With the unveiling of Lorado Taft’s “Spirit of the Lakes” in Chicago, the New World will acquire a great piece of purely ideal sculpture, a national symbol admired by critics as a marvelous work of art. The erection of this group of statuary, which is unsurpassed by any in the United States, will inaugurate the most comprehensive plan for civic beautification ever undertaken by an American city—a scheme made possible by the patriotic bequest of the late Benjamin F. Ferguson for the purpose of commemorating in bronze or marble, persons and events important in the history of our land.

“The Spirit of the Lakes,” set in place on a broad grass plot of the South Side park system, symbolizes the Great Lakes, each of the five bodies of water being represented by a lovely feminine figure. At the top of the piece a clear, cool stream rises in the shell which Superior holds in her outstretched hands. As the water overflows the bowl, it trickles down into the shell held in readiness a few feet below by Michigan. The five maidens sit on a rocky foundation at heights corresponding to the relative elevation of each lake above sea level. Thus the miniature flood of fresh water falls from shell to shell, through Michigan, Huron and Erie, until it ultimately flows from the peaceful guardianship of Ontario to be lost in the turbulent rushing of the Saint Lawrence.

Mr. Taft has also recently been commissioned to design the “Fountain of Time,” a huge marble statue which will be erected at the western end of the Midway Plaisance in Chicago, and which will be one of the central figures of the general decorative scheme. The completion of this group will require five years.

The purchase of the “Spirit of the Lakes” and the ordering of the “Fountain of Time” are the first active steps taken to carry out the articles of Mr. Ferguson’s will. Interest on this fund provides thirty thousand dollars a year for the project, which is administered by the trustees of the Chicago Art Institute. With this sum available annually, the work should continue uninterruptedly according to Mr. Taft’s plans until it is finished. Public money will be needed only for the superstructures of three bridges, the cost of which is as yet unprovided for.

This optimistic outlook apparently assures Chicago a stretch of marble parkway that will exceed in beauty all the sculptured boulevards of France and Germany. Furthermore, Lorado Taft, who for
years has dreamed of such an ideal undertaking, has dedicated the remainder of his life to the task, and will reserve all his skill for designing and building this group of civic statuary.

The spot chosen by the sculptor and the Art Institute trustees for the realization of this dream in marble is the Midway Plaisance, a grassy parkway a mile in length and one thousand feet in width, connecting Washington and Jackson Parks, the two biggest public playgrounds on the south side of Chicago. During the brief period of the World’s Fair, when the Midway received its name, temporary buildings and works of art showed the possible attractiveness of the location, and made the fakirs’ booths along its length the favorite promenade of crowds of pleasure seekers.

Adjoining the Midway is the campus of the University of Chicago, covered with massive Gothic halls, ranking among the most imposing of all American educational buildings. The proposed sculptural decorations will consequently be an appropriate setting for this beautifully designed seat of learning.

The most conspicuous feature of the Midway at present is a grass-covered depression a hundred feet wide running the entire length in the center of the parkway. The South Park Commissioners have already planned to dig a formal canal through this low level to connect the lagoons of Jackson and Washington Parks, and the Ferguson scheme, as developed by Mr. Taft, assumes the existence of this body of water.

At three points the new stream will be crossed by ornamental bridges, symbolic of man’s three fields of thought, religion, art and science. Two huge fountains, depicting the creation of man and his progress through the world, will stand at either end of the canal, while at half block intervals on each side, some distance back from the banks, will be erected one hundred bronze statues of historic leaders in religion, science and art.

The Bridge of Arts, the largest of the trio, will mark the center of the Midway and will be the heart of the entire scheme. Its roadway will be slightly broader than those of the other two, and the ornaments will be more elaborate. Life-size statues of many painters and sculptors, notably Michaelangelo and Raphael, will line both edges of the structure.

The Bridge of Sciences near the eastern terminus of the Midway, and the Bridge of Faiths near the western end, will be in keeping with the central figure, but will be smaller, with distinctive decorations. On these also will stand statues of pioneers in all departments of science, the greatest philosophers and the founders of
"THE SPIRIT OF THE LAKES," CHICAGO'S SYMBOLIC SCULPTURE, DESIGNED FOR THE SOUTH PARK BY LORADO TAFT.
The upper figure on this page is a detail of Lorado Taft's "Spirit of the Lakes" representing Lake Superior; as will be seen from the complete group of this piece of sculpture on page one hundred and twenty-five, Superior dominates the figures: a clear, cool stream of water rises in the shell which she holds in her outstretched hands; as the water overflows the bowl it trickles down into the shell held a few feet below by a figure symbolizing Lake Michigan.

The five maidens as seen on page one hundred and twenty-five representing the lakes are grouped about the rocky foundation and their positions correspond to the relative elevation of each lake above the sea level: thus the flood of water falls from shell to shell, from Superior to Michigan, from Michigan to Huron, past the shell which Erie holds to the kneeling figure of Ontario, as shown at the right-hand side: a figure which seems to suggest a proud care of the great gift of nature entrusted to her charge.
A LARGER DETAIL OF THE FIGURE OF ERIE IN MR. TAFT'S GROUP IN THE SOUTH PARK OF CHICAGO.
A section of Mr. Taft's design for the "Fountain of Time," which has recently been ordered by Chicago. Mr. Taft is shown at the right, studying the design which is one of the achievements of his life.

A second detail of the "Fountain of Time." This monumental group is to be erected at the west end of the Midway Plaisance, one of the central figures of the whole decorative scheme.
CHICAGO’S DREAM OF CIVIC BEAUTY REALIZED

religions. All the figures will be modeled in Georgia marble of extreme hardness and close grain.

THE group to which Mr. Taft has now been commissioned to give his attention is the “Fountain of Time,” which will stand out prominently against its green background where the Midway canal merges into the tiny lakes of Washington Park. It will show a great procession of humanity passing in review before a withered, marble figure of Father Time, a theme suggested by Austin Dobson’s verses:

“Time goes, you say? Ah, no.
Alas, time stays; we go.”

The troop of people pushing hither and thither along the path of life under the scrutiny of Father Time, all pressing toward certain goals, represents the several human ambitions. The unsubstantial and ephemeral nature of their existence is portrayed by waves of water closing over two figures, one signifying the fear of youth and the other the joy of old age in death. While the youth struggles to surmount the remorseless waves of eternity, the aged one complacently stretches out his feeble arms to welcome the end.

THE “Procession of Time,” as the throng of individuals on the fountain is called, is as yet only a design on paper. The simple sketch, however, is solemnly impressive. Its quiet dignity and preservation of ideas in the mass awakens an almost sublime trend of thought that leads up to the edge of the infinite. When set in place on the Midway this imposing fountain will be eighty-two feet in length. Father Time with his twenty feet of height will rise above the other statues, which will be ten feet high, with the exception of one giant form in the center of the group reaching an altitude of fifteen feet.

The most artistic task for Mr. Taft’s skill, included in the general plan is the “Fountain of Creation,” a Greek legend of evolution in sculpture; this will extend at the eastern extremity of the canal. Twelve groups, composed altogether of thirty-six figures, ten feet in height, will symbolize the peopling of the earth. According to this theory of evolution, Deucalion and Pyrrha, the only survivors of the great flood, were dropped lightly on the summit of Mount Parnassus by the lowering waters when their frail craft had safely weathered the storm. Hastening to an oracle, they prayed for help in restoring the population. The goddess commanded that they cover their heads and throw the bones of their mother over their shoulders. Interpreting the oracle’s order to refer to Mother Earth, husband and wife cast
THE GOOD GIFT

stones behind them, and these immediately became animated, growing to the stature of men and women. In the fountain group, close to the water’s edge, one sees first rough, boulderlike forms. Following from group to group, one marks how these shapes gradually assume human likeness and proportions, still groping vaguely as they emerge from the rock, until at last with a look of dawning consciousness, they are transformed into men and women, striving and yearning, yet filled with hope and ambition.

It is such qualities as these, such expression of spiritual aspiration through his materials and technique that mark Lorado Taft’s sculpture, making it a fitting and significant adornment for a great city that is awakening to its possibilities for civic beauty.

THE GOOD GIFT

I

THOUGHT I had forgotten you,
My old kind lover, with the true
Grieved eyes I saw unchangingly
Till years had built a peace for me.

But someone said, and sighed, last night,
Some little trivial thing and light
That you were used to say, and sigh,
When all the world was you and I.

And my smooth vacant peace was gone
Like a white mist the wind blows on,
Your true grieved eyes unchangingly
Watch the tormented soul of me:

The sharp repentances of old
That I was freed of, clutch and hold—
And all my being cries again:
"Thank God! Thank God for the old pain!"

MARGARET WIDDEMER.