

ARCHITECTURE RELATED TO ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

By PROF. J. O. SUMNER.

Among the callings of which the Institute offers a professional training, architecture alone stands in close relation to the civilizations of the past. The science of one generation is superseded by that of the next and has thenceforth only an historical interest, but good art is never superseded and, in particular, this is true of architecture. The principles of form, of balance, of rhythm, are unalterable and are, as a rule, better exemplified in the simpler and more unified buildings of past ages than by those in which the complex demands of modern life have at all points to be considered and satisfied. Improved mechanical methods, too, while diminishing the labor and enormously increasing the possible quantity of architectural output, have been in many ways injurious to its quality. Details are no longer executed, to any appreciable extent, by craftsmen trained by lifelong practice not in mere mechanical repetition but in the freest and most delicate work. Perfected by successive generations of such handworkers, the mouldings and the carved and color ornament of the great epochs of art in the past are the necessary a. b. c. of the architect of today,—an alphabet in which variations, new combinations, and so new words and new meanings, are ever possible, but whose letters it would be as foolish to forget as it would be for the man who has new ideas to put into writings to forget the alphabet and grammar of his mother tongue.

So the student of architecture must be in perpetual communion with the work of the past, and even the practicing architect is apt to grow more imitative rather than less so, and to repeat himself and become stilted and dull, if he ceases to draw refreshment and inspiration from the monuments in which the great styles reached their first perfection.

But the architecture of the past is only the cast-off cloak of the life of the past. It was that life which determined its forms and which gave it the spirit and manner which we describe as "style." People build with the materials which are accessible to them. The style of building depends in part upon the character of those materials. But its development is shaped by the habits and temperament of those who create it, and above all else, by their aspirations. It is no accident that every one of the three really distinct and complete styles in the history of European art, the Classical Greek, the Byzantine, and the Gothic, was formed in response to the needs of religion. The temple in the Greek, the domed church in the Byzantine, the vaulted cathedral in the Gothic, gave, in each case, the central problem through the working-out of which all the arts of construction and adornment, architecture, sculpture and painting, received that harmonious and related development which constitutes a true style.

Style being thus the expression, through the plastic arts, of the needs and aspirations, and, most subtle of all because unconscious to the builders themselves, of the temperament of the people and the age which created it, the student of the architect who knows only one of these arts apart from the rest, and who is unfamiliar with the literature, the history, and the life of the period whose manner building and decoration he appropriates, is seldom able to work in the spirit of the style. How-

ever skilfully he may imitate and adapt its external forms he is almost certain to use them unintelligently and in a piecemeal, inorganic manner.

The desirable breadth of fullness of knowledge of the great creative epochs of the past cannot, it should be needless to say, be established through one or two academic courses. But some idea of the conditions and life of these epochs and a guiding thread of history which will connect them together may be so imparted, and should serve, for students who are in earnest with their art, as a point of departure for fuller and more mature study of the periods whose work specially interests them. To accomplish this is the primary purpose of the courses in the History of European Civilization and Art.

While pursuing the general aim thus described, a special effort is made, in these courses, to familiarize the student with the development and with the more famous masterpieces of sculpture and painting, arts which express in concrete form the life and spirit of their time and which are always intimately associated with its architecture. In addition to the illustration of these courses by several thousand lantern-slides and photographs the magnificent collections of original works in the Museum of Fine Arts and in Fenway Court are readily accessible, and it is hoped that the better disposition of time which goes into effect after the present year may make it possible to utilize these resources more fully.

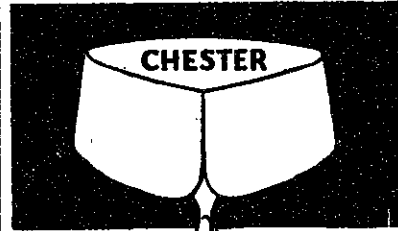
OFFICE TRAINING

(Continued from page 37.)

common sense supply, and he will lay down a life method of procedure. The ideal he must consider is the right kind of success in his profession which must come from his practical qualifications of backbone and common sense, and from the added moral one of loyalty which covers all others. Loyalty to office and employer means loyalty to self and client. Loyalty to self means that his self cultivation must never stop, that his abilities are to be used, and improved and added to.

Every good office is inspired by a strong "esprit de corps" and fine traditions, and in such an office where his fortunes begin, the young draughtsman must help extend these, and show quality and quantity of work, and herein is the finest training for the position he intends finally to occupy, that of a practicing architect.

Another point well worth remembering is that training in a fine office gives reputation to a draughtsman, so that he need never be out of employment so long as he has a sane mind in a sane body. It will take him some years to apply effectively what he has learned with us,—to convert his theoretical knowledge into actual facts. But when he can fall back on his theoretical knowledge to justify his practice, or vice versa, and can call to his assistance both his scientific knowledge and his experience, he will find himself in a happy condition. Let the young draughtsman be in no hurry to commence practice for himself. The ideal start would be when he is strong enough to carry the traditions of the office in which he has served with him,—until he feels capable of continuing the class of work he has been engaged on in another architect's employ. Character is shown ten times over in the man who believes he should be prepared before he is to be trusted, than in the man who the false impression that success is measured by the time his "shingle" has been exposed to the public view.



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