

Swiss architecture

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Although intensive study and a certificate on passing final examinations facilitates getting a job in some branches, the standard of perfection is so high that even this training does not legally qualify either chefs or waiters, who have to serve a specified legal apprenticeship of 2½ years before they are regarded as the acceptable finished article."

And here is something for our fair readers sent to the "*Birmingham Mail*," October 1st, by a lady visitor who has been impressed by the way the hot iron is handled for pressing clothes in our country:

"To press garments with a professional touch, always test the heat of the iron beforehand, bearing in mind that the heat must suit the material. Knowing this is not really difficult.

In testing the heat of the iron, dip your finger in cold water and let a drop touch the iron. If it stains, it is just the right heat for woollens. To be hot enough for starched goods, the iron must fling off the drop without so much as its leaving a mark.

Taffeta, crêpe-de-chine, georgette — in fact, all delicate fabrics, especially in pastel shades — are apt to fade if too much heat is applied, and the silks will go 'papery'. So see that the iron is just nicely warm for all materials of this kind.

Silk scorches easily, and the best plan is to press it very carefully on the *wrong* side, with little or no moisture. An the iron should be fairly light in weight. To press a seam in silk garments it does not need wetting, but it is essential that the iron be kept moving all the time.

Velvet needs a treatment all its own, since ironing it flat on a board or table will quite spoil it. A method we use in Switzerland is to stretch the material, wrong side uppermost, then quickly press a hot iron backwards and forwards over this side of it.

For woollen garments that require ironing, wet-press on the right side. Wet a heavy cloth thoroughly, then wring it out and place on the garment. Press with a hot iron very lightly. Dry-pressing may cause the garment to show the mark of the iron, or become shiny.

If the pressing has been done properly the garment will be slightly damp after you have finished, so hang it carefully where it will not wrinkle. Go lightly — pushing the iron heavily only results in stretching the material."

SWISS ARCHITECTURE.

The Exhibition of Swiss Planning and Building now on view at 66, Portland Place, W.1, till October 26th, has been commented upon in flattering terms by all the papers that have found space to refer to it, in fact in reading some of the reviews one might even discover traces of an inferiority complex. This picture is in no way obscured by the indistinct statement of Mr. Aneurin Bevan (who has recently returned from a holiday spent in the Ticino) "that he found no evidence that neutrality had stimulated building." Here are a few extracts:

"*The Times*," September 28th:

"The main trends of contemporary Swiss school building, as explained by Herr Alfred Roth, a Zürich architect, keep the number of classrooms per school as few as possible. A one-storey building is preferred for larger as well as small schools. Classrooms should face south-east to avoid afternoon over-insulation, and schools of normal size include special rooms for needlework, housekeeping, music and art. Gymnasiums, showers, toilets, etc., are connected by covered passage-ways, and there is a nursery school in the immediate vicinity. Finally, each school has a day room and refectory where children of parents at work can stay over lunch-time or after school and have their meals.

No account of Swiss school activities would be complete without mention of the Pestalozzi Children's Hamlet, of which a model is included in the exhibition. The village is being built to house over 350 war orphans between 3 and 15, who will have the opportunity to spend several years in home-like surroundings in the care of 'foster-parents.' The scheme is financed by voluntary donations, and school children and students from Switzerland, France, Austria and Holland have volunteered to help in the building of the village.

The Swiss theory of education is still based on the sound ideas of their great eighteenth-century educationist, Heinrich Pestalozzi. The present aim of the school architect is still the small homely school designed to suit the nature and needs of children. Buildings such as those of the Zollikon primary schools and the kindergarten at Wehntalerstrasse, Zürich, indicate that this objective has, in certain instances, been attained."

"*Cavalcade*," September 28th:

"Opened at the Royal Institute of British Architects in Portland Street was one of the most stimulating and instructive shows seen in London for a long time. It is the Swiss Planning and Building Exhibition, designed to exhibit outstanding pioneering work done by Swiss architects and landscape artists during the last two decades.

In the practice of their art, Swiss architects have had one decisive advantage: their work is grounded in a centuries-old tradition of freedom and democracy which has prevented the excesses of overlaid ostentatiousness or the squalor of slum areas.

When Winston Churchill delivered his address in Zürich he was speaking in one of the most beautiful modern university buildings in Europe, set in a city that is probably the best-built, most efficiently planned in the world, and the intellectual and industrial centre of a country which is an exemplar of how peoples of

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When the Swiss Pierre Jeanneret, now known to architects and town-planners everywhere under his pseudonym of Le Corbusier, startled the building world with his theory that 'a house is a machine to live in,' he was only expressing what had long been familiar practice in his country.

His influence on his fellow craftsmen there was increased by the work of Swiss bridge-builders, notably by the engineering genius of Robert Maillart, whose audacious and graceful concrete arches spanning dizzy chasms are among the most beautiful modern structures to be seen in Switzerland to-day.

Their clean, sweeping lines, unadorned by ornament and relying solely on perfect proportions for impressiveness and elegance, are among the most vital factors in Swiss architecture, especially in large buildings such as factories, office blocks, stations, hospitals and the like.

Most of these new Swiss buildings are distinguished by simple, harmonious design, and give an impression of lightness in spite of their often considerable size.

Among the outstanding structures of this type shown at the Exhibition are the new hospital at Basle, the largest in Switzerland, and the only one to be built in Europe during the war years, the University of Fribourg, and the Zurich Municipal Baths, each an exemplar of their type.

Domestic architecture is well represented. It is particularly notable for the care with which it is made to fit into the landscape. Swiss housing settlements avoid the deadly uniformity of similar developments in Britain by careful grouping small but telling details such as porches and balconies, and by the bold use of colour in the roughest plastering of outer walls."

"Church Times," September 27th:

"English visitors to Switzerland are generally so preoccupied with its alpine and gastronomic pleasures that the exciting architectural developments, to which the Swiss Planning and Building Exhibition at the premises of the Royal Institute of British Architects draws attention, have largely escaped notice.

In no branch of Swiss architecture have the changes of the past twenty years been more startling than in church building. One of the first and most important products of what is known in Switzerland as the 'Modern Movement' is the Roman Catholic church of St. Anthony at Basle.

Constructed in unrendered concrete, severely simple in line and decoration, St. Anthony's has been described as a beacon-light on the path of modern architecture. This attempt to apply the principles of functional architecture to church-building marked a break with the uninspired revival of traditional forms of architecture, which was as fashionable in nineteenth-century Switzerland as it was in Victorian England.

Twenty years ago the new church at Basle created a stir. It was hotly debated whether the performance of Catholic rites did not require a rigid architectural adherence to traditional forms. That the champions of reinforced concrete won their way was due in large measure to a change of attitude on the part of Swiss architects themselves. The best of them have come to see that an exclusive devotion to the principles of utility and function leads to artistic sterility.

'We are seeking in our work,' writes one of them, 'the synthesis of a rational working method and artistic imagination.' The result is that the frankly modern approach to church architecture is now generally accepted by Catholics and Protestants.

It is claimed for the new Swiss Catholic churches that they express not only the principles of secular functional architecture, but also the influence of the liturgical movement initiated by Pope Pius X. This movement, among other things, demands of the worshippers a more active part in the service. Consequently, the separate choir and apse are dispensed with, in order to obtain a closer association between priest and choir, on the one hand, and the congregation on the other.

In the St. Charles's church at Lucerne the unity of priest and people in worship is indicated by a building in which nave and aisles are of equal height, closed off at the end with a semi-circular choir. Slender fluted piers, placed at regular intervals round the building, and a ribbon window emphasize the sense of unity. The altar is plain, with no reredos. There are frescoes, but no statues in the building. It is poles asunder from the exuberance of Baroque and the mystery of Gothic; yet it is unmistakably a place of Catholic worship.

The architects of Protestant churches have not been behindhand with the use of new materials and design. Functional principles have emphasized the fact that to the thorough-going Protestant the church is primarily a preaching-house, with the pulpit as its focal point. A striking example is the church at Altstetten. Built in the immediate neighbourhood of the old village church, it is conceived as a conscious contrast, in terms of modern skeleton structure.

Another interesting development is the restoration of the artist and the craftsman to their place in the service of the Church, and a new co-operation between architect, sculptor and painter. Whereas, only twenty years ago, ecclesiastical warehouses provided the pulpits, pictures and stained-glass windows, it is now possible to commission first-rate artists for such work. Churches such as St. Anthony's at Basle, St. Charles's and St. Joseph's at Lucerne, contain examples of the best contemporary artistic achievement in Switzerland."

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