

4

sideration is therefore given to timber bridges in the following pages. As far as aesthetic proportions are concerned, all steels are equally good, but all stone or all concrete is not satisfactory. Any material which shows signs of rapid disintegration, in addition to presenting a rough and objectionable surface finish, creates a feeling of distrust in the mind of the observer concerning its powers of resistance, and the general effect of the structure on the mind is a bad one. Occasionally clay and pebbles of easily disintegrated shale in concrete aggregate gives rise to this by unsightly spalling on the face of the work.

The chief responsibility for the lack of aesthetic quality in our bridges rests with municipal councils or, in general, the elected representatives of the people. While railway directors and managers are not infrequently guilty of perpetrating a monstrosity in the form of a bridge, they are less culpable than those who, by accepting public office, place themselves under the obligation to conserve the higher interests of the community or state. The private corporation naturally directs its resources toward the increase of earning power, and it cannot be expected to give special consideration to matters beyond the field of economics unless forced to do so by outside influence. While the representatives of the people have little or no present control over the appearance of most of the bridges used exclusively for railway purposes, they are jointly responsible for bridges carrying both highway and railway traffic, and frequently in urban districts hold the power of accepting or rejecting designs for railway bridges within their boundaries. A case in point is the Wabash Railway bridge over the approach drive to Forest Park, St. Louis (Fig. 2). The city authorities made the replacement of the former bridge at the crossing of this roadway conditional upon the railway building a structure in every way suitable to its surroundings, and backed its request by agreeing to defray a part of the cost. Were public pressure brought to bear in all such instances where any check exists upon the railways, and were the people as ready to approve of a little additional expenditure on their own part as on the part of the corporations, a vast deal of improvement would soon be seen in the bridges in this country.

It is unfortunate that municipal councillors and bridge commissioners frequently regard it their duty to secure the lowest priced bridges to safely accommodate the traffic on their highways for a limited term of years. That all attention to the matter of appearance is foregone in such instances need scarcely be stated; indeed, there are few councils that will pay anything more than what is necessary to satisfy the bald structural requirements, and scarcely enough to satisfy these latter well. The desire for extreme present economy is so strongly seated in many municipal