

THE ARCHITECT

The architect with his happy combination of idealism and realism has been praised as the crowning glory of modern man. Unfortunately he alone feels the truth of these words, while his contemporaries stand off to the side, little interested. I too, at the risk of being accused of a delusion of grandeur, must join in the song of praise. □□□



□ The lifelong training of the architect, the responsibility connected with his creative work, the great difficulties opposing the realization of his buildings, the indolence and peculiar views of the masses concerning architecture, an unfortunately all too frequent envy, and the diversity of views among his colleagues invariably cover his path of life with thorns, and far too often he looks wistfully at the disciples of the sister arts, who as a rule are carried aloft by mankind along a path strewn with roses.⁷ The praise and criticism that should enrich the career of the artist, as the sun and rain enrich the earth, seldom appear in the architectural sky; the eternal gray of practice and eerie darkness of public indifference veil every free and cheerful prospect. □□□

□ The architect can never count on instant success or immediate ideal remuneration. The hoped-for recognition will perhaps be allotted him after many years when under a load of tribulations he has completed a building, yet the

climax of his artistic ecstasy and joy of creation is at that moment when he sketches what seems to him to be a happy basic idea, however invisible and unintelligible to others. □□□

□ The architect therefore has to seek his reward for the most part in an inner contentment. Nevertheless, he must always keep his work in view with the same love and perseverance, and neither go astray nor tire, even if his financial remuneration, as is unfortunately the rule, amounts to a mere pittance, and the world—as hitherto, so henceforth—should be pleased to pay a female vocalist, for example, as much for an hour of song as Gottfried Semper with all his thriftiness saved during his entire life. □□□

Among the fine arts (as difficult as it is for me to speak of arts, for there is only one art),⁸ architecture alone is truly creative and productive; in fact, it alone is able to make forms that have no model in nature yet appear beautiful to man. Even if these forms have their source in natural structures and their origin in the material, the result is so far removed from the starting point that it must be considered a completely new creation. □□□

□ It therefore cannot be surprising to hear THAT WE SHOULD SEE IN ARCHITECTURE THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF MAN'S ABILITY, BORDERING ON THE DIVINE.⁹ □□□

□ And rightly so! Proof of this lies in the mysterious and overwhelming power that architectural works have on man, practically forcing him to contemplate. Architecture must therefore be described as the most powerful expression of art.¹⁰ □□□

Every artistic talent consists of two personal qualities: innate ability (predisposition)¹¹ and acquired conceptual knowledge. The more these two qualities appear and balance one another, the greater will be the value of the work of art they produce. It is scarcely necessary to cite an example for this, yet for the sake of easier understanding it may be noted that Hans Makart, for instance, possessed more innate ability than acquired knowledge, while with Gottfried Semper the reverse was obviously true. Because of the enormous amount of study material that the architect needs to absorb, the Semperian relation in most cases prevails. □□□

□ With painters and sculptors success is conceivable without any acquired knowledge—whereas with the architect this is clearly impossible.¹² □□□

□ Innate ability consists mainly of imagination, taste, and manual skill,¹³ and just these qualities that count so heavily in choosing the career of architect are so much sinned against by those advising students on a career. □□□

□ The student may put his heart and soul into his work, but if imagination, taste, and manual skill are wanting, or if even one of these qualities is missing, then all the effort of training will be in vain. For this reason, one too often finds among architects changes of profession, despondent artists, and the dreary type who has misspent his life.¹⁴ □□□

□ The system that wants to train a man to be an architect only because he wants to become one, without persons in authority having determined whether he is born for it and has or has not the aptitude for it—such a system must finally be broken.¹⁵ □□□

□ It is unnecessary to emphasize that peace of mind and freedom from care, encouragement, and experience must work together to preserve in their entirety the personal qualities mentioned. Whether the creative power of the architect remains active or slackens during the course of his life will also depend on this. □□□

□ On the other hand, it must again be said that the wealth of knowledge to be acquired, the experience, and the successive growth and maturation of young, fresh ideas into their embodiment postpone the age at which the architect fully matures far beyond that at which other artists attain the height of their powers. □□□

□ Surely it is no exaggeration to place the successful practice of the architect beyond the fortieth year. □□□

□ To these difficulties intrinsic to the profession itself is joined yet another set of circumstances that contribute to making his life less rosy. One of the most serious and harmful is the frequent appearance of hermaphrodites of art and vampires of practice. It is therefore incumbent on the architect not only to fight these individuals, but also¹⁶ to recapture and maintain the position that belongs to him absolutely because of his ability and knowledge. □□□

It is appropriate here to speak of the state's protection of architecture. □□□□□□□□

□ Certainly the state receives the greatest advantages from the cultivation of art. In Italy we see today a country in which the artistic achievements of past generations surely form its most important life-nerve, and France likewise owes its wealth in no small part to art. □□□