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Original Cartoon for Mosaic Decoration in St. Aidan's Church, Leeds.
By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

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Plate I. November 1917.

MOSAIC DECORATIONS IN THE CHANCEL OF ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, LEEDS.

By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

MR. BRANGWYN'S MOSAIC DECORATIONS IN ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, LEEDS.

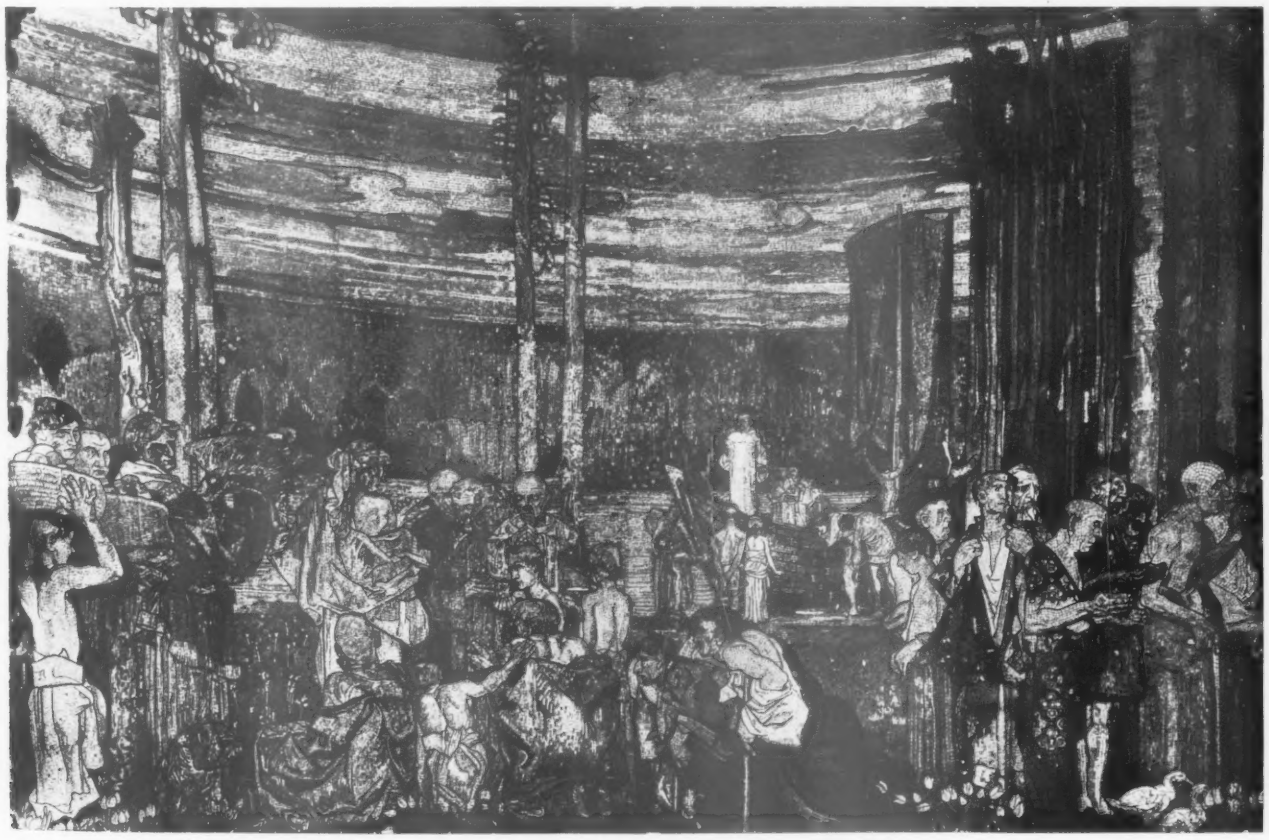
By ARTHUR FINCH.

OF all the decorative media used for the enrichment of interior architecture, there is none better than mosaic. In the texture of tesseræ there is a quality that is more akin to the structure of the building than is to be found either in tempera or fresco. It was the recognition of its intrinsic suitability as a decorative medium on a large scale, coupled with its incomparable possibilities for rich colour-effects, that led the master builders of the Byzantine Empire to employ it in the decoration of their architectural masterpieces. With what success they filled the enormous wall-spaces of their churches we have to imagine in the case of Santa Sophia; but in that of Isidore's Basilica of St. Mark, Venice, the testimony of Ruskin speaks in reference to the colour, "the most subtle, variable, inexpressible colour in the world."* In addition, mosaic, if executed properly, is virtually imperishable; for, apart from the devastation wrought by barbarians and the devious devices of restorers, time has dealt kindly with the masterpieces of Ravenna, as represented in St. Vitale and the Galla Placidia.

The superiority of mosaic over other media, especially for ecclesiastical decoration in the hands of capable designers and colourists, would have led one to expect its more frequent use in architectural schemes to-day. Certainly a revival took place in the 'eighties and 'nineties; but the enthusiasm for its employment in modern church decoration has died away, and apart from the work in Bentley's Westminster Cathedral little has been done recently in mosaic decoration of an important character. Despite the quality of permanence, not one of the formulators of war memorial schemes planned to be carried out in ecclesiastical or other buildings has thought of using mosaic as the medium. The spell of inactivity surrounding the employment of mosaic has, however, been broken. It has been left, not, as might have been expected, to an English cathedral church to embody a big decorative mosaic scheme, but to a parish church in an industrial Yorkshire town.

Like the Byzantine Cathedral of Santa Sophia, and the churches of Rome and Ravenna, where the old mosaicists fixed together their wonderful schemes of colour, the church of St. Aidan, in the Roundhay Road, Leeds, is pre-eminently suited for mosaic treatment. It is of the simple basilica type with nave and two aisles, and an imposing apse, somewhat similar in plan to the small basilican churches to be found in Rome and its north-eastern vicinity, and reminiscent in some respects of the more famous Later Romanesque designs in Rhenish Bavaria, such as Speyer Cathedral. The mosaic, which is the gift of Mr. R. H. Kitson, son of a well-known local resident, consists of the principal design in the form of one enormous panel measuring 1,000 sq. ft., occupying the entire centre of the apse, with base having an area of 500 sq. ft. of plain tesseræ, with supporting design of the chancel screen covering 300 sq. ft. Except for the admirable softened gold

* "Stones of Venice," St. Mark's, Sec. XLII.



"ST. AIDAN GIVING BUNS AND APPLES TO THE POOR."

tone in the panelled cove, there is little other colour in the interior, so that Mr. Brangwyn has thus been able to render his scheme undisturbed by conflicting masses of colour.

Seeking for an underlying unity in his theme with the edifice which his design would decorate, the artist chose to render episodes in the career of St. Aidan, just as did his compeer, Puvis de Chavannes, by associating the subject of his Panthéon masterpiece with the life of St. Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris. In arrangement this has much in common with Mr. Brangwyn's mosaic decoration. Originally intended for execution in tempera, for which the central composition was specifically designed, it was found necessary to abandon the idea, and to make use of an enduring material like mosaic, impervious to the local atmospheric conditions.

While the design is divided into three subjects, with an episode, "The Landing of the Monks," in the immediate foreground—on the extreme left, "St. Aidan giving Buns and Apples to the Poor"; with the central composition of "St. Aidan Preaching," and the "Death of St. Aidan" on the right completing the scheme—the artist, by his wise system of spacing and apportioning of his figures into interdependent groups, and brilliant arrangement of trees forming background into masses relieved by a simple scheme of colour in the purple blue distance of a sky acting as a background to the brownish outlined trees thereon, with water in the middle distance, binding the whole scheme together, has formed a unified pattern, which was a marked feature of the best work of the Roman school of the sixth century at Ravenna. Although there is a certain formality of manner in the pose of the chancel screen groups of worshippers that may lead the uncritical observer to connect them with the conventional traditions of Byzantine representation, coupled with a somewhat crude mode of figure execution generally, the student of historical mosaic will observe that there is an absolute break with traditional technique. The design is essentially modern both in feeling and rendering of colour. What a gulf is fixed between the vigorous drawing, especially observable in the tense expressiveness of the three kneeling figures in the left foreground group and the inanimate, stiff types characteristic of Byzantine mosaic! Yet how closely is it associated with the best Roman and later Italian work as expressed in Jacopo Torrito's design for the apse of St. John Lateran, Rome! Brangwyn, like Albert Moore in his wonderful cartoons for mosaic for the Central Hall at Westminster, perhaps the most successful from the standpoint of clever figure drawing and decorative quality that have yet been designed for mosaic, understands thoroughly his medium and its limitations. The scheme is treated in a broad manner, with solidity of outline, unspoilt by aspirations for individual trickeries of style which have been the bane of much modern work in this medium, especially that of French mosaic designers; it has a dignity and freedom of execution comparable to the severity and simplicity which characterized Watts's early mosaics for St. Paul's Cathedral, but combining a richer and more varied colour-note than was shown in the work of the great Victorian artist.

The absence of colour reproductions here, despite the fine quality of the one-toned illustrations, will be greatly missed by the lover of brilliant colour; for it is in the arrangement of colour masses and blending of tones that the whole beauty of mosaic is envisaged. But especially in the case of an artist like Brangwyn, whose figures are of the elemental, barbarous type, fashioned from the outpourings of a torrential flowing mental stream, does it convey a false impression on the beholder. Viewed from down the nave, with the play of the afternoon light on the panel, and aided by the excellence of the execution so as to render variations of tones and gradations as in stained glass, with long, vertical lines for draperies and tree

"THE DEATH OF ST. AIDAN."

Plate II

November 1917.

MOSAIC DECORATION IN THE CHANCEL OF ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, LEEDS: "ST. AIDAN PREACHING."

By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

Plate III. November 1917.

ORIGINAL CARTOONS FOR MOSAIC DECORATIONS IN ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, LEEDS.

By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

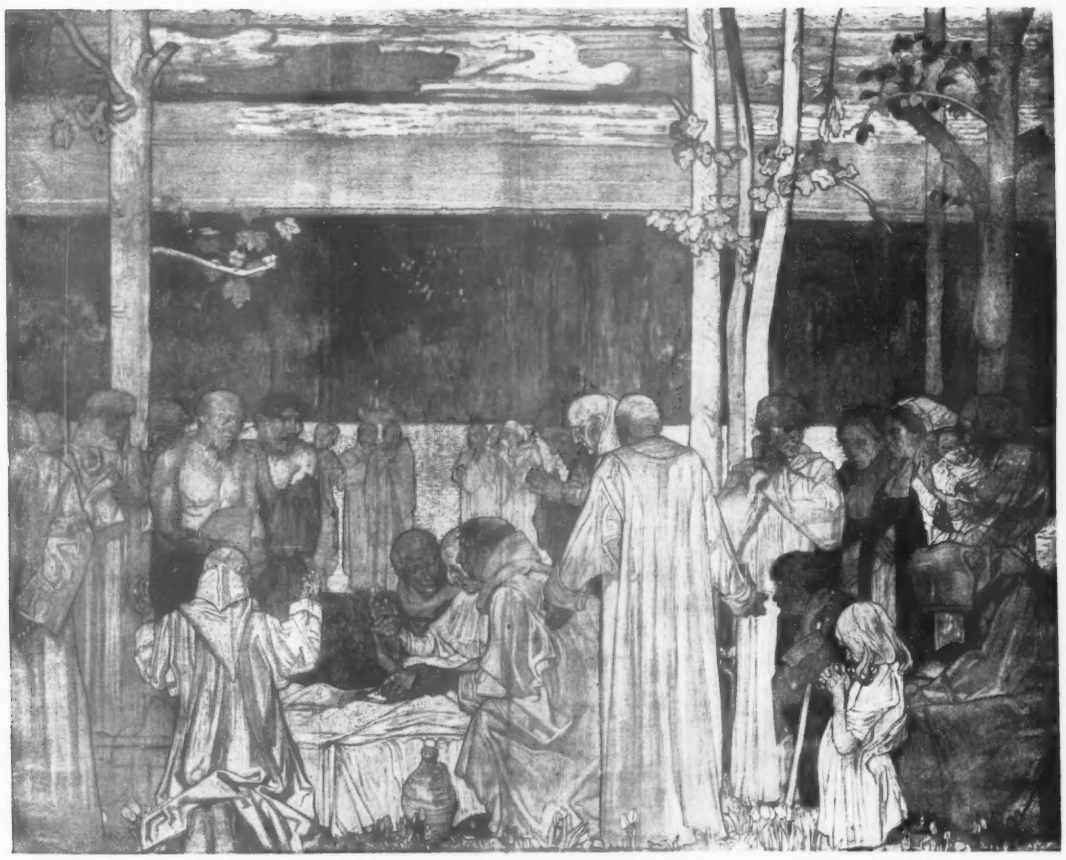


Plate IV. November 1917.

ORIGINAL CARTOONS FOR MOSAIC DECORATIONS IN ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, LEEDS.

By Frank Brangwyn, A.R.A.

forms, and horizontals for skies to provide an expanding illusion, the figures appear restful in the glow of colour that is accentuated by their enamelled flesh tones. There are the rich reds of the cloaks of the two end figures in the central composition, the deep purple contrasted by white of the end figures of the left group, the variegated bright hues of the women's dresses, deep purple against white and red and orange speckled headgear, contrasted and neutralized by the white robes of monks outlined against tinted grey of sail and the lighter grey and purple-tinted greys of the monks' robes, the occasional delicate blue and green hues of the draperies, completed by the whites of the tulips and geese against the conventional grey-green grass foreground effects, spice fillings reminiscent of some ancient Roman mosaic work. Brangwyn has made great play with his arrangement of folds and draperies for effects of light and shade, as well as for linking up his many figures; particularly is this noticeable in the foreground group of the composition, "Feeding the Poor," of which a detail view is given (see p. 91).

It is impossible to do adequate justice in the space of one short article to the *verve* characteristic of the whole design, though the detail views reproduced of the original cartoons enable one to grasp its significance. There is no more masterly spacing in the design than in the whole treatment of the closing composition. Brangwyn knows well the value of simplicity both in the use of colour and of drawing to bring out the central *motif*, St. Aidan, in each composition, the white robe of the saint having the effect of making him the pivot of the design and the controlling unit therein. For individual fine types there is none better than the females forming the end composition and that of the listening monk in juxtaposition.

Careful workmanship is noticeable in the execution of the design, which has been carried out by Mr. H. Jesse Rust and staff at the mosaic works in Battersea in the material known as "Rust's Vitreous Mosaic." This material, not being so highly glazed as the modern Venetian mosaic tesseræ, has, in the opinion of many eminent artists, a more pleasing and a softer effect. In work of this kind it is still a matter of controversy whether the better effect is produced by carrying out the mosaic *in situ*, or working the design at the studio on a full-sized detail of the cartoons, reversed, which is cut up into sheets of suitable size, so that it can be easily handled for fixing with cement on the surface to be decorated, the mosaic being pieced together face downwards. The latter was the method employed in the work at St. Aidan's Church, thereby reducing the inconvenience of the scaffolding from at least twelve months to six weeks, and certainly reducing the cost. Still, the difficulty of working under such conditions is great; and in justice to the mosaic workers it is only due to say that it is little short of marvellous that the character of Brangwyn's types has been, on the whole, so well preserved.

THE NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES.

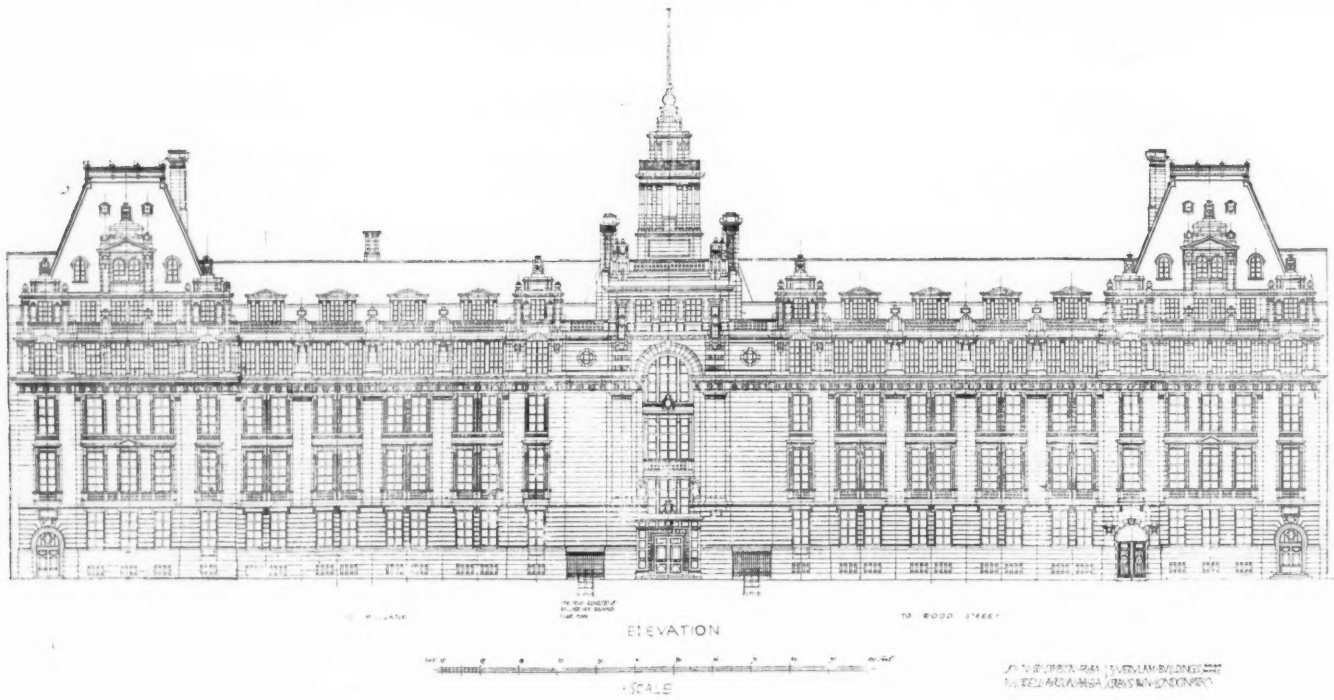
THE process of reconstruction which is ceaselessly at work in all parts of London seems at times to settle in some particular locality, which, sooner or later, becomes transformed beyond recognition. A change of this description is usually coincident with the creation of a new, or the widening of an existing, thoroughfare; and with it the disappearance of old familiar landmarks seems unhappily but almost necessarily involved. Kingsway, our most notable modern example, lost to us an intensely interesting, if somewhat squalid, sector of old London; but the improvement which it secured in London's north and south traffic communications may be said to have justified, or at least mitigated, the loss.

Many drastic changes have been wrought within recent times in the aspect of that area of Westminster which lies along the river bank between the Houses of Parliament and Vauxhall Bridge, particularly with regard to the embankment roadway itself, which (apt instance of our peculiar fondness for plurality in street nomenclature) is identified with the names Abingdon Street, Millbank, and Grosvenor Road. It was perhaps too much to expect that this roadway, rendered important by its close proximity to the Houses of Parliament and by the useful means of communication which it provides between north and south Westminster, should retain indefinitely its old-world charm. Indeed, by these characteristics alone, it seems to have been specially marked out for reconstruction.

Except for the huge and comparatively recent building for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Abingdon Street, the northern end of the embankment roadway, remains virtually as it was a century and more ago. Millbank, its continuation, has been widened and completely rebuilt within the last few years. At the point where it is touched by the now sadly decrepit Lambeth suspension bridge Millbank ends, and, beyond, the embankment roadway becomes Grosvenor Road, and changes into a picturesque survival of that older London which is so rapidly disappearing. With its cobbled roadway, its old riverside frontages, its wooden wharves and jetties, its mud banks and stranded barges, this part of Grosvenor Road has that fascinating sort of squalor which makes irresistible appeal to the eye of the artist. Already, however, at the Vauxhall Bridge end, a large section has been swept away; and the only reminder of Millbank penitentiary is its site, now occupied by the Tate Gallery.

It is upon the corner which is formed by the junction of Millbank with Wood Street that Messrs. John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton, R.N., A.R.I.B.A., have erected a fine building to accommodate the Crown Agents for the Colonies.

In this building the idea of the architects was to avoid as far as possible that conventional type of design which within recent years has hovered dangerously on the verge of the stereotype. "Government building" suggests, as to the exterior, long lengths of colonnaded elevations dotted over with pediments small and large, and other characteristic features from the architectural box of bricks; and, as to the interior, long stretches of corridor with a succession of rooms which, owing to the exigencies of working, can seldom be used to advantage. This sort of thing has been done so often that we are beginning to get just a little weary of it. Messrs.



Simpson and Ayrton's abandonment of the Government office tradition, therefore, is both timely and welcome. That they have made a considerable success of it will be apparent from an examination of the accompanying illustrations.

The site, though good, is not quite perfect, for the angle which is formed by the meeting of Millbank and Wood Street is slightly obtuse. This particular defect in a site is always somewhat detrimental to the appearance of elevations of buildings of a classical type, and various expedients to hide it have been employed from time to time. One of the most favoured, of course, is to curve the angle. The War Office in Whitehall, a building without a single external right angle, is an interesting example of this kind. Messrs. Simpson and Ayrton, however, have overcome the difficulty by cutting the angle off and making it an important feature in the design. Reference to the plan will show that the entrance hall and staircase are ingeniously accommodated in this angle, from which direct access is gained to the various offices contained in the two arms of which the plan is composed. It will be seen that there are no corridors in the commonly accepted sense of the term, the offices intercommunicating and being divided off one from another by glass partitions. The various departments, besides being self-contained, all converge upon the staircase and lifts; and interdepartmental communication is thus easy and direct. We may now turn our attention to the elevations.

The most striking view of the building is obtained as the spectator approaches it from the direction of the Houses of

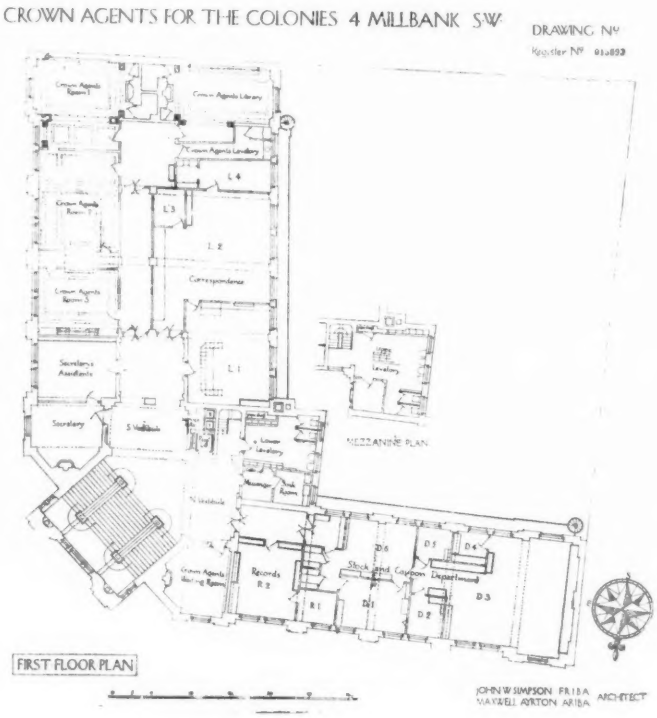


Plate V. November 1917. Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES, MILLBANK, WESTMINSTER.

John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton, R.N., A.R.I.B.A., Architects.

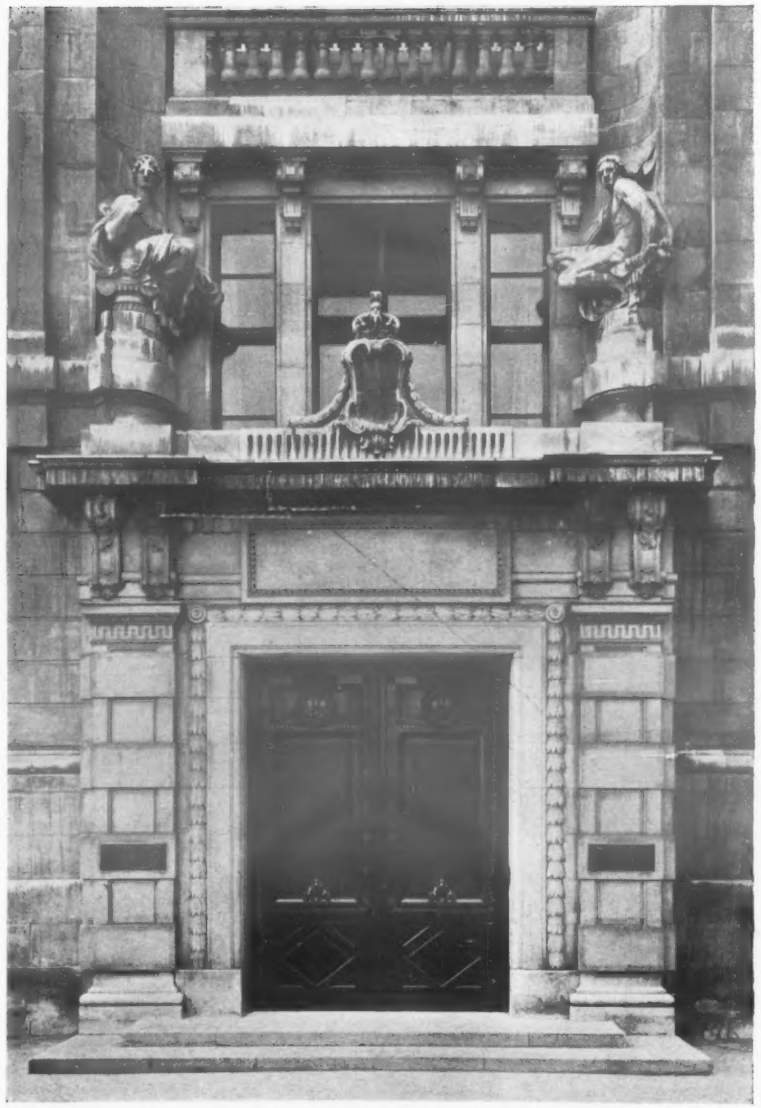
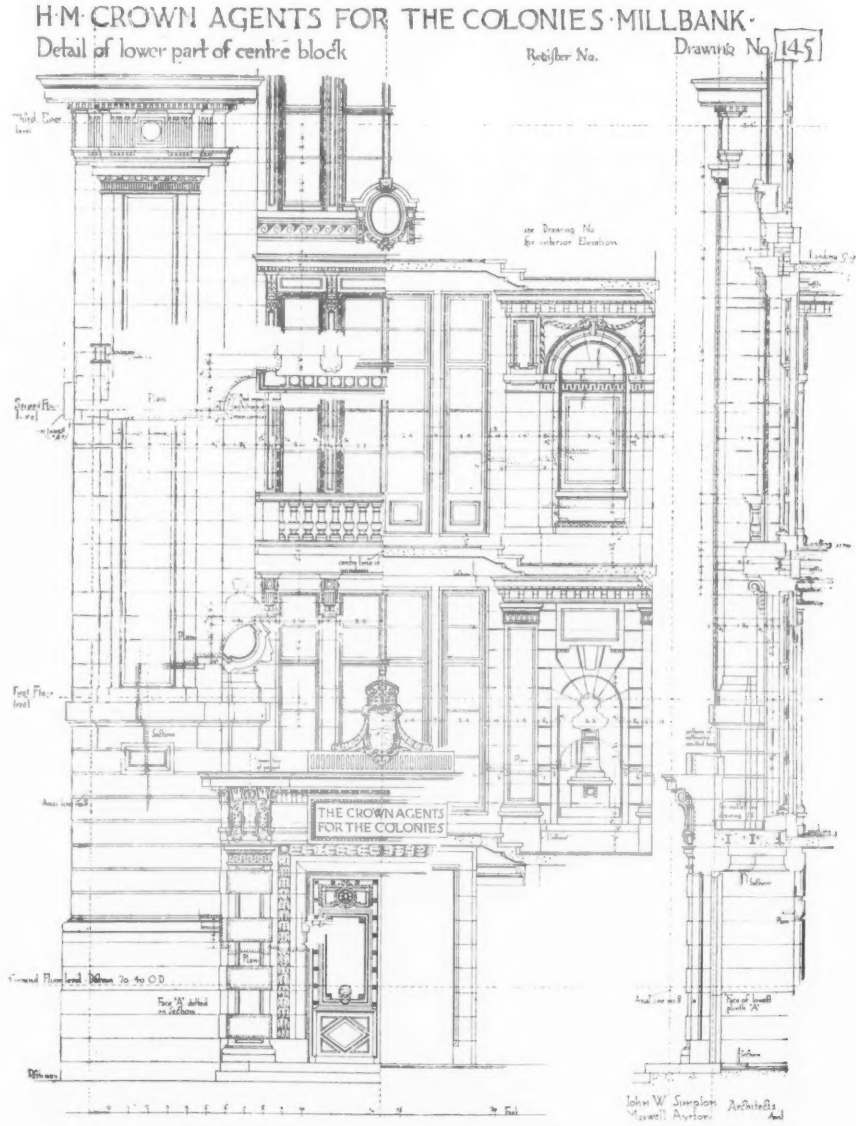


Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

Detail of Principal Entrance.



Detail of Lower Part of Angle.

NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES, MILLBANK, WESTMINSTER.

John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton, R.N., A.R.I.B.A., Architects.

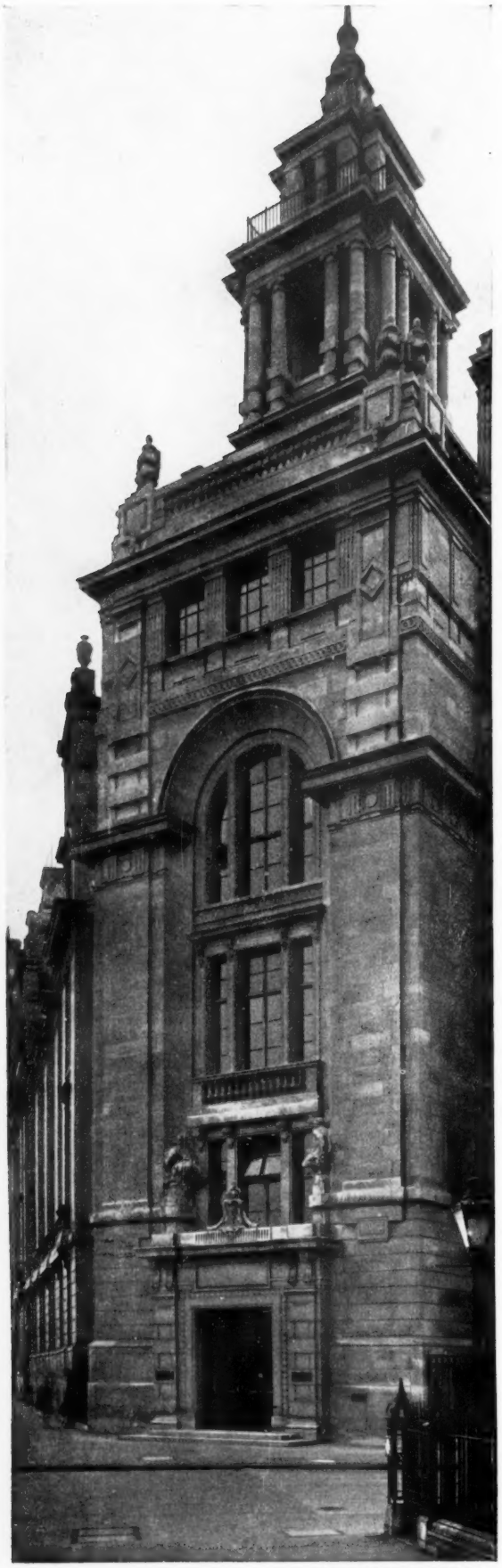
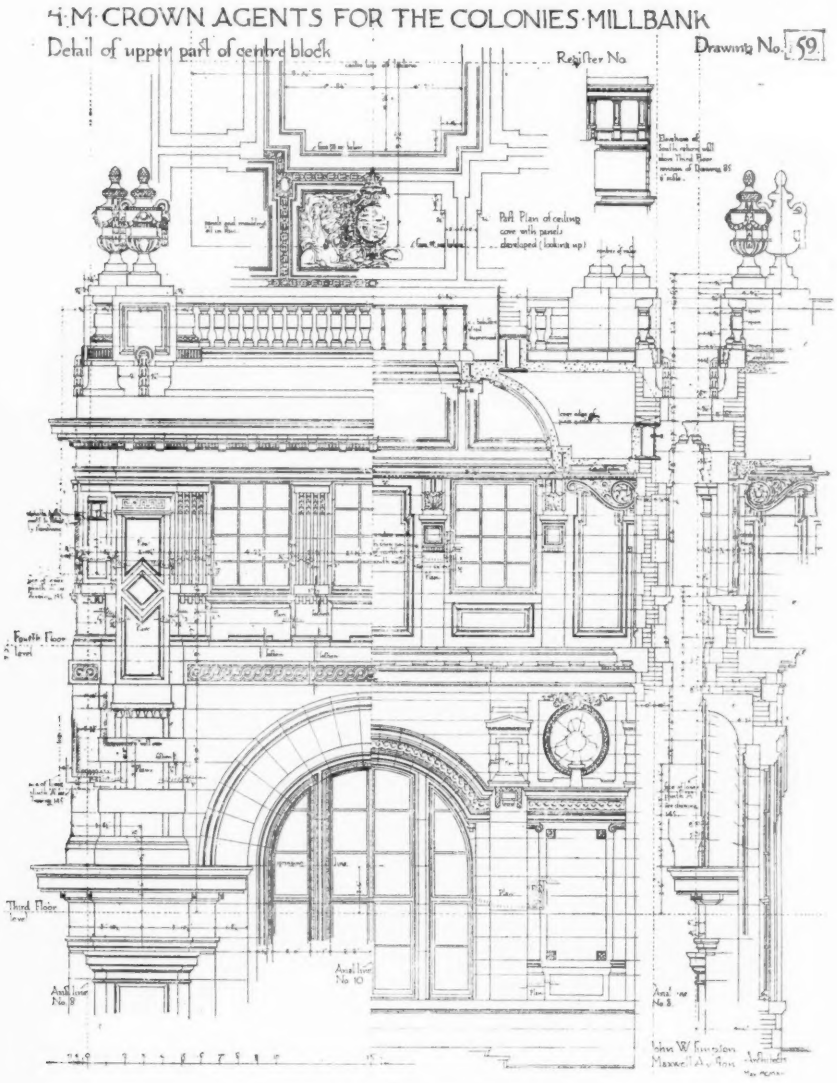


Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

DETAIL OF ANGLE.



DETAIL OF UPPER PART OF ANGLE.

Parliament. The angle faces towards him, with its broad pilaster-like masses rising impressively on either side and embracing the windows which light the great staircase. Above the crowning arch is a bold horizontal mass, surmounted by a tower. Messrs. Simpson and Ayrton have surely made out a convincing case for the re-establishment of the much-maligned and generally discredited tower. In such an instance as this its use seems to be singularly appropriate; for it gives just the right emphasis to that part of the building which is the fulcrum of the whole scheme.

The principal entrance is filled with some well-designed mahogany doors, embellished with delicately chased bronze handles and with the letters C.A.C. (Crown Agents for the Colonies) worked into carved wreaths at the top of the panels. Over the entablature to the doorway are the Royal Arms, surmounted by a crown, while seated on pedestals on either side are some fine symbolic figures by Mr. Albert Hodge. That on the left is a female figure representing "Prosperity and Development, with the Attributes of Commerce, Health, and Education," while that on the right is a male figure representing "Administration, with the Attributes of Law and Order." These figures have the right architectonic character. They have nothing of the assertiveness that is a common fault of only too large a proportion of the sculpture on our modern buildings. They harmonize admirably with their architectural

setting, and contribute considerably to the excellence of the total effect. This is the kind of work that we always expect from Mr. Hodge, who, of course, has had the advantage of a thorough architectural training.

The general elevations are well and effectively composed. There is, first, a plain base, then horizontal rustication up to the first-floor level, which is marked by balconies supported on small consoles. Above, and separating groups of double windows, rise broad pilasters to the third-floor level, terminating in abutment-like features decorated with lions' heads.

Internally, as already explained, the most important feature is the staircase, which, constructed throughout of Corsham Down stone on reinforced concrete, runs through the whole height of the building. It is a very dignified piece of work, upon which considerable care has been spent, particularly in the design of the wrought-iron balustrade, which, as may be seen in Plate VI, has for its principal *motif* the letters C.A.C. The niches in the staircase wall, one of which is visible in Plate VI, contain busts of Julius Cæsar and Augustus.

Photo: Cyril Ellis.

VIEW IN ENTRANCE HALL.

Above, again, are decorative stone urns, between which, and partly concealing the slate-covered mansard roof behind, runs a balustrade. The frieze is marked by a continuous treatment of triglyphs and circles alternated. The view of the Millbank front reproduced on Plate V includes, on the left, a new addition to the building, which has just been completed. It will be noted that certain modifications in general treatment have been introduced, though in all its essential features it remains the same as the older part of the work. The entrance for vehicles is in Wood Street, the driveway sloping down to the loading yard, which is situated at basement level.

A fine and fitting culmination to the ascent is provided at the top of the staircase. Here we are immediately beneath the tower. This fine square space, with the staircase ascending in a broad flight from the landing below, and with its coved ceiling supported on finely modelled consoles above, is a veritable *tour de force*. It is splendidly lighted by the three windows high up on the external staircase wall, and a certain amount of light is also admitted through the lantern of the tower above. The cove itself is a particularly fine piece of modelling in stuc, containing the badges and emblems of the Crown Colonies. At the suggestion of the architects, it was

signed with the name of the craftsman responsible for it, Mr. Stiles. All this work, together with the various cornices, soffits to stairs, panels, etc., was modelled in stuc by Messrs. G. Jackson & Sons, Ltd., of London, who also carried out in the same material the wall surface, cornices, etc., in the extension of the building. It is difficult to say at once which is the real stone and which the stuc, so exactly has the colouring and finished surface of the stone been imitated in the stuc work. We are informed that war-time restrictions prevented the importation of stuc from France; Messrs. Jackson & Sons were successful, however, in manufacturing a similar and perhaps better material in this country.

By far the most interesting rooms in the whole building are the offices of the Crown Agents, situated next to each other on the first floor, overlooking Millbank and the river. Their arrangement may be studied on the plan reproduced on page 94. All are characterized by a decorative scheme of very considerable refinement. The wall panels are coloured a delicate creamy-grey, lined around with a colour of a somewhat darker tone. Similarly, all have a white marble chimney-piece with an inner surround of black marble containing a black iron firegrate. The kerbs are all of white marble. All overmantels are fitted with mirrors in delicately designed bronze frames. The rooms differ from one another in architectural treatment in several important respects. Room No. 1 (see p. 100) is divided into two parts. The larger has a decorated coved ceiling on consoles, while the chimney-piece is distinguished by a flat-arched treatment over, supported by a column on either side. Two larger columns support a beam across, on the other side of which the ceiling is treated in a series of shallow coffers.

Room No. 2 (see p. 99) is also a fine apartment, though perhaps a little less elaborate in decorative treatment. The frieze, with its delicate key-pattern and oval medallion *motif*, is a charming piece of work. The small bronze vases on the mantelpiece add a delightful touch to the character of the room, and are typical of the thought and care which have been bestowed upon decorative detail throughout the building. A working drawing of these vases, reduced from the full size, is reproduced on this page.

Room No. 3 (see pp. 99 and 100), like No. 1, is also provided with a coved ceiling. One wall of the apartment is divided up into three arched recesses, supported by pairs of coupled columns. The bust in the centre arch is of the Athene from Pompeii. The whole scheme of this room is delightfully attractive. All three rooms, it may be added, have oak-block floors, solid mahogany doors and fittings, and French windows, and all are illuminated by electric light on the indirect principle.

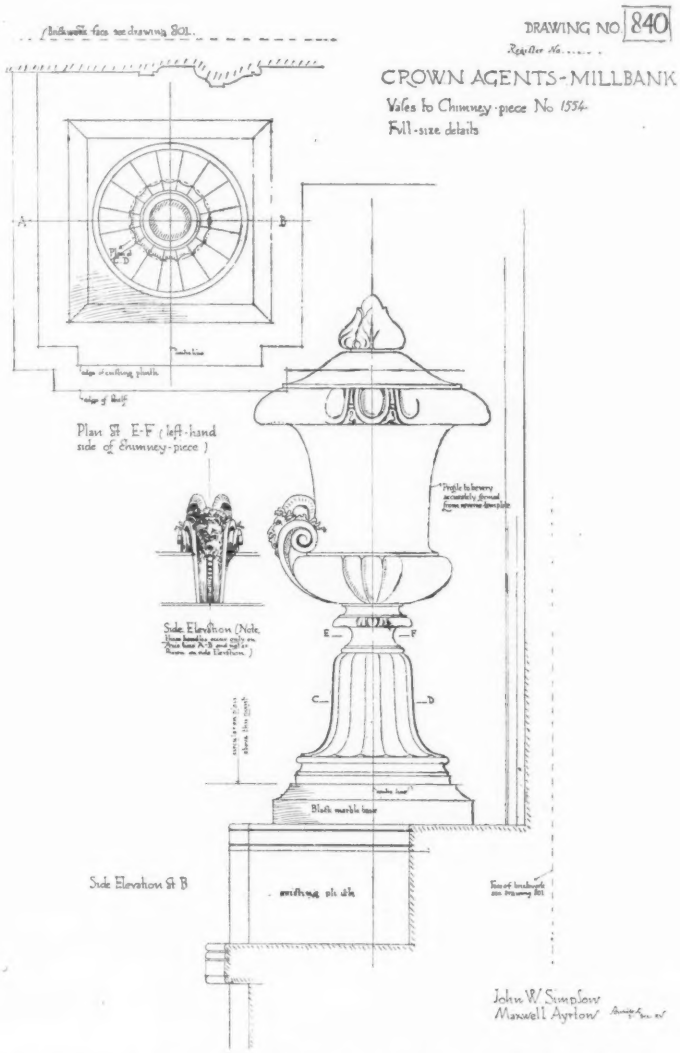
Thirteen "New System" intercommunicating telephones are installed throughout the building. They are fitted under contract on the "New System" rental basis, which carries with it an all-time guarantee of efficient working, together with free maintenance, repairs, and renewals. This installation connects up some of the essential departments in the Crown Agents' organization, and was supplied by the New System Private Telephone Company, Ltd., of London.

The carved statuary marble chimneypiece for the High Commissioner's room, the other marble chimneypieces in the main building, together with the paving in statuary and Belgian block marbles to all six floors, were supplied and fixed by Messrs. J. Whitehead & Sons, Ltd., of London.

Messrs. Carter & Co., Ltd., London, carried out a considerable quantity of tiling in the lavatories, kitchens, and elsewhere. A large proportion of this work had to match the glazed partition bricks used in the construction. So close is the match in size, colour, and jointing, that it is impossible to distinguish any difference between the two.

The electric wiring throughout the building was carried out by Mr. V. G. Middleton, of Westminster, who also supplied the electric bells. The electric fittings, supplied by the British Thomson-Houston Co., Ltd., of London, are mostly of the standard "Eye-rest" type. Those used in the private offices, also the large fitting at the top of the staircase, were specially made up from designs prepared by the company, and approved by the architects.

The building, which worked out at the remarkably low cost of 1s. 2d. per foot cube (inclusive of heating and of electric-lighting mains, but not of furnishing and special fittings), is constructed generally of brick and stone, Whitbed Portland for the exterior and Corsham Down for the internal work. The floors and the flat mansard roofs are fire-resisting throughout, and were executed on their hollow-brick system by Messrs. Homan and Rodgers, of London, who also were the engineers for the constructional steelwork and reinforced concrete to the retaining walls, courtyard raft, staircases, etc. The floor to the entrance hall and the corresponding space on the higher levels are laid with black and white marble tiles. The building contains on the top floor its own canteen and kitchen arrangements. The whole of the gas cooking equipment in the



DETAIL OF BRONZE VASE IN CROWN AGENT'S ROOM NO. 2.

Plate VI. November 1917. Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES, MILLBANK, WESTMINSTER: VIEW FROM STAIRCASE LANDING.

John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton, R.N., A.R.I.B.A., Architects.

Crown Agent's Room No. 2.

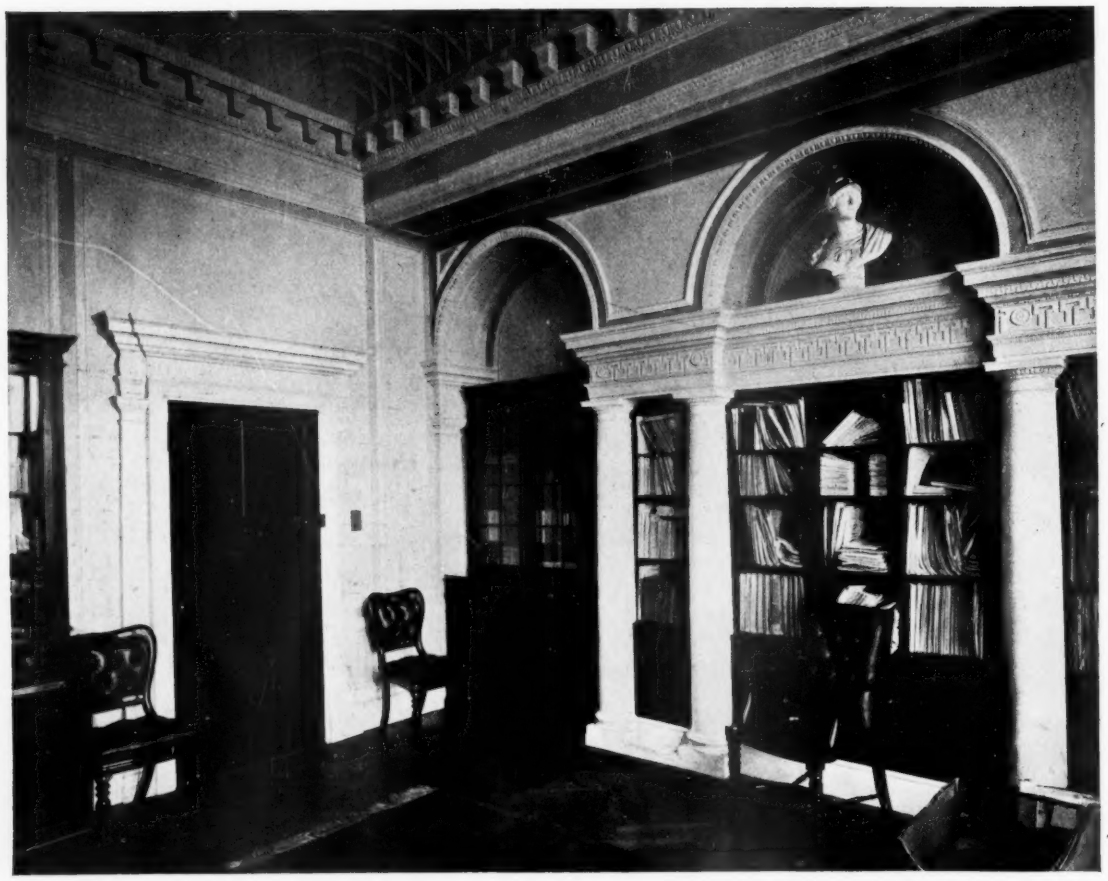
Crown Agent's Room No. 3.

Photos: John H. Avery & Co.

NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES, MILLBANK, WESTMINSTER.

John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton, R.N., A.R.I.B.A., Architects.

Crown Agent's Room No. 1.



Photos: John H. Avery & Co.

Wall Treatment, Crown Agent's Room No. 3.

NEW OFFICES FOR THE CROWN AGENTS FOR THE COLONIES, MILLBANK, WESTMINSTER.

John W. Simpson, F.R.I.B.A., and Flight-Lieutenant Maxwell Ayrton R.N., A.R.I.B.A., Architects.

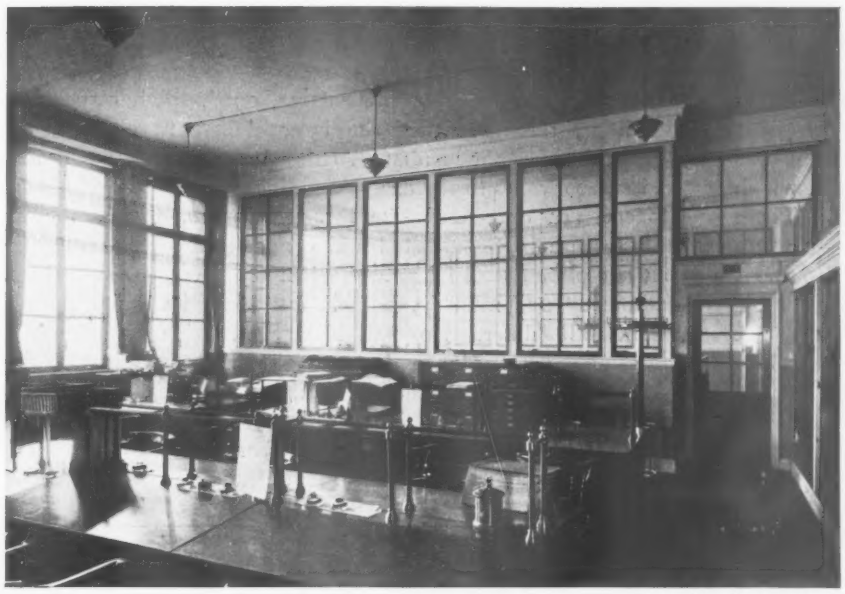


Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

A TYPICAL OFFICE INTERIOR.

kitchen was supplied by The Richmond Gas-stove and Meter Co., Ltd., of London, and embraces the following units:—(1) One large central cooking range, consisting of four ovens, with liberal boiling and grilling accommodation on top; (2) one large "double-decker" pastry oven; (3) two massive "Whitehall" roasting ovens, each measuring 6 ft. high by 2 ft. 3 in. wide by 3 ft. deep; (4) two boiling tables, each erected on stand, and measuring over all 6 ft. long by 2 ft. 6 in. wide by 2 ft. 9 in. high, and 6 ft. long by 2 ft. deep by 2 ft. 9 in. high, respectively; (5) one large griller on stand, fitted with warming closet on top, and measuring 2 ft. 9 in. wide by 1 ft. 9 in. deep over all; (6) one pastry table measuring 3 ft. 3 in. wide by 1 ft. 9 in. deep by 2 ft. 9 in. high.

The kitchen was equipped with steam-heated cooking apparatus by Messrs. McDowall Steven & Co., Ltd., of London. Vegetables and soups are cooked in the series of steam-jacketed pans and in the battery of six steaming chambers. A special feature of this battery is the patent steam control valves which release the pressure inside the chambers before the doors can be opened, thus obviating the risk of burns from the steam in the chambers. Messrs. Revy Phillips & Co., Ltd., of London, supplied the "Reliance" automatic boiling water apparatus, the "Universal" automatic toasters, and the Revy patent silent direct steam heaters.

Messrs. Holliday and Greenwood, Ltd., of London, were the general contractors for the building, and among the sub-contractors were: Messrs. Bratt, Colbran & Co. (stoves and grates); Messrs. Waygood-Otis, Ltd. (lifts and cranes); Messrs. Art Pavements and Decorations, Ltd. (marble chimneypieces).

Other sub-contractors were: Messrs. Val de Travers Asphalte Paving Co., Ltd.; Messrs. Frederick Jones & Co., Ltd.; Mr. J. Gibbons; Messrs. Helliwell & Co., Ltd.; Messrs. Shanks & Co., Ltd.; Messrs. Tylor and Sons, Ltd.; Messrs. Turpin's Parquet Floor, Joinery, and Wood Carving Co.; Mr. C. Kerridge; Mr. E. Norkett: Messrs. The Birmingham Guild, Ltd.; Messrs. The Bostwick Gate and Shutter Co., Ltd.; Messrs. J. Jeffreys & Co., Ltd.; Messrs. R. Anderson & Co.; Messrs. The Imperial Machine Co.; Messrs. Le Grand and Sutcliffe; Messrs. Burnet & Co., Ltd.

THE HOUSING PROBLEM: COMPETITIONS FOR DESIGNS.

In the course of his Presidential Address to the R.I.B.A., on Monday, 5 October, Mr. Henry T. Hare made an important statement with respect to the housing problem and the part which the Institute is to play in its solution. We know only too well, he said, that the conditions under which they (the working classes) live in most cases are indeed deplorable, and any material amelioration has seemed almost hopeless under the complicated conditions and restrictions which have fenced round the problem. . . . I am pleased to say that the Local Government Board has approached the Institute, and invited our co-operation in securing the best possible plans for the houses which are to be erected in large numbers immediately after the War. They have placed at our disposal an adequate sum of money for procuring these designs, and we have drawn up a scheme for instituting a series of competitions throughout England and Wales. These are to be conducted by the R.I.B.A. and its allied societies, who have entered into the scheme with great enthusiasm, and there is every reason to believe that a very satisfactory result may be arrived at. Many serious problems arise in the preparation of these designs. Not only is it essential that the houses should be healthy and comfortable, sufficiently segregated, pleasant to look at and live outside of as well as inside, and as varied in design as may be practicable, but they must take into account the necessity of the most rigid economy, and the serious shortage of many building materials hitherto regarded as essential. The use of the latter must be minimized, and substitutes designed and arranged for so far as may be possible. Apart from the question of these competitions, the Institute has a very strong committee sitting which is considering how the interests of architects and, as we firmly believe, the interests of the public as well may best be safeguarded in the carrying out of these extensive schemes of housing.

Photo: John H. Avery & Co.

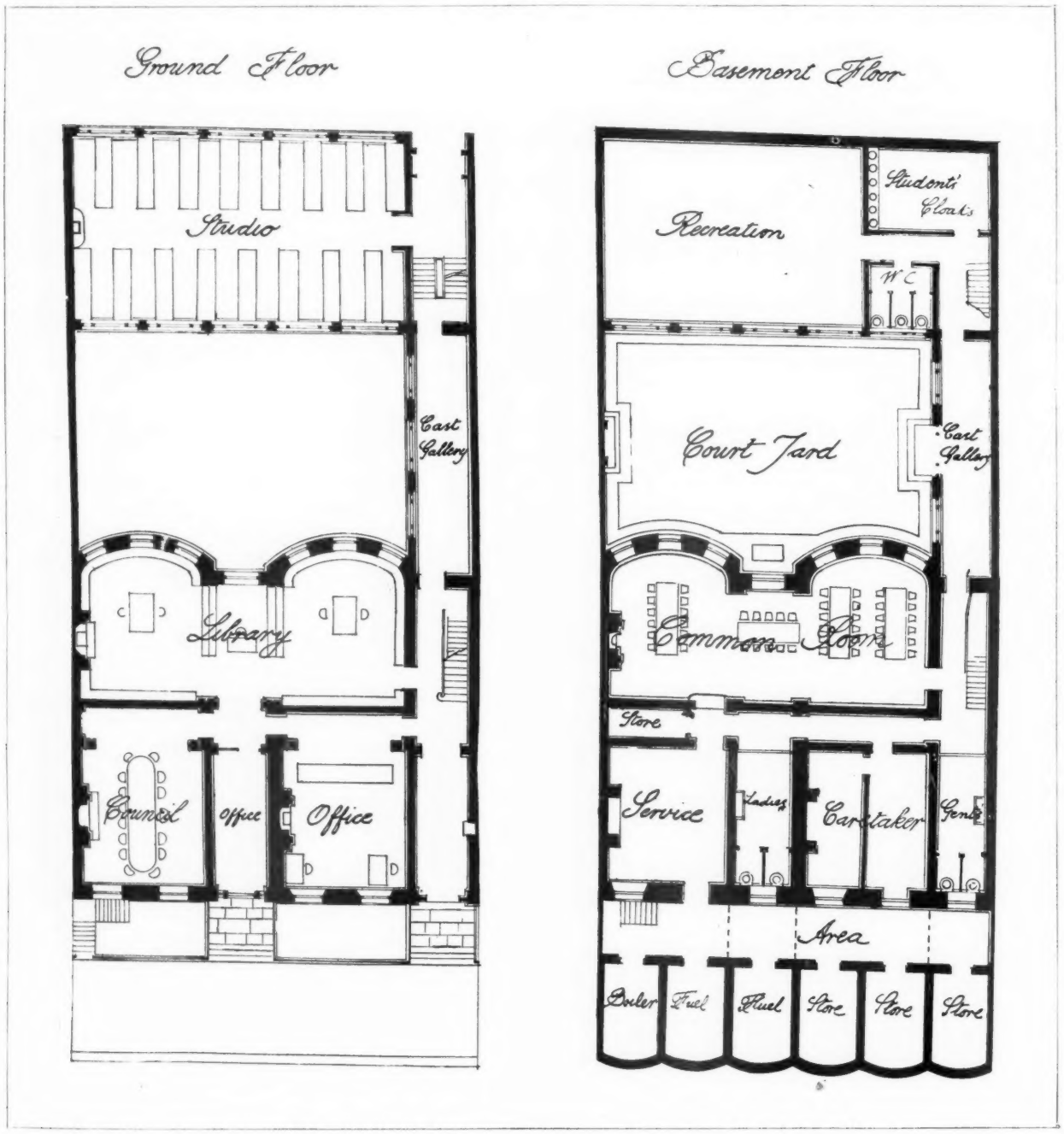
VIEW IN KITCHEN.

THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION'S NEW PREMISES IN BEDFORD SQUARE.

TWO or three months ago the Architectural Association finally abandoned their temporary premises in Great Smith Street, Westminster, having acquired the leases of the two houses, Nos. 34 and 35 Bedford Square, in which to carry on their work of architectural education. These houses are quite excellent examples of late-eighteenth-century domestic architecture; and, if the influence of environment counts for anything at all, they should act as a considerable stimulus to architectural study. In these pages, by the courtesy of the "A. A. Journal," we are able to reproduce a number of most interesting illustrations of the houses, together with some notes thereon.

Bedford Square is the most complete of the London squares, and the least spoilt of the West Central group, with a beautiful garden, fine plane trees, good, solid, respectable buildings, reminiscent of the later eighteenth century, not over-ambitious nor tawdry. Artificial-stone doorways it has, and stucco fronts to the centre buildings, but treated frankly as stucco; not over-sized like Fitzroy Square, with ambitious architecture half-completed and ornament stuck on with glue, but complete on all four sides. Not too severely classical nor sacrificed to symmetry, a little irregular; its balconies and details all differ. No unnecessary or false ornament: a restrained design by a lesser eighteenth-century architect (Thomas Leverton, about 1780), not yet puffed up with the pride of the Brothers Adam.

Built upon a rubbish heap, a timber yard, sundry ditches, and a horse-pond, with trustful optimism and poor materials,



PLANS OF NOS. 34 & 35 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, SHOWING PROPOSED ALTERATIONS.

the square shares with its contemporaries the defects of over-speculation. No better nor worse in that respect, it beats them in its quiet, reposeful, serene respectability, its colony of modern architects notwithstanding.

In the days when the nobility washed seldom and entertained often, the houses reflect in their immense reception-rooms and mean bedrooms the domestic comfort of the times. Servants slept anywhere—goodness only knows where, the men servants on truckle beds in the basement—washed at the sink, and fed in the kitchen.

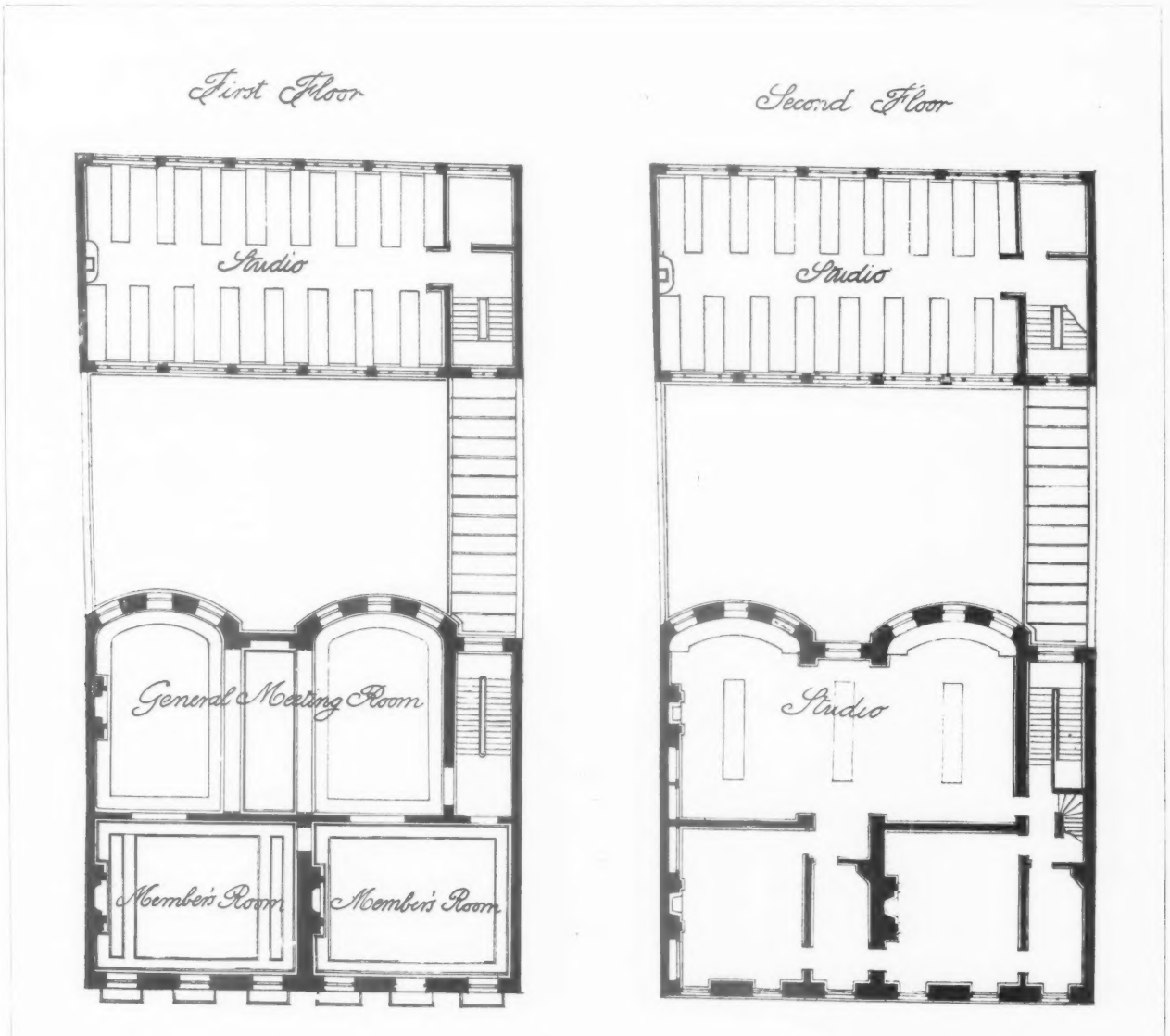
Powdering-cupboards, so indispensable in Soho Square, are not provided; for the rest, the rooms are delightful, well lit, lofty, have beautiful marble fireplaces, and what decoration there is is of the most refined description. The doorways, a feature of this square, are all alike (except the centre blocks, which have meaner doorways than the rest); three openings under a rusticated arch; in most cases the lunettes have been afterwards pierced with fine lead radiating fanlights.

These fanlights, repeated as an inner screen, give at a minimum of cost a most effective entrance hall.

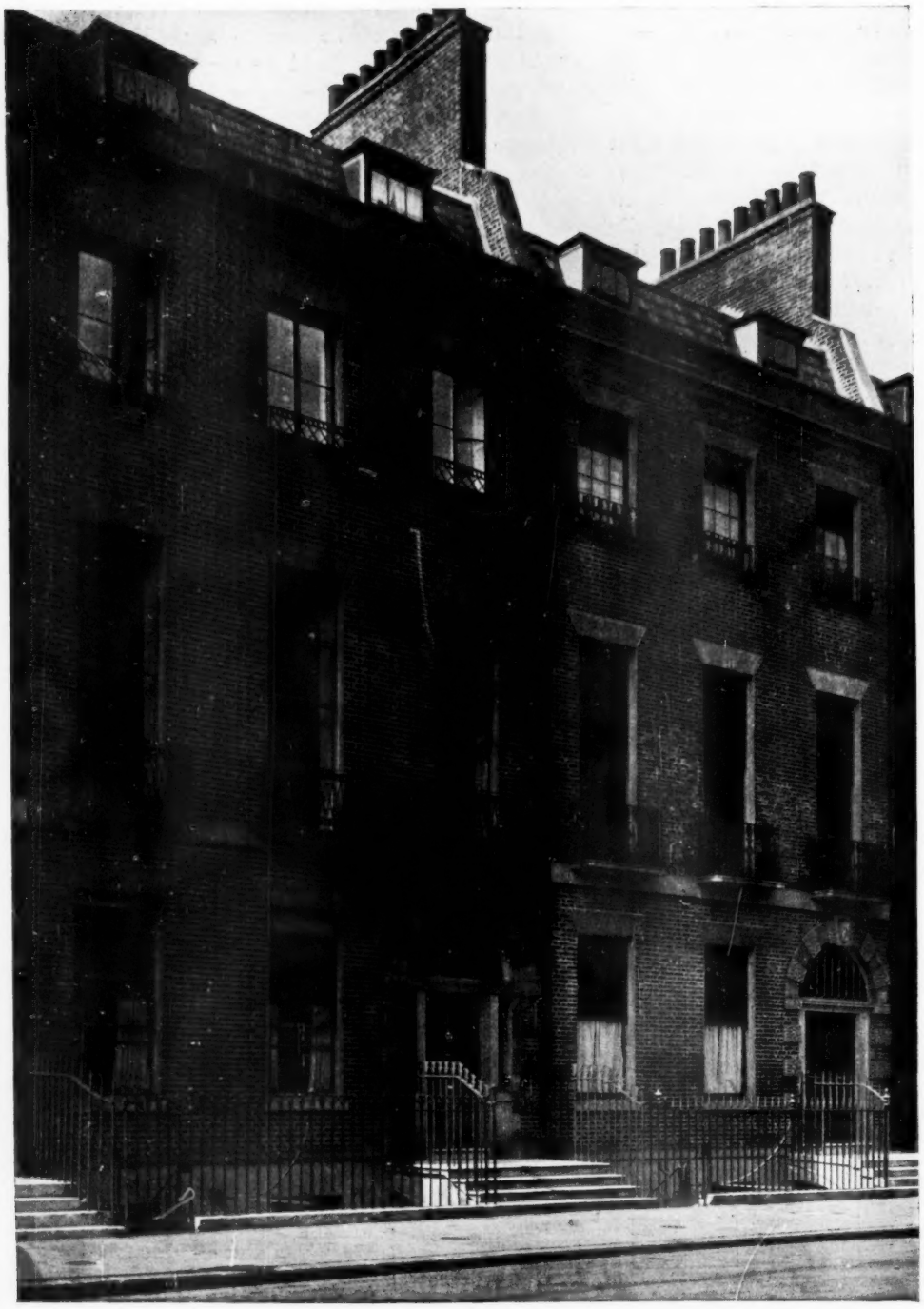
The ground-floor rooms are large and very simple, the front room having a pair of Ionic columns in imitation marble and the hall a fine cornice. A stone staircase, with an iron handrail, leads to the drawing-room floor: magnificent apartments with long windows and light iron balconies; in one, a geometrical ceiling of Adam character and a fine inlaid mantelpiece of marble; the other has an even finer fireplace, but not such a fine ceiling.

To fit the premises for the occupation of the Association, only such alterations as are vitally necessary will be undertaken. To provide a meeting-room and library, one of the staircases will be removed with its side walls all the way up. Members, never suitably catered for at Tufton Street, will have the two large first-floor rooms overlooking the gardens of the square, a luncheon-room and the library.

As for the schools, the old back stable buildings abutting on Morwell Street will be demolished, and a four-story studio building erected in their place, with access from Morwell Street, and connected to the main block by galleries for the exhibition of selected casts from the Tufton Street Museum. One hundred and twenty day students will be provided for, with an art classroom and a life-room in addition. For their recreation, so essential in winter, the students will have a large room, where fives or gymnastics can be indulged in *ad lib.*



PLANS OF NOS. 34 & 35 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, SHOWING PROPOSED ALTERATIONS



NOS. 34 & 35 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON.

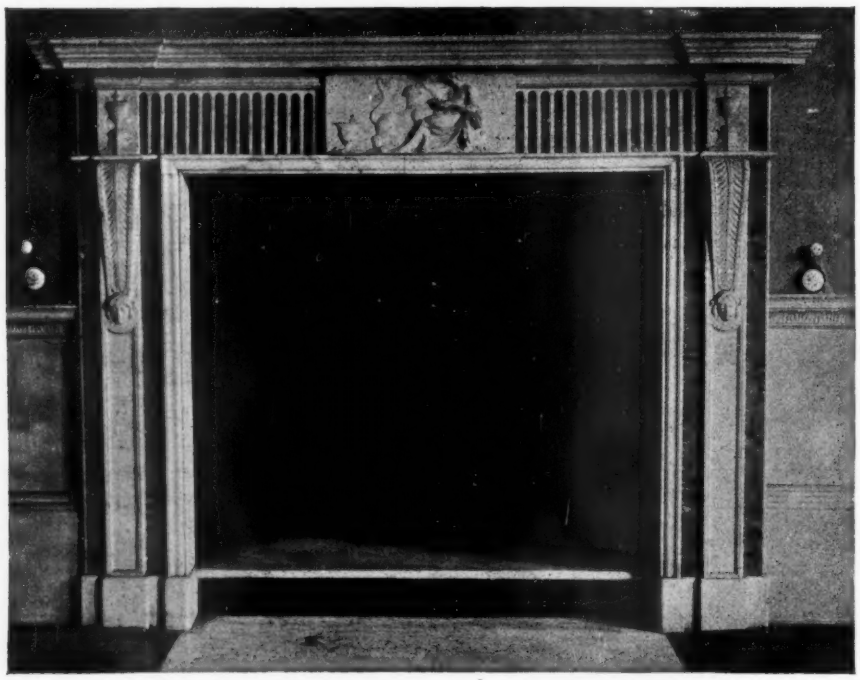
ENTRANCE TO 34 BEDFORD SQUARE.

ENTRANCE TO 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.

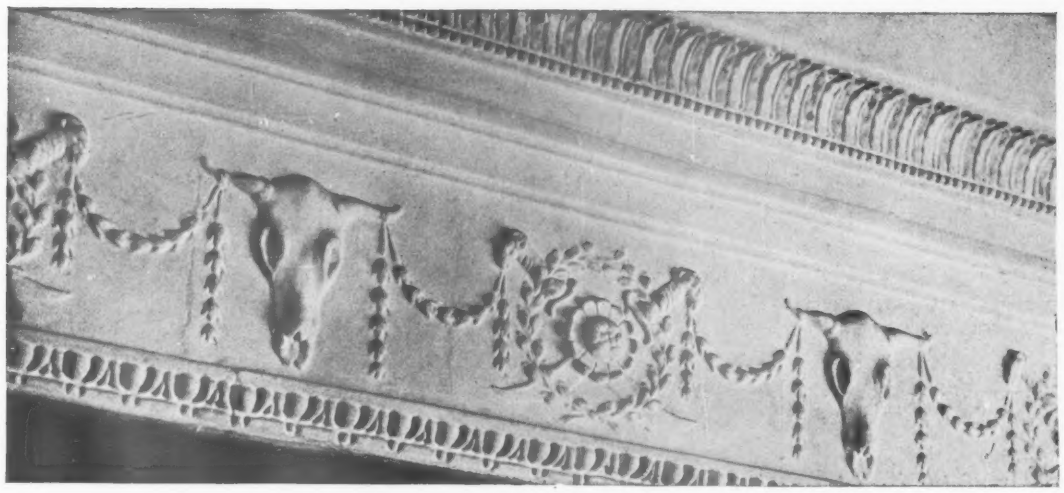
COUNCIL ROOM.

FRIEZE AT 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.

DETAIL OF CEILING IN FIRST-FLOOR ROOM, NO. 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.



FIREPLACE, FIRST FLOOR, NO. 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.



FRIEZE AT 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.

DETAIL OF CEILING AT 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.

DETAIL OF CEILING AT 35 BEDFORD SQUARE.

"THE WORKING-CLASS HOUSING PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION."

We have received the following letters in response to our request for correspondence on the above subject :—

To the Editor of The Architectural Review.

Sir,

I read with interest the article in the October Architectural Review under the above heading, but I cannot think that the problem will be solved by lightly refusing to discuss points essential to the solution of the problem, viz., the "selection, purchase, and lay-out of the site." Surely one of the chief causes of unhealthy and disreputable dwellings is the disgraceful way they have been thrown without thought or reason on to the site by "land and house agents, surveyors," and engineers. A site can be overcrowded (to the detriment of the health of the inhabitants of the houses) in the same way that a house can be overcrowded by its inhabitants.

If the architect thinks he can continue to work as heretofore, by designing pretty little single cottages on paper, it is time he were disillusioned. He will have to gird up his loins and turn to and attack the problem in its "dug-out." The first step will be the selection of a healthy and convenient site, properly laid out, viz., planned for convenience of traffic and housing; the house should be a fitly designed detail of the scheme as an entity. A fitly designed cottage nowadays should be as suitably designed for its purpose as a piece of machinery should be—I say should be, as the engineer is not such a practical designer as many people believe, as witness many a motor-car or motor-cycle in which a great number of the details seem to be designed on paper by a man who makes no practical use of them.

Again, why should a tenant pay rent for an empty space in a roof? Has Mr. Macartney ever seen a wall with one coat of plaster? I should prefer to pay rent for a house with two coats in which money has not been wasted in the empty space of a steep roof (of course, if money is no object a picturesque steep roof may be added). If casements are required with a light over the transome there are a good number of fittings on the market which, quite unobtrusive and cheap, work with a cord, and do not require steps for the housewife's use. I may say I have been engaged for some years on town-planning and housing schemes, and am at present occupied with that work.

Yours faithfully,

J. A. Hallam, Architect.

Member of Town-Planning Institute.

32 Park Place, Cardiff.

To the Editor of The Architectural Review.

Sir,

I hasten to reply to the excellent suggestions made by Mr. M. E. Macartney, Lieutenant E. Holloway, and Mr. J. J. Joass, for a solution of this difficult problem, and I think the standard cottage is the germ of better things.

Of course it requires more frontage than the ordinary type, but that must be insisted upon at all costs. What can be worse than the abominable house which is the outcome of a narrow frontage, and which may be seen by the thousand in the Midland, Lancashire, and Yorkshire manufacturing and mining districts?

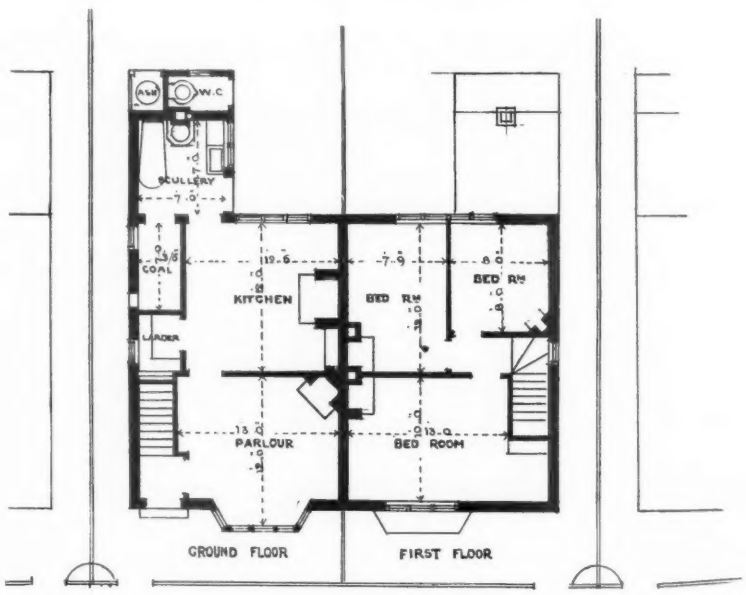
To obtain three bedrooms on the first floor with this class of house, one of them is placed over a projecting scullery with sometimes three outside walls. The bedroom has to be reached on the first floor by an unsatisfactory passage; but, worst of all, owing to the narrow frontage, the projecting scullery block at the back overlaps the kitchen, where the family live. The kitchen window is in consequence crowded to the side, and leaves the room dark, gloomy, and sunless, especially as the next house scullery block projection is within a few feet. Such houses should be condemned for all time.

I know the standard cottage plan very well, my firm having built similar houses, with an elevation not unlike that illustrated. But the average working man, in the districts I have named, insists upon having a parlour, and I think he is right. It may be said that he does not use it, but he does use it on Sundays and on festive occasions, and he is now using it more, and it frequently contains a musical instrument of some kind. To meet this requirement I enclose a plan. The bedrooms, you will notice, are exactly the same as illustrated by you, whilst the main dimensions of the outside walls are the same on the ground floor.

Parlour.—This is obtained by placing a wall under the cross wall of the bedroom above, and I have added a bay window (which the tenant always likes), and this gives a parlour sufficiently large for a working man's requirements.

Kitchen.—The kitchen is a fair size, is thoroughly lighted, and, above all, has a comfortable hearth, the doors being well placed to prevent draught.

Scullery.—A small scullery becomes, of course, a necessity, with the provision for a sink, copper, and bath. The hot water for the bath would be supplied from the copper, thus saving plumbing complications, in the way of circulating pipes and their consequent repairs; this arrangement is found to work well. The bath top, which consists of two light pieces of ledged framing, I suggest might be used as a table when the bath is not required, but when in use it would form a good dry platform for standing upon the wet floor.



WORKING-CLASS COTTAGE PLAN BY ALBERT N. BROMLEY, F.R.I.B.A.

Semi-detached Houses.—Although these are not so architecturally pleasing as a group of four, I am convinced that semi-detached houses have advantages in other respects, which more than compensate for any architectural loss. A first-class reliable builder, whom I have frequently consulted on this subject, always builds his houses semi-detached for investment. He contends that there is little loss of frontage, as the back passage to other houses is dispensed with, and a saving of fencing and gates is obtained. His tenants strongly object to a joint access to the back premises, and are willing to pay a little more rent for privacy. A man's house is his castle, and a semi-detached arrangement secures him the privacy he desires, as his front gate is secured for himself alone, and serves for his private back access also.

It seems unnecessary to point out the other advantages of a semi-detached arrangement, such as a better circulation of air round the houses and the satisfactory lighting of the staircase and larder. When in America, I noticed that semi-detached houses were becoming increasingly popular amongst the working classes.

Yours, etc.,

ALBERT N. BROMLEY, F.R.I.B.A.

Prudential Buildings, Nottingham.

To the Editor of THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW.

SIR,

Mr. Macartney's article on the working-class house problem, together with Mr. Joass's suggestive elevations, is a really valuable contribution to the subject; but whether it will be productive of any improvement in the ways of local sanitary authorities is, I fear, open to question. It will always be difficult to convince the minds of average councillors that the grouping of cottages in the way shown by Mr. Macartney's plans is a distinct advantage over the long, straight, unlovely rows so beloved of the speculative builder.

One of the most important points in connexion with the Building By-laws, which in their present form do so much to strangle sensible building, is that of the height of rooms. And in this connexion it seems to me that there is some misconception with regard to the powers of local sanitary authorities. The Local Government Board Model By-laws contain no reference to the height of rooms, and in the annotated by-laws a note will be found to the effect that the Public Health Act, 1875, does not empower local authorities to make by-laws regulating the height of rooms.

I have just examined thirty-nine sets of local by-laws, and I find that in seventeen only is there a by-law dealing with the height of rooms. Seven of these fix 9 ft. as the minimum height, eight fix 8 ft. 6 in., and the remainder 8 ft.

There can be no doubt that, as pointed out by Mr. Macartney, Mr. Voysey, Mr. Baillie Scott, and other architects of experience in this class of building, within certain limits of convenience a room of low altitude is more easily warmed and ventilated than one of greater height. Personally I should be content with 7 ft. 6 in., but should regard 8 ft. as a maximum height for the kind of rooms we are considering. The obvious advantages gained by adopting a lower standard of height are, increase of floor area, a decrease in the height of the staircase, and better ventilation.

Height is wanted for head-room, and excessive height in proportion to floor space is not only useless but mischievous. What is wanted is adequate provision for the circulation of air, and sufficient but not excessive window space.

The question of the use of materials other than ordinary building bricks for walls is rather more difficult to deal with. Mr. Macartney refers to "patent bricks," by which I understand he means thin hollow bricks ranging from two to four inches in thickness, of which there are several varieties on the market.

The question arises, will a 2 in. hollow brick rendered on the outside and plastered inside form as good a protection against variations of temperature as an 11 in. hollow wall built of ordinary bricks and having a cavity of 2 in.?

I certainly cannot think that a solid ferro-concrete wall 3 in. thick can be a satisfactory material for an outside wall.

It ought not to be difficult to solve a question like this if only we had some properly equipped body to make experimental researches into this and many other questions.

One other point I will refer to: the position of the sanitaryoffice. In the case of the Evesham cottages, which Mr. Macartney takes as a type, the offices are of the earth-closet variety, and are evidently intended to be placed at some distance from the cottages. In some districts I have found a regulation in force requiring a minimum distance of 10 ft. between the back wall of a house and the earth closet. I can find no authority for this restriction either in the Public Health Act or in the Model By-laws, and I can see no reason for its enforcement. A properly constructed earth closet, with proper means of removing the receptacle from outside, can and should be a part of the house, and, if not approached from inside the house, ought to be accessible under cover.

The most serious defect in "back to back" houses which are so common in many Northern towns is the position of the w.c.'s. As these houses are usually planned, the provision of a w.c. inside each tenement is impossible, and so the necessary offices are grouped in a back yard. The publicity and inconvenience of access inherent to this arrangement prevent the proper use of these offices, especially in the case of children, and the result is seriously insanitary conditions inside the tenement.

I am glad to see Mr. Macartney's advocacy of the double-hung sash window; and fully endorse all that he says on that subject.

Yours, etc.,

KEITH D. YOUNG, F.R.I.B.A.

17 Southampton Street, Bloomsbury.

To the Editor of THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW.

SIR,

In response to your invitation for correspondence, I venture to make the following remarks in the light of a varied experience in Canada.

I will base what I have to say on the excellent little plans of Lieutenant Holloway. These are carefully and economically worked out, and give the desired accommodation. Following the order of treatment in the article referred to, namely—1, Design; 2, Planning; 3, Construction—I make some suggestions which I think worth consideration. As to design, I note that all the designs illustrated are very charming, and almost all depart from the detail of the window that is recommended, for they show casements and not sashes. My sympathies are with the casement for very small cottages, but my judgment is for the sliding sashes as affording the best practical ventilation and most convenient handling. The window should, I think, extend quite to the ceiling, however, not merely to within 9 in. of it.

In regard to planning, my suggestion is that the scullery should be called a kitchen and laid out for use as kitchen. Where the bath is shown on the plan there should be a range

of what may be called the portable type, not built into a recess in brickwork. I find that housewives appreciate the freedom of access to this type of range. Where gas is cheap economy is increased. The copper should be replaced by a vertical galvanized iron hot-water cylinder, from which hot water may be circulated to a tap upstairs as described later. The manner of handling the range and the hot water will be found to save space.

The bath in the scullery strikes me as likely to be a vexatious obstruction to the housewife, and it occupies valuable space. In any case, why is it so large? Its use with any degree of privacy must be a still greater vexation and interference with house-work. It would probably be diverted to makeshift uses for which it is not intended, and become more or less of a nuisance. A portable shallow tub, large enough for one to stand up in, and suited and employed for one or two definite purposes, would be many times more real use.

The living-room fireplace, though not an absolute necessity —a stove would warm the house more efficiently—is a matter of so much comfort and pleasure that it should be retained, but it should be treated with the greatest simplicity—built of plain bricks of good colour and quality, and should have a plain plank for mantelshelf.

The kitchen sink should be placed adjoining the range, so that the filling of pots and placing them on the range may not involve walking to and fro even across the whole of the little kitchen. In the partition between kitchen and living-room there should be a dresser forming part of the partition and accessible from both rooms, the drawers for cutlery capable of being pulled out from either room, the "top" becoming a service counter. This greatly facilitates all operations of setting and clearing away articles of table service. When the dresser-doors are closed on either side, the two rooms are separated. With these conveniences the scullery would be found to be a more than ample kitchen. A wooden veranda along the back of the house with a wooden coal-bin would give a good working space for many operations of cleaning better done outside the house, and the coals would not have the same certainty of messing up the kitchen. Upstairs, the fireplaces should all be omitted: this would save a considerable amount of brickwork and grates. The chief value of these fireplaces is as ventilators. Cheaper and better methods of ventilation ought to be devised, either by means of more efficient windows or by 4 in. pipes carried up beside the chimneys. There should be one flue from the upper floor with a ring for the fixing of a stove-pipe when required. One stove in one of the bedrooms is all that is ever likely to be used at any one time. This should be of portable type, preferably set in the largest bedroom, but capable of being erected in any one of the others. In many cases even this would not be required, but if the flue is provided a stove could be "rented" for any special case such as sickness. In Canada, it is a frequent practice to place a stove of this kind in the room farthest from the chimney and to carry the flue-pipes by ring openings in the partitions through several rooms, following an indirect route into the chimney, thus helping to warm the various rooms in the process. This proceeding will probably not commend itself to Englishmen, as the pipes are unsightly in appearance. It has considerable practical value, however, and in summer time the pipes are taken down and the holes stoppered.

In the bedrooms, the space saved by the omission of fireplaces should be utilized as cupboards, which need only be of the lightest construction. Shelf and hanging room is an absolute necessity in a bedroom, and should never be omitted.

At the head of the stair I would advocate a space with taps for hot and cold water, with a drain to take away water from portable wash-hand basins and bath-tub. A small recess at the expense of the largest bedroom might be made to accommodate all this, including the bath-tub, which could hang on the wall. This demand may appear to some to be extravagant, but the actual extravagance is in having an unusual bath in an awkward place, not in having real conveniences which would encourage and not deter from habitual cleanliness. In these days we should be ashamed to say that a cottage is fit for human habitation that does not contain the vital necessities that plumbing supplies. We are much too conservative in the matter of sanitation in this respect. Pipes should be placed inside the house where they will be secure against frost. In Canada, this must necessarily be the case, and not only can be done, but is accomplished perfectly by the modern improvements of plumbing materials and methods. This cottage should have a water-closet where the coal space is shown. That it is beside the kitchen is no drawback. The excessive isolation so commonly insisted on for water-closets is a remnant of the ideas of a time when closet apparatus had not reached the present state of perfection.

Coming to the question of construction, I have had experience of the comfort of houses built of wood. These are constantly employed in countries where weather conditions are most extreme, and they are much warmer than brick ones. Prejudices against wood construction must be modified. The main point is the danger of the spread of fire. When a fire actually occurs, the loss is heavier on a brick house than on a wooden one, for both are about equally liable to become complete losses. After being gutted by fire, the brickwork of the one can only be demolished. Shingled roofs are too dangerous in this respect, and I know of nothing preferable to slate or tile, unless asbestos slates can be manufactured to compare with them in first cost. These have the advantage of lightening the carrying construction. Houses so separated as to avoid risk of fire spreading from one to the other are, of course, more expensive, both through their occupying more ground and from their having no walls in common. On the other hand, to accept as a settled verdict that there is not room enough upon this earth to afford to every man a separate free-standing cottage is a confession of the failure of our economic constitution that one ought to refuse to consider final.

In conclusion, I should call in question the wisdom of building cottages of so small a size to last "at least one hundred years." One should rather aim at a maximum of fifty years or less. Conditions are going to change a good deal in that time. We have too many of the derelicts of past centuries on our hands. Posterity is not going to bless us for multiplying the number for them to deal with by ten thousand fold. Not that I do not share the love and admiration of the old and lovely, but the question we are handling is the crying need to make more wholesome and happy the lives of living men. Things are not more beautiful and right simply in proportion to the time they will last: "a lily of a day is fairer far in May" than the most venerable rotten tree. In the solution of the housing question this point of obtaining a short-lived and yet satisfactory habitation is one that must be kept directly in view if we are to get any farther forward.

CECIL S. BURGESS, A.R.I.B.A.

Bramshott Camp, Hants.

[Further correspondence is held over till next month.]