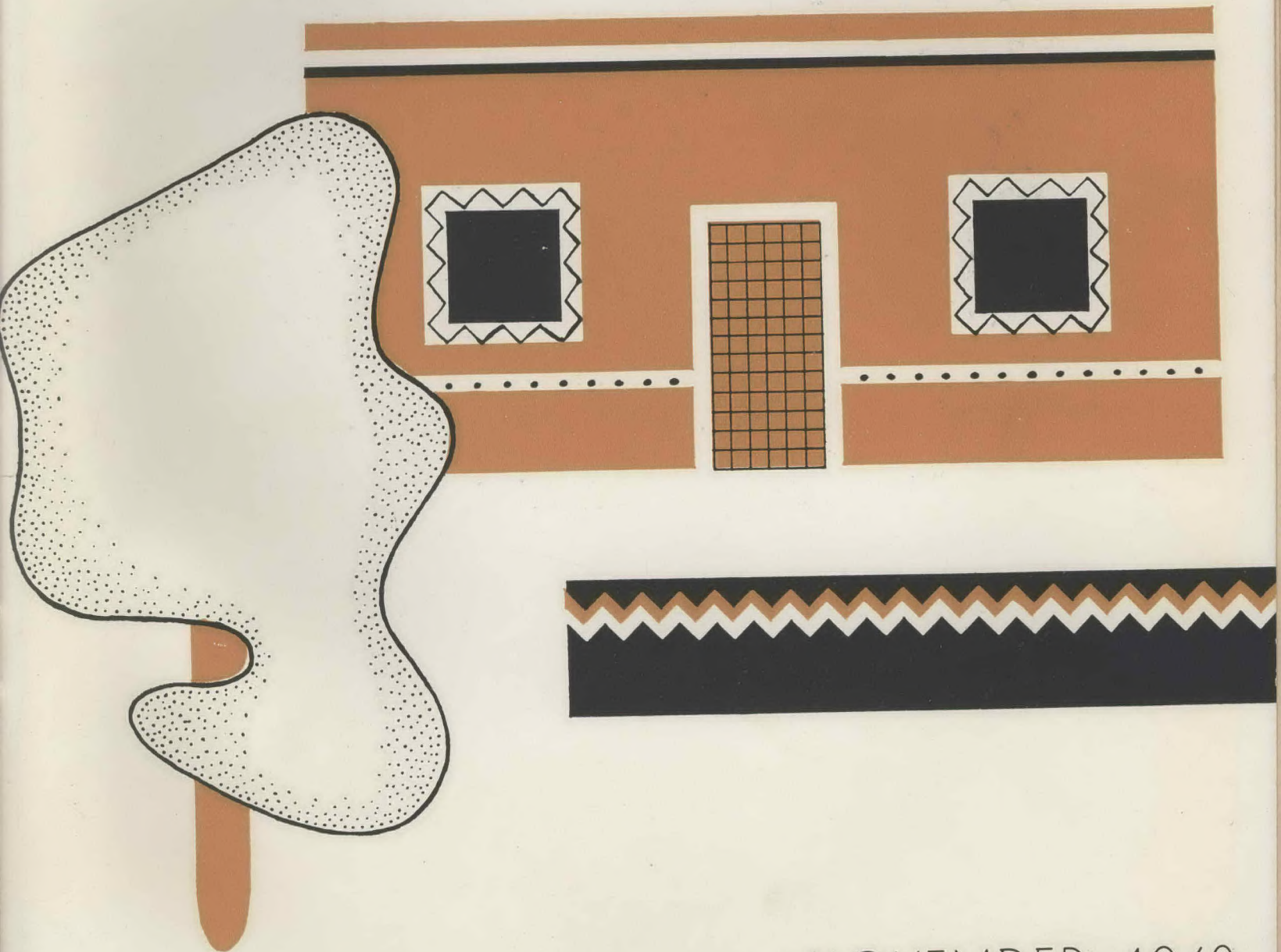


SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



NOVEMBER 1940

C O N T E N T S

● Cover Design by H.M.

387 NATIVE ARCHITECTURE

392 NEW PREMISES FOR S.A. LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

400 SWEDEN AT HOME

405 THE ARTISTIC LEGACY OF THE RENAISSANCE

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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Fourteen miles from Johannesburg. The men are in contact with Europeans, and work on a nearby farm. The huts are all square on plan, the one shown above is occupied by the Chief.

NATIVE ARCHITECTURE

By BETTY SPENCE

South Africans are too inclined to look overseas for inspiration. According to many of them we have no artists, no authors, no musicians, no good plays or concerts, in fact no culture. This may be partly true, but those artists we have are driven overseas by lack of appreciation. The very fact that a thing is South African seems enough to damn it. Architecture has not escaped the curse. Cape Dutch architecture has been admired by other countries thus its position is accepted, and, by most, forgotten. The indigenous architecture, that of the Native, has never been considered at all.

By this time there can be very few Natives in South Africa who have not unconsciously imbibed European ideas and their architecture is visibly influenced by the European house. Before the coming of the White Man the Native lived in a round, thatched hut, one of many in a circle about the cattle kraal. Different tribes had slightly different styles, the Zulus' semi-circular, the Xosa's similar but raised on low mud walls, the Native huts of Portuguese East Africa were conical in shape; but all were circular in plan with no windows or doors. Now, scattered all over the country can be seen square huts mixed with the round. They are not very conspicuous. Native houses are made entirely out of their surroundings and are indistinguishable from them at

a distance. It is only on close inspection that the vital contrast between architecture and nature is evident. This, to my eye, possibly because it is a European eye, is more pleasing in the square than in the round huts. It is so surprising that Native architecture should improve by the impact of such a completely foreign civilisation, especially when, in all other respects, the result has been one of demoralisation.

The first time I explored a Native kraal of square huts I was completely fascinated by its charm and simplicity. Regular mud plastered walls encircle formal courtyards. In each courtyard there is at least one trim shrub in contrast to the smooth grey surfaces of walls and floor. The huts themselves are simple rectangles with a door in the centre of one long side facing the Entrance to the court. Like ancient Egyptians these Natives, cover their walls with murals, thus they serve a double purpose. At a distance they are purely structural, purely architectural. One approaches, the three dimensional becomes two dimensional, the wall is now a picture.

One gem of a hut seemed to me to be the work of a true artist. I think it must have belonged to the headman. It was situated at right angles to the mass of huts, forming the lower stroke of an L in plan, and thus overlooking them. It was placed centrally in its enclosing wall with the hut door directly opposite the opening in the wall and, excitingly tucked away under the eaves, was a complete Panathenaic frieze in miniature.



Another view of the group of huts shown in the frontispiece.

A Kraal of round huts 30 miles N.E. of Pietersburg. As these huts are situated in a native reserve the treatment is not subject to immediate European influence.



I was sure that this surprising discovery must be phenomenal. It was impossible that all Natives could design such delightful homes. Not a bit of it. The next and the next, and yet the next all had the same aura of peaceful tranquility and contentment. All were part and parcel of their surroundings. Nature was used as part of the design—a tall tree to balance a spreading kraal, a poinsettia bush vivid against grey wall, a back screen of blue gums.

It may be unconscious but it is good.



Native homestead of Transvaal SOTHO, Pietersburg District. [from Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa. Ed. Schapera - photo.]



Complete (and unpleasant) confirmation of European influence is given by the contents of the hut—a "modernistic" set of diningroom table and chairs. This group of huts is situated to the North of Johannesburg.

Drawing and all photographs by Betty Spence.

NEW PREMISES FOR THE S.A. MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

ARCHITECTS: STUCKE, HARRISON AND SMAIL

THE SITE.

North West corner Harrison and Commissioner Streets, Johannesburg Central.

Frontage 104 feet in Commissioner Street and 155 feet in Harrison Street.

DETAILS OF PLANS.

The basement provides accommodation for the Society's strong rooms and storage for files, records, etc. A portion is set aside for the use of tenants and general building services. While each of the shops on the Harrison Street frontage is provided with a basement as additional premises and contains an individual strongroom.

GROUND FLOOR.

Two-thirds of the ground floor is occupied by the Society's Offices and entrance lobby to the upper floors. The remaining one-third to seven shops, all of which have their frontage to Harrison Street. Above the ground floor the general plan takes the form of a letter F. The top horizontal stroke of the letter forming the South wing of the building which fronts on Commissioner Street, and the vertical shaft of the letter forming that section which fronts on Harrison Street. Large light areas are formed at the back of the building in the spaces between the horizontal and vertical strokes. There are 328 offices.

EXTERIOR TREATMENT.

The treatment of the two street fronts is an adaptation of the classical to the modern vertical treatment executed in granite to midway of the 2nd floor. The remainder of the faces are in precast concrete blocks, toned to harmonise in colour with the granite base.

This is a detailed architectural floor plan of the 1st floor of the Central Criminal Court. The plan is rectangular with a central courtyard labeled 'COURT'. To the left of the courtyard is a long corridor labeled 'AGENTS CONCOURS' with several small rooms branching off. Below this is a 'DOCTOR' room, a 'WAITING ROOM', and a 'DOCTORS OFFICE'. At the bottom left is a 'BUREAU' and a 'DEP AGENTS COMMON ROOM'. To the right of the courtyard is a large 'PASSAGE' area. Below the passage is a 'CORRIDOR' with several rooms, including a 'TEA ROOM', a 'CLEANING' room, and a 'S R' (Store Room). A 'GOODS LIFT' is located near the corridor. In the center, below the courtyard, is a 'MEN'S LAVATORY' and a 'FAN ROOM'. A 'LIFT WALL' is situated between the fan room and the bureau. The plan also shows various staircases, including 'FIRE ESCAPE STAIRS' and 'STAIRS' leading to the 'ROOF LIGHT' and 'ROOF TERRACE'. The drawing is a black and white line plan with various labels and architectural details.

This is a detailed architectural floor plan of the first floor of a building. The plan is oriented with the main entrance at the bottom left. Key areas include:

- Public and Customer Areas:** A large 'PUBLIC SPACE' at the bottom left contains 'COUNTER' units and 'TABLE' areas for 'CASHIERS'. A 'MAIN ENTRANCE HALL' is located at the bottom, featuring a 'LIFT HALL' with multiple elevators and a 'STAIRS' area.
- Office and Administrative Spaces:** The upper left section is dominated by a large 'GENERAL OFFICE'. To its right is a 'CORRIDOR' leading to a 'CHIEF CLERK' room, a 'NEW BUSINESS' room, and 'LOANS' rooms (one labeled 'LOANS (PRIVATE)').
- Support and Service Rooms:** A central 'CORRIDOR' provides access to a 'BOARD ROOM', a 'MANAGER'S ROOM', and several 'AREA' spaces. To the right of the central corridor are 'TYPIST ROOM', 'TYPISTS CLOAK RM', 'TYPISTS LAVATORY', and 'MANAGERS LAVATORY'. A 'PASSAGE' is located at the top right, near a 'TEA ROOM' and 'CLEANERS'.
- Other Features:** A 'TELEPHONE' booth is situated near the top left. A 'SEAT' and 'LOBBY' area are located between the Chief Clerk's room and the Board Room. Multiple stairwells are distributed throughout the plan, including one near the entrance hall and another near the top right.

The plan uses standard architectural symbols for doors, windows, stairs, and elevators. The overall layout suggests a functional office environment from the early 20th century.



Cashier's Office
Society's Main
Office Beyond

The main entrance lobby of the building which has an entrance from both streets has its walls lined to a height of 11 feet 6 inches with Napoleon Grand Melange Marble, and the floor is paved with 2 inch Mosaics bordered with similar marble. The entrance doors, ornamental grilles to lobby and office windows of the ground floor, and decorative lanterns on the exterior of each entrance are local productions in bronze.

The Society's general office is similarly treated. The Board Room and Manager's office are panelled in American walnut and floored with Kejaat Wood Blocks.

The south wing of the building on the first floor is occupied by the agents of the Society whose small offices are panelled in teak. The remaining space is occupied by tenants.

Lift Hall walls are panelled in marble and floored with Mosaics corresponding in design to the ground floor main entrance lobby. The stairway leading from the ground floor is finished in marble with a decorative marble dado. The corridors are floored with Ruboleum and the walls lined with coloured tiles up to the cable rail. The ceilings of the corridors, above which are the supply ducts for the air conditioning of the offices are formed of metal lath and plaster.



View from Corner of Harrison and Commissioner Streets
Architects: Stucke, Harrison and Smail



1 2
3 4



OPPOSITE: 1 Manager's Office
2 Typical View of Main Stair
3 Main Stair detail
4 Lift doors from Main Entrance on ground floor

BELOW: General view of Main Entrance showing entrance to Society's Offices on the left



AIR CONDITIONING AND VENTILATION SYSTEM.

There are three separate equipment rooms supplying air to different parts of the building. The Society's offices on the ground floor, and the agent's offices on the first floor are conditioned from a plant in the basement. The remainder of the building is serviced from two plants on the twelfth floor. The office floors are divided into five zones so that the outside temperatures of the building can be allowed for in quantity and temperature of air supplied to the inside of the offices. Conditioned air is supplied directly to each office and used air, exhausted through louvres in the doors and corridor walls into the corridors, where it is drawn back to the fan rooms, either for reconditioning and recirculation or exhausted into the open air.

There are three high speed passenger lifts which serve all eleven floors and basement. There is a separate passenger lift to the agents' concourse on the first floor, to the Society's general office on the ground floor and a book lift which serves the basement from the ground floor office. There is a goods lift for the use of tenants serving the basement to the 10th floor.

The main roof is covered with cast cement blocks so that it may be walked on without injury to the roofing material. Spaces are marked off on the main roof for deck tennis, quoits, and shuffleboard.

The Caretaker's quarters are on the north end of the 11th floor, and consist of hall, lounge, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. The Boys' rooms are on the same floor, but separated from the rest of the building in the west wing. Two dormitories, mess room, bathroom and scullery provides accommodation for twenty boys and a boss boy.

FLOORING.

The corridors throughout are floored in Ruboleum, offices in wood block and lavatories with black and white vitreous tiles. The stairs are terazzo.

In the offices and corridors the lights are standard bowl type fittings. In the entrance hall on the ground floor fittings are purpose made bronze lanterns and in the general office, suspended ornamental chandeliers of the same metal.

At each stairway landing there is a drinking fountain—unusual in the buildings of South Africa,

Another feature is the installation of an electric clock at every lift vestibule.



T h e H a r r i s o n S t r e e t E n t r a n c e

S W E D E N A T H O M E

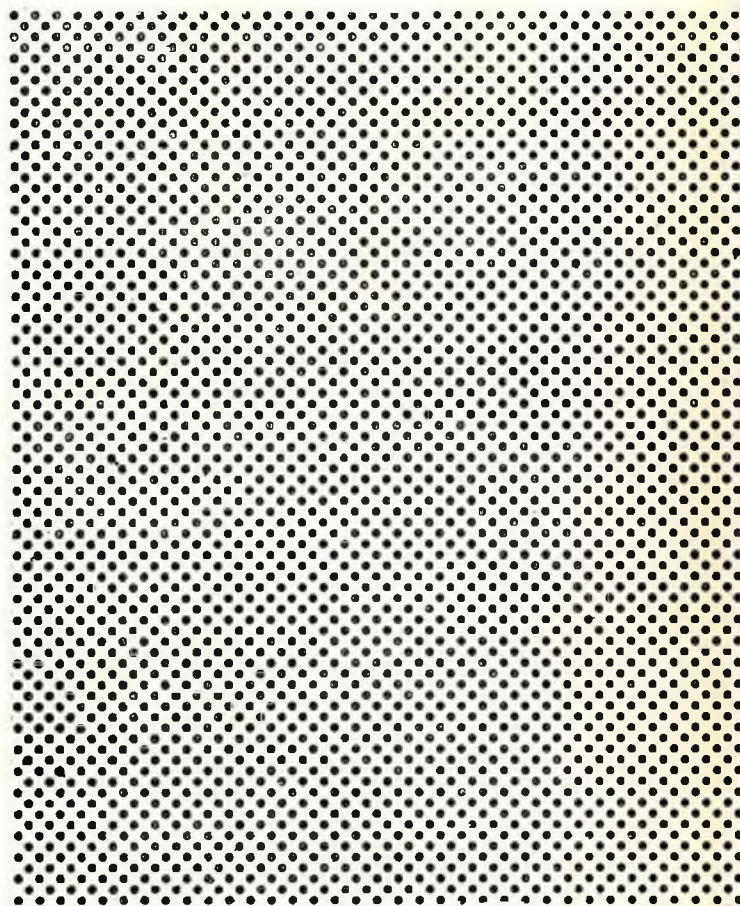
B y C L A R I C E M O F F A T

The Scandinavian countries have little liking for the limelight, and the tragedy of war which has brought them into prominence, though it touches Finland most deeply, is also bitterly felt by Sweden. Sweden has had no war since the early eighteen hundreds, and so has had the opportunity to develop the arts of peace to a degree which has placed her in the front rank of the European countries. A Swedish home is spacious, well planned, and tranquil, and the Swedish housewife asks no more than to be able to keep it so. Whether you first see Sweden from the eastern station of Gotenburg where vines set in little lawns trim the end of each platform, or from the western city of Stockholm itself, you will everywhere get the same impression of a people placid and peaceful, but determined, if the worst should come, to fight for that peace. In Stockholm you will find a busy population living mainly in flats, who work till eight o'clock at night and then with undiminished vitality spend the evening in one of the waterside restaurants eating and dancing till after midnight. The casual visitor may wonder how the Swedish girl keeps her figure considering the quantities of food that are disposed of, the mountains of butter, the savouries, the strömming (a kind of smoked sprat) and the cream topped coffee, but once he has taken part in the strenuous week-end mountain and hiking tours, or taken into account the fact that the Swedes do, (in the majority of cases) their own housework, he realises that one thing cancels out the other.

In the small flats of Stockholm the owner does not shrink from entertaining because home consists of one room only. You want to entertain three friends to dinner? Good; you put through a telephone call to the right shop, and ten minutes before they arrive a van will draw up and unload a small folding dining table and chairs, a case of cutlery and linen, and the dinner itself, hot and ready in covered pans. The same van will call next morning and collect the furnishings and the dirty plates, thus leaving you nothing to do but to amuse your guests. The Swedish housewife shows the same careful planning over her home washing, for every house has in its kitchen what looks like a closely covered packing



STOCKHOLM: The main office of the Co-operative Union as seen from one of the lower planes of the Slussen viaducts. The architect, Eskil Sundahl, has used marble for the surface of the walls. The connecting link between the building and the Katharina Lift houses a very popular restaurant, the Gondola.



case. Open this and you will see a lidded pail wedged round with pads of hay. The pail is filled with boiling suds, the washing put in it, both things are firmly shut, and it is left to "cook" overnight, and rinsed out in the morning. The hay keeps it hot, and the labour of scrubbing is avoided.

The Swedish hotels have also worked out simplified systems for the visitor who does not understand the language, and there are many. Every room has a set of bells with a picture on the press knob. You want the chambermaid? You press the bell which has a be-capped and be-aproned girl on it. The luggage porter? Again a bell with a picture. The waiter? The same thing? You can have an excellent hotel room in Stockholm for as little as four kronor (the crown averages roughly a little under a shilling), but you will find that compared with other countries your food will be fairly expensive. If you want to see the historic houses of ancient Sweden you must go southwards from Stockholm to Nynäshamn, and thence across by boat to the Island of Gotland and the great city of Visby. Visby's glory was done before Diaz made his African voyages, for it was sacked and wrecked by the Danes in the middle of the fourteenth century, but before that it had a thousand years of history as the richest trading centre of Northern Europe, a place where merchants from Rome, Russia, and even the Caucasus, met and traded. Though you will no longer see the solid silver lattices which framed the windows of the merchants' houses, or the jewel studded doors (for Visby's wealth was almost legendary), you can still see the tower into which the girl who gave the city keys to the Danish commander was walled up alive, and you can trace in the simple architectural lines of the mansions that clean cut outline which distinguishes Swedish housing design to-day. The mediaeval wall which surrounded the city is still intact, and you can walk round the battlements and see every side of the town which in its day had more influence than almost any other capital in Europe.

But if the modern homes interest you more than those of yesterday, strike southwards again till you come to Falsterbo, the extreme tip of the country opposite the Danish coast. Here you can see good examples of community architecture in a go ahead little seaside town, which also boasts what is certainly the smallest restaurant in the country, containing no more than four tables, and seating only twelve people. The houses of the working class are interesting because in so many cases they are put up by the workmen themselves. In a land where timber building is the rule, and where every man has training in carpentry from childhood, this is not difficult. The government and municipal councils

provide the sites in the areas to be built on, and allot to each family a house of so many rooms, for which they give out the walling and roofing planks, doors, windows and frames, flooring, etc., and the workman and his family spend their week-ends erecting it. When it is ready the council lays on the water and electricity, and the family moves in and settles down.

Most of the big towns show examples of this community building scheme in their suburbs, and the skill with which they are carried out should be noticed by the visitor.

Though the Swede is not a great traveller, his own peninsula, with an occasional visit to France and Germany, suffice him well enough, the Swedish trains are a revelation to the newcomer. The corridor trains are equipped with hooks and shelves at the end of each car for hats and coats in addition to the ordinary compartment racks, the traveller will find shoe cleaning materials as well as washing facilities in the washing cubicle, and if you want to know the details of your route you will find on every platform a map where pressing a button will light up an indicator of the trains direction and stopping places. Take one of these trains when you are in the country, go and visit Upsala, the

STOCKHOLM: Arbetarebostad på Kvarnholmen. The workmen dwellings of the Co-operative Union are all of the most modern type.





STOCKHOLM: Eriksdalsskolan, Biblioteket. The library in the new Eriksdal Elementary School in Stockholm.

university town, which houses its students in buildings named after the different provinces of the country, and where you will hear the varied dialects, and see if you are lucky, traces of the varied costumes, of the races which make up Sweden. Upsala has one of the most valuable manuscripts in the world, a mediaeval copy of the Gospels, illuminated in Prague in gold and silver letters on leaves of red parchment, and known as the Codex Argenteus. Every night this precious script is locked into a fire and burglar-proof safe, for as every antiquarian knows, it is beyond price, and would be absolutely irreplaceable if damaged.

But talking of costumes; if you want to see the Swedish peasant in his own setting, in the wooden farmhouse with its stepped gables, and its wonderful array of painted walls and multicoloured earthenware, you must glimpse the province of Dalecarlia in the North. Here each village indicates itself by different patterning on the hem of the apron, whilst the remainder of the wearers dress will consist of a black bodice and skirt with a green over-jacket, red woollen stockings, and an embroidered kerchief. Their homes are as spotless as in the electrically lit flats of Stockholm, their faces have the same frank smile, and their outlook on a future which seems painfully uncertain, is an unflinching one. Sweden will not take lightly any threats to her cherished independence, and the spirit of the Vasa kings, who led the Swedish armies on their victorious campaigns, is by no means dead in this hardy people.

THE ARTISTIC LEGACY OF THE RENAISSANCE

By PHILIP A. FRANKLIN

Attempts have been made to assign certain dates to the great movements of the European mind, which we call Renaissance, and it has been said that Dante (1265-1321) opened it and Galileo (1564-1642) closed it. The inclusion of Dante as one of the dynamic personalities of the period is due to the profound influence of his work on subsequent generations; on men of such different temperaments as Michelangelo and Botticelli.

But the spirit of "renewal" had already commenced before Dante's time and remained active long after the time of Galileo.

In contrast to the middle ages the Renaissance was indeed, volcanic. Raphael was born in 1483—but so was Luther. And although the Reformation was in many ways alien to the spirit of the Renaissance, it was, nevertheless, a sign of intellectual unrest in Europe. It acted like a cleansing storm, and has been described as a Renaissance of Conscience.

The most important work was done not by men who maintained that excellence was to be found only among the ancients, but by the men who brought the new problems of Art and Nature, their own genius of observation and expression. In this way they recaptured, often unconsciously, the free spirit which had characterised the great creation of antiquity.

For instance, in the work of Michelangelo there is nothing Greek except his power of intense and direct vision, and his contempt for idle ornament. It is true that Renaissance architecture was far less original than Gothic. Although Alberti (1404-1472) adapted the Roman Triumphal Arch to ecclesiastical edifices, and Brunelleschi (1374-1446) and Palladio (1518-1580) made careful measurements of Roman buildings such as the Pantheon and the Colosseum, Renaissance architecture was a new creation of beauty. The finest work was done by independant genius, whether or not it had steeped itself in classical antiquity.

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