

THE NECESSITY OF PLANNING.

THE daily work of the architect and the landscape-architect is popularly supposed to consist in ornamenting lands and buildings so as to make them appear beautiful. Rooms may be inconveniently and awkwardly shaped, but they can be "beautified" by rich furniture and upholstery. Whole buildings may be irrationally planned, but they may still be made "artistic" by means of mouldings, carvings and mosaic. House and grounds and college grounds, private gardens and public parks may be senselessly, as well as ineffectively, arranged, but they may still be glorified by yellow and purple leafage. In short, "The world is still deceived with ornament."

On the other hand, although all seekers for the truth concerning beauty have discerned elements which defy analysis, such special students have nevertheless deduced from the visible and historical facts a whole series of fixed principles, which are quite as surely established as any of the other so-called laws of nature. Among these, perhaps, the most important is this, that "in all the arts which serve the use, convenience, or comfort of man, from gardening and building down to the designing of the humblest utensil which it is desired to make beautiful, utility and fitness for intended purpose must be first considered." It is to be remembered that this is not theory but law. As a matter of fact and experience satisfying beauty is not won unless the law of nature is obeyed.

That faithful and well-reasoned planning for the accomplishment of purpose is necessary to the success of the work of architects of buildings is now generally understood. "A plan" is a skillful combination of convenience with effectiveness of arrangement. "A design" is made up of plan, construction and outward appearance, and by no means consists of the latter only. Indeed, the external aspect of a structure depends directly on the mode of construction, the construction depends, in turn, on the plan, and the plan on the purpose in view; with the result that the whole appearance of the building inevitably and naturally expresses this purpose.

If it be true that expression, character, and even beauty are thus most surely won, in the case of buildings, by keeping decoration subsidiary and designing with purpose in view from the start, it is equally true of all the wide field of architecture, using the word in its broadest imaginable sense. "Architecture, a great subject, truly," says William Morris, "for it embraces the consideration of the whole of the external surroundings of the life of man; we cannot escape from it if we would, for it means the moulding and altering to human needs of the very face of the earth itself." A busy pasture or a smooth green field in forest-clad New England is as truly a product of human handiwork as a green meadow in treeless and dusty Utah, yet each is beautiful, and neither owes a particle of its beauty to decoration. The English deer-park, with its broad-spreading trees, or the churchyard, with its ancient stones and yews, the typical Yankee farm with its low buildings and great Elm, or the Live Oaks and quaint structures of the plantations of Louisiana, these and all similarly interesting landscapes are interesting, not because they have been decorated, but because they are strongly characterized and highly expressive. Their moving beauty is the natural product of straightforward work for the adaptation of land and landscape to human needs and uses.

Believing these things, it will be impossible for us, when a tract of land is newly dedicated to some special purpose, be it that of a suburban lot, a railroad-station yard, a new village, a country-seat or a public park, to stand by and see it thoughtlessly laid out and then, perhaps, turned over to the decorators. We shall insist on premeditation and careful fundamental planning, knowing that therein lies the best, if not the only, hope of happy results. Once possessed of faith in that law of nature in accordance with which beauty springs from fitness, we shall be ready to agree that, when purpose is served, formal gardens, rectilinear avenues and courts of honor are not only permitted, but commanded. On the other hand, we shall be equally strenuous in demanding studied planning and adaptation to environment and purpose in the laying out of whatever work may need to be done to make the wildest place of private or public resort accessible and enjoyable. Positive injury to the landscape of such places can be avoided only by painstaking, while the available resources of scenery can be economized only by careful devising. So with the whole range of problems which lie between these extremes. No work of man is ever successfully accomplished without taking thought beforehand; in other words, without planning.

And, strange as it may appear, opposition to such planning for effective results will not, in practice, be found to come from those who attempt decoration only because they know not how else to attain to the beautiful. Just as the literary class in China ruinously opposes change of any kind, so there is with us a comparatively small, but influential, body of refined persons, far too well educated to be "deceived by ornament," who most unfortunately, though unintentionally, assist in the triumphs of ugliness by blindly opposing all attempts to adapt land and landscape to changed or new requirements. Enjoying the pleasanter scenery of their surroundings as it exists—certain shady roads, or some lingering fields or farm-lands—these estimable people talk of "letting Nature alone" or "keeping Nature natural," as if such a thing were possible in a world which was made for man. No, the "moulding and altering" of the earth goes forward of necessity, and if those who ought to be leaders will not help to guide the world aright, the work will surely be done badly; as it is, in fact, done badly in the neighborhood of all our great towns. To refuse to exercise foresight and to adapt to purpose in due season, is simply to court disaster. Instead of hanging back, it ought to be the pride and pleasure of these very people to see to it that proper plans are seasonably laid for the widening of roads so that fine trees shall not be sacrificed, to see to it that electric-car tracks shall be placed only in suitably selected and specially arranged streets, that public reservations of one type or another shall be provided in accordance with some consistent general scheme, and that such reservations shall be saved from both decorative and haphazard development by the early adoption of rational and comprehensive plans. There is needed a little less selfish contentment in the doomed landscape of the present, a sharper sense of responsibility to the future and a living faith in that law of God, in obedience to which everything which is well adapted to use and purpose is sure to be interesting and expressive, and if not beautiful, at least on the way to be.