

425

Biography, "Appraisal XI (p. 251-264)"

WARE MC14

In attempting to appraise the absolute worth of his life-work, to measure the magnitude of his success, due weight must be given to the fact that there was no beaten track for him to follow. Although in New York he at length gathered about him a capable team of huskies, his assistants of various kinds, who actually pulled much of the load, his nevertheless was always the responsible task of "breaking-trail" ahead; and at Boston, in the early years, he not only had to break trail but had to draw almost the entire load himself. His real rôle was that of precursor rather than pioneer; for a pioneer wanders along somewhat at haphazard, and though he does make progress has no very sound reason for making it, ~~In one direction rather than~~ ^{In one direction rather than} than in another. The precursor, on the other hand, knows not only what the goal is that he seeks, but where it lies, and so leads as directly to it as circumstances permit.

Unless one is of sufficient age to have a first-hand personal knowledge of the conditions that prevailed during the period 1861-7---- the years that marked the inception and incubation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ---- the resources, educational, financial, commercial and technical that the community had at its command, it is very difficult to appreciate how great has been the ^{everywhere throughout the country,} change and progress, and how large a ^m need of praise is due to those whose instructed and intelligent initiative has brought about this remarkable change; for the change -- transformation, if you will -- has been astounding, and the entire world

acknowledges it to be such.

The forces that have enabled this development seem to be, in due order, the exercise of the orderly processes of industry and commerce which brought about the accumulation of wealth, in the first place, and in the second place the vesting of this wealth in the hands of financiers who, individually or collectively as corporations, were endowed with active imaginations and clear vision, or at least were intelligent enough to comprehend the advice and suggestions of students, thinkers and political economists, who could point out how these hoards of gold could be dispensed to the greatest gain of the body politic. But unless there had been found at hand trained and skilful hands to which the execution of these desirable adventures in the field of progress could be entrusted, the functioning of these two primary forces would have been productive of but little of permanent value.

As an elderly man travels about the country and notes how many absolutely new towns and cities have come into being, and how the face and texture of the towns known to his youth have altered and improved, as well as grown in physical extent, it is easy for him to perceive that, amongst the most active and benevolent of the secondary forces engaged in effecting the development he notes, are the great building industries of the country. But it would have been almost bootless for these great machine-crowded mills, factories and plants of every kind to turn out their vast and varied product, if there were not ready to assemble and combine them in proper order a countless host of trained and skilful mechanics of many kinds, whose actual manipulations were directed by efficient and intelligent executives, the master-builders; and these could have brought into existence but inferior monuments of constructive ingenuity, if there had not been, higher up in the hierarchy of building, the creative minds, the trained intelligences and refined artistic comprehensions of a

considerable, but, relatively to other classes in the community, a very small, body of men, the architects who provided the designs and schemes which prevented the unwise, mischievous and degrading dispensing of acquired wealth in those particular fields. There can be no question but that this country, as it exists in this year of grace, and the people who inhabit it, owe their present rank in the scale of civilization as much to the work and influence of the small body of architects as is owed to any other class of men, even if a hundred-fold more numerous. And, be it confessed, the architects are quite conscious of the fact. But, while, it is not to be disputed that architects stand at the head of the building industries, and though they would like to be accepted of men ^{as} on the same plane ^{with} as poets, as having been **Born** artists, the fact is that they are but the products of an educational and evolutionary process: they have been ⁱⁿ "taught the trade" as truly as any mechanic who carries out their designs. Now a very large proportion of the architects practising in this country today received their education, in full or in great part, in one or another of the architectural schools which have come into being in this country since 1866, so that in the first instance acknowledgment must be made, in "house - that - Jack - built" order, to the men who devised the schemes of architectural instruction and administered them -- the teachers in these schools; though above and more remote still comes the credit due to the common-school system, the dame-school and the mother's knee.

The fact that some other men might have been found to discharge these functions in a more thorough and acceptable fashion does not alter the fact that no such persons were found, and the work that was done was actually done by those who did it; and, holding the foremost place amongst these men, not only as the first incumbent of a chair of Architecture in an organized educational institution in this country, but because of the qualities and absolute worth of the educational methods and processes he patiently evolved, must always stand the name of William Robert Ware. It was his

signal and peculiar fortune that a great and unique opportunity was brought within his reach, and he did justice to it, worthily and fully. Nothing more can be demanded of any man than that he be the faithful steward of his opportunities; and, if to expend every fibre of one's mental and physical strength upon the matter entrusted to his care is to be faithful, then he deserves to rank with the best stewards in any walk of life.

Modest man as he was, he was too intelligent and honest-minded to be either unwilling or unable to apply the touchstone of success to his own career; and so we find him, just after retirement from the active direction of the School of Architecture of Columbia University, writing as follows to his young Fidus Achates:-

[To F.D.S. July 14, '03]

"Saying good-bye the other day, at the top of the stairs, seemed a simple ceremony, but it carried me right back to 35th St., that evening you first came to see me about the 'Perspective' plate. All my New York life lies between, and it is already beginning to look like a dream. It seems such a queer rig to have run, for me, of all persons. I should have been glad to be allowed to close it up decently and do not yet understand why I was not. But there is, of course, a sense of relief in being rid of it all, in no longer having to strain night and day to play a part for which I never had any proper training. One gets tired of living on his wits, interesting as it is, and longs for work he is really up to. Doing nothing seems about to fill the bill, for there is nothing and there never was anything that I could do as it ought to be done. It is something of a relief, accordingly, not to have anything expected. No more duties for me. Whatever I do I mean to do for my own satisfaction, and not to be hurried into doing it with one hand, because the other hand is busy. It is curious and paradoxical, but I recognize that it is nevertheless true, in a sense, that out of twenty years

of daily failures has come a twenty-year success. I think it is really a good School, and what is more to the purpose, a good kind of a school, and I cannot deny that it is in kind and degree my own achievement. It is really something to have done, and the acclaim is not without reason. This helps to reconcile me to myself, even though I am denied the satisfaction of bringing the work to the end ~~and~~ which seemed just in sight. It seems as if there was some efficiency in a lofty aim, even though all the means of attaining it are lacking.

"I think I feel very much about the sixty or seventy years as I do about the twenty. I am disposed to forgive myself, and not to take it too much to heart that things have miscarried. When one makes up his mind to 'accept the world' he may as well accept himself as part of it, and not worry too much over his deficiencies and shortcomings. Goodness and wisdom are rather beyond one's reach, but one can generally manage to behave properly, and this course, if persisted in, is not without result, as one finds when he is nearing the end.

"I have enough things that I want to do, to keep me occupied, and I do not expect to be homesick or to miss my accustomed food and drink. Indeed there was just a drop of bitterness in the final draught that suffices to spoil the taste of the whole thing. It was all very nice, but I feel no wish to return to it. The best part of the recollection is my affection for so many of these men, beginning at the beginning and continuing to the end, and the return it has met."

Later still he wrote:-

"I did what I could for twenty years according to my dim lights, but it is now all past and gone. I am pleased, and surprised, every now and then, to find that it means something to the men of this generation."

(To F. D. S. 1909)

"To be sure, according to what is nowadays said, forty-nine is the extreme limit of efficient performance. But this was my age when I came to New York, and I was just coming into my inheritance, such as it was. The most active, intelligent, original and courageous years of my life were those between sixty and seventy, and my last year of work was much the best. It is the only one that I now regard with any sort of satisfaction. No, you may hope for twenty years more of good work."

(To F.D.S.Feb.1911)

"As perhaps I told you, there was a concert of action which nearly swamped me with Christmas letters from old students, nearly sixty. I have answered them all. What surprises me is that so many of them say that they got at the School a 'personal' benefit as well as a 'professional' one. I don't quite see what they mean, but it pleases me."



It is the glorious and enviable privilege of most Physicians, many clergymen and not a few teachers to learn in their own lifetime, through the grateful outpourings of patient, parishioner or pupil, how fully and satisfactorily they have discharged their duty towards their fellowmen. As the years flowed on and as his pupils, passed into the workaday world, "found themselves", as Kipling words it, and came to a mature understanding of the value of the instruction they had received, Professor Ware had the pleasure of receiving many grateful acknowledgments of the wisdom of his conceptions, the judiciousness of his aims and the untiring fidelity with which he applied them to the development of the characters submitted to his care and influence.

These actions de grace, appearing as they do informally in letters devoted to other topics, have about them a spontaneity, warmth, and ingenuousness that set them as testimonials above the similar, but somewhat perfunctory, expressions of gratitude that poured in on him in 1910, when an organized movement to send him Christmas greetings from his former pupils was successfully carried out. As mankind in general is rather shy about exhibiting anything that smacks of sentimentality as affecting itself, it will be all the more interesting to quote here some of the grateful and gratifying words that from time to time came to him, often from quarters from which he would least have expected to receive them.

(From C. M. Nov. 29th, '06)

"I do hope you will visit New York sometime before long. I miss my Verrochie (^hbe of the true eye) very, very much. Indeed I often wonder if you know how much sentiment we older pupils feel for you. For, when everything is said and done, none of us know anything except what you have taught us. It was you who taught us that 'Architecture is the distribution of mass and harmony of proportion.' It was you who taught us to 'compose with sunlight'. It was you who taught us to be tremulously sensitive to beauty in all its forms; and that we were all too prone to look on a work of art in the ^{^^}role of judges, when really it is the work of art that is judging us. For it is appreciation that shows cleverness, not the ability to pick flaws. In fact, were it not for you, we would all be wallowing in 'l' Art Nonveau,' or possibly worse, if there is anything worse."

(From W.W. Dec. 24, 1909)

"I have always believed that the value of a true College or technical education is not in the things learned, but in the training of the mind and in the general refinement of the ^Spersonality, which means that the men at the head must have, as you so especially did, culture as well as mental strength."

(From V. E. M. Dec. 10, '10)

"It seems impossible that over sixteen years have gone past since I left the Architectural Department at Columbia, as the influence of the few years there is still so fresh. Never a day passes that the spirit there learned does not make itself felt.

"Perhaps of all your former students I can best realize the breadth of that spirit, as I have never followed the profession of Architecture. The influence of your personality, however, was not confined to professional lines, and therein was your wonderful power over all your students. I am sure that we all regret that we have not had the inspiration and privilege of having you among us in New York.

"My time has been divided between business interests and what I hope are constructive philanthropic movements. My first efforts in this latter direction were made while I was still in the Architectural Department, when Stanton Coit came up to the School one afternoon in 1892 and talked to us on the subject of the University Settlement which was then starting and which was the first Settlement in America."

(From H.B.H. Dec. 22, '10)

"Pray believe me that you are ever in our thoughts: the boys feel as if they knew you well, as does my wife. I pray that it may be the good fortune of my own sons that when they, too, take up their life work some man as great of heart, as kindly of spirit as yourself may guide them as you guided me upon the right pathway of life."

Although ^{it has} ~~there is~~ no direct connection with the foregoing extracts, yet because it is approbatory and is "praise from Sir Hubert" indeed, it seems desirable to introduce ^{here} a note from Charles Eliot Norton, written after reading Professor Ware's account of the manner in which he was teaching History in connection with the regular Architectural studies. Mr. Norton

writes:-

"I am much obliged to you for letting me see this excellent and convincing statement of yours, and I repeat my congratulations on the results you have brought to pass.

"You would do well to let your History paper be the first in a series which should set forth in order the whole work of your School of Architecture as it is now, and as you would like ^{it} to be. Nothing could be more useful to other Schools ---- or to your own. The public ought to be instructed as regards such work as yours. It is plainly your duty to do it, and you should throw off other work if need be in order to accomplish it. Let this paper be preceeded by a short introduction, and by a promise to deal in similar manner with each main division of instruction.

"This really must be done."

Three years later Mr. Norton again writes:-

"As for my resignation of my Professorship, it was not because I felt old; but because it was time to be ready for feeling old. I laid it to heart Dr. Walker's wise and humorous saying to the Committee of the Faculty, with Mr. Felton at its head, that visited him to induce him to withdraw his resignation. 'Why, Doctor', said Mr. Felton, 'there is not one of us who sees the least reason why you should resign!' The Doctor looked up with that ^lshy air and bright twinkle in his eye which was so familiar to us, and replied, 'Do you think I am going to wait until you do?'

"What you say of your work and of the method you have developed in your School is most satisfactory. It is a great happiness for a man to feel that the designs to which he has given the best part of his life have been successfully carried out. I wish you joy of this. You have good reason for satisfaction."

(From ^a IV = Year Circular June 25th, '98)

"I hear on every side from those best qualified to speak that if we really make the most of our opportunities, we shall presently have as good a School as any in the world, turning out men as skilful and as well-informed as any, and, it is to be hoped, with the cultivated taste and sound judgment which the profession needs, and which only such a liberal course of study as ours can give. Each class seems to me to get a step nearer to this, and thereby to make the School a better and more profitable place to be in for their having been in it."

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"At the same moment comes an encouraging line from E-- who, after two years in Paris, writes; 'After seeing the work here I am more than ever proud of the best School of Architecture in America. If men would be willing to stay at Columbia as many years after graduation as they spend in Paris, they would in the end accomplish fully as much. The American Schools have, I believe, many things in their work superior to that in Paris.'"

(From J. T. W. June 25, '13)

"The end of your influence upon our profession is not yet and never will be, and it must be a source of great satisfaction to you to think of all the fine things that have been accomplished by your one-time boys".

(From C.L.K. Dec. 20, '13)

"I shall never forget to be grateful ^{for} of the privilege of studying under you at Columbia. You have made the history of that place and they will realize the fact more and more, just as we fellows do. By 'they' I mean the authorities who will look in vain for another like your inspiring self".

(From C.L.K. Nov. 17, '14)

"I will not go farther in this direction just now than to say how thankful I am for myself for the circumstances that led me to your teaching and influence -- and to see the real you, the person you really were, not only wanted to be".

(From E.S.G. Feb. 3 '00)

"I tell my various interested friends who are shocked at my having 'bolted' Architecture that I really never had fully decided to follow Architecture, and had taken that Course at Columbia because I felt it was the broadest and best for a general education. And this is true. I feel now, out in the world, among educated people, that a Scientific course can not have too much Academic work. The Course in English which you gave us, although it may not show itself in this hasty note, has proved immensely beneficial".

(Charles A. Rich in N. Y. Evening Post Jan. 15, '15)

"I look back to one bright morning in May when, together with one of his "Tech" boys, we trudged down to the Providence railroad-station with Knapsacks on our backs, to take the New York train to board the 'Devonia' of the Anchor Line, to take our first student-life trip to Europe, and it was a seven o'clock morning train, mind you, and yet down came Mr. Ware to see us off; and as the train started, he slipped a \$2.00 bill into each hand, saying, 'When you get to Angoulême, buy a little work on the churches of Southern France,'--- and, so, we were off. But just analyze that little seven o'clock act for a moment, multiply it by hundreds and you can understand this side of Mr. Ware's life; what it meant to us, sending us off with strong, hopeful, buoyant hearts! And I know that his death will bring up many such a scene to the boys now grown up and scattered over the country. I could not help reciting the above incident, because the very recollection of that morning, with its simple act of affectionate thought for us, 'his boys', has come back to me often, and love for him has grown stronger as he has grown older, and has left the recollection of him sweet and tender."

(C.H. Walker, Boston Transcript June 11, '15)

"There are many to whom his death will bring more than the feeling of the loss of an able architect and educator, and of an idealist in his profession. These are the men who were members of his student family and whom he considered 'his boys', not all of whom had studied under him, for some he had gathered from the byways and had admitted into that serene and appreciative environment which was so characteristic of his life. His was a gentle but firm philosophy of life, lightened with the flicker of epigram, and permeated with the warmth of affection. With a mind that delighted in the intricacies and delicacies of supposition and enjoyed

the labyrinths of speculative conjecture, he associated an ability to simplify and make clear to the student the basic elements of his art. He therefore had an unusual gamut of mental activities and those who were so fortunate as to talk with him intimately found coordination of thought upon all subjects and a constantly increasing vista of ideas. But it is his helpful friendship which will always remain his legacy, a friendship which developed intention and urged to ~~afford~~^{effort} and the best success. A refined idealist, who inspired not by forensic eloquence, but by a calm leadership, he was above all things a father to 'his boys'."

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(A.D.F. Hamlin, in the Nation)

To the great host of his former pupils and associates Professor Ware's memory will undoubtedly be chiefly precious by reason of his broadly sympathetic personality. He was less a pedagogue than an inspirer of men. His lectures were often rambling and discursive; they were never reduced to writing and followed ~~to~~ⁱⁿ carefully prepared syllabus. But they were full of suggestion, mind-openers, breaking windows, as it were, in the walls of his subject, through which the student glimpsed other and wider fields of knowledge. Philosophy, ethics, religion, literature, history educational theory, in these and many other subjects he awakened new interest, and many a student has him to thank for revealing a world about him to whose beauty and majesty he would otherwise have been blind while treading the hum-drum path of professional routine.

Professor Ware was never married. The great stores of affection of his tender and unselfish heart found their outlet in friendships of a peculiarly warm and devoted character, not only with men of his own generation, but also with young men, whether his pupils or junior associates,

to whom he was a father, a brother, a counsellor, a comforter, and a welcome companion. To all this host his death has come as a personal affliction, an irreparable loss. It is not likely there will ever arise another to occupy a position precisely like his, to do a work like his, or to leave behind him in the profession a memory so fragrant, or the record of a life and career endeared to so many as the record of this strong but most gentle, pure and lovable personality."

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(Prof. J. R. Wheeler, in the N.Y. Evening Post)

"For all these services [in connection with the School of Classical Studies at Athens], and for his presiding through many years ^{over} of the New York Society of the Archæological Institute, Classical scholars may well cherish Professor Ware's memory with sincere gratitude. For those of us who have had the privilege of being personally associated with him, this memory will be made still brighter through the recollection of much wise counsel -- counsel given often with a whimsical humor that lent to wisdom's goddess a truly benign air".