

#11

Correspondence, Post-Columbia, 1909-1910.

WARE MC14



HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCE

16 UNIVERSITY HALL,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

December 21, 1909

Professor William R. Ware,  
Milton, Mass.

My dear Professor Ware:

Professor Warren gave me Saturday your very kind letter of December seventh which I have read with the greatest interest and profit. Your description and discussion of the École des Beaux Arts is exactly what I have been wishing for the past two years, and especially since last summer. Had I been allowed to be present and questioned you you could not have covered more points in regard to which I wished to make inquiry. In your statement of the organization of the École des Beaux Arts, its advantages and its disadvantages, some circumstances attending the organization of the School of Architecture in Cambridge, and in your analysis of its field of usefulness and its possibilities, you have given me not merely suggestive statements but an authoritative document. I shall read it again and shall study it and I shall endeavor to get others to read it whom I think should bear in mind the facts as you present them.

We are going through an interesting and critical period in the development of the School, one which perhaps we can guide but certainly cannot force. I am hoping for



the best and that that best will be good.

Thanking you again for your continued interest in  
the School and in particular for this letter, I am, Sir,

Very truly yours,

*Wallace C. Sabine .*



Milton, Dec. 28, 1909.

My dear Mr. Sabine,

In writing to you the other day I passed over one or two things which seem to me of importance, fearing that my letter might be too long. Your kind reply encourages me to mention them now.

In the first place, both observation of other people's classes and experience with my own, have made me think that the constant bestowal of marks and rewards, as is done under the French system of Mentions and Medals, is a poor way of encouraging study. It serves of course a practical purpose where, as in the Ecole de Beaux Arts, the rank of every student must be precisely known, as a basis for Government promotion. It may, perhaps, also be of use with children, to stimulate activities which interest in their work can hardly be expected to arouse. But in this country, both in schools and in colleges, it now enjoys but little favor, and is more and more regarded as an exotic which had better not be acclimated. Certainly everybody would agree that it would be singularly out of place in Schools of Law, Medicine or Divinity, and it would seem to be equally so in any school where grown men are pursuing serious studies chosen by themselves as a preparation for the business of life. In Architectural Schools, at any rate, men who do not care enough about the subject to work hard, had better be somewhere else. For while the practice of this profession, is not without its drawbacks, even for the men who care most for it, the study of it is one of the most interesting there is, and men who do not



feel the stimulus of the Science, History, Literature and Art with which it brings them in contact had better drop it than be kept at work by factitious inducements.

It is a more serious objection to these devices, that the artificial atmosphere they foster is calculated to spur young men on to achievements they could not have compassed under other circumstances, and which they presently find are beyond their power anywhere else. They miss their "dram." It seems safe, even at some sacrifice of immediate results, and of the excitement and exhilaration which attend competitive exercises, to accustom students in school to do the best they can under what are to be for them the permanent motives for exertion. Otherwise they are in danger, all their lives, of hankering after impossible conditions, and of feeling that in losing their youth they have somehow parted with their best powers. Here then also it would seem that the brilliant precedents of the Ecole de Beaux Arts are to be followed, if at all, with great caution.

But the most important point in which it falls short of our conception of what a professional School should be, and thus fails to offer an example for our imitation, is that it trains its men chiefly for the showy exercises immediately in hand, rather than for the more serious, if more prosaic, work which the practice of the profession will ultimately call for. They acquire, indeed, an extraordinary skill as draughtsmen, and highly developè their fancy and imagination. They thus achieve unparalled success in a kind of work that can be perfectly well done, under these favorable conditions



by somewhat immature young men between twenty and thirty years of age. But they are not put in training for the task that will come to them when they are between forty and sixty. The problems they learn to solve are not the problems they will generally encounter in the practice of their profession, except indeed, those few men, only one or two each year, who win the Prix de Rome, and are thus fairly launched upon a life-long career as Architects du Gouvernement. The rest, who are denied admission to these rich pastures, are turned out into the comparatively barren fields within their reach, putting up with such occupation as ordinary practice offers. Much which they most need to know has then to be learned in the slow school of experience, sometimes in other men's offices, sometimes in their own. It is then, and not at the moment of graduation, that the value of Academic training can be measured by its results. The results of good Architectural training are good buildings, not Exhibition pieces, and a School of Architecture, if it is to meet the needs it may reasonably be expected to supply should take up every topic which the well-instructed practitioner needs to know about, and discipline all the powers which he will ultimately have occasion to exercise.

How much of all this can be condensed into a three or a five years course of study is a problem as yet unsolved. But it is a problem which belongs to this country, and considerable progress has already been made in its solution. Only a part of the field, however, has as yet been attempted. A scientific analysis of the ordinary professional experience has not yet been made, much less reduced to a shape in which it can be systematically studied.



At present these things have to be learned, so far as they are learned at all, by hap-hazard drudgery. This involves great waste of time, for office-work is of course assigned so as to be profitable to business, and only incidentally so as to be serviceable to the draughtsman, or even to the student, who has it in hand. Almost everything that is learned in an office, and many things which draughtsmen and even architects hardly know at all, might be taught and ought to be taught, in theory at least, in every Architectural School that pretends to qualify men for general practice. The field of domestic architecture, for example, a field in which most architects necessarily spend a chief part of their time, but which at present almost all schools, except your own, seem sedulously to neglect, deserves special attention. For the study of palaces does not qualify one to design a cottage. The principles involved are not the same. Here the Paris example, which exemplifies only the perfection of Academic achievement, does not even point the way. But the most advanced Schools should extend their range beyond this, into the higher fields of History and Philosophy and Political Economy of which I spoke before, and which are in large part also as yet untrodden.

As to the methods of draughtsmanship, I think I have nothing to add to what I have said in the printed pamphlet I sent you, except that I have now had a number of acknowledgements from some of my young men to whom also I sent it, which have much pleased me, especially those from men who have been in Paris. One of them writes,--"I want to say at once that I heartily agree with you as to



the deceptions likely to result from elaborate drawings." Another writes,—"I wish I could put a copy of it into the hands of every Architectural student, and of many practitioners. It is sound and right, and ought to be spread broadcast." This is the same young man who wrote to me from Paris several years ago, when in the height of a triumphant career, speaking in the highest terms of the seriousness which marked his Patrons' instructions, and deploring the little effect they produced in his own atelier, and he added:—"It must be admitted that the taste of the Third Republic leaves much to be desired." It was curious that the designs that the same student sent home a few weeks afterwards exemplified at a dozen points the fashions which he contended, and which he thought he was on his guard against. The current of the Seine is so strong as to sweep even the most vigorous men off their feet.

Another who is doing some teaching himself, writes,—"It seems to me admirable, a clear statement of a very valuable set of principles. I am trying to instil them into my boys. Rendering and the desire to turn out a chic set of drawings, are pit-falls into which most of them fall. One can scarcely blame them, since they find the well-rendered works best rewarded by our juries. I am always fighting against this, but find it a hard up-hill fight, and it always gives me infinite pleasure when some poorly-presented scheme has such undoubted merit that the jury must recognize it. So I am glad to be fortified in my views, by your essay, and I wish I could present it to every member of our school. The only justification of the prominence given to Renderings is that anything that



stimulates the students' imagination is of value, even the grouping of the blacks, the whites, and the greys, in a Plan, so as to form an agreeable composition. It may later lead to something more closely allied to Architecture."

Another young man, writes:- "My experience both at school here and later in Architects' offices, has led me to strike out rather into the practical sphere. To me, paper architecture was abhorrent, so shallow and fictitious seemed the draughting, and the large competitions disgusted me, so unscientific and unworthy were the principles followed. The real Architecture of today seems to be allied to Bridge Building. It is this that has made steel building possible. An Architect instead of being an expert in drawing-board falsification should be keenly awake to engineering possibilities and to the science of seeing things as they are to be. The reason I did not go to the Ecole is that I prefer to follow Truth."

Still another writes,--"Since I could not afford to go to Paris, and stay a long time (not less than four years) I am glad that I did not go for the usual short period and get poisoned by the prevailing ways and means of the various ateliers, where the young men, quite justly, fall in love with their Patrons, and consequently ape their peculiarities and quite miss any real excellence their master may have."

"The picture-card planning and rendering is a source of profit for the few floating draughtsmen who have proficiency in the Art, which they make the 'broker' architect pay for, to catch would-be clients, and the juries of the promiscuous kinds of competition



which exist, which I am sorry to say, are advocated by professional men who should know better."

The strongest and most independent young man I have found to be much of this turn of mind, is <sup>was</sup> George Heims, the architect of the new New York Cathedral, whom Governor Roosevelt, made State Architect. He also refused to go to the Ecole. It was he whom I quoted as preferring his office-boys' drawings. Even in New York where the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects is much in the ascendant, there is a strong body of dissenters, who in the discussions about the value of French influences in this country, which they have from time to time set on foot, give their sceptical opinions an emphatic expression.

The moral is that since many of the most important qualities of building cannot be shown in drawings, and what are the most engaging qualities of a fine drawing cannot be made manifest when the design comes to execution, drawings are unsafe guides, and the more attractive they are made the more likely they are to mislead. It would seem to follow that to make architectural drawings as attractive as possible, is unwise, and that they should exhibit only such merits as can be materialized in actual structures. For all kinds of pictorial representations are inevitably to some extent misrepresentations. No drawing can be explicitly trusted, and the more they say, the less are they to be believed.

Yet draughtsmanship is, of itself, of the greatest value as a means of artistic training. The problem, in a School of Architecture, is how to secure this discipline without sacrificing the



chief object in view. This is the essential difficulty of teaching a Fine Art and a Useful Art as one.

I am much disposed to think that, in schools, Brush-work, including both water-colors and India-ink might well be pursued by itself as an independent accomplishment. It would then, like the crayon-work done in drawing from the cast, have, so far as architecture is concerned, a purely disciplinary value, just as the writings of Themes, in prose or verse, improves the style of more important compositions. Both greatly enhance the artistic quality of the architectural draughtsmanship. But ~~this~~<sup>e</sup> manipulations might greatly be simplified in character, without losing anything of value. I am encouraged in this opinion by my own experience with public competitions, in which I have more than once prescribed and enforced a very elementary style of presentation. In a number of cases I have required, instead of highly rendered water-color drawings, that the Plans, ~~Elevations~~<sup>Plans</sup> and Perspectives shall all be executed in pencil, on tracing paper, and that at a small scale. The results have been perfectly satisfactory, clearly illustrating all the architectural points of any importance. This procedure effected a great saving of time and labor, and a similar economy might profitably be made the rule in schools. But in School problems as in public competitions, the only sure way to prevent these wasteful extravagancies is to adopt and to enforce an official mode of presentation which shall make such wastefulness impossible.



Milton, Dec. 28, 1909. - 2 -

My Dear Mr. Sabine,

In writing to you the other day I passed over one or two things which seem to me of importance, fearing that my letter might be too long. Your kind reply encourages me to mention them now.

In the first place, both observation of other people's classes and experience with my own, have made me think that the constant bestowal of marks and rewards, as is done under the French system of Mentions and Medals, is a poor way of encouraging study. It serves of course a practical purpose where, as in the École de Beaux Arts, the rank of every student must be precisely known, as a basis for Government promotion. It may, perhaps, also be of use <sup>with</sup> among children, to stimulate activities which interest in their work can hardly be expected to arouse. But in this country, both in schools and in colleges, it now enjoys but little favor, and is more and more regarded as an exotic which had better not be acclimated. Certainly everybody would agree that it would be singularly out of place in Schools of Law, Medicine or Divinity, and it would seem to be equally so in any school where grown men are pursuing serious studies chosen by themselves as a preparation for the business of life. In Architectural Schools, at any rate, men who do not care enough about the subject to work hard, had better be some where else. For while the practice of this profession, ~~is of all others~~, is not without its drawbacks, even for the men who care most for it, the study <sup>of it</sup> is one of the most interesting there is, and men who do



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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
—  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCE

16 UNIVERSITY HALL,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

January 9, 1910.

My dear Professor Ware:

I have been forwarded your second letter by Professor Warren. Through your kind efforts I am beginning to understand the situation in regard to the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the peculiarities which are unique to our own problem. I notice that you mentioned in your letter a printed pamphlet which you sent me. This I have not received and if you have another copy which you could spare I should be very grateful indeed for it.

No one regrets the ~~dis~~ception inherent in good rendering more than I do and yet I cannot help but realize that it is a many sided question. It is not so much in itself a fault as it is an abused virtue. It would be an abuse to your patience for me, a layman, to enlarge on this subject and I shall not do so.

Thanking you again for your interest in our hard problem, I am,

Very truly yours,

*Hallace C. Sabnis.*

Professor William R. Ware.



Milton, May 12, 1910.

My dear Mr. Lowell:

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of saying how much satisfaction I have had in reading your Report. I have indeed been rather disposed to think that if the College course was to be shortened at all, the Freshman year could better be spared than the Senior, since the work done in the upper classes of preparatory schools is often more serious than in the first year at College, which is much encumbered with boyish traditions. Sixty years ago, I myself found Cambridge rather a let-down from Exeter. These views I urged in New York some years ago, when Mr. Butler was proposing to shorten the Columbia course to two years. But I got no more of a hearing than he did. To my mind the four year scheme is still the best, four years of active intellectual life being better than three, even than three years of hard study, if only they can be made years of serious discipline, and thus be as good a preparation for an active career as the Professional Schools are for the professions. Here it seems to me that the establishment of the Graduate School with its higher degrees relieves undergraduate work of some ambiguity of purpose. That seems the place for the high scholarship the lack of which among undergraduates Mr. Wilson was last summer lamenting. But this is not, and cannot be, the aim of more than a dozen or two, out of the two or three hundred men in a Class. Scholarship, as such, does not appeal to them and does not really concern them. What does concern both them and the community is preparation for good Citizenship, and it seems as if the measures <sup>now</sup> ~~was~~ proposed to free Freshmen from their irresponsible childishness might foster in them an interest in things worth taking a serious interest in that would color



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the subsequent years. It seems as if an eager intellectual life, purposely framed as a preparation for the responsibilities of maturity, might thus come to pervade the College atmosphere. This would bring to perfection what has always been the unique characteristic of the American College, as the Germans have lately begun to recognize, with envy and admiration.

" The trouble about Electives is that, at best, they tend to make specialists, and thus to narrow the range of men's knowledge and interests, whereas what the Community asks from Colleges is not only a small group of scholars, but a large number of men with a variously disciplined understanding, and wide intellectual sympathies. Indeed such men are needed in the learned professions quite as much as in affairs.

" The trouble with experts and specialists as teachers is, that they are apt to care only for turning out experts and specialists like themselves. This, of course, is especially likely to happen under an Elective System. To guard against this result, I tried to manage, when I was in New York, to have every member of my staff teach at least two different subjects. This was indeed one of the advantages of the old Academies, where the Master taught everything.

" Holding this point of view, which emphasizes the paramount importance of liberal culture, I am not disposed to rely much upon the stimulus of honors and prizes. Immediate personal distinctions tend to divert attention from the serious requirements of later life. School laurels seem rather a vanity and a toy. The real reward of



education, as even undergraduates may learn to bear in mind, comes later.

"In this I am perhaps prejudiced from having found in Architectural Schools that their practical and professional tone was plainly lowered by Mentions and Medals, and above all by public Exhibitions and Intercollegiate Competitions, both of which, besides, foster a meretricious draughtsmanship to the neglect of more serious and important attainments.

"I will venture to add, remembering your friendly interest, that I have meanwhile been pegging away at my Latin manuscript, which has received much commendation from men who understand the subject much better than I do. But the publishers and schoolmasters agree in saying that the present somewhat inhuman methods of instruction are too firmly established, and are too strongly supported by the College examinations, for any such revolutionary procedures as I propose to get a fair trial. Yet unless something is done to make Latin attractive to boys,—and this would require revolutionary methods, it looks as if Latin as well as Greek would soon cease to count among the belongings of well-educated men.

"So when my Correspondents call my methods "Unusual", "interesting", and "intelligent," and even "entertaining" and "winning" I am encouraged to think that there is something in them not unsuited to the times.

"I have not been in Cambridge or Boston since October, having been shut up within doors. Now I am getting about again, and am hoping presently to extend my boundaries as far as your threshold.

K.P.W.  
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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE

May 13, 1910.

Dear Mr Ware:-

Thank you very much for your letter. I feel that it ought to be possible to get hold of the students as they come to college, and make them take their work more seriously. In fact we have been stiffening up the freshman year a good deal, and fellows who come now with the expectation that they have little work to keep up, are apt to find themselves disillusioned. We ought to do much better than we do.

In regard to the question of honors and distinctions, it seems to me that there is a great difference in this regard between professional and college work. Personal rivalry does not produce the highest form of achievement in life. Nevertheless it seems to me to be a great stimulus during the educational period, where the achievement is not in itself the important thing; and therein I wholly disagree with President Eliot, who feels that you cannot properly give much honor for college work, because in itself it involves no achievement worthy of it. That, to me, seems the very reason for giving honors. Rivalry, emulation, competition, are the very life-blood of



of youthful development, the stimulus to exertion before the more serious stimuli of life come in. No doubt you are right that architectural exhibitions produce meritricious work; but I do not think that is true of undergraduate competition, because it is not the achieved work that is being compared, or which one is trying to produce. The object is simply to provoke activity and eagerness; and this, it would seem, can be done effectively by competition. By the way, I enclose a copy of an article I wrote upon this subject last year, which may interest you.

I am glad to hear that you are getting about again, and that you are getting some encouragement for your suggestions about the teaching of Latin. Curiously enough, Latin seems to be reviving, while Greek is dying out, among the Western high schools.

Yours very truly,

*A. Lawrence Lowell*