

SOME NOTES ON A FLYING TRIP TO WASHINGTON, BALTIMORE AND PHILADELPHIA.

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WASHINGTON.

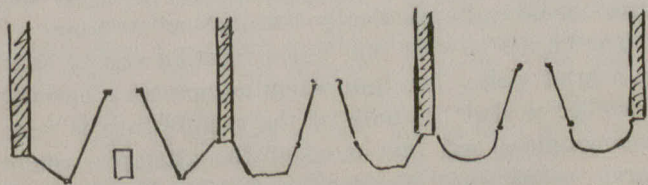
From the prosaic narrow streets of Toronto to the broad avenues of Washington, with their interesting perspectives and vistas is as great a change, artistically speaking, as was the change from a wintry spring to the mildness of early summer with blossoming trees and shrubs, and flower-decked gardens and squares.

Going, fresh from the study of Toronto's plan, with which the O. A. A. Committee is now wrestling, I was doubly interested in the much-lauded plan of Washington.

I was, first of all, struck by the great scale on which the avenues and squares are laid out, the area devoted to each being greater in proportion than that of any other city in the world.

The Capitol, of course, dominates the city and the principal avenues radiate fan-shape from it as a centre. Most of the streets are laid out at right angles with the Capitol, the result being numerous acute angled intersections with the avenues—possibly too many—but as most of the buildings are kept well back from the street line, but few narrow, wedge-shaped structures are seen.

The very wide sidewalks in the business sections, with an apparent reservation on which only bay windows, shop fronts and steps are permitted to encroach, has resulted in a curious competition in the show windows of the stores, resulting in the greatest imaginable hodge-podge, which is not altogether architectural in effect. Here are some of the treatments.



The business and house architecture of the city is with a few exceptions commonplace and uninteresting. The "H. H. Richardson" house will always be interesting, and there are a few of the newer houses, old colonial in feeling, which are decidedly good, so good that one wants to go back or pass that way whenever possible, as they seem to "grow" on one.

The numerous circles at the intersections of the avenues give fine opportunity for monuments, and the opportunity has been seized with good effect in many instances, thus breaking the long vistas. If our city fathers could be transported to Washington for a week, under proper tutelage, we would find the project of improving Toronto streets much more popular than at present.

They could also get pointers and precedent for a logical and simple method of naming and numbering our streets.

The Library of Congress is one of the most important and interesting structures in the city. Money has been lavished on it—something over \$6,000,000—and while there is so much that is good one cannot

help regretting that much that is not good has been permitted to creep into the design. While the mosaic work in the lower corridors is excellent in design and quiet in tone, the decoration of the ceiling of the main hall strikes one as crude and raw in the extreme. Many of the fresco paintings are charming in motive and execution, while on the other hand much of the modelling of the architectural ornament is commonplace and monotonous. It seems almost incredible that the enormous marble columns and pilasters in the reading room, over a score in number, should be crowned by Corinthian caps of identical design, cast in plaster apparently from the same mould, and commonplace in character. Moreover, these pilasters have so many re-entering angles, each with a compressed attempt at a cap, that the result is quite a jumble of partly hidden volutes.



It seems to me that here was a magnificent opportunity for the very highest type and invention in modelling, an opportunity which was taken advantage of in the Capitol. The same evidence of hurry and lack of thought and invention are visible in other portions of the building. In some places pilasters are cut in two or jammed into return walls for the sake of uniformity of spacing, resulting in deformed capitals and a general jumble of features which betokens either ignorance or lack of study.

The mistakes are all the more inexcusable from the fact that examples of a better way are to be seen in much of the work in the Capitol on the adjoining square.

While the interior of the Capitol looks somewhat dull and quaker-like after the brilliant newness of the Library, there is a character about its detail which is satisfying and pleasing to the eye of the architect.

The older buildings, such as the Capitol, the Treasury and the Patent Office, with their great single orders seem much grander and more dignified than the newer buildings with their superimposed orders. The State, War and Navy Building, with its four superimposed orders in the central features and three on the corner pavilions, is the least satisfactory of all, unless one includes the red brick Pension Building. The story is told in Washington that the designer of the latter building was showing it to General Sherman who bluntly exclaimed that it would do for a barn. The architect then went on to explain that it was fire-proof, whereupon the outspoken soldier exclaimed, "What a pity."

Most of the other Government buildings, such as the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are devoid of architectural character.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art occupies a noble and well-designed building—by Ernest Flagg—and houses many notable pieces of sculpture, bronzes and paintings.

The Carnegie Library is also a well-designed building and well worthy a visit.