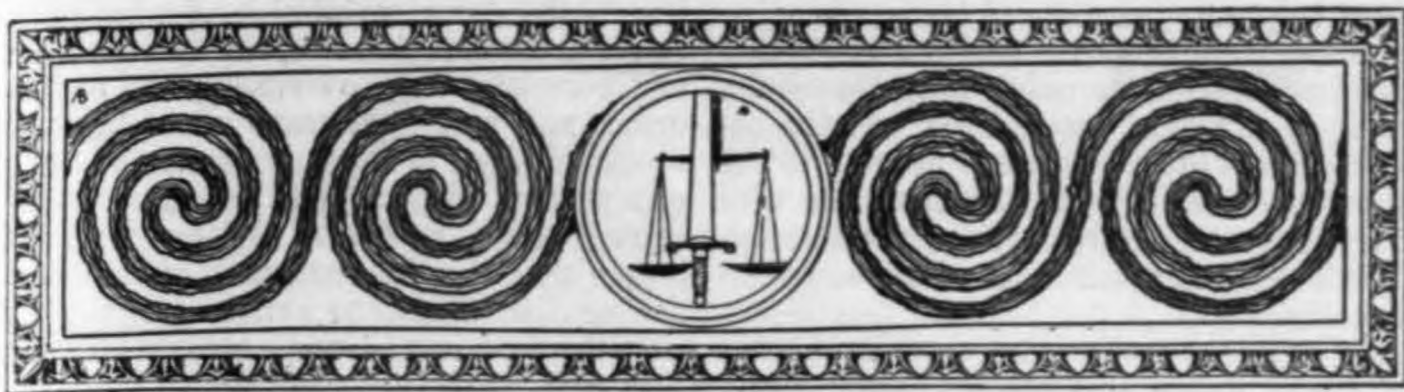




WHITE CITY AND CAPITAL CITY.

BY DANIEL H. BURNHAM,

Of the Commission for the Improvement of Washington.

THERE develops in the life of every American youth a state of restless desire, a dissatisfaction incited by the prospect of superior opportunities, a potent longing for pleasanter things. In this frame of mind, this eager desire and expectancy, the American, alert for the pleasanter and better, comes upon a new thing that, in its capacities to make him happy, transcends anything he has used or known. No ancient traditions bind him to the outworn. The new has come, and he will possess it. So works out the ambition of the New World's pioneer ancestry in the children of the new day. It is to a significant phase of our development in the arts, one happy sequel of the forceful ambition of mother and father working out in daughter and son, to which I beg to call attention. In the American there is developing, as it were, a new instinct.

Never in any country was there, up to 1893, so large a yearly expenditure of money for public improvements as was lavished in this. Nevertheless, throughout the land dissatisfaction was general over the results. Something indefinable was the matter, but the cause still lay unrevealed. Up to 1893 the American citizen, as a rule, had given little thought to the way that things generally looked about him. Not far had he then advanced in the development of a civic sense of the beautiful in the quality, quantity, and relation of the lands and buildings he works and plays in. He knew what building he liked and what he disliked. He had seen much public money spent, yet many things did not seem right. Things did not fit. Within him was an instinct groping outward. He wanted an example to give it form, breadth, and a base for grand

initiative. He wanted a vision, a picture materializing his yearnings.

The World's Fair came, and disclosed what all were unconsciously waiting to receive, a lesson in landscape architecture. What the matter was with our public improvements the Columbian Exposition made forever plain. Here, studied on the spot by millions, and by millions more through the activities of the Bureau of Publicity and Promotion, a great truth, set forth by great artists, was taught to all our people. This truth is the supreme one of the need of design and plan for whole cities. Now every one saw plainly that, though a pond be beautiful, a grassy lawn or bank beautiful, a building beautiful, all of these elements wrought into a harmonious design attain another and greater beauty, and that the beauty of the whole is superior to that of each of the several parts of the composition exploited separately. Thereupon this people, where education is universal, thought and reasoned. They found that, in some places, their money had been spent honestly and with artistic skill so far as individual objects were concerned; but their vital discovery was the fact that they had built great public works in piecemeal, unrelated, and without the unity of a comprehensive general plan. Thus awakened to the missing factor in public art, people took up the study of the wider side of public works; and serious efforts were made in San Francisco, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York to obtain and officially adopt a plan for all future public improvements, and to eliminate the objectionable from works already in place. From these centers the spirit of agitation and reform has spread, and hopeful evidences of popular understanding of the value of great general plans

—of the basic principle of landscape art—multiply throughout the land; while, guiding and invigorating the public purpose, are the civic or municipal associations, and the periodical and other literature devoted to the great question of how man shall live with his fellow-man in harmony, as befits the intellectual level to which he has attained in this country.

It would seem, therefore, that the World's Fair was first of all a result of dumb desire already strong in all American hearts, and, second, that it became not only the embodiment of what people vaguely felt, but that it also taught that public money put into public buildings and grounds is used rightly, and so economically, only when every part of the system of public works is related to every other part, and each and all parts are constructed after a general plan.

A friend of Ruskin once pointed to an ugly ink-blot while discussing the artistic value of details, and said that nothing could be done with *that*. Ruskin soon after sent him a beautiful handkerchief, the border of which was composed of the blot laid out in series. Out of a blot, formless and solitary, a good general plan created beauty. Americans, now having found the function of plan, an element as vital in successful art as in a campaign military or industrial, are taking up the problem of public improvements with an intelligence and prescience never yet applied upon such national questions. As a people we are beginning to see that in no architectural or landscape composition do many parts of themselves make a whole, unless by plan and design they are primarily laid out to have the reciprocal relations of a whole. A perception of this principle, animating the continued use of vast outlay in public works, will bear fruit that will signalize this century. For the people have seen and known, and it is the logic of their training that what they know and want, that they will have. It is much when the many faintly catch the vision of the few: the useful flowers only in the atmosphere of the beautiful.

Out of the World's Fair came popular understanding and feeling of the intent and scope of landscape architecture. Out of these has come a national purpose to express the fullness of this art in a no less representative place than the city of Washington. Here, in the nation's capital, the American people have declared shall be

the theater for an exhibition of what plan, single and comprehensive, can do to develop and correlate the diversified parts of the urban and rural landscape of an already beautiful city. In this city, itself the issue of a perfect topographical arrangement designed under President Washington, the people ask for a demonstration of the sense and soul of landscape art, so magnificent that the capitals of Europe shall confess it; so simple that the rawest county-seat in the newest State, having seen the vision of the World's Fair, shall grasp and apply. The general plan is the thing. No longer shall a representative of the people, knowing some things well, but among them not art, go forth and out of hand ordain that "about there" shall arise a monumental edifice, "about there" for generations stand a great something repudiating the past, affronting the present, and forever blockading the future.

We go forward. What the people desire, their great representatives feel. The United States Senate has authorized its committee to obtain a plan for the improvement of the District of Columbia. When the people cry in this Western republic, "Let the consuls look to it that the republic take no harm," they bid their wise men not alone to safeguard them from foreign invasion or internal corruption, but to remove and forever keep from view the ugly, the unsightly, and even the commonplace.

It is the signs of the time that the people will no more continue to endure gross violations of landscape art than they will the disgusting and disorderly in domestic and municipal environment. Sentiment is gathering to the form of an edict that the offensive shall not be forced upon the multitude, and that when the chief expenditure is of brains, and not money, they shall no longer be denied the right to live among beautiful things. And I say again that it is not so much money that is wanted to shape municipal improvements in response to the growing taste of the American people as it is a general, a well-thought-out plan—a plan that reaches out not merely through the life of one throw of the political dice, but beyond men and seasons and policies, for a century. What is logical is also beautiful. The monuments of Pericles, reared in the zenith of Attic supremacy, are logical. The pilgrims of twenty-four centuries say that they are also beautiful.



THE IMPROVEMENT OF WASHINGTON CITY.

FIRST PAPER.

BY CHARLES MOORE,

Author of "The Northwest under Three Flags," Clerk of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia.

WHEN President Washington was charged by Congress with the duty of superintending the creation of a capital city on the banks of the Potomac, he sent Major Andrew Ellicott to mark the metes and bounds of the federal territory, and immediately afterward commissioned Major Peter Charles L'Enfant to make drawings "of the particular grounds most likely to be approved for the site of the federal town and buildings." During the Revolution Count d'Estaing had commended L'Enfant to Washington, and the latter had formed a good opinion of the young French engineer's abilities. When peace had been conquered, L'Enfant settled in New York city, where he was enjoying a lucrative practice when Washington summoned him.

Such was his confidence in the President that he immediately gave up his private work, and threw himself heart and soul into the task that, while it won for his name enduring fame, brought to him personally nothing but disgrace, neglect, and poverty prolonged through more than a quarter of a century.

Arriving in Georgetown in the March of 1791, L'Enfant was soon joined by Washington, and the two tramped over hills and through forests to discover the most advantageous sites for the Congress house and the President's palace. These two points having been located, L'Enfant began his congenial task of laying out a city, reporting by mail twice a week to Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State. Calling on Jefferson for maps, he received large and

accurate ones of Strasburg, Amsterdam, Paris, Milan, Turin, Frankfort, and other cities visited by the Secretary during his travels in Europe. On the margins of these maps were copious notes made by that observant traveler; but Jefferson proffered no advice beyond a few general observations, such as exhortations to adhere to classical models and those modern examples of architecture which had been approved by persons of taste.

A lieutenant in the French provincial service when he came to America at the age of twenty-two, L'Enfant must have been familiar with landscape-architecture as practised by the great Lenôtre, whose work, not only in France, but also in England and in Rome, is still unsurpassed. Washington was not unacquainted with the stately art of landscape-gardening as exemplified in the capital of his native State and the great plantations laid out according to plans brought over; and Jefferson's taste had been developed by actual study of some of the world's greatest examples of civic art. Two plans were drawn by L'Enfant, only to be rejected by his principals; but the third was accepted and adopted. In this accepted plan undoubtedly Washington and Jefferson each had some part, and for it Ellicott made valuable suggestions; but the origin and development of the general scheme belong alone to L'Enfant.

The commissioners who had the general oversight of all matters pertaining to the District of Columbia had decided on a system of streets running from north to south and from east to west. Upon this rectilinear arrangement L'Enfant imposed those diagonal avenues, radiating from the Capitol and the White House, which give to Washington its distinguishing feature. He also made disposition of the public buildings so as to secure to each its appropriate landscape setting; and he was most particular to preserve the axial treatment which is the cardinal principle of Lenôtre's work. In a word, he planned the capital city as a work of art, in which each feature should have a distinct relation to every other feature; and thus he gave to the scheme that feeling of unity which to-day excites the interest and admiration of the visitor in Paris.

In L'Enfant's plan the one great park of the city was to be the space connecting the Congress garden with the President's park south of the White House. Here a grand avenue four hundred feet broad and about a mile in length, bordered by gardens flanked with buildings, was to dignify the approach

to the halls of legislation; and where the axis of the White House intersected the axis of the Capitol was to be placed the equestrian statue of Washington voted by the Continental Congress in 1783. The twenty-five springs within the limits of the city were to furnish an abundant water-supply for fountains and cascades, and Tiber Creek was to be utilized as a canal to accommodate commerce, save where the waters should flow through the public gardens. In this manner he proposed to overcome the arid conditions which prevail during the long Washington summers, or at least to mitigate them. The canal was built; in its day it served its full commercial purpose, and even now the small portion remaining uncovered is in use. The cascades were never realized; and the most urgent need of the capital city to-day is fountains as numerous and as copious as those which give life and beauty to Rome.

L'Enfant became so absorbed in his plan that he conceived an exaggerated idea of his own importance. Fearing lest speculators would select the choicest sites, he perversely withheld his map from the commissioners, who needed it to satisfy purchasers at the sale of lots which was to supply the funds for the construction of the public buildings. Washington, who had received L'Enfant "not only as a scientific man, but one who added considerable taste to professional knowledge," and who regarded him as, by all odds, the person best qualified for the work in hand, intimated to the commissioners that the feelings of men of genius "are always alive," and that it is policy to humor them, or to put on the appearance of doing so.

Unfortunately, however, it was found impossible to employ Major L'Enfant "about the federal city in that degree of subordination which was lawful and proper," and so Jefferson dismissed him after he had been employed only a single year. The President urged that his compensation be ample—twenty-five hundred or three thousand dollars: but L'Enfant placed the value of his services at fifty thousand dollars, and refused to accept a less sum, nor would he accept an appointment as professor of engineering at West Point; and until the day of his death, in 1825, the tall, erect figure of the courtly Frenchman trod the corridors of the Capitol as he vainly pleaded with Congress for the reward he believed to be his due.

Washington and Jefferson not only adopted L'Enfant's plan, but so long as they were in power they protected it from perversions,

just as they also guarded Thornton's plans for the Capitol from threatened changes by builders claiming to be architects; and by the time these two worthies had passed from the scene the main features of the original scheme were fixed beyond possibility of loss, although not beyond neglect and temporary perversion. Lack of money in the federal treasury at first prevented a full realization of those elements which made for beauty, and in later years there was a marked decline in public taste.

The Civil War found and left Washington a straggling Southern town, ill built, unpaved, with cattle and swine roaming the streets at will. During the war the poor and homeless negroes, who naturally drifted to the capital, squatted upon its vacant lands and built a cordon of huts on the range of hills that commands the city on the north.

Then came the Shepherd régime, during which Washington was improved with a ruthless hand. Grades were changed, streets cut down and hastily paved with wood; Congress was outwitted and defied; judges were lured on excursions from the city in order to prevent them from restraining the demolition of unsightly structures; money was poured out like a Potomac flood; taxes were doubled, and an enormous debt was piled up: but, after all has been said, the fact remains that the result was amply worth the cost.

Meantime two great works had been accomplished. The Capitol extension, planned by Walter, had been finished during the war by the completion of the superbly proportioned dome; and in 1884 the half-built Washington monument, which had been an eyesore for a generation, was carried to its present splendid height. Unfortunately, however, the engineers, despairing of building a firm foundation at the intersection of the two axes as planned by L'Enfant, placed the monument off center as regards both the Capitol and the White House. Moreover, the space where was to have been the grand avenue connecting those two monumental buildings had become a common pasture, watered by a canal lined with wood-yards; and, as if with the purpose of destroying forever L'Enfant's conception, in 1870 the citizens invited, and Congress sanctioned, the location of a railroad across the Mall.

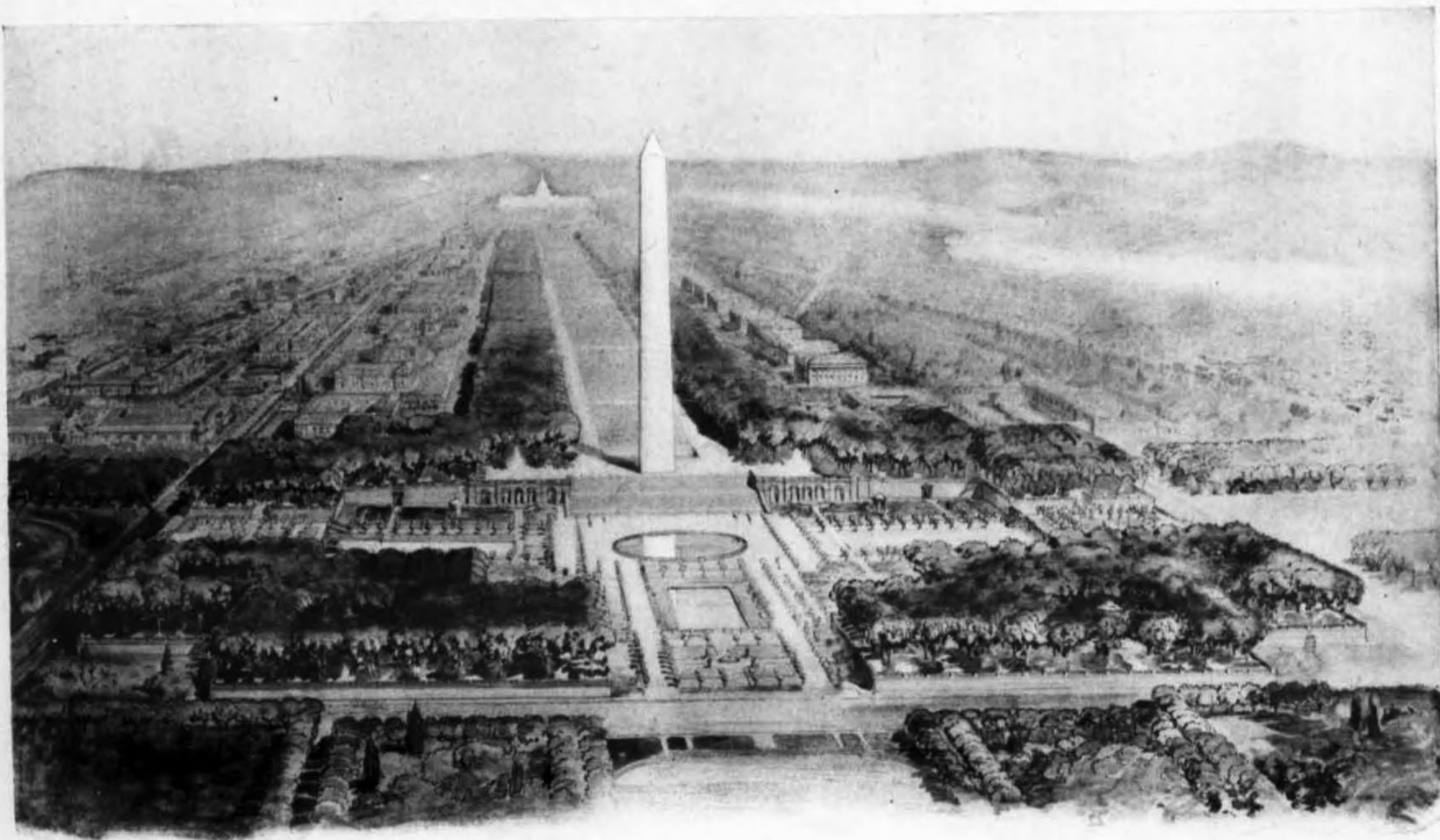
It is true that the parks and circles which L'Enfant had reserved for improvement by the States came to be adorned with statues of heroes of the Rebellion, until to-day Washington can boast of more bronze horsemen

than any other city on the globe possesses; that, year by year, the small parks have been improved, the streets have been well paved, and many excellent residences have been built; and that large park areas have been either purchased or reclaimed from malarial marshes. The one thing lacking in the development of the capital has been that unity for which L'Enfant strove.

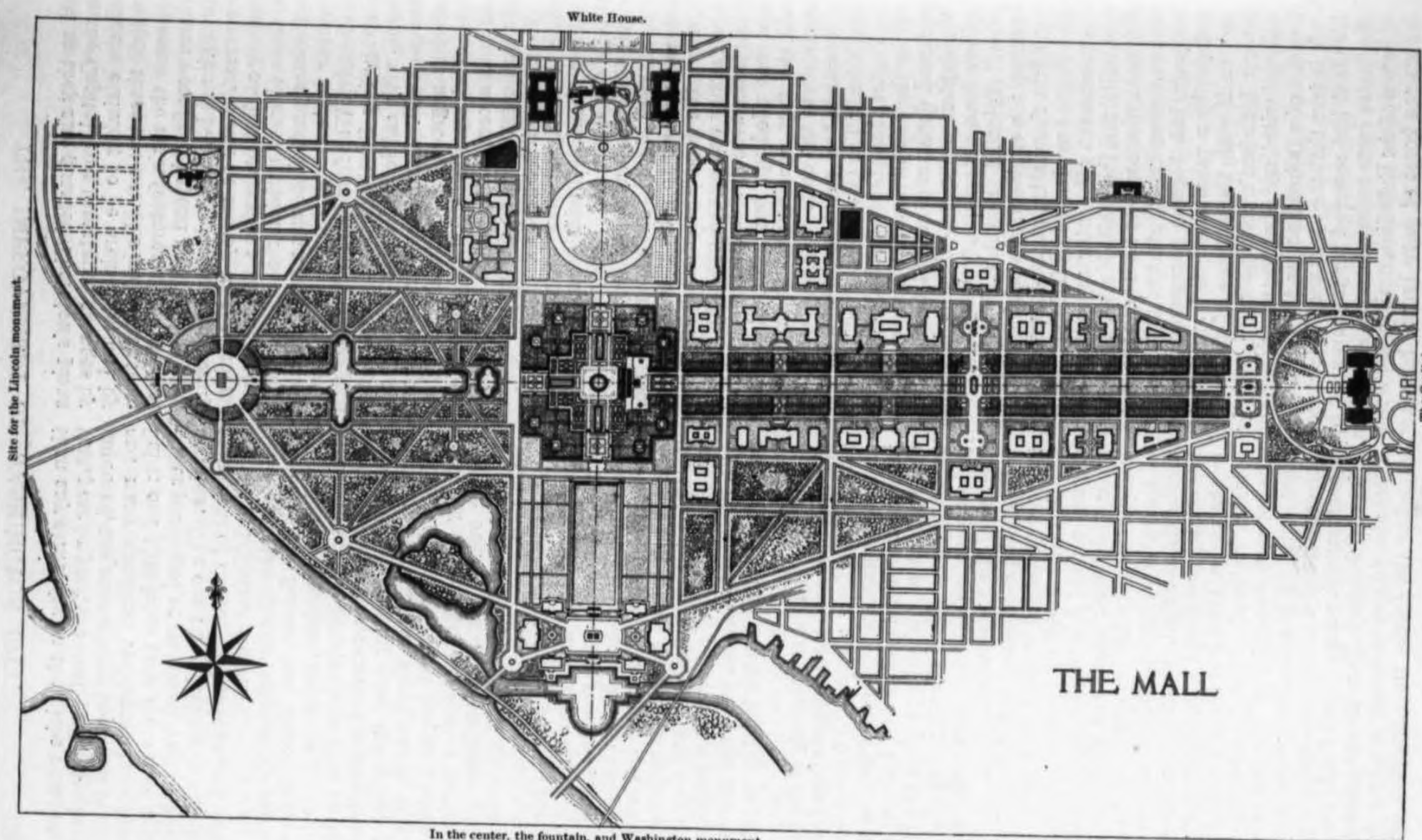
Such was the situation when, at the special session of the Senate, last March, Senator McMillan of Michigan, for some years the chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, secured the adoption of a resolution directing that committee to report a plan for the development of the entire park system of the District, and authorizing the employment of experts to prepare such a plan. A conference with the Institute of American Architects resulted in the selection of a commission composed of Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago, Charles F. McKim and Augustus St. Gaudens of New York, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., of Brookline, Massachusetts. It so happened that these men had worked together to produce the results achieved at the Chicago Exposition, and thus they were able to bring to their new task a familiarity with like problems, and, what was more important, the ability to work together in entire accord.

No sooner was the membership of the commission announced than requests for aid and advice came from a number of the officers of the government who had duties to perform in relation to parks and buildings in the District of Columbia; and at the very outset was established a feeling of confidence and coöperation that promises well for the success of the undertaking.

When the commission began to study the problem presented to them, they were satisfied that their first duty was to return to the original plan of L'Enfant, which had found favor with Washington and Jefferson. In order to treat the Mall as a unit, the removal of the railroad-tracks and the station was absolutely essential. Happily, the appeal of the commission found sympathetic response on the part of President Cassatt of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Most fortunately, also, the common ownership of the two railroad lines entering Washington makes possible the creation of a monumental union station, a consummation long hoped for in the District of Columbia. Thus the commission has been able to secure terms on which the removal of the tracks from the Mall may be



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE MONUMENT AND APPROACHES, LOOKING EAST—THE CAPITOL IN THE BACKGROUND.



In the center, the fountain, and Washington monument.

brought about by the favorable action of Congress.

The plans now before Congress contemplate not only the improvement of the Mall and the monument grounds, but also drive-ways, boulevards, and park connections, the reclaiming for park purposes of the Anacostia Flats, the acquisition of additional park areas in those portions of the District now ill provided with breathing-spaces, and

where the streets cross the Mall great bands of light lie across the stretches of tree-shadow; carriages and riders pass and repass on the roadway half covered by the grateful shade, while pedestrians linger under the wide-spreading trees. Thus, by a simple device of planting, the monument is brought into the vista of the Capitol.

Or suppose that the observer stands at the monument, with his gaze still directed to the



VIEW OF THE TERRACES AND THE MONUMENT FROM THE GARDEN.

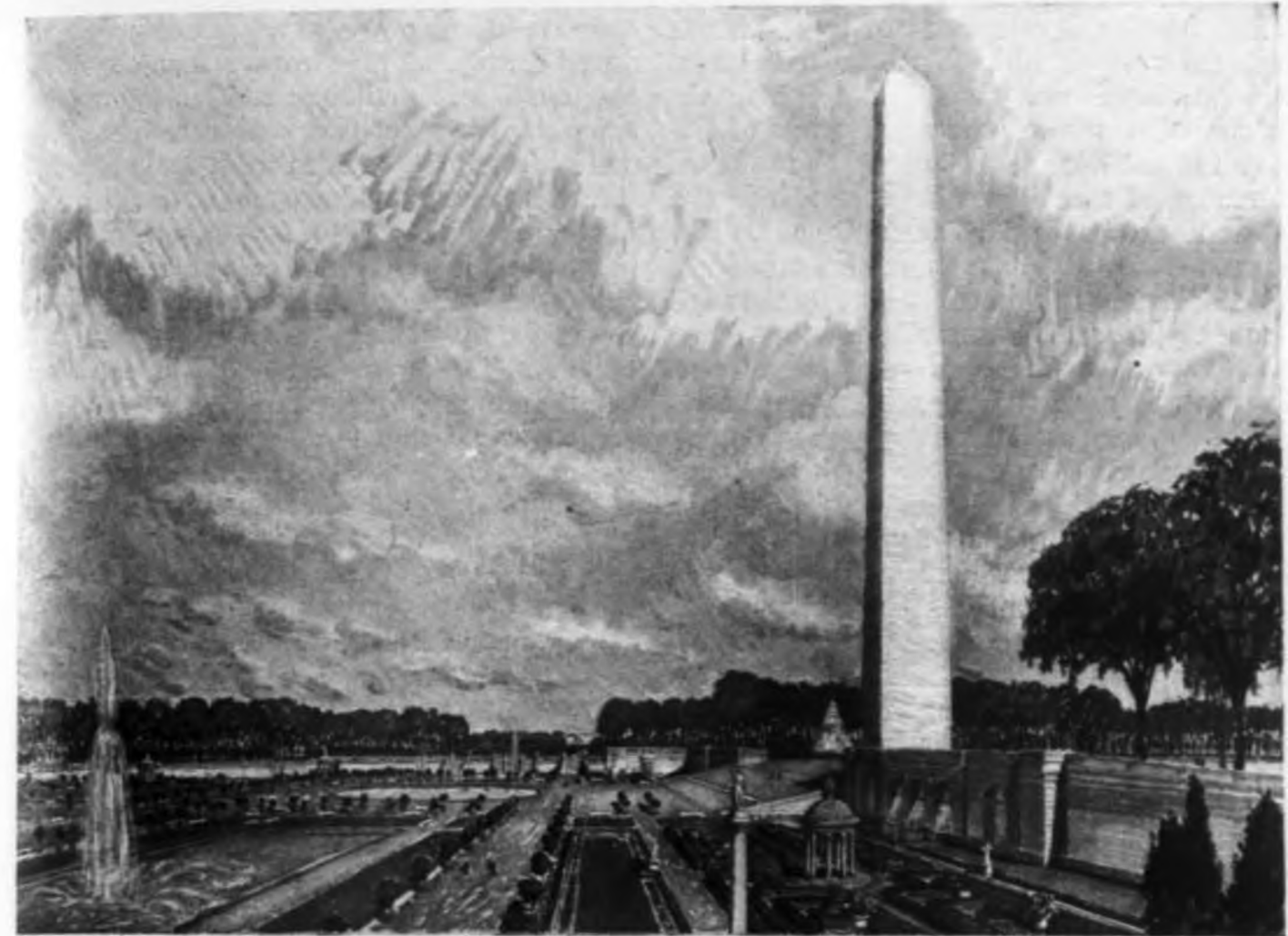
the development of areas already possessed and awaiting improvement.

When one recalls the setting of many foreign capitals and their flat topography, one realizes that with so superb a beginning, and with the majestic monument in a vista closed by the Potomac and the Virginia hills, the possibilities for beautiful treatment of Washington are unequalled. The new plans open the way to realize these possibilities.

Let one imagine himself standing on the western terrace of the Capitol on a summer afternoon. At the foot of the extended grounds great fountains toss clouds of refreshing spray into the heated atmosphere. From the foot of the Capitol hill to and up the monument slope, a mile and a half distant, two lines of stately elms march majestically in column of fours, one column on each side of a carpet of greensward three hundred feet wide. Buildings of white marble gleam behind the rows of elms;

setting sun. The space about him, as extensive as the piazza facing St. Peter's, is flanked by elms beneath which children play. At his feet broad stairs lead down to a formal garden inclosed by wooded terraces; and from this garden the broad opening leads to a long canal, tree-bordered, as at Versailles. Nearly a mile away, where the axis meets the Potomac, is a great *rond-point* surmounted by a Doric portico commemorating the one man in our national history who is worthy to stand with Washington—Abraham Lincoln.

From this point of divergence a memorial bridge leads straight across the broad Potomac to the terraced slopes of Arlington, surmounted by the temple-like mansion, which, once the home of Robert E. Lee, now stands sentinel among the thousands of graves of Union soldiers. From the same point of departure one road leads up the river to the valley of Rock River, and thence



VIEW OF THE MONUMENT AND GARDEN FROM THE SOUTH TERRACE, LOOKING TOWARD THE WHITE HOUSE.

to the great park which takes its name from that stream; while a second drive extends down the Potomac to the park formed by the engineers in reclaiming those malarial flats whose miasmal emanations, in Garfield's case, are believed to have completed the work of Guiteau's bullet.

From the portico at the rear of the White House the eye looks off over, first, the circular parade-ground, and thence over the garden at the foot of the monument, which is treated as an adjunct to the towering needle, thus establishing the reciprocity between the two structures that now is missed by reason of the construction of the monument off the axis. The space still farther to the south, between the garden and the Potomac, is arranged with basins for swimming and boating, with gymnasiums and ball-fields, with a stadium for games and displays of fireworks, and with all those means of athletic recreation which now are a necessity in civic life. The White House vista may be completed, perhaps, by a colossal figure, emblematic of the republic, standing serenely on the shore of the broad river, or even rising from the smooth surface of the water.

Fronting on the White Lots, as the parade-ground is called, public or semi-public

buildings may well be placed—on the east perhaps an armory, to be occupied by the battalion of District militia, and to be used for inaugural balls or other large gatherings; on the west, continuing the line of the Corcoran Art Gallery, the administration building of the contemplated National University. So, too, the spaces fronting on Lafayette Square may come to be occupied by buildings for the Departments of State and of Justice, and by such other monumental structures as the growing needs of the republic may demand. Possibly, too, it will be found advantageous to build for the President an office building, and thus relieve the present overcrowded condition of the White House.

The historic Pennsylvania Avenue, also, will have its south side lined with such structures as a municipal building for the District of Columbia, a modern market in which the space is ample to accommodate the traffic now done on the public streets, and a hall of records for storing in safety government archives. And the Capitol grounds, too, should be faced only by public buildings, of which the number already projected is sufficient to complete the square indicated by the Capitol and the Library of Congress.

The return to the original type of treat-

ment for the development of the Mall was not determined without most careful consideration. During the summer of 1901 the commission studied the great parks of Europe: in the Borghese Gardens, on the broad terraces of the Villa d'Este, amid the still splendid ruins of Hadrian's Villa, on the Grand Canal at Venice, on the magnificent Maria Theresia Platz at Vienna, on the swift Danube curbed between miles of stone quays at Budapest, in the Gardens of the Luxembourg, and amid the splashing fountains of Vaux-le-Vicomte they threshed out many a perplexing problem. Bushy Park and Windsor Great Park, while they emphasized the beauty of long stretches of green, warned the commission against disturbing the central space by a commonplace roadway; and Hatfield House showed conclusively the surpassing beauty of a *tapis vert* bordered by tall trees.

Will these plans, developed after much study by competent men, be carried out? That is for Congress to determine; but there is good reason to believe that the work will begin at once and be prosecuted continuously. The new building for the Department of Agriculture is to form a portion of the Mall improvement; and the supervising architect of the Treasury sought and obtained the aid of the commission in preparing the program, in selecting the architects for the competition, and in making the award. The removal of the railroad-tracks from the Mall will necessitate the improvement of the space vacated, together with the adjoining areas.

The Secretary of War has made the approval of plans for two new bridges across the Potomac contingent on the approval of the commission; and various other projects that have been delayed for the want of agreement as to the sites to be occupied now will have that obstacle removed. Moreover, there has been manifested throughout the country a conviction that the day has

come to develop Washington according to a well-considered plan, rather than continue the haphazard building that has gone on since the L'Enfant plan was lost sight of.

The large degree of interest and coöperation the commission have met with since the beginning of their work is decidedly encouraging; and if only the people of the United States will support their representatives in Congress in making the necessary appropriations, the improvement of the national capital along the lines laid down by Washington and Jefferson will be accomplished speedily.

It is not essential to the success of the plans that large appropriations be made immediately. Considerable amounts of money are appropriated annually for carrying on the development of the District of Columbia in order to meet the needs of the increasing population, and from year to year new buildings are being erected by the government. The public offices are now scattered about the city, many of them being located in private buildings, the rentals of which are out of all proportion to the interest paid by the government on its loans.

There is every reason to believe that in the near future a number of the bureaus will be provided with buildings adequate to the demands of the work to be done; and the two houses of Congress are considering the question of erecting office buildings of a monumental character for the use of their members individually. What the new plans do contemplate mainly is that when appropriations are made from time to time, the buildings shall be placed and the parks shall be developed according to a definite system; and if this principle shall be established, the result must follow that the capital of the United States, already beautiful for situation, will stand as one of the most beautiful cities of the world.

