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The New General Post Office

Johannesburg

THE NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE

JOHANNESBURG

For many years the necessity for a new post office at Johannesburg has been recognised, but lack of funds prevented a start being made with the scheme until July, 1933. The building has now been completed in slightly over two years, and was opened on October 15th by the Union Prime Minister, General Hertzog.

Johannesburg now has a Post Office which so far as can be reasonably foreseen will meet the City's requirements for many years to come.

The ground and first floor plans illustrated, show the general arrangement and working of the building, and the photographs give some idea of the architectural character both internally and externally.

The architectural treatment externally follows a simplified "classic" type, and embodies on the ground and first floors a lofty arcaded treatment—punctuated by fluted pilasters and pierced by large semi-circular headed windows which light the great public concourses within.

The main and subsidiary entrances have been enriched with ornament symbolical of the work of the Post Office. A Keystone in the form of Mercury and low relief panels depict travel by land and sea.

The upper floors are approached by deep set entrances at the West and East ends of the facade where high speed lifts and generous staircases serve each floor.

The elevation of the upper storeys consists of simply designed and widely spaced windows without enrichment. Only above the main entrance a balcony, with recessed panels flanking it, serves to emphasise the axis of the principal entrance.

It must be noted that East and West elevations are in a sense incomplete, and until the future wings are completed cannot present an altogether satisfactory architectural unity.

Internally the building has been designed with restraint, and the materials have been sympathetically employed to serve their respective purposes in the scheme. It may be noted that the metal mostly employed is an aluminium alloy—Birmabright—which has a silver finish blending admirably with the marble and stonework.

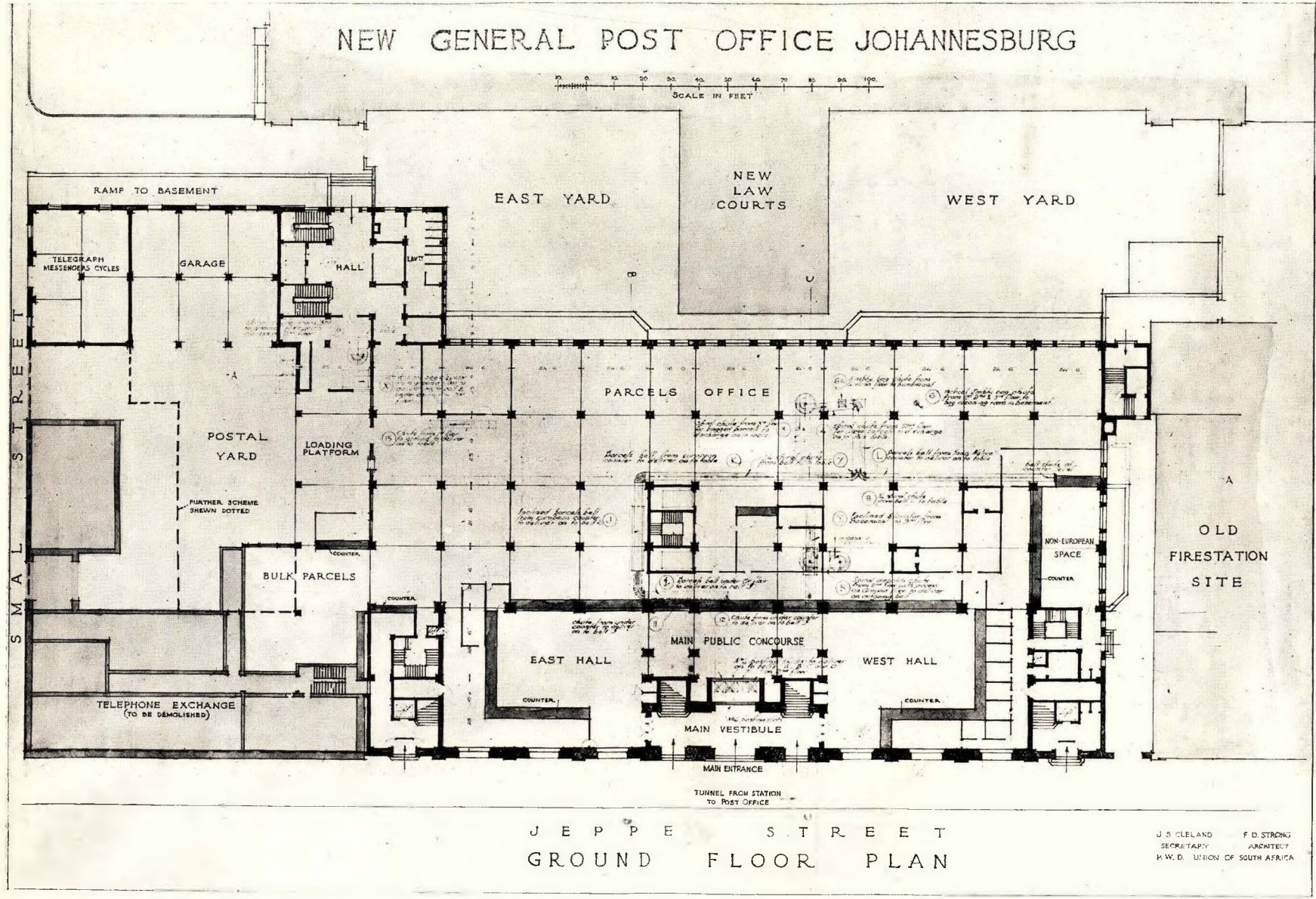
The main vestibule being partially exterior in function has been treated with freestone. Here every detail has received careful attention. Posting slots, stamp machines and notices are within easy reach of the public.

The public concourses are spacious, lofty and well lighted, the walls and counters being faced with a light coloured marble with black skirting and cappings. The ceilings are in acoustic plaster with large coves. The floors are covered with terrazzo tiles. The general effect is one of extreme dignity and repose, the smallest incidentals (which are usually attached haphazard) being worked into the general design as an integral part.

The counters are of steel except where marble and lino have been used, while the grilles, with their strong horizontal direction, are of "Birmabright" metal.

Colour has been added in a bold arrangement of mural paintings executed by Alfred Palmer, Anton Hendricks and Sidney Carter. If one may venture a criticism, these paintings do not seem to have the weight and formality commensurable with an architectural scheme of the severity and breadth which are seen here. The rather empheral and informal character of some at least harmonise but ill with the sense of ordered movement and strict function of this fine interior. The artificial lighting is by means of a carefully arranged indirect system.

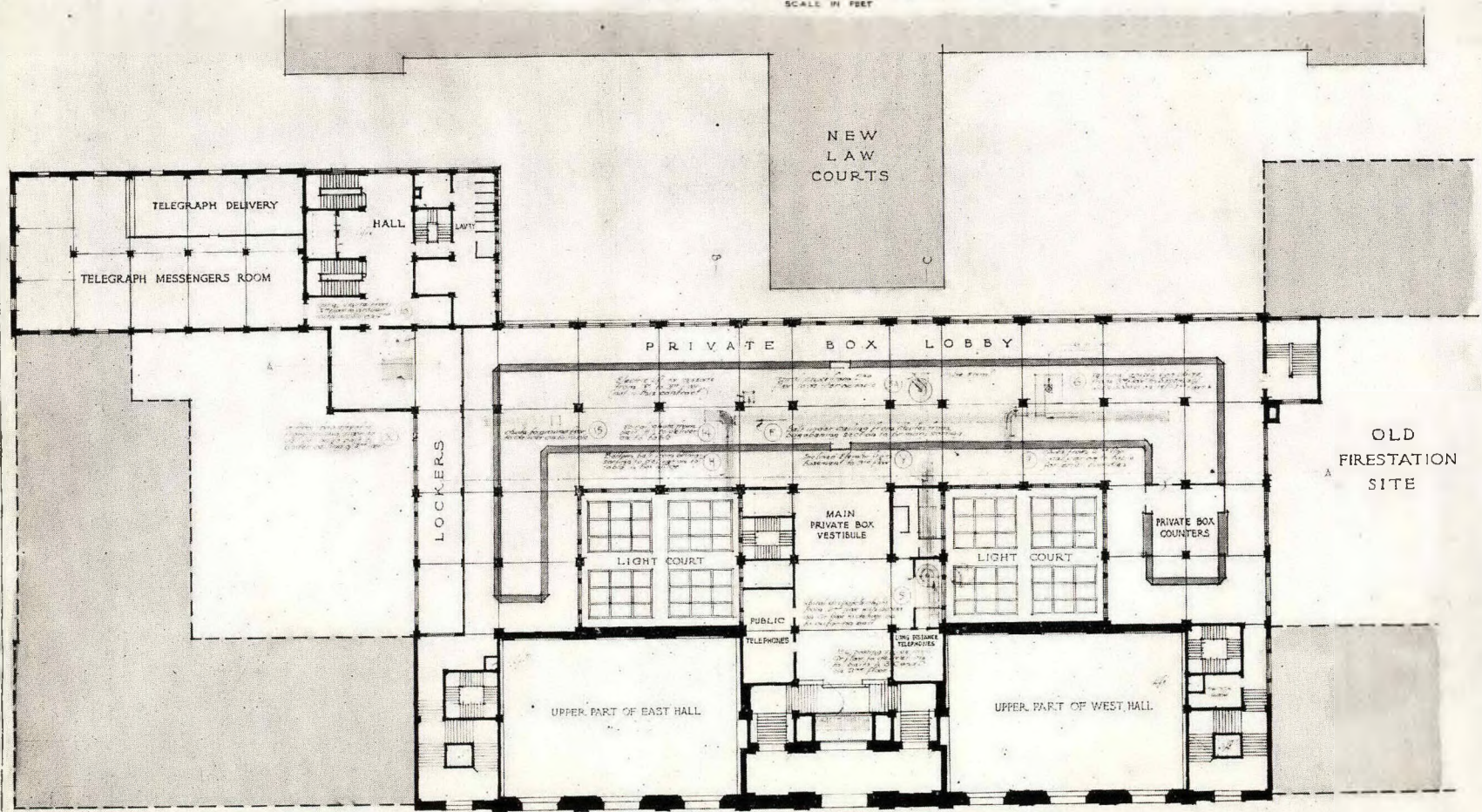
On the first floor is placed the Box Lobby. This is approached by four staircases, and architecturally is treated in bands of travertine and slate. The boxes are grouped in



NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE JOHANNESBURG

SCALE IN FEET

NEW
LAW
COURTS



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

J. S. CLELAND F. D. STRONG
 SECRETARY ARCHITECT
 P. W. D. UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

the form of an island, with suitable notices to direct newcomers. On either side of the upper vestibule are placed the Public Telephones, both local and long distance, suitably screened from street noises, etc.

The second floor is given up to the Main Circulation Branch, the western portion being divided into a number of cubicles for the Registered Letter section and served by lift to the Public Counter at ground floor level.

The third floor houses the offices for the Administrative Staff, which face north on to Jeppe Street, while the rear portion is allotted to the Postmen's Section.

The telephone equipment is arranged on the fourth floor, and the Manual Exchange Room has been treated acoustically for the greater comfort of the operators. The automatic exchange is mechanically ventilated.

Of the fifth floor the north side has been given to the Recreation Section, and the south to the Central Telegraph Office. The former consists of a large dining room with mural decorations, and equipped with modern furniture. A large and completely equipped kitchen serves this room.

On the west of the Dining Room a fine library, furnished with reading tables and book stalls is provided for the staff, and to the east a lounge is planned en suite with Dining Room and Cloak Rooms.

A feature of the new building is the ample provision that has been made for the comfort of all grades of the staff. The telegraph messengers have been provided with a club room and gymnasium ; and showers are provided for postmen returning from their deliveries. Locker and retiring rooms are provided on each floor, and in addition to the recreation rooms mentioned above there is a roof garden with seats, pergolas, etc.

It is interesting to note that wherever possible the materials used in the building are of South African manufacture or origin. The granite employed for plinth and dressings to the arches in the main elevation is Half Way House granite, while the main facade is in Flatpan Freestone. The paving to the main vestibule is Ladybrand. Internally the black marble is from Marble Hall, the white being imported.

Malmani Travertine from the Western Transvaal and Italian Travertine are used in the Box Lobby. The slate throughout is Mazista.

Kejaat is employed throughout for doors, finishings, etc., except for the basement where teak is used. The wood block flooring is of Syringa.

The building was designed by the Public Works Department, and the contractors were The Lewis Construction Co. (Pty.), Ltd.



Johannesburg Post Office

West Hall



Johannesburg Post Office

East Hall

The New Post Office



Chutes



Lounge



Restaurant

A study of the theatre, submitted as a thesis for degree of Bachelor of Architecture in the University of the Witwatersrand. This paper will be completed in four parts, the first of which appears below.

Introduction.

Once a year, with monotonous regularity, the prophets of gloom declare the theatre dead; but still the faithful ones who keep it alive go resolutely about their own—and hence the theatre's—business.

The theatre, like any other art, is always partly a record of its day, partly a prophesy of a day ahead, and it is impossible to foresee what form the "New" Theatre will take. But every theatre, from to-day to eternity, must have as its main feature a place for the actor, where he can interpret to an audience the beauty of drama. And it is around this "place" that this thesis is written.

To design a theatre it is essential to understand the inward working of the stage and the uses to which it is subjected.

The theatre must rise from the stage, not the stage from the theatre.

Architects have been burdened with a hundred evils that come out of the past, because they will not realise what simple things the theatre actually needs, materially, to serve its purpose, and how easily they could be supplied in this age of mechanical science.

The average Architect, knowing little or nothing about stage equipment, usually depends on an equipment catalogue to help him out of his difficulty, without studying the demands of the particular theatre he is designing. Invariably the organisation suffers discouragement and loss because the stage at its disposal is totally inadequate.

Only architects who understand the technical means by which the design can be realised and become part of the organisation of the stage can successfully create the environment of the stage.

This brief outline of a comprehensive subject makes one appreciate the dramatic value of architecture; its relation to space and the human form, to movement and music; one realises the enormous psychological effects of light and colour on the stage and how these effects may be applied to interior decoration; one finds a new outlet for architectural talent—scenic design.

The subject matter of this thesis has been gleaned from many sources and no attempt has been made at any literary reconstruction where the words of the various writers are used. It is a correlation of ideas outlined as briefly and concisely as possible, tracing the development of the stage setting.

The Stage Setting.

The realisation of the written drama demands action and a place for this action—the stage. This bare element must be made into an adequate and appropriate background for dramatic action, and therein lies the art of stage decoration. This decoration must serve the drama and the actor; it should attune the audience to the proper mood for drama and disembarass the actor of distracting surroundings; it should localise the action and strengthen the emotion projected by the play and the actors. It is the integral part of any drama—all the contributive stage arts which help to emphasise the presentation of the play.

As a starting point in scenic design one assumes that nothing can appear or move before an audience without suitable background or surroundings. This setting must by the nature, quality or appeal of its shape, colour and material evoke an emotion which will ensure the successful presentation of a play. It must quietly introduce the audience

to the locale and mood of the drama and perhaps remind them that they are in the theatre. The idea that the decoration must be sensational is destructive to dramatic unity and one should distinguish between this aspect of decoration and the use of the physical aspect of the stage to strike the keynote to emotion: but, since modern stage decoration rests inevitably on what went before, it is necessary to trace the development of stagecraft to fully appreciate the simplicity and beauty of dramatic form.

The Evolution of Modern Stagecraft.

The theatre, having as its source the acted drama of religious ceremony, was born in Athens. The new art sprang out of an element of the carnivals and festivals so beloved by the Mediterranean people—an element combining worship and pleasure, the Dionysion parades and dances.

At first the theatre was probably no more than a cleared and marked-out dancing circle; then a hillside hollow with the dancing circle at its foot with an altar to Dionysius and a sacrificial table which became the first "stage."

Then, as the actor separated himself from the dancers, a tent or a hut, the "skene," in which he could change his costume, was erected somewhere beyond the orchestra. Further back in the area consecrated to Dionysius was the temple which some authorities believe gave form to the ultimate building. The temporary wooden seats for the audience which were first used were found unsuitable and the first stone theatre was built which, it is believed, had a platform stage.

In fourth century Athens the dancing circle was backed by a scene-building considerably larger than the dancing circle with two wings projecting forward. It is believed that a construction more like a colonnade than a platform stage was temporarily built between these wings, forming a one-storied columned structure against the two-storied one behind. The stage at this period was a neutral place and the changes of scene were only contained in the wording of the drama. In the Roman theatre of later years a device called the "periati" or revolving prism was

used to indicate the locale. In general the Greek theatre consisted of three elements: orchestra, auditorium and scene-building, the last providing all the stage decoration required by the Greek actors and dramatists.

As this scene-building developed, it assumed the form of a high stage backed by a higher architectural structure, and in addition to the acting space in the orchestra there was a platform stage before a permanently decorative architectural wall.

In the Roman times the progression continued until finally all action was confined to the platform stage, the old orchestra circle being cut into a semi-circle thereby enlarging the audience space. The auditorium was pushed against the stage and became one unit with the scene-building—an ornamental and massive affair. The background itself was a mass of intricate architectural ornament, towering some three stories above the stage. This heavily decorated wall, which enclosed the acting space on three sides, had three doorways in the back and one on each side. By conventional use, the central doorway became accepted by the audience to represent that of a palace, and the other two those of guest chambers. The doors at the side were used to indicate the place from which the entering actor came—the one on the left indicated a traveller from a long distance, and the one on the right someone from the immediate neighbourhood.

This stage formed a permanent setting and the "periacti" were used to suggest the locale. The sides of this revolving prism were painted to represent a new scene, and the machine was turned to indicate the change of place.

Besides the regular drama, the Romans, who were lovers of spectacle, developed a marvellous array of machinery for novel effects.

Vitruvius in his "Ten Books on Architecture" describes the Roman drama: "There are three kinds of scenes, one called the tragic, another the comic, and a third the satyric. Their decorations are different and unlike each other in scheme. The tragic scenes are delineated with columns, pediments and other objects suited to kings; comic scenes exhibit private dwellings with balconies, and views representing rows of windows after the manner

of ordinary dwellings; satyric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains and other rustic objects delineated in landscape style."

In the early Christian centuries classical drama all but disappeared until the independent cities or the noblemen of Italy were swept by the wave of revived interest in ancient cultures; and various societies came into existence to spread the interest.

It was for such a society that Palladio built the still existing theatre in Vicenza in 1555, which was, in effect, a small Roman theatre roofed over. An addition to this building after Palladio's death was the introduction of the first actual "scenery." In the five doorways Scamozzi built perspective vistas in relief construction—purely as a novel ornamentation.

The Farnese Theatre at Parma, built in 1581, shows the final development of the Roman stage wall into a form of decoration surrounding one large opening—a typical proscenium frame with the stage behind a curtain and presumably demanding a new setting for each play, and artificial lighting came in permanently with the roofing over the stage.

Although Christianity killed the drama of the Roman civilisation it was in the Christian Churches that drama was reborn ten centuries later. Ritual became dramatised in part and "Miracle" plays were acted as part of the service on festive occasions.

As the plays became more secular and the "Mysteries" took the place of the orthodox Miracle plays, the theatre moved further from the Church. Temporary stages were erected, which seem to have been characterised by a row of constructions beginning at the right with a place called Paradise and ending at the left with a realistic Hell mouth that could be made to belch flames. Between were the temple, Herod's house and similar localised places such as survive to-day on the Oberamergau Passion stage.

The Mystery stage in Germany was characterised by the three decker system, and in England wagons were used by the Guilds who gave plays in cycles, each guild representing a scene from its own wagon, which was wheeled to the many places where spectators gathered to see the performances.

Apart from the progression of the Roman Renaissance theatre, there is sufficient evidence to warrant the belief that a special form of theatre was used for the plays of Terence and Plautus acted at the schools in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The stage was a projecting platform with a background of a series of curtained arches. In the same way the simple stages link the Greek theatre to the theatre of to-day: the temporary erections used by strolling bands of players, the plain curtained stages of the *Commedia dell'Arte* as depicted by Callot, the platform of *Tabarin* in Paris, the floating theatres and the farce platform. In all these the curtained background was the usual decorative feature, which sometimes bore patterns or pictures.

The so called "tennis court theatre" in France came into being for the same reason that the Elizabethans used the inn yard and bear pit—finding a suitable place for holding performances.

The Elizabethan stage is the unique sort that demands attention not only on its own account but as a model for new forms in present theatre design, now that there is a revolt against eighteenth-nineteenth century picture setting. When the Guilds no longer performed the Mystery plays, the drama was carried on by strolling professional players who were accustomed to set up a platform in an inn yard. The surrounding balconies served the "quality" for seats, while the others stood below; all facing a platform at one end of the court. From this arrangement and from the small arena used for animal baiting, exhibitions and cockfights, the Shakespearean stage evolved.

This "bear pit" was in effect a high rounded "doughnut" sort of building with the interior formed of tier upon tier of boxes covered on three sides. The pit was open to the sky and an architectural stage completed the circle. The raised stage jutted forward into the pit and two free columns halfway back held up the roof of the acting space. Behind the platform was a portion of the "doughnut" itself arranged with a permanent balcony alcove and a curtained recess below for occasional use in transformation scenes, and permanent doorways.



Theatre at Epidauros, Greece.

• Fourth Century, B.C.

Here again, the stage is the decoration, there being no evidence of the use of scenery. With the coming of the Italian setting, a new type of theatre came with them, and the Shakespearean playhouse disappeared.

Returning to the "new" theatre at Parma, we find that the demand for a new scene with each play introduced two types of settings: the rediscovered art of perspective and the creation of spectacular "effects" owing to the influence of pageants and festivals. These two developed side by side—the imitational architectural perspective and the painter's depicted scene. The *Commedia dell'Arte* introduced one of these forms—the "street" setting.

The perspective stage went through many modifications but generally it consisted of a stage shaped as a diminishing street between two rows of buildings, a form used in temporary hall theatres as well as in the later proscenium framed houses.

The scenes were built of canvas and wooden frames in exact imitation of architecture, with the relief all built out, but the measurements decreased as the scene receded. The blackcloth closing the vista was usually painted in perspective—as distinguished from the built perspective of the rest of the scene.

The architectural stage was such a maze of columns, corridors, vistas and profuse ornament under the influence of the Bibienas, that drama itself was almost lost. The players were smothered in garishness and immensity, and the serenity and intimacy of the old truly architectural style was lost.

The painter trailed the architect in invading theatre production and eventually outbid the Bibienas in gorgeous display. This painted setting may be traced to the days of masks and pageants, for which the most elaborate tableau backgrounds were devised with favourite subjects such as grottoes, huge shells, dragons and bits of forest repeated in every imaginable form. These display elements eventually were used as backgrounds for regular drama, and when the representation of a localised spot out of nature was shown the illusional picture setting was really born.

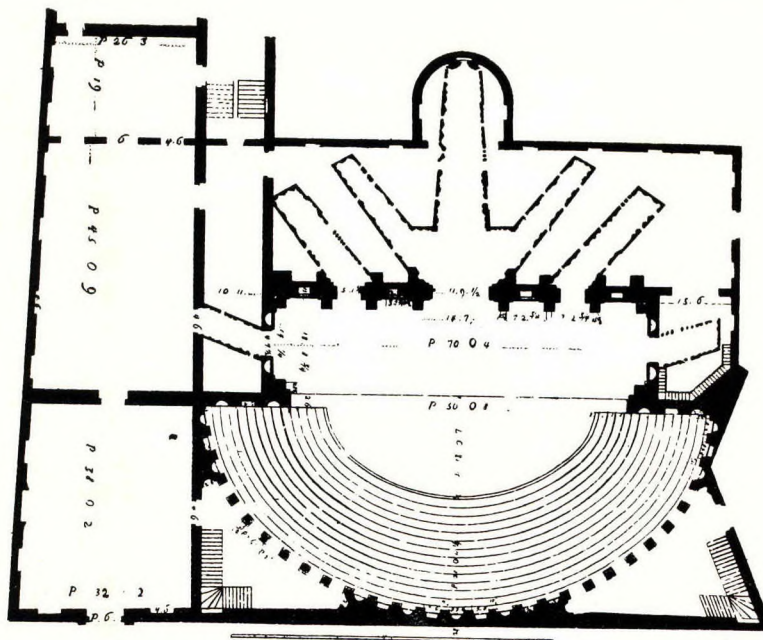
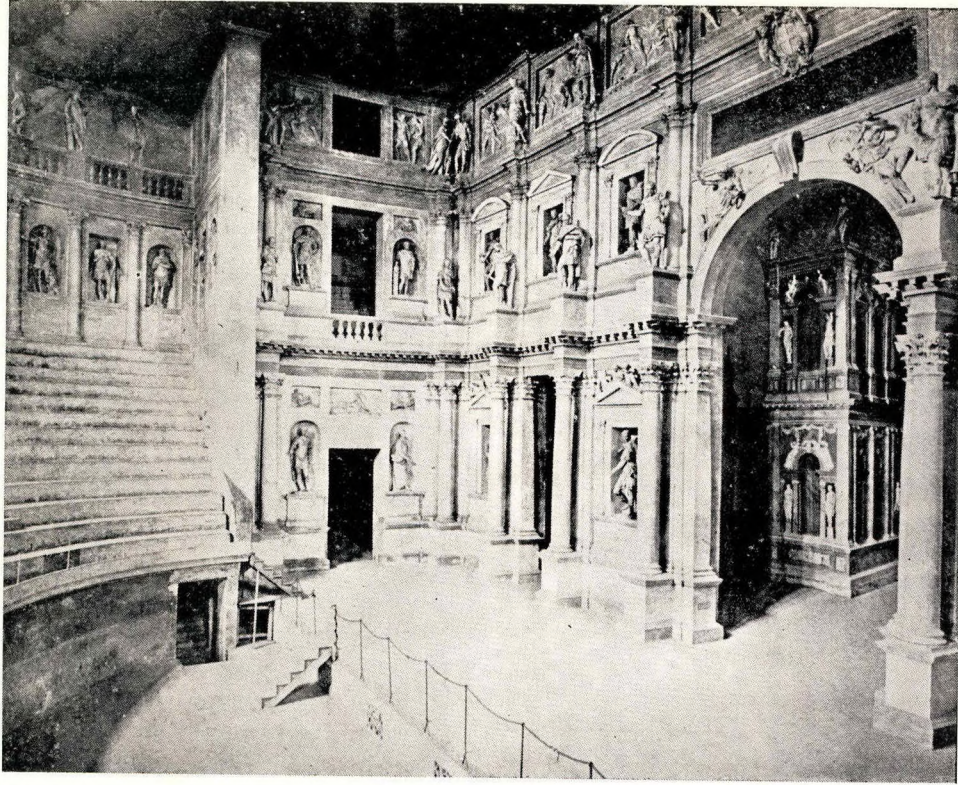
The painter's setting and the perspective setting developed together and were often used together; though in the end it was the

painted perspective that characterised spectacular staging, and it was the obvious inappropriateness of the painted perspective on a three dimensional stage that provoked the twentieth century revolt against the picture scene.

The decadence of the Italian Renaissance found painters engaged in deceiving the eye with perspective—an occupation which became an obsession. Vast alignments of columns and vaults through the openings of which were shown glimpses of still further alignments of colonades and monumental stairways. The theatre abandoned itself to this craze of pomp and ostentation which is still found in some of the theatres of to-day.

At first picture settings were individual creations, too cumbersome to be changed, but when it became necessary to change the scene during a play, a mechanical system of changing it efficiently had to be devised, and back drops and wing pieces were developed. The latter were easily removable screen pieces made of canvas on wooden frames that could be fastened on poles sliding in grooves on and off the stage; and in the normal setting rows of these towering painted screens reaching from floor to ceiling borders, and set parallel to the front curtain and blackcloth, flanked the acting space.

Towards the front the wings were set wider apart so that the free stage area had much the same shape as the old diminishing perspective scene—like a V with the sharp angle cut off by a backdrop. The "borders" closing the view at the top were a series of cloth strips hung one behind the other until the entire top works between the proscenium and backdrop were cut off from the view of the spectators in the front seats. From one point in the auditorium the lines of the architecture painted on one wing piece matched perfectly with that on the next piece, but from a point to right or left of this there was an evident discrepancy. Under the little controlled lighting the edges of the wings showed up in over emphasis. The audience actually came to accept the lack of real illusion on the wing scenes as theatrical. And it was a common practice to paint on the walls all the furniture not actually used during the performance



The Theatre at Vicenza • Architect Palladio

When the theatres began to be built with high stage lofts more than twice as high as the proscenium opening, the disillusioning regularity of the wings was broken by the wider use of hangings. These consisted of "leg drops," oblique pieces, porches, fountains and the like which could be flid when not in use and let down whenever required. The oblique pieces which were not in grooves were a step to the later box set interior.

A great deal of the stage setting was standardised and a theatre just opening could order in from the scenic studio a half dozen stock scenes ; and if its storage space was sufficient it could have a complete decorative equipment which could be used for almost every need.

In the end, the painted picture setting, which was first used as an added element of spectacle and then as an attempt to localise the action, failed to add to the truly dramatic values with its spectacle and proved itself at best only an approximation of actuality and at its worst a tawdry and artificial caricature of reality ; actually the work of creating the illusion was left entirely to the spectator.

In the late nineteenth century the great tradition of scene painting had so badly run down in most places that almost all the plays were presented in settings not only tasteless and untheatrical but ridiculously artificial, muddy in colour and without any knowledge of picture composition.

Where the grand manner still persisted the actor was surrounded with painted magnificences which dwarfed him and injured the play.

At this time the stage was a huge box with a curtained peephole opening in the front. When the curtain was raised the audience looked into a stage flanked by canvas wings, appearing quite frankly in rows, or with hinged flaps and "cut outs" supplementing "leg drops" and set pieces in an effort to obtain a sort of painty reality.

Scene painting had had glories of its own, but the world was beginning to question whether painting ever had really belonged to the stage, and because of its negligent artificiality and unrelated elaboration, and the inadequate ideas of history, the stage was adorned with an alarming mixture of styles which created an incomprehensible environment.

New Forms.

Having traced the development of the stage forms which are more or less definitely considered as belonging to the past, one arrives at the beginning of a revolutionary movement which has shaken the very foundations of the theatre and brought changes which were good and bad—changes which altered the whole existence of the theatre.

In dealing with stage settings of the twentieth century, it is clear that only those artists who understand the technical means by which the design is to be realised and become a part of the organisation of the stage, can successfully create the scenic environment of the stage. If the stage setting could be considered as something apart—a finished work finding its justification within itself, the case would be different ; but stage drama separated from the living drama for which it was designed, to complement and serve, loses its very reason for being. The moment the artist separates his design from the stage, to be judged on its own merits, irrespective of the stage, it is considered as a work of art and is judged accordingly. Properly speaking the stage setting does not really enter into the domain of art—it is an environment for the action of the drama, and without that drama its purpose is unfulfilled. For this reason no setting can be judged unless it environs the action and serves the play efficiently.

Adolphe Appia, speaking about the principles of settings, lighting, colour, etc., said "One law will always dominate them : that of the indisputable supremacy of the actor in the scenic space."

A different attitude toward the theatre and a different sensibility demand different forms of expression. Each period had the theatre it needed, and in the final analysis the difference between the theatre of one generation and that of another consists principally in a more or less developed receptivity on the part of the audience for visual forms.

During the last quarter of a century, stage decoration has had three ends to achieve ; to produce a proper environment for the action of the drama, to create the psychological atmosphere for the unfolding of the story, and to establish a relationship between the actor and the space surrounding him.

To-day, in the midst of conflicting and contradictory tendencies—decorative, expressionist and cubist painting, severe and simplified architecture, and the all powerful influence of the Machine Age—it becomes increasingly difficult to establish a New Art of stage decoration. Books written a few years ago, announcing principles of decoration which then seemed unchangeable, have grown out of date with alarming swiftness, showing how liable to change are our conceptions concerning the stage, and it seems that almost every manifestation born swiftly with pretensions to durability, dies as swiftly. But a new consciousness has undoubtedly grown from these new forms which are outlined in the following chapters—a different world, which, as Craig loves to express it, is definitely of the theatre. A creation of the imagination, functioning in terms of the stage.

Naturalism.

In the middle of the last century, an interest in research modified the glaring mistakes which were overwhelming the stage. This research resulted in greater historical accuracy and verisimilitude although it did not actually solve the problem of realisation of the right environment on the stage.

This was a period when careful attention was given to the minutest detail in costume and historical reconstruction, the enthusiasts believing that by so doing they were strengthening their characters.

The theatre, however, was dragged out of the rut, and the problem of the production as a whole faced; but this confusion of unessential detail was still executed in false perspective and painted high lights and shadows.

During this period an important phase was introduced—the first step to bring stage decoration into its own—the Wagnerian theatre. The setting had become an actor in the drama. The fire of *Valkyrie*, the collapse of the palace of the Nibelungen, apparitions in the clouds, brilliantly lighted grottoes, the changes before the eyes of the audience, the unfolding of the panoramas; the setting was no longer a background—it acted. Adolphe Appia stands out as the master of the decoration for Wagner.

The heroic gesture and buskined manner of the actor was now forced out by naturalism,

which also insisted that the environment should be characteristically realised by the setting. The idea of the painted scene was too deep-rooted to disappear, and the development to solid construction was slow. Under the influence of Stanislavsky decoration gained in style and expression as far as interior scenes were concerned, but the exterior still depended largely on painting.

In the late years of the nineties a few producers, Brahm in Europe and Belasco in America, set about to make backgrounds more reasonable and more natural. This revolt was purely in the interests of naturalism as distinguished from the search to be made later for the living spirit, imaginative, emotional and formal qualities of the stage.

The first step was an improvement, but even this type of setting developed into something as unfitting, ridiculous and distracting as the setting it had driven out. It was a stage parallel to the achievement when each hair on the cow's hide was made apparent separately and each leaf on the tree depicted with exactitude.

First the absolute unnaturalness of furniture painted on the room walls and landscape on flapping screen drops were discarded and actual mouldings, mantels, door and window frames brought onto the stage. The walls were made more solid so that the canvas flats no longer moved at the slightest touch, and one or two doorways were considered enough—and more natural.

The property man who had long exercised his ingenuity, fancy and taste—if any—in furnishing the stage room, was now restrained. The clutter of unrelated objects cleared out, and such furniture put in as might be found in a real house of the period. A new solidity and material correctness had been achieved.

In the search for truth the producer eventually went too far in an attempt to portray actuality, by introducing all kinds of objects which forced the reality, and innumerable distractions buried the action of the drama.

But this step helped toward the new revolution. Painted shadows that never correspond to the actual were banished, painted perspective was laughed out of existence and the worst excesses of the scene



The New Inn at Gloucester

painter were put aside for all time. Even though the box set interior was too profusely detailed, it was made solid and honest and a general material rightness was achieved.

Realistic Settings.

Under the influence of the men at the head of the new decorative movement in Europe—Roller, Orlik, Stern and others, the *mise en scene*, emerging from the materialistic school, was enriched by the stylistic elements of the time and improved by experimenting. The setting was simplified and at the same time preserved its character of illusion.

The simplification and making tasteful of the realistic setting, the dressing of contemporary plays in appropriate scenic clothes, the development of the machinery for efficient scene shifting, and particularly the advance in stage lighting are the changes accomplished during the last quarter of a century. Actually it has been for the most part a surface change. The fundamental upheaval that aims at nothing less than the overthrow of all phases of realism after a reign extending through centuries; the change that parallels the progress toward an accepted modernism in the other arts, promises to go far beyond the general dressing up of realistic plays or the atmospheric aid to a realistic staging of the old plays.

Although Craig and Appia never compromised with realism, or counselled their followers to do so, they are responsible indirectly for that minor revolution within realistic limits which has brought the majority of the world's theatres to a pretty form of impressionistic stage setting. Though they have wielded enormous influence by means of their writings, Craig and Appia remained aloof from the contemporary stage because the stage is primarily designed for exhibiting realism. Their followers practically all took a more reasonable path and clothed something less noble in clothes that would become nobility, conveniently forgetting the extreme teachings of their masters, and applying practically the more obvious ones; changing the naturalist stage setting to a simplified, tasteful and often restful picture, that added to the appeal of the play and did not distract from the acting.

When one simplifies tastefully one unconsciously employs design and composition. Pictorial and architectural design may be utilised to make the setting itself harmonious, graceful and restful, and the stage designer brought design to aid him after he had stripped the scene of unnecessary detail and had chosen the few essential and characteristic motives for suggestion of mood.

If the merely simplified setting was not wholly right though the material details were correct, it was easy to see that it lacked this intangible thing called mood. This subtle quality was to soften the bareness, and since light has been brought to such a state of flexibility and since the quality of light is more sensitively expressive, progress in this direction has been easy. The setting became a pictorial composition and not merely a representation of place. Colour simplification, colour, suggestion, colour composition and, in the more intangible field of mood and atmosphere, colour psychology, colour quality and colour harmony came to have immeasurable importance. Settings came to be conceived plastically, based on the unchangeable fact that the actor always appears in the round, and therefore a picture background on the wall behind him will always be out of consonance with himself.

Stylisation.

In simplifying the scene, in suggesting far more than is shown, in utilising plastic materials, in applying laws of composition in line, mass and colour, realism was perfected. but something was still left to be desired. This element was finally found in stylisation. Style is a sustained decorative treatment that lies in individual manner, conception and working; a quality that distinguishes one solution of a given artistic problem from another. A likeness with a sort of visual beauty throughout.

The designer's conception of his setting may arise out of an external detail or out of a suggestion of the author, or out of a feeling conveyed by the text—but appropriate to the play it must always be, and sustained

throughout the production. It is, in a sense, a conventionalisation made dynamic by the individual genius of the designer.

At its worst stylisation on the stage may be an imposition of a thing borrowed or stolen. At its best it aids the regisseur's design and completes the dramatists's intention.

The difficulties of stylisation may be traced to the failure to sufficiently consider the actor, but in the dance drama, particularly, the perfect opportunity for a gorgeous, sensuous stylisation has been found.

The appeal of the dance drama lies chiefly in music and visual forms. The effect is compounded out of creative colour and lines, movement and music. It is an art which aims at the intoxication of the senses, and the scene oftener than not arises out of a conception of gorgeous mass of colour for visual effect. The painter becomes not a servant of an author and director, but a fellow creator. This may be seen in the Russian ballet—simplicity is forgotten and the painted canvasses outdo in bigness, voluptuousness and lusciousness anything ever seen on canvas before.

It is but a short step from this sort of conventionalisation to the purely symbolic setting. As soon as an artist begins to exercise a selective sense to make a setting suggestive rather than literal he is travelling toward the use of symbolism. But so far the talk about symbolism as the chief aim of modern stage decoration has only proved confusing. Either one has a certain amount of conventionalisation within reasonable realistic scenes or one goes over flatly to Expressionism.

The President and Committee of The Transvaal Provincial Institute take this opportunity of conveying to all their readers hearty Christmas Greetings and every good wish for 1936.

THE DUNLOP FACTORY

DURBAN

The establishment of the "Dunlop" Factory at Congella, is a distinct compliment to Durban, for many municipalities in South Africa vied with each other in an effort to secure this industry, within their own boundaries.

On June 1st, 1934, the builders commenced to cut down the trees on the selected site, ten acres in extent, and by October, the factory premises were occupied, though the requisite machinery was still to be installed. In January of this year—seven months after the trees were first felled—manufacturing operations commenced, and on August 13th, the new rubber factory was officially opened by the Prime Minister, General J. B. M. Hertzog.

The factory site, which is oblong in shape is surrounded by a wire fence, entrance to the factory being obtained at a wicket-gate office, almost on the corner of Sydney and Macdonald Roads. The actual factory is located behind the offices on Sydney Road, and is situated in the centre of the compound, extending six hundred feet, parallel with Macdonald Road. Standing prominently out is the tall white water-container, somewhat resembling an Eastern minaret. Near it, loftier still is a chimney stack painted with aluminium and black paint, resembling a gigantic cigarette.

It was not long before all the buildings on the Sydney Road end of the factory had been erected, these consisting of mess-rooms, change rooms, employees' canteen, and the double storey building, with offices below and the board room and directors' rooms, above.

The laying of the foundations for the factory, was by no means a simple task, for in several parts, the sea-water is a mere four feet below the earth surface, and it was necessary to put in stanchions for the whole of the factory.

In one part of the workshop is an autoclave pit forty-two feet deep, where moulds go down to cast patterns on the tyre treads.

At the corner of Sydney and Macdonald Roads, are the car and cycle sheds, and at the side of the factory, are located the boiler and pump houses and refrigerator room, first aid rooms, lavatory blocks, repair shop and garage.

It is the interior of the factory building itself, which is of special interest; the em-

ployees work under ideal conditions. Perhaps the most striking feature is the even distribution of light throughout the building—due to the adoption of the saw tooth type of roof trusses.

Though there is an immense amount of machinery, both large and small in the factory, yet conditions are by no means cramped. There is excellent ventilation, and surprisingly little noise, due largely to the utilisation of electric power and the most modern manufacturing devices.

The entire factory is equipped with Grinnell quartzoid bulb sprinklers, also Simplex fire extinguishers, together with hydrants and buckets installed by the Associated Engineers' Co., Ltd.

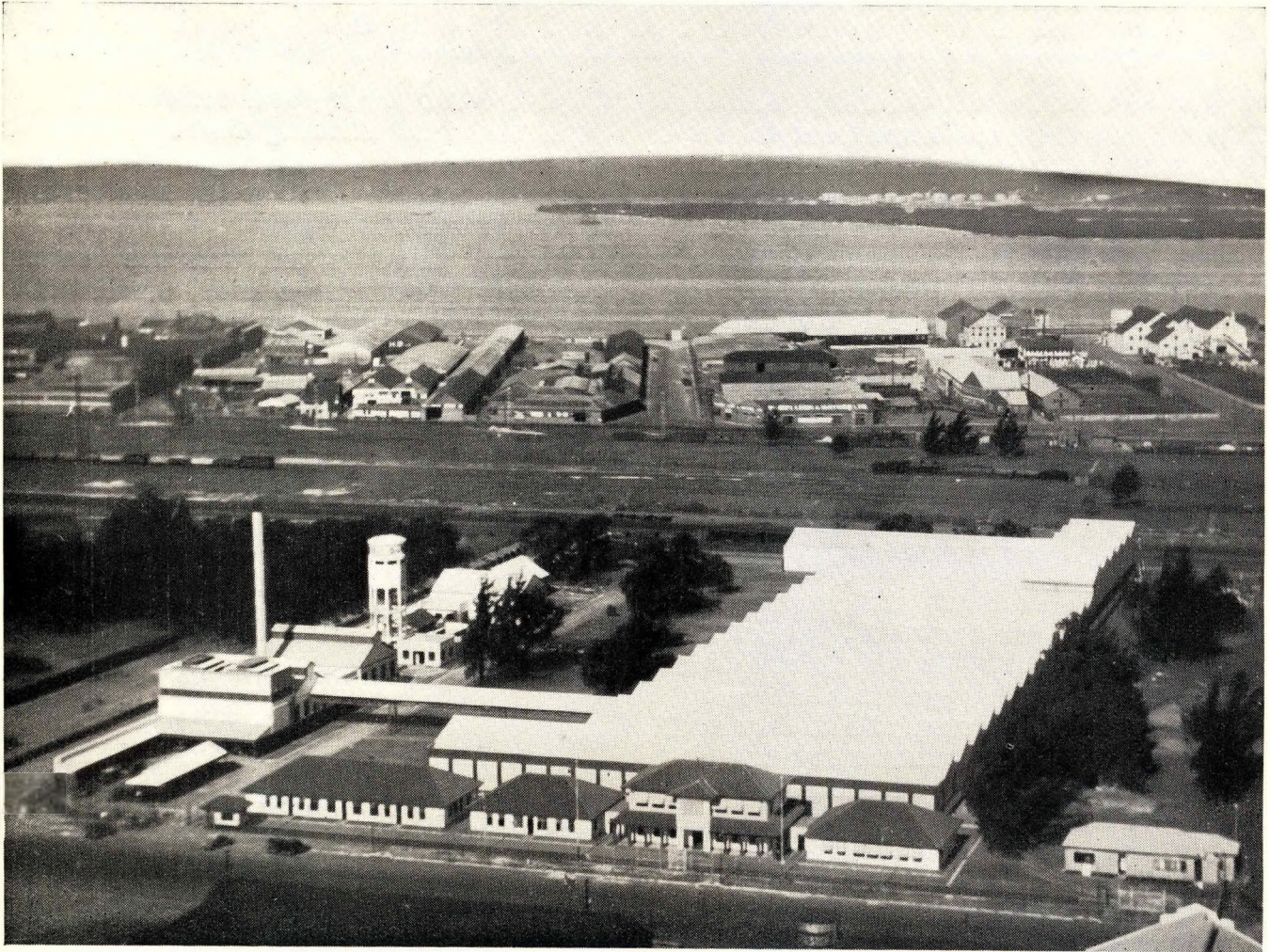
The tower which forms a land-mark, and a distinguishing sign-post of the Dunlop Rubber Co.'s factory, rises to height of seventy-five feet and is designed for the storage of water for the sprinkling system and refrigeration purposes. It is of reinforced concrete throughout, with a rigid frame of modern design, erected by the Concrete Construction Co. (Pty.), Ltd.

The rubber floors throughout are a product of the Dunlop Rubber Co., and were imported from their factory at Manchester. Various designs and colours have been used showing the wide scope in rubber flooring dressing with the advantages of resiliency.

The factory is now manufacturing tyres, tubes, belting, hose, tennis balls, and other world renowned Dunlop products.

Mr. Albert Lakeman, L.R.I.B.A., the Dunlop Co.'s Architect, arrived in this country to carry out this extensive scheme, and his offices were located on the site, together with a large drawing office for the several draughtsmen employed. Mr. D. C. Macdonald, A.R.I.B.A., M.I.A., his chief draughtsman, will take over the responsibilities for additional work contemplated at present and also in the near future.

The contractors for the building were Messrs. Dougall and Munro, and both the architect and contractors are to be congratulated on completing such an extensive building scheme in so short a time.



The Dunlop Factory, Durban

Albert Lakeman, Architect

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----|--|
| 1 | Office Extension. | 17 | Water Tower for Sprinklers. |
| 2 | Main Offices. | 17a | First Aid Station. |
| 2a | Corridor. | 18 | European Lavs. & W.C.s |
| 2b | Corridor. | 19 | Native Change Room, Lavs. and Showers. |
| 3 | European Change Rooms. | 20 | Indian Change Room, Lavs. and Showers. |
| 4 | Mess Rooms. | 21 | Works Garage. |
| 5 | Car Parking—A. | 22 | Repair Shop. |
| 6 | Car Parking—B. | 23 | Substation. |
| 7 | Cycle Stand. | 24 | Extension Area. |
| 8 | Motor Cycles. | 25 | Coal Dump. |
| 9 | Car Parking—C. | 26 | Future Extensions to Factory. |
| 10 | Gate Control. | 27 | " " |
| 11 | Refrigerator House. | 31 | " " |
| 11a | Compressor House. | 32 | " " |
| 12 | Pump House. | 27b | Gas House. |
| 12a | Boiler Feed Pumps. | 27c | Subway Vent. |
| 13 | Chimney Stack. | 27w | Test Room. |
| 14 | Accumulator. | 28 | Main Factory. |
| 15 | Boiler House. | 29 | " " |
| 15a | Future Extension to Boiler House. | 30 | " " |
| 16 | Ash Cartage Exit. | 33 | Sidings. |
| 16a | Blow off Chamber. | | |

A STANDARD OF VALUES FOR ARCHITECTURE TO-DAY

FRANCIS LORNE. F.R.I.B.A.

Paper read before the Northern Architectural Association
at Newcastle-on-Tyne on 13 February 1935
Reprinted from the R.I.B.A. Journal

Every once in a while as the years go by it becomes necessary to reshuffle our standard of values. Conditions of living are always changing, so that the important thing of yesterday cuts no ice to-day, and that which was non-existent the other day is now the latest thing. Our life is in a continual state of flux, and therefore in continual need of re-statement. We are interested primarily, of course, as architects in the restatement of things architectural, but, as architecture is so closely related to living, a statement of architecture is practically a statement of our country, and as foreign relationships extend and we become more international in our way of living, it becomes, with the exception perhaps only of climate, a statement of human-kind. The best standard of values or the best codes of manners of any time become the best manner of expressing the method, way, style and habit of the age. We need, and have needed for some time, something of a standard of essential values to strike at, a goal, as it were, for our time, but the general public must have it before we shall get it for architecture. We can only advance in architecture as far as we can persuade the public to advance with us. It remains with us, therefore, to habituate them to looking through new eyes. I shall tell you what I think will be a good standard of values, after which we can discuss it and between us probably arrive somewhere in our thinking that will lead us to better mannered action for our time. I should say the essential things consist of—

1. Being ourselves, and therefore being original.
2. Being simple, and therefore poised and quiet.
3. Being chic, and therefore distinguished.
4. Being co-operative, and therefore serviceable.

It is not very difficult for us to realise that to be ourselves is to be original. No human being is the same as another, nor any animal, flower, tree or piece of natural scenery. All of these preserve their individuality and original qualities save man, who is prone to the fatal diseases of snobbery and plagiarism, and nearly all of us suffer from these maladies in a greater or lesser degree. We see some individual or race of individuals gain ascendancy through original behaviour and our snobbish instincts lead us to copy. We sink thereby as human beings into the morass of mediocrity. Just think of the snobbery and plagiarism of clothes, buildings and furniture. Watch women devour the fashion magazines for the latest thing from Paris, the dark, the fair, the fat, the thin, the tall and the short, all aping the one thing which really fits only one, with the result that most of them are makeshifts, unnaturally trying to be someone else and becoming mediocre thereby. Watch a man increase his wealth and surround himself with the essentials and trappings of the man-about-town or the country squire, pathetically pretending that he has enjoyed them all his life. He becomes a bulwark of old traditions, old houses, and old furniture. Watch the architect with his adaptations of Classic, Gothic, Elizabethan and Georgian, copying the planning, treatment and detail of another age and manner of living, pathetically trying to live in two ages at the one time.

Look at our designs which one sees in the magazines. The Renaissance plan, the Renaissance form of windows, doors and fenestration, but instead of Renaissance detail there is a triangular form of detail which is called modern. They are not in any sense really modern buildings, they are only Renaissance buildings with modern dressings;

grandmothers in modern gowns. Architecture has degenerated into the habit of applying ornament to things. It is not any more, unless in very isolated cases, the art and science of building. If you doubt this, let us for a moment invade an architect's office and overhear a conversation on any job, something like this:—

“What about getting out a really attractive composition this time; here's a chance, an island site. What d'you think, shall we have a symmetrical composition or an asymmetrical one? Anyhow, let's build up an interesting mass which has a good sculpturesque quality about it. I think it would help to lengthen these wings a bit. Suppose we raise the height of that storey, it seems too low. D'you think we should have a vertical treatment or a horizontal one? Or why not combined them—happy thought, horizontal there and just a little vertical here? What about style? Shall we make it just faintly Georgian or shall we go all out for modern? What about roofs? Oh, you can't put sloping roofs on a modern design. Well then, let's compromise, what about a flat in the centre and butt the sloping roofs of the wings against the central mass. Don't you think this central mass is much too plain? Let's put in some breaks and change the colour and the texture a bit. Let's put in a good strong set-back here. It will mean that we will have to put in some extra steel to carry it, but what's steel for, anyway. What about putting in a couple of balconies, one here and one there?—break it up, give it interest. What about this big room in here? We've got to get around it on this side, you know all about that. Oh well, never mind for the moment, the boys will work it out on the plan somehow, and we'll get the builder to do one of his stunts and carry it.”

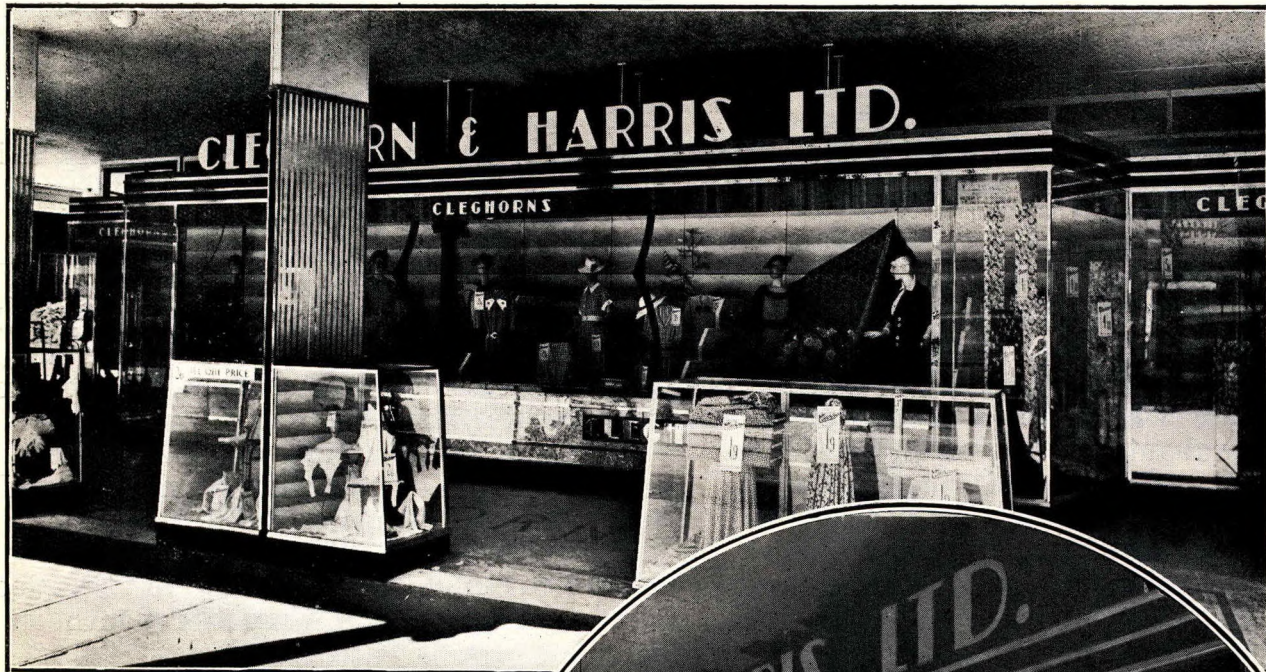
How typical. Applied ornament, sculpturesque grouping—the most sinister influence and major curse of architecture to-day, and ninety-nine per cent. of the buildings in this country are designed this way. Perhaps it

is just as well the man who pays doesn't know it. This is not architecture. It is not building. It is just playing with toy bricks. It is just being little boys again. Meanwhile, what becomes of the planning? What becomes of the reasons for the building existing at all, namely, the client's requirements and its usability as a building for him and his purposes? What about its economic being, that it should be financially worth while to build it, its being itself as a building, its being original? Suppose instead of all this we tried for once to make a school look like a school instead of a study in composition of the Georgian country house or a T.B. Hospital in Switzerland. Suppose we make a multiple block of flats look like what it is, rather than a Florentine palace or a hotel in the South of France; a library that looks like a library rather than the Pantheon at Rome. Let us create a design out of its fundamental requirements. We have had enough of first thinking, of sculpturesque composition, applied detail and copying foreign designs, and second of torturing the conditions and requirements of the client into what's left.

The first consideration of a building is the use to which it is to be put; second, the form, the rooms, their size and the combination of them will demand; third, the best and most usable materials with which to build it; fourth, the most efficient building process for putting it together; fifth, whether in this form it is economic and worth while to build it at all; and sixth, its design, and by its design I mean treating this set of conditions in such a way that they will be true to themselves and have a distinction and personality of their own. Naturally, it depends on the mental grasp of the man or men who do it how good the result will be. It depends what the gods have given them in capacity to create, but only in this way will a building be itself, only this way will it be original, and only this way a modern work of art.

To be continued

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