I: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, September 29, 1892

Cologne September 27th 1892.

Dear Professor.

I can finally offer you something that resembles a report. I find that after all I am only human and that after solid tramping and looking from early morning till dark and then an hour or two of journal writing is about all that I can do in one day. My friends certainly have suffered as to letters, and I put off writing to you until I now have such a mass of material that I don't see how you are ever to get the smallest part of it. I send the "essay on Scandinavian Architecture" not as what you should have but the hurried result of what I did at odd times; I might say that most of it was written in a little shoe-shop while I sat in my stocking feet waiting for the shoemaker to repair damages after a long tramp on a flinty turnpike in search of a Romanesque ~~Cocerstone~~ Benedictine Abbey Church.

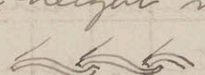
To supplement the "Report" it may be of interest to you to know the ground I have covered up to date. I landed at Kristiansand, Norway, on July 2nd then went by steamer to Stavanger. From this point I went by steamer, carriole, row boat and on foot to Sand, Naes, Horve, Odde, Eide, Vossvangen, Gudvangen, Faerland, Vadheim, Förde, Florø, Trondhjem and then coasted to North Cape and return, stopping at a number of queer

towns including Tromsø and Hammerfest. From Trondhjem, I went across country to Christiania, into Telemarken and back, then to Göteborg and across by canal to Stockholm. Here I was headed off by the cholera, and was obliged to postpone my trip to Russia, and turned south across Sweden, after a splendid time on the Island of Gotland and in the ancient city of Wisby — by the way I forgot all about that in the "Report" — it is full of old churches, mostly in ruins, but showing most interesting forms and especially vaulting. I found one in which the vaults were domical, and an old lime kiln which looked for all the world as if it had come from Cairo. Upsala and its surroundings of course. In southern Sweden, Linköpping, Lund and Malmö. Copenhagen — I must only give a catalogue — Helsingör, Fredriksborg, then over to Germany, Stralsund, Rostock, Wismar, Schwerin, Lübeck, Lüneburg, Bremen, Osnabrück, Münster, then to Holland — Arnhem, Nymegen, 'S Hertogenbosch (Bois le Duc) Utrecht, Amsterdam, Zaandam, Haarlem, Leyden, The Hague, Delft, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, — then Belgium — Antwerp, Malines, Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, Courtrai, Tournai, Brussels, (Waterloo) Louvain, Liège, — Holland again — Maastricht — Germany again — Aix-la-Chapelle, now Cologne where I have spent a very busy week. The lower Rhine churches interest me very much, and I have seen several not on the regular programme. Of course St Martins, St Maria im Capitol, St Apostles and St. Gereon here in the city are of supreme interest, but there are smaller churches in the country that are worthy of attention. I go up the Rhine next week, and hope to reach Berlin in November some time. Part of the winter I will spend in Russia, when our friend the Comma Bacillus is asleep, and then over to Paris. My health has been excellent. Please give my best regards to Professor Setany I have a letter in pickle for him, Professor Homer, Lawrence and all the rest. I hope you have your hands full of students. Yours truly

No 1. Architecture in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

There is a prevailing opinion concerning the architecture of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, especially among those architects who are on a mere predatory raid in Europe, that there is nothing to be found there worthy of notice and study. While this may be true from a comparative point of view, I venture to say that even in these countries there has been developed and preserved peculiarities found nowhere else, and that there are lessons to be learned in regard to the various styles of architecture, prevalent at one time or other all over Europe, that are by no means to be despised. This is more especially true to the student of architectural history to whom the origin and development of styles from the use of available material is of importance as well as the artistic success with which it has been done. From an ethnological point of view we are not led to expect much from the people of Scandinavia in artistic matters. A pure Teutonic race grafted on one of Turanian origin is not likely to possess a very imaginative nature, yet there is a love of color and form among them, at least for the grotesque, that has led to interesting features in costume and architecture, and has given to existing work a character as peculiar to the country as can be found with any people.

These northern countries are to a great extent covered with forests, and although stone is universal and of all qualities, yet the greater ease with which wood is procured and worked has led to an interesting timber architecture. To go no further back than the log house, although there is no trouble to find a more primitive type in use among the Lappo, we meet with this easy and substantial method of construction from North Cape to the Baltic. The well known method of piling squared

logs on one another and binding them by means of a mortised joint at the corners, was the almost exclusive construction among the older buildings. The quaint and picturesque farm buildings found all over Norway, especially in the inland districts of Telemarken and Österdal where the struggle for life is not quite so severe and there is opportunity to indulge in something more than bare necessities, are built in this way, and their peculiarities of broad projecting roofs, overhanging upper story and balconies may still be traced to practical needs in the older buildings. As in America, the farm houses of Norway are isolated and scattered over the country, but in the case of the larger so-called "gaards" or farms there is a systematic grouping of the buildings. As an illustration I may mention a gaard which I visited near the town of Tönset, district of Österdal. The farm house, a large log building blackened by age but with the window and door frames neatly painted, lay at the back of a grass covered court, and occupied one entire side. It was two stories in height roofed with curved red tile, of this pattern:  . The interior divisions into rooms were plainly indicated on the outside by the projecting ends of the partitions. This latter peculiarity is the result of a consistent carrying out of the construction of a log building, for there is no part of the house until the roof is reached, that is not built of logs with overlapping ends: partitions, floor joists, everything but the floor boards. The pitch of the roof was made by shortening the logs of the gable gradually and binding them in place by purlins. On these purlins lay the rafters, on

these the tiling laths. The logs of the house were jointed with each other, not only at the ends but their entire length by a rude groove and tongue thus:  and laid in reindeer moss to make a weather-tight joint. The doors and windows were made at the same time that the logs were laid, and not sawed out afterwards. To the right of the house, as the observer looked towards the entrance, were the stables, and opposite the store houses. These latter buildings are often decorated with elaborate carved ornaments, balconies and crestings. In the park of Oscarshall at Christiania, there has been reerected a number of these buildings, removed from Telemarken and Gudbrandsdal, to illustrate the better class of this kind of work, as done several centuries ago, and there is remarkable skill and taste displayed in the wood carving and painted decorations of the interior. This system of log construction is still in constant use, not only in the forest districts but in the villages, and even in larger towns where all the peculiarities of the log-house are carried out with sawed plank four inches thick and about ten inches wide. There is no frame whatever in these houses, but they are bound together by the mortised ends and cross partitions. Occasionally a log house is weatherboarded, a first step towards the modern frame house. All over Norway and in many parts of Sweden I met with the familiar lumber-yard — or I might call it jig-saw architecture, with all the good and bad features that we use: the cross bar and lattice ornaments in the gables, the sawed-out cornice decorations and crestings, the narrow window hoods and jig-saw panel decorations. These houses are often painted in bright

colors but still oftener are left in natural wood oiled and varnished. In the hotels at least, the interior is also plain wood, not plastering whatever. In Sweden I met with a curious grafting of classical detail on a log-house construction, a sort of "old colonial" that was not altogether unpleasing. It began by boxing the projecting ends of the logs and decorating the tops in imitation of pilaster caps. Then followed classical window and door frames and cornices, but always with the uncovered log walls.

Naturally the log method of construction does not tend to produce a monumental architecture, and if it did the perishable nature of the material would apparently prevent its preservation. There is however an exception in the case of the famous Stavekirker or timber churches of Norway, and the old bell-towers of Sweden. The Stavekirker, of which some fifteen still exist, date from the 12th Century, and are the remarkable result of the application of a log-house construction to the then existing Romanesque plan. It was my good fortune to examine two of the most famous of these buildings: the Bolskirke, from the Hallingdal, now re-erected in the park at Oscarshall, Christiania, and the largest of all, the Hitterdals Kirke, still in use on its original site in Telemarken. I also saw one of the smaller churches re-erected in the grounds of the Kgl. Norske Videnskabers Selskab at Trondhjem, but it was comparatively uninteresting. The Hitterdals Kirke, like most of the interesting spots in Norway, lies at a distance from any large town, and somewhat off of the usual line of travel, although formerly the route from the Hardanger to Christiania passed the

church. I made the visit an architectural pilgrimage by adding to the railway journey from Christiania to Kongsberg a twenty mile walk over the mountains and up the romantic Hitterdal. The surroundings of the famous church are rural in every respect; great trees, grain and hay fields on all sides, the white parsonage opposite, while the purple mountains in the background add an element always present in a Norwegian landscape. The building stands with its west front facing a churchyard and scores of unmarked graves, while to the north and east is an open space where the people congregate before and after services. The church itself has a most venerable appearance. The south side is blackened by the sun as if by fire, and all the corners are rounded and worn by age. The plan is cruciform, with a semicircular apse, after the fashion of the time. For its traditional date is 1164, but the aisles and ambulatory, contrary to the usual custom, are an exterior not an interior feature. This change no doubt came about by the need of a shelter for the congregation before the services began. Part of this outer aisle is still in its original condition, with an open arcade under the eaves and the ancient stone floor; but around the choir and apse it has been transformed into a vestry. Above this aisle, which is roofed separately, the building rises in receding stories to represent aisle and clere-story, although originally there were no windows nor any means of lighting the building from the outside. This may seem to contradict the theory that as we proceed northward the size of window-openings increases; but it must be remembered that glass at that early date was too expensive

a luxury for the poor country congregations of the extreme north, and also that the impressiveness of a Catholic service was not injured when seen only by the dim light of the altar candles. The exterior of the church is almost the same as it originally was – a maze of gables and turrets: a gable for each face of every feature, and a turret at each crossing. The choir and apse each terminate in a round conical roofed turret, and the nave in a square tower with four gables surmounted by a square spire. The entire outside is covered with thick shingles cut to a point, excepting the lowest story, which is boarded up and down and may be a late idea. The interior has been sadly injured by an attempted restoration in 1850, when the original high timber roof was replaced by a flat wooden ceiling, unsightly galleries added to the nave and windows cut in the sides. The door jambs, doors themselves capitals of columns and gable ornaments are carved with grotesque figures and elaborate arabesques, which resemble the Romanesque work of the time with an added originality easily traced to the ornaments of the Runic stones of the country. Altogether the Hitterdalskirke, as a representative of its class, presents a curious and interesting example of monumental architecture translated by a simple people into a perishable material. But perhaps this last expression had better be modified when we consider that the Hitterdalskirke dates nearly 100 years before the foundations of the Cologne Cathedral were laid, and that while it stands in comparatively perfect preservation, many of the so-called eternal monuments of stone have literally mouldered into dust.

The Bolo Kirke at Christiania, formerly stood in the Hallingdal, but was removed to the park of Oscarshall and all its original features restored. Although not as large as the Hitterdals Kirke it is more graceful in its proportions, and shows a more general use of light and elaborate ornament. The exterior aisle is here restored, and surrounds the entire church. The open arcade under the roof and panelled screen below it add very much to the appearance of the building and give weight to the suggestion of a gathering place for the people, where not only shelter but light and ample ventilation were needed. The interior is also in its primitive state. The ceiling follows the roof line and the open timber work increases the effect of the obscurity in producing the impression of great height. Here the smaller upper part of the nave is supported on round posts, and above the aisle thus formed is a sort of triforium arrangement. The carvings of this building as well as the many examples preserved in the museums of Christiania and Stockholm, would make an interesting study of the ornament of the time, and the influence of contemporary work in England and on the Continent. I might here mention that there has just appeared in Norway, an exhaustive work on the subject: "De Norske Stave-Kirker, af L. Dietrichson (Alb. Cammermeyer's forlag)", illustrated by some 300 wood-cuts.

Although as a rule the buildings of Sweden and Denmark are of a more durable character than in Norway, yet there exists in Sweden a class of buildings somewhat allied to the stavekirker and perhaps of as great antiquity. I refer to the curious bell-towers yet found

all over the country. I met with a number of them, notably at Stockholm, Gamle Upsala and at Söder=Köpping on the famous Göta Canal. The latter by far the most interesting that I saw, I discovered by the merest accident in wandering around the ancient town while the canal-boat was passing a series of locks. The town is not described in the ordinary guide book, but on inquiry I found that it was a place of some importance in the middle ages, as several large churches still testify. To one of these bearing the date 1296 the bell-tower was apparently attached. The tower was built of wood, covered with shingles similar in shape to those of the stavekirker. In this case the bell gallery was formed by four steep gables placed around a square and terminating in a very tall and slender spire at the crossing. The whole structure was supported on a lofty frame-work of timbers which sloped inward from all sides. A stairway to the gallery was enclosed in the centre. This was the most picturesque of those I examined, but the character of all was the same and it seems to represent the type.

In Norway the country church forms the dominant feature in every landscape that includes a town, for the nucleus of every settlement is its warehouse and its church. Almost without exception these churches consist of a big rectangular auditorium, a lower addition at the back for the chancel and a second for the vestry, and a tower with a low porch at the west front. The towers are always picturesque and of an almost infinite variety. Of brick and stone buildings there are very few in

Norway. At Throndenaes, far inside the Arctic circle, there is a church, apparently vaulted for there are buttresses, dating from mediaeval times, and for many years the northernmost church in Europe. But with one exception this is the only stone church in the district.

In Sweden it is quite different. All the village churches that I examined were of stone or brick overcast with plaster. The use of small material, notably brick, has led to several peculiarities, for instance the stepped gables and the sunken panel wall decorations. The principal gables are almost invariably stepped, especially in the older churches, those dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, and often the feature has been carried higher by terminating the massive square tower in a gable roof. The panel decorations mentioned always form a prominent feature in the façades of Swedish buildings, perhaps carried over from North Germany where they are universal. They are usually found in the triangular space under the gable and take the form of bands of crenellations or foils, as for example in the St. Drothens Church at Söderköpping, the Fosie Kirk and several others near Malmö. In Denmark the type follows southern Sweden to a great extent, but the influence of Germany has been too strongly felt to allow any marked national peculiarity.

To sum up the ordinary architecture of Scandinavia, therefore, I might say that in Norway the type is to be found in the wooden, especially the log houses, with their broad eaves, sawed and carved gable ornaments and angular openings. In Sweden the characteristics are best seen in the country churches which show the stepped gable and sunken panel

ornaments and more particularly the square tower with a stepped gable roof. In Denmark the blending of Swedish peculiarities with those of North Germany, resulting not in a separate type but the existence of both side by side.

When we come to consider monumental architecture proper there is little in Norway, much more in Sweden and Denmark but all of a character that does not stamp it as national. In the cathedrals of Stavanger, Trondhjem Upsala and Lund we do not find Norwegian and Swedish architecture but the prevailing styles on the continent at the time of their building. and their study is of interest in connection with the great periods of European architecture, the Romanesque and Gothic, not with the national style.

The first of these greater buildings that I met was the Cathedral of Stavanger on the south-west coast of Norway, The church was founded in the 11th century and to this period perhaps the Romanesque nave with its great round columns belongs. The influence of its English founder is easily traced in the Norman mouldings and details. There is a clere-story and aisles but no triforium nor transept, The choir, in the richest late-Gothic style, opens directly into the nave by a great round arch. It has a square east end flanked by square towers and the angles where the choir joins the nave are marked by octagonal turrets. The material is of a greenish chlorite-slate, which has been used in the late thorough restoration.

The only other building of historical importance in Norway is the ancient and famous Cathedral of Trondhjem, this

beautiful building stands in a large church-yard in the southern part of the town, and when the restoration which is now in progress is completed, will rank as one of the great buildings of Europe. not only in historical importance, for it has been the centre of civilization in Norway, but for the extent and beauty of the church itself. The plan is cruciform, with an octagon at the east end, and a chapter house on the south side. This chapter house and the transept, the oldest parts of the building, were built in the Romanesque style under English-Norman influence, during the 12th Century. The choir and octagon stand next in age, and exhibit a wealth of Gothic detail and expedients. The vaulting is especially interesting in its curious variations from the usual methods. Five times injured by fire the building shows but little of the original handwork but the repeated restorations have always preserved the first designs. The choir and octagon, with the chapter House, are the only parts now fully restored from the effects of the last fire, but the transept is in the hands of the workmen, and there is a prospect of the early completion of the whole. The nave, which was the latest portion built, was in the English-Gothic style, long and low ending in a great dome at the crossing. The west front apparently was possessed of two flanking towers and a central portal and the remains of sculpture indicate that it was richly decorated. But as it is at present, it is almost a total ruin, and barely indicate what it was in its perfection. The material is a local chlorite-slate with decorative columns in light colored marble. This material is very favorable for carved work, easy to manipulate and apparently durable.

Excepting these two cathedrals Norway has little to offer in monumental work. Christiania has nothing excepting perhaps the Gaule Akers Kirke, an interesting Romanesque building of the early part of the 12th Century. It is a cruciform church with a shallow transept, a great square tower at the crossing, a short choir and semicircular apse.

Sweden is somewhat more fortunate in buildings of importance, and in the cathedrals of Upsala and Lund, possesses at least two of the first class. Upsala dates from the 13th to the 15th Centuries and is a cruciform church of French model, that is to say of great height, with an ambulatory around the choir and radiating apsidal chapels. The interior is especially imposing with its great height of nave, 108 feet, and perspective effects of the ambulatory and chapels. The material is brick laid Flemish bond, with an attempt at color effect in the different tint of alternate bricks. The west front shows two great spires and there is a small spire at the crossing. The clere-story is strengthened by flying buttresses weighted by pinnacles, and the transepts, which project to the line of the aisle chapels, are flanked by tall turrets. The building is now completely restored, and at the time of my visit, the scaffolding of the frescoes was being removed preliminary to the reopening of the church. Lund in the extreme south of Sweden, as Upsala is in the north, on the other hand is a Romanesque building, also of great dignity and unity. It is of cruciform plan with a semicircular apse, and the details and arrangement follow northern Romanesque models. The west front shows two great towers (square), lightened at the top by three tiers of round arch arcades, and a gable with corbel

cornice and a loggia arcade on the line of main cornice of the nave. The apse is built after Rhenish Romanesque models with its loggia arcade under the roof and corbel cornices. The interior is most effective. The transept and choir are raised about nine feet above the level of the nave which gives much dignity to the east end, and the great size of the bays, artistic groupings and beautiful color decoration produce an interior not surpassed by the most elaborate Gothic. Under the raised choir and transept is an extensive crypt, with interesting decoration on the column shafts and capitals. The neighboring town of Linköping possesses in its cathedral a church of no mean proportions since its length is 320 feet, but the mixture of styles it exhibits and the very apparent crude workmanship place it below its sister church at Lund. At Malmö I found a church of entirely different character, the St Peters ~~Kyrka~~ Church the most important in the place. It was the first example of the brick architecture of north Germany that I met, and as it is a misplaced example, there is no need of a detailed description more than that it exhibits the characteristic glazed brick ornaments, brick mullions and tracery in the windows, and elaborated vaulting found along the south shore of the Baltic.

Of Denmark I saw but little more than Copenhagen. There I examined a number of churches mostly built in the Renaissance style of all periods, with the local variations in details, especially in the matter of towers and spires, that give to Copenhagen its characteristic appearance as seen from the sea.

The palaces of the three Kingdoms all date from the 17th ~~Century~~

to the 19th Centuries. That at Christiania is of no artistic interest, Kristiansborg at Copenhagen is in ruins, the result of a late fire, but the great edifice of Stockholm, erected by Nicholas Tessin in the 17th century in the Italian Renaissance style, is a truly noble building.

Two castles in Denmark which I included in my route were excellent examples of their class. Kronborg, at the entrance to the Baltic and famous as the locality of the play of Hamlet, was built in the 16th Century in a plain and massive style, but showing rich carving at the portals and parts of the court. The second, Slot Frederiksborg, is perhaps one of the most magnificently located and planned edifices of the kind in northern Europe. It has been thoroughly repaired since the fire of thirty years ago, and now presents the sight of a Renaissance castle in its perfection. The exterior with its many picturesque towers, successive courts richly decorated with carving and especially the magnificently decorated interior, make up an architectural group of which the Danes are justly proud.

In modern architecture, the larger cities of Norway, Sweden and Denmark show about the same class of work that is being built all over Europe, lacking perhaps the progressive tendency of the past few years on the Continent proper; for here we have the brick skeleton and plaster cast architecture that has been the curse of the old world for years past. There are exceptions of course, in the Johannes Kyrka at Stockholm, a brick Gothic church of good design and noble interior; the building of the "Academy för de fria Konsterna" at Copenhagen, which by the

way includes a school for architects, where free ~~use~~ and judicious use has been made of faience decoration; the University buildings at Upsala and Lund, both good examples in the French Renaissance, tempered by the modern German school; the Marble Church at Copenhagen, a domical building in Roman Renaissance and others, But the tendency to follow in the rut worn by all the nations of the world for the past hundred years. seems to be too strong as yet to offer much prospect for an early improvement, and until the wave of life that is beginning to rise in Germany, Holland and Belgium crosses the Baltic, we can look for little but the academic architecture of France badly translated into clumsy Teutonic work.

Cologne, September 29th 1892. Jos A Meyer Jr.