

## THE WHITE CITY.

### A Materialized Vision—An Embodied Paradise—What Is Due to the Artistic Genius of Olmsted and Codman.

*Scribner's Magazine* has an article on the White City entitled "Foreground and Vista of the Fair," by W. H. Gibson, and handsomely illustrated, from which the following extracts are taken:

The "White City" is already a heritage of delight and inspiration to a vast multitude who have spent their available days beneath the spell of its enchantment.

It is no small thing thus to have penetrated the veil, as it were, as is here actually done for many—to have materialized a vision—to have embodied a paradise. The "Heavenly City," the "New Jerusalem," with gates of gold and pearl, which in one questionable shape or another lingers in the hopeful, faithful fancy of so many of the sons of Adam, will here find a realization, supplanting or exalting the ideal which has hitherto not always been to the glory of heaven.

But in thus paying tribute to the architect we are perhaps unconsciously crediting him with more than his due; certainly more than he would himself claim. Of what avail were beautiful palaces if they could not be seen; and how easily might such an assemblage of heroic structures such as these at Jackson Park, as in previous similar Expositions, have been so disposed, with relation to each other and their environment, as to have completely lost not only their individual impressiveness but the infinite advantage of their imposing ensemble?

We traverse the winding lagoon for an hour in continual delight, every passing moment, every quiet turn of our launch or gondola beneath arching bridge or jutting revêtement opening up in either direction new and ravishing vistas of architectural beauty. Yet how little have we considered that the very means of our enjoyment, the pure, blue water-way upon which our gondola so listlessly floats, is the crowning artifice by which the work of the architect is glorified—a very triumph and inspiration in the great scheme of landscape—say rather water-scape—gardening, which has made this Columbian Fair a unique model for all others of its kind. I think it is conceded by the architects of the Fair that in no way are its buildings to be seen to such satisfaction or full effect as from the lagoon.

As we traverse the lagoon we had utterly ignored another feature of its banks, or perhaps had our attention only momentarily inveigled thither by the invitation of the bevy of snowy ducks or geese or graceful swans hastening from our prow and gliding beneath the overhanging boughs of feathery gray willows. Here indeed is a haven for a tired soul, a fairy realm whose modest charms are apt to be overlooked in the claims of the overwhelming architectural surroundings. But sooner or later its restful refuge will be discovered and welcomed. How many a foot-sore mortal, weary from the very excess of enthusiasm, will seek this quiet retirement, content for the moment to consign the architect to the accessory place of vista and horizon, while he roams and pries and muses among the labyrinthian paths, fragrant bowers, and shadowy glades, and along the reedy flowery borders of this sylvan fairy island, which the artistic genius of Olmsted and Codman has here, in a short year, conjured up like magic from the muddy, dreary marsh.

Superlative anticipation of our hopes is often disastrous to their full realization. But no such danger awaits the visitor to the Columbian Fair. The most extreme glorification of this superb achievement of Chicago still leaves us the superlative of actual experience.

Dull indeed must be the intelligence which fails to respond to the vision of beauty which the genius of architecture has here created. Whatever oblivion may await the other features of the Exposition, the fame of the architect is secure. Even though in their substance his creations here are but as the flowers of a day, to be cut down ere the coming winter, their very evanescence constitutes their most abiding charm.

Though we may spend weeks in the enjoyment of the unexampled treasures within these walls, confusion will at length claim most of our minor reminiscences and the winnowing process of the years will at last leave few tokens. But the glamour of this celestial city, this throng of ethereal palaces hovering between sky and sky, buoyant as uplifting archangel wings from dome and pinnacle and acroteria—these will abide to the end of our days.