

houses versus blocks of flats—horizontal spread versus vertical spread. In this controversy we can discern the elements of something that is crucial to sound social planning but which often gets neglected, and that is—the weighing of what, for want of a less sententious phrase, I must call “the spiritual imponderables.” For against certain practical advantages in favour of the blocks of flats has to be set an imponderable of enormous importance, to wit, the English character. I am not saying that this settles the issue in favour of the small house (personally I believe in some of both), but where a people show an instinctive preference for a particular type of housing because their natural genius thrives in it, why then that is a consideration that can be ignored only at the risk of fatal frustration.

We have so to plan and build our cities that the people who live in them may lead a balanced, rewarding life, that they may not merely suffer an efficient existence but may fulfil and enrich their humanity. In countries where the war has wrought great havoc, this touches the difficult question of priorities. It is noticeable, for instance, that in broken Berlin to-day, where the population is living in hovels and patched houses, concert halls and theatres have been repaired and are thronged. It seems that these battered people feel the inner need of music and drama and that enjoyment of these arts holds them together and sustains them when materially all is so disastrous.

Planning for the good life is of peculiar importance and difficulty in an era of mass-production and mass-building such as this. We have to consider what sort of life we want and then how best to build to achieve it. Perfect planning must—in addition to all the other considerations—make an almost anthropological approach to the problem, must certainly consider the biological and psychological needs of the people as well as their economic and commercial needs.

The crisis facing our twentieth century civilization is to combine order with individuality, controls with essential freedom. This also is the architect's problem—to build order with individuality, to bring individuality, grace and variety into the deadening uniformity of modern living. It is the artist who can assert the dignity of the individual and satisfy the claims of the spirit, and the strangling regimentation and frustration of our time, which so readily breeds dictators. It is not enough to replan the structure, we must also reanimate the spirit. We are concerned not merely with utilitarianism but with art, not merely with mechanism but with culture. We must plan and build, not for a race of efficient and comfortable robots, but for a race of happy people.

We Must Think Right

This means that in order to build right we must think right. Good architecture can be built only on the foundation of a sound philosophy of life, of living. It could be argued that the decline in architecture which accompanied the industrial chaos of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a symptom of the loss of balance and serenity that afflicted the mind of that period. If we are to build and plant aright we must have faith in ourselves and in the future. The current age is a little too apt to concentrate on quick returns. This is a symptom of our uncertainty. Look how the eighteenth century, although it was a materialistic age, planned for posterity. They laid out parks in which the trees they planted would grow to maturity neither in their own lifetime nor in their sons'. The landscape gardeners of that Augustan age planned for the third and fourth generation. There was an age which believed in itself and in the future—and what a lot, in consequence, we owe it to-day.

Even a superficial survey of the material and spiritual conditions of ruined Europe in the aftermath of the second world war leaves one with the fear that, midway through this twentieth century of ours, it is touch-and-go whether our Western culture will survive. Whether it does so, and how strong and complete the recovery will be, depend on the faith and courage of those whose task it is to rebuild. If our generation has belief in itself and in its destiny it will produce the artists and technicians, the men of vision and the men of reason, to do the job. The very continuance of our civilization is at stake—and what a future of unimagined splendour it can have. To architects belongs a special opportunity, because, as we have seen, the art of architecture is the art of living.

Mr. D. P. Hanly, B.Arch., of Dublin, has been awarded first prize for his design for the conversion of part of the Rotunda Gardens, Dublin, into an Irish Garden of Remembrance. Second and third prizes went to Messrs. J. D. Doyle and Dermot O'Toole, M.R.I.A.I.

A Unique Collection of Books on Engineering and Architecture

By COLIN JOHNSTON ROBB

The writer being the direct descendent and heir of a family descended from one Jordan Le Robb, a Norman knight, who came to England with William, Duke of Normandy, in 1066 A.D., and who have been connected with the science of engineering and the fine art of architecture from the time of Sir James Robb, of Edinburgh, who was a skilled artificer in this now dual profession, 1543-88, it is natural that some very interesting literature should be handed down from father to son in such a family.

The earliest of this collection having an Irish connection is entitled “Art of Building and Fortification” by Owen Langford, Gentleman, Surveyor of the King's Works at Carrickfergus, 1578. It deals with building fortified houses and forming defence trenches, etc. The second is a manuscript volume covering examples of Plantation houses, the caption or title missing, compiled by Captain Nicholas Pynnar in 1630.

In 1660, James Robb, grandson of the above James, came to Ireland as “Chief Mason of Works” to Charles II, and afterwards his name appears as “Surveyor-General of the Fortifications, Buildings, Roads, Mines and Plantations.” He prepared and published a work bearing the title “An Account of Many Fortifications, and the Seats of the Nobility and Gentry in Ireland” in the year 1688. The reference to “plantations” recalls another work in the collection entitled “Sylva, Or a Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber,” etc., by John Evelyn, Esq., which besides dealing with forestry deals with gardening, cider making, etc. It was published in 1678.

In 1714, John Corneille published a book in Dublin dealing with harbours in Great Britain and Ireland, namely, “The Principal Ports within the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland.” Then there is a book on surveying having the title “The Compleat Surveyor: Or the Whole Art of Surveying of Land,” by William Leybourn, published in 1722. Another very rare book in two volumes is dedicated to William, Baron and Earl of Inchiquin, and entitled “An Introduction To a General System of Hydrostatics and Hydraulics, etc.” published in 1739. It contains well-illustrated data relating to the watering of noblemen's and gentlemen's estates, buildings, gardens and, besides, fire engines, water mills, etc.

John Vokes, of Belfast, a civil engineer, published a little work called “The Art of Improving the Drainage on Gentlemen's Estates.” This was printed by one Blow of Belfast in 1743. Another member of the Robb family, who was agent to Sir John Rawdon, afterwards Earl of Moira, published a work entitled “An Account of the Management of Landed Estates in Ireland with a Discourse on the Taking of Receipts,” by John Robb, 1754.

John Gibbons, of Dublin, published a book in 1760 entitled “Building in Stone and Lime, with an Account of the Carpenter's Art.” On the question of ecclesiology, there are complete extracts from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, relating to ecclesiastical architecture and liturgical art and antiquities from 1737 to 1798. “A Treatise on Estate Engineering and Field-Work: The Practice of Levelling and Planography,” by John Hill, of Belfast, appeared in 1810. Captain Hugh Nevil published a work entitled “Ecclesiastical Monuments of Munster” in 1816. Major John Robb Hanna issued a small book in 1838 called “An Account of Constabulary Barracks in Ireland: And Quarters for the Revenue Police.”

There is also a file of the *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1797 to 1803, and the file of the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal: Scientific and Railway Gazette* in leather-bound volumes commencing with volume I—1839. This journal is very well illustrated and deals with many engineering undertakings, public building and other works in Ireland.

This family collection in all contains some 700 volumes relating to the profession of the civil engineer and architect.

The next intermediate examinations of the R.I.B.A. will be held from 8th to 14th November (applications by 23rd September), 16th—22nd May, 1947, and 7th—13th November. The dates for the final and special final examinations are 4th—12th December (applications 23rd October), 2nd—10th July, 1947 and 3rd—11th December. Examinations of licentiates to qualify for candidature as fellows will be held on 4th—9th December (applications 10th October), 2nd—7th July, 1947, and 3rd—8th December. Examinations for building surveyors will be held on 9th—11th October (applications 28th August), 7th—9th May, 1947, and 8th—10th October.