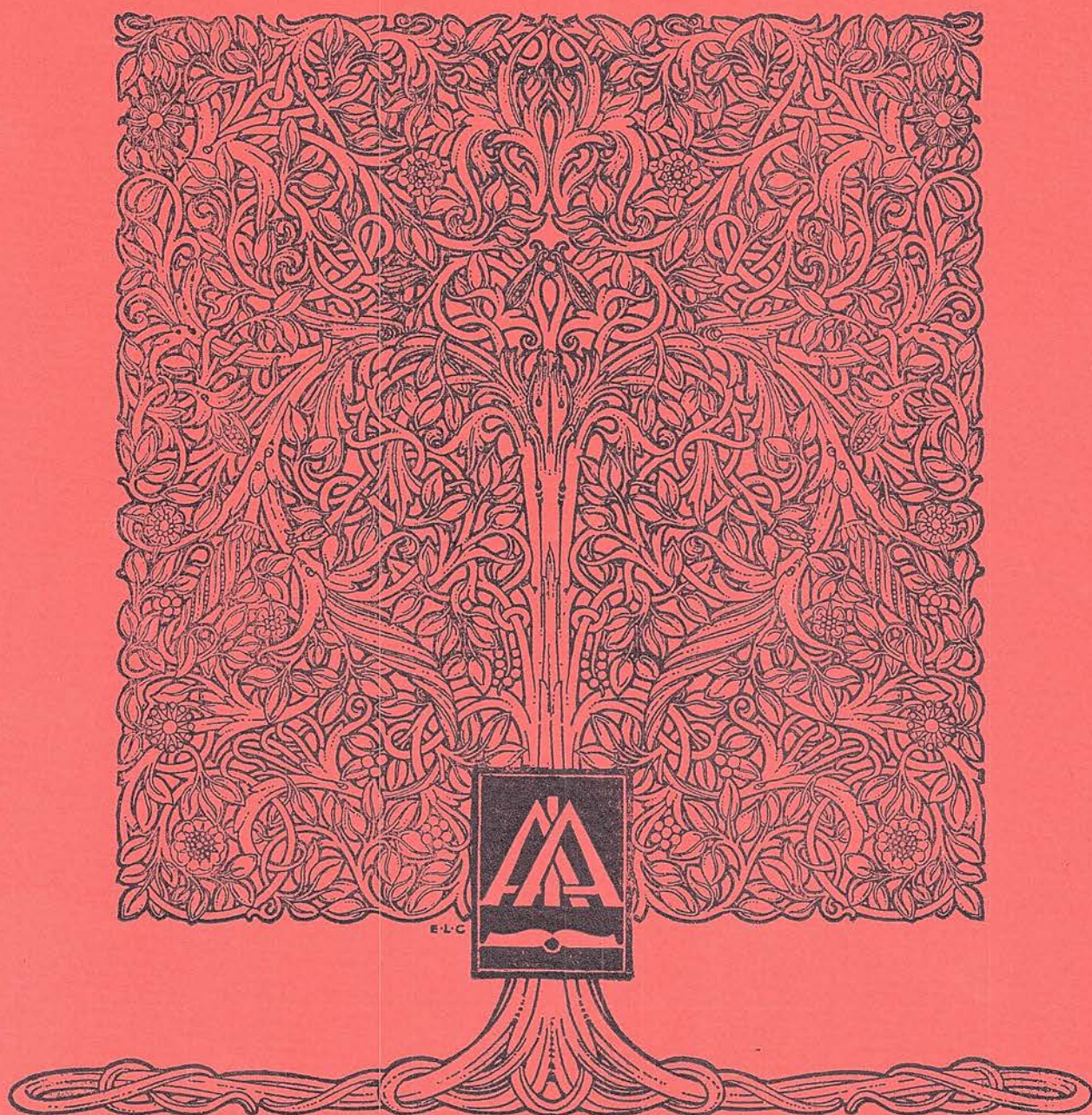


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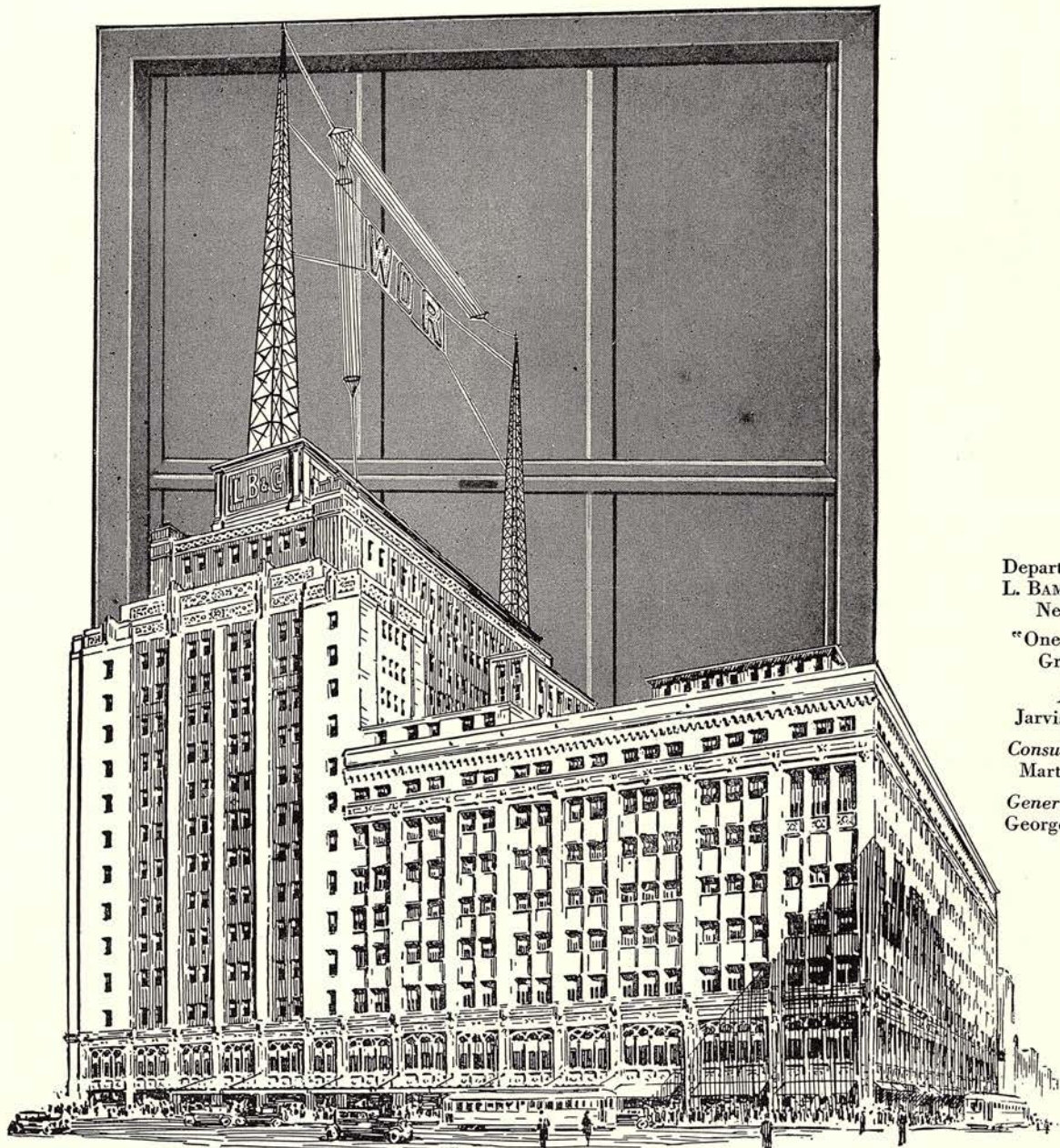
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Volume XV

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Number 10

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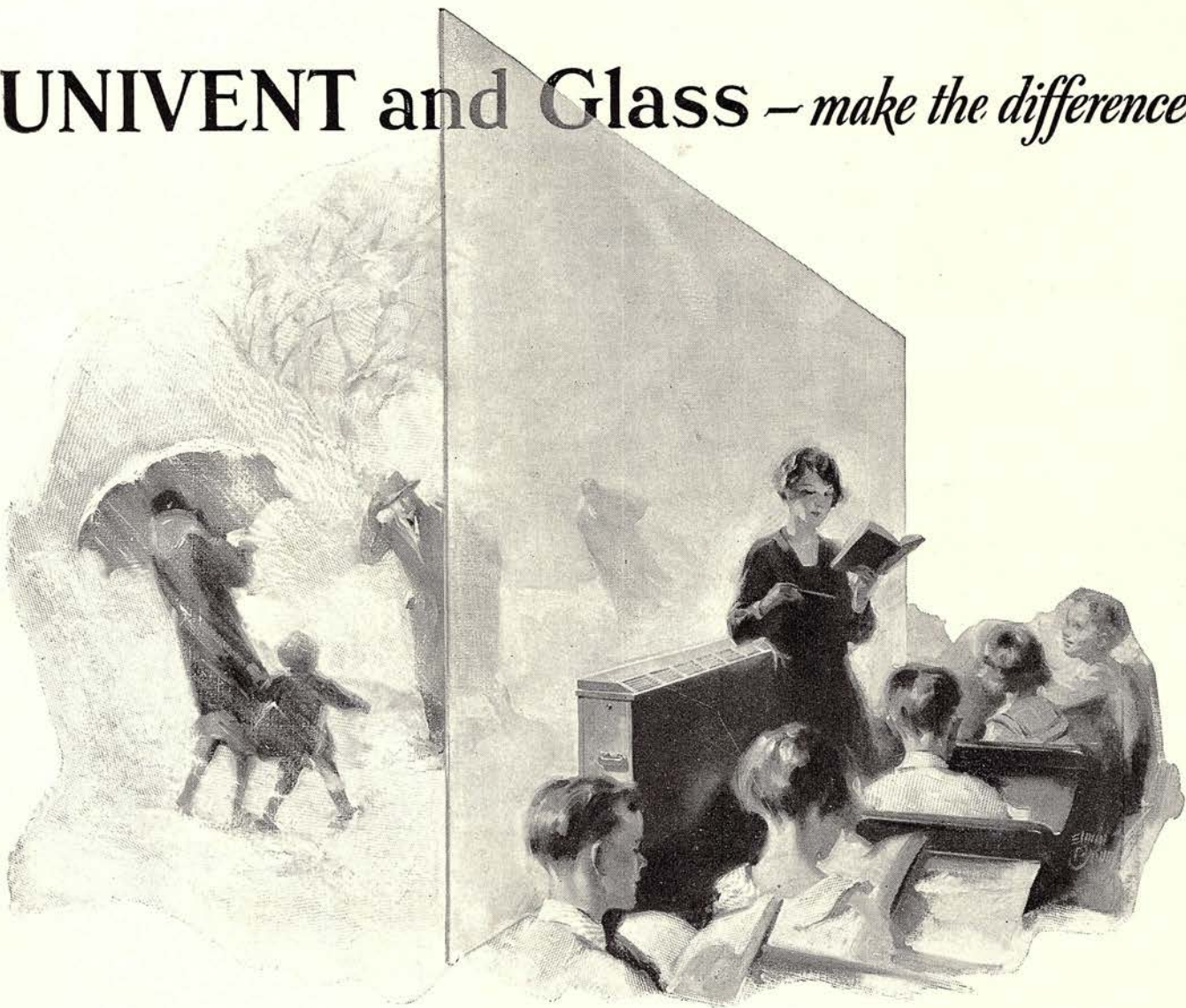
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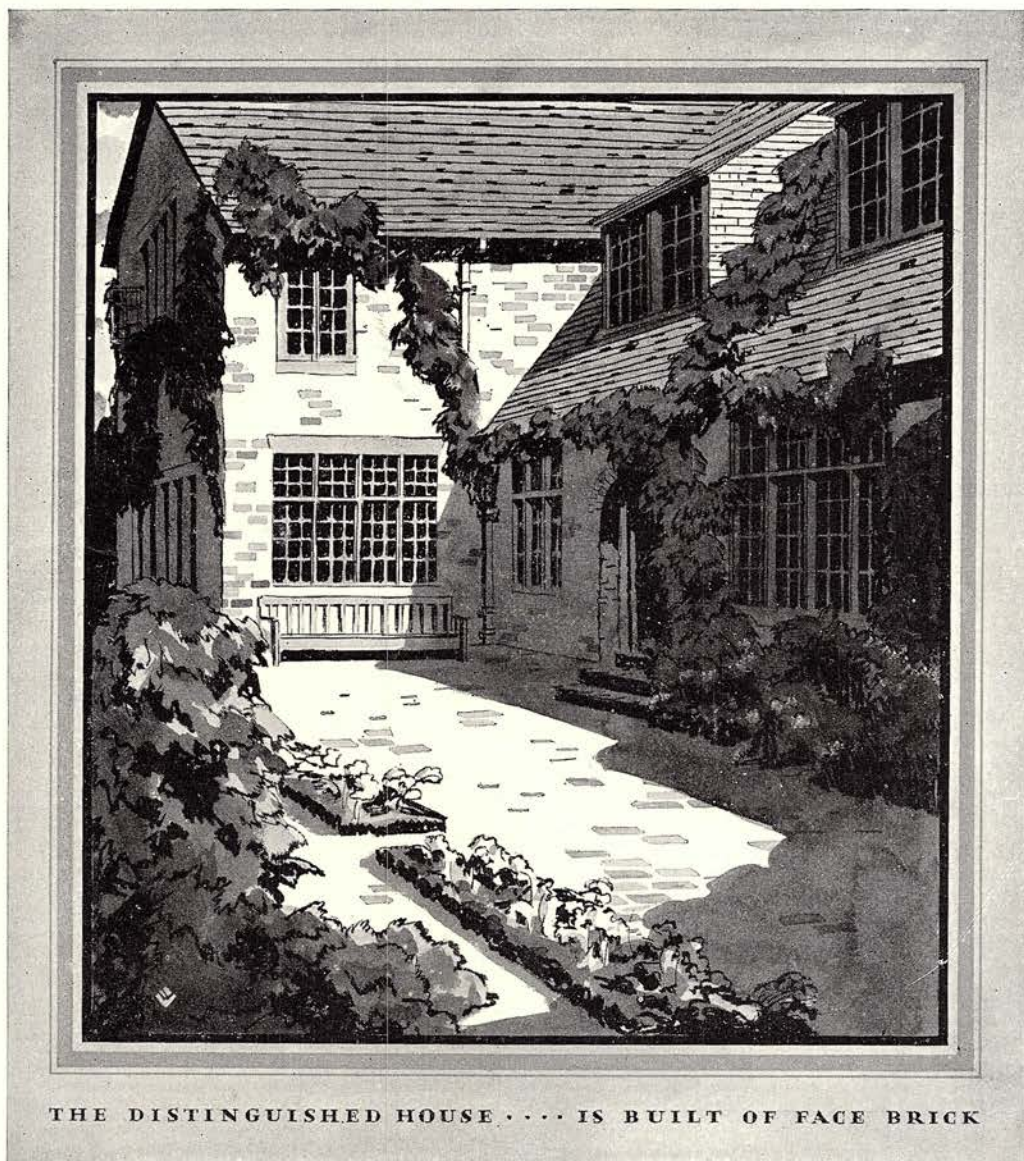
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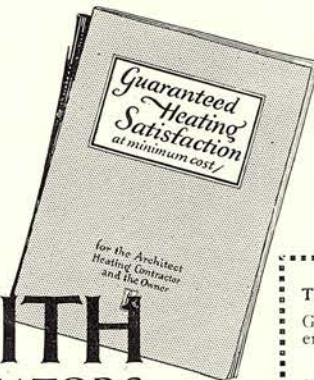
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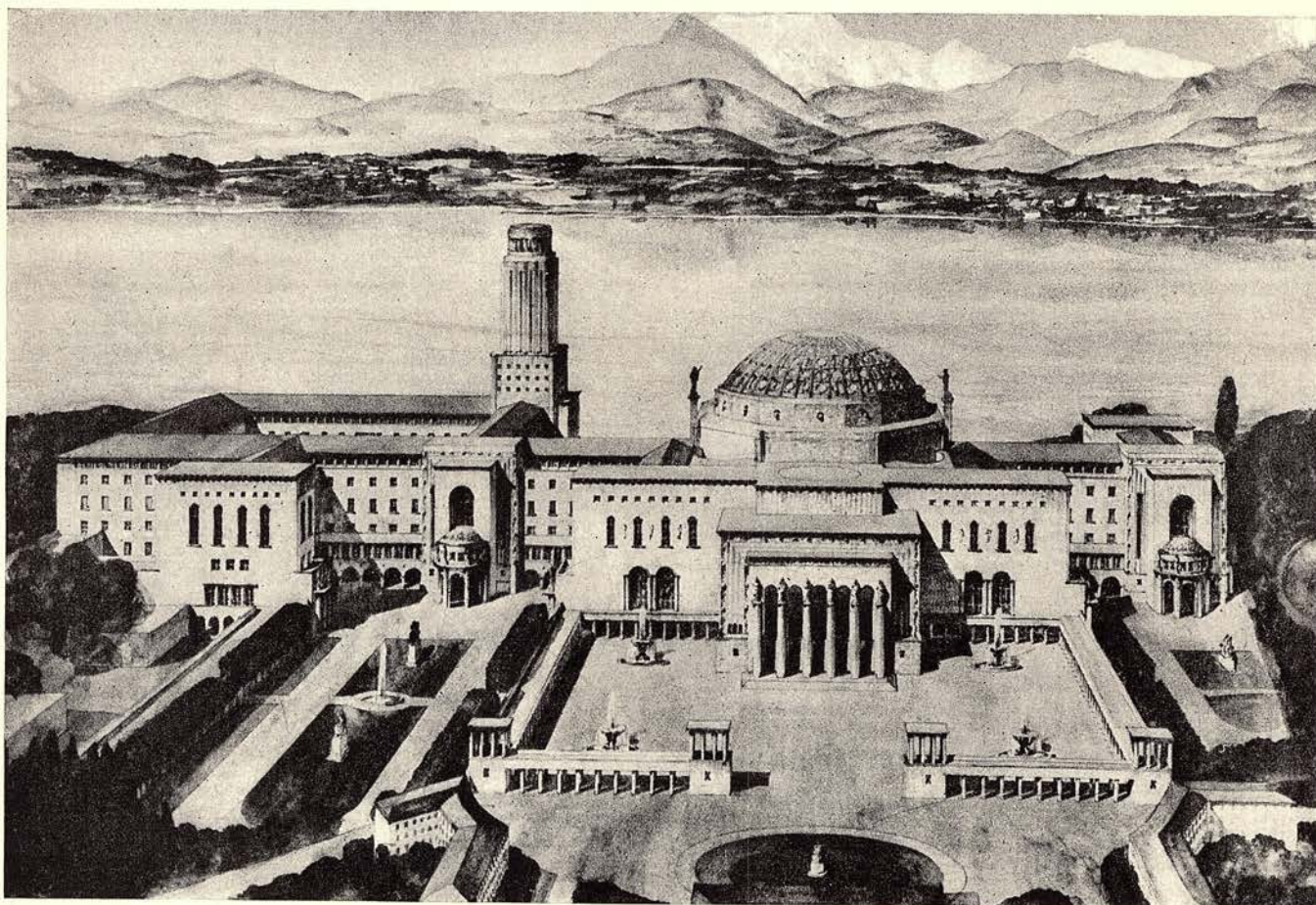
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Prof. Giuseppe Vago of Rome, Architect

In the architectural competition for the erection of a League of Nations Building at Geneva, nine first prizes of 12,000 francs each were awarded to architects of member states. There were nine honorable mentions of 3,800 francs each in Class 1, and nine honorable mentions of 2,500 francs each in Class 2. Three hundred and seventy-seven architects took part in the competition, and submitted thousands of drawings "expressing their idea in a practical and artistic form worthy of the object in view."

# JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

Volume XV

OCTOBER, 1927

Number 10

## Steps and Stairs

By ALFRED M. BROOKS

**S**OLOMON'S great throne of ivory had six steps. The ascent to the Muses' mountain was the gradus ad-Parnassum. Approach by stairs has always been the mode of reaching the high places of man's erection, literally or figuratively. They are indispensable for going from level to level, inside and out of buildings. Grand or humble, they are a necessity. Few or many, they should be easy, but seldom are. Furthermore, they should be beautiful, fair and open, with a fair landing-place, as Lord Bacon said. Unfortunately, physically and æsthetically, we know how very seldom this is the case.

As we go up and down any particular stair there is an ever-felt, but never seen, companion at our side. It is the spirit of the builder, the designer; best of companions when his stairs are easy and beautiful; worst when they are difficult and ugly, for no feature of architecture is more closely bound up with its twin-essentials, use and beauty. The architect of good stairs has blessed humanity more than the inventor of any labor-saving machine has ever done, or probably ever will.

Few know the difference between the man who makes our necessities less arduous and more lovely, and the man who makes unnecessary things more troublesome and more costly, but not lovelier. The first is our friend; the last, our enemy. The last invents and improves patent carpet-cleaners to be used on needless stair-carpets. The first contrives necessary steps into easy and beautiful flights. The first is a real wizard. The last a pseudo-magician, though an age whose god is machine neither sees nor grants it. The first produces a work of art. The last, an artifice.

To discuss some well-known steps and stairs, simple

or otherwise, intimate and charming, which have delighted men through ages is my purpose. They divide naturally into three kinds: those in the open, whether on the outside of buildings, or in court-yards; those strictly interior; and those in gardens, parks, and streets,—civic.

As an example of sheer elegance in outside steps, steps at once foundation and approach, nothing exceeds those of the Maison Carrée, that best preserved and perfect Roman temple. Their reasonableness as an approach, the way they cut through the basement or podium, and thereby provide their own parapets, the relation of width to height within themselves and to the building as a whole, bespeak the very qualities which the term classic implies. Rome never went beyond them. Greece did not often go farther. All the world has copied them.

As examples of solid charm, variety of form given to what are plainly base-works, constructions which add to the appearance of strength, as well as the actuality, few equal the steps of the communal palaces of Prato and Perugia. Perugia is perhaps the more impressive, beauty alone considered. Prato the more commanding, dignity only taken into consideration. In each, the steps, ramps, and landings occupy the entire width of the façade. They are veritably base-works. At Prato the scheme is simpler, keeping on plan to straight lines. The lower ramp, at right angles to the length of the façade, leads straight to the half-way landing. Then, against the wall, by an upper ramp one reaches the main landing. It is longer by several steps than the lower. This gives that touch of diversity which is so vital, but never an obvious quality of a good design, no matter how symmetrical



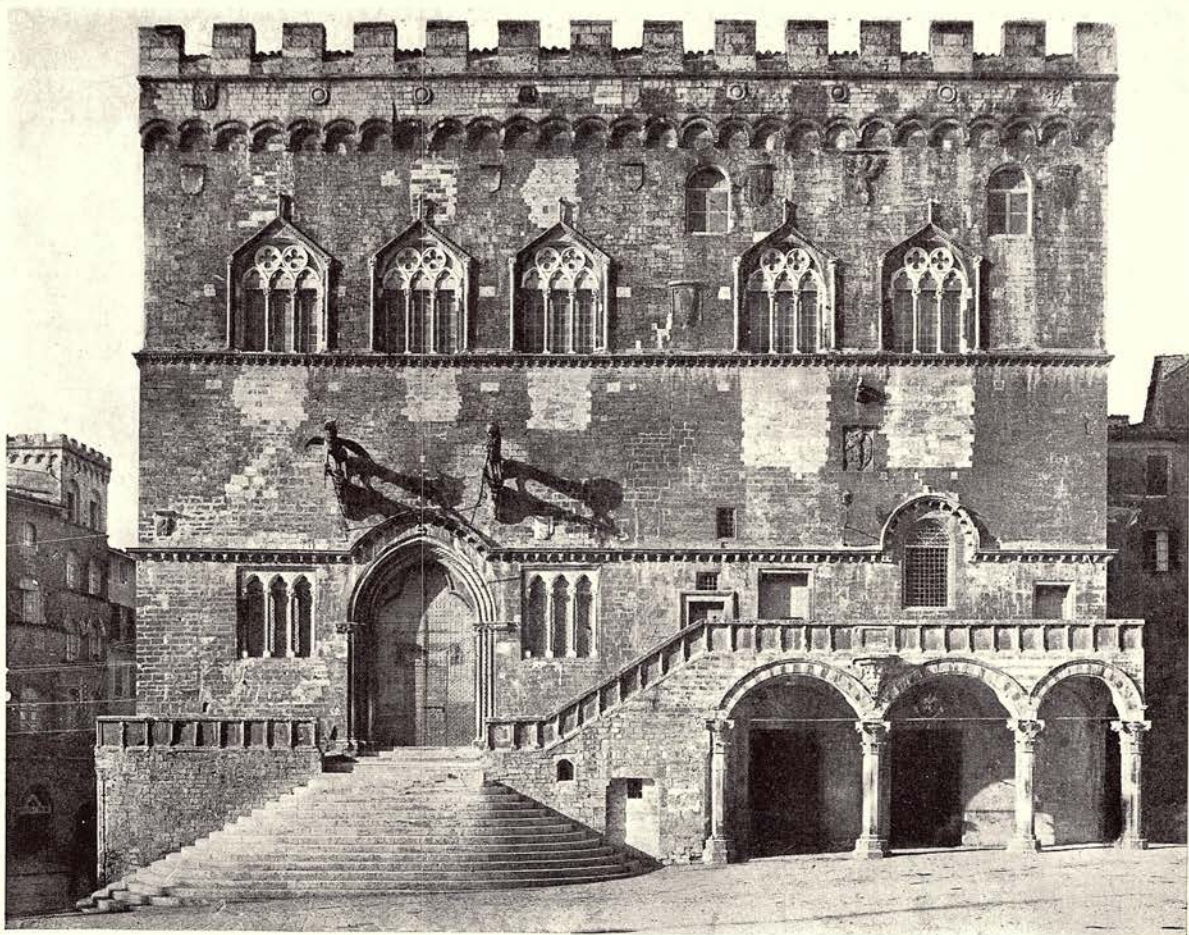
STEPS OF THE APSE-FACADE OF SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

it appears to be at first sight. There is, as it were, an inviolable law of progression ruling over the proportions of this stairway. The lower ramp is to the lower landing as the upper landing is to the upper ramp. Furthermore, there is refreshing variety of detail provided by the contrast between the straight, iron railing of the steps, and the bellying rail of the high platform where one is expected to pause for breath, view the square below, and loll, if one likes. The railing invites to just that.

How well these steps are adapted to the towering wall above. The subtle relation of the one to the other is alluring. But even more so, the sharp shadows on the steps, the broad shadow among the brackets of the platform, the dominant shadows which the vaulted arches make and hold. These shadows, of various shapes and significance, added up, convey the impression of one great shadow to which is opposed one broad light. As the shadow, so is the architecture. Masterly it all is, because it provides just the contrast, without garishness, necessary to make the sunny, soaring wall above appear as gigantic as it really is. The end aimed at has been reached by the simplest means. The interest which attaches to detail is not lacking, but the rare quality of

breadth is insistently kept to the fore. And breadth is the very last perfection of noble architecture. We are amazed by the close approach to beauty in a building which, as ordinarily understood, possesses so little grace. The reason is its steps.

The grace not present at Prato is, at first glance, the paramount feature of the steps of the communal palace at Perugia. But it is not to be accounted for by absence of vigor, for vigor they too have preëminently. It is largely, if not mainly, due to the use of curved lines on plan; the curving, flattened cone of steps, truncated to fit the width of the pointed door to which they ascend in a manner almost triumphant. Then, from the level of the landing, a straight ramp hugs the wall and leads to the long, arch-borne terrace at the right, echo of the less important, wall-borne terrace at the left. It is significant that the horizontal line from the start of the ramp to the extreme left equals, in length, the horizontal line from the top of the ramp to the extreme right. The centre of the entire design is thus brought close to the middle of the triangle formed by the right-hand edge of the curved steps, the walled railing of the upper ramp, and the left-hand column of the arcade. So, with consummate art, is the massive, stepped,



STEPS OF THE COMMUNAL PALACE AT PERUGIA (Lower)  
STEPS AND TERRACES OF THE PETIT TRIANON (Upper)



STEPS OF MAISON CARREE  
THE PERFECT ROMAN TEMPLE

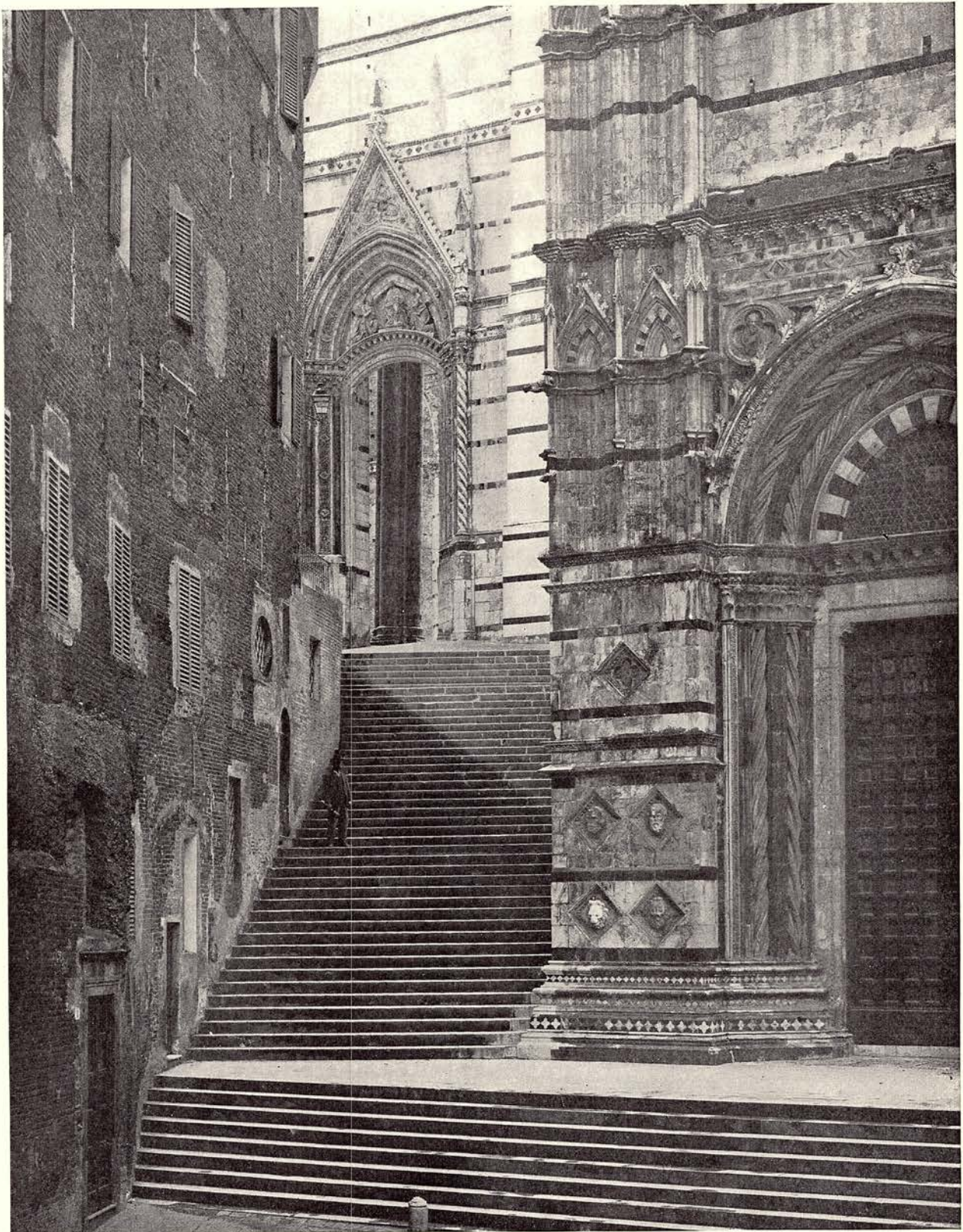
left side balanced upon the open-arched, right side, solidified, as it were, by shadow. It is an example of design in which the centre of importance is devoid of intrinsic interest; a focal point upon which the several, major areas hinge as delicately as the scale-arm upon its bearing. In the same instant analysis is invited and baffled, but the effort is rewarded by increased delight. The experience is one with that which we so often have while listening to music, an experience forever repeated, and always fresh, as we contemplate any work of art born of a true marriage of mind and heart.

Totally different from the Prato and Pistoja stairs, because in no sense the expression of creative imagination attaining its goal solely by the *via sacra* of use and beauty, is that glorious flight in Siena which leads abruptly up from the terrace of the baptistery to the unfinished nave of the cathedral. Here, the steep hill-side is the floor of a canyon, walled on the right by carved and inlaid marble, wrought to the point of jeweller's work; on the left, by soft-hued, time-stained, brick. In this extraordinary place stair and shadow have been companions through centuries.

They follow the straight path which leads from one important point to another, otherwise unattainable save by a long detour. The solution of the problem was foreordained. The architect had the genius to recognize this fact and the grace to bow to it. All he did was to lay up the easiest steps which grade and width admitted. There was no other way. At their top the always lovely wall of gay, light marbles; bright on a dull day, dazzling on a sunny, and the ever-open door. The simplicity of these steps in their setting is sublime.

Of Renaissance origin, especially in Rome, many famous stairs are to be seen. Rarely are they such marvels of delicate adjustment as their medieval forerunners. On the other hand they frequently attained grandeur and are, not infrequently, grandiose. Of the latter kind the imposing flights of the Palazzo Senatorio are typical. As a major item in Michelangelo's design for its façade these steps are alike pompous and suitable. It is not hard to agree, in part at least, with those who claim that they are out of proportion to the whole, a case of tail-wagging dog.

Ramp on ramp, to either side they rise, at an angle,



SIENA CATHEDRAL SHOWING "GLORIOUS FLIGHT"

which is neither easy, nor looks so, to the high platform. This, a bulk-head treated as a fountain, is built up from a double-terraced pool at the street level. Formal in every detail of baluster, pilaster, podium, and newel, theatric in magnitude, sumptuous in toto, these steps are what they were meant to be. That is no small praise, though far from the highest.

Wholly different are the steps of the apse-façade of Santa Maria Maggiore. Think what we may of its pilastered, pannelled, pedimented pile, dome-capped, its stepped foundation, remains one of the sights of Rome. As a vast element of a vaster design, setting off what is so gorgeous by means so direct, they are unique. Ramp over ramp, curved or straight, merging and emerging, they suggest an ocean of petrified waves. Nothing could be more plainly a firm, actual foundation, and nothing could be more accurately symbolic of a spiritually firm foundation. But their Egyptian immobility throbs with motion. They seem to heave and bend. Sun-light and moon-light, shade and shadow, now gentle, now intense, play over them and pattern them as spume does waves. They are star witnesses to the true grand manner. Among their kind they are *ne plus ultra*.

Not in Italy alone was the delicate problem of stepped approaches beautifully solved. Of outside staircases, as commonly understood, that at Canterbury always comes to mind first. It consists of two steps and a broad landing from which a single ramp goes straight to the top. Nothing in its kind is easier. Nor could anything look easier in the nice sense intended by an uneducated man of natural taste who bestowed the high praise upon a house, "She sets easy on the ground." Round, Norman piers on heavy footings, topped by rough-hewn capitals, stand at the four corners of the bottom landing. They are connected by round arches decorated with hatchet-work. The four angles formed by these arches are levelled up to a square base. On this rests a pitch, timber roof.

The steps of the long ramp are walled up high enough to form a parapet. This wall, rubble and flint, carries a light Norman arcade, the shafts of which are progressively shorter as they near the top; bases, capitals and arches remaining the same. The contrast of cut stone and rubble work, along with the delicate spirit which this typically heavy design breathes, the whole roofed with wood, produces one of those rare works of art which appeal equally to the initiate and uninitiate.

Of the same class, but late Gothic, is the outside stairway which leads up to the Chapter Hall of the Cathedral of Meaux. In it the nine lowest steps make a quarter-circle turn, and the tenth step begins the long, straight ramp which continues, uninterrupted to the top. The slow curve dying gently into the prolonged straight line is a beautiful thing to behold.

Two half-arches of cut-stone support the outer ends of the steps. The inner are embedded in the wall of the building. These arches resemble a double flying buttress, the lower arch taking its flight from near the ground; the upper from a half-way pier wings its course to the summit of the higher pier. This supports the top landing. But for the undercutting of these arches, which gives them an interesting profile, the stone-work is absolutely void of decoration. Yet, such grace as this structure possesses, rare at all times, is astounding in a design so positively abrupt. But how the arches, narrow at the start, spread as they rise. In this fact lies much of the secret of their grace. It is the self-same secret which accounts for the ineffable grace of so many French, flying buttresses, as they soar, secure and securing, to unbelievable heights,—Paris, Amiens, and many more.

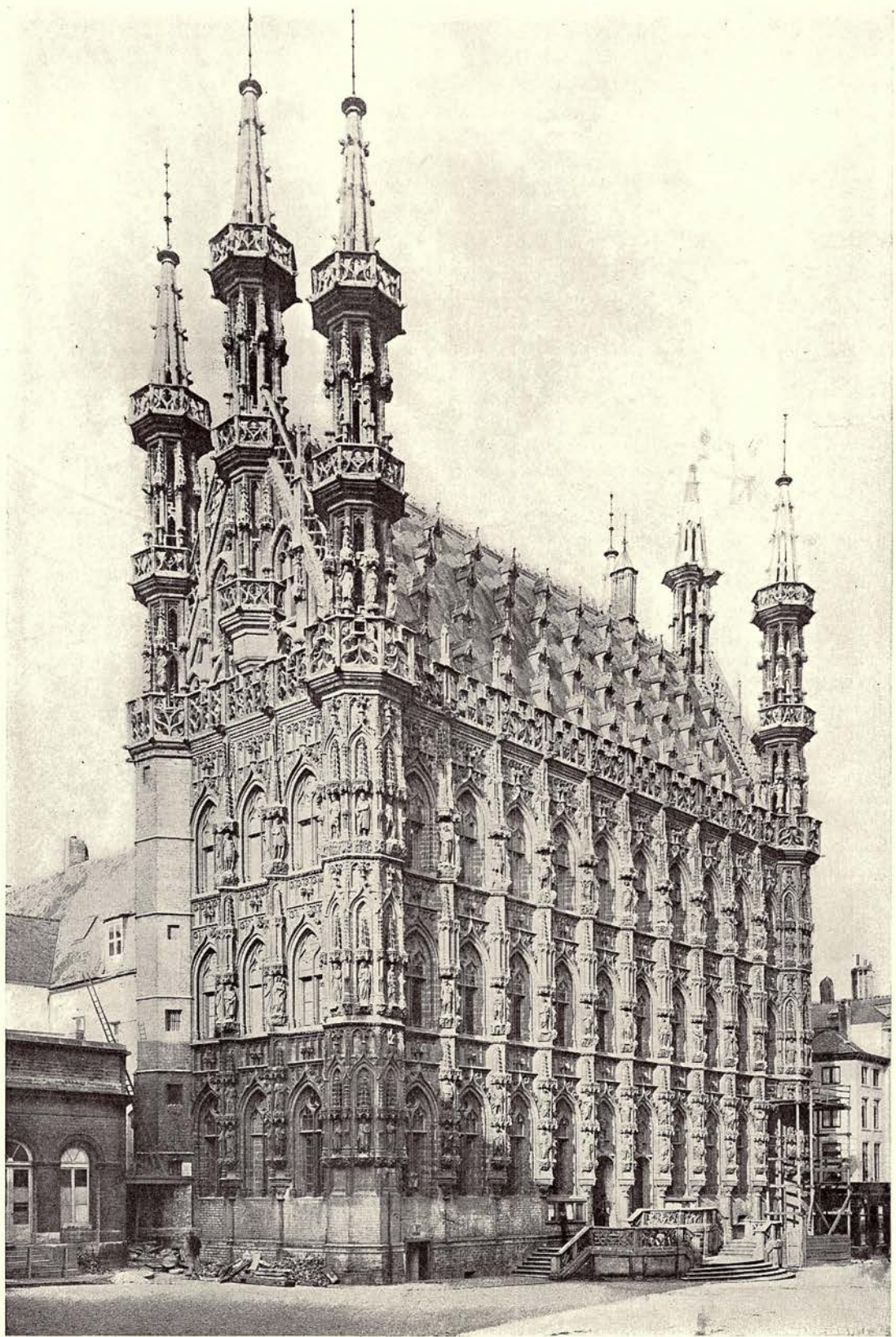
As at Canterbury, so at Meaux, the stairs are protected by a timber roof. But at Meaux we have an example of carpentry, art too little appreciated, raised to the highest level. Plain and sturdy are the square posts which carry this roof, and reasonable to the last degree are their spreading braces. Few are the members, but the purpose of every one is self-evident. Meagre, but rightly placed, is the decorative carving, beneath the brackets, and on the pinnacle-like structures which separate the panels of the parapet. Straightforward and homely, the beauty of design is astounding. Best of all, these steps still stand, ruggedly useful, with every sign of their great age upon them, undefiled by needless, which is always wanton, restoration. They are an architectural benediction. Nearest in our day to profiting by this benediction was Richardson in his fine outside stairway for Trinity Church, Boston.

From such dimensionally insignificant things as the Meaux and Canterbury stairs to the steps of the Cathedral of Bourges seems a far cry. Not so, for the reason that fine architecture is never, primarily, a matter of dimension, nor ever can be. It is a matter of proportion, and always must be. The wide steps of Bourges are at once approach and foundation. In spirit they are identical with those of Santa Maria Maggiore. It matters not if the steps of one lead up to that many-membered dwelling-place of ideas and their lovely symbols which is Bourges, while those of the other support the bland pile of over-worked Roman properties which is Santa Maria.

The significance of these Bourges steps, and their meaning to a vast Gothic front are clear at first sight, but are made clearer by reading what Victor Hugo says of Notre Dame de Paris, which once had similar steps though it has them no more. The worth of architecture, like that of all other arts, is inherent. But the value of art to civilization is in proportion to the number of persons at any given time, and the sum of such persons in all time, who, seeing and using,



FLIGHTS OF THE PALAZZO SENATORIO



STEPS OF THE TOWN HALL AT LOUVAIN

## SCHOOLING THE DRAFTSMEN

understand and enjoy. For initiation into this state of mind, the words men used to look into the deep heart of things are invaluable; the Goethes, Hugos, Ruskins, Hawthornes and Rodins, to name only the dead. "Of the three things of importance now wanting to this front" (Paris, and remaining to Bourges) Victor Hugo names, first, "the eleven steps by which it formerly rose above the level of the ground round about; . . . the eleven steps which added to the majestic sense of grandeur."

Two other examples of outside steps which partake of the nature of base-works, as the stairways of Canterbury and Meaux do not, are those of the Hotel de Ville in Louvain and the Petit Trianon at Versailles. In one respect at least they belong to a different class than any we have discussed, in that the main ramp, approaching the building at right angles, divides at the first landing. From this, by single or double ramps, sometimes curved on plan, one passes up to the top landing which is the floor of the bulk-head left by the dividing ramps lower down.

Of such steps those on the front of the town-hall at Louvain offer an elaborate instance. They have three landing levels, and are planned on a semi-circle. The first ascent consists of five curving steps which lead to a platform from which curving ramps lead up, right and left, to second landings. From these, in turn, straight ramps, against the wall of the building, take one to the top. The whole arrangement, in essence simple, is treated with pannelled basement-walls and pierced, carved parapets in a way to make it appear extremely elaborate.

If you cover these steps with your finger, you instantly perceive the fundamentally important part

they play in the design of this famous building. They broaden and confirm what otherwise would be top-heavy. They temper what is perilously near over-elaboration. They moderate an excessive verticality. They are an inseparable part of a florid whole, themselves florid yet restrained. By contrast, they form an entrancing prologue to what they introduce, the extraordinary architectural drama of the Louvain façade.

With the Petit Trianon we complete the circle in which our present-day architecture started, so to speak, on the steps of the Maison Carrée. But in using this figure of a circle we must remember that much more is implied than mere return to a point of beginning. The truth is otherwise. The circle constantly increased in diameter as the ages wore on. The symbol stood still, but its embodiment has grown. The conservative believes that we are in the same old circle, and, today, at the point in it where Rome began. There, too, he desires to remain. The radical denies place or part to Roman and medieval architecture alike. Both are unreasonable, and, generally speaking, ignorant.

The steps and terraces of the Petit Trianon are structurally obvious. So also are those of the Maison Carrée. Both attain their incomparable elegance by means of absolute symmetry, balance of parts about central axes. To fail to perceive and enjoy their beauty is to fall far short of a catholic, architectural taste. What we need to bear in mind is the fact that such catholicity of taste does not bar out preference, even the strongest preference, our unalienable right as individuals. Neither does it bar out invention, the duty and delight of living builders in every age.

## Schooling the Draftsmen

By JOHN TAYLOR BOYD, JR.

*[This is the first of two articles on a plan of the Committee of Education of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to advance the standards of professional practice. With the shops as the laboratory, draftsmen are being schooled to a more precise understanding of the craftsmen's tasks. The experiment promises to develop as a sound working principle meriting general adoption. The second article will appear in our November issue. The author is the Chairman of the Committee.]*

IN approving the plan of its Committee of Education to further cooperation between draftsmen and craftsmen, the New York Chapter was directly impressed with the need of higher standards in architectural details on the artistic as well as on the practical side.

Deficiencies in architectural design are, of course, due chiefly to the architect, not the client, particularly in New York City practice, where are met countless owners and investors who want the finest architectural design in the finest building materials. Unfortunately, these liberal clients too often fail to get what they pay for.

This is a sweeping generalization, one which can easily be misleading and become harmful to the profession, if it is not used with care. Certainly, there is no intention here of indulging in one of those heated attacks on the profession of architecture which are published from time to time without sufficient basis of fact or clear reasoning from the facts. To indict a profession is almost as serious as to indict a nation. On this account, it should be understood that we are



WHERE BROADWAY BEGINS

*At Bowling Green, not only where Broadway begins, but where New York began.  
The site of Fort Amsterdam. From "Manhattan, the Magical Island."*

## SCHOOLING THE DRAFTSMEN

simply tackling one phase of a constant problem, namely, that of ever improving the standards of professional practice.

Though this problem is always before us, it takes different forms from time to time, and it is one particular form which is here at issue.

However, notwithstanding these proper qualifications, one may fairly assert that the widespread approval given in many quarters to the plan of the New York Chapter's Committee on Education does indicate the existence of a well-informed opinion as to the need of higher standards in architectural details.

To quote the preliminary report of the Committee, which states, after recognizing that the "average attitude of encouragement of the practising architect towards his staff is most creditable," that: "There is, however, in all offices the constant tendency, produced by pressure of work, to hold the men so closely to the production of drawings that we believe that we can discern the growth of a generation of designers and detailers who are losing contact, both with the materials of architectural construction, and with the arts and crafts which prepare them for use in our buildings.

"We have particular reference to the artistic aspects of our work, for we realize that the structural and mechanical aspects are most often handled by men who superintend at least a portion of their work in the field, and so maintain contact with the realities of production.

"We believe that a constant effort must be made to assure contact between draftsmen and craftsmen, in order not only to maintain the vitality of our art, but to prevent a vast amount of wasted effort in the drafting room, due to lack of understanding of the possibilities and limitations of materials and workmanship.

"The ignorance of the average draftsmen of such operations as the sawing, planing, and polishing of stone and marble; the modelling and casting of bronze; or the forging of iron is abysmal, and is expressed in many an expensive detail drawing."

After suggesting to each architect that the "entire drafting force working on a building be permitted to visit, at least once during the course of the job, all the shops such as those fabricating the cut stone, marble, bronze, and ironwork, decorative plasterwork, furniture and draperies, sculpture, etc., where work is being executed for the operation," the Committee offered "to arrange a series of visits of members of architects' staffs to shops of craftsmen, at intervals of one or two a month, toward the end of the afternoon."

Such, in brief, is the plan. No formal, elaborate educational program for which the Committee, not being professional teachers were not equipped, but merely a simple, practical step, made, in the Committee's words, "to secure a definite start on a move-

ment which could be carried as far as individual architects and draftsmen desired, acting on their own initiative."

Despite the severe strictures contained in this report, the Committee's findings and suggestions were received with a really surprising enthusiasm. The officers and members of the New York Chapter, craftsmen who eagerly offered the courtesy of their shops; draftsmen, less articulate, but nevertheless deeply appreciative; the architectural press that gave much space to it; the daily press that published widely the accounts issued by the Committee on Public Information of the Architects; and educational authorities, particularly the School of Fine Arts and the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale,—all this testimony, oral and written, I believe it fair to say, is sound evidence of the need for improvement in architectural details.

Although the approval of the profession and of allied and sympathetic local interests given to the report was immediate, widespread, and hearty, one may regret that it was not more specific. Had it been so, there is no doubt that much valuable information as to these defects in professional practice and suggestions for overcoming them would have been forthcoming. But, the expressions came from active, practical men who said, in effect:

"You're right, go to it!" and went their way to their own concerns.

Even the dozen or more architects, among them some of our ablest practitioners, who took the trouble to sit down and write personal letters of appreciation to the Committee, could hardly be expected to cover pages quoting chapter and verse, valuable though that would have been.

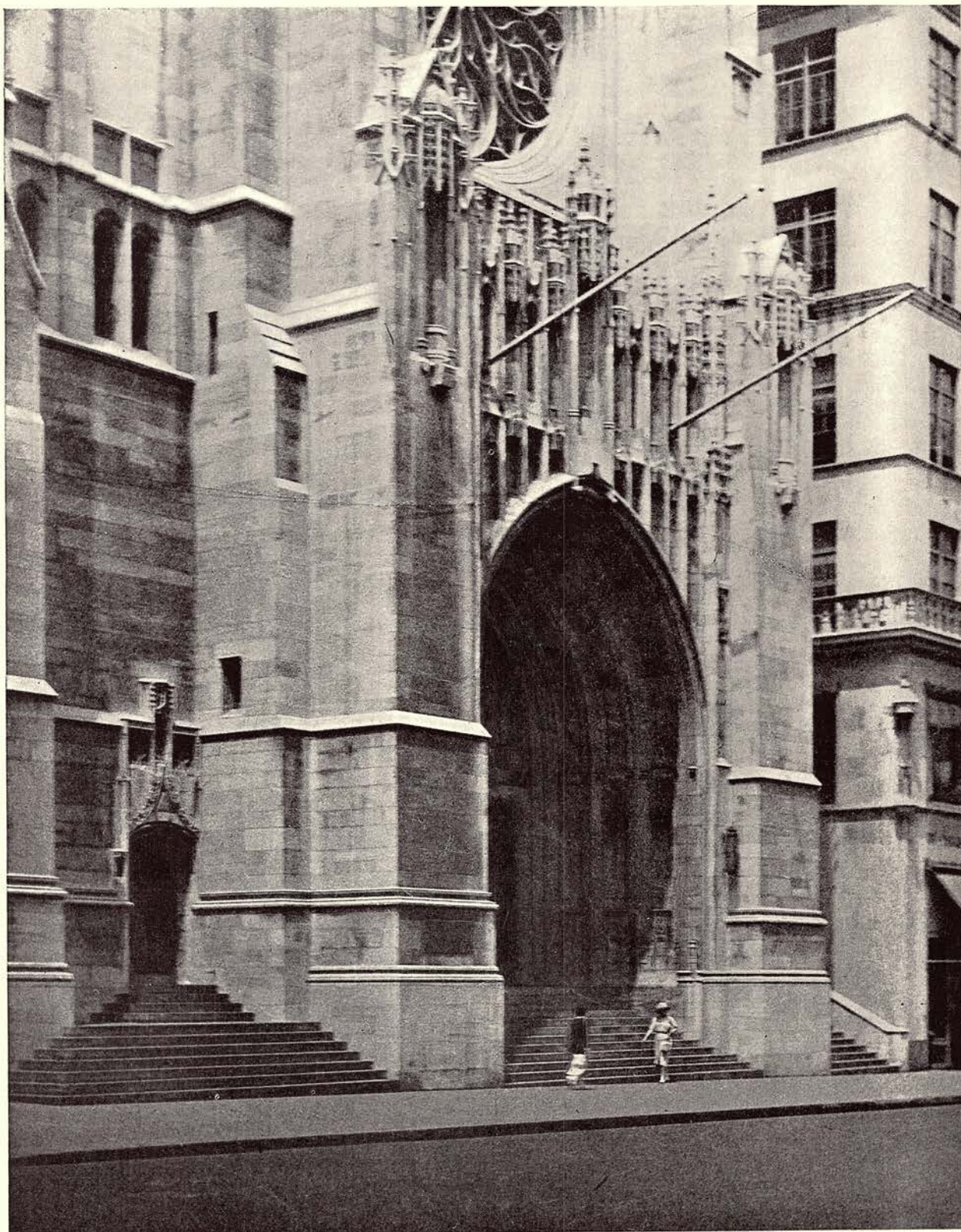
The craftsmen, naturally, were diplomatic in avoiding adverse comment. And the Committee, too, had not the time for an extensive survey, made to find out the exact extent and degree of the shortcomings at issue.

However, it seems worth while to discuss deficiencies more specifically, and not be deterred by the talk of an ideally-thorough investigation. In any case, one may justly call attention to certain phases in the situation which are fairly well known in New York.

In the first place, as suggested above, it is true that, in New York, many clients do not shrink from building the most expensive buildings, decorated with the finest and most beautifully wrought materials, and that these details are often of low standard design. Generally, the craftsman cannot be blamed for the failure, because he often executes these same details with the highest technical skill.

In fact, more than once I have had the embarrassing experience of walking with a craftsman along one of New York's finest streets, and having him exclaim:

*(Continued on Page 302)*



THE PORTAL TO ST. THOMAS'

*Designed to hold its own with the buildings which surround it. The interior of St. Thomas' with its glorious veredos is most impressive. Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, architects. From "Manhattan, the Magical Island."*

# Editorial

## PAN-AMERICA

Pan-America suggests unity, and unity suggests oneness of mind. So ambitious a term could scarcely have come into common usage among the peoples to which it applies were it not expressive of an ideal. Plainly, this ideal is some higher form of democratic association.

We are tempted to discourse upon the implications of the ideal; to point out the things which it embraces, and the things which it excludes. To do so would make too wide a detour from the cultural influences of architecture, and perhaps affect finality of judgment in controversial spheres.

We cannot believe, however, that the oneness of mind which created the Pan-American aspiration is rooted essentially either in politics or in commerce, though sympathy of thought and practice in both is a not unworthy end.

But the unity sought is a moral unity, implying no sterile formalism, political or commercial, but grounded rather in the normal interrelationship of cultures, each freely acting upon the other and reciprocally enriching all. Through moral means alone can Pan-America persist as a living force. External, whether in the shape of treaties or of other agreements, are not enough.

Pan-America lies deeper. It was not created by contract; still less by fiat. Through neither can it endure, unless by contract we mean that consensus which arises from true friendship unweighted by mercenary consideration, and by fiat we mean that manifestation of nobler natures which recognizes the inalienable rights of men and of nations. At the bottom of it all is human dignity. And it is from human dignity that culture springs. Governments are possible only because of the existence of underlying cultures. From all culture, and hence from all government, architecture is inseparable.

It is encouraging to learn of the experiences of the delegation appointed by the President of the American Institute of Architects, and designated by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, to represent the Institute and the United States at the Third Pan-American Congress of Architects at Buenos Aires.

This is neither a report nor a eulogy. But we cannot refrain from noting that to the chairman of the delegation, Mr. Frank R. Watson of Philadelphia, was assigned the task of discussing "Spiritual Bearings of the Architect in America." This subject, we are sure, is not unrelated to the Code of Ethics of the Institute, which, it is appropriate to point out, is receiving nationwide prominence in the press of the United States—not an unhappy sequence.

No less inspiring was the theme assigned to Mr. Kenneth M. Murchison of New York—"What Should Be the Architect's Attitude Towards Modern Social Problems?" Here we find the architect discussing "the architect's share in the making of the law." How inspiring it is to witness the architects of two continents ignoring shadows and boldly voicing the fundamental realities which Pan-America connotes.

The report of this delegation, consisting also of Professor John Galen Howard of the University of California, Professor Warren P. Laird of the University of Pennsylvania, and Mr. W. L. Plack of Philadelphia, is a historical document disclosing fresh springs of international morality. Pan-America is an invitation to destiny. We have the courage to hope that destiny will respond in the universal spirit of architecture.

One incident of the journey of the American delegation is too moving to pass unnoticed. At a farewell banquet tendered the visiting delegation by the Sociedad Central de Arquitectos our representatives presented, through Mr. Murchison, the following declaration:

"On this ninth day of July, when the Republic of Argentina celebrates the anniversary of its independence, the brotherly love and cordial sympathy of all good Americans from the United States must go out to her with peculiar depth and force. We remember our own Independence Day—the Glorious Fourth of this same month; we remember our own beloved liberator, Washington; and, in so remembering, we cannot fail to recognize with kindred honor and affection Argentina's day, and Argentina's liberator, the great San Martin, whose name is blazoned with that of Washington among the immortal few who have brought freedom to mankind.

"To the members of the United States delegation to the Third Pan-American Congress of Architects, these feelings come with special power. We have experienced at first hand the warmth of friendly welcome. We have worked shoulder to shoulder with our fellows of the South to find solutions for the problems of our profession. We have been privileged to enjoy a splendid and unforgettable hospitality. Great as our admiration and our affection for our neighbors of South America have always been, we shall return to our own land with those sentiments magnified a hundred fold and with a new keenness born from personal contact."

Not the least interesting among other features of the Congress upon which we cannot dwell at length was the feeling that the Congress should in the near future convene in Washington. This event would impart vitality to the Pan-America we have tried to envision.

## Schooling the Draftsmen

(Continued from Page 299)

"See that iron work (or those windows); I did that! Don't you think that is a good piece of work?"

The work of the craftsman was clearly good, indeed excellent, but the design and modelling were indifferent. One case I remember was the large two-storied cast-iron windows of a bank alteration, the windows filling the space between heavy Greek Doric columns of a building over fifteen years old. Mechanically, the windows were excellent, but the tiny scale and over-fine character of the modelling and details were an example of a most flagrant mistake in architecture—that of giving one material the character of another. The windows looked like wood. Peculiarly unfortunate was this idea of giving the metal-work on the front of a big city bank the air of a village store front. The architect was solely responsible.

Defective scale and spurious character are current faults in contemporary architecture. To these must be added superficial modelling. The variation in the excellence of the modelling of ornament is striking on the new buildings of New York. Not only is this true as between buildings, but sometimes it is true as between different details on the same building. These faults are due both to defects in the underlying design of the building and to the execution of the design itself. It is the latter factor, of course, which concerns most draftsmen.

Fortunately, one sees instances of fine design and

details. If one misses the wonderful thoroughness and precision of the older tradition, as exemplified in the work of McKim, Mead and White in the Morgan Library, or of Carrere and Hastings in some of the shop buildings on Fifth Avenue, such as Alexander's, at the same time, there is a real advance in the freshness, originality, and richness of much contemporary design. Architecture is getting less bookish and is becoming more modern.

Another, and most important, fact is the types of buildings which are most at fault. I believe it correct to state that the better class of domestic architecture shows the best design, and the best details. Country-house architecture seems to be our finest work. Next comes "institutional" architecture, particularly those buildings devoted to the higher education. Churches often show a high degree of excellence.

Public architecture, likewise, varies in excellence, possibly due to the conflict between "classical" and "modernistic" formulæ in this type of building. In this respect, I personally feel that our just pride over the development of our own American architectural education blinds us somewhat to the fact that we have not yet established our own tradition of monumental design comparable to the Beaux-Arts ideal.

But the point is that, in these important classes of buildings, design is often of a high order and is sometimes deserving of rich praise. The exceptions noted are due chiefly to cultural confusion, which, nevertheless, the architect should strive to clear up. Generally, there is little widespread complaint of poor design or slovenly details in this architecture.

## A New Enterprise of Education in the Fine Arts

By STANLEY WHITE<sup>1</sup>

FOR the past two summers a small group of students has taken a postgraduate course of study never offered before in this country, with results that have been convincing as to the real merit of such a form of training. Following graduation from college, eight architects and eight landscape architects, selected from several universities, have been brought together for three months in Lake Forest, Ill., where they have been given an opportunity to round out their experience by making many new contacts that the universities, by virtue of their location and organization, are not able to afford.

The principal object of the Foundation for Architecture and Landscape Architecture is to provide for a limited number of students who give promise of high professional attainment an opportunity to en-

large their patrimony of culture, to collaborate in practical problems in architecture and landscape architecture. They are to study fine examples of both arts created in this country, and to sketch free-hand from life, and to travel in Europe in collaborative teams of architects and landscape architects.

The program of the Foundation accomplishes two leading purposes: first, the study of real subjects in the field; and second, collaboration between students of different arts on academic problems. On account of the great number of fine architectural and landscape subjects within a radius of a mile of the headquarters of the Foundation, it is possible for the students to study and work together for the entire summer. In this way, they get the benefit of contacts with men from various schools and different professions.

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Landscape Architecture in the University of Illinois and Director of the Foundation for Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

## A NEW ENTERPRISE OF EDUCATION IN THE FINE ARTS

The field work is comparable to the study accomplished by traveling fellowships abroad, but, as it is done under American conditions, it has the advantage of training the student in American ideas and traditions, and giving him information on native materials of all sorts.

The idea for the Foundation started in 1925 when an Institute of Lectures was held under the auspices of the Lake Forest Garden Club, directed by Ferruccio Vitale, Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Although much of the work of organization and management for the first two experimental years of the Foundation fell on the shoulders of people in the vicinity of Lake Forest who were interested in the innovation, the institution is intended to represent broad interests. By its support and student constituency it bears out that purpose. Students have been selected from Iowa State College, the University of Illinois, the Ohio State University, the University of Michigan, and the Armour Institute of Technology.

The American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects have appointed their respective presidents to the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. The Alumni Association of the American Academy in Rome has undertaken to provide criticism on the collaborative problems of this year. On account of the unusual success of the first trials, the Foundation was incorporated, and plans have been started to develop it on a permanent basis.

As to the accomplishment of definite purposes, much may be said. At the present time, the whole thing is so new that it may not be easily appreciated in its exact relation to education in the fine arts in this country. That is to say, present experiences may be the basis of newer ideas yet to be formulated and carried out. Now, one of the chief benefits is that students, of a high degree of merit in their particular line, are given a broader outlook on their profession through seeing and studying real subjects in the field, and by associating with other students and professional artists who are able to give them a fresh viewpoint.

In this way, it serves as an excellent transition from the classroom to the laboratory of life, whether the student wishes to continue his studies or travel, or to take up practical work.

The Foundation especially desires to maintain a liberal viewpoint in whatever arts its influence touches. Its purpose is not to take an active part in the formulation of any idea or set of ideas that might express a "school of thought," nor to subscribe to any particular mode or art form as a precedent for the practice of the arts. The freedom of the student to do his own thinking is scrupulously guarded. We have no faculty and no responsibility to any other institution which might tend to establish fixed notions.

Describing more fully the detail of the summer's work, it might be said that the most important part of the study is the field work to which two-thirds of the total time is allotted. During the periods spent in the field, the students are assigned to definite subjects (as far as possible of their own selection). But, the manner of their study is not established for them, thereby giving them the greatest possible freedom for individual interpretation.

The records they make vary from plot plans, measured elevations, and details, to free impressions in perspective, and in whatever medium suitable to their convenience. This type of study, closely following a full academic course of study, is of great practical value in giving substance to their critical sense.

In viewing buildings and landscapes in full sunlight and perspective, and in full operation, according to their particular functions, the students have the best opportunity for consummating their long preparation by gaining these first-hand contacts with the subjects they have known mostly through mere pictorial representations. Here, they learn the great importance of good scale, fitness to position and to purpose, as well as details of texture, and color of materials.

Collaboration between landscape architects and architects, viewed from the standpoint of success already established, promises to be of the utmost importance. Approximately, one-third of the total time is given to it at Lake Forest. Four different problems, each of one week's duration, are given in the summer, alternating with the periods in the field. In the summer work of the Foundation, the organization is such that collaboration can be done most effectively. Its success may be of interest to colleges whose fine arts groups are so organized that collaboration has not been considered a necessary part of the curriculum.

Among the most valuable contacts with professional people should be mentioned the visits of the critics sent to us by the Alumni Association of the American Academy of Rome, who remained for a week at a time. Chester B. Price remained for two weeks to give special instruction in sketching. We had occasional visits from other professional men, as trustees of the Foundation, or as judges in the competitions.

Two students, an architect and a landscape architect, who have proved themselves most worthy in each respective line, receive prizes of \$1,250 each, to be used for foreign travel the succeeding year. The first traveling fellows were Franklin G. Scott, architect, and R. L. Reaser, landscape architect, of Ohio State University.

The officers of the Foundation are: Edward L. Ryerson, Honorary President; Walter S. Brewster, President; Mrs. Tiffany Blake, Vice-President; Mrs. A. A. Carpenter, Secretary; and Mrs. John W. Gary, Treasurer.

# Spare the Potomac!

By HORACE W. PEASLEE

[This communication, "a protest of national idealism," addressed to Major Brehon Somervell, District of Columbia Engineer, has been filed with the Federal Power Commission by Horace W. Peaslee of Washington, Chairman of the Institute's National Committee on Plan of Washington and Environs.]

ON behalf of the American Institute of Architects, and as a member of its National Committee on the Plan of Washington and Environs, it is my duty to file a protest against any power development, private or public, of the gorge of the Potomac River or of the Great Falls district. This objection is based on the following grounds:

At stake is an important element in the setting of the national capital, which in its entirety is a question of national and international interest and importance. At best the power development is but a comparative detail of limited commercial value. It is the belief of the architects and of the planning professions at large that nothing should be done which in any way detracts from or limits the possibilities of maximum development of the seat of government.

Concerning taste and policy in such matters there may be no agreement; but in regional planning, in city planning, and in æsthetic considerations, which from our point of view are the prime considerations, we believe that such matters should be left in the hands of specialists, just as are any matters of engineering, law or medicine in which we are vitally concerned.

From the point of view of internationalism, we refer to the oft-quoted comment of James Bryce, former Ambassador to the United States from Great Britain and a man of the broadest international viewpoint. With intimate knowledge of the great countries of the world, he states that he knows of no European capital, except Constantinople, which has such beautiful scenery in its environs; that no European city has such a noble cataract as the Great Falls of the Potomac, which, he points out, is a unique scenic asset as distinctive in its way as the Bosphorous is to Constantinople, or the mountains to Rio de Janeiro. He points out that nature has done so much, and has offered such an opportunity for a superb capital, that it would be almost an act of ingratitude to Providence, to history, and to the men who planned the city here, if we do not make use of these advantages. One phrase is peculiarly striking in the present instance:

"In these circumstances, may not the city of Washington feel that its mission in life is to be the embodiment of the majest and the stateliness of the whole nation \*\*\* to be \*\*\* a capital of capitals \*\*\* repre-

senting all that is finest in American conception, all that is largest and most luminous in American thought embodying the nation's ideal of what the capital of such a nation should be \*\*\* the highest aspirations as to external dignity and beauty that a great people can form for that which is the center and national focus of their life."

The second consideration is the viewpoint of the specialists. We have only to review the chaotic conditions and the haphazard misdirection which preceded the work of the McMillan Commission to realize what specialists in city planning and civic development have contributed to the national capital. Through the McMillan Commission, through the Fine Arts Commissions, and now through the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the ablest men of the country have contributed, freely and without compensation, of their best thought and most painstaking effort. Those commissions have had the solid backing of their professional groups.

If we are ever to get anywhere in any kind of project such as this, we may not, as laymen, take the suggestions which we happen to like and reject those which do not appeal to us. It is a case of putting our full confidence in the ablest men available, and of following their lead: if we cannot agree and cannot follow, of getting other able men and of following theirs; but some general leadership must be recognized. We know of no abler group than this one to which the planning has been entrusted, nor any group of men who have had to do with larger projects. Its members have international standing, not for theory but for accomplishment; and it is our purpose as a professional organization to back them to the limit of our ability.

Here is a project so great in its conception that even those closest to it have barely glimpsed its possibilities because of present inaccessibility. They have taken it for granted, just as many of us take for granted and always intend to visit our museums and historic monuments. But there are millions here, gone, or yet to come, who never have seen or never will see anything else comparable. To them the scenery of the Yellowstone, of Niagara, is inaccessible. These millions, however, make pilgrimages to the capital of their country, and are certainly entitled to find there, preserved by its custodians and made accessible, every scenic asset with which nature has endowed it.

Every day brings its sheaf of telegrams and letters of protest from architects in every state who have long fought for the adequate development of the national capital, protesting the destruction of the Potomac

## EXPLOITING THE LAND

gorge and stating their determination to support the fight in Congress. These protests are too detailed to be presented at this time, but will be subsequently filed. One or two comments are of special interest.

A North Carolina representative writes:

"The natural beauty of the Potomac River is known throughout the land, and to my mind it would be nothing short of sacrilege to ruin this for any hydro-electric development."

One from New Jersey states:

"Too many places have disregarded the value of nature's beauties, and have sacrificed that value for commercial exploitation returning less of real profit, to their later regret. We have an instance of it here in the Great Falls of Passaic. Surely Washington is the last place where such a thing should be admitted."

Another from Colorado:

"We in our state are up against just such a proposition regarding the magnificent Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River. Without a doubt we will defeat the program of the public utility corporation involved."

We do not regard this as a question to be settled upon a so-called "practical" basis. We believe it to be primarily one of national idealism. Yet we cannot refrain from pointing out certain practical considerations. It has been said that every great progressive

movement, such as the construction of a railroad, has been launched under opposition. That is equally true of great forward movements in constructive planning.

It was true when Central Park was set aside in the heart of New York, yet today its value in cold cash cannot be conceived of. It was true when the Rock Creek Valley was snatched from commercial development and made a breathing space for the people. It was true when the Potomac flats were reclaimed from marshland and made over into a great playground. Only yesterday the papers rang with opposition to the placing of the memorial to Abraham Lincoln in that marshy swamp, where it would shake itself down with fever and ague; and today millions thrill at what the planners envisioned.

Today we could not think of doing without Rock Creek Park and Potomac Park. They are essential to our living conditions. Since their acquisition the population of the city has doubled, and the parkways are crowded to the limit of their carrying capacity. What of tomorrow, when the population shall have doubled and trebled? Tomorrow the gorge of the Potomac, with its beautiful flanking boulevards, with its primitive untouched aspect, will be as vital to intensive city life, and as indispensable, as are today these hard-fought projects of yesterday.

## Exploiting the Land

By HENRY WRIGHT

FOR its resolutions to study the problem of land exploitation and subdivision control the Committee on Community Planning received the generous support of the sixtieth convention of the Institute.

It may be in order to dispel the suspicion that the Committee is embarking upon a crusade of reformation or hopes to offer a constructive "solution" of the problem. We can take it for granted that cities will continue to sow their wild oats of extravagance in projecting unnecessary and useless extensions of territory so long as the speculative urge is uppermost in the minds of their citizens.

There is, however, growing evidence from many quarters that cities are beginning to cast up their balances or are taking an inventory of their stocks in hand, and that the question of how to carry over large quantities of damaged goods is at least a live issue.

We learn that our largest mid-western metropolis, in which one authority has estimated that newly plotted suburban land has been opened up sufficient to house 80,000,000 people, is now making a study to

find out where it "is at." One institution has been making a study of assessed valuations and has discovered widespread variations of a most remarkable nature.

Newly developed property has to a large extent escaped the attention of the assessor, and has scarcely begun to carry more than a meagre part of either general or local costs. Another planning body is digging into records which will furnish reliable facts in relation to the quantitative factors of the situation. Unfortunately neither of these studies is as yet ready for public distribution.

A neighboring city which has until recently maintained a record for rapid growth of population has so outstripped that growth that it has added a six-mile belt of half-baked land development along its circumference. The opinion of our correspondent in that city is that much of this land will be abandoned to weeds and decay while builders seek unspoiled areas beyond. What are a few more minutes by auto to a homeseeker of the present era—where there is more land waiting for the spoiler's art?

<sup>1</sup> Chairman of the Institute's Committee on Community Planning.

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Another city of three-fourths of a million population has the unique credit of having not only plotted but built streets and sewers in a single sector of its suburbs over an area more than equal to the present residential area of the city. Here the township has put over the clever idea of seeing that its bonded debt limit is reached in advance of annexation to the city.

The chairman of this Committee feels that it may be of some value to assemble a mass of such data as may bear upon the following points: (1) The extent of recent land subdivision in various cities; (2) The degree to which the city is seriously working out the problems of service, taxation, government and responsibilities for these new areas; (3) Studies and methods

of control which are being suggested or carried out to meet the problem.

By showing up in mass the ridiculous lengths to which practically all our cities are going in the direction of over-expansion, it is possible that we might direct the attention of authorities to something more pertinent than merely passing laws to regulate the width of streets and size of lots. Valuable as these efforts might have been five years ago, before we had already spoiled most of the land in sight, such efforts are almost too late to be effective. Committee members and others are invited to send in any information or suggestions which may bear upon this perplexing subject.

### A Museum of Peaceful Arts

TWO Museums of Peaceful Arts comparable to those of Munich and Paris are planned in the United States. One is to be erected in New York City, and the other in Chicago. The collections will represent various phases of human industry apart from the arts of war, and will embrace mechanics, manufacture, transportation, mining, farming, chemistry, physical science, and astronomy.

Design of a structure of this character provided the problem for the 1927 Schermerhorn Fellowship competition in the School of Architecture of Columbia University. A committee of members of the American Institute of Architects composed of Prof. E. V. Meeks of Yale University, and Louis Ayres, Thomas Hastings, D. Everett Waid, and Raymond Hood of the New York Chapter awarded the first prize to Charles E. O'Hara, Jr., of Englewood, N. J., a 1927 graduate. The Fellowship, carrying a stipend of \$1,875, affords a year of foreign travel and study.

The winning design was adapted to the projected Museum on the hill in New York at about 178th Street near where the new Hudson River Bridge from New York to New Jersey is to be located.

The general requirements to which the design conforms were stated to the competitors as follows:

"The collections in themselves will be the decorative objects, and since they may be changed from time to time by donations and improved methods the exhibition space must be easily varied for arrangement of exhibitions.

"The space must be lighted mainly by daylight, but many parts will be illumined artificially. There must be, however, ample window openings for both light and air. Since the public will attend in large groups, it is deemed not practical to make the building so high as to require elevator service for the majority.

"Six stories above the ground in the highest point is about the normal content desired. Some of the building will be lower; a small part may be higher. The exhibition space is to have a width normally about sixty feet wide, but parts may be up to eighty feet or 100 feet wide.

"A court or courts, for large and lofty exhibits, should be arranged for, covered by a glazed roof at any height desired by the designer. The side walls may be set back in stages to admit an abundance of light at the bottom and to illumine the rooms about the court.

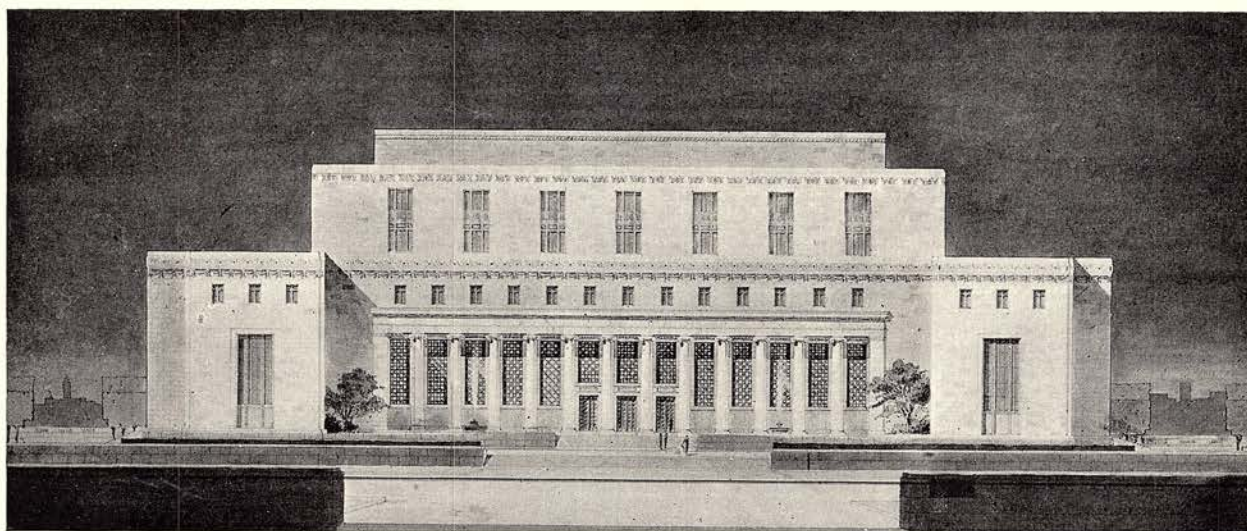
"The basement stories, of which there will be two or three below the ground, will be lighted and aired mechanically. The astronomical exhibit will have one side opening on a flat roof for its own peculiar purposes.

"General exhibition and administrative space above the ground level, about 200,000 square feet, and below ground, about 100,000 square feet, generally arranged in six stories, more or less above ground, and two or three stories below ground.

"A large entrance hall should be preceded by an open court. Administration offices should occupy about 2,000 square feet, and public comfort and coat rooms, 2,000 square feet. There should be one or more closed courts, 8,000 square feet to 12,000 square feet. The exposition space is to be arranged in a convenient and artistic plan in any desired form.

"Elevation of front is to have such dignity and beauty as a building of this character demands. The expression should convey the idea of a certain richness and grace, and yet portray the practical character of a museum.

"Windows in general should have lintels or flat arches, since in museum space arches cut off light



MUSEUM OF PEACEFUL ARTS  
WINNING STUDENT DESIGN

area. Windows should reach to near the ceiling and the sill should be six or more feet above the floor. Roof spaces are in general to be flat, and arranged for practical uses.

"The property available is not over 400 feet in each direction from street to street. It is surrounded by an avenue in front and streets on three other sides."

## The "Horrors" of Piccadilly

*Correspondence of THE JOURNAL*

*London, September*

THE Londoner is a patient fellow, charming and polite when one considers the kind of thing that he has to put up with.

In the first place, the London winter is an abomination. During November come the first fogs, mostly very dark grey with black spots (the *crème St. Germain* variety having gone out of fashion), and the fogs are varied by rain. In the London winter it does not rain all day, but it rains every day; especially when the morning starts with an early burst of sunshine one is certain of a good soaking before 11 o'clock.

The weather becomes more actively hostile in January and February than in any other month, but the rain and cold extend well into the so-called merrie month of May. By this time the Londoner is beginning to get a little fed-up and wants his summer, which he gets in one glorious fortnight of brilliant blue sky dotted with fleecy white clouds seen in Leader's pictures. During this fortnight everyone rubs their hands together, and shopkeepers say "Good morning! What wonderful weather we're having!" In fact, it is this particular fortnight which prevents coming true the remark of Stendhal's that "once in every year the Englishman contemplates suicide."

After the fortnight summer rains set in, and continue steadily until it is time again for the November fogs.

The only thing which keeps the Englishman alive during this summer period is the hope that the annual fine fort-

night may coincide with his two weeks' holiday. When he returns disappointed from his wet vacation he finds his final income-tax demand notes waiting for him, and this gives him such heart failure that he forgets all about the weather until next year.

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These long introductory remarks about the English climate are not made merely with the object of filling space. They are intended to convey the impression that a London summer can be pretty trying, and to lead up to a mention of the added horror which has descended upon us in the shape of the four months' closing of our principal East and West thoroughfare, Piccadilly, for complete relaying.

It is fifteen years since Piccadilly was relaid, and then it was only done in sections; since then the Water Board and the Post Office, and the Gas and Electric Light Companies have had time to forget where the various services are located, and are going to start on a little voyage of exploration.

The closing of Piccadilly came as a bombshell to the hotel proprietors, to the shopkeepers, and to the clubs. Besides the Berkeley and the Ritz and the Piccadilly, there are two new hotels, the Park Lane and the Green Park, in Piccadilly. Their guests are having the joy of listening night and day to that modern horror, the pneumatic percussion drill. As for the shopkeepers, they estimate a decline of fifty per cent in trade while the block is on.

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There are, however, compensations. One of them is that for the first time in history, by special Royal consent (and in England that means something) traffic passes through Decimus Burton's Arch at Constitution Hill and comes out at the Admiralty Arch along the Mall into Trafalgar Square. For the first time in history you can look into the windows of Buckingham Palace from the top of a 'bus, and take a penny fare with St. James' Palace as your destination. It is an enchanted ride, past the world's most famous clubs of Pall Mall, and then into the Park past the cobbled courtyard of St. James' Palace. Then round the statue of Queen Victoria domestically gay with pale green water and red geraniums, and so up Constitution Hill to Marlborough Gate. It is an English idyll, modern style, and that 'bus ride is about the best and cheapest sensation in the whole of the British Empire at the present moment.

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While Piccadilly is being pulled to pieces, and a corps of housebreakers are pulling down a block in the Strand to widen it between Adam Street, Adelphi, and the Hotel Cecil, other buildings in London have been collapsing without any outside help at all.

The first disaster occurred in Beak Street, a narrow thoroughfare just back of Regent Street, where an old building which was being underpinned came down without warning like a house of cards, unfortunately involving loss of life. Here it would appear that insufficient strutting was the cause, and inquiry is being held into the responsibilities.

Excitement over this disaster had scarcely abated before there was a much more serious collapse of similar nature in Cornhill. In this case, the entire end wall of a six-story building occupied by an insurance company crashed without warning into a deep excavation which was being made along the roadway of Cornhill, crushing the great baulks of timber which were strutting the retaining wall to the roadway, and dragging part of the latter into the chasm. A report of the cause of the disaster has not yet been issued, but it is noteworthy that here again the failure has occurred where underpinning was in progress. The collapse of the roadway has revealed an alarming state of affairs in the roadway itself, where it can be seen that the solid earth on which the street surface was once laid has subsided to such an extent that the roadway has become merely a self-supporting vault, beneath which is a void, and great anxiety is felt for the safety of other streets in the city where similar subsidence may have occurred.

The collapse is a serious matter for the contractors, the engineer responsible for the underpinning, and the architects, and indicates the dangers ahead with the present system of honey-combing the foundations of London with subterranean channels of all kinds, for the subsoil is constantly shifting, and it is probably to some such cause that is partly attributable the failure of the piers of St. Paul's Cathedral, where the work of reinforcement is still in progress.

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While parts of London are falling down, there is fortunately plenty of new building in contemplation to fill the gaps. The most important of the projected schemes is the plan of the London University to utilise the site in Bloomsbury for the erection of buildings for the social, corporate, and athletic activities of the University.

The ground comprises eleven and a half acres just back of the British Museum, and has been bought for £525,000. The purchase closes a controversy over policy which has lasted for seven years. If London University is enabled to house itself in this most charming quarter of London it has to thank America for the opportunity, for the purchase was only made possible by the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation, which donated the sum of £400,000, the remaining £125,000 being contributed by His Majesty's government.

Next in importance from the standpoint of London architecture is the news that Mr. Irving Bush has decided to add to Bush House in Aldwych two large wings of office buildings, and that work will proceed at once.

Bush House as it stands at present has never looked quite satisfactory, as must be the case with any half-completed scheme. The new additions will spread on either side of the present block in a curved frontage of 155 feet on Aldwych, and between the old and new blocks will be passage ways connecting Kingsway to the Strand.

It was originally intended in Helme & Corbett's plan that the whole of Aldwych site should be occupied by Bush House, but as reported in our last "Letter," Sir Herbert Baker is building premises for the High Commissioner of India to one side, and in order to keep the scheme symmetrical the new Bush House is being kept smaller than at first intended. The block to the West will be the first to be started, Bush House Ltd., having an option for three years on the East side on the same terms. The lease is for ninety-nine years, and the annual rent of each site is £5,000, a pretty heavy charge to meet for a ground area of 13,400 square feet. It is the high rent of this property which has kept vacant for so many years this site, one of the finest in London.

Another big London building will be the £1,000,000 Masonic Temple, the foundation stone of which has just been laid by the Duke of Connaught who is the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasons.

The site is on an acre of ground in Great Queen Street, just off Kingsway, and the design, selected in an open competition a few months ago, is by Ashley & Winton Newman. The plan is a clever one, but the competition elevations were in rather coarse and heavy classic which has been such a favorite competition winner in the past twenty years. They are almost Assyrian in their massiveness, with a 150-foot tower placed anglewise over the main corner entrance, recalling a blend of Sir Edwin Cooper's Port of London building on Tower Hill and the Palais de Justice in Brussels. The money has been subscribed by Masons throughout the Empire.

The Metropolitan Railways is another body which is providing work for the building trades, by erecting what the newspapers call "a wonder block of flats" over Baker Street Station, next door to the gutted premises of Madame Tussaud's famous waxworks which were not so long ago destroyed by fire.

The flats are costing £750,000, and comprise 1,000 rooms divided amongst 200 suites of service flats. There will be a banqueting hall and a ballroom. They are actually going to have central heating, and it is even whispered that each flat will have its own telephone, and that there will be a hairdressing saloon (or should one say barber's shop?) on the premises. That is what is called in London "American

## THE "HORRORS" OF PICCADILLY

practice." An architectural student who recently returned from the States has told them about mail chutes, so it is rumored that they are going to have those, too.

In the realm of smaller buildings, there is considerable back-patting in official circles over the excellent results of the housing campaign, for figures have just been collated which show that the results since the Armistice are very satisfactory.

In general figures, there will be 1,000,000 more houses in this country by December than there were in 1919, two-thirds of them constructed without State aid. The highest peak of activity was reached in 1926 when 200,000 houses were built, but this year will exceed the record by about 17,000. These figures take on a real significance when one realizes that it represents an output of over 600 houses per day!

One important cause of this mushroom-growth of bricks and mortar is the rush to qualify for the present rate of State subsidy, which ends this month. The subsidy under the Housing Act of 1923 will then fall from £6 to £4 per house per annum for twenty years, while that under the scheme passed by Mr. Wheatley in the Socialist government of 1924 will fall from £9 to £7: 10: 0 per annum for forty years.

Generally speaking, the architectural level of the Housing work has been very good, and though one hates to praise an official body, it is the London County Council which, through its own architectural department, has put up dwellings as pleasantly designed and soundly constructed as any in the country.

Rents are still very high, but it is likely that there will be a slight decrease in building costs, owing to a price war which is engaged through a disagreement in the "ring" formed by the Light Castings Association and the National Federation of Builders' Merchants. There has been a price maintenance treaty between these two bodies for many years, which has recently broken down, with resulting free competition, which by some optimists amongst the builders is considered as promising as much as £100 reduction in the cost of a £1,500 house. One wonders.

\* \* \*

The cult of the electric hare is having a slight repercussion in the architectural profession, for new greyhound racing tracks are coming into being all over the country, and grandstand experts are getting quite a lot of work. The latest track to be opened up is the Wembley Stadium, built for the the Empire Exhibition, which has just been sold for £150,000 to a racing syndicate. It holds 100,000 spectators, and the track is long enough to give the electric hare a good run without being savaged. Most of the stadium seats are at present uncovered, but it is the intention of the new owners to get out a scheme for roofing the entire stadium with glass, a nice little prospect for the patent glazing companies.

\* \* \*

It is a little sorrowful that the Architects' Registration Bill, by an adverse vote of five to four, cannot be reported to Parliament, the Select Committee suggesting that a new amended Bill be presented to Parliament next session. What will happen is uncertain, but it is very difficult to obtain a place in the Parliamentary ballot; and it may be that the result of the Committee's recommendation will mean a shelving of the whole matter for some considerable time.

The debates in Committee have shown that politics and architecture are very wide apart, but that does not seem to have deterred Mr. Alfred Bossom, who, it is publicly announced, is entering the political arena on the Conservative side. The first steps are already taken; Mr. Bossom has bought a house in Carlton Gardens, and is now living with his family in a charming Thames side house at Sutton Courtney, right next door to Lady Oxford and Asquith, and it is said that "the American architect and the wife of the former Prime Minister have already exchanged sallies of wit."

Mr. Bossom's activity will probably be very useful to the Conservatives, and it is hoped that he will find a seat very shortly. Bethnal Green would be a useful Borough, for its local Council, after a lively discussion, has just decided to christen its new housing scheme "The Lenin Estate." An amendment to change the name to "Cambridge Heath" was rejected by a large majority. Poor old England!

"X"

## Bad Practice

A case has come to the attention of the Committee on Practice of the activities of a firm of architects who are not members of the Institute. This firm is incorporated and, having received a large commission, are in need of money. They have written to a number of contracting organizations offering a share of stock in this corporation valued at \$100.00 with the statement that the money will be returned within a year with interest at the rate of 6%. They also hold out the promise that any contractor who joins the corporation will receive copies of all plans that are put out from their office.

This is merely a method of borrowing money without collateral. If the firm of architects needs money they should go to the bank and if they are able to raise money in that way the last persons from whom they should borrow are the contractors with whom they are likely to deal.

The contractor who loans them money has no security except the statement that the money will be returned and the promise that he will receive plans that are made in the office. This is not a valuable security. The architect, on the other hand, has formed a partnership with those whom he is introducing to his client so that his advice to the client is affected by their relation.

It hardly seems necessary to make a further analysis of such a situation because it is so obviously bad practice.

ABRAM GARFIELD, *Chairman*  
Committee of Practice.

## American Construction Council

The sixth annual convention of the American Construction Council, of which Franklin D. Roosevelt is President, will be held at the Statler Hotel, St. Louis, December 1 to 3.

The announcement of Dwight L. Hoopingarner, Executive, quotes Secretary Herbert Hoover of the Department of Commerce as saying: "The problems before the American Construction Council are of immense public importance."

Directors of the Council include the following members of the American Institute of Architects: William Drewin Wight, Kansas City; Sidney F. Heckert, Pittsburgh; Robert D. Kohn, New York; George C. Nimmons, Chicago.

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## Structural Service

### *Refrigerators To Be Standardized*

To eliminate waste and reduce costs, a committee of five, appointed at a recent meeting of the refrigeration industry held in Cleveland under the auspices of the Division of Simplified Practice of the U. S. Department of Commerce, will formulate a simplification and standardization program for refrigerator manufacturers.

The members of this Committee are J. Blair Easter, Keystone Refrigeration Corporation; C. C. Sreen, Chief Engineer, Kelvinator Corporation; C. J. Gibson, President, Gibson Refrigerator Company; George B. Bright, Consulting Engineer, and Leslie C. Smith, National Association of Ice Industries. A representative of the American Institute of Architects and a representative of the Division of Simplified Practice will act as ex-officio members and will attend all meetings.

The Committee will undertake:

"To make a final survey of all standard household cabinets now made, showing the width of each and the number of units of each size sold during a period of one year; to tabulate and analyze this data, and to recommend not more than six maximum standard widths. It is understood that the maximum widths to be recommended for each nominal size will be such as to include at least eighty per cent of all cabinets now made in that nominal size.

"To make a further study of the present range of depth of standard sizes with a view to making recommendations on this point at some later date.

"To make a detailed study of the dimensions of food compartments, cooling compartments and door openings in household cabinets for the same purpose, for presentation at some future date.

"To determine the necessity for establishing technical standards in connection with any feature of domestic cabinets and to cooperate with such technical standardizing bodies as they may deem advisable, for the purpose of developing such standards."

### *Producers' Council Will Convene*

The fourth semi-annual meeting of the Producers' Council, affiliated with the American Institute of Architects, will be held at the Detroit-Leland Hotel, Detroit, October 19 to 21. Prominent architects will address the meeting, which is expected to be of much interest not only to the members of the Council but to architects in general. Members of the Institute are invited to attend.

Since the annual meeting of the Institute, at which a resolution to encourage and continue the contact with the Council for a period of at least five years was adopted, the Council has been carrying out a constructive program. A leaflet stating the aims and purposes of the Council has been prepared and distributed among the salesmen of its thirty-nine members.

An active campaign to increase the membership of the Council, which comprises manufacturers and associations of manufacturers of materials and devices used in building construction, is being waged. The Council's brochure, approved by the Institute's Board of Directors, is just off the press

and is being distributed to the architectural profession and the building industry.

Achievements of the Council include the Standard Filing System of the A. I. A., adopted by approximately 800 manufacturers; reduction of waste and misstatement in advertising, and creation of a spirit of understanding and cooperation between architects as professional, and manufacturers as business men.

Among the problems yet to be solved are: Standardization of specifications, abolition of substitutions after specifications are written, economic introduction of new materials and processes, improvement of advertising copy and literature with consequent reduction in cost, preparation of standard mailing lists.

"The Council can congratulate itself on the great progress made with an idea, once revolutionary but now pretty generally accepted, that unless today business recognizes the element of service, business cannot live," according to N. Max Dunning, Director of the Institute's Structural Service Department.

"The inspiration for an affiliation was an appreciation of the value of cooperative effort on the part of architects and producers and the desire on the part of both to improve the quality of service they were giving to their common client—the public.

"By cooperation between manufacturer and architect, not only will advertising become more informative and valuable, thus making unnecessary the promiscuous calls of salesmen, but also the quality of salesmanship will be improved and the salesman become a respected adviser of the architect.

"All the elements of the building industry owe a duty to society to work together and to use their specialized training and experience to solve the problems brought about by rapidly changing conditions, and to offset the ever-increasing costs due to higher standards of living by economics worked out by the greater application of science and invention to building."

## Electric Night By Radio

Milton B. Medary, President of the American Institute of Architects, has accepted an invitation of the General Electric Company to participate in the nationwide broadcasting program celebrating on the evening of October 21 the birth of the electrical industry through the development of the incandescent lamp by Thomas A. Edison forty-eight years ago.

Station WRC, Washington, operating on a wave-length of 469 meters, will broadcast Mr. Medary's talk, lasting ten minutes from 10:50 o'clock, Eastern Standard Time, and, from the standpoint of architecture, dealing with the influence of electricity in the construction, equipment, and operation of modern buildings.

Preceding Mr. Medary, who will represent the consumer interests, W. F. Ham, President of the Potomac Electric Power Company, Washington, will speak for ten minutes as a representative of the producer interests.

A musical program will be provided through a hook-up of broadcasting stations, starting at 10 o'clock Eastern Standard Time. The General Electric Company is one of the active supporting members of the Producers' Council, which is affiliated with the Institute through the Structural Service Department.

## From Our Book Shelf

### *What is Architecture?*

In starting this book on architecture from the pen of Mr. Robertson,<sup>1</sup> I confess I approached the task of critic with little enthusiasm, thinking that I had before me another attempt to tell, in a few pages, what so many writers have tried to tell in so many ways in so many books. However, the first paragraph of the preface interested me intensely and when I had finished, I felt that the author had approached one of the great arts in the spirit of an interpreter rather than instructor and with a background of knowledge and accomplishment which rendered him eminently fitted for the task.

Mr. Robertson has divided his book into a preface and fourteen chapters. For readers who wish to follow, in more detail, the history and development of architecture, a bibliography at the end gives a wide range of reading. Though primarily for the layman, there is a great deal which will appeal to the architect and much by which the trained designer may well profit.

The first chapter, on the nature of architecture, describes clearly what architecture is and what architecture is not. The author says, "Consideration of a building as a work of architecture implies the presence of attributes distinct from those arising out of the actual process of construction. It implies the presence of an idea which is directing that process toward some definite end with the object of endowing the resulting forms with the expression of this directing idea."

In order to explain the fundamentals of architecture, Mr. Robertson, in his second chapter, shows how architectural problems have been solved in the past. He begins by passing rapidly over the first appearances of buildings in the world and through early civilization, feeling they live chiefly in legends and in the researches of archæologists. He thinks that architecture of this early epoch yields little, as we, today, are so generally ignorant of this remote civilization, that we are scarcely in a position to link cause and effect together. He, therefore, starts with Egypt, as the first tangible evidences of architecture appear at that time, and gives a slight resumé of Egyptian life. He passes to Greece, omitting the early architecture of Mesopotamia, and finishes the first stage of architectural development with Imperial Rome.

From the architecture of the ancients, he takes up, in chapter three, the architecture of the Middle Ages, saying, "Byzantium architecture revelled less in gigantic dimensions than in the elegance of the solution of the building program and that kind of sheer beauty in decoration which would most appeal to the beholder through his senses and emotions." He then leads the reader through various phases of Romanesque and Norman architecture and the Byzantium influence in Italy and France and so on up to the great Medieval Gothic periods which, he thinks, form the contrast with the classicism of Greece and the almost modern materialism of Rome, a phase of thought and feeling so vivid and powerful as completely to change the character of architecture, proving it again to be the mirror of human ideals and strivings. He ends his chapter on the Middle Ages with an interesting thought. He says, "Gothic

architecture is, then, the reflection of the social tendencies; the mass movement of the Medieval years." Again that "the appeal of Gothic buildings will depend, primarily, upon the degree of reaction of the onlooker towards the human characteristics, finding expression in the style and the clarity and skill with which that expression is made manifest."

In chapter four, the author makes a comparison between the Gothic and the Renaissance periods of architecture. He thinks the Gothic an architecture with movement and equilibrium instead of repose as its structural basis, as opposed to the restful breadth and grandeur of conception of the Renaissance. The reader will have to read this chapter carefully to grasp thoroughly what Mr. Robertson wishes to point out in his comparison between these two styles.

"Architecture Explained" being, primarily, for the layman, the author devotes the next three chapters of his book to an explanation of the principles of architectural design. He shows, at the start, that practically every detail of a well designed building has a structural or functional purpose apart from its æsthetic value. He elaborates, giving several examples in which he shows the reason for certain structural elements. He then defines what is meant by beauty, associating the effect of beauty on the mind with the sensation of pleasure, and follows this with the statement that good architecture invariably succeeds in making an appeal to certain senses and emotions in the same way as do fine poetry and music. Architectural writers of all periods have attempted to tell the essential qualities of good architecture, but the essentials for good composition remain the secret of the successful designer, and the public is initiated into the effects of fine architecture but not into the causes which are responsible for such effects.

In chapter eight, Mr. Robertson deals with the subject of character in architecture; and in chapter nine, he passes on to the principles of architectural design in everyday things.

It would be useless for me to attempt to give a resumé of this chapter, as it needs the entire continuity of thought running through it for the reader to grasp the definite conclusions which are drawn.

In chapter ten, he treats of the question of styles and in chapter eleven, present day architecture of England.

In chapter twelve, he covers the modern architecture of America, and says, "American architecture is one of the wonders of the present day world; not so much because of its high achievements but because of its general level of excellence and the unusual directness with which it has progressed towards its high standard, side-stepping the pitfalls and dangers which the ready-made fields of European architecture so freely offered." He ends his chapter by saying that in America, as in all modern countries, the rapidity and sureness of architectural development will depend very largely on the education of architects and an evolution in school instruction corresponding to the evolution in the character of the architectural problems of the day.

In the thirteenth chapter, on modern architecture of Europe, he thinks the signs of renewed vitality are markedly indicative of the changes which we may expect to see when conditions become more favorable to a greater expansion of architectural thought and activity.

In chapter fourteen, on architecture in the future, Mr. Robertson suggests that future architectural design will be

<sup>1</sup> *Architecture Explained*. By Howard Robertson, F. R. I. B. A. and S. A. D. G. Ernest Benn Ltd., London.

## JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

increasingly subject to the influence resulting from civic design and an improved organization to our conditions of living; also that future progress will demand much closer cooperation with the technical engineering specialists.

With the architecture of the far distant future, he confesses that he is not deeply concerned, but thinks, for the sake of the generations immediately following upon our own, steps should be taken, without delay, to insure the improvement of architecture in its widest sense of covering the whole question of the conditions of living, and closes by saying that architects may console themselves by the reflection that if the public of today does not understand architecture, it is because it has not been educated to seek an understanding.

The book is illustrated with excellent photographs descriptive of the text. I cannot recommend too highly the advisability of the trained architect, as well as the layman, reading this thoughtful dissertation filled with, at times, delightful metaphysical and philosophical ideas.

W. HARMON BEERS

### *Monumental Architecture*

Among the various books treating of architecture from the point of view of theory, which have appeared in this country and in England during recent years, the "Theory and Elements of Architecture"<sup>1</sup> by Atkinson and Bagenal takes a high rank in interest and value. The work is rather in the form of a treatise than a text-book, although the two aims are not inconsistent, but, it is not a text book to place in the hands of a beginner.

As a reference book for the lecturer, for the advanced student in architecture, and for the library of architects interested in the designing of buildings, it is admirable.

When completed, the work will comprise a series of three volumes, of which volume one is divided into two parts. Part one of volume one, the only one so far published, is the subject of this review. In this part, the authors aim to give a history of materials and structure in different climes and epochs, and to show how the various simple elements of buildings, such as walls, roofs, doors, and windows, etc., were developed and perfected.

They discuss the limiting conditions that controlled or influenced their development, and deduce, wherever possible, a principle or conclusion that might be helpful to designers of our own day and time.

In listing and discussing these influences they have overlooked nothing, and if there is any weakness in the treatment of the subjects, it is merely in respect to the occasional importance given to inconsequential matters.

Books of this nature, however, are as a rule too summary, too seldom is the reader given the privilege of deciding what is important and what not, and in this direction the authors do not err.

Naturally this part is concerned chiefly with monumental architecture, that is, architecture in stone or other massive materials. Particularly in the chapters on building stones and their traditional use in walls have the authors assembled and digested a mass of the most interesting and informative data. Readers will find here what most of us have long sought and wished to know, that is, not merely the external

appearance of stones in all periods of architecture, but what kinds of stones they were, and where they were quarried.

Although a little weighty, the book is excellently printed with an abundance of beautiful and wisely-chosen illustrations. Valuable lists of references are given at the end of every chapter.

N. C. C.

## Applications for Membership

September 26, 1927

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE:

The names of the following applicants may come before the Board of Directors or its Executive Committee for action on their admission to the Institute and, if elected, the applicants will be assigned to the Chapters indicated:

BOSTON CHAPTER.....	Charles Wm. Edward Morris
BUFFALO CHAPTER.....	Charles A. Porth
CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER.....	Gilbert L. Van Auker
COLORADO CHAPTER.....	Henry W. Huntington, Elmer E. Nieman
DETROIT CHAPTER.....	James Alexander Spence
HAWAII CHAPTER.....	James Donald MacMullen
INDIANA CHAPTER.....	Wayne Everett Bell
MINNESOTA CHAPTER....	C. J. Bard, Guy Newton Crawford, Wm. K. Macomber
NEW JERSEY CHAPTER, Seward G. Dobbins, Rudolph Kruger	
NEW YORK CHAPTER.....	T. Markoe Robertson
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER.....	Ernest H. Hildebrand
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER.....	John Francis Mullins, Erling H. Pedersen
SOUTH TEXAS CHAPTER.....	James Ruskin Bailey, Charles W. Oliver
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER.....	Aleck Curlett, Eugene Weston, Jr.

You are invited, as directed by the By-Laws, to send privileged communications before October 26, 1927, on the eligibility of the candidates, for the information and guidance of the Members of the Board of Directors in their final ballot. No applicant will be finally passed upon should any Chapter request within the thirty-day period an extension for purpose of investigation.

Yours very truly,

FRANK C. BALDWIN,  
Secretary.

## The Proceedings

The Institute will supply copies of the Proceedings of the sixtieth convention to libraries upon application to the Executive Secretary, The Octagon, Washington, D. C. A copy will be sent to the library in the home city of any Chapter at the request of the Chapter President or Secretary.

## Jurors Named

William J. Smith of the Chicago Chapter and Chester H. Aldrich of the New York Chapter have been appointed by President Medary to the jury which will make European travelling scholarship awards provided by the Foundation for Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

<sup>1</sup>Theory and Elements of Architecture. By Robert Atkinson, F. R. I. B. A., and Hope Bagenal, A. R. I. B. A., D. C. M. Robert M. McBride & Co.

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**Douglas Fir Finish and Trim—**Douglas Fir finish and trim may be obtained in either vertical or flat grain. The wood resists abrasion and stands hard usage. The grain is attractively brought out when the wood is stained or wax-rubbed. Douglas Fir siding may be obtained in many different patterns. It lays straight, holds nails and takes paint well.

**West Coast Hemlock—**West Coast Hemlock finish and trim offer a uniform color and texture. They have a beautiful grain, work smoothly, take stain readily and present a comparatively hard surface that does not mar easily. Its smooth surface, uniform texture and comparative hardness makes West Coast Hemlock a splendid base for enamel. West Coast Hemlock siding is easy

to nail without splitting. It is free from pitch, takes paint easily and holds it well.

**Sitka Spruce—**Sitka Spruce is uniform in texture, and has great toughness and strength, combined with lightness. The grain is smooth, the fibers are long, and the wood contains no resin—thus it is easy to work and it takes finishes readily. Few other woods give such a smooth base for enamel finish. Being odorless and tasteless, Sitka Spruce is ideal for kitchen woodworking and for compartments where food is kept. Its uniform texture permits it to resist warping and shrinking to a remarkable degree, hence it is highly favored for drainboards and other uses which expose it to alternate wetting and drying.

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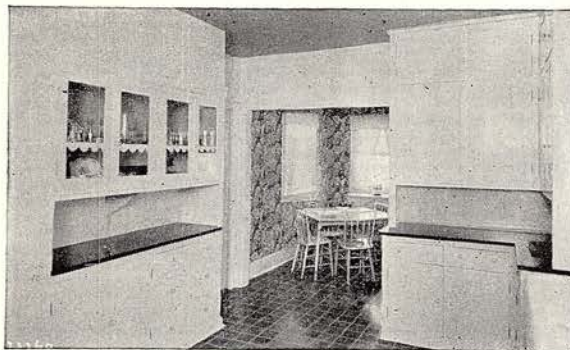
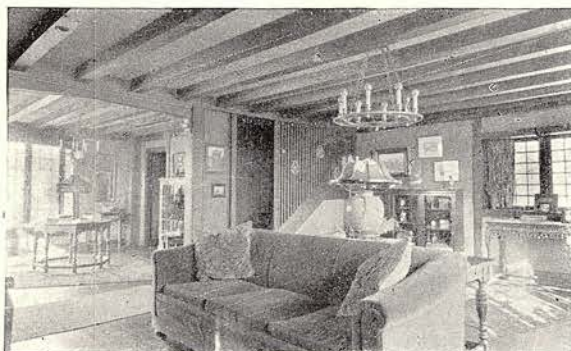
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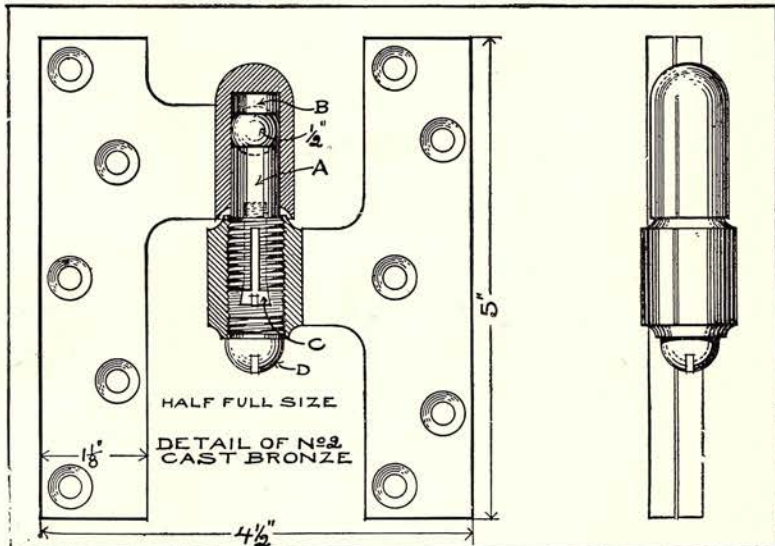
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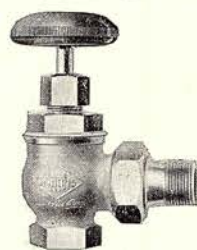


Fig. 853  
Low Bonnet Angle,  
male union



Fig. 171  
Tee Handle  
Key

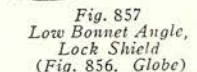


Fig. 857  
Low Bonnet Angle,  
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(Fig. 856. Globe)

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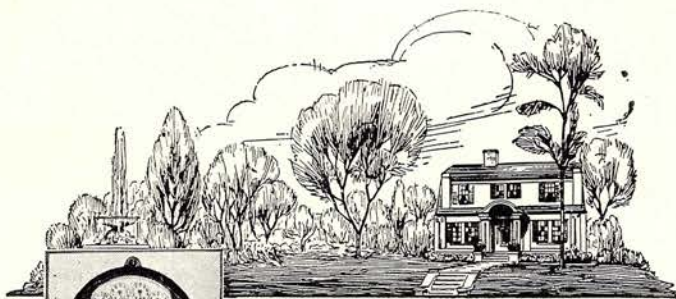
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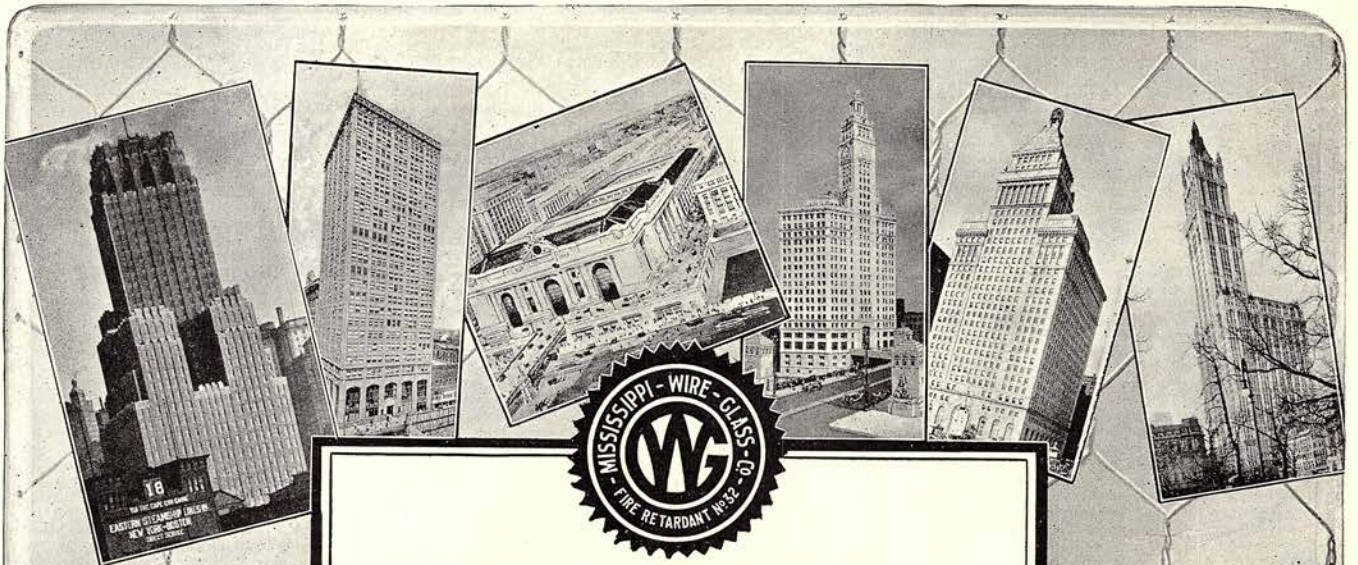
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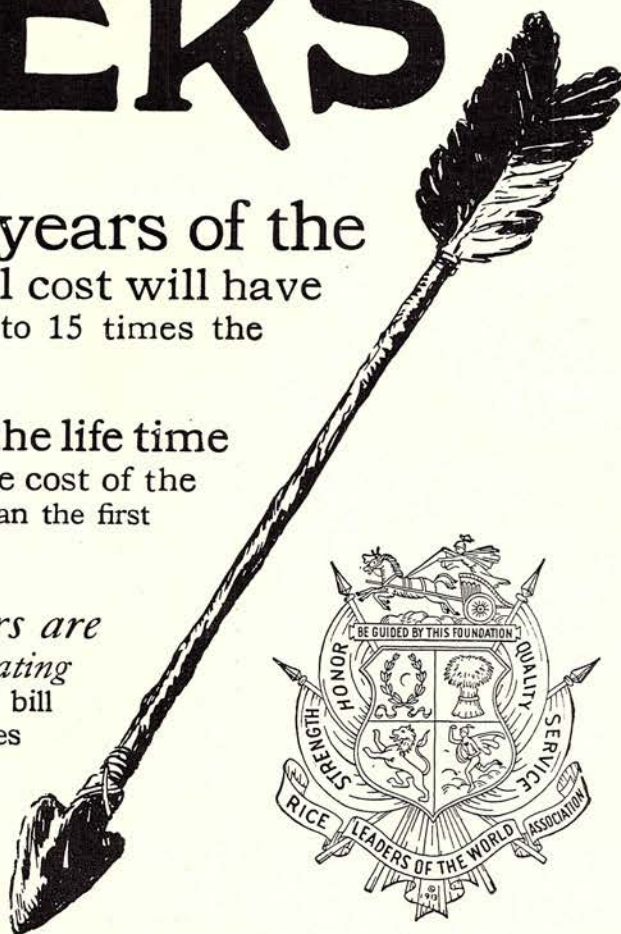
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The side walls and columns are notable for their lack of ornamentation. The decorator relied solely on the beauty of plain painted finishes to support and set off the lavish colors and delicate detail of the ceiling. This treatment demonstrates the adaptability of paint as a decorative medium.

The walls are treated in a light gray-green. The columns, engaged columns and pilasters are painted a pale salmon pink. Both these colors possess exactly the same light-reflective value—a fact of special interest. The panel borders are in Russian blue—one of the colors found in the ceiling decoration.

The dado is glazed down to a deep umber which harmonizes with the scheme of decoration.



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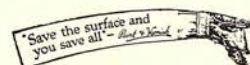
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A corner of the Grand Ballroom, showing the elaborately painted ceiling. Murals set in gold mosaics are the dominant note.

An unusual stencil treatment applied to the dado in the auditorium of the Buffalo Consistory. The serpent motive appears in two shades of tan over a background of light Cerulean blue.

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