

PRESENT TENDENCIES
AFFECTING ARCHITECTURE
IN CANADA

BY

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PART I. THE INHERITANCE

OUR immediate task is the discussion of certain faiths, doctrines and attitudes of mind on the subject of design, as these are revealed in brick and wood and stone and iron. If this were attempted with any show of that bigoted zeal with which Gothic Revivalists and Academic Classicists were wont to assail one another a century ago, it might be more amusing for the reader; it might stimulate more thought—and there are mighty thinkers abroad today, who are all for 'stimulating thought,' no matter how warped the thinking. It may be doubted, however, whether the assimilation of the many exotic traditions now so manifest in architecture in Canada would thus be hastened to the end that something we could call Canadian architecture might emerge. That, we are all well assured, is the ambition and the inspiration, rightly or wrongly, of the architectural mind of Canada today. If this ambition is ever achieved, it will help to keep the world interesting. But it will not be achieved by the architects of Canada alone; their public has quite as much to do with the matter as they have.

A distinction is often made between fine art and applied, or industrial art, and architecture is placed by some in the one, and by others in the other category, with an implication of higher or lower symbolised by the use of capitals or their absence. We need not take this too seriously. Architecture, like speech, has its vernacular, and its poetic diction, its inspired rhetoric, and its lucid prose. In any of these modes we may touch the "garment's hem" of the True Romance and so achieve a work of art; failing this, we perform mere building, good, bad or indifferent. And when I say "we," I do so advisedly, meaning thereby a conjunction of effort as between client and architect. The client may be a corporate body or on occasion the entire nation, but the architect (even when lost to view among partners and consultants) is inevitably an individual. Broadly speaking, it is for the client to pose the problem and for the architect to solve it. And in so far as the former finds the materials consisting of land, brick, stone and other expensive whatnots, such as pay envelopes, which are all required in considerable abundance, it follows that he has a very considerable say in what is built. It is not, however, our present purpose to define the relations which should ideally subsist as between clients and architects, but only to make clear that in what

follows on the subject of architecture in Canada we are considering the joint efforts of our building public and our architects—our contractors being here regarded as executant extensions of the architects of little theoretical importance, practically indispensable though they be.

Architecture is a means for recording the cultural and economic history of peoples—perhaps the best way of doing so. It is brought about by the joint effort of client and architect, as has been stated, but there is another party to be considered—the outside public—what the aestheticians call the "recipient." For this is the most democratic of all the arts, in the sense that it is rarely hidden away in private collections. From its very nature it is there for all men to behold, or to turn away.

Few, if any, of us architects follow our always exacting, usually unprofitable, but altogether de-

lightful profession for the satisfaction of our clients alone, and few, if any, of our clients embark on their undertakings in the spirit in which they might order a solid solitary meal. The client and architect cooperate as one artistic party to impress the other party, which is a public either limited or unlimited—a "chosen few" or the "common herd." It takes two to make love, and it takes two to achieve art, one to give, the other to receive. The architect and his client cooperate as the giver, and all mankind with eyes to see and hearts to beat may receive at will. Architects and clients often fight like cats and dogs, of course, in their efforts to appease the many headed multitude, or to enlist the sympathetic approbation of those who know and understand. Their intention being good, and directed to the same end, they should forgive each other more often than they do, after the last bill is paid. From all this it is evident that architecture is very sensitive to the cultural make-up of "the man in the street."

Some reference to the past is in order in a discourse of this kind. In the eighteenth century it took science a generation to direct the aims of philosophy, and it took philosophy a like period to influence literature, and literature again a like period to affect politics and art. Today, of course, things move faster and philosophy seeks to absorb the mathematics of the beyond and journalism to borrow the jargons of both within a season. Thus we discover with a certain mental jolt that navies are useless, and that art is independent of tradition.



LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, HALIFAX (C.1810)

Let us, for the moment at least, assume that this latter discovery is not so, on the off chance that Professor Santayana may have been right when he said "our ideals are the residue of our past experience." What interests us at this juncture is the ideal of the man in a Canadian main street in the matter of architecture—the man who, if he ever sees the Parthenon, or the Coliseum, or Notre Dame de Paris, or Hampton Court, at all, does not see them till *after* he has built his house, subscribed to the building of his church, and launched his family. What are the residues of his experience in architecture?

THE FRENCH TRADITION

The French brought to Canada the sound rustic building traditions of their native provinces where the inventiveness of Gothic inspiration had been dead for a century and the refinement of the courtly renaissance tradition had as yet hardly penetrated. The words of William Morris in speaking of the English art of an earlier period may be equally well applied to this sturdy tradition in stone building: "It strove little to impress people by pomp or ingenuity; not un seldom it fell into commonplace; rarely it rose into majesty . . . never coarse, though often rude enough, sweet, natural and unaffected, an art of peasants rather than of merchant princes or courtiers; it must be a hard heart, I think, that does not love it, whether a man has been born among it . . . or has come wondering on its simplicity from all the grandeur over seas," or over the border to the south, I may add. Sparingly fed by a diminishing contact with the fountain heads of building tradition in France, the architecture of French Quebec has had its ups and downs with more of degeneration than of evolution marking its course during the latter half of the XIXth century. Today there is a revived interest in the sterling qualities of this old Quebec style, fed largely by the researches of Professor Traquair and his students in architecture at McGill University. This manifests itself, so far, in a score or two of new houses throughout the province based upon the formal traditional French model and numerous intelligent and sympathetic restorations and conversions of old buildings.

A contact with the centre of French architectural culture in Paris has now been re-established through schools of architecture, at Montreal and at Quebec, sponsored by the Provincial Government, and organized as parts of the "Écoles des Beaux Arts" in these two cities.

At these schools, under our learned confrères, Professors Poivert and Panicheli (who both hail from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris) a sound training is administered, and a rapidly growing body of graduates are making their mark and bearing witness to the vitality of the French tradition. So much for the French architecture in Quebec.

A log architecture comparable with that of Switzerland, Northern Russia or Scandinavia was not developed here by the French, and their frame and clapboard building was artistically little more than a substitution of walls of wood for the stone walls of the earlier period.

Now the French had been building farm houses, seigneuries, mills, churches and town houses for over a century in Canada, when the English came, bringing with them that version of the later Georgian tradition which had already been most thoroughly translated into balloon framing and clapboard in the American colonies. Where the

English settled in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces and in Ontario private buildings were mostly of this Colonial type, in wood, while the design of public buildings in stone came, in many cases, directly from the hands of the great English masters or of their pupils in the public services. The United Empire Loyalists, when they in turn came, brought with them the already Americanized and more or less acclimatized later Colonial tradition. Professor Arthur, of the Department of Architecture at the University of Toronto, has recently been making good progress with a survey of the charming buildings of this period still standing in Ontario. Little has as yet been done to record the Colonial architecture of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which is rich in interest and charm; this is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as most of this is in wood, now passing rapidly into decay, or suffering reconstruction and alterations at the hands of country builders who have lost the traditions of their forefathers. All modern North American construction is still very largely based and founded on this Colonial tradition which was in many respects the counterpart of that superlative Georgian building tradition in England of which Sir Reginald Blomfield has most truly said:

"Probably at no time in the history of English architecture has there existed a more perfect knowledge of the technical arts of building than at the beginning of the XVIIIth century."

That state of things lasted until the industrial jerry building and confused tradition of the Victorian era destroyed it.

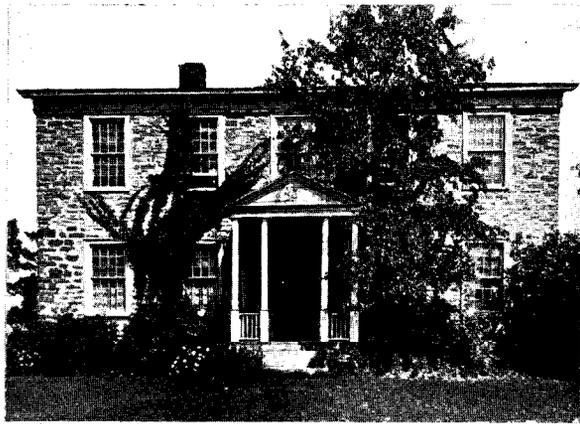
There was thus in modern times a period of climax in hand craftsmanship and it has taken nearly three generations to adjust machine craftsmanship to a comparable standard of performance. The Gothic Revival, with its worship of handiwork, has indirectly aided machine craftsmanship by leaving behind it a distinctively English philosophy touching the relation of how things are made to the forms which they take. This philosophy of method is not really incompatible with the characteristic philosophy of the French tradition with its tremendous emphasis on use and requirements in generating form. For form may be best regarded a synthesis of purpose, material and technique. Design is good in so far as it embodies the principles of both these philosophies. It is the function of the schools of architecture to make this clear to the architect at the beginning of his career, instead of leaving it to him to discover for himself at the end of it.

By the beginning of the XIXth century Greek influences were making themselves felt in European and especially in English architecture, and the neo-Greek soon made its debut in Canada, where, from time to time ever since, there have been epidemic recurrences of this tradition. The Bonsecours Market in Montreal may be cited as an early example. It is worth noting that the strong cornices and clean mouldings so characteristic of Greek pellucidity of expression have served their purposes well when translated into grey limestone, doing what was expected of them and keeping the wall faces free of water stains, but incidentally collecting icicles where they would do least harm to the building and most to the passer-by.

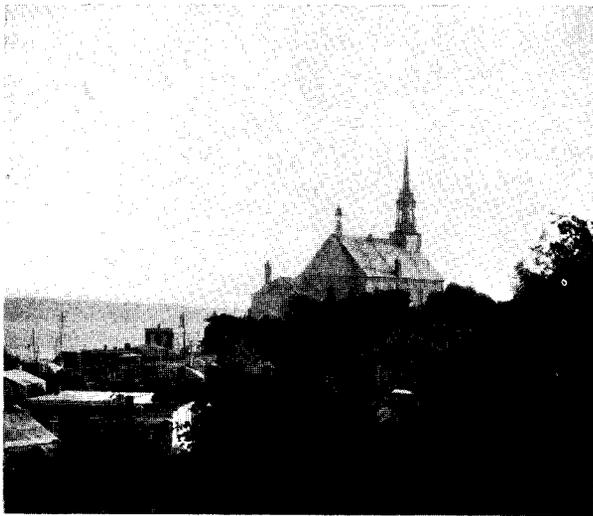
By the middle of the last century the enthusiasms of the neo-Gothic propaganda, which was an essentially English movement, were felt throughout North America. The great prophets of this cult, at the time of its fullest manifestation and influence,



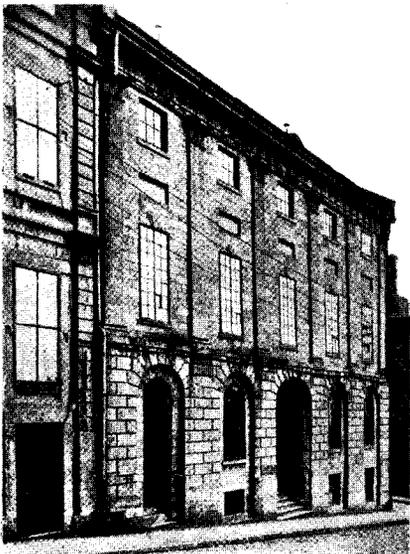
THE ADAMSON HOUSE
ERINDALE, ONTARIO (C. 1800)



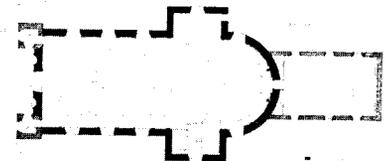
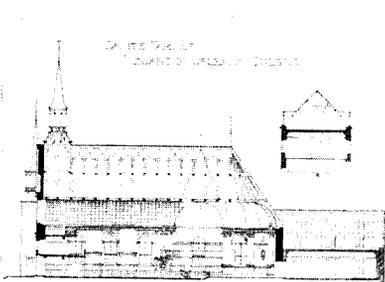
POPLAR HALL
NEAR PRESCOTT, ONTARIO (C. 1800)



CHATEAU RICHER CHURCH, P.Q.
(C. 1840)



OLD HOUSE, MONTREAL
(C. 1759)



SAINT FAMILLE, ISLAND OF ORLEANS
QUEBEC (C. 1742)



ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, MONTREAL
(C. 1841)

were John Ruskin, William Morris and Violet le Duc, who was, of course, a Frenchman. But while the last-named knew and understood far more about Gothic architecture than his great English co-religionists—for Gothic was a religion for the regeneration of mankind to its mid-century votaries—he met with a cold reception in his own country while his English friends carried the day in theirs.

Some sound, but inconspicuous adaptations of mediaeval building traditions to Canadian materials and Canadian climates were soon in evidence in Canada, of which the Church of St. Patrick, in Montreal, may be taken as an example. But zeal for scholarship in mediaeval architecture here as elsewhere soon outran all interest in adapting what was adaptable in the mediaeval tradition and various English Gothic Revivalist architects received commissions to design Canadian churches, such as are sung of by Piers Ploughman—"with crockets and corbels all bellysh yearven." Now in certain parts of Canada, highly crocketed pinnacles and stone spires are quite incompatible with northwest winds and bitter spring nights after a day of thaw, all which they have learned to their sorrow at Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal. Even the simplified American Gothic of the late Bertram Goodhue, as evidenced in the Cathedral of All Saints at Halifax—in design by far the finest church in Canada—has failed rather conspicuously to meet the rigors of another of Canada's many climates. We shall be discussing presently the architectural influences from across the border, and will here anticipate something which might there be said with respect to Gothic influence from that quarter. While the building of Gothic churches and churches Gothic in intention, which is not quite the same thing, is actively prosecuted in the United States at the present time, there has as yet arisen only one great master of modern Gothic in America—Goodhue. His influence is widely felt throughout the United States and Canada. The holy originals, as they exist in the parish churches of the XIVth century in the English shires and in the works of the masters of the later phase of the revived art in England—Bodley, Bentley, Aldred Scott and Tapper—have little effect on those who design Gothic churches in Canada today. For the moment, at least, the influence of the recently deceased American master is pervasive in this field here in Canada.

We have thus come to grips with our theme of present day influences on architecture in Canada. In so far as the various phases above enumerated have all left their monuments to colour our ideals, they must be taken account of as still active in the formation of our taste. Since art is long while life is short, we shall not be unduly stretching the words "present day" if we allow it to include the thirty years of this century and more especially the post-War period.

When this century opened, there were three outstanding geniuses in architecture—Charles Follen McKim, in the United States, Ludwig Hoffman, in Germany, and Norman Shaw, in England. These three were directly and indirectly making a large part of our world. A fourth influence was the Ecole des Beaux Arts, in Paris, but as the great Frenchmen who were teaching the young Americans were essentially a group with a tradition, there is no name that can be singled out among them to represent an individual contribution as great as that of any of the three above named.

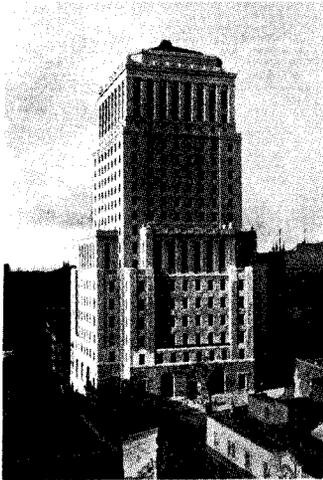
Hoffman had little influence here; his following was in Middle Europe. For twenty-five years, centred on 1900, no Canadian who studied in England, and no British architect who was recruited to the ranks of the profession in Canada, could do other than fall under the influence of Norman Shaw. He also had a strong following in the United States, especially in Philadelphia, where some of his work was practically repeated "en gros." But McKim influenced us here, not only indirectly, through the sincere flatteries of his imitators, but directly, by his works in our cities. The Bank of Montreal's main office in Montreal is perhaps McKim's most perfect achievement. He showed Canadians for the first time, on their own soil, what modern classic and planning in the grand manner really meant; also he gave us a much needed lesson on the cost of a first-class job!

Thus, during the period from the opening of the century, to the outbreak of the Great War, we had in Canada four more or less exotic influences at work. Such Gothic as was being done was in a state of "Goodhue-ization:" an effort towards grand Italian classic, rarefied and tintured with "McKim-ishness" was also manifest; a wide, but thinly spread tendency, more especially in minor architecture, towards the free Anglo-Classic, in its Shavian interpretation, was abroad in the land; an Americanized and somewhat superficial version of the French taste as then in vogue at the great school in Paris, was showing here and there with unmistakable exuberance. There was also the occasional effort in the direction of the secessionist movement—just then most active in Middle Europe.

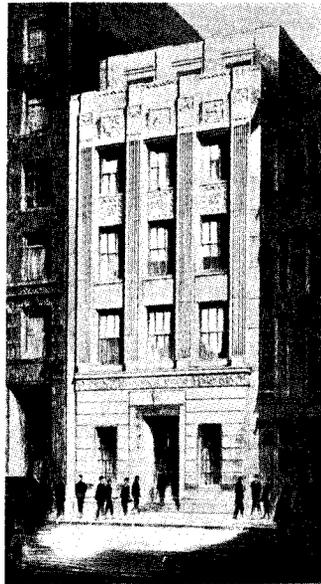
Meanwhile the real fundamental tradition on which all these several manners had to be superimposed for their Canadian manifestations was the old Colonial one. This provided certain accepted ways of designing windows, doors, roofs, chimneys, balustrades, cornices and whatnot so as to hold together and do their work more or less satisfactorily in these climates of ours with the materials available. I do not say these old ways were the best ways—they were the accepted ways, and all these imported tastes and manners had to take some account of them.

Then came the war, and the rebuilding of the Parliament Buildings, with great respect to the original that had gone up in smoke. This, in its day, had been designed again with great respect to what Barrie and Pugin had provided for the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster after a fire in which a very different kind of building had perished. For some years, that was the only important fact to be recorded with respect to architecture in Canada.

After the war, building prices here got back to pre-war levels rather sooner than expected. They had been considerably higher three years before the outbreak. But across the border they soared, while a feverish activity in construction there marked our leanest years. Even as things are, drastic economy is the characteristic of all but a very few building enterprises in Canada today. For fifty years we have been learning to do without this and that elaboration, and to substitute ever cheaper methods of construction, and let us hope the limit has been reached. Much of the bedevilment that was mistaken for decoration in mid-Victorian times we are well rid of, it is true, but we have now got to the point where all interest of detail has been banished from most of our buildings.



**BEAVER HALL BUILDING
MONTREAL**
Barott & Blackader, Architects



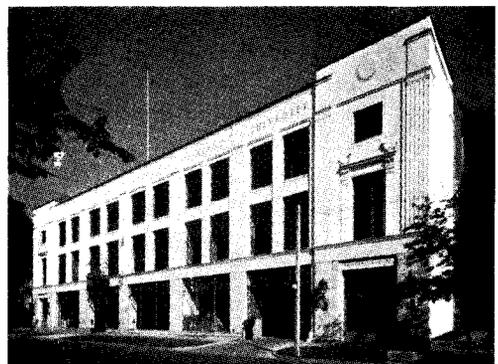
**HANSON BROTHERS
OFFICE BUILDING, MONTREAL**
H. L. Fetherstonhaugh, Architect



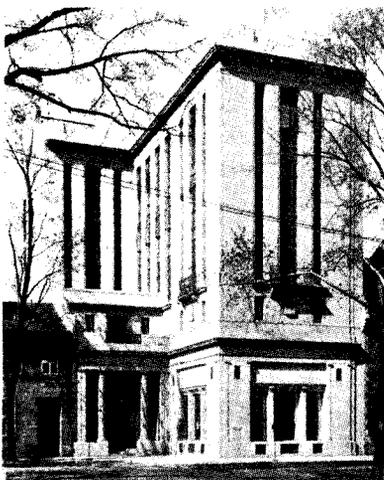
THE TORONTO STAR BUILDING
Chapman & Oxley, Architects



EGLISE ST. AMBROISE, MONTREAL
Ernest Cormier, Architect



A. D. GORRIE GARAGE, TORONTO
Murray Brown, Architect



**CRANE LIMITED
OFFICE BUILDING, MONTREAL**
Hugh Vallance, Architect



**SPENCER DEPARTMENT STORE
VANCOUVER**
McCarter & Nairne, Architects



**MAIN ENTRANCE, AUTOMOTIVE
BUILDING, C.N.E. TORONTO**
D. E. Kertland, Architect

and the romance of our history. Much Canadian talent has since been enlisted in its evolution. Now the word "Chateau" has become a part of the Canadian language, and signifies Railway Hotel. And well it may. For there is nothing more characteristic of our cities today than these steep roofed hostelries which greet us with all the comforts we cannot afford in our homes, as we journey about our businesses from end to end of this great land. The architects of Canada have acquitted themselves well with respect to these undertakings. If some of them are adorned with rather too many plumes borrowed from the panache of Henry IV, blame the public's taste for make-believe rather than the architect's laziness, and remember Kipling's lines: "When 'Omer smote his blooming lyre, he'd heard men sing by land and sea, and what he thought he might require, he went and took, the same as me." And take note of what Davy Brice, of Edinburgh, who, by the way, was the master of the late Mr. Ewing, so long the Chief Architect here in Ottawa, said to a client who found him studying a book of drawings and upbraided him for selling old ideas for five per cent on the cost of carrying them out, "Aye, I copy, but mind you it takes a dam' clever chiel to ken what to copy," and our hotel builders certainly answer this description.

FRENCH CANADIAN COTTAGES AND CHURCHES

The long French cottages of rural Quebec may lay claim to represent something more than a transplantation from Picardy or the Loire. These, and the older churches of rural Quebec are real Canadian architecture. They meet the requirements of their times; they are materially and technically straightforward and honest; they embody an evolutionary process of modification or modernization of a sound parent tradition; they are racy of the soil; they have an air, a mood, a sentiment all their own. If the architectural genius of the race that produced these things has been dormant for a time, there is no reason to suppose that it is dead. Recent indications suggest that it is awakening, refreshed.

Beyond our new hotels and our old cottages and churches, there have as I have said, been many architectures in Canada; but they have come to us ready-made, so to speak, and there has been little taking of root and bearing of fruit.

We have had one great architect, so far, and we have with us now a number of architects in the full flower of brilliant careers. The late Mr. Frank Darling, of Toronto, who received the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1912, undoubtedly stood head and shoulders above the rest of us in his time. His work will be long remembered for its splendid sanity and his steadying influence at a critical period in our architectural history can hardly be over-estimated in any survey of our cultural development. Though trained in the office of that perfervid neo-Gothicist, George Edmund Street, it was as a robust classicist that he made his mark.

We have now enumerated categorically the several traditions in design which might influence the taste and ideals of our composite "*client-architect*" artist and those of the man in the street public—the old French, the Colonial, the Gothic revival, the English domestic, the American academic, the modern and modernistic. (When an aesthete uses a word with an "istic," it means he has some

suspicion that the phase he is talking about is spurious—thus Hellenic and Hellenistic, Archaic and Archaistic. There are, in every land, modern architects, the heirs to all the ages, but those who profess their modernity too much deserve the "istic.") These several traditions have been coming to us naturally enough, through our French and English and American contacts, and represent the interplay of tradition, industrial revolution, nationalistic romanticism, archaeological scholarship, new philosophy and I know not what other such savage, many-headed beasts, and winged monsters, for fuller description of which I refer you to the Book of Revelation.

THE SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The last of the positive influences we have to consider is bound up with our organization, I cannot say our system, of architectural education. Reference has been made to the schools under governmental auspices at Quebec and Montreal, and to those at the universities of McGill and Toronto. Besides these there is the School of Architecture of the University of Manitoba, and the beginnings of Schools of Architecture at the universities of Saskatchewan and of Alberta, and there may be one in British Columbia ere long. Of these, two are distinctly French, one Scots, one English, one American, and the others less defined in the matter of tradition and method at the present time.

Now, I would be the last to argue for uniformity of tradition or standardization of method in the schools of architecture in Canada. That is neither feasible nor desirable, at present, and I have no conviction that it will ever become so. I venture, however, to make a plea for the encouragement of emulation among the students of these schools which are now providing the great majority of the recruits to the profession. It will be noted that these schools are all more or less supported by the provincial governments, with the exception of that at McGill. Also, these schools are far apart in distance. While assuming their development on individual lines, it would still be of benefit to each and all to know what the others were doing and how they were doing it. The institution of some federal travelling scholarships would be the best means of bringing this about. A scholarship that would take a succession of Canadian students to study at the British school at Rome, might be the first to be instituted. This might be followed by scholarships to London and to Paris. The advantage of such scholarships, of which the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Institute of Architects have several at their disposal, is not only to the schools and to the successful candidates; their most valuable function is in stimulating the efforts of the many who compete, apart from the few who win. Canada being what it is (which again I neither praise nor blame) it is very difficult to stimulate an interest extending beyond provincial boundaries on the part of pious donors in a matter of this kind. Considering the large investments the Provincial Governments are already making in the cause of architectural education, it is surely not unreasonable to suggest that the Federal Government should do a little in the broader national aspect of so good a cause by founding and providing for a Rome scholarship.

WE HAVE now traversed what may be regarded as the positive influences at work on architecture in Canada—the older traditions and the newer schools of thought. It will be remarked how valuable a contribution to architectural ideals on this side of the border has come, in the early days from New England, and latterly from, or through, the United States in general. There is of course nothing strange or unnatural in this, for we are North Americans, with North American problems to solve by North American means and methods. But the influence of our neighbours, though upon a balance no doubt very substantially on the credit side, is not all to the good. In recounting the hindrances to a fuller expression of our culture in our monuments—all buildings are monuments in this sense—first place must be given to certain tendencies incidental to the contiguity of a great neighbour. Some of our more Canadian peculiarities of outlook with respect to the organization of hurry and the disregard of public amenity must also be touched upon.

The common vices of the vernacular architecture of the United States are artificiality, or want of realism, in the matter of spiritual content, and a gross insincerity with respect to materials. Of course there are among the clients and architects of the United States many men of real creative understanding, sensitive to the characteristics of modern materials and modern methods of construction. These succeed in expressing the realities both in the exteriors and the interiors of their buildings, but they are all too few. Sloppy sentiment, pretence, make-believe, and that lack of the grammatical instinct for construction which characterizes so much of the written and spoken thought of the United States, is abundantly in evidence in the builded thought also. Thus, their churches are, for the most part, base travesties of the holy originals of Early Christian, Mediaeval or Renaissance art in Europe; their banks are, for the most part, pretentious reminiscences of Roman courts of justice or of Roman baths; their houses are very often fraudulent imitations of Cheshire manors, Northamptonshire granges, Andalusian haciendas, or the minor chateaux of the Loire, while their hotels, high class apartment houses and office buildings, which in plan and structure are usually supremely competent, are bedevilled outside and in with the second-hand loot of the traditions of all the ages. In these vernacular performances the last thing a student of design is likely to find is an intelligent inventiveness or the search for form by the only path by which form is discoverable, which leads through materials and methods and purposes to a synthesis. Instead, we find a childish delight in substitutes, that is to say, materials often quite good in themselves tortured into the semblance of

something quite different from what they are—usually something that Assyrians, or Romans, or Frenchmen, or Englishmen were wont to use naturally and honestly and substantially at this or that stage of their economic development. So we have excellent rubber tiling masquerading as marble; good plaster wall finish masquerading as stone; clever pressed steel work masquerading as the rarer woods, and first rate modern built-up, veneered or cased joinery, masquerading as solid Gothic carpentry; in a word, all the insincerities which are anathema to the European architectural mind.

These things come to us with the infiltration of ideas from a gaudily barbaric civilization, via the architectural monthlies, via the trade catalogues of mass producers, and most effectively via the quite commonplace practitioner from the other side of the border who shines by the reflected glory of a McKim or a Goodhue, and operates in our midst.

Now I have never heard a word of complaint from any Canadian architect against great Canadian commissions handed to *really* great American architects, or over the recruitment to our ranks of immigrant American architects—some of whom have been very competent. Such invasions of our bailiwicks have been almost welcomed by our profession. But the lesser fry, with offices across the border, have little to teach us but the cheap vices of artifice. Theoretically, the practice of architecture in Canada is a protected industry; there is a tariff (just a little tiny one) on plans. But it is Canadian sentiment rather than Canadian Customs regulations on which Canadian artists must rely for the privilege of exercising such gifts as are theirs in their own country. Moreover whenever an American architect is employed on a Canadian job a vast amount of American products displaces things which can be produced quite well in this country.

We must now consider our next adverse influence—the organization of hurry, of which such boast is made by our builders, and by some of the great corporations that employ them on large undertakings. There is this to be said, to begin with, it is largely a matter of climate. In spite of all this to do about facilities for winter work in the building trades, the fact remains that a wall built in summer is better than a wall built in winter; and that interior work done in winter in a closed in, heated building is better than interior work done in an open or a closed building in summer. This being so, most contracts are let in this country in the Spring, heavy construction is completed as far as possible by the Autumn, and jobs, big or little, are expected to be delivered complete by merry May day. Thus the climate often forces the pace.

Now presumably it is that unknown quantity, the profit on the harvest, that seems to prevent

ninety per cent of Canadian clients knowing whether they can afford to build in any given year till some time in January of that year. Then they expect their architects to get through all the stages of making sketch plans, working drawings and letting contracts, by the time the frost is out of the ground. Thereafter, the builders, who have been hibernating, more or less, attack construction like hungry bears, and the detail drawings are avidly demanded, without consideration for the time, or the talent, available to produce them. All this, again I say is so, without praise or blame, or any suggestion as to how the climate can be improved, or how the reliance on wheat profits (if any) for building costs, can be avoided. The result of this seasonal pressure is that our architects have little chance to gracefully correct the mistakes the builders make, and have to restrict the luxury of making mistakes themselves to an absolute minimum.

The disciplined perfection of execution, which is so characteristic of the more important modern buildings in England, France, Italy, and most notably in Germany, is thus almost inevitably a quality of architecture to which we do not dare to aspire in Canada. Any serious attempt in that direction is apt to end in the law courts.

Some radical defect in our system of teaching in the arts, the crafts, and the trades, seems to be disclosed by the fact that we are not producing the skilled artificers we need and use, outside the engineering field. Perhaps the main reason is economic. A cabinet-maker is not here paid proportionately to his skill, as compared with a joiner, or a joiner as compared with a carpenter. Assuming that our excellent ordinary stone-cutters and plasterers are properly remunerated, then our stone-carvers and modellers are by all the standards of the past ridiculously underpaid. That, it may be supposed, is why we don't train and produce them. It has several times fallen to my lot to state, and I do so again with all assurance, that an architect in Canada can get anything he designs in the way of stone, marble, wood or metal work as well executed here as anywhere in the world, provided he will seek out and find the craftsmen to do it; also, that the cost for the highest classes of work here is moderate in the extreme. But such work can rarely be done by the Canadian born, or by the Canadian trained, craftsmen. I had cognizance, just the other day, of the case of an elaborate piece of recent work remarkably well executed in an ancient Parish Church in the Province of Quebec. Some pride was taken by the contractors in the fact that it was all "Made in Canada." So it was. The designer was born and trained in Scotland, the modeller was born and trained in Malta, the bronze finisher was born and trained in England, the marble carver was born and trained in Spain, the marble sculptor was born and trained in Italy.

The transportation, however, was in the hands of Canadians born and bred and the shipping was execrable in punctuality of delivery.

The finer crafts should, as a matter of course, be recruited from the trades. As things are here, artistic ability and native talent are the last things that the Canadian public, or the Canadian building industry, seriously aims to foster. The stone-cutter with something of the slave-driver in him may rise to mighty respectability; the stone-cutter who cuts life into stone, with or without air tools to help him, gets, instead of reward, a more precarious employment.

Leaving carving and sculpture out of account, and speaking of stone-hewing, it is not to our credit as a civilized people that, in the period 1825-50, stone-cutting in Montreal was often executed with a precision and refinement which would have satisfied Ictinus, Peruzzi, Gabriel, or Adam. Work of that class cannot be got for love or money, by hand or machine, in Canada today. Thus, craftsmanship, which is at least the life, if not the soul of architecture, is left to perish. What is true of stone cutting, is true, in some degree, of every trade.

The dress of a lady has been compared to the frame of a picture—a mighty important manner in making the best of things. What the frame is to the picture, that the site is to the building. Canada has many fine buildings—few of them are on adequate sites. This is because town planning has been utterly neglected for two generations. Now town planning is no new thing, even in Canada. Once upon a time it went without saying that our towns would be laid out by engineers with a taste and interest in building sites. For half a century the engineers who have had a say in the layout of our cities have been preoccupied with the exploitation of land and its subdivision into lots—quite another matter. Thus, we are as we are, and I must say little more, lest I follow the town planning theme into the ramifications of the traffic problem. I will content myself by asserting what everyone seems to have forgotten, that streets, squares, avenues, and boulevards are building sites first and traffic routes afterwards. There is not much incentive to our architects when the best site available for an important building is usually a corner lot suitable for a grocer shop. Occasionally, but not often, we get a whole block; very rarely a whole block can be seen as such. The closed vista—the best of sites—is all but denied to the Canadian architect. So our sites are for the most part quite unworthy of our architectural expenditure and effort.

UNREGULATED ADVERTISING

One can forgive and excuse the poles and wires that give our towns such an air of untidiness. These are, after all, temporary expedients, and are in time replaced by underground connections. Advertising by means of posters, sky signs and



A street, bedevilled from end to end with display advertising of all sorts, so competitive that no one's attention is arrested. Parts of this street would be quite dignified if the buildings were given fair play.

St. Catherine Street, Montreal



This is within a stone's throw of the McGill University gates. Two decent buildings made ridiculous, and five hundred yards of street vulgarized by misplaced advertising.

Sherbrooke Street, W., Montreal

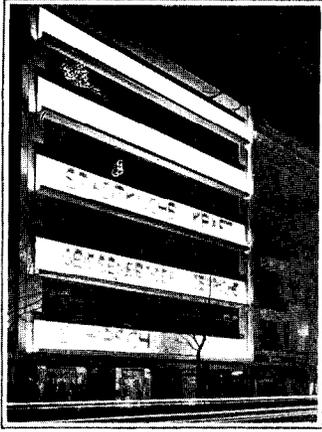
illuminations, is another matter, and tends to become more offensive and destructive of the amenity of our streets year by year. What in the wide world is the use of expenditure of money and time and thought on such subtle matters as scale and proportion—the only things that really matter in architecture—if the work of the artist is to be made ridiculous and futile by the superposition of all the blatancies that ingenuity can devise for the crying of wares in competitive stridency. Some of the German architectural realists have been frank in the matter and have designed street architecture as so many horizontal stripes for printing, separated by lines of glazing. At least they are logical when they do that. The rigid control of signs and lettering on buildings is the more reasonable procedure. Our towns would have just as much amenity and dignity as those of Austria, Bohemia, Hungary and France, if this matter were dealt with. The question has two business aspects. In a company of lunatics where everyone is allowed or encouraged to scream his loudest, nothing can be heard for the noise. So with our strident masses of advertising. They make no appeal to the distracted and surfeited



A view from the dining-room window of the Chateau Frontenac Hotel. The serenity of the architecture of a period of natural good taste disturbed by sky signs of the grossest blatancy.

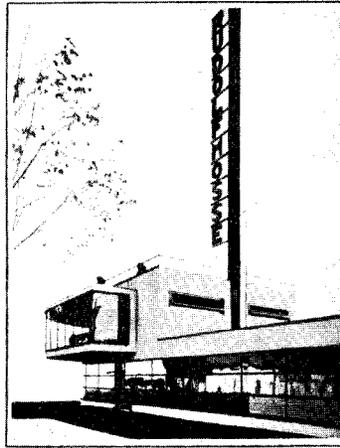
An open space, Quebec, P.Q.

attention. Incidentally, the public is learning to disregard this overwrought hysteria of an epileptic salesmanship. Montreal for instance is bedevilled all over with sky signs appertaining to whiskies which no one with a cultivated taste in such matters would buy. The Quebec Liquor Commission happens to provide a considerable range of 'Aberdeen sheries' which are far too good to need any sky signs to stimulate their sale. As things are, buildings worthy to be enjoyed by contemplation as works of art are destroyed, amenity is sacrificed, and no particular advertising value is achieved. The only positive result is that a horde of parasitic non-productive industries have been allowed to come into being. I cite the views from the terrace and windows at the Chateau Frontenac at Quebec, as a case in point, by night and by day. In all seriousness, the easiest remedy would be to tax the display advertiser out of existence. This would do no harm to real industry. A more homoeopathic remedy is to zone our cities rigidly for advertising, as we are beginning to do with respect to the other uses of land and the bulk of construction upon it.



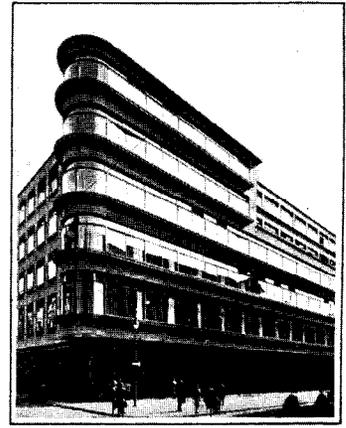
An example of the advertising column style of composition. Such reality in design may be unfair to an adjoining building, but is at any rate sensible.

Commercial Building, Berlin, Germany



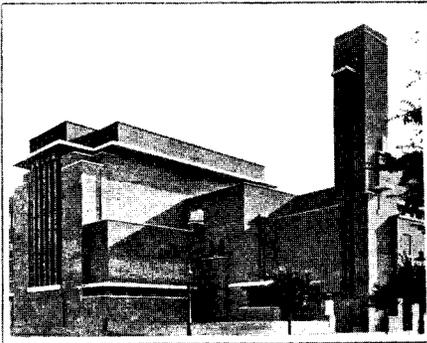
These affectedly violent contrasts in scale and in proportion disregard both stability and economy of construction — quite unconvincing as a solution of this or any problem.

Exhibition Building, Cologne, Germany



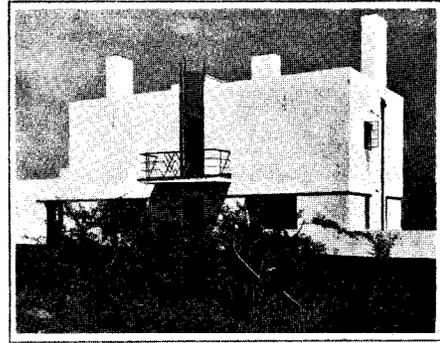
Assuming that so much glazed surface is really required, this composition is highly incongruous. Note the perfectly natural treatment of the side street elevation.

Commercial Building, Breslau, Germany



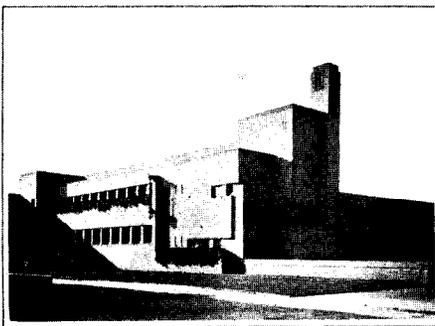
Observe the utter lack of system in the placing of the cornice with respect to the flat parapeted roofs; also the lack of relation between superstructure and substructure.

Synagogue, Amsterdam, Holland



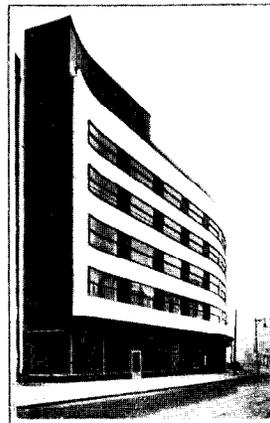
This house is very wantonly cut in two by the central feature. The railing of the balcony is well adapted for children to fall through. Why the projecting upper storey?

House, Silver End Garden Village, England



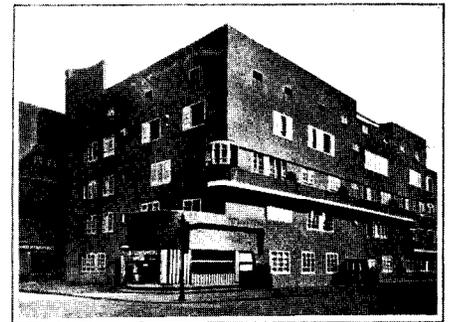
Could anything be sillier than the notched out surfaces about the near corner, which involve all sorts of senseless cantilevering? The rest of the design has some claim to reality.

School, Hilversum, Holland



If a facade is to be regarded as a surface for display advertising, this is a logical treatment, but the vertical elements of the structure are ignored.

Commercial Building, Berlin, Germany



Supposing the haphazard placing of windows is demanded by the plan, and that the corner shop is commercially efficient, why thin the wall of the storey above the balcony?

Housing Block, Amsterdam, Holland

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, allow me to deal first with these negative and sinister tendencies to which architecture in Canada is exposed, or by which its development is hampered. Happily, they are all removable, or at least modifiable, in the sense that they will respond to treatment. The treatment consists almost wholly in understanding them. A little more discrimination in what we adopt, or adapt, from across the border; a little more appreciation of the difference between what is finished and what is merely done; a little more humanity in our evaluation of human skill as distinct from human energy; a little more realization that for architectural effect the most economical ingredient is often more space—even when that space costs many dollars a square foot where the law permits 100 cubic feet of building on it; and lastly, a little more self-respect mixed with a great deal more business acumen in dealing out cold justice to the display advertising industry. Surely, if that is all that is involved, we need not be pessimistic with respect to our adverse influences.

And now, to summarize the outlook, and that means prophecy. The United States of America has made hardly any original contribution (and Canada none at all) to the Architecture of Realism, which we hear so much about from Europe today. The one American contribution to architecture at large is, after all, the tall building, and the tall building has yet to be built that is real in design in the sense that Greek Temples and English Parish Churches were real. So far these tall buildings have affected the arcaded complexities, the surfaced severities, or the trabeate solemnities of a dozen alien centuries.

Realism in modern architecture is, I think, quite compatible with tradition, though many of its professors say otherwise. I cannot see that there is anything new in the movement; they do; but then many proclaim themselves realists while perpetrating the most brain spun nonsense—the kind of originalities which consist of paradoxes at the best, when not mere perversions. I spoke just now of keeping our heads, and there is some need, if we are to distinguish the wheat from the chaff—the real from the realistic, and that again from the pseudo-realistic and other strange beasts.

The absolute, or *engineering realist* plans and constructs, and lets it go at that, trusting for the solution of the problem to explain itself and tell its own story.

Now, by *architectural realist* I understand a person who would never leave matters that way. He will derive from his solution rhythms of division, and grouping of parts, and he will use scale or relative

size to keep the whole thing together as one organism, or possibly to distinguish the major organization of the fabric from its minor subordinate organisms, and leaves it at that.

The *architectural traditionalist*, however, may be, and often is, quite as competent to see as clearly as the others, but he doesn't leave the design where the architectural realist did. He is not content with rhythms and scales, but is interested in associations, and sentiments and moods of his own, as distinct from the moods of the problem. He belongs to a school, and he expects people of his school of thought to understand him, and he doesn't care who else does or does not. He wants his building to say things (to the initiate at least) and do more than hum tunes.

At the other end of the scale are the *style-mongers*, who assemble their designs from books and twist their plans and their constructions to fit their copyings, and are of no account as artists.

We need not distress ourselves about the style-mongers or the engineers from the extreme ends of our categories, or the hysterical would-be realists who are the low comedians of our art. Just now the more serious clients and architects of Canada, as a class, belong to the group I described as architectural traditionalists, but they and their outside public are becoming a little suspicious of the genuineness of their stock-in-trade traditions. Meantime, they note in Europe, among a host of architectural farceurs of the independent maniac type, a few real masters of our art, who seem to say, "Our problems are new; our methods of construction are new; let us find new solutions, with new rhythms and new scales! To do this, let us forget the past," or, on occasion more loudly "to hell with the past."

The difficulty in this gospel is that the monuments of the past are there in Europe, and being very well built and the climate moderate on the whole, these monuments have a way of outlasting the schools of thought and entering into the residue of past experiences of the man in the street of today and even of tomorrow.

But here it may be different and we have no very great architectural past and the perfectly logical attitude of what I have called the architectural realists of Europe may have an enormous influence for good on our future work, that is, if we keep our heads, accept so much of their doctrine as will help us, and solve our own problems in our own way, with a weather eye on our climate. But Canadian architecture will be poor, heartless stuff if we fail to frankly accept the mechanization of mass production, on the one hand, or to retain a place for the skilled artificer, on the other. We have need of both.