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*Unaffected friend
D. H. Burman*



The Court of Honor, Looking Toward the Peristyle

THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893.

LESSONS OF THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LATE DANIEL H. BURNHAM

MR. BURNHAM used to trace, to the World's Fair at Chicago the beginning of the American city-planning: His own experiences with that enterprise taught him the lesson that co-operation among artists was absolutely essential in order to produce a really great result; and also that success can 'be achieved only by having one recognized head. The American Academy in Rome was an outgrowth of the intimacies formed among the artists at the Chicago Fair. The Plan of Chicago was another direct result. Mr. Burnham's success in directing the construction at that Fair led to his selection, eight years later, as one of the two original members of the Washington Park Commission, of

which he was the chairman and directing spirit. From that work he was called to undertake the planning of Cleveland, San Francisco, Manila, Baguio, and, as a supreme effort, Chicago. The following interview took place on April 8, 1908, in the rooms he had built on the roof of the Railway Exchange as a workshop for the Chicago plan, to the preparation of which he gave freely not only his time and the ripest results of his experience, but also many thousands of dollars. Mr. Burnham was not talking for publication, as is evident from his familiar way of speaking of his fellow architects, but was recalling the steps leading up to the "Plan of Chicago," preliminary to

the writing of the first chapter of the Report. The conversation embraced various other subjects, which have been omitted; it was taken down by a stenographer and was laid away by the editor of the Report among other notes furnished him by Mr. Burnham and by Mr. Edward H. Bennett, who was present. No attempt was made to cover the entire ground; but enough was said to throw a strong light on the way in which the Fair work developed; and Mr. Burnham's own task of direction is shown to be much more comprehensive than is generally supposed. His tributes to Mr. Codman and Mr. Atwood expressed his deliberate conviction as to the important parts they played in creating the artistic success of the Fair. The death of the former when the Work was nearing completion resulted in a loss to this country, which both Mr. Burnham and Mr. McKim often lamented; and their fondness for him was a constantly recurring theme during the progress of the Washington work. The interview should be read in connection with the eulogy by Mr. Peter B. Wight, which appeared in the ARCHITECTURAL RECORD for August, 1912.

Charles Moore.

[The narrative in Mr. Burnham's own words follows:]

The World's Fair movement began in 1889, when a temporary organization was made—not a legal one; there was no incorporation. The Chicago people went to Congress, and there fought out the question of the location of the fair that was to commemorate the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. Washington, New York and St. Louis, always opposed to Chicago, wanted it; but the commercial conditions in Chicago were sufficient to carry through the location here.

There was a Buildings and Grounds committee consisting of Mayor Cregier, Edward T. Jeffery, Eugene S. Pike, Robert A. Waller, Owen F. Aldis and Charles H. Schwab, as I remember. They asked me in as a sort of unofficial adviser. They incorporated in the spring of 1890. Happily, politics were not in the

minds of the committee, and they gave no special attention to that subject. Along in July, 1890, James Ellsworth, then president of the South Parks Board (he was very active in artistic matters; he now lives in New York and has a villa in Florence), happened to be in the East. He was on one of the committees,¹ and he went out to Brookline to see Frederick Law Olmsted, whom he asked to come out here, guaranteeing to pay him \$1,000. Olmsted came, and in August made a report. He brought with him Harry Codman,² whom I first saw at a meeting in Chicago. We had already urged the selection of Jackson Park. Olmsted had figured the thing out, and on a sheet of foolscap paper he made a rough sketch—a design of Jackson Park. He recommended this park, and advised that Wooded Island be left as it was. The latter feature was not then acted upon, but Jackson Park was definitely approved as the site.

Then Harry Codman, John Root and I took up the matter. I have in my records a good many of the drawings made at that time. We had a cross-section lithograph of the park, on which we worked. We determined the size of the buildings, and finally their location; we retained Wooded Island, and, at my suggestion, placed a fountain in the vista.

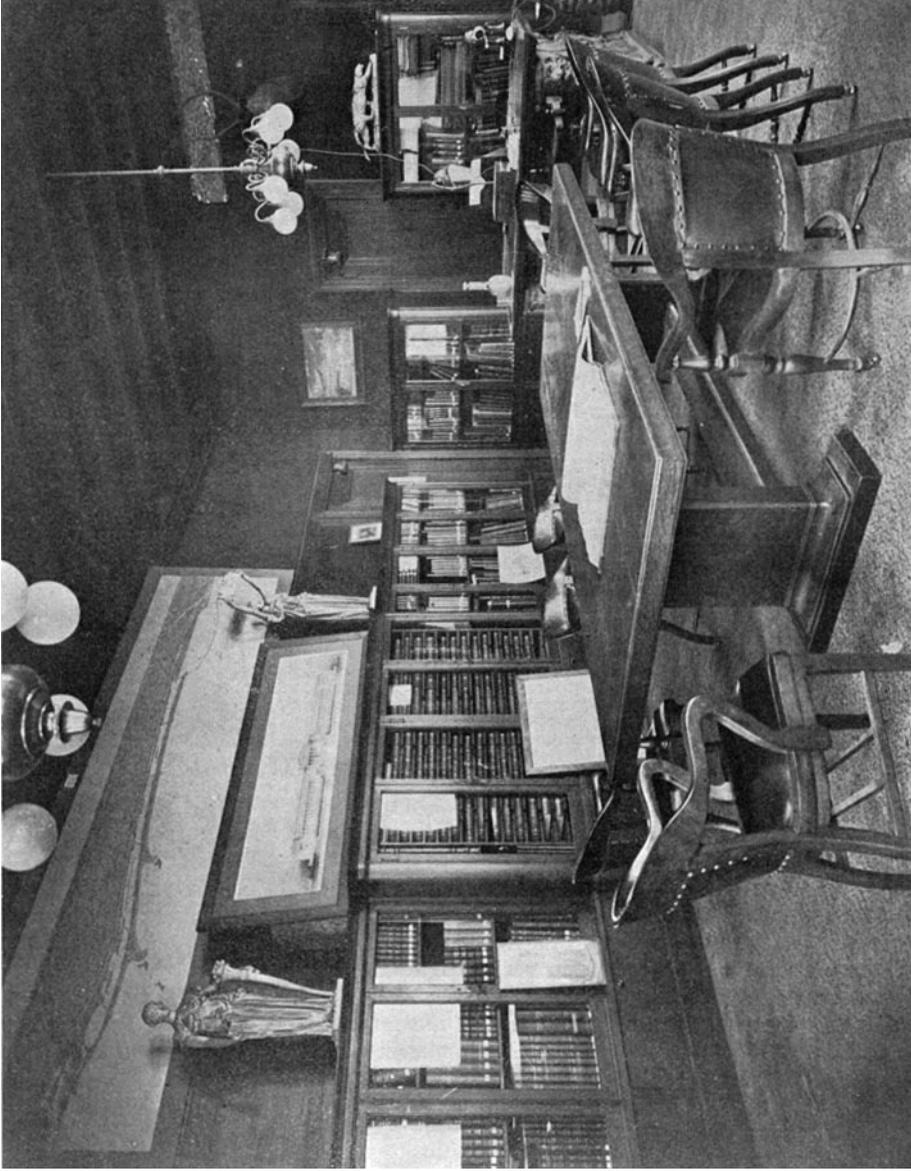
Then came the fight. The National Commission³ demanded that plans and specifications be submitted for their approval. We presented the general plan as we had it laid out, on a piece of brown paper, not rendered at all; and standing up before the crowd, I made some explanations. In November the National Commission adopted the plans and specifications submitted as satisfying the Act of Congress.

In September, 1890, an organization had

¹James W. Ellsworth was a member of the Committee on Foreign Exhibits.

²Henry Sargent Codman, a partner of Mr. Olmsted. He died January 13, 1893. Tablets for him and Mr. Root were placed on the Fine Arts building. For the report, see History of the World's Columbian Exposition, New York, 1897.

³Appointed under authority of Act of Congress, approved April 25, 1890, and consisting of two commissioners for each State and Territory and eight commissioners at large. This commission had important powers. There were some clashes with the Chicago Directory, but the work was done mainly by the local body.



MR. BURNHAM'S PRIVATE OFFICE IN THE RAILWAY EXCHANGE
Over the framed drawing on the book-case is Jules Guerin's original rendering of Lake-Front Parkway.



SCENE FROM THE WINDOWS OF MR. BURNHAM'S OFFICE.
Overlooking Michigan Avenue, Grant Park and Lake. The play of light and shadow on the water, and the breadth of view were sources of keen delight to him.

been formed; John Root was made consulting architect, Olmsted consulting landscape architect, and I was named chief of construction. My commission was drawn by Jeffery, then president of the Illinois Central, who acted as chairman of the Grounds and Buildings Committee. He placed everything under my control, and fixed it so that all others must report to me direct, so that they could make no communications save through me. It was urged by men who knew more about organization than I did at that time, that it was absolutely necessary to have a chief.

We shoved on as fast as we could, without having anything definite in regard to the various buildings. Then, late in the year, December, I believe, I grew very impatient, and told the committee that we must have

action-get together a force of men and begin work. There was further delay, but about the 5th of January I got orders. It was agreed that I should select five Chicago architects and five outside architects. I made my selection and went before the committee of seven members, three of whom were in political life. The committee could not come to an agreement, the politicians desiring to keep me from making the selection. Finally Gage put the motion-four voted for and three against me.

The next morning I had a letter prepared to the men in the East, asking them to participate in the work. I had written to them previously, feeling confident that I would carry my point. My plan was to bring together the men of greatest experience. I was forty-four and a half years old, and knew who the men were. I

went to New York and met the architects at the Players' Club; told them they would be expected to design their buildings, and I would guarantee that none of their artistic conceptions would be interfered with; that Root would give expression, of course; but that they would be kept in full touch, and whatever each desired in regard to his own building would be carried out. I found them in doubt and uncertain whether they would take part; but they finally decided to come in.⁴

The five Chicago firms⁵ selected I called on the morning after the decision in committee. First Cobb, then Beeman, each of whom said he would come in. Next Burling & Whitehouse and Jenney & Mundie consented. Adler & Sullivan "did not know"; later they, too, decided to come in.

The Eastern architects appeared on Saturday, January 10. McKim did not come, but Mead represented that firm; then there was Hunt, Peabody, Van Brunt, George Post and Olmsted. Root, who had been in Georgia for three weeks, got in about nine in the morning. He remained in the office while I drove with the visitors to Jackson Park. It was a cold winter day; the sky was overcast with clouds and the lake covered with foam. We looked the place over. Peabody climbed up on a pier and called out:

"Do you mean to say that you really expect to open a fair here by '93?"

"Yes," I replied, "we intend to."

He said he thought it could not be done; but I told him that point was settled. That night the Grounds and Buildings Committee gave a dinner, the whole crowd being present. Gage presided and made a very beautiful speech. Then Jeffery spoke. Then they asked me to speak. I said that in one sense this was the third great American event, 1776 and

1861 going before; and, that as in both those events men had come to the front and given themselves up to the public, so now the times demanded self-sacrifice. I told them further that the success of this undertaking depended upon team-work. If they worked for the thing as a whole it would be a great success. There was a great deal of response. It was the same old appeal that the Chicago men had been brought up on. From that night on this spirit never failed.

Sunday I did not come into town. Root had asked the visitors to his house on Astor Place, for five o'clock tea. He was in evening dress, ready to go out somewhere. When they were leaving he ran out and saw them into their carriages. The next morning, while the meeting was in progress, Mrs. Root called me up to say that John had a bad cold, but might come in for the afternoon. In the afternoon she called again to say that John had pneumonia. During the next three days I remained with him nearly all the time, night and day. On Thursday Harry Codman went with me to the house, but did not go in. John was breathing rapidly when I entered his room.

"You won't leave me again, will you?" he pleaded.

I promised to stay. Later I went in to see his wife, who was very ill. His aunt came into the room to tell me John was dead; that he had put his hands on the counterpane as if he were running them over a keyboard (he played beautifully), and said:

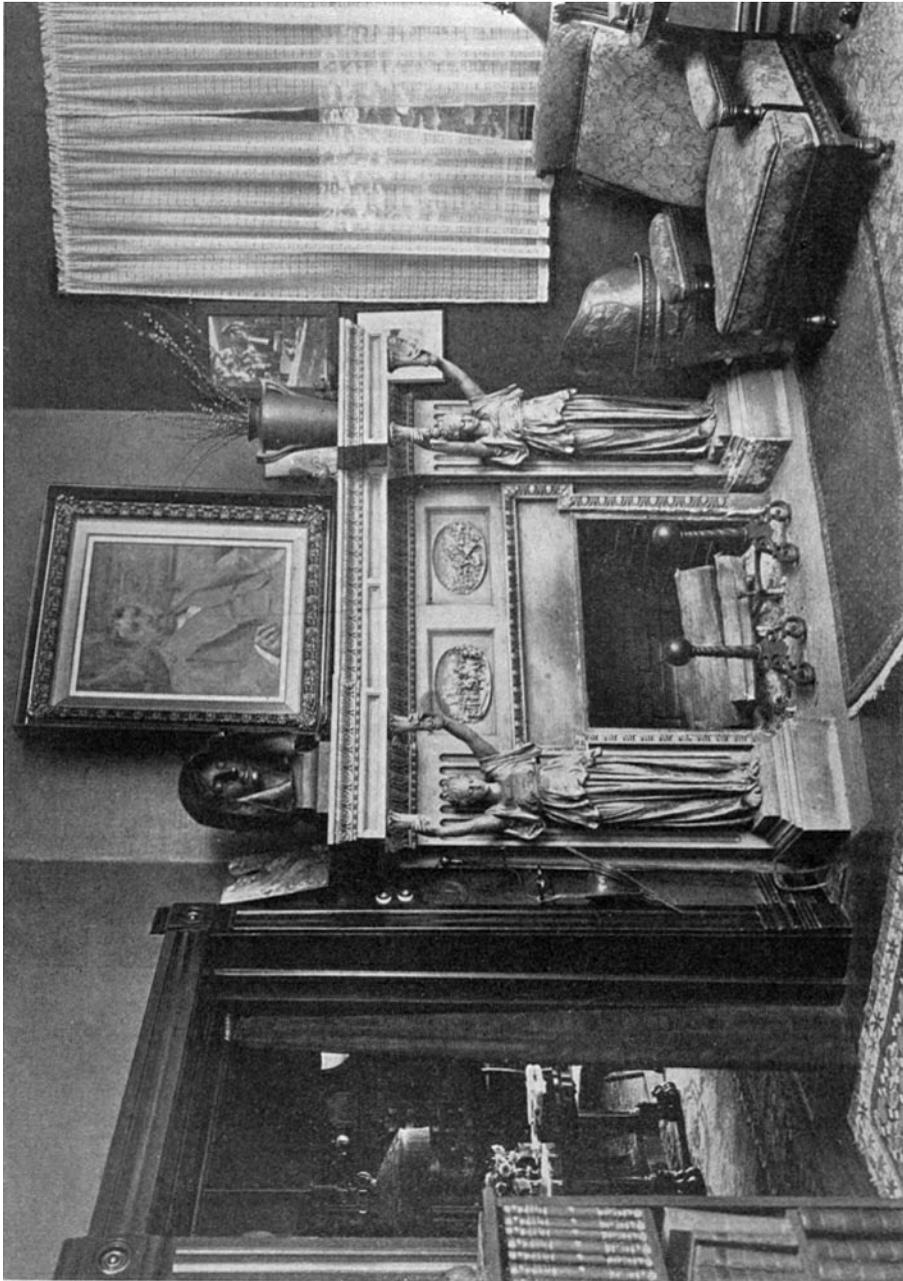
"Do you hear that? Isn't it wonderful? That is what I call music!" Then he threw up his hand and was dead.

The Eastern men remained for a week working with me. They made one change. Harry Codman's knowledge of formal settings was greater than that of all the others put together. He proposed to carry my fountain back, taking it out of the north and south axis. Then they returned, to meet again in a month. Codman took the plan to Brookline and seriously set to work on exact dimensions, terraces, placing of bridges, and the general laying out of a piece of formal work. We had

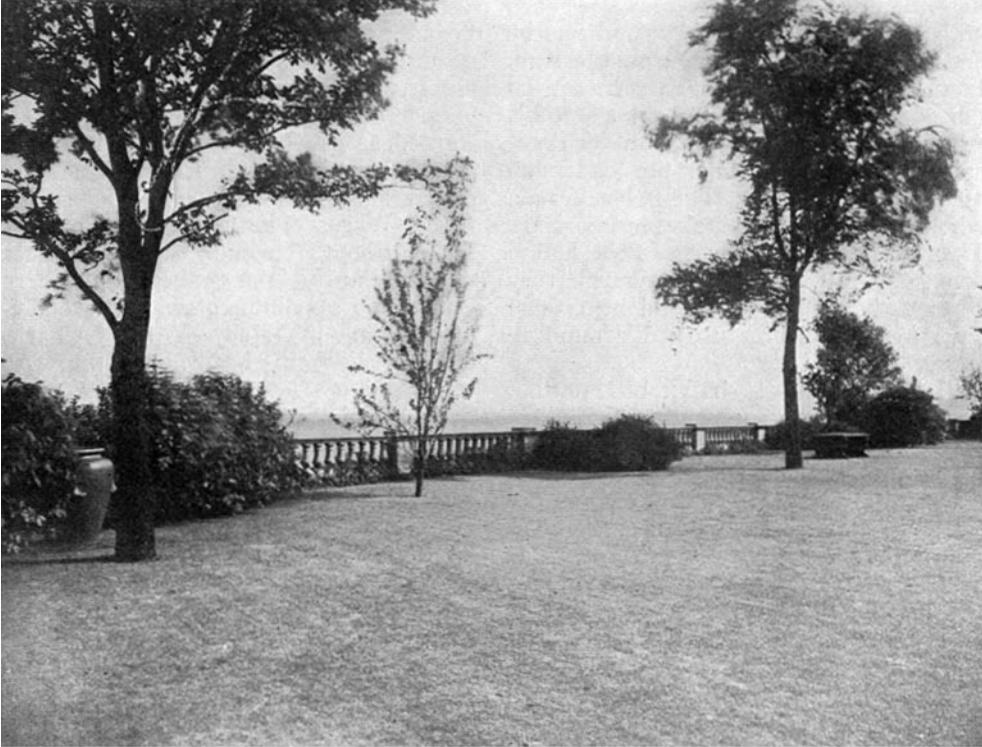
⁴The five firms outside of Chicago were Richard M. Hunt, George B. Post and McKim, Mead & White of New York; Peabody & Stearns of Boston; van Brunt & Howe of Kansas City.

⁵The Chicago firms were Burling & Whitehouse, Jenney & Mundie, Henry Ives Cobb, Solon S. Beeman and Adler & Sullivan.

⁶Charles B. Atwood, who, after the Fair, became a member of the firm of D. H. Burnham & Co. He designed more than sixty of the buildings of the Fair, besides various ornamental features.



A CORNER IN MR. BURNHAM'S STUDY AT EVANSTON ILL., SHOWING THE MANTEL FROM HIS "SHANTY" ON THE WORLD'S FAIR GROUNDS, HIS PORTRAIT BY ZORN, AND A HEAD BY SAINT-GAUDENS.



TERRACE AT MR. BURNHAM'S HOME IN EVANSTON, ILL..
Overlooking Lake Michigan, and raised above the driveway donated by him to carry out the plan of a lakeside parkway. Here he dispersed a patriarchal hospitality.

not given any consideration at all to terraces; but we had agreed that the Italian Renaissance-style of architecture should be adopted for the Court of Honor. The buildings were as distinct from one another as could be. Harry Codman was great in his knowledge and in his instincts. He never failed. He liked to come to the business meetings and occasionally he made an excellent suggestion about organization. I loved the man. Nature spoke through him direct.

The men came back I think about the 20th of February. By that time Beeman's building was begun; the design had been made and the foundations were being put in. They came out in a private car. They brought Saint-Gaudens. After they had returned in January I felt I must have Saint-Gaudens. I wrote to ask if he would come out to give general advice; if he would take a fee and his expenses, and go so far as to indicate what sculptors we should use.

The visiting men came to a breakfast. They were filled with enthusiasm. Charles McKim broke out with a good deal of repressed excitement, saying:

"Bob Peabody wants to carry a canal down between our buildings."

I told him I would agree to it and that we would do it even though it would cost something. That was Peabody's contribution to the Fair. At night this canal was wonderfully beautiful.

Next Saint-Gaudens took a hand in the thing. He thought the east end of the composition should be 'bound together architecturally. All agreed; and he suggested a statue surrounded by, thirteen columns, typifying the thirteen original states. We all hailed this as a bully thing.

We had a meeting a day or two later in my office, the Grounds and Buildings Committee being present. Lyman J. Gage presided. All the

fellows, including the Chicago men, were there, each with his sketch or sketches; and one by one they put the drawings on the wall. Hunt, crippled by rheumatism, sat on the edge of a table, and told about his Administration Building, with its dominating dome, expressing the leadership of the Government. The scheme as a whole had begun to take hold of us. Then came Post. George Post had a dome 450 feet high. The moment they all saw that dome you could hear them murmuring. George turned around to the crowd, saying:

"I don't think I shall advocate that dome. Probably I shall modify the building."

Charles McKim had a portico extending out over the terrace and made extremely prominent. He did not wait, as George had done, but explained that the portico had been under consideration; but that he would withdraw it to the face of the building. The feeling for unity thus manifested, and the willingness of those two men to subordinate their individual ideas in order to produce a single harmonious effect, will illustrate the spirit which made possible the artistic success of the Fair. Where they led, others were willing to follow.

So the day went on. We had luncheon brought in. Then came the large committee. The winter afternoon was drawing to an end. In the room it was as still as death, save for the low voices of the speakers commenting on their designs. You could feel the thing as a great magnet. Finally, -when the last drawing had been shown, Gage drew a long breath, stood up against the window, shut his eyes and said:

"Oh! gentlemen, this is a dream!" Then, opening his eyes, he smilingly continued, "You have my good wishes, and I hope it can be carried out."

Saint-Gaudens had been in the corner all day, never opening his mouth, and scarcely moving. He came over to me, and taking both my hands, said:

"Look here, old fellow, do you realize that this is the greatest meeting of artists since the Fifteenth Century?"

I had a great deal of private work; not as large a business as I have now, but for that time it was a large business. I had a shanty down at the Fair grounds, where I spent most of my nights. A special metallic-circuit telephone connected with my office. I wanted as great an architect as I could get to help in my own work, and consulted several men, among them Professor Ware. The latter was most emphatic about Atwood,⁶ who had been doing beautiful things here and there. I made an appointment with Atwood to meet him in New York. Charles McKim shook his head about him. Atwood did not keep his appointment. I waited an hour at the Brunswick Hotel and then left. As I was crossing the street a man stepped up and asked if I was Mr. Burnham. He said he was Mr. Atwood and asked if I wanted to see him. I told him I was going back to Chicago and would think it over and let him know. Within four hours after I reached my office Atwood came in. He had followed me out. I told him I would like to have him design an art building, and explained what was wanted. He was a very gentle, sweet man, and certainly he was a very great artist. His Art Building is today in design the most beautiful building I have ever seen. He weighed things to a nicety.

I sent a blue print of the Art Building to New York. They took it to the Players' Club, and from there sent back the most enthusiastic telegram you ever read, saying that it was a triumph of art.

I sent a letter to the governor of each of the thirteen original states, asking for a granite column. Atwood promised and promised to prepare a drawing for those columns, but I never could get it out of him. One day I told him I could wait no longer. He then drew out a drawer and showed me the column beautifully drawn. He asked if I had really made up my mind about the scheme. I asked what he meant, catching from his manner that he was holding back something. He said he felt that the 'screen would be too thin, that something a little more solid and tied-together was needed. He was very gentle, but perceiving that lie

had in mind a scheme, I asked if he could suggest anything. Thereupon he took out a drawing of the Peristyle drawn exquisitely. It was as if some one had flung open the Golden Gates before me. I told him there was no question about it. I sent a copy of it to New York. There was not even a suggestion of a possible alteration. They telegraphed most emphatically that they were glad of the change.

Charles McKim came out often as did the

meeting. I had chosen a man named Prettyman, largely on account of his great friendship with John Root. He was to have charge of the decorations; and, knowing that staff was going to be used, he had at once begun to work, out 'a general coloring of staff. He concluded that ivory would be the best color. The crowd came out when Beeman's building was nearly finished. I was urging every one on, knowing it was an awful fight



COVERED PORTION OF THE PATHWAY THAT LEADS FROM MR. BURNHAM'S HOUSE THROUGH NATIVE WOODS AND CULTIVATED GARDENS TO THE TERRACE.

others. Charles McKim would go into the detail of things with me, and was an inspiration. He spent nearly an entire afternoon looking over Atwood's drawings. He took down the books every little while, looked at them, and then turning to me would say:

"Confound him, he is right every time!"

Saint-Gaudens recommended French, McMonnies and a dozen others. Frank Millet came in about three months after our first

against time. We talked about colors, and finally the thought came, "Let us make it all perfectly white." I don't recall who made the suggestion. It might have been one of those things that occurred to all minds at once, as so often happens. At any rate the decision was mine. Pretty man was in the East, and I had Beeman's building made cream white. When Prettyman came back he was outraged. He said that 50 long as he was in charge I must

not interfere. I told him that I did not see it that way; that I had the decision. He then said he would get out; and he did. McKim said Frank Millet would be the man for the place. George Post recommended him and this went far, because I have great faith in Post's judgment of men. So I went down to New York and met Frank at a dinner at Delmonico's—Charles McKim gave the dinner and at the dinner I made Frank a proposition, offering him the largest salary of any one on the staff, \$15,000. Frank said it cost him that to live, and I went before the Directors and told them I thought we should pay that. Of course we could not afford to do anything else. Frank organized the whitewash gang. Turner of New York got up a method of blowing paint on buildings; this Frank adopted, and it is now in common use in car shops.

In a sense the Chicago Fair was the first attempt made in this country to connect landscape with architecture, although of course L'Enfant's plan of Washington cannot be ignored. You cannot find an instance of planning an entire city until you come to L'Enfant's plan; and I believe that the plan of Washington exerted a decided influence in Europe.

In 1894, the year after the Chicago Fair, James Ellsworth asked me to take up the consideration of a parkway in the lake, connecting Jackson and Hyde Parks, getting outside the Illinois Central railroad and doing away with the unpleasant conditions. Nothing was thought of the North Side then. That is a

recent idea. The south end of Jackson Park is about eight miles from the mouth of the Chicago River. A drawing showing a parkway and driveway extending from the city to Jackson Park went to the Commercial Club twelve or thirteen years ago. When that drawing was made, Ellsworth asked me to bring it to his house. He gave a little dinner. George Pullman took fire at once and said he would give up the riparian rights to his property along the lake. There was not a man present who was not more or less overcome by the presentation of the lake park scheme. Armour, Field and others said the thing ought to be done. Armour went further and said that some day it would be done. While I was in the Philippines, Jules Guerin was out here doing some rendering for us, and Ernest Graham had him do that (pointing to the sketch now hanging over the bookcase in his office) view of the lake-front. About two years after I returned Charles Norton came in to suggest that the Merchants' Club take up in earnest a plan for Chicago. We did not start with the lake front, but with the road connecting the different suburban towns with the city, a subject Charles Thorne had made his own. Then the Commercial Club and the Merchants' Club were merged to promote the plan.

Since taking hold of this project we have found the same spirit that carried through, the World's Fair. It is marked, persuasive; it permeates everywhere. All are interested and each is ready to bear his part. The men are different; the spirit is the same.