

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

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COTTAGES AT PORT SUNLIGHT

THE FIBRE OF THE NATION. PART I

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY AND IN EUROPE

By WM. H. SCHUCHARDT, A.I.A., Member of the Milwaukee Housing Commission



GREAT disparity between earning capacity and the cost of living still exists for a tremendously large number of people in spite of Congressional and scientific investigations and countless schemes devised for bringing about "better times." For those who enjoy no dividends to bridge the span between the proverbial ends, the struggle becomes more and more discouraging; and if cause and effect hold their old relations to one another, it must be evident to all discerning ones that a turn in the lane must soon be met or be made, if we wish to avoid the consequences due to the improper living condi-

tions to which a too large number of our wage-earners must submit. Business competition, governmental considerations (in Europe), as well as a certain amount of good will toward employees, have made it necessary and possible to approach that turning point, and to begin a determined fight against the racial deterioration, which is a source of enormous expense to every country, and which manifests itself in all large and small industrial centers. It may be interesting for many to know that, during the last forty or fifty years, much has already been accomplished in this direction. There are too many, however, who, though they realize that proper living conditions for the poor, as well as for the well-to-do, form the very foundations of a strong and

happy nation, yet regard the problem as overwhelming beyond possibility of solution and the ideals too Utopian in character.

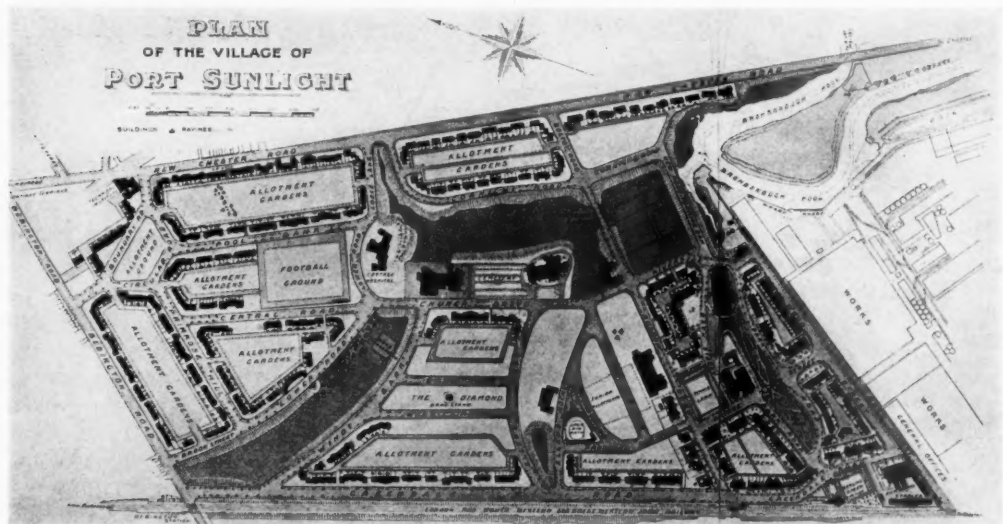
It is to such that this article is particularly addressed. And to the architect, who must of necessity bring his best thoughts and talents to the development of details, the information herein given may, it is hoped, be of some value.

I shall for the sake of clearness, divide the subject under three heads, illustrating firstly and briefly: What the Housing Problem Means; secondly, How It Is Being Solved in England; and thirdly, How It Is Being Solved on the Continent (Principally in Germany).

It will be impossible, of course, within the scope of this article to consider the many causes underlying poverty, and the many other means employed to bring about relief, or to illustrate every endeavor in improved housing conditions; and as reports on work of this kind, done in America, are easily obtained from other sources (National Housing Association and Bulle-

in discussing the subject with me last winter: "The movement for the bettering of wage-earners' living conditions, inaugurated by Bismarck soon after the Franco-Prussian war, in the establishment of compulsory insurance against sickness, accident, unemployment, etc. (and "housing" is but a development from that) is simply a matter of strengthening the fibre of the nation. An otherwise sound, strong country cannot long survive, when a large proportion of its people find it difficult to live happily and in wholesome surroundings. The strength of a nation lies in its so-called common people, whose love for their country must be unshakable, and love of country and love of home are always synonymous terms. Unlovable homes, constantly draining the meagre resources of their occupants, are therefore a serious menace to the established institutions of a country.

"Again, we in Germany, feel that a man's value to the community is two-fold: firstly, commercial, and secondly, purely social. A man of great commercial value to the



tin of the Bureau of Labor), no comments will be made on it here.

Under the first head, "What Housing Means," I beg leave to quote the words of one of the leading authorities on sociology in Berlin, which, although he speaks for Germany alone, are the best answers to the question that I know of. He said,

community may be of small social value or, on the other hand, a man of high social value may have but little value commercially. Collectively the working classes certainly do possess great social value, but individually their earning capacity is generally so low, that there is danger of their high social value being weakened, and so

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we are trying to produce conditions under which this social value to the country will not be jeopardized. A happy, contented people require little police supervision, are more efficient workers and surely make for a strong, conquering nation. Housing is part of the fight against deterioration

employees. Before the advent of huge factories, improper housing certainly existed, but congestion in limited areas, with all its squalor and misery, was not more often the lot of thrifty workers, than now, when the production of wealth is greater than it has ever been before. Organization of indus-



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in one of the chief elements of a nation's strength, toward which modern industrial conditions lead."

There is, in this synopsis, not a thought of philanthropy, and if the spirit of the government does, on the surface, appear more parental than we Americans would tolerate, we cannot but admit that, in the last analysis, only a shrewd, far-sighted policy has been adopted, largely for the benefit of the whole nation, though directly for the welfare of the wage-earner. And this strengthening of the fibre is not confined to Germany. For a quarter of a century and longer the process has been going on in all industrial countries of Europe, and although the vast majority of wage-earners is still living under unwholesome conditions, considerable headway has been made. Housing has become a problem for statesmen.

Curiously enough, the development of the factory system out of the old shop system, has not brought with it a corresponding development in the domestic life of

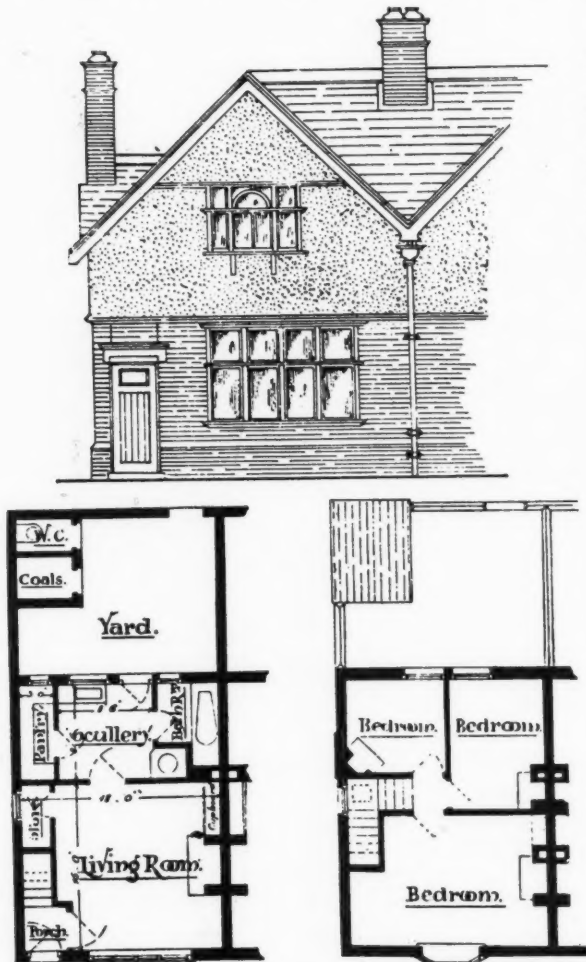
trial forces, *i. e.*, modern business, developing itself with scientific care and exactness, with every thought directed to efficiency and economy, has created conditions of serious danger to organized society. It has necessitated rapid and generally poorly considered extension of city boundaries; it has gathered around its belching chimneys thousands upon thousands of workers, depopulating rural districts, and has created, first land congestion and then room congestion. Rental values in such districts have grown far beyond a just relation to wages (in Berlin and London often forty per cent. to fifty per cent. of the income) and the beginning of the slum is at hand. Skilful organization has enriched the commercial world, but it has also made business the burden of mankind instead of being merely its source of sustenance, and it will hold that unnatural position until co-operation has brought the domestic life of the great masses of wage-earners again into harmony with it. The same careful, scientific thought

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must be brought to bear on this phase of the social structure, the same eagerness to eliminate waste and ensure stability, must be applied to the problem of providing

much as by inadequate wages. Think of the cost of building and maintaining the various institutions required to ameliorate these social diseases, and consider your share, as taxpayer, toward their support!

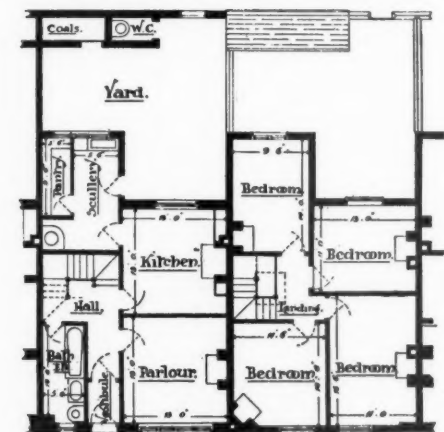
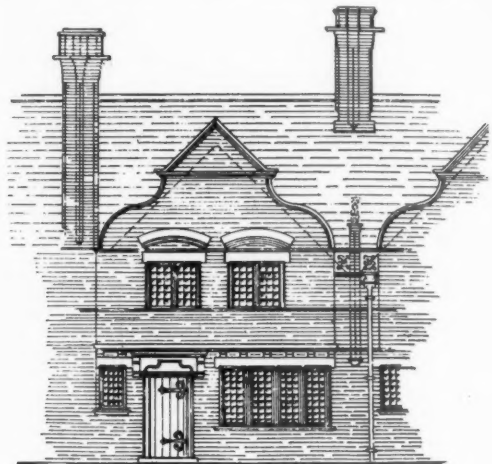
And if this be costly, think of the inefficient service in factory or office, which can be directly traced to improper living conditions,—to emaciated bodies unequal to their allotted tasks. In Manchester, during the South African war, 8,000 out of 11,000 men, mainly factory employees, were rejected for military service because of physical weakness. The Blue Book of the



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homes, so that the efficiency of the machine shall not be outbalanced by the inefficiency of its operator.

It is now generally recognized that many, if not all, social evils have their roots in improper housing, and that the only hope for their eradication lies in an attack upon those very roots. Think of the struggle against tuberculosis, the shame of white slavery, the full prisons and detention homes, the insane asylums; think of the spread of anarchism and class hatred! They all are nurtured by the unlovable, unsanitary homes of the poor, quite as



PORT SUNLIGHT. PLAN OF TYPICAL HOUSE

Scotch Educational Department, reporting on the effect of proper housing on children, states: "It cannot be an accident that boys reared and living in two-room apartments should be eleven and a half pounds lighter than the average boys from four-room

houses and four and a half inches smaller. Neither is it an accident that girls from the two-room homes average fourteen pounds lighter and five and a half inches shorter than girls from the four-room houses"; and similar observations have been made all over Europe. That difference in physical development surely represents a considerable loss in pounds-sterling and shillings. Weakened bodies in large number indicate a large economic waste, and make for weakened wills, which are responsible for still larger waste and further crimes, great and small, which necessitate elaborate and expensive policing, innumerable courts of justice and innumerable jails.

So much for waste, largely and rightly attributed to poor housing conditions. It is quite in line with our own national waste of natural resources, our fire losses, our heretofore general disregard for the future, and it is quite as appalling in magnitude. And as organized and effective conservation is the only answer to those other wastes, so is it the answer to that tremendous waste of the country's real strength—the quality of its "common" people.

ENGLAND

Much as we have done in this country toward clearing many industrial perplexities, we may turn with considerable profit to the experiments of Europe for guidance in this fundamental consideration of social problems, for they have been far more numerous and somewhat more successfully handled than have been ours. And as the newest and perhaps the most promising movement, one that points to great changes in future city development, was inaugurated in England, and because we may enjoy a pardonable pride in the fact that this development is an outgrowth of the teachings of Henry George, I beg you first to consider the solution of our problem in the Mother Country.

Long before members of Parliament and other Government officials became seriously alarmed because of increasing physical deterioration for military purposes, long before hooliganism became the serious matter it is today and syndicalism threatened the very existence of established order, a small group of men, all large employers of labor, recognized the impossibility of

maintaining a high standard of production under the then existing living conditions of their employees. Being men of unusual sagacity with the rare gift of a keen sense of justice, they determined on making it possible for their large industrial army to reach and maintain that same standard of physical well being which is of necessity required of a military army. They removed their help in bulk, out of the slum into the country, and in some cases the works were brought along. To be sure, efforts were made, here and there, for the improvement of the conditions of the laboring classes thirty to forty years before, and considerable public interest was aroused at the World's Exposition in 1851, but it is in the study of the work of these men and subsequent municipal and co-operative endeavors wherein we shall find the greatest aid England can give us in minimizing evils here at home.

The different schemes developed were either municipal undertakings; or they were semi-philanthropic, such as Bourneville Village, the Sutton Fund, and the Peabody Fund buildings, and the Guinness Fund buildings, where no returns were looked for; or they were what might be termed socialistic, "standing midway between altruism and egoism," as at Letchworth and Ealing; or they were purely business transactions tempered by good will and broad justice.

To this last group belongs Port Sunlight, the home of the Sunlight Soap Works, owned by the Lever Brothers, and situated about five miles from Liverpool. In 1887 the site of fifty-six acres was acquired at \$1,000 per acre. Two years later, the village came into existence. Today, after twenty-five years, we find over 800 houses, public amusement halls, churches, schools, and other necessary institutions for complete civic life. Before going into details, it will be well to consider the basic scheme of the village.

Recognizing the fact that much of the success of the firm was owing to the loyalty and faithful work of its employees, and wishing to compensate them for their share of this success, the Lever Brothers inaugurated a new type of profit sharing which, although open to some criticisms, is yet far more practical and effective than any other

profit sharing scheme devised. In fact most other profit sharing schemes, embodying the payment of cash bonuses, have, with few exceptions, failed in actual application. The main difference between these and that of "prosperity sharing" as the Lever Brothers call it, is that the bonus is earned by the employees collectively instead of individually and this sum is applied to the erection and maintenance of the village and the provision of real homes for very low rents.

According to the village account of 1907, there had been invested up to that time a capital of \$2,500,000, and the interest on this sum amounting to \$125,000 annually is the bonus earned by the 4,000 employees. Otherwise the village is entirely self-supporting, even earning in 1907 a surplus of \$5,000. Bear in mind that this bonus represents but a trifle over \$31 a year per employee, and consider the small advantage to the individual employee if he were given that amount in cash. On the other hand, consider the increase in efficiency which cannot but have a marked effect on the profits of the firm. In one sense the scheme develops into an injustice toward those employees who must find homes elsewhere, for there are not enough cottages built to keep up with the ever-increasing demand, but the shifting of labor makes vacancies possible and brings with it a reward to the most efficient. Since February, 1909, tenants have been given opportunities to procure shares in the undertaking, so that eventually the burdens now assumed by the company will be borne by the beneficiaries themselves.

The town has been laid out with great care and skill, with the result that "every prospect pleases." Streets and lanes are as direct as the natural configuration of the land permits, and sufficient space for allotment gardens has been left in each block. Besides the splendid homes which, as the illustrations show, must satisfy the most fastidious, the corporation conducts lunch halls, one for men and one for women, seating each 800 at a time. These lunch halls pay no dividends, but are totally self-supporting, and by means of proper co-operation, hot lunches of generous proportions, consisting of meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread and butter can be had for

ten cents. Everything possible, both in and out of the factory, is done on a self-paying basis to increase the efficiency of the human machines. We cannot here dwell on the government of the village, but it will suffice to state that every suggestion of paternalism is carefully avoided, and democracy is promoted in every way.

The Port Sunlight cottages are of two kinds, the five-room, called kitchen type and the seven-room, called parlor type. The first has a large kitchen, generally fourteen by fifteen feet, which is used as a living room and dining room as well and a scullery, where all the grosser evidences of kitchen work and washing are taken care of, and three bedrooms and bath. The parlor type has on the ground floor a kitchen, bath, scullery, and "parlour", and on the upper floor four bedrooms. A half dozen three-room cottages are used by old or childless couples and pensioners.

As is general in England, these cottages have no cellars, but there is always a larder and a coal shed provided. Whether the omission is wise may be a debatable point, for the possibility of dampness is certainly increased, and where ice is so expensive as to be a luxury, cool cellars are quite necessary for the preservation of milk and other foods. To be sure, cellars are quite too often receptacles for rubbish and may, for that reason, be a source of danger, but by proper administration and persuasion, this is possible of elimination. All rooms are well lighted, the kitchen floors usually tiled, and in all cases the interior is as attractive as the exterior. Bath rooms are always on the ground floor as a matter of economic plumbing. The bedrooms are sufficiently large for air and comfort, and it is the intention that the tenants may enjoy in them as much privacy as possible.

Rentals for these cottages are approximately \$1.25 and \$2.00 a week, which is a fair portion of the earning capacity of their occupants. No lodgers are allowed except on special permit, and as the houses are limited to ten to the acre, room and land congestion are impossible. The death rate has been for a number of years from eight to ten in 1,000, which is encouragingly low, when compared to Liverpool nearby, whose death rate is more often than not

(Continued on page 144)

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CITY PLANNING INCREASES IN POPULAR ESTEEM

THE attention which the subject of city planning is receiving in this country is perhaps only exceeded by that accorded it in some of the cities of Europe. And even abroad where the importance of a well devised plan, both from practical and æsthetic viewpoints, has long been acknowledged, there has been an unusual awakening during recent years. A most notable illustration of the hold which the subject has taken on the popular mind is contained in a despatch from London, which states that an appeal signed by the editors of London papers, both morning and evening, with the exception of *The Times*, has been made to the London County Council, to purchase certain property at the corner of Trafalgar Square by the new Admiralty Arch, in order to open up the vista of the avenue which leads to the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace.

Such unanimity of opinion on the part of London editors is said to be unparalleled, and their appeal both to the Council and to the public through the columns of their own newspapers, is unprecedented. The plan advocated, if adopted, will provide one of the finest prospects in Europe, as there will be afforded an uninterrupted view down the Mall with the great Victoria Memorial terminating the vista.

There is little doubt that the project, which appears to have such strong and distinguished advocates, will be ultimately realized, but the fact that the public demand has been so great that it has been accepted as legitimate and desirable by the editors of more than a dozen of the most influential papers published abroad, is cause for greater congratulation than the mere prospect of obtaining the accomplishment of a particular undertaking.

THE WANE OF THE WAYSIDE BILLBOARD

PROBABLY the contention maintained by many that roadside advertising still constitutes one of the greatest blemishes to the natural scenic beauty of this country, if in fact it does not occupy an exclusively pre-eminent position in the list of scenery defacing agencies, is in large measure justified; but that its popularity with manufacturers and retailers as a means of attracting attention to articles of general or specific usefulness is rapidly waning due to an altered and greatly improved public attitude toward the practice of placarding the highways of the country, there can be no doubt. No successful manufacturer or business man interested in the sale of merchandise, can afford to long remain oblivious to public opinion, particularly the opinion of that portion of the public to which or through which the major portion of his sales must be made. And since it is to the educated and cultured classes, the classes that have awakened or are now awakening to the disfiguring effects of the average wayside billboard that the message which it carries has heretofore been addressed with greatest profit, it is not difficult to predict the ultimate outcome.

The New York *Times* recently gave expression to an opinion anent roadside advertising, which seems to agree accurately with the situation and furnishes illustration of the popular interest taken in the subject. It was in part as follows:

"In these enlightened days roadside advertising attracts attention only to excite antagonism against the advertiser, and observers of it who are really public spirited feel it a duty to destroy the illegal placard-

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ing. For doing that they have explicit statutory authority whenever public property has been thus misused."

Of course there has been and still is a great amount of billboard advertising carried on to which as yet no suspicion of illegality attaches by reason of its execution, in a manner not inimical to public safety, upon privately owned property located along and adjacent to public highways; but public opinion that looks with dis-

favor upon the disfigurement of the landscape will scarcely distinguish between public and private ownership of the site upon which the offending billboard has been erected. Under all the circumstances it would seem that a material decrease in a form of advertising that has long been the despair of architects and others interested in conserving the beauty of both rural highway and urban street might with some reason be expected in the not distant future.

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(Continued from page 142)

from seventeen to twenty-five per thousand.

For American conditions Port Sunlight is perhaps too elaborately built to serve as a prototype, owing to our high cost of building, but the general scheme should commend itself to our large employers of labor. In the splendid little volume "Labor and Housing at Port Sunlight," by Mr. W. L. George, they will find much valuable information.

Mention must be made of Thornton Hough, not far from Port Sunlight, which although a village of farmers still resembled in many respects a city slum. When Mr. Lever acquired these properties he improved with characteristic energy the homes of these people, added rows of new cottages, and in other ways gave the place a new start toward civic health.

(To be continued)

OLD MASTERS AND MODERN PAINTERS

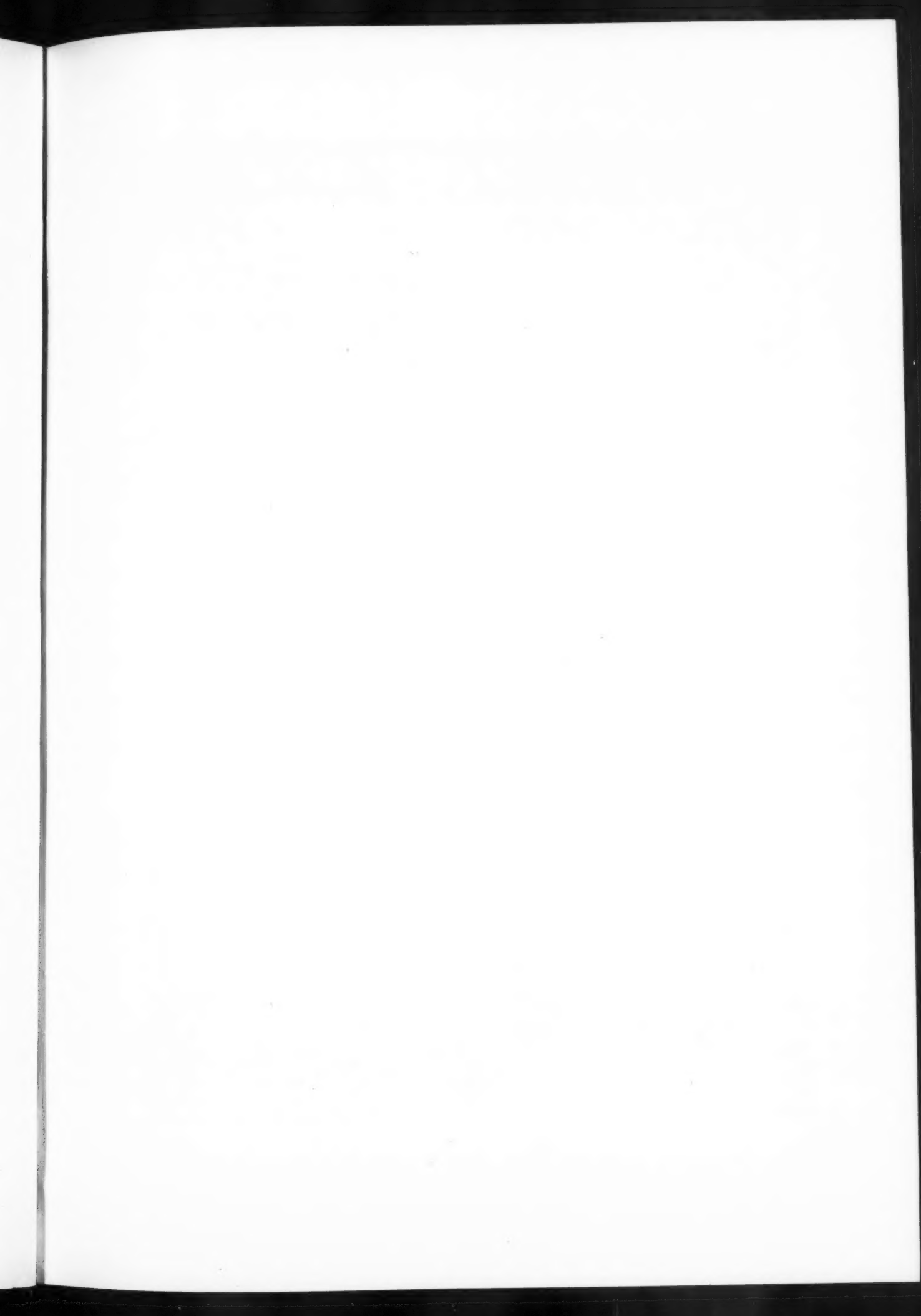
THE unreasonableness of expending large sums of money on "old masters," many of which are of doubtful authenticity, and at the same time neglecting the modern painter, has been many times discussed in the daily press, and is now revived owing to the very large prices realized at the recent Borden sale in New York.

The Standard, of London, commenting editorially on what the editor regards as a lamentable lack of substantial recognition of modern art, states:

"As to the general public, its taste is naturally influenced by the verdict of the

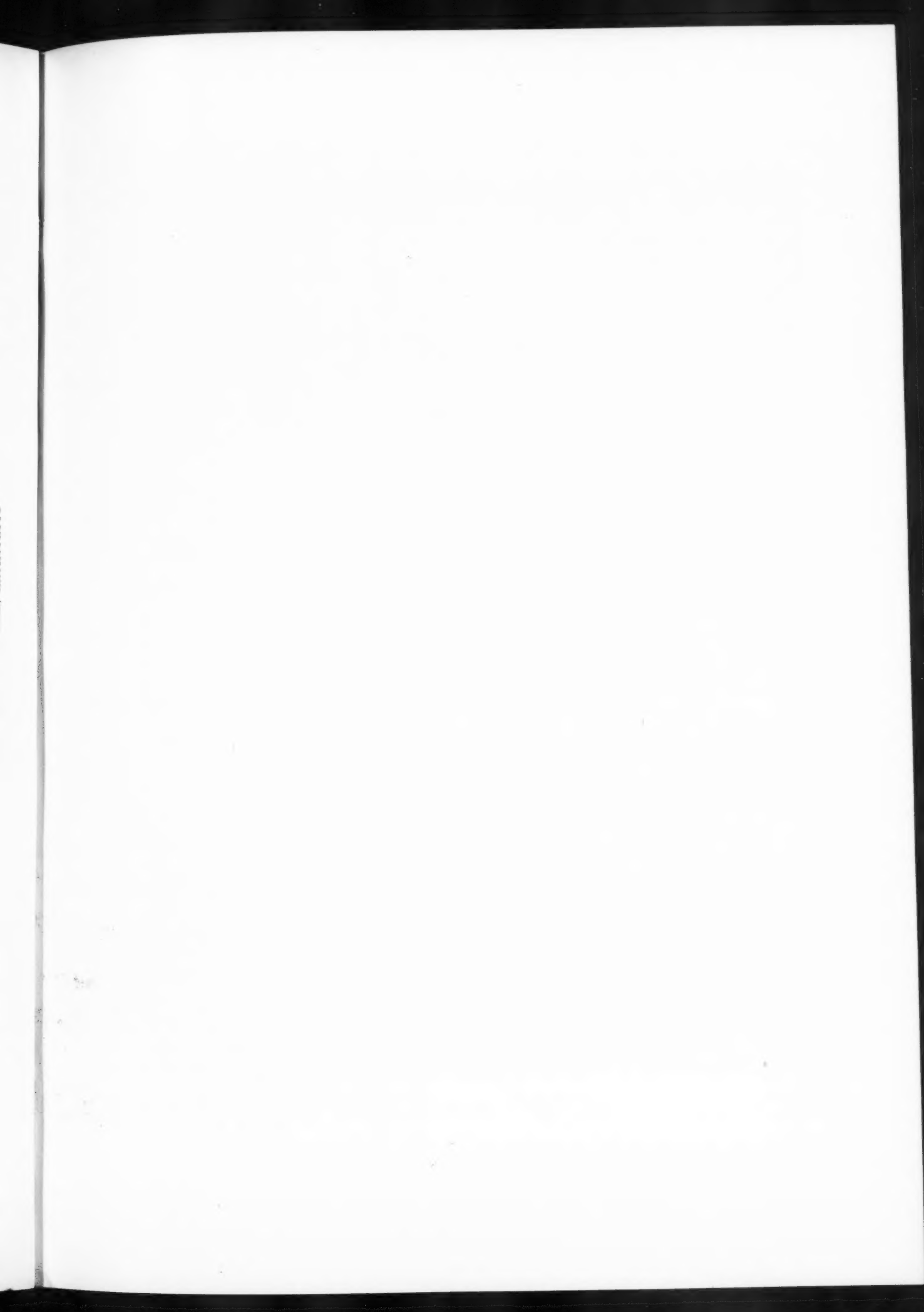
expert and the auction-room. Every expensive picture which makes its appearance in a gallery draws a crowd of reverential admirers. They may know nothing whatever as to the reasons, possibly not artistic at all, that make it a valuable acquisition; enough to know that it cost a large fortune, and must therefore be beautiful. Thus a Flemish or Italian 'primitive' is worshipped in exactly the same spirit as a Gainsborough portrait or a Corot landscape—a fact that largely explains the extraordinary attitude of the average man towards art in general. Broadly speaking, not one picture buyer out of ten ever lays out his money in satisfying his own taste; his purchases are nearly always dictated by considerations as to whether a picture is likely to 'keep its price,' or as to whether it will be generally approved by people with pretensions to connoisseurship.

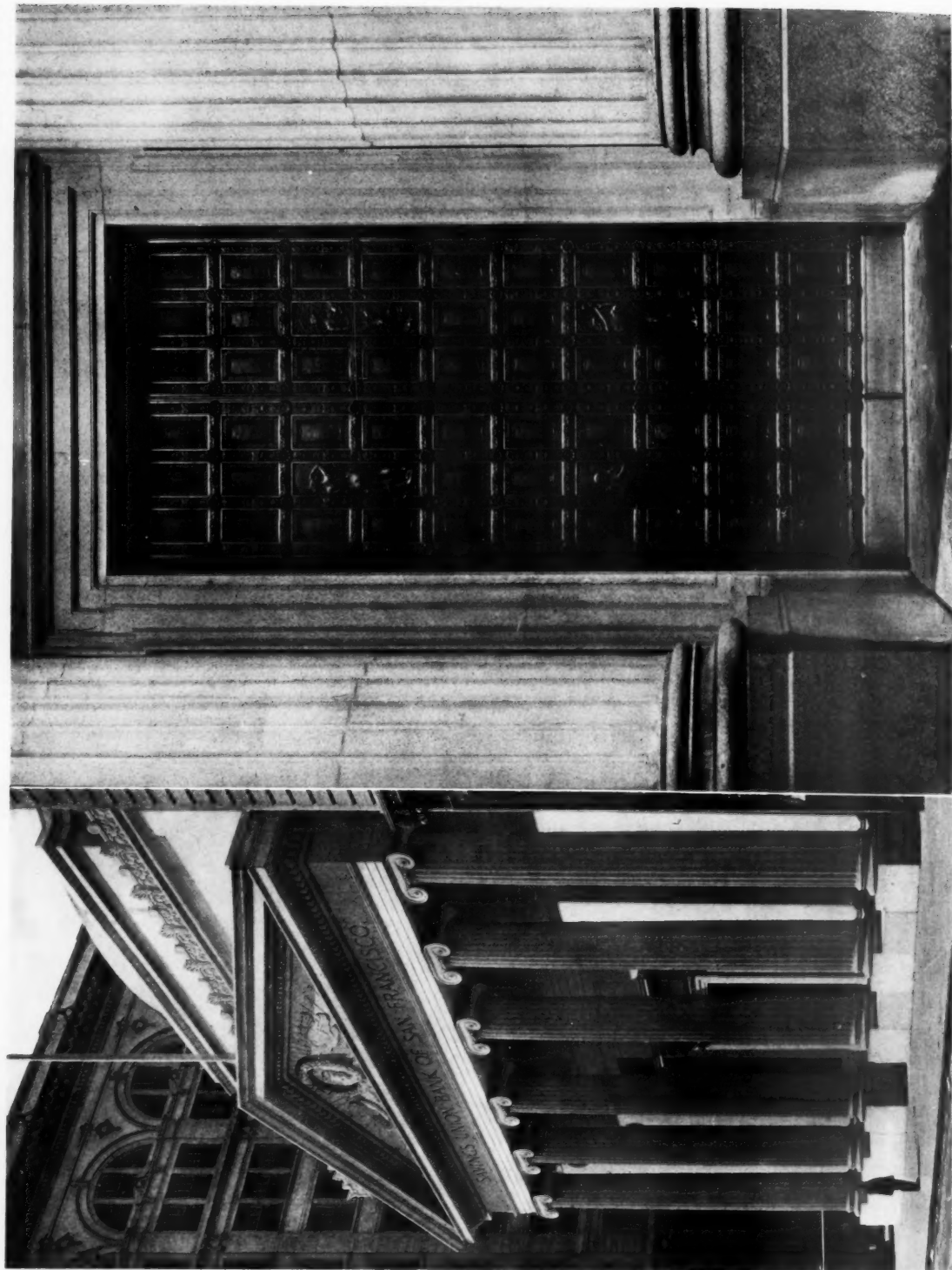
"Of course this attitude is generally bad business, from the lowest point of view. The money gain, as well as the enjoyment, belongs to those collectors who, like the late Justice Day, care for merit and merit only. He bought freely from the great nineteenth century Frenchmen and Dutchmen when their works were cheap, and his heirs benefited largely by his discrimination. The multiplication of this type of collector would be a great advantage to contemporary art. The expenditure of millions on old masters is rather a futile business after all. A tithe of the money spent in encouraging living talent would at once stimulate the true artist and discourage those eccentricities into which some modern painters are led out of sheer despair of attracting patrons by legitimate means."





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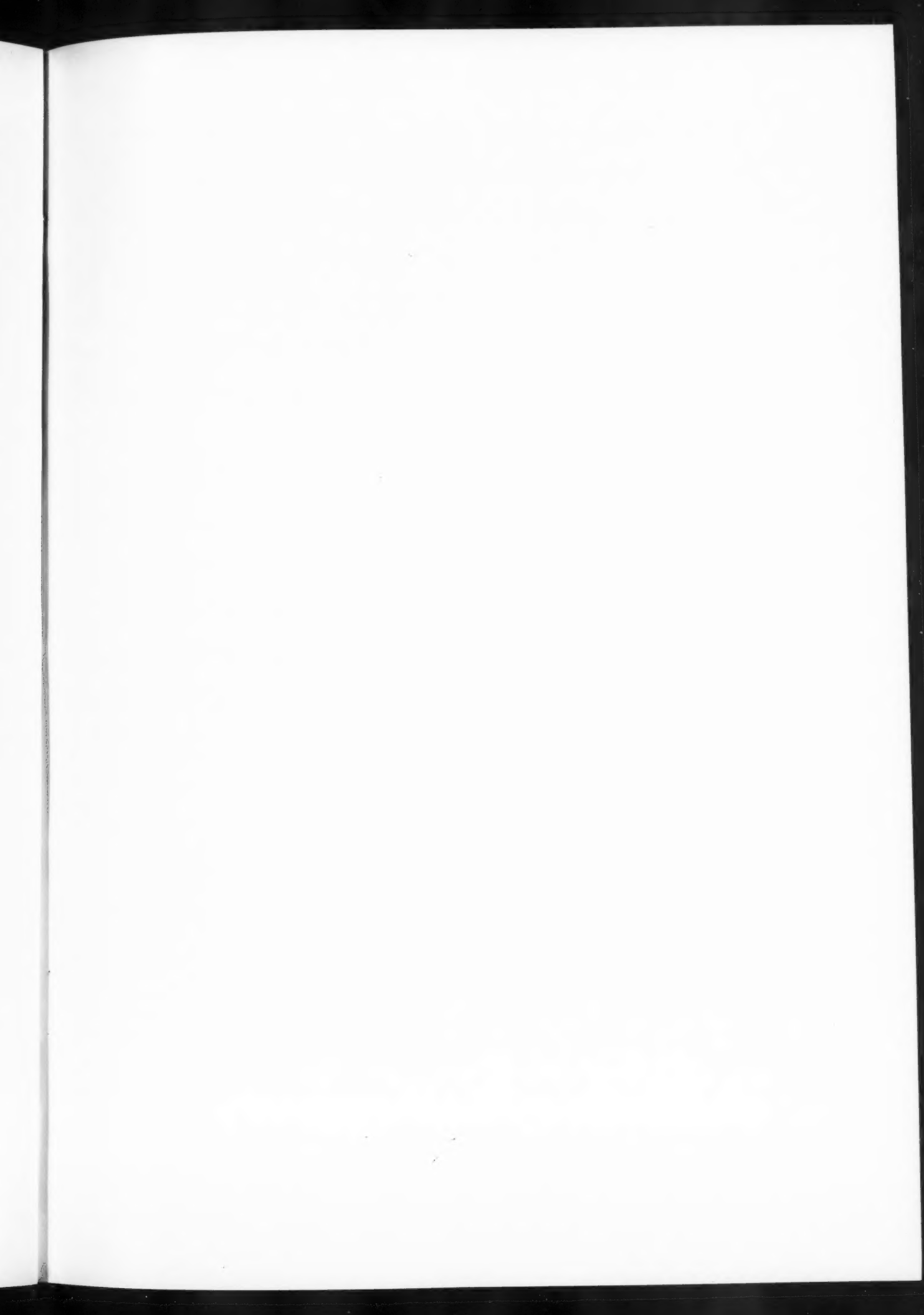
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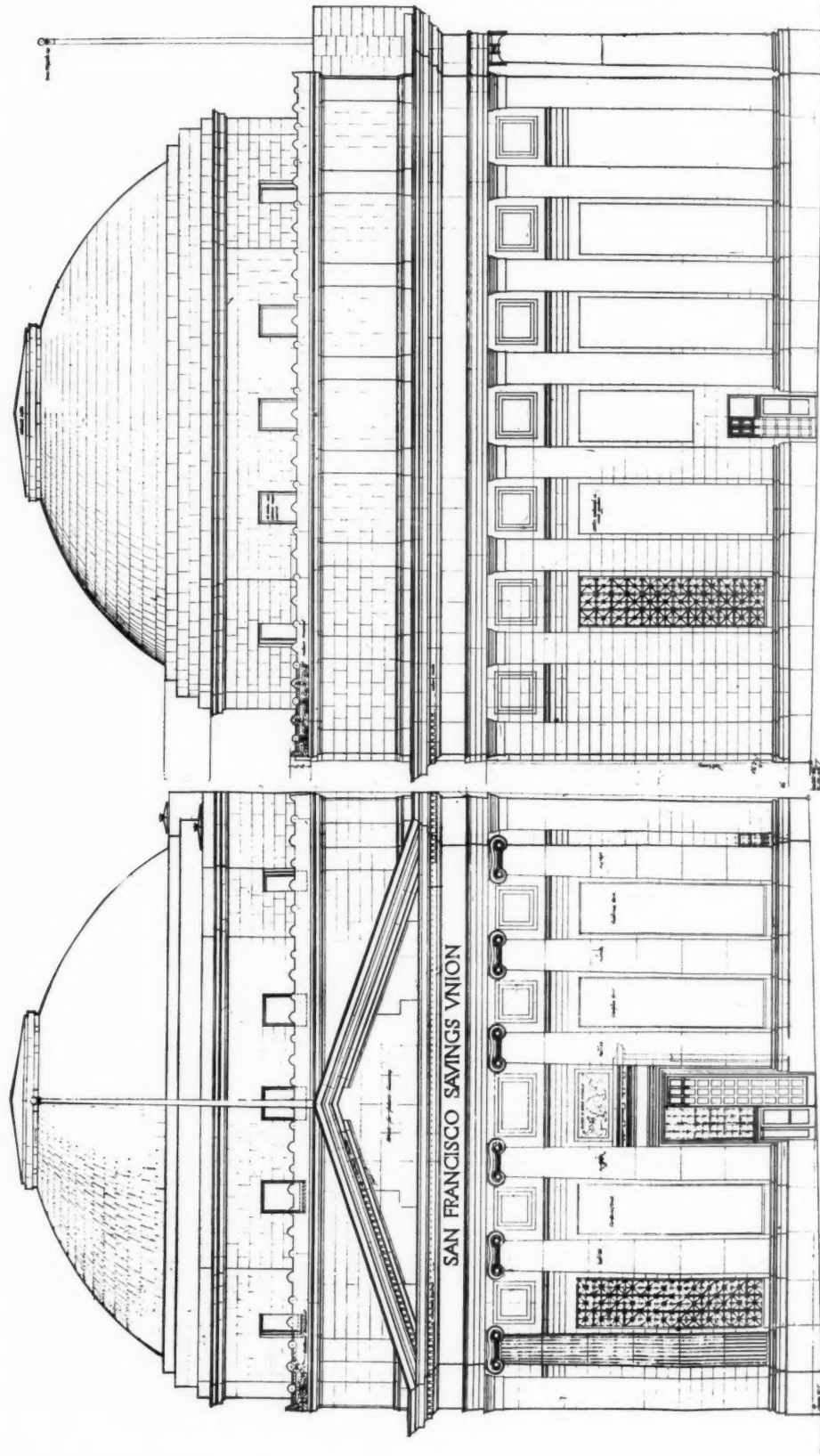




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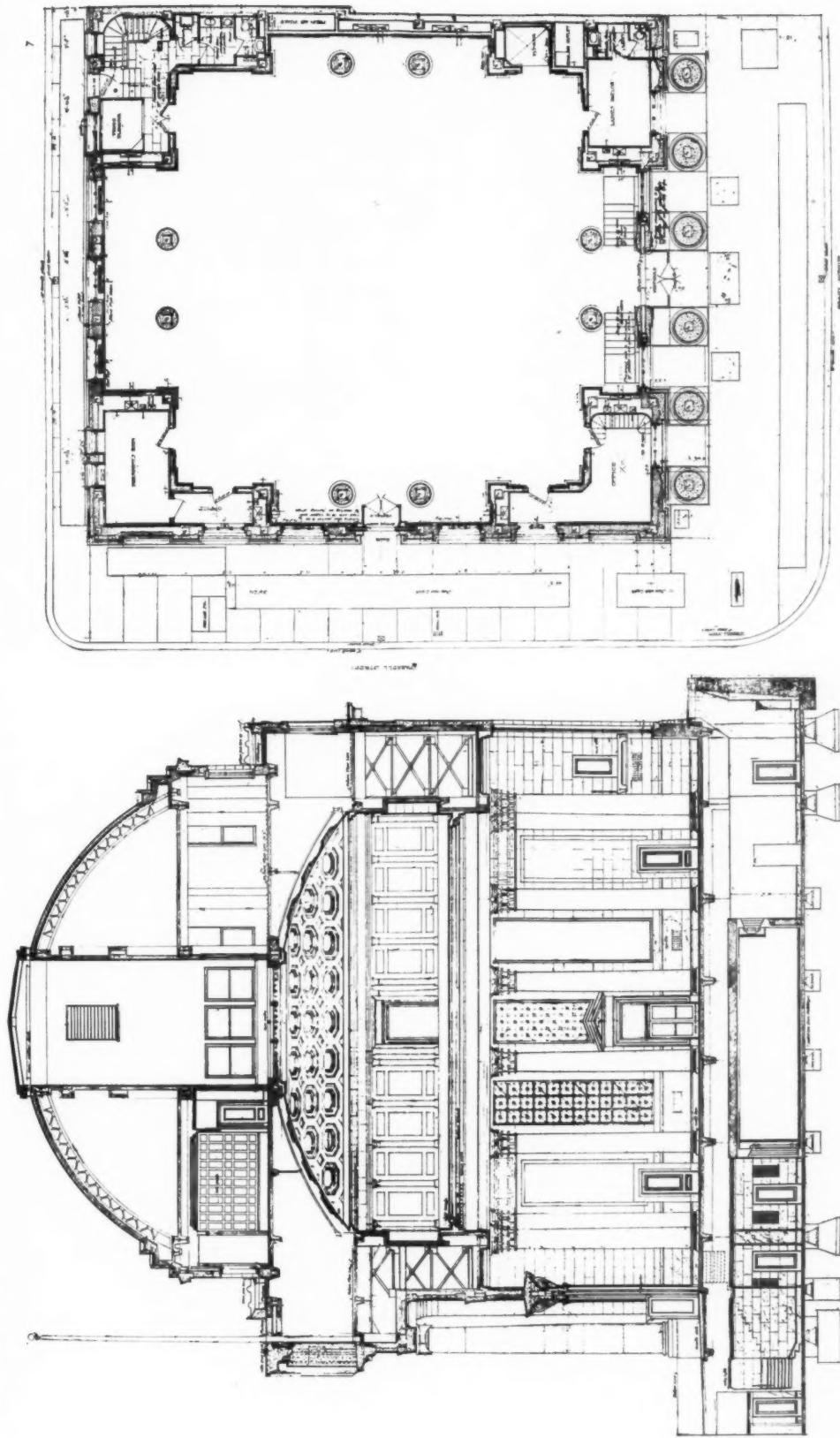
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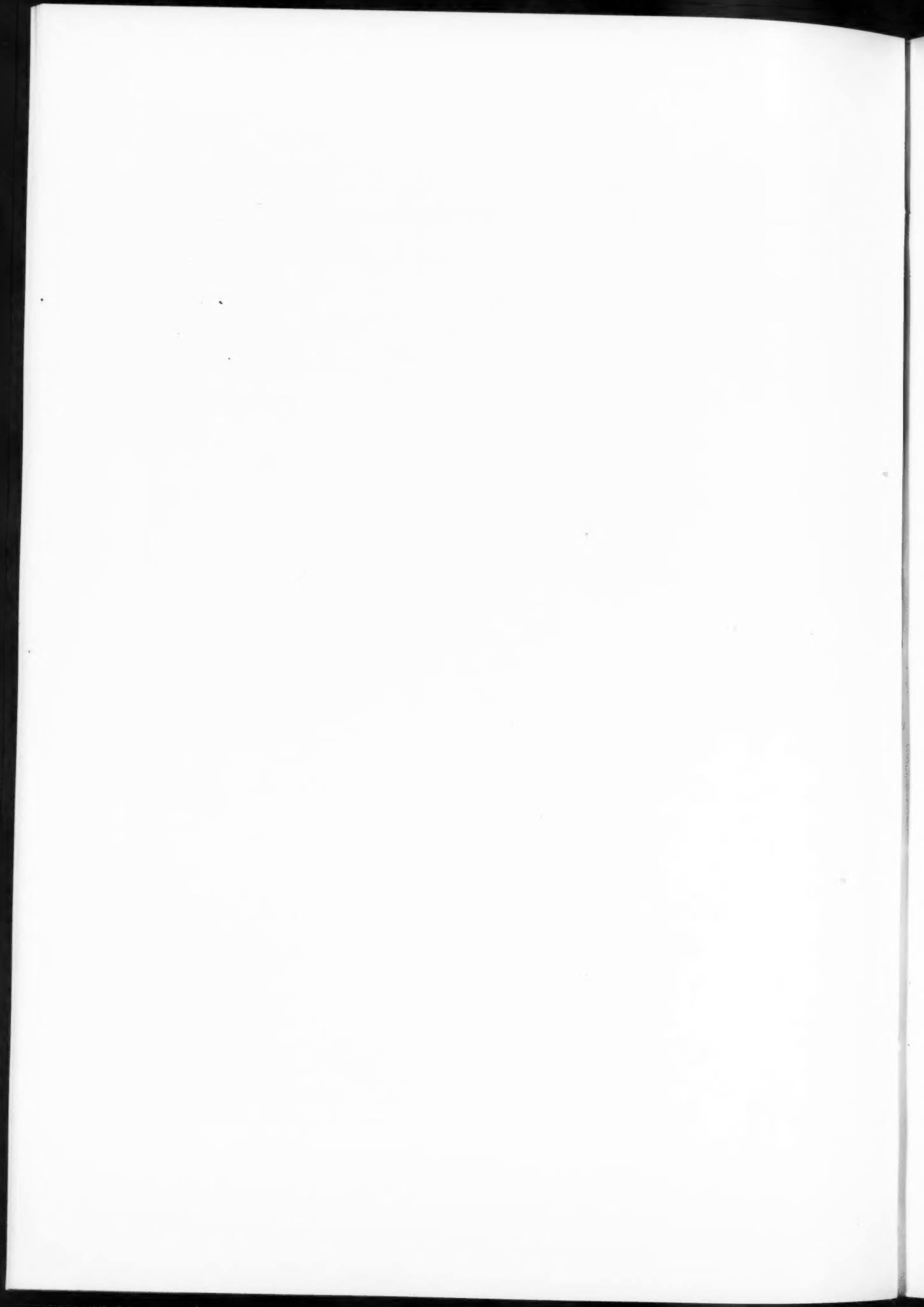
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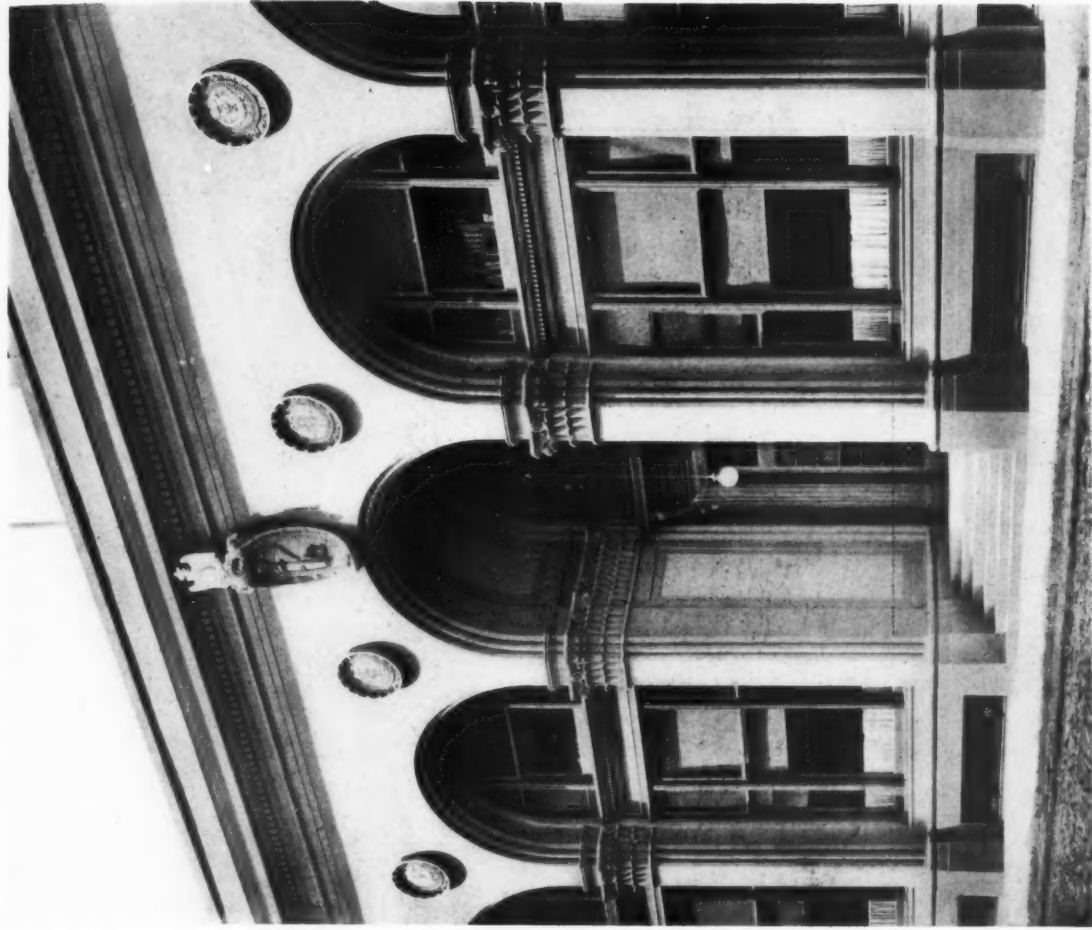
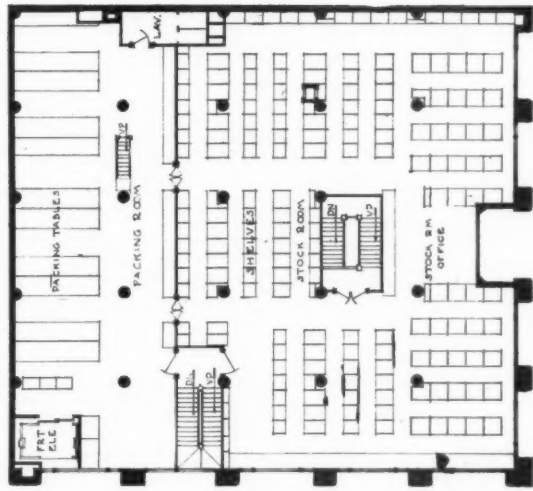
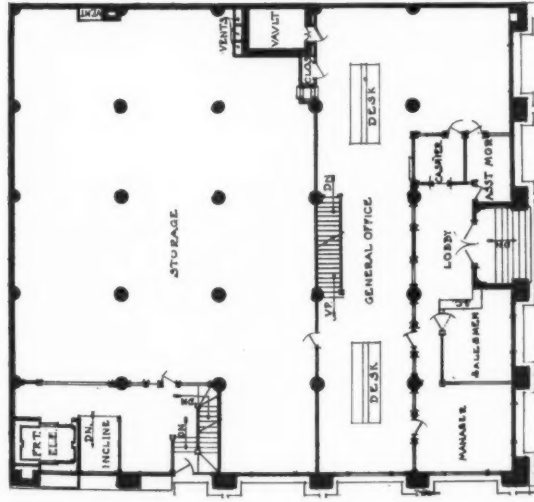


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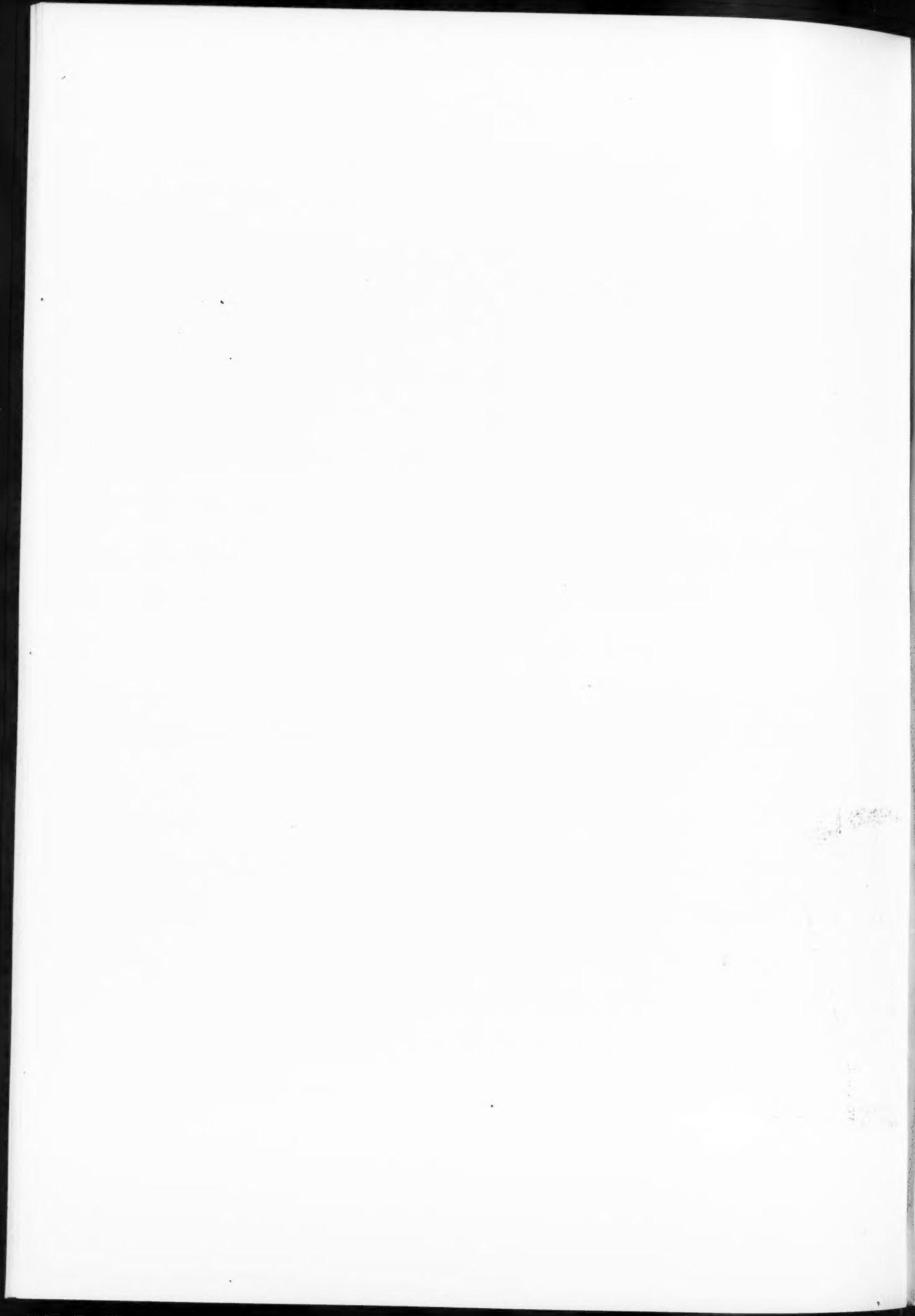


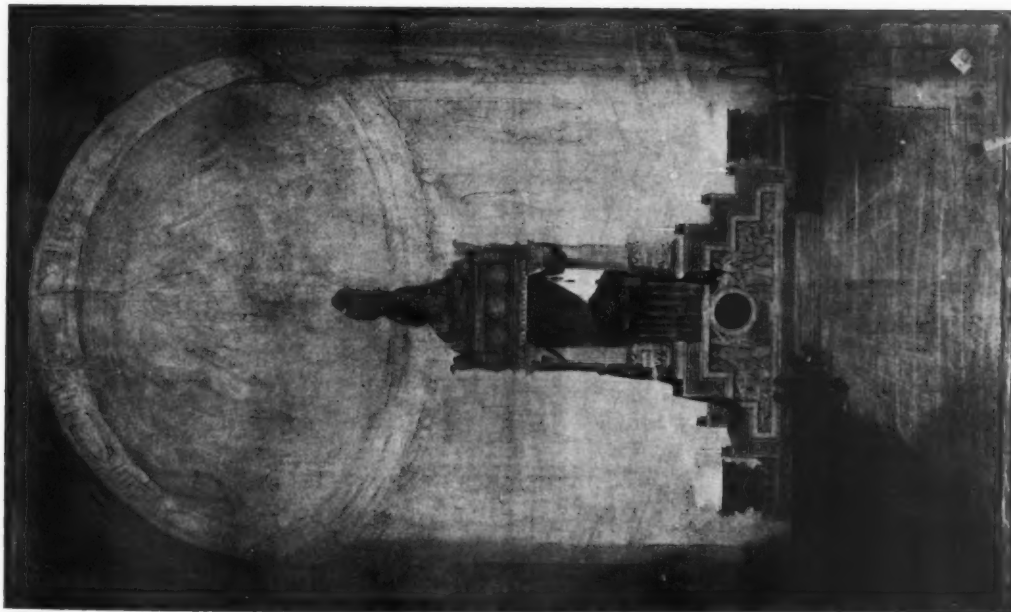
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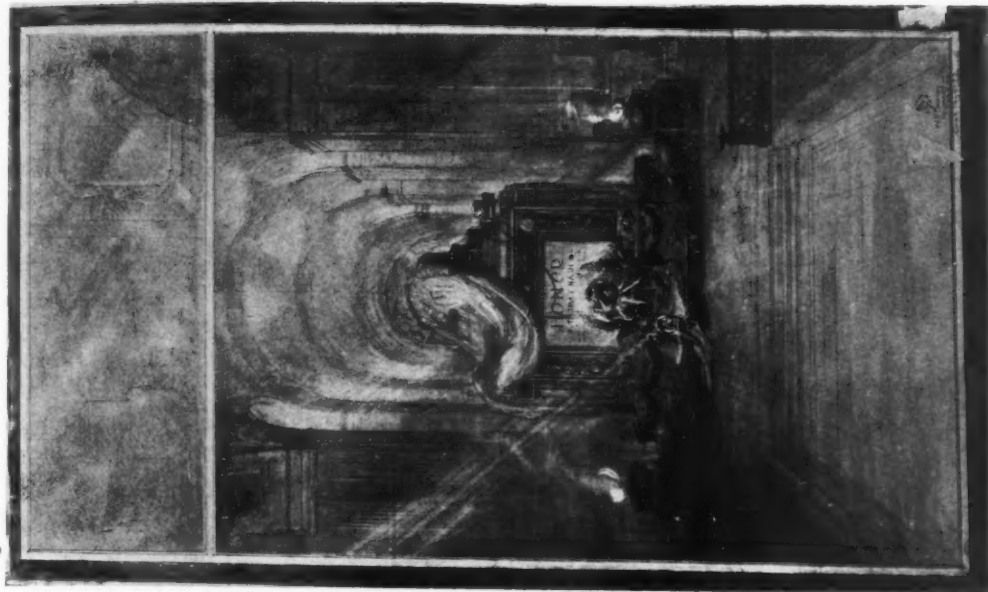


BUILDING FOR EASTMAN KODAK CO., SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
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ROBERT PALLESEN, SECOND MEDAL, ATELIER WARE-WAGNER



W. P. BARNEY, SECOND MEDAL, UNIV. OF PENNA.

CLASS "A"—III PROJET (Problem in Design) "A CATAFALQUE"

STUDENT WORK—SOCIETY OF BEAUX-ARTS ARCHITECTS

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GEORGE FOUNTAIN, ROTHENBURG ON THE TAUBER