

POST-WAR COMMITTEE ON ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE.

[The Post War Committee on Architectural Practice is the creation of the American Institute of Architects, and this communication should be of great interest to members of the profession in South Africa. It hoped that by sharing each others experiences and suggestions the practice of Architecture may take its rightful position in the affairs of men.—EDITOR, *Building*.]

FOREWORD.

1. It is the purpose of this Committee to study and suggest improvements which will affect the conditions and increase the efficiency and adequacy of architectural practice throughout the United States. The desire is to make the study cover the whole country and to reach every qualified person practising the profession of architecture, irrespective of whether or not that person be a member of one of the established professional organizations.

2. As a result of conditions preceding and consequent on the war, the practice of every vocation faces new conditions, and the time has come when each vocation must honestly appraise its true position.

3. The world is apparently searching for a way in which to make human relations more right—not in words, but in fact. The test of right relationship is being applied in a thousand ways.

The individual must appraise the value of the service he renders to his fellows, primarily through the measure by which the results achieved in the practice of his vocation are effective. Thus, as architects, we most ask ourselves these questions: Are we in right relations:

- I. With those whom we would serve—the public?
- II. With those with whom we would co-operate in the production of a building: with the engineering professions, the crafts, the industries and the trades organizations?
- III. With those who render the same service—our fellow architects, the students of architecture, the architectural schools, and, as professional men, with all those who render professional service?

The experience of the war has bared the weaknesses of long established methods of performance until institutions of every kind, hitherto thought to be effective, have been found wanting. The conditions affecting the building arts, at this time, therefore not only suggest but demand, that they be given the same searching analysis that is being given to every human activity, in order to bring it into right relationship with the new world in which we are to live.

In order that we may get the facts on which to

base a forward-looking programme for our vocation, we ask every architect to co-operate with all his heart and soul, in the work of this Committee. An outline of topics suggested from many sources is set forth with the idea of determining a direction along which lines of discussion should proceed. The Committee assumes no responsibility for their validity in thus setting them forth, but wishes only to offer them as guides to discussion and investigation. What it does ask at the outset are hearty co-operation, candor of expression, self effacement and the avoidance of personalities. No matter what wrongs we may believe ourselves to have suffered at the hands of others we are now to turn the searchlight on ourselves—are *we* right?

SUBJECTS SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION.

Your consideration and comment is therefore invited on the following topics or on as many of them as you may feel you are qualified to express a clarifying and helpful opinion. Replies of individuals or groups should be addressed to the Committee in Washington (1741 New York Avenue, N.W.), to each paragraph being prefixed the letter of the alphabet here attached to the corresponding item.

I. THE ARCHITECT'S RELATION WITH THE PUBLIC.

a. *Extension of the service that the architect may render:* All of the professions have been criticized for having worked primarily in the interest of one class to the neglect of others; for the rich or moderately wealthy, and to a lesser degree, or not at all, for the poor. We know that a large majority of all building work is carried on without the services of a competent architect. It is one of our most important problems to discover where lies the responsibility for this condition: with the architect's training, methods of practice, or with the public.

Has the architect laid too much stress on the æsthetic and too little on the other values of his service? Has the architect been educated to believe that architecture is the art of designing monumental buildings? Has he kept in touch with the new developments in industrial methods, the ever-growing demand for, and effort towards better human relations within industry and the desire for better ways of living, each one of which justifies and requires an ennobling environment which will further its development? Does the architect lack sympathy for these great social forces? Is the cost of the architect's service such as to make it generally unavailable for the erection of structures intended to meet such problems? Does the public (perhaps with some justification) consider the architects' service as a luxury mainly reserved for the wealthy? Granting that it is essential to attempt to

secure an æsthetically satisfactory solution of every building problem, should not the architect also accent the value of his service from the point of view of wise economy, adequate and practical planning, safety, and the most advanced building methods? Assuming that the profession as a whole has acquired the knowledge that justifies a much wider field of usefulness will the opportunity for greater service come of itself? Does the public need to be educated?

b. The Architect as a Citizen: While the legal profession is looked to and largely expected to write our laws and the medical profession demands the preservation of health by the expenditure of public funds and the submission by the individual to regulations for the welfare of all, the architectural profession has not made itself felt with equal weight. The public does not take it for granted apparently that an incompetent individual may not develop at will a physical part of the community in a manner which the architectural profession ought equally to be in the position to reprehend as being against the interest of the physical, mental and moral health of the community as a whole. While the architect may render excellent service to an individual client he appears to have failed to render the greater service, for which his training has fitted him, to the community in which he lives. It is said that his ability to render such service is little understood because he has not taken sufficient interest in business, political and civic organizations; hence other more aggressive interests are more closely identified in the public mind with the building world.

Are these statements in general justified by the facts? Are architects very generally ignored in the formation of governmental and civic organizations dealing with matters lying well within the domain of architecture? Has the architect been exclusive and failed to take an interest in public affairs so that he is out of touch with them? What are the particular functions of government in which the architect can be of special service by reason of his technical knowledge and in which he must be consulted if government is to become efficient? How can he make the public realize the value of his aid in these particulars?

c. The Status of the Architect: art, profession or business: To the vast majority of people the construction of a building is distinctly a business undertaking, and the men they associate with the building business are the ones they have learned to identify with the actual operation. It is said that the public—including its governmental officials—does not associate the architect with the actual operation of building construction with the same degree of understanding it gives to engineering and construction companies. The

elements of conception, study, and design are regarded as intangible and secondary things and are considered only in this light—if considered at all. Yet the architect should remain unwilling to diminish in any degree that part of his professional effort which makes for the æsthetic ideal. Since an important part of the architect's work is that of business administration it would seem as if there were some justification for the uncertainty of the public as to his status.

Shall the architect lay stress on his functions as an artist in order to develop the "business" side of his profession? Could he thereby establish a better appreciation of that very ideal which he considers essential? If he develops along the line of making his work of greater social service, will he not find the right ratio between art and efficiency through the exacting limitations of that service? Is it true that the profession is too detached from the actualities of contemporaneous thought and life and the practical problems of the day?

d. Responsibility of the Architect: A large proportion of building is carried on with borrowed funds. A reliable estimate of the cost of the completed structure is necessary as a prerequisite in arranging any scheme of financing. It is said that many architects have been slow to realize how vital is a reliable preliminary estimate to the success of a building undertaking. Then too an architect's estimate, even though correct, carries with it no financial guarantee that protects the owners or lenders in the amount of money they may be called upon to spend. Even though all architects do not take advantage of the fact it is generally agreed that the architect's status as agent of the owner imposes upon the owner full financial responsibility for all errors of judgment or defects growing out of lack of experience or ability on the part of the architect, except in such remote cases where it can be proved that the architect had failed to exercise due diligence and care. It is said that the public does not agree to the reasonableness of this relation.

How shall the architect supplement his work, if at all, so as to overcome these apparent deficiencies? Shall his organization include estimators competent to make reliable statements of costs? Would the general adoption of a system of quantity survey afford an economical basis for estimate and thus help to meet this problem? Is there really any desirable extension of the architect's function to be made possible by a guarantee of costs? Is it not true that there is inherent danger in a financial guarantee given by a person engaged to render a professional service? Would not the assumption of such responsibility by the architect be curiously inconsistent with the increasingly "profes-

sional" attitude of the contractor who avoids financial responsibility in cost plus contracts?

Should architects generally assume financial responsibility for their errors? If so would it not be made possible by and justify additional compensation because of the added protection afforded to the client?

c. Percentage Remuneration: It is commonly said that the theory of charging for an architect's service on the basis of a percentage on the cost is unsound. While the cost of two buildings may be the same, the cost of rendering the architectural service for the two buildings would never be the same. A given percentage in one case might be too low and in another too high; further, the public cannot disabuse its mind of the notion that where a man's remuneration is based upon a percentage of cost, there will be a tendency, if not actually, to attempt to increase the cost, at least to refrain from making an effort to reduce it. Then too the schedule of professional charges, although it never has been mandatory, is said to be considered so by a section of the public.

Has the present practice a marked influence on the extent to which the architect's service is used? Are the substitutes satisfactory that have been suggested and are actually, to a certain extent, in practice (the cost plus fee system)? Is there any other practical suggestion? Does an established schedule of charges work as a handicap or as a benefit?

f. Supervision of Construction: Architects are said to devote themselves too exclusively to the study and preparation of drawings, specifications, contract documents and general office matters and to entrust the supervision of the works too largely to salaried employees. The owner's active interest is in the actual construction, not in the drawing. In watching the progress of the work the owner is thrown into closer contact with the contractor and the salaried employee, with the result that his estimate of the value of the architect's service in connection with the actual construction is said to diminish as the work proceeds. The architect appears to him to be more and more a picture maker whose work ends when actual construction starts.

Is this a factor in the present status of architectural practice? If so, as the busy architect is already very heavily burdened, is there any practical solution of this difficulty? Would his position be bettered and his services more adequate if those to whom supervision of construction is entrusted were his associates or partners, rather than employees? Does this suggest a different type of organization for an architect's establishment? (See II h.)

g. Advertising: Advertising seeks to accomplish a greater use or sale of any article or service. Such

a result is supposed to be attained in the business world by means of a liberal expenditure of money along recognized lines of publicity. The architect does not advertise. Between these two business and professional opposites, however, there must lie a fruitful field for study, to the end that architecture may be given a wider application and serve society in a fuller measure. In the multiplicity of problems that are met with in the housing of modern industry, governmental activities and private life, each architect acquires special technical knowledge. There are now no adequate ways in which he can make known the fact of his distinctive qualifications.

Have we not the obligation to make these distinctive qualifications known? Do we not otherwise appear to claim that every architect is equally competent to do everything? As ordinary advertising is an element of competition can not a new form of publicity be found which will be an element of that co-operation without which the whole field of architectural service can not be covered?

II. THE ARCHITECT'S RELATIONS TO THOSE WITH WHOM HE WOULD CO-OPERATE.

h. The Need for a More Comprehensive Service: The modern tendency of business, accentuated by the experience of the war, is to deal with larger organizations with one responsible head rather than with the several contributing factors that go to make up an organization to produce a material result. It is said that the architect has done nothing to meet this demand, but that engineers and contracting organizations have, to an extent, done so.

The war has brought the whole world face to face with a situation which demands that production be increased and that resources and facilities be developed to an extent far exceeding the pre-war volume. The architect appears to have done little to co-ordinate his work with the movement for efficiency in production. The experience of the Construction Division, the Emergency Fleet Housing Division, and the Housing Corporation have demonstrated the great advantage of intimate organized co-operation of all the factors in building production in meeting the exigencies of a war emergency. Such co-operations would appear to be no less desirable in peace times.

Should there not be a closer co-operation between engineers, architects, and construction men? Should not all these qualities be integrated within the architect's organization? Should not all be present at each stage of the procedure? Does this point toward larger organizations in which men of varying qualifications co-operate figuratively as equals rather than the present plan whereby one man—the architect—employs others.

to work under his direction? Does it not suggest the organization of the architect's own office on lines which would insure the interest of every assistant as a creator rather than as a wage-earner?

i. *The Contractor's Function*: Great changes have taken place, in recent years, in the status of the contractor in relation to building enterprises. In important work the contractor now, generally, sells his services on a professional basis. His remuneration is understood to be for the use of his organization and its knowledge of the building business. In such cases this changes the relation of the architect to the whole building procedure.

Many contractors have been quick to realize changed conditions and the apparent desire of modern business to deal with one organization equipped to handle all phases of a building problem. There are, to be sure, some so-called "general contractors" who do nothing but trade on a name, have no technical knowledge of building, and live on the skill and credit of their sub-contractors. But there are also general contractors and construction companies composed of able men, which employ able designers and do all work from the making of drawings and specifications to the financing, building and furnishing of the structure. As against such a system, the average architectural organization dwindles in impressiveness. The services of an architect, where a really competent contractor is selected on the basis of "confidence," is not required in the same degree as in the older method, to watch the performance of the contractor or to safeguard the expenditures of the owner. Nor is he so frequently called upon to adjudicate disputes that may arise between the owner and the contractor over interpretations of the contract obligations. On the other hand, where the old form of lump sum contract is carried out with incompetent so-called general contractors who sub-let everything and know nothing of building, the work and responsibility of the architect is greatly increased. On the whole contractors are more and more unwilling to guarantee costs as the complexities and uncertainties of building increase and there appears to be a shifting relationship in the professional responsibilities of architect and builder.

In view of these tendencies shall we not have to revise the established relations of architect and contractor? Do these not also suggest a vital reason for establishing a closer co-operation and understanding between architects, consulting specialists, and contractors, and indicate a community of interest that has hitherto been unapparent? Must not the architect encourage and utilize every valuable outside aid to efficiency and yet clarify his own function as an element in building production? Can the man who

creates the design also be the director or manager of the whole procedure of building or shall he be primarily the designer? Should not the architect by his experience and training be the best fitted to co-ordinate all branches of the work and successfully administer the enterprise? If not, does it not suggest a serious defect in his training? Would not the contractors welcome such administration if applied in a business-like way by the logical interpreter of the design? Have not building and architecture (which once were the same art) drifted too far apart?

j. *Organized Industry*: The Architect is said to have ignored or neglected his relationship to one great element of the building world: organized and unorganized labour. He is said to consider that skilled and unskilled labour is troublesome, unreliable and uninterested in good workmanship, in the advance of the art of building and in efficiency.

Has the architect done anything to find out if there is another side to the question? Is the architect convinced that the average builder is so wise a guide to labour that no better condition of employment could be devised? Should not the architect as representative of the owner (the public) be a party to the agreements made between employers and employees in the building trades? Would not a more intelligent study of trades relations avoid many of the disputes between workmen and employers? Could he not co-operate in their relationship so as to place it on a higher plane, make it more human and tend toward better craftsmanship?

Is not the environment of the worker in his shop and in his home largely responsible for the attitude of the worker toward his work and the factor which decides whether or not his happiness and contentment comes from the pursuit of his chosen vocation? If so, is not that environment a challenge to the architectural profession in each community?

If workers generally have become wage-earners rather than creators, is this not a condition tremendously important to the future of architecture and does not the challenge for its correction lie at our door?

k. *Standardization of Building Products*: Although efforts have been made in the past toward standardization of building materials of minor importance, it is said that the high cost of building is due in a measure to the great variety and detail of materials demanded by architect's plans and specifications. There are said to be many parts of a building which are now made to special details or which vary in the details as produced by the manufacturer the standardization of which would simplify and cheapen the process of building but would in no way affect its appearance.

Is this not a field for co-operation between

"material men" and architects that offers a wide field of usefulness? Should not an effort be made to perpetuate and expand the effort made in this direction by the War Industries Board because of the war-time necessity? What are the items than can profitably be attacked and how?

III. THE RELATION OF THE ARCHITECT TO HIS FELLOW ARCHITECTS AND THE MEN PREPARING FOR THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION.

1. *Architectural Societies*: Only a small percentage of the practicing architects of the country are members of any professional organization. There must be a reason for this aside from the proverbial indifference of human species to matters not patiently connected with getting along in the world. Our professional organizations have been accused of devoting too much time to discussions on the art of architecture. They are said to have occupied their energies in the past in prescribing the exact terms upon which an architect may seek or accept employment and have not taken into account sufficiently the kind and quality of service the public demands and is willing to pay for, or the terms upon which the public is willing to engage such service under the ever changing economic condi-

tions that govern all business operations.

Without expressing any opinion as to the justice of these accusations, can we not consider anew what kinds of organizations are needed in order that through association and conference between architects the practice of architecture may be advanced and the extent and value of the service it may render to society thus be increased? Is the cost of membership in existing societies prohibitive? Do existing organizations have the influence on public questions which they should be able to exert by reason of their competence? Are they too much occupied with subjects pertaining to their own households? Do we need regional organizations of architects distinct from or as an adjunct to a national organization? Shall we have organization for so-called business and technical purposes only with no attempt to enforce an ethical code? It has been said that we should have an organization of architects for the sole purpose of bettering the financial standing of the architect. Is there really any such demand?

m. *Competitions*: It has been said that a profession whose members are willing to compete with each other for employment can never occupy as authoritative or distinguished a position as one whose counsel is directly sought from its members according

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It has been charged that the architectural profession is suffering the consequences of having officially countenanced competition as a means of selection,—that competition involves economic waste and is fundamentally unsound,—that the comparison of drawings produced without the benefit of personal consultation or co-operation with the interests that are to use the building when built tends to confirm the belief that architects are primarily picture-makers and that the owner's interests do not demand contact with the architect.

On the other hand, it is claimed by friends of competition that an architect comes out of a competition a better architect than when he entered it, (whether he be winner or loser),—that where the recommendations of the American Institute of Architects are observed the limits of cost are fixed by limits of content, the competence of competitors established by examination of previous performance and judgment by a technical jury guaranteed; a competition becomes a post-graduate thesis of great value to the profession and no greater economic waste than any other form of education.

As part of this question, the methods by which architects are employed need study. There seem to

be three ways by which they may solicit a commission: By the competition, as above described; by the social method of utilizing friends and acquaintances; and by the direct business method of soliciting employment, by making sketches gratis, none of which methods are countenanced by good business procedure. The schedule of professional charges has been supposed to be mandatory, or has been used by some architects to indicate a compulsory fee to which they are bound, thus setting up an anomalous condition whereby the public is led to believe that all architects possess equal ability because they are entitled to equal payment.

The younger men have said that only through competitions can they hope to get a chance at important work. Even if this is true, is it a desirable way? Does it lead to progress? Could not a better way be found to achieve this and the purposes generally subserved by competitions? Are not the results of competitions (because of unfulfilled promises) one of the most prolific sources of disappointment and discord between architect and client?

n. Education: Our architectural schools, in emphasizing with more or less success, the important features of design, science, and culture, are said to have neglected to train the students in practical business methods or practical building knowledge, with

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the result that a large proportion of graduate architects are utterly unprepared to render skilled service. Architecture to them appears to be mainly a matter of designing monumental public buildings. Thus it would seem to be true that many young men gain their actual experience at the expense of their first clients. There is a large question as to whether the practical application of scholastic training can be taught in schools or whether it must be gained through some system of apprenticeship or responsible association with more experienced architects.

What can be done to make our schools more responsive to the practical needs of the world in which we live? Have not architectural schools been woefully at fault in neglecting to instruct their students in their obligations as citizens qualified to render a great and needed service in every community. What can we do to bring this viewpoint to the fore and yet not neglect the training in that art which is the spiritual element of building? What kind of a plan can be devised which will give the inexperienced architect a chance after suitable training to start for himself yet give him wise guidance?

There is also a great problem before us in the frequently discussed question of new forms of architectural design appropriate to the new ways of living, the new ways of industrial production, and the new

social forces everywhere in evidence. Does not this problem require an entirely new kind of training for the young student and continuous study on the part of the practising architect to keep in touch with reality?

These then, inadequately stated, are the subjects submitted for consideration and comment. Supplemental lists of topics may be added from time to time. Suggestions of topics pertinent to the purpose of the inquiry are invited. The Committee earnestly hopes that every reader of this document will be moved to co-operate in its efforts, that group meetings will be held for the discussion of the subjects and that the conclusions there reached as well as individual views will be sent to the Committee with the greatest frankness. Above all the Committee urges a realization of the fact that it has no brief for any point of view and does not state any subject because of any preconceived verdict as to its validity in the discussion. The desire is to set the architectural world to thinking about its own relations to the rest of the world so that those relations may grow to be more right in every sense of the word.

All expressions of opinion, suggestions and general communications on the foregoing, should be directed to the Registrar, The Association of Transvaal Architects, P.O. Box 2266, Johannesburg.

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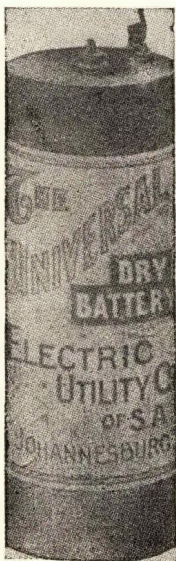
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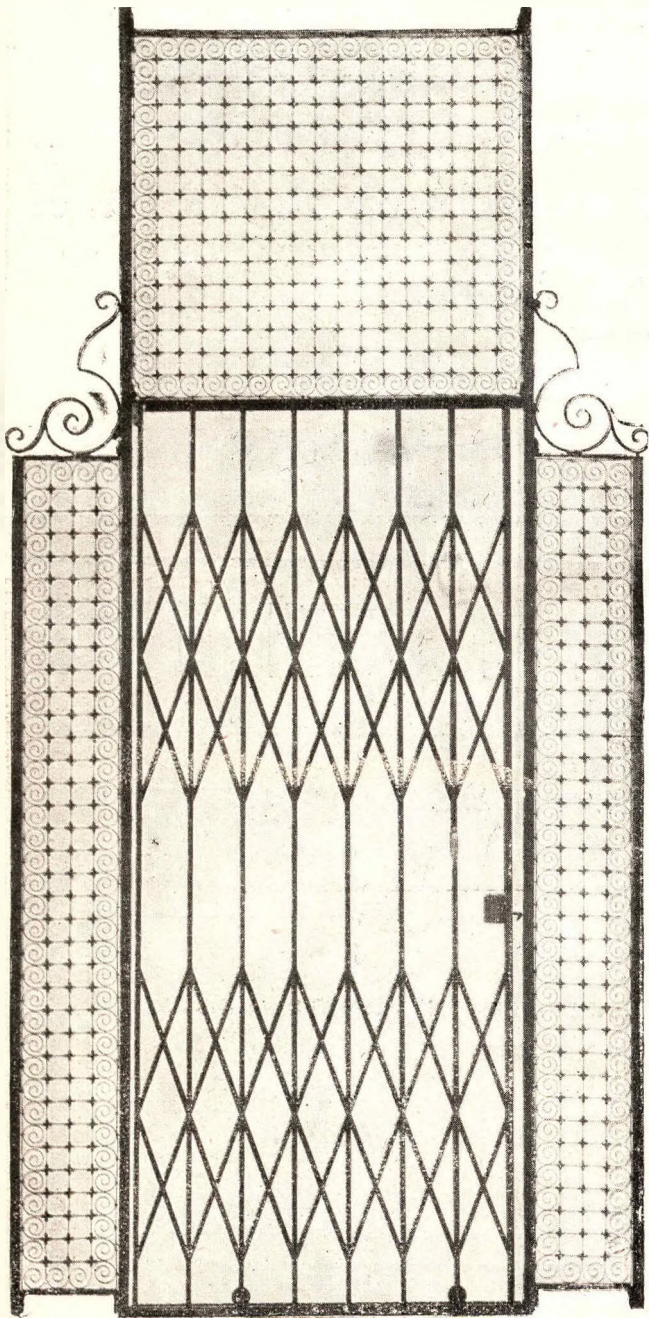
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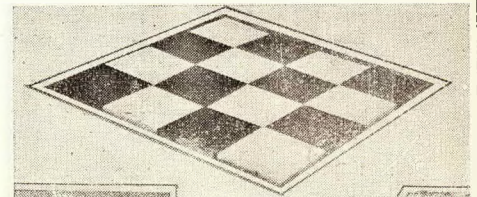
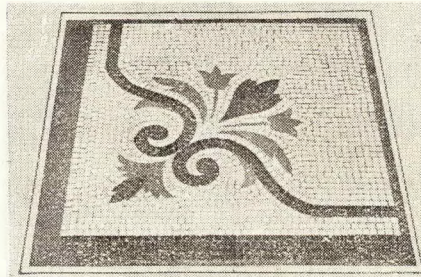
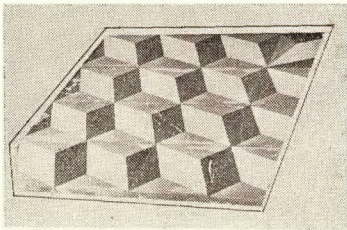
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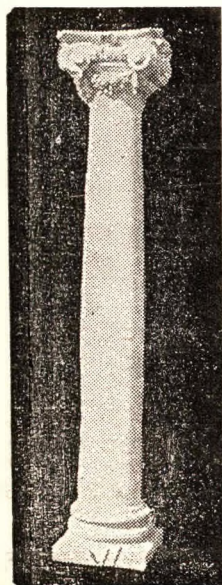
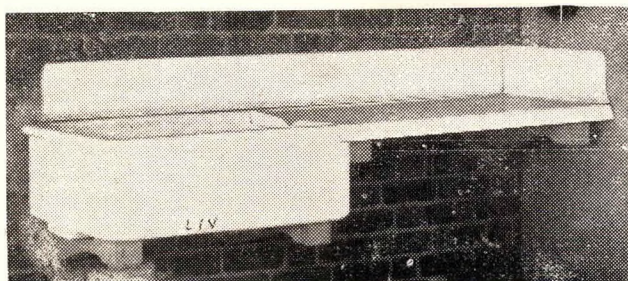
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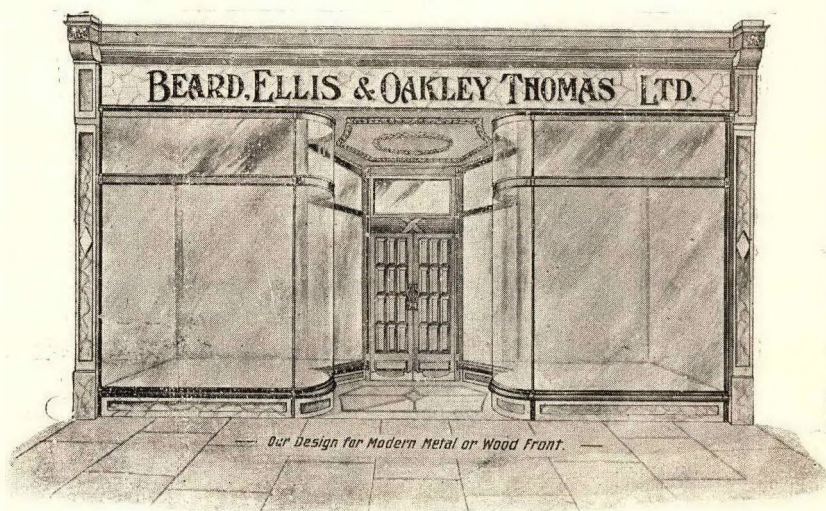
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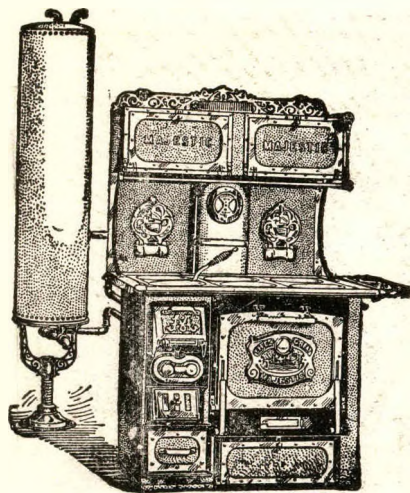
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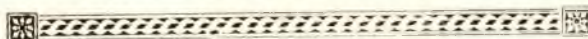
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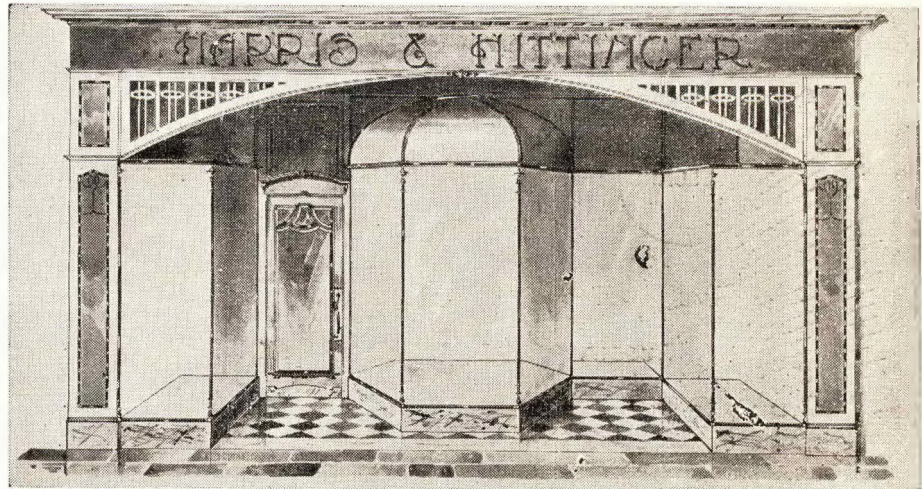
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