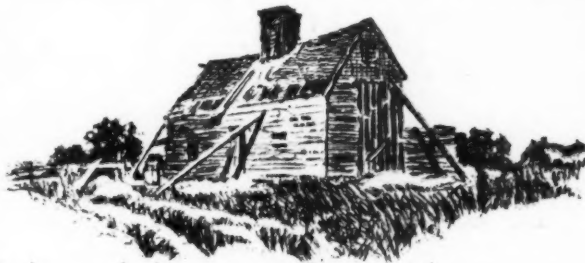
heads the list. His name has a semicolon after it, while the other names have only commas.

"These ptyes after mentioned did buy all right and interest—of the Iles of Nantukket that did belong to Sir Pferdinand Georges; and James Pforrett Steward to the Lord Sterling, which was by them sold unto Mr. Thomas Mayhew of Martha's Vineyard;"\*

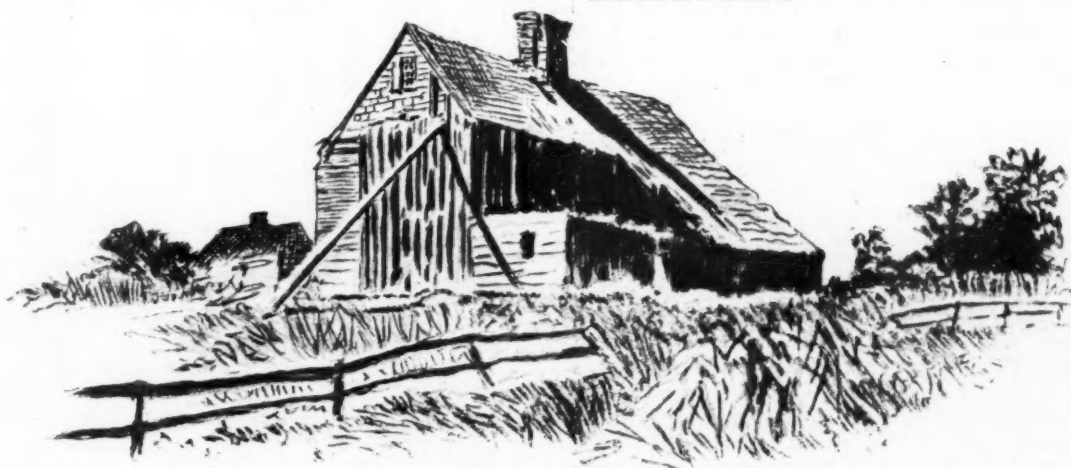
It seems that this transaction only took place after Thomas Mayhew had obtained in addition a deed from the Indian Sachems, the consideration being 30l and two beaver hats. The original deed, still in a state of excellent preservation, is now in the fireproof vault of the Nantucket Historical Association, where Miss Kelley, the custodian, graciously allows the visitor to peruse it. The original

purchase was 1,500 acres, about one-quarter of the area of the Island, and the early town records contain frequent mention of trading with and selling rum to the "Ingions." The Jethro Coffin house on Sunset Hill (those who are interested in the exploits of this sturdy pioneer are referred to the excellent history of the family by Allen Coffin, Esq.) measures 39 feet east and west by 30 feet north and south. It rested—until the summer of 1927—on the ground without either cellar or wall. There is a jog in the northeast corner where a fire occurred some forty years ago. Since that time the jog has remained, presenting a rather curious appearance to the approach which is from the southeast. The present restorer evidently intends to fill in this lacune, which

\* Extract from the Town Records.

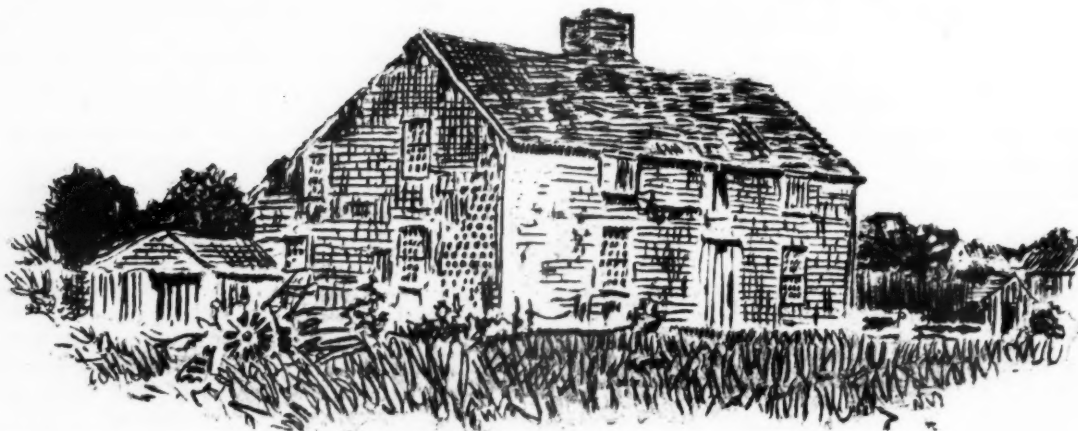


THE HORSESHOE HOUSE FROM THE SOUTHEAST DURING RECONSTRUCTION



THE HORSESHOE HOUSE FROM THE NORTHEAST, SEPTEMBER, 1927, DURING RECONSTRUCTION





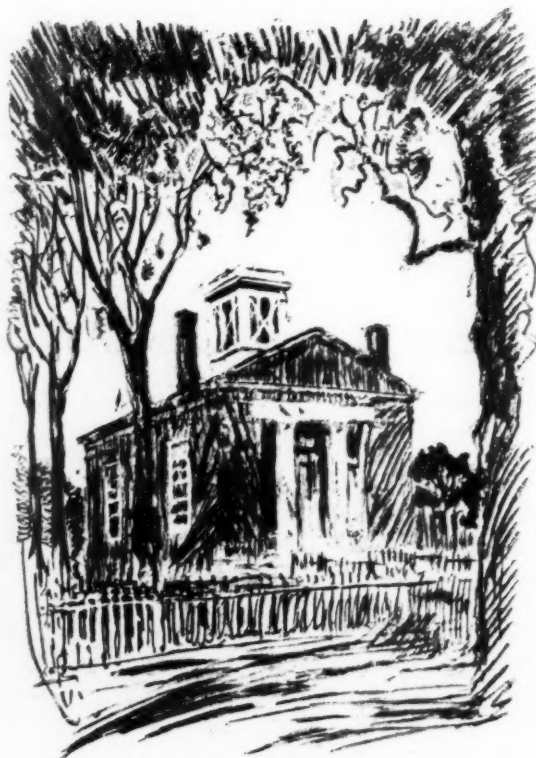
OLD HOUSE ON SUNSET HILL, NANTUCKET. DEMOLISHED, 1927

will be a decided improvement. A single remaining corner post indicates that the originals were of oak, top bracketed; the ship's knees, one of which, deeply gnawed by time's relentless tooth, is at this writing lying on a work-bench outside in the yard, were always a later addition to fortify the decaying posts. The "summers" were of pine, 10" square, the girts 11" square, and the chimney jamb 14". The outside boarding of the early houses was originally vertical, nailed to the sills and girts, with no intermediate studding, though the present restoration, as the illustrations indicate, has studs and horizontal boarding. To the purist this may seem a sacrilege, though only very old and knotty boards, riddled with borers and eaten by slugs on the ends, are used. These boards are 16 to 20 inches wide and vary in color from a dull biege to a deep bois de rose. The ship's knees will undoubtedly be a marked feature in the restoration, if only to lend romantic interest, and cause fair visitors to squeal with delight on viewing them. Early American knees possess a charm of their own that even the knees of 1927, with all their allegresse, or rather l'allegro, cannot dim.

It is presumed that all the timber for the house was cut on the Island, which it is believed was once heavily wooded. This is somewhat doubtful, however, as trees do not readily grow to a large size there unless, like the great elms in the center of the town, they are sheltered by the buildings. Even the Napoleon willow, that used to stand on Center Street opposite Quince, had to be taken down some twenty years ago because it became unsafe. Three of these willow slips from St. Helena were originally planted; only one survived the storms and blasts of sixty winters.

The great chimney of the Horseshoe House had four fireplaces, vast elliptical maws, capable of producing enough B. T. U.'s to keep the occupants of the house snug and warm from the piercing gales that occasionally

sweep the Island with relentless fury. It was found that the masonry had settled to an alarming extent, some nine inches or so, enough to endanger the "summers" and the purlins, so very dexterously (and surreptitiously) a few L's and I's were introduced, the whole jacked up and a solid foundation inserted. The



THE COFFIN SCHOOL, NANTUCKET

## THE JETHRO COFFIN HOUSE

work of restoration progresses with a measure of deliberate calm, indicative of the traditions of the astute citizenry, and compatible with the dignity of the operation, under the able direction of the President of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, assisted by an architect of high repute as an antiquary, and, in addition, an archeologist of parts.

The Horseshoe House was built, the story goes, as a wedding gift to his son, by Peter Coffin, on land given by John Gardner. Mrs. Jethro Coffin was a Gardner, daughter of John Gardner. Her father (son of Richard Gardner, whose name appears in the list of inhabitants of June 23, 1665), was called Capt. Gardner, and he died at the age of 82, in 1706. He married Priscilla Grafton, who survived him. They had twelve children. John Gardner, John Coffin and Nathaniel Barnard were elected Prudential Men, June 17, 1678, which indicates that the Gardners and the Coffins were quite thick and naturally the young folks saw a good deal of one another. Prudential men were like Selectmen; they made rates, saw that the commons were fenced, the pounds repaired, and that "all rams be carried off and brought on in season," superintended the grazing, and attended to odd jobs around town.

The young couple moved in, and all the wedding guests gathered at the ceremony of the hanging of the crane. This was a quaint custom, during which vast quantities of ham sandwiches, apple pie, and head cheese were washed down in quaterns of New England rum, with home-made elderberry wine for the ladies. A replica of the old crane used to stand in the west room, but the ceremonies no longer obtain.

Jethro followed the sea and had many a tussle with sou-westers on the raging main, and many hair-breadth escapes from the free booters of the Caribbean. His bride kept the homestead, spun the yarn, milked the cows, set the milk, helped with the haying, sheared the sheep, dusted the hearth, knit, baked, picked blueberries, made beach plum jelly that would melt in your mouth, salted down pork tenderloins for the winter months, did the family washing, mended little Obed's knickers, and in her leisure moments read the Bible, Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Milton's "Samson Agonistes," "The Divine Emblem" of Francis Quarles, with an occasional surreptitious peek into "The Hesperides,"—(mostly the "Noble Numbers") and Lyly's "Euphues"; in short, performed the multifarious duties of the industrious housewife.

It is related that on one occasion, when Jethro was away at sea, the young wife was all alone in the house, save only little Obed, an infant of tender years. Night fell. It was time for Obed to go to bed, and his mother carried him up the winding stair that led to the bedroom in the halfstory above the living room. The stairs in the Horseshoe House are composed chiefly of winders, with treads varying from one inch wide at the posts to as much as six or seven inches at the wall. The risers are of random heights to match the steps, some of them eight inches high and some eleven or twelve inches. All in all, as we remember it, it is rather a casual staircase. Mrs. Coffin was used to it, however, and could slip up and down stairs light as a feather; she was noted for being quick on her feet.



SUNDAYS THE HOUSE IS CLOSED IN WITH BOARDS AND SHUTTERS

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Having gained the upper floor, holding the infant in the hollow of her arm, she reached under the corded springs of the solid maple early American four-poster for little Obed's trundle bed. She noticed the closet door was ajar. To the thrifty New England housewife a closet door ajar is a hissing and a byword, so she started across the room to close it. On the way a sudden premonition caused her to pause. Peering cautiously through the gathering gloom of the December twilight into the blackness of the half-open door, she caught the gleam of a basilisk eye and the dim outline of a swarthy human figure. It was Nippanoose, the sheik of the Wappanuckets of Cowatue, on one of his drunken sprees! The startled mother realized that if anything was to be done she must act quickly. There was no time to waste, for Nippanoose, drunk or sober, was a fast worker. Pausing only to snatch up the cooing Obed, who, all unconscious of their peril, was holding out his tiny pink hands to the savage for a "ride on the choo-choo train," the terror-stricken woman started for the door. Quickly the painted Indian, on whose red blanket the cold frosty snow still sparkled, blocked her way, and drawing a long thin knife from his girdle, stooped over to sharpen it on the 10" by 4½" by 2½" bricks of the hearth.

This was Mrs. Coffin's opportunity, and with a lithe spring she reached the head of the stairs, closely followed by Nippanoose. Down the winding flight she sped with the savage only slightly over an arm's length behind. She could feel the hot breath of her relentless pursuer on her cheek, as, light as a swallow, she leaped over the last tread. It was a crucial moment; crucial not only for Mrs. Coffin and the gurgling babe, to whom the whole affair was like "playing horsey," but even more crucial to the untutored savage. His feet, unaccustomed to the intricacies of the staircases of the paleface (the wigwam, as every schoolboy knows, has no second story), feet which could thread without a misstep the trackless wilds of Shawkemo and Quaise, began to falter on this unaccustomed and irregular footing. He stubbed his toe halfway down and came plunging head foremost into the hatrack that stood by the Best Room door. A thunderous crash, and all was still! Slamming the door behind her, the hysterical mother dashed frantically with her precious burden across the cabbage patch into the safe refuge of John Barnard's barnyard, gasping out her story to the kindly neighbors who took her in and calmed her fears.

Next morning Nippanoose was found crumpled up outside the front door, more dead than alive, covered with bruises and suffering from sprains and contusions. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself and deeply contrite, for up to this time his record had been, while not exactly unsullied, on the whole a fair one. He was fined 30 s., forced to sign the pledge, and sentenced to six months' fence building. This latter penalty hurt his pride severely, and he was never quite the same man

again. The sachems renamed him "Mattaquitcham," which in our language means "Young man-afraid-of-a-staircase," and the squaws and papooses used to stick out their tongues at him behind his back as he slouched along with an armful of fence rails.

Nippanoose's punishment was cleverly framed, not only as a penalty for his peccadillo and a warning to others of his tribe, but also to the advantage of the settlers, for the proper care of sheep was at one time a serious problem on the Island. What with some 14,000 sheep in the pastures, and fishing and farming chores to attend to, the inhabitants were often forced to repair damages to the crops caused by imperfect fencing. Poling the sheep was first tried, but it was found that the land was not hilly enough, so fences were built. The early records contain many entries of fines imposed on sheep owners for letting their flocks stray into the cornfields, and bitter disputes and unseemly bickerings were not uncommon amongst the early inhabitants.

Of the many stories concerning the town jail, it is related that once some fierce sheep broke through a five-barred fence and, entering the jail yard, severely bit one of the prisoners who was attempting to make friends with them. The indignant inmates of the lock-up sent word to the Prudential Men that unless the owners kept their sheep safely confined they wouldn't stay there any longer.

Until a year ago an old building stood slightly to the south of the Horseshoe House. It was just an old house, like hundreds of other old houses. If it had been the only old house on the Island, it might have been famous, for its lines were suave, and the detail in keeping. As it was, it somehow lacked it, so, being in feeble condition and badly in need of repair, it was decided to demolish it and use the material, together with what could be salvaged from the Horseshoe House, for the latter's restoration. This may smack somewhat of commercialism, many fine "antiques" are really genuine in parts,—but as the restorations of the Horseshoe House are not for gain, and needed material was available in sight, it is hoped that as time goes on these anachronisms will be overlooked. We are wondering what will be done about the cedar lath and the clam lime plaster. Will spruce lath and Keen's cement be substituted? Will West Coast "Forest Products," or Arkansas "Soft" Pine Non-Splitting Plaster lath, or Flax-li-num Keyboard Heat Insulation be used? The wisecracks of the Island are shaking their heads and saying nothing.

The Coffins have always been one of the leading families in Nantucket since the first white settlement on the Island. Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin, born in Boston in 1759, entered the British Navy at the age of 14. He lived to the ripe age of eighty, dying in Cheltenham, England, after a long and distinguished career in his chosen profession. He was a great grandson of Tristram Coffin, and when in 1827 he visited Nantucket, where he met many of his kin, he founded for them a manual



## WHAT IS ART?

training school. Here all boys of the name of Coffin might attend free of charge; afterward from others a small fee was exacted. In 1852 the present building was erected. In design and execution it is a perfect example of the Golden Age. There is just the right amount of detail, and the setting and proportions of the whole are most felicitous. There exist no shams, no falsities; the two ante columns, to be sure, are of wood, but that is a concession to economy. They look like marble, as the underpinning is in reality. The cupola is graceful, airy and refreshing.

The present restorations of the Horseshoe House are being undertaken at the instance of a member of the Coffin family, in emulation of the kindly and public-spirited deed of Sir Isaac in founding the Coffin School. The educational value of these restorations, the examples of simple homely life in the good old days of johnny-cakes and apple-jack (with generous drams of grog at frame raisings and crane hangings), cannot be overemphasized as a contrast to the complexities of our modern modes and manners.

## What is Art?

By HARRIS C. ALLEN

There has never been a definition of Art which would be acceptable to every one, as being clear, correct, comprehensive. Artists, critics, connoisseurs, have always disagreed about the nature, laws, scope of Art; and today that disagreement is more evident, more intense, than ever before.

Much of the argument is deliberately insincere—advertising tactics to get publicity for the artist, or the pseudo-artist. On the other hand, some of it is based on hero-worship, on prejudice, on timidity; some, on curiosity, emotion, hypnosis. There is a considerable majority which stands firmly on the conservative, traditional side (speaking broadly), and a respectable—growing—minority which, with honest conviction and passionate enthusiasm, is proclaiming the dawn of a new era, the birth of a new conception of art and all the forms of art.

Architecture, the oldest of (male) professions, has not taken a leading part in this movement. There has been comparatively little external comment on this fact; perhaps because the turmoil in departments of painting, sculpture, music, has engaged public attention. But within the profession, if we have escaped internal strife, we have not lacked increasing agitation. Architects themselves, very generally, have realized and admitted that the profession was marking time, and was not even reproducing past technique with the skill and beauty to be found in the allied art of painting.

It is unnecessary to state that this condition no longer exists. But before attempting to analyze the new development in our own form of art, it will be interesting, and perhaps illuminating, to consider the theories and aims of those radicals in the other arts, who are called iconoclasts or reformers according to the point of view.

We are all more or less familiar with the "Modern" movement in painting, its phases of impressionism, cubism, futurism, symbolism. But to many of us the meaning, the principles, which have caused this revolt against traditionalism, are vague. Indeed, it is difficult

to extract from the voluminous, complicated, and often excited arguments of the modernists a definite creed which offers a clear and fundamental basis for art development. Such a creed might take the following form:

"We believe that true art is *meaning* and not *technique*.

"We believe that *emotion* should come first and foremost in all art.

"We believe that art must be *original* and not a *reproduction* of anything.

"We believe that art is founded on a *mathematical* and *psychological* basis.

"We believe that a painting should be a vehicle for *color* and *tone*, not a *representation* of place or person.

"We believe that color should be seen as an *abstract composition of forces*.

"We believe that true art is expressed with *ease* and not with *pains*, and that excessive *skill* is a sign of *decadence*."

Whether all these tenets are admitted or not; whether or not some of them may appear inconsistent; whatever the opinion of various paintings created to demonstrate them—yet, they contain some undeniable truths, and some theories which cannot be lightly dismissed.

Can these ideas and ideals be applied to architecture? And is there a tendency in that direction?

Architecture records history, the customs and characters of peoples, their education, civilization, culture, more truthfully and more permanently than does the art of painting. That architects are artists we admit, if we do not proclaim. But they are seldom artists pure and simple (if such terms may apply to artists), and they do not allow themselves to be carried away on a wave of enthusiasm; they do not shine as reformers, martyrs, fanatics. Experiments in architecture are too costly, failures react too severely, to encourage rapid change.

Changing we are, however, and there can be seen, here and there, a tendency in a similar direction to the

developments in painting. These indications are still so slight (certainly less than a half of one percent—not to be considered intoxicating) that it is doubtful if any great division in architectural views will come into existence. It is much more likely that the process of gradual evolution, halted for so long, is being renewed, without any integral conflict with the fundamental spirit of architectural design.

Looking over the field of recent architectural accomplishment in this country, and more especially on the Pacific Coast, it seems obvious that certain principles are being followed, which are emphasized in "Modern Art," but which are not essentially new in the practice of architectural design. These are: the vital importance of *meaning* rather than *clever technique*; of *originality* rather than *imitation*; of a *mathematical*—and even a *psychological*—basis for design; and the use of design to indicate a *composition of forces*.

Since it is not feasible to introduce into the execution of a building the distorted structural lines and proportions which are featured in so many modern paintings, and since, indeed, a man to become an architect must

be a thoroughly trained draftsman, those phases of modern painting which offend many critics are with us avoided. It is true that there have been produced in the Old World some buildings in which it is difficult to see any traces of draftsmanship, construction, function, or meaning—but in this country we are seeing the development of a logical and expressive treatment of material and function. That is an icily technical description of a realm of architecture which has produced warmly rhetorical floods of enthusiasm with which there will be no competition in this brief paper. We are also seeing (again speaking particularly of the Pacific Coast) the use of Old World motifs in a new and charming way; a style which is as far removed from its original inspiration as the latest towers of commerce from the pioneer "sky-scrapers," and as well suited to place and purpose.

May it not be true, then, that Architecture is in the process of choosing most of the virtues, and avoiding most of the vices, that characterize the childhood of Modern Art?

## Colonial Architecture II<sup>1</sup>

By W. F. BROOKS

TO BE alive is to change, and our pursuits are subject to this principle. Times of political ferment or of widespread emotional significance usually bring a change of style in building. For over one hundred years the Colonies pursued the even tenor of their way, free from political responsibility, in ever increasing security, without the necessity of seeking new materials, and with the rigor of Puritan severity slowly ebbing as their wealth increased, showing that luxurious expansion within the style itself which is clearly traceable as time went on and which stood, I fancy, in lieu to these old builders of the need for any change in the style itself. The new man, anxious to show his capability, could show it by an elaboration of detail and an expansion of parts that was sufficient. We thank God for his modesty and the absence of a Woman's Home Companion architectural page.

Then came the War of Independence, which broke rudely in upon our sylvan isolation and perhaps shook a bit our sole dependence on English traditions. The war had allied us with the French, from whom already we had imbibed that philosophy with which we backed up our reaction to England's irritations, and upon which we founded our right to fight her, hence it was natural that French influence should be strong.

<sup>1</sup>Concluding a paper introductory to a course on Colonial Architecture presented before the Connecticut Chapter, A. I. A. For the first part, see the May JOURNAL.

With the beginning of the new century this influence can be seen, not clearly, of course, as any sharp breaking off, but gradually the later English Renaissance of, say, the Brothers Adam, was supplanted by a French contemporary, and Major L'Enfant came to lay out our new capital and his style was followed in our more outstanding buildings of the times as in the New York City Hall.

Perhaps these facts account for our acceptance of Empire when that style was thrust upon France by the power of a man who wanted to be as near a Roman emperor as possible and who commanded the wealth and power in his person to create a new style by court order.

I do not think the influence of this engaging style ever took hold in England, naturally where Napoleon was anathema, but we swung into line with some interesting results which are clearly not of our previous traditions and which have, therefore, led me to mark its rise as the end of the Colonial architecture. On this point very likely you will dispute me; frankly I am only drawing on my own notions, and we all know that styles merge and survive with astounding complexity and bewildering ramifications.

We imported and made lots of fine Empire furniture, but I am not clear that this style very markedly changed our buildings. At any rate, the Classic revival which



## COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE—II

immediately followed was of greater influence and produced more important buildings, so that the first departure was merged into its logical development.

Porticoes and pediments supplanted the earlier porches and gables in our homes and the towers of setback cubes, each a Greek temple "in anti," surmounted our churches to the confusion of Sir Christopher's children.

I saw an article the other day laying at the door of a Mr. Biddle of Philadelphia the whole Classic revival. Mr. Biddle was an influential banker but hardly a Napoleon, and anyway, that isn't the way these matters work. Someone always scents the change of tide and gets the credit for it, but the sources of change in architectural style are as deep and far-reaching as those of the tide itself.

The buildings produced at this period in our country are similar to those in England and France, and the common reaction against the excesses of Napoleon may be responsible for the reunion. At all events they are in logical development of Classic and worthy of taking a dignified place at the extreme end of that Renaissance which had revived classical architecture in Italy five centuries before. As this style ruled in the days of our early expansion as a country it became the style for many important State and public buildings and extended as far as the Mississippi.

Then what could happen but what did? It was the end; every conceivable change having been wrung on the classic traditions and, moreover, the final stage was singularly inelastic.

I fancy the inappropriateness of so much classic dignity helped to bring a quick change and there was nothing to change to but Gothic, at least it so appeared. We were not only artistically blind to the beauty of our earlier architecture, but were destroying it wholesale to our everlasting shame. Nevertheless it is quite remarkable to see what our carpenters and architects did with the long-buried style they now turned to and how they managed to obtain a real grace and elegance with the peaked gable trimmed with lacelike verge boards, the bay window and the pointed dormer, still using wood for the entire effect as they had always done.

Beside what followed in its wake, the Gothic revival is to be held in reverence. It is here that we became lost to shame, as it were, and enter those years to which I earlier referred to as a nightmare of ugliness. Whatever may have been the faults or weaknesses of the then reigning Queen of England, it has always seemed to me unfair to couple her name with the architectural style for which she was in no way responsible.

Victorian Gothic is bad enough and this had some conspicuous examples over here.

During this period important buildings followed this as the prevailing style until the days of Hunt and Richardson, but in domestic work a new type was evolved. I refer to the square box house with low hip roof surmounted by a pepper box, wide thin cornice often



OLD ST. PAUL'S CHURCH  
NORFOLK, VA.

supported by huge scroll brackets, and a smaller square box tucked on behind for the kitchen ell. I live in such a house and for thirty years I have speculated on its origin without much light and so far as I know they are one of our few spontaneous products, like the bungalow. Our house was the result of a drawing by an architect in New Haven and what has interested me are his sources of inspiration. Someone in this company may know the answer and if so I hope he will refute my theory, which is this: we know that books compiled by skilful and trained hands in England were responsible for much of the uniformity and excellence of our Colonial houses and no doubt the practice lingered well into the 19th century. I have myself seen books of the Gothic revival cottages, and Asher Benjamin's book, for instance, had much of Empire and Classic revival work. These books were followed by our builders with the results we so admire to-day. Such changes as the individual case demanded were honestly met and provided for by these builders and were sufficient to produce an agreeable variation. In such ways the craftsman was able to impart individuality and interest. But as time went on the architect arose, or rather some of these builders began to specialize in doing plans, and being strong individualists, spurned the old books that had sustained their fathers in the true faith, and being wholly without a sense of beauty they overlooked the older fine examples about them and attempted creation, without benefit of clergy, so to speak.

At all events this is the only way I can account for the riot of individualism that thenceforth afflicted all but our most important buildings.

Since writing the above I have read that Wm. Delano attributes this confusion to the new art of photography. This seems further to substantiate my theory, showing that these men, untrained in architecture, found in foreign photographs too rich a source of crib, which gave them indigestion.

We now come to the discovery of Colonial, and its gradual revival of which we have all been more or less a witness. This is the next question, why we came back to the sanity and charm of Colonial after the nightmare of ugliness which is gradually passing out of mind. Of course we never have come back to anything like a general acceptance of this style. We have come back to sanity, or at least we so flatter ourselves, but eclecticism is strongly cherished, and the entire history of architecture is not only available to all, but is invitingly spread in school where dabbling in all styles seems to be commended. I mentioned the year 1890 as about the time we began to notice our own early works which were published by the *American Architect*, to whom, it seems to me, belongs the largest share of the credit of the discovery. But we all discovered it. The time was ripe. When I was trudging about with my camera I had not seen the "Georgian Period" books, and I cannot recall ever hearing our Colonial art extolled at college, for although Professor Ware was a cousin of Wm. Rotch Ware, who conducted the *American Architect*, he himself designed the Memorial Hall at Harvard, Victorian Gothic, and his approach to the profession as a teacher was always scholarly, so that I suppose, our Colonial efforts seemed but a puny part of the great accomplishments of history from which his students were to choose their style.

This again is merely personal, but indicates that the discovery whose cause we seek was probably not in the new schools which had arisen to train us. No, taste had changed for the better and there it was to hand. Perhaps Richardson's work had shown us how badly in need we were of a rock to cling to in the sea of possibilities that education and the photograph were surrounding us with. Richardson's stuff was wonderful, but even a child could sense that it could not go on and a growing continent filled with such buildings would be unthinkable.

But if we have never wholly accepted the Colonial architecture as our present-day model we have, I think, accepted its general traditions. Even this, however, hung in the balance for some years as we all know, for the influence of our early architectural schools was to ship graduates to the Paris school if they were strong men.

It was natural that teachers in a new field should look to the old-established school of France as a model



"JEFFERSONIAN SIMPLICITY," AT RICHMOND, VA.

while the needed stress to put on the "rendue" could only be aroused by photographs of the French school drawings. Under this influence many of our strongest men followed in the wake of Richard M. Hunt and the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* and were imbued with a spirit called "modern" and with a religion called "logic." Contemporaneously with this influence a firm of architects in New York were gradually working into the opposite view. McKim, Mead & White never did anything modern and their elevations were rarely a logical development of their plans, but we felt at once an appeal in their buildings, not only because of their beauty, but because they seemed to belong to us, they were in our traditions. Even when they used Italian styles they used them as Englishmen would and had used them, and it was only natural that they should soon take up the Colonial which they have never deserted and whose general acceptance as a style is largely due, I feel sure, to the scholarly and sympathetic use by this firm. They had a feeling not only for beauty in the abstract but for that variety of it acceptable to a people whose traditions were English, and it is this supersense which places them in the foremost of the influences leading us back to sanity and beauty and which has finally triumphed for the time being over what is

## COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE—II

modern, because we "ought to be," and over what is logical, "whether we like it or not."

There remains the final question of the strength that those traditions have for us to-day and for our successors. This is more difficult ground and a mere personal telescope is of little value in viewing it. I can only point out such influences as occur to me while acknowledging that my glass is far too small to pretend to see very many of them.

To begin with, there is an amazing amount of sentimental interest in everything connected with our early period. Sandwich glass and Bennington pottery, period furniture and hooked rugs have become "What Every Woman Knows" and the magazines that have catered to and spread this enthusiasm have rendered a great service in helping to preserve much of this minor art that otherwise would have disappeared forever. Also those interested through the minor arts have been led to contribute to restorations and to stimulating local pride in Colonial buildings so that I think we may rest assured that all that has escaped will be taken care of as an inspiration to the future. The American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum has put the stamp of the highest approval on the preservation and display of what in some quarters might have been considered too trivial or commonplace to enthrone, and other museums are following. But not many can do much beyond furniture, china and implements.

For the preservation of our buildings we must look to the New England Society formed for that purpose, and to such similar groups as may, for all I know, be working to this same end in other localities. I can only speak of New England, but there I feel sure is no farmstead so remote or benighted as not to know that Colonial relics have a high cash value, while the magazines of all grades have so published and advertised that I feel certain the general interest in these matters extends well into the west where these things are traditional only by courtesy. In California they are not traditional, and such influences as would lead us to use English Colonial would rightly lead them to the Spanish Colonial.

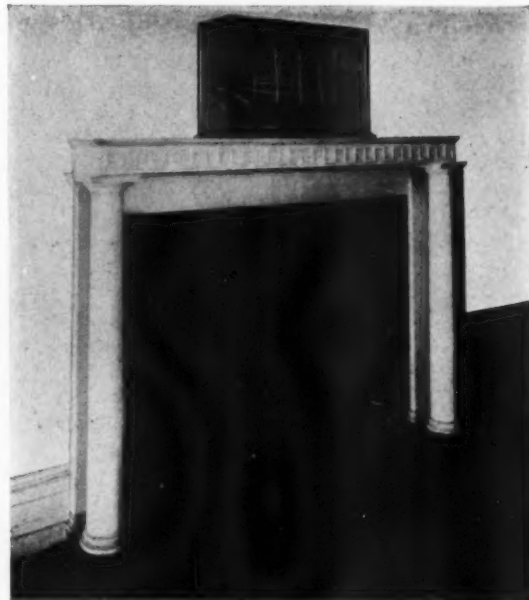
But an important fact confronts us in this sophisticated generation. Familiarity with all historic styles following the long break in our traditions has produced a state of mind in our designers never before apparent in great building epochs such as we have been in for some years. New problems have given at least one legitimate excuse for eclecticism in style.

But aside from new problems I doubt if the Colonial or any one style would even give us that variety in the ensemble or that expression of individuality in the problem under consideration which we crave. The cities of Europe were subject to tradition in successive eras of building, but as we see them to-day we find the buildings of these various eras standing in harmonious variety and we enjoy the effect.

We do not hesitate to follow this result rather than strive for a strict unity of style so that to-day we may say that style has become something which seems to express and lend itself to certain purposes rather than a tradition into which all problems are to be warped. Mr. Rogers does a post office on one site of New Haven Green in Roman and his Yale buildings on the other in Collegiate Gothic, and we feel a certain reasonableness in making the government building Roman and the college buildings after the colleges he feels most expressive of this spirit. New Haven is a place eminently suited to a revival of Colonial traditions and Yale's first buildings were genuine examples.

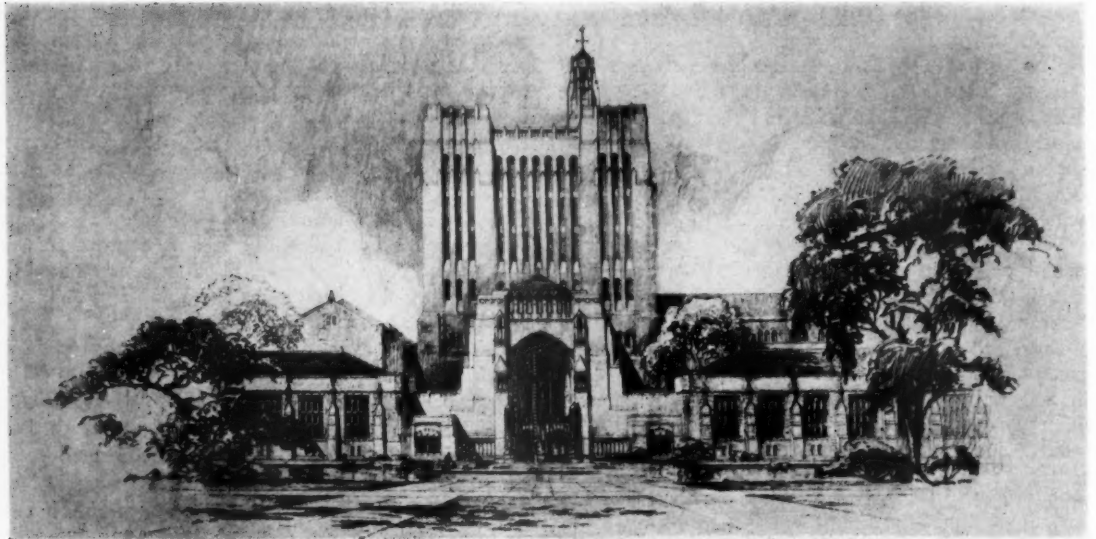
Harvard has been faithful to these traditions to a great degree and McKim, Mead & White's new group there carries on. But who would insist that Yale and Princeton should also have been faithful or at least returned to the Colonial style when the revival made it an open question? For my part I would not. We may deplore that in our times which has led to these results, but it is a freer expression of our age, and the variety of having both Yale and Harvard architecture is stimulating and agreeable.

On the other hand it is neither stimulating nor agreeable to me to see buildings arise in our midst from distinctly foreign sources. The selection of style should be kept in the family, as it were, not perhaps in California, not in Florida where we want to be foreign and enter another family for a change, if for no other reason,



AN ORIGINAL MANTEL PRESERVED AT THE GRACIE MANSION, WHICH HOUSES THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK





PERSPECTIVE OF THE STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY BEING ERRECTED IN NEW HAVEN  
JAMES GAMBLE ROGERS, THE ARCHITECT

to appreciate our own family when we return to its bosom.

Bearing on this point, did it ever occur to you that no great place in England was done after a French

chateau, although to get to Italy Englishmen must for centuries have passed them on the way? It seems to have been a part of their taste to go to the source for inspiration so as to mould the style to their own taste



PART OF THE NEW GROUP OF BUILDING AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
LEFT, DORMITORY; CENTER, LIBRARY; RIGHT, MORGAN HALL. MCKIM, MEAD AND WHITE, THE ARCHITECTS



## HOUSES OF THE GENTEEL PERIOD

and purposes as the French had done for themselves. This is what I mean by keeping in the family. No matter what the style, it can be moulded to the family taste with resulting harmony, but if we step outside the family circle we ought to realize we face a job that only generations of endeavor can whip into conformity, and that it is outside any possible harmony until it has been subjected to that subtle transformation by which we can feel it has been moulded by a common taste so to be saluted as a cousin.

Looked at in this way, therefore, our Colonial style

must take its chances with the others and trust to receive favorable notice when the place and the problem seem to indicate it as a happy choice.

England, through many centuries, has moulded to her taste both Gothic and Classic styles of which our Colonial is but a minor offshoot, yet our own and so deserving always of first consideration, but in our larger world with its more varied and many new problems we are entitled to a wider choice that is productive of variety and freer expression, yet need never be out of harmony if we but mould the design to the family characteristics.

## Houses of the Genteel Period

By WILLIAM GRANT KEITH

"WE HAVE at length arrived at an epoch when the pictorial sentiment is rekindled, and the old English architecture, it is hoped, may become, once more, a marked feature of modern national taste." Thus trustingly wrote Mr. Francis Godwin in the introduction to his "Rural Architecture," which appeared in a first edition in the year 1833; and if we may judge from the steady output of publications devoted to cottage and country house design during the early part of the nineteenth century in England, the development of the national taste in this branch of architecture was evidently a profitable line for the practitioner. It was certainly a well-worked field, and one of the most characteristic contributions to the literature of the art of rural house building of the time was J. C. Loudon's "Encyclopædia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture," produced in the same year as Godwin's book. It is an astonishing compendium, and the humanitarily minded Loudon, whose aim was a high one, tells us his chief idea was no less than the improving of the "dwellings of the great mass of society in the temperate regions of both hemispheres"; a secondary object being "to create and diffuse among mankind generally a taste for architectural comforts and beauties." Every detail of the cottage is painstakingly dealt with and illustrations are given of the furniture and fittings proper to homes of low degree down to the latest idea in improved clothes-pegs.

On the all important question of architectural style Loudon shows himself thoroughly catholic in outlook. The more single-minded Godwin, showing a preference for what was, perhaps, the most favored style of the day, looked for nothing beyond a Tudor renaissance, for this is the style intended when he speaks of "old English architecture;" with occasional excursions into the "Italian." Loudon, on the other hand, though holding the Tudor in high esteem, gives equal opportunity to

his contributors to show what might be done in improving the standard of architecture of the countryside with designs for houses in the Grecian; the monastic, ecclesiastical and castellated Gothic; the old Scotch; the Scotch baronial; the Anglo-Italian and the modern styles. And there is at least one example of an exotic blend termed the Indian Gothic.

Wide as was this stylistic range, however, there was still another manner of design, which, defying all attempts at architectural definition, is described by Loudon as the "mixed style." Commenting on a "judicious design" for a cottage in this manner, he says: "This design conveys the expression of a comfortable and even elegant dwelling. There is much of style in its external details, and yet we cannot point to any particular manner as its type." But let the architect, Mr. Richard Varden of Godalming, speak for himself, as, in response to the editor's request, he permits us to peep behind the scenes and we see him at his board ingeniously fitting together the pieces of this architectural jigsaw. "I do not know what style it can be said to be in," he candidly confesses; "it is of so complicated a nature in its details, that I know of no term which expresses their general result. Were I requested to analyze its component parts I should give it as my opinion that the gables resembled those of the Italian style; the balustrading and galleries the Flemish or German manner; and that the large projecting eaves partake of the Swiss character. I say this with due deference to architects who have visited foreign countries, for my ideas are derived from books alone. The hood over the entrance door is somewhat similar to those made use of in Berkshire farm buildings." In a final comment Loudon adds: "Whatever may be said of the kind of style exhibited in Mr. Varden's design, all our readers, we think, will agree in the praise

we have already bestowed on it. The effect of the whole is highly picturesque."

But such a *tour de force* as Mr. Varden's essay in the mixed style is rather the exception among the examples illustrated by Loudon. The approved designs are generally more definite in character and the editor is quick to point out any that fall short of what he considers to be a scholarly interpretation of the style chosen. Thus in criticising a scheme for a four-roomed gardener's cottage he says, in defining its "expression," that this is "something Gothic; and, from the cross over the entrance front, bordering on the ecclesiastical style. This expression is counteracted in a small degree by the modern windows; but more is gained to the inhabitant in comfort by these windows than is lost to the man of reasoning taste, by the deviation from the details of correct style. However, as the comfort of a single man, for example, a gardener in his garden, is of much less consequence than that of a family, we see no objection to completing the effect of such a building by introducing mullions in the windows with lattice work, and labels over them. . . . The effect of the whole would then be enriched, and rendered more characteristic of the style so obviously indicated. . . ." The detail drawing showing the design for the ornamental strap hinges of the entrance door seems to confirm the view that the artist's predilection was for the "ecclesiastical."

Another Gothic cottage illustrated wins high praise from the editor. This was from the design of Mr. Smallwood, "a young architect of great taste who has devoted his attention chiefly to the Gothic style and who has lately spent a considerable time in Normandy and the Netherlands, delineating the antiquities of those countries." It was to be built for the architect's own occupation, and among other compliments paid the artist Loudon says: "The barge boards for the entrance and garden fronts and the small dormer windows are of highly appropriate beauty; that for the end is not less curious, and, if executed, would at once be a standing memorandum of the architect's taste, and of his travels." But here we have reluctantly to reveal the damaging fact that the last mentioned feature was admittedly "a facsimile of the gable of a house at Ypres in Flanders."

Although usually quick to reprobate any pretentiousness in a design for the dwelling of a simple cottager, Loudon himself occasionally shows a weakness for embellishment. A building must express its "destination and purpose," says he, quoting with approval Newton's edition of Vitruvius. The design which drew forth this remark, a two-roomed, thatched cottage in *pisè*, is thereupon commended as having "no other expression than that of subject . . . a substantial looking cottage dwelling without any pretensions to either elegance or beauty." Bareness of treatment had been carried to too great an extreme apparently, for Loudon immediately suggests that the cottage might

be "ornamented" by surrounding it "entirely with a roofed veranda in metal work and a terrace parapet." He goes further, and, showing what we can only think was a brutal disregard for the feelings of the designer, adds that "Another and a very simple and economical mode of conferring ornament on such a cottage is by disguising its roof with a second roof, supported on a screen front of light trellis work, for the purpose of being covered with plants . . ." Warming to the subject, and being nothing if not a master of the styles, Loudon proceeds to convert the cottage into a two-storied structure composed in (a) the castellated Gothic, (b) the monastic Gothic, and (c) the Elizabethan mode.

As we have seen, not all the designs selected are held up as exemplars of correct taste, and occasionally the editor expresses strong disapproval. Summing up one design in particular, he tersely remarks: "On the supposition that this house is to be seen principally in front, we consider it handsome; though, if it were to be seen alike on every side, it would be the reverse." Here it is all too evident that the unfortunate architect had sinned against the canon Loudon enunciates elsewhere, that "symmetry is the soul of architecture."

Leaving the rarefied atmosphere of architectural æsthetics for the humdrum level of practical planning, we find Loudon equally resourceful. In discussing the potentialities of an ante-room which separates kitchen and parlor in a cottage plan, he suggests that the room might be used as "a small greenhouse, or as a china closet, if the cottage were occupied by what is called a genteel family; or if used as a public house, it would make an excellent bar; or, for a private family in humble life it might be a child's bedroom or pantry." This very accommodating chamber is lit by that characteristically English feature, a bay window. It is a feature which Loudon highly approves, and in expressing his convictions on the subject is it possible that, at last, the bay window's secret is revealed? for he writes, "In point of expression, bay windows of three lights convey ideas of ancient times."

The furnishing of the cottage is fully discussed and illustrated, and it need hardly be said the furniture strongly reflects the various stylistic tendencies of the period. Among the chairs shown are some remarkable specimens in cast iron, a new material for furniture warmly recommended to the architect. Notable among these novelties is a "design in Etruscan" which, on the authority of the designer we learn, "may be cast in two pieces. It would therefore come cheap, and would look exceedingly well in the porch of a cottage in the Italian style." The editor then gives a receipt for painting these economical products of the iron age "in imitation of oak." But surely the author of the Etruscan chair carries his passion for economy to excess when he devises an iron elbow kitchen chair whose legs are made out of gas tubing! And few will feel at ease with the editorial recommendation that it "only

## ABOUT ART—II

wants good cushions . . . to make it a most comfortable article for a cottager."

In treating of the interior decoration of the cottage, Loudon does not neglect the finer issues of the problem when he discusses the wall papers appropriate to the style and character of the humble dwelling. Speaking of the custom of covering the ceilings as well as the walls with trellis work and flower pattern papers, he says: "This practice may be allowable in towns, as creating an allusion to the country; but in country cottages we consider it in bad taste, as not contrasting with local circumstances." We also learn with interest that there were to be had "very appropriate Gothic papers, with borders at the top to imitate cornices, which are very suitable for Gothic cottages."

It is a preeminently genteel period which Loudon's book recreates for us. Such is its genteel nature, indeed, that the indelicate subject of sanitation is kept so well in the background that even the hypersensitive among the students of this genteel compendium could scarcely have been aware of its presence. Sanitary by-laws had yet to add another volume to the architect's library, so we are prepared for the shock when in at least one of the cottage plans the pigsty is seen sheltering under the main roof. But on occasion the editor is moved to censure too flagrant a disregard for hygiene. One of the plans shows a two-roomed cottage with a small closet opening off each of the main rooms. In his criticism Loudon says: "We know a case in which a cobbler and his wife lived in such a cottage . . . and

both being under the usual size they put a bed in one of the closets," but this is "not to be recommended in any book written with a view to human improvement." Rising to the emergency, however, he turns defeat into victory by an adroit solution, for he continues: "We may, notwithstanding, state that a closet may be turned into a makeshift bedroom for persons of even the ordinary size, by projecting the foot of the bed through a partition into the next room, or closet, enclosing and covering the projection in such a manner as to give it the appearance of a chest of drawers or a press, and making the top serve as a dressing table. . . ." And being as good as his word, he adds a section to show just how this masterpiece of camouflage may be effected.

Although Loudon was not himself an architect, his encyclopædia—a monument of industry—cannot be discounted as an amateur's work on that score. The contributed designs, which form the bulk of the illustrations, were mainly the work of practising architects of the day, both London and provincial, and may be fairly judged as representative of the standard of the ordinary domestic architecture of the period. That Loudon's book met with the approval of the profession is shown by the fact that he drew contributions from such men as Charles Barry and Charles Fowler. Encouraged by the success of his encyclopædia, in the following year (1834) Loudon founded the *Architectural Magazine*, so that the production of the first regular architectural periodical in England must thus be placed to his credit.

## About Art<sup>1</sup>—II

By OTTO H. KAHN

I BELIEVE it to be a fact that no great and lasting success, no worthwhile success, can be attained in this country unless there is in the man seeking and attaining that success, somewhere, somehow, in some nook and corner of his being, perhaps quite unknown to himself, that quality of idealism. That is so even in business.

I remember an occasion when I took a distinguished European to see my great friend, that eminent railroad man and captain of business, the late Edward Henry Harriman, than whom no man was supposed—quite wrongly supposed—to be made of harder stuff. My friend talked to Mr. Harriman for half an hour and as we left, and after the door had shut upon us, he turned to me and said: "Why, that hardboiled Harriman of yours is a great poet; only he rhymes in rails."

From that innate idealism, from that groping after

higher things, from that stirring which is going on throughout the land, I look for great achievements and, among other results, for the creation of a great impulse toward art.

I say this in spite of sundry proclivities, developments and goings-on which have caused much head-shaking of late and which may be summed up in the general term—though meaning different things to different people—"the revolt of youth." We are in a period of transition. Certain phenomena of the times, which at first blush seem to bear a disturbing or even ill-boding aspect, I would diagnose as the kind of concomitants which in one shape or another have always been characteristic of such periods, but which are by no means indicative of their lasting results. I look upon them as symptoms, rather, of a distinct and hopeful forward movement, groping for and seeking its due form and expression and ultimately destined, I feel convinced, to find them.

This is no Polyanna philosophy. Call it optimism if

<sup>1</sup> Concluding an address delivered before the Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. For the first part, see *May Journal*.



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you will, but permit me to claim that it is the optimism which represents experiences culled from the not wholly unsuccessful career of a practical man of affairs.

\* \* \* \*

The upward struggle of democracy aims at the spiritual no less than at the material. The sap is running strong in the tree of American art and culture.

The scoffer at art is gone out of fashion. He who would indulge in jeers and gibes at serious art movements, who would disparage and slight, let alone hinder or oppose art finds listeners or followers in America no longer.

When I first began, some 25 years ago, to occupy myself—in my leisure hours, be it said—with endeavors to be of some little service to the cause of art in America, some of my friends of the older generation of business men warned me to desist. They foretold that I was bound to jeopardize my career and that I would not be taken seriously in business if I “fooled around” with art matters. They shook their heads regretfully: “Too bad. A promising young man going wrong!”

That spirit is gone. I do not mean to say that the business community is doing, as yet, its full share by art, as I conceive the matter, and adequately recognizes the value of art as an educational, cultural, and social force. As compared with the admirable liberality of our successful men in supporting other altruistic activities and endeavors, art is still being treated in a stepmotherly way.

But still, a very significant change has taken place, and there are distinct indications that the leaven is working in the minds and hearts and pocketbooks of business men.

Art has overrun and captured the trenches which were held against her by incomprehension, indifference and prejudice, and, passing beyond, has firmly established herself in an unassailable position.

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In this vast country with its unprecedented mixture of races, all thrown into the melting pot of American traditions, climate, surroundings and life—underneath what the surface shows of newness, of strident jangle, of jazziness and Mainstreetness, there lies all the raw material of great cultural and artistic achievement. Every kind of talent is latent here. All that we have to do to bring it to fruition is to call to it, to look for it, and to see that it gets an adequate chance.

Young America is bringing forth every year a surprising number of artistically gifted people, especially the female portion of young America. Why it should be especially the female portion of young America is an interesting study. I have my answer but I shall not give it today.

These young artistically gifted people of America are loyal and devoted to their calling. They are serious in the service of art; they are eager in their striving; they are finely ambitious in their aspirations; they are willing

to undergo the discipline of hard work and self-denial. Their promise is great.

\* \* \* \*

But of that young talent far too much, alas, goes to waste for lack of guidance and opportunity.

Who can estimate how many young talents there may be who knock in vain at the door of opportunity, how many who pass through the all too common tragedy of qualities, impulses and aspirations thwarted, starved or denied, and turned to gall and wormwood within them?

What is the remedy? There are numerous cures that can be prescribed, but the principal and simplest prescription seems to me to be this: “Let the country at large emancipate itself from Broadway. Don’t be satisfied to be the ‘hinterland’ of New York. Cultivate your own fields, plow your own furrow, bring forth your own crops. Let colleges and universities take the lead. Let cities other than the greatest centers of population be spurred on more and more to cultivate music, the drama, picture exhibitions and so forth.” I venture to think the result would prove a national cultural achievement of the utmost value.

New York is a magnificent city. I am proud to be one of its citizens. But it is essentially a market place. The goods of the world, whether material or spiritual, are brought to that immense market place, the vastest in all the world. There they are appraised and find takers. But a market place is not the most appropriate spot for creative activity. The two things do not naturally go together. Take Rome in the time of the Renaissance. It was not Rome that created the greatest artists. Most of them were created in the lesser cities. Then they were discovered by Rome and brought to Rome. Or take Germany in the 18th century. It was not Berlin, but smaller places, like Weimar, where the cultural and spiritual life of the period flowered most exquisitely. Similar cases could be cited in other countries.

And thus I would venture to say to the cities and towns west, south and north of New York: “Go to it. Form your own art centers, as some of you are doing already with excellent effect. Discover, and give opportunity to your own talent, and mobilize and marshal sentiments, aspirations and interests of an artistic nature which are latent among the people throughout the country. You are less rushed and driven and crowded and preoccupied and spent than we New Yorkers are. You have more repose for thinking and feeling and concentrating. Go ahead, and claim and take your rightful place in the art life of America!”

\* \* \* \*

When the right to vote was first given to the broad masses of the people in England, a great aristocrat said: “Now we must educate our masters.” He was right. He enunciated a theory which many years earlier had been adopted as basic in the conception of democracy in America.



## ABOUT ART—II

But education that concerns itself merely with the intellect is a lopsided thing. To be complete, to fulfill its true purpose, it must not only aim likewise at developing and strengthening character, at stimulating and directing individuality—it must also foster and refine taste, it must take cognizance of that supremely important sphere, the emotions, and seek to minister to that subtle, indefinable and multipotent thing which we call the soul.

A distinguished writer has said:

"There is only one thing that can be taught; by wise teachers, by love, by example, by privation, by sorrow, by life, we can be taught to learn. Beyond that, although everything may be *learned*, hardly anything can be *taught*."

But to be "taught to learn" requires leadership.

The scope for leadership which lies before our universities and colleges in the field of art and aesthetics is great indeed. Its potential fruitfulness can hardly be overestimated. The value and diversity of the influence which is open to those seats of learning to exercise in the fulfillment of that mission warrant the most earnest consideration and the most active zeal on the part of those with whom rests the function to impel and guide that force.

It is exceedingly gratifying to observe that that leadership is being asserted more and more definitely and purposefully on the part of American universities and colleges. The enhanced standing and consideration accorded more and more of recent years to matters of art in our higher seats of learning are signs of a highly significant development, which is resulting in noteworthy nation-wide effects, and calls for grateful acknowledgment.

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There is no people anywhere more malleable than this new race of ours, the composite and resultant of strains so multifarious, out of which the influence of soil, climate, environment, or whatever other be the powerful elements at work, have produced and constantly do produce a distinctively American type, distinctive physically, mentally and psychically. There is no people more willing to rally around leaders, more responsive to a worthy call and more deserving to be finely led.

America has been said by European observers to be "the land of unlimited possibilities." The remark was meant in a material sense, but it is equally true of spiritual things.

America is much misunderstood and consequently maligned. Its foibles, its imperfections, "jump at the eye," to use a graphic French expression. Its really controlling qualities lie deep and are not apparent to the casual beholder. The world likes the short cut of catch phrases, such as "the land of the almighty dollar," and is reluctant to go to the trouble of reconsidering opinions once formed.

I emphatically deny that America is the land of the almighty dollar. I do not think it ever was. I believe

that, even in America's most materialistic days, the power of the idea, the impulse of the ideal, were far mightier than the might of the dollar.

It has never been typical of the American to seek dollars for the sake of sheer possession and accumulation. In the great majority of cases—consciously or, perhaps, more often intuitively—the dollar to him is an instrument merely, or a token of achievement, the concrete consummation of his ambition to create and construct, of his will to rise, to succeed, to excel. And nowhere are men so willing as in this country to give away for all manner of philanthropic purposes large portions of that treasure which it has taken them a lifetime of strenuous effort to attain.

And I would add, contrary to traditional opinion both abroad and here, that the dollar is less respected here nowadays and confers less power, honor and distinction, than the pound sterling, or the franc, or the lira, or the mark, in Europe. I do not claim that as evidence of superior virtue on the part of America. Very likely one of the main reasons may be found in the fact that the number of rich men has increased so rapidly in America that there does not adhere to them any longer what art collectors call "scarcity value."

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America in the last century had the formidable task of conquering a continent, physically, industrially, economically, and it was necessary that the intensest energies and activities of its people should be devoted to that stern and exacting task of material effort. That task has been accomplished. America stands today, and promises to stand for many a day, the most prosperous and, economically and industrially, the most puissant nation in the world. We can afford and ought to occupy ourselves increasingly with art, science, culture and other things of the spirit. And there is every evidence, in my opinion, that this evolution is, in fact, taking place.

Let us take a rapid glance at the existing state of things in that respect.

I will not speak about America's notable achievements in science and research, because on those subjects you are far better informed than I. But what about art?

In architecture we lead unquestionably and by a wide margin.

In literature, painting, sculpture (also in minor arts and in handicrafts) we occupy a highly creditable position.

Of our young playwrights, several have jumped, almost in one bound, into the very front rank of their profession, and, what is particularly significant, the general tendency and character of their product are not by way of imitating European models, but they are racy of the soil, expressive of American life, pervaded by the tang and atmosphere of America.

The stage of New York shows a vitality and vigor and a variety of offerings greater than exist perhaps anywhere else. (Unfortunately, that cannot be said

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of the stage in other American cities, but I believe that the neglect of the spoken drama in communities outside of New York is a temporary condition which will be remedied in due time and for remedying which various promising and rightly sponsored movements are now under way.)

We have an abundance of acting talent, and not a few men and women distinguished by brilliant achievements in that form of art. We have some first-rate instrumentalists and a number of admirable singers, including some of the very highest rank.

There is inherent in the mass of our young people a veritable genius for dancing, with its rhythm and plastic grace, and art of ancient lineage and by no means to be despised.

Symphony orchestras, some of them equal, if not superior to the very best existing in Europe, choral societies and various other forms of musical activity abound, and are being added to constantly. Great conservatories have been established.

No other city in the world offers the combined profusion and excellence of concerts which characterize the winter season in New York, not to mention the Metropolitan Opera. The leading singers, instrumental virtuosi and conductors of all countries are to be found in New York each season, and many of them are heard in other American cities, too. (I may mention, incidentally, that a number of these artists have spoken to me with enthusiasm of the admirable responsiveness of American audiences everywhere.)

It is true that America's intentness upon, and pursuit of, music have demonstrated themselves, thus far, rather in appreciation and cultivation than in creative activity, but it is a safe prediction that out of the ever more widely cast seed of comprehension and proficiency there will spring the final fruitage of creation.

I could easily expand that survey, including, among other things, observations on the "movies" and on the thing generically called "jazz." But time does not permit it.

I have indicated a cursory record of what we have. I have said it not in the spirit of boastfulness, but in the spirit of hope and faith; not in self-satisfied complacency at what has been done, but in order to emphasize our task and our duty to cultivate and develop the talents which have been given to the American people and to make conscious and determined efforts in striving towards ever higher achievement in the field of art.

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The book of American Art is young. But few of its pages have been written. I am confident that it is destined to be a great and resplendent book, worthy of a great and high-souled people.

I don't mean to indulge in a "high falutin'" peroration, but, looking broadly and soberly at the stupendous achievement, potentiality and promise which are America, I believe what I am about to say, in concluding this

address, is no more than the setting forth of a plain, though inspiring state of facts:

A great spiritual task calls and beckons to be done by the American nation. Its accomplishment will enhance the fullness and richness of our lives and of the lives of those to come after us. Let us realize the greatness and worth of that task and apply ourselves to it in common, with firmness of faith and purpose.

And, while following that pursuit, let us, at the same time, take care to guard the physical vigor and stamina of the race. Let us strive to preserve the inventive and organizing genius, the imaginative enterprise, the strenuous effort and ambition and the open door to opportunity, which are of the essence of our material progress and prosperity. Let us defend and maintain our traditions and institutions, in just pride and love of country. Let us recognize, and seek to live up to, those duties and responsibilities towards humanity which are particularly incumbent upon the strong and successful, whether nations or individuals.

Let us heed and do these things, and then, gentlemen, the road lies before us, broad and straight, leading, under Providence, to heights as lofty as ever attained by any people anywhere in all past time.

### From Our Book Shelf

#### *Architecture*<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written during recent years in the cause of painless culture. H. G. Wells has reduced the complex and conflicting currents of world history to the simplicity and unity of a well planned novel; Litton Strachey has taken the ponderous theme of biography and given it the intimate charm of friendly gossip; Will Durant has rendered the esoteric subtleties of philosophic systems comprehensible to the average reader; and so on in most departments of knowledge the ancient barriers raised against the average mind have, one by one, been removed. Now Architecture is having its turn and Mr. Russell has made the most of his opportunity and done his profession a lasting service. He has written a most readable book in a clear, simple, engaging style and has sustained throughout the point of view of the Architect, the man who knows only too well the thousand and one difficulties to be overcome to produce a beautiful and significant building. The proper understanding of Architecture by the layman has among English speaking peoples been much hindered and confused by standards of criticism being imposed by gifted and persuasive writers who knew but little of the technical side of Architecture. It will doubtless take another generation for the popular imagination to outgrow some of those plausible and pic-

<sup>1</sup> By A. L. N. Russell. The Simple Guide Series.

(Continued on page 240)

# Editorial

## THE SIXTY-FIRST CONVENTION

"There has been an awakening in the architectural profession."

This declaration, appearing in the annual report of the Board of Directors to the Sixty-first Convention of the American Institute of Architects, summarizes the spirit and accomplishments of that convention.

The events of the past year are too close to be fairly appraised. Time alone can bring out the true values. Yet, out of that convention, it is possible to say, "architecture as an art" emerged with increased vigor.

Collaboration in the arts of design provided the overshadowing theme. One year ago, at the Sixtieth Convention, the Committee on Allied Arts, under the chairmanship of C. Grant LaFarge, inaugurated a plan to bring about actual working collaboration between the architect, the landscape architect, the painter, the sculptor, and the craftsman.

So fruitful were the labors of Mr. LaFarge's Committee that the Directors of the Institute were able to assert with confidence at St. Louis that "this high ambition has been realized in part."

"And we venture to believe," the Directors continued, "there has been the birth of a new spirit of cooperation between the professions and crafts which are engaged in creating the architecture and the fine arts of our country."

The symposium at St. Louis, directed by J. Monroe Hewlett, successor of Mr. LaFarge, amply bore out this optimistic conclusion. The keynote of the symposium was "the mobilization of the forces which make for better architecture." The report of the Committee on Allied Arts, presented by Mr. Hewlett, embraced a formal statement of Principles of Collaboration, which the convention adopted, and which crystallizes as a basis of agreement unorganized discussion covering collaboration among practitioners of architecture and the allied arts. These Principles, illuminated at the convention through addresses by Walter S. Brewster, Royal Cortissoz, Ferruccio Vitale, and Everett V. Meeks, follow:

### PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

"Any work representing the unified expression of the talents of two or more artists depends for its success upon their ability to perform their allotted tasks with the understanding, and the sympathy necessary to the creation of an harmonious whole.

"It is, therefore, evident that the first requirement of successful collaboration is the selection of men capable of working together with a high degree of broad appreciation of the characteristics and limitations of each field of art and with mutual sympathy and esteem.

"Leadership is necessary in artistic collaboration as it is in teamwork of any other kind. As a general rule such leadership arises naturally from the nature of the problem at hand and from the character, ability and personality

of the collaborators. It may be assumed, however, that where the elements of the problem are predominantly in the field of one art, the representative of that art should be the logical leader.

"Wherever possible, the collaborators should be called together at the inception of the work and all studies, especially at the preliminary stages, made in frequent consultation with all collaborators engaged and with the client.

"In any collaboration there must be some degree of joint responsibility such as is shared by partners in a firm for the actions of the firm, and some degree of specialized individual responsibilities whether the scope of these individual responsibilities is clearly defined or not. A collaboration which stresses the joint responsibility in extreme form constitutes in effect a limited and temporary partnership which, like an ordinary partnership, must leave the apportionment of the respective duties of the collaborators largely to be arranged between them as the work progresses and which is largely dependent on their confidence that they can work out such apportionment satisfactorily by mutual consent as they go along.

"Where such a temporary partnership in joint and undivided professional responsibility and in the financial aspect of the work does not exist, and where one collaborator has a direct responsibility, professional and financial, to the client for some parts of the whole, and the other collaborator has a similar direct responsibility to the client for other parts of the whole, it is very important to have simple and unmistakable physical criterion for resolving doubts as to which is primarily and directly responsible for any given part of the whole and which is to act merely as an advisor in respect to that part. As soon as the design of the whole upon which two or more collaborators are thus engaged has advanced far enough to permit its being done intelligently a line can be drawn, by agreement, on one side of which direct and primary responsibility rests upon one collaborator and on the other side on the other collaborator.

"The main types of collaboration, each of which is suitable under certain circumstances, are:

"(1) Where the collaborators have a joint and undivided responsibility for all parts of the work as in a temporary partnership even though there be an understanding that each is to concentrate his efforts mainly on certain aspects of the joint undertaking.

"(2) Where one collaborator is primarily and directly responsible for the whole undertaking and any other is (a) a consultant to whom responsibility for certain parts of the work may or may not be delegated, but who is directly responsible to the client for expressing his concurrence or non-concurrence in the wisdom of the conclusions of the principal, or (b) a subordinate collaborator to whom certain responsibilities are delegated by the principal, and whose remedy in case of essential disagreement is to resign.



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"(3) Where each collaborator is individually responsible to the client for certain parts of the work but each acts also to some degree as a consultant or as a subordinate collaborator in respect to other parts of the work.

"In any one of these types, except 2b, the important points to cover are these:

"(1) To make it clear which collaborator is to be finally and directly responsible for any given part of the whole after getting advice from the others; (2) to arrange that each collaborator may obtain the advice and assistance of the other or others as to any part for which he is responsible by meeting the expense involved in the rendering of such advice or assistance; (3) to arrange that no collaborator will reach a final decision in respect to any part for which he is directly responsible without giving the other or others a reasonable opportunity to offer his or their advice; (4) to make each collaborator responsible for advising the other collaborators about anything in connection with the entire job which he thinks might be bettered by his advice, and putting him in a position to express that advice (by drawings or otherwise) without subjecting him to unreasonable unremunerated expense; (5) to have a clear understanding whether or not the degree of joint responsibility is such that any of the collaborators has the duty of expressing to the client his dissenting opinion in case he is finally unable to assist to the expediency of a decision made by another collaborator within the field for which the latter is primarily responsible."

It is manifestly impossible, the Committee on Allied Arts pointed out, to draw a form of agreement among collaborators which will apply to all, or even a majority of problems. It was, therefore, recommended that the above general principles be approved by the different national associations and considered the basis upon which the members of these associations may write individual agreements.

### "Mobilization"

Important to the architect was an idea expressed by Harry F. Cunningham. "In every mobilization of forces toward any end whatsoever," Mr. Cunningham said, "there must be a head, a commander-in-chief. It has not been pointed out sufficiently strongly that in this collaboration between artists toward the production of a perfect building there must be a commander-in-chief and that one must be the architect."

Nor did "mobilization" exclude the crafts. W. O. Ludlow aroused the keen interest of the convention by his explanation of the activity of the New York Building Congress which accords recognition to excellence in craftsmanship in connection with definite architectural undertakings.

The success of this plan in localities in which Building Congresses have been established suggests the desirability of an effort to encourage such a procedure under the

auspices of Institute chapters in localities where there are no Building Congresses.

The proceedings of the convention, which will be interpreted more fully in succeeding issues of the Journal, were characterized by a cohesion of purpose heartening to the new officers and directors of the Institute. Their responsibilities have been clarified by their predecessors, whose record of service, disinterested and constructive, has rarely been matched in the administrative annals of American architecture.

Under Mr. Medary and his associates the Institute has moved to higher ground, where there is no room for decay.

### CRITICAL THINKING

Criticism is an essential factor of all progress. It is noteworthy that the annual report of the Board of Directors was not merely a narrative of things done and undone but rather was strongly flavored by critical thinking. Two sections of the report, devoted to the architect and the community, and to standardization of architectural design, indicated the bases of thought in which the development of the Institute is grounded. On the one hand, the Directors pointed out that architecture must not desert the fundamental ideals of art, and on the other that these ideals must be kept intact for the enrichment of society.

The Board offered this criticism of the architectural profession:

"It believes it to be true, for practically the whole country, that the Architect is guilty of neglecting his community. As a professional group, organized or unorganized, he seems to give little or no attention to the civic progress of his own town or city. A charge of disregard of community welfare cannot be made against the doctors. They are active in their field, as it affects the health of the people. They do not hesitate to assume the leadership which is rightfully theirs. The same principle of conduct is true of lawyers, whose control in making the laws is proverbial. But the architects seem to assume an over-modest attitude when planning, zoning, and civic developments are under way, or should be under way. It is observed that those few Chapters of the Institute which do take an active and vigorous part in civic matters are the strongest Chapters of the Institute—not necessarily in numbers, but in influence and enthusiasm. It is also observed that active participation in civic matters by Institute Chapters over a sustained course results in substantially greater recognition of the individual architect by his community.

"The Board has this to say to every Institute Chapter: The development of your community in Architecture and its related fields is your legitimate business. Your public and your press will meet you more than half way if you take the initiative and exercise the prerogative of leadership, which is yours by training, experience and knowledge."



# The Mission of the Institute<sup>1</sup>

By MILTON B. MEDARY

RATHER than review the work of the Committees and the Board of the Institute during the preceding year, it was thought well last year to leave that to the report of the Board and confine the President's address to a short introduction to a first session which would give a keynote to the convention.

This year we will follow the same procedure, but it is rather important, I think, to review some of the broader aspects of the Institute's work which seem not to be entirely understood and which have guided the action of the Board and the Committees.

There seemed to be no particular definite purpose or direction in the work that the Institute was doing over a long period of years. We were busy with innumerable things, and we handled them all as individual things. The result was a feeling of doubt and uncertainty concerning many of our activities, which we finally came to know as external activities. We had scattered our interests in various ways, so that no one was quite sure that they were under the American Institute of Architects' control at the Octagon. This resulted two years ago in the appointment of a committee on which there were representatives of these various activities, and out of that committee came a report to the convention urging that all of our activities eventually be brought back home to the Octagon. That was the work assigned to your Board two years ago. The Board reported to the Sixtieth Convention a year ago its recommendations concerning these various activities, with recommendations of ways and means by which all of them should be brought back to the Octagon and be directly under the control of the Institute.

The convention voted to approve that report and turned over to the new Board, which will report to you this afternoon, the task of putting the recommendations into execution.

I am happy to say that I believe, if the convention confirms the action of this Board, which I hope it will, you will find all of our affairs which have caused uncertainty and doubt in the minds of many of our members have all been brought into direct control, located at the Octagon, which will be truly the home and headquarters of all the activities of The American Institute of Architects.

In one respect only have we not physically transferred these activities, and that is in connection with our relation with the Producers' Council. This has been definitely provided for in a contract which admits the difficulties of an immediate move, but definitely fixes the time (before expiration of the ensuing year) when this activity also will be located at the Octagon.

There has been a feeling, which has been expressed from time to time, that perhaps the Board has done too

much work; conventions have been said to be too well oiled, that there was no opportunity to speak from the floor. The history of reports of conventions is interesting. There was a time when a report was made directly to the convention by the chairman of a committee, sometimes on the spur of the moment, sometimes without any of his committee having seen it. The result was that debate followed, but without any particular opportunity really to digest the work that was reported by such committee.

The Board, therefore, inaugurated some years ago the principle of having the committee write its report, secure the approval of the members of the committee, send it to the Board for consideration, have it printed, send it to all of the chapters, ask the chapters to hold meetings at which every member of the chapter and therefore every member of the Institute had full opportunity to discuss and judge the effect of that report on his own local group; also, for the benefit of the delegates, that they be informed of the opinion of the local group. But there seems to be a belief that that has disposed of committee reports. That is not the case by any means. The Board report will tell you what the Board believes concerning all our activities, and of the reports of the various committees; later the Board report is taken up seriatim after the first reading. This second reading constitutes the program of action by this convention. As each item is read, that particular committee report is then before the convention, not as in the old way, simply on the spur of the moment, but presumably with the substance already well known to every member of the Institute, not only the delegates here, but to every member of the Institute. I want particularly to commend the action of the Chicago Chapter. That chapter sent the Board a series of resolutions indicating that that chapter had read, carefully thought about, digested every report, and had formulated the opinion of the Chicago Chapter in definite resolutions concerning it. If that program were followed in every chapter there could be no possible question as to every member of the Institute having infinitely more opportunity to express his will on the floor of the convention than ever was the case in the past.

Membership is a subject which has impressed me as a thing that perhaps is not well understood. We hear talk of The American Institute of Architects not being representative because of its numbers. I am perfectly convinced that the influence of this body in the past, present, and future is dependent entirely upon its ideals and the way it lives up to them and not at all on its numbers.

<sup>1</sup> Address of the retiring President at the Sixty-first Convention of the A. I. A. St. Louis, Mo., May 16, 1928.

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There is something more than merely proclaiming an ideal; we must live up to it. We know that a precept is nothing more than an aspiration unless it is followed by example. I hope that we shall never lower any of our standards in order to increase our numbers, and we shall never admit any member who will not by the example of his practice live up to his precepts.

Now as to the particular subject which we brought before the convention last year, collaboration in the arts. This has been regarded as a new subject, coming out of a clear sky, in the minds of some members of the Institute. As a matter of fact, it was decided upon as a result of very careful analysis of the trend of the Institute activities in the past. This analysis showed that we had devoted a vast amount of time in a most valuable way to developing our own business relations, our contract documents, and related subjects. It illustrated further that, first through the scientific research department and then the structural service department, we had set up a most valuable contact with all those with whom we must deal in the production of materials that we use in our practice and the methods that we use in the construction of our buildings. We had gone further: We had set up an actual point of contact; we had set up a system by which we could exchange ideas and develop all angles of this material side of our practice. But it seemed to be an astonishing fact that an architectural organization such as The American Institute of Architects had never set up any such contacts or any such means of intercommunication, any such means of direct fellowship, with all of the arts of design and all of the crafts which represent the esthetic side of our practice. Last year we tried to make clear that the Institute must go as far in the esthetic side as it has gone in the material side, and it must go far to do so. For that reason we have asked the Committee on Allied Arts again this year to take the floor at this morning's session and give the Allied Arts and crafts first consideration, in order that your minds may be directed in all of your actions in this convention by consideration of the artistic as of the material phases of our problems.

In that connection, therefore, I have written a few notes, in an effort to keep off the ground which the distinguished speakers who have been asked to come here will cover, and confine myself to a statement which shall be an introduction to the Chairman of the Committee on Allied Arts, who, in turn, will present the report of the committee and introduce those guests who will address us.

Character in architecture, as in all its manifestations, arises from sincerity and truth. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles." The architecture we are creating in the United States must express the national life which it serves and in common with that national life must recognize the influence of constantly increasing contacts with the rest of the world, just as the world contacts of ancient trade centers carried the influence and forms of expression of these centers along

their trade routes and, in turn, brought back to those centers new inspiration, enriching them with the products of the imaginations of different peoples.

The Sixtieth Convention focused attention upon the interdependence of the arts in the conception and creation of an architecture which would embody and be enriched by all the elements necessary to its fullest expression.

This morning we shall focus our attention upon those guiding limitations which must be recognized if the character of an architectural work shall measure up to the standards of sincerity and truth, for it is this element of character which gives life and meaning to all art expression.

The Committee on Allied Arts will treat specifically of the influences affecting architecture, considered from several angles—the influence of the patron and the nature of his problem; the influence of tradition, of environment, and of education.

Basically, a structure of any kind must be a sincere expression of the problem out of which the demand for the structure originated, whether this be the simplest utilitarian requirement or a memorial of purely spiritual quality.

The problem may be one the character of which changes rapidly with the changing nature of modern life, or it may be universal and independent of time. In either case the parti must recognize the nature of the problem and meet it frankly. It will not do to start with the idea of a beautiful structure in which an effort will be made to house the problem. It is necessary that the structure shall be designed to meet all of the requirements of the problem in the planning of the basic structure, but in terms of dignity of arrangement and beauty of proportion, capable of appropriate enrichment of detail. To limit architectural expression to a naked answer to a given problem, with exaggerated emphasis on the utilitarian or functional aspects, is by no means a guarantee of sincerity or truth, and is more often than not an indication of a poverty of imagination. The human figure is an expression of functional design, true in every respect to the bone and muscle which represent its parti, but with countless variations in proportions and detail, all kept within the limits established by the parti. It is perhaps fortunate that the advocates of a complete abandonment of tradition, on the grounds that anything which has been cannot be used without hypocrisy, apparently have no influence in the councils governing nature's processes of evolution.

The influence of tradition is less arbitrary. What has been at one time considered true is, in the light of greater understanding, sometimes found to be false and misleading. Tradition should not ever stand across the path of progress, but rather should serve as the stem on which new growth is grafted, and only when it is proven untrue or false should it be rooted out altogether.

Tradition and environment are in many ways inseparably related. This is particularly true in their

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influence upon architecture and its character. Traditions affecting the way of life at a given period of time, however, differ from those in the same physical environment at other times; while the traditions affecting the way of life in different environments have always been and should be different. It is by this difference, and the reasons for it, that character is expressed. By ignoring it, character is being lost and our architecture becoming insincere. Cities once typical of the geographic, historic and climatic conditions out of which a definite character was established, today exhibit a clearly marked line between that original character and the standardized type which is spreading through all our cities. San Antonio, New Orleans, Charleston and Boston are typical examples. Side by side with the old, which is invariably characteristic of the different geneses of these cities, is the modern—bank, hotel and high school, alike throughout the United States, while what has come to be known as "Main Street" is lighted by a row of typical standards, cast in the same foundry, and is lined with the standardized contribution of such chain store organizations as the Childs Restaurant, the Woolworth Five-and-Ten, and the A. & P. In the residence section, apartment houses are more or less alike from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and houses with small rooms and low ceilings, built upon lots but a few feet larger than the house itself, suitable enough in northern climates, are in the Gulf cities replacing houses with large and airy rooms and high ceilings, surrounded by shaded grounds and protected from the intense sun by ample galleries.

The recognition of the limitations established by tradition and environment, which was so clearly indicated in the architecture of the early days of the Republic, was gradually ignored with the growth of our political freedom until our American architecture recorded nothing more than a period of unprecedented material growth going hand in hand with artistic illiteracy. The outward form of an historic architecture lingered for a while, but generally misapplied and without relation to appropriate planning or an intelligent solution of a problem. By the time this had led to such obvious absurdities as the use of the cella of a Greek temple for a school room, historic forms were discredited and abandoned altogether. The meaning of architecture had been forgotten and those of its forms which remained were regarded merely as decorations and more often than not were ignorantly applied.

The revolt against this condition revealed itself first in the form of scholarly reproduction of older architecture treated more as archeology than as a living art. This has been followed by a sincere effort to create an architecture based upon intelligent planning, the art of building, and the appropriate use of materials which compose its structure. This is the basis for a sincere and truthful architecture. It is frequently overstressed, however, and results in crude and primitive forms and an unreasonable limitation in the use of modern materials and methods, fearing to conceal any of the structure. The

belief that materials should not be brought from a great distance when other materials are near at hand is untenable in the face of modern methods of transportation which make the materials of the whole world available. Steel, for instance, which takes so large a part in expanding the field of architectural form, may be mined in Lake Superior, rolled into shapes in Pittsburgh, and erected as the skeleton of a structure in Boston. This is not in defiance of tradition and environment, but in harmony and accord with the full use of the greater opportunities resulting from the scientific development of materials, methods and transportation. It is in the manner in which this greater palette is used, and not in the fact of a greater and richer array of materials and methods, that character may be preserved or lost. Applied with sincerity and truth this greater palette makes for a richer, nobler and more truthful architecture.

The American Institute of Architects is dedicated primarily to the service of American architecture. With the growth of great building corporations, interested in the immense field of the building industry as a business, it is more than ever necessary that we devote our best efforts to restore and preserve, as far as may be, the basic meaning of architecture; and in seeking new expression of that basic meaning it should never be forgotten that, until the faith and culture of our forebears are completely eliminated from our national life, we cannot with sincerity and truth create a national art which excludes them from its forms of expression.

The Federal Government has in recent years created two Commissions which have an important influence upon our public architecture. I refer to the National Commission of Fine Arts and the more recently created National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Both these Commissions, in dealing with problems of design and planning affecting the National Capital, have been guided by a firm conviction that the historic and cultural traditions established by the faith and vision of the builders of the new Capital should guide its future development, fully meeting all the complex demands of vast expansion while at the same time honoring and proclaiming the faith and culture woven into the fabric of the early work.

To the work of these Commissions has been added the sympathetic cooperation of the present Administration. Secretary Mellon, exercising the authority given the Treasury Department, and Senator Smoot, of the Public Buildings Commission, have planned a program of Federal construction worthy of the challenge set up by the work of the founders of the Capital.

I believe it would be a valuable addition to our Convention programs if our Committee on Public Works could include in its report individual reports from any of our members who may from time to time be serving on these Commissions. The American Institute of Architects gave its enthusiastic support to every step leading to the creation of these Commissions and has since given



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them its support and cooperation at all times. We shall have greater opportunities of service in the cause of American architecture in the future than in the past, in the field of public architecture and planning problems, national and local, as well as in private practice, and the character of the architecture of the future will depend upon the manner in which we measure up to these opportunities.

With our own organization, problems involving many important decisions have come before the Board during my administration. These will be dealt with in detail in the reports of the Board and the Treasurer.

May I say in closing that your Board throughout this administration has been a singularly devoted one, working in perfect harmony for what it believed to be the best interests of the Institute as a whole? With this Board, and with the untiring devotion of Mr. Kemper and his staff, it has been a stimulating source of inspiration to carry on the duties of the office with which you have entrusted me during the past two years.

### From Our Book Shelf

#### *Architecture*

*(Continued from page 234)*

turesque fallacies preached by Ruskin so long ago. We must applaud, therefore, so comprehensive a history of Architecture that is written with an authority and zest that has seldom been achieved by the older and more academic works. Interest is sustained by the most ruthless elimination of great names. For example, in his chapter "Italy and the Renaissance" there are about a dozen Architects, painters and sculptors mentioned, but of these only Brunelleschi, the great master builder of the dome of Florence, is given more than passing comment. Personally, we might prefer the work of Peruzzi or Sanmichele, but we can have no quarrel with the selection of so dramatic a figure to typify the age.

The author is an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects and has a distinctly British point of view, which is "greatly to his credit." Thus, his chapters, "the Normans," "from Norman to Gothic," "Tudor and Jacobean," "the English Renaissance," "the Modern Position in England" are probably the best, as they spring from intimate knowledge and appreciation and not from literary research. The ramifications of Romanesque and Gothic vaulting are explained so lucidly that they cease to be nightmares of descriptive geometry and are readily visualized as structural forms. In his criticism of Norman work in England he takes into consideration many of those factors that do not interest the purely literary critic. Such factors as the unsettled state of the government and the absence of law and order in the realm, preventing the transportation in safety of work-

men, and the absence of passable roads requiring the shipment of all materials by water. Highly skilled workmen were few, being imported from Normandy, and these had to direct the activities of partly skilled Saxons who spoke a different language. The Norman foremen were themselves experimenting with a new system of construction not yet entirely understood. Probably the casualties were high among the Saxons when one of the great central towers, inadequately supported, came crashing down while the job was in progress. Doubtless the Norman, Abbot or Bishop in charge considered a few Saxons as "expendable" in the cause of supreme Architecture.

The chapter about "America" is well bred and scholarly, in fact, it rather suffers from both of these qualities, for it seems rather more inspired from American publications than from much first-hand information of the country, and we fear that it is rather too generous in praise of contemporary American work. "Modernism in Northern Europe" is much more keenly critical and gives an appraisal of some of the very original work now being done in Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. Such work that requires much surer standards and more perception to discuss than that based on well-known and long established precedent.

There are some fourteen plates and forty-seven line drawings done in a very free and spirited manner that rather completely illustrate the text. Besides these there are many extremely vivid word pictures. As an example of only one of a number of such "purple passages" we quote the following:

"Under our feet the chancel paving is a rich expanse of patterned mosaic in little squares of coloured marble; the columns of the altar canopy, brought here from some abandoned palace of the Ceasars, are of Greek Cipollino, the colour of the sea before dawn; marble in softly variegated panels clothes the walls to a man's height, and from there the glory of the mosaic sweeps upward and into the dim recesses of the apse, where the Christ sits enthroned, in that aloof and ageless majesty of rigid pose which only the Byzantines could express."

ALBERT SIMONS.

### *Summer School in Italy*

The third session of a summer school and tour for American students, including courses in architecture and archaeology, will be conducted this year under the auspices of the Italian Government and the direction of Professor Paul Valenti, A. I. A., a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Milan and a member of the Faculty at Washington University, St. Louis. Classes will be held at Villa Plinius, Bellagio, and periodic visits made to the principal centers of Italy.



