# CITY PLANNING • HOUSING

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CIVIC ART

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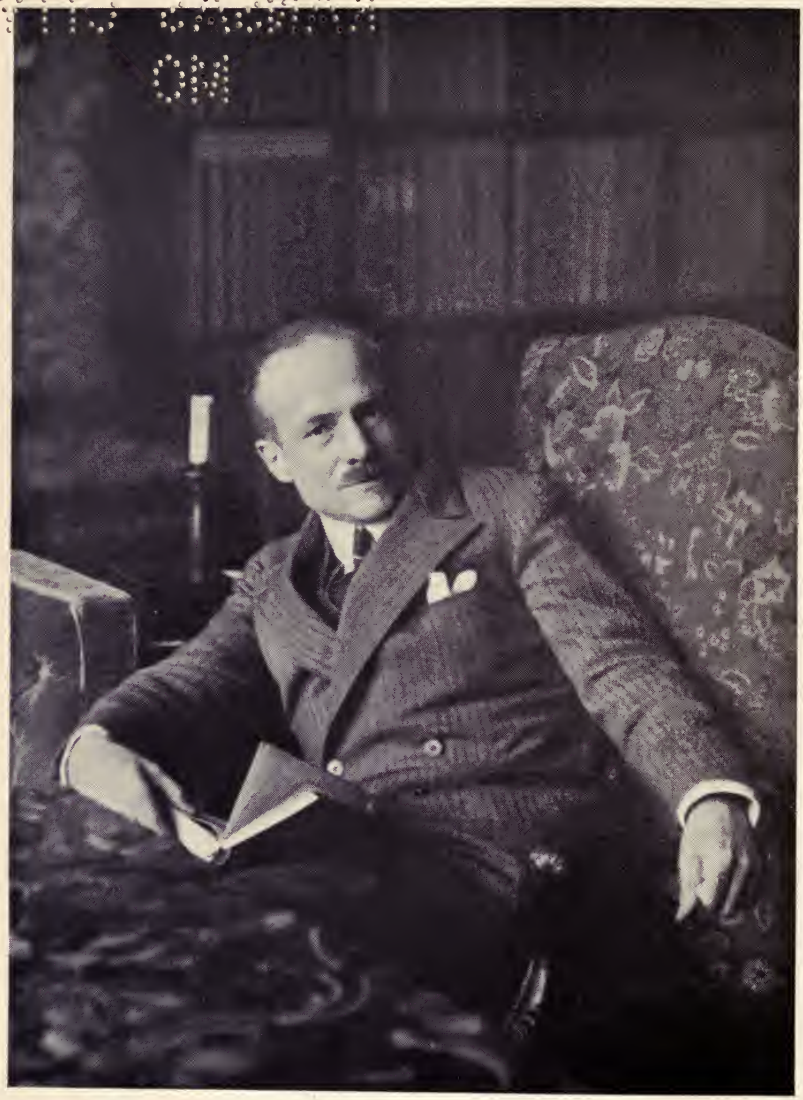

Werner Hegemann

1882–1936

# CITY PLANNING
# HOUSING

BY

WERNER HEGEMANN

EDITED BY

RUTH NANDA ANSHEN

With a preface by Joseph Hudnut and a chapter by Elbert Peets on recent civic art in Washington and elsewhere

*SECOND VOLUME OF TEXT:*
*POLITICAL ECONOMY and*
*CIVIC ART*

ARCHITECTURAL BOOK PUBLISHING CO., INC.
112 WEST 46TH STREET, NEW YORK

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the reading of the manuscript the editor is indebted to Mr. R. C. Weinberg.

The sketches illustrating this book were made by Messrs. Gunther Arndt, John G. Breck, Charles Warner, Chauncey Stillman, and B. Bowen from instructions by Dr. Hegemann, supplemented, after his death, by Mr. R. C. Weinberg and Mr. W. A. Sanders.

The frank criticism by Elbert Peets (Principal Town Planner of the Greendale Project, Division of Suburban Resettlement, Resettlement Administration) of recent developments in federal capital planning affords a specially fitting conclusion to this volume.

Ed.

## *PREFACE*

*Whenever, as a part of those processes of assembling, shaping, and arranging materials for human use, the arts achieve also an expression of those qualities which men seek, without finding, in their non-human environment they become endowed with a sudden vitality. It is at such times, when they seem to share the processes and aims of science, that the arts attain their greatest power over our hearts. The assurance of permanence, completeness, and peace which they offer us seems then to be, for a moment, convincing.*

*The art of city planning is no exception to this universal principle. City planning is a practical art concerned with the application of science to the problems of shelter, of traffic control, of public health. City planning is also an art of expression and strives repeatedly to attain an aesthetic excellence through the creation of patterns—geometric or free—whose elements are streets and squares, planted areas, and structures. Considered as an art, city planning is most successful at those rare moments in which its two objectives (service and expression) are seen to be attained as parts of a common process.*

*Aristotle defined a city as a place where men live a common life for a noble end. He could have meant no existing city but rather that city which men in all ages have built out of their aspirations: the planned city, the city made consonant with an exalted pattern of life inwardly apprehended. His definition takes no account of outward aspects, whether these are the consequences of science or of a search for expression. Neither a collection of buildings nor an aggregation of people makes a city, but rather the form and content of society and the direction of its march.*

*In the vision of such a city there may be discovered the secret which will give vitality to our science and our art. Technique and expression will be reconciled when both are addressed to the realization of a communal order directed towards a common*

*good; and from that realization and direction there may arise that inner discipline which in all the great traditions has been the true source of unity and power in the arts.*

*It may seem strange that housing—by which is meant the provision of shelter for the vast populations of industrial cities —is in this book by Dr. Hegemann closely associated with civic art. Housing is a homely word and contains no suggestion of that grandiloquent geometry of street and structure which until recently was an accepted connotation of "art" in its relation to cities. Housing in its important aspects is a matter of science. Its factors are as much social and economic as material. It would appear to have little to do with the patterns made familiar by city planners.*

*Yet it is probable that the study of housing is precisely that study most likely to lead to a redemption of this art from its present futilities. This will not be true, of course, if housing is thought of as merely the expression of a compassionate impulse; but it is, fortunately, impossible to consider it long in such a way. Every question of civic life impinges on this arresting problem, whose solution—if there be a solution—will demand a reëxamination of every premise upon which the structure of our society is founded. From this reëxamination, it is probable that there will take shape some new vision of life that will in time transcend our science and our art. In that vision we shall discover a new ideal of beauty from which our civic art will gain a new dignity and authority.*

*Joseph Hudnut*

Cambridge, Massachusetts
October 22, 1936

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## INTRODUCTION

### A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Our fathers and forefathers believed implicitly in liberty as the unfailing boon and saviour in every emergency: in economic liberty which means free competition; in political liberty which means democracy, both of which, however, are helpless without some form of national planning—a basic conception of the American Constitution. It was this faith that gave our fathers inspiration and strength for mighty achievements. They marched forwards and upwards in almost every field of science, of economics, of culture. Today this faith is considered to be mere delusion. Yet with its disappearance there vanished both strength and prosperity and we stand today aghast, confronted with the possible downfall of our civilization, faced with the prospect of falling back into poverty, servitude and barbarism. Yet there is one shining ray of hope which, if we grasp it, can prevent the imminent cataclysm. This hope lies in a rationally planned society rather than in a growth of purely "natural forces."

The strengthening of civic pride and the recognition of the importance of housing the masses decently must soon become one of the main objects of social, economic and political endeavors and of historic research. Fortunately civic pride as well as efficiency of the inhabitants of America are rapidly increasing. The old English saying cannot be too often repeated, namely, that one can kill or disable a man just as well with a bad dwelling as with an ax. As long as this disguised state of lawlessness is tolerated and even encouraged by building codes and law courts, the resistance against criminal abuse must come from the surviving victims. A grocer is forbidden to sell decayed food. As long as a slum owner is encouraged or compelled (by tax assessor and sheriff) to sell decayed and poisonous housing, as long as such enforced crime is euphemistically labelled 'main-

most intense national efforts than city planning and housing.

Dr. Werner Hegemann, eminent and internationally known city planner and architect, whose philosophy—since truth can bear repetition—I have attempted to expound in terms of the First Volume of this publication, had, for many years before his tragic and untimely death on Easter morning, 1936, at the age of 54 years, been engrossed in the problem of better housing for the masses. The present volumes of "City Planning and Housing," are, indeed, sufficient evidence of Dr. Hegemann's unique ability to offer a working program of reform and a solution to what heretofore have been considered irremediable difficulties. This book thoroughly discusses the historical, sociological and economic aspects, in addition to many others, of city planning and housing and can, without exaggeration, be said to be a revelation to and an invaluable background for every one interested in sociology, economics, housing and national planning.

Originally a student of city planning, history of art and architecture, Dr. Hegemann later turned to economics and political science, thus achieving, by means of natural endowment and varied though related studies fostered by many years of residence in most parts of the globe, a broadness of view entirely free from national prejudice. His excellent and iconoclastic studies found in his "Napoleon," "Frederick the Great" and "Christ Rescued" reveal not only Dr. Hegemann's uncanny instinct for historical truth but his open-mindedness, liberalism, and objectivity of thought. He longed to divest ignoble leaders, living and dead, of that pseudo-immortality which mythopoeic and unthinking men had granted them. He was less interested in what actually happened than in the illustrative, moral and instructive aspects of history. Aristotle said, "Poetry is truer than history because it is illustrative, moral, human, pertinent to man in the generic sense." And although Dr. Hegemann repudiated the "unintelligible," esoteric and poetic medium of many systems of philosophic thought, although he deprecated the old, biblical assumption, which traditional philosophy at times has adopted, that "blessed is he who shall not reveal what has been revealed unto him," he nevertheless conceded the value of the philosophical approach in matters of history.

In 1905 Dr. Hegemann became a housing inspector for the

City of Philadelphia, and in 1909 and 1910, as director of the international city planning exhibitions in Boston, Berlin and Duesseldorf, exhibitions which were, in the autumn of 1910, transferred to the Royal Academy in London, he brought the housing problem to the foreground. Later, in 1911 and 1913, he published two volumes (financed by the Municipalities of Greater Berlin) summarizing the results of the city planning exhibitions and showing the basic importance of housing in every aspect of city planning.[1] At that time Dr. Hegemann was elected Honorary Secretary of the "Association for Decentralized Settlement in Greater Berlin," of the "League for the Protection of the Forests of Greater Berlin," and of "The Group of Twelve for the Architectural Development of Berlin." The interest the socialist labor unions had manifested in the Berlin City Planning Exhibition led to Dr. Hegemann's directorship of the socialist "Cooperative Building Association *Ideal*," which for the first time, after a lapse of almost a century, again constructed for the workingmen individual homes with private gardens within the districts of Greater Berlin (Britz) zoned for tenements.

In 1912 Dr. Hegemann started a popular campaign for a more decentralizing system of housing and transportation and for more playgrounds and forest reserves in Greater Berlin. At the same time he was prosecuted by the Prussian police for having the billboards of Emperor William's ambitious capital covered with posters reading: "600,000 inhabitants of Greater Berlin live in tenements at the rate of from 5 to 13 people per room.[2] 300,000 children have no playgrounds." The persistent placarding of these figures, accompanied by a gripping drawing of two Berlin slum children [3] was declared to be conducive to the

[1] The title of these volumes is: "Der Städtebau nach den Ergebnissen der Allgemeinen Städtebau-Ausstellung in Berlin." Volume I (published 1911) offers a history of city planning and housing in Berlin; a new publication which appeared in 1929 under the title "Das Steinerne Berlin" brought the discussion up to date. Volume II (published 1913) contains studies of city planning, urban transportation, housing, and open spaces in Paris, London, Vienna, and in some American cities.

[2] In honor of Berlin's civic beauty it should be stated that these statistics, equally ghastly as they were reliable, did not include kitchens as rooms to live in.

[3] It was designed by Kate Kollwitz. This powerful artist and realistic portrayer of slum life has recently been forced by the Hitler regime to leave the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts.

"incitement of class hatred," punishable according to law. The prosecution, however, had to be abandoned because, finally, the truth of the hotly debated figures could not be denied.

The propaganda connected with the figure of 600,000 Berliners in badly crowded tenements reached wide sections of the population. Especially did it receive the support of the powerful labor unions whose leaders, more perspicacious than many of their American colleagues, appreciated how easily workingmen, even with rising wages, can be plundered of income and health by rising rents and bad living quarters. Also after the war, the labor unions, Socialist and Catholic, and the different Federal, State and Municipal governments, supported by them, became the real agents of housing reform.


Two Berlin Slum Children
Designed by Kate Kollwitz.

In 1913 the People's Institute of New York, directed at that time by Dr. Frederick C. Howe, asked the then prominent mayors of the German cities (Mayor Adickes of Frankfurt-on-the-Main and Mayor Marx of Duesseldorf) to recommend someone who would expound German city planning to American audiences and compare it with procedures in American cities. Dr. Hegemann was selected and

thus secured the opportunity of studying and reporting about civic conditions in twenty American cities, large and small. From the end of the year 1913 to 1915 he worked for the East Bay Communities of San Francisco. This activity was interrupted by a journey for the purpose of studying the capitals of Australia, Japan and China. In 1915 his "Report on a City Plan for the Municipalities of Oakland and Berkeley" was published.

From 1916 to 1921 Dr. Hegemann associated himself with Elbert Peets and Joseph Hudnut and directed a considerable amount of practical real estate subdivision work especially in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. (Part of this work is described and illustrated in "Civic Art," p. 216, 217, 223, 280 and 283.) A large part of the following years was spent in travelling and in studying city planning and architecture in all countries of Western Europe, in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. From 1924 to 1933 he was intermittently city planning advisor to the cities of Hameln, Leipzig and Münster, while his main work was dedicated to the editing of two prominent architectural reviews of Berlin, "Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst" and "Städtebau." In 1931 he was invited to advise the cities of Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentine, in matters of city planning and housing. At the same time he gave courses of lectures on this subject at the Universities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo (Uruguay).

As editor of the architectural reviews in Berlin Dr. Hegemann tried, during those long years of often violent polemics between opposing ideas, to give recognition to such architectural developments as seemed promising, and likely to endure and become valuable. In so doing he attempted to be indifferent to the origin of such ideas, indifferent as to whether they issued from the "left" or from the "right," or whether they claimed to stand for either progress or tradition. In expressing, without reticence, his views, he acquired the gentle art of making enemies and friends, right and left. He was often bitterly attacked from all sides. But when his fiftieth birthday arrived his friends and antagonists joined to thank him most generously. One hundred and thirty leading architects from many countries urged him to continue his critical work. The list (published in "Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst und Städtebau," July

1931) extended from the right traditionalism of Ragnar Ostberg and Paul Schmitthenner to the left modernism of Bruno and Max Taut and the brothers Luckhardt.

From the encouraging observations made on that occasion two extracts may be quoted. J. J. P. Oud declared: "I seldom am of your opinion, but I almost always learn from you." And Erich Mendelssohn wrote: "Best wishes, for more of your sharp tongue. We will furnish the grindstone."

Dr. Hegemann time and again has manifested an indisputable capacity not only for abstract idealism but for inspired idealism and realism. In 1933, when the last vestiges of freedom were confiscated in Germany together with his property and citizenship, Dr. Hegemann found refuge as visiting Professor of City Planning and Housing at the New School for Social Research and as Associate in Architecture at Columbia University. He was thus able, in spite of many, many impediments, to continue his battle for peace and order in an otherwise belligerent and planless world. He was a pacifist armed with the only effective weapon—the power of reason. He was one of that esoteric number who realize that a social philosophy of liberalism need not be divorced from constructive radicalism in action.

"City Planning and Housing" is a veritable treasure house of tangible ideas and applicable plans. Endowed with a most perspicacious recognition of historical and contemporary parallels, Dr. Hegemann declares that we have only to substitute the word "slaves" for the word "slums" and we have a condition at present almost identical with that of the Civil War period. On a par with Lincoln's general recommendations to indemnify the slave holders is his suggestion as to the extent of compensation to be granted them. A similar proposition might advantageously be chosen today in indemnifying our slum-owners. And "whenever, indeed, a right of property is infringed upon for the general good, if the nature of the case admits compensation, it ought to be made, but if compensation be impracticable, that impracticability ought not to be an obstacle to a clearly essential reform." (Alexander Hamilton) With such piercing analysis as this the reader is at once convinced of the monumental character of the book. Furthermore, Dr. Hegemann's keenness in the perception of housing problems in America and the wisdom

of his suggested panaceas reveal the great extent of his fine, clear judgment.

"Can the American architect under existent conditions economically design effectual and legal plans for the construction of decent cities to be inhabited by people, the majority of whom may at any moment be unemployed?" Dr. Hegemann asks. And he swiftly brings home to the reader the appalling realization that approximately 40 million Americans live in slums and blighted districts; that the New York Region could hold twice the population of the globe if built up to the full extent legally made possible under the New York Zoning Laws and "restrictions"; that the founders of our country—Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson—had proposed plans for national public works, zoning laws and housing; and that in Stockholm, the Municipality enables the tenement-dwellers to become builders and owners of garden cottages under a practical plan of supervision and financing, without paying more than they previously paid in their congested tenements and without becoming a burden to the general taxpayer.

Few historians have sufficiently emphasized to what a large extent the political revolution of the nineteenth century was a direct victory for better housing—the political victory of 'the people who live in small houses.' With irrefutable logic, with burning conviction and with the fervor of a pioneer, Dr. Hegemann points to the palpable truth. Instead of fearing the city as the inevitable grave of humanity, the present study recommends the modern decentralized city with its highly improved health standards as the only possible salvation for mankind. This requires not only planning, but good planning. And the realization of good planning is impossible without a high degree of mental and material prosperity of the masses, without real social well-being of the whole community to be achieved in the way Dr. Hegemann suggests and by the "destruction of fictitious land values."

Back of this book is the conviction that modern civilization is not only on trial but that it has been judged and found wanting, and that in the struggle for a new world more is at stake than the discovery of new political and economic organizations which will enable humanity to survive a while longer. "City

Planning and Housing" is a beacon to those who despair of freedom. It points to the fatal error which led humanity into the wilderness. It exposes the deception and wins back the faith that once made us strong and enables us to find a way out of the terrible crisis of our civilization. Planning must henceforth take the place in governments that thinking takes in individual lives. Dr. Hegemann was one of the remaining few who with great effort, and, we pray, with no little hope, still believed in liberty and hung on grimly to the last battered trenches of freedom.

The power of reason is its decisive influence on the life of humanity. Conquerors have influenced profoundly the lives of subsequent generations. But the total effect of this influence shrinks into insignificance if compared with the entire transformation of human habits and human mentality produced by the long line of men of thought from Thales to the present day, men individually powerless, but ultimately the rulers of the world.

Werner Hegemann was the

*". . . nerve o'er which did creep*
*The else unfelt oppressions of mankind."*

RUTH NANDA ANSHEN

New York, July, 1936

## Nineteenth Chapter

### A COMPARISON OF PARIS AND BERLIN

America's imitation of foreign examples in city building and housing is difficult and even dangerous due to the fact that it is not at all easy to ascertain what peculiar political and other conditions brought them into existence, made them survive or caused their doom. Even knowing these facts it remains difficult to determine the applicability of these foreign examples to the very different conditions in America.

While in Berlin, the author of this book had the privilege of making repeated tours with Americans desirous of seeing the achievements of Berlin's post-War housing policy. A day or two of continuous driving is hardly sufficient to obtain even a perfunctory glimpse of the innumerable new housing schemes which form a wide girdle of unprecedented decency around the shamelessly overbuilt quarters of old Berlin. The American visitors were as a rule quite overwhelmed by what they saw. One of the most prominent and cultured among them, after a strenuous day of sightseeing, exclaimed: "If New York within the next fifty years will have achieved as much modern housing as I have seen today, it will have done wonders!" Indeed, it requires a cultured mind to appreciate intelligently the surprising achievements and promises proffered by the new housing enterprises in various European countries. Cultivated observers from lands which for some reason or other remain inactive or less active in this new field are easily overcome by something like rage or shame, and frequently, even unjustly, fail to appreciate the achievements of their own countries. These feelings are akin to that very injustice (commented upon in the First Chapter) that led a prominent French observer to deprecate so vehemently modern Chicago.

One may further add: "We Americans were putting up houses twenty years behind those of England and Holland. We were building horses and buggies instead of automobiles. One of

the great objectives of our government housing will be to investigate European housing improvements. We are learning in Europe not to crowd the land, and we are tending already toward greater openness of land. Crowding brings obsolescence." (N. Y. Times, Aug. 21, 1934.)

Almost all European states did engage in great housing schemes for their workingmen as long as the United States insisted upon continuing her exports to them and paying for these exports and especially for Germany's war indemnities by new American loans. Even those countries which received only small shipments of American capital profited, indirectly, either from the American money that reached them in the form of war indemnities or from the general prosperity created by the steady flow of American funds into countries with which they traded.

Unfortunately, the great foreign housing and city-planning schemes (due to far-sighted American generosity or short-sighted greed) were finally suspended by two causes:

(1) As the United States insisted upon European interest payments and amortization but refused practically every other means of payment but gold, the American bank vaults became glutted with this precious metal and many European vaults were in serious danger of being emptied altogether. Even the safes of thrifty or over-conservative France, Switzerland and the Netherlands were at various periods dangerously drained. The result was panic.

(2) Europe had not been able to use all the abundant American loans for public works, comprehensive though they were. Some of the American funds, therefore, found their way into the chests of a bellicose nationalist propaganda which asked for the revision of frontiers and managed to create an international fear of new inner and outer complications in Europe, and especially in Germany. Suddenly the American bankers lost their buoyant confidence in Germany's economic future. They withdrew Germany's liquid funds and quickly discovered that the American billions invested in Germany were "frozen" assets which could not be liquidated. Even Dr. Schacht cancelled his previously persistent promises of repayment. The resulting panic was the end of a wonderful period of public works in Europe, the temporary end of those fine European housing achievements from

which America will benefit so greatly, if the depression finally forces her to subsidize her own public works—rather than foreign ones—and to return thereby to the basic conceptions of George Washington and his fellow statesmen who founded the Constitution and the Nation in order to control its resources, and who created national legislation for model city planning.

The great public works Republican Germany achieved with American money in the field of city planning and housing have been given an appreciative treatment of high literary value by the afore-mentioned Jean Giraudoux. (First Chapter, p. 38) This appreciation is interesting for two reasons; firstly, for the vivid description of war-stricken Berlin as it gloriously developed under the policy of the public works instituted; and, secondly, for the French writer's flaming indignation over the failure of victorious France and rich Paris to carry out similar schemes and surpass or at least compete with those of Germany and especially of Berlin. This indignation, of course, must be taken with a grain of salt. It is the patriotic indignation that every patriotic citizen of every country should and will feel about the civic shortcomings of his fatherland. It happens that the author of the present volumes has written in a similar spirit of indignation about Berlin and its civic backwardness. It is true that his criticism was directed especially to the Berlin of pre-War time, while Giraudoux very justly criticizes the post-War development of Paris.

Is it possible to portray adequately those highly exhilarating feelings—the liberation, the admiration for great new achievements, and the disgust for the backwardness of one's less progressive land—those potent emotions aroused by a comparison of the old-fashioned, wild, disorderly growth of certain cities and the amazing new possibilities illustrated in so many well-planned housing developments of post-War time? This has been done very vividly by one of the most sublime writers of modern French literature. Jean Giraudoux has written a comparison between Paris and pre-Hitler Berlin (in the little book "Berlin," which appeared in the collection "Ceinture du Monde," Editions Emile-Paul, Paris, 1932) a few excerpts of which will illustrate the point. Much of what in these passionate sentences refers to Paris does, of course, equally well apply to many sections of

cities in America and Europe, not excluding, to be sure, those of Germany.

"What is there new and instructive for us in Berlin?" Jean Giraudoux asks, and replies: "In the first place there is that which would be sufficient to complete the supreme happiness of our first parents: gardens.

"Berlin is not a city of gardens, it is a garden. All the descendents of the primeval couple are not dwellers in Eden. Berlin contains 272,900 disabled in peace, 63,000 disabled in war, 115,000 backward children, and at least 600,000 vagrants. Nevertheless, it is a garden.

"In France, the mere presence of the usual Frenchman—not to mention architects or contractors—is sufficient to deface a countryside which is naturally beautiful and which has proved its adaptability to every artificial embellishment. In Germany, the presence of man and his house beautifies a countryside which is by nature hideous. There is no modern invention—railroad station, tramway, garage, power-house—the name of which in France does not evoke the idea of squalid neighborhoods forever defiled. In Germany, on the other hand, the words gas, steam, electricity are associated with terms that we employ only to describe parks and gardens. There is no station, no warehouse front, no newspaper printing plant, which cannot be photographed with trees and flowers in the foreground. No city possesses more tramways than Berlin, but they run between trees and over lawns. Each time a person leaves Paris, each time he arrives, his heart is wrung. There is no possibility of reaching or leaving this city, known as the city de luxe, this city of Art, this city of Liberty, without going through a terrible zone of wretchedness, without having one's eyes overwhelmed by everything in bad taste, in pettiness of conception, and in poverty of execution which an irresponsible municipality has been able to accumulate, without having to contemplate, from the last wheat field of Brie to the Louvre, unrelieved by a single refreshing interruption, proofs of a determinism the most hideous and most humiliating to man that a mistaken interpretation of modern life could have created. The word suburb, in German so alive with rich promise, in French is the most terrible term in the vocabulary of ugliness. Berlin lay defeated, desolate, without the

traditions of a great city, in the midst of a plain and marshes. Paris was rich, victorious, no one of its projects realized by its kings or emperors but could have been carried on and enlarged throughout a countryside encircled by chateaux and gardens. Berlin—a black stream, a gutter. Paris—a beautiful river, studded with islands, winding between sloping banks. This advance towards perfection, this search for fresh water, the law of every civilization, for the individual as well as for the state, was for the Parisian of the time of Flaubert or de Maupassant already nearly accomplished. What is left today of these marvellous advantages? On the outskirts of the city, in the zone of wretchedness, even the banks of the beautiful Seine seem to be a no man's land, but an over-populated one, where all the beautiful monuments of the future, schools, libraries, hospitals are barracks; where there is a river with bare shores, reflecting nothing, without borders, the water but mud, the islands evoking only ideas of filth; where the city magistrates, because they heap love and care on the begonias of the Tuileries and the fuchsias of the Luxembourg, are given the right to make an organized drive on every tree, on every green thing for ten miles around and to fill up with reenforced cement every remaining cubic inch of fresh air which ought to be considered more important than any historical monument. Paris, the most beautiful example of conglomerate humanity, is no longer anything but a kind of trap, a noose, from which those who have yielded to her allurements can escape only through cunning. There is not one of its future institutions but is already consecrated to atrophy. No one has been willing to understand that the future city is neither the Carrousel, nor the Arc de Triomphe but is rather Issyles-Moulineau, Asnières, or Pantin, and that the fate of Paris depends upon the fate of each inhabitant of these suburbs, upon his well-being, his happiness, his habits and a normal life. Paris pours out its surplus population all around itself as it pours its surplus refuse over the sewage farms where the enslaved condition of the laborer and the employee is accentuated in all its forms. In Paris the only planned open spaces are the cemeteries, the area of which almost exceeds, even in the city, the area of the parks. Honor to the city which provides more oxygen for its dead than for its children!

"Berlin, on the contrary, gnaws with a jaw of iron into a plain flatter than a looking glass, its only charm being the mirroring of the seasons. The last field of rye and Brandenburg potatoes touches uninterruptedly upon the rhododendrons and the geraniums of the boldest and most elegant of model suburbs. The walls of Berlin are these colored-walled citadels where the meanest worker's dwelling boasts of its bath-tub and its telephone. And in front of these dwellings each year will arise new garden apartments and country houses never so closely built as to exclude large groves of poplars, pines and wild birds. All that reconstruction of the Fatherland which a vanquished generation cannot permit itself has been replaced, awaiting better times, by the reconstruction of its houses. All the orgies of architecture and civic scenery which formerly only victorious kings dared indulge in, this conquered country enjoys by virtue of the victory it has gained in dedicating itself to its democratic and civic life, which is at the moment its only future. An army of talented architects, for example, Peter Behrens, Erich Mendelssohn, Hans Poelzig or Max Taut has found in the heart of Berlin that which our French architects have found only in Morocco in the sand and in the brush: space, poise, liberty. Immense streets unobstructed (the one to Wannsee is paralleled by an auto speedway) present to your view an open, airy city with huge public buildings which, even when imperfect, at least seem to be inspired by the architectural models of the future and not of the past. "The army is a question of barracks," said a German general who had made his corps *un corps d'elite* by giving it ideal quarters with a library and swimming pool. The nation, the German statesman now says, is a question of city planning. From this point of view, Berlin merits the assignment that Germany has given it. A people composed of individuals who have well-poised bodies will have, later, a well-poised civilization. All new Berlin from Lichterfeld to Grunewald is a watering place though it has no particular springs, a seaside resort without the sea. The idea of vacation which for the French bourgeois is squeezed between the heat of July and the rain of September, is in Berlin extended to each day, each hour, and resting three times daily has assumed the charm of wealth, of leisure, and—it is now 1930—of who knows what victory. . . ."

All this was written three years before the Hitlerite or national-socialist revolution, which is considered by many as that "victory" which Giraudoux foretold would come, "sooner or later." Others prefer to believe that this revolution postpones the ultimate "victory" as it postponed further housing reform in Germany. At any rate the national-socialist "revolution" of 1933 does not invalidate Giraudoux's reasoning. He continues: "Finally there is for every Berliner what even in America can be obtained only by the privileged classes: physical culture.

"The most surprising thing in Berlin is the joy with which the people welcome the changes of season. In France, they dread the winter because of the cold, the summer because of the heat and the extremes of climatic changes are regarded as calamities. The entire population of Berlin, on the contrary, rushes out into the frosty weather and into the heat of the dog-days as if to the rarest of pleasures, for the winter brings snow, ice, and the sports that go with them; the summer, open-air bathing, and every season brings the sun. Not a day passes for the Berliner which does not include a bath outdoors or indoors thereby bringing his naked body in contact with air, light and water. . . . Paris is the land of the lone fisherman. Most of the frequenters of the banks of the Seine have no contact with their river except through its fish; they show their love for it chiefly by sprinkling it in the open season, with worms and other bait; they prefer those turns in the river, as does the carp, where the sewers empty and from under their turned down imitation panama hats they present to the Sunday sun scarcely more than a nose, which they bring home reddened and painful. It has never occurred to the municipality of Paris to restrict the banks of its rivers and to regard them as possible municipal bathing beaches, magnificent and free. . . . For the Berliner, on the contrary, water and sun have become necessary nourishment and the beer halls, the restaurants formerly filled with greasy humanity are little by little becoming empty to the advantage of their competitors: the sands of the Havel and the air of the pines.

"This care of the body which certain classes of French people practice in secret as though it were a superstitious task and a

personal ordeal, the German leaders have, on the contrary, done everything to give the character of national public salvation. All the environs of Berlin have been organized for this religion. There is not a wood without its establishment for sun bathing. There is not one of the numerous lakes formed by the Havel between Berlin and Potsdam where the beach is not more commodiously and conveniently arranged than at Deauville. Every afternoon, spring and summer, Berlin swarms out to Wannsee. In 1930 the old establishment was replaced by four model buildings of yellow brick clinging to the edge of the hill, all four topped by a terrace five hundred meters long, intersected by colossal stairways and surrounded by flower beds. On holidays, thirty thousand bathers install themselves for the day on the beach which is cut into patterns to its very edge by the innumerable naked children digging in the sand and forming a lacework of water, shore and infancy.

"The German theoretical mind would not have deserved its reputation if it had not progressed from the passion for seminudity to the complete nude. Wannsee is but the ante-chamber to the colonies where all covering is proscribed. They are numerous. . . . It sometimes happens that all special disfigurements such as pimples, eczema, pock marks, corns become imperceptible to the advantage of the general beauty of the sect and one envisages a white race attaining the natural perfection of the black; deprived of cotton, wool and silk, all these bodies are compelled to clothe themselves in calm tranquillity and silence; when the couples, deposited by automobile, have ascended, clothed and agitated, the forest road to pavilions, and descend naked to the lake, they seem to have abandoned only their disagreements and nervous habits, and the atmosphere is purified because, for the first time in this age, it no longer resounds with coughing, spitting and sneezing. . . . Such is the mission of New Berlin. . . ." [1]

It was perhaps partly for political reasons that the wonderful German achievements were calumniated by Adolf Hitler. But to attempt to vindicate his hyperbolical criticism one may well assume that he was animated by that same patriotic indignation which inspired Giraudoux to criticize Paris (and the author

[1] The translation of these excerpts is made by Dr. Ruth Nanda Anshen.

of the present volume to criticize Berlin). One, very properly, is never quite satisfied even with the finest achievements in his own fatherland. At any rate in his "My Battle," Hitler wrote: "By its mere incapacity to solve the housing problem the so-called 'social' Republic has simply prevented many marriages and has thereby helped prostitution."

## Twentieth Chapter

### FOREIGN EXAMPLES—PARIS

When it comes to housing his workmen, Uncle Sam has, so far, been even less socialistically inclined than his old constitutional daughter, individualistic and capitalistic France. This latter country has spent, from 1922 to the end of 1934, 12.93 billion francs in subsidies for low cost housing, a sum equal to 855 million present American dollars. Of this total only 3.77 billion francs (or 249 million present dollars) were spent in the Region of Paris. This is only about 26 per cent more than what has been spent for the same purpose by the city of Vienna which has less than one half the population and is much poorer than Paris. Most of this Parisian money was wisely expended for homes on comparatively cheap land outside the congested districts, i. e., not in clearing the slums to which in America many social workers would like to give primary attention.

In a certain instance when the French built tenements in the more congested districts, their experience recalls rather curiously the arguments of the Viennese "Christians" and even gives one a taste of the bloody days of the American draft riots of 1863. In Paris, so reported the New York Times of May 3, 1934, "several hundred manifestants, after a meeting at the Joan of Arc City Municipal Apartment, which right-wing leaders say is a revolutionary center, ripped up newly repaired pavements and attempted to build barricades. Police reinforcements again besieged the huge tenement block which served as the red citadel." And the Paris newspaper *Le Matin*, by no means ultra-reactionary, wrote on May 2: "Such barracks as Joan of Arc City should not be permitted inside Paris. Freedom of speech and opinion is well enough but freedom to organize armed rebellions is a wholly different matter and the most severe measures should be taken."

This forcible language recalls the old Parisian billion-dollar slum clearance which has so often been recommended for Ameri-

can imitation. It was initiated eighty-five years ago by Napoleon III, after street fighting in the two thousand-year-old slums of Paris had brought him to power. He then hastened to push expensive streets through the most congested districts of the city—and at that time all Paris was congested. His new street plan was conceived primarily with an eye for the use of artillery in street fighting.

"Napoleon-Haussmann's" openings through central part of old Paris.

With his great street openings Napoleon III intended to "slash the belly of rebellion." But he also stuffed it with more indigestible material. His successors noticed it (even before his grand projects were completely carried out) during the bloody days of the Commune. Napoleon-Haussmann's huge operations did not decentralize congested old Paris. They did not benefit from the example of London and its extensive garden suburbs served by new suburban rapid transit lines. Napoleon III financed his slum-clearance by piling additional stories upon the already over-built areas of his capital. He succeeded in concealing the increased congestion behind the often well designed facades of his new straight avenues. He pursued the dubious policy (which has been followed again, recently, in New York's Knickerbocker Village) that building higher, rather than lower, means wise economy.

This story (with its sad antecedents and finale) has been told in greater detail and with the reproduction of many plans in the volume entitled Civic Art (p. 241 ff.) of this publication. Some facts concerning the social and "labor creating" policy of Napoleon III may here be added. They have become of special interest in the light of the present American efforts to finance such public works as "create labor." Napoleon III had done more than learn the bloody lesson of October 5, 1795, when his "greater" or bloodier uncle had shown that the ever-rebellious old slums of Paris could be disciplined by artillery. In addition to building straight wide streets for efficient gunfire, Napoleon III intended to be a social reformer. His slogan was: "Every Frenchman for whom I secure a comfortable existence is a recruit against Socialism." Napoleon and his faithful assistant, Haussmann, were determined to be far-sighted social planners and providers of great public works as a means of combating socialism.

Although the replanning of Paris, Marseilles and other congested old cities, was the most expensive aspect of their public works, equally as much was spent for roads and railroads, canals, river regulation, ports, etc., and, of course, for armaments. But the dictator spent the billions belonging to his people in such an ill-advised manner that he met with results not bargained for. He thought he was very cunning when he combined his

slum-clearances with the construction of strategic avenues. But his Haussmann in "slashing the ancient belly of revolution" only succeeded in making it fairly easy for the more fortunate republican successors of his beloved emperor to smash the communist revolution which arose from his military defeat of 1870. Haussmann was thus even inadvertently instrumental in bringing about the great defeat which finally ousted his master Napoleon.

These far-reaching and—again today—timely implications of city planning are well illustrated in the letter written to Karl Marx, August 16, 1870, by Friedrich Engels, part of which reads: "Napoleon could never have gone into this war without the chauvinism of the French masses, of the bourgeois, petty bourgeois, peasants, and of the proletariat of the building trades. This proletariat created by Bonaparte in the big cities, the Haussmannian building proletariat, had arisen from the peasant class." The ill-reputed "white blouses" of the Second Empire (today one would probably call them "gray shirts") were ill-educated peasants turned building workers. For a long time they had been the loudest supporters of the French dictator. They frequently had been accused of being bribed supporters of this spendthrift regime. A somewhat similar reproach was reiterated in the United States by some Republicans in their campaign speeches during the Congressional election of 1934. Here the supporters of the Democratic ticket were accused of reaping benefits from President Roosevelt's labor-creating schemes or from other federal subsidies.

If Engels' interpretation of the causes of the Franco-German war should happen to be correct, it may, at some future time, become worth while to ask to what length a leader less peaceful than President Roosevelt might be able to drive the masses dependent upon his labor-creating schemes. The so-called "white shirts" of Napoleon seem to have become, after his fall, the supporters of the "Commune" which the Revolutionary Napoleon so much dreaded. Mark Twain's prophecy that after Haussmann's strategic street openings barricades could not again be built in Paris proved to be incorrect. The Commune did erect barricades. But they could be demolished by the new French republic under Thiers within a week; even if it had to be a week

of ghastly bloodshed. For Marx this was the destruction of his hopes. The artillery of the new French "bourgeois" republic victoriously bombarded the city of Paris which was in the hands of the Communists. Marx asserted that Bismarck gloated over this bombardment of Communistic Paris by the French bourgeois who were backed by the Prussian army lurking nearby.

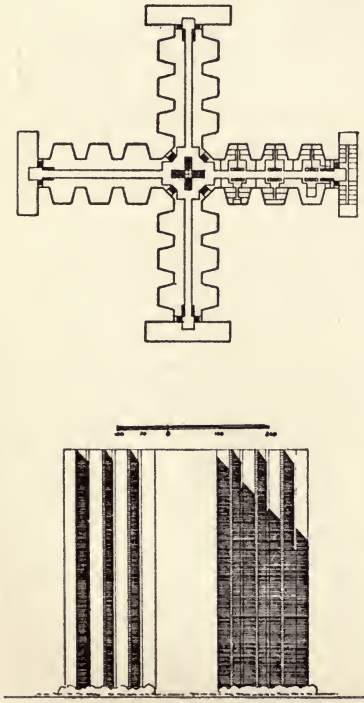
Marx referred to one of Bismarck's earliest and bloodiest speeches delivered twenty years before, soon after the revolution of 1848 had shaken Berlin and the other capitals of Europe. Bismarck had then declared: "If the big cities should dare to rebel again, the real people of Prussia will be able to force them into obedience, even if it should be necessary to wipe the cities off the earth." In 1871, Marx claimed that the German bombardment of Paris appeared to Bismarck as "the first installment of the general annihilation of all big cities he had prayed for." The fact that the workingmen beneficiaries of Napoleon's labor-creating and city-planning policy turned against bourgeois society only after he had led them into a disastrous war proves that Napoleon was by no means entirely wrong when he defended his vast public works by his much repeated phrase: "Every Frenchman for whom I secure a comfortable existence is a recruit against socialism."

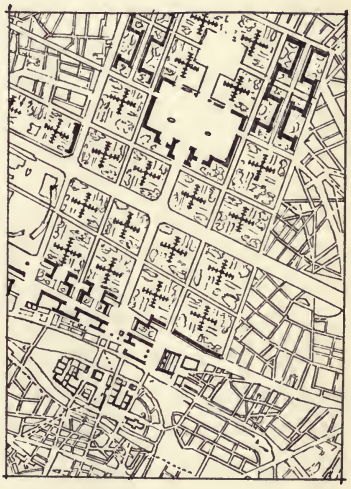
The dangerous policy of Napoleon-Haussmann who thought it well to finance the rebuilding of the congested French cities by increasing land values and the heights of houses has found subsequent imitators. The work of two prominent ones, the American, the late F. F. French, and the Frenchman, Le Corbusier, may be discussed here.

Le Corbusier shares with many thoughtful Frenchmen the deep dissatisfaction about the urban development in post-war Paris. Le Corbusier, therefore, proposed to pull down the city of Paris, or at least large sections of it. He proposed to begin with clearing completely the most congested and very expensive 800 acres in the heart of this city, on the right bank of the Seine River. The area is now covered with buildings from five to seven stories high. The appalling maze of cluttered buildings which now exists there is to be replaced by twenty skyscrapers, each sixty stories high and each one standing in a twenty-five acre garden of which the skyscraper covers only five per cent. Each

tower shall contain working space for some 30,000 to 40,000 people. This proposed occupancy is from two to eight times larger than the population which at present is squeezed into the existing muddle of narrow streets and dark courtyards. Le Corbusier's hope to squeeze into the skyscrapers more than twice as many people as previously lived upon the same area makes him believe that his proposal is economical and apt to be realized in the near future.

The skyscrapers Le Corbusier proposed have a cross shape. The axis of the cross is assumed to be either 500 or 660 feet long. An area of twenty-five acres covered at the rate of five per cent (or 1.25 acres built upon) gives him 50,000 square feet of area, or, in 60 stories, 3,000,000 square feet of floor space (including, however, the areas sacrificed for elevators, stairways, corridors, walls, flues, etc.). In order to accommodate 30,000 workers upon this floor space (as Le Corbusier plans) there can be given a net area of only about seventy-five square feet (or even less) to each worker. This is less than one-half the American stand-





Above: (right), General plan of Le Corbusier's scheme for Paris; (left), Floor plan of individual building.

Below: (left) Elevation, showing parts shadowed.

ard. To arrive at even so low an average Le Corbusier has to work up a rather tortured ground plan. He breaks up the exterior of his buildings by numerous U-shaped courts. Although Le Corbusier thinks this an excellent method of lighting the rooms in his buildings and although he calls his buildings "real radiators of light," more than one-half of his rooms are very badly lighted. Whoever has worked in the lower stories of closely spaced skyscrapers knows that a room in a deep narrow court, even if it does open towards a park on one side, is badly lighted during many hours of the day. When it comes to sunlight in an office it does not matter so much how many feet above the ground this office is located, as to what an extent the sunlight can penetrate into the office unobstructed by walls facing the office or rising at its left and at its right. Le Corbusier's "real radiators of light" are in reality ghastly shafts of about 25 by 35 feet and of a depth of 600 feet. The fact that these shafts are open, on one side, does not make them any the less fantastic.

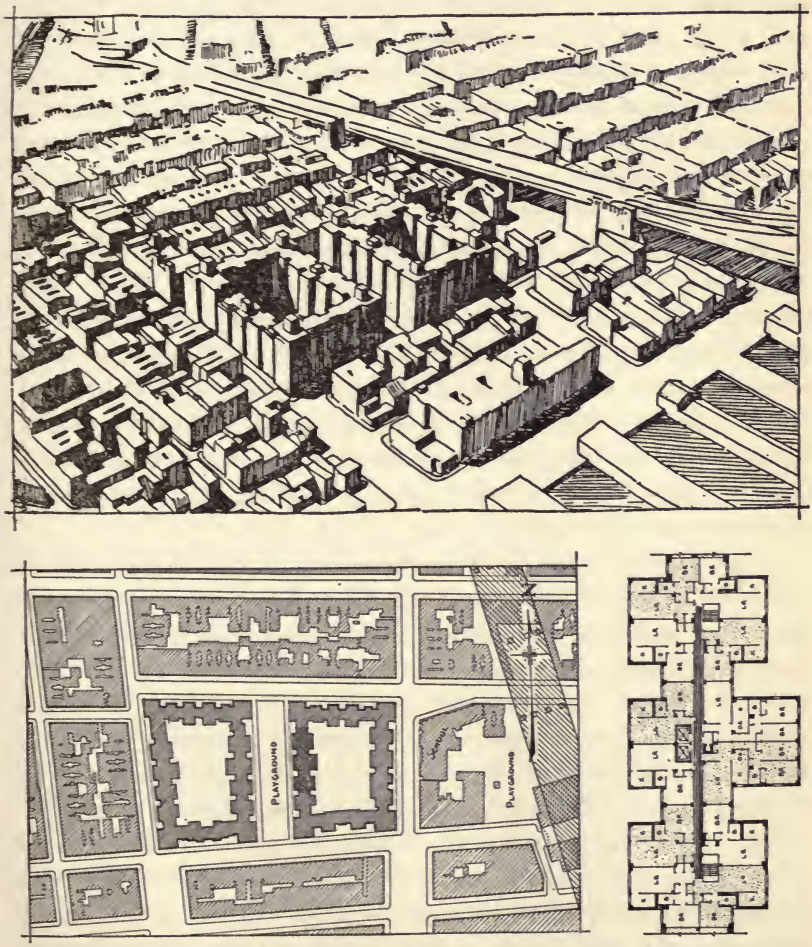
The foregoing facts have been stressed by the author in 1927.[1] Since that time Le Corbusier has publicly admitted (for instance, in his lecture given at Columbia University in November, 1935) that large parts of his proposed towers are badly lighted. He has made new proposals for towers which are much lower (i. e., much less "economical") and which do not suffer from the ugly light shafts of his former plans. After, however, having made all these reasonable concessions, Mr. Le Corbusier calmly proceeded to show lantern slides illustrating his old proposals of badly lighted towers and discussed them as if they could still be taken seriously.

But it is not Le Corbusier alone who thus returned to the obsolete policy of Napoleon and Haussmann who thought it good finance to rebuild congested cities by increasing land values and building heights. This same policy is continuously being revived in the congested sections of New York. The outstanding example is the so-called Knickerbocker Village. It is called village probably because it is no village at all but one of the most congested and tallest conglomerations of dwellings in the world. This unpleasant fact is supposed to be veiled by giving it a name

[1] Cf. The city planning monthly "Städtebau," 1927, p. 69 ff.

suggesting quaintly pleasant and country-like conditions. The Knickerbocker "Village" replaces congested six-storied "tenements" by twelve story "apartments," tripling (with 1047 persons per acre) the former population congestion per acre of this area, and even quadrupling the average residential density of Manhattan Island.

Immediately after the opening of these Knickerbocker Apartments the tenants, dissatisfied by the inefficiency with which the buildings were operated, organized. They staged their first




Knickerbocker "Village" . . . New York (Fred F. French & Co.)
Above: General view.
Below: (left), Plot plan; (right), Detailed apartment plan of shaded part.

strike and refused to pay rent. This strike could be pacified by strategic concessions to the new tenants and by equally strategic evictions or threats of eviction. The strike, however, carried a foreboding of the greater things which may develop if this policy of increasing congestion should be carried further.

The attempt to abolish slums by building higher, instead of lower, is false economy. True, three thousand people paying about four to five dollars a month for their old dilapidated rooms, are being replaced by the inhabitants of 6030 new rooms, costing $12.50 per month per room, in Knickerbocker "Village" and lined up along windowless, long and narrow corridors (4 feet wide and averaging 120 feet in length). (And 800 of these "rooms" are in reality dining alcoves or bathrooms which were permitted to be called "half rooms" in order to secure more government subsidy.) It is also true that in a somewhat similar instance the city authorities can point to a 262 per cent increase in land assessment as a result of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' rehousing scheme in Manhattan with its 112 families per acre (which must not be compared with the London standard of 12 families per acre in public rehousing areas). It is again true that the late Mr. F. F. French, promoter of Knickerbocker Village, claims: "The high cost of land in lower Manhattan does not render slum clearance impracticable . . . the cost of land is rendered less expensive per room by building twelve or sixteen stories on it rather than six."

The weakness of this argument, however, is emphasized by the 1933 report of the New York State Board of Housing: "on land as expensive as $6 a square foot commercial practice cannot produce a cheaper room in a twelve-story building than in a six-story building. In both, only a room rent as high as $18 a month would be remunerative. But under the regulations of the State Housing Law, a room on one-dollar land costs $10.21 in a twelve-story building and only $9.51 in a six-story building." These figures again prove the accuracy of the late Eberstadt's often quoted contentions. This German master in the science of housing has established the fact that the higher a dwelling is the more is it apt to be burdened with unproductive expenses. He has also proved, as has been said before, that the individual two-story row-house is the most economical unit for housing the

masses and for distributing the heavy financial burden connected with a large-scale project.[2]

[2] The First Volume (p. 246) of this publication indicates a similar conclusion reached by the architects, Aronovici, Churchill, Lescaze, Mayer and the late Henry Wright in their illuminating analyses of housing economics in New York.

## Twenty-First Chapter

### POLITICAL ECONOMY IN GERMAN HOUSING

The favorable French opinion of German housing stated in the Nineteenth Chapter is clearly dictated by that noble spirit of national self-criticism which proud and progressive nations relentlessly cultivate (see pp. 262 ff.). In spite of its severity this French estimation contains a degree of truth. These people —and many patriotic Americans will think it even more true of their own countrymen—have, one may say, reposed upon the laurels and other advantages gathered in the World War. In matters of internal reform this War was for some of the victors as dangerous as the victorious Civil War was for the northern States of America.

Germany, on the other hand, during the post-War spell of democratic enthusiasm and social freedom and during the five years (1924 to 1929) of boundless international credit enjoyed by her first Republic spent about 3 billion dollars of the public money, achieving thereby considerable advances in the field of housing, not to mention the great amount of other social architecture (public baths, playgrounds, stadia, hospitals and buildings of labor unions). It would, however, be rash to overestimate these achievements. Not only were they (by 1929) almost entirely discontinued by the anti-democratic propaganda of the Hitlerites, even before this political party actually came into power; not only did the German post-War housing hardly surpass what was being accomplished at the same time in Holland, England, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and probably in other countries; but, most of all, the German accomplishments, notable as they were, were far from what they could have been or from what would have been required in order to prevent the catastrophic reaction brought about by the Hitlerites. To be sure, post-World-War Germany has fought more valiantly for internal reform than the post-Civil-War United States, thereby indicating that the for-

mer enjoyed a spiritual, if not physical victory in the World War. And compared with the inexcusable indifference to (or even obstacles impeding) better housing vouchsafed by the imperial regime in pre-War Germany, the post-War achievements seem almost like miracles. But the final "moral breakdown" (the catastrophe which in the United States has been so eloquently described by Emerson, Henry Adams and James Truslow Adams) occurred in the Germany of 1933 with no less virulence than it did in the America of 1870. And Germany's economic strength was so much inferior to America's inexhaustible economic power that the German collapse could not but be even more severe than the American one two generations earlier.

The breakdown of Germany's morale following her gallant effort in the field of social architecture might well discourage the advocates of comprehensive planning. The German failure requires analysis. What influences invalidated Germany's much vaunted democratic enterprise from its beginning, or during its development, and what sinister agents finally ruined it? Such an analysis may also shed new light on America's great parallel example: the memorable advantages grasped by Lincoln and the opportunities ignored by Grant.

Republican Germany's surprising post-War effort in housing has sometimes been referred to as her "great five-year program" (for instance, by the late Henry Wright in his excellent new book "Rehousing Urban America," p. 96). Such a term is perhaps too complimentary to be applied to Germany. It suggests a more comprehensive effort and greater political wisdom than had actually been brought to the task. The word "five-year plan" suggests the Russian idea of the endeavor to engage the whole nation in a planned campaign for a technical and economic reorganization and regeneration. Such a coordinated effort has been sorely lacking in Germany although nothing short of a successful attempt in this direction could have saved the Socialist and the Catholic masses from the catastrophe of 1933, and could have prevented the victorious re-habilitation of the reactionary Junkers exploiting the industrialists and their numerous unreasoning supporters in the middle classes.

From the very beginning of the Republic and even, previous to it, during the War, promises of better housing and of sub-

sistence homesteads have played prominent roles in the ruthless political campaigns involving such issues as monarchy versus republic, militarism versus pacifism, industrial exploitation versus labor unions. The two outstanding leaders of the ultimately victorious "Third Reich" owe part of their popular appeal to the seductive promises they made at an early date in matters pertaining to housing and real estate. "The fatherland shall help everyone willing to live by honest labor to win a home which is secure from the exploitation of usurers, fit for the sheltering of German family life and for bringing up children healthy in body and mind," the late President Hindenburg wrote during the World War.

And Adolf Hitler, whom the dying Hindenburg entrusted with the execution of his patriotic wishes for Germany's military regeneration, had, even in his official and allegedly "unchangeable" program of 1920 and 1926, promised "a national reform of the laws governing real estate, the creation of a law permitting, for public benefit, the expropriation of real estate without indemnification, the abolition of ground rent and the prohibition of all speculation in real estate."

Such promises were forgotten the moment those who made them came into power. But as they were proclaimed these assurances sounded the historic clarion call of the Roman soil reformers, the Gracchi, of the old German "peasants war," of the American President Jackson, and of the American Freesoilers who, in 1856, formed the nucleus of the new Republican Party and helped ultimately to form the one-third minority that brought the Presidency to Lincoln, the Homestead Act to American settlers, and doom to the landed aristocracy of the South. Nowhere could similar promises have been more sorely needed than in Germany where the "peasants war" (1524–25) during the so-called Reformation had practically restored human chattel-slavery. Its "moral, social and political blessings" have been praised not only in South Carolina, by the "war hawk," John C. Calhoun, but, three centuries earlier, in Germany, by the "reformer," Martin Luther, who enflamed the princes and noblemen of his time to curb the small farmers, ruthlessly and for centuries to come.

Field Marshall Hindenburg had given his soldiers the charm-

ing war-time promise of home-sweet-home in order to please the large and ever active but peaceable group of German "soil reformers" whose leader, Professor Damaschke, soon afterwards was so often referred to as the first candidate for the Presidency of the new German Republic. (This man's death in 1935 has received considerable space in American newspapers.) He had derived much of his pacific inspiration from America, especially from the book "Progress and Poverty" first published in 1879 by the same Henry George whose "livid description of the carking desolation spread under high noon of American prosperity had given no serious qualms to the managers of politics." (Beard)

It was during the World War that the propaganda of the German "soil reformers" became more threatening. They patiently repeated to the suffering soldiers (and to their families) the pathetic appeal made 2050 years earlier by the classic housing reformer, Tiberius Gracchus, to the soldiers of Rome: "The savage beasts have their dens, their places of refuge and repose. But the men who bear arms and offer their lives for the safety of the country, enjoy nothing in it but the air and the light and have no houses and no places of their own where they can settle."

The German reiteration of the old Roman housing propaganda sounded equally as appealing to the socialist privates who daily embraced death in the trenches as to the aristocratic generals who espied it from afar through efficient telescopes and commanded it by long distance telephones. At the same time Lloyd George demanded that England, after the War, be made "fit for heroes to live in" and promised the English soldiers the abolition of the slums from which so many of them came. At least the slums of London were for the most part only one or two stories high and consisted generally of houses lined up along simple lanes, while the tenements built on the highly mortgaged soil of Berlin and of most other German cities were uniformly five stories high and were crowded about dark courtyards. Their victims, therefore, could not even enjoy the "air and the light" conceded as an inalienable right of the poor Roman soldiers who were deprived of land.

One of the curious outgrowths of the World War's "trench spirit" was a new and less tolerant attitude on the part of the soldiers towards the essentials of the life they had left behind

and had indeed never enjoyed. It was commonly and almost seditiously rumored that the bellicose activities in the open had made the common soldier unfit for returning meekly to the German tenements, many of which were worse than the trenches.

The introduction to this book mentions the pre-War housing propaganda relating to the 600,000 Berliners in badly crowded tenements. This propaganda had reached wide divisions of the population and had received special support from the powerful labor unions whose leaders, more far-seeing than many of their American colleagues, recognized how easily workingmen, even with rising wages, can be plundered of their incomes and health by rising rents and bad living quarters. Also, after the War, the Socialist and Catholic labor unions and the different federal, state and municipal governments supported by them, became much more the real agents of housing reform than either Field Marshall Hindenburg and his Nationalist supporters were, or than "Führer" Hitler and his National-Socialists are, although their futile promises of better housing had acquired for *both* these men good electioneering results.

Today, it is generally recognized, even by advocates of mere slum clearance, that housing is by no means a purely municipal matter and simply a cure for urban ills. Housing can be successful only when it is a part of such state planning as is able to generate new life by means of the effective redistribution of crowded industries and suffering agriculture. One must keep this urgent fact in mind when judging the curious events related in the following pages.

The first President of the new German Republic, the Socialist Ebert, died early in 1925, shortly after the inauguration of those energetic, though often haphazard, housing activities by which the Socialist and Catholic governments of Republican Germany achieved so much merit and even greater fame. As a fighter for homesteads, however, this first German President was by no means a worthy imitator of the Roman Gracchi or of such American friends of the small farmer as the "leveler" Jefferson, "Old Hickory" Jackson, or Abraham Lincoln, who succeeded in opening land to city workers willing to farm it. On the contrary, the Socialist Ebert had strong conservative cravings and connived with the army generals and their landholding

Junker friends who, hardly worth a picayune and therefore more rapacious, were the diminutive counterpart of the planting and slave holding aristocracy of the American South. Although Ebert was the representative of the people having small or no means, he unwittingly prepared the political re-establishment of the big landowners. Like the Southern planters before Lincoln's time, the Junkers enjoyed (and still enjoy) the social prestige that indicates power. For many hundreds of years they have known how to exploit every ruler of state for their private ends. They called themselves Nationalists and Patriots and their belligerent propaganda was greatly augmented by the Treaty of Versailles. It was this "peace" Treaty that infuriated the Germans (whom Wilson's "fourteen points" had pacified) against their former enemies who imposed upon them huge indemnifications which could not be paid unless Germany's role in international commerce was magnified on a basis of world-wide free trade. The Treaty of Versailles made no provisions for this.

The War had brought America into the salient economic position formerly held by England. America had become the creditor of all nations. But she was opposed to, or psychologically not yet able to enjoy the privileges inherent in such a position. She refused the foreign goods offered in payment by her debtors. Since, however, in the long run, debts can only be paid by goods, America's refusal to accept them became equal to declaring international default. And since the Treaty of Versailles had commanded Germany's payment of especially large slices of all international debts, America's refusal to accept her goods approximated the enforcement of Germany's default, a position preceded and enlivened by great internal difficulties. Many well-informed Americans agree with the Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace, who often and with due concern has spoken of "the insane spectacle of American tariffs raised in 1922 and again in 1930, in defiance of the inevitable fundamental trend of the American post-War position." [1] Probably no other form of "insanity" since the War has contributed as much to the catastrophic economic depression of 1929 to 1936 and, incidentally, to the political debacle in Germany.

The Versailles Treaty was not more sane than the "insane

[1] Cf. "New Frontiers" by H. A. Wallace (New York, 1934), p. 71.

spectacle" in America. This treaty permitted Germany to return, after 1924, to its pre-War system of high tariffs in favor of the Junkers' landed estates reaping profits from that economic "autarchy" which prepares and invites war.

The new German situation was analogous to the American one under Lincoln except for these two important differences: Firstly: the big planters of the American South found their interest in fighting for free trade, while the would-be big planters of Germany benefited from high tariffs. Secondly: the American planters later found their inspiration in Lincoln and in America's decision to be free, while Germany's aristocratic landowners always remained victorious over the German people cowed by centuries of despotism and military drill. The Junkers have controlled their nation at first through the Prussian kings, later through Hindenburg and, today, they control it through the medium of their even more popular tool, Chancellor Hitler. Only immediately after their defeat in the World War and then only for a short time did the Junkers lose their power.

But even one year before Ebert's death Germany had returned to her pre-War policy of subsidizing the large agrarian estates by rapidly increasing the tariffs on grain at the expense of the industrial laborers in the crowded cities. This was equal to restoring political power to the Junker class and to the rapidly re-arming military caste which is intimately connected with it, both of which have always mastered the war-ridden country. The victory of the Junkers meant death to all hopes for the democratic replanning of Germany and for a truly modern housing policy based upon a wise and expedient redistribution of the population.

Curiously enough this latest restoration of the large agricultural estates took place in contradiction to the ideas of the late von Treitschke, Prussia's most nationalistic historian and statesman in obvious sympathy with the Junker class. When, long before the War, he discussed the fact that about 200,000 Germans yearly left their fatherland and found homes in America, he declared: "Germany is by no means over-populated, especially in her northeastern parts." (These sparsely settled areas are devoid of free peasants and are the very stronghold of the Prussian Junkers.) Treitschke believed that by subdivid-

ing her large agrarian estates Germany could be made to accommodate a population of almost 100 millions. At present she contains only 65 millions; but, nevertheless, the Prussian aristocrats clamor for expansion just as vehemently as their *cousins*, the aristocratic Southerners of the United States formerly did. Both vociferated so loudly that a considerable part of world opinion feels that their demands must have been and must now be justified.

Replanning the nation for a democratic redistribution of landed property, a national rehousing policy and the compulsory abandonment of the ghastly tenements built under Bismarck and the last two Williams would have been an inspiring duty for a German statesman of Gracchian or Lincolnian caliber.

There were powerful national reasons why this duty had to be fulfilled. Many of the large estates were of very low agricultural productivity. The managing efficiency of their aristocratic owners has been unduly praised. Furthermore, small farming of the Danish type would have been more suitable to the changed economic peculiarities of the country. But the strongest reason for the unproductivity of the Junkers was intimately associated with the predatory old mortgage system. It is that same system which during the last hundred and fifty years has been the fearful handicap of German city-building. (This fatal mortgage system which, since the War, has been copied in America and has here brought about dead losses of over ten billion dollars will be discussed in another chapter.) For more than a century the facility of contracting continuously new mortgage debts and paying the interest by a new increase of the tariff on bread made it possible for the economically decaying aristocrats to rival with the rapidly increasing "conspicuous consumption of wealth" (to use Veblen's pointed phrase). The pace for this more and more voracious consumption was set by the big industrialists who on their part yearned to be accepted as social equals by the aristocratic exploiters of the state. For more than a century this highly immoral situation has been the secret of Germany's political and economic tragedies and the grave of her hopes for better planning and housing. "The indispensable effort to rival with the richer bourgeoisie's increasing standard of life has become a disaster for the majority of the landed aris-

tocracy of eastern Germany." So has the immorality of the condition been described by Max Weber, one of the internationally recognized economists of Germany. The situation is aggravated by the fact that these 15,000 "big" landowners are individually only pretentious small fry, approximately one-third of whom own not more than 1250 acres. Therefore "their inherited political power," Max Weber continues, "instead of being established on a broad, secure economic basis, must, on the contrary, be used for obtaining economic advantages. . . . Under such conditions their request for economic protection easily turns into the demand of the dissatisfied recipient of alimonies to which he feels himself entitled." [2]

The large estates could bring adequate financial returns only under the protection of high tariffs ruinous to Germany's industries and to the vast majority of her people. According to leading agricultural scientists many of the big estates could never be made profitable by the present methods and the available hired help. The low-grade agricultural laborers have, in fact, been kept very much in that old serf-like condition which prevailed, such was their status even in law, prior to the time of Napoleon I, who very much against the Junkers' will effectuated at least the beginning of the laborers' legal liberation. And, today, these Prussian farm workers, although not exactly slaves are yet serfs who have not up to the present found a German Lincoln, and who can attain their freedom only by fleeing from the country into the big cities. "The farm laborer knows that as long as the Junkers rule he must give up his home if he wants to be free." (Max Weber) On the other hand, however, only the subdivision of the large estates into small farms and the self-abnegating labor of individual owners with fairly large families could restore real productivity to the soil. The Junkers fight this solution with every method, fair or foul. Indeed, this solution would mean a return to the more intensive procedures and denser population prevalent at the time of the first settlement (i.e., before the year 1400) and before the "noblemen" had plundered and driven away the small farmers

[2] Cf. Max Weber, Entwicklungs-Tendenzen in der Lage der ostelbischen Landarbeiter. (Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung, 1894.)

and had enslaved the few hands which are required for the noblemen's more extensive agricultural pursuits.

Incidentally, a return to the older and denser form of settlement would be the only means of protecting the empty eastern provinces from the ultimate influx of the more democratic Slavic nations who, for political and military reasons, introduced a very compact form of settlement east of the German frontiers. But such truly national considerations were and are of no avail among the Prussian aristocracy which emphasizes its political Nationalism for more practical inducements, i.e., for the tingling of the pecuniary nerve.

To oppose such pseudo-Nationalism by a truly National-Socialist policy of rehousing and resettlement would have been the fighting chance for a democratic German statesman. He could have copied the replanning work of the new Slavic states created near the eastern boundary of Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. These states got rid of their overbearing German aristocracy by distributing the land among many thousands of small Slavic farmers, thus creating a strong national and democratic basis for the new commonwealth. It is perhaps one of the most regrettable facts in the world's social history that the German Socialists were prevented, largely by fallacious socialistic doctrines, from making true social use of their power, when they had it. Immediately after the War they could have followed Lincoln's example and passed a liberal German Homestead Act subdividing the aristocratic estates unfit for economic survival. This is exactly what Hitler, as quoted above, promised, but never did. The Socialists did not enforce the necessary subdivision largely because the "scientific" doctrines of Marx did not demand it. Marx fatalistically believed that the concentration rather than the division of property deserved encouragement. Concentration of property, expropriating the few remaining big owners, would, he believed, lead automatically to the communistic state. The Socialists, furthermore, suffered from the other erroneous belief that technically also the age of big scale agriculture was everywhere at hand and that small farming was an antiquated mode of production. Ideas such as these may to some extent be justified in such countries as America or Russia

where enormous plains and rich soil permit (or rather permitted!) extensive farming. The illusion that the same concepts can, and at once must, be applied to densely populated countries like Germany, Denmark, Holland or France is dangerous. Even in Russia ideas may change. H. G. Wells relates his conversation with Lenin: "We talked chiefly of the necessity of substituting large scale cultivation for peasant cultivation." But on September 10, 1935 the New York Times published Walter Duranty's report: "Soviet Peasants Get Deeds to Land. . . . With a shrewd if somewhat belated recognition of the peasant mentality, such grants are being given sparingly to collectives finishing the harvest sooner and better than schedule and are being made the occasion for public rejoicing with the formal presentation of the grants—and speeches—by important local officials. All Europe knows that the outright ownership of land by the farmers is the surest weapon any regime can have for its own stability. The Bolsheviki have reforged it for the defense of their agrarian socialization, which only three years ago was the cause of much strife and suffering in Russian villages."

The German Socialists had no "shrewd recognition of the peasant mentality." They preferred to build huge model tenements in the big cities; they also tried to win the farmers by burdening the city workers with continuously rising tariffs which, however, were mostly profitable for the Junkers. Thus the peasants were driven into the arms of Hitler who, having received his power from the Junkers, Hindenburg and von Papen, quickly ceased talking about the subdivision of their estates.

A comparison here of three presidents, Washington, Grant and Hindenburg, is significant. What Washington said about his aversion to receiving a "pension" from some powerful economic group has been restated in the First Chapter. Reference has also been made to Grant's rather close proximity to the Erie Railroad scandal and the Gold Conspiracy; but the fact remains that after his presidency he was poor and, only on his deathbed, received a pension from the United States. All German state planning has been deeply influenced by Hindenburg's actions, actions which were diametrically opposed to those of Washington and Grant.

After the death of the pseudo-Socialist Ebert and after Hindenburg's election to the Presidency, the Junkers had pondered in their own way over that classic phrase of the Roman Gracchi which had been used in time of war to win the German soldiers to embrace the idea of homesteads and better housing: "The savage beasts have their dens. . . ." The Junkers asserted that it would be unjust for a Field Marshall who had for four years successfully opposed a peace without annexations (although, incidentally, he had thereby brought about Germany's complete downfall) not to be presented by his grateful nation with a landed estate worthy of his old noble name. The large landowners had always objected to any statesman presiding over them without himself being a landowner. They were accustomed, for almost a thousand years, and it was therefore their god-given right, to be ruled only by big landowners. Knowing well how to hold their own, they prevailed upon the less close-fisted barons of heavy industry, the producers of iron and coal, who in important matters were wont to submit to the Junkers as their traditional and social superiors. Big industry, therefore, bequeathed to President Hindenburg [3] the large agrarian estate of Neudeck. This was one of the cleverest strokes executed by the Junkers during their everlasting management of Germany and her rulers.

[3] Today one can hardly avoid seeing the parallel in the action of President Hindenburg who accepted a gift of a large landed estate offered to him by the Junkers and paid for by big industrialists both strongly imbued with "principles unfriendly to republican government." By this ingenious machination of the Junkers Hindenburg became a Junker himself and was quite rapidly induced to abandon his previous fairly republican attitude and to favor thereafter the reactionary plans of the Junkers. This led to the fall of the parliamentarian ministers, Bruening and Schleicher, who planned to stop subsidizing the parasitic Junkers, and it also led to Hindenburg's delivering the political power to Hitler who pledged that he would not carry out his former program of a democratic land policy of condemning and subdividing the uneconomical estates of the Junkers. Here are the words with which Washington, on the other hand, objected to the gift offered to him: "What would be the opinion of the world when it comes to be related that George Washington has received twenty thousand dollars and five thousand pounds sterling of the public money as an interest therein? . . . . Would it not in some respects be considered in the same light as a pension? . . . . Under whatever pretense, and however customarily these gratuitous gifts are made in other countries, should I not thenceforward be considered as a dependent?" Washington, nevertheless, accepted the gift but immediately bequeathed it to institutions of learning for the perpetration of liberalism. Hindenburg after having accepted the gift did not bequeath it; he had from the beginning accepted it for his son in order to evade the national inheritance tax. But here, as in so many similar cases, the glorious legend is stronger than the sordid facts: Hindenburg is still being celebrated as an unimpeachable nobleman.

From now on, old Hindenburg, who admittedly had never taken an interest in politics, economics, or other non-military matters, suddenly forgot that his last (second) Presidential election was due to the Socialist and Catholic workers. He turned an ardent sympathizer of agrarian interests. He therefore angrily dismissed two chancellors, the "bolshevist," Bruening (a devout Catholic) and the self-styled "social general," Schleicher, both of whom thought it impossible to delay any longer the introduction of a somewhat less anti-social agrarian policy. Bruening and Schleicher favored small settlements and the subdivision of at least those big estates which could not, by any conceivable elevation of protective tariffs, ever be made productive and which depended for their economic salvation entirely upon the continuous renewal of hundreds of millions of state subsidies given to big agriculture (*Osthilfe*). These profuse gifts, in the last analysis, must be paid for out of the taxes collected from industrial laborers in crowded cities. These workers are forced to pay high taxes and high prices, to boot, for their bread, in addition to still being, in many cases, badly housed and prevented (by the lack of an effective homestead act) from returning to the open country of their fathers, from which they had been driven by the Junkers. But the Socialists, at least, have built fine tenements for the upper strata of industrial city workers and have won the admiration of Jean Giraudoux and of many American travelers.

When the Junkers saw their big state subsidies threatened by General Schleicher, they handed the power to Hitler. Having been able to ply honest old Hindenburg, they had no difficulty in picking from Hitler's highly contradictory policies such parts as suited their interest. Those of Hitler's followers who insisted upon the tangible realization of the more popular aspects of his versatile program were shot in the wholesale murder of June 30, 1934. Among them was General von Schleicher, the nobleman who had committed the felony of planning the subdivision of noble estates.

Although the liberal-socialist-Catholic governments (existing from 1919 to 1931) have carried out no comprehensive state planning ideas and have done little towards a rational redistribution of Germany's population, they have, nevertheless, indis-

putably enjoyed international and especially American credit and have caused the erection of 2,510,000 urban dwellings [4] (about 300,000 of which were rehabilitated old ones). And since 1929 (when the belligerent Nationalist propaganda had ruined German credit and had put an end to the previous and continuous inflow of American loans) the pre-Hitler governments discontinued expensive tenement house building (price $2500 per one-family dwelling) and efficiently encouraged the more rational construction of subsistence farms (price $900 per dwelling).

When Hitler's fourth party congress convened, the American newspapers reported (Sept. 5, 1934) the affirmations of superior achievement proclaimed on this solemn occasion by Nazi-officials eager to vindicate their destruction of democratic ideals and self-governing institutions. In the field of housing their contention was:

"Twice as many homes have been constructed during the first six months of 1934 as during the first six months of 1933. The total value of the building materials produced in Germany rose by 1,000,000,000 marks in 1933 and statistics for the first half of 1934 show another increase of 50 per cent."

The validity of dictatorial statistics can seldom be proved. But even if Hitler's housing computations are correct, they may only mean (1) that during the first six months (1933) of his government, building activities were practically at a standstill, partly because (2) the Hitler government, strongly favoring manufacturers and vested interests, permitted the price of building materials to rise. The Nazi government spent 500 million Marks (200 million dollars) for rehabilitation, i.e., for transforming large apartments and large suburban one-family houses into small apartments and small tenements. With such large subsidies some recovery in building activities and in prices of building materials is quite possible. The public money for rehabilitation was largely a subsidy given to the owners of old apartment houses. These owners, in Berlin (as in Vienna), had strongly opposed the socialist housing policies and were, therefore, instrumental in bringing Hitler to power.

Something not quite dissimilar developed in the United States. In 1934, many American advocates of better housing seemed

[4] See Vol. III of this publication.

to be disappointed because instead of the vigorous construction of new dwellings which they had expected from the New Deal, they could discern only some loans for the rehabilitation of old ones. An important difference, however, distinguishes the American from the German situation. In America, about one-half of all families live in their own houses, while Germany by her bureaucratic regulations and stupid exploitation of bad mortgage laws has long ago become a nation of tenement house dwellers. Loans for rehabilitation, therefore, in America are apt to be a fairly democratic matter, while in Germany they are apt to be of benefit first and foremost to the small but influential group of large tenement house owners. Only one per cent of Berlin's inhabitants are owners of houses.

The official newspaper of the Czechoslovakian government (Prager Presse) published, on August 22, 1935, an article entitled "The Crisis in German Housing." In it a leading German official (Staatssekretär Reinhardt) was quoted as saying: "The lack of small dwellings, already very great in 1934, will become even greater in 1935. Soon we will have a general scarcity of lodgings (*allgemeine Wohnungsnot*)." It furthermore reports that the Hitler regime, always bent upon union and coordination, instituted its housing activities by uniting seven existing organizations into a comprehensive "Working Communion for Furthering the Construction of Workingmen's Homes." But the government gave it very little financial support. It was *officially stated*, however, that Germany at present lacks 1,350,000 dwellings, 500,000 of which are "most urgently needed." Since so little construction was actually forthcoming, the favorite plan of "liquidating" the shanty towns (allegedly homes of "communists") surrounding Berlin, had to be abandoned. They "house" 140,000 people in the most primitive manner, although they afford them more sun and air than did the clumsy pre-War tenements of Berlin.

Real improvement in housing is possible only in times of a general rise in employment and wages. Employment and wage statistics are almost identical with housing statistics. Hitler has given new work to all industries which produce war materials, many of them working overtime. And, in spite of reports about the boycott of Germany, she has in 1933 and 1934

doubled her imports of raw materials required for armaments. According to official statistics *(Institute für Konjunktur-Forschung)* the number of those privately employed in Germany during the first Hitler year has risen from 12 millions at the end of 1932 to 13.3 millions at the end of 1933. The industrial workers' hours of work have been increased by an average of 6 per cent. The total sum paid for wages has risen by 3 per cent. Therefore the real wages paid have sunk during Hitler's first year by 13 per cent. Evidently Hitler's destruction of the labor unions was not as much of a boon to the working masses as Hitler's propaganda wishes them to believe. After October 1, 1934, industrial laborers under 25 years of age lost their claim to regular work in their own trades. They now have to abandon their jobs to older, married men who thereby disappear from the lists of the unemployed. The younger men are not granted any dole for unemployment, but are invited to join labor camps where they have to do a kind of forced labor for little more than board and lodging. The housing problem is being solved by the construction of the roughest kind of barracks. Even for those who are maintained in regular work, Hitler's general lowering of wages by 13 per cent must necessarily have a repercussion in their housing. Not all of them can benefit from the satisfactory dwellings provided by the previous liberal-socialist-Catholic governments. Hitler has done much for encouraging new marriages. They require new homes. It may take Hitler's propaganda many years before it will admit the sad effects on popular housing resulting from his rapid destruction of German credit, export and industries.

Only a dictator firmly enthroned over an enslaved nation can make as startling revelations regarding housing as, for example, Mussolini has made. After twelve years of Mussolini's dictatorial achievements, the Herald Tribune, New York, reported on September 8, 1934:

"As part of a general campaign to prevent an exodus of the rural population to the cities, Italy's Fascist government has taken the first steps in a sort of 'New Deal' program designed to relieve unsanitary and often miserable living conditions among large sections of the peasant population dependent on agricultural labor for sustenance . . .

"In accordance with orders of Premier Benito Mussolini, the National Confederation of Agricultural Laborers has completed a statistical survey in which it is shown that more than 6,000,000 persons, or about one-third the total rural population, inhabit houses—often in conditions of unhealthful promiscuity—which should be either demolished or subjected to extensive repairs . . . In an address last March, Premier Mussolini described a 'thirty-year-program' calling for the building of 500,000 new rural houses and the repairing of 930,000 others as one means of combating excessive urbanization . . . Of the 3,479,000 houses which fell within the limits of the survey it was found that 8 per cent, or 276,810, should be classified as absolutely beyond repair, while 21 per cent, or 739,580, needed extensive repairs. Houses in the first category were inhabited by 346,930 families, a total of more than 2,000,000 persons. In other words, a tenth of the entire rural population was found to be living in 'uninhabitable' homes . . . According to France Angelini, national commissar for the confederation making the survey, at least one-third of the Italian rural population is unsatisfactorily housed."

Similar conditions prevail in the rural housing of Germany and of the southern part of the United States, not to speak of the equally unfortunate conditions in most of the obsolete big cities all over the world.

It will be interesting to ascertain whether fascist governments like those of Italy and Germany or democratic governments like those of England and the United States will be the first to stamp out unsatisfactory housing, ruinous equally to the health and to the economy of their respective nations. Figures published by military dictators must be read with suspicion and with extreme caution. This has been again evidenced quite recently by the Italian example.[5] Different contradictory sets of official Italian statistics conclusively prove that the various local unemployment figures are badly tampered with in Rome. And even according to these officially concocted calculations the number of Italian unemployed in 1932 was at least twice what it was in 1922 dur-

[5] See G. Salvemini's article, "Italian Unemployment Statistics" in "Social Research, an International Quarterly," New York, August, 1934. "Even according to the statistics cooked up in Rome, 24 per cent of the total number of workers (in Italian industry and commerce) were unemployed in February, 1932" while in non-Fascist England the much more reliable official figures show at the same time only 17 per cent unemployed.

ing that severe crisis which Mussolini accepted as his justification for destroying the labor unions and the democratic institutions of the State.

Such unemployment as this makes better housing impossible. And even the method, utilized rather recently in Germany and Italy, of relieving unemployment by the feverish and expensive manufacture of armaments is unlikely to cure permanently the inferior housing conditions.

It is now proved that during the first 28 months of Hitler's regime, Germany spent 17 billion marks from ordinary tax receipts, 4.3 billion marks from publicly admitted new loans, 18.3 billion marks from secret new loans (mostly in the form of short term bills of exchange endorsed by the Reichsbank), or a total of 15.8 billion dollars; in other words, 250 per cent of the expenditures made by the French Republic during the same period (50 billion francs yearly).[6] By far the largest part of Germany's secret loans has been used for "labor creating" armaments. This has indeed brought relief to unemployment, but this method of financing can hardly be continued for any length of time. Countries using such methods must, as soon as the lack of funds or inflation stops further unproductive spending, experience great internal suffering or seek refuge in external war. Somehow, nations always find the means with which to finance even the most expensive war—at least for a time. A fraction of the money burned in war could cure all housing ills and, if wisely spent and in proper time, could prevent the necessity of war.

[6] Cf. the article, "Die endgültige Ziffer der Reichs-Ausgaben," by L. Schwarzschild and H. Hermes in "Das Neue Tagebuch," Paris, Sept. 6, 1935.

## Twenty-Second Chapter

## POLITICAL ECONOMY IN AMERICAN HOUSING

### AMERICAN MONEY FINANCED GREAT CITY PLANNING AND HOUSING SCHEMES IN EUROPE.

The first object of a renascent liberalism is education. Its task is to aid in producing the habits of mind and character, the intellectual and moral patterns, that are somewhere nearly even with the actual movements of events. It is the split between the latter as they have externally occurred and the ways of desiring, thinking and of putting emotion and purpose into execution that is the basic cause of present confusion in mind and paralysis in action. The educational task cannot be accomplished merely by working upon men's minds, without action that effects actual change in institutions. The idea that dispositions and attitudes can be altered by merely "moral" means conceived of as something that goes on exclusively inside of persons is itself one of the archaic ideas that must be changed. Thought, desire and purpose exist in a constant give and take of interaction with environing conditions and idealistic concepts. And resolute thought is the first step in that change of action that will itself carry further the needed change in patterns of mind and character.

Because America "boasts itself, with truth, to be the mightiest republic that the world has ever seen," the Republican President, Theodore Roosevelt (April 29, 1903) prophesied that in the field of well-planned public works, the United States "will rise to a position of headship and leadership such as no other nation has ever yet attained. . . . There is no use of a nation claiming to be a great nation, unless it is prepared to play a great part."

The American people have begun to realize that the Democratic "Professor in the White House" was right when, in 1919,

he warned them of a world catastrophe in case America should refuse to assume world "headship and leadership."

The aftermath of the World War compels the American people to fulfill the prophesies of their Republican President. The depression existing since 1929 can be overcome only by a new demonstration of the American "Pioneer Spirit," which, according to Theodore Roosevelt, is the truest and most practical "Spirit of American Government."

The American people of 1936 desire the resuscitated activity of the old pioneer spirit. Common sense and the power of *practical* thinking makes something of a pioneer and an engineer of every good American. The sense of common decency inherent in this engineering spirit is insulted by the ludicrous technical inefficiency of those "realtors" who use their political power only to imprison millions of their brethren in shameful dwellings.

Very appropriately Theodore Roosevelt further insisted: "A century and a quarter ago when there were no big cities, no factories, no mines, no railroads, when the normal relations of capitalists and laborers were those of employers and the hired help, you didn't need legislation to secure the rights of the employee."

It was indeed long after the framing of the Constitution that crowded slums for the employees and rapidly widening blighted areas became the plight of all American cities. And (as has been shown here) this was caused not by deficiencies in the Constitution, but by contempt of its spirit. It may be restated here that the legislation created by the framers of the Constitution made provision for city planning of the finest type. "As to the federal city, it is not to be denied that this was a favorite of the illustrious Washington. But it is no less certain that it was warmly patronized by Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison and the great majority of the members who at the time composed the opposition in Congress, and who are now influential in the anti-federal party." (Alexander Hamilton, Works, ed. H. C. Lodge, Vol. VIII, p. 232.)

It has also been shown here that George Washington not only secured the best city plan available, but that he also proved to be a great empire planner and wished his city to become the keystone of that comprehensive system of waterways by which

he planned to unify the growing nation and to connect the immense valleys of the Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri, Hudson, and Mohawk with the Potomac. This was the very plan that brought forth the American Constitution. There exists, therefore, no constitutional or historical excuse for urban crowding and for avoiding, today, effective legislation which will safeguard ample space, sun, light and satisfactory working conditions for all American city dwellers, at least one-third of whom are now crowded into unhealthy tenements. In justice did Theodore Roosevelt continue his argument in favor of adequate legislation for the modern employee:

"Now such legislation is imperatively necessary. To give such legislation is not to work a revolution in the Constitution; it is simply to *carry out the purpose of the Constitution* by facing the fact that new needs exist and that new methods must be devised for reaching these new needs. It would be entirely wrong for us as a nation or for us as individuals to neglect our self-interest. Until a man can pull his own weight he can't help anyone else pull anything. I have no use at all for the type of reformer who seeks to have everybody do something for somebody else before the individual is able to do anything for himself."

Benjamin Franklin's expression of the same idea was: "It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright."

Not charity but a chance! This fundamental American requirement underlies all planning for the wise use of the national resources and for public works as an emergency measure to counteract the slack in employment.

At present the American people are forced to live up to the expectations of their last popular President from the Republican ranks by making expenditures for public works and relief at the rate of several billions a year. And this national expenditure for public works, relief, etc. has proved to be far from sufficient, i.e., far too small to make up for the much larger sum of missing billions which private enterprise (ashamed of its recent mismanagement) is still withholding from the work the nation must perform. The nationwide unemployment affords us an opportunity to fulfill, in a much broader way, Theodore Roosevelt's inspiring promise.

Needless to say, in the fight against unemployment, this en-

terprising statesman was also a leader. He demanded (January 26, 1915) that "the national government should at once start work through the Reclamation Service and through the River and Harbor Service in such ways as to relieve unemployment." Quite in the vein of George Washington he asked for "a permanent labor policy," "a great scheme of flood control in the Mississippi basin, including the Ohio and Missouri, at the mouth of the Columbia, and in connection with Boston Harbor and the Hudson." Subsequent presidents, like F. D. Roosevelt, have tried to reap for the nation the harvest sown by Theodore Roosevelt and to bring to a tangible realization his suggestions.

Whoever is unwilling to trust the recommendations of so practical a politician and successful a statesman as Theodore Roosevelt, may prefer to accept the advice of as practical a business man as Henry Ford who for many years was a national idol and who, in 1935, was again mentioned as a desirable Republican candidate for the national Presidency. As a true American he seems to have a strong appreciation of the old American tradition in public works as a necessary objective in national planning. In his book "Ford Ideals" (1922), the world's most successful automobile manufacturer republished his article, "The Army is Never Laid Off," which appeared in his Dearborn newspaper immediately after the World War.

"During this war," Henry Ford here says, "it has happened, as it sometimes does in industry, that there is nothing for an army to do in the task it was organized for. We have seen whole winters pass with nothing special for the armies to do. Did the government lay the men off and stop their pay, saying, 'Come back when the fighting opens up again and we'll put you on the payroll?' No. The Government felt itself under obligation to keep that army intact and in good trim. Where is the difference between our fighting armies and the armies of peace—our great industrial army? There are about twenty millions of men engaged in the industrial maintenance of the United States. They are our great standing army of production. . . . We are ready for business. But suppose business isn't here. Are we to sit down and wait? Is there nothing for us to do? It is not the American way to sit down and wait. If not enough is doing, we must start something."

Henry Ford himself controls a "great standing army of production." The Russian dictator Stalin, in a perhaps somewhat unfriendly manner, observed that "Henry Ford unquestionably is a capable organizer, but one who throws his workers into the street when it serves his interests to do so." [1] But the above quotation from Henry Ford's article ought to leave no doubt in one's mind as to his eagerness to see the federal government "start something," even when his own starters have proved inefficient.

There are numberless ways "to take up the slack in employment," says Henry Ford, and continues: "For the cost of a month of war we could make such public improvements in this land as would be worth most of the territory involved in the war. . . . There are any number of things waiting to be done which will bring fabulous benefits to our country if we would only turn out to do them. And they are the very things which must be done if American business is not to burst its already tight bounds."

Thereupon Henry Ford made an observation pertaining to war debts and the financing of public works of revealing significance:

"Somebody may ask where the money (to bring fabulous benefits to our country) would come from. That is easiest of all. If it were a shortage of men or food that confronted us, it would be serious; but money is the cheapest thing there is. All the money we spent on the war is here now. It is only (!) the material that is gone. The war is paid for, so far as money for its support is concerned. Every man who contributed a bushel of grain, a ton of material, or a day of labor to that great enterprise has been paid. All the borrowing we did, we borrowed from ourselves, and we spent it among ourselves. All the money we lent, or the larger part of it, was spent here among us."

To appreciate the poignancy of Mr. Ford's observation, one may compare it with the following statement taken from the Annual Report of the Comptroller of the Currency (66th Congress of the United States, Dec. 6, 1920, Vol. 1, p. 2, etc.): "It has been estimated that the profits and increments accruing

[1] Stalin said this in his interview with H. G. Wells; see N. Y. Herald Tribune, Oct. 9, 1934.

to the people of this country during the last year of the war amounted, approximately, to 50 billions of dollars; and that the surplus income over and above the living expenses of the people, despite the extravagant rate at which they were living, approximated 15 billion dollars for that year."

Out of these enormous war profits and the more or less fictitious war debts so pointedly alluded to by Henry Ford, developed the big loans granted by the United States after the war to foreign countries, those very loans which became so important a cause of the large public works achieved, not in America, but in Europe, between the years 1920 and 1930. This period affords one an idea of the preponderant role which public works, city planning and, today especially, housing, may and, according to Washington and Jefferson, should play in all the world's politics.

If Henry Ford's opinion on war debts, as quoted above, can be relied upon, it would seem almost evident that the demand of the United States for European repayment of "all the money lent and spent here" during the War was uncalled-for. At any rate, this repayment became doubtful long ago and, today, is generally considered to be improbable. Rather than lose these loans entirely (and in order to preserve at least the semblance of receiving some return) the American bankers preferred to pay (i.e., with "other American people's money") the interest on them and send billions of new loans abroad. Thus the American bankers seem to have hoped to create prosperity in Europe and the economic ability for repayment. And thus, also, the United States created the economic basis for much or most of the public or semi-public housing abroad, referred to in previous Chapters and illustrated in the accompanying Atlas. American money has not been directly given for housing; but it has indirectly benefited housing. About the large German portion of the American loans going to Europe, the much-quoted President of the Reichsbank and Minister of Economics, Dr. Schacht, wrote in his book "The Stabilization of the Mark" (1926):

"These foreign credits have been used extensively to bring the producing plant of Germany up to date, to make good the defects arising out of the isolation of the war and inflation periods and to further the process of 'rationalization.' . . .

For a long time ahead Germany will not be able to dispense with foreign credits. . . . Germany will never be guilty of betraying the confidence foreigners have placed in her economic capacity."

This optimism later proved to be sadly unwarranted. Under Schacht's leadership the effective "rationalization" of Germany's industry was directed to serve almost exclusively and at high speed Germany's colossal re-arming activities which are paid for, in the last analysis, by American workingmen compelled to live in slums!

At any rate, the United States' amazing creative power which was conducive to European "rationalization," public works, and the housing of German munition workers may be considered very auspicious. It offers the hope that someday, and that perhaps soon, the United States will find it less disappointing and more advantageous to spend her large pecuniary riches for public works, housing and city planning *at home.* However reluctantly, Uncle Sam may be forced into and may succeed in finding methods of gradually habituating himself to the benefit his own countrymen may derive from his capacity to sow the surplus funds available at the rate of about 12 billion dollars a year. This threatening change of habit may not only interfere with America's economic prejudices, but, so Mr. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, fears, may even ruin her constitutional traditions and cause democracy to be replaced by dictatorship. Fortunately this fear appears to be unfounded when one remembers that national planning for public works—amply indicated above—is one of the basic conceptions of the American Constitution well able to be revived. A departure, therefore, in the direction of wisely planned public works may have, not a destructive, but a truly regenerating influence upon American politics. Such a departure may protect the American government from certain defects in the "spoils system" and in the "boom system" and may save her from again becoming the victim of "robber barons." Thus a more wisely planned economy, instead of ruining America and her political ideals, may even secure the more adequate fulfillment of well-being among those for whom Lincoln wished "the greatest good to the greatest number."

Some reference has already been made to this suicidal policy

of American saviours and capitalists, who practically forced European countries to build modern, state-supported, low-cost housing for their workingmen. Thus, Americans thought they could preserve one of their old ideals which, however, has here been proved to be neither old nor indigenously American, but rather English and contradictory to the essential contributions made by America to the constitutional and sociological thought of the world. It may be restated that *before* the war America was a great debtor nation and was, therefore, forced to export great quantities of goods (export always being the only means of paying the interest on foreign debts). When, after the war, however, all the world owed money to her, America asked for the impossible; she wished at one and the same time (1) to continue her large exports of American goods and to receive cash payments therefor, instead of distributing these goods in the form of higher wages (permitting better housing, etc.) and shorter working hours among those millions of Americans who were and still are in need of such relief; (2) America wanted, furthermore, to receive large payments for the interest and repayment of the loans she had granted to foreign countries; (3) America wished to refuse most foreign goods (except gold) in payment for her foreign exports and loans, although the acceptance and wise distribution of the foreign goods proffered could have greatly improved the standard of living for millions of needy Americans.

The United States Ambassador to Germany, William E. Dodd, characterized the American attitude in the following words: "Industrialists in the United States forced through Congress in 1923 and 1930 tariff acts that practically closed American markets to the debtor countries. Simultaneously the same men demanded payment of $11,000,000,000 of war debts in gold —at a time when there was hardly that much free gold in the world and when $4,000,000,000 of this precious metal was already in the United States. The protectionists thus injured themselves and prevented the payment of the allied debts." (See New York Times, September 10, 1934.)

In short, in her supreme economic superiority, America surprised the world by demands which were not more consistent than would be the invitation extended by the mighty owner of a pistol urging a weaker brother to simultaneously hold up his

hands and hand over his money. As has been pointed out, the United States' contradictory attitude culminated in her paying out of her own pocket for most of the goods she insisted upon exporting to other countries.

Furthermore, by her contradictory attitude the United States inadvertently placed herself in dangerous opposition to the system of privately controlled capitalism. By January 1, 1931, the United States' private long term investments abroad amounted to 15.17 billion dollars. The interest on this investment could have well been paid by the foreign borrowers if America had been willing to accept from them annually the equivalent of approximately 800 million dollars more goods than she exported to them. Instead of accepting this necessary excess of imports over exports, she herself, from 1919 to 1930, exported an excess averaging annually more than 1.2 billion dollars. In the form of unpaid exports and of interest payments due but not paid to American creditors, the United States, therefore, bestowed upon foreign countries, practically free of charge, values to the amount of approximately 2 billion dollars annually. If efficient salesmanship had been able to deflect one-half or all of these yearly foreign investments (largely lost today) into American housing, it would have been possible to build annually from 250,000 to 500,000 new American homes at $4,000 a piece. From 1919 to 1930—this would have meant from three to six million new homes, or the adequate rehousing of most of those 30 to 40 million Americans who today live in rural or urban slums.

Instead of rebuilding "the national House" and realizing Lincoln's ideal of "making there the homes of a free and happy people" (March 6, 1860), instead of fulfilling what Lincoln called "the duty of that (Republican) party to attend to all the affairs of national housekeeping"—in short, instead of evincing statesmanlike imagination and constructive powers, the American leaders of business threw away 15 billions of dollars in preference to giving the American workers better pay, a little more freedom and the chance to spend at least part of the available billions for better homes in their own land. Such a state of affairs seems so criminal that one must hope it was only a manifestation of

stupidity (although this is even worse). The American capitalists did not even realize that they were digging their own graves and destroying for capitalism the chance for survival.

They did not realize that in forbidding the ingress of foreign goods by prohibitive tariffs a creditor nation directly opposes private capitalism and contradicts those capitalistic conceptions previously demonstrated by England, the godmother of capitalism. When England, in pre-War time, was the great creditor nation of the world, she fostered private capitalism everywhere by giving in all her markets a fair chance to the efficient private capitalistic producers of all countries. She never forgot the essential fact that in order to be a great creditor one must be a free trader or else be satisfied with receiving no payments.

This latter alternative was selected by the American Republic and her bankers. In making this choice they showed a gratifying and helpful preference for America's youngest sister republic, socialist Germany, and made it possible for her not only to pay annually to the "allies" (with one-half of the yearly American loans she received) her huge war "indemnities," but also (with the other half) to "rationalize" her industry and to institute respectable schemes of state socialism and engage in those impressive housing and city-planning activities previously described. With American help, the efficient German Republic, between 1923 and 1931, carried out many of those ideas of public works the execution of which had been denied to America by her curiously uninspired leaders during the long years preceding President Hoover's belated conversion.

It was only after the black Friday of 1929—i. e., it was too late—when President Hoover urged the state governors to cooperate in an extension of public works which would ameliorate the slack in employment. Or, as the astute Stuart Chase put it: "Mr. Hoover threw billions of government dollars under tottering banks, railroads and insurance companies. . . . He sought to preserve economic individualism by two billion dollars worth of socialism." ("The Economy of Abundance," p. 305.)

This was as yet by no means the end of disappointments for American housing reformers. The construction of suburban communities on a large scale was one of the original New Deal

plans for recovery, but failed to be adopted in March and April, 1933. (This measure, however, has subsequently become one of the major policies of the Administration.)

Remembering the prodigious sums the United States expended for German housing, the plans made in Washington for housing the American nation do not seem rash or impossible. On the contrary, sincere critics blame only the dilatoriness with which the Federal Housing Administration in October, 1934, announced its intention to build three million new homes and renovate many old ones. (See N. Y. Times, Oct. 7, section 8, p. 2.) Also Secretary Ickes' proposal to spend, over a period of five years, $5 billion of the Public Works Administration funds on housing for low-income groups, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration's (under Harry L. Hopkins) proposal to spend $9 billion on subsistence homesteads, or the proposal of H. I. Harriman (president of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States) to bring private enterprise to build 750,000 homes yearly over a period of ten years and at a total capital outlay of $15 billion—these and many similar private proposals only approximately indicate what is possible and necessary.

## Twenty-Third Chapter

### SLUM FIRES

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" *Jesus Christ* (St. Luke, 12, 49)

The growing number of slum fires in New York and other cities begins to awaken the public conscience to the slowness and cruelty of this method of slum clearance. In his moving radio talks the chairman of the New York Housing Authority, Hon. Langdon W. Post, has told us that "last year, here in the city of New York, 81 men, women and children were burned to death. Yes, burned to death, in tenement house fires, in slum fires. Eighty-one of our fellow citizens burned to death because, through no fault of their own, they were compelled to live in slum fire traps." (April 26, 1935.) In the same address we were again informed that "more than a million and a half people in the city of New York live in houses which are unfit for human habitation. These slums of ours are not isolated social cancer spots. The slums and blighted areas of our city extend from Coney Island up to the furthermost reaches of the Bronx." How shall we get rid of this plight?

We are not yet as fortunate as the people described by H. G. Wells in his great story on replanning England: "In the Days of the Comet." These reformed Englanders knew how to use fire, in a much more clement, intelligent and efficient manner, for the purpose of ridding their country of the slum disease. Wells' memorable novel offered, in 1906, a ten-year plan for a whole country's systematic reconstruction, an idea which could be practically approached only thirty years later when the first "five-year-plan" was undertaken in Russia. Wells anticipated, by twenty-nine years and on an even larger scale, the ten-year program submitted (on October 20, 1935) to the Mayor of New York by his special commissioner, Nathan Straus, who restated

"the fact that 1,500,000 people in this city are forced to live in crime-fostering and disease-breeding tenements" and the other "fact that New York City still has buildings built before 1879 which contain more than 250,000 rooms without windows to the outer air." Commissioner Straus justly criticized New York City's housing policy, because in view of such appalling facts it has since 1920 issued $190,000,000 in the form of tax exemption as a subsidy for building up new slums, "a subsidy used to line the pockets of speculative builders who have disfigured great portions of our city with shoddy, ill-designed, ramshackle buildings without central plan, without adequate space for recreation and with no thought of anything except profit to the individual engaged in the building operations."

What the Mayor's Commissioner criticizes as New York's "piecemeal slum clearance, without a comprehensive plan or purpose" is most inefficiently and cruelly helped along by the occasional burning of fire-traps. All this is a pitiful contrast to the inspiring tale of strong, planful and fiery action visualized by Wells. After his amazing comet had struck our world and provided it with a new respirable gas healing for nerve and brain, renewing all men and giving them what they needed most: common sense; after this great feat had been achieved, people no longer had any doubts in their minds as to "the public nature of the housing duty." "Until schemes of work were made out, almost every one was going to school again to get as much technical training as they could against the demands of the huge enterprise of reconstruction that was now beginning." Until the huge enterprise could be started the finest residences in the country were "taken over . . . to make communal dining-rooms and so forth—their kitchens were conveniently large—and pleasant places for the old people of over sixty whose time of ease had come, and for such like public uses. . . . About these 'great houses' there had usually been good out-buildings, laundries, married servants' quarters, stabling, dairies, and the like, suitably masked by trees. We turned these into homes, and to them we added first tents and wood chalets and afterwards quadrangular residential buildings. . . . Nearly all the other communes that sprang up all over the pleasant parkland round the industrial valley of the Four Towns, as the workers moved out,

came to us to study the architecture of the residental squares and quadrangles with which we had replaced the back streets between the 'great houses' and the ecclesiastical residences about the cathedral, and the way in which we had adapted all these buildings to our new social needs. Some claimed to have improved on us."

After the workers had moved out of the squalid industrial towns, industry could be reorganized on a new scale. "Now that we had got all the homes and schools and all the softness of life away from our coal and iron ore and clay, now that a thousand obstructive 'rights' and timidities had been swept aside, we could let ourselves go, we merged this enterprise with that, cut across this or that anciently obstructive piece of private land, joined and separated, effected gigantic consolidations and gigantic economies."

Then came "the May-day in the Year of Scaffolding. It was the first of the ten great rubbish burnings that opened the new age. Young people nowadays can scarcely hope to imagine the enormous quantities of pure litter and useless accumulation with which we had to deal; had we not set aside a special day and season, the whole world would have been an incessant reek of small fires; and it was, I think, a happy idea to revive this ancient festival of the May and November burnings. It was inevitable that the old idea of purification should revive with the name, it was felt to be a burning of other than material encumbrances, innumerable quasi-spiritual things, deeds, documents, debts, vindictive records, went up in those great flares. People passed praying between the fires. . . . Endless were the things we had to destroy in those great purgings. First, there were nearly all the houses and buildings of the old time. In the end we did not save in England one building in five thousand that was standing when the comet came. Year by year, as we made our homes afresh in accordance with the saner needs of our new social families, we swept away more and more of those horrible structures, the ancient residential houses, hastily built, without imagination, without beauty, without common honesty, without even comfort or convenience, in which the early twentieth century had sheltered itself, until scarcely one remained; we saved nothing but what was beautiful or interesting out of all their gaunt and

melancholy abundance. The actual houses, of course, we could not drag to our fires, but we brought all their ill-fitting deal doors, their dreadful window sashes, their servant-tormenting staircases, their dank, dark cupboards, the verminous papers from their scaly walls, their dust and dirt-sodden carpets, their ill-designed and yet pretentious tables and chairs, sideboards and chests of drawers, the old dirt-saturated books, their ornaments —their dirty, decayed, and altogether painful ornaments. We burned them all. The paint-plastered woodwork, with coat above coat of nasty paint, that in particular blazed finely . . . thank Heaven! there is nothing in life now to convey the peculiar dinginess of it all. . . . We burned and destroyed most of our private buildings and all the woodwork, all our furniture, except a few score thousand pieces of distinct and intentional beauty, from which our present forms have developed, nearly all our hangings and carpets, and also we destroyed almost every scrap of old-world clothing. Only a few carefully disinfected types and vestiges of that remain now in our museums. . . . Most of our public buildings we destroyed and burned as we reshaped our plan of habitation, our theatre sheds, our banks, and inconvenient business warrens, our factories (these in the first year of all), and all the 'unmeaning repetition' of silly little sham Gothic churches and meeting-houses, mean looking shells of stone and mortar without love, invention, or any beauty at all in them, that men had thrust into the face of their sweated God, even as they thrust cheap food into the mouths of their sweated workers; all these we also swept away in the course of that first decade. . . . Then also there was a great harvest of fences, notice boards, hoardings, ugly sheds, all the corrugated iron in the world, and everything that was smeared with tar, all our gas works and petroleum stores, all our horse vehicles and vans and lorries had to be erased. . . . But I have said enough now perhaps to give some idea of the bulk and quality of our great bonfires, our burnings up, our meltings down, our toil of sheer wreckage, over and above the constructive effort, in those early years. But these were the coarse material bases of the Phoenix fires of the world. These were but the outward and visible signs of the innumerable claims, rights, adhesions, debts, bills, deeds, and charters that were cast upon the fires; a vast accumulation of

insignia and uniforms neither curious enough nor beautiful enough to preserve, went to swell the blaze, and all (saving a few truly glorious trophies and memories) of our symbols, our apparatus and material of war. Then innumerable triumphs of our old, bastard, half-commercial fine-art were presently condemned, great oil paintings, done to please the half-educated middle-class, glared for a moment and were gone, Academy marbles crumbled to useful lime, a gross multitude of silly statuettes and decorative crockery, and hangings, and embroideries, and bad music, and musical instruments shared this fate."

When this utopia of Wells' was first published (in 1906) it must have appeared much more fantastic than it turned out to be, when after the World War and after the Revolution of 1918 in Germany the so-called financial "inflation," as efficiently as any fire from heaven could have done, actually wiped out "innumerable quasi-spiritual things, deeds, debts, vindictive records" and, most of all, produced the "destruction of fictitious land values" as was demanded, for America, by Henry Ford. This magic "inflation" wiped out the hard earned or ill-gotten savings of millions of families. It transformed an urban mortgage debt of about ten billion dollars into an obligation that one single gold dollar could have repaid. In other words, this magic stroke had for 60 million Germans comparatively even more catastrophic results than the "depression" after 1929 had for 120 million Americans. The latter wiped out only eight billion dollars worth of "guaranteed" mortgage bonds and, perhaps only temporarily, invalidated another eight billion of America's urban mortgage debt totaling thirty-five billion dollars. It was this tremendous economic and spiritual German earthquake that, as efficiently as any miraculous comet could have done, prepared the clean foundations upon which, with the indirect but powerful assistence of irrepayable American loans (or grants), those new German housing activities that have become the object of international admiration could be effectuated.

However, even this tremendous cultural advance of the German (pre-Hitler) republic was by no means so sweeping that the desirable utopia of Wells', the systematic and rapid destruction of all obsolete and undesirable buildings, furniture, etc. could have been realized on a comprehensive scale. During the long

years of the War, destruction on the biggest and most expensive scale ever conceived had, indeed, been carried on, but it had been directed mainly against human life and, when it attacked buildings, it devastated indiscriminately the worst slums and the finest cathedrals or residences. The billions spent so destructively and on such an unprecedented scale resulted in little that was permanently useful. Among other calamities this fierce wasting of productive power produced a severe housing shortage. Therefore, after the War, while 2,500,000 of the most modern dwellings were erected for the masses, even greater masses were compelled to remain in those old obsolete tenements which should have been destroyed, or they had to live in the new shanty towns that in post-War Germany were less rigidly forbidden than before. The same thing was experienced in Russia, where the great efforts to house the masses, efforts made under the first and second five-year plans, could not prevent millions from still being forced to live in very crowded and undesirable old houses or in pitiful new dugouts.

We may safely assume that in America also even the most optimistic and best supported of reconstruction plans would have to proceed fairly slowly with the pulling or burning down of the huge American slums which in any case will remain, at least for another five or ten years, the shameful monuments of the senile blindness with which one of the most advanced nations has employed, for a whole century, good money for producing in a reactionary manner utterly backward and undesirable goods requiring speedy destruction.

If the slum fires, which in New York are occasionally and much too slowly permitted to burn down the "firetraps," were started systematically, as had been planned for England by H. G. Wells, in order to liberate the unfortunate inhabitants of New York (instead of permitting them to be burned alive), the conflagration would have to be much greater than the one emperor Nero is reported to have started in order to rid Rome of its historic slums. Imperial Rome, at its period of most intense crowding, probably never had more than one million people. In New York City, on the other hand, as has been mentioned before, "more than a million and a half people live in houses which are unfit for human habitation. These slums of ours are

not isolated social cancer spots. The slums and blighted areas of our city extend from Coney Island up to the furthermost reaches of the Bronx." (Langdon W. Post) What a gigantic bonfire! And how suitable for a nation large sections of which were so aptly described as having "manifestly no other solicitudes, just burning to live and living to burn!" (Cf. H. G. Wells, Social Forces in England and America, p. 351.)

Before the destruction of these enormous agglomerations of bad housing can be undertaken on a large scale, even larger scale housing operations will have to be carried on for at least five years in order to supply decent homes for the millions who must be liberated from the degenerating prison-life in slums and blighted districts.

## Twenty-Fourth Chapter

### IMMEDIATE NECESSITIES IN PLANNING AND HOUSING

The question as to the most desirable character of the most urgently required new housing activities has been discussed by numerous bodies and agents. The details of this discussion are less interesting than is the imperative problem of securing a speedy start. The field to be covered is so enormous that the unavoidable initial mistakes will be comparatively harmless. Experience in the most efficient methods of producing rapidly, in the United States, the most desirable, economic and altogether popular types of new dwellings, residential groupings and industrial nighborhoods can and must be acquired while instituting and accelerating the nation-wide reconstruction. An excellent start had been made by some of the War housing activities and, subsequently, by the work of the late Henry Wright, Clarence Stein and other "social" architects in such developments as Sunnyside, L. I.; Radburn, N. J.; Chatham Village, Pittsburgh; and in other developments illustrated in Henry Wright's new book "Rehousing Urban America" (1935). Another and very important departure was started in the fall of 1935 by the Resettlement Administration under Professor Tugwell (although the twenty new suburban communities which were to have been started in September, 1935, had dwindled down to four by October of the same year).[1]

Among the general rules to be observed in all new planning and housing work the following are probably the most important:

(1) All new housing must closely correspond to a reasonable (state and national) plan for an efficient relocation of industry avoiding the huge unnecessary expenses connected with the present, often accidental or routine crowding of industries in congested neighborhoods. New housing supported by public money is never to be a subsidy for badly located or otherwise

[1] See Volume III of this publication.

handicapped industry. The relocation of industry is being carried on continuously, automatically and irresistably, but planlessly. In the future this process should be helped by and should help the redistribution of housing.

(2) All new construction should be planned in close relation to the existing or the proposed lines of transportation. The Empire State Building requiring an office population of 20,000 and twice or thrice that many daily visitors to fill its at present largely empty offices, stands at a distance of 1000 feet from the nearest subway station and is an example of expensive new construction insufficiently related to rapid transit facilities. The largely unoccupied Empire State Building is an illustration of the present costly, planless and wasteful method of reconstructing New York, a method which must be replaced by a more satisfactory system. About the financially disastrous Empire State Building "Mr. Foster" in his "New York Standard Guide" tells the interested visitors: "There is here in this stupendous fabric a striking illustration of the process which is continually going on in the never ceasing and never ending making-over of the City of New York, where millions in value are ruthlessly scrapped to make way for more millions to take their place. The erection of the 50-million dollar Empire State Building involved the destruction of the 13-million dollar Waldorf-Astoria. With the exception of the copper of the roof and the steel which was sold for junk, all of the magnificent hotel building now lies at the bottom of the sea, five miles off Sandy Hook."

This planless and dangerously anarchical process of continuous urban reconstruction in its inadequate relation to social —and traffic!—requirements was even better described by the Chairman of the New York Housing Authority when he said (April 26, 1935): "We have just spent a million dollars to build the new, modernistic Central Park Zoo [2] in which to house monkeys, but we allow tens of thousands of our children to continue to live in the slums. Nor is this all. At a time when most office buildings are a quarter and a third vacant, a group of citizens have constructed and are constructing Rockefeller City at a cost of $250,000,000. *Two hundred and fifty million dollars!* This amount of money could clear 250 square city

[2] See Volume III of this publication.

blocks in the slums and pay for the construction of airy and clean apartments for nearly a quarter of a million people." The new and, in many ways, ideal offices in Rockefeller Center [3] and the financial power behind this colossal enterprise spell ruin for numberless owners of less modern and less powerfully managed but concentrated office buildings. Their tenants flock to the giant towers of Rockefeller City which is beginning to create a new and serious problem of traffic congestion to be solved largely at the expense of the very citizens whose useful work is delayed by the new traffic difficulties thus created.

Another and perhaps even more serious instance of the unsatisfactory relation between new building and—in this case—*new* means of transportation is furnished by the fact that the perfectly amazing and in many ways quite wonderful new highway systems called "parkways," as have been created especially in Westchester County, New Jersey and Long Island, are designed, for the most part, for automobile pleasure traffic or at least are not permitted to serve the most important requirement of residential decentralization.[4] It would have been comparatively easy to combine the construction of these new highways for automobile traffic with the design of new roads for rapid and inexpensive rail communication. Auto-roads and rapid surface railroads could have been made to run near each other separated by some twenty to one hundred feet of dense planting, but both using the same viaducts or kept free from intersecting traffic by the same bridges and underpasses. Since this great opportunity has been lost a minimum requirement could be satisfied by allowing rapid buses to operate on these expensive new parkways. Only by thus serving the popular demand for cheap and rapid means of communication would the great cause of decentralized housing be efficiently served by the new parkways and their enormous cost be justified and redeemed. New "parkways" should always be designed in relation to new model suburbs to be served.

(3) No window of any living room, bedroom, kitchen (nor of any other room used for more than an hour at a time) should ever again be built without being guaranteed, permanently, good

[3] See Volume III of this publication.
[4] See Volume III of this publication.

natural lighting and ventilation. This means that the distance between all new buildings (not only those facing streets but also those facing courtyards) should never be smaller than the height of the highest of the buildings. In other words the angle at which the outer light strikes a window must never be greater than 45 degrees; and no wall of any kind (facing the window, to the right or the left of the window) can be allowed to obstruct the incoming light. Therefore, if the buildings are grouped around a closed or open court necessarily forming darker corners, the outer light must enter at a considerably smaller angle, or (in other words) the height of the buildings must be much less than the distance between the buildings.

Once this minimum demand for light and air is draconically enforced one might almost say that everybody can build as high as he pleases or cover his lot as densely as he pleases. Even high apartment houses in a district of one-family residences can not do much harm if their whole mass sets back ten feet more from their lot line for every story that is added to their height.

(4) Very little if any of the new housing should be carried on within congested areas, on expensive land, separated from liberal areas for recreation. There are in this country and even near most big cities immense areas available which can be used neither for agriculture nor industry, but only for recreation and spacious residential districts. The latest English and German standards for recreational areas should be equalled and can, sometimes, be materially surpassed in America. Liberal acquisition of land for public recreation is, indeed, in most cases the only chance for the owners of such land ever to get any, however small, return from their property. All new buildings must and can be so located that a park of at least ten acres in size can be reached within a five minute walk. In most cases one of the larger radial park areas making uninterrupted connection with the outer park belt and forest reserves should be accessible from new buildings within a six or seven minute walk. This applies not only to new residential buildings but to all new buildings, especially schools, business and public buildings, and also to most new factories.

(5) Another chance for outlying private real estate to become useful and bring at least a small return to its owners is

the rapid increase of general standards of private garden areas. The more spacious the new developments are, the larger will be the number of present property owners who are benefited. On the other hand, the more concentrated the new residential and recreational developments are, the more restricted will be the benefit to a limited number of real estate owners and the larger also will be the number of those landowners who must remain empty-handed. As long as the general confiscation of land is avoided and the present system of land ownership adhered to, so long will landowners benefit most from the generous decentralization of all relocation of industry and redistribution of the at present crowded masses.

It is therefore entirely possible and economically most necessary to satisfy all reasonable "land hunger." But what is reasonable? Why not accept the advice of one of the best American minds? On August 15, 1835, Ralph Waldo Emerson, then thirty-two years old, wrote in his diary: "I bought my house and two acres six rods of land of John T. Coolidge for 3,500 dollars." Four weeks later (Sept. 14) he wrote: "I was married to Lydia Jackson." Nine months later (June 10, 1836) Emerson wrote: "I gladly pay the rent" (i.e. the tax) "of my house because I therewith get the horizon and the woods which I pay no rent for. For daybreak and evening and night, I pay no tax. I think it is a glorious bargain which I drive with the town." And during the year 1843 we find in his diary such entries as: "My garden is an honest place. . . . I enjoy all the hours of life. . . . The sky is the daily bread of the eyes. What sculpture in these hard clouds. . . . No crowding; boundless, cheerful, and strong."

All this can be enjoyed on two acres of land. There is no reason why every family desiring it should not have two acres. The whole country would be benefited if there were many such families, even if all of their forefathers were not Emersons. Emerson's contemporary, Walt Whitman, asked indignantly: "Is the Dollar-god so ruthless that he grudges a few poor acres to the service of health, of refinement, of religion? Is nothing to be thought of on earth, but cash?" Whitman wrote this (July 9, 1846) when his fellow citizens of Brooklyn suffered from one of the first attacks of that insane land exploitation craze that

afterwards ruined not only Brooklyn but many other American cities. Walt Whitman chided: "And we are to be 'justly proud' of increasing the 'rapid Growth' of Brooklyn, by cutting down Fort Greene Park! Oho! Imagine some one in New York holding forth in that vein to the good citizens there—how 'justly proud' they might be of erasing the Battery, selling Washington Parade Ground (i.e. Washington Square) in building lots, and running blind alleys through Tompkin's Square! Why the man would hardly be safe from the Lunatic Asylum."

Walt Whitman's protests, in addition to those of others, succeeded in saving for Brooklyn its Fort Greene Park from the ruthless Dollar-god. And (as has been stated before) there is no reason under the sun why much more liberal public parks should not be preserved and why, furthermore, two acres of private garden should not be granted to every family desiring it and deserving it by the good upkeep of the land thus granted. This is possible even in the most congested neighborhood of the globe. The City of New York and Environs (or New York "Region") covers 5,528 square miles, or 3,537,249 acres. If the liberal proportion of sixty per cent is reserved for streets, public buildings, business, industry, parks, etc. and forty per cent for residences, we have remaining 1,414,899 net acres for about 11 million people or 3 million families. Assuming that half a million families for some reason must select the apartment house containing approximately fifty families to the acre (requiring a total of 10,000 acres) while 1,900,000 families are to be housed at the fairly liberal "garden-city standard" of ten families per acre (or each family occupying a lot of 43 by 100 feet), requiring 190,000 acres, there would still be more than 1,200,000 acres remaining, or enough to give a full two acre garden plot to 600,000 New York families. If, with a different calculation, the available residential area (after deducting the land required for 500,000 families in apartments) were to be distributed equally among the remaining 2,500,000 families of New York "Region," each family would obtain more than half an acre (net) or a lot 115 feet wide and 200 feet deep. These are, of course, average figures which, when practically applied, would greatly vary. The contrast between different methods of distributing the houses adds decidedly to their charm. Squares

and common garden courts surrounded by rowhouses only 20 to 25 feet wide, alternating occasionally with a few stronger blocks of low apartment houses framed by many high trees, with groups of semi-detached houses and rows of three to eight houses and with areas of detached houses having gardens of one or more acres merging into parks and golf links, these attributes constitute the charm of the garden-suburb.[5]

On lots of two acres, or even of one-half an acre granted to everyone who desires it, many activities including "subsistence" gardening could be carried on. The recommendation or condemnation of "subsistence" farming is not unusual. Many critics believe that the provision of subsistence farms for the workers could and should become the solution of the problem of housing and also of the problem of unemployment. Others see in the subsistence farming idea mainly a new trick on the part of irresponsible employers, eager to pay lower wages, to force the worker to make up his deficit by sweating overtime in his vegetable garden. The latter view had something to do with the policy (referred to in the Seventeenth Chapter) of such cities as Vienna and Copenhagen where the public housing activities were directed or strongly influenced by the representatives of socialist workingmen organizations and where rather few private houses with gardens were built for the workers while the large "model" tenement became the rule.[6]

On the other hand, even the Russian type of communism did not exclude the private ownership of the individual home. But bolshevism did, originally, exclude the private ownership or even the private use of a garden. As a result foreign observers reported an appalling contrast between the superior maintenance of Russia's private houses as compared with the utter neglect of the gardens which formerly had belonged to them but had been turned into public property by the Bolshevist revolution.[7]

The neglect of public gardens might not necessarily have been final. On the contrary, a joyous responsibility for public prop-

[5] Cf. Henry Wright's plan for such a city.

[6] See Volume III of this publication.

[7] This contrast was mentioned as being a prevalent condition in the Russian cities by Ernst May, one of the most prominent foreign directors of Russian city planning (former director of city planning and housing of the Municipality of Frankfurt-am-Main) when he lectured in Berlin, in the summer of 1931, about his Russian experiences.

erty is possible even in capitalist countries and among their lower income recipients, as soon as the most elementary wants of this stratum are provided for. An example: shortly before the war, enterprising or socially-minded realtors of San Francisco's East Bay suburbs undertook to serve one of their high grade real estate developments by having the municipality build a "boulevard" or "parkway" which, before it reached the realtors' new enterprise, had to pass through a fairly poor residential section. Pessimists prophesied that the plantings of the parkway would be ruined by the irresponsible inhabitants of the poorer quarter. The opposite turned out to be true. During the long dry summer months the vegetation of the public parkway suffered more in the wealthy quarters than in the poorer sections where the inhabitants "came out with tin cans and coffee pots to water the thirsty plants in front of their homes." And water is scarce and expensive in California.

The possibility that workingmen are capable, desirous and "deserving" of owning and cultivating private gardens has been recognized by the Soviet Government. According to a N. Y. Times report (Dec. 27, 1933) the Soviet Government decreed (Dec. 25) the allotment of individual vegetable gardens to 1,500,000 Soviet workers. Thus, during the year 1934, huge vacant land areas were ordered to be made available for the purpose of enabling the most deserving workers to increase their food supply during their spare time. The individual plots were ordered to range from one quarter to one-half an acre. They were to be leased to the workers for a period of from five to seven years, free from taxes and crop levies, provided the workingmen thus benefited would not be negligent in cultivating the privileged land granted to them. This new departure in communist Russia is in keeping with the policy promulgated by Stalin, on June 23, 1931, when he expressed the desire "to attach the workers to their factories."

The Russian allotment of vegetable gardens to "deserving" workers has found approval among foreign realists and reprobation among critical idealists. The American attitudes regarding the "subsistence" farm problem were expressed by Catherine Bauer and Lewis Mumford. The latter wrote: "Unemployment insurance is not by itself a sufficient safeguard against fluctua-

tions in industry; our new cities must have agricultural belts and internal gardens capable of raising fruits and green vegetables in sufficient quantity to eke out the family income and to provide a healthier environment and more sanative forms of recreation than our crowded, dreary, asphalted, urban environments now do." (Cf. "Break the Housing Blockade!" by Lewis Mumford, in The New Republic, May 17, 1935.) And Catherine Bauer wrote a succinct criticism from which the following extract affords one an unbiased American opinion of the latest German development in the field of "marginal settlements" (Randsiedlungen). She writes:

"The idea of rendering the individual less dependent for his life and living on the erratic extremes of urban employment conditions, by providing him with a garden, is as old as the factory system. Older, in fact; for the whole system of cottage industries depended on it. As a working principle, it has served dozens of social and political philosophies at one time or another, from the anarchism of Proudhon and Kropotkin to the feudalism of Ruskin. At present it is one of the keystones of Hitler's Nationalism. . . . In the working philosophy of Kropotkin and Patrick Geddes, this included the possibility of balanced work for all individuals. The entire Garden City Movement sprang from such an ideal. . . . But 'unemployed colonies,' as they have been developed in Germany and as they seem likely to be projected in this country, are quite another thing from fundamental regional planning on the one hand, and small allotments on the outskirts of large cities on the other. The truth of the matter is that if even a very small part of the current talk about 'homesteads,' 'subsistence gardens,' 'decentralization,' and 'putting people back on the land' had been put into practice in the manner suggested, we should already have succeeded in transforming not only a large number of our present city-dwellers but most of our farmers as well, into a new American peasantry with a standard of living and an outlook for the future probably about equal to that obtainable in the Balkan rural regions. Perhaps I should not be so vehement had I not seen the results of the emergency homesteading movement in Germany. There, since 1931, when reactionary forces began to tip the scales, no public money has been lent for new housing unless each dwelling

was accompanied by a sizeable allotment garden tract and the houses built for themselves by groups of unemployed workers whose labor became their 'capital' investment. On the surface some of these colonies are picturesque enough, and at worst the fact that they are likely to be built in arranged groups, and with some benefit of the admirable technique of community planning lately developed in Germany, makes them rather better than the average American equivalent would probably be. But what is the net result? The 'dole' of such people is cut down to almost nothing. . . . In short, the *Randsiedlungen*, taken by and large, are nothing more nor less than poor-farms, and the only people who really benefit from them are likely to be the people who pay the taxes which support the dole. The cycle of 'modern housing' has turned back on itself, back to the pauper hand-outs of the mid-nineteenth century. It is worth noting that the subsistence-homestead movement in Germany was first urged by the Liberals, but that now, when the Liberals have vanished, the movement fits perfectly into Hitler's conscious and energetic policy of turning potentially dangerous urban workers into a helpless pauper peasantry."[8]

This just criticism by Catherine Bauer could be refuted only in a country where political freedom is secure, where social insurance (against unemployment, etc.) is strong, and where redistribution of industry and population is planned and carried out so as to secure for each worker easy access to such new work as may present itself after periods of unemployment. What Miss Bauer says about the possibility of "subsistence"-homesteads becoming poor farms reminds one of what the Secretary of Agriculture, H. A. Wallace, says in his book, "New Frontiers" (p. 243 f.). We read:

"While no hard and fast rule can be drawn, it would seem that in the eastern half of the United States, the ideal location for many of these poor land farmers who are now on relief would be on self-subsistence homesteads where part of the family can work in industry. This may also be the destiny of the unemployed in our cities. It costs only one-third as much to take care of a farm family on relief as a city family, and if the Federal Relief has to support several million families for several

[8] Cf. "Modern Housing" by Catherine Bauer, p. 248 ff.

years, it will try to make the money go as far as possible by getting several hundred thousand of them out on the land, establishing them in part-time farming and part-time industry.

"This trend is a matter of grave concern to established industry and agriculture. We in the AAA will of course insist that these government financed people do not produce farm products for sale. Industry will probably insist that they do not produce industrial products for sale. But industry can not solve the problem this easily, because ultimately industry through the income tax has to foot the government relief bill.

"The 10 million unemployed plus the 5 million living on (poor and crowded) land which can never be farmed are a continuing menace to the established industry and agriculture of the United States. To solve it means decentralized industrial planning relative to land. If the heads of our two hundred leading corporations were to take into account the full significance of paved roads, autos, trucks, high line electricity, and the increased happiness of human beings close to the land, might they not enthusiastically start a decentralized, industrial, self-subsistence homestead program on a scale which would jerk us out of the depression for years to come?

"If industry does not seize this opportunity, its only effective defense against serious trouble will be such a revival in business that two-thirds of the unemployed will be put to work again at their accustomed places in the big cities. It would seem high time for those big industries which are truly conservative and interested in their long-time welfare to begin to do a little real planning about the unemployment problem. Agriculture should be included in this, because the wrong kind of decentralization would increase the burden of agriculture. . . . Nearly half of the unemployed are under thirty years of age. The larger part of them have at least high school education and many have college diplomas. They are well equipped in mind and body and can see no good reason why it is so hard for them to find jobs. As I have indicated, there is some danger that these younger unemployed, joining hands with farmers who have been in the most serious trouble, and with certain other unprivileged groups, will push the nation so far to the left that we will be headed

toward the land of nightmare, even as the unemployed youths have succumbed to misguided leadership in certain foreign countries. This group, by asking more relief year after year than the Government can afford, can eventually bring on an uncontrolled inflation. To avoid this disaster, it will be necessary to get more and more of our people thinking seriously about that continuously balanced harmonious relationship which I call the Land of Tomorrow. The industries of the country must be brought definitely face to face with their responsibility for these unemployed. If they dodge, it will be the duty of the Government to go ahead with its own method of rehabilitation and build out of the unemployed a self-subsistence system of exchange cooperatives which are outside the capitalistic system."

The case of providing the worker desiring it with liberal grants of land (from one to two acres per family) would become even stronger in a country—such as the United States at present—spending billions for automobile highways and—perhaps soon?—fulfilling the Ford-dream that every family own a car. It is being hammered into everybody's head that we are to live in an "economy of plenty" where to work will become more and more a privilege of the most capable. According to General Hugh S. Johnson, former NRA administrator, there were 12,000,000 unemployed during the last "depression"; "the total is now down to 9,500,000"; and "you are going to have at least 6,000,000 unemployed when you get all the way back to normal." In such an economy liberal grants of land to anybody capable and willing to assume the ensuing responsibility, will be necessary as one of the means of keeping the individual busy, or at least amused and out of mischief.

Incidentally, nothing short of a liberal redistribution of the population can save the smaller cities of the United States. There are at present about 53,000 towns and villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants most of which have too many retail stores. Only 22 per cent of the population of the United States live in cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants. But these cities representing 22 per cent of the nation's population do 70 per cent of its total retail business. The retail stores of the towns consisting of less than 1,500 people are deplorably lacking in

customers.[9] The economic structure of most of these small towns is thus seriously endangered.

The necessary redistribution of the population should by no means become a method of "poor farming." On the contrary. *If* we shall ever live in an "economy of plenty," anyone not anxious for action or eager for work will again be in the enviable or pitiable condition of the "free" in Greece, who according to such approving philosophers and statesmen as Plato felt greatly honored in never resorting to manual labor. To them, artists such as architects, sculptors and other masons were inferior beings. At present, a return to such a philosophical attitude would greatly relieve the problem of unemployment. "Subsistence" gardens as described and loved by Emerson will mitigate this difficult problem and, perhaps, provide America and the world with a new race of Concordian philosophers of the Thoreau-Emerson type.

In this connection Professor Alvin Johnson's charming description of new "Happy Valleys" must be mentioned. He has pointed out that Theodore Roosevelt may have been wrong when he said "the pioneer days are over, save in a few places." (Outlook, Sept. 10, 1910.) A new pioneering age has just begun. The "frontier," formerly vanishing in the West, has come back to us and now lies within sixty miles of most large cities. (Cf. Eighteenth Chapter; p. 256.) Sixty miles from New York City, for example, poor New Jersey land can, today, be acquired at $20 an acre and, with an additional expenditure of $90 for soil treatment, can be made richer than Mississippi Valley land at $150 an acre. Nearly the whole of the United States could and should again be considered as open land. The present tenants are tired out or lacking in ability. To acquire their land and make it useful would require no more, or even less effort than the original pioneers had to expend when first conquering it. Agriculture, by this time, has made such amazing strides and raises so much food that the Government will soon have to pay us for eating it. Today it is no longer land that is being sold, but the right to raise or to sell the products of the land. It is the right to sell so much milk or so much cotton that gives value

[9] Cf. The article: "Are Small Towns Doomed" by a Village Trustee, in "The American Mercury," May, 1934.

to a farm or a plantation. Four-fifths of the present farmers may have to come to the new decentralized cities. They will have to live there the contemplative life of free philosophers. As a result of the rapidly growing efficiency of agriculture it will be just as easy, for the remaining farmers, to cultivate 200 acres as it was, formerly, to cultivate the customary 30. In Kansas, at present, eighty bushels grow where formerly eight grew. Noble leisure, therefore, must increase tenfold.

Facetious critics claim that "the United States has only 200,000 armed crooks, 300,000 unarmed crooks, 400,000 lawyers and 500,000 capitalists, but that all the rest are still honest Americans." Even if such irony were justified, there would yet be a sufficient number remaining to begin anew in American pioneering and industry. And nothing could more appropriately facilitate such a new start than redistributing and rehousing the nation, when, at present, approximately 50 million Americans are badly housed and when bad housing produces worse effects and prepares more crime than a reformatory. Children delinquent at thirteen are delinquent for good. And "the child without a playground is the father of the man without a job."

National defense, the army and especially the navy, require billions for material that will surely be scrapped within ten years. Native delinquents, robbers or thieves, attack a community more persistently and insidiously than foreign enemies could ever do. Money spent for housing would become an investment with a duration twice and thrice that of capital invested in war material which ages much more rapidly than even semi-permanent buildings. Even the present destitute slum dweller will be able to pay more for, or at least take better care of his housing if he lives in better surroundings. At present his shelter stands upon sinfully overvalued land and is built in accordance with complicated old methods which, if adopted for the production of an automobile, would make the cheapest one cost $10,000 instead of less than one tenth that sum. Rehousing the nation according to newer and better methods offers an unlimited field for the necessary pioneering, for the lasting reconquest of the nation's domain and for statesmanlike leadership.

## Twenty-Fifth Chapter

### CIVIC ART

> Cities of men are like the perpetual succession of shells on the beach.
> *Emerson's Journals,* VI, p. 9 (1841).

Contemporary thought in aesthetics tends to reject the absolutism of both "nature" and theology. Man is not regarded as condemned to remain forever either a glorious brute offending the deity that flickers through his aspirations or a fallen angel struggling with his brute nature through the heroic failure of successive renunciations. These conceptions of man are dissolving with the dissolution of scientific and theological certainty and assurance. In this place comes another conception of aesthetics controlled by neither the compulsions of brute nature nor the fears of everlasting hell-fire. At its very center is knowledge of good and beautiful things and conduct which have been brought to realization—if only here and there and in fragmentary form. And when this knowledge respecting the nature of aesthetics consciously or unconsciously is made central to all thought about policy, the creative forces of aesthetics can be accelerated. In other words, when the idea of a mechanistic necessity is abandoned and it is universally recognized that all who act, teach and lead in any capacity, large or small, do act on some conception of the good and the beautiful, then the clarification of aesthetic purpose will precede efforts to formulate and to apply policy. This recognition is now slowly taking place and its widening and deepening in the consciousness of mankind constitutes the chief revolution wrought in contemporary thought. Such is the operating synthesis for the future.

The American city of former days and its future have been strikingly described by one of America's most penetrating thinkers. Emerson wrote in his Journal (June, 1847):

"The American builds shingle palaces and shingle cities; yes, but in any altered mood, perhaps this afternoon, he will build stone ones, with equal celerity, tall, restless Kentucky strength; great race, but though an admirable fruit, you shall not find one good, sound, well-developed apple on the tree. Nature herself was in a hurry with these hasters and never finished one."

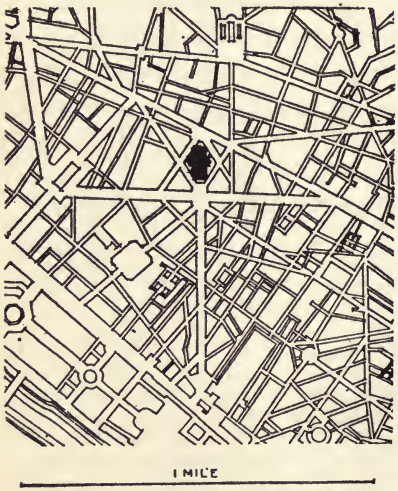
Since Emerson's time new American cities, "stone ones" and steel ones, have arisen. Their feverish growth and gruesome magnitude have startled the world. Emerson commented: "Speed and fever are never greatness . . . America is formless." Was his pessimism as to American "forms" exaggerated? Speed and fever have achieved in American cities new and fantastic proportions. Out of contradictions new "forms" have evolved. The awful has married the freak and has generated "forms" of its own. The following newspaper report reads like a satire on American urbanism:

"Jack Glickstein, age 35, weight 58 pounds, height 37 inches, weds Mildred Monti, age 21, weight 400 pounds, height 5 feet 4 inches. The two were married in the ballroom of the Hotel Edison yesterday afternoon. . . . At the end of the service the blushing bride lifted her husband high in the air and kissed him. Professional exigencies postponed the wedding trip, the bride and bridegroom being dancing partners in a revue." (From The New York American, Dec. 5, 1934, a newspaper which has as its motto, "Character, Quality, Enterprise, Accuracy.") A photograph of the newlyweds, dwarf and giant, accompanied the report. Few of us will look at it a second time. But most of us are very frequently obliged to look at the freakish architecture that surrounds us.

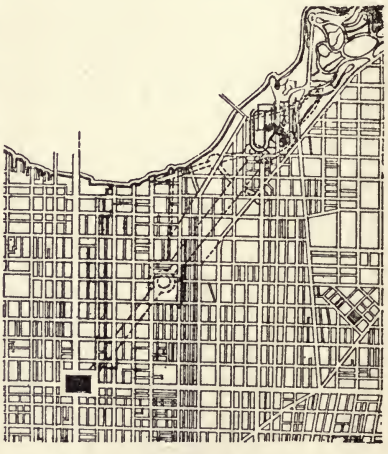
Every American city crowds skyscrapers into many of its oldest and narrowest streets which were designed to accommodate two-storied or three-storied houses, and are hardly wide enough for four or five-storied ones. Today, twenty and thirty-storied buildings push their naked "party"-walls against those of two stories. The windows of hundreds of the new skyscrapers will be darkened the very moment the neighboring low buildings

accept the invitation to this strange "party" and transform themselves into equally towering annihilators of light and air.

In Paris, the poor design of Napoleon III's and Haussmann's costly street openings had been the source of infinite pain to contemporary artists. The bitter and just complaints of Charles Garnier about the ruination of his Grand Opera site have been quoted in full in the volume, "Civic Art" (p. 62 and 63 f.). The assembly of radial street openings in the immediate neighborhood of what was meant to be a monumental building had lost all the charm of such well-designed prototypes as the Piazza del Populo, Rome; the Chateau Plaza, Versailles; or the Capitol Site, Washington, D. C. Instead, an ill-digested geometrical pattern was put on the map. But the lamentations of a Garnier, deploring such atrocities, did not reach the ears of those American city planning enthusiasts who lustily glorified the work of Haussmann and who were determined uncritically to repeat and to magnify in American cities the mistakes made in Paris. The bad setting of the Grand Opera was duplicated in Philadelphia. The walls of the old square surrounding the City Hall of Philadelphia were demolished. At least one diagonal gash (costing some fifty million dollars) was required to satisfy the American Haussmannites. For subsidiary "civic centers" slashed by diagonal



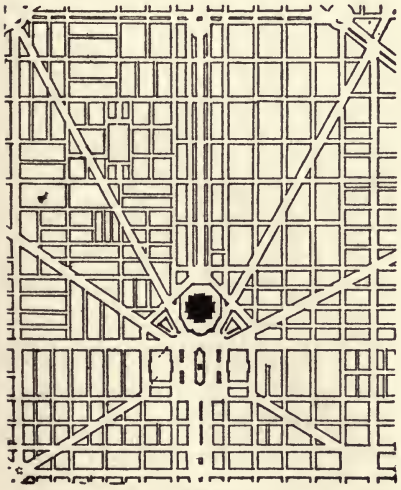

Part of Paris showing site of Garnier's Grand Opera House



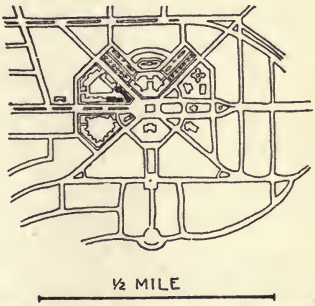

Part of Philadelphia showing direction of Fairmount Parkway connecting the City Hall with the Art Museum

streets provision was made in cheaper sections of the Pennsylvanian metropolis.

Chicago meant to outdo Philadelphia and advertised a "Chicago Plan" with a new city hall in the focus of a diagonally slashed site which rivalled effectively all the errors that had oppressed the architect of the Grand Opera in Paris. This ruthless spirit of civic enterprise, however, seems to have suffered afterwards from a faint heart, weakened in Chicago, and, fortunately, nothing came of the grandly advertised "civic center" plan. But Buenos Aires, queen of South America, mustered more civic energy than her equally populous sister, queen of the Middle West. Untold millions were spent for slashing the central rectangular plaza of her old city plan, of Spanish origin. One of a pair of radial streets of symmetrical obliquity chopped off the southern corner of the old "cabildo" or town hall, the finest and almost the only historical building of the Argentinian capital. (The northern part of the same monument had been chopped off at a previous street opening.) An esthetically disastrous attempt at building a new city hall was made, with great expense, upon one of the many utterly impossible sites created by the new diagonals. (And terminating the main axis a national Capitol was erected that resurrected the idea of the very highly




Proposed City Hall and street arrangement from "the Chicago Plan" by Burnham.




Planned Civic Center for Mariemont, O. showing one public building already erected

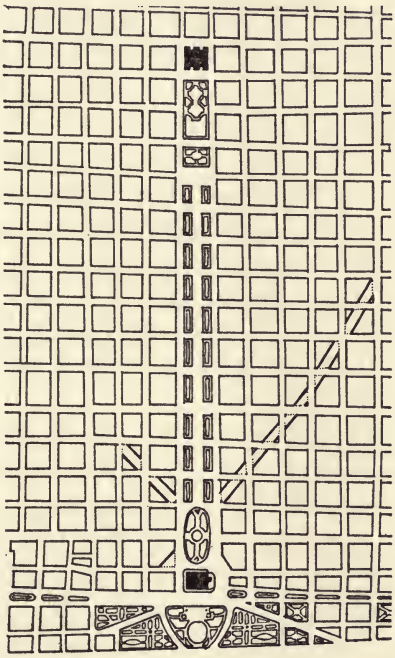
stilted cupola which had been buried with the plans for Burnham's Chicago City Hall.)

The craving for the decadent diagonal type of planning even penetrated into the otherwise far superior garden city design of America. Only the lack of money has, so far, protected Mariemont, Ohio, from the erection of more than one of its public buildings upon those unfortunate triangles rarely able to produce esthetic satisfaction.

The attitude of mind of the advocates of similarly dubious schemes is illustrated by the articles of the late Andrew W. Crawford, who had given much of his indefatigable and unselfish energy to the promotion of the furiously expensive diagonal "Parkway" of Philadelphia. He was editor of a page in the Philadelphia daily "Public Ledger" dedicated to city planning. And some of his most striking contributions appeared in the monthly review "Charities and the Commons" (today called "Survey Graphic"). He and many other militant city planning enthusiasts were permeated with an ill-founded admiration not only for the work of Baron Haussmann in Paris, but also for the more recent German city planning. Crawford (to mention one among these) urged American cities to copy certain novel street planning ideas rather than imitate the monotonous or ugly designs of the nineteenth century. The source of his inspiration was illustrated German magazines. But without a knowledge of the German language and without a trained esthetic judgment of his own, the American enthusiast confused the German instructions and models, good and bad. Thus he inadvertently recommended what his admired German masters considered bad, and he ridiculed what they recommended as being more beautiful. He meant to live up to their instructions. And to add to the confusion, the discussion in Germany took a new turn while Mr. Crawford wrote his articles in America. The German town planners concluded by ridiculing the schemes which Mr. Crawford had originally intended to acclaim; not understanding the points at issue, he not only condemned them but advocated something even worse.

This type of well-meaning if confused intelligence was instrumental in bringing about the construction of the expensive Philadelphia "Parkway" and, influenced by the Philadelphian

example, the similarly costly and problematic two radial streets in the center of Buenos Aires. The unsatisfactory appearance of these diagonal streets with their badly designed street intersections (not to mention their obstruction to traffic and their undesirability as building sites) is another proof of the necessity of studying more carefully, before millions are expended for the sake of civic "beauty," the esthetic problems of city planning. Such a study has been attempted in the volume "Civic Art" of this publication (which, on p. 250 and 260 f., contains an illustrated analysis of the Philadelphia Parkway just referred to).




CENTRAL SECTION OF BUENOS AIRES
SHOWING CENTRAL PLAZA AND RADIAL STREETS.

The American cities, built since Emerson's time, are loaded with heavy-weight investments crowded carelessly into ill-selected spots of the globe by planless, badly trained and often imbecilic men who control billions and hundreds of billions of dollars and cause their trusting fellow citizens to suffer enormous losses. A prominent spokesman of American architects estimated that:

"the United States now staggers under something like five hundred billions of dollars of debt (including all public and semi-public debt, and all land 'values' held for rent) almost every cent of which (except the few billions spent on wars) has been piled up in buildings, or in schemes that serve buildings. (Charles Harris Whitaker in "Rameses to Rockefeller: The Story of Architecture," p. 262.) Almost everything on earth is somehow involved in buildings. And the financial disasters following even the costliest of wars are small compared with the economic losses resulting from ill-advised building perpetrated decade after decade by a whole nation. In any event, it is not the lack of funds but the lack of cultural leadership which has produced that American formlessness so bewailed by Emerson.

Building may be ill-advised and require speedy destruction for many reasons: because it furnishes unhealthy or unsafe quarters, because it is ugly, because it is uneconomical, or because it has all these vices combined. People often believe that civic art should or could concern itself exclusively with the question of architectural ugliness or beauty. This is an error. Some of the preceding chapters have expounded such economic, social and political conditions as must necessarily be fulfilled before one can hope for and seriously discuss a less "showy" but a truly modern "city beautiful."

One might attempt to contradict this by saying that history records great periods of civic art built upon the economic and social foundations of slavery, serfdom and other methods of exploitation. This is true; but it is also true that the creative minds of those by-gone periods were not awakened to the injustice of their economic environment. Plato had no objection to the employment of slaves in the construction of kings' palaces or the Parthenon. Neither did the finest minds of the Middle Ages object to the miserable poverty of the manual laborers who built the cathedrals nor to the beggars besetting them. (We have seen that Luther even recommended slavery.)

There was the assumption in the Middle Ages that universals and conceptions, ideas and categories were the genuine actuality. It is the assumption which the greatest of classical philosophers made the kernel of his system. But Plato only taught this

theory. The medieval age lived it. The modern age repudiates it.

Into every house that he built, every song that he sang, every ceremony that he practiced, medieval man put deep symbolism which brings bliss because it casts a spell. And the poetic point of view is distinguished from the scientific and the practical point of view in that it views natural phenomena symbolically.

The picture that the Middle Ages offers us is full of contradictions. Seen in one aspect, it has an appearance of blessed repose, of a majestic noonday stillness which illumines and protectingly embraces all living things; in another aspect there is the spectacle of a splendid discontent, of deep internal rendings and stirrings. No doubt everything lived and moved in God and felt itself enveloped in God; but how satisfy Him? This was the dread question which trembled everywhere under the serene and peaceful surface of existence. The mediaeval soul lies before us, as a clear silvery pool, but at the bottom there is agitation: a perpetual seeking without finding, a brewing, a bubbling, a reaching. Spires rear themselves to Heaven, striving to lose themselves in the depths of the firmament, insatiable in the erotic yearning that was their most fundamental and original discovery or invention, the love that so hypostasizes its object that it becomes unattainable and is reduced to a symbol of infinite longing. And above it all rises the figure of Christ, the incomparable and yet the exemplar whom man has solemnly been bound, by baptism, to copy in his life.

But by the middle of the fourteenth century there appears on the stage an entirely different kind of humanity, or rather one which contains the germs of another kind. There is still seeking but also finding; still agitation, but no longer only in the depths. A tragic culture is making way for a bourgeois culture, a chaotic for an organic one. The world is thenceforth no "God-inspired mystery but a man-made rationality."

The great devout thinkers of the Middle Ages thought health, wealth and beauty dangerous impediments to the salvation of the soul and believed, perhaps somewhat perversely, that poverty was a great spiritual asset. And even quite recently (Sept. 11, 1935) the German chancellor, Hitler, told his nation that "des-

titution (*Not*) has been a constant companion of art." Poverty, the medieval thinkers claimed, recommends its victims to the special and loving attention of a supreme being who, although he was considered to be ever kind and almighty, must have been in their conception somewhat sadistic in tolerating, or in even obtaining satisfaction from the unspeakable sufferings of millions of his creatures.

These antique and medieval notions have been fundamentally changed by Dutch and Anglo-Saxon Calvinism and especially by the American Declaration of Independence, guaranteeing and recommending liberty and the pursuit of happiness to everyone except the stupid. Lincoln sharply opposed those who held "that slavery is morally right, and socially elevating," and he declared: "We think slavery a great moral, social and political evil." And poverty, today, is considered most dangerously synonymous with bad housing, poor nourishment and the other causes of disease and social decay which seriously threaten the health and the purse of our entire community. Bernard Shaw came close to expressing a widespread modern conviction when he said that poverty is the worst of crimes and should be made punishable by death. This paradox, of course, has a moral meaning only if the victims of poverty have been given a chance to overcome it. This chance must be available from the earliest beginnings of natal as well as prenatal life. If received any later, the chance fails to be a complete chance. The prey of such a failing chance is in danger of being victimized for life; and we have no right, Voltaire chided, "to expect the unfortunate to be perfect."

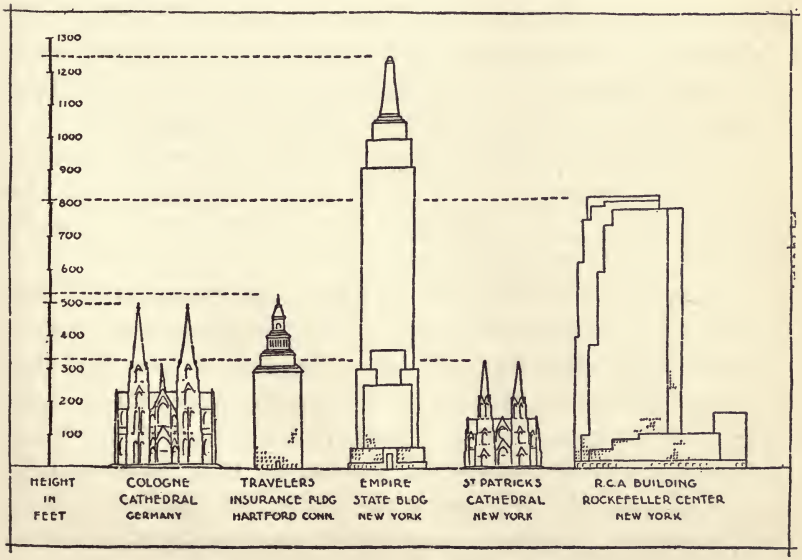
All these facts are now somewhat generally realized. They are graven deeply into the hearts of all thinking and feeling women and men. The vivid realization of these truths is a part of our new religion, the devout belief in the desirability of a spiritually and materially abundant life. Whoever is not imbued with this new creed can as little be a true representative of modern society as anyone not believing in the desirability of poverty and chastity could have been a true representative of medieval culture.

Any new civic art that does not fully express the new religion can only be unrepresentative of our times, and is necessarily an evasion and an abortion. The medieval city, wherever it was

congested and filthy or wherever it was exalted and sublime, was a true expression of medieval religion with its implicit belief in the desirability of the most ghastly contrasts of gallows, pillories and crowded ghettos on the one side, and, on the other, of masterly patrician houses arrayed in the sanctifying vicinity of lofty spires. The slum dwellers even more than the owners of rich mansions were promised the rewards of heaven and the protection of the saints in the mighty cathedrals transfigured, through dazzling stained windows, in mystical lights.

Modern civic art can readily build much loftier cathedrals and higher towers than the medieval cathedral builders ever dared to conceive. The highest of all cathedral towers, that of Cologne (495 feet high, but completed only in the nineteenth century and with money gathered from lotteries) is lower than the Connecticut Yankee's tower in Hartford (Travelers Insurance Building, 527 feet high). The Empire State Building (1248 feet) is more than twice as high. Holy St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York humbly stands in the shadow of the Rockefeller Center Tower which, aside from being much higher, boasts of infinitely greater bulk than the religious spires opposite.

In spite of their superior height, however, most high buildings



in America are abortions. They often do not pay and, to boot, ruin their neighborhoods by taking the light, air and tenants away, and by congesting the traffic. Furthermore, most American high buildings are even esthetically a miscarriage. They are appealing, for the most part, only in so far as anything unusually tall and even gigantic impresses and excites the startled mind. But even this precarious appeal of dubious beauty immediately disappears when the inordinate giant is closed in upon by other giants. The height of a building can be measured only by relating it to other buildings or objects in its vicinity. The City Hall Tower (548 ft.) of Philadelphia, for instance, was formerly very high. Today it is only moderately so and produces a spindle-like or niggardly effect unworthy of a city hall. This lapse of worthiness was caused by other towers beginning to crowd in upon it. The newcomers are lower than the City Hall, but they are much bulkier.

Or, to illustrate further, looking at the skyline of Dallas, Texas (and one finds the same distortions in most American cities) one observes buildings which formerly were very tall now becoming part of a large mass, not even as high as it is broad. (See sketch, p. 341). Aside from being clumsy, such a huge heap suggests to every thinking observer at least two questions. Firstly: how many badly lighted and badly paying offices and how many clerks deprived of sunlight and ruining their eyesight exist by this evident abuse of the new technical possibilities of skyscraper construction? Secondly: what evil or stupid powers instituted such laws as permit this abuse, an abuse, which, even if it brought some profit to a few owners of centrally located land (and in the long run this profit is also doubtful), must have shattered the formerly well-founded expectations of most owners of less centrally situated property.

A medievalist—and there are many still living—could well tolerate the most appalling civic antitheses and any extreme of local crowding, stupidity, or even malevolence in his city, since he could view it as the work of the devil in whom he sincerely believed or as a part of that earthly creation which the divine Maker distinctly desired to be less perfect than that promised heaven which is to be enjoyed after death. Most modern people, on the contrary, believe that no devil should prevent their making

the world a place worthy of the economic and technical powers they possess and which they can employ to combat the hell on earth. We today feel that the world may well be made meritorious of whatever perfect heaven God has or has not planned and built for our posthumous life. Even before he dies the spiritual eyes and nose of a modern man are so acute that they see congestion and smell disease even when the stench from these despicable relics of former civilizations does not emanate directly from Park Avenue, New York, or from the most stately avenues of Washington, but, concealed, issues (except for the insensible observers or the medievalists) from the alleys immediately adjoining.

All this is fairly well understood and agreed upon by most contemporary thinking and seeing people. But the problem does not end here. Let us suppose that all the prerequisites of modern city building, as have been discussed in the previous Chapters, are achieved. Let us suppose that every worker can pay and maintain (thanks to his wages or to public subsidies) a healthy home, and that every city can and will provide in decency and even in beauty for all the public buildings, parks and playgrounds required, and that all semi-public buildings (banks, offices, factories, etc.) can and will be dignified, spacious, well-lighted, well-ventilated and even beautiful. The question then arises: what shall these novel and extensive groups of buildings look like? The answer obviously must be that the new forms required will naturally develop with the practical facilities for fulfilling the new needs. But this evident consideration does not exempt us, citizens and architects, from giving the most serious thought to the plan and to the exterior forms of every proposed new building.

Fortunately, America, since the time of Thomas Jefferson, of Walt Whitman and of Montgomery Schuyler (to mention only three outstanding personalities) has often had statesmen, art critics, poets, and philosophers deeply susceptible to civic beauty. And during the last decades a valiant school of new civic critics arose; women and men of the strength of Catherine Bauer, Claude Bragdon, Royal Cortissoz, T. F. Hamlin, Joseph Hudnut, Fiske Kimball, Benton MacKaye, Lewis Mumford, Elbert Peets, Kingsley Porter, T. E. Tallmadge, or—last but not least —of the strength of that ever-young veteran Charles Harris

Whitaker, who, "for thirty years, has assigned himself the roving commission of historian, observer and commentator in the field of architecture."

These intrepid critics guide America to a new Civic Art worthy of her unparalleled technical and economic power. Do their opinions harmonize and are they all sympathetic with the obvious rationalism of our period? The answer probably is that these opinions are evolving. Nothing could be more convincing—to take one specific example—than some of Lewis Mumford's recent articles on housing which refer mainly to the economic and social aspects of the problem. (I do not see how a better article than "Break the Housing Blockade!" by Mr. Mumford in The New Republic, May 17, 1933, can be written.)

But when we search for light on those esthetic problems which the next Chapter endeavors to discuss, we find that modern American critics, and with them the architects, have to overcome the same difficulties and contradictions which confront their European colleagues and which the author of the present volume had occasion to experience in all their intricate developments during the nine years of his editorship of a critical architectural review. To him nothing appears to be more to the point than Joseph Hudnut's victorious jousting with R. A. Cram in the articles, "The Romantic Architecture of Morningside Heights," and its sequels (Columbia University Quarterly, 1930, 1931, 1933). No criticism could be more penetrating than Elbert Peets' analysis of the ponderous developments in the national capital (published in the "Architectural Record," Sept., 1932). But the mere fact that many recent buildings seem to justify as pointed a criticism as that made by Hudnut or Peets, shows what fundamental differences of opinion prevail among American architects.

Whoever tries to find his bearings among the often contradictory writings of America's leading architectural critics, finds himself at once attracted to the frequent assertions which declare H. H. Richardson (1838–1886) to be the father of modern architecture. A similar claim has been made in Germany in estimating F. Schinkel (1781–1841) whose "Old Guard House" has quite recently been praised as being far superior to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. (Cf. next Chapter) The allegation

that Schinkel is the father of modern architecture is probably much more valid than the similar one made for Richardson. Both assertions, however, appear untenable to the present author.[1] Schinkel, in spite of his advanced classicism, his love for iron as a medium of construction, his strong tirades against the tedium of traditionalism and his sympathy with new functionalism, was, nevertheless, a romantic, flying off on many tangents. Such a quixotic spirit is a danger to our aspirations for new and true civic art. We can follow his teachings only with great caution. Can we with any less caution follow H. H. Richardson? Was his effort consistent? Did he actually create the beginnings of *our* new architecture, as his admirers maintain? The appearance of our future cities will, to a considerable extent, depend upon consistent answers to these questions and their implications. Who was Richardson?

[1] The author believes he has refuted the claim made for Schinkel, in "Das Steinerne Berlin," p. 232 ff. and 241 ff.

Sky line . . . Dallas, Texas.

The City Hall . . . New York.

## Twenty-Sixth Chapter

### ORIGIN AND GOAL OF AMERICA'S NEW CIVIC ART

In Europe, Americans have often been praised or blamed for giving or failing to give a new architecture to our new world. In America we have been told, many times, that a "new school of architecture" has been founded by H. H. Richardson who—as we shall see—was "a colossal man." A man of such proportions seems to have been indispensable for overcoming America's architectural plight concerning the seriousness of which, prior to Richardson's intervention, foreign as well as indigenous critics seem to have been unanimous in their opinion. Previous to the architectural revolution wrought by Richardson, poorly informed foreigners approaching New York's beautiful City Hall (built in 1803) are said to have exclaimed: "*That* never was built in this country!" (Cf. Montgomery Schuyler, "American Architecture," p. 120). Only after Richardson's efflorescence do we find frequent reports about perhaps lengendary but thoroughly pleased citizens of Chicago who after their death and subsequent reawakening in the ghastliest of hells always mistake that abode for heaven and shout delightedly: "How wonderfully this glorious paradise reminds us of our dear old Chicago!" To recognize a good thing when one sees it is a sign of true wisdom, and—it also applies to architecture—the highest virtue of the critic.

At the very time when Emerson called America "formless,"

his great compatriot, Walt Whitman, also advanced powerful reasons for equal dissatisfaction. It was the period when the development of young America's traditional architecture was interrupted by the importation of medieval forms from Europe. These forms were neither practical nor had they ever taken root in that new world of America, which was discovered by bold Renaissance thought and which received its political institutions from that new humanism and rationalism which sneered at the "dark ages" and at their "Gothic" (i. e. barbaric) architecture. In the Brooklyn Eagle (March 9 and 30, 1846) Walt Whitman discussed the new Gothic church (Grace Church) on Broadway and Eleventh Street, New York, designed by James Renwick, the Englishman, in the new fashion of English romanticism at that time entirely foreign to America. It was the same English architect who also designed the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C., and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.[1] For Walt Whitman, the philosopher, architecture was necessarily not only an esthetic but also a moral consideration.

"The architecture of Grace Church," Walt Whitman wrote, "is by superficial observers called beautiful. The proper word is not beautiful, but showy. . . . We are impelled to say that we do not look with a favorable eye on these splendid churches—on a Christianity which chooses for the method of its development a style that Christ invariably condemned, and the spirit which he must have meant when he told an inquirer 'that he could not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Grace Church, inside and out, is a showy piece of architecture, and the furnishing of the pews, the covering of the luxurious cushions, etc., appear to be unexceptional, viewed with the eye of an upholsterer."

Thus did Walt Whitman give vent to strong utterances in his criticism of that new fangled Gothic revivalist architecture which also was later so profusely used for American universities, or rather for what Joseph Hudnut calls, "the university of es-

[1] Renwick designed the old (now demolished) building of New York's City College at Twenty-third Street, an achievement which called forth the following comment: "The president of one of the literary societies of the College told his audience that the old pile was called Gothic, not from any similarity to Gothic architecture, but rather, he thought, because it might have been built in the time of the Goths." Cf. "The City College Quarterly," Dec., 1907.

cape" or "the romantic university." In such a university and in such a church a-social and anti-social predilections seek and find comfort and protection. "The familiar concrete world might not enter here."

Against this costly architecture of escape Walt Whitman sets the simpler forms of America's traditional small churches. "Ah, who does not remember," he continues, "some little, old, quaint, brown church in the country, surrounded by great trees and plentiful verdure—a church which a property speculator

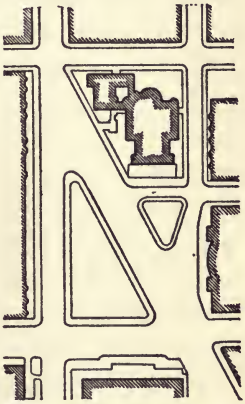
Grace Church
New York

would not own, as an investment, if he had to pay the taxes on it? Is that to be compared for a moment with the tall-spired temples of our great cities, where 'the pride that apes humility' is far more frequent than the genuine spirit of Christ? And we must say that for such reasons, we regret to see every new putting up of a gorgeous church. . . . Grace Church puts one in mind of the style of over-ornamented and bedizened column and panel work so popular among theatrical scene painters. The music, too, is a complete innovation on the usual style of church music. It is loud without being impressive. . . . The

haughty bearing of our American aristocrats (that most contemptible phase of aristocracy in the whole world!), the rustling silks and gaudy colors in which wealthy bad taste loves to publish its innate coarseness—the pompous tread, and the endeavor to 'look grand,'—how disgustingly frequent are all these at Grace Church! Ah, there is no religion there. The worst feelings and impulses of humanity, instead of being thrown aside, are incorporated in everything connected with the establishment, and its proceedings."

American church architecture which according to Walt Whitman embodied "the worst impulses of humanity" has long since been supplanted by the superior taste of those American church builders from Richardson to Goodhue and Cram who were even more deeply steeped in European medievalism than the English architect of Grace Church on Broadway. Is their art more American? Is it expressive of higher social impulses and of a more truly *civic* spirit than the English church that shocked

Trinity Church, Boston.



Right: Plan showing its location on Copley Square.

Walt Whitman? And if the individual buildings of these new designers evince superior skill in the use of the medieval mode, are the settings of their structures compatible with this more dignified use, and does the neighborhood respect them? Even the satisfactory appearance of the finest building depends largely upon its satisfactory position in the proper surroundings. Did the architects fulfill this most fundamental requirement of all civic art?

By no means! Richardson's famous Trinity Church in Boston lacks the indispensable relationship to a well proportioned fore-

court (the "paradise" of the medieval builder), and faces, instead, a triangle created not by an artist but by unsympathetic traffic engineers. It is true that the neighboring would-be skyscrapers were, respectfully, half-completed, and were prevented from soaring higher than ten stories. But this means that they are still six stories higher than the scale of Trinity Church could artistically permit. In New York Goodhue's charming St. Thomas' Church is disrespectfully squeezed into an irrelevant corner of a block and is, now, fatally drowning between skyscrapers. And the ostensibly medieval construction of Cram's gorgeous and most costly St. John the Divine is in reality a sham pasted over modern steel and skyscraper construction thus flagrantly contradicting the ideals of superior "honesty" promulgated as an expression of medieval architecture by its modern copyist.[2] Also the outward refinement of the showiness of college and office buildings, apartment and tenement houses—although they are distinct improvements or caricatures of heavily corniced Italian palaces or of Tudor castles with battlements and fake half-timber work—is often transcended by the parsimony influencing the exploitation of and the crowding on the land. Crowding and "overcrowding" made the pretentious new cities of this evidently too small American continent obsolete long before the steel supporting their pasticcio of architectural motives had a chance to rust. To what extent could the genius of Richardson and his followers have given a dignified appearance to this economic and social chaos?

Richardson's greatness was eulogized at an early date. In a symposium on the ten finest buildings in America, conducted by an architectural journal in the 'eighties,' five designed by Richardson were given unanimous acclaim. Although the dilatory Encyclopedia Britannica of 1891 does not refer to him in a single word, its Chicago reprint of the same year, with "Original American Articles by Eminent Writers," informs us that "the late H. H. Richardson, of Boston, may be said to have first popularized the principles of a pure architectural taste in the United States, and it has been justly said that to him we owe the fact that we have today an American architecture, though

[2] The ¾" scale drawing of wooden king post truss over Synod House at the Cathedral of St. John in New York shows this truss and ceiling suspended from a steel truss completely concealed in the ceiling space.

scores of lesser lights were working along the same lines whose labors have since borne abundant fruit. Richardson's monument is Trinity Church, Boston, and from its erection, a few years ago, dates a new era in the religious architecture of the country. Scarcely a city of prominence but can point to one or more churches conceived in the highest spirit of the builder's art. In our civic and governmental buildings, too, we have cast off the shackles of ignorance and provincialism, and in most instances the results are eminently satisfactory. Meantime, the aesthetic leaven, spreading downward, has tended to beautify the domestic architecture, at least, of our larger cities and towns. In the West, no less than in the East, is this made manifest, and the suburbs of the great centers of population are dotted with examples of a trained taste and an attention to the demands of the new environment. The amazing growth in recent years of building and loan associations has made it possible for the artisan and the man of moderate means to own a modest home. Even in this direction the new school of architecture has made itself felt." (Cf. American Appendix to Vol. II of Encycl. Brit., ninth edition, Chicago, 1891, p. 131.)

Thereupon the same American Appendix from Chicago proudly and elaborately describes another and entirely "new style of structure, first introduced into that city and known as 'The Chicago Construction.'" In connection with *this* "new style," however, the name of Richardson is not mentioned. It is, nevertheless, this very mode of iron and steel construction which is rapidly becoming, apparently, the most congenial expression of our machine age. This new style has conquered America and is conquering the world, while the works of the previously mentioned "new school of architecture" founded by Richardson seem to be—what Claude Bragdon called them—"stage scenery," having long ago gone "back to the storehouse." (The full quotation is given on p. 354.) This criticism of "stage scenery" repeats (inadvertently, one may assume) the denunciation ("theatrical scene painting") so eloquently declaimed half a century earlier by Walt Whitman in his refutation of the Gothic pasticcio of Renwick's Grace Church. Even for Richardson's Romanesque art his great contemporary in poetry seems to have expressed less, if any, veneration than for the symbols of the

new machine age. Richardson was ten years old when Whitman wrote: "There are few more magnificent pieces of handiwork than a powerful steam-engine, swiftly at work!" (January 10, 1848.)

The patriotic admiration, which Richardson's Romanesque buildings aroused in other contemporaries of the gilded eighties and gay nineties, is perhaps exactly what should have been expected. More impressive is the fact that in some minds this admiration survived the period of alleged bad taste and that it has, only a few years ago, been voiced again in similar and even stronger terms by some of the advance guard of American critics. And even when they stop admiring Richardson's own "new school of architecture," they claim—as we shall see—that Richardson was in reality the very prophet of that "new style" of "Chicago construction" referred to above which is today our most adequate hope for a new civic art. Against this claim the counter-claim exists that Richardson (and, in so far as he has influenced them, almost each one of his followers) has not aided but rather impeded the American advance towards a new civic art, i.e. an art which is at the same time practical and beautiful. Richardson's critics, furthermore, claim that the handicap he created is as yet by no means overcome; that its implications still lie at the bottom of much of our historical teaching in architecture; that similar regrettable "modes" or fashions under different guise are recurring every few years.

It is not in architecture that *la recherche de la paternité est interdite.* On the contrary, the curiously opposing and sometimes even slightly grotesque opinions held about Richardson demand scrutiny. If the paternity of modern architecture is once analyzed and validly repudiated in so outstanding a pretender as Richardson, the child—new architecture!—may grow up to be more healthy, and the subsequent claims made for the numerous other dubious but ambitious "fathers" can be passed over with less concern.

Following are, verbatim, some of the more recent assertions and counter-assertions made in Richardson's behalf. We read: "Between 1880 and 1895 the task and method of modern architecture were clarified through the example of a group of American architects whose consistent and united efforts in this line

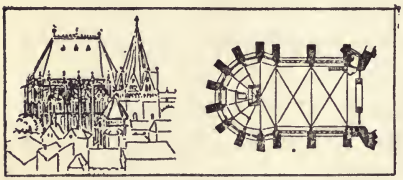
antedated, by at least a decade, the earliest similar innovations in Europe. Modern architecture had its beginning in this period," which witnessed "the first experimental efforts to work out the form of an office building, an urban factory, a hotel, in terms of their inherent needs and their new possibilities. How did this change come about? In back of it stands a colossal man, Henry Hobson Richardson, an architect who almost single-handed created out of a confusion which was actually worse than a mere void the beginnings of a new architecture." ("The Brown Decades," Lewis Mumford, p. 113 f.)

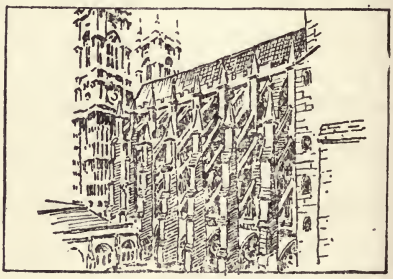
Thus in almost medieval adoration of Richardson spoke his admirer, Lewis Mumford, who otherwise has by no means such medieval inclinations. His Richardsonian creed, although shared by many, is opposed by those iconoclasts who denounce Richardson as "a kind of exotic, a mistaken interpreter of his time and his opportunity, a great artist manqué." (Royal Cortissoz, in "Art and Common Sense," p. 387) Creator? Or mistaken interpreter? Which is he?

Richardson's power of specifically modern creation was compatible with (or due to) the fact that he "was perhaps the last of the great medieval line of master-masons." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 101.)

What may the terminator of an extinct art have done to initiate modern architecture? The last medieval master-mason? Do not this and similar slightly mystical expressions form part of that romantic and sometimes even nauseating ideology of John Ruskin who praises everything medieval and sneers at everything else, be it Renaissance or modern? We know, by now, that the medieval master-masons, like any other masters, made frequent errors. Their calculations were probably less accurate than those of modern architects. Entire medieval churches proved unstable and were blown down by the wind (like the one of Utrecht, only the apse of which is still standing). Probably many more of them would have collapsed by this time if modern architects had not spent much of their genius and more of the people's money in maintaining the complicated stone work of these often irrational structures or rather stone scaffoldings. Also the frequently stated assertion that the medieval masons were more "honest" than their successors may be dis-

missed. It is true that the famous Renaissance domes of the cathedral in Florence or of St. Peter in Rome are held together by hidden chains. But is this any more "dishonest" than the fact that the grandiose Gothic choir (built about 1385) of the cathedral in Aix-la-Chapelle is built without the outer stone scaffolding of flying buttresses and is actually held together by concealed iron chains? (Where this chain must pass through the gloriously exalted windows of the choir it is each time deftly disguised as one of the metal frames that holds the stained glass in place.) Thus the choir stands and is probably much more beautiful for having its outer view unobstructed by the heavy outriggings of stone called flying buttresses. And these fine outer views convey to an honest person nothing "dishonest." On the contrary, if one craves for interpretation, one might even say that they suggest the almighty though invisible holy ghost who through as modest and "modern" a medium as iron holds the body and the soul of the sacred church together. Words permitting any variety of literary interpretation to whatever an architect wishes to do will never be lacking.

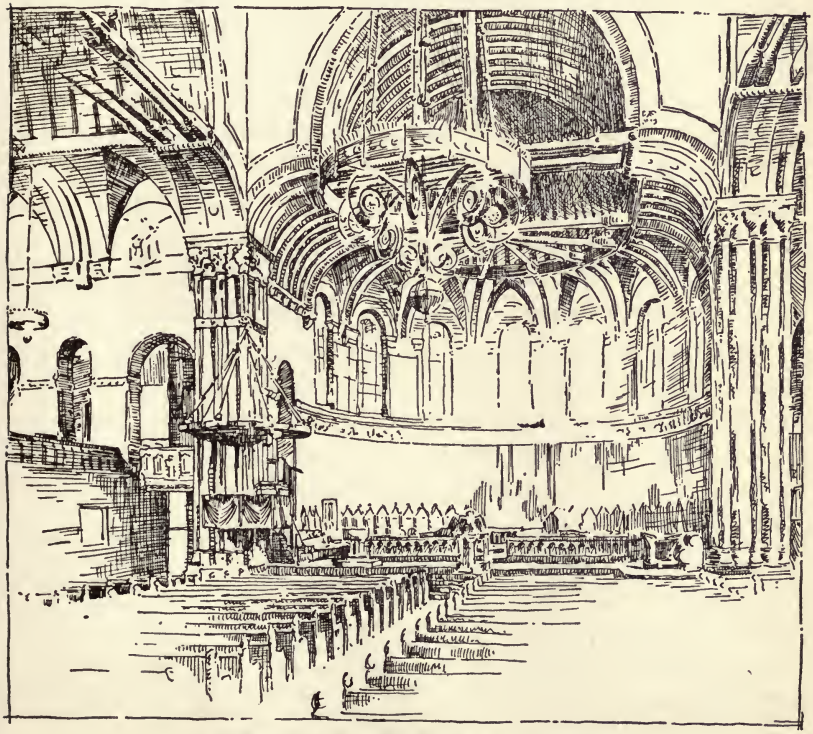




Above: Aix-la-Chapelle, 16th Century. Right: Nave of Westminster Abbey, 15th Century, showing light obscured by flying buttresses.

A claim as precarious and romantic as the one asserting the superior "honesty" of the medieval master-masons has been made by Ruskin and his followers who declare that the social order of the middle ages was superior to our own. More careful students of medievalism have shown that there was just as much social unrest during the period of cathedral building as there is today. And there were many fights and strikes even when it came to the financing of and the slaving for the erection of the most sublimely religious structures. But there is here not sufficient space to discuss this obvious fact. (It has been touched upon in the Sixteenth Chapter.)

Let us return to the question: what does it mean to designate Richardson as "perhaps the last of the great medieval line of master-masons"? The medieval architects knew most of all how to form wonderful interiors. They put the "flying" structural supports of their amazing halls outside the building so as not to obstruct its interior. In sunny Greece the congregations assembled outside the temples which could be duly admired from without; neither inside nor outside had they flying buttresses to obstruct their crystalline forms. The churches in the cloudier countries of the "dark" middle-ages, on the contrary, gathered their rapt congregations within masterly shaped halls. Joseph Hudnut has justly emphasized: "Gothic architecture is an architecture of interiors." But another attentive student of medieval architecture, on the other hand, speaks of Richardson's "wholly evil interiors." (A. Kingsley Porter in "Beyond Architecture," 1918, p. 198) What was there medieval about Richardson?



Interior of Trinity Church . . . Boston.

With this question in mind I visited his Trinity Church one bright sunny September morning and was shocked by the glare of at least two hundred electric bulbs. These were distributed around large and small chandeliers, but struggled ineffectually against the darkness of the medieval structure. A kind gentleman attendant assured me that artificial light was required even in the summertime. "And even then," he said, "I find it often quite spooky. A lady of our congregation told us that she would like to visit the church more often, but this spookiness gives her the creeps." Over the small windows filled with darkly stained glass Richardson raised a vault which is a wooden make-believe covering a truss with tie-beam and king-post. The vertical kingpost seems to hang down from the center of the vault, i.e. from the very point of the vault that would be the weakest if the construction were what it tries to appear to be, namely, a vault, rather than a masquerading truss. There may be no objection to simulating an appearance which is at variance with the structural reality. But such a conjurer's trick must either produce something beautiful or at least conjure up the illusion of some historical precedent with which the designer or the beholder may be infatuated. Richardson's vault is not beautiful. It certainly reminds one of no "honest" medieval construction. Where, then, is the "medieval master-mason"? [3]

This brings us to something more truly *moyenâgesque*. The discoverer of Richardson's more significant new name (see footnote) also calls him a "true master builder." But he adds: "Richardson, too, might be called a copyist, for he adored the genuine craftsman splendors of the Romanesque." (Cf. "Rameses to Rockefeller," Charles Harris Whitaker, p. 242). Now the real miracle appears: the "copyist" was provided with "the creative instinct." It was the Romanesque of Southern France that fecundated this instinct with the conception of a "new archi-

[3] Is it perhaps more akin to medieval practice (but it certainly cannot be important!) that part of Richardson's name is shrouded in that romantic mystery which often conceals the identities of designers of medieval cathedrals? As a modern illustration of how such medieval shroudings can originate, it may be mentioned that for many brown decades Richardson's admirers thought his middle name to be Hobson. But this was evidently not "Hobson's choice." Recently, his cryptic connection with a great musical composer and his identity with a certain Australian writer seem to have been discovered: his middle name now seems to be Handel. (See Whitaker, "Rameses to Rockefeller," p. 242 and 358)

tecture." And—an entirely medieval touch—this fecundation was the result of an immaculate conception: it occurred without bodily contact. This belated or pseudo-Christian miracle was consummated in 1872 when Richardson received the holy and profitable commission for Trinity Church in Boston. "Although it was not until ten years later that he saw any Romanesque buildings other than in photographs—for he had not traveled during his student years in Paris—it was in this sturdy mode that he cast his best work." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 101.) Indeed, Richardson's admired Trinity Church, in spite of its "wholly evil interior," presents his inspired effort to copy the French Romanesque "mode," a mode which he did not see "until ten years later."

Such an attempt to create out of photographs a *new* architecture which is "cast" in medieval forms might be called "bookish theoric"; but this term belongs to Shakespeare and his Renaissance, unsympathetic with medieval modes. At any rate, Richardson's "single-handed" and perhaps somewhat high-handed effort was doomed to failure.

Christ fulfilled the predictions of great prophets. The inspired medieval master-mason tried to do likewise: "Going back to Romanesque precedent. . . . he was following out a dictum of Viollet-le-Duc: 'only primitive sources supply the energy for a long career.'" ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 101.)

Primitive? How can the "*last* medieval master-mason" be a primitive? Richardson "copied" the porch of Saint Trophime (Arles), built in the twelfth century. Is it likely that its anonymous designer considered himself a "primitive"? Or did he rather proudly consider himself to be the *last* of the Romans? This church in Arles is adorned with sculpture and decorations which might almost pass as late Roman work.

And did Richardson have "the energy for a long career"? He had the genial appetites of a "King Lehr" and of "the Gilded Age" the clumsy extravagances of which have recently been retold by Elizabeth Drexel Lehr. But Richardson's "gargantuan appetites," his "love for good food," and "his capacity to drink champagne" lasted him—after his virginal conception of the Trinity—only fourteen years. His "bulky figure" (all these epithets are taken from "The Brown Decades," Lewis Mumford,

p. 116) had soon become so bulky that his genius, to permit him to survey his jobs under construction, had to invent special hoists and tackles to lift the weight of his Falstaffian figure to the upper stories. As late as 1934 an old attendant at the State Capitol in Albany vividly described this uplifting process of which he had, in his youth, been a frequent eyewitness. But it is perhaps not to the rope required by this process that Mr. Whitaker refers when, in his glowing account of Richardson's significance, he writes: "With Richardson there passed a moment when it would be easy to say that the fate of Architecture in America hung by a thread." ("Rameses to Rockefeller," p. 244.) American architecture will not be hung as "easily" as that.

Even liberated from his chores by an untimely death, the spirit of Richardson had no "long career." In an essay "Towards a New Architecture," Mr. Claude Bragdon writes the following phrases (partly quoted above): "The vogue of the 'Richardson Romanesque' was short-lived, being foreign to our psychology, and ill-adjusted to our needs. It was stage scenery, in point of fact, and only a little after the death of its great exemplar the show closed and the scenery went back to the storehouse." And "the so-called Richardsonian Romanesque style, with its rough stone walls, small, deeply set windows, squat columns and round arches with enormous voussoirs, was affected, extravagant and ill-adapted to modern needs and conditions. Being first of all a practical people, and architecture being first of all a practical art, a short time after death had put an end to Richardson's activities and so diminished the force of his example, we abandoned the use of a style which offered so many impediments to comfort and convenience." [4]

A similar opinion was expressed by Mr. Royal Cortissoz: "Richardson encouraged exoticism, redundancy, and an unexpressive florid kind of swagger, at a time when the one thing needed was discipline."

The opinion of Mr. Cortissoz has been quoted and called "stupid" by Richardson's admirer, Mr. Mumford, who, sometimes, likes to fling epithets at his opponents, although he may,

[4] The latter quotations are taken from Bragdon's essay: "The First American Modernist: Louis Sullivan." As the title indicates, Bragdon endeavors to secure the title of "First American Modernist" for Sullivan rather than for Richardson. The merits of each are equal.

in many essentials, agree with his victims. Mr. Mumford avers that: "Richardson, alas! left scarcely a trace upon the period that followed." He calls Richardson "the chief exponent of American romanticism" and admits that the "Romanesque precedent" which Richardson attempted to "absorb" was "a vanished tradition." And the attempt was not always successful: "So far had the art of masonry disappeared that in Trinity Church Richardson sometimes introduced struts and girders without any attempt to assimilate them in the composition"; nevertheless, "Richardson's brand of romanticism was a genuine attempt to embrace the age." ("Sticks and Stones," p. 102 f.)

Does Richardson's failure to assimilate struts and girders weaken or strengthen the thesis that he was the last great master-mason? This thesis, by the way, might have made Richardson, or at least his contemporaries, smile. One of them, a true admirer, wrote, in 1888, an article on fire-protection by slow burning construction, especially in the textile factories of New England. He cites Richardson's Field Warehouse in Chicago as an excellent example of good (interior) timber construction. Today, it is a parking lot. Unlike most of the other of Richardson's cyclopean buildings, the ponderous masses of which are too expensive to pull down, it did not escape destruction. Probably its floors and roofs were three inch oak planks, its joists heavy oak timbers and its posts cast iron. Assimilated or not by the master-mason, such construction satisfied the fire insurance company. It evoked the following comment from the expert in fire protection: "The great warehouse built by Richardson for Marshall Field is but a glorified cotton factory, and the lovely little building connected with the home office of Mr. Richardson in which his art treasures were safely housed was the picker building of a cotton factory with a touch of genius added." (Century Magazine, Vol. 15, p. 578.) Richardson came from Louisiana. It is a great pity that his cotton picking souvenirs, after he had "glorified" them, look so very much more like medieval dungeons than like Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Richardson's most censorious critic is probably neither Cortissoz nor Bragdon, but Mumford: "The chief marks of the style Richardson created," he said, "are the all-too-solid courses of rough stone, the round arch, the squat columns, and the con-

trasts in color between the light granite and the dark sandstone or serpentine." ("Sticks and Stones," p. 105.) Seven years later Mr. Mumford praised Richardson's "strong sense of colour, which perhaps tempted him too far in his use of contrasting stones." Without a doubt, too far. Today, one may admit that although Richardson had little sense of colour he wantonly used contrasting stones, probably because he had been reading Viollet-le-Duc or Ruskin who told him that polychromy was good medieval practice.

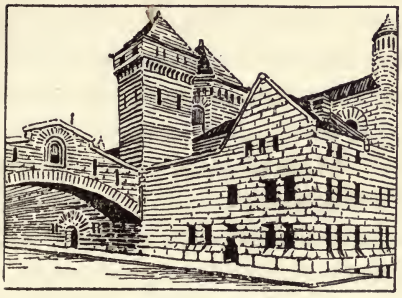
"Mr. Montgomery Schuyler, an excellent architectural critic, once said, not without reason, that Richardson's houses were not defensible except in a military sense." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 105.) Mr. Mumford speaks of Richardson's "ponderous forms" and says: "His efforts with the heavy Romanesque earned, not altogether unjustly, the epithet dropsical." Dropsy, the dictionaries tell us, is "a morbid collection of fluid in the serous cavities of the body."

Montgomery Schuyler, whom even Mumford does not refer to as being "stupid," but as being "the one real critic of architecture that America has produced," comments on the Gargantuan freakishness of Richardson's work as follows:

"Richardson's best buildings were the express images of that impetuous and exuberant personality that all who knew him remember. He used to tell of a tourist. . . . who upon being introduced to him exclaimed: 'Oh, Mr. Richardson, how you are like your work!' . . . the salutation was not without critical value." Schuyler ponders: " . . . when a building consists as exclusively as possible of bare stone walls, it irresistibly suggests . . . . the abode of a misanthrope." When it happens, however, that such a defensive residence is erected "upon a fashionable avenue" one may assume "that the owner does not profess misanthropical sentiments," but that "the character of his abode must be referred to a whim on the part of his architect—a Titanic, or rather Gargantuan freak." (Montgomery Schuyler, "American Architecture," p. 153 and 160.)

The "dropsical" morbidity of many of Richardson's erected buildings being fairly generally admitted, his disciples, when in less anachronistic moods, ask us to admire the work which he did *not* do, but would have liked to have done. "The things I want

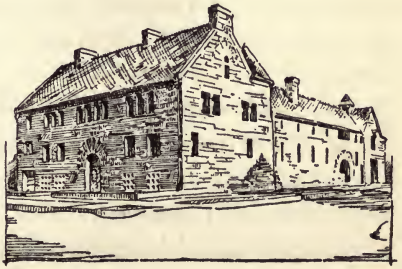
most to design," Richardson said to his biographer, "are a grain-elevator and the interior of a great river-steamboat." But those who praise him for such statements forget that "by one of those paradoxes that seem peculiarly ironical (Richardson once said:



The Jail . . . Pittsburgh (Richardson).

'Wait till they see my jail!'), his finest building is the Pittsburgh County Jail. There one finds true masonry, flawless in the rhythm of all its parts. In the jumble of modern Pittsburgh, with its dull and pompous pseudo-Roman, at Schenley Square, and its miles on miles of shabby streets and sprawling fringes of sheer and utter ugliness, Richardson's jail stands out like a finger of shame." ("Rameses to Rockefeller," Charles Harris Whitaker, p. 243.)

Shameful, therefore, seems to be the fact, that the finest building of the "creator of modern architecture" is a pseudo-Romanesque prison. It is his finest achievement because in this he could approach most closely his far-fetched romantic ideal of an eleventh century dungeon and could fully satisfy his craving for a minimum of small windows, or rather loopholes and embrasures. Old dungeons are, of course, very beautiful at least from without, in spite of their "wholly evil interiors." It would



Glessner residence . . . Chicago (Richardson).

even be unjust to say that the beauty of this kind of military architecture is wholly un-American. In the northwest corner of Central Park, New York, stands a souvenir of the American Revolution, "Blockhouse No. 1," an excellent example of how sturdy an American pile of rocks with a minimum of openings also can look.

Richardson's admirers, however, are not inclined to admit that the "copyist" of fortresses ("not defensible except in a military sense") stubbornly resisted the modern age and its demand for air, light and lightness. They suggest, rather amusingly, that after all Montgomery Schuyler must have been wrong, when he directed his accusations against the architect, and not the client, for demanding this freakishness. No, they say, it was not Richardson's fault, but modern America's: "The fact that so many of Richardson's buildings have the heavy air of a prison shows us that the Gilded Age was not, indeed, gay, and that a spiritual Black Friday perpetually threatened the calendar of its days." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 114.) Thus the ominous fluctuations of the New York Stock Exchange (and not Viollet-le-Duc's "dictum") were responsible for Richardson's imitating "a vanished tradition" of France, most suitable for prisons, when the problem was rather to design modern America's residential and other buildings. In short, Richardson's edifices were *not* "the beginnings of a new architecture," but were the ominous expressions of the Gilded Age.

Richardson's admirers may sometimes be perverse; but they are not blind. "Richardson was a mason, and masonry was being driven out by steel. . . . The very strength of Richardson's buildings was a fatal weakness in the growing centers of commerce and industry." The difficulty of getting rid of these Romanesque structures "only increased the demand for a more frail and facile method of construction. Romanticism met its great defeat in the office-building." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 106 f.)

After this admission of Richardson's defeat his admirers found a new line of defense. Mr. Mumford even reversed his previous argument: "Romanticism met its great defeat in the office building." Those in sympathy with Richardson now claim that "the chief exponent of American romanticism" celebrated his great

triumph in his last office buildings. "What Richardson brought to architecture, finally, was an interest, not in an exotic past, not in dead forms, not in the external flourish, but in the inherent nature of building itself and its relation to society."

This new thesis is said to be proved by Richardson's Marshall Field and John H. Pray buildings. His contemporary, the excellent Montgomery Schuyler, praised the Field Building by saying: "Its bigness is made apparent by the simplicity of its treatment and the absence of any lateral division whatever. Simplicity, indeed, could scarcely go further." Instead of the simplicity of the structure the modern observer rather admires Richardson's capacity to invent, for a simple warehouse of seven stories and a basement, the unbelievable multiplicity of eight different types of windows. At least two of these rows of windows (the arched ones in the fourth and sixth stories) are distinctly designed to create an exterior "esthetic" effect and not to satisfy requirements for interior lighting. The game played with podium, colonaded attic, palace cornice, and different-sized groups of windows dissatisfies even Schuyler. He says: "It must be owned that there is a distinct infelicity in the arrangement of the five stories of this intermediate wall, the two superposed arcades, the upper one of which, by reason of its multiplied supports, is the more solid aspect, and between which there is no harmonious relation, but contrariwise a competition."

Richardson was incapable of simplicity even when he distinctly desired it. One must appreciate this unsatisfied craving. When the rebuilding of the business quarter of Boston was in progress, and while that city was for the most part congratulating itself upon the display of the skill of its architects for which the fire had opened a field, Mr. Richardson observed (to Schuyler) "that there was more character in the plain and solid warehouses that had been destroyed than in the florid edifices by which they had been replaced."

This comment (the present author believes) should become the basis of America's architectural criticism. It is directed most of all against Richardson and then against all the "architects" who, following him, ruined the auspicious, fairly sane and practical development of American architecture—one might even say, tradition. They ruined it by acting the part of some anachro-

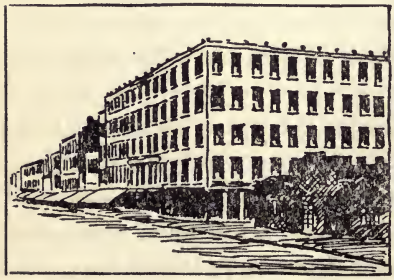
nistic "master-mason" and by "designing" buildings inspired by photographs taken elsewhere, first in southern France, then in Egypt (we shall presently see the Monadnock Block!), and later in almost every other part of the globe.

Astor House . . . New York.

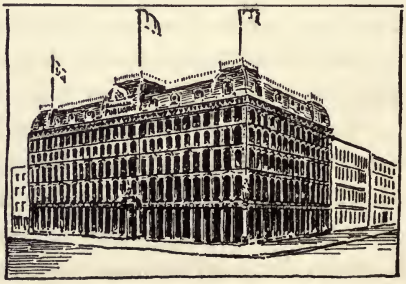
Stewart Bldg. . . . . New York (now Wanamakers).

Richardson's platonic words (or crocodile tears) about the fine "character in the destroyed plain and solid warehouses" will be understood if one considers the scanty remains of those very periods as yet undefiled by romantic master-masons. Mr. T. F. Hamlin, in his valuable book, "The American Spirit in Architecture," has preserved many fine old views. The old Astor House and the old Stewart Building, both on Broadway in New York, the Neil House in Columbus, and even Philadelphia's old Public Ledger Building (with its cast iron front, like that of the old Stewart Building), manifest greater simplicity and less pretention than Richardson's vaunted Field Building. They also evince what serious tendencies towards a new and practical realism, utterly unconcerned with academic prejudices, had been fatally interrupted by the "dropsy" of Richardson.

But Mumford writes: "One can almost agree with a young



Neil House . . . Columbus, O.



Public Ledger Bldg. . . . Phila., Pa.

American critic of architecture when she says: 'Richardson was the real founder of the *Neue Sachlichkeit.*' " ("The Brown Decades," p. 126.) If this has a malicious intent, she might indeed be right. Of course, the German architects' "Neue Sachlichkeit" means "new matter-of-factness" or functionalism. But, unfortunately, this slogan has been selected by a group of architects, some of whom were decidedly great artists of the *l'art pour l'art type*, willing to commit any conceivable sacrifice of common sense and practicality for the sake of some novel artistic effect, whether it was long horizontal windows, or whole glass fronts, or making buildings look like ships, like Le Corbusier's, or resorting to other novel devices.

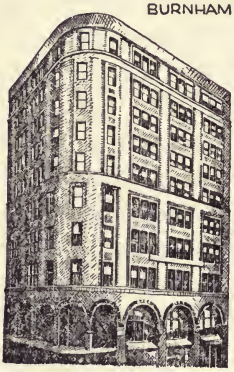
Richardson's matter-of-factness, we are told, achieved its final triumph in his Pray Building. "Though this building antedated the skeleton form of construction, it already has the feeling of lightness, and the readiness to welcome sun and air that this departure should have brought in; in the shallow reveals, the design is already miles from stone construction. This conception of an office building dates less than ten years after the clumsy romantic office buildings Richardson himself had designed in Hartford and Boston; but it was more than a generation in advance of current work." And: "The bays (of the Pray Building) are given their full width and the spandrels are only as wide as the floor is thick; the windows are unbroken, except for the band that separates the stories from the upper panels; even the unfortunate features of the upper story, the round arches and the castellated windows at the top are carried through with great simplicity." ("The Brown Decades," Lewis Mumford, p. 126.)

The fact is that Richardson decorated his Pray Building with colossal windows, aiming at an effect which is uncalled for. It would be justified only if some huge hall or church with an unobstructed interior equal to four ordinary stories were to be lighted. But Richardson places his colossal windows in front of four ordinary stories. He does it by extending the glass surface of ordinary windows down to the floor level, i.e., down to the place where no glass is needed and where—quite generally—the observer (on the outside) sees the radiator which blocks—and must heat—the unnecessary expanse and expense of glass near the floor.

Delusion has infinite possibilities, good sense, only one! As

① MONADNOCK BLDG.—CHICAGO
BURNHAM & ROOT

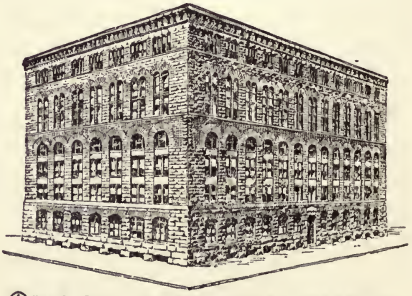
② CHURCH IN BALTIMORE—MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE



③ 900 BROADWAY — NEW YORK
MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE (?) M. WELLS)

④ AUDITORIUM BLDG.—CHICAGO
ADLER & SULLIVAN

⑤ PRAY BLDG.—BOSTON—H. H. RICHARDSON



⑥ FIELD BLDG.—CHICAGO—H. H. RICHARDSON

Richardson wished to have his make-believe giant window appear arched at the top, one whole story receives more of the superfluous light coming in at the floor level, and much less of the essential light coming in where the upper and most light-giving part of the window should be. It is in the fifth story that the upper part of the outer wall must accommodate Richardson's Romanesque arch (inevitable, of course!) which seems specially designed to obstruct the light. Is this "great simplicity," or are we already in the presence of "the unfortunate features of the upper story"? No, it is the sixth story whose "features are carried through with great simplicity" but made "unfortunate" by Richardson's craving to obtain, above his round arches, the additional "artistic" effect of a Romanesque cornice with windows through which as little light as possible may pass.

It is unnecessary to show in detail how Richardson's extravagance influenced other architects, especially Sullivan, and how the same illogical method of extolling Richardson has been practised in the critical judging or rather misjudging of other American architects and has done much to deter the advance of American architecture. Two examples, from the work of Root and of Sullivan, may be given special attention. Sullivan (who will be discussed after Root) began by imitating Richardson's copies of Romanesque arches. His colleague, Irving K. Pond, wrote: "In his 'Autobiography of an Idea' . . . Louis Sullivan proclaims his love of mathematics and his sympathy with engineering . . . his design belies the latter in many a striking example in which the dominating arch is made mere ornament and its structural character is denied."

This same use of ornament which is intended to look structural but in reality is not, was also resorted to by J. W. Root. Loud praise has been given to the exotic tendencies of Root and gentle slander has been piled upon his partner, Burnham, and upon the architects who with him built the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. They broke away from the Richardsonian Romanesque in an attempt to develop for modern American use the Greek-Roman-Renaissance-Georgian forms which had taken firm root in America with the earliest white settlers, long before 1785, when Thomas Jefferson (twenty-two years before the Madeleine was built in Paris) designed and constructed the Virginia Capitol,

upon purely Roman lines, and soon afterwards attempted something similar in his home at Monticello and in the very wonderful University of Virginia. The efforts to follow American precedent instead of playing with exotic forms have been most severely criticized by the advance guard of American critics. They praise Root who preferred Egyptian, East Indian and Hindoo forms.

Root is the architect who is generally credited with the design of the Monadnock Building, in Chicago. "Montgomery Schuyler pronounced the Monadnock Building the best of all tall office buildings. He was right. It was by far the best thing done in masonry and its windows were more inventively planned than those of Sullivan's Auditorium Building, which followed close on its heels." And it is the Monadnock Building "which has exerted such a powerful influence over the new school of German architects." In addition to these remarks made by Mumford, he further maintains: "Our first tall buildings were designed for the most part by men who thought in terms of established architectural forms: Burnham and Root's Monadnock Building was an almost isolated exception; and, significantly enough, it did not employ the steel skeleton! The academic architects compared the skyscraper to a column, with a base, a shaft, and a capital." ("Sticks and Stones," p. 169.)

The Rookery . . . Chicago (Root).
(See p. 366)

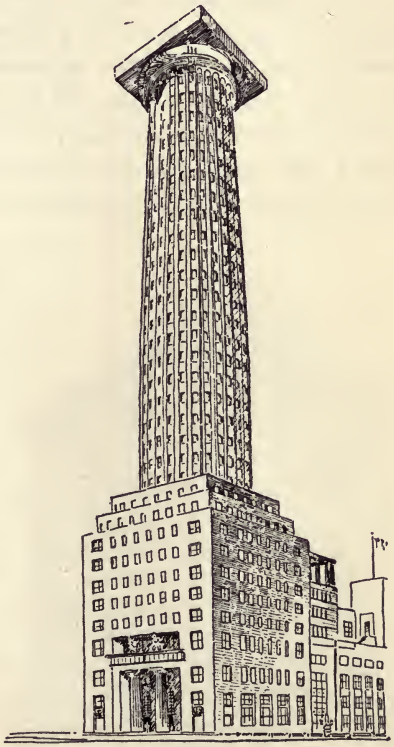
It happens—this may be mentioned incidentally—that it was one of the most anti-academic of architects, the internationally known Viennese modernist, Adolf Loos, who most strongly entreated that a skyscraper look like a column.[5] It also happens that the Monadnock Building and its alleged designer Root were by no means the exceptions Mumford declares them to be. Root was

[5] Cf. "Adolf Loos," edited by H. Kulka, Vienna, 1931, p. 378, fig. 156.

precisely one of those despised "men who thought in terms of established architectural forms." It was the much slandered business man of the nineties and, with him, the shrewd Burnham who partly, but only partly, succeeded in pulling Root away from his academic leanings. Harriet Monroe's biography of Root tells us very honestly how the clients "rejected Root's sketches as too ornate. During Root's absence of a fortnight, Mr. Burnham ordered from one of the draftsmen a design of a straight up-and-down, uncompromising, unornamented facade. When Root returned, he was indignant at first over this project of a brick box. Gradually, however, he threw himself into the spirit of the thing, and one day told Mr. Aldis (the uncompromising businessman) that 'the heavy sloping lines of an Egyptian pylon had gotten into his mind as the basis of this design, and that he thought he would throw the whole thing up without a single ornament.' "

When Root thus turned Egyptian, he had seen as little of Egypt (and of Egyptian pylons used for office purposes) as Richardson had seen of Southern France when he turned South French Romanesque. But such truly "creative" architects could work (and, it seems, could work *only*) when the practical demands made by the clients were somehow reconciled with the suggestions of some photograph which had impressed the artists' brilliant minds.

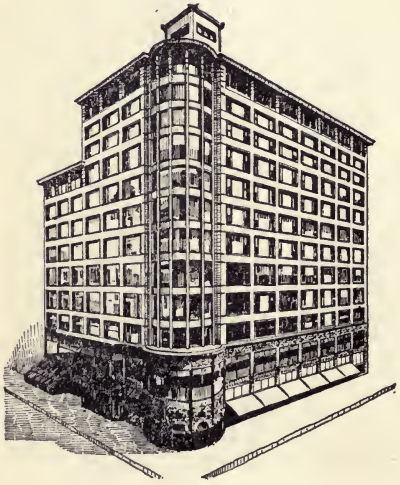
When such recollections have influenced the business buildings of architects of the McKim, Mead and White group, the severe American critics speak with disgust of "office-buildings which retained



Design for Chicago Tribune Tower (Adolf Loos).

ill-chosen souvenirs from crumbled civilizations." ("The Brown Decades," Lewis Mumford, p. 141.) When Root finally decides to bow to the practical requirements of his client and to the better judgment of Burnham, it is called "a wise decision." When bulky Richardson refused to listen to common sense, we are told: "Richardson did not grovel before practical conditions." It was, of course, only Burnham who groveled; at least that is an often repeated criticism of him. Even the highly cultured McKim is branded as a "better salesman." The same critics inform us that Burnham ruined the Chicago World's Fair (by introducing uniform style and cornice line) and that this Fair would have been *so* much better if his partner Root had not died prematurely. But "Root had initially conceived of a variegated oriental setting." (And Root's "epochal building," the Rookery, profusely covered with ornament, was "discovered to be East Indian or Hindoo—a wayward child of Root's seething brain.")

Was Root's Egyptian choice for the Monadnock Building really such a wise choice? In order to obtain the effect of verticality indispensable to his souvenir pylon he had to use narrow or "more inventively planned windows." To use narrow windows, however, meant going back, even before Richardson, who in his latest office buildings had previously proved that broad windows were possible even when they must be arched in the fifth story and

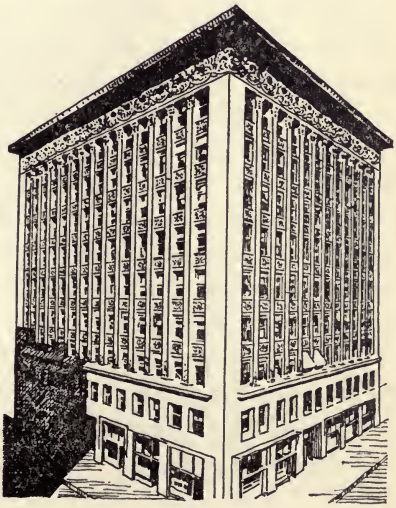


**Carson, Pirie, Scott Building . . . Chicago (Sullivan).**

thus decorated with souvenirs from the "dark" ages. In order to obtain in his Monadnock Block what he considered to be an Egyptian effect, Root did what Sullivan, at almost the same time, with many declamations, did in his skyscrapers in order to obtain a soaring effect, only to prove shortly afterwards by his Schlesinger and Mayer Building[6] that about one-half of the vertical members separating the windows was wanton decoration and could be eliminated.

Sullivan's fallacy has perhaps best been pointed out by Irving K. Pond, who writes: "In the Foreword to his 'Autobiography of an Idea' we read that 'Louis Sullivan's was the distinction of having been, perhaps, the first squarely to face the expressional problem of the steel framed skyscraper and to deal with it honestly and logically. Later solutions, in so far as they are good, have been along the lines that he, by precept and example, first laid down.' To solve the problem of the steel framed skyscraper, in any manner, is just one thing that Louis Sullivan never did, anyway not by example. I wouldn't say he never seriously attempted it. One time he gives the whole frame a horizontal treatment—an anomaly. Another time he gives part of the frame a vertical expression and part a horizontal. Where his verticals tend to dominate, as they should, he crushes them with a powerful horizontal feature. Some one made Louis Sullivan believe that he had solved the problem. On page 298 of the 'Autobiography'

[6] Now the Carson, Pirie, Scott Building.



Wainwright Building . . . St. Louis (Sullivan).

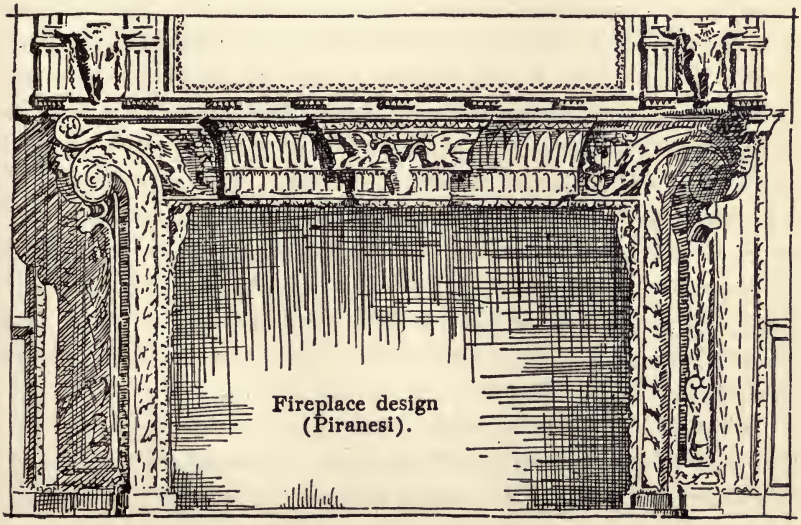
we read: 'and in Saint Louis, it was given first authentic recognition and expression in the exterior treatment of the Wainwright Building, a nine-story office structure, by Louis Sullivan's own hand'. . . . That design is no more a solution of the problem of covering architecturally the steel skeleton than would be the application of a Palladian motif with a basement plinth, a classical colonnade extending through the height of two or more stories, and an entablature taking in the attic story. There is in the Wainwright Building a two-storied base or plinth, a series of columns all alike, but every *other* one containing a steel core, though the exterior semblance is the same in all—running through seven stories and having each a capital, and this feature is crowned with a frieze and cornice out of all proportion with the columns on which they rest—a horizontal, a vertical, and a horizontal, absolutely at variance with the movement within the frame."

Part of this criticism of Sullivan's pseudo-"functionalism" also applies to Root's Egyptian pylon, as far as it is said to be modern building. About one-half of the vertical members between the windows of the Monadnock Building could advantageously be eliminated. This superfluous ornamentation of the wall with vertical subdivisions of areas available for light-giving windows may represent a successful effort to make the rooms darker and thereby more like a mysteriously dark Egyptian interior, but they refute the claim made by Root and his admirers, that he threw "the whole thing up without a single ornament." The actual oversupply of Egyptianizing ornament obscuring the windows is especially objectionable in smoky Chicago.

It must be remembered that under the brilliant sun of Egypt the smallest openings in a temple wall or roof (sometimes just a hole of a few inches is used) suffice to illuminate a statue most effectively. Root's confession that "the heavy sloping lines of an Egyptian pylon had gotten into his mind," when the problem was the building of a light and well-lighted American office building, seems, if possible, even more ridiculous than Piranesi's voluminous publication advocating the use of Egyptian architectural forms especially for the ornamentation of mantelpieces. Piranesi did not wish to copy Egyptian fireplaces, because none existed (the Egyptians used the sun instead), but he designed fireplaces

as he assumed the Egyptians would have designed them if (in the hypothetical possibility of the sun's disappearance) they might have been compelled to design them. How much wood would a woodchuck chuck for such fireplaces if a woodchuck had less common sense than a human animal?

This craving to go Egyptian was by no means confined to Root and Piranesi. When ten years ago practically the first modern office building was erected in London, the Adelaide House, it also had to look Egyptian. Some called it "modernistic." Indeed, some of the best Egyptian forms have a certain powerful and very modern simplicity and clarity. They justify the remark (made by the late Meyer-Graefe in his lucid study "Pyramid and Temple") that the interiors of the oldest Egyptian graves possess to the highest degree that majestic simplicity and that absolutely convincing matter-of-factness which otherwise is found only in the most modern and best designed American W. C.'s or comfort stations. These have, no doubt, spiritual affinities capable of further development. But it is stretching the point if such affinities lead the designer of a modern office building to copy the batter (or inward upward slope of the walls) and the huge hollow cornice which in Egypt were traditional features of pylon or temple walls (even when built in stone). These religious buildings preserved sacred traditions and copied the old mud walls of the oldest and most primitive temples. The back-



Fireplace design (Piranesi).

ward slope was originally required by the soft material. A huge cornice of palm leaves and clay protected the old mud walls against the rare but dangerous rains. In his Egyptian diary Flaubert describes his experience of an extraordinarily strong rain that washed away the whole house in which he was spending the night, leaving him a spot under the table as the only dry place in which to wait for the morning. It is slightly absurd to reconstruct such "souvenirs from crumbled civilizations" when the problem is to shape the appearance of modern office buildings. At least Root secured his Egyptian effect only by creating an inexpensive illusion.

"The corners are cut off by a slice which begins with nothing at the bottom and increases to a width of several feet at the top, where the whole wall flares out with the graceful outline of a bell, very similar in effect to an Egyptian pylon. This clever device of cutting off, or 'chamfering,' the corners produces the optical illusion of a slope or batter in all the walls, the whole effect of which fills the beholder with the sensation of a tremendous lift or soaring of the entire structure. At the time of the Columbian Exposition it was the Monadnock Block that received the most study and praise from the European critics." (Talmadge, "The Story of Architecture in America," p. 184.)

In addition to his clever pretense Root did widen the ground story of his Monadnock masonry pile, such a high and heavy mass being ill suited to the soft ground of Chicago. (Piles driven down to the deep rock were introduced much later in this city.) In the Monadnock Building "projecting bays of windows increased the sunlit space in rooms that would have been lost in darkness behind piers fifteen feet thick at the bottom." ("The Brown Decades," Lewis Mumford, p. 136.) The architects of the Adelaide House in London were not satisfied with a clever pretense, nor did they build in old-fashioned masonry. Their whole granite-covered building, from foundation to Egyptian cornice, was given a real batter, an expensive method of having granite surfaces recall to one's mind those structures built of the mud of the Nile.

The most striking example of an American-Egyptian structure and of the surprising difference an architectural critic can find between six and half a dozen, is furnished by the Washington

monument, the obelisk, in Washington, D. C. Many Americans may have been shocked when they read that H. G. Wells called it "an idiotic colossal obelisk." But how well do they know what they really like about the Washington monument?

It was one of the severest critics of "the dreadful influence" of Greek revival "and the theory of precedent" who alluded to the Washington monument in more respectful terms than did Wells. About the obelisk and its designer, the engineer Mills, we read the following opinion likely to please every American:

"Then Mills did as glorious a thing as mortal ever did. He laid out the simple lines of the Washington Monument, the most superb piece of pure masonry to be found in all America, and exceeded in its majesty and purity of line by nothing built anywhere. It was, after all, a natural design for a man who began by building locks, canals and bridges. Nowhere was the effect of craftsmanship ever made clearer. When Mills took to buildings, because he really liked them, he fell a victim to the current idea that the Greek ruins were the perfection of all art. In the Washington Monument, his natural craft taste reasserted itself, for, as he faced a temptation that hardly another designer of his day could have resisted, he left the surface of the monument clean and flawless. Up it goes, five hundred and fifty feet in the air, a soaring majesty of craftsman simplicity, rising from the earth, like a noble bole of genius. Had Mills been the complete craftsman of Khufru's" (the Egyptian pyramid builder's) "days, he would have known that the crushing weight of his obelisk form was more than the lower stones could bear. The corners, at the base of the Washington Monument, will one day need a treatment such as no one knows how to give them, if the monument is to be saved, and such as the pyramids of Khufru do not yet require. It was not for nothing that a pyramid builder referred to his work as a 'firm thing.' " (Elbert Peets)

So while it was bad to follow a dreadful Greek precedent, so common in America, it was, "after all," natural *for a good engineer* to follow some old precedent and select the form of an Egyptian obelisk. And it was dangerous to attempt designing such an obelisk *without being a good engineer.* Nevertheless, the final outcome exceeds everything else in beauty. Some observers may follow such a line of reasoning. Others may remember the

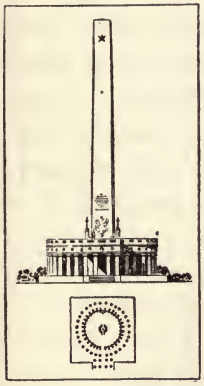
fact that the obelisk, as we see it, is quite different from what the good and bad engineer, Mills, wished it to appear to be. "Mills intended it to be surrounded by a colonnade, and he gave it, at the top, a low pyramidon, like that of the Bunker Hill Monument. The present high point is probably due to the army engineers." (Elbert Peets). No one who loves and understands music would permit even the most highly qualified conductor to change materially the first and the last movements of a famous symphony as it was written by its composer. Why should very essential changes in an architectural work of art remain unobserved? Something we do not understand "is Greek to us." Egyptian seems to be even more unintelligible.

What is, for us, an obelisk? Is it nothing but a well-chosen or "ill-chosen souvenir from a crumbled civilization"? Or is it an eternally beautiful form? But the great masters who originally conceived this beautiful form never designed an obelisk to stand alone in the middle of an axially organized group. Obelisks always appeared in pairs to flank an axis. When Egypt was plundered by modern Europeans, they had a hard time to draw those gigantic granite bolts into their pirate ships. When they succeeded in bringing one to Rome, Paris, or New York, they placed their booty proudly in the middle of some Piazza del Popolo

Adelaide House . . . London.

or Place de la Concorde, much as some proud cannibal would treat a precious bracelet he had torn from the wrist of a female European. Instead of wearing the jewel on his wrist he would rather pull it through his nose so as to have it decorate the center of his delighted face. Much of so-called human progress is contingent upon such proud usurpations. Trying to be accurate would be ill-becoming. We often lose the original sense of the words and the ornaments we are using. (Perhaps because words and their meanings are subjected to vicissitudes and empiricism in usage. For example, *soul* was originally a purely generic term, not a specific one, as we understand it.) But the Washington Monument remains beautiful, wherever it stands.

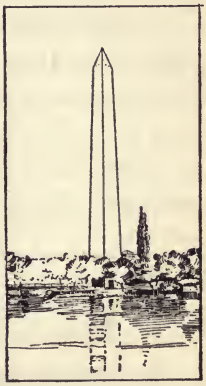
When the question of designing and placing the Lincoln Memorial arose, the ingenious Walter Burleigh Griffin (the American who won the competition for the city plan of Canberra, the capital of Australia, [see "Civic Art," p. 250]) proposed to



The Washington Monument

As designed

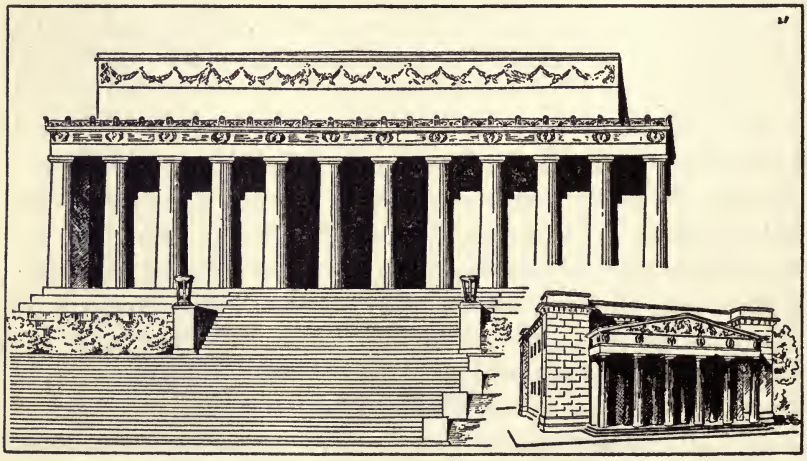
As built



make intelligent use of the fact that the Washington obelisk (on account of swampy soil conditions) had actually been placed a little off the main axis. Griffin suggested that a second obelisk be erected similar to the Washington one and that the main axis of the Mall pass between the twin obelisks. This would have been a correct and probably highly beautiful application of the Egyptian designs from which the obelisk idea originally was derived. As everyone knows, Griffin's ingenious suggestion was not heeded. The willingness to imitate an Egyptian obelisk seems to carry with it no obligation to place the copy in such a position as the original designers of its form would have placed it. In-

stead, the axis of the fine Washington Mall has been slightly turned and now passes through the Washington obelisk.

Instead of a twin obelisk, Lincoln received a monument terminating the Mall. Instead of an Egyptian design, a Greek or Roman colonnade was selected. But while for the Washington Monument, as for the Monadnock Building, an Egyptian pylon or obelisk was considered permissible by censorious critics, a Greek colonnade seemed quite undesirable to them. "In the Lincoln Memorial one feels not the living beauty of our American past, but the mortuary air of archaeology." ("Sticks and Stones," Lewis Mumford, p. 141.) "Into the designing of the Lincoln Memorial the architect threw all the knowledge that puttering measures and calculators have been able to extract from the bones of the Greek temples. The result is a heavy handicap, for the emotional content of this skillfully hallowed Greek form has the effect of completely hiding the fact that the Greek builders, were they alive, would never so build. They had a principle and it produced a temple. To imagine that 2,500 years later they would still be clinging to that form is to insult their superb intelligence." (Charles Harris Whitaker) It happens that the Egyptians of approximately that period did cling to pylon and obelisk forms and are praised for their superb intelligence, are even copied, and their copyists are praised, in



The Lincoln Memorial . . . Washington (Bacon).
Below: (right, *at same scale*) War Memorial . . . Berlin (Schinkel).

turn, for copying by the same critic who adds: "Also, to compare the Lincoln Memorial with the War Memorial in Berlin—the simple and profoundly moving building that the architect, Heinrich Tessenow, succeeded in fashioning from an abandoned guardhouse on the Linden—is to realize the lengths to which a maudlin 'art' propaganda has permitted architectural salesmanship to impose on the American people." ("Rameses to Rockefeller," Charles Harris Whitaker, p. 264.)

This critic seems to overlook the fact that "the simple and profoundly moving" War Memorial in Berlin in every particle of its exterior (and the interior this critic does not discuss) was designed by the classical revivalist Schinkel who wished to make it just as much of a Roman camp ("castrum") faced by a Greek colonnade as was possible without making its practical use for modern military purposes impossible.

Is it not employing different standards of measurement to an excessive degree when a critic claims that Greek forms should be permitted in Berlin, where the Greek revival came later than it did in America, but should not be permitted in America, where it was introduced at an early date by one of this country's greatest architects and presidents?

Probably modern architects and their critics will have to abandon some of the old erudite claims. The minds of most people, today, no longer seem to function in this field. At present, the erudite traveller is capable of such curious and quite novel interpretations of old art that an old-fashioned and unsophisticated student would probably consider them misinterpretations. A striking example of this rather general modern state of mind is furnished by the learned author of "From Rameses to Rockefeller, A Story of Architecture" (cf. p. 50 ff) who has taken such wonderful photographs of the Parthenon in Athens and has come to the conclusion that, so far, the generally accepted interpretation of its appearance is quite wrong. We all have fondly believed that the famous sculptured frieze picturing the Panathenic festival was placed *behind* the columns around the top of the wall of the cella. We learn now from Mr. Whitaker that this frieze was a "lower belt, just *above* the columns" and just below an "upper belt composed of alternate spaces known as metopes and triglyphs"!

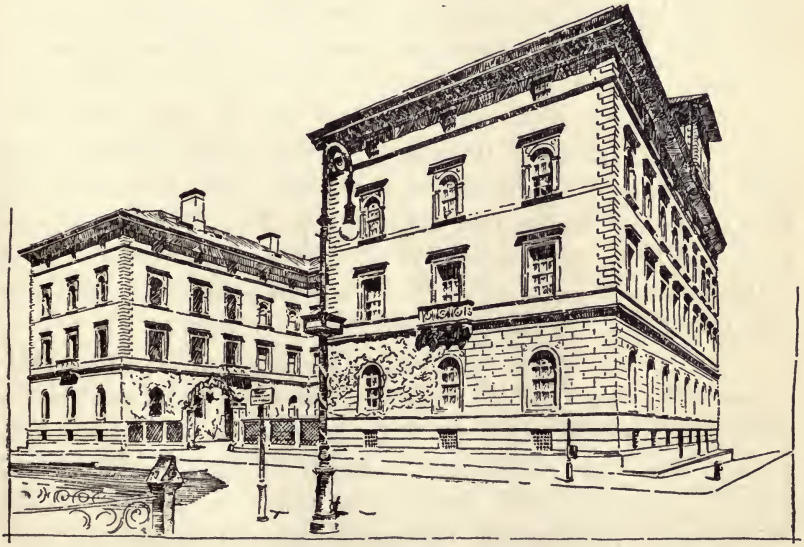
Where such surprising errors or differences of opinion are possible among scholars, all fussing about architectural refinements should stop for a very long time to come. In the future we can and must turn our minds above all to practical issues. If anyone insists upon covering his building with ornaments (Romanesque, Hindoo, Greek or—this seems to be the preference today—Egyptian verticals and Le Corbusier horizontals), he may use them only if they in no way whatever interfere with the practical requirements. Whatever their shape may be, architectural ornamentations of residential buildings should become an object of special taxation—at least as long as there are millions of people without the necessary decent shelter. It was Alexander Hamilton who wanted "cottages inhabited by paupers to be excepted" from his proposed "building tax"; (this has been mentioned before). But Hamilton also proposed special assessments for "every house with pillars or pilasters outside in front," and for "every room with stucco cornices" or "with a stucco ceiling." (cf. Works, III, p. 313.)

Of course, when it comes to denouncing and proscribing columns and similar historical symbols, a special case is presented in monuments and memorials. They have deep symbolic implications while, different from most other buildings, they do not serve

**Philadelphia Cricket Club (McKim, Mead and White).**

practical purposes. It might therefore be wise to postpone the erection of all memorials until some agreement among friendly art censors has been reached as to what specific historical precedent (e. g. Egyptian) is to be praised, and what other precedent (e. g. Thomas Jefferson's preference: the classical) is to be damned or ridiculed. The many millions invested in Germany's giant memorials of Emperor William's time ought to serve as a warning. When they were being erected they were vaunted as daringly novel. Today, they are generally recognized as being hard to get rid of, although they are complicated, ridiculous and old-fashioned *art nouveau*, while Schinkel's "classical" guardhouse (erected in 1816) with its pure Doric colonnade is, today!, and by a leading American critic, mistaken for the work of a modern architect, and highly praised.

And this mistake is by no means unreasonable. The modern architect (Tessenow) who rearranged the interior of the old guardhouse is one of those "conservatives" of whom Catherine Bauer justly says: "There has been very little strictly traditional architecture in Germany since the war; for the work of such conservatives as Schmitthenner, Tessenow, Bestelmeyer, would be called 'modern' in America or England."



Villard Residence . . . New York (McKim, Mead and White).

The discussion of new civic architecture, attempted in this chapter, seems to lead us back to the wishful prophecy which Burnham's partner, J. W. Root, so clear-sightedly made and the realization of which he and Richardson, as well as others, did so much to prevent. "In America," Root once said in a lecture, "we are free of artistic traditions. Our freedom begets license, it is true. We do shocking things; we produce works of architecture irremediably bad; we try crude experiments that result in disaster. Yet somewhere in this mass of ungoverned energies lies the principle of life. A new spirit of beauty is being developed and perfected, and even now its first achievements are beginning to delight us. This is not the old thing made over; it is new. It springs out of the past, but it is not tied to it; it studies the traditions, but is not enslaved by them."

This ideal has not been realized by Richardson's dropsical designs copied from France, nor by Root's copies of Egyptian or East Indian forms, nor by McKim's copies of Italian palaces. But at least Root's and McKim's designs are, even today, often pleasing. Even a Romanesque church looks better when it has been designed by McKim than when it has been designed by the Romanesque specialist Richardson. Speaking of McKim, Mead and White's Church in Baltimore (see p. 362), even the somewhat partial Mumford admits: "The tower is surely one of the finest that has been erected in America, a long leap ahead of Richardson's own Brattle Street Church tower." With relation to McKim's first office building (see p. 362), Mumford says: "Nine Hundred Broadway carries on the story of the Pray Building: its chief defect, the division into horizontal segments, was due to the fact that only part of the building was erected at first. Here again was a building above fashion. That nothing so fresh was done in New York for a whole generation is a manifold cause for astonishment."

Great praise is due to McKim, Mead and White for rediscovering the vitality of the American Colonial. Buildings like the Germantown Cricket Club (1891) are creations permanently enriching American architecture. Much of McKim, Mead and White's "colonial" work ought to be called "so modern that it startles us." (Talmadge) Only a blind man could deny that that English critic was also right who said, in referring to McKim, Mead

and White's work: "There is all the difference in the world between this and the practice of most of the previous revivals." (Cf. A. L. N. Russell's book, "Architecture," p. 215.)

Even where McKim, Mead and White were heavy, as in some of their Clubs imitating Italian palaces, one hardly has the feeling of dropsical morbidity. These buildings, even today, appear stately and often elegant. The Henry Villard residence (1885!), in the palace style, represents an ingenious grouping of houses which preceded similar grouping efforts in Europe by many years. This American precedent merits new attention in the rehousing campaign of today.

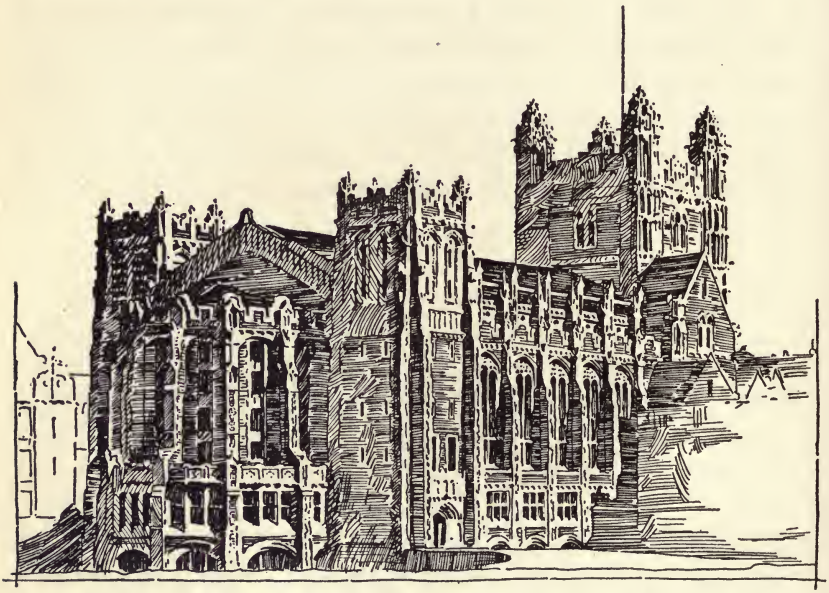
The error of copying forms designed for other climes and other materials of construction becomes evident when whole stories required for practical use are tucked into cyclopean basements as in the case of the "podium" on which most of the Columbia University buildings stand (cf. "Civic Art," p. 119), or when the architect tries to squeeze a whole popular library with

Columbia University . . . New York (McKim, Mead and White) showing continuous podium.

a large auditorium into the cellar of the Pantheon shape originally designed in ancient Rome as part of the bathing establishment of a rich plunderer of conquered provinces. The main building of New York University (upon and under the Hall of Fame terrace) is just such a depressing example. The book stacks are squeezed between two rows of heavy columns, and seating galleries cut sharply into the shaft of columns (round ones and with entasis!). (cf. "Civic Art," p. 120)

It is in such cases that something akin to senility appears in McKim, Mead and White. Even there a certain dignity remains lifting the work above such concoctions as New York's City College, designed almost a decade later (1907) by G. B. Post. Its main building is called "The Cathedral" because it is squeezed

into the shape of a cathedral with huge, expensive towers and with a transept and apse that have no interior relation to the church-like large assembly hall in the nave. The buildings for Chemistry and for Mechanical Arts rebelled so strongly against being completely raped in medieval fashion that the following apology had to be given in "The City College Quarterly" (Dec., 1907): "Most notable in this building, and really one of the remarkable feats achieved in this whole group of buildings, is the architecturalization in collegiate style of the factory chimney." And: "practical requirements of lighting precluded architecturalizing the rest of this building."

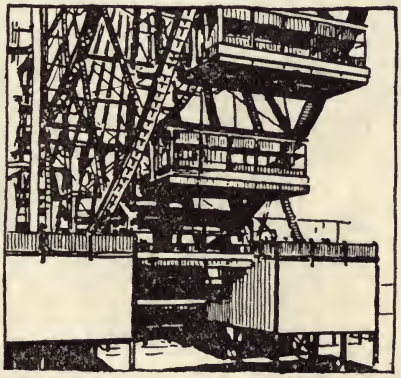


The Great Hall, College of the City of New York (George B. Post & Sons).

The farce of a main auditorium squeezed under the Hall of Fame Terrace into the cellar of a "Pantheon," and the "architecturalization precluded by practical requirements," cause the architect to appear not as a benefactor of humanity but as its enemy trying to force his victims into the prisons of his antiquarian imagination. Such incarcerations glaringly show how urgently our age requires creative power for new design. Was J. W. Root justified in saying: "Compare the best of our recent architecture—some of Richardson's designs, for example—with

the most pretentious buildings recently erected in Europe. In the American works we find strength and fitness and a certain spontaneity and freshness, as of stately music, or a song in the green woods!"

The very moment colossal Richardson stopped foisting his cyclopean residences upon his clients, the prototype of the modern prefabricated house seems to have been conceived. Ferris' big Wheel of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 looks like a gigantic machine whose endless belt delivers in rapid succession the new, light and elegant cabins ten millions of which are needed, today, for distribution in five thousand new garden cities and suburbs to take the place of America's historic slums, and, incidentally, of several prejudices dominating architectural criticism.




**Washington, from an early nineteenth century map.**

## Twenty-Seventh Chapter

# WASHINGTON, WILLIAMSBURG, THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS, AND GREENDALE.

This chapter is by Elbert Peets who was for several years associated with Dr. Hegemann in the practice of landscape architecture and city planning; he is now a member of the planning staff of the Division of Suburban Resettlement, Resettlement Administration.

### I. WASHINGTON

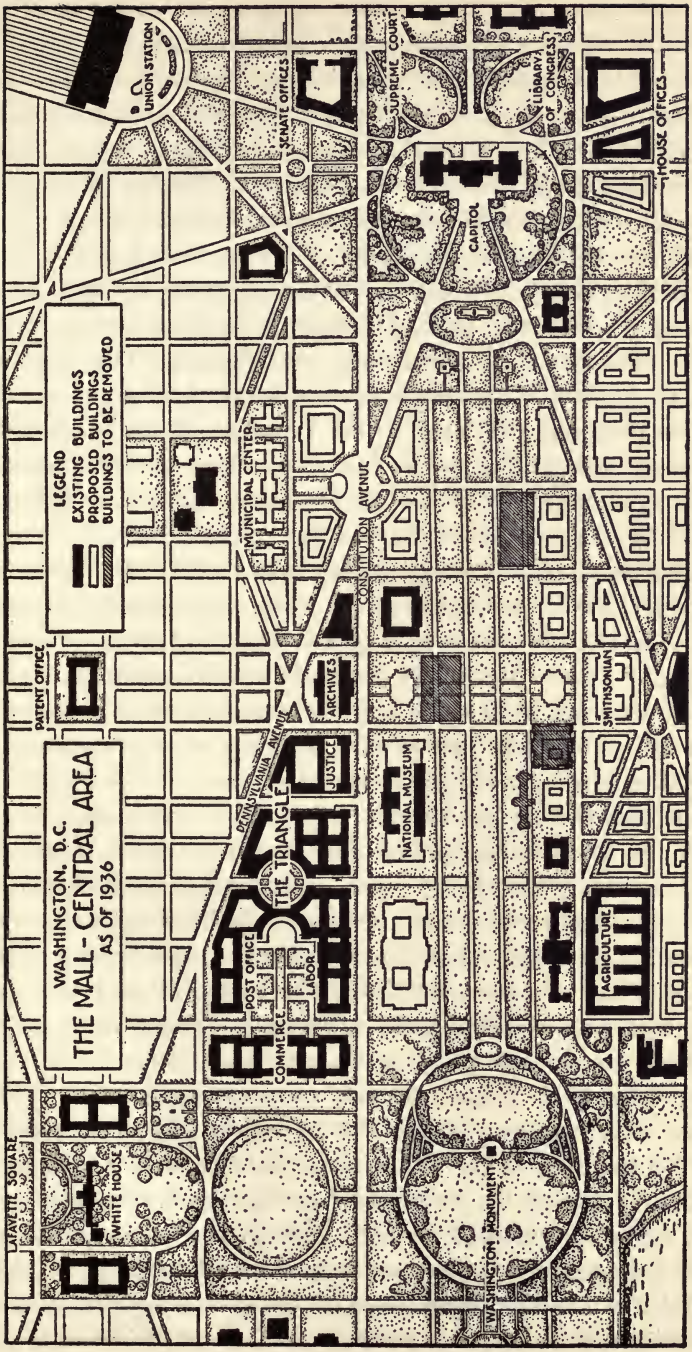
Evening, the Mall, Washington. I walk on the grass, on axis. Flocks of swift starlings sweep toward the Triangle and the city. Soon the lights will come on the Capitol. I turn to look at the soaring Monument and then back at the dome of the Capitol, rising above broad horizontals. Reciprocal forms, would that be the word? I walk, thinking inevitably of Versailles and St. Peter's and then of the things I am to write here. Are the old arts of space and form dying, as some say? How stands civic art after so many centuries of striving? What is being done and with what intention? Under the influence of what models and ideas, with what popular response? Forming what augury for the future?

Here is the Mall, surely tonight the most beautiful place man has yet made in America. At last the Monument does not stand beyond a woods from the Capitol; with the flow of space between them, they now join in formal relation. The verticality of the Monument has at last the appearance of rising from a horizontal plane. And the Capitol is for the first time quite beautiful: it must have been for this view that Walter designed the dome. Here is begun, as if Michelangelo had roughed a block of marble into the promise of a figure and finished part of it, a work of plastic art potentially more majestic than any other that man has created. I am sure of that, and sure that in this serene light the body of that beauty is already felt. Yet, here at its heart, on the axis of perfection, our architects have made no place for people to walk; the Mall is deserted,

while in the city whose rumble comes to me from beyond the Roman palaces of the Triangle, thousands of people are watching movies, listening to radios, playing fashionable in furniture of chromium and red leather, looking at improvisations in paint, talking about art, and sincerely studying the appreciation of art. It is evident that domes, monuments, and malls are not for us the deep and stirring personal experience that they have the power to be.

I have proposed questions touching on civic art and its place in our lives. Toward answering them I shall use four examples: the recent work at Washington; the old capital of Virginia, Williamsburg, lately established as a museum-place of Colonial art; the Century of Progress at Chicago, where the question arises whether this fair will parallel the one of '93 in significance to civic art; and Greendale, a town being built by the Resettlement Administration near Milwaukee.

One would like to know what the people of 1791 thought about L'Enfant's plan. Apparently the plan was accepted on sight, with minor criticisms, by Washington and Jefferson. I have not happened on any evidence of astonishment as concerns the type of planning. Oddly enough, the plan seems to incite expressions of surprise more frequently now than it did then. The point may be that a planned variation from a simple gridiron appears more remarkable to us than to the men of 1790 just because such a mass of gridiron plans has grown up since then. The language of American city planning, then as now, was based on the gridiron plan—based but not debased, for in the eighteenth century the gridiron was still plastic, still fundamentally an art style, as the architects of the Renaissance made it. Plans of Philadelphia, Reading, Savannah and Williamsburg can be printed alongside plans of Charleroi, the town of Versailles, Bloomsbury, and Edinburgh. The average statesman or the average architect of 1790 was better prepared by education and experience to find meaning in L'Enfant's plan than were the average statesman and architect of 1890—not to cite a later date. The Renaissance still lived in the cultural air. The language of Renaissance planning still retained some of its inflections: soon all was to be lost in America save its broadest grammatical principle—of course not at all exclusive to it—the


WASHINGTON, D.C.
THE MALL - CENTRAL AREA
AS OF 1936
LEGEND
EXISTING BUILDINGS
PROPOSED BUILDINGS
BUILDINGS TO BE REMOVED
LAFAYETTE SQUARE
WHITE HOUSE
PATENT OFFICE
POST OFFICE
COMMERCE
LABOR
THE TRIANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
JUSTICE
ARCHIVES
MUNICIPAL CENTER
CONSTITUTION AVENUE
NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON MONUMENT
AGRICULTURE
SMITHSONIAN
SENATE OFFICES
U.S. UNION STATION
CAPITOL
SUPREME COURT
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
HOUSE OFFICES

straight street. My point is that the straight street is a deep blood-bond between Versailles and Omaha, that the American gridiron is not ineligible to the cult of Renaissance planning. L'Enfant's plan stems from France and Rome, but the form language in which it is was cast was the lingua franca of old and new Europe in the eighteenth century. George Washington needed no interpreter to help him understand it.

But the sentimental feeling-art that liquidified like a lovely mold the rigiding form-arts of the winter-and-spring century crept early over the genteel fringes of land-planning in the post-Puritan America. Gardening melted first. The Washington Mall became a potential landscape garden before Andrew Jackson Downing was born to lay it out, and the Washington Monument was placed on a hill overlooking the Potomac, a typical landscape location, three hundred feet from the point marked by Thomas Jefferson's stone pier. And so it went. Buildings were placed where they would make a handsome appearance. Trees were planted in every open space, to make the city look as little like a city as it might. L'Enfant's vistas were veiled with foliage. East of the Capitol, where our most spectacular piece of Roman architecture demanded an imperial forum to complete its formal life, a pretty arboretum was laid out in the mode in which Currier and Ives prints depict the lawns of neo-Gothic mansions overlooking the Hudson.

Around 1900 came the L'Enfant revival. For a moment it seemed as if the totality—the interwoven completeness—of L'Enfant's plan would be rediscovered. But the art of gardens was too English and romantic, architecture too dazzled by the Chicago Fair. Neither could see the beautiful *city* that was L'Enfant's vision. The Mall, L'Enfant's Grand Avenue, was at last to be carried out—but as an "undulating lawn"! Its median cross-axis, Eighth Street, commanding a vista of the lovely Parthenon-front of the Patent Office, was to be plugged up. And the plan of the Commission of 1901 proposed a monumental area where the buildings housing the government of a nation newly conscious of its high place in the world could exist forever in impeccable monumentality. Around the Capitol, along the Mall, in the Triangle, around Lafayette Square, was to rise a city-within-the-city, aloof from the rest of Washington

just as the Court of Honor at Chicago in '93 was unaware of the vulgar Midway. Much of this has come to pass, but of it I count the clearing of the Mall, imperfect though the work is, as the only part of all this prodigious labor that reveals the beauty of L'Enfant's plan and the glorious power of civic art.

The recent works of public architecture in Washington are so well known that it is no longer necessary to repeat the facts concerning their cost, cubage, and authorship. They have not had, it must be said, the delighted acclaim of critics and other thoughtful persons. On what might be called moral grounds, the attack has been particularly sharp. Blatant grandiloquence, pompous grandeur, criminal squandering,—these phrases have been repeated. When a fire in the windowless rooms back of the cornice of the new post office building burned on for hours while firemen chopped holes in the floor above, leftist architects read the item with broad smiles. Increasing congestion and the growth of government departments faster than buildings could be erected have aroused even within official planning groups much opposition to the policies of concentration and monumental design. My own criticisms of the new work do not need to go much beyond its bearing on the L'Enfant plan.

The inventory can well begin with the Supreme Court Building. L'Enfant, presumably with Washington's approval, intended it to stand in Judiciary Square, a site somewhat aside from the principal elements of the plan, but well connected with it. The Commission of 1901 inexplicably assigned it the site across East Capitol Street from the Library of Congress, where it now stands. For the Court, the site is meaningless, but it would have made a good place for the Library Annex. One feels here the good old American principle that a good site is one within a certain zone of elegance. The Judiciary Square site was available, but it would have been impossible there to eliminate all vulgarity from the adjacent streets. What effect such a conception would have had upon the planning of Rome or Paris can be imagined. A planner who wishes to unify a whole city cannot afford to be snobbish. After the place indicated by L'Enfant, I should have chosen a site on the hill east of the Anacostia River, on the extended line of East Capitol Street.

L'Enfant's median cross-axis, Eighth Street, one of the im-

portant and highly developed lines of the plan, has been blocked by two new buildings. The Archives and the Federal Warehouse (closing, north and south, the so-called "Mall transepts"), cut off the Mall from the rest of the city plan. Though so planned by Burnham and McKim, the ruling conception here probably springs from the principle of landscape gardening that a park must be isolated from the surrounding town. The designers of the Triangle went farther than the Commission of 1901 and wiped out the section of (old) Louisiana Avenue running from Pennsylvania Avenue toward—though not straight at—the Washington Monument. This, the only vista of the Monument from the historic avenue, might have been trued up and made into one of the finest views in Washington. Instead it is stupidly blocked by the Justice Building.

Constitution Avenue is the most destructive of all the crimes yet committed against the L'Enfant plan. The heart of that plan was a triangle of which Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall were two sides. Constitution Avenue has now been made stronger in some ways than either of those lines. It is wide and grossly insistent, parallel to the Mall and cutting across Pennsylvania Avenue. Essentially a service street, without axial function and weakly terminated, it is overloaded for a short distance with the spectacular walls and pediments of the Triangle buildings, which however have on this front no architectural organization. As civic art, the street is a piece of sumptuous stupidity. Its effect on L'Enfant's plan can be expressed crudely by some such analogy as this: If on a broad parade ground some beautiful military ceremony were taking place, say in honor of a national hero, and if at the highest moment a company of visiting firemen marched across the field, with band playing and helmets shining, that would be like the effect of Constitution Avenue on L'Enfant's delicately adjusted city plan.

When you are covering some two dozen city blocks with monumental buildings you have to lay hands on everything you can get, and especially on buildings that do not have those absurd office windows stuck all over them. So the National Archives are in the Triangle, although elementary sense would suggest, in these days of air bombardments, that they be housed in low buildings, spread out on some suburban hill. Mr. Pope's

building is a rousing fanfare; if the stone weathers contrastingly the building will shortly be touching the popular heart.

Poor old Pennsylvania Avenue, to which our historical memories used to cling, apparently hasn't a friend on the Art Commission. Nearly all the quaint buildings that one used to recognize in old prints of the Lincoln and Grant inaugurals are gone. A vast open space, largely to remain open, weakens its eastern end; Constitution Avenue crashes across it; the plaza at Eighth Street is maimed; vast walls of stone weigh down one side of the Avenue, while parking lots cut gaps in the other, making the north side even uglier than the south side was claimed to be in early Triangle propaganda; finally, the plaza between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets has been ruined by an open space yawning wide toward the west.

The old Patent Office has suffered further indignities. One Sunday morning I attended the unveiling of a monument, over his grave in the Congressional Cemetery, to the memory of Robert Mills, the architect of the Washington Monument and of the Patent Office, a building that is acquiring standing as one of the finest of the fine old structures of Washington. Robert Mills was praised and the Patent Office was praised. On the way home, I drove through E Street. The granite walls and steps (marred by modern pipe handrails) that led up to the Parthenon portico of the south front had been torn away. Now the lovely columns stand on a rusticated wall with three crude dark openings. The side view is especially gauche: the wall is ill-proportioned, its top is not sufficiently emphasized, and an absurd window stares at you. The old steps expressed, in the side view, the existence of the Eighth Street axis, and in the south view they took the rising flow of Eighth Street and carried it up to the portico. I regret, particularly, that it will no longer be possible to go up, at night, and have that dramatic view of brightly lit F Street, framed by the ponderous yet graceful columns, with the Treasury colonnade in the distance.

Of the Triangle, specifically, little need be noted. It is planned in the eighteenth century French mode and closely resembles a plan submitted in the competition that resulted in the formation of the Place de la Concorde. It was influenced also by the San Francisco Fair of 1915, but falls far short of

that plan's fine outline and masterly subdivision. It is the type of plan that needs spirited detailing, with enough verticality to vivify the horizontals and enough dark narrowness to give light to the open areas. The theatrical pediments that are tacked to the Constitution Avenue front in order to flatter Mr. Mellon's hypothetical art gallery would have been used by an Inigo Jones or a Contant d'Ivry to give a voice to the big plaza of the Triangle.

Around Lafayette Square no public construction has been done for some years, and it is evident that the 1901 plan has here met a disastrous defeat, leaving the Square definitely less attractive as a setting for the White House than it was when the Burnham group was named. This part of the Commission's plan forms the clearest proof of its brutally destructive all-or-nothing attitude. With incredible assurance Burnham, McKim and Olmsted—in this part of their work Burnham probably took the lead—said flatly that the procedure used in designing the Court of Honor at Chicago, the establishment of a standard "ordonnance" and material, was the only way to create the setting for a public building and that everything in the areas they marked out for this treatment was bad and must be torn down, wiped out. If, in war, the forces of an enemy nation had bombed and destroyed the buildings that stood around Lafayette Square in 1901—the Dolly Madison house, Webster's home, the Hay and Adams houses that Richardson built, the Decatur house which thousands of people pay to enter when it is opened once a year, that exquisite white and buff mansion across from the State, War and Navy Building, and above all the fine old St. John's Church, one of the beloved buildings of Washington, with its picturesque old wall and centenarian sycamores—if all these had been destroyed by an enemy the whole nation would have been stirred with grief and anger. But when three of our leading architects proposed the destruction in order that they might set up a copy of a vainglorious World's Columbian Exposition as the setting for the modest mansion of the President, we acclaimed the plan and conferred high honors upon its authors. The destruction began, but the intolerability of the program had its inevitable effect. The Treasury Annex may be extended, but there is no likelihood that the whole plan will be carried

out. The present state of the enframement of the Square is, to put it plainly, a mess, and it will get worse before it gets better. If in 1901 a more modest plan had been adopted, one based on the preservation of what was good among the existing buildings, plus new public architecture harmonizing with the old work, the beauty of the Square could have been maintained even during reconstruction. The plan, if necessary, could have been adapted to changing conditions and would not have been ruined by abandonment after fractional execution.

The new Interior building stands in an area shown as park in the plan of 1901. It is too close to the Pan-American, D. A. R., and Red Cross buildings and will bring upon them the curse of auto parking. It projects so close to the line of Virginia Avenue as to make impossible the realignment of that street, as formerly proposed by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, to bring the Washington Monument on its axis. This was, I believe, the last possibility of creating a perfect vista of this unequalled avenue-objective.

The planting around the Lincoln Memorial has been extended in recent years so that it now hides almost all of the architecturally important line where the earth comes against the great stone retaining wall. As the enormous box bushes of the initial planting grow larger, they still further reduce the scale of the Memorial. A very interesting chapter could be written in analysis of this gorgeously beautiful and thoroughly inappropriate planting. In a formal French park stands a Greek temple, so we plant it in an American stylized mode derived from English sentimental landscape gardening, partly by direct descent and partly by way of Puvis de Chavannes and other illustrators of Tempe and the dales of Arcady.

The striking thing about this roster of the efforts toward beauty and impressiveness of architecture and civic art in Washington is the consistency with which L'Enfant's plan is ignored—not to say flouted. The Triangle wipes out a large patch of the L'Enfant plan, substituting not merely a different plan but a different type of planning so that, whatever may be said in its favor, it destroys the stylistic unity of the Washington design. At the same time the national officials and planners effect a gorgeous exhibition of self-deception—for I think they

are quite sincere about it—by interminably lauding L'Enfant. The mental mechanics of the situation might seem to permit only one explanation, that the planners have never looked at L'Enfant's plan. The self-deception theory, however, is more plausible, for we Americans have to an extraordinary degree the power to entertain in our minds diametrically opposed ideas. A trained capacity for dutiful self-deception sustains our religion, our politics, and our patriotism. Why should it not also enter into our art, particularly here at Washington, the busiest market for this kind of thought, in all its branches?

Thus it is wise, in accounting for current capitoline civic art, to disassociate it from the L'Enfant plan, and to seek outside of L'Enfant's purposes for the ideas that have engendered the Washington we see so often in the rotogravures.

The Triangle is not in its roots identical with municipal civic centers but it is the fruit of similar purposes and values. American city planning derives its power from two kinds of ideas—those prevailing in the chamber of commerce and those of the social settlement house. To the energy of the chamber of commerce, city planning is a tool for the creation and preservation of land values. Planning, control of traffic, cutting new streets, zoning, fine parks and pleasure boulevards, impressive civic centers—these exist because individuals forming energetic groups believe that they pay in greater population, more business, and higher land values. The other source of impulse in city planning is the benevolent-social people, lay and professional, who, through psychological circumstances which real estate dealers look on as abnormal, advocate better housing, broader education, and playgrounds in the slums. The Washington Triangle, plainly, is the product of the land-value type of human energy. It is the highest flower of that motive, expanded by patriotism, aetherialized into a symbol and a justification of a way of life. It is our national conspicuous waste, our display of superfluous power.

In its practical aspects, there is no question that the concentration of office buildings has been overdone. As a statement of the case the writer may be permitted to use a paragraph from an article published in Mencken's American Mercury in 1926:

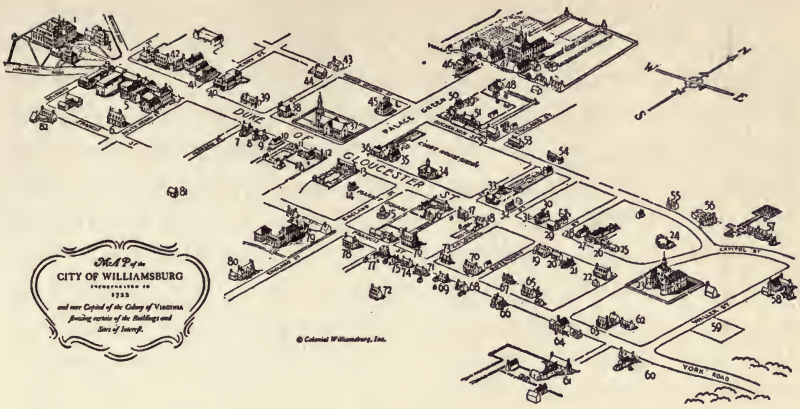
> "If there is one thing now plain about the planning of big cities it is that beyond a certain intensity concentration is wasteful, and that modern transportation makes such concentration unnecessary. Washington is ideally laid out for the distribution of traffic-objectives and for convenient communication between them. The departments are as autonomous as so many universities. They ought to be widely spaced, even on the suburban hills, where sensible offices could be built, and where the personnel could walk to work or come in their cars without producing intolerable traffic and parking congestion—where, too, an architect could make his own design, not having to follow a set of official templets."

It would appear to be axiomatic that a building group that is certain to grow should be planned so that it can expand centrifugally, and that such a group ought not to be planned—as has been done in the Triangle—within rigid external boundaries. A department office building has in its use-character more affinity with a school or hospital than it has with an exposition hall or a Roman palace, and it ought to be placed and planned in harmony with that character. The perfectly successful operation of the Bureau of Standards in a suburb of Washington has been cited by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission as evidence that concentration is not an unquestioned necessity, while the Department of Agriculture's new Beltsville experiment center, some ten miles from Washington, may be the first evidence of a broader centrifugal movement from the crowded city.

The thing that finally wrecks the heart of a city planner who knows and loves Washington is picturing to himself what that money could have done if it had been spread less thickly and more wisely. Let us say, and the figure is not impossible, that a hundred million dollars could have been saved since 1901, in land and construction costs, if the government offices had been built neatly of brick in a number of groups, out of the high-value zone. That amount of money, carefully administered and supplemented by taxing, zoning, and encroachment laws, could have influenced the architectural design of new buildings throughout the city, could have secured changes in existing buildings, and could have preserved old buildings. It could have brought about the rehabilitation of depressed areas and could have controlled the blight of parking lots which threatens im-

portant streets. It might have made the Triangle an attractive residence district and might have preserved the colonial atmosphere of Lafayette Square.

Efforts of this kind would have tended toward a harmoniously developed Washington. L'Enfant designed a whole city. He designed in terms of significant points, lines, and long vistas, thus organizing large areas and forming a space-composition having an effect of totality. The present procedure follows very different ideals. This concentration of monuments, memorials, museums, and endless department office buildings in the central area of the city is destroying the city, as a work of art and as a social entity, in the process of glorifying the capital—or perhaps more accurately the government. People who have no sense of the beauty of large spatial organizations, people who do not love the life of a city and who do not see that snobbishness—even though it be official snobbishness—is fatal to civic art, people who cannot distinguish between art and splurge, obviously cannot see how far we are getting from L'Enfant's conception. For he dreamed, not of a beautiful court of honor, but of a beautiful *city*.




The store groups referred to in the text are at numbers 5 and 41.

## II. WILLIAMSBURG

While the United States Government has been destroying and plotting to destroy in Washington, Mr. Ford has been collecting old buildings for his museum at Dearborn and Mr. Rockefeller has gone him one better by collecting an old town—and not only an old town but an old state capital, complete with history, traditions, a college, numerous firsts, oldests, and uniques, and a live population, including several rare old ladies who would grace any museum in the world.

Williamsburg has, of course, close relations to the city of Washington. L'Enfant knew the town. It was admired by Washington and other men who influenced the design of the national capital. The similarity of the plans is obvious, though I trace the resemblance to the common style and common requirements, and do not suggest that the older plan was the principal model for the later one. But the fact that Williamsburg was part of colonial culture must have facilitated L'Enfant's work.

The town plan of Williamsburg probably derives from a sketch by a skilled architect, imperfectly worked out on the ground. Incomplete though it is, the town has the good order and managed emphasis that mark a good Renaissance design. People go to Williamsburg to see the sumptuous and beautiful buildings and gardens that have been restored or rebuilt, but I am sure that the basically good plan is a factor, whether con-

sciously or not, in the invariably pleasant impression of the place.

The restoration has hardly affected the plan except in the shopping center that has been developed at the College end of Duke of Gloucester Street. The necessary parking accommodations are managed tactfully and are neither conspicuous nor offensive. The store groups themselves, however, that have been built (there was some remodelling) at each side of Duke of Gloucester Street, constitute a preposterous travesty on eighteenth century planning. The stores are frantically picturesque and various; the fronts are parallel to the curb but are set back at random distances from it. Only the post office setback is sufficient to produce a satisfactory area. Often the offset, between one store and another, is so slight as to be without plastic value. In one case a store with a bow window is set back from its neighbors just about the amount of the window's projection, the total result having less vigor than no variation at all. There is no design-value in these weak deviations from alignment, merely an affectation of un-mechanicalness which, since we know it is not modern, we are intended to assume is colonial. Emphatically, it is not. The southern planters laid out their slave-quarters on axes and cross-axes and made dignified symmetrical courts out of their barns and stables. Williamsburg is not a medieval town, formed by centuries of accidents. It is a product of seventeenth-eighteenth century rationality. If the restoration is intended to give us a true picture of the culture and the architectural ideals of colonial Virginians, this shopping district is a gross misrepresentation.

Furthermore, for the truth must be told, the place smells strongly of landscape architecture. Sitting on one of the pleasant sidewalk benches to have my shoes shined, I counted nine different species of trees (two of them dead) within the distance of a peanut toss. There were tall holly trees, fresh from the woods, planted within a foot of the store fronts and leaning away from the wall, as if they had grown there from babyhood. It was a naturalistic planting of street trees, to go with the naturalistic planting of shoppes. Nobody but a landscape architect could have thought that all out.

From the sumptuous way in which the buildings and formal gardens are carried out, I judge that there was no wish to

understate the quality of the old designs or the skill of the colonial craftsmen. I believe that strict archeologists will agree that many parts of the work represent what the early Virginians would have liked to do rather than what they actually did do. The same attitude might well have stimulated the town planning work. Take for example, the Palace Green, lying between the Governor's Palace and Duke of Gloucester Street. The man who made the plan (in England, doubtless) assumed that this mall would be level and that it would afford a perfect view of the Palace from the street. As it happened there is a little rise of ground at the middle of the mall that cuts off the lower part of the building, spoiling this all-important view. A few hundred dollars worth of grading, before the young trees were set out, would have remedied this patent fault and would have brought out the true quality of the design.

This Palace axis continues on across Duke of Gloucester Street, the main axis of the layout. South of Gloucester Street, as it is at present, there is a field opening up a view into the country. So casually is the whole thing handled that from the upper front window of the Governor's Palace you see practically nothing but grass and trees—there is nothing at all to indicate that the main street of the town, the main axis of a design to which the Palace is related by perpendicularity of axes, runs across your vista. In the distance a hill slopes sharply across the view; beyond that, woods. This failure to develop the design architecturally, as the designer must have intended, contrasts sharply with the very elaborate development of the garden axis north of the Palace. A very modest amount of "expression" of the intersection of axes (at Duke of Gloucester Street) and the continuation of the cross-axis toward the south would satisfy the minimum needs of the situation. Some grading, a few white-washed posts or stone piers, some white fence, possibly a pair of sheds or summer houses, would serve to "render" this important part of the plan. The "Frenchman's map," showing the town in Revolutionary times, indicates that some sort of formal development marked the mall axis south of the main street.

The view of the Capitol from the College gate is already partly obscured by the shade trees on Duke of Gloucester Street. That is the American spirit to a T. Spend a million dollars

to create a beautiful perspective and then let it be overgrown with foliage, for fear of inconveniencing a squirrel.

Williamsburg is a huge success. People are flocking there, they love it. They love the quaint buildings, the old cooking things in the Governor's kitchen, the pillory, the old box bushes, the powdered ladies in farthingales; they love the Governor's coach and cocked-hatted coachman driving through the streets, just as in ye olden tymes. The architects of the frigid Washington Triangle, when they go down there, must wring their hands and say "Alas, why didn't we think of this?" There will never be another Triangle, but there will be other Williamsburgs.

And why? Is it the vogue of antiques and our delight in being able to collect with Mr. Rockefeller a colonial town when in the past we have been able only to collect, or read about collecting, door knockers and spinning wheels? Is there a vein in us of nostalgic patriotism, a hungry love that we cannot feel for this harried present time but can freely give to that simple and beautiful and unworried golden age? Is it the smartness of knowing about the past, a phase of the world interest in archeology? Is it merely that men still long to go on pilgrimages?

One thing is fairly clear, that Williamsburg is largely a phenomenon of sentiment. The management recognizes this in such details as the costumes of the guide ladies and similar affectations. Reports of "Ye Olde A. & P. Foode Shoppe" are exaggerated but not untrue in essence. The grossly picturesque store center is certainly a surrender of architectural sense to sentimental antiquarianism. And the point I have mentioned about the Palace Green where the visual spacial composition is spoiled by a few feet of earth: so obvious a blunder can only be accounted for by supposing that the architects looked at the Green through some sort of magic glass that made of it a sentimental value in which formal perfection would be a redundancy. To people whose perception of pure proportion, formal relation, and the modeling of space, is an infinitely more exciting experience than their sentiments, this typically American (and English) substitution of sentiment for sensation and perception, is a constant distress. It runs all through our art, of course, but the loss seems greatest in architecture and civic art, where the

formal values are so simple and evident and where they can be kept relatively pure of distracting meanings—as they cannot for example in literature.

I associate this sort of feeling with the wide and deep popularity of informal landscape gardening. No art style is more widely accepted. And the basis of "landscape" is a sentiment, a feeling that nature's art is better than man's. Three generations of infiltration of landscape conceptions have insidiously corrupted our architects, making them tolerant of "informalities" that actually negative essential objectives in their designs. This atmosphere, incidentally, is a dangerous one for the evolution of "modern" architecture, for it encourages a general softness and mere avoidance of "artificiality," usually taken to mean the absence of axiation and defined pattern.

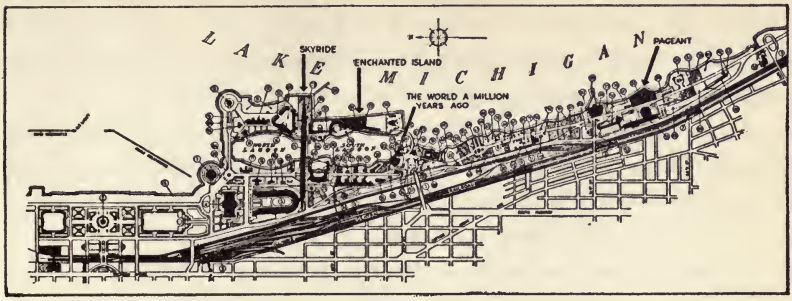
Much of the popular acceptance of "landscape"—the word has come to have a meaning far removed from the landscape gardening of Humphrey Repton's time—is due, I believe, to a dim feeling that this way of arranging things is opposed to art and is a new demonstration that intuition and the heart are after all superior to the arts that require genius and training. This kind of anti-art is a very deep-lying element in American thought and feeling.

In any case there is no question that the kind of thinking that produced the plan of Williamsburg and the plan of Washington is not the kind of thinking that has meaning to most of us, today. The severely rational and formal type of art is apparently fundamentally irritating to people who are dimly conscious of a basic irrationality and inconsistency in their own thought. Our efforts to retain religious and patriotic conviction while constantly surrounded by evidences of irrationality in nature and human conduct, necessarily destroys the easy mental balance which alone takes pleasure in a rationalized art. A kind of sadism impells people who are conscious of their own uncertainties to hate minds, and creations of mind, which have the sense of order they cannot understand. When people of this type can ascribe emotional meaning to a work of art they are avid to substitute this intelligible meaning for the formal organization which disquiets them. They look at the Lincoln Memorial and see a symbol of a tragic life. Perhaps they also

see a demonstration of accepted propriety in the choice of materials and architectural style. These are values they can accept and share, but any exhibition of purely rational design unsupported by sentiment arouses the antagonism which is part of uncertain comprehension. There is something very deep in human nature which makes failure fully to understand equivalent to fear, and fear equivalent to hate. Hence the invariable success of the ridicule of poets and artists and hence the delight of visitors to Williamsburg in the purposed disorder of the quack-colonial shopping center. Freed from any burden of necessity to observe and understand an organized unity, they can freely enjoy the toy-town prettiness and the lush sentimentality.

Is there perhaps a compromise? Can civic artists whose ill-judged time and place of birth throw them into a civilization of word-worship, sentiment-seeking and minute-counting—can they find some way of expressing space and mass and area that *will* have meaning to crowds of people, as L'Enfant hoped his plan would have? There is no more reasonable place to look for the answer than at one of the big fairs where designers are free from conservative restraints and where the popular response can be closely gauged.

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS—CHICAGO EXPOSITION OF 1933




### III. THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS

City planners have one bond with the landscape architects, that they become very charitable of architecture. They lean heavily upon a gracious law by which a large collection of bad architecture may become very tolerable civic art, or charming scenery. And their constant solace is the happy accident. They feel (let us suppose) an active thirst to experience the coming to life of space in unexpected perspectives and in spirited conjunctions of silhouette. Thus it happens that they find crumbs of nourishment even in badly baked bread.

The Chicago Century of Progress was mixed—to continue our homely figure—in a hundred million dollar bowl but was baked, alas, in a thirty million dollar oven. The bakers did their best, but the loaf fell. The Fair had no general plan and at a dozen points no perceptible local plan. The mixture of chic science, architectural bontonism, architectural jazz, big-shot advertising, Coney Island entertainment, and sentimental archeology caused the physical and emotional collapse of all but the sturdiest visitors. The confusion was complete. The incidental buildings were more looked at than the "dominants," over-subtle compositions of architectural plan failed to carry in the normal view, the intended spirited variety became a monotonous incoherence, and the color seemed always tentative.

Yet I spent a dozen Saturday evenings at the Fair and enjoyed them all. What was irrational by sober daylight became at the day's end a fairyland for optical adventure. The arbitrary bulks and colors of the buildings were subjugated by the sunset's warm light and long shadows; they were drawn into

a single picture with the lagoon and its moored and moving boats. The pale-dark towers of tragic Chicago and the leaden lake seemed more unreal than these meaningless but hypnotizing shapes when familiarity had drawn them together.

If in its totality the Fair became a landscape rather than a work of art, its details could not be dismissed as valueless to architecture. The designers of the Fair, or some of them, were experimenting with abstract sculpture and with the correlation of forms that were alike so obscurely that their order could only be sensed by some sort of metaphysical touch. It is in this direction that the post-architectural art seems to seek esoteric rationalities to take the place of those primitive conceptions of mass in stability and well-knit membering that have been enervated by our modern structural systems using concealed steel and large sheets of rigid materials. One suspects that some of their constructions were intended to find something responsive in the hazy physical meaning we give to such phenomena as ether waves and cosmic rays. Since radio waves are tossed back and forth by the earth and some layer of the stratosphere, why shouldn't their vibration be symbolized by two parallel planes, which they are imagined to animate, much as the constant threat of movement is the energy that gives tactile animation to a stone arch. Forming one of the minor gates of the Fair there was a construction of steel pipe and orange canvas that fascinated me deeply. There was something Japanese about it, and a reminiscence of kites. It worked somewhat (in addition to the muscular appeal of the strong posts) as if the tactile meaning of surface were intensified, in some such symbolical way as I have tried to suggest, by an atmospheric pulsation playing between close and parallel planes. Things of this sort, construction for the beauty of construction, are needed in civic art, particularly in civic garden art. They can have so much more vivacity than the conventional earth-furniture of stone.

In their civic art—their planning of open spaces and building groups—the designers of the Fair obviously adhered to the slogan that guided their architectural work: Don't bore. They therefore avoided anything so hackneyed as a general plan-organization. Only in a few passages did they suffer strict axiation to appear, and they billowed the ground surface almost

as industriously as the landscape architects do when they want to justify winding walks on a terrain that nature made flat. In their planning they used freely what the painters call the *imprevue*. In fact, there is a general impression that the correct type of planning for the arrangement of buildings in non-traditional styles is necessarily an informal one. The reasoning seems to be that since axiation is obviously an art value, functionalism (which was named and advocated as for modern man a better guide than art) must give us a different result—asymmetrical forms.

Many passages in the Century of Progress plan had much resemblance to the style identified with the name of Camillo Sitte. That style was developed from the accidental or in part accidental medieval civic art. It was influenced by both informal gardening (which has always been conceived of by its practitioners as functional art) and the formal architectural planning it sought to displace. In Sitte's plans the streets were usually straight and at approximately right angles. But they were asymmetrical in plan and elevation and the terminal or "closing" element normally was of informal, pictorial, character. The open places set with fountains and statues in informal relation to the area, were asymmetrical and as closely enclosed as practicable. Like the "Sittesche Stil," and like, one supposes, all young art movements, the modern style has in it a lively element of sadism, directed against the old way. That which pains the old teacher delights the rebel pupil. The feeling of being wayward, destructive, lusty, unlike and superior, is a rich reward for the perils of insurrection. This stimulating sadism, this anti-art, is experienced also, though not so sharply focussed, by the public. They learn that it is smart to destroy, that it is chic to know the proper object and means of destruction. Of the modern style few people can perceive what it *is*, but anyone can see what it is not. "Familiar" and "different" are the esthetic scales of most minds. The familiar is beautiful until it becomes chic to prefer the different.

There was the further effort, at the Century of Progress, to exploit the chic of science. The rape of science by the modern style in building and decoration is one of the entertaining elements in what our literary friends call the contemporary scene.

The reasoning runs in the following syllogism: Science is destructive of old ways; the modern style of architecture is destructive of old ways; therefore the modern style is science expressed in architecture. The fact that some kinds of scientists are more fanatic worshipers of symmetry, as in the cutting of a cogwheel, than ever were the architects of the Renaissance, is just as easy to ignore as the fact that the old ways destroyed by science and by the new art are not ways of the same order.

Though they had to renounce any general organization—beyond the psychological dominance of the lagoons—the planners of the Fair were fertilely experimental in their detailed planning. The great circle of flags at the main entrance to the Fair and the avenue of sloping flagstaffs with their enormous banners were moving and beautiful things, rich in suggestions for serious civic design. Piers, stele, and lighting standards were used to define and give plastic depth to open spaces in ways that recalled the sculptural enrichment of French plazas and Italian gardens. The baroque planners sought always to make their work sociable and friendly and cheerful, touched with humanity. The Fair was free to seek the same expression of life, unhampered by the conventional concrete, granite, evergreens and grass that make so many American civic centers a pall upon the imagination.

The Fair planners wrestled with plaza design, though rather in terms of courtyards and gardens than as monumental assemblages of buildings. The court of the Science building—a high mass with arms extending to the shore of the lagoon—was well proportioned and vivaciously modeled, the sort of thing that ought to be studied by those architects whose only rule for creating an ensemble is to enforce a uniform cornice height.

Of the technical aspects of the Fair construction every city planner must have been struck by the success of the pedestrian pavements. A bituminous pavement covered with fine crushed stone is easy on the feet and easy also on the eye, since it is dark and cannot glare. It makes an infinitely better foil against vertical masonry walls than does concrete, because the slick and usually over-scaled slabs of a concrete pavement hide the mother earth on which buildings stand and men walk. The low-set flood

lights on the lawns were distinctly worthy of restrained emulation in public gardens.

A big exposition is a fairyland, a museum, a bazaar, and a carnival. At the Century of Progress the bazaars and the carnival shows had several centers of intensity; there was no such complete segregation as at the Columbian Exposition. And the Century of Progress, particularly in the second year, carried to an unprecedented development that old entertainment motive, the Village, which has the charm of combining the four delights of the fair. Here was the most ironical part of a highly ironical whole. Alongside the boldly forward-looking modernism of the Fair's main buildings flourished the lush antiquarianism of the villages. The customers, it is embarrassing to confess, seemed definitely to favor the medievalism—with music. No doubt they considered the modern buildings very smart, but they spent their quarters to see the Belgian Village and the Black Forest.

There is no denying that several of the villages were fetching places. They were small, close, harmonious, of human scale, bearing plainly the human mark. It was pleasant to walk in any direction free from traffic danger—for the constant noise and constant peril of traffic in our cities is a heavier nervous burden than most of us realize. The villages were small enough to be sensed as a whole, they were places of escape from worry and boredom—escape into a simple physical and emotional unity made pleasant by a hazy familiarity. There was the flattery of being asked to be at home in Belgium, Italy, or Tunisia. And there was the crowd, the sociability. Say what you will, it is sweet and sanitary, at carnival time, to sink one's personality in the thought and feeling of a crowd.

I recollect an architectural cocktail party where at one point the conversation touched the Chicago villages. What was their charm? Among the theories advanced were infantilism, grandmotherism, peasantism, snobbism, and agoraphobia. The last, at least, is not wholly inconsistent with esthetic perception. Even when we have no dislike for open places, most people have a liking for safe havens such as a quiet cloister or a sunny clearing in a woods. Far be it from a lover of old civic art to say the villages were all silly. They had in various degrees something of the composition of solids and voids, narrow streets and open

plazas, that endear to us Venice and Rothenburg and Ghent.

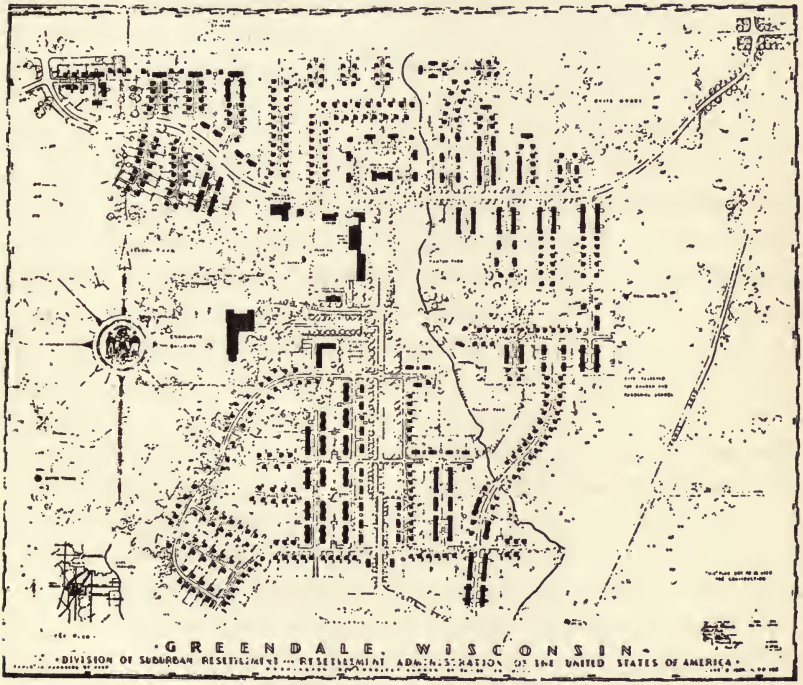
City planners must deal with the vest-pocket village—and must have a care lest it make fools of them. The shopping center at Williamsburg is a fair warning of the spiritual swamps into which a jolly Puck of this sort can lead an artist. It should be possible to discover the sound values of the villages and to reject the over-sentimental elements. Suburban shopping centers of the "park and shop" type are being built around many cities. These could profit by a close study of the Fair villages. An understanding of marketing customs, traffic, and parking, for work of this kind, must be supplemented by an understanding of the history of towns, which will suggest the means of adding deep esthetic values to practical convenience.

One went to Chicago in 1933 and '34 to experience three-dimensioned space mastered in terms of modern architecture. One found delightful jeux d'esprit in the furnishing of open spots; one found architecture to please every taste save that of the professional critics, who know a happy land where there is no *so what?* in *à la moderne;* one delighted in lagoons that seemed lately to have been borrowed from the wild ducks and to have been surrounded temporarily with Gargantuan colored playthings in place of willows. One found lush sentiment enshrined in medieval villages made old with painted weathering, made wonderous with icicles of glass. But one found no civic art that revealed so much intellectual conviction as laid down the stern and hated gridiron of Chicago.

### IV. GREENDALE

A sampling of the American civic art of these days obviously must comprise some notice of the New Deal's town planning.

Following the financial occurrences of 1929, it became a matter of general agreement that a housing program ought to be undertaken, with some kind of federal help. At the beginning slum clearance seemed most promising, probably in part because the destruction of old buildings and the construction of new ones for (presumably) the same low-income tenants appeared




likely to sustain urban land values and not seriously to affect rentals. A considerable amount of this rebuilding has been put through, but it has become evident that it is impossible without a large subsidy to bring the old slum tenants back into the new apartments, even when the doubtful expedient is used of increasing the population density of the rebuilt area. In some instances, furthermore, it appears that the slum environment—the smoke, for example, and the square-mile overcrowding, which is still a

burden after room-overcrowding has been relieved—survives the rebuilding and diminishes its social value.

Experience may show how these handicaps can be overcome, but the theory is spreading that cities are fated to spread centrifugally, that it is futile as well as anti-social to try to maintain the present density of population. Some take it to be a necessary corollary that this tendency renders the low-rental apartment obsolete both in the blighted districts and in the new land on which the city is spreading.

The subsistence homesteads experiment was a fruit of the growing belief that industry ought to decentralize. The experiment was at least not a clear success, mainly for the reason that the provision of an appropriate industry could not be made a part of every project plan. The next step was to test a European device, the colony town outside the large city but within range of existing employment. For this purpose the Division of Suburban Resettlement was set up, under the Resettlement Administration. Suburban Resettlement is at this writing building three suburban towns at Washington, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee.

Greendale, the Milwaukee project, enjoys the spiritual advantage of being born poor. Its planners aimed at a population of a thousand families with incomes of twelve hundred dollars a year or a little more; their calculations soon showed that only with money at nominal interest could such a town pay its way and amortize its cost within sixty years, the estimated life of the contemplated plain but sturdy houses. In a big city, people of this economic stratum live in a kind of partial poorhouse. Their homes are old buildings the value of which has been written off by more prosperous occupants. The small taxes they pay, concealed in rent and other living costs, may not meet the cost of schooling one child. The enormous capital and maintenance cost of public utilities, streets, police and fire protection, libraries, schools, parks and playgrounds, hospitals, courts and prisons—practically all of this is paid for in taxes—to view the situation diagrammatically—by the workman's employer, and is reflected in the factory's accounts as an increase in the price of its product and a reduction in its wage scale. In simple truth, the cost of the city comes mainly out of workers' wages. This

is the "concealed subsidy"—it might be called a concealed wage—of which housing experts talk. Now when a workman goes out to the suburbs and buys a home in a town where there are no factories or hotels or rich people to pay this subsidy, and the workman still draws his pay from a factory in the city, he automatically loses most of this concealed wage. The man will be paying (in the form of a reduction of money wages) part of the cost of police protection and schools enjoyed by his friends in the city, while at the same time he will be paying (in taxes) the cost of the protection of his home and the education of his children. That is why it is the well-to-do who live in the fresh-air suburbs and that is why laborers live in city slums or in smoky factory towns. All this discussion may appear to have little to do with civic art, but it has had a great deal to do with the plan of Greendale.

The program, the skeleton of ideas and facts, on which Greendale is being planned is something like this: Automotive transportation makes it possible for men to live a considerable distance from their work; pure air, rural surroundings, and contact with the ground, are physically and psychically good; life is better in a small town where social cooperation is possible; by eliminating inflated land values, by appropriate planning, by large-scale construction, and by taking advantage of every reasonable means for reducing living costs, working-class families can afford to live in small special-built suburban towns. The plan of Greendale has been directed toward making these statements true—particularly the last of them.

A large area (about five square miles) of rolling farm land, eight or nine miles from Milwaukee, was bought. Near the center of it a compact town, planned for an ultimate population of about 4000 people, is being built. The farm land will mostly remain farm land, in close economic connection with the town, probably through correlated cooperatives. It is intended that another compact group of houses, and a number of looser groups, will eventually bring the number of families up to about three thousand.

When it came to the location of the first compact town a site was chosen that was not cut by existing roads. The site is near main highways but does not actually touch them. In the

design of the plan, the first principle determined upon was that the streets should be divided into two types: traffic streets and residence streets. The traffic streets are wide, follow easy gradients, are planned to avoid their being used as trunk highways but rather to form convenient channels of traffic flow from highways to the town and within the town, and they are not used to create lot frontage. The residence streets are narrow, sometimes are rather steep, normally short, and normally dead-ended. In fitting this scheme to the irregular and partly hilly site an intermediate type of street developed, a kind of collector street giving access to several culs-de-sac, and itself carrying abutting lot frontage.

Along with the street plan had to be met the questions of row house versus single and of private yard versus community block-interior.

Row houses—officially rechristened group houses—have in late years been accepted as the necessary form of low-cost suburban housing, just as multi-family dwellings, formerly thought of as apartment houses, have been accepted as necessary in cities. In the latter case the controlling factor is the land "value"; in suburban housing the land cost factor is usually not sufficient to force housing into apartments but it reinforces the cheaper-construction argument in favor of row houses. Rows are somewhat cheaper to build than detached houses, and the saving in street and utilities costs is considerable. Commercial low-cost housing projects have usually adhered to local customs, rows being much used in Eastern cities. The sophisticated town planners, largely on the authority of English precedent, have accepted the row house—in short rows—as desirable, or perhaps rather as unavoidable, even for work in districts where it is not traditional. The planners of Greendale, under pressure of a limited budget, accepted the row house for about half their housing units but they set out to find a way to place and build single houses economically enough to justify using them for the other half.

How that was done is to town planners the interesting part of the Greendale story, but a discussion of the other factor I named—the handling of the block-interiors—is a prerequisite to it.

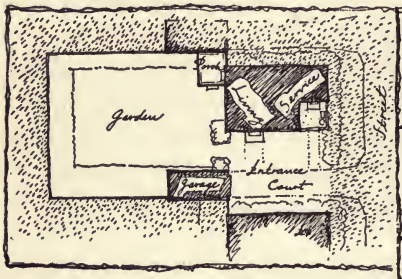
That "front yards" could be left unfenced was a discovery of the '90's. A studiously planned community near New York, some ten years ago, boldly did away with the ancient and beloved back yard. Radburn, "the town for the motor age," was an experiment in several ways of much value to town planning. The basic principle of the plan is the division of the land into "superblocks." An area of perhaps one thousand by two or three thousand feet is surrounded by wide traffic streets; from these, dead-end lanes run into the block, giving wheeled access to a dozen or more single or twin houses, mostly with incorporated garages. Alternating with the lanes are foot ways, corresponding—but in location only—to the old-time alley. The houses front toward these foot ways and the entrance walks diverge from them. There are no fences: the space between the rows of houses is developed in the manner known as parklike. Perhaps it will make this description clearer if I say that strangers do not quickly perceive which is the front of the houses and which the rear. Even on Monday, I understand, there may still be uncertainty. Actually, social visitors are intended to park their cars on the traffic street and walk in, via the foot way, to the house they have in mind. It should be added that a strip of private park runs through the super-block, with walks that pick up the ends of the foot ways and form, with the help of underpasses beneath the traffic roads, a safe route to the school. This last feature has been much acclaimed; actually the underpasses are used only when it is convenient, and there is competent doubt as to whether it will really conduce to the survival of the Radburn young to be thus protected during the habit-forming years.

The planners of Greendale liked the Radburn lanes, but they could not accept, for a town of middle western workingmen, the parked yards. They accounted for this aspect of the town of the motor age by thinking of Radburn as a Riverside Drive apartment house taken apart, set down on the ground, and environed with one of those interior gardens the Phipps apartments have made the cynosure of all apartment eyes. The human elements in this transaction have no hankering, in Spring, to plant a row of cabbages, nor have they formed the habit of pitching horse shoes on Sunday morning. No, it is overdoing

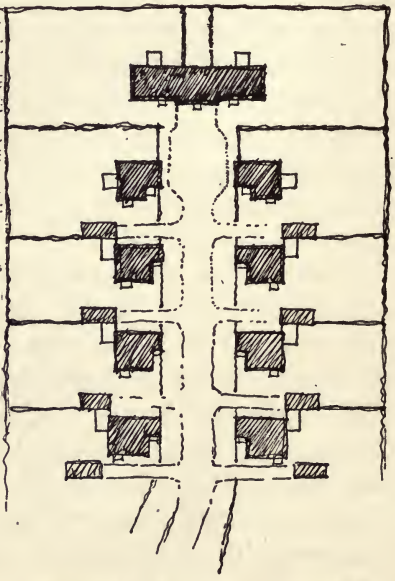
it to let the motor age deprive us of personal relationship with the Ancient Mother. The Greendale plan started with the premise that every house should have its patch of ground, with a fence around it.

Our old conception of a town street was that it should be a sort of public garden upon which it was pleasant to have an outlook from the living room and the porch. Suburban residence streets, in those days, were intended to attract admiring pleasure-drivers. This conception is changing, thanks to gasoline and to a growing appreciation that the front lawn was a very expensive thing in land, in cost of utility connections, and in upkeep. It had to be paid for by crowding the houses into a disgracefully close row; the side yards were so narrow as to be useless.

The special way of putting together street, house, and lot that distinguishes the Greendale street—as, in the spirit of the advertising age, its begetters have christened it—appears most novel to those whose knowledge of town planning history is least. The type of house it implies is much like the side-garden house of our Colonial towns, a house built on the street and




Greendale scheme of house location showing relation of living and service rooms to street, entrance court, and garden.



Residence Street . . . Greendale

along one side of the lot, with a garden between it and the neighbor. Even more it resembles the ancient and universal arrangement of the houses in farm villages, where one does not enter the house directly from the street but through a court around which the buildings are grouped. Not unexpectedly, visitors to Greendale—the town is under construction as this is written—have sometimes found an Old World flavor in its residence streets. They are narrow, for one thing. That was done to reduce the cost of grading, drives, and the utility connections: sewer, water and electricity. It is the end of the house that touches the side of the street—there is no "front yard"—and the entrance is in the longer front, facing on the *hof*. The lot is quite wide for a poor man's town, at least fifty feet. The court comprises all the room between one house and the next, because each house lies on the side line of the lot. This is not a serious matter since all the houses are rented: the town, in effect if not in form, will own itself and rent its houses to its people—but that is another story! There are few—on the first floor no—windows in the house-wall abutting on the neighbor's court.

The street, then, consists of two rows of houses facing parallel to the street, not perpendicular to it as is the common scheme. It is obvious that orientation becomes important in such a plan. Almost all of the residence streets at Greendale run north and south; the houses face south and the width of the courts is sufficient to insure winter sunlight in the living rooms. The garage is at the rear of the court. With the neighbor's garage it serves to enframe a little house-lawn just back of the house; beyond this lies the garden or recreation area of the rear yard.

This plan conceives of the house, the car, and the garden as together comprising the "home." It was worked out as a correlation of the house with, on one side, the community and the world, and, on the other, the privately held bit of land that is the garden. The motor car is the link between the house and the world: the court brings the car into the home complex—one can go from the car to the house as directly and with almost as perfect privacy as one goes from room to room in the house. One's friends drive in; they are not forced to stop in the street, to walk across a public sidewalk, and to remain

in public view until the street door of the house is opened. The court is a harbor in which the family car may anchor and unload in safety after its journey on the high seas of the traffic roads.

This Greendale type of house and lot planning brings the residence street back into civic art—it rescues the street from the street trees and the front lawns. The street becomes a defined channel of space, as it was in the old town plans. It is a plan well suited to substantial uniformity in the houses; they stand far enough apart to have personal identity, yet they are together an entity of a higher order than each is separately. Because the houses form directly the street walls, they can be manipulated for plastic effect; a setting-back of the houses at the entrance to a street, or a pinching-in of the plan at its end, has value that tells in the modelling of the designed space of the street. The entire street, too, is often so short that within it can be compassed the completion of a simple rhythm, from the portal to the terminal members. When the ground is favorable a symmetrical pattern works out naturally; if an irregular space must be divided, or if the lie of the land and existing trees affect the layout, the result is inevitably an informal grouping that Camillo Sitte—or the modernists, if the houses had that cast—would find more charming than the other. The whole scheme, to the present writer's great contentment, is conducive to straightness in the streets.

And it is not quite an accident that in its skeleton organization the plan of Greendale is much like the plan of Williamsburg.

When Werner Hegemann and I were building our book on civic art we talked often of the future of civic art, not the window-box type of civic center and that sort of thing, but city and art of the same meat, the intended beauty of cities as places of commerce and life and government, beauty built into streets and open squares that are the daily gathering and passing places of men. We had to say that no more towns like Nancy and no more plazas like the Piazza del Popolo would ever be built.

And we had to say, further, that if an effort were made to attain the old civic beauty it could not be done in the old forms,

for the automobile has taken the city unto itself, destroying the possibility of any full human experiencing of the city as an esthetic whole. We studied old plans, sketched the fair sights that would appear as one walked in those streets. But we knew that modern traffic would leave little pleasure in such a town.

Traffic, however, is not the only enemy of civic art. Modern cities are so large and so richly built, with every building doing its best to detach itself visually from the rest, that they become an intolerable burden upon the various elements of our minds and bodies that react to mass, form, and color. The buildings vary also in height, and the high ones rise far above the power of the street to control them. This competition within the street wall is another factor in the destruction of the street as a perceivable whole. The plain fact is that our cities have architectural indigestion—they would be better architecture, as cities, if the street fronts of most buildings were in the same style as the alley fronts, which are usually simple, harmonious, and uniform in scale and material.

The hope for beautiful cities as architectural ensembles lies in the direction of the new towns which must grow up in response to the distributive factors in our mechanical and economic evolution. In some of these towns, as in the Resettlement Administration projects, budgetary limitations will compel the architectural abnegation which competitive commerce does not permit. Some will test new ways of sparing our days the burden of traffic noise and danger. Something resembling the traffic-free villages of the fairs may be evolved as the form of the town business centers. A firm separation of residence streets from traffic streets will give some peace and beauty to the homes in future towns and suburbs.

But there is no need to abandon existing cities to the dragon, Traffic. Architects must fight against the growing theory that traffic volume is a phenomenon of nature which man may not deny. Traffic engineers often work on assumptions that are at least unphilosophical. People to whom there are finer values in life than getting from one noisy place to another in five minutes instead of ten, or adding a million dollars to the land values in this street rather than in that one, must learn to fight for their faith. In Washington, for example, there were other possibilities

than the slashing of the broad traffic route of Constitution Avenue diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue. The traffic roadways within the avenue of the Mall are wholly unnecessary and are obviously destructive of the intended simple grandeur of this monumental composition.

In little bays from the traffic stream, minor passages of civic beauty may still be attained. The plaza of the Rockefeller Center will have its imitators and rivals. And in successive regional, national and world fairs many beauties of civic art will be given us, beyond the power of cities to compass.

Exceeding these possibilities, the student and lover of the old civic art must dream of a public garden art in which the rare essential glories of old cities—and of old and new town plans that have never been built—can be translated into forms realized in tree-masses, hedges, walls, green and paved areas, and water surfaces. In such gardens an easy state of mind is possible, a calm reaction to verticals and horizontals, nears and fars, such as our cities will not tolerate. And in them people can meet and talk without keeping one eye on a traffic light. There is more to be learned about garden designing from the study of Renaissance town planning than in any other way, and I believe that the facts about solids and voids, masses and supports, that can be learned from civic art must be the basis for effective garden planning in whatever architectural styles the future brings. It must not be supposed that a mastery of the means and purposes of Renaissance city planning is easy or commonly encountered. The numberless confusions as to what is important in the L'Enfant plan, failures even to perceive what that plan is, demonstrate how much we need still to know about this elusive art.

But surely it is not possible to be wholly pessimistic about the future of those kinds of esthetic creation which we may group in the phrase civic art, when the last year has given us so fine a thing as the Mall already is. It is true that I must go there at dusk when the bunglings of L'Enfant's modern successors are charitably obscured, in order to get the feeling of perfection. Well, that is an easy price to pay, here in the soft afterglow of a Summer evening.

## INDEX

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Volume III of "CITY PLANNING—HOUSING" will appear in the larger size and format familiar to readers of "THE AMERICAN VITRUVIUS, AN ARCHITECT'S HANDBOOK OF CIVIC ART," as an atlas containing plans and photographs of the more significant work in the various fields of city planning and housing in all parts of the world. While the author, before his death, had planned the third volume as an integral part of the complete work of which the two text volumes present his thesis and argument, he also intended it to stand alone as a work of reference for architects, housers and city planners who will find here collected, within the covers of one book, a representative selection of material.

### Contents of Volume III