

## Architecture and building.

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# ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING.

DEVOTED TO

ART, ARCHITECTURE, ARCHÆOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND DECORATION.

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Retrospection.....	313
The Unemployed.....	314
Editorial Notes and Comments.....	314
Economic Conditions of Architecture in America—II.....	315
Ninth Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League.....	317
Report on the Federal Buildings of New York.....	318
An Architectural Object Lesson.....	318
European Roads.....	319
Hard Wood Joinery.....	320
Biltmore Forest.....	323
Early Use of Lead.....	323
Color in Ancient Architecture.....	323
Societies.....	324
Personal.....	324
Current Notes.....	324

## Retrospection.

AT the end of the year we cannot but look back to see the results of the previous twelve months' work.

The year now closing has been a trying one to those engaged in building occupations, as well as to those in other branches of industry. Before the financial troubles had been felt we suffered from the lateness of the spring season and the severity of the winter, and in April many proposed improvements, particularly in the suburbs, were abandoned for the time, as owners feared they could not be made by the time they had to go into the country. In early June it was found that the Columbian Celebration had the effect of somewhat retarding the acceptance of plans, and toward the end of the month the premonitory signs of the money tightness commenced to be felt; this was followed by the actual trouble that threatened for a time to paralyze business generally. The last month has witnessed a revival of confidence and renewed activity is shown in fostering and planning new improvements. Notwithstanding the general business depression many buildings of importance have been added to the list of edifices in New York. Great interest has been shown in the sixteen-story building now being erected for the Manhattan Life Insurance Co. at 64-68 Broadway, from plans of Messrs. Kimball & Thompson; the pneumatic caissons have proved a remarkable feature in the construction, the work being superintended by Mr. SooySmith. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine has progressed but slowly. It is understood that the topography of the ground was not fully appreciated and that the excavations are a matter of greater importance than at first anticipated. The new St. Luke's Hospital, from designs of Ernest Flagg, is well under way, but the "West Side Institution Hill" does not yet show much progress in the many improvements which are expected to be the crowning glory of Morningside Park. Public buildings have again helped but little toward the gross amount of building expenditures, with the exception of school buildings, which, under the superintendence and after the designs of Architect C. B. J. Snyder, are adding to the architectural effects of the city; the new school to be built at West End Avenue and Eighty-second Street will enhance the beauty of that delightful section of the city. The Criminal Court Build-

ing is, at last, virtually completed; the old Castle Garden structure, renovated, now appears as a model aquarium. Considerable work has been done on new armories, though on further outlay for militia housing Mayor Gilroy has called a temporary halt. The Federal Government has started the new Appraisers' Stores and the commission recently appointed to report on the condition of its various structures will, it is anticipated, lead to a report looking to radical improvements. Banks have this year not been backward in having new homes erected. The Corn Exchange Bank, an eleven-story granite and stone building at Beaver and William streets, from plans of R. H. Robertson, nears completion; the roof is on the new National Shoe and Leather Bank, at Chambers Street and Broadway, which was designed by Messrs. Cady, Berg & See; the Bleecker Street Savings Bank, Fourth Avenue and Twenty-second Street, from plans of C. L. W. Eidlitz, and the Bowery Bank, Bowery and Grand Street, from plans of Messrs. McKim, Mead & White, are nearly completed, and an extension has been built to the Lincoln Bank structure on Forty-second Street, from designs of Messrs. Geo. E. Harney & Wm. S. Purdy. Facing the City Hall Park the nearly completed Postal Telegraph Building, from plans of Messrs. Harding & Gooch, and the Home Life Insurance Building, from plans of Messrs. N. Le Brun & Sons, have metamorphosed the small block between Murray and Warren streets. The Mutual Life Insurance Co. has had a graceful addition built from plans of Mr. Charles W. Clinton, who also adds to the dignity of the jewelry district by his buildings at the corner of John and Nassau streets and No. 3 Maiden Lane. Mr. Chas. C. Haight has given us the American Theatre and Messrs. Wm. Schickel & Co. the German Hospital Training School for Nurses. Messrs. Lamb & Rich have designed a new four-story building for the Roosevelt Hospital.

Among the larger buildings well under way may be mentioned the Broadway Improvement Co.'s eight-story building on the northwest corner of Broadway and Thirteenth Street, from designs of Mr. S. D. Hatch; the Produce Exchange extension, from plans of H. Gilvarry; the New York Hospital House of Relief, Jay and Hudson streets, designed by Cady, Berg & See; the corner of Broadway and Fourth Street, from plans of Messrs. Buehman & Deisler, and the twelve-story office building at Nos. 56 and 58 Pine Street, designed by Oswald Wirtz. The White Elephant, Broadway and Thirty-first Street, from plans of Messrs. Buchman & Deisler, was a model of celerity in construction. The cable companies have added largely to the outlays in new buildings and have given Messrs. McKim, Mead & White an opportunity to show what architectural effects can be obtained in that class of building. These latter gentlemen, we may mention, have now crossed the East River and are to be the architects of the new Brooklyn Institute building, a beautiful design of which is exhibited at the exhibition of the Architectural League. A new wing for the Museum of Natural History has been started, under the control of Messrs. Cady, Berg & See, and one for the Fine Art Museum has been completed, under the superintendence of Architect Joseph Wolf. The Health Department have had some excellently arranged contagious diseases buildings erected at the foot of East Sixteenth Street, from plans of Messrs. Warner & Jackson.

of attention is this year's exhibit, both to the public and the architect and draughtsman. We have left the purely decorative portion of this exhibit for next week, when we shall devote our attention to the exhibits presented in these departments.

### Report on the Federal Buildings of New York.

UNDER a resolution introduced by Mr. Wharton, of New York, in October last, a committee was appointed to look into and report on the Federal buildings of New York. The following is an extract from this report:

"This enormous business is at present accommodated by some forty-five buildings or parts of buildings. Of these seven are owned by the Government and the remainder rented. The seven so owned, including the Custom House, Sub-Treasury, Assay Office, United States Courthouse and Post Office, the United States River Dock and Barge Office, the United States Appraiser's Warehouse and the United States Army Building. Taken together these are worth far more than the entire rented quarters, and they stand upon ground the value of which, separate from the buildings, is probably above \$12,000,000. With two exceptions the buildings upon each piece of ground could be duplicated at far less than the value of their sites, and either on account of original unfitness (in some cases having been built for other purposes) or lapse of time they have become so inconvenient or crowded as from a business standpoint to be an actual damage to the ground they occupy—the loss and inconvenience resulting from their use being such as long ago to have made it profitable to have torn them down for renewal on their present site or elsewhere. In addition the growth of the city and the development of business have so altered conditions that in most cases the present buildings stand upon ground which, though not particularly convenient for their purposes—in most cases far otherwise—would promptly sell at prices ample not merely to procure most spacious and convenient locations elsewhere, but largely if not completely erect proper buildings thereon.

"In regard to accommodations, matters considered intolerable ten years ago have been growing worse, additions and alleviations not having kept pace with the increase of business. The merchants and manufacturers of the port, financial and commercial institutions, the public so greatly concerned in postal administration—every one, in short, who has to do with Federal business in just the one city of our country where the most of it is done—are subjected to constantly increasing inconveniences to an extent so enormous and in ways so numerous as to be incalculable, while in one Federal building after another employes are so crowded and quarters so unfit for occupancy, from a sanitary point of view, are utilized for offices and other work that it is only their Federal ownership and the natural desire of the local authorities not to encroach upon Federal jurisdiction that have kept the Board of Health from condemning them and clearing them out—in the central Post Office alone some 300 clerks being constantly employed in rooms twelve feet below the sidewalk, with no light from outside, and in an atmosphere so stifling and foul that those who continue are the more enduring of the far greater number who have attempted to work there. It is not expected—it would not be desirable—that the Government should own all of the buildings in which its business must be transacted. As to many of them (including the greater number of those used for postal purposes) continuing local development is such as to make it undesirable for the Government either now or in the immediate future to acquire ground and erect its own buildings. But in the large proportion of cases where buildings are rented—including some of those in the postal service—renting is expensive to the Government, unsatisfactory to the service and totally unjustifiable.

"Nor is there involved here any plan for the erection or grouping of new Federal buildings. It is the fact that such buildings at the city of New York will constitute the most extensive series of great public buildings on the continent outside of Washington; that an opportunity is thus offered for the development of civic architecture on a creditable basis never elsewhere attempted and never even suggested elsewhere than in the architectural triumphs at Chicago; that late legislation has made it possible for buildings hereafter planned to be constructed by the Federal Government, to have equal facilities for securing economy, together with architectural merit and business convenience, equal to that at the avail of private persons; that the awakened public spirit of the architects of the country, and New York especially, and the civic pride of that great city might be counted upon for coöperation. But present conditions, the perplexity of the problem, the enormous interests that must be considered and the delay that must ensue before even a plan can be formed,

much less realized, throw these things so far out of consideration that no request for action in their regard is made or can well be made during the present Congress."

Therefore the committee recommends the appointment of a commission (already provided for by a resolution previously reported), which, as its first duty, would determine how to dispose of the property wastefully held by the Government, and to inform Congress upon the subject.

### An Architectural Object Lesson.

WITH the first of November we stand reviewing the empty shell of our great national festival and realize how much that shell contributed to the success of the enterprise. In spite of mistakes, misunderstandings and false notes, there remains only the echo of a great harmony. Here for once the landscape and architectural designer fairly clasp hands and divide honors for the completeness of the finished effect they have so woven together, the buildings, waterways, bridges and islands. The difficulties of location and soil seem to have stimulated to new activity the tireless promoters of this splendid enterprise.

The Fair, covering a much greater area than that of any previous exhibition, did not depend upon mere bigness for its success. Any one of the compositions, of views up or down the grand canal, the lagoon borders, the lake front or the water front of the Art Palace, offered enough in attractiveness to compensate for any defect in design. Comparison between the exhibition held in Philadelphia in 1876 and that just closed in Chicago is always confined to the exhibits, and in that respect it was no mean competitor. The Philadelphia buildings were, with a few exceptions, simply great sheds for the display of exhibits. In Chicago the lagoons, the boats, bridges and pavilions; the buildings, from the glittering dome of the Administration to the tiny Swiss cottage; the statues, the fountains, the wooded island and the Peristyle, with its Columbus arch, are all the Fair. The exhibits occupy but a secondary place in the attention of the visitors. Whatever the success of the electric, mining, manufactures or educational exhibits, the Fair was first and preëminently an art and architectural exhibition and as such will mark a new era in architectural development, and it has given a new impetus to the art of America.

So real was this perishable city of palaces that the dullest visitor felt its potent influence and was roused from his old architectural apathy to something like architectural appreciation.

The architects of the World's Fair are to be congratulated on their harmony of design and for the general absence of that unrestrained originality which mars so many of our buildings. One cannot fail to be impressed by the faithfulness of detail and execution in the ornamental work of the Fair. Modeled with the certainty that a few months would find their work in the rubbish heap, and that to the great bulk of visitors the lack of faithfulness would be unseen, we can only congratulate ourselves on the exhibition of a real devotion to art displayed. I have no regret that the buildings are temporary structures. They were the text-books of a great national architectural object lesson, and, like the text-books of the college graduate, are only of value in so far as they have cultivated a higher standard of scholarship.

Though nothing shall remain at Chicago to remind us of the White City, the graduates of this summer school of architecture will echo in every part of the country in better architecture the worth of its existence.

The architect seems for once to have sunk his individuality in his desire to make an entire success of the Fair, and so each has found for his own building a splendid setting showing by the reflected light of the neighboring jewels like a natural coronet.

Our city architecture is growing more and more out of harmony because we will not erect our buildings or make our designs with any reference to the neighboring buildings. If we have an alteration to make we must needs stamp our own individuality on it, to the discredit of ourselves and the disadvantage of the previous architect. An artist believes it a merit to restore an old picture to its original state, but an architect must stamp upon the old all the freshness of his later fancies.—*Minerea Parker Nichols in the Philadelphia Times.*

THE most extensive pneumatic tube system in the world, probably, is that which has recently been completed at Chicago. It extends from the headquarters of one of the great press news agencies to nearly all of the daily newspaper offices, and is to be used exclusively for sending messages to and from said offices. About seventeen miles of brass tubes three inches in diameter were used.