

Another fashion in lunar eccentricity finds favor with Hall Caine; his moon plays bo-peep with the earth—comes and goes in a most irresponsible way. When the Governor of Man made his little cruise around the island with his daughter and her lover, "Stowell and Fenella sat on deck under the moon and stars." The very next night they are on deck again; but the moon has business elsewhere, for "the gray twilight came down from the northern heavens, and then night fell—a dark night without moon, but with a world of stars." As the lovers were not keeping curfew hours, it was not their fault that they saw no moon; they gave her time enough to come, but she did not keep the appointment.

It is a long time since people believed that the moon is made of green cheese; it is time to take another forward step and learn something of her ways. May an admirer drop a word of kindly admonition in the ear of dear writer-friends? The moon is coy, retiring, and ignores every effort to make her change her habits; so why not let her pursue her nightly path according to her own wilful way?

SOME days ago I went out to our country home, after a long city winter, to rediscover, with Hector the collie, all our favorite places in the deep woods by the river. Each year we do this, and each year we find more of the alder-swamp impenetrable and the curtains of cat-briar set against us. This part of the country is indeed being reclaimed by the wild. It bears few remaining signs of its occupation by men. Once it was as neat and settled and lived-in as any New England community. The queer old town three miles up the river used to have a great landing-dock for coal and farm produce, and beamy deep-laden schooners had passage up-stream. Now, with difficulty and at high tide only, fair-sized motor-boats may dodge the bogs and shallows, and reach the old dilapidated wharf. And what a pleasure to think that, though commercialism is ruining many of the wildest and loveliest of places, this place is being made ready for a second existence as wilderness!

Hector and I, fur and clothes full of last year's dried burrs, waded as far as we could into our alder-swamp, to look for white violets and jack-in-the-pulpits, and at length came out upon a little clearing—Old Whit-

ney's clearing—arched over with swamp-grapes and tangled woodbine. Here a bent and broken crab-apple tree was pointed, at the tip of every branch, with red buds about to burst into flower. No wind stirred. The river appeared far beyond, toward the north, through a haze of green leaves folded and pale like luna moth wings. A drift of cherry petals shook from a branch swayed by a bird. There was silence for moments at a time, interrupted by a wood-thrush that we knew—his song unvaried since last year.

And then we turned and looked south, up a slope where passage should have been easy through the underbrush, toward the old fallen homestead grown up with vines. Amazing! Everything was silver-white riot and ruin. Beside Old Whitney's fallen house an enormous cherry-tree had been swept over by one of last autumn's storms. Its towering head, bent over the unused road at the side, smothered the world in a foam of white blossoms. Beyond it an oak with a trunk three feet in diameter had toppled over, and its roots had borne out of the earth a delicate hemlock thirty feet high—the only hemlock within a radius of two miles. No one would ever recognize Old Whitney's dooryard. He himself, having been once a Long Island farmer, is probably taking the change philosophically, if he is conscious of it at all in whatever heaven he inhabits. He and his neighbors took all things philosophically fifty or more years ago. His house to-day is a sunken ruin, with little but foundation and heaps of refuse left. His orchard on the hill to the south is grown up with locust and cedar, against which the old apple trees still flower out bravely and beautifully as ever at this season, regardless of what gnarled fruit they bear for the consumption of wasps, chipmunks, and squirrels later on. And here the dooryard is a wreck, the currant bushes broken, the quince barren, and the berries gone wild. Long ago a lack of light choked out the lilacs and the syringa.

Well, there we sat, Hector and I, surveying the site of an ancient homestead, and wondering at how things change. I suppose, by Hector's expression, that he may have been regretting the passage into earth of his favorite piles of rubbish and chalky masonry. And I may have been lamenting the gradual dissolution of man-made things—but scarcely regretting it, for nothing is more beautiful than a blooming ruin in early

spring, set in the solitude of a glade. And, anyhow, I am of the younger generation, and don't believe in regrets. Then, too, this place had given birth to many of my plans, none of which had quite gone to nothing. Sitting here I had cast my hopes three ways: I would be author, opera-singer, and actress. From the age of nine on, I had designated my ambitions by four secret initials, here explained for the first time. To consider to-day the first ambition: Well, I have just had a book published, so authorship was not so unattainable after all. As to the second, I suppose I must count Hector's appreciation of my singing voice. That is something, though all the rest of the world remove itself at my first few notes. And my histrionic achievements may be but slight fulfilment of the third ambition; yet they do not lack vividness. This old ruin provided the proper solitude in which I gained the necessary daring to draw up a few great plans, now executed in small part.

During our reflections on ambitions and change, the air grew chilly, and Hector restless, making it necessary for us to return home, a quarter of a mile cross-country, due east. Upon our arrival at the house, and after seeing me settled by a log fire, my brother opened conversation.

"You know you aren't the only author in this village," he began.

"Is that so——?"

"Not by any means the only author. Maybe you think you are, but I was in the drug store uptown this afternoon, and, do you know, Jim Hampton has written a book, and it's on sale there! The story of his life. The old fellow's got a stack of copies, selling them at three plunks apiece for the church. The whole town's buying them. Book's full of local history, they say, and it has a picture in it of this house, and one of Old Whitney's."

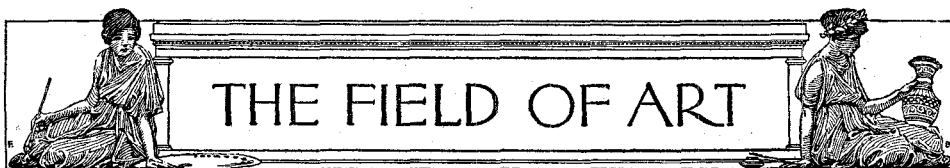
"Humph," I muttered, seeing my new-made reputation as the town's only native author falling with a sound like thunder. "Better get a copy, and let's see if it really is a book."

Now, in much cooler mood, and after perusal of the enchanting pages, I am more than willing and glad to admit that I am by no means the town's only author. He has done more, this Jim Hampton, than he ever planned to do. Ingenuously, without the grace of flawless grammar or the ornaments of studied style, he has written a book

which strikes me, at least, as infinitely better and more important than all the popular novels-of-place of the present day. And he was born, the book tells us, in Old Whitney's house!

I doubt if, in boyhood days, he ever sat at that doorstep and planned to write a book. He probably spent more time planning the planting and harvesting of the little farm—caring for the now neglected fruit trees—doing anything he could to earn a few cents to help his mother, widowed in the Civil War, and with several small children to support. He used to husk corn at three and a half cents a shock, for one thing. And he left home bravely at the age of twelve, to live with childless neighbors and relieve his mother of some of her burden.

From the first break, he seems to have grown in mind rather faster than most members of the community. The country school interested him; his neighbors, in fact any people, always engrossed him. He regarded them all kindly. When in his mature years he built up a business with an office in New York, and travelled throughout Europe, meeting men of the world, his homely straightforwardness caused him to prosper; but his success never made him forget the simple folk of his boyhood, or the trivial doings of their full lives. He is living among them to-day up in town, and he has surprised them all with his book for and about them, written secretly during the past year. He will soon be seventy years old—a ripe age and honored among these country people. They will appreciate the pictures from his life in the larger world, gathered into his book for them—his office in New York—his family climbing the Alps. There is also a recent picture of his grandchild. He shows our own house because its site was that of the home of those friendly neighbors who took him in when he was a boy of twelve. Old Whitney's house appears, almost as it is to-day, a ruin among tangled weeds and vines; but in the photograph the cherry tree is still standing, and the oak, and the little hemlock now upturned. Yet if Jim Hampton should revisit his birthplace, I wish he might see it as Hector and I saw it the other day—a beautiful spring ruin, covered by a mist of blue-white cherry blossoms—a desirable birthplace, not laid waste for anyone's material gain, but claimed by the forest, and made ready and renewed for another cycle of life.



Art and the Skyscraper

BY DEWITT CLINTON POND

EUROPEAN comment on American architecture has not always been of a favorable nature. Our tall buildings are acknowledged to be noteworthy examples of engineering enterprise and initiative, but as works of art they are simply skyscrapers, a term expressed in tones of good-humored patronage. These towering buildings seem to be all that we have, and to the observer the engineering phase of our undertakings has been considerably more important than the art which is involved.

The word skyscraper makes a vivid appeal to the imagination, and for this reason it has been given undue attention when American architecture is under consideration. Although buildings in the more congested parts of our larger cities are almost universally higher than those found in European cities, the truly tall buildings, in the construction of which unusual engineering skill is involved, are exceptional. Even in New York, where the development of tall buildings is the most impressive, in proportion to the total amount of construction in the city, there are actually few buildings which can properly be called skyscrapers. An airplane view of Manhattan shows this graphically. The upper part of the island is covered with six-story apartment-houses. Farther south, around Seventy-second Street, there is an outcropping of taller structures, and at Columbus Circle and the Plaza there are some of gigantic proportions. At this point, however, these buildings are exceptional, rising as they do far above their surroundings. It is not until the uptown banking and commercial district and downtown financial district are reached that the towering buildings are the rule. In the uptown section the Bush and Times buildings are probably the most prominent. In the Wall Street area are the Woolworth, Equitable, Singer, Bankers Trust, and Cunard

buildings, the like of which have never before been seen in the world.

As Manhattan is only one of the five boroughs which form the greater city, the proportion of tall buildings in this metropolis is actually small. In view of these facts it is evident that although the development of the skyscraper is significant and appeals to the imagination, certainly it is not characteristic of the architecture of the country as a whole.

This is also true of buildings which require unusual engineering design. They are exceptional. The science of engineering has become so standardized that for the average building, once loads are found, the sizes of supporting members, such as beams, girders, or columns, can be determined from tables in which the properties of the various members are listed.

The European observers are not the only ones who are prone to believe that our building achievements are more a matter of engineering than art. I believe that in any treatise on architecture one fact should be emphasized strongly. This fact is that architecture should properly be regarded as an art. However, although this is the only sane manner in which this branch of the fine arts should be viewed, one wonders if the various persons in the swirling throngs around the base of the Woolworth Building in New York or that pass in and out of the Pan-American Building at Washington mentally file these masterpieces under this heading. Architecture is so intimately associated with various branches of engineering work that the observer is apt to believe our modern design is entirely a matter of construction. Structural conditions undoubtedly impose certain restrictions, but I believe it is safe to say that such restrictions are less burdensome to the architect to-day than at any other period in the history of the world.