

*Is there a Possibility of a New Style of Architecture?*

his raw materials in masses, so as to produce agreeable effects of light and shade. But he must go much further than this, to produce anything worthy of being mentioned in comparison with the masterpieces of ancient or modern Architecture. There must be beauty of detail as well as of outline, and play of light and shade on surfaces as well as in contrasting masses. He would now have to go on to express the construction by suitable detail, and enrich it with appropriate ornament, so as to form a beautiful and harmonious whole. If, with the limitations we have assumed, he were able to accomplish this, he would thereby prove himself such a heaven-born genius as has never yet appeared in the world. All his ideas of outline of masses and play of light and shade and beauty of form would have been derived from a class of objects entirely different in shape, proportion, color and texture, from those with which he was now called upon to deal. He would be practically in the position of a student, say of electrical science, who had studied the theory of electricity but had never seen a dynamo or other electrical machine. Such a person would probably discover on taking his first model to the patent office that he had wasted his time in inventing again something that had been invented in the very infancy of the science. Our designer would be in the same position. So far as Architecture is concerned, he would be in the position of a child or a savage, and his best efforts would inevitably be crude or puerile.

Now let us suppose the same problem presented to an architect trained in the modern or eclectic school, the sole proviso being that his design should be beautiful, but absolutely devoid of style. Would it be possible for him to divest his mind of all his accumulated knowledge of the architectural forms and details and ideas of the old styles, as a slate is cleaned off with a damp sponge? Is it not more likely that from the very first steps in the arrangement of his plan he would be influenced by recollections of the old styles? He could not divest himself of the influence on his taste of those buildings which he had admired and studied. Try as he might, he would find recollections of basilica, or temple, or cathedral, or mosque, suggesting ideas as to the treatment of his raw materials, and insensibly he would find himself designing in some familiar style. He could not help himself, because style consists not merely in ornamentation, but also in structural form and disposition of mass. So the questions of style and external treatment have to be kept in mind even in the arrangement of the ground plan. The consideration of the nature of the various materials alone would bring him face to face with the question of style. Is the ruling motive to be the beam or the arch? This might not be determined by local circumstances, and so the one system might be as available

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as the other. What is to determine it then? The aesthetic taste of the designer. And having once made his choice, his artistic instincts would lead him to adhere consistently to the principles of the system chosen. The leading lines must necessarily be either horizontal or vertical, because every great architectural monument that has ever been produced has been either in one style or the other.

No! it is not thus that a new style of Architecture will ever be invented. Man is always the heir of all the ages, and his heritage is the sum of the learning and knowledge that have been slowly accumulated in the past. Progress is only made by advancing beyond the highest point previously reached. The men who originate new ideas are those who are most familiar with all the ideas of their predecessors. New inventions are most likely to be made by those who are most familiar with all previous inventions. So, in art as in science, that man is most likely to invent a new form whose mind is most saturated with the best of the old forms.

Some attempts have been made to produce a new style by harking back to some old style at an incomplete stage in its development, and trying to carry it onward on some other lines than those on which it was actually developed. This appears to have been Richardson's idea in attempting to revive the Romanesque style, and to that extent his attempt differed from most other modern attempts to revive old styles. None of these attempts have had any better result than to galvanize the old forms into a semblance of life more or less ephemeral according to the ability of the apostles of the cult for the time being. Examples of the more recent attempts will at once occur to you—the Gothic revival, Norman Shaw and the Queen Anne, Eastlake and his so-called principles of "Truth." It is curious to observe in Eastlake's case how some of the designs in his own book belie every one of the principles laid down in it. It is difficult, for instance, to conceive on what principle of truth a book-case can be designed which is finished on top with an imitation of a shingle roof with dormer windows. As regards Richardson, it is futile now to speculate what he might or might not have accomplished had he lived to the allotted span. His experience would doubtless have been that of all others who have trodden the same path. Measured by actual results, his influence upon the Architecture of this country has not been beneficial, not so much because of what he did or failed to do, but because of what his imitators have done. Richardson went to original sources for his inspiration, but most of his imitators have only gone to Richardson, and the result therefore cannot be considered surprising.

Attempts have sometimes been made to combine the outlines of one style with the details of another, but no new style has ever re-

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sulted from these attempts. The best example of this is probably the French Renaissance of the time of Francis I, where the outline is Gothic and the details mostly Classic. The effect is picturesque, but there was no vitality in the resulting style or variety. The English Elizabethan is of the same type. The term "debased" applied to it by the Gothicists is not inappropriate, and no better instance of this debasement is to be found than in the west front of Westminster Abbey, where the Classic details look strangely out of place on the Gothic front.

If, then, all attempts at revivals have failed to produce a new style; if the eclectic method has failed; if the invention of new constructive methods and the creation of new needs have also failed, and if the attempt to dispense with style altogether is sure to fail, is there anything left on which to base a hope that there will ever be a new style? It is a question not lightly to be answered. The conditions under which the old styles were produced have long passed away. Life was leisurely in those old days. There was time to linger over a design until it was as perfect as its author could make it. Men whose work was of an artistic kind worked for the love of their art, and took pleasure in their work for its own sake. The styles were not made by men who looked upon their art as a mere means of making a living. In those days each worked in only one style, and all worked in the same style at the same time, and they probably knew little or nothing of any other, so that to them it was the vernacular. They did not dabble in Greek one day and Gothic the next. In some cases they may have had before them examples of the preceding styles out of which their own had grown, but they could only have had such knowledge of these as they could obtain at first hand. There were no excursion trains to afford them the mental dissipation of a glance at all the monuments of antiquity during a summer holiday. They had few books, still fewer illustrations, and no photographs at all. So it is not surprising that some of the Romanesque work, for instance, was obviously the result of efforts at recollection of Roman forms, which might perhaps have been copied literally, had the means only been available in the shape of a library. Men were therefore compelled to think for themselves instead of borrowing the thoughts of others. The growth of a new style was an affair of centuries. The best Egyptian or Greek architect, if called upon to design a spire, would probably have pronounced it impossible. And so it was, within the time at the disposal of one man or one generation. But keep the problem before one generation after another, and gradually the thing is done—not all at once or by one man, but slowly, through many tentative efforts and failures, success is finally reached, and the Greek temple becomes the Gothic cathedral. Mr. Sturges

puts this idea very well when he says: "Once only in a series of centuries appears an architectural thought destined to grow great and stimulate other thoughts, and call out their embodiment in visible form."

The shadow cannot move backwards on the dial, and the old conditions can never be restored. Some one said recently that "the most fertile mind—much less the average—is not able to produce from the use of the material and purposes of the structure, an entirely original supply of forms, especially within the limit of the time allowed for the occasion." That is true, and therefore every architect must express his ideas in the forms of some known style. All styles are open to the choice and all are alike alive or alike dead to this generation. The history of the last three centuries seems to point to the Renaissance as the one most in touch with the spirit of modern life. It is by far the most plastic of all styles. It is suitable alike for all classes of buildings, from the most humble to the most palatial, and for every purpose—domestic, ecclesiastical, educational, commercial, municipal, national and monumental. So long as the fancy is restrained within the limits of good taste, its forms can be used with the utmost freedom, and adapted to every purpose. Every young architect, after having acquired a general knowledge of all styles, should take some one and make it his own and try to know it thoroughly, in its principles, its history, its monuments and its details, and he should, if possible, design in that and no other. If the Renaissance is chosen, then some one phase of it—say French or English—should be thoroughly mastered before another is taken up.

It cannot be predicated with certainty that there will ever again be a new style. But there are certain principles on which the existing styles should be used, and it may be confidently asserted that if these principles are not followed there will assuredly never be a new style. Blind copying will never produce one. It would be a long task fully to analyze and formulate these principles, but for the present purpose they may be summed up into two propositions: 1st, That construction must be absolutely truthful, and must be expressed in forms appropriate to the purposes of the building; and 2nd, That no moulding or feature of any sort must ever be used merely from habit, or without careful analysis to discover why it is pleasing to the eye, and what it means, and even then it should be used only after long and careful consideration whether it should be used at all, what function it is to perform, and whether nothing better can be devised to perform that function.

The following out of these principles may never result in the formation of a new style. Certainly no one man will ever invent one; but it may be that the efforts of some of those who try faith-

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fully to carry out these principles may start an influence that will increase as it rolls onward, until in course of time it will be found that unconsciously a new style has grown up. But assuredly the only efforts that will be of any avail will be inspired by an earnest striving after what is true and beautiful, and an honest love for art for its own sake, and only when these are vivified by at least some spark of that divine creative imagination which must be born in a man, and without which he may be a builder, but never an architect.

