

# The Outlook for Western Civilization

## *III—Engineers of a New Renaissance*

BY GLENN FRANK

WITH this issue my editorship of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE comes to an end and I turn from journalism to the kindred field of education, assuming this month the Presidency of the University of Wisconsin. Readers of the July and August issues of the magazine will know that this is the last of a series of three papers in which I set out to pull together into some sort of coherence the observations on the status and prospects of Western civilization which I have been making intermittently in these columns during the last four years.

In the July issue I discussed an existing literature of despair in which post-war pessimism has been expressed with an unprecedented richness of detail. This is the literature in which we meet the confident prophecy that Western civilization is headed toward a new dark age. I dismissed, as not germane to that discussion, the writings of those practitioners of intellectual sadism who eke out a journalistic living by terrorizing the credulous with lurid prophecies of wholesale social disaster. I defined the literature of despair exclusively in terms of the sober second thoughts of accredited scholars whose research in their respective fields has led them to fear

that we are citizens of a disintegrating civilization.

I outlined what seem to me to be the seven dominant fears that have inspired and have been inspired by this literature of despair. I described, with such detail as space permitted, the biological fear of racial deterioration, the psychological fear of crowd-mindedness, the political fear of undisciplined democracy, the economic fear of dehumanization through over-mechanization, the historical fear of social senescence, the administrative fear of unmanageable bigness and complexity, and the moral fear of apostasy to standards.

I felt that an attempt to clarify these contemporary fears would be a distinct service to public thinking at this time, for unless we meet and master the social fears of our time, social health will be impossible. The conquest of fear is the beginning of health, happiness, and achievement for either a man or a civilization. If I go through life glancing uneasily over my shoulder at dreaded dangers, I can neither work well by day nor sleep well by night. And this literature of despair is making clear to us that the problem of fear and how to meet it is as real a problem for us as it was for our primitive ancestors.

Our primitive ancestors had to face wild beasts that were stronger than they. They were stricken dumb by the terrors of earthquake and lightning and flood and famine which they did not understand. Wild beasts are now confined to jungles and circuses. We have conquered most of the terrors of nature. Those we have not conquered we at least understand. And a fear understood is a fear half conquered. But we have taken on a lot of new fears for old. The stage-setting of our lives is different, but it is the same old play of fear and flight.

The riddle of civilization is breeding fears for us as the riddle of nature bred fears for our primitive ancestors. And despite our veneer of sophistication we are reacting to our fears very much as they reacted to theirs. The dogmas of disillusionment scattered through our literature of despair are to us what the swarm of evil spirits were to our primitive ancestors.

This literature of despair is affecting all of us, whether we read it or not. It is subtly injecting the poison of fear into the intellectual atmosphere that we breathe. A clear understanding of this literature of despair is socially imperative because only so can we pull our fears out of the gray twilight of rumor in which they are likely to take on all sorts of exaggerated shapes and sizes. Our prophets of doom have, therefore, performed a significant social service by their public dissection of our fears, for if we can only drag the fears of our generation into the daylight, half the battle against them will be won. Those that are legitimate we can fight; those that are groundless we can forget.

In the August issue I discussed an

emerging literature of hope. This is the literature that has led certain adventurous minds to believe that, while a new dark age may be probable, a new renaissance is possible. I dismissed, as not germane to that discussion, the merely sweet sentimentalities of the professional optimists. I suggested that there may be a difference as wide as the world between a literature of optimism and a literature of hope. A literature of optimism may be inspired by nothing worthier than a flight from facts; it may be nothing more than a lyric preachment of a he-can-who-thinks-he-can-you-can-pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps philosophy. A literature of hope, on the other hand, faces with utter frankness all of the ugly facts, accepts with gratitude all sections of the literature of despair in which the facts and sources of actual disease are uncovered, submits to us an inventory of the forces of health that are available and awaiting our intelligent use, and warns us against optimism unless and until we actually harness these forces of health and put them at work in our private lives and our public affairs.

We would do well to throw into the waste-basket or the fire all of the merely optimistic literature regarding Western civilization that has been written by human Chanticleers whose only contribution to contemporary discussion is a loud crow for Utopia. We can neither prevent a new dark age nor produce a new renaissance by the voluble inanities of the booster; such achievements wait upon the technic of the builder. A new renaissance must depend upon engineers rather than cheer-leaders.

It was, I admitted in the August

discussion, a little misleading for me to speak of a literature of hope with the same definiteness I used in speaking of the literature of despair, for no such definitely formulated literature of hope exists as yet. That is to say, we have no literature of hope in the sense of confident prophecies of a new renaissance to match the confident prophecies of a new dark age that dot the pages of the literature of despair.

I used the phrase "a literature of hope" very loosely to suggest the vast mass of incoördinated raw materials of renewal that have been thrown up as by-products of the sciences, philosophies, and practical experience of modern mankind. These new ideas, new idealisms, and new spiritual values, fortified by all that is valid in the knowledge of the past, are lying about us to-day in confusion and challenge, waiting only for adequate leadership to bring them together and to touch them into life. We are to-day threatened by a new dark age because we have not used these raw materials as we should have used them in the building of family life, the practice of politics, the management of business and industry, the organization of international affairs, and the development of educational policy and procedure. We may, I am convinced, realize a renaissance of Western civilization within the lifetime of this generation if we consciously set ourselves to the task of making these raw materials the basis of the policy and action of our common life.

Western civilization must, as I see it, choose between voluntary social control and involuntary social suicide. And the only sound social control will be a control in terms of the best

knowledge that we have. The problem of our generation is to bring knowledge into contact with life and to make it socially effective. The men and women who can help us to do this will be the engineers of a new renaissance. How are we to go about this gargantuan task? What sort of leadership do we need? It is with some aspects of this problem of leadership and procedure that I want now to deal.

## § 2

*The New Encyclopedists.* I suggest that we need to have done for modern knowledge something analogous to what Diderot and the Encyclopedists did in the eighteenth century. To be specific, I think Western civilization would profit vastly from the labors of a group of men who would go, with conscientious care, through the findings of modern biology, psychology, anthropology, experimental ethics, genetics, economics, sociology, chemistry, physics, through the findings of all the natural and social sciences, pulling out, tabulating, and reducing to easily understandable terms the net social and spiritual contribution that each of these adventures of the modern mind has made to the future of our civilization. This would give us something approaching an inventory of the raw materials of social renewal upon which we must depend.

All of these sciences have lying, relatively unused, in their laboratories certain socially usable ideas that would, if really used, lift the whole tone and temper of modern life. Unfortunately many of these ideas are to-day buried under the jargon of technical scholarship and effectively insulated from contact with the common life. Now and then fitful and

fractional glimpses of these ideas filter into the press and are pounced upon by demagogues who misinterpret them and use them in a misguided warfare against the whole salutary output of the modern mind. If we are to save the results of modern research from slander at the hands of demagogues or from sterility as the private luxuries of the sophisticated, there must be, I think, some soundly conceived attempt to winnow out the net social and spiritual contributions of scholarship from the chaff of attendant detail and to translate these contributions into the vernacular. I doubt that we have much right to complain of the victories won by the evangelism of superstition until we have matched it by an equally earnest evangelism of scholarship.

Scholarly research may unearth and amass all of the necessary raw materials for a thoroughgoing renaissance of Western civilization, but these raw materials will be about as valuable as so much sawdust if they lie unused in our laboratories or remain buried in technical brochures that none save the initiated can understand. And they will not be used in any socially effective way until the man in the street has at least a bowing acquaintance with them. If we are to realize a renaissance we must somehow thrust the results of research into the stream of common thought and make them the basis of social action. The creative scholar is the hope of civilization, but his contribution does not become a social asset until it gets beyond the stage of inarticulate accuracy.

I realize the objections that will arise in the scholar's mind to the suggestion that we undertake to tabulate and translate into the vernacular

the net contributions that the sciences have so far made to the future of civilization. It will be worth while to consider two of the objections that will almost inevitably be made.

First, it may be said that any such attempt to make science give orders to civilization would violate both the spirit and method of science which has enabled the modern mind to discover these ideas and principles that might mean so much to our future. The creative scholar has an insatiable appetite for facts and an insistent reluctance to draw conclusions. To this modesty of scholarship the world owes a debt it can never discharge. I realize the importance of suspended judgment in the work of the scholar, but it seems to me that we must also face the fact that a civilization will starve on a diet of suspended judgments alone. The scholar can never turn dogmatist. He must ever hold his conclusions open to revision in the light of further research. This does not, however, do away with the fact that, unless civilization is to play into the hands of selfish interests and social inertia, society must evolve some technic for using the results of scholarly research in the determination of its basic policies.

The end of all research and analysis is synthesis and social application. This must mean, it seems to me, that every now and then we must gather up the results of a period of research into what, for want of a better term, may be called a series of tentative dogmatisms upon which society can act until further research reveals wiser bases of action. Such tentative dogmatisms would not do violence to the scientific spirit; they would, on the contrary, faithfully express it. The

scholar is rightfully fearful that the popular mind is so accustomed to the changeless dogmas of arbitrary authority or superstition that it would misinterpret the purpose of scholars if they offered to society tentative dogmas from the laboratory. But the solution of this difficulty does not lie in the scholar's refusing to accept the responsibilities of social leadership; the solution lies rather in the development of an education that will inspire in students the scientific spirit as well as retail to them the discoveries of science. A generation trained in the scientific spirit will not be afraid to act upon tentative dogmas from the laboratory and to scrap them as soon as further knowledge proves them inadequate. We are now, I think, in a period that calls for a clear although frankly tentative inventory of the socially usable ideas that have been produced by the natural and social sciences. The New Encyclopedists are overdue.

Second, it may be said that the scholar's business is pure science, not applied science, and that his goal is truth, not utility. This is, of course, an accurate analysis of the aims and temper of the productive scholar. Pure science produces nitric oxide directly from the air, not because some scholar is interested in the nitrate market, but because he is animated by the itch to know. The result of this research, however, is soon recognized as a usable fact that may completely revolutionize the nitrate market. Pure science gives us vacuum-tubes, but before many years have passed this result of pure science becomes socially usable in terms of radiotherapy. That is to say, the end of pure science is applied science, despite the fact that

the pure scientist may work best when innocent of any utilitarian motive.

And, of course, the really important results of pure science invariably get used socially, but often only after a long and wasteful period of muddling. The question that Western civilization, face to face with the threat of a new dark age, needs to answer just now is this: Might not a wiser social statesmanship speed up this transfer from pure science to applied science instead of leaving the transfer to the slow fortunes of a snail-paced infiltration into the public mind or to the manipulation of purely materialistic interests? If Western civilization is dependent upon "a race between education and catastrophe," might we not help education to win the race by ferreting out and making intelligible to the average man the major results of creative scholarship? I think we can. And I think one of the first steps in this direction would be taken if we brought the New Encyclopedists together and set them to work.

I am not assuming that progress can be manufactured overnight. I know that all sound social advance is a matter of growth. I know that mankind lives by instinct more than by reason. When the New Encyclopedists turn their attention to the field of modern psychology, they will find all this staring them in the face. I am suggesting only that we may facilitate the process of growth by a little more conscious preparation of the soil of progress.

Where shall we find the men and women for this adventure in social statesmanship? If an evangelism of scholarship is needed, how shall we effect a union between the accuracy of the scholar and the popular appeal of

the evangelist? Effective evangelism has too often served only the sensational and the traditional. Can it be made the servant of the realistic and the creative? This is the problem that will confront the New Encyclopedists. And it is a problem that the rank and file of creative scholars may not be able to solve, for two fairly obvious reasons:

First, in many instances, the creative scholar may not be the best judge of what his net contribution to society has been. If he undertakes to distil from his achievements the essence that is socially usable, he may dissipate his own energies, distract the attention of his readers, and obscure the main point by spending too much time on collateral aspects of his ideas, aspects that may seem very important to him as a scholar, but which may have little practical significance in terms of social application.

Second, the spirit of propaganda and the spirit of research do not work well together in the average mind, even in the great fraternity of scholars. Each is likely to reduce the effectiveness of the other.

This does not mean that the attempt to make a tentative summary and interpretation of the socially usable ideas from the sciences must be made by laymen with facile pens who may take a few months off in which to "bone up" on the sciences. Here and there and yonder, inside and outside our universities and research institutions, there are unusual scholars who combine the burrowing qualities of the mole with the singing qualities of the lark, men who are masters alike of the science of research and the art of expression. It is from the ranks of these scholar-geniuses that we must

draw the leaders of the New Encyclopedists. Such men will, of course, know how to make use of good minds and facile pens that may lie outside the ranks of professional scholarship.

Much of what I am suggesting is, of course, being done to-day by these scholar-geniuses and by a small handful of really responsible popularizers of modern knowledge, but it is to-day a scattered enterprise, lacking the impact of a great organized and coherent effort to interpret the major findings of the modern mind. I should like to see some great publishing house or some great university sponsor such an enterprise, for, despite the almost insuperable difficulties that lie in its way, I cannot but believe that the victories of intelligence will be insecure, liable to periodic defeats by strange revivals of obscurantism, until, as I put it earlier, we match the evangelism of superstition by an equally earnest evangelism of scholarship.

### § 3

*A Ringmaster of Specialists.* I have just discussed what seems to me one of the definite possibilities of leadership for a new renaissance. I want now to discuss one of the probabilities of leadership. I have said that I think we have at hand most of the necessary raw materials for a renaissance of Western civilization, and that the question is: Will we have the wisdom, the will, and the technic to use them on anything like a grand scale for the renewal of our common life? I think that an affirmative answer to this question may depend a good deal upon whether there arises during the next twenty-five years a great spiritual leader who will be able to capture the attention of the whole Western world

and fire its imagination with the social and spiritual possibilities that are locked up in these new ideas, new idealisms, and new spiritual values with which the natural and social sciences have provided us.

When I made this statement in these columns three years ago, it was instantly challenged by various editorial writers throughout the United States and Europe. Whenever I have made it since, I have had to face a vigorously sharp fire of criticism. I can best report that criticism by recalling a typical conversation with a distinguished scholar who agreed fully with the suggestion that the renewal of our civilization can come only through the social use of the results of modern research, but disagreed emphatically with the suggestion that any such movement of renewal needs or is likely to find a great leader to inspire it.

"You are entirely right," he said, "in saying that modern science has furnished modern civilization with the raw materials of a new renaissance. And I am not without hope that we shall really get around to using these raw materials. I think I see signs, even in this post-war confusion, that before long we may see a vast fresh advance of the human spirit, a new humanism that will have its roots deep set in the soil of science. I think you and I may live to see this new renaissance you are writing about, but if and when it comes, there will be no great leader at its head."

I had outlined to him the suggestion of the New Encyclopedists, and, with such reservations and recognition of difficulties as I have included in this paper, he agreed that such an enterprise was needed and might be effec-

tively executed, but he balked at the notion of a single great leader's bringing a world-wide leadership to modern civilization.

"I think," he said, "that you are being misled by your memory of great historical movements. The Renaissance had its Erasmus. The Reformation had its Luther. The Revival had its Wesley. But the new renaissance you suggest is a different sort of movement and it must work itself out in a different sort of age. And these two facts afford the two reasons why Western civilization will never find renewal in the trail of a great personal leader."

"Let's take your two reasons one at a time," I suggested.

"All right," he said, "here is the first reason. Your New Encyclopedists, if there were enough of them, might roughly and tentatively list the major results of modern research in a helpful manner, but the mere bulk of modern knowledge has become so great that it is intellectually impossible for any man to come to know enough about the various fields of human thought and interest to enable him to bring anything like authoritative general leadership to the situation. With knowledge increasing by leaps and bounds while the intellectual capacity of mankind remains stationary, we have reached a time when the individual mind must be content with specialisms. There can never be another Aristotle, not even a Descartes, or a Humboldt. The next renaissance must be a renaissance by piecemeal. A movement that means the propagation of a set of doctrines or the contagion of a new emotion may be promoted by a great leader, but a world-wide movement that means

the synthesis and social application of modern knowledge can have no great leader; it can have only leaders in the various sections of knowledge.

"And this brings me to the second reason. The time has passed for trusting to great leaders. Humanity has had its fill of Napoleonism. And a Napoleonism in the fields of the mind and the spirit would be the worst of all. We are out of the age of great personal leadership. We are in the age of group leadership."

I cannot bring myself to agreement with these contentions. I think we have allowed ourselves to become unduly awed by the bulk of modern knowledge. I believe that in any given field of knowledge the great ideas that are vital to the future of civilization are very few and very simple, at least susceptible of a simple statement of their social utility. At any rate, we know that the ideas that are to underlie the social renewal of civilization in the next fifty years will have to be susceptible of simple statement, for involved ideas have never moved great masses of people save after long stretches of years. And I believe that one of those rare, intuitive minds that the race seems to produce at historic intervals could, even at this late date, range over the whole field of modern knowledge, arrive at a fairly accurate sense of the dynamic ideas that the various sciences have contributed to the social and spiritual future of mankind, and render a distinguished service to civilization as an advance agent of renaissance.

Such a leader would in no sense supplant group leaderships; he would supplement group leaderships. He would be a sort of impresario of our group leaderships. He would play

ringmaster to the specialists, luring them out of their air-tight and often thought-tight compartments and welding them into a fighting fraternity for the common good.

Such a leader, as I have said from hundreds of platforms, would have to be a sort of combination of Francis Bacon and Billy Sunday. That is to say, he would have to be a catholic-minded person, an omnivorous reader, who had ranged over the whole fields of human knowledge, and had made himself more or less at home with the great generalizations that have emerged and are emerging from the sciences, philosophies, and practical experiences of mankind. And there would have to be just enough of the alloy of mountebankery in him to enable him to touch the imagination of the masses and to invest the whole adventure of the modern mind with that absorbing passion for humanity which has characterized all great epochs of civil and religious progress.

I am not thinking of such leadership in terms of a secular messiah who will carry us over the rough places and deposit us gently in some promised land of renewal. I am thinking only of the fact that such leadership might awaken an effective popular impulse to search out, interpret, and weave into social policy these new ideas, new idealisms, and new spiritual values that have been thrown up out of our laboratories, our class-rooms, our philosophers' closets, our industrial institutions, and our political adventures. This impulse, in any wide-spread and effective sense, is to-day lacking. We stand outside our laboratories eagerly waiting for any result of research that we may apply to the material undertakings of our lives, but we display a

strange reluctance to plant our larger social policies in the soil of science. It is not chimerical, I think, to suppose that even one great figure, with a genius for leadership, might stir the whole Western world to a realization that the same scientific spirit that has enabled us to remake our civilization materially can enable us to remake our civilization socially and spiritually. I believe that our civilization is in a state of delicate balance, with the possibility that it may tip toward retrogression or toward revival, but that even one great and forceful personality, with a devotion to science and a passion for humanity, might tip the balance toward renaissance.

I doubt that such a leader is likely to appear as a wandering free-lance. The modern world seems organized against the itinerant prophet. We are so busy, so distracted, and so obsessed with the idols of respectability and exalted position. Humanity is even readier than it was nineteen hundred years ago to crucify, at least by ostracism and neglect, a leadership that appears with no authority save the intrinsic authority of its own sincerity and vision. We have become so materialistic and artificial that we have difficulty in recognizing great leadership apart from the glittering regalia of high office and the clamorous cry of mob approval. This probably means that the Erasmus of any new renaissance, the Luther of any new reformation, or the Wesley of any new revival of Western civilization will have to be a man whose official position gives to his voice a sounding-board with world-wide resonance and gives to his pronouncements an obvious and automatic prestige. For instance, a British Premier or an American Presi-

dent, possessing the sort of qualities I have suggested, might light the fires of renaissance in a few brief years by putting the prestige and attention-getting values of his office back of the ideas, idealisms, and spiritual values that the New Encyclopedists might uncover. If the fortunes of Western history in the years ahead do not provide us with such leadership, we must, of course, achieve the result by some slower process.

#### § 4

*The Rôle of Religion in Renaissance.*  
Before concluding this discussion I must deal with another of the major criticisms that has been made of the theory or formula of social renewal that has been advanced in these papers.

A distinguished prelate of one of the Protestant communions said to me some time ago: "I am sorry to see you leave religion out of your projected picture of the renaissance of Western civilization. As it stands, you are pinning your hopes to a coldly secular movement. The raw materials of renewal that you suggest are by-products of the natural and social sciences which are purely secular adventures. And you suggest that the dominant leadership of a spiritual renewal of civilization may be found outside the church."

If I have seemed to minimize the importance of religion in the needed renewal of our civilization, it has been due to faulty statement, not to intention. I am convinced that any renaissance or renewal that is to mean more than a mere reestablishment of the old order of things under new names must be, in the deepest sense of the word, a religious movement. It must deal with the roots of life, not merely polish

and pack in new and fancy containers the fruits of life. Anything less will be only an abortive adventure in what Mazzini called "the petty skirmishes for interests and rights."

I believe, with Mazzini, that "there has never been a single great revolution that has not had its source outside material interests. We know of riots, of popular insurrections, but of none that has been crowned with success, or transformed into a revolution. Every revolution is the work of a *principle*, which has been accepted as a basis of faith. If a revolution did not imply a general reorganization by virtue of a social principle, if it did not secure a moral unity, we should believe it our duty to oppose the revolutionary movement with all our power. The true instrument of the progress of the peoples is to be sought in the moral factor."

I believe, as I have said repeatedly in these papers, that the next great spiritual renewal will come as a result of our bringing together into a new synthesis the new spiritual values that have been produced by research in biology, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and related quests of the modern mind. I do not, however, believe that the impulse to this new synthesis will arise spontaneously in these fields. We must look, I think, to some general leadership that is animated by a genuinely religious passion for the unity and richness of life to light the fires of this renaissance. The things I have suggested as sources of renaissance are not things to take the place of religion; they are simply the raw materials with which really great spiritual leadership, inside or outside the church, must work.

In every time of grand-scale read-

justment a lot of new raw materials for religious enrichment are unearthed. For the last fifty years especially the scientists and the scholars have been digging out of themselves and their fields, often without realizing what it was, "the clay of which the bricks are made with which religions are built." Science has thrown up a vast mass of religious raw materials that are waiting to be used by a religious leadership that can recognize religious values even when they are unlabeled.

The problem that religious leadership faces to-day is not the reconciliation of modern science to ancient theologies, but the utilization of the results of science for the enrichment, the increase, and the moral unification of life. Science has forever demolished many of the absurdities that mankind in its ignorance had confused with religion, but science has brought added power to the appeal of every reality of religion. Science is not sniping our religious leadership; it is supplying religious leadership with some of its finest raw materials. Instead of the pathetic and irreligious bombardment of scholarship and scientific findings by certain groups in some of our churches, it is the duty of religious leadership to infuse scholarship and the findings of science with spiritual meaning.

The sort of renaissance I am suggesting does not ignore the rôle of religion in its processes; on the contrary it broadens the scope of religious leadership. It rests upon the assumption that the conscious control of civilization is at last within our grasp if we can heal the age-old schism between the leaderships of our secular life and our spiritual life, if we can bring to the situation a religious

leadership that will take all of life for its field, break down the artificial and dangerous distinction between things secular and things spiritual, and invest the whole round of human interests and activities with spiritual significance by refusing to regard religion as a mere department of life or as an alien something thrust into life.

Science alone is not a staff upon which we can afford to trust our whole weight. Science is power, but power may be prostituted. A sharp knife may be a good tool in the hands of a workman; it may be a dangerous weapon in the hands of a lunatic. It has been only a few years since we were using the results of modern science in a war that came near being the suicide of Western civilization. But this does not justify our thinking that science is essentially irreligious; it does not justify our turning away from scientific thinking to refuge in a tenuous mysticism alone. It only reminds us that science is neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral, waiting to be used for high ends or low at the will of the user.

And, in the days of the next renaissance, it will be the business of religious leadership to see to it that the results of science in all fields are used for high ends. If I may resort again to a phrase I used a moment ago, the task of religious leadership in the new renaissance will be to help mankind use the results of modern biology, psychology, sociology, and other sciences, for the enrichment, the increase, and the moral unification of life.

Whatever may be the point of departure for the next renewal of Western civilization, and from whatever source its leadership may come, I think we know where it must look for its sources of power—to science and to religion.

“The spiritual integration of society,” says Dean Inge, “must be illuminated by the dry light of science, and warmed by the rays of idealism, a white light but not cold. And idealism must be compacted as a religion, for it is the function of religion to prevent the fruits of the flowering times of the spirit from being lost.”

# Some New Books We Have Read

## *Adventures in Criticism and Reporting*

BY THE EDITORS

### THE CLASSIC STRAIN

*Sticks and Stones.* By Lewis Mumford.  
Boni and Liveright.

*The Pilgrimage of Henry James.* By  
Van Wyck Brooks. E. P. Dutton &  
Company.

The vernacular in the arts may have satisfied most Americans, but it has never been able to satisfy all of them. Various ideas, tried and complete enough to be revered, came with the first settlers; and others of the same dignity have since then been periodically imported. Between these alien classics and the home-bred vernacular there has always been a conflict. The followers of the vernacular have used several weapons, chief of all that of a contented ignorance of the classics. The followers of the classics have consequently been driven to the exasperation which men always feel when they talk to blank walls which are, however, remarkably high and strong. The history of American civilization may be traced largely in terms of this conflict.

Something of this history appears with unusual perspicacity and charm in the latest work of Lewis Mumford, who here concerns himself with the most solid of the arts, architecture. From the first, naturally, Americans had to build houses. As building is,

in all but its simplest phases, a complex art, the early builders had to rely upon European traditions of construction. At the same time, however, they had to work with native materials and to adapt themselves to native purposes. In many sections of the country this resulted in formless edifices, but wherever, Mr. Mumford shows, there was anything like a homogeneous community life, as in New England, tradition and experiment were fused into a new style which was economical, workmanlike, useful, genuine, and therefore comely. The formlessness elsewhere was due to the restlessness with which Americans swarmed over their continent. Almost no pioneer expected to stay long in any one place, and so he demanded merely a temporary shelter instead of a solid fortress for his comforts and a worthy monument to his tastes. When more pretentious architecture was called for, as in public buildings, it had no wide-spread general principles to spring from, and so it reflected whatever fashion happened to prevail among the most aggressive architects of the moment, modified, of course, by the limitations of the men who accepted the plans and paid the bills. Thus the age of the Revolution, which saw itself in heroic ancient molds, took to Greek models; the middle nine-