

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT



ILLUSTRATIONS
AND READING
MATTER PERTAIN-
ING TO ARCHITECT-
URE AND ALLIED
ARTS

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VOLUME CVIII

JULY 7, 1915

NUMBER 2063

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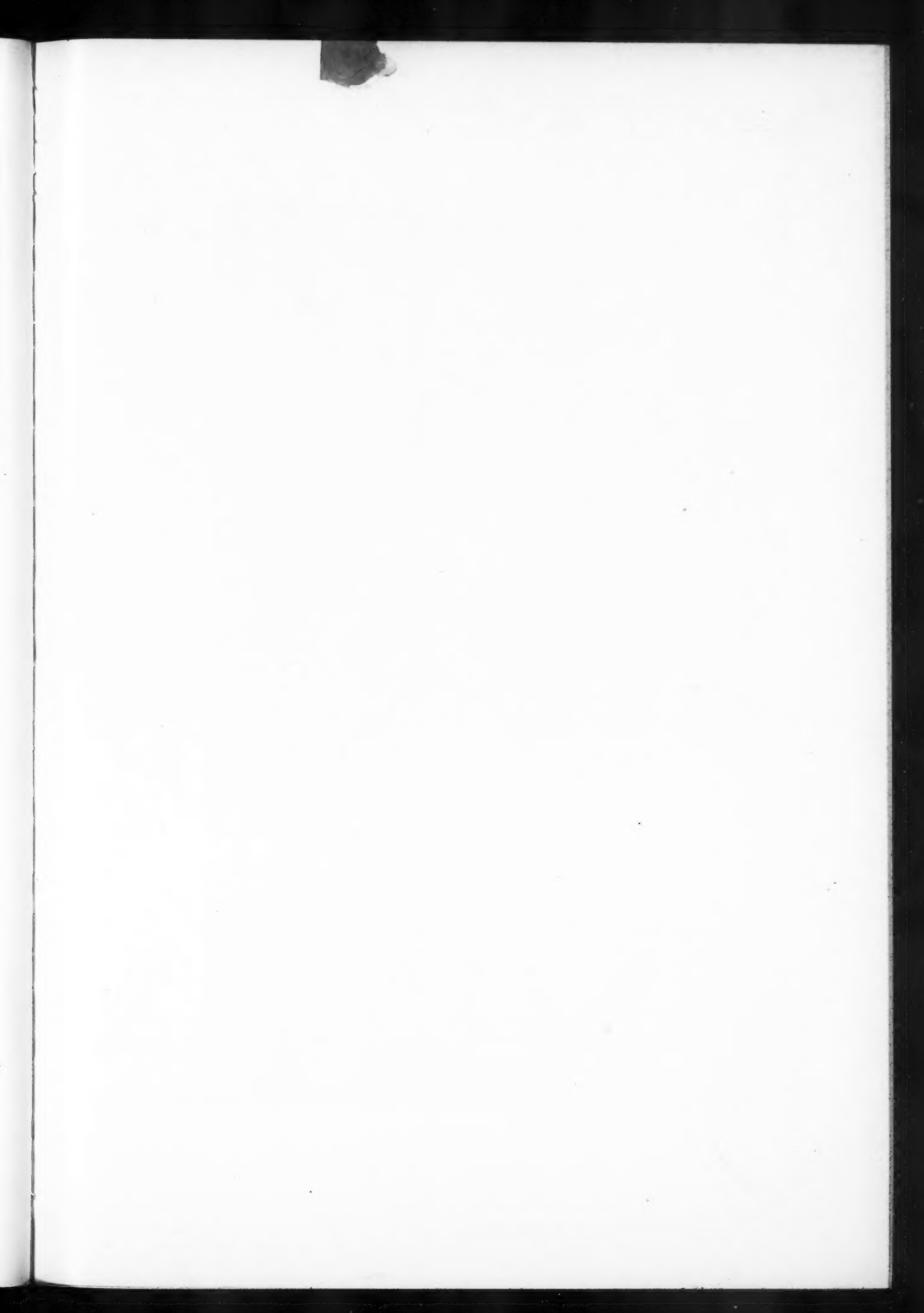
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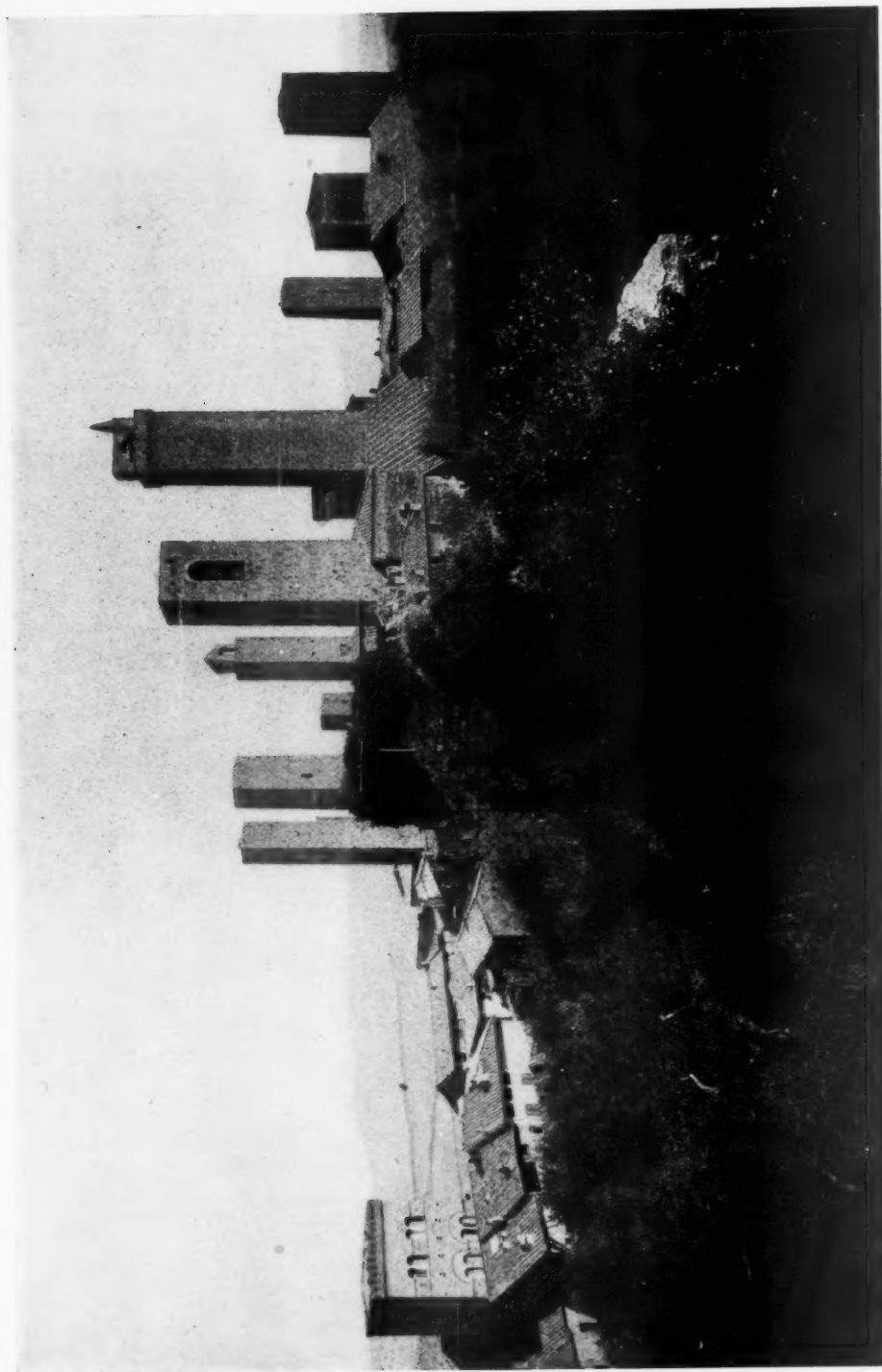
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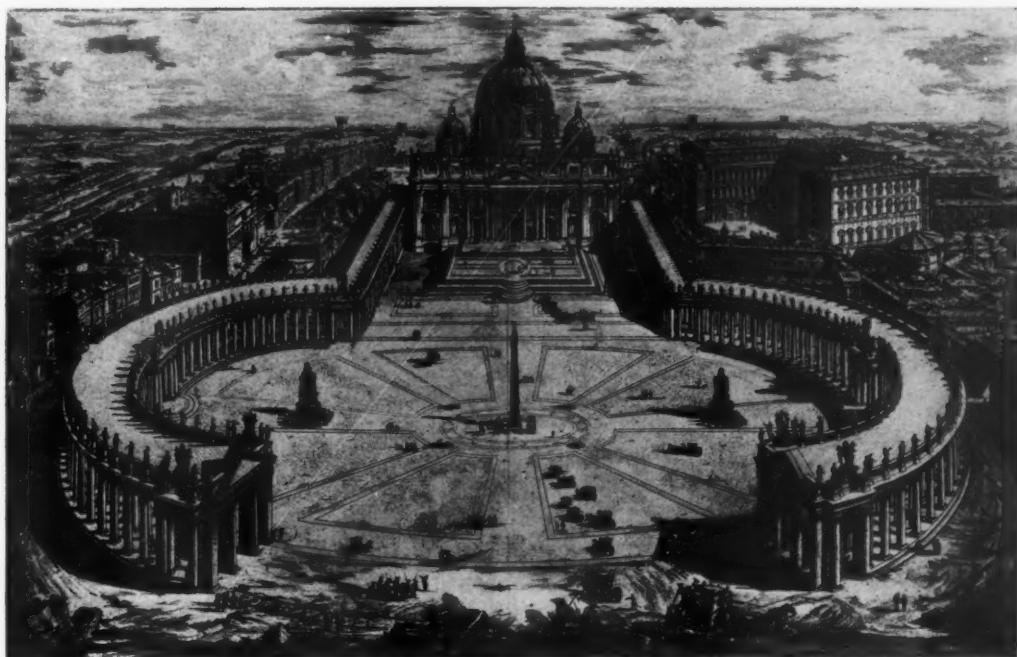
THE TOWERS OF SAN GIMIGNANO, ITALY (XIII CENTURY)

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

VOL. CVIII

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 1915

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THE PIAZZA OF ST. PETER'S, ROME

FAMOUS ARCHITECTS SERIES—No. 2

GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI—Part I

By GEORGE LELAND HUNTER

The Illustrations are reproduced by courtesy of the Avery Library, Columbia University, from Antichita Romane and the Works of Piranesi

GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI was an architect, and is famous. But his fame is not due to the buildings that he designed and erected. His fame is due to the fact that as an architectural and decorative artist and engraver he probably excelled all others before his time and since. His copper plate records of the monuments

of ancient and contemporary Italy are inspired and poetic pictures that thrill the observer with the boldness of their conception, and with the brilliancy of their execution. As was rightly said by an English writer in 1831, who based his account on notes supplied by Piranesi's son: "The lover of art regards Piranesi with admiration, as one of the first names in art, for his ingenuity and

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THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

vastness of invention, his excellence of execution, and the wonderful originality and boldness of his designs; but, if a scholar, he regards him with still fonder enthusiasm, as one who gave his energies to perpetuating the relics of antiquity, and, by his learning and research illustrating those remains, and so teaching the public justly to appreciate them, preserved them from wanton attacks and neglect, to which they had been previously exposed." And also: "The life of Piranesi was eminently that of a man of genius, characterized by all the peculiarities ascribable to genius, perhaps as failures of human nature, but also distinguished by that which imparts to its possessor an imperishable renown. Those peculiarities are worthy of noting, as they bear so much on the character of his works; but his works, wonderful as they are in point of execution, are less to be admired for this than for the interests of the subjects he chose, and that which he imparted to them. In an age of frivolities he boldly and single-handed dared to strike out for himself a new road to fame; and in dedicating his talents to the recording and illustrating from ancient writers the mouldering relics of former times, he met with a success as great as it was deserved, combining as he did all that was beautiful in art with all that was interesting in the remains of antiquity."

The two books on Piranesi and his engravings are: Arthur Samuel, Piranesi (London, 1910); and Albert Giesecke, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Leipsic, 1911). The first is written from the point of view of the English collector of prints, and possesses the distinction of having been the pioneer book on the subject. Herr Giesecke's book is admirably constructed and merits the high-

est praise as an exhaustive accomplishment in original research. It is of prime importance to all who wish to familiarize themselves with the facts about Piranesi, and is richly illustrated with sixty-three photographic pages of Piranesi plates reduced about one-half. Mr. Samuel's book has only twenty-five pages of plates reduced about three-quarters, but the reproductions are much better. In *Prints and Their Makers*, edited by Fitzroy Carrington (New York, 1912), there is an interesting paper by Benjamin Burgess Moore, based on Samuel, and consequently repeating many of his errors.

LE ANTICHITA ROMANE

O P E R A

DI GIAMBATISTA PIRANESI

ARCHITETTO VENEZIANO

DIVISA IN QUATTRO TOMI

NEL PRIMO DE' QUALI SI CONTENGONO

GLI AVANZI DEGLI ANTICHI EDIFIZI DI ROMA
DISPOSTI IN TAVOLA TOPOGRAFICA
SECONDO L'ODIERNA LORO ESISTENZA
ED ILLUSTRATI CO' FRAMMENTI DELL'ANTICA ICNOGRAFIA MARMOREA,
E CON UN INDICE CRITICO DELLA LORO DENOMINAZIONE
ARRICCHITO DI TAVOLE SUPPLETORIE
FRALLE QUALI SI DIMOSTRANO

L'elevazione degli stessi avanzi: l'andamento degli antichi Aquedotti nelle vicinanze e nel dentro di Roma, correlativo al Commentario Frontiniano ivi esposto in compendio; la Pianta delle Terme le più cospicue; del Foro Romano colle Contrade circoscrivute; del Monte Capitolino; ed altre le più riguardevoli.

NEL SECONDO, E NEL TERZO

Gli Avanzi de' Monumenti Sepolcrali esistenti in Roma, e nell' Agro Romano colle loro rispettive piante, elevazioni, sezioni, vedute esterne ed interne; colla dimostrazione de' sarcofagi, ceppi, vasi cinerarij e unguentarij, bustilievi, stucchi, musaici, iscrizioni, e tutt' altro ch' è stato in essi ritrovato; e colle loro indicazioni e spiegazioni.

NEL QUARTO

I Ponti antichi di Roma che in oggi sono in essere, colle Vestigia dell' antica Isola Tiberina, gli Avanzi de' Teatri, de' Portici, e di altri Monumenti, esizandio colle loro indicazioni e spiegazioni.

TOMO PRIMO.

IN ROMA, MDCCLVI.

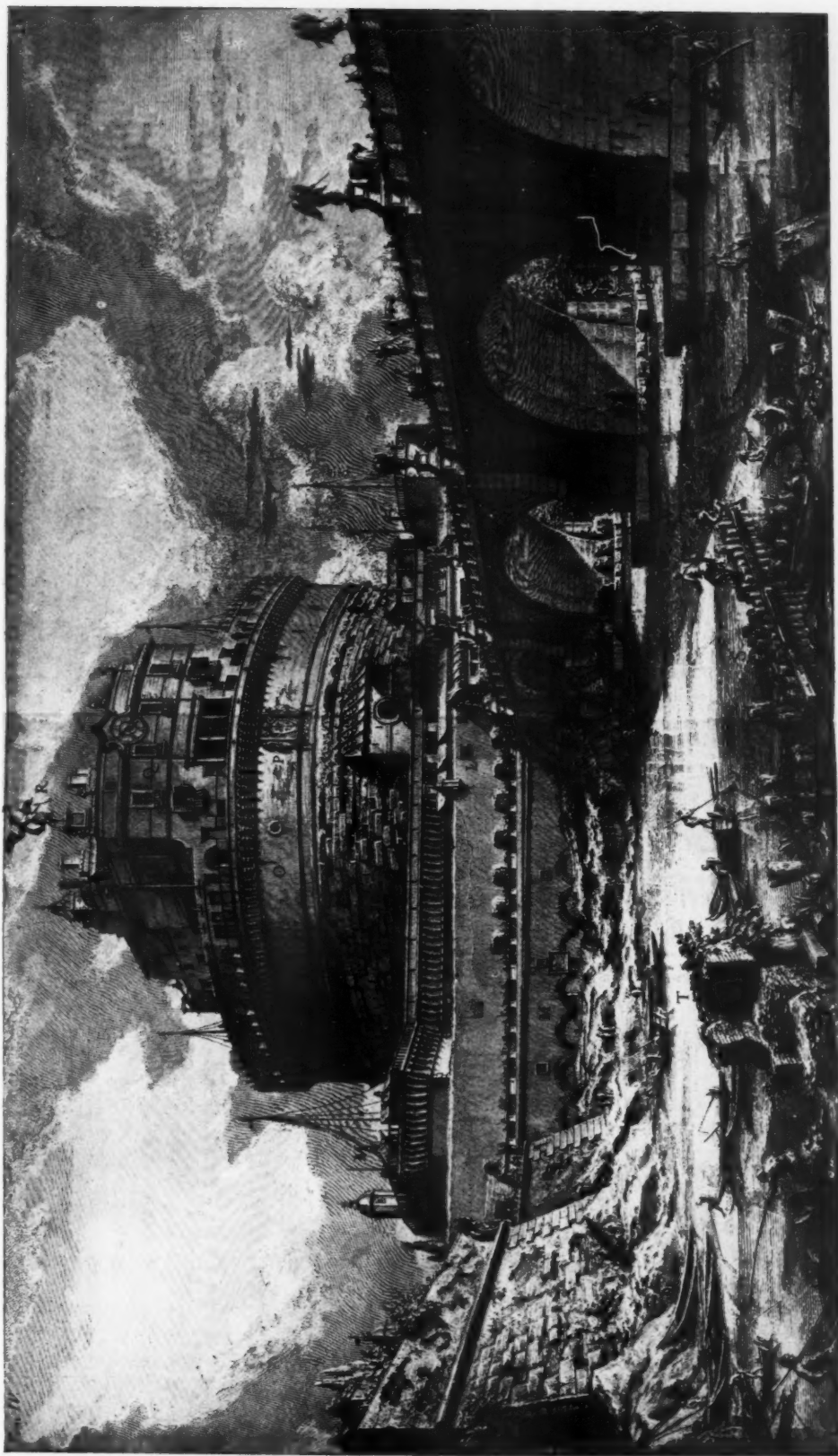
NELLA STAMPERIA DI ANGELO ROTILJ

NEL PALAZZO DE' MASSIMI.

CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI.

SI VENDONO IN ROMA DAI SIGNORI ECUHARD, F. GRAVIER MERCANTI LIBRAI AL CORSO
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TITLE PAGE, LE ANTICHITA ROMANE



CASTEL SANT'ANGELO, BY PIRANESI
(From *Antichità Romane*)

but most admirably arranged and written.

Bianconi's *Elogio Storico*, published the year after Piranesi's death, is by no means a eulogy. As Biagi wrote forty years later, "Bianconi was a wit; and wits as we know from experience are accustomed to sacrifice a friend to an epigram." Neither Bianconi, nor Biagi, nor even Emilio de Tiplado in 1845 appreciated the fact that Piranesi was a great artist. For written recognition of his extraordinary talents we must turn from Italy to France and England.

In 1798, twenty years after Piranesi's death, his two sons, Francesco and Pietro, removed their engraving establishment from Rome to Paris, and with the patronage of their father's friends—citizens Molard, Monge, Belloin, Tardieu, David, Clérissseau, Legrand, Cassas, Dufourni, Percier, Fontaine and Visconti—prepared to bring out a new edition of the works of their father and of Francesco. For this edition was prepared as an introduction a *Notice Historique of the Life and Works of J. B. Piranesi*, to be published as an introduction. But when this edition did appear, in twenty-six volumes in 1800 (not including Francesco's three volumes on Pompeii that were first published later), it appeared without text of any kind. Legrand's *Notice* was based on "notes and documents communicated by his sons, the companions and continuers of his numerous works." With reference to Bianconi's unfriendly *Elogio*, mentioned above, Legrand says: "After his [Piranesi's] death the journals printed at Rome and particularly the *Antologia*, not being able to decry his talents, wanted to turn into ridicule the defects of his character."

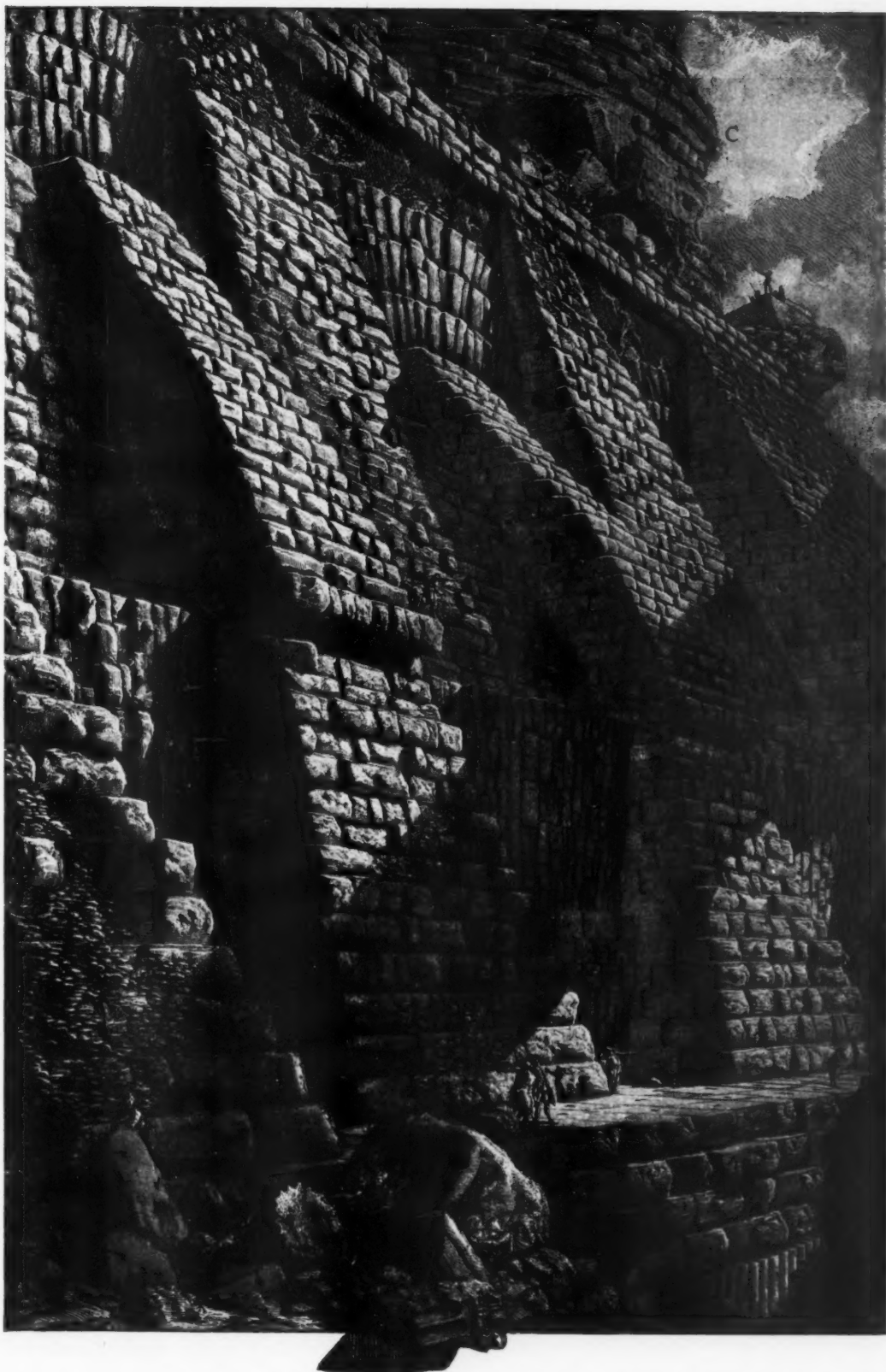
On the whole, Legrand's *Notice* is just and accurate. About Piranesi as an architect, he says nothing. But he sees clearly the position occupied by Piranesi in the history of the graphic arts, and describes Piranesi's processes in a manner that shows him to have been a connoisseur of the art of engraving. Piranesi's weaknesses he does not attempt to conceal, but refutes Bianconi's contention that Piranesi was not equipped with sufficient learning to be able to write his own text.

Giovanni Battista was the son of Giacomo and Laura Piranesi. He was born in Mojano, near Venice, on October 4, 1720, and was baptized on November 8, in the parish

of San Moise, in Venice. His father was a stone mason. The mother was daughter of the sea captain, Valentino Lucchesi, and sister of Matteo Lucchesi, architect of the Venetian Water Department, with whom Giovanni first studied architecture and learned to know and love Palladio. Perspective he studied from the writings of Vitruvius and with Carlo Zucchi, and some of the results of this study are to be seen in his *Prospettive*, published in Rome in 1743. But his first great inspiration toward antiquity came from his brother Angelo, who was a Carthusian monk with an exhaustive knowledge of the classics. His second great inspiration came from a young woman, Francesca Corraghi, who on the death of her parents in Rome had come to live with friends in Venice. She talked to Giovanni of the wonderful art treasures in the Eternal City, and fired him with longing to see them and study them; but she married the Conte d'Amalfi.

In 1740 young Piranesi's ambition to go to Rome was gratified. He was appointed draftsman to the Venetian Embassy there, and is said to have had an allowance from his father of 6 piastres (\$6) a month. For three years he studied architecture and antiquities, and worked in the studio of the theatre decorators, Guiseppe and Domenico Valeriani, taking up engraving towards the end of the period.

A very clear view of Piranesi's mental attitude in 1743 can be had from his *Prospettive*, a volume with twelve plates in large folio, dedicated to Nicola Giobbe who had welcomed him to his house on his arrival in Rome; put at his disposal his rich collection of paintings, drawings, engravings, and books; and made him acquainted with the two famous architects, Nicola Salvi and Luigi Vanvitelli. In Piranesi's dedication to Giobbe, he says: "I tell you that these speaking ruins have filled my spirit with pictures altogether unlike those I was able to conceive on the basis of the drawings, exact though they are, made by the immortal Palladio, and always kept by me before my eyes. Consequently I have decided to publish some of them. And since no architect in these times can hope to execute any of them, whether because of the architecture that has come down to us from ancient grandeur, or from lack of Maecenases for the



FOUNDATION WALLS OF THE CASTEL SANT' ANGELO, BY PIRANESI

(From *Antichità Romane*)

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

noble art to-day—the truth at any rate is that no buildings of to-day are seen that call for such an expenditure as that demanded, for instance, by the Forum of Nerva, the Colosseum, the Palace of Nero—and, since neither in princes nor private individuals does the desire arise to have them seen, it seems to me that for myself, as well as for all other modern architects, nothing remains but to *illustrate our ideas in the form of drawings.*”

According to Bianconi, Piranesi's first teacher in the art of engraving was the Sicilian Guiseppe Vasi, whom he accuses Piranesi of having attempted to murder, through dissatisfaction with the results of his teaching as expressed in material form in the Prospettive. The tale reads well, but appears to lack foundation in fact, although it is possible that later Piranesi may have worked for a short time with Vasi. The man actually responsible for Piranesi's training came from his own city of Venice, brought to Rome about 1742 as master of engraving in the Ospizio di S. Michele. His name was Felice Polanzani, and it is he who designed and engraved and signed with the date 1750, the portrait of Piranesi often bound as frontispiece at the beginning of the *Antichità Romane*.

After a short visit to Naples towards the end of 1743, Piranesi is said to have returned to Venice and studied painting with Tiepolo. At any rate, he wrote from Venice in May, 1744, to his patron in Rome, the famous antiquarian and close friend of Benedict XIV, Monsignor Bottari, to whom he dedicated *Archi Trionfali* in 1748. Certainly Tiepolo's influence seems apparent in the four Rococo Groteschi, published after Piranesi's return to Rome, in the 1750 edition of the *Prospettive*; and in the Rococo frames of the two title pages of *Archi Trionfali*.

Also in the 14 *Carceri*, published in 1750, the only prints that were announced by Piranesi as etchings, the Venetian influence is

apparent. The most vivid description of the *Carceri* is by De Quincy, given by him as similar to his own visions when under the influence of opium. He wrote in the *Opium-Eater*: “Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them * * * represented vast Gothic [sic] halls; on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery; wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc., etc., expressive of enormous power put forth and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls you perceive a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself; follow the stairs a little further and you perceive it comes to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi? * * * You suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eyes, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld; and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labors; and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.”

These *Carceri* plates are often wrongly regarded as typical of Piranesi. That they are characteristic of one phase of his emotional nature is true; but it is a phase that almost entirely ceased to express itself after 1750, being submerged in the greater and more classic work that he was accomplishing. The typical Piranesi plates are those of the *Vedute di Roma*.

(To be continued)



NORTHERN ITALIAN DETAILS

No. 32—DOORS, PALAZZO ROSSO, GENOA

THE Palazzo Rosso, so named from the red color of its façade, stands in the Via Nuova, which was constructed by Alessi. The palace itself is said to be from his designs. It was originally the property of the Brignole Sale family who presented it in 1874 to the city of Genoa together with its valuable library and picture gallery. This palace, and the Palazzo Bianci opposite, are arranged as museums. Their attractive interiors present a welcome relief to the usual uninteresting art museum. The doors illustrated afford access to the library on the *piano nobile*. They are executed in Italian walnut and are carved and ornamented with great feeling. The trim is marble, once white, but now toned by age to

a waxy hue. The bronze knockers are masterly pieces of metal work, crisp and refined is their modelling and casting. The eyes of the lions are of polished brass, a feature that adds considerable interest.

The design of the doors, while of comparatively late date, is restrained and even academic; probably they err rather on that side than by being too free. They face upon a small hall that forms the landing to the stairway from the ground floor. The floor of this hall is attractively composed of a herringbone pattern of alternate black and white marble tiles, a suggestion of which has been indicated in the drawing. As is the case with most of the Genoese marble, it is probably of Carrara origin.

SOME ARCHITECTURAL CRITICS

CONSISTENT readers of the current architectural journals, comments *Building Review*, must have noticed that during the past few years there has arisen a class of writers who seem to find it next to impossible to make a plain statement of any fact. If they have any points they so befog them with useless verbiage and meaningless analogies that nobody can tell what they are driving at. Of course facts have to be decorated to a reasonable extent in order to make an interesting and readable article. The magazine which confined itself solely to the categorical statement would grow dusty on every news-stand. We are not declaiming against originality and picturesqueness of style, but against a too prevalent sophistication and hyperbole.

On the other hand, there are many writers on architecture who say what they have to say clearly, forcibly and attractively.

As illustrations of what we have in mind

we call attention to two articles in *The Architectural Record* for May concerning which it will be unnecessary to suggest the conclusions that the reader may draw for himself.

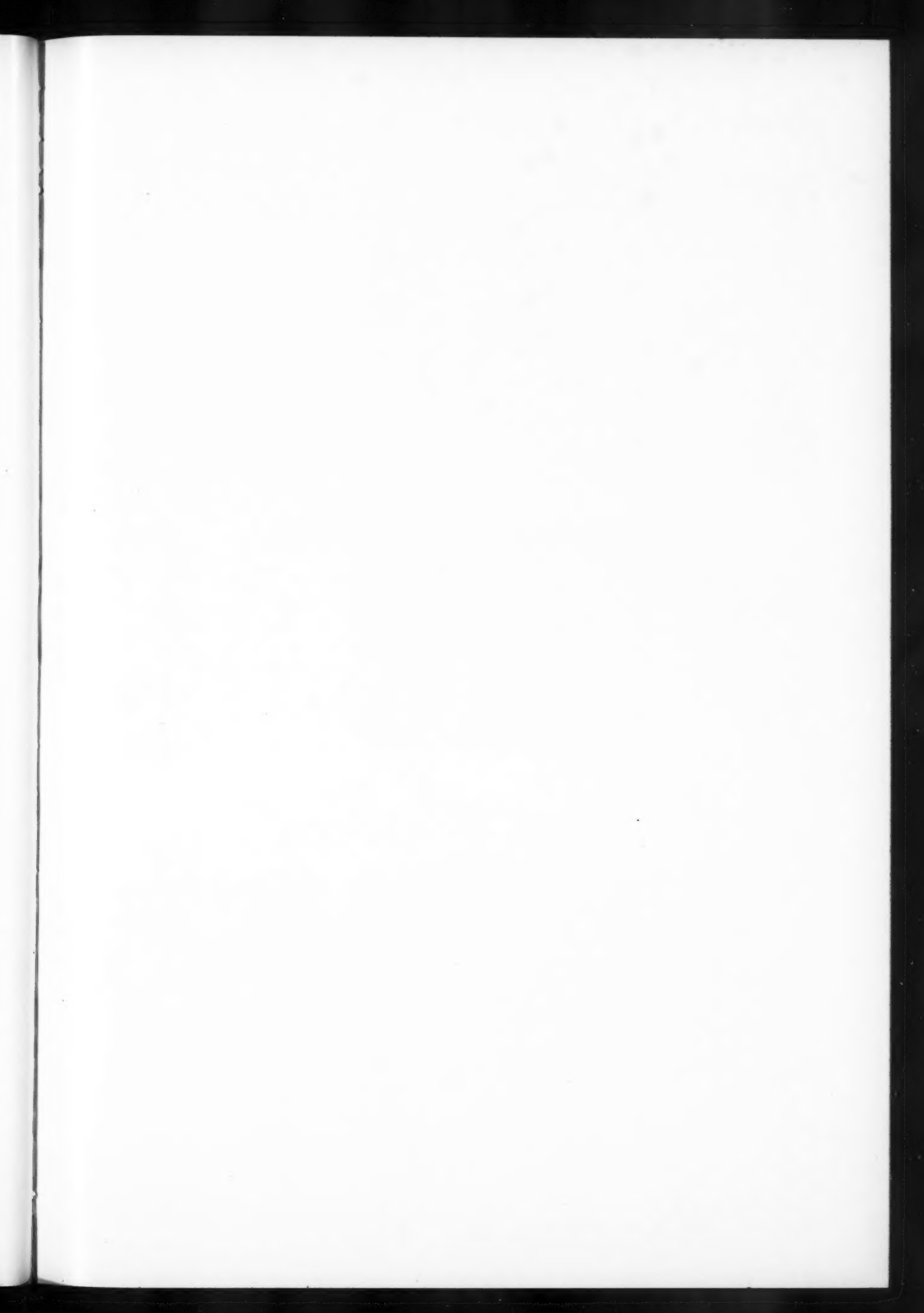
These are: "Roman Architecture and Its Critics," by Professor Hamlin, and "Color in Architecture at the Panama-Pacific Exposition," by Wm. L. Woollett.

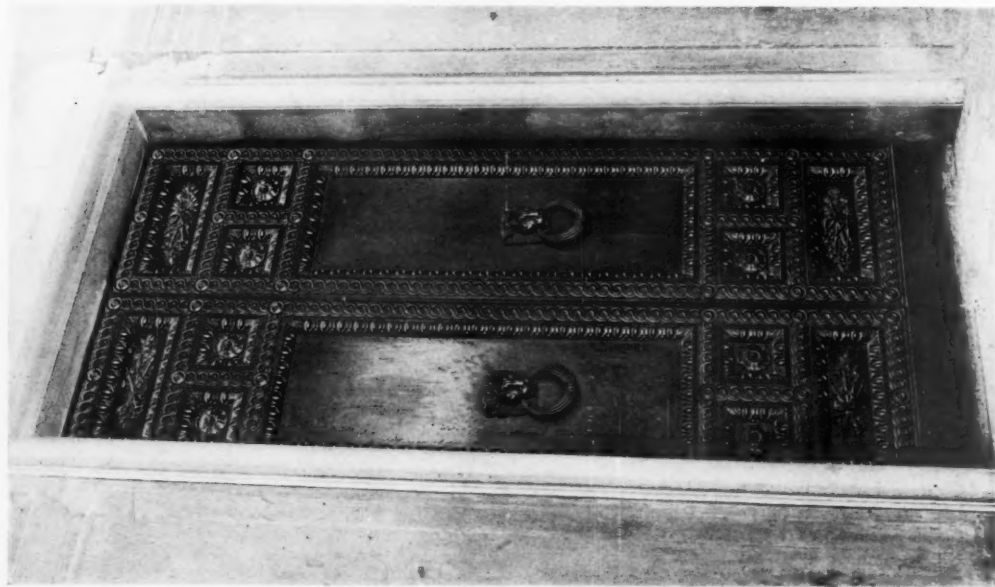
We will only say for ourself that we have a strong predilection for Professor Hamlin's erudite and scholarly paper.

Herbert Croly is ordinarily an entertaining and rational writer, but is the sense of suggesting "an element of mystery" as the proper answer to the following query:

"Was it accidental that the Spaniard should have used more than any other people, both the sombrero with its broad brim and the shapely projecting roof?"

The proper answer to that query is: "No, it was to keep the sun off."

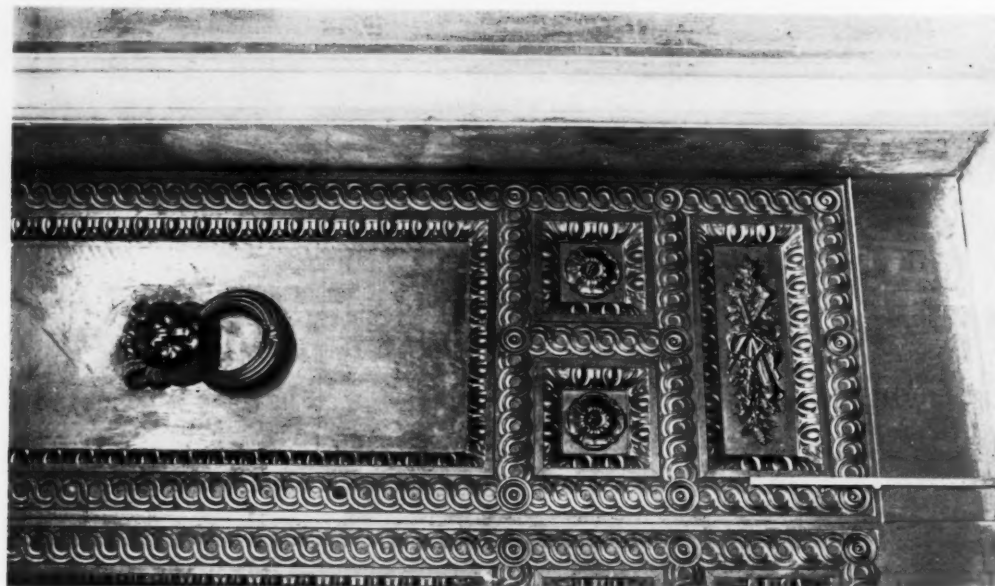




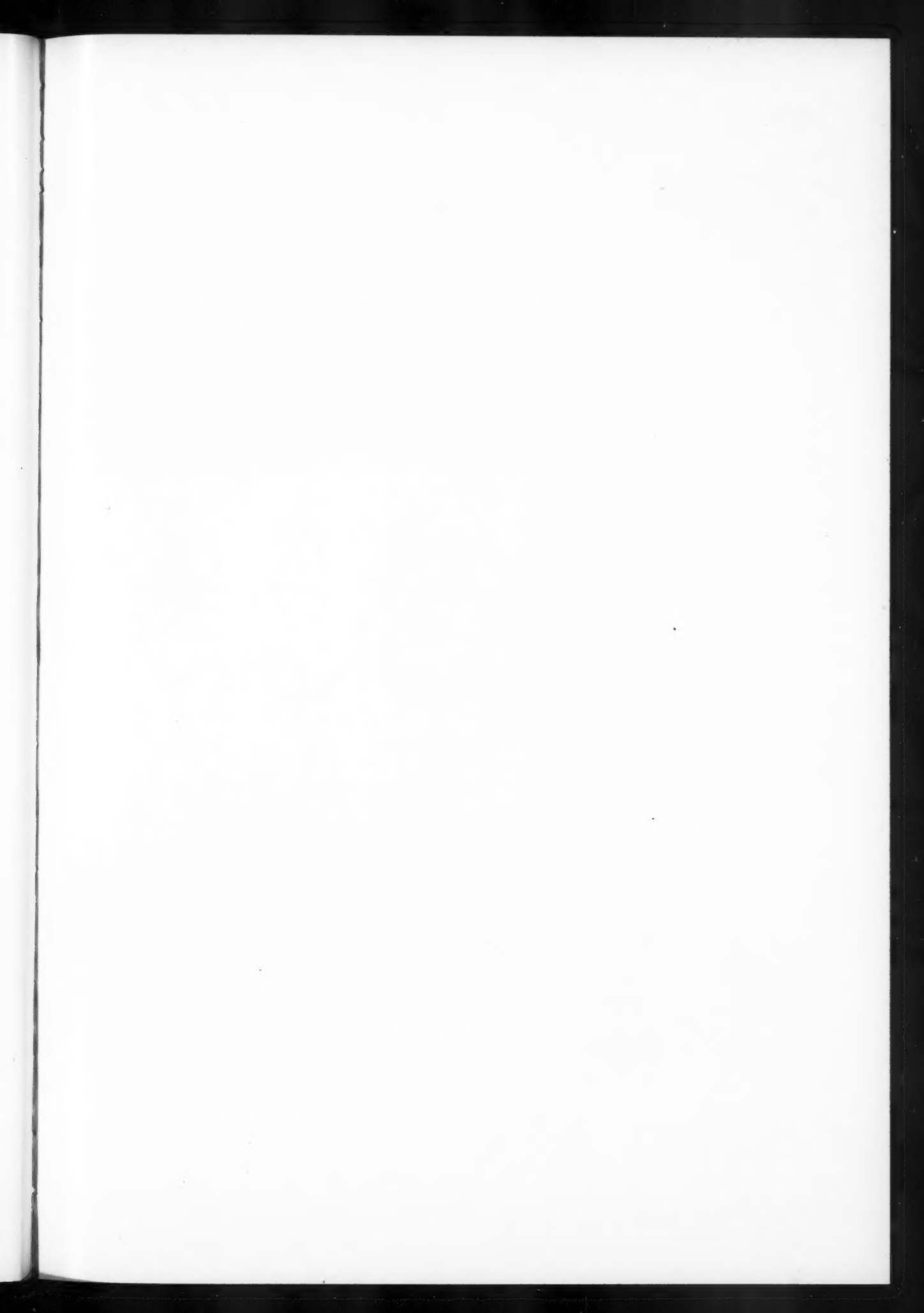
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BY W. G. THOMAS AND J. T. FALLON

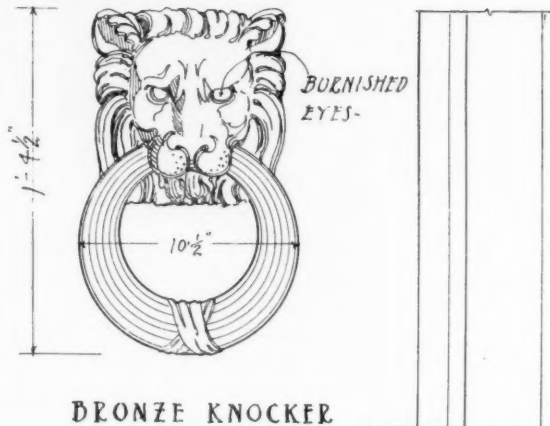
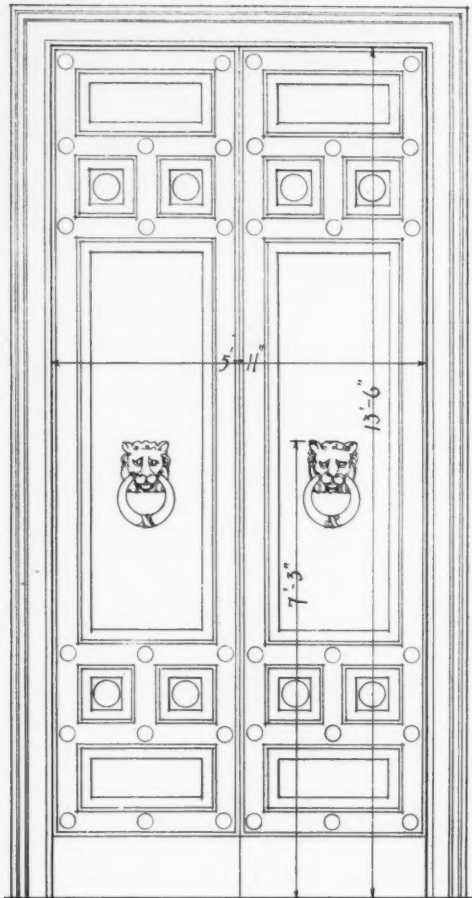


ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS
OF NORTHERN ITALY—PLATE NO. 69

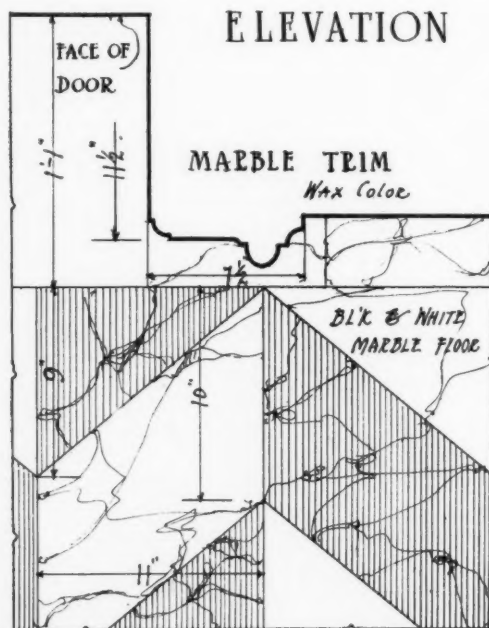


DOORS: PALAZZO ROSSO, GENOA

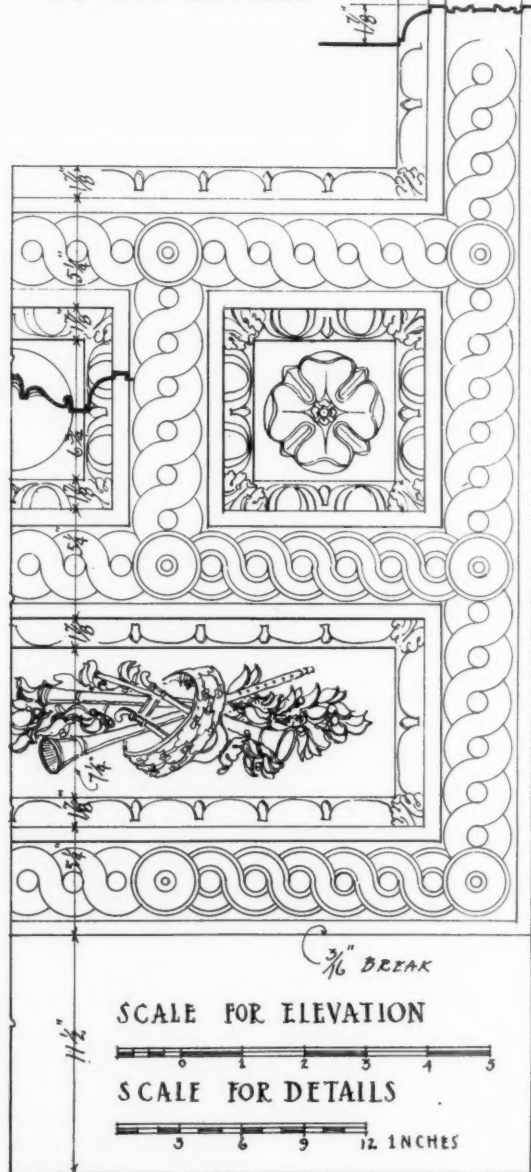




BRONZE KNOCKER



ELEVATION

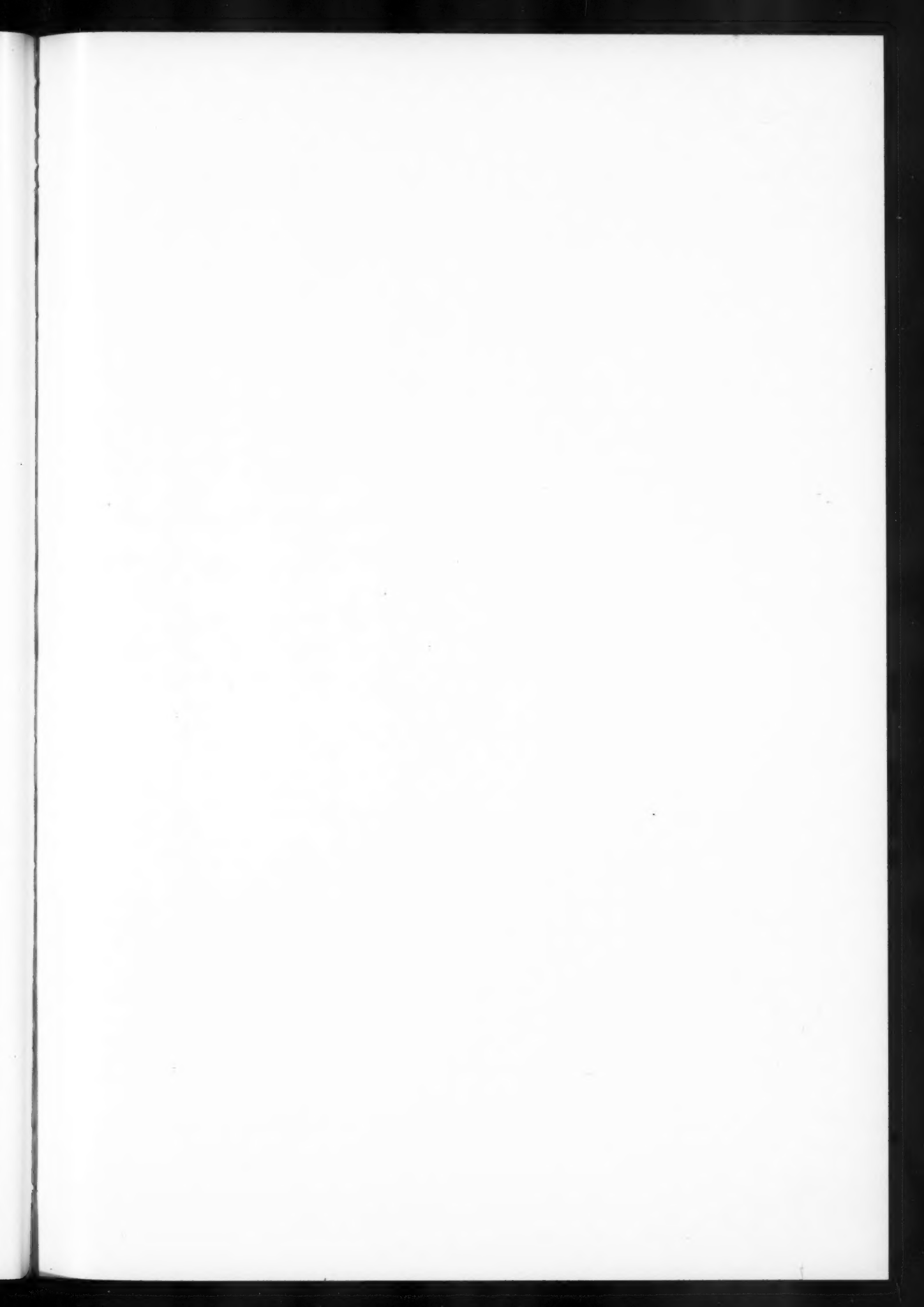


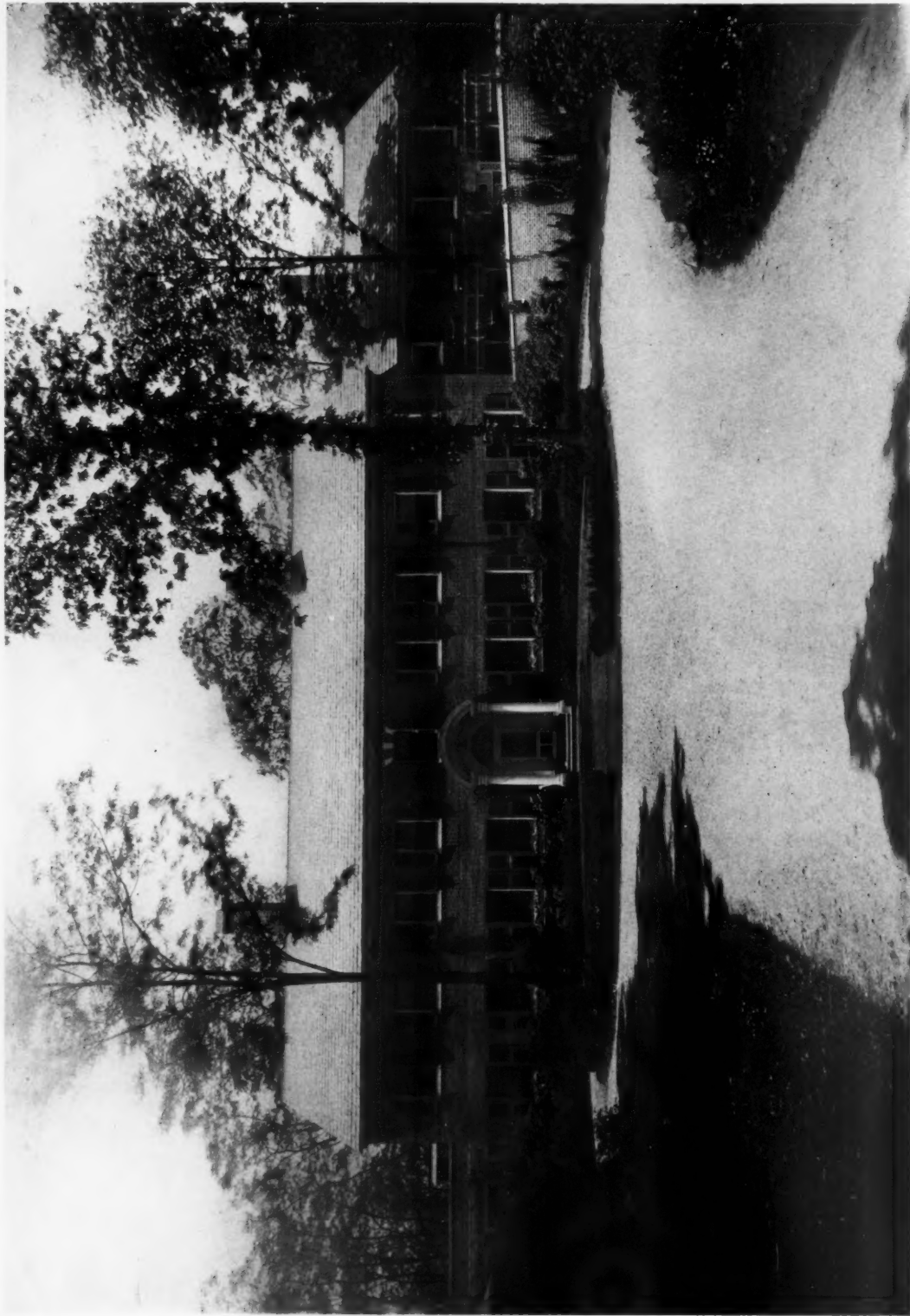
SCALE FOR ELEVATION

SCALE FOR DETAILS

12 INCHES

DOORS: PALAZZO ROSSO, GENOA

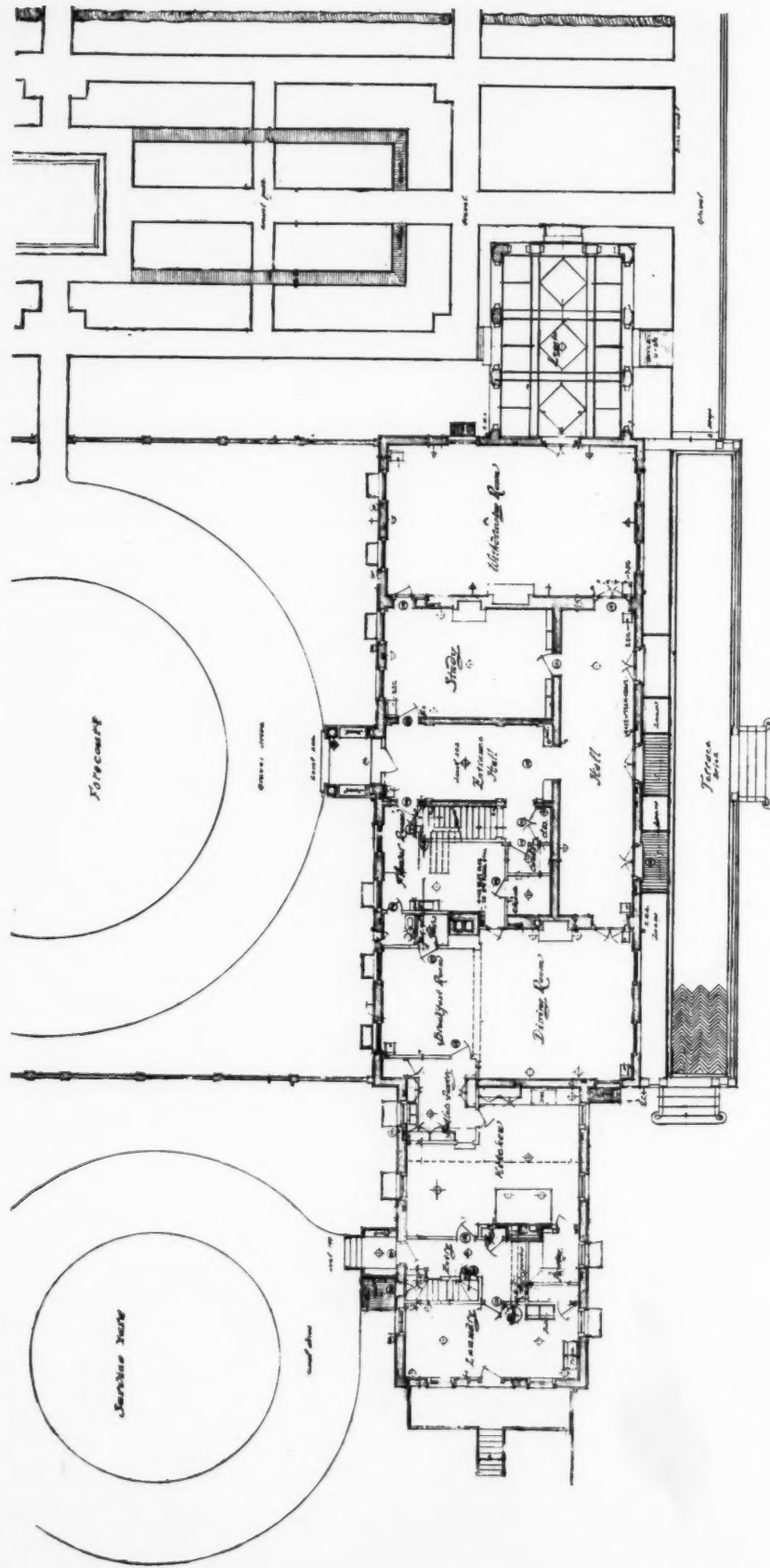




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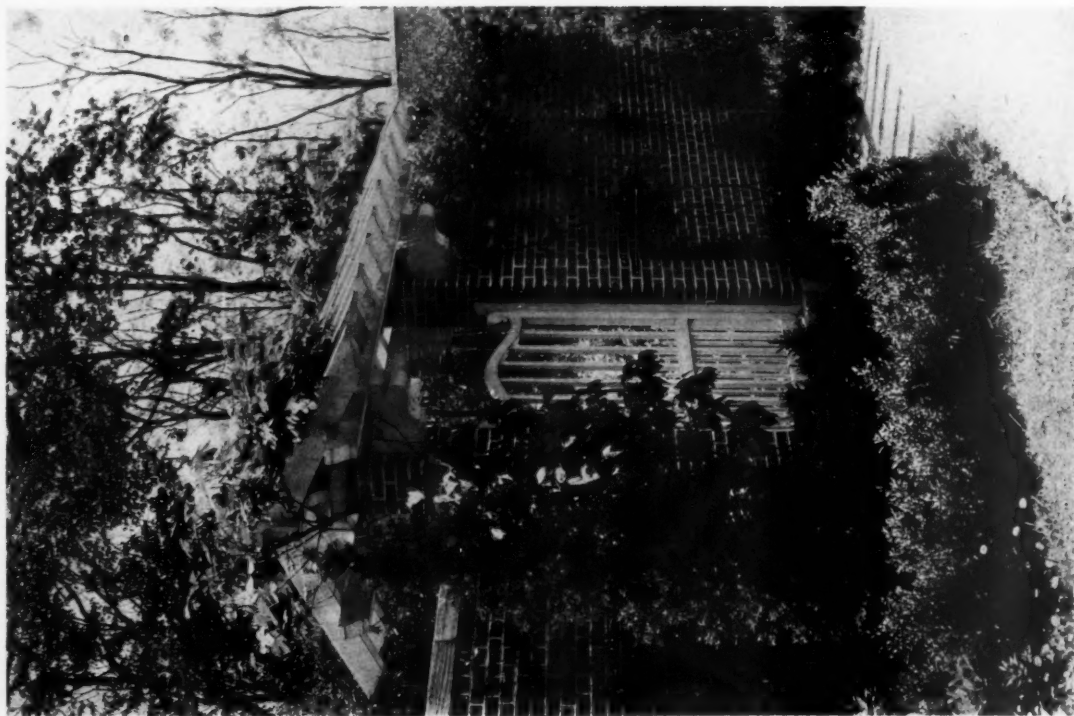




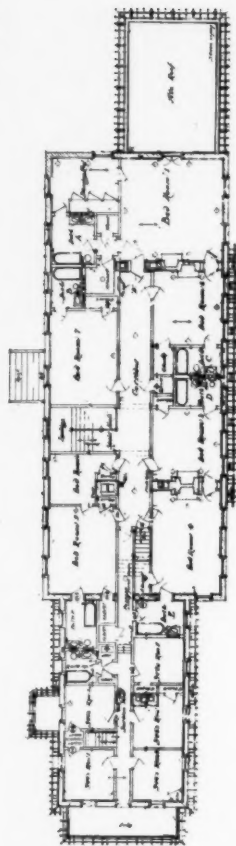
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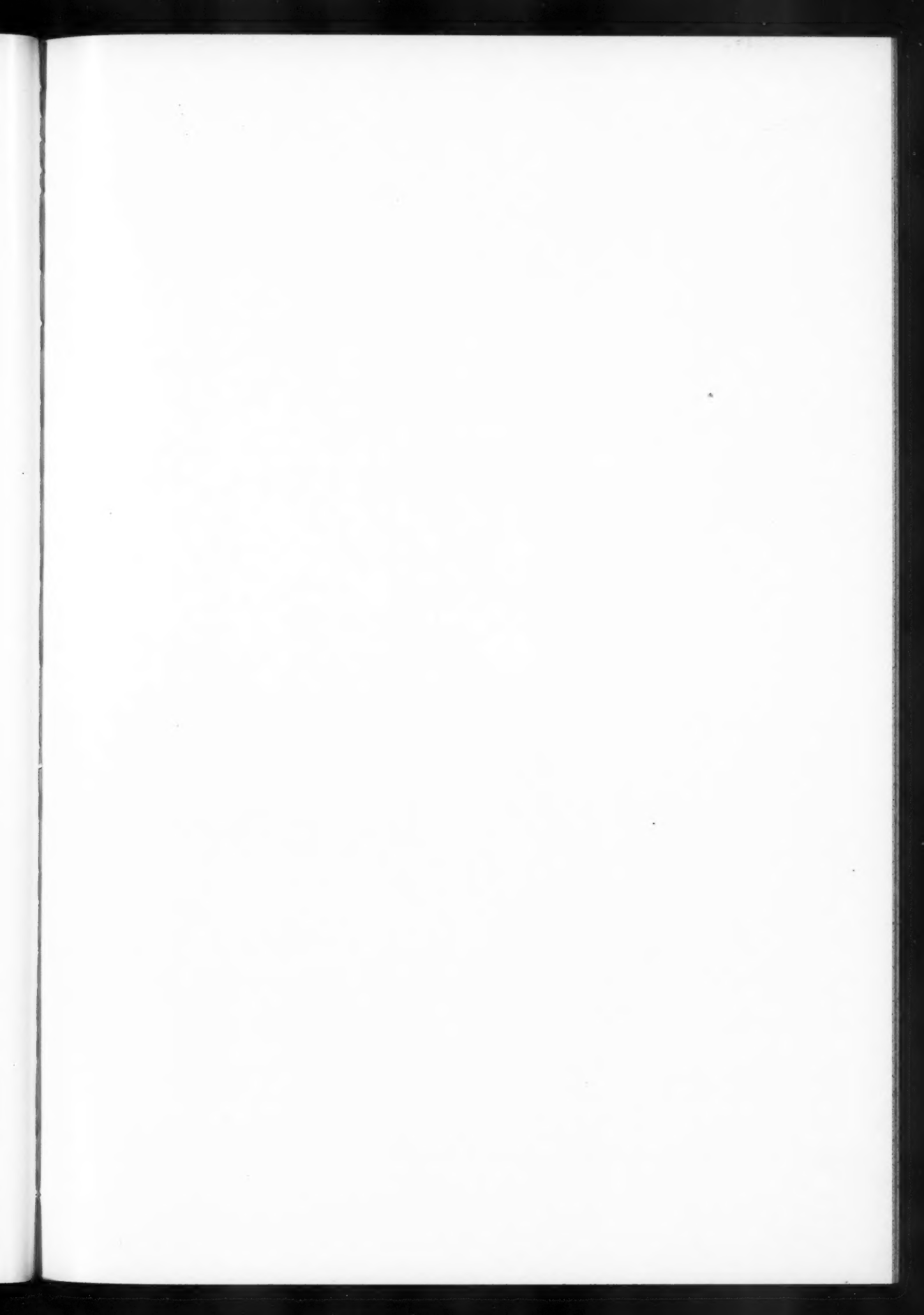
GARDEN ENTRANCE



PLAN OF SECOND FLOOR

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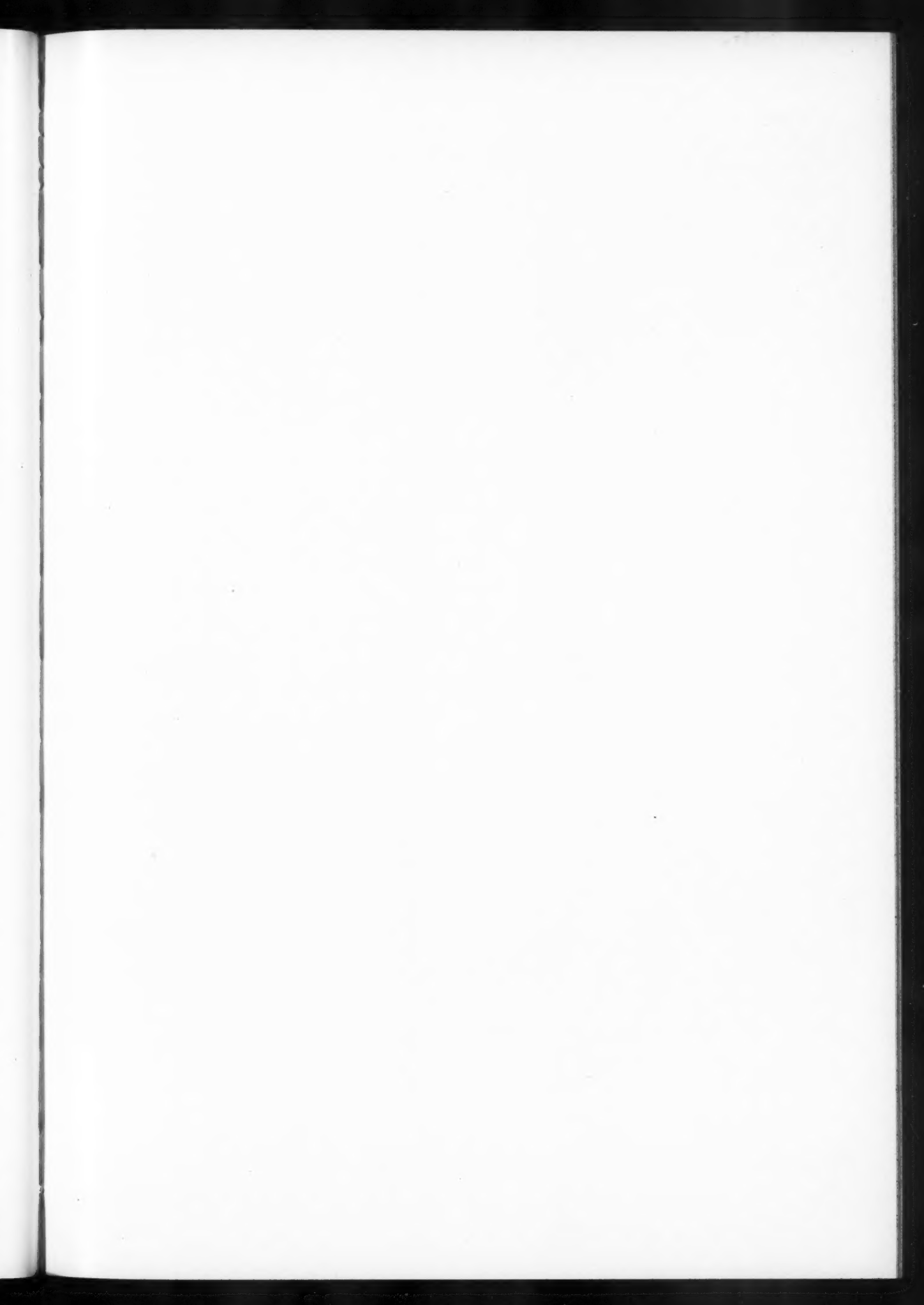
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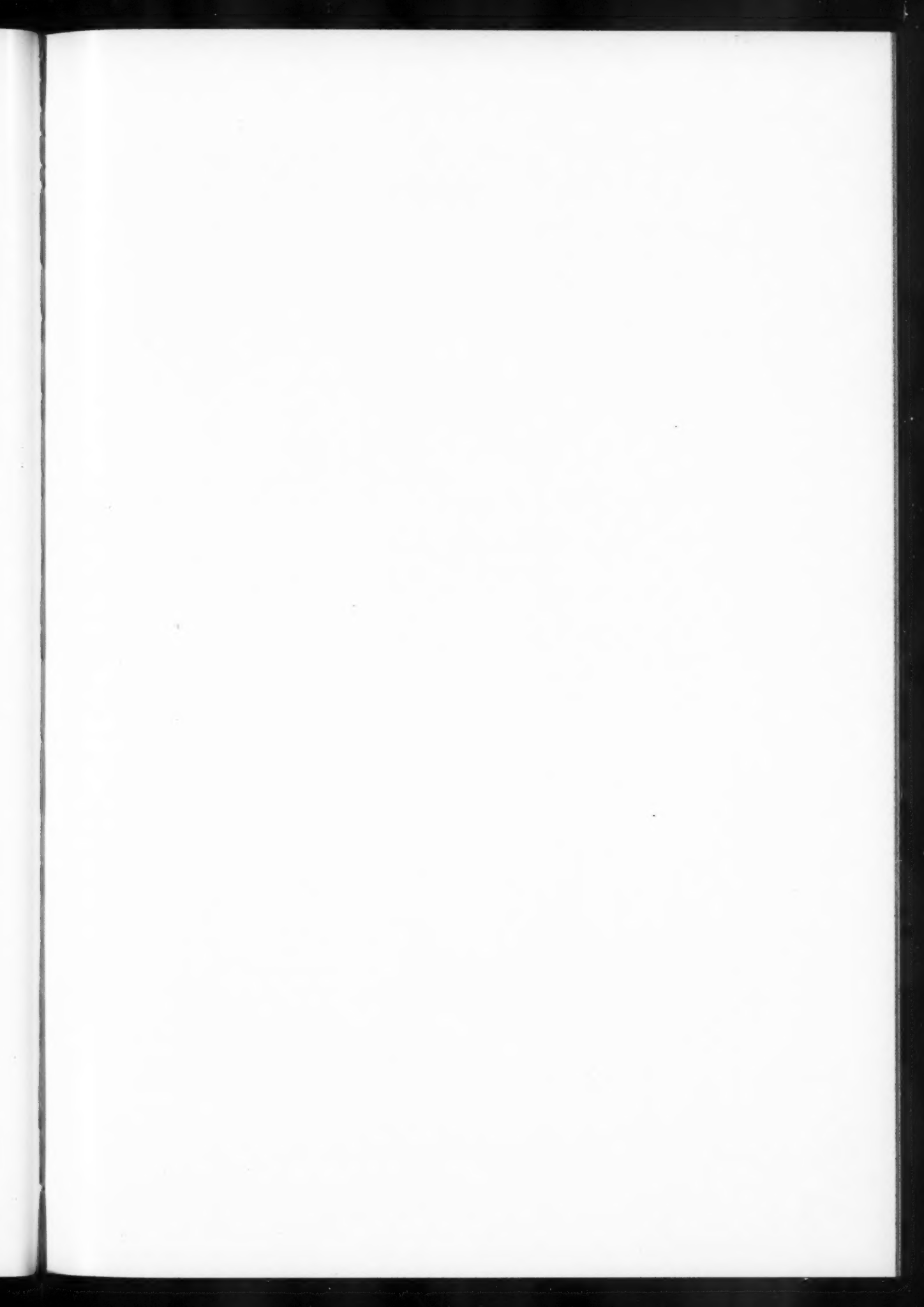




VIEW LOOKING ACROSS GARDEN

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VIEW ALONG TERRACE FRONT

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TERRACE.

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VIEW FROM THE TERRACE

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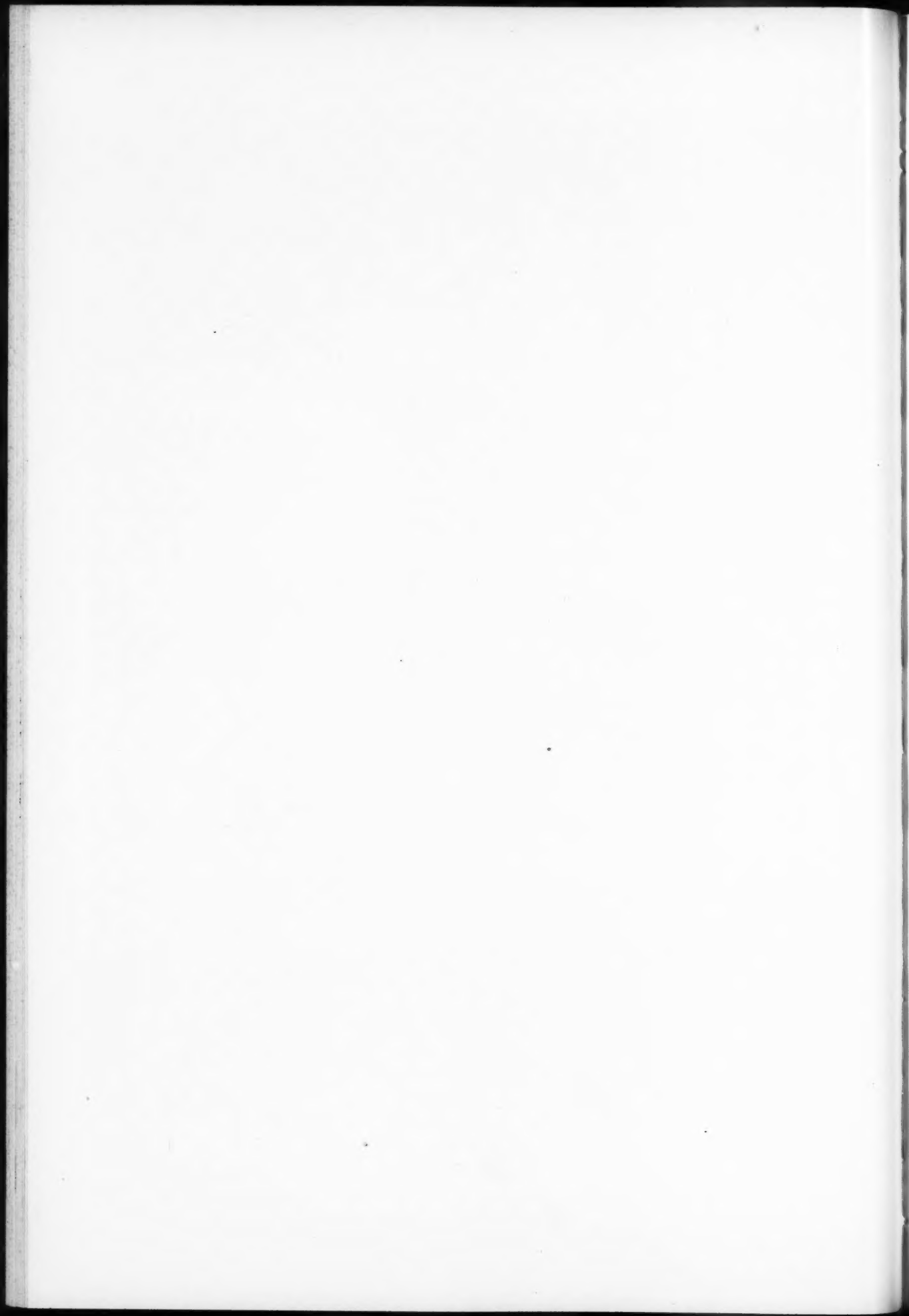




SERVICE EXTENSION

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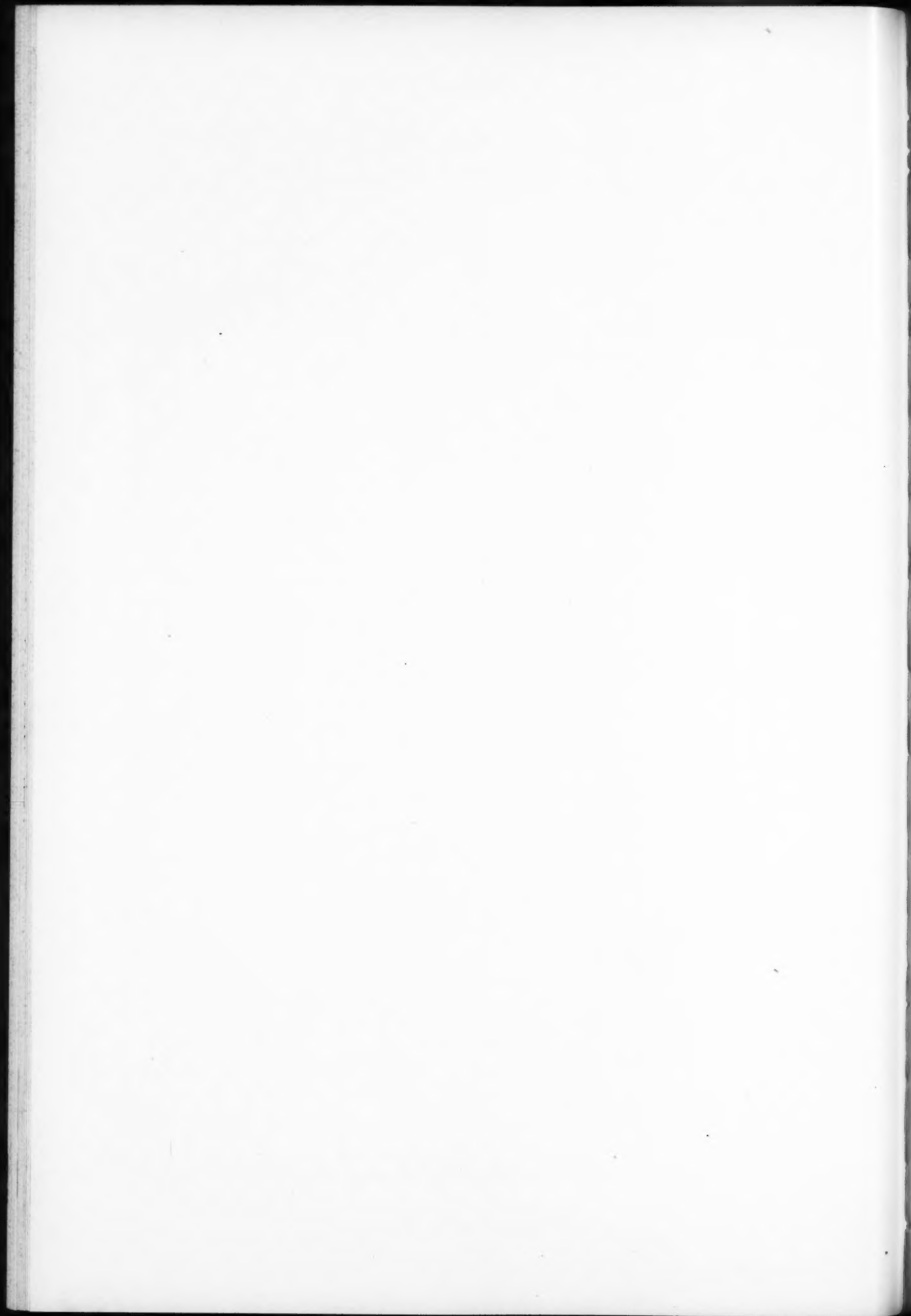


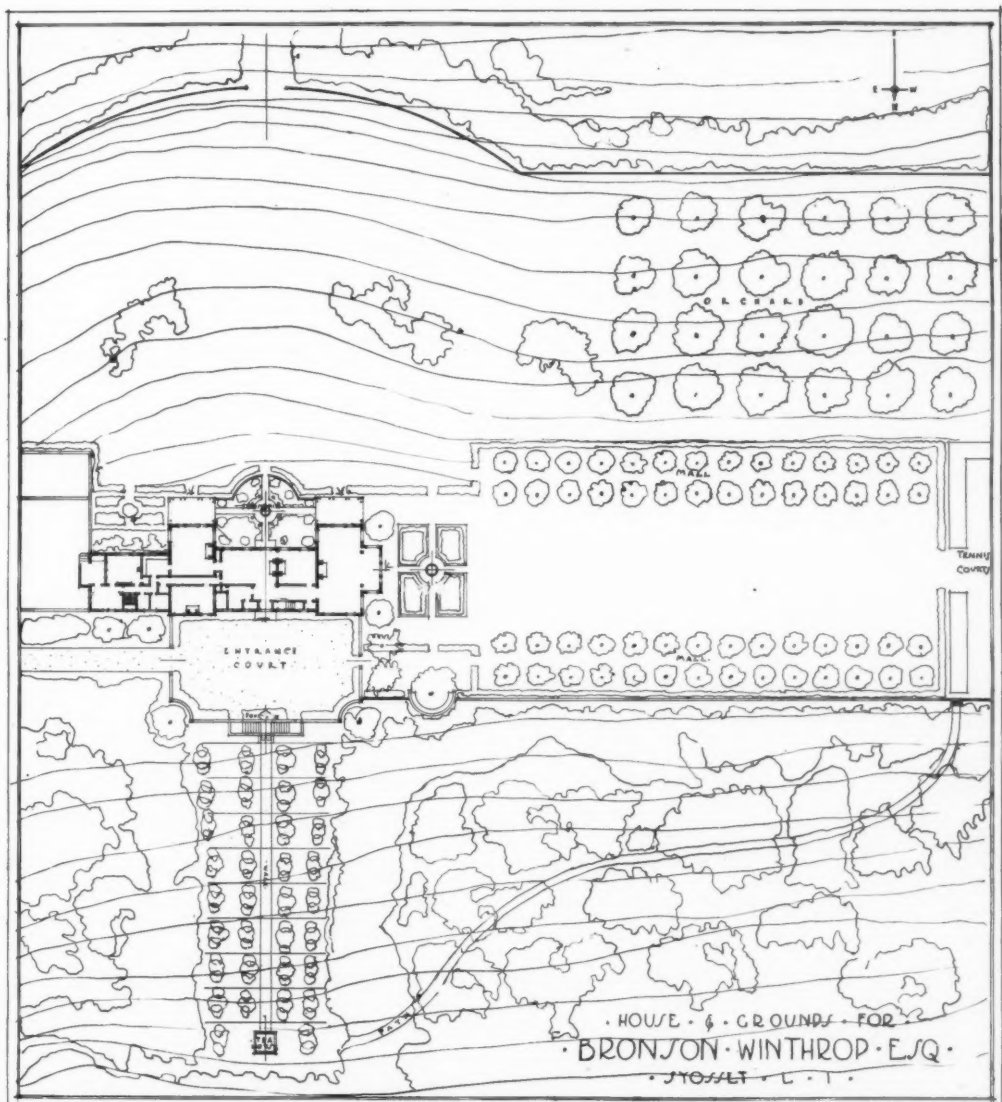
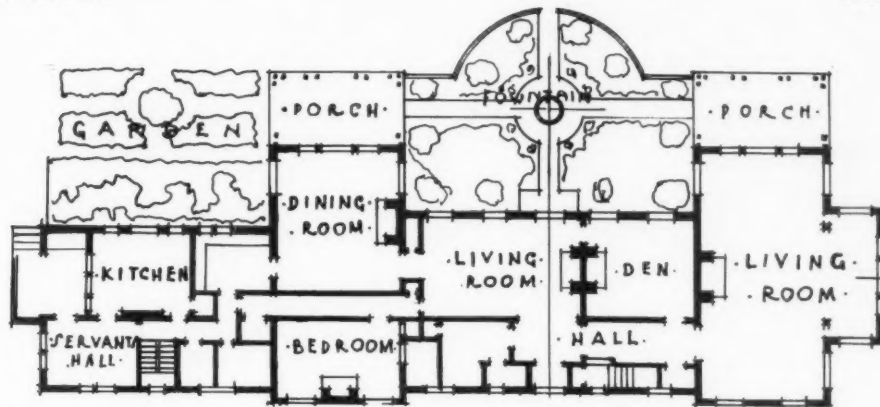


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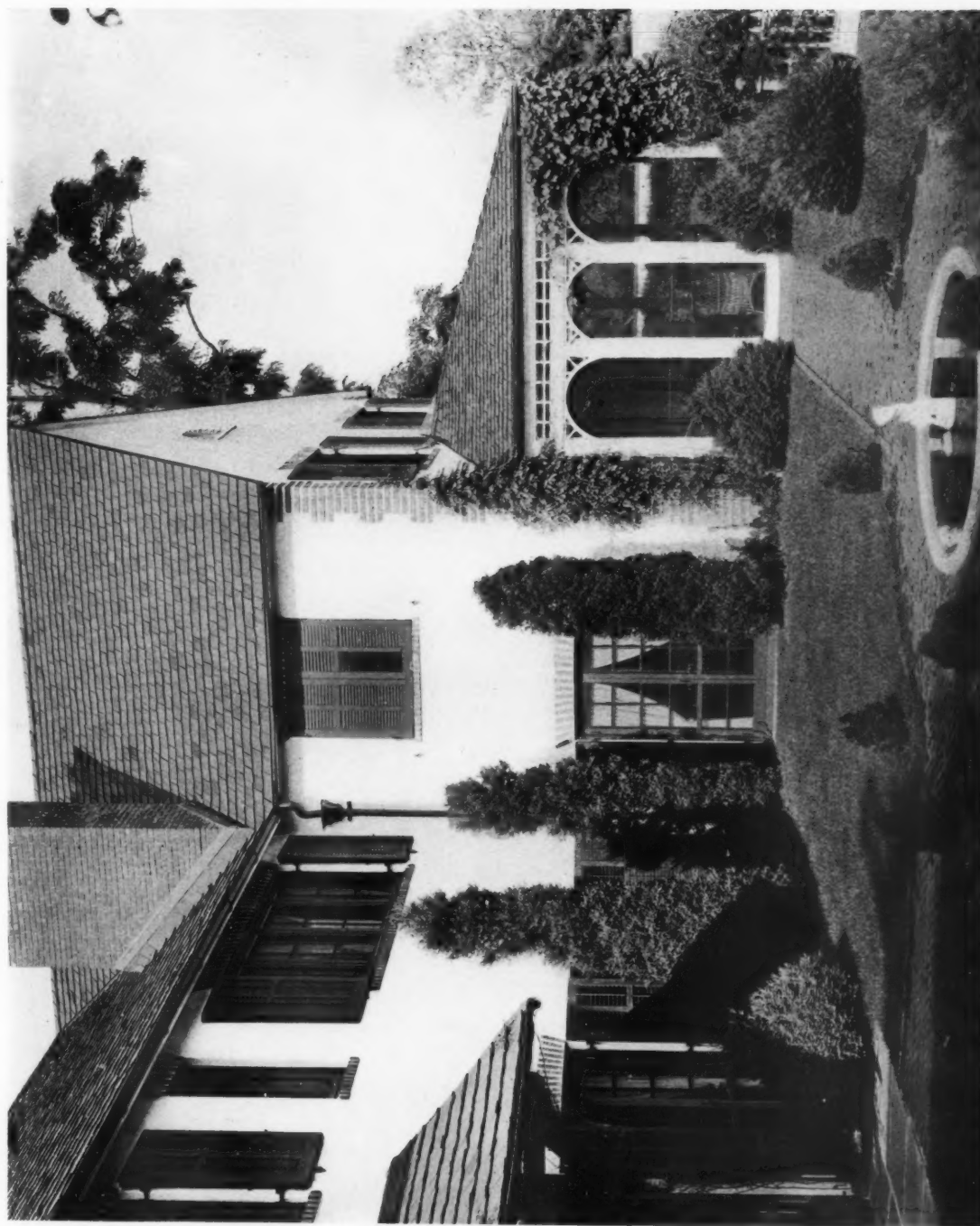




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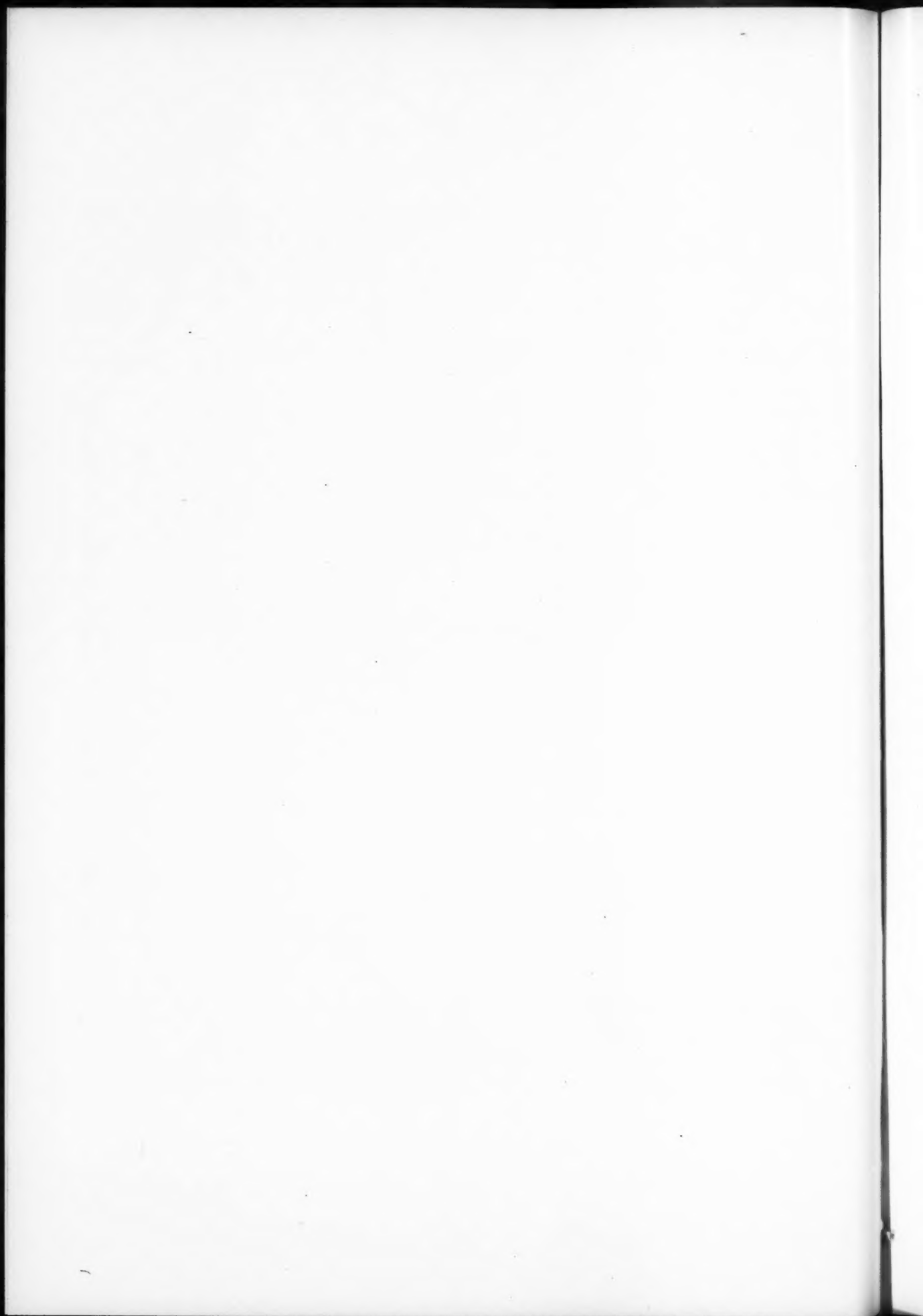
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SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES BESETTING THE PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE PRESENT TIME

THE practice of architecture is generally classed among the professions, and the architect is now ordinarily accorded an equal rank in modern social life with the lawyer and physician. Most of the products of the architect's professional activities have, however, always been regarded by educated people as works of art and the architectural monuments of the past belong, in the largest sense, to what may perhaps be considered the most important phase of the fine arts.

It will be realized on a little reflection that architecture at its best possesses a dual importance, artistic and utilitarian, and that the architect plays a double rôle in the affairs of life; a rôle which adds greatly to the difficulties of his work since it demands both artistic and business ability in its performance.

In the practice of the sister arts of painting and sculpture, the finished product, which is after all the true objective of the artist, is within the possible attainment of the individual mind and hand. Painting re-

quires only the skilful use of canvas and oils, and the painter is able to see his conceptions take shape under his own hand without the intrusion of any foreign and possibly unsympathetic influence into his work. The sculptor is equally able to translate his ideas into stone or marble, and even if he relies upon the help of a third party, it is only to perform a mechanical part of the work, and this element could be dispensed with at will. The client or person who will ultimately possess the work does not enter strongly as an influence into either of these arts, and if he is known and an influence at all, he is usually a person with some previous knowledge of or interest in artistic matters.

On the other hand architecture by its very nature demands not only that the architect depend wholly upon such artisans and workmen as may be available, to translate his ideas from the abstract to the concrete, but he is also dependent upon the client who furnishes occasion and fixes definite limits to the ideas.

The client of the architect may have no acquaintance whatever with architectural matters and frequently employs the architect not in the capacity of artist, but rather that of director of building operations.

Within the legal and medical professions, the interests of the client and the professional man are usually and properly identical but the architect is sometimes, in the case of uneducated clients, forced to in a sense serve two masters and to seek a nice compromise between the duty and desire on one hand to create a beautiful building, and on the other the obligation that he owes to his client to meet his wishes and plan an intensely practical and economical structure, omitting all else. He is even forced in extreme cases almost to the point of insincerity to preserve the integrity of his design, by such expedients as drawing the attention of his client away from the cost of purely artistic features.

Regardless of the moral aspect of the questions involved in such a course, and without attempting to pass on matters that must be decided by each practitioner for himself, it is this dual nature of architecture that has given rise to many popular misconceptions that in themselves hamper and thwart the architect. The profession has always recognized the difficult rôle which its indi-

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vidual members are forced to play, and has endeavored by the maintenance of a high ethical standard to serve both the interests of the public and those of art with strict fidelity to both.

Only by a slow and gradual process of education can these two interests ever be made identical and until that time the practice of architecture in its highest form will probably continue to consist largely of a liberal use of tact and discretion, accompanied by a highly developed sense of values that can effect a compromise between the practical and the artistic, without too great a sacrifice to either.

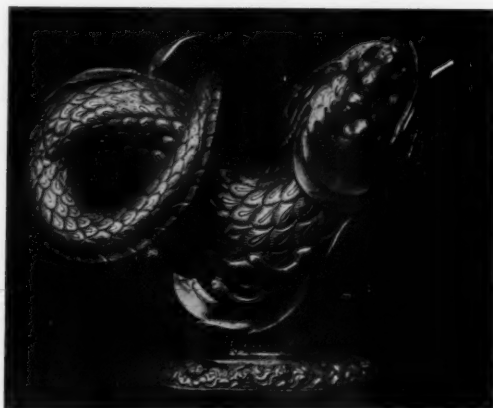
AN ILL-ADVISED PIECE OF LEGISLATION

THE recently enacted law, under which express companies are now required to exact a tax of \$3.00 for each \$1,000 of value on works of art, and the full value of a shipment must be declared, seems to be one of the comparatively rare but exasperatingly ill-advised and retrograde actions occasionally taken by legislators without apparent reason. One of the principal activities of the American Federation of Arts has been collecting and sending forth traveling exhibitions of pictures and sculpture, to places more or less removed from art centres. According to reports, there were held last year twenty-six such exhibitions in one hundred and twenty-four places. One of these exhibitions, com-

posed of forty paintings, traveled—according to the records—to Norman, Okla., and from there made a circuit of all the more important Texas cities. Another was sent to Dayton, Ohio, and thence over a circuit of the cities in the Middle West. A third traveled from Sioux Falls, S. D., to Seattle, and later to a great number of cities on the Pacific Coast.

From these typical examples, it can readily be seen how valuable a work the Federation has been doing in making it possible for people located in the smaller cities and towns, and who have never enjoyed the advantage of travel, to view authoritative works of art and profit by their civilizing influences.

It is stated that the demand for the exhibitions is eager, and the towns requesting them ordinarily defray transportation expenses, while the Federation undertakes the labor involved in assembling and forwarding the objects. The interest awakened throughout the country where these exhibitions have been held has apparently been more than sufficient to justify the enterprise. The situation as it now exists obviously becomes difficult, if not impossible, for neither the Federation nor any other society is sufficiently endowed to bear the expense involved in the moving of exhibits under the new law. It is hoped that the error committed in the enactment of this legislation will be speedily realized, and that relief will be provided within the year.



The Apartment House Fire-escape

The very stringent laws regulating fire-escapes in New York and other cities while probably a necessary precaution in the safeguarding of life, undoubtedly work to the detriment of the æsthetic aspect of thoroughfares, and in some instances quite seriously affect the rental income of apartment houses.

The general opinion of tenants that fire-escapes on the front of an apartment house place it in the "tenement house" class, is prejudicial to good rental values.

Several solutions of the fire-escape problem have been attempted, but not always successful from the economical, or owner's viewpoint. Exterior stairs in enclosed towers, where the plan will permit of access from every apartment is one of the attempts at solution. But as stated these solutions, while masking or unobtrusively placing the fire-escape, usually add to the structural cost, and do not always proportionally add to the rental income.

With existing requirements slightly modified, even with fire-escapes placed on the façade, it would probably be possible, if sufficient study is given the problem, to turn what is now considered an unsightly feature into a decorative element that would materially add to the artistic aspect of the street.

A prominent builder of apartment houses in New York is quoted in a recent interview as saying:

"The dwelling lines of the streets of New York would be increased in architectural beauty fully 75 per cent if a change were made in the law affecting fire-escapes. When you glance down the street now your eye is actually pained with the sight of the glaring ironwork of the escapes jutting out from the front of dwellings. A number of houses have been erected where this has been done away with, but it has been at a distinct loss of living room.

The plan is to build an alcove in the front of the house of sufficient size to embrace the space needed for the fire-escape. In this alcove are placed the iron platform and ladders that you now see sticking out over the street line. Thus the façade is preserved in whatever architectural beauty it possesses. But, of course, this takes up room. The building laws demand that you reserve

so many feet of your lot for light and air. So, if you build your indented fire-escape as described you simply lose that much space on your lot that otherwise would be devoted to the room or rooms of your flat.

"There are many who would rather have the room than the nice street line. And, again, if you put your fire-escapes in an alcove, say in three or four houses you erect, along comes some other builder who puts his fire escapes out over the street line and spoils your view and effect."

The present policy of the average builder of apartment houses is no doubt due to the fact that he does not build for a permanent investment. His procedure is to erect a structure as quickly as possible, fill it with tenants as soon as he can, and with a demonstrated income, seek a purchaser. His contribution to the æsthetics is limited to the exactions of the building law, plus such limited embellishments as will serve to attract tenants and enable him to go forth on his search for a purchaser.

These conditions afford a good example of the struggle that is constantly being waged between good art and the materialistic viewpoint of the average investor.

Progress in the Industrial Arts

In an address at the recent annual meeting of the American Federation of Arts in Washington, Charles R. Ashbee, an architect and the director of large art industries in England, deplored the effect of the war on British industrial art. He said that just before the war he had worked out a plan by which a laborer's cottage could be designed and built for a thousand dollars, just the amount that it costs to fire a sixteen-inch gun. Now no cottages are built and millions of money are shot away on the battlefields. Mr. Ashbee's workshops are all closed, three of his workers are at the front, a fourth is drilling cavalry, another is learning to drop bombs from an aeroplane, and another, "the best enameleer in England," is making cartridges.

Mr. Ashbee and men in his position realize more fully than others the peculiar waste of war and its destructive effect upon the arts of peace. At the close of his speech he said that his friends in England feel that we in

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A HOUSE IN RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA
MR. ROBERT DAVID FARQUHAR, ARCHITECT
(Floor plans not available)

Roof, shingles; foundations, brick; exterior walls, wood. Hot air heating system, electric light. Approximate cost \$15,000.

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America, in spite of our "sympathy and generosity," do not grasp fully the moral value of the struggle in England, the fact that the English are fighting "essentially the battle of democracy," that we in our "wealth and splendid isolation" have grown "so contented and happy" as not to be able wholly to understand.

The best proof that we do understand to a degree fuller than our public expressions may indicate lies in our prompt and determined effort, inspired by the situation in Europe, toward the strengthening of our own industrial and artistic life. The exhibition of American industrial art at Washington, now open to the public, proves not so much that we already have made a definite beginning in this direction as our intention to "take account of stock" and know precisely where we stand and what our weakness is. It shows that the manufacturers and merchants are looking toward the artists for the help that should be expected of them, and are ready with a market for their talent when their talent is ready for the market.

The exhibitions of the schools of industrial art that have opened this month show also an awakening appreciation of what needs to be done on this side. The work exhibited is the best from the technical point of view that ever has been accomplished in our schools, but the most encouraging fact to be noted is the dissatisfaction of directors, principals, and teachers with what they are able to accomplish under existing conditions. Dr. Haney's report made two years ago, after he had spent several months in the study of European conditions, has just been republished on account of the value of its constructive suggestions.

At the meeting of the American Federation Mr. Henry White, formerly Ambassador to Italy and France, advocated the establishment throughout the country of public schools where the industrial arts should be taught, emphasizing the importance of these schools to the manufacturers of the country, who through them would be provided with artisans trained along artistic lines, and could thus more easily compete with foreign manufacturers in the excellence and attractiveness of their product. The sooner this advice is followed, the more certain will be the honorable reward we can

reap from our position in the gigantic problem of the world. There is true moral strength in making use of our opportunities in a way to increase the value of the work done by us. To be slothfully peaceful would bring us shame, but a peace that arouses the energies of the nation to struggle with ignorance and incapacity justifies its association with honor.—*N. Y. Times.*

RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

CONTRACT FOR ERECTION OF SCHOOL HOUSE—*ULTRA VIRES*

The New Jersey School Law provides that no contract for the erection of a public school building can be made until the plans and specifications have been submitted to the State Board of Education. An architect sued upon a contract to pay him 6 per cent. of the cost of building a school house for his plans and superintending the erection thereof, which contract he claimed arose from the acceptance by the Board of Education of a borough of his plans, submitted on its agreement that the successful contestant would be so compensated, and from the fact that the voters of the borough voted to expend \$22,000 to build according to the plans. It was held that, in view of the provision of the School Law, the contract was *ultra vires* of the defendant Board of Education of the borough, and judgment for the defendant was affirmed.

Fletcher v. Board, New Jersey Supreme Court, 88 Atl. 834.

ARCHITECT'S AUTHORITY

The authority of an architect is not absolute. He is bound by the general rules of agency. In the absence of an express contract or compelling facts, it is never held as a matter of law that an architect has any implied power to purchase materials or to enter into a contract for or on behalf of the owner. An architect who draws plans for a building and supervises its construction has no authority, express or implied, to make contracts with a subcontractor binding the owner, unless the owner has conferred on him such authority.

Schauen-Blair Co. M. & G. Works v. Sisters of Charity, Washington Supreme Court, 137 Pac. 468.



UPPER TERRACE

HOUSE OF EDWARD K. ROWLAND, ESQ., RADNOR, PA.
MESSRS. ZANTZINGER, BORIE AND MEDARY, ARCHITECTS

Sycamore Wood

OUR native sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis* L.) tree has from the earliest days in this country supplied a good deal of wood for many special uses. It is one of the best known trees, and is said to be far the largest hardwood tree north of Mexico. A number of sycamore trees measuring from 8 to 11 feet through one foot above the ground have been reported. The tree is planted extensively for shade in streets and parks, both in this country and in Europe.

Sycamore can not be said to be abundant, but it occurs scattered along the water courses from Maine to Florida and westward to Texas. It seems to find its best development in the Ohio River valley. Owing to its scattered growth, sycamore wood is not usually abundant in the market, notwithstanding that in the chief sycamore regions—Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee—the tree was formerly left untouched when the poplar, walnut and black cherry were taken. Although comparatively rare, sycamore is not a high priced wood. In the Eastern States it is sold often for from \$10 to \$25 per thousand feet, while in the Middle West the best grade occasionally brings \$60 per thousand feet. The total amounts of sycamore reported as cut during 1908, 1909, and 1910 are 43,332,000, 56,511,000, and 45,063,000 board feet. With extended use of the wood the cut of sycamore has approximately doubled during the last ten years. The wood is moderately hard and heavy, not strong, close-grained, very tough, usually exceedingly cross-grained, difficult to split, and not durable in contact with the soil. It is easier to split when dry, but is liable to warp in seasoning. The heartwood is a reddish brown, especially in older trees, with a decidedly reddish color in the pith rays; the sapwood is light brown and the transition from sapwood to heartwood is

quite gradual. The annual rings of growth are not always clearly defined. The pith rays are very inconspicuous.

Sycamore is highly esteemed on account of the smoothness of its grain and its susceptibility to a high polish. The demand for it began about 30 years ago, and soon after that time practically all the sycamore lumber marketed was shipped to Richmond, Virginia, and St. Louis, Missouri, which were then the largest tobacco-packing centers. A little later Lynchburg, Virginia, became the tobacco center, and a large part of the sycamore lumber went there. The wood is well liked for packing boxes, because it splits with difficulty, holds nails well, and does not impart an odor or taint the contents. Owing to the extensive drain on this species, manufacturers are using it now almost exclusively in the form of veneer for the inside ply of three-ply tobacco boxes, the middle and outer piles consisting of less expensive woods. Use of this wood in the form of veneer aids in conserving the supply and avoids the necessity of long and careful seasoning to prevent warping.

Sycamore wood was formerly considered superior for such special purposes as butchers' blocks and for certain articles of furniture. Occasionally sycamore woods are used for interior finish, either in solid or in veneer stock; but only the best grades are suitable for this purpose. The strongly marked figure of quarter-sawed wood has always made it more or less popular for some purposes, such as bookcases, chairs, tables, parquetry, furniture and cabinet work, sewing machines, picture molding, saddle trees, certain parts of vehicles, farm implements, washing machines, wooden bowls, tool handles, wooden screws and blocks. At one time sycamore was used almost to the exclusion of all other woods for lining refrigerators.