THE PARIS EXHIBITION OF THE RE-CONSTITUTED CITY (1916.)

(EXPOSITION DE LA CITÉ RECONSTITUÉE)

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"THE Cities and Town Planning Exhibition," now becoming known under the shorter, more human and more accurate title of "Civic Exhibition," had been in India during the winters of 1914-15 and 1915-16 at the invitation of three presidency governments. It was held at Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, and later at Nagpur and Lucknow, the capitals of the central and united provinces respectively. Its director was reporting on cities, and advising on town improvements and extensions, when a request came from the Comité Supérieur of the Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée in Paris to share in this exhibition in the summer of 1916 by exhibiting the whole or part of its collections.

The original collections of the exhibition had been destroyed on their way out to India in October 1914 by the famous *Edmen*, which met the vessel on which these collections were being carried, and sunk it in the Indian Ocean with all its cargo. It was a serious loss, as the collections represented much of the work of twenty years or more, and many of the documents were irreplaceable. Nor did the insurance cover war risks. Moreover, the first exhibition in India was to have been held a month or so from the date of its destruction. Members of the town planning institute in London, Edinburgh and elsewhere set to work with admirable promptitude and energy to gather new collections; and generous aid was forthcoming also from colleagues in America like Dr. Nolen and others. An exhibition, smaller of course, but not without value, was held in Madras in less than three months; and since then with each subsequent exhibition further reconstruction has been in progress.

After this experience the transporting of the best of the renewing collection once more across the seas in war time was not without risk; but the documents reached Paris at the end of April 1916, a few days before the date announced for the opening of the Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée. It was not surprising, however, to find that owing to war exigencies the preparations for opening were still far from complete. Even under ordinary circumstances exhibitions are apt to be late; and when we consider those under which the idea of this Paris Exposition of 1916 was conceived, and the difficulties of innumerable kinds in carrying it out, we cannot but regard it as one more amongst the many indications of the energy and vitality of the French, of their power of co-ordination, above all of their farsighted and generous social outlook.

It was planned and held when the enemy was still only some sixty miles from the gates of Paris, and holding a portion of France more than equal to the whole of Belgium, and while the terrible struggle of Verdun was at its fiercest, the Germans gaining ground there, and threatening to break through the French defences. Every available man of fighting age was either at the front or otherwise employed in war work. Scarcely a family but was mourning their men already fallen on the field. The exposition, too, suffered from the absence at the front of architects and others who would have rendered good service; as also from the inevitable cares and preoccupations of those promoters who remained on the spot. Workmen were scarce; materials, such as wood for temporary constructions, were hard to find. Nevertheless, the exposition was useful, as an education to the general public and to specialists of various kinds; and above all it was a triumphant demonstration, alike to allies and enemies, of the courage and confidence of France.

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GOVERNMENT

The draft programme announced that the exposition was organized by the *Association Générale des Hygiénistes et Techniciens Municipaux de France et des Pays de Langue Française*, under the ægis of the republic, with the patronage of the ministries of commerce, of industry, of agriculture, of education and fine art, of labor and of the interior; of the general council of the Seine and municipal council of Paris; and of the committees for housing and social welfare and the like. Its working nucleus was well constituted, of architects and planners, men of affairs, of politics and government; and its composition included at once a strong representation of regionalists, from Brittany to Provence, as well as eminent Parisians. Of their working president, M. Georges Risler, much might be said, and all appreciatively.

The site of the exposition was well chosen on the Terrace of the Tuileries adjoining the Place de la Concorde, easily reached by underground railways and by tramway from both sides of the Seine. Most of the buildings were temporary constructions except the central one of the old "*Jeu de Paume*." In this were exhibited plans for the reconstruction of Rheims and other towns and villages in the war zone, as well as of foreign towns by skilled and scholarly French architects and municipal engineers. There were also photographs and drawings of some of the destroyed Flemish towns, with plans for the reconstruction of their ruined quarters and public buildings.

Around the central building were examples of building materials and constructions in wood, in various kinds of cement, plaster, terra-cotta, etc.; some separate, or in street rows, some grouped as model villages. The exposition showed altogether 40 of these model houses costing from 1500 francs (\$300) upwards. There were of course the usual business

exhibits by firms of cabinet-makers, electricians and other house furnishers, agricultural implement manufacturers, and so on.

THE QUAKER CONTRIBUTION

One of the most interesting and congruent exhibits was that of the English Society of Friends (Quakers), whose war victims' relief committee has for the past two and a half years been engaged in reconstruction work in the departments of the Marne and Meuse, from which the Germans were driven back in September, 1914. This exhibit took the form of a wooden hut of three rooms, such as the Friends have been building in great numbers for the inhabitants of the villages and small towns wrecked by the Germans. Inside the little dwelling were plans of these villages and towns, indicating the houses totally or partially destroyed (in some cases scarcely a single one was left standing), and those rebuilt by the Friends' committee. There were also photographs showing other branches of their work, such as medical relief, distribution of agricultural implements, seeds, etc., of clothing and other necessities; temporary schools and work rooms, with specimens of needlework for sale.

VILLAGE PLANS

An important feature of the exposition was the competition, open to all architects, French and other, for the best village plans, for which prizes were offered. The competitors, of whom there were twenty-five or more, were supplied with plans of three types of ruined agricultural villages, large and small, chosen from different regions and with varying situations and needs. The competitors were of varied points of view, from the most urban outwards. Some were extreme Parisians—must one say even to cockneyism?—of the type which prevails in every great city; projecting the boulevards, places, rond-points of Paris, even the Etoile itself, upon the village, which was thus effaced beyond recognition as a village altogether. Others there were with all degrees of practicality, up to rural commonsense. But in general, for villages as for cottages, with of course creditable exceptions, the idea was not clear enough to most of the competitors, that the peasant requires a home-stead, a working farm-center, and not merely that pleasant suburban retreat to which the city dweller, his work over, looks forward to retiring.

THE CATHEDRAL QUARTER OF RHEIMS

The proposals for the cathedral quarter of Rheims were too much influenced by Paris. They tended to repeat the errors of the Second Empire, and those of the earlier German town planners with their excessive opening up, in front of Notre Dame and all around Cologne Cathedral. The Germans before the war, awakened to this error, were organizing competitions for building up again around their cathedrals, and so restor-

ing them to their former scale and majesty. For thus, instead of being left isolated upon an empty place, like a head on a charger, like bric-à-brac upon a table, or like a model on a museum floor, they will again appear soaring above the homes grouped around them, presiding over, protecting, inspiring their city.

So far these two criticisms, of country plans and city ones. But one of the great uses of our exhibition is to provide an opportunity of making mistakes like these of village and cathedral in their experimental phases, while there is still time for criticism and improvement, instead of the commoner method—that of half-considered execution first, and useless criticism after the fact.

An excellent and varied programme of lectures was provided on civic subjects ranging from public sanitation, rural and urban, to the æsthetic and social aspects of town planning. It included also regional studies of the French provinces, Alsace-Lorraine, Brittany, Provence, Auvergne and many more. Peripatetic lectures (*promenades-conférences*), too, were organized; and all this again with fitting leadership, not only anti-quarian, artistic and architectural, but embracing at once the best geographers of France, all now regionalists to a man; and the small but growing group of politicians who are working to renew the too much lost lesson of 1870-71; that of slackening the excessive cerebralization of Paris, and renewing the life of the old provinces, recombined as natural and economic regions, and each around its provincial capital and university city.

Parties of school children were admitted free of charge under the direction of their teachers or other guides. Members of municipalities and other city officials came from afar. A special invitation was sent by the comité supérieur to the lord mayor and council of Dublin, who at the time were preoccupied by the question of replanning and rebuilding the areas destroyed during the Sinn Féin rising at Easter of last year. The lord mayor, city architect and several councillors accepted the invitation, and a cordial meeting took place between them and their Paris colleagues.

So much for the bulk of the exposition; our own section, that of the civic exhibition, was of more general scope than any other. It consisted of a type-collection of graphic illustrations bearing on the life of cities, and on their constructions considered as expressions of this civic life. It was arranged as a basis for the scientific and comparative study of cities: past and present, and for relating to each the conception of the "city possible."

PLANS OF ANCIENT CITIES

Plans and drawings of ancient cities, of Egypt, Israel, Greece, Rome, of mediæval and renaissance times led on to those of the modern industrial age, and supplied that historical perspective needed to correct the view too limited to our mechanical age of town planning and city improvement.

which is still so characteristic of both the city engineer and his lay public. Without such preliminary study, our town planners overlook elements of vital importance, material as well as moral, to the life of the community for which they plan, and thus have too often impoverished and degraded their towns instead of enriching and ennobling them.

The influence of wars on the congestion and consequent deterioration of cities was exemplified in a series of old prints and plans of Flemish towns, Ypres, Dixmude, Ghent, etc. Yet with all these tragic records the opportunities of renewal also were not forgotten.

The too narrowly utilitarian character of the town planning of the earlier modern industrial period, with its accompaniments of squalor and degradation of the worker and his family, were only too easy to illustrate; but happily also the garden villages and garden suburbs characteristic of the later industrial developments. It is of the greatest importance to distinguish between these two phases of the industrial age. Just as we recognize in the stone age the two great periods of paleolithic and neolithic, of rough stone and polished stone implements respectively; so in the industrial age we must distinguish on the one hand the earlier, ruder industry characterized by coal and steam, and the making of cheap products and cheaper people crowded into ever spreading, ever dirtier and smokier towns,—the paleotechnic period as we may call it. On the other hand we are entering upon the second stage, the neotechnic, characterized by electricity, by finer industry, by more skilled and educated workers, by cleaner towns with parks and gardens and playgrounds all of which are important factors for survival in the struggle for existence of a community.

CONGESTION

Examples of the plans of Indian cities showed overcrowding, and consequent disappearance of open spaces,—gardens, parks, squares—as in the west; with the accompanying evils of depression, dirt and disease. The remedies for this congestion by “conservative surgery,” *i.e.*, demolition of the less valuable property and consequent opening up of crowded quarters in more economical fashion and with less hardship to the inhabitants than by wholesale destruction, were also indicated. In many cases the plans revised yielded economies rising from three-fourths to five-sixths or even nine-tenths over the original ones.

Examples of regional survey as applied to cities great and small illustrated the growth of London from Roman times. A more detailed study, geographical, historical and social of Edinburgh as a complex typical city further demonstrated the usefulness and even necessity for such a preliminary study preparatory to replanning, on the principle of diagnosis before treatment.

REGIONAL SURVEYS

Other regional surveys, on a simpler scale, had been carried out by schools and colleges, primary, secondary and higher; and afforded illustrations of how geography, history and other subjects may be taught in a concrete and living way; while at the same time developing that early acquaintance with and interest of the child in his village or city, which is the best training for citizenship.

This regional survey movement is rapidly growing. Its provisional committee formed two or three years ago has developed into a regional survey association with separate branches for education, for archaeological and scientific research, for the co-ordination of naturalist societies of all kinds, and now for civics and town planning also. A world-wide appeal may shortly be made to educationists and to the wider public; for this conception of survey for service harmonizes and unifies all systems of education—the classical and historical with the modern and scientific, the technical with the ethical. Towards this end the efforts of regionalists even in France are still but half consciously directed. But with the approaching reorganization,—mainly after the war, yet as movements like this exposition show, already fully begun—the renewal of education on this basis of survey, and with this outlook and purpose of service, will become clear, and this in thought and policy alike.

But as yet the most important outcome, the main result of the Exposition de la Cité Reconstituée, has been the grouping which was coming into being as it closed, and which is its real continuator and successor—the formation in Paris of a school of public art and town planning (*Ecole d'Art Public*). Here the organizing leader is M. Patris, a distinguished Belgian architect; who, though a simple alien and refugee without wealthy or official backing, has collected in the course of the exposition promises of teaching help and part time service, all of course unpaid, from no fewer than some seven and thirty colleagues, like the guidance by the French painter of his pupils, or the services of the hospital physician everywhere.

Such an organization is itself at once the best example of the civic movement, and the evidence that its leaders are forthcoming. And what was done last year in Paris, as queen of art and inspirer of cities, may and will be done in cities everywhere.