

REVIEW OF THE FAIR.

A CRITICAL OBSERVER RECORDS SOME OF HIS OPINIONS.

Attitude of the People Who Visit the White City—They Do Not Regard the Exposition Seriously, So He Says, but They Enjoy It Immensely—Some Side Lights on American Character—Short-comings and Deficiencies of the Great Show—Lessons That Are to Be Learned.

The World's Fair at Chicago is an entertaining spectacle, a great show, and the people who see it are enjoying it. They are not studying it toilsomely, or analyzing it closely, or thinking about it very seriously in any way. It is not a school of philosophy, or a school of any kind to them, but a holiday spectacle and entertainment, something to be enjoyed. Many persons worked themselves to death at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876 in a conscientious endeavor to see the entire exhibition and to learn all its lessons. Nothing of the kind has appeared in the methods pursued by the visitors to the Fair at Chicago. Nobody seems to be doing anything here from a sense of duty or a feeling of obligation to make the best possible use of his time in any sense except that of getting as much pleasure out of it as he can.

This difference in the demeanor and spirit of the visitors at the two exhibitions—of 1876 and of this year—marks a distinct and important modification in the intellectual character of the American people which has taken place in the brief period of seventeen years. We are less strenuous in our self-discipline than we were in 1876, and much more in the habit of using our opportunities for enjoyment without troubling ourselves to find any good or benefit in them beyond the moment's diversion. This is not a superficial or accidental trait. It is fundamental, and indicates the trend and development of our national thought and character.

The first element in the popular enjoyment of the Fair is the attractiveness of the out-door features of the show. The people like to linger just inside the entrance court, near the grand partial opening from the lake, and to return to this point again and again, to saunter along the canal between the Genius of the Republic and the MacMonnies Fountain, and appropriate the whole fair scene around them—the bright water, the great buildings with the long lines of statues looking down from the tops of the walls, and the ever-changing multitude of visitors passing onward and inward, the great throngs always dispersing and disappearing, yet perpetually renewed. The scene which is visible from any position in the great entrance court is almost entirely harmonious and pleasing. It has the elements of surprise and illusion, the indefinable charm which results from the complete subordination of appropriate details to a noble common purpose and satisfying general effect, and which here, as always, makes the whole seem much more than the sum of all its parts. So potent is this out-of-door fascination for everybody that when officers of the Fair act as guides for parties of friends, and try to have them go to see specially interesting exhibits in the buildings, they find it difficult to induce the visitors to turn from the spectacle outside and go within, and they are apt to be haunted by remembrances which influence them to escape from guidance and to return to the open air at an early opportunity.

Importance of the Lagoons.

It was the original intention of the landscape artists who designed the grounds that all visitors should enter the Fair grounds at the lake-front, through the Court of Honor, and the failure to carry out this intention is a matter of regret, as it has seriously interfered with and diminished the effect of the first view of the grounds. The incorporation of the lake with the site of the Fair by means of the canals and lagoons which extend to nearly every part of the grounds, providing a water frontage for all the principal buildings and supplying means of communication between them, is the basis and essential feature of the beauty and attractiveness of the grounds and of the whole out-of-doors side of the Exposition. It imparts an ideal quality and lifts the Fair from the commercial and business level on which it would otherwise rest into the realm of art. This use of the lake was first suggested by Frederick Law Olmsted more than twenty years ago, when he was consulted in regard to the creation of a public park in the region which is now the site of the Columbian Exposition.

The planting of the shores and the growth of the trees, shrubs, and aquatic plants have been marvelously successful, considering the brief time available for the work of the landscape artists and of nature in beautifying a desolate and forbidding territory. There is a look of permanence in some places, as if the wild scenery had long been domesticated and the great palaces entirely at home in their familiar natural environment.

The degree in which the landscape dominates the architecture is very remarkable. For structures so enormous in size the principal Exposition buildings are extremely unobtrusive. This is a triumph for the architects as well as for the landscape artists, and is highly creditable to both classes of designers. An interesting magazine paper or even a small book might be written by some one who was present at the discussions between the architects who designed the great buildings for the Fair—a paper describing these discussions and the process of the development of the fundamental ideas involved, by which the plans for the chief structures and all the details of their character and finish were brought into relations of quiet cooperation for a common object.

This unqualified praise cannot be applied to the buildings erected by the different States of our country. Taking them all together they are an aggregation of incongruities, without much architectural dignity or fitness, and with no vital relations to each other or to the objects of the Fair, except as meeting-places for the people of each State. The Massachusetts Building is a copy of the old "Hancock House," which formerly stood in Boston, and a comparison of its characteristic features with those of the modern structures around it deepens the regret of all thoughtful men that the original should have been pulled down some years ago. The New York Building is large and costly; the interior is commodious and beautifully finished.

The numerous small buildings scattered about the Fair grounds, which were erected by manufacturers and merchants to advertise their wares, nearly all stand in places where there should be no buildings of any kind. They represent commerce pure and simple, unredeemed by any artistic quality, and some of them interfere seriously with the unity and beauty of the general design for the buildings and grounds.

The character of all these buildings which are not provided for in the general plan of the Exposition and which have the appearance of being in revolt against it suggests the question of what would be the proper method of treatment or design of structures for similar purposes in any future great fair or world's exposition. If there are to be separate small buildings for advertising purposes they should be provided for in the original plan of the grounds and buildings, and their character and design should be strictly controlled by the artists who have the general charge of the landscape art and architecture of the exposition. Otherwise each separate commercial building is likely to introduce discordant and impertinent features which will fatally mar the general effect.

State Buildings Not Characteristic.

As to the State buildings, the main question would be whether there can be a special and particular design for a building for each of all the States of our country which shall in any true sense or important degree represent what is native or peculiar, predominant or essential in the character of the State. This would appear to be chiefly a question for architects and other artists, but in some of its bearings it might be of interest to all thoughtful and patriotic citizens. Would it, for instance, be possible to design a building which should be truly representative of the State of New Hampshire or of Illinois? If such a design is practicable for each of the States of our country measures to secure it should be taken by all of them, so that if we should ever again have occasion to erect representative State buildings suitable plans for such structures may be ready to our hands. Perhaps the architects in each State might be invited to prepare such designs without waiting for the approach of the time for another great fair. A really appropriate design for a State building could be utilized at any time and in various ways.

All the great buildings of the Exposition are white outside except the Transportation Palace. The color is not entirely suitable, as

it is too dazzling and trying for the eyes in bright sunlight, and often renders the details of the architecture indistinct, but it is probably fortunate that a uniform color was generally used, as a variety of colors would have opened the way for profuse "decorative work," much of which might have been unsuitable. There is a line of misshapen figures, which are said to be angels, on the wall of the Transportation Building which look as if they had been made of wax and then stretched almost in two. They are stupid-looking and grotesque. As none of our artists ever saw an angel it might be well for them to stop painting them. A human figure with wings is usually out of place and unmeaning in modern secular art.

The external architecture of the principal buildings is, in general, of a high order, but most of the interiors reveal a common defect which militates seriously against the essential object for which the buildings were designed and constructed—the exhibition of the wares and products which are housed in them. The upper floors and galleries provide great areas for the display of goods, and articles of many kinds are placed there in number and quantity so great as to constitute a very important proportion of the entire Exposition, but only a small proportion of the people who go to the Fair ascend the stairs to the upper floors or see any of the products which are there set forth for their examination and enjoyment. Many of the objects which are thus practically inaccessible are fully equal in interest to those which are to be seen on the ground floors, but the people will not get to see them. Noting the empty and unpeopled condition of the great halls and galleries above stairs, I thought I would inquire about it, and during two or three days I asked several hundred persons if they had been upstairs in any of the buildings. All but two or three said no, and nearly all added: "There is ten times as much down-stairs as we can see in the time of our stay at the Fair, and why should we waste time and strength in climbing up-stairs?" Whether this view is reasonable or not it controls the practice of visitors almost completely, and whatever else may remain uncertain regarding the plans for such exhibitions, the World's Fair of 1893 has made it plain that products which are to be seen by any important proportion of visitors must be on the ground floors, but slightly removed from the level of the entrances of the buildings, and that space in the upper halls and galleries is comparatively valueless for exhibit-ition purposes.

Visitors Made Comfortable.

The provision and arrangement of means to promote the comfort and convenience of visitors while they are on the Fair grounds are in general good and complete. One feature which is highly appreciated by many mothers is the house where babies can be left for hours in the care of competent young women. As I passed it one day I saw a man from Kansas whom I knew standing on the steps with two little children. We saluted and I was going on, but he said: "Wait and see my wife. She's gone inside to pawn the baby."

The boats of different kinds on the canals and lagoons give great delight to multitudes of visitors, young and old. The electric launch is an ideal means of transportation. The magic carpet of Oriental style has hitherto been regarded as the most perfect vehicle for travel ever invented by man, but the electric launch is superior in interest and charm to anything else that has been tried in this country. There is no visible means or agency for the propulsion of the boat. The steersman quietly turns a little wheel to direct its course, but the graceful, swift-gliding craft looks as if it were propelled by the mere power of will of its occupants. It is a most poetical, fairy-like, magical boat, and if it can be supplied at small cost it should speedily come into general use on our small, safe lakes, ponds, and streams.

The Columbus caravels and the Viking boat are among the most interesting, suggestive, and instructive of all the objects to be seen at the Exposition. They all appear wonderfully small for sea-going vessels, and especially for crossing the Atlantic when it was still an unknown and uncharted sea. But it is possible that men in very early times sailed and adventured abroad much more widely than the moderns are just now inclined to believe. The model of the battleship Illinois, an imitation ship which will not float but is built on piles, is interesting, especially to our inland young people.

The United States Government Building is pretentious and inappropriate, but most of the government exhibition has great educational interest and value. It suggests that collections similar to some portions of it should be established in each of the States of our country for the information of our teachers, school children, and youth.

The exhibitions of fruit and other farm products from the Pacific coast region of our country are impressive, although the arrangement of the articles or the manner in which they are shown is often displeasing and adapted rather to defeat than to promote the objects for which they are exhibited. Thus fruits are often shown in enormous aggregations having the form of globes, pyramids, and columns, or of animals of colossal size. A gigantic horse and his rider are constructed wholly of prunes. Such forms are not merely grotesque and vulgar, they show an entire lack of perception on the part of the exhibitor regarding the means of producing the impression which he wishes to make on the minds of those who look at the fruit. He desires that visitors shall see that his fruit is large and fine looking. The size, color, and other qualities of the individual specimens are the features of essential interest in an exhibition of fruits. If visitors are to perceive and appreciate these qualities, if they are to be able to see that the fruit is large and of fine appearance they must see the individual apples, pears, peaches, or oranges near at hand and in groups or collections each of which contains only a few samples. When oranges are shown in a globe ten feet in diameter or in a life-size hippopotamus the fruit appears dwarfed to half its real size and very inferior in quality. The common American belief that mere bigness indicates superior character is displayed in many departments of the Exposition. It is always absurd, but it is specially mischievous in the pomological part of the show.

The German exhibition of manufactured articles has been prepared and arranged with superior intelligence, and many of the foreign collections have been more carefully selected and winnowed than those shown by our own people; but this is natural, as we had almost unlimited space at our disposal. Judging from what can be seen at the Fair, Germany appears to be the foremost nation of the world in the application of scientific knowledge to economic uses through the industrial arts and in the intelligent and responsible use and development of her natural resources; but several of the principal countries represented at the Exposition are considerably in advance of us in these respects.

The People at the Fair.

The attendance has been greatly restricted by the business, industrial, and financial disturbance and depression which prevail throughout our country, and as a consequence only the people who are comparatively well-to-do or prosperous have gone to the Exposition. Very few poor people, very few of the men and women who work with their hands for wages, have gone to the Fair, except those who live in Chicago or near it. If business and industry had been prosperous this year many of the working folk of the country would have visited the Fair.

The general aspect and deportment of the people at the Fair are interesting and encouraging to students of our civilization and to all patriotic Americans. All are orderly, well-behaved, unobtrusive, evidently comfortable and evidently able to take care of themselves while they are enjoying the show. They are not seared at the crowd nor abashed by the unfamiliar surroundings.

The most impressive phenomena at the Fair are the uniformity in dress, manners, and general appearance, the disappearance of the local and special types, eccentricities and peculiarities which formerly existed in some regions of our country, perhaps in all, and the manifest development of a national type. The change in all these respects in the last twenty-five years is most striking. Even those who have closely studied the people of all our States in their own homes can not often distinguish the inhabitants of any one State from those of any other except by acquaintance and inquiry.

I saw no eccentricities of dress except in the case of a few Indian women, who are too poor to subscribe for a fashion paper and who had made their own gowns, which were of a sort of "Mother Hubbard" shape. All the other American women wore gowns which had been cut by modern, improved patterns, all very much alike, and by far the larger proportion of them were made of new fabrics. A few farmers' wives wore French "satens" of a style which has not been imported since four or five years ago. These are economical women, and they do not stay long at the Fair. Their faces are full of goodness and of all the signs of steadfast and faithful lives.

The exaggerated type of the simple, artless, awkward countryman, who is overwhelmed with astonishment when he sees a man with good clothes on, will probably long be cher-

ished by writers for the illustrated newspapers and the artists who make the pictures for them, but I did not see any people of this kind at the Fair. I have traveled and lived among the people in the regions most remote from railroads and cities in nearly all the States of our country, and I have not seen a person of this type in the last twenty years. I judge that it is becoming scarce in real life in this country. But I saw a picture intended to represent this type made at the Fair. Two artists were sketching a few yards apart along the water front of the Transportation Building, and I paused a moment to look at their work, as did many who were passing near them. One was looking at something across the lagoon, the other at objects along the shore on which they were at work. Presently the latter called to his friend:

"Busy?"  
"Yes; but what'll you have?"  
"I want a countryman in this just arrived."  
"All right; where does he stand?"  
"Right where you are. Look over at Trans. Now gawk."

He gawked, and his friend sketched him with rapid strokes. I have not seen the picture in any publication, but it was a clever drawing of a handsome young man in an overdone attitude of stupid, speechless wonder.

I saw no beggars, intoxicated persons, or "confidence men" in the main Fair grounds, but members of all these classes mingled with the crowd on the Midway Plaisance. So far as I could observe there appeared to be no reason for believing that keepers of hotels or boarding-houses in the city tried or desired to practice extortion or to obtain unreasonable prices for board and lodging. I paid \$1 a day for an adequate and comfortable room in a good new hotel near the Midway entrance to the grounds. It was about the same in character as I usually obtain in New York for this price. The table service appeared to be good and the prices for meals moderate so far as I had an opportunity for acquaintance with them.

Lessons of the Fair.

The principal lesson suggested by the Fair, as it appears to me, is the importance of improving the means and methods of transportation between the different parts of our country so that food products of all kinds and perishable goods and materials in general may be carried to market with the greatest possible celerity and in the best possible condition. The great mass of the American people need better food. It is an indispensable basis and condition for their attainment of permanent prosperity and of the fullest civilization of which they are capable. Most of them still think of their food without seriousness, and with slight perception of its relations to the highest uses and objects of human life. Though every dish prepared by unwilling hands is poisoned, yet cooking is mostly slave's service, without honor, respect, or reward. The life of American working people needs reconstruction, from its basis in the character of their food to its apex, whatever that may be, and one of the most important means for improving the food of the mass of the people is the development of the better methods for the transportation of food products between the different regions of our country. The people who work with their hands for wages, and especially those who work in shops, mills, and factories, need more fruit for food, fruit in better condition and at less cost. We should as fast as possible reduce the time for railway transit between the great fruit gardens of our Pacific coast region and the homes of the vast populations of our Northeastern States. We shall soon have a home market for all our food products, and our system of railway management should be such as to secure the best possible markets for producers and the best products for consumers at reasonable prices.

The second lesson of the Fair is the imperative need of the economical development and intelligent use of all our natural resources and possessions. We are the most wasteful of all the great nations. Of some of our most valuable natural resources we have always wasted far more than we have used. The national prosperity of which we boast as evidence of our superior energy and wisdom has been produced in a considerable degree by the extravagant expenditure of our natural capital.

When an English nobleman heard that a spendthrift friend had received a legacy of £10,000 he said: "That will enable him to live at the rate of £20,000 a year for six months." We have been far too willing to live in reckless profusion upon what ought to have been regarded as the fixed capital and basis of the Nation's prosperity for all time to come. We have wasted, and are still wasting, our original natural wealth and resources in forests, in fish and game, in the fertility of the soil, and in other storehouses of the Nation's natural wealth as if there were no such thing as responsibility to the future for our conduct as dishonest trustees of this magnificent inheritance. We have the spendthrift's childlike faith that our patrimony is inexhaustible, and the mass of our people have come to believe in the omnipotence of science to make good all the loss and waste caused by our reckless folly and to bless our disregard of economic and moral laws with all the rewards of wise and orderly living. The natural effect of this belief upon character is the breaking down of moral distinctions and the emancipation of the human mind and will from obligation, and this effect is already everywhere manifest, but the consequences of this mighty transformation in thought and character will probably unfold themselves gradually.

We should at once enter upon a careful measuring and development of all our natural resources, and should guard them henceforward with a new sense of the folly and insanity of such waste as we have hitherto practiced. The existence of a passionate desire for wealth side by side with the reckless destruction of the materials out of which it is to be created is a curious psychological phenomenon. It is a prominent feature in our national character at the present time.

Menace of Warfare.

Another lesson of the Fair is the absolute incongruity, antagonism, and contrariety of war with the highest industrial developments. Many nations, perhaps all, become civilized in a considerable degree in some departments of their character and action, while they are still in large measure undeveloped and savage in other respects. This is the condition of the leading European nations and of our own country in these closing years of the century. All these countries believe in war, and they keep themselves in readiness for it by maintaining costly armaments in time of peace. The war spirit or feeling is still strong among the rulers of European lands, and here, under a form of government which was established to secure the rule of the people, we have the essential conditions and methods of war blended and incorporated with our industrial system, to such an extent as to render industry, with the national prosperity which depends upon it, irregular, fitful, and uncertain. The most intelligent and successful business-men of our country say that under existing conditions business is war, and that it is not honest to pretend that its essential qualities are those of friendly cooperation for the common interest or benefit. Competition in the business world is war, a contest in which the strong rise and succeed by the fall and defeat of the weak. Those who prosper by this system of warfare appear to think well of it, but no man who has any serious interest in the welfare of his country, or even in the prospects of his own children, can desire the perpetuation of existing industrial conditions.

It is not possible for any of the great nations of the world to advance much farther in civilization while they go on trying to carry war and industrial development forward together. It is true that—

Civilization does git forrid  
Somtimes upon a powder-cart.

As Mr. Hosea Biglow tells us, but that is in the lower stages of development—in the times of birth for a nation or people—and for any of the great nations to fight now would be to renounce and destroy the best that modern civilization has achieved. The powder-cart and our industrial machinery are moving in opposite directions, and we cannot possibly ride forward on both.

The exhibition of Krupp's guns and our own, and of plates of the finest steel pierced, tortured, and ruined by shot in the contest between irresistible projectiles and impervious armor, side by side with the most exquisite creations of modern industry designed to maintain, refine, and improve human life, is an enormous absurdity. The metal conditions which lead many men in our own country at the present time to regard a foreign war as desirable on economic grounds are a menace to civilization.

The essential feature in civilized industrial methods is the application of science—that is, of systematized knowledge to all the arts of human life. This is the only possible basis for the development of a secure and permanent civilization, and this excludes war and all the elements, influences, and conditions which produce or promote war. To believe that war can coexist with a scientific civilization is to build the foundation of our national structure over cavernous mines, above which we shall gather an infinite store of all precious

things, only to await the inevitable explosion which must wreck the fairest and strongest fabric we can build.

Permanent Benefits.

I observe in most of the current writing about the Fair predictions of immense benefits to all our people from the lessons of the Exposition; but, so far as I am aware, no writer admits or believes that we Americans are in serious need of lessons of any kind. We are already, in our own estimation, the wisest and greatest of nations, and we are celebrating this great festival at Chicago with a universal paean of self-congratulation.

We may rightly expect considerable improvement in various special arts and industries to result from the stimulus which the Fair will give to those engaged in them. The lessons and the encouragement to landscape artists are obvious, and a society of architects has given the best possible promise of improvement by showing that they already had some excellent ideas of their art before the Fair was organized. In few of the arts of civilized life is there greater room or need for improvement than in American architecture.

Some improvement in various manufactures will of course result from the exhibition of methods and of finished products at the Exposition, but the notion that the Fair will necessarily and effectively teach great and valuable lessons to the people of our country in general has no substantial basis. It is not supported by anything in experience or history. If important lessons are learned or a noticeable advance of any kind is made as a result of the Fair, it will be because a few persons have a clear and definite perception of what the needed lesson is and a persistent impulse to bring it to the attention of the country. The mass of writing about the Fair gives no encouragement to the belief that a general awakening, advance, or rebirth in thought is to result from the influence of the Exposition. The character of the utterances at the various "congresses" connected with it is distinctly discouraging to such a hope by reason of their general vagueness and crudity and the evident indifference of their authors to effectiveness of form in preparing their papers and addresses. A much more advanced civilization is shown in the mechanical departments of the Exposition than has been manifested in the oratory of all the "congresses" at Chicago during the year.

I think the contents of the American mind need an overhauling, "a strict examination with a view to correction or repairs," but I have not yet seen any indication that this is likely to be among the results of the World's Fair of 1893. We need to take account of stock, to find out "where we are at" and what we have on hand in material and mental resources and possessions. I do not say that the Fair teaches this lesson in any special way, but the events and conditions of the current year teach it clearly. These events and conditions constitute a more impressive exposition of our national civilization than is presented to the world in the great Fair at Chicago.

What we shall learn or gain from any or all of these sources depends on ourselves. The American people respond readily to impressions, but they are lacking in the ability to revise and coordinate their mental impressions, to reject those which lack vital significance, and to utilize those which require thought for their development. We are too fond of thinking that our minds are necessarily "broadened" and adequately educated by the mere succession of a great number of vague, unrelated impressions of any kind whatever.

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