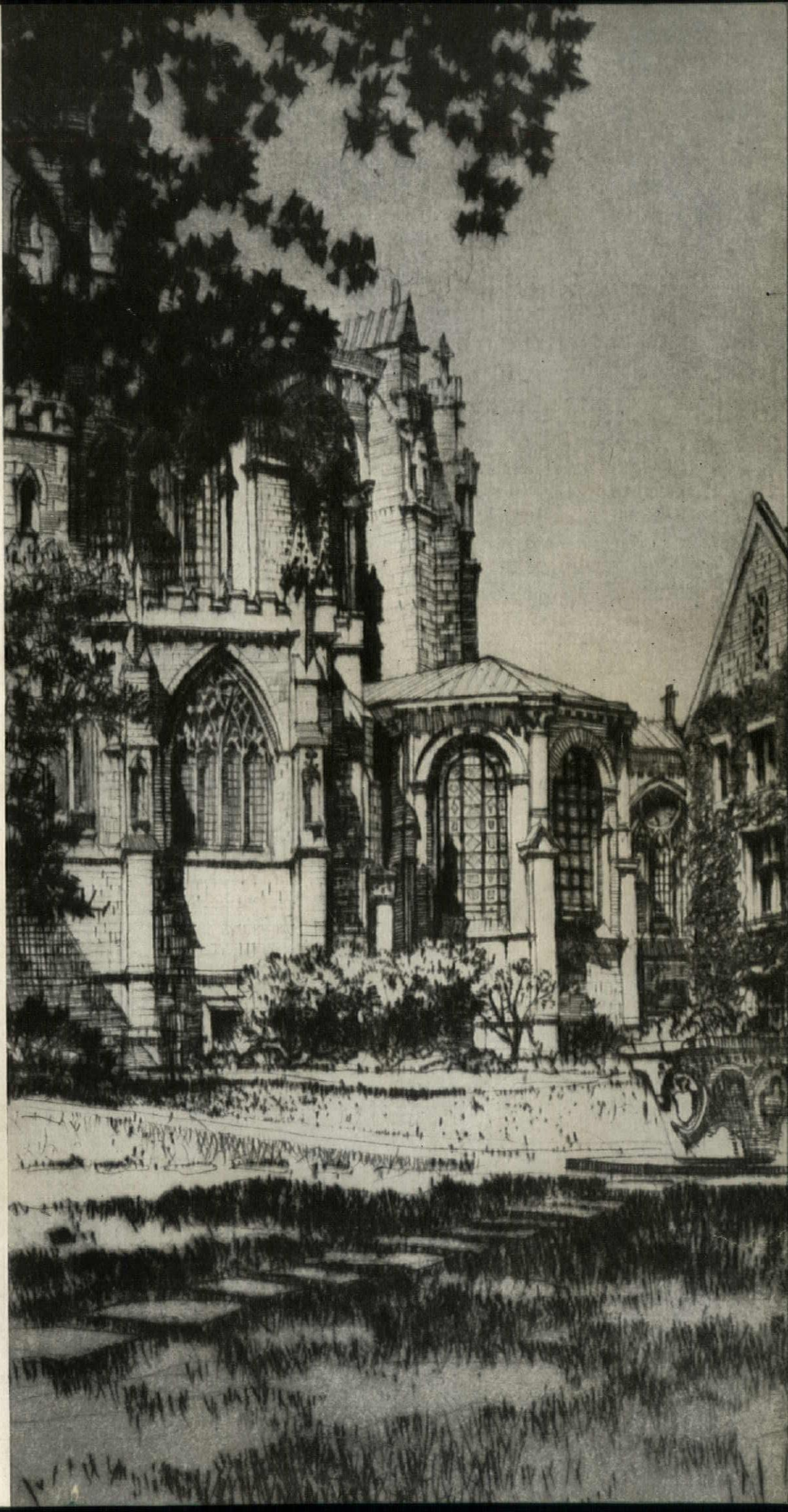


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The Second Street (top) and the East Capitol Street façades of The Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D. C. Paul Philippe Cret, Architect, Alexander B. Trowbridge, Consulting Architect. This frontispiece illustrates Mr. H. Van Buren Magonigle's essay (pages 479-485) and is presented to confirm his thesis that it is not necessary to reject the canons of sound architecture in order to create something fresh and distinctive



PLOUGH UNDER THE ARCHITECT?

A Challenge to Today's Art

By W. POPE BARNEY, A. I. A.

IT is a matter not devoid of significance that today so many of our Architectural Schools are looking for new deans; new leaders out of the slough of despond which has threatened the very existence of the profession. It but emphasizes the fact that the hour has struck for re-examination and re-evaluation of old attitudes and methods in the teaching of the schools. It acknowledges that a newer and broader vision must be gained if the oncoming architect is to find even a field of usefulness for his endeavor, to say nothing of the commanding position a member of his profession should assume in the reconstruction of a demoralized world.

Today, as never before we are standing at the cross-roads asking "Whither?" The breakdown of much of our ancient machinery of living is so disastrously apparent on every hand that the acceptance of a turn-over is in the air. The question is only: how much of a turn-over shall it be? How much shall we plough under to clear the field for a new planting?

For the past few years the field of Architecture in America has indeed, and through dire necessity, been lying fallow—and perhaps to architects more than to any other class of creative workers has that question been driven home—"Whither?"

But is not this fact a confession that a fatal weakness has been allowed to creep into the conception of the architect's function: a confession that he has been losing his vision of the high possibilities and responsibilities of his calling? Is not the fact that more and more the engineer and operative builder have been crowding him out of his own bailiwick; that more and more architecture has come to be classed as a luxury for the rich individual or corporation—an arraignment of the architect's lack of envisioning the full extent of his ability to serve the common weal—a lack of vision for which he has paid a bitter price since the market for luxuries has been closed?

The dictionary definition of architecture as: "Art or science of building, especially for the purposes of civil life" and the Greek ἀρχιτέκτων—"Master Builder," suggests, in this period of tearing down

and destruction, a profession and a man of immeasurable usefulness: a *constructive* thinker. But to be useful, the "constructive" should today be interpreted on broad and far-seeing lines. It is no time for constructing charming trifles—but now in this era of social chaos, as truly as in the chaos of war, the insignificant must be laid aside for the fundamental and each profession in its own particular sphere must reach out toward its highest conception of service to humanity, and in its schools endeavor to prepare men to solve new problems and meet new conditions. Today is a splendid challenge to man's supreme effort to attain a wise balance in a shaken world. It is a time to slough off the outgrown, the dead ashes of the past, while cherishing the flame which made the greatness of the past. That flame, the spiritual fervor of the creative worker, has sunken low but will be revived, I believe, through the enlarging and clarifying of vision that will be the outcome of the purging of the last few years.

* * * *

The endeavor to meet the changing conditions about us is taking many forms in the various architectural schools. Astonishingly, there are still some too conservative to admit that the conditions *have* changed, despite diminishing enrollment and the signs which he who runs may read.

On the other hand many experiments are being tried ranging all the way from a sound acceptance of functionalism as the basis of study; as the foundation upon which to build—to the extreme experiments where the classroom is turned into an architectural office and projects are worked out, supposedly, as they would be in actual practice: The hypothetical project designed for an existing site and studied from the period of business promotion, financing, etc., to the last stages of the work (theoretically). This method sounds extremely logical and persuasive to the layman but is looked upon with grave concern by the majority of educators. My observation of its working leads me to feel that it rather resembles studying calculus before one learns arithmetic, and I find in the students thus trained a naïve conviction that their youthful essays warrant the most respectful consideration of the professional world. My great objection to this method is that it is putting the cart before the horse; that it is crowding out of the curriculum much which can only be most effectively taught at college and putting in much that the student could more naturally and more wholesomely learn in his period of apprenticeship while he is "getting his experience" in some established architect's office. The hazard of turning loose on the public half-baked architects who feel competent to open their own offices is still only too great though it has been lessened by the establishment of Architects' Registration Boards in most states. A sound form of teaching the aspirant actual office practice is now being worked out under the super-

vision of the Education Committee of the American Institute of Architects, and is known as the "Mentor System" wherein qualified practitioners, to whom service is of more concern than profits, undertake to advise eligible young men in seeking experience in all branches of the practice; specifications, working drawings, bookkeeping, superintendence, conferences with clients, etc., in a balanced ration, so that in actual fact they become practicing architects and are in time ready to be recommended for registration.

The allotted term of study in the architectural school is all too short for training in the underlying fundamentals of the complex profession of Architecture to permit of emphasis upon the application in school of half-digested conceptions of actual office conditions. If architects are to meet the high demands which the times lay upon them, what they must gain in their college course is first and foremost a grave recognition of the part their profession should play in modern life—a sense of the tremendous possibilities and breadth of influence for rebuilding society their training is capable of producing—a feeling that, practicing as it does in the fields of engineering, construction, æsthetics, and the humanities, architecture touches the whole gamut of human life and if mastered in all its branches should produce an individual of such high potentialities that the very scope of his power lays upon him the necessity to use his trained abilities for the common weal, as a sacred trust, as a *profession of faith*—never as a mere profit-making business. This conception of his work leads him on and on to a fuller dedication of his time, to a deeper study of the needs of society. Because his sight has been dimmed, the architect has fallen into disrepute, as a fifth wheel in a practical world, and in times of stress like the present, he is brushed aside. Had his vision been more prophetic he would have foreseen the onrushing need more clearly and probed more deeply into the branches of his craft which would have met that need. He would have sooner recognized that luxury at the top of the scale cannot continue to flourish while the slums are festering at the bottom, and his very humanity would have drawn him to study that phase of modern life—and find an architectural solution for it: and that study would in turn have led him on to recognize that slums cannot be permanently wiped out in an unplanned city and drawn him into the study of city and regional planning. Thus he would have seen that architecture, in order to continue its healthy development, must include a recognition of its relation to social science.

In his "Outline of City Planning," Thomas Adams writes: "In its truest form the art of city building is the art of creating the kind of environment needed to produce and maintain human values, *inter alia*, the balancing and harmonizing of private and public needs and interests so that

one shall not be unduly sacrificed for the other."

This *balancing* and *harmonizing* is distinctly the function of the architect, as the school should impress upon him. It runs through all his work, whether in design, or in conduct of his practice as impartial judge and arbiter between the claims of conflicting interests, or in the larger implications of city planning. It calls for fair-mindedness and rests upon a developed character which again emphasizes the dignity and responsibility of the profession.

This expanded conception I feel is of fundamental importance in the teaching of architecture. It is a strong challenge to youth to consecrate its life to a constructive work for the service of humanity: a challenge which will awaken that spiritual fervor eventually to flower into significant creative work.

Although I am in complete agreement with the teaching that functionalism is the basis of sound planning, I cannot go so far as to hold with the school which, in the field of design, would cut off all connection with the past, arguing that, as we are working with new problems and new materials, therefore a looking backward is irrelevant. I am however in entire sympathy with the honest realism of the college men who have dubbed a certain romantic modern-mediæval dormitory "Darkness Hall," and who reasonably feel that modern methods of construction justify us in demanding that the need for sunlight be frankly met.

Given the materials and construction methods at their command, the aspirations of the Greeks and Cathedral builders were functionally expressed for their time—and produced works of beauty—and with new materials and construction methods, the needs of our times can be functionally and beautifully met if we but feel for our work the spiritual fervor and inspiration which they exemplified. This does not mean either that we shall work less directly than those masters of the past nor yet that we need cast aside the rich heritage they have bequeathed us, but that through reverent study of their great work our sensitiveness to beauty of line and mass and proportion shall be so refined that with a perfectly direct approach, sacrificing no logic to precedent, we shall yet produce work of greater purity and nobility because of our assimilation of the qualities we have admired in them.

Due, perhaps, to the fact that we all admit that the Orders as motifs have ceased to be a part of the vocabulary of modern design, it has become increasingly the fashion of the schools to relegate them to the limbo of outer darkness. I look for the day, however, when they will be re-discovered—not to be integrated bodily with our work, but for the great delight and cultural value they hold for the student. I cannot forget my first impact with the sheer beauty of a Doric column as rendered in a Beaux-Arts Analytique problem. This

seemingly casual experience turned me overnight from a callow and contented student of engineering into an ardent aspirant for architectural study. It awoke in me an ambition to create forms of beauty which has never left me; and later, the same thrill brought me literally to my knees before the Elgin marbles to study—to memorize if possible—the crisp yet exquisitely subtle curves of the mouldings of a fragment of a capital (inappropriately placed on the floor), as one would try to memorize some beautiful movement from a Beethoven Sonata—not for the sake of later imitation in one's creative work, but for the cultural enrichment of one's life which they afford.

Such storehouses of delight and inspiration are open to us all, and it seems to me that it immeasurably impoverishes the imagination of our young students to omit the training of hand and eye gained by the drawing of them. I know a very modern poet who professes never to have heard of Keats, but this boast does not add to my respect for him nor make me feel that his work is necessarily more vital for this omission in his cultural background.

Because, in the past, schools have dwelt too much on *styles* and not enough on *style*, the word "stylistic" has reasonably fallen into disrepute. I like to think of style, not as a recall of old motifs, but as the result of a complete mastery of one's craft, a mastery which attains so fluent a facility in the solution of a problem, that the worker can bring an unconscious personal grace into his design which stamps it with his own individuality and makes the work of each distinguished architect instantly recognizable, so that one can say: "That is the work of Bulfinch—or of Goodhue." This quality, which only comes as a result of drilling and is the fruit of hard won mastery, constitutes the joy of creation. It is this joy of the creative artist which the world needs today and which the schools should seek to foster by awakening enthusiasm in the student and thus making him realize the worthwhileness of the immense labor he will have to accomplish in the attainment of his goal.

Because, admittedly, the young architect must face grim reality and hard practical problems when he leaves the schools, I do not feel that that fact necessitates bringing such grimness or emphasis upon the practical phases of his work into the academic halls as to crowd out the delight which should be the mainspring of creative work. Whatever legitimately builds up the student's sense of the richness and rapture of living, as a glorious and rewarding adventure, I feel is of immense importance for the schools to foster, until the very difficulties to be overcome in the complex problems presented for his solution will be faced with the enthusiasm of a sportsman for his favorite form of sport.

It is this attitude which should be encouraged

by the school faculty. It will develop in the student a driving power that will not let him rest content with a conventional solution founded upon precedent, but will urge him on to original thought and research, determined that his work shall make a fresh contribution to whatever field he is studying and his solution be the uniquely right one for each problem. And such a spirit going out from our schools—a spirit impatient of conventional and perfunctory standards and seeking with zest and enthusiasm to carry research further and accomplishment higher—is our only hope of a renaissance in architecture, a renaissance which will restore the architect to the place in society he should hold as an essential leader of constructive vision.

One may say: "This is a large order." Truly it is a large order, an order which points to the type of man needed to make the architectural schools in the highest sense successful. Only fire and enthusiasm can awaken fire and enthusiasm—only a driving power toward a clarified vision can foster driving power and unfold such a vision in the student. The prophet's words are as true of the schools and the profession as of the individual—"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

It is a tragically cynical saying which is current among architects, that only the men who are not good enough to succeed in practice go into teaching. Surely it is in the schools that dynamic men are most needed: men who are willing to sacrifice the large fees their outstanding ability commands, and retire to the comparative obscurity of the classroom, that through the unselfish devotion of their lives, a new race of architects may be born—a race not drilled by little men in little routines, but fired with a new conception of the vastness and the glory of their profession, even as Michelangelo and Alan of Walsingham have been fired before them.

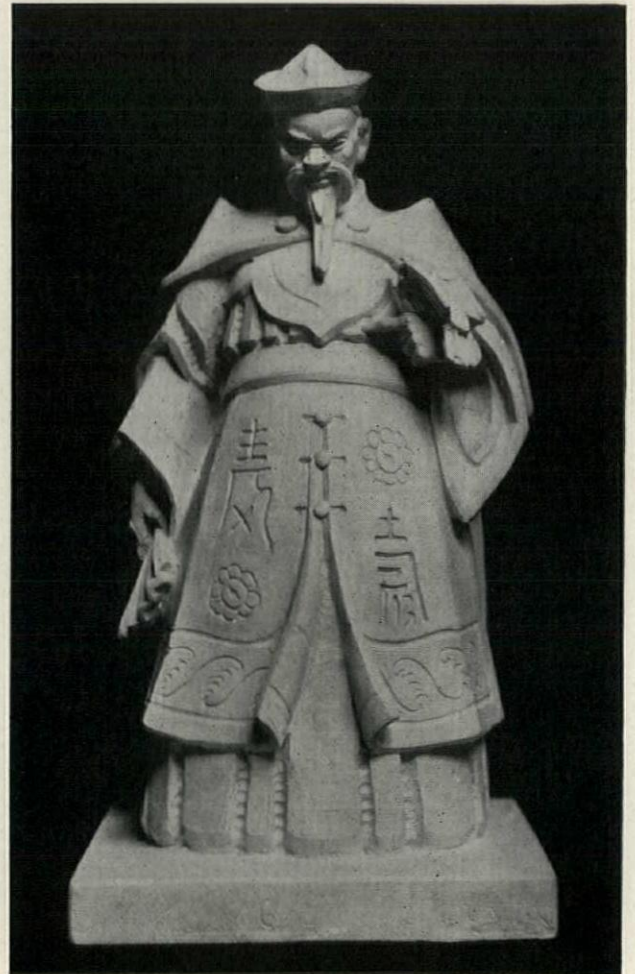
Such fire does not spring from copying out of books, but from original creative thinking. There is immense wisdom in Emerson's words: "Books are for the scholar's idle hours." Books may stir the imagination, but there wisdom must be assimilated and transmitted into individual vision.

The economic fluctuations—war or depression—may for long periods make the visions of man stern. It may be that for a generation the architect will have to relinquish the dream of a beautiful flowering of his art: slums may have to be torn down and low-cost housing to be built: it may be foundation digging rather than the spires of a Chartres which falls to his lot, but it is all part of one unity—part of a constructive effort toward the good life, and as such one can feel the thrill of being a part of a great whole. Upon the sound foundations laid one can have faith that beauty will flower in good time, and in this thought one can rest content.

In looking down the centuries of architectural

development one can see the past and present as an indissoluble unity, as an ebbing and flowing of human life and achievement, ever illustrating cause and effect: the past preparing the present and the present nurturing the future. One can see architecture as Vitruvius saw it—composed of “three conditions: commodity, firmness, and delight.” Perhaps today the left wing of the profession is too prone to stress the first two qualities of this trinity and to overlook the last, but I believe

the balance will be restored, and, as a living plant, architecture will survive complete: firmness—the roots, commodity—the branches, and delight—the flower—but the balance will only be restored through a renewed vision and consecration on the part of the individual members of the profession and the teachers in the schools. When that is achieved the architect will prove himself too essential a part of the body politic to be ploughed under.



Two decorative figures by Georg Lober, Sculptor, to be placed in the doorway of the Children's Building at Broadacres Sanatorium, Deerfield, N. Y., Bagg and Newkirk, Architects. The figures, which represent "The Princess and the Pea" and "The Emperor and the Nightingale," are to be done in limestone



ARCHITECTS OF EUROPE TODAY

7—*Van Der Rohe, Germany*

By GEORGE NELSON

ON the top floor of a rather dowdy old house in Berlin there lives a man who, in spite of having built little, spoken less, and written not at all, has somehow come to be considered one of the greatest architects of his time. Such is the power of personality and an idea.

Up to ten years ago he had built virtually nothing of his own, and it was only in certain groups in Germany that his influence was making itself felt. Today he occupies a position which is unique—even in Germany—and he is almost as well-known as the more widely publicized Le Corbusier. In spite of his unwillingness to dramatize himself, Miës is no dreamy recluse to whose garret door the world has beaten a path: the luxuriously simple apartment in Berlin is in no sense a garret, and for this ample, well-fed German the meagre life holds no attractions. He likes his food and knows his wines, and with a sufficient quantity of both inside of him he can become a charming and mellow conversationalist.

It has been my purpose in this series to show the work of some of Europe's outstanding architects, not as the automatic results of those vast and vague influences known as "economic pressure" and "social trends," important as these are, but rather as the creations of definite and mature personalities expressing themselves according to the possibilities of their time. And if this is borne in mind it will be seen that Miës' work, culminating in the Tugendhat house, which in one stroke crystallized the ideas and aims of designers the world over, could never have been conceived, let alone built, had this man been a dour dyspeptic for example, or anything, in short, but what he was.

Of all possible architects Miës was the hardest to interview. He was polite but very frankly bored by the prospect of talking with a stranger, and he did nothing whatever to help out when his interviewer became enmeshed in the abominable intricacies of German grammatical construction.

Catch questions, which had set off Le Corbusier on interminable orations, Miës disposed of with an indifferent phrase. When I mentioned the attacks on Le Corbusier for his frequently excessive use of glass he brushed the matter aside with the comment, "The glass façade is not modern architecture." He had known the fiery Swiss in Peter Behrens' office, but it is not likely that they had much to say to each other. A certain intelligent skepticism and breadth of view are characteristic of Miës, and it is very probable that Le Corbusier's tendency to carry theory to extravagant limits might well leave him cold. On the subject of Frank Lloyd Wright he was more willing to talk and, like most of Wright's European admirers, found it hard to understand why he had had so little influence in his own country. Wright, said Miës, was the greatest artist in setting buildings in a given landscape who had ever lived. So much for the prophet without honor in his own land! As the conversation progressed to matters of mutual interest, Miës gradually unbent and we both had a much better time. I left enormously impressed by the keenness and extraordinary personal force of the man.

Miës van der Rohe was born in Aachen, in 1886. His father, a stone mason, had hopes that the boy would continue in the business, but there was a certain quality in his son that he mistook for stupidity. He apprenticed him to an architect, thinking that in this way he might acquire a certain amount of business acumen—curious idea! A story which Miës himself tells of this time indicates with what unconscious accuracy his father had selected his profession for him. It happened that during the preparation of an important drawing of an elaborate ceiling in the Renaissance manner the head designer fell ill, and there was nobody in the office who could be trusted to finish it. Precisely like the child wonders who appear in the stories of the Italian Renaissance, Miës stayed late one night and finished the drawing. There was a furor, of course, and when it was discovered who had done it Miës was promoted from broom to drafting board. Shortly after this rise in life he went to Berlin, worked with Bruno Paul for a time as furniture designer, and then went into the office of Peter Behrens. Behrens was the greatest single influence in modern German architecture, and in his effect on his assistants he was very like the late Bertram Goodhue. Here Miës finished his architectural education and was entrusted with work of importance. After about three years of this, however, the association came to a sudden and violent end. Behrens entered a competition, and Miës, of course, worked on it. Apparently unsatisfied with Behrens' solution he did one of his own outside the office, winning first prize with it. The scene which followed, as Behrens swore with mighty Teutonic oaths that Miës had copied his scheme, may well be imagined. Miës, no weakling

himself, did a bit of bellowing on his own, but finally wearying of the argument, announced that he was resigning and going to Switzerland to ski. The resignation was quite unnecessary, but ski he did, for five months. When he returned he opened up an office of his own. Behrens never forgave him.

It was not until several years after the war that he was heard from. In 1921 and the years immediately following he published a brilliant series of studies: the Glass Skyscraper, which proved nothing; a cantilevered office building consisting of alternate horizontal bands of window and spandrel, a scheme used by Mendelsohn with great effect on Columbus Haus in Berlin; and several country house projects. None of these, it will be noted, were ever built; but they were published far and wide, and by means of the printing press Miës entered upon the road to fame.

It was in 1928, however, that he showed, in a fashion that left no room for doubt, that he was no "paper architect." In this year a young lady came into his office, said she was getting married and going to Czechoslovakia to live, and that as a wedding present her family wanted to build her

a house. The reason she came to Miës was that someone in her family had a house that Miës had built, and she wanted one exactly like it. The house she referred to was an innocuous Empire villa—Miës' first commission—of which he was bitterly ashamed. To be asked to repeat this house was something of a blow, but swallowing the words which sprang to his lips Miës said he would be enchanted to serve her. Two years later the young lady and her husband moved into their new home—the Tugendhat house.

The Tugendhat house is Miës' masterpiece, justly world-famous, perhaps the finest modern house that has been built. But it could hardly be considered even remotely like the Empire villa his client thought she was going to get. What marvelous powers of persuasion the man must have used, what telling arguments he employed can only be guessed at; it was in any case a magnificent piece of salesmanship. The clients, incidentally, were delighted with the house, and they have shown it with pride to the throngs of visitors who have come to see it. In this connection, the remark of one of his associates is interesting: "All his clients are still his friends." What higher praise



An apartment in New York. Miës' fondness for simplicity and solid luxury is well exemplified here. The heavy leather of the chairs and their sturdy frames, the use of quantities of material to produce an effect of richness are all typical of Miës' decorative treatment which distinguishes him from his imitators

could there ever be anywhere for an architect?

The Tugendhat house is too well known to justify any extended discussion of it here. Its chief interest to us is to note how closely it reflects the personality and idiosyncrasies of the architect. Miës' fondness for space, for simplicity, for rich materials all find expression here. In the glass-enclosed downstairs portion space literally flows, interrupted by an occasional partition, but never enclosed. The dining room is not a room at all in the conventional sense, but a portion of the living space; the same is true of the so-called living room. The feeling of movement that this type of arrangement gives, and its ample vistas, are enormously stimulating. Miës hates and despises cheap materials, but for once he indulged his tastes. An onyx wall, selected after months of searching for the right material, the curved macassar wall, the hundred feet of plate glass window and silk curtains to cover them—all these were things he really enjoyed working with. Into his search for the onyx he put a fantastic amount of time and money, demonstrating once again how well founded were his father's fears—but in the end he got his wall, which was all that interested him. Today, when he

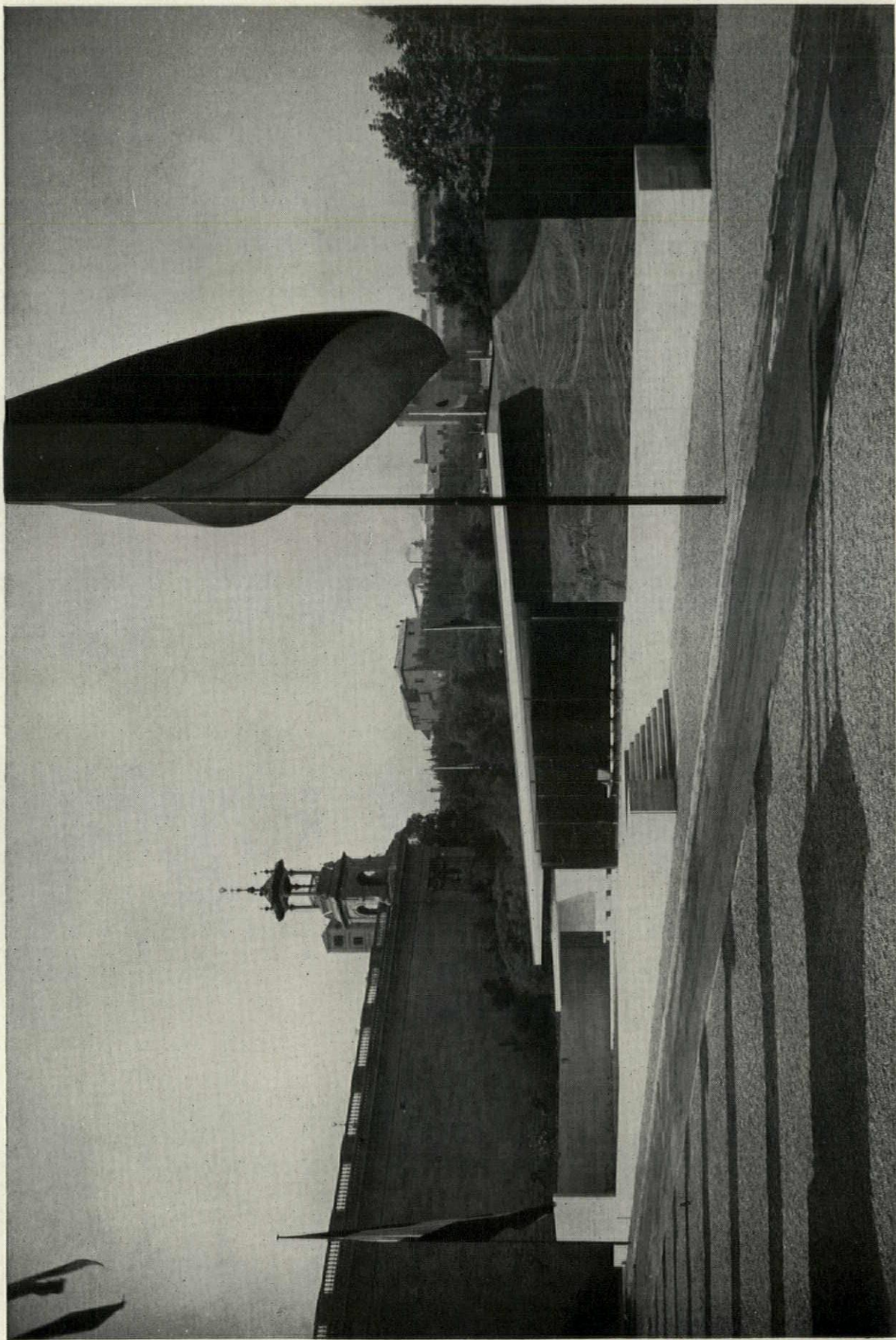
makes an occasional visit to Brno, he settles his bulk into one of the comfortable metal chairs, looks at his creation with content and says, "Now there is a wall!"

Miës designed the first metal chairs in Germany. Others were working on them, and that he did any at all was accidental. He designed a silk exhibition room in Berlin with Lily Reich, his collaborator on most interiors, and when the room was finished he suddenly remembered that there were no chairs. Unwilling to put common chairs in this rich setting, Miës went back to the office and in one evening designed the chair that has since been copied all over the world. Four days later, when the exhibition opened, the chairs were there. They were a great success, and a manufacturer made arrangements with Miës to produce them. He made a slight variation in them, however, and Miës in a rage cancelled the contract and bought up all the chairs that had been made. Anything that went out under his name, he stormed, had to be perfect.

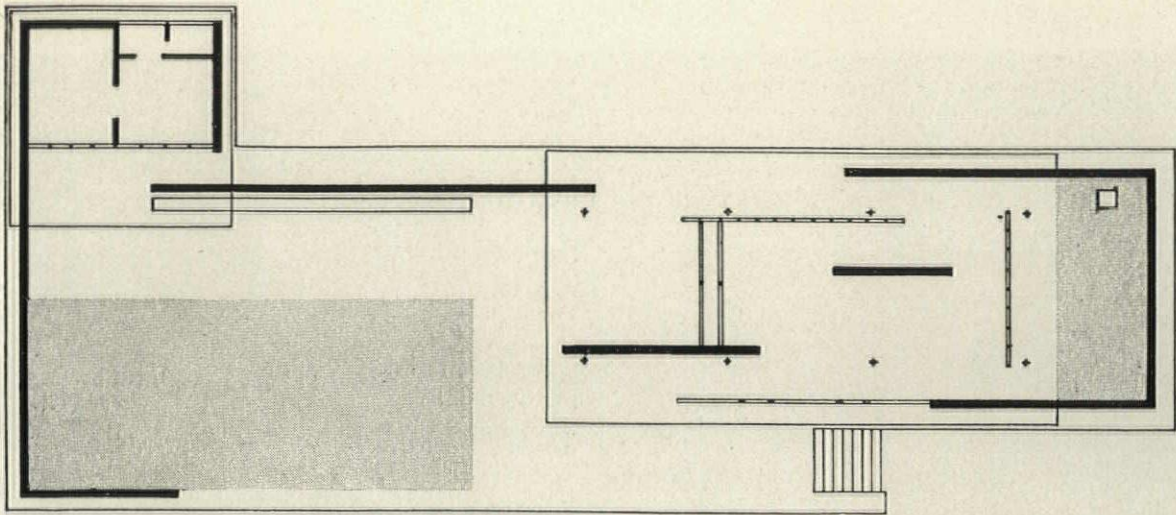
If Miës has built few things, he has by no means been inactive. He was one of the founders of the Deutsche Werkbund, that powerful combination



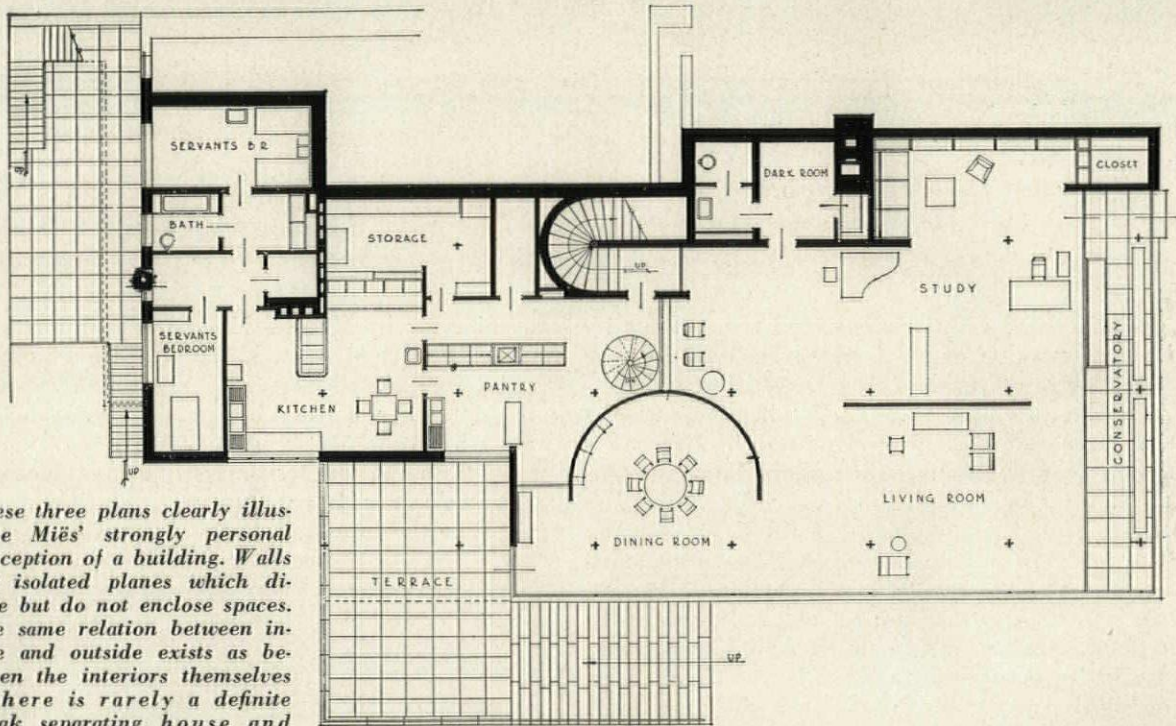
"There," says Miës, "is a wall" In his realization of the enormously rich decorative possibilities of natural materials, Miës is unique among modern architects. Unlike his more ascetic confreres he argues that something has to be done to relieve the harshness of the bare interiors found in today's work



The German pavilion—Barcelona Exposition, 1929—a brilliant composition, notable for its proportions and use of materials. The conception of the roof as an independent slab is emphasized with great effectiveness by the use of different materials in the vertical planes which meet it

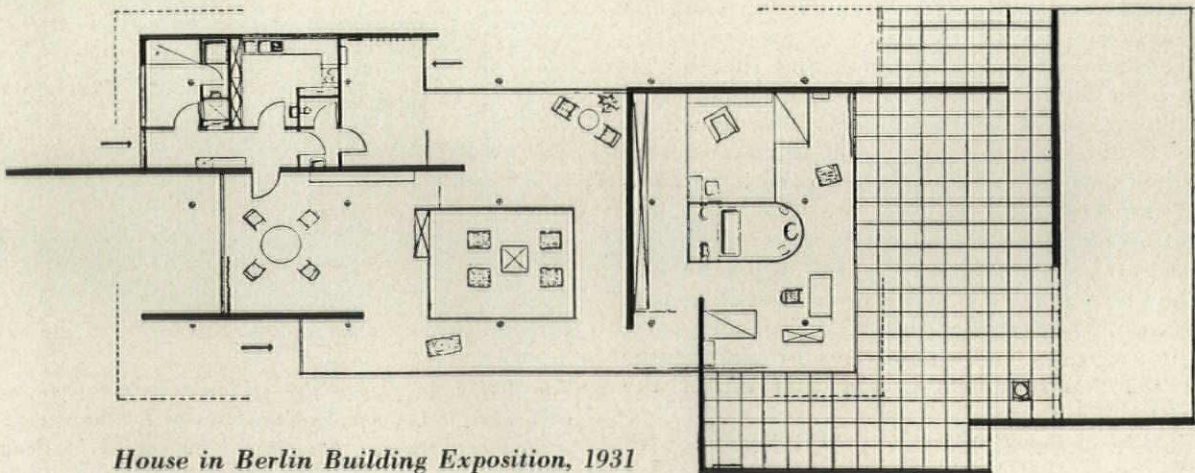


German Pavilion, Barcelona International Exposition, 1929

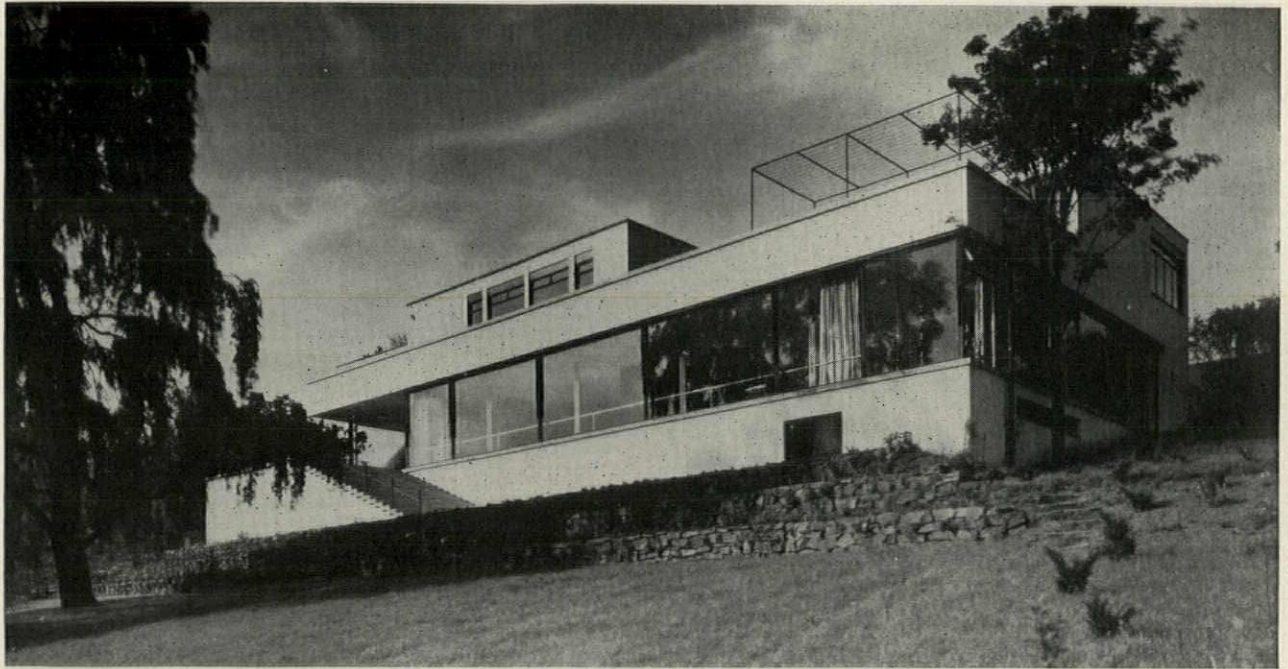


These three plans clearly illustrate Miës' strongly personal conception of a building. Walls are isolated planes which divide but do not enclose spaces. The same relation between inside and outside exists as between the interiors themselves — there is rarely a definite break separating house and garden. The façade in its usual sense does not exist

Tugendhat House, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1930



House in Berlin Building Exposition, 1931

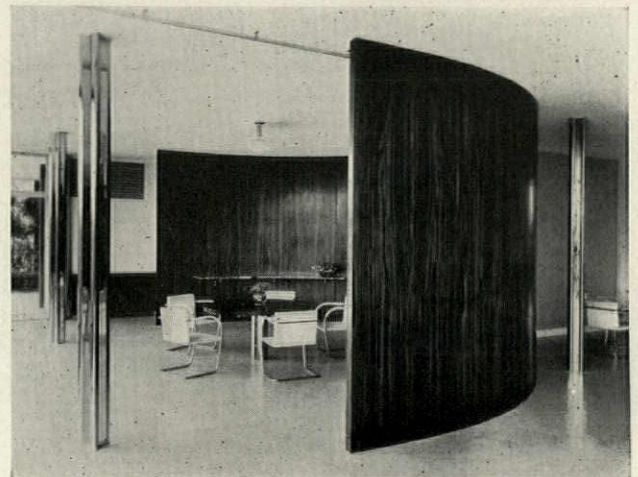


The Tugendhat house represents Miës' closest approach to the conventional modern façade. A hundred feet of plate glass windows on the ground floor can be lowered by electric motors into the walls, opening the entire house in good weather and making the living spaces practically one with the out-of-doors

of designers and industrialists, and throughout its existence was one of its leaders. In 1927 he was put in charge of the Housing Exposition at Stuttgart, as the only man who could talk the conservative representatives of that city into allowing modern houses to be built. Two years later he was head of the German section in the Barcelona Exposition, and the pavilion he built here was one of the finest things he has done. His strong tendency to make the roof an independent member, under which partitions are set where he wishes to put them, is even more evident here than in the house in Brno. A roof, to Miës, is not the lid of a box; it is a shelter under which partitions, columns, and living spaces are arranged. On the strength of this work he was made director of the important Berlin Building Exposition. Here he had sufficient power to select as architects the younger men in the Werkbund, and thereby incurred the enmity of most of the more established architects. A movement arose to remove him from office at the next election, and at the meeting Miës had perhaps twenty people in the large audience who were for him. Before a vote was taken he got up and made one of the longest speeches of his career — fifteen minutes — and when he had finished he was re-elected with one dissenting vote — his own. Shortly after this he retired, however, and it was rather fortunate, because six months later the Nazis came in, and that ended the Deutsche Werkbund.

Another phase of his career is linked up with the Bauhaus. Gropius built it, and was succeeded

as director by Hannes Meyer, a functionalist and a communist to boot. More interested in communism than architecture, apparently, Meyer changed the character of the school radically. It must have been a rather hectic place, with a wild group of students agitating for one thing and another, and turning out a large crop of illegitimate babies, much to the horror of the staid citizens of Dessau. So bad did things become that Gropius was invited back, but he was busy and suggested Miës, who accepted. Miës was completely indifferent to com-



The dining space, partially enclosed by the semi-circular wall. The form, a completed logical one for the serving and seating requirements, has since been copied by designers who have proved themselves more admiring than intelligent



A view of the interior of the Tugendhat house, showing the light and spaciousness of the interior. Heavy foliage outside protects the room from glare. The use of partitions to organize the living spaces is well illustrated here. Reference to the plan on page 457 will show more clearly how this is accomplished

munism, or any political system, for that matter, and his students objected to him violently, calling him a reactionary. He stayed a year, however, doing some interesting work. Gropius had just finished a study of a tract of land in Berlin, proving that the solution of the housing problem was to put everybody in twelve-story houses, set a considerable distance apart. Miës, never much taken in by this sort of thing, put his students to work on the same tract of land, and proved that the same number of people could be settled for the same amount of money in little two-story houses.



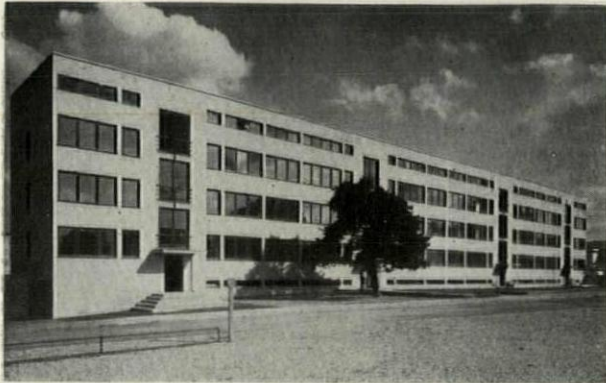
First of the famous metal chairs, designed overnight by Miës and since freely copied all over the world, here used with excellent effect against a background of metal and glass

This little experiment showed exactly what Miës wanted it to show, that there are several ways of doing almost anything. Most of his students were too busy talking to get the idea.

At the present time, oddly enough, Miës is on the up-grade. Hitler and his aides have condemned modern architecture repeatedly, evincing a preference for a kind of bombproof Nuremberg style, but Miës, who has never shown much love for pitched roofs, has been made head of the architects in the German Academy. And only a short while ago his competition drawing for a new Reichsbank won first prize, although his design will not be built. Whatever it is that accounts for his enviable position, it is to be hoped that he will get some jobs out of it. With Mendelsohn, the Tauts, and Gropius out of the country, there surely ought to be a commission or two for those who remain, and it would be interesting to see what Miës would do on an important building.

If this picture of the man is incomplete, it is because his career, more than that of any other living architect, has been one of great promise and little realization, and the story of it leaves one with the feeling that more must be forthcoming. This is only a feeling, however—he is living in an uncertain country under an unpredictable government. He has done the Tugendhat house, to be sure, and his pavilion in Barcelona was a major achievement of a kind of abstract architecture, and the sum total of his work, if small, is important. As for the man himself, he is a sure, sensitive artist, and in his handling of space and feeling for

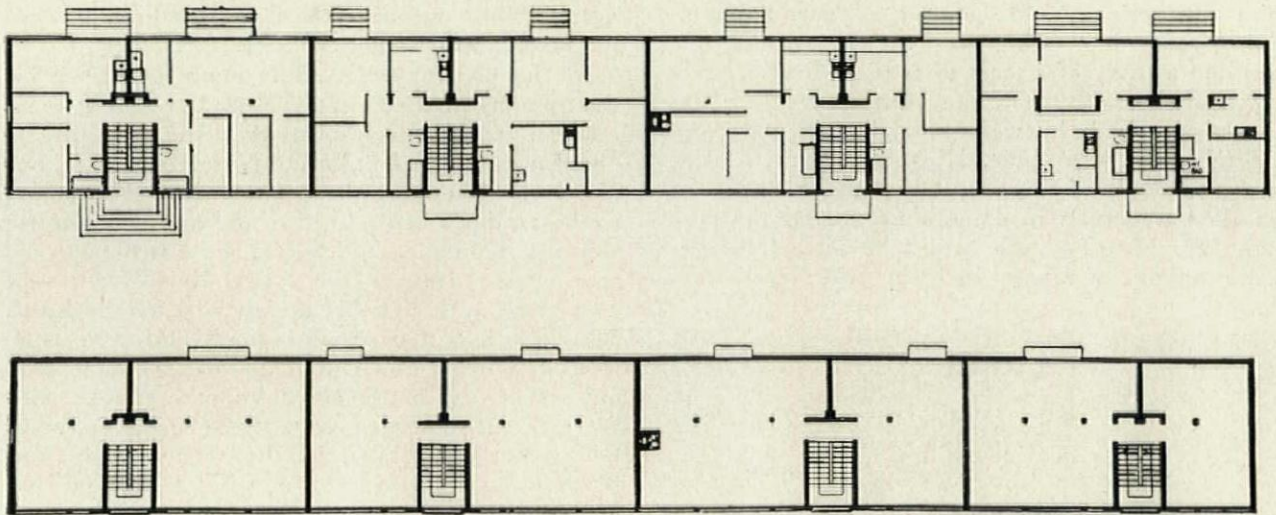
material he has no superior. He is brilliant, slow, affable, and vain. Impractical, utterly uninterested in politics, the social or economic aspect of architecture, he is paradoxically the only one among Germany's great modern architects who has anything like a sure position in the country at this



Apartment House—Stuttgart—1927. In this, his first steel building, Miës showed how clearly he understood the basic principle of its use: repetition of a unit. The construction system is simplicity itself. The regularity of the plan is reflected in the exterior. Only in the arrangement of individual apartments do his personal preferences find expression. Plans of ground and typical floors shown below

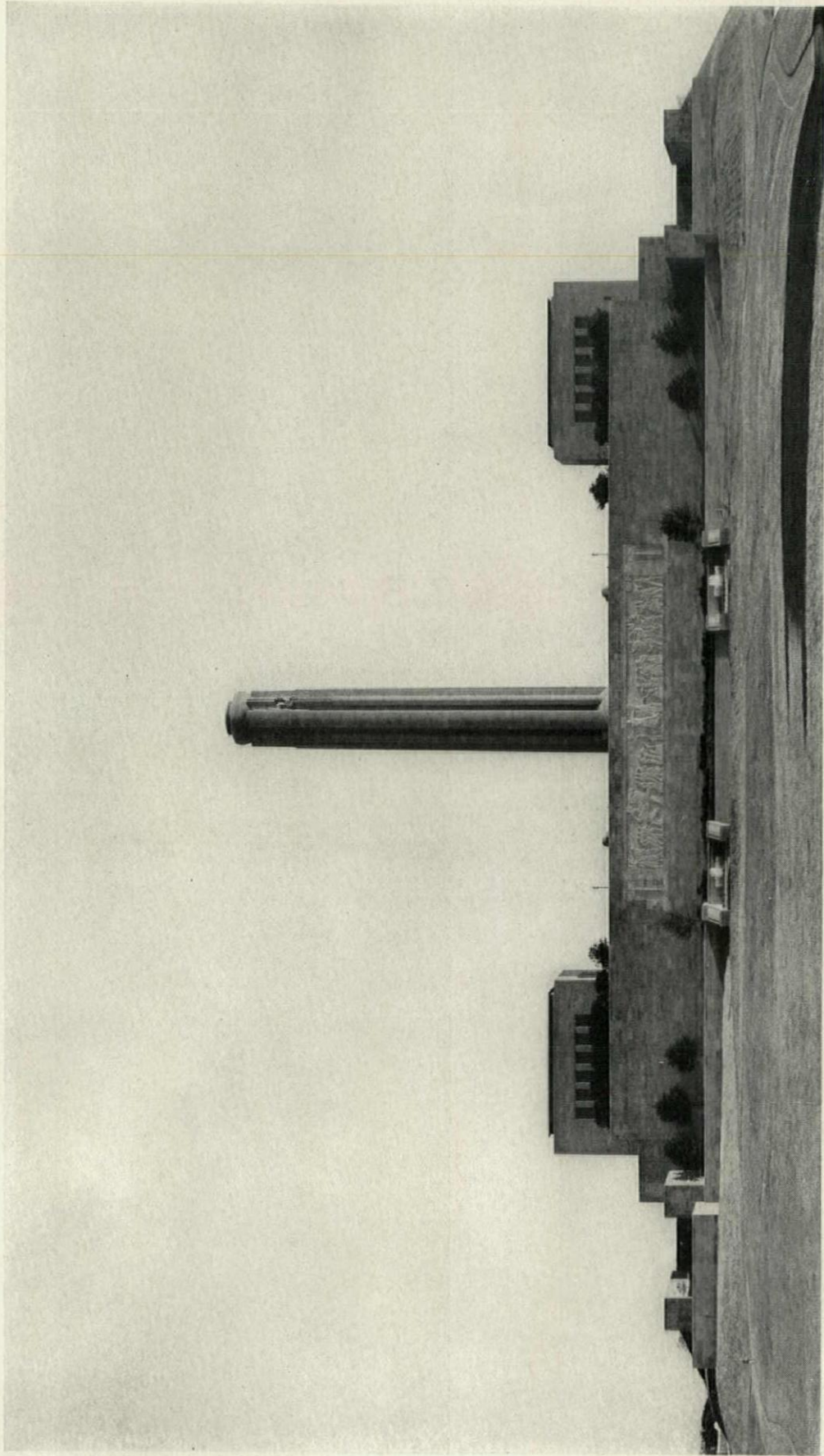
time. Quiet and reserved, he nevertheless could fly into a tantrum like a petulant child when a manufacturer made a minute change in the design of his chair—an attitude not unlike the “Art for art’s sake” of the 19th century. At the present moment he refuses to release any more of his photographs for reproduction in America because it seems that someone copied something he did and he is determined not to let it happen again. Such conviction of his own importance is a curious but not inconsistent part of a complex personality. Physically he is strongly and heavily built, but lazy. A fine draftsman, he prefers to have his drawings done for him, and if sitting is the final test of a chair, the metal chairs in his office leave nothing to be desired. Miës, the academician, and former professor in the Bauhaus, has no use whatever for schools, and delights in listing the outstanding men in architecture who never saw the inside of one. His reaction to a remark about the Beaux-Arts was brief and to the point. “It’s dead,” he said.

As I got up to leave I noticed a beautiful engraving of an Ionic capital, prominent in the modern room, and asked what it was doing there. Miës looked at it seriously for a moment before replying. “The old architects,” he said finally, “copy this sort of thing. We appreciate it.”

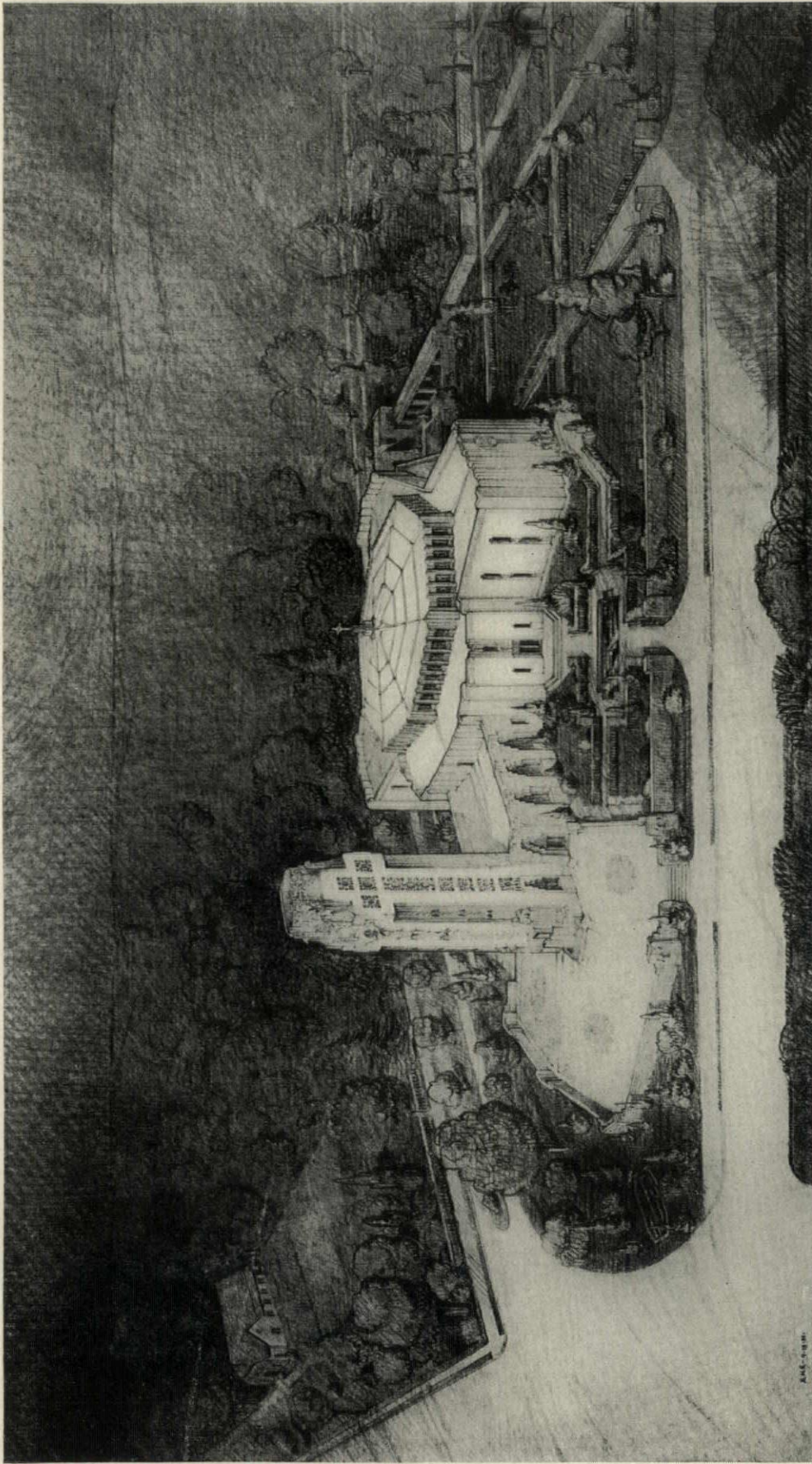




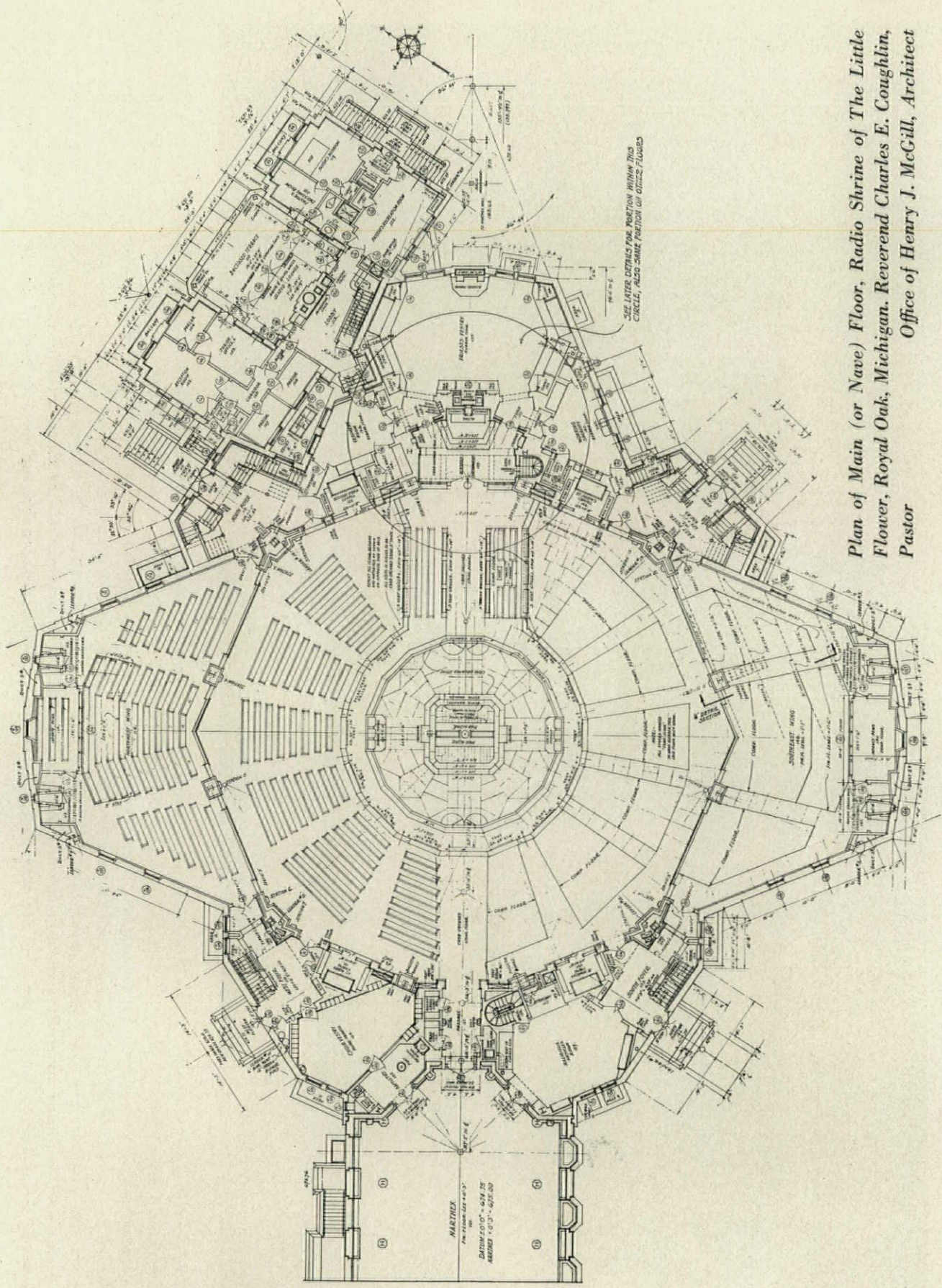
The horrors of war contrasted with the virtues of peace as depicted in a relief sculpture by Edmond R. Amateis for the base of Kansas City Liberty Memorial. The central figure represents Peace Victorious. The monument itself is reproduced on the following page, showing the position of the sculpture. Above is the effect with natural illumination and below with artificial lighting: changed shadows make the two views quite different



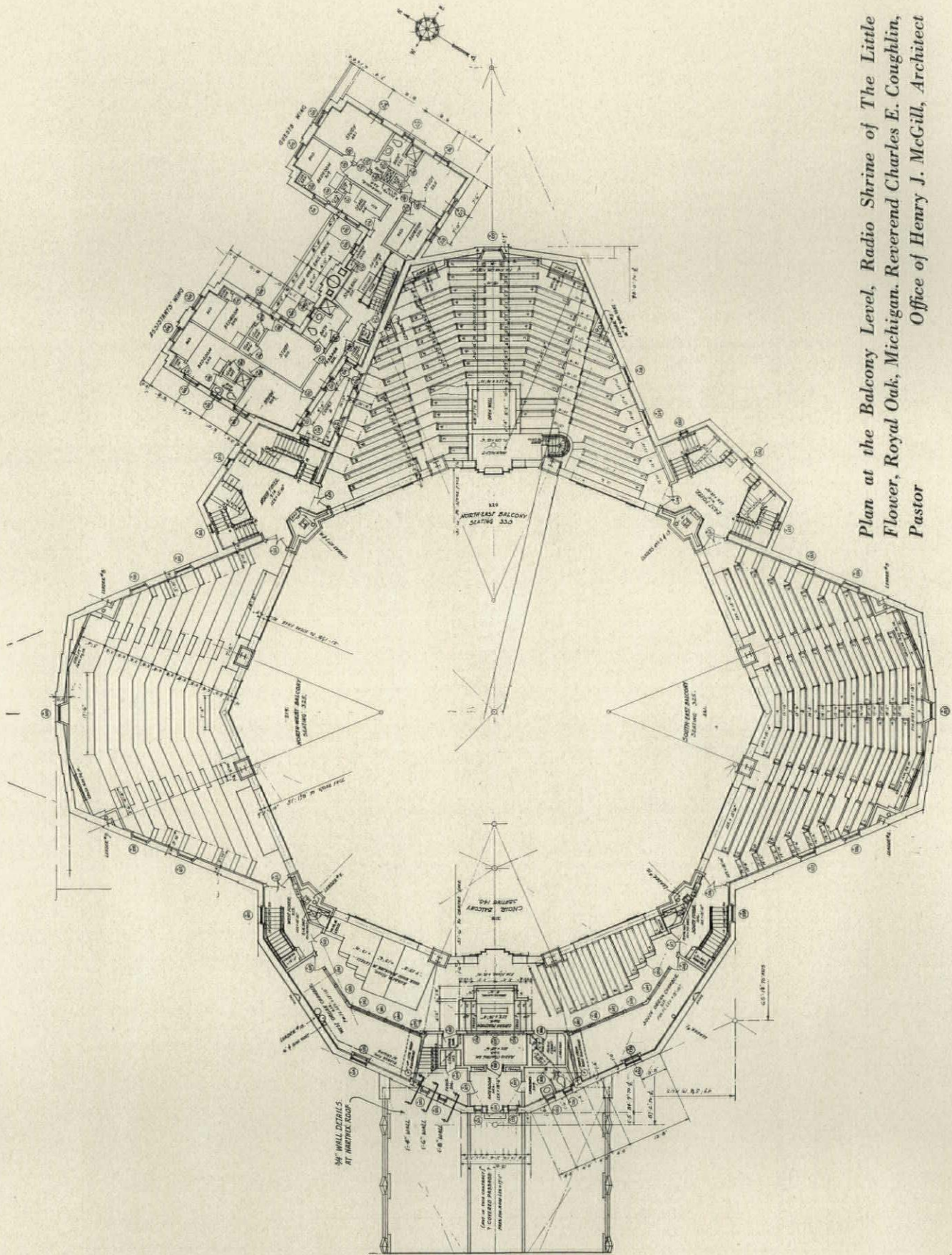
The Liberty Memorial, Kansas City, originally designed by H. Van Buren Magonigle, Architect. Alterations and additions by Wight and Wight of Kansas City under whose direction the band of sculpture by Edmond R. Amateis was recently executed. The panel is 18 feet by 150 feet long



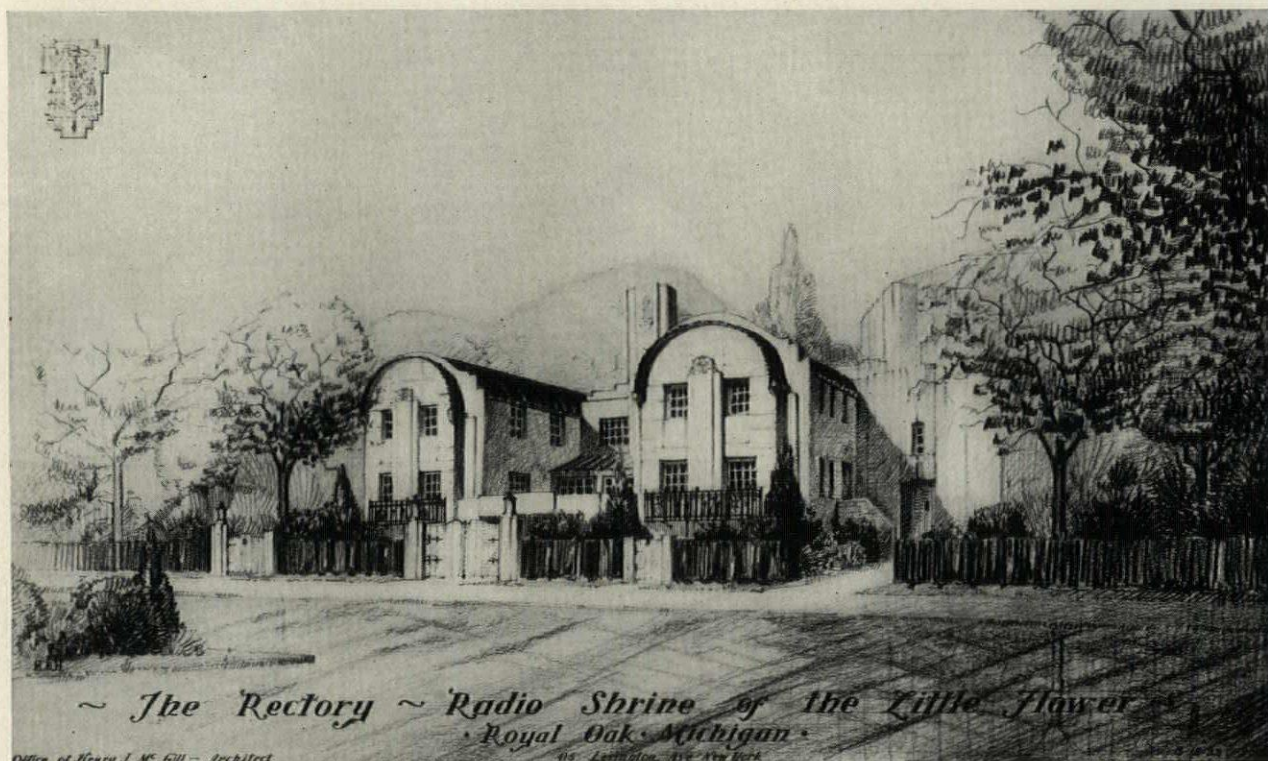
Bird's-eye Perspective Sketch of the Radio Shrine of The Little Flower, now under construction at Royal Oak, Michigan. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor. Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect. The drawing shows the Charity Crucifixion Tower facing west. It is connected with the octagonal body of the church by the narthex. There are three wings with intermediate foyers which face the four points of the compass. The church is entered through these foyers and the narthex. Seam-face granite will be used for the main exterior walls with limestone trim around doors and windows. The ends of the side wings will be of limestone. The lantern will be of precast slabs faced with copper and with nickel-chrome steel combined integrally with the concrete backing of the slabs. The structure will be surmounted by a large cross of nickel-chrome steel. Some of the architect's working drawings are reproduced on the fifteen following pages showing not only general design but many of the details



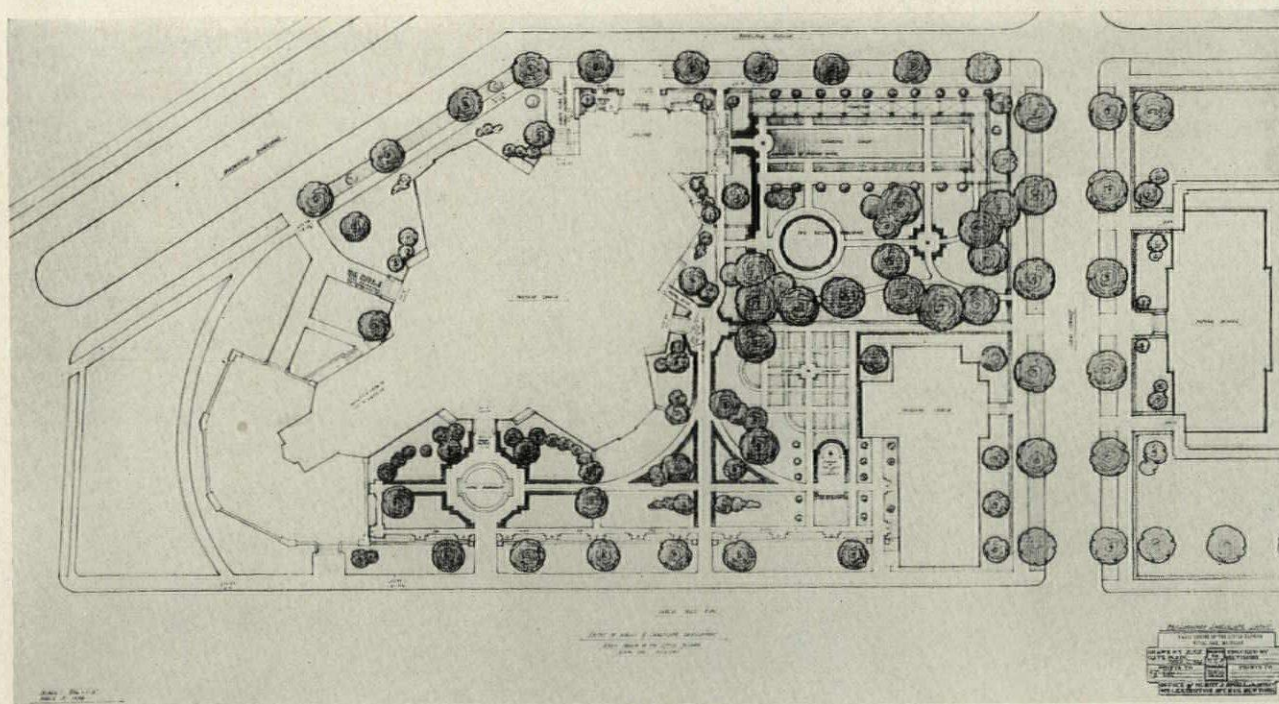
Plan of Main (or Nave) Floor, Radio Shrine of The Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor
 Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect



Plan at the Balcony Level, Radio Shrine of The Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor
 Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect



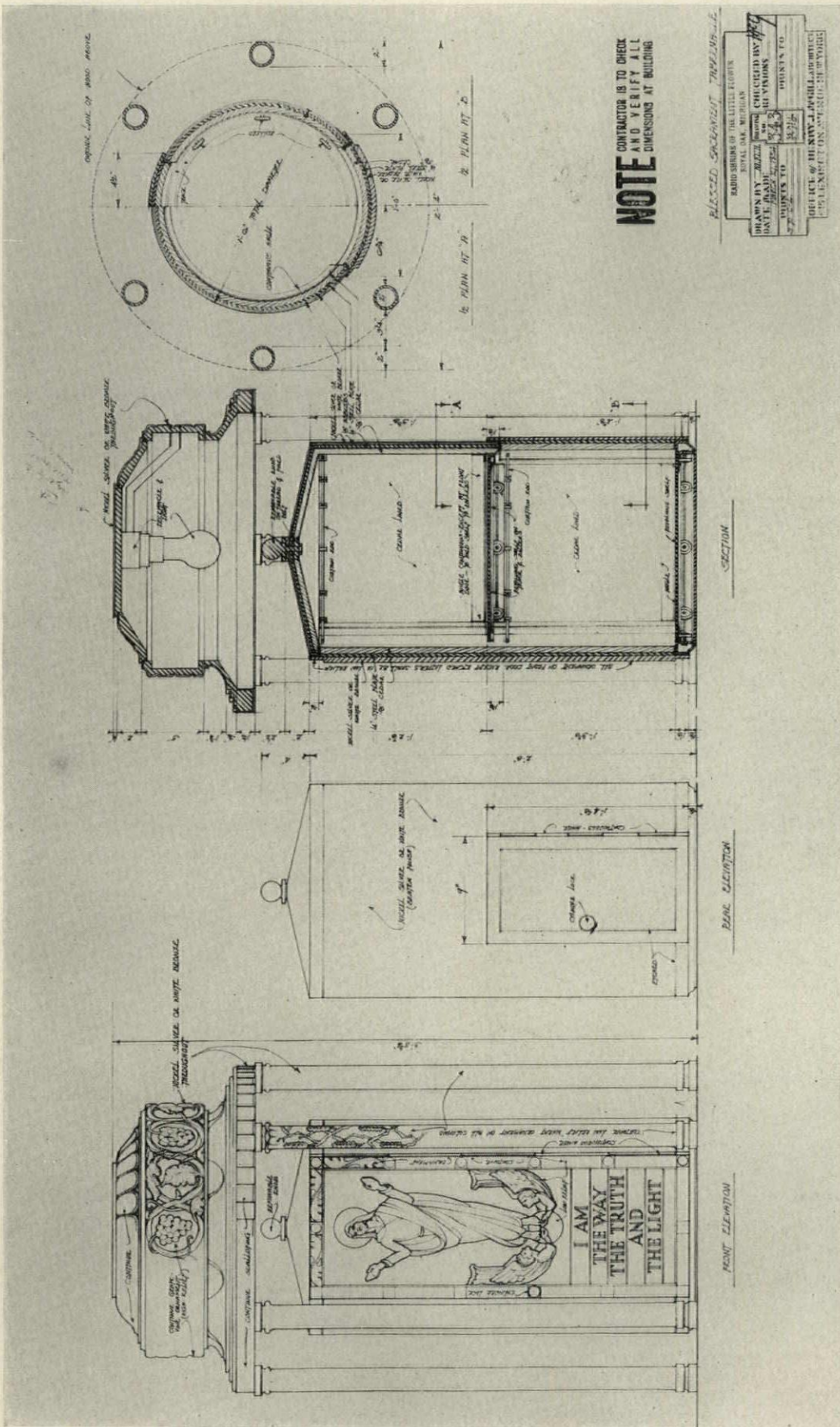
The Rectory for the Shrine will adjoin the Church at the Northeast as shown by the plan on page 472



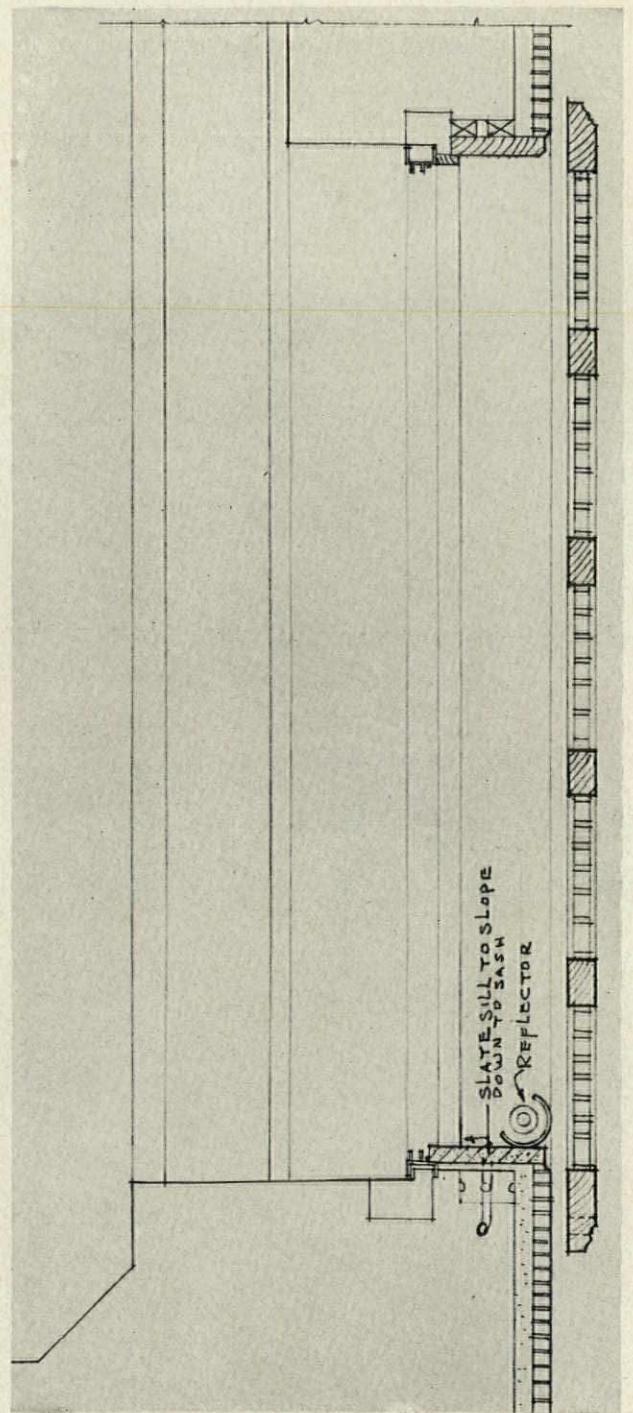
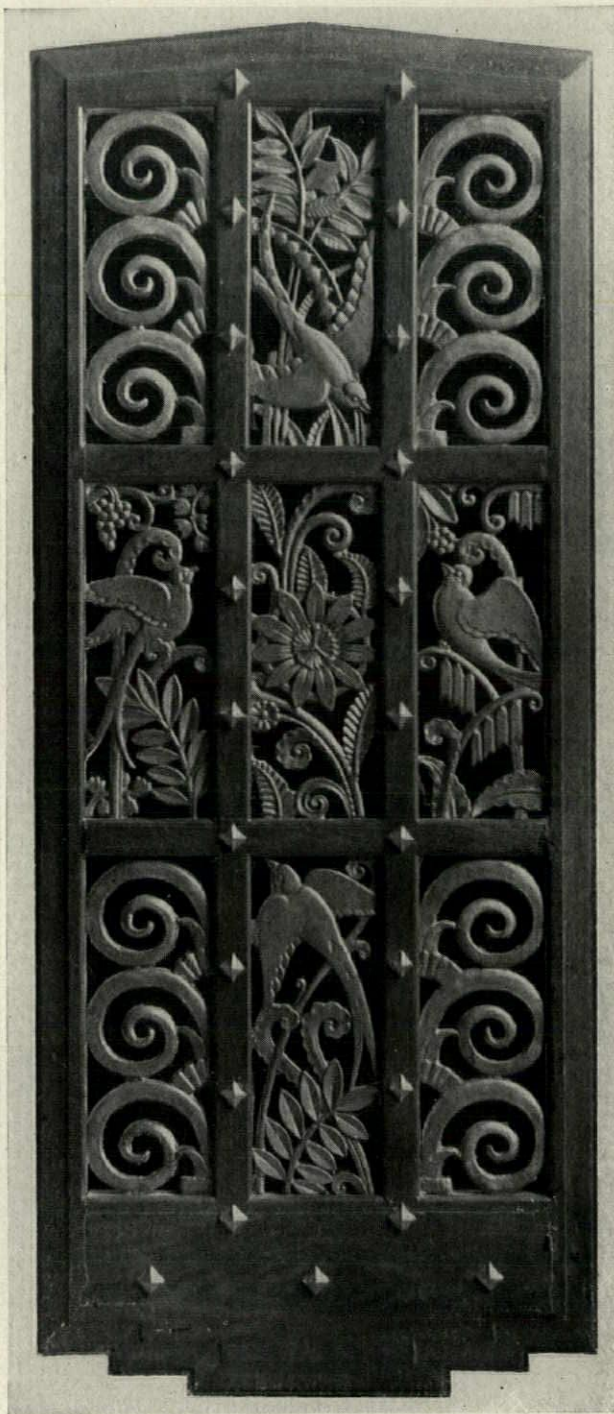
Preliminary Landscape Layout, Radio Shrine of The Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor
Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect

EXCEPT YOU EAT
THE FLESH OF THE
SON OF MAN AND
DRINK HIS BLOOD
YOU SHALL NOT HAVE
LIFE IN YOU. HE THAT
EATETH MY FLESH AND
DRINKETH MY BLOOD
HATH EVERLASTING
LIFE AND I WILL RAISE
HIM UP IN THE LAST
DAY. FOR MY FLESH IS
MEAT INDEED AND MY
BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED:
HE THAT EATETH MY
FLESH AND DRINKETH
MY BLOOD ABIDETH IN
ME AND I IN HIM.

MOSES GAVE YOU
NOT BREAD FROM
HEAVEN BUT MY
FATHER GIVETH
YOU THE TRUE BREAD
FROM HEAVEN. FOR
THE BREAD OF GOD IS
THAT WHICH COMETH
DOWN FROM HEAVEN
AND GIVETH LIFE TO
THE WORLD. I AM THE
GIVE US ALWAYS THIS
BREAD. I AM THE
BREAD OF LIFE: HE THAT
COMETH TO ME SHALL
NOT HUNGER AND HE
THAT BELIEVETH IN ME
SHALL NEVER THIRST.



The Blessed Sacrament Tabernacle, Radio Shrine of The Little Flower. Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor. Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect



Ornamental bronze grilles placed inside of glass around lantern, Radio Shrine of The Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, Pastor. Office of Henry J. McGill, Architect

THE UPPER GROUND

Being Essays in Criticism

By H. VAN BUREN MAGONIGLE

D. ARCH., F. A. I. A.

*"Take the upper ground in manœuvrin', Terence, I sez,
'an' you'll be a gin'ral yet,' sez I. An' wid that I wint up to
the flat mud roof av the house and looked over the par'pet,
threadin' delicate."*

R. K. "My Lord the Elephant."

A LETTER ABOUT MODERNISM AND A REPLY

"Dear Mr. Magonigle:

"We have been shouting hearty 'Amens!' to your PENCIL POINTS exhortations and deriving sound benefit from your criticisms. But you are letting us down by not preserving your critical attitude when approaching the 'modern' (or what you will).

"Irving W. Morrow's letter to the Editor published in the May issue of PENCIL POINTS is a very just indictment of your failure in this respect.

"Surely all the 'moderns' are not insincere charlatans and all their efforts are not devoid of one single commendable achievement."

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) JOHN MANGRUM,

President of Evansville Architectural Draftsmen's
Chowder and Marching Club.

* * * *

This letter has gone long unanswered, dated as it is May 16th, 1935. I can only plead preoccupation with other subjects and the decision of the Publisher to discontinue publication of most of the mass of letters received in response to utterances in this department. But Mr. Mangrum's letter does not deal with the foibles and failures of the profession at large, particularly as represented by the Institute; it refers directly to the shortcomings of the writer in criticism and especially to his strictures upon the so-called "modern." So that it comes under the purview of this department and deserves an answer in which I shall try to clarify my point of view—one shared, I may say, by many others.

This answer is not to be construed as in any sense an apology for that point of view—to which, whether as citizen or critic, I hope I may claim, without offense, to be entitled.

In the past fifty-four years I have seen a number

of schools rise and pass including the *Art Nouveau* which was only another way of saying "modernistic"; but the authors of the work done in their name bore criticism with fortitude and even good humor. This latest of the schools, however, seems to be troubled with a sensitiveness approaching the touchy. A case in point is the Morrow episode to which Mr. Mangrum refers. There was published in a western magazine a view of a house by Morrow and Morrow with a caption saying that the garage was placed on the roof in compliance with the client's "highly detailed program of requirements." I scanned the photograph with great care but it failed to reveal the existence of any upper road by which the car could enter or leave the garage, and said in comment: "There is no explanation or evidence given as to why the 'rigorous solution' of the . . . program demanded that the car should be kept on the roof. But this is probably one of the 'new ways of living'" (a quotation from some statement in the same number explaining one of the other "modern" abodes published). "Does it fly off or jump down? Or is it just to have and to hold?"

I thought at the time that this was a rather harmless little joke but it seems not.

Although Mr. Morrow in his letter to the Editor of PENCIL POINTS specifically disclaimed being "thin-skinned under criticism" he permitted himself some very ill-mannered and unpardonable expressions, such as my "willingness to stoop to any means to make a point" and "Mr. Magonigle's willingness to descend to dishonest methods to make a point." These are not quoted as exhibiting Mr. Morrow's failure in amenity, but as illustrative of the type of reaction of the "modernist" to any but laudatory comment on his work. This is not the only letter I could quote from, written by practitioners of that cult, which display fury in differing degrees in highly personal attacks upon my intelligence, honesty, and narrow-minded, reactionary attitude toward "any idea which has emerged since his (my) school days."

Well, I do not propose, at this late date, to defend my record as a progressive. And as to my intelligence, even honesty, I gladly let these gentlemen have their last word. I could have, with an equal equanimity, made my critique of the Morrow illustration and the accompanying "descriptive caption" (explanation of their work seems a necessity to them) more impersonal by omitting the name of the author. Perhaps that will be a good policy to pursue in the future. Criticism should be as impersonal as possible—as lacking in personalities as the reactions to such criticism might be.

* * * *

This letter of Mr. Mangrum's and the episode referred to give me the cue for a statement of my view of the function of the critic at a time when the principles and standards of rational design are

being challenged by so many, here and abroad.

I respect and admire progressive design which neither rejects structural and æsthetic standards, nor stupidly plagiarizes the work of the living or the dead.

I like very few modernistic designs because most of them do both.

I find them devoid of that precious quality, personality. I think many of them and their explanatory blurbs ridiculous. And when I see students in the schools, and men of maturer minds who ought to know better, accepting this new gospel of apparently perverse and deliberate ugliness for the sake of being "new" or "original," I am moved to use the weapon best suited to combat what I consider a pernicious tendency—and that weapon is ridicule. For most of it should be laughed to death.

I deem it the duty of a critic to tell the truth as he sees it, even though in so doing he may hurt someone's feelings. The pussy-footer has no place in criticism. We may remember that the function of the critic is to draw attention to the merits or defects of the work he examines, to watch current trends and oppose or support them as they appeal to his judgment or not. It is his province to stimulate the thought of the reader and if that thought be adverse to the critic's opinion, well and good. The critic has done this job. The reader rejects or accepts. The reader is left free to agree or disagree with the critic—but the duty of the critic is not affected thereby. It is his province also to compare what he has under review with the best that has been thought and done in the world, always within the limitations of his culture.

* * * *

I do not think, as Mr. Mangrum expresses it, that "all the 'moderns' are insincere charlatans and all their efforts devoid of one single commendatory achievement." But I do think they have, so far, failed to achieve anything remarkable, and that they are guilty of extreme silliness very often. To read the explanations which inevitably accompany the illustrations of their work, one would be led to think that they are Columbuses discovering new continents in design and construction and the use of materials; even "highly detailed programs of requirements" are referred to as though such programs are something quite new and extraordinary; most of them must be very young, for they lay great stress on such matters; experienced practitioners long since learned to regard them with a sense of proportion.

But they are not discovering new lands—most of them are merely cribbing from the work of men in Germany, Austria, Holland, and France, and to a limited extent from Sweden. The American exponents of the cult offer nothing new. They seem to believe that if they build a rectangular box without a visible roof, stick a pipe rail or two here or there, and run the windows of a corner room around the corner with no visible support

for the weight above, they have achieved an "original," "functional," and commendable result. One has only to run through some of the foreign periodicals once a month as I, for my sins, have to do, to see that the familiar vice of the profession, plagiarism, is just as rife as ever and has merely chosen another field for exploitation.

* * * *

A short time ago, for a lecture, I collected a half-dozen examples of exactly the same modernistic motif, done in Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Berlin, London, and New York. The whole series speaks the language of the parrot. Cover the captions and it is impossible to tell where any one of them had been built. And it is from such sources the "modernist" seems to draw his "inspiration."

* * * *

The "moderns," or the "modernists" (it seems there is a subtle difference claimed by divisions of the school not perceptible to any but the initiate), announce that their work is based on "logical" grounds—"rigorous solutions"—that they are guided by considerations of "function"; and, to judge from the results of their devotion to these excellent principles, they let beauty and charm and gracious living go down the wind. In most of the house plans I have examined, there seems to be as much possibility of a decent privacy in daily life in them as for the goldfish in its bowl. The rooms "flow" into each other or leak or ooze out into terraces or "sun-parlors." They nearly all provide an excess of light that must be hell to live in day by day, and this feature is emphasized whether the house or building be in a climate that demands a lot of light or lots of protection from light. If they would be logical let them study the ways excessive light and heat are handled in southern countries where the maximum of air is provided for with the maximum of protection against heat and glare, and with provision for all the light inside that is needed when the day is dull.

Logic would suggest blinds to keep the sun off the overweening areas of glass so characteristic of these designs. It is merely commonsense to keep the sun from beating upon glazed areas. We old-fashioned reactionaries do this because it is commonsense, if not logic, to recognize facts of physics. To depend upon inside curtains may be "a new way of living" but it doesn't seem a sensible or a comfortable way.

* * * *

Upon the harsh forms and ugly, unrelated masses so evident in this work, the haphazard fenestration which looks as though the building had not been subjected to a study which would reconcile the amount of light required in a given interior space to the very real, but now apparently out-moded, demands of beauty, balance, and charm of composition, I have already made comment in

these columns from time to time, unnecessary to repeat here.

* * * *

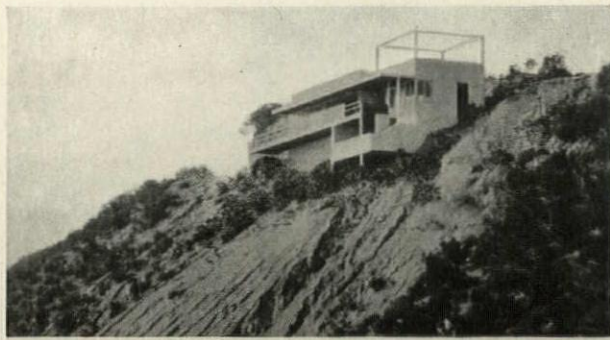
Logic is a very fine working tool, but it argues a certain mental or spiritual indolence to go no further and be satisfied with only that. To stop there indicates also an insensitiveness to the charm and grace that should inform a composition. Logic is only one of the forces to invoke for the solution of a problem. Logic appears to be chiefly responsible for the dreary and repellent ranges of tenements published so often from foreign sources. To compel human beings, presumably furnished with souls, to dwell in such depressing, soul-deadening barracks is no less than a crime against humanity. If these be the spawn of logic, give me plain death—it is preferable to death-in-life.

* * * *

I have seen a large number of photographs of buildings in this modern ultra logical spirit, built in beautiful countrysides in Austria, Germany, and England; and their harshness, their nakedness, are in shocking contrast to the beauty of their settings. They can never take on the mellowness, the *gemütlichkeit* of the older things that have charmed thousands of travelers through many generations. *Apropos*, one day I was looking over an exhibition of gardens and came across a lovely composition of growing things; in one corner was a structure consisting of what looked like two Lally columns supporting a thin slab of concrete—so starkly ugly, so completely out of harmony with the gracious beauty of the garden that I couldn't suppress an exclamation—"Hell," or something. Further down the room was an exceptionally well-trained man who has forsaken "tradition" for the modernistic; he came to where I was and I said, forgetting this, "Look at this little horror in this beautiful spot!" He replied, "Ah, there speaks the old reactionary. I think it is very charming." "Charming!" Good God! Well, I shut up; what was the use. But there you have it. Judgment and a sense of the appropriate seem to be held in abeyance once the modernistic bug gets a good bite. The birthright of architecture is sold for a mess of steel and concrete and those who oppose the sale are to be called reactionary.

* * * *

Pat to the occasion I find in *Architecture* for August, just received, a house the name of whose author I carefully refrain from printing. It is one of the series of One Hundred Small Houses and I reproduce it here. It is accompanied by the following winged words: "All the houses which I was privileged to detail were happy work to me. Still this mountain house gladdened my heart beyond the rule, because it offered proof that it may take but moderate means to fulfill even peculiarly interesting requirements." Look carefully and dispassionately at this house; ask yourself whether its lines and masses and texture have any relation to

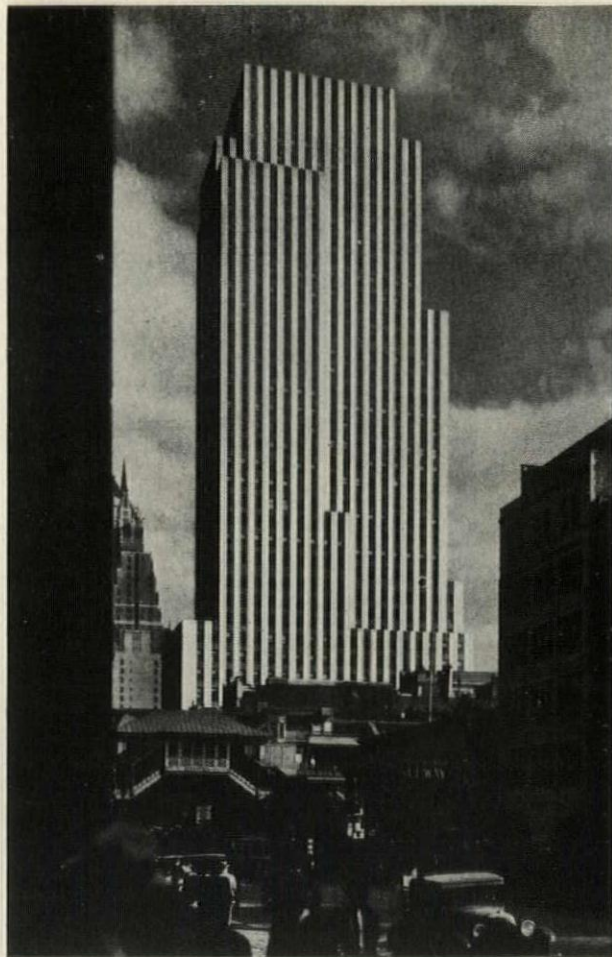


House in California

From August *Architecture*

the rocky slope upon which it does not even seem to maintain itself; or is it a mere excrescence which could gladden the heart of no one with any sense of taste or fitness except those committed to a barren building formula, regardless of those qualities.

One of the "peculiarly interesting requirements" of any building is that it should be in harmony with the site and its conditions. Is this? So far as I can see it follows the same modernistic formulæ



The News Building, New York. John M. Howells, Raymond Hood Associated, Architects Nov., 1930, *Architectural Forum*



RCA Building, Rockefeller Centre. Reinhard and Hofmeister; Corbett, Harrison and MacMurray; Hood and Foulhoux, Architects From December, 1933, *The Architectural Record*

dear to this school whether the site be level and suave, or, as here, rugged and steeply sloping. This specimen alone would be ample ground for my distaste for their work.

* * * *

In the business-building field are other different but equally distasteful practices. It seems to me that an architectural composition, no matter how simple, should be complete in itself, have a defining treatment at the top which says: "This building finishes here; it is going no higher; we do not intend to build any more stories on it."

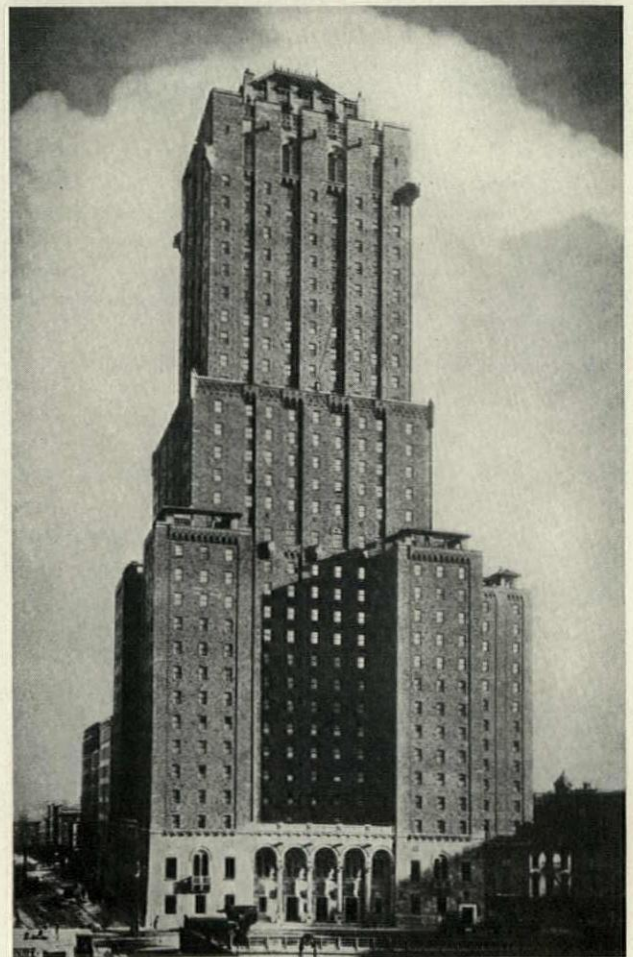
Look at the Daily News Building in New York and Rockefeller Centre published herewith. Neither of them terminates. You could cut them down, either of them, five or ten or more stories and never miss them. The window slots go right on up and out into space. The same treatment is given much lower buildings, of two or three stories, as anyone may verify by looking over the illustrations in the magazines.

This insistence on the vertical and the avoidance of horizontal shadows is akin to a musical composition in F which repeats that note and no other

—as Whistler once pointed out. Even in the Gothic cathedrals, where the whole composition aspires strongly, we find many strong horizontals which do not interrupt the upward flight of the buttresses and pinnacles, but which do furnish the minor contrast of another movement which makes them well-balanced and satisfactory compositions.

* * * *

Nor is there any attempt to give a sense of weight and thickness by the treatment of the reveals. Buildings of this type look like structures of cardboard. In Rockefeller Centre the meanness of the reveals and other means of modeling the buildings are especially noticeable. I don't know what the window reveals are in inches—it isn't much, and it doesn't matter, for such dimensions are proportionate and relative: I know it looks mean and meagre. On certain pavilions, of one of the buildings, on the side street, is some "sculpture." Passing over its utter lack of any sound sculptural principle, its complete absence of balance or rhythm, its complete absence of relation to the building, and concentrating only upon the relation of its projection to the depth of the reveals, there is no relation to be found. It just sticks out in great gobs. If the architects, obsessed by the "logic" of a



The Shelton Hotel, New York. Arthur Loomis Harmon, Architect From "Masterpieces of Architecture in the United States"

twelve-inch screen wall to enclose the buildings, denied them any shadow or modeling where it could have so easily been obtained, one wonders why then they permitted the sculptor to give his figures the high relief they have instead of a flat relief that would have some relation to the window reveals.

* * * *

Thousands gape at these buildings every day. Rockefeller Centre having been one of the largest and most advertised of the "modern" manifestations, they are probably, for the uninstructed laity, the very latest and best thing. One could wish that they are also the very last. I hold that an architect has a moral duty to the art he professes to follow and should not permit himself the silly and unbridled performances to be found everywhere in this group; he should consider their effect upon an innocent public, not to say the art he debases—an effect which leads to steady deterioration of public taste, and, given the name of Rockefeller, which connotes the command of the very best to be had, sets a stamp of approval upon such stuff which is pernicious and misleading.

* * * *

If anyone is interested enough to see an exquisite study in relative projections and reveals, I would direct his attention to the old building of the house of Scribner on Fifth Avenue just below 22nd Street, designed by Mr. Ernest Flag. I think it is one of his earlier works done not long after he returned from Paris while he retained the strong impression Neo-Grec detail made upon so many men of that day. But question of "style" apart, the building is a triumph of judgment and skill and taste and study in the handling of the relations between window reveals, projection of pavilions and pilasters, and other modulations of the surface, including cornices and string courses. Each is exactly right in proportion to all the others. I suppose a modernist would call it old hat. Before he does that let him pause to compare his own "creations" with it and learn from it what really sensitive design is. Although, of course, sensitive design is old hat too. So long as a building can be touted as "new" and shock or puzzle the beholder, all objectives are attained and the hired publicity man is provided with snappy copy.

* * * *

He or they might also take a look at Arthur Loomis Harmon's Shelton Hotel, which was awarded the Gold Medal of the Architectural League when it was first completed, and deservedly. It is still one of the best tall buildings in the country. And it is so because it exemplifies so many of the permanent virtues of good architecture and yet strikes a fresh note. A steel frame with the usual thin wall of course, Mr. Harmon gave it a sense of solidity and real weight and mass by a number of devices which anyone who studies it without prejudice must agree are valid. How

"logical" they may appear to some is a question; but that they possess the unanswerable logic of beauty cannot be doubted. They seemed to me when I first saw them perfectly reasonable and legitimate. Something ought to be done to a tall building to avoid the effect of a cardboard model, and Mr. Harmon did it. His devices are not of the type of those of the Chanin Building, for instance, where a flimsy cardboard shaft is topped out with huge buttresses that buttress nothing and are utterly out of relation with the mean window reveals below them and completely indefensible as structure.

* * * *

I believe there to be a sincere attempt in most of the "modern" work to attain simplicity. But simplicity is not paucity of imagination—it is restraint in the exercise of imagination. It does not reside necessarily in the omission of "ornament" nor in the absence of the light and shade which models the building. True simplicity is not the fruit of logic; it is the child of taste and measure.

Taste changes from epoch to epoch, but the best things, the things which survive, all possess it. The taste of the Golden Age of Greece is very different from that of the eighteenth century—but they both have traits in common.

Taste, in the artist, is that selective judgment which combines the elements of design into a beautiful whole. It may be broadly stated that in periods when taste is narrow and exclusive it is usually at low ebb, and when it is broad and catholic and inclusive of all that is best it is at high tide. Our own epoch—by which I do not mean the ten years from 1925 to 1935 but the past twenty-five or thirty years—should be notable for its selective judgment for we are dowered with a vast mass of information culled from centuries of culture. If our time is lacking in taste we cannot claim that we err in ignorance.

Taste is possible to anyone who will take the trouble to acquire it by constant, thoughtful study of what, by the test of time and the consensus of opinion of the most cultured judges, are considered the masterpieces of all the great epochs of artistic history.

* * * *

No great art ever developed by the rejection of the canons of design to be found in the best work of preceding generations. It is a sufficiently trite observation to say that no enduring structure can be raised without firm foundations. Yet that is precisely the fundamental error of the "modern" cult. One has but to survey the history of architecture to see at a glance that the art has developed slowly and inevitably from what has gone before. Each "style" has grown out of the preceding "style" as it was subjected to the many and intricate influences of race, personality, climate, place, and available building materials. A new art cannot be created out of nothing, by merely taking



American Battle Monument, Chateau Thierry, France

Paul P. Cret, Architect



Washington Heating Plant, Washington, D. C.

Paul P. Cret, Architect

thought; but it can be developed by gradual modification of older forms—a process of inevitable but slowly working laws repugnant to impatient temperaments or to the opportunist.

How then, in the face of such overwhelming evidence as human history provides, can this group expect to produce great or even good architecture by fiat?

* * * *

Let me say a few words about the current obsession with the “abstract” in those grace notes in architectural composition we may group under the general head of “ornament.”

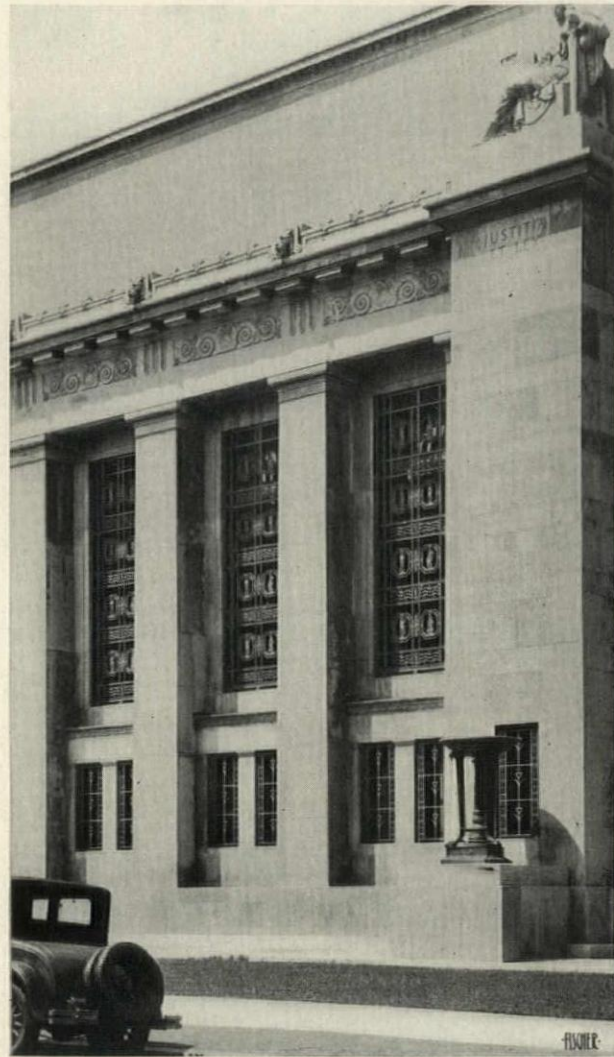
Turning again to the lessons of history, consider for a moment the edict of Mohammed against the use of living forms, animal or vegetable, and its effect upon ornament in Mohammedan work. Denied those fields by religious prohibition, the Mohammedan artist did not abjure ornament but had recourse to geometrical forms and pattern. The result was sterility, and Moslem ornament therefore had no influence to speak of upon succeeding work in Christian lands.

We have been, and to a certain extent still are, afflicted with a rash of chevron-like forms combined or not with others apparently derived from pressed ferns, blown up to huge size, curling upon themselves. There is a band of this stuff, a whole story high, on the Chanin Building in New York, which, for lack of scale, lack of beauty, lack of taste, lack of life, it would be hard to beat. These forms were not invented here; they were plagiarized from France, just as the cartouches and the corbels cribbed from Modern French Renaissance buildings were applied to American buildings.

* * * *

Let us turn from theory to example for confirmation of our thesis that it is not necessary to reject the canons of sound architecture in order to create something fresh.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Paul Phillippe Cret I am enabled to present some of his beautiful and progressive work. It requires neither comment nor analysis from me. It speaks for itself, in the old



Hartford County Court House, Hartford, Conn. Paul P. Cret, Architect
Photograph by Sigurd Fischer

language, with a new accent. But I may go so far as to point out that there is nothing meagre about it but that it is rich in light and shade beautifully disposed. And it is along such lines that I believe we may look for sound and rational progress in American architecture.

Just as we go to press, word arrives of the sudden death of Mr. Magonigle on August 29 at Vergennes, Vermont, where he was visiting friends. It is with deep sorrow that we make the announcement. He was a man, loved by his friends, respected by his adversaries. The profession of architecture has lost a rare spirit, one who has ever striven with all his might to uphold its highest ideals.

WASHINGTON MONTHLY LETTER

By CHESTER M. WRIGHT

INSURANCE of mortgage bonds will be the next major stimulus to low-cost housing on the part of the Federal Housing Administration. It will be part of the Administration's new determination to utilize the home-building urge of the American people in a major recovery program directed at building construction. New programs, new projects, new methods are being worked over and will be announced within sixty days.

There was nothing in the National Housing Act to prevent the FHA from insuring mortgage bonds on low-cost housing projects. There were, however, a number of difficulties and obstacles in other laws. Action by this Congress on banking and bankruptcy laws cleared the way for action by the FHA. A definite scheme will be announced very shortly.

PROFITS. So successful have been the manufacturers of building supplies and materials cooperating with the FHA, that their sales and profits reports constitute an amazing recovery, in many cases a phenomenal transition from red to black. First quarter earnings this year of 22 companies reporting to the FHA are \$9,861,839, compared to earnings in 1934 of only \$947,046. This is an increase in profits of 941 per cent. Sales increases between January and July are in one case 712 per cent, another 350 per cent, another 344 per cent, many at 200 per cent and 100 per cent, with most of them running between 25 and 50 per cent in increased sales.

WORKS PROGRESS. Criticism of the Administration's spending policies falls into two classifications. One group says the government is spending money too rapidly; the other says the funds are not being disbursed rapidly enough to stimulate recovery and relieve the unemployment situation. Without taking sides, it seems pertinent to give the facts as of August 24.

To date \$2,794,717,052 of expenditure has been approved out of the \$4,800,000,000 appropriated by Congress. The biggest single classification is that of Federal projects—War, Navy, Veterans, and other federal agencies, housing and resettlement—totaling \$1,314,563,937. That covers 1,123

projects of the 5,105 which have been filed, and since only 570 of these have been denied, there is plenty of opportunity to spend more money within this classification.

Detailed information about approved housing projects is not available because the PWA has adopted the policy that secrecy will be maintained until the real estate deals involved have been closed. Too many housing projects have been killed because of boosting of land values to such a point that low-cost housing became high-cost housing. But deals are being closed rapidly and the sum will eventually run into big figures.

State administered projects are eventually going to mean considerable spending, but so far only \$325,315,394 has been approved.

Out of the \$200 million highways and \$200 million crossings appropriations, \$386,237,803 has already been earmarked. The \$100 million for statutory roads is another item to be added to the total.

Projects totaling \$27,997,918 have already been approved out of the National Youth Administration's appropriation of \$50,000,000, which seems to dispose of more than half of the question of how that money would be spent. The NYA is having difficulties cooperating with other departments of government which have been caring for the youth of the country, especially along educational lines, but it is fairly well settled now that most of the money will be spent for educational purposes.

The funds disbursed for direct relief are gradually being reduced; the funds approved for this purpose now total \$640,000,000.

Administration expense accounts for more of the total, such as the allotment of \$600,000 to the Treasury.

WPA STRIKE. The New York City strike of building craftsmen against the "security wage" is not settled permanently. There will be rumblings from labor for some time to come, perhaps more than mere rumblings, because of what lies back of the front line trenches.

The prevailing attitude of employers toward labor in the building industry is that lower wages are essential to a building revival. Observers combine this attitude with the tendency of the Administration during the NRA era to increase minimum wages and reduce the wages of skilled labor. From these two attitudes they deduce that the "security wage" idea was part of a general plan which will further the efforts of private employers to reduce the labor cost of construction.

Labor in the building trades has seen the same picture. The strike came in New York because that was the first place that the WPA got going and the first place labor men could protest. They point out that the WPA wage regulations involve large reductions in the total pay of unskilled labor

and reductions in the hourly rate of skilled labor. They insist that they have fought for generations to lift the skilled rate to a decent level and that their wage scales should not be cut but wages in other industries brought up to their levels.

Compromises are coming. The prevailing wage is paid on PWA projects. Unions say the PWA agreement is being circumvented by splitting up large projects into smaller ones of less than \$25,000 each, thus putting them in WPA's jurisdiction. PWA Administrator Ickes believes union labor to be efficient, more efficient at the prevailing wage than non-union labor generally at lower wages. So there are two viewpoints within the Administration itself, one working for the prevailing wage and the other for the "security" wage. The President's expressed views in favor of a guaranteed annual wage point toward a maintenance of the "security" wage during a period long enough to permit experiments looking toward more general adoption by industry of the guaranteed annual wage idea.

LOWER INTEREST RATES. Discussion in Administration circles of lower interest rates for housing purposes continues and is slowly having an effect in lowering rates. Recent surveys by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board indicate that the majority of investors today are more interested in safety than in extreme liquidity or a high dividend rate. In the past building and loan associations depended largely upon the high dividend attraction. They are now shifting to "the more attractive attribute of safety, based upon the insurance of share accounts made available by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation," says an article in the Federal Home Loan Bank Review. One of the largest savings and loan associations in Ohio reduced its dividend rate to 3½ per cent following the receipt of its insurance certificate. Average rates have been running from 4½ to 5 per cent. In spite of the decrease, the safety provided by share insurance resulted in an almost daily increase in share purchases."

Mutual savings and loan associations are now paying from 2 to 3 per cent on savings. The FHLBB believes that federally insured savings and loan associations should attract ample funds at 3 to 4 per cent dividend rates in most sections of the country.

CONSTRUCTION REVIVAL. Public works and utilities activities ended July with the largest volume of contracts for any month this year. Contracts in 37 states totaled over \$53.9 millions, which was 38 per cent better than either June, 1935, or July, 1934.

Apparently people all over the country are cheered up over future prospects and are putting on the paint. Paint sales in the first half of 1935 were 15 per cent above 1934, 59 per cent over

1933. Much of this is modernization stimulus from the FHA, but a very large part is due to the fact that residential awards for the first six months were ahead of the full total for 1934! Seven months rolled up a volume of \$256.5 millions, a 69 per cent gain over the same period of last year.

Another index of the trend comes from the FHA, which reports a \$53,797,335 volume of business during July, an increase of 250 per cent over March.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U. S. Department of Labor reports: "Compared with the corresponding month of last year the estimated cost of the buildings for which permits were issued in July shows an increase of more than 60 per cent." The greatest improvement is reported in residential construction—three times greater than July of last year.

RAISING HOUSE STANDARDS. There is a challenge to the architectural profession in the open letter from Miles L. Colean, technical director of the Federal Housing Administration, to the Committee on Housing of the American Institute of Architects. R. H. Shreve, chairman of the Committee, in presenting the facts in the July issue of *The Octagon* says that "it challenges the profession to make good its assertion of the right of the private professional to be employed as against the organization of a government service," and "it points to a need for service in a field to which the commercial agent has given more attention than has the architect."

Architects have done little, according to Mr. Colean, to influence local housing standards. As a result typically local types of buildings have evolved in certain cities largely by accident and have been copied and generally adopted as acceptable house construction. Some of these forms are not especially fitted to the life of the community in which they happen to exist. Some are decidedly freakish.

"Without some positive force being brought to bear, the prospect of improvement in the character of this housing, which comprises the shelter of a substantial proportion of the population, is slight," says Mr. Colean, "and, due to the ingrained habits of developers and builders and to the sentiments of owners and occupants, resistance to change is extremely strong."

The architectural profession constitutes the force to make the change and "it is possible of development as a source of remunerative endeavor."

Widespread changes in professional techniques and practices must be adopted in order to make architects effective in the field of small structures in small communities, says Mr. Colean. "The magnitude of this field provides opportunity for millions of dollars in fees which the architectural profession through its neglect has lost to itself,

just as the community has lost the values arising from sound, economical, comfortable dwellings."

The basis for approaching the problem to the advantage of the architect lies in the FHA requirement of adequate drawings, specifications and other documents for a commitment to insure a mortgage for new construction. "The provision of these documents is very important, and time spent in publicizing their essential value should result in a greater appreciation of their value and the value of the services of the architect."

BORROWING FROM UNCLE SAM. How much of a loss will the Federal government be forced to take on money loaned or credit insured to rescue home owners or to help them build or modernize their homes? We are now beginning to get some actual facts. They tend to prove the same old story, that the American people generally pay their bills, that the exceptions are few and can be measured in fractions of one per cent, that lack of income has forced more farmers and home owners to give up their properties during the depression than ordinarily but that rising values and increased incomes are changing that picture rapidly, and that on the whole the Federal government's work in saving the country's credit structure deserves much praise and merits little criticism.

When the Home Owners' Loan Corporation announced this month that \$2,727,000 worth of loans had not proved gilt edged, it seemed like a lot of money. But because the HOLC has put out that much money on poor risks does not mean that it has lost it. The appraised value of the property is much more. Sales may return enough to avoid loss.

Even supposing that the HOLC were to give this property to the poor or to Andrew Mellon, it would amount to only one-tenth of one per cent of the total loans to date, which are \$2,693,547,209. Foreclosures could eventually amount to ten times or even a hundred times what they are now without causing economists much worry, and the home-saving program would still be a success.

Let nobody mistake the fact that foreclosures are as inevitable under government mortgage operations as under private operations. There may be more foreclosures under HOLC operations because its terms were more liberal and many owners may decide to throw their properties into the government's lap rather than to continue paying on debts which may seem greater than the properties' value to them. But the government will not permit an individual to forget an obligation. The transaction will be carried to a conclusion somehow.

So far only one of every 981 borrowers has defaulted on his payments to such an extent that foreclosure has been necessary. One out of every 2,623 borrowers has been "wilfully delinquent." That is to say, 340 out of the 909 foreclosures are the outcome of deliberate refusal on the part of the borrower to make payments when his ability

to make such payments was clearly established.

Under the operations of the Federal Housing Administration, character loans are proving fine risks. Up to August 3 the FHA had settled only 164 claims, totaling \$68,983, for modernization credit, or six cents for every \$100 of insured loans by banks for alteration and repair of homes. Credit operations under the FHA are not direct loans but insurance of loans made by banks and mortgage institutions.

FHA insured mortgages on homes and new construction of homes has not been in effect long enough to justify foreclosures. The FHA did not reach its stride in Title II until March of this year. Mortgages accepted for insurance up to August 3 number 13,535 and total \$56,472,345 in value. Mortgages selected for appraisal and with fees paid number 32,147 and total \$126,741,631 in value. Pains were taken to make only gilt-edged loans in the early cases so that considerable time will probably elapse before foreclosure proceedings will affect FHA operations under Title II.

Uncle Sam's farm mortgage credit burden has been considerable for some time. It goes back to 1917, when the Federal Land Banks were established. The Farm Credit Administration did a major rescue job in 1933, but the situation has improved materially since, so that now optimistic reports are in order. The FCA is now principally engaged in developing a complete unified system of credit institutions on a permanent basis to provide farmers and farmers' organizations with credit adapted to their particular requirements.

On May 31, 1935, the total amount of mortgage loans outstanding was \$1,988,228,428.34, and after deducting matured principal unpaid, in the amount of \$5,936,400.73, was \$1,982,292,027.61. On \$1,555,546,616.59 of these mortgage loans all matured installments were paid. That's a mark of 77.7 per cent, which is not so bad considering farm conditions during past years. There were 140,113 loans of the total 627,344, valued at \$442,681,811.75, which were delinquent. This does not mean that they will be delinquent permanently. Farm incomes and farm values have increased. Fewer farms are being abandoned.

But delinquency is not the final measure of the extent to which Uncle Sam will be holding the bag. The final measure will be the real estate eventually held. On May 31 the FCA had \$71,601,941.70 tied up, with another \$15 million in process of being tied up. This is a little over 4 per cent of the mortgage loans outstanding. It does not represent loss. In fact the Banks have been very successful this year in their disposal of real estate acquired through foreclosures and other means, for they sold for \$11,045,083.90 real estate which they were carrying for \$10,912,608.09. Uncle Sam does not want to make a profit on his mortgage business, but his losses are not going to be big enough to make any of us worry.

A. L. Guptill's Corner

A LITTLE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL ESTHETICS, WITH
EMPHASIS ON SKETCHING AND RENDERING



HERE IT IS AT LAST, FOLKS!

Without more ado, I have the honor of presenting the following program for a new sketch competition.

GUPTILL'S CORNER SKETCH COMPETITION No. 2: SKETCHING FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH IN PEN AND INK

PROBLEM. The problem is to make an effective sketch (not rendering) in pen alone of the photographic subject published on page 490 of this issue of **PENCIL POINTS**. The contestant is not expected to make a slavish copy, exact in every detail, but rather to interpret the building and its surroundings as though he were actually before them, making an outdoor sketch. All the main architectural elements of the subject must be shown, and at approximately the same proportions as in the photograph: it is not enough to select a limited area, such as a doorway, and draw that. Inconsequential details can, however, be omitted or suppressed. The complete surroundings need not be drawn, and the portions included can be somewhat recomposed: trees can be made larger or smaller, or changed in position or detail; vines or bushes can be added or omitted, etc. Appropriate figures, clouds, or other accessories are permissible. Tones of light and dark throughout the entire subject can be changed as desired. Assume the light to fall from any angle.

DRAWING. A contestant can submit one or more drawings, but no contestant is eligible for more than one prize. Each drawing must be in undiluted black ink on white paper measuring exactly 11" x 14". Illustration board and stiff Bristol board are especially recommended. Unmounted tracing paper is not acceptable. The paper can be placed vertically or horizontally. The subject matter must be larger or smaller than in the photograph as evidence that it was not transferred. The subject can be vignettted (allowed to fade at the edges) or not. Border lines are optional, as is a lettered title. Though the drawing must be done with pen only (no brush work being permitted) there is no restriction as to make or size of pen, or method of working. Results in outline, fine line, broad line, mass shading, or combinations of any of these, will be received with equal favor.

NOM DE PLUME. No drawing is to be signed, nor is to contain any identifying mark with the exception of a *nom de plume* or device which must appear at small scale in place of the usual signature. With each drawing there must be enclosed a plain, opaque, sealed envelope containing the true name and address of the contestant, and bearing on the outside his *nom de plume*. The envelopes will not be opened until after the awards have been made.

DELIVERY. Drawings must be mailed flat, postpaid, fully protected against rolling or folding, to A. L. Guptill's Corner, **PENCIL POINTS**, 330 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y., in ample time to be delivered on or before October 21, 1935. Drawings will be given every reasonable care, but are at the owner's risk from the time they are sent until returned.

JUDGMENT. The drawings will be judged during the last week of October by a qualified Jury appointed by **PENCIL POINTS**. Judgment will be based on artistic merit. Composition and logical expression of the subject matter will have as much weight as technical excellence. Immediately the drawings are judged, the winning contestants will be notified by mail. General announcement of the results will appear in the December issue, a copy of which will be sent to every contestant.

THE PRIZE DRAWINGS. The prize drawings, and report of the Jury, will also be published in the December issue. These drawings are to become the property of the Reinhold Publishing Corporation, and the right is reserved to publish or exhibit any or all of the other drawings. The drawings of unsuccessful contestants will be returned, postpaid, within a reasonable time.



PRIZES, PRIZES AND PRIZES!

PRIZES. There are no cash prizes. All prizes are in the form of **PENCIL POINTS** Books, selected from the list printed on page 68, Advertising Section, of this issue. Sixty-five dollars' worth of books will be given in all, as follows:—First Prize, \$25; Second Prize, \$15; Third Prize, \$10; three Fourth Prizes, \$5 each. These books will be sent postpaid as soon as selected by the winning contestants. Mentions (honorary) may be awarded at the option of the jury.



THERE'S NOT MUCH ROOM LEFT

It took so much space to tell you all about that competition that there's not much left this month for anything else. But the enthusiastic way in which Competition No. 1 was received indicates that No. 2 will, in itself, prove sufficient to interest most of you. I've been getting quite a number of letters asking when it was coming.



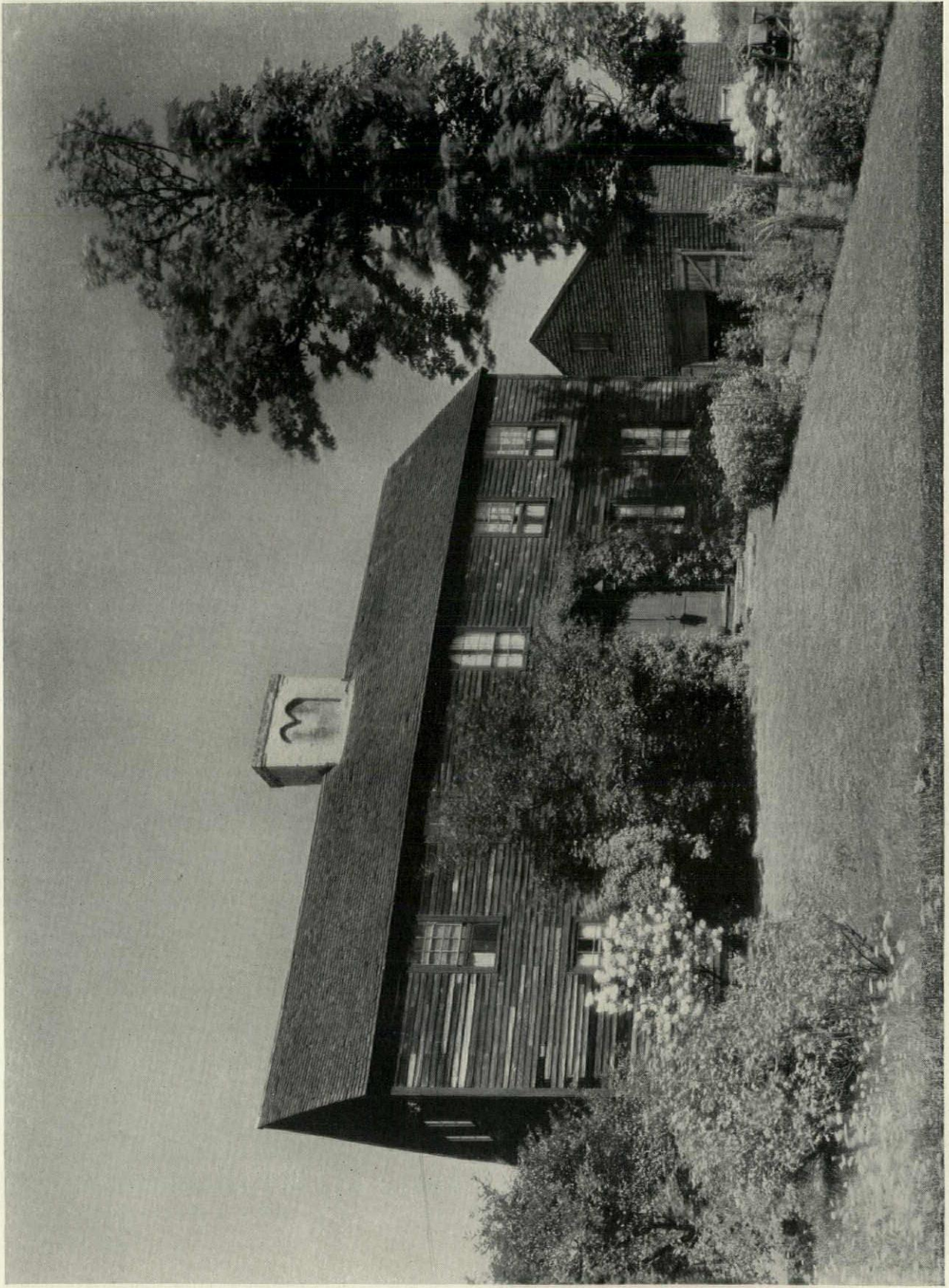
I'M TRYING TO CATCH UP WITH ALL MY CORRESPONDENCE!

Which reminds me to tell you that hard as I try to keep up with my correspondence, I'm still hopelessly behind. But I appreciate your letters just the same. When this appears in print I'll doubtless be back at the old desk again, and will try to answer each letter individually.

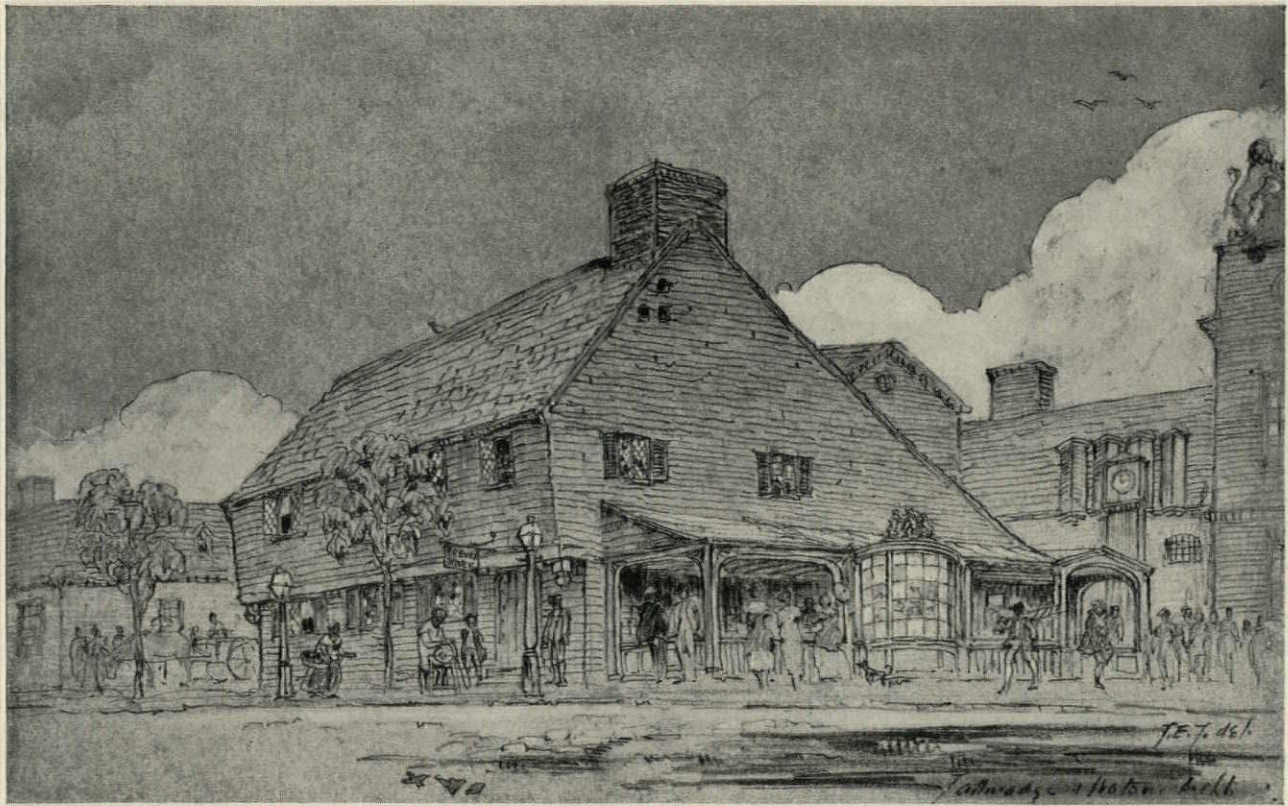
My mail has brought a few bully suggestions. One calls for a competition for the rendering from photograph of a typical tree or group of trees of a type which would lend themselves to incorporation in architectural renderings. What think ye? Several want reprints of the recent rendering projects; others, of the prize and mention drawings of the Guptill's Corner Competition No. 1. How many would like these, if they could be brought out inexpensively as loose sheets or in a paper cover? The publishers are willing to do this if there seems reasonable demand. Let's have your vote if you are interested. No obligation incurred! Perhaps you would prefer to have us wait until there are additional competitions, then making a single publication.

Every so often a question bobs up which I can't answer. I have one now. Perhaps you can help me, gentle (or ungentle) reader. "I like scratchboard for pen renderings of small size to be used for newspaper publicity, but it costs quite a bit and the old wallet is 'depression compressed.' Can such board be prepared at home, and how?" Cameo paper can be scratched to fair advantage, but is usually ill-suited to pen work. Send suggestions.

Another friend asks, "Could we have dope in your department on the æsthetic employment of some of the newer building or finishing materials—plastics and the like—or on new uses for the old?" I don't see why we can't fit this in gradually, though my limited space offers a decided handicap. But let's hear from other readers. Do you want this in place of some of the sketching and rendering dope? Would you prefer to have **PENCIL POINTS** run leading articles on this sort of subject matter? Do you miss the "crits" of current material? In short, how can I make the department better?



Wentworth Mansion, Salmon Falls, N. H. Dating from 1701, this old house makes a fine subject for the pen and ink sketch competition



Two sketches by Thomas E. Tallmadge of buildings in the Colonial Village, Century of Progress, 1934. Above, Paul Revere's House, done in pencil and water color on gray board. Below, House of Seven Gables, in pen and ink. Tallmadge and Watson, Architects

BIGGER, BUSIER TRASH BASKETS

By HAROLD DRAPER VERNAM

SOME fifteen years ago or thereabouts there was a great to-do about catalogs. They were then of all sizes, from vest-pocket to steamer-trunk. Indeed, some still are. Out of the melee emerged an agreement upon two standard sizes, 6" x 9" and 8½" x 11", together with a classification scheme based upon the Dewey system, a system that is used the world over in libraries. The standardization was forced upon unwilling manufacturers and printers by architects and engineers. It is mentioned here because it shows that if the good old Spirit of '76 is aroused something can be done.

It is well known that architects and engineers have been so knocked about, tramped upon, and generally beaten to the earth of late that very little of the Spirit of '76 or of any other vintage remains to inspire them to derring-do. Yet it is noticeable that here and there an architect is sticking his head up again and presently the mighty manufacturers of building materials will begin once more to coyly woo these once revered but recently neglected arbiters of the detail and the specification, and the mails will be choked with new catalogs, etc., etc., etc. So let us then strike before the iron gets hot, form a League Against Useless Catalogs, with the slogan, "Bigger and Busier Trash Baskets!"

As someone might have written,
"Lives there a draftsman with soul so dead,
He never to himself has said,
'Here's another one of those suet-pudding concoctions, all fat without an ounce of meat in it. To the everlasting fire with it!'"

Every one of us has participated in episodes like one of the following Scenes from Everyday Life.

SCENE I

"Say, Bill, how deep is a sump?"

"What a question! How deep is a chump, you mean. Go measure yourself. A sump-chump, you are!"

"Oh, yea? Well, you're the plumbing expert around here. You tell me. I should worry."

"Sure thing; we've a catalog somewhere—"

"Oh, I've got the catalog, all right, and I knew enough about sump-pumps and sewage-ejectors, 'spite of not being a plumber, to find 'em in the catalog. Here's the one we're supposed to use. It

tells everything in the world about it, except how deep a hole it requires. I guess we have a caisson built and sink it until we touch bed-rock and then everything will be hunky-dory. Of course, it gives you a depth, but not the required one. They assume you have all the space in the world, and show an imaginary sump. But what we want is the minimum."

"Golly, you're right. Oh, Miss J., will you write to these folks and ask—no, better call 'em up, if they've an office in town, and let me speak to one of their engineers. Wouldn't you think they'd know enough—etc., etc., etc."

SCENE II

Another day.

"Harry, will you get the catalog we received a couple of days ago from those Venetian blind people? I've got a pretty close fit here in this bay window and I need some dimensions."

"Sorry! It's up the flue by now, I guess. Orders are to chuck everything out that doesn't fit the A.I.A. system, and that was one of those dinky little throw-aways, so away it went. Shall I get another?"

"No, I need it too soon. I'll 'phone 'em and get them to measure how far the head of the blind sticks out. Lord preserve me from window details!"

SCENE III

Next week.

"Would you look at this? A million-dollar catalog, full of pretty pictures of the president of the company and all his ancestors, bird's-eye views of the plant and the warehouse and the Empire State Building, where they have a claim on a window or two, history of their business and how many gadgets they sold since they started, twenty-four pages of nice paper and ink, four of which, at the end where they won't annoy you if you're too busy to read that far, give a lot of dope about the stuff they sell. Let's see, if we had twenty-four filing cases full of such catalogs, we'd have four of them with information and twenty with 'hokey.' To the waste basket with 'hokey.' When I need one of these things, I'll find a poverty-stricken manufacturer who can't afford catalogs because he puts all of his money into his goods. I have to send for a salesman anyhow, if I want any facts, so it might as well be his."

What is specifically wrong with catalogs, you may ask, and what can we do about it?

Of course, no catalog is all wrong, and perhaps not even their most ardent sponsors would declare any particular catalog to be all right, so criticism must be understood to be general rather than specific. Almost all users of them, however, will agree that the following faults can readily and frequently be found.

1. They vary too much in size. If a producer wants a small folder to tuck in with every