ARCHITECTURE AT THE EXPOSITION.

The Centennial and the Columbian Expositions, the two Fairs of international importance thus far held in the United States, were epoch-making in our architectural history. The Centennial in 1876 gave the first impulse to the revival of taste and interest in architecture since English influence ceased to be felt in the early days of our national existence. By the year 1893 some good architectural work was being done, but it remained for the beautiful Court of Honor at Chicago to arouse public interest thoroughly and stimulate architectural practitioners as a body. The enthusiasm thus awakened has not abated. On the contrary, the general appreciation of good architecture has greatly increased, and correspondingly greater demands are made upon the architect. These demands require in him a more careful education and training and inspire him to his best efforts. As a result, professional standards have been raised to higher levels during the last decade. In these various signs many are reading a prophecy of an era of still greater progress. It would almost seem that it but remained for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition to give a third impulse to American architecture, the results of which should bring about an architectural period noteworthy in history.

These conditions imposed a great responsibility upon the designers of this Exposition. How well they have fulfilled their task can only be judged when the effects resulting from their work have been revealed by time. The mere fact that many may experience pleasure on first beholding the immense architectural groups does not prove that the lasting
impression will be deep and fruitful. But it is equally true
that although the plan and buildings may be open to
technical criticism they may still awaken dormant sensibili-
ties in many beholders and stimulate the love of the beauti-
ful in all.

It is not the purpose of this article to describe the
architecture of the Fair. If it were, many points of beauty
could be found and dwelt upon. Its purpose is rather to
make a critical analysis of the more general aspects of the
Exposition, and in so doing what seem to be faults of vary-
ing degrees of prominence cannot be overlooked. This does
not mean that impressive beauty has not been attained. It
means rather in most cases that opportunities may not have
been seized to their fullest extent and hence some possi-
bilities have not been realized.

In all that has been written concerning the Louisiana
Purchase Exposition, and especially in the official state-
ments published, great emphasis has been laid upon its size
and upon the huge proportions of all its features. However
impressive statistics may be as regards some aspects of the
Fair, they are of but slight assistance towards an apprecia-
tion of its spectacular beauty. We are told that this Expo-
sition is to be the largest ever held. Unfortunately there is no
one point of view where this fact is apparent. The restricted
vistas are unfortunate. Acres and miles realized only by
wearied body and tired feet serve little to impress the mind
with grandeur and sublimity. Nothing expresses grandeur
more effectively than the extended vista. The Louisiana
Purchase Exposition is twice the size of the Columbian
Exposition and four times that of the Paris Exposition
of 1900. Yet its main vista from the Louisiana Monu-
ment to Festival Hall is shorter than either the Court of Honor at Chicago or the uninterrupted avenue from the Trocadéro to the Palace of Electricity at the Paris Fair. The apparent extent of the main court of the St. Louis Fair is undoubtedly restricted by the position of the Louisiana Monument. The lack of a monumental closure at the north end of the main open space between the outer ends of the Manufacturers and Varied Industries Buildings makes the Louisiana Monument the definite extremity of what may be termed the Court of Honor, and throws the extensive area north of the Monument out of the composition. In the absence of an adequate or even a direct approach, this plaza becomes of itself the approach, and the visitor does not feel that he has entered the Court of Honor until he has passed the Monument. Thus, about one-third of the area that rightfully belonged to the Court of Honor has been wasted. On the other hand, the Louisiana Monument, although superb in itself, as the only closure at the north end of the main court is inadequate. Looking back upon the court from Art Hill, in place of a monumental feature to form its northern end, the comparatively slender monument is seen against the ragged outline of canvas mountains on the Pike, a composition scarcely complete, judged from the architectural standpoint. Mention may be made here of the unfortunate location of the Pike, although its utilitarian character excludes it from a consideration of the artistic composition of the Fair. It is certainly a misfortune that its long line of extravaganzas should be the first feature forced upon the attention of the visitor on approaching the entrance to the Exposition.

The general architectural plan is familiar to the reader.
It was determined by the natural ridge of ground, now named Art Hill, which was an obvious position for the focal point. An axis perpendicular to the general direction of this ridge was then the natural axis of the composition. It would follow that buildings which could not be grouped about this main axis would be placed upon another running transversely to it. On account of the boundaries of the site this axis could not be made straight. This is not necessarily unfortunate in a transverse axis. Had it taken the form of a long, sweeping curve instead of an abruptly broken line, a perspective effect of great beauty would have been obtained, and the continuity of the avenue made evident. The existing breaks confuse the beholder, and give the effect of a sudden termination rather than a mere change in direction of an extended avenue. This may be cited as one of the lost opportunities to impress upon the visitor the great extent of area to which the Exposition may lay claim.

The natural ridge of Art Hill with its long sloping approaches formed a rare site for the culminating point of the main composition. The group of buildings upon the hill, Festival Hall, the Colonnade of States and the Restaurant Pavilions, together with the Cascades and the extensive slope, as a whole form a fine monumental conception. In this hill Nature bestowed a favor that has not before been granted to the designers of expositions. But lest they should grow too exultant she turned the hill to the north so that, save in the early morning, the great group of buildings crowning Art Hill, instead of forming the brilliant point of the composition, remains a shadowy mass. This is undeniably a misfortune. It is also to be regretted that the costly and well-designed Art building should be cut out
and wasted as an effective element in the architectural grouping.

Effective as is the stupendous group of buildings on Art Hill, there seems to the writer to be too great a lack of continuity between it and the buildings on either side of the Grand Basin. There is but one point from which the main court appears to be a unit. That point is the boat landing directly in front of the Louisiana Monument. From other points of view a wide gap separates the buildings of the lower and higher levels. Within the fixed limits of the Court of Honor the task imposed upon the designer was to emphasize the length of the vista, and, with the fortunate site for the main point upon an elevated ridge, to accentuate the height of the hill. The shape of the Grand Basin is a semicircle joined to an elongated rectangle, the semicircle, whose diameter is about twice the width of the rectangle, being at the farther end from the most advantageous view point. This sudden expansion in width undoubtedly acts in opposition to the perspective effect of distance. The optical effect of the parallel sides of a rectangle seen in perspective is an apparent contraction at the farther end. Obviously a real contraction would enhance the effect of distance, and on the other hand an expansion would annul this effect. Hence the vast area of the half circle at the end of the rectangle is not realized; and yet because of its area and location it tends to dwarf the apparent size of the rectangle and to shorten the apparent length of the main vista. This arrangement of two groups of buildings, one upon a lower and the other upon a higher level, decidedly removed from the first with no connection between, tends by reason of perspective effects to diminish the ap-
parent height of the higher of these groups. The absence of any connecting feature to carry the eye from one group to the other renders it difficult to realize the actual distance between them and compare their respective heights.

Had the Colonnade of States been arranged to form continuous lines with the court facades of the Electricity Building on the one side of the Grand Basin and the Education Building on the other, the true effect of the distance from the plain to the summit of Art Hill would not have been lost. The elongated rectangular form thus given to the Court of Honor would have greatly augmented the apparent length of the vista; while the long lines of colonnades sweeping up the slope would have emphasized the altitude of the hill, and brought out to its full value the height of the great dome of Festival Hall.

Such an arrangement of the Court of Honor would not in any way detract from the effect of the two side courts radiating from Art Hill. They are complete units in themselves. Festival Hall and the Colonnade of States do not enter into their composition. The Restaurant Pavilions could remain in their present positions, forming the central points of the axial vistas. The function of the Court of Honor in the general plan is monumental impressiveness. The two secondary courts are not intended to be competitive. Their function is more to contrast by the charm of picturesque. In this they are both successful to a degree, but more especially the East Court. The view the latter affords looking back along the canal from the first platform of the stairway leading to Art Hill is one of the most attractive in all the Exposition grounds. The corresponding view of the West Court is marred by a hideous blue dome which either
by chance or by design falls on the axis of the Court. The East Court, it is true, lacks an attractive point to arrest the vision at its north end. In the absence of an adequate and fitting closure to the view the bank of trees of the Park would at least have offered no element of discord. However, this charming view was not to be left unmarred. Again, either by chance or design, an unfortunate building is placed fairly on the axis, in this case taking the form of a structural steel tower with no elements either of beauty or fitness to the place. So we have unfortunate and disappointing terminations at one end of each of the three main vistas of the Fair. The most important one of these closes with the ragged outline of sham mountains and towers of a Pike concession; while, of the two lesser, one ends in a shapeless blue dome and the other in an unsightly tower of steel columns.

From the platform of the east steps ascending Art Hill, a second charming view is that along the canal toward the Grand Basin. On the right are the colonnades of the Education Building with their reflection in the waters of the canal, and on the left the grassy slopes of the hillside. The foreground is composed of masses of low evergreens and taller shrubs, while along the green banks of the canal are fine white birches. This is only one of the many little views about the base and slopes of Art Hill which are accidental in the sense that they are not along the main lines of the plan, but which are full of charm and beauty. The fine avenues of trees flanking the Grand Basin and the banks of the side canals will add greatly to the present aspect. Incidentally they constitute a remarkable instance of the transplanting of large trees. In many places thoughtful
work in planting is evident, and when nature bursts forth in leaf and flower and discloses the secrets of the landscape architect’s plan, no other work will be found more effective in unifying and embellishing the general architectural scheme.

A great deal might also be said in commendation of the high type of sculpture to be found in profusion about the grounds, and of the well-designed and harmonious bridges, electric light standards and other minor accessories.

Thus far we have been considering the arrangements of the Exposition as a whole, because the general plan is of far more importance to the effectiveness of the entire composition than are the individual parts. If the portions serving similar purposes are kept of a uniform size and general color effect, there can be considerable difference in the character of the detail and in the general treatment without marring in great degree the effect of the whole. The buildings of the Fair are of uniform height and color, but beyond this individual fancy has run riot. The limitation of style, if it may be called a limitation, which was imposed upon the designers was the use of “free renaissance.” A common understanding as to what interpretation should be placed upon this limitation was evidently lacking, and a certain impression of discord results. The varied designs express, no doubt, the ideas of the different designers as to what exposition architecture should be. The material used, as well as the purpose for which a building is intended, determine the character of its design. The festive and ephemeral nature of exposition architecture tends to loose the bonds of restraint which should be felt in designing a permanent structure. Staff,
the material employed in these buildings, is a light plastic substance, admirably adapted to rich and elaborated decorative forms. An architecture true to the nature of this material should observe its limitations of strength. It can not logically be used in structural forms primarily designed to be built of stone which, unlike staff, is capable of sustaining great weight. In sham stone architecture, then, we can scarcely expect to find all of the Seven Lamps of Architecture burning brightly. Its beauty must be somewhat dimmed by the absence of the flame of truth. This type of architecture, however, has come to be considered legitimate, in this country at least, in exposition building, and until our cities are more replete with permanent structures of fine monumental character, we may perhaps be pardoned as a people for our fondness for such creations in plaster when an exposition presents the opportunity to build them.

A newspaper contributor has made use of the following phrases in writing of Festival Hall: "In a classic style of architecture, somewhat Ionic in idea, but treated in a decidedly ornate manner, with selections of beautiful suggestions from many of the schools of the renaissance." The buildings of the Fair taken together, undeniably might require this comprehensive pale to include all their diversities, but Festival Hall, fine as it is, can scarcely claim to cover so wide an archeological field. It is one of the noteworthy buildings, masterly in proportion and profile, with rich and vigorous detail. Festival Hall, together with the Colonnade of States and Restaurant Pavilion, form a consistent group. Scarcely any other work on the grounds approaches this group in quality and strength of design. We consider, however, the lack of connection between the Colonnade and the Pavilions
to be a fault. The Restaurant Pavilions, though comparatively modest in size, are exceedingly attractive in composition. The form of their domes, however, seems to be too little harmonious with that of Festival Hall. Their ornament is well disposed, admirably filling its place and in excellent scale. These small buildings show the results of careful study and may be ranked among the most successful. The design of the Colonnade of States is also skilful and interesting. If its shadowy mass could have been arranged to be seen against the sky, a fine effect would have been gained. Deprived of sunlight by its northern exposure it needed a brilliant rather than its present sombre background. Whatever may be lost in the day time, however, will doubtless be fully retrieved at night under the transforming influence of myriads of electric lights.

The evident lack of sympathy between the designs of the various buildings is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the group on Art Hill and the facades surrounding the Court of Honor. These two groups seem to belong to two distinct and separate species, as it it were. The balance of stronger qualities is perhaps with the group on the Hill. The heavy though decorative architecture of the time of Louis XVI. marks this group, while one finds around the rectangle below the lighter Italian influence predominating. Of the four facades about the Court of Honor, that of the Manufacturers' Building would seem to be the most worthy of note. Its skilful and spirited design shows an evident appreciation of the free, decorative character of exposition architecture. Its colonnade if we must accept stone columns in plaster, is by far the finest on the grounds. The columns are heavier than
the usual proportion for stone columns, and this undoubtedly gives a sense of adequacy for its purpose to a column of weaker material. The intercolumniation also is fine. An instructive comparison may be made by glancing across to the colonnades of the Varied Industries and the Education Building, neither of which is so well proportioned nor so vigorous in detail. The Education Building as a design, however, is open to little criticism. Its chief fault may be said to consist in its somewhat too serious character both for its material and its purpose as an exposition building. The facade of the Electricity Building, on the other hand, can scarcely be called successful. Its lines and masses are too much broken to give a feeling of repose. This is equally true of the Machinery Building, the detail of which is open to almost sweeping condemnation. Its heavy imitation stone trimmings—imitation even to exaggerated marks of the stone-cutter's tools—sink well nigh to absurdity. The use of a sham clock-face with plaster figures and hands as an ornament over the main entrance scarcely denotes inventive fertility in design. As if in rebuke, one of the finest groups of decorative sculpture, among many fine ones at the Exposition, is to be found as the crowning feature of this entrance directly above this futile time-piece. The Transportation Building may be counted among the successful designs. It has some exceptionally well designed and skilfully executed ornament. The slender towers at the ends of the facade seem to be too high and at the same time not sufficiently massive to fulfil adequately their combined function of terminating the sky line and serving as crowning features to the heavy end piers. The plainness of the sides of the building, acting as a foil to the rich end facades, is a very acceptable relief.
It is a serious question whether in the design of this exposition as a whole sufficient recognition has been given to the value of such plain spaces. With their proper and desirable use a considerable sum might have been saved and directed not only to the concentration of richness at focal points, with a consequent relief to senses overpowered by a constant bewilderment of effects, but also to the adequate termination of incomplete vistas and other similar omissions which are at present much to be regretted.

The Mines and Metallurgy Building is both original and interesting. Perhaps it is more out of sympathy with most of the other buildings than they are with each other; but a frank difference is almost always preferable to a slight discord. In this respect the designer's somewhat radical departure may be counted to his credit. The building lacks scale, and its central motives, with crowning globe and flanking obelisks, are not entirely satisfactory; but as a whole and in many details it is of great interest. It was evidently designed for a rich color treatment which it apparently is not to receive. This leads one to wonder at the general absence of color treatment, the cheapest and most effective agent that could have been employed to unify the whole architectural scheme, rendering it brilliantly festive and at the same time more restful to the eye than a desert-like monotony of universal monochrome.

The United States Government Building occupies a fine site, but is badly dwarfed by the colossal exhibition buildings flanking the avenue leading to it. The elaborate sweeping ramps forming a main part of its approaches are somewhat superfluous, being entirely lost to view behind the big buildings in front of it. The little building of the United
States Fish Commission has much charm and interest, considerably more, in fact, than the main Government building itself. It appears upon first glance to be of pure Greek inspiration, but an examination reveals that it is not archeological in the least, but full of charmingly original detail.

In the groups of foreign government pavilions there are a few that are particularly noteworthy. The French building, a reproduction of the Grand Trianon at Versailles, will be studied with especial interest by young architects. The disposition of the building and the gardens about it is an excellent example of the skill and thoroughness of French designers. Scarcely a foot of the ground has been neglected, and all of it seems to have been used to the greatest possible advantage. The English building, though a reproduction of one of the minor works of the great Wrenn, seems rather sombre and retired, but its beautiful little garden promises to show the charm that only an English garden possesses. The proximity of these two gardens of the French and English schools affords an interesting comparison. Another highly artistic school of landscape gardening will be represented by the garden connected with the Japanese building, which will also furnish a very instructive example of garden-craft. We Americans have yet much to learn of the delightful possibilities of the small garden. The Chinese Pavilion will doubtless be to many a revelation of the high degree of artistic genius possessed by these Orientals. The skilful disposition of color, particularly on the exterior, is well worth study. The brilliant spots of color arranged on a gray ground preserve an excellent balance of the warm and cool, the brilliant and sombre, the negative thus enhancing the effect of the positive. The result is one that could only be achieved by the most highly developed color-sense.
The State buildings are grouped together on an undulating tract of land covered with fine trees. Out of sight of the main exhibition buildings, they will afford an attractive retreat for the visitor foot-sore and weary after covering his quota of the 1240 acres of the Fair. The native of New Jersey will find his haven of rest in a quiet little house with green blinds and ample piazzas nestling among the trees, while the citizen of Connecticut will find a stately colonial mansion—both delightfully restful in their contrast to the glare and bewilderment of the sights of the Fair. The people of some other States will hardly find such restful surroundings in their ambitious structures.

In this hasty survey of the architecture of the Exposition no attempt has been made to be comprehensive. The purpose of the paper has been to be analytical rather than descriptive. In an analysis of a work so rare in history, of such great import and of such far reaching results, criticism must be from an ideal standpoint. The spectacular effect of the Fair cannot fail to rise to the impressively beautiful. It would be premature to judge whether we have fully discharged our responsibilities in the expenditure of such a vast amount of our resources and energy until the great work is before us in its entirety—with every sign of incompletion removed, with the beautiful natural setting in full leaf and flower, with the throngs of people filling the avenues and the water-craft plying upon the lagoons. These will give the touch of life and motion and human activity, which alone can enable us finally to estimate the merits of the huge architectural creation, by determining the degree of success with which it fulfills its predestined function.

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