MODERN USE OF THE GOTHIC: THE POSSIBILITIES OF NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLE.
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It is the purpose of this article to invite discussion. It is hoped that, by calling attention to modern conditions, discussion may be cited and that, from this interchange of thought, helpful conclusions may be reached.

It must be apparent to the most casual observer that we are tiring of the old architectural styles. It is felt that they are not adequate expression of present conditions, and modern buildings show a distinct effort toward departure or modification.

It may not be conceded, but it is nevertheless true, that *L'Art Nouveau* is a concrete expression of the same desire.

While it may be disputed, it is the purpose of this article to show that, in the modern use of Gothic, we have a suggestion of the lines of the possible development of a future architectural style.

The new has an indefinable charm for every mind—human nature is so constituted that it will accept an inferior production if it has claim to novelty, rather than finer work founded upon accepted precedent. An interesting side-light may be thrown upon the possible new development in architecture by an analysis of the modern use of Gothic.

Custom has become so exacting that when we speak of a public building, we instantly think of a classic structure. Even the more utilitarian public buildings, from the fact that they have been designed in many cases by Government architects, have the same characteristics, yet when a church or religious building is mentioned, the mind at once pictures some form of Gothic edifice.

Tradition thus exerts its influence and it is often amusing to see the uncertain and wandering efforts of the designer when some problem is given for which there is no precedent, as, for example, a modern office building.

In the chaos which has resulted, it is interesting to note the influence of the old, and to speculate as to the possibilities of a new style. The classic, with its column and lintel, does not solve the problem. The modern office building with columns at the bottom or at the top, as seemingly dictated by accident, is not a thing of beauty. Roman precedent, while better, has not been markedly successful in its
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adaptation; it is therefore with interest that the student notes the use of Gothic in many of the newer private and semi-public buildings.

And it may be opportune to suggest that, just as in painting, the Classic school has been repudiated and a more modern and virile treatment based upon study of nature substituted, so in architecture the recent study of Gothic may be but a forerunner of a return to Nature, from which a more virile and more practical style will be evolved.

It is a statement which may be criticised and yet which is nevertheless true, that in *L'Art Nouveau*, a movement which is now being felt throughout the western world, there is marked similarity between its main characteristics and those of the Gothic style.

The same spirit of unrest is shown in *L'Art Nouveau*. It goes without saying that there is much that is hopelessly bad, but it remains true that the general feeling for line and the remarkable appreciation of color have made this movement notable. A careful analysis will also develop principles which are fundamental to all good styles—and principles, many of which have been set aside since Gothic was in its prime.

It must be admitted that many modern architectural *L'Art Nouveau* efforts are woefully inferior, but this criticism is true of the early efforts in every movement. The results obtained in minor lines are much more satisfactory, and in textiles and jewelry, results have been obtained which merit high ranking.

The color combinations, above all, are of a superior quality, and in many instances have reached a development never before obtained. In fact, it is to this wonderful charm of color that this style owes much of its present success. Color has heretofore been scrupulously avoided in modern architectural schemes. It is to this very love of color that may be ascribed much of the exuberant, and at times unmerited, praise which has been bestowed upon *L'Art Nouveau*. If the same perfection were obtained in proportion and in balance of line, what might not be expected of this style? It bases itself upon the principles that were the fundamentals of the Gothic movement. Plant forms supply the data from which the detail is drawn. Plant growth suggests the lines which are fundamental. And even in the use of color the inspiration seems to be from the same source.

The movement at first jeered at has come to receive serious con-
consideration. Its influence is felt in painting, its influence is noticeable in sculpture; and it will not be long before its spirit will be discernible in architectural effort. The decoration of many stores, hotels, and even exposition buildings has shown this influence. Perhaps the most intelligent example was the German exhibit at the St. Louis Fair. So important is this development considered in Germany that plant forms have been technically analyzed as a basis for design. A special exposition was held not long ago to bring together information and concrete examples of work in this department.

It is undoubtedly true that in household architecture many modern examples owe their inspiration to influences which can be easily traced to mediaeval times. If these premises are granted, is it too much to claim that the new movement will in the main draw its inspiration from Gothic?

A FEW examples may make this contention more plain: The most successful school buildings are distinctly Gothic. Among the most notable in New York may be mentioned the Morris High School and the Wadleigh High School. These are splendid structures, with every modern convenience, and stand as excellent examples of what an educational building should be. Every room is well lighted, the ventilation is perfect, and the sanitary conditions uncriticisable. The design is such as to be simple in construction, yet impressive. With all this a charm is retained which is most attractive. Not of the ordinary utilitarian character, they rank with the best of public buildings and at a moderate expenditure. They show the versatility of Gothic and demonstrate its possibility in modern use.

The Erasmus Hall High School, not as yet completed, is an interesting example of the adaptability of this style to modern requirements. The scheme in brief consists of grouping the buildings, the center being dominated by a large tower giving entrance to the Court, which is to be surrounded at a later date by buildings devoted to the purposes of the school, as growth may demand and money may be available.

Mr. C. B. J. Snyder, Superintendent of School Buildings, deserves great credit. The buildings meet every practical utilitarian requirement, and yet in the successful adaptation of the style are
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among the most beautiful of the city's possessions. Mr. Snyder has not only raised the standard of design, but has added many features in plan and arrangement which are unique.

The admirable buildings for the College of the City of New York by Mr. George B. Post are a case in point. In spite of the fact that many designs were made for these buildings and varying styles suggested, the final decision was given in favor of the present plans—a modified form of Collegiate-Gothic. These buildings most fittingly meet modern requirements. They have been described so often that a detailed statement would be but a repetition. Not only has every practical condition been successfully met, but many of the buildings have reached a plane of excellence seldom if ever attained. The view of the Assembly Hall from the college grounds is most imposing and will stand as an example of a happy combination of line, form and color. Thus when completed, this will be the most important series of municipal educational buildings as yet planned for this country.

Wallabout Market, erected some years ago, was so designed that it could be extended from time to time along the lines laid down. It is an excellent example of the desirability of a comprehensive scheme. It draws its architectural inspiration from the Flemish buildings, so markedly influenced by the Gothic movement. It proves the possibility of an artistic arrangement of one of the city's most utilitarian problems.

The extensive improvements of the United States Military Academy at West Point—practically the entire replanning of the Academy—after full discussion and an important competition, are to be executed in the Gothic style. The successful designs by Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson cover an extended area, and when completed will form a veritable city. The appropriateness of the buildings and the wisdom of the selection of the styles are shown in the admirable series of drawings submitted. In the study of these plans even the most scholastic enthusiast will be forced to admit the evidence of the influence of the new movement.

It need hardly be mentioned that the new Lady Chapel for St. Patrick's Cathedral is following the style of the old building, but it may be worthy of note that in the chapel being built in connection with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, although the main building has a distinct leaning toward the Romanesque, the prototype of Gothic
architecture, the latter chapel, in its construction and detail, is more nearly the Gothic of the purer type. And it will be interesting to see in the progress of this building, whether its minor details will not indicate the same influence.

Church architecture throughout the country is from tradition markedly influenced by the Gothic style, but in many recent buildings careful analysis will show distinct modification of precedent in adaptation to the modern requirements. Many of our buildings have an almost personal touch, this influence being felt even in minor details and interior decoration. Theological seminaries and schools while following traditions are yet so designed as to meet modern conditions—as notably in the work of Charles C. Haight, one of the older architects of New York, one who has upheld the spirit of the Gothic movement as handed down by Upjohn and others of this country.

But the test, of course, is not a school or a church, as in these few radical or difficult problems are to be met. The office building, the modern business necessity, is indeed the test, and not the least successful solutions have been secured by adopting this style.

The Trinity Building, facing Trinity church, is a twenty-story structure with all the paraphernalia of modern requirements and yet in detail it is Gothic throughout. It forms a fitting companion to the old building it faces and does not suffer by contrast with its neighbors on the southern side, erected some years back, although they followed more conventional precedent. The building to the north of Grace Church has been designed to form a fitting frame-work for the old building, and the result is unquestionably a success.

But in the New York Times Building, recently completed, the architect, Mr. Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz, has achieved a distinct victory. Based upon Italian Gothic precedent, a modern office building, up-to-date with every possible contrivance, it stands a beautiful monument to private enterprise. It is a most successful “sky scraper,” and is one of the loftiest buildings in the city. From an isolated position it rises from the curb at Forty-third street to the top of the Observatory rail three hundred and sixty-two feet, standing on a ground plan so restricted as to make the architectural problem the most difficult of solution.

With these facts before us, it is most interesting to read the reasons why the Gothic style was selected:
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"It was plain from the first that, with so irregular a ground plan, the classical style did not supply the precedent needed, and that classical and formal symmetry would have to be abandoned in favor of picturesque irregularity. The free and romantic styles and periods of architecture were, so to say, indicated by the conditions of the problem. Of these styles, the Gothic is of course by far the most important and the most fruitful in precedents available for modern uses. The choice of Gothic for the style of The Times Building was accordingly not capricious, but proceeded from a consideration of the particular requirements of the building. Given the site, and given the genera scheme of a building of which the sub-structure covered the whole of it, while something like half of it was to be carried six or seven stories higher, with an irregular ground plan, and it is hardly conceivable that a design in antique architecture of the Renaissance could have been effectively accommodated to the site and the scheme, at least without much sacrifice to architectural consideration of space of which none has in fact been sacrificed, but all utilized to the utmost."

Whatever question may have been felt as to the advisability of this style, in advance of the construction of the building, it has been scattered to the winds by the beauty of the completed result.

The architect is to be congratulated upon solving the problem so successfully and upon the courage which led him to select this virile architectural style, in contradistinction to the more popular adaptations found on every hand.

In a description of public buildings, one is confronted with the difficulty of speaking of architectural style without having accepted in advance a series of terms which have been agreed upon. It often happens that we find described as belonging to the same style, public buildings constructed at practically the same date and yet differing in architectural detail. The architectural scholar of the present day insists that a building to be worthy of consideration should be carried out consistently and follow precedent in every detail. This has led to much that is commonplace and uninteresting, and, after four hundred years we are aroused to the fact that the results are dry and unsatisfactory. At last a reaction has set in, and a careful study of buildings recently completed will convince one that old rules are being deviated from, and that precedent is being set aside and new sources of inspiration sought.

Thus we find in the Opéra Comique in Paris, a building following tradition in its massing and main proportions, but with detail entirely new. The capitals, instead of following the regular orders, are designed with original detail, studied from floral forms. The same is true of the moldings and much of the applied ornament. Flowers and vines are the inspiration, and the result is most satisfactory.
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Moreover, these are not inconsistent with the conventional massing and proportion of the building. This instance is given of a building recently completed in Paris because it has been said that the Ecole des Beaux Arts has destroyed individuality, and is responsible more than any other factor for the lack of architectural originality of the present day. Examples might readily be found in Germany, or even Austria or Belgium, but these would not be surprising, as in those countries academic schools have not as yet attained so great an influence.

The conclusion to be drawn from the buildings now being erected, is that a new style is in process of formation; scholars may protest and contend that the present movement is but a transient one and must surely pass, but there is undoubtedly a stronger force behind this movement than a mere passing impulse. What the new style is to be, what will be the outcome of the present study and experiment, it is hard to say, but the fact remains that the earnest thought and attention which is now being given to this subject will undoubtedly produce result.

We find that the public buildings constructed in the early part of the nineteenth century were classic in detail, if not in their general form and construction. The Gothic style which was so prevalent during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had reached its perfection and declined. A change was desired and the student of architecture went to history for precedent. A classic revival was the result, but no new style developed. Thus we have a group of buildings throughout Europe, classic in detail, but somewhat changed in form and general construction to suit the requirements of the city or time in which they were built. The National Gallery, London, the Museum in Brussels, the King’s Palace in Stuttgart, the Old, and even the New Museum in Berlin are of this style and owe their architectural character to the interest taken in these revivals. Sans Souci at Potsdam, the wonderful group of buildings at Versailles, and even the new palace of Frederick the Great are the result of the same influence.

What is true of these important buildings, is also true of the lesser buildings constructed at the same period. The result, however, was not fully satisfactory, and a study of the Roman work produced such buildings as the Pantheon, the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, St. Paul’s
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in London, the entire school of Sir Christopher Wren and the hundreds of minor buildings.

Then came the more recent development known to us as the Renaissance, in order to clearly define which we had to invent the distinctive terms, French Renaissance, German Renaissance, Italian Renaissance. Thus we see that by the acceptance of this nomenclature, it was conceded that the styles produced by the influence in different countries were not identical.

And now in the buildings of to-day we find a distinctive detail differing from anything that has heretofore been produced, and above all we find requirements never before confronted by architects in the past. This alone would be sufficient to create a new style, and we may depend upon it, a new style is coming in spite of scholastic protest. While it is true that we still find buildings, as the Gare du Midi at Brussels, following the classic detail while using modern construction, it is also true that this style of edifice for practical, utilitarian purposes is the exception and not the rule, and that such a structure as the Anhalter Bahnhof is more nearly the ideal sought in buildings of this character. In this example we do not find the columns and gateway of the palace, but rather a simple, straightforward construction suitable to requirements. The lines of the building are simple and are governed by the constructional necessities imposed by its size and the materials used. The detail is simple, yet with sufficient ornamentation to relieve plainness. All sense of stiffness is removed by the happy selection of color, the building being executed in brick and terra cotta, with of course an iron construction. This building is but one of a number of its kind. The main station at Dresden is as large and possibly equally successful in design. These buildings are typical of a style of construction which is being used with great success for postal and telegraph, for telephone buildings and for railway terminals. It may almost be said that the requirements in these cases have produced something original in construction: certainly the result has been a series of buildings such as never have been seen before and which will undoubtedly in future ages be looked upon as characteristic of the time in which they were produced.

While the necessity of economy and the enforced use of steel construction in railroad terminals and commercial buildings have produced innovations in the style employed, the same cannot be said
of such public buildings of the present day as universities, theaters and museums. Thus the University at Strasburg, recently constructed, markedly shows classic influence. The Fine Arts Museum in Brussels is subject to the same classification, and as one goes from city to city it may be plainly seen that Grecian precedent predominates in buildings of this class.

Yet when a gallery or a museum is carried one step further and becomes an exposition building, we find a radical change in form and construction—so much so, that the name "exposition architecture" has had to be invented in order to describe the result produced. This may possibly be due to the fact that in expositions, larger spaces are covered and steel construction necessitated by the requirements. Or it may be due to the fact that, as these buildings are of a temporary character, the architects have seized upon them as an opportunity to try much needed experiments in construction and detail. The result, however, remains that in very few cases have exposition buildings followed the old style and in most cases the result has been successful and satisfactory.

Careful study of important civic buildings of foreign cities will show a marked effort to depart from classic precedent. We can discern a distinct desire to produce buildings not only worthy to represent their cities, but buildings which are distinctive in architectural treatment.

Thus we find in the Palace of Justice of Brussels, in the Reichstag in Berlin, in the Kaiser Palace in Strasburg, in the Museum des Konigsreichs Bohmen, Bohemia, in the projected Festal Hall in Nuremberg, positive evidence of a desire to depart from the dictates of precedent.

When this is true of buildings that do not require the use of the elevator, what must be the result when this recent invention is universally used in our public buildings?

In Gothic architecture alone, we find examples which will bear comparison with modern buildings. In Gothic architecture alone, are these possibilities of height sufficient to meet modern requirements. The column and the lintel have their limitations. No matter how exaggerated may be the scale of the classic building, it will not be sufficient to meet present conditions. There is a limit to the extent to which columns may be superimposed upon columns. And
EMMANUEL REFORMED CHURCH, HANOVER, PA.
VIEW OF CHANCEL
in the use of the style mentioned, it is only possible to meet modern conditions by the elimination of those features which are its chief charm.

It is for that reason that Gothic remains as the one style from which a possible inspiration may be received for the tall buildings of modern times. The height of the Gothic building was only gauged by constructional limitations, not by design. We can imagine these buildings as reaching the sky, if such a thing were possible, without shock to the aesthetic sense. Can the same be said of any other style?

It is of course conceded that Gothic architecture is but a development and an outgrowth of the Romanesque. Many of its fundamental principles are the same, and it took up the problems where the Romanesque builders left them and worked out new solutions under new conditions.

"The Twelfth Century was an era of transition in society as in architecture." More liberty was allowed the individual, the Guilds obtained greater power and the Gothic cathedrals—those wonders of the world—are the concrete expression of the ideals of humanity of that day.

The main lines of the structure were of course determined in advance, but much latitude and individuality of expression was permitted in minor details.

"Gothic architecture was constantly changing, attacking new problems or devising new solutions of old ones. In this character of constant flux and development, it contrasts strongly with the classic styles, in which the scheme and the principle were early fixed and remain substantially unchanged for centuries."

It developed most enduring forms of construction and, with the refractory building material, achieved unequalled successes.

In its development of the concentration of strains upon isolated points of support, it foreshadowed the modern development of construction. The buildings were supported just as our modern buildings are supported upon piers, and in buildings, the walls become mere filling in, just as our wall spaces are but the connecting links between the main lines of support.

The increased possibilities for light given by this constructional triumph, made possible the marvelous glass of the middle ages. To-

* Prof. A. D. F. Hamlin.
day we have the requirement of light to an even greater extent and our solution, as in the case of the school buildings before mentioned, has been the same.

While modern steel construction has eliminated the necessity for many of the delicate constructive expedients of the older style, it still so closely duplicates its main lines as to suggest the possibility of similar treatment in the future of detail and ornament.

There is a marked similarity in the upward growth of the Gothic building and the modern office building, which undoubtedly foreshadows a similar development in detail.

The lay builders who carved the capitals and details of the Gothic structure had recourse for their inspiration to Nature. Plant life was especially studied. We see the same tendency in the modern development which for want of a better name we call *L’Art Nouveau*.

Our modern office building has been handicapped by inferior fenestration, due, in a great measure, to the study of buildings created under conditions when light was not an essential factor. Why should these handicaps still obtain? With the modern system of construction, why is it not possible, if desired, to use the entire space between the uprights for light, and why is it not possible to do this in an architecturally decorative and satisfactory way, by following the principle of development in Gothic of the tracery window!

And last, but not least, why should not our modern office building receive hints as to the use of color from those charming examples produced in the Middle Ages?

In spite of contention to the contrary, color will be used by the American people. The popularity of *L’Art Nouveau*, as before stated, is due in a great measure to its color sense. The treatment of the interior of the country house most positively demonstrates the appreciation of color.

Viollet-le-Duc said that nothing, at that day, “unless it be the commercial movement which has covered Europe with railway lines, can give an idea of the zeal with which the urban population set about the building of cathedrals.” If Viollet-le-Duc were living to-day, would he not find in the commercial movement which is creating the great modern office building and all that this implies, with its constructive necessities and constructive possibilities, a source of inspiration for a new architectural development?