

Portrait of a Home Town

IT is of course the potteries which have made Hamerton prosperous, perhaps even famous, though Hamerton is not the only great pottery centre in the country; probably it is not the most important even in the middle west. But Hamerton understands publicity. It became known first for its white stone-china, producing this by the ton and quickly following with the highly profitable Queensware and glossy brown Rockingham for the kitchen. Then began the great era of the useful-ornamental. An enormous business was done in majolica urns, umbrella jars, jardinières, and similar articles in terra-cotta. Miscellaneous pieces of china were poured (well packed) into a yawning market; figurines, rose-jars, pin trays, toilet-ware, odd cups and saucers and fancy plates—very odd and very fancy—with lavish scroll gildings, flowers, cherubs, girlish faces, and all kinds of moulded configurations, knobs, handles, curled edges. Hand-painting in the home began to flourish, the plate-rail came into favor, and Hamerton did its best to accommodate. This exuberance was gradually toned down, as all know who have followed the fascinating gyrations in American taste. Hamerton, always open to change, began to produce ware which was almost excessively refined, with nearly invisible little sprays of fern or flower and a certain dainty sub-division and multiplication of dishes. The bone-dish appeared transiently.

Today the past, even this more recent past, is pretty well left behind. Hamerton is not sensitive about its commercial history, though if taunted it will argue and deny. It is well aware that its older production was part of a gross era, but it also knows that carpets, stoves, furniture, wall-paper have all gone through similar stages. It has had company; and now it is on the right industrial high road. It still does a discreet business in miscellaneous china, for the odd dish is not yet off the market, and it still makes a quantity of kitchen ware; but its main emphasis is upon practical, simple chinas and porcelains in "sets," with conventionalized designs and clear color. Its taste has become safe and guarded.

Even in the most thriving commercial cities the centre of life varies—and Hamerton is thriving. In some the heart of the place palpably beats in manufacture. Definitely localized in production are energy, purpose, even to the point of congestion. This is not true of Hamerton. In the first bright hey-day of the majolica umbrella-jar and the odd dish there must have been both fever and romance, but now there is neither. The potters display sound sense and unquestionable enter-

prise; their business is well rooted, they ship to points all over the two Americas, their markets will not easily slip away; the city is not only prosperous, it is rich, chiefly because of the potteries but also because of other industries which have gradually added themselves, foundries, mills, machine shops. Its wealth per capita is very high; it has had few bad failures. But Hamerton is a little detached from business. Commercial as it is, it can probably evade the reproach of a raw commercialism. Hamerton's real interests are elsewhere; it is a home town. Perhaps the making of dishes stimulates the domestic instincts. Perhaps the rather pretty country in the midst of which Hamerton lies suggests a pleasantly rooted existence. Some observers say that domesticity on the part of the workingmen has been deliberately cultivated as part of a labor policy. It is hard to strike on the partial payment plan, and there is no question that a good many factory-owners have made a good thing out of real estate on the side—in twenty-five to thirty foot lots. But then the working population comes mainly from a race which is naturally thrifty. Whatever the causes, there you have it! A consistent type, a fine flower of our middle-western civilization.

Hamerton is at the opposite pole from the substantial grime of the pottery towns which Arnold Bennett describes. Its potteries are scattered up and down the winding river, their gray-white truncated cones rising with a certain picturesqueness. None of them, none of the other factories and shops crowd upon the city. Even the large district pretty much given over to workmen's houses is neat and comfortable. The streets which skirt the mills are a little black, but they soon stretch off in trim rows. There are poor districts to be found, shabby districts, narrow streets of slant-lined houses. What city is without them? But they are comparatively few in Hamerton. The town has an effect of freshness, sun, good air, and in spite of the abundance of narrow lots it is fairly spacious, spreading out over a circlet of old farms and still keeping the remnants of country orchards in its gardens. It is tree-lined, and proud of its trees, its lawns are well kept, and in summer their brilliant green stretches along street after street. And the houses thus set off are not merely tenanted; Hamerton has one of the highest percentages of self-owned homes in the country. It excels in clean-up-your-back-yard, swat-the-fly, rake-up-the-leaves, plant-a-packet-of-seeds movements. It is actively concerned about health, and was one of the first middle-western cities to look after its water-supply. It has inaugurated a great variety of clinics; its infant mortality is low; its general

death-rate is low; it withstands the ravages of epidemics. These advantages may be due in part to an equable climate, but they are also the result of care. And Hamerton is also concerned with morality; it has no red light district. Within certain well-defined lines it is benevolent. It does not support general causes adequately, such as that of modern welfare work; but after the ancient private manner it looks after its poor, its sick, its aged, rather well. There is a large number of institutional homes in the city: an old man's home, an old woman's home, another home for the "aged," a home for gentle-women, a memorial home for both sexes, a home for the blind.

These masses of self-owned homes (private), well, they are not altogether charming, even though they are set among trees and shrubbery and along well-kept streets. In some of the poorer sections a few old plaster houses with simple gables have survived, homesteads of the pre-pottery days, reticently placed; but their tradition has not been continued. Houses are most often trenched down close to the street; the quick and easy route of standardization has been followed. Streets and streets show a few prevailing types: that made familiar by frequent photography last summer at Marion, Ohio; another which seems to be a late offspring of Georgian, with wooden trimmings and porches; another which is small and box-like, in frame. The last and most popular is of brick or cement or both, short but high-waisted, with a flaring base, colored trimmings and roofs, and a great variety of roof-lines. These houses look impregnable, like moated granges set along side by side. Severity with certain hardy effects in decoration now seems to be the general architectural course. A noticeable tendency has developed to strip off bulging porches and change windows, add a touch of colonialism, with a resultant air of purity and a lack of ease. Many of the country homes which are being built beyond the further fringes of the city produce much the same strict effect, though they go further afield for their styles. Their architecture is often impeccable, but they rest stiffly upon their sites; one wonders just how and why these were chosen.

Time, with careful landscaping, will doubtless attach them to the soil. Time is probably all that Hamerton needs. It has acquired houses; gradually it is acquiring all those proper modern articles of established pattern which belong to the proper American home, from four posters and Colonial sewing cabinets (copies) and tea-carts and billiard tables to expensive silver and rugs and even Barbizon paintings and Colonial originals. It is anxious to learn metropolitan social usages, and has

learned them, so that its use of country clubs and its management of dinner parties is sophisticated and even charming. In matters of culture it is rapidly burgeoning with all those more or less exclusive little clubs and associations which keep the quiet provinces abreast of the times. It will relegate its more obvious crudities, probably rather quickly. It has the money; it will use it—for domestic improvement. Public enterprises, these are quite another matter. Hamerton has always been exceedingly thrifty about civic expenditure of any sort. It preserves certain decencies, particularly as these affect health, but it has never seen its way to large policies in the matter of parks, hospitals, recreation centres, social service, city planning. It pays its teachers badly; its library funds are meagre; it scamps appropriations whenever it can. Nor does it roll up public subscriptions.

But these latter days Hamerton has become a little sensitive and restless. War-taxation and war-giving have pried open its private purses, and though these have snapped firmly shut again, they may open next time more easily. The city seems to be developing a conscious pride; it has adopted a complacent motto, which suggests action, and it occasionally shows itself vulnerable when comparisons are made with other cities of its region. Comparisons—built upon a solid surplus—may generate some of those community possessions which are now lacking but which are coming to be as correct for the prosperous town as sewing-cabinets and tea-carts are for the prosperous home. Hamerton has proceeded from necessity to comfort, from comfort toward taste; it may also take the next stage, from domestic to social improvement, acquiring even an art gallery, a little theatre, an orchestra. Here it will probably stop. Some fine impersonal enthusiasm may flame up and sweep the town, but this seems doubtful. If the middle west is bursting and burning with enthusiasm, as it is supposed to be, then Hamerton is the great exception. High hopes do not flourish there, any more than in Gopher Prairie. They start, perhaps, by some chance contagion, but they are gradually questioned, modified, set to one side, diffused. Hamerton is not cold; and it nearly always preserves an air of good temper, interest, an open mind; it is "progressive." But it invariably plays safe.

It has had its Dionysiac period, when the clays were first discovered and potteries began to multiply and homes were built by the hundred, and this has closed over without a trace—except for the homes. It seems now to be establishing a new middle-western tradition for refinement and comfortable certitude, perhaps joining in a vanguard

of cities which have left their hard-working days behind them and are settling down into something like opulence. It denies Gopher Prairie. Indeed except for its complacency, which is probably common to most prosperous American towns, it is essentially unlike Gopher Prairie, and perhaps always has been. It has no Main Street, but a criss-cross of rather well built city blocks. It is not crudely self-contained; it keeps acquisitive eyes fixed upon the outside world; it wants the best. It has been compared with some of the more agreeable New England towns, and it enjoys and fairly merits the tribute, in spite of a certain lack of finish. With its cleanliness, its apple trees, the easy sloping country round about, it has nearly all the pleasanter conditions for living—except a lively principle of growth.

I hate to contemplate the distilled culture and satisfied refinement toward which Hamerton seems cautiously to be heading. Not all of that naive gusto which filled the plate-rails can have been dissipated; Hamerton must still have an abundant energy if only this could be set free; and it has other solid assets: youth and health and money in the bank.

Reformers, civic diagnosticians, prescribe for Hamerton, save us from a final boredom! But don't merely tell us what we ought to be. Give us a working plan. Be practical, for we are wholly practical. Don't expect anything like the rise of a guild movement. Naturally the whole town ought to be compelled by the wish to make beautiful dishes, working passionately together like the cathedral makers of the middle ages; but we are not passionate, we seldom work together on anything, and there is little or no feeling for craftsmanship among us. Don't expect anything in the way of social reorganization from labor. When or if the social revolution comes it will come last to Hamerton. Unions are quiescent so far as they exist; labor has fought few battles. Labor is paying for its homes, buying sets of furniture on the instalment plan, helping its children to climb.

Don't of course disturb the home. And whatever you propose, be rapid and incisive, for Hamerton is already beginning to take on that rather brutal adiposity which sometimes comes to the prosperously domesticated; it may soon be immovable.

CONSTANCE MAYFIELD ROURKE.

Austria, Hungary and the Habsburgs

THE weapons of the Entente destroyed the old Austrian-Hungarian monarchy as a powerful state, and at the same time overthrew the oldest and most honored throne of the European continent—the throne of the Habsburgs. The Hofburg in Vienna, where the old Byzantine spirit was united with the mediæval Spanish spirit, stands empty, and even the Reparations Commission, which lived for a time in this haunted building, preferred modern bureau buildings to it. The Habsburgs went the same way as the Stuarts and the Bourbons.

Curiously enough, this downfall was regarded in quite a different light by Austrians and Hungarians, in Vienna and in Budapest. Viennese and Austrians, these people that had always followed their Kaiser with childish submission and had even in November, 1918, set up a democratic republic, had decided on a republican constitution, and have now taken as their first federal President Dr. Michael Hainisch, a buergerliche (middle-class) man of letters. But Hungary, on the other hand, the country of Rakoczy and Kossuth, that rebelled against the Habsburgs in secret agreement with the French, for nearly four hundred years, a people that is by nature free and unbound, seems to be working for

the restoration of the House of Habsburg and the reestablishment of the monarchy. The roles are exchanged—in the year, 1849, the Magyars in the Debreczin Reichstag declared the House of Habsburg dethroned, and Austrian troops reerected it; in the year 1920, the Habsburgs lost the Austrian throne and the Magyars are arming legions in Zala Egerszeg, which shall reestablish them in Vienna. And the French, who intrigued with the Hungarians against the Habsburgs for four centuries, seem to desire their restoration!

Free Americans, to whom the Peace brought such heavy disappointments, surely want to have one satisfaction for their war sacrifices—the satisfaction of having freed Europe from the mediæval form of the state and of having brought democracy to the ascendant in Europe. And it might interest American readers to know whence come these contradictions, and what outlook the Habsburgs have for their reestablishment.

The proud Magyar race loves freedom—but still more does it love dominance. Since the invasion of the Hungarian plains, (896) when Attila's Huns and after them the Avars, threatened Europe, and for a time dominated it, this little people has always exercised great authority over its neighbors.