THE SOUL OF CITIES.¹

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DOES physiognomy reflect the soul? Does the soul always govern physiognomy? Ruskin used to tell us that those who produce beautiful things must themselves be beautiful in character. Let us never contest a fallacy at once so attractive and so inspiring.

When the Roman Empire entered upon that tragic period in which the Barbarian hordes began to assert their mastery, when Rome had been sacked by Alaric, when Spain and Gaul were being overrun by irresistible tribesmen, and the sinister shadow of Genseric was about to loom up behind Carthage, St. Augustine composed his famous book "de Civitate Dei," in which he drew a vivid picture of the new City of the Soul, which was to erect its superstructure above the ruins of the older and saddened world. Like Aristotle he looked upon the city as a living entity, as a place where mankind must lead a common life for a noble end. And such a city would be no mere aggregation of houses, but rather a reunion—not only the place of domicile, but the focus of home life, with its public duties and its private enterprise, with its government and religion responding to the higher needs of the community, and amplifying the call of the birthplace by the far-flung duties of patriotism and world-wide responsibility. And throughout the history of our race the ingenuity and ambitions of mankind have been manifest in their cities. All men want to build. After the nomadic leader developed into a pastoral chief, his first impulse was to erect a permanent shelter: until then he had enjoyed no leisure to build, but he learned how to sit still: then came the constitution, the formularisation of his religious beliefs, and worship gave its primary

¹ A lecture delivered in the Manchester Art Gallery on Friday, the 3rd October, 1924, under the auspices of the Arundel Society.
impetus to creative art. All kings want to build. It is the most continuing passion of Emperor, Mogul, and Pope. Their lineaments are mirrored in their palaces and cathedrals; our characters can be read in our streets and squares and suburbs. Our cities are influenced by climate, scenery, geology, site, occupation, by the style, colour, and employment of materials, and thus acquire a degree of personality, emphasised by the character of a dominant style, and to a less palpable extent by the sentiment of their inhabitants. Often indeed towns are too incoherent to be personified, because like their inhabitants they lack countenance and defy characterisation. Towns like people are vapid, neutral, or colourless, jumbles of contradiction and aimlessness; but even so they may be typical of a race. And a town is a very secretive personage. At first we may think its character its easily defined; but be cautious. There are contradictions and diversities which may lead us astray in our assessment of man or city; and the city seldom reveals its character to the first impression. Bruges may sleep, Stirling may frown, Venice may enchant, Paris may smile: but one must search diligently, analyse a sequence of competing elements, and even then it is often difficult to detect fundamentals. Paris used to be called the Gay City. To-day I suppose we apply the epithet more generally to her satellites along the French seaboard. Examine their gay laughter and you may see that the happy smile of these forbidding places is often akin to a rictus.

When I was young and active I used to make a practice of climbing the highest tower in every foreign town I visited for the first time, in order to get a bird's-eye view of the place. Poised a hundred yards above the streets, one felt a sort of mastery, a sense of possession. Instinctively one's first glance travelled far afield, out into the surrounding country dependent on the town, and intersected by the road system converging towards the centre;—reaching the gates, entering the town itself, distributing themselves in those concentric rings which mark the successive extensions of urban life and fortifications. After casting one's eyes over the sea of roofs one ultimately peeped into the abyss far below, into some market square or forecourt where citizens intent on perambulation, resembled an anthill, though seemingly less methodical in purpose. Much can be learned from these high places, though only physical aspects present themselves to the eye. Roofs are eloquent and do not always withhold a glimpse
of an interior; but broadly speaking the guidance one receives from these high-level surveys is general in nature—the scale of the city, the sweep of its river, the pulse of its arteries—those ruling features, be they symbols of religion, warfare, commerce, or seafaring, which control the destiny or govern the sentiment of a community.

Of course these physical aspects which in their essence form the problem of town-planning, influence the life and habits of the citizen, just as the sentiment of the community shows itself in the organisation of the town. We should organise our towns as we do our businesses. The latter are reasonably efficient notwithstanding our habit of self-deprecation: but our individualism in business affairs has blinded us to the need of organising our communities, just as the average architect concentrates his effort upon the building he has to design without due deference to the affinities of the township as a whole, or even to the permanent buildings in the vicinity. I like an architect to be a good host and his building to pay heed to neighbourliness: and he is ill-advised to neglect these amenities. A vast building has just been erected near a little church, towering over it; but the little church still holds her own and her gigantic neighbour looks like a hyperpachic baby.

Let us descend from the tower with its entrancing views and the dreamland perspectives of Mount Pisgah. We are back at our starting-point: we are on a pavement, that great leveller, but without letting our soul cleave unto the dust as did the Psalmist's—adhaesit pavimento. Assume we are in the centre of a town, in the Square, the Market, the Piazza, Place, Platz, or Plaza. We are at the pivot. All towns need a central point just as every town requires a frame. On the whole the Italian apellation of Piazza seems most apposite for the area to which traffic must flow and from which it has to be redistributed. The centre of the town was the Agora, Forum, Parliament, Exchange, the meeting-place of all and sundry whether for purposes of politics, religion, or commerce. In England this focal point usually occupies the old market-place and retains the original name. Elsewhere the dominant building is a church, fortress, or palace, but in most cases the piazza was the scene of the crucial episodes in the life of a town. Turbulence, exhortation, persecution, faction fighting, the struggle for municipal or national freedom, the religious procession and pageantry of art, always supplemented by the process of unemotional trade—such is the history of the average piazza of the average
medieval town. The influence on public life of this open space, hedged in by some great building, has always been marked. The piazza requires enclosure, a sense of public privacy, otherwise the area becomes a mere junction. Here and there the piazza is so much protected that it is no more than a courtyard from which wheeled traffic is excluded—such as the calm and dignified Exchange Flags of Liverpool, and the ancillary squares of Verona or Avignon.

From the piazza we emerge into the street, a passage-way hedged in by houses. In New York a street can be ten miles long without beginning, centre, or conclusion: elsewhere it is some wayward meandering track conforming to the lie of the land, or again a sequence of palaces—Pall Mall or the Via Nuova at Genoa. In the ideally designed city the street would be laid out before a house was planned; but in our own haphazard congeries, it just comes into being by the erection of buildings which consequently seem to disclaim relationship with the street; while the street in turn wearily accepts the houses as part of the dull day’s work. But the street as street has its own functions to fulfil, not as a thoroughfare along which one wants to hurry ut celerrime, but as the approach to each frontage in its entire length. One should only be less proud of residence in a great street than of citizenship of a great city. Many people (perhaps most) think it axiomatic that the street should have a terminal point, and should end in the vista of some public building of character. Paris is the classic example, where under the control of Baron Hausmann, an engineer rather than an architect, streets were cut, diverted, and directed with this specific purpose. Undoubtedly such a practice gives value to indifferent buildings, and enhances the importance of the street itself by conveying the impression of an objective. No street can seem quite vacuous or indeterminate if some big church or public building provides a logical and imposing conclusion, even if 99 out of 100 people intend to pass it by. In point of fact the radiation of Hausmann’s streets was partly designed for convenience in handling an excitable population:—most towns were originally founded on the basis of strategy or commerce—and modern Paris is a little too stiff in applying principles of perfection. I become less enamoured of these rigid syllogisms. There is great charm in the irregular terminals so common in Southern Germany—I can even forgive the hopelessly false alignment of St. James’s Street as it runs down to St. James’s Palace, and it is some-
times urged that the oblique approach to St. Paul’s Cathedral enhances the stature rather than curtails the dignity of that masterpiece.

Not indeed that I wish the street to lack personality—far from it. The ideal street while serving its purpose as an easy thoroughfare should keep the wayfarer’s interest active, should surprise him from time to time by unexpected pleasures, rather than keep his eye fixed on some bonne bouche at its termination. Herein lies one charm of the curved street, an idea almost unknown to the geometers from Hippodamus in B.C. 450 to Baron Hausmann in 1860. Whitehall and High Street, Oxford, or the curved thoroughfares along the river frontages of Pisa, Amsterdam, London, or Vienna, keep the mind alert as fresh views and perspectives emerge. The great circular boulevards which have replaced walls in old fortified towns—Moscow or Paris, have a somewhat similar merit, except that being so far from the centre of the city there is seldom anything to arrest attention.

Fully curved streets must be exceptional, but the straight road can have its own paradoxes, and nowhere is the unexpected more frequent than in Nuremberg, where the old fifteenth century town lives in triumphant alliance with a young commercial community as big as Bolton, Blackburn, and Oldham combined. I doubt if there is a single building of importance in Nuremberg which fulfils the laws of axial planning: for to right or left or diagonally one passes churches in market squares, forecourts of public buildings, gardens, fountains, recesses, projections, irregularities of every description, and yet the effect is altogether fascinating. Camillo Sitte argued that these irregularities were much more the result of conscious town-planning and designing than we acknowledge. I question it. The casual routes through the centre of an old town are largely governed by levels and angles which followed primitive footpaths, while the outer range of narrow and crooked streets marks boundary lines of cultivated property which was afterwards incorporated in the town. Even today we trace market gardens and country villas in the trees, sometimes though too rarely, left along new suburban thoroughfares. Were Sitte’s thesis correct we should have many more records of municipal regulations and bye-laws, and the disputations they provoke. It is sufficient to hold that the medieval architect had the instinct to profit by the irregularities affecting his building lines, while the homogeneity of style in any given period preserved that congruity of general aspect
which gives unity and character to these old towns, in spite of daring variety in individual treatment. Anyhow we may learn the lesson that dissymmetry need not alarm us unduly, so long as we maintain the affinities of what is best in our civic life.

Thus the street need not be criticised because its features are only broken by lateral views of monuments and open spaces. One requires these spaces, these expansions, for reasons I need not refer to to-night. One wants a view. I dislike the parsimonious town which is so congested that one never gets a chance of looking it in the face. One wants to see a town as one approaches it; but we would also fain be able to look out of a town. Here in Britain we have few of those hill-towns of Italy, Greece, or Spain, which impose themselves upon us when miles away, and from which one can command hills, valleys, and plains; sunsets; often enough the sea, that privilege of scenery at once infinite and sublime which offers itself to us without effort or reserve. Our great towns have mostly settled in the plains and along estuaries, far removed from mountains. Nature is a poor accessory to our urban virtues. How differently places respond to varying phases of light and shade! Murano, for instance, or Aigues Mortes, never seem to be aroused till sunset. Edinburgh is at her best in the Autumn twilight. For Melrose, the Lago di Nemi, and the Colosseum, a full moon. Whistler used to be enraptured by the vague and misty ambiguities of the Thames. I have heard that architecture is never so solemn, perhaps so theatrical, as when the thunderstorms of the Himalayas illuminate those vast monasteries perched on the mountain crags of Thibet. Yes, like ourselves, architecture is susceptible to these influences of the weather and the seasons, reflecting the exhilaration of the sunshine, the depression of the storm. Rain, snow, thaw, fog, hurricane—all leave their impression on the countenance of stone. Mankind and his works are ever swayed to bow before the impulses of Madre Natura.

The street leads us out of the town, to the exit, which is also the entrance, to the point which marks the beginning as well as the end of urban life. The gateway excludes the enemy, welcomes the guest: marks the point beyond which the intruder shall not pass, while opening its doors to those seeking refuge. It was an emblem of hospitality, and like the church portal occupied an honoured post, and has always played a crucial part, in the history of the city. The
fabulous Babylon of Herodotus had a hundred gates connected by fifty miles of fortification. Our communities are no longer thus self-contained. Pray where does Manchester begin or Salford end? Where are the Roman gates which once marked the boundaries and emphasised the clear-cut physique of Mancunium, of this ancient foundation? I recall Sir Herbert Warren saying that Manchester has an advantage over Liverpool in that the form of our name records the classical distinction of our ancient pedigree. Had Cicero lived at the appropriate moment, he could have included us in a treatise de urbisbus as easily as Rome or Alexandria. But all is lost—except philology! and as perchance that memory may play us false, let us pass out of the city gates to the smiling countryside beyond.

After the Fire of London, John Evelyn wanted to preserve the outlines of the ancient city, and suggested that suburbs should be forbidden within ten miles of the enceinte, but as in the case of other ideals of that projected reconstruction, apathy took command. In London as elsewhere, the eighteenth century pursued its placid course, bequeathing an achievement of domestic comfort in that array of spacious houses with their conscious sense of intimacy and repose. The tradition ran on into the nineteenth century, and then arose the sudden demand for urban expansion. The suburb as we know it came into being. Its progress was rapid, sensational, and enervating. The deserted village is sad, but the deserted suburb is sadder still,—those areas of endless streets infested with endless houses, uniform where uniformity is not wanted, diversified where systematic handling would have been helpful,—alternately governed by caprice or cupidity, though more often the product of sheer untutored heedlessness: such is the portrait of the vast wildernesses crowding round our great cities yet not forming part of the body politic, being detached from the full corporate life of their ancestress. That is why I call these suburbs "deserted." I have no objection to an artisan quarter as such. On the contrary, zoning of occupation and residence has many merits. The tendency is natural, for it is the outcome of instinctive aggregation. London name-places have come to signify professions and callings—Harley Street, Fleet Street, Lombard Street, Temple, Whitehall, Covent Garden, and so forth. Even whole towns will specialise in some chosen product,—Sèvres, Meissen, Barnsley, Montreux of Winter Sports fame, and there is a bright spot on the Californian
coast of which I cannot recall the official name, but which is known as Moovie City, devoting itself to the break-neck career of compiling cinema films. And towns so to speak specialise in men as they do in output—Baireuth, Stratford-on-Avon, Weimar, Assisi.

But the artisan quarter should be a quarter and not the whole unit. Our tradition is that each house should be a home, one home: and a town of ten or fifteen thousand small houses must be monotonous alike in feature and personality. There can be little play of light or shade in such a welter of identicals. They become caricatures from their very iteration. Even a suburb should be defined, characterised. Even a blank wall can charm by its sense of security or enclosure or intrigue; but cottages by the thousand, or miles of wall connote the poverty of mere multiplication. Good suburbs exist, Toronto, Birmingham, and what Henley used to call "leafy Muswell Hill;" and as time goes on the growth of their young trees will veil what is ugly and enhance whatever deserves praise. But let me whisper one word about another kind of suburb, virtuous but perhaps a little standoffish, the long-range suburb of Southport, Buxton, or Blackpool. The congestion and drab uniformity of the local suburb is partly caused by the disinclination of the well-to-do townsman to live near his work. His contribution to the development of his own town should be the variety of motive introduced by different requirements of architecture, with the tendency to attract centres of shopping, recreation and leisure, while the public life of each suburb would thereby be diversified, extended and enriched. Berlin with its thirty distinct suburbs, Paris with nearly as many, have maintained their direct nexus with the mother-town while developing all their more local associations. This they can and do accomplish without danger of divided allegiance, which in the cases I indicate too often results in a very half-hearted service either to the residential or to the occupational centre. We now devote much attention to suburban problems. Many old mistakes we shall never repeat, but the problem of the existing suburb remains acute—how to infuse variety, life, responsibility, and bring them into closer touch with the corporate life of the greater unit,—in short how to stimulate the *amour propre*, the prestige, and the ambitions of the smaller and more detached community. It is in architecture and town-planning that some of the remedies must be sought.

Nowadays we seldom establish new towns, or if we do we build
them like suburbs. I suppose the golden age of town-planning began about B.C. 150 and lasted for 300 years, during which period at least 120 new towns were founded in Italy, followed by quite as many in the provinces of the Roman Empire. As a rule they were colonies for retired soldiers, or military outposts, which formed the nucleus of defence against the ominous tribal movements on the Northern and Eastern frontiers. This great group of towns came into existence full-grown, designed on the familiar chessboard plan, and laid out in accordance with rectilinear designs which had prevailed since 500 years before Christ. Most of these towns were small, and some of them retain their original dimensions with scarcely a single projection. Both in Spain and Italy these isolated burghs survive, the line of demarcation between town and country being abrupt. Until a few years ago, where Rome suddenly ended the Campagna immediately began, with that immense area of spaciousness—sky above, plains below, mountains beyond—surely the most perfect setting which ever framed a town. Rome still preserves the solitude which is the majestic appanage of great cities.

I often wonder what is the date at which some famous city must have reached its apogee of beauty—not of success and renown—and I am inclined to fancy that the most seductive moment would be that of decline—Ravenna about the year 600, Rome during the Papal exile at Avignon in the fourteenth century, Constantinople in 1450 just before her capture by Islam, Venice when she surrendered her age-long independence at the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797—these in truth are moments of decay; but at least these cities were homogeneous and had not been disfigured by vulgarisms and inconsistencies. Their old age was decorous and true to type. The soul of man, like the soul of a city chastened by distress, surveys byegone distinction with the retrospect of melancholy day-dreams, with the hope, perhaps with the expectation that the future may be kind and that from the ashes of a noble tradition, the new and more glorious city shall revive. If as is probable these cities were less beautiful in the heyday of their prosperity than in more troubled times, history teaches us that a Renaissance is at the command of those who know how to grasp their opportunities. After the completion of the Parthenon, Athens may have been a little too perfect for real perfection so far as her central monuments were concerned. And it is well to remember
Haverfield's verdict on the town as a whole—that in all its later history Athens was an almost oriental mixture of splendid public buildings with mean and ill-grouped houses... and that its streets, narrow and tortuous, unpaved and unlighted, were more like a chaos of mud and sewage than even the usual Greek road (of to-day). Not only did the Parthenon and its adjacent masterpieces lack the loving patina of time, but the gilding and polychromacy of their statues and architectural detail must have combined to give a garishness—I dare not use the more fitting term, which to our eyes would discount the excellence of form and even the purity of line. The mellowed Parthenon was still practically intact in 1687 when it was bombarded by Venice, by the great-grandsons of Titian, Tintoretto, Sansovino: and I imagine at that time the building still retained its supreme and ineffaceable character.

Rome too in the splendour of the Augustan age must have looked very raw. One knows how leisurely is the process of discolouration of marble in the Italian climate, and marble had become the medium of expression in their chief buildings: the newness of the Forum, Palaces, and Baths, the unrelieved and blazing whiteness of the Colosseum (presumably as glaring as that new national monument in the Piazza Venezia),—all the spickness and spanness of modernity—No! The affectionate embrace of centuries was required to caress this masonry, to harmonise its outlines, to soften its texture and to deepen its tone. And one other thing would have afflicted us in Rome (though no more than elsewhere), namely the ruthlessness with which older monuments were sacrificed. Modern investigations are revealing the ancient Rome which was so heartlessly covered up by the great builders: not even the most sacred and historic remains were spared. But it has always been so. Rome herself was pillaged for materials for the construction of Santa Sophia, which in turn was looted by the Crusaders who melted the bronze statues to make into bells. As for the history of the old Basilica of St. Peters, it is tragic how one of the most significant buildings of Christendom was smashed up, with a haste which in itself was an indecency, and to this day scores of Papal tombs lie mutilated or forgotten in the crypt. About this time Pirro Ligorio was describing the best method of grinding up antique statues for the manufacture of lime.

The disclosure of the old ground plan of Rome shows that the
ancient city as we now know it, was in itself the reconstruction of an earlier town, which had replaced one if not two primitive settlements. The older classical towns of Greece and Italy seldom if ever show their original town planning. They differ from the Colonist towns, the really new cities founded afterwards, but like these places they do represent a considered architectural lay-out, though of the reforming rather than the creative type, that is to say obliterations of earlier civilizations rather than building on virgin soil. Foundations may survive, at least in the form of rubble and debris. Some of the most curious towns in the world, small clay cities rising from the desert plains of Western Asia, resemble sugar cones standing on level ground, their height being composed of ruin superimposed on ruin,—generations, centuries, æons of successive reconstructions. The lowest foundations of Jerusalem are seventy feet below the present level of the soil. The Rome we see is a relatively modern town, few classical buildings having survived as intact as the Parthenon for instance, or the Pyramids, or the hillside temples of Sicily, while the early Christian structures have been bamboozled and sophisticated beyond recognition. It is even said that classical Rome has so far vanished that hardly any street line of to-day follows an original Roman road. Nor can we be surprised. Rome was sacked by her invaders, sacked by her own Generals, and in the intervals of peace was sacked by her own rulers and inhabitants. She was the most prolific quarry in the world. But her proud indomitable soul survives. It is not the visible city so much as its mystic fame,—its Mirabilia of the spirit more than the marvels of handiwork, which have made Rome eternal and an object of worship and veneration. Names constantly change in Rome. The Pantheon is now called Santa Maria Rotonda, but remains triumphantly pagan. Buildings alter their purpose, but jealously cling to some dim feature of their original destination. Though time after time art has shrunk back abashed by the violence of invader and inhabitant alike, yet these classic ruins survive, flayed and fleeced, providing a slender bridge between the old city and the new dispensation. Rome is too sanguine an entity to become a museum-town like Carcassone, but as the diggers dig on, more of the ancient city is being revealed. Antiquity, which was ill-served by the Middle Ages, strives to re-assert her supremacy. But Rome well knows that she is inexhaustible, knows that in departure we always have the consolation of hoping to return and
begin afresh. It is a renewing, a reviving personality, certain of itself and its destiny. You seem to see confidence in every face you pass up and down the Corso, and well may this be, for Rome has the calm assurance of incontestable and abiding distinction.

The Orthodox Greek Church, which is tenacious of its ritual and nomenclature, calls Constantinople “New Rome,” and like the sister capital, Constantinople is built on seven hills. Civilization had been shaken in the West, and Constantine moved his capital to the Golden Horn. His city became a harbour of refuge, ever providing a rallying point, and the achievement of Constantinople is its repulse of besiegers—Huns, Slavs, Persians, Arabs time after time, Haroun Al Raschid the hero of the Arabian Nights, Avars, Russians, Latins, Turks—siege after siege for a thousand years, and only one crucial surrender when the world was stupefied by Muhammad’s success in 1453. We know little of Constantinople in its great days. Few physical records have been preserved. The Turk must have destroyed between four and five hundred Christian Churches and establishments—others he converted into Mosques, including Santa Sophia the most grandiose church in the world. Originally founded in the fourth century, it was remodelled by Justinian, the Illyrian ploughboy, in 530. He plundered famous shrines for his material, including Delos, Baalbek, and Athens, and produced this romantic and mysterious building all regardless of the Greek masterpieces still intact across the Ægean Sea. Santa Sophia in fact is replete with orientalisms. The East exercised a potent sway upon the builders, on their mosaic decoration and the somewhat hybrid style of construction we associate with Byzantium. The wealth of its treasury was prodigious. It is in Ravenna that we must seek a pallid and fitful reflexion of Constantinople at its apogee. Ravenna is the microcosm of what we call Byzantine Art,—a tiny little town with a dozen churches, built before 550, and adorned with processions of Saints and Potentates winding along the walls of nave and apse in stiff hieratic procession, gleaming in the reserved brilliance of mosaic executed 1300 years ago. Like her mistress on the Bosphorus, Ravenna was the scene of ceaseless strife throughout the later history of the Empire. Odoacer, then Theodoric the Ostrogoth, then his daughter Amasaluntha whom Justinian attacked, Galla Placidia, the wife, sister, and mother of Emperors, then again the Greeks, the Lombards, Peppin the Frank,
the Venetians, the Popes... Charlemagne looted it, Gaston de Foix died there, so did Guido da Polenta, so did Dante: what a sequence of names, what a genealogy in the pedigree of greatness, violence, and genius! The sea deserted the port, withdrawing the lifeblood of commerce and naval enterprise. Like Bruges, or Winchelsea, or Rye, Ravenna settled down to the fastidious obscurity of a dead city, almost with the suspended animation of Pompeii. Ravenna grew lean. Like Ypres as I remember it before the War (the most silent town I ever visited, and doomed to perish in the most diabolical noise of history)—as in Ypres

The streets like lanes did seem
Not paved with stones but green...

To-day beyond the Ravenna boundaries, stagnant ditches with a sluggish movement through the marshes replace what was once the invigorating pulse of the sea. Sant’Apollinare in Classe still stands up though in complete isolation, perhaps less erect than formerly: she seems to lament her lost congregations—seems to beg for a crutch, a buttress, a moral support. All Ravenna seems overpowered with fatigue. Theodoric no longer sleeps in his tomb, that Tirynthian sepulchre roofed in by one great stone weighing 300 tons, but his ghost must haunt the Aryan churches he built, passing along the deserted streets and across the lonely piazzas, recalling the stirring episodes of his life, and the vicissitudes of the town he loved so well.

If Ravenna be the shadow of byegone Constantinople, her prototype is now a vicious or cynical mockery. From the moment of her capture by the Turks she has degenerated, no effort being made to honour the venerable evidence of her tremendous history. All is neglected. Dingy, ill-kempt, harsh, notwithstanding the genial efforts of nature, Constantinople has lost her soul during four and a half centuries of corroding and progressive decay, retaining only the sense of power, the inborn faculty of resistance conferred by a site at the junction of two continents, at the confluence of two seas,—the lasting asset of stability in martial resource and diplomacy, which has seldom deserted her possessor. At least she preserves the tradition of inviolability. But were it not for the inspiring presence of Santa Sophia, debased and defamed as it is, one would look upon Constantinople as like one of those towns which Solomon offered as a
gift to Hiram, king of Tyre, but which were refused because they were so dirty and displeasing.

One other great city has a site comparable with that of Constantinople, namely Alexandria, and for the Arts of Peace the situation of the latter excelled; again two seas, two continents, and a hospitable climate, with the added advantages of a peninsula, a great lake, and a fertile river. It was well chosen by Alexander the Great to be the second city of the world. It was laid out by Dino- crates who acquired fame in building the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. But what a long tale of disasters! When the Arabians took the place in 640, they boasted that it possessed 4000 palaces, 4000 baths, and 400 theatres. There is a neatness about this computation which makes me rather sceptical of the Arabian arithmetic—though they may have been right, for I can believe anything about a city so precise and well ordered that its five areas were known by the names of A, B, C, D, and E. The history of Alexandria is a sequence of eclipses. There were 600,000 inhabitants in the days of prosperity, early last century not more than 10,000. Notwithstanding surrenders, massacres, and burnings, the place seems indestructible, always reviving, though she will never again live a life of greatness. She will neither die with decision, nor will she live on in dignified retirement, inspiring the affection aroused by those towns which at first seem dead but in reality slumber. The really dead town, the skeleton town as one may call it, such as Palmyra, evokes a different emotion, for one cannot but lament its catastrophe. In the third century of our era a sudden and overwhelming effacement crushed this rich and sumptuous town, governed by that intriguing character Zenobia, Queen of Odeynath. She was of Egyptian race. She found herself immersed in the whirlpool of passions which led to revolt and civil war, ambitions which produced their crop of assassinations, public anger and family feuds which marked this period of bloody and consistent brutality,—yet an epoch of noble edifices, splendid towns, emphatic souls. Far beyond Damascus and arising from the hot cruel sands, the horizon is cut by the great avenue of columns which formed the processional colonnade nearly a mile long, all that is left of this colossal achievement. The ground is strewn with broken masonry like the rubbish heap of a builder's yard. All the way to Damascus are traces of other vanished towns. Where did the débris of Palmyra go, what
happened to the massive structures of these other places? Doubtless some of their exotic marbles have been exiled and still charm the eye in Aix-la-Chapelle or San Marco, others are hidden beneath the whitewash of Santa Sophia, or incorporated in the Chanteys of Christian Rome. But Zenobia's city is the very emblem of desolation. As a town it is swept from the face of the earth, and what is left merely represents what successive invaders were too tired to overthrow. The elaborate system of water-supply which sustained a large population with its baths and fountains, its flocks and herds, cornfields and gardens, giving the oasis the Syrian name of the Palm-grove, has dwindled down to two tiny springs. Even these rebelled. Their water has turned brackish and refuses to welcome those who visit these gaunt dry bones. The history of fresh water is one constant factor in the history of civilization, but I must not pursue this theme. How forbidding is the picture of Palmyra's grim skeleton!

"When one buildeth and another pulleth down, what profit have they then but labour?"

Happily the suppression of liberty does not always involve the extinction of a town. I always think that Venice showed but small evidence of her sustained and spirited love of autonomy when she abdicated to Napoleon. But her victor was irresistible, and Venice had refused to acknowledge the French Republic. Napoleon entered the city in May, 1797, and in the following Autumn the Treaty of Campo Formio brought a long history to its close, and assigned the province to Austria. Three or four years earlier Goldoni, the matchless exponent of Venetian life who had been living at the Court of Louis XVI., was deprived of his pension and died in destitution: so Venice had her grievance against the Republic. Goldoni's interpretation of Venetian life confirms those paintings of his contemporaries, perhaps as living and vivid transcripts of a town and its personality as the art of illustration whether by painting, engraving, photography or film, has ever accomplished. Pietro Longhi, Guardi, the Carlevaris, and a number of less known painters whose biographies deserve reconstruction, have left ten thousand canvases, each giving some view of the town or some phase of its occupation—dry matter-of-fact inventories to the casual observer, but infinitely more subtle and penetrating than one fancies at first sight. These painters of the latter half of the eighteenth century, the last exponents of a glorious tradition,
detected every nuance and recorded every pretty fantasy of their time. "Let no flower of spring pass us by!" Their portraits of the town itself and its scenes of Campo, Church, and Canal, are so true that at every turn along that baffling network of streets, or as one crosses any one of the 400 bridges, the name of the Canaletti springs to the mind. Venice pictorially is the Venice of everyday life, the place to which one may most accurately apply the word "picturesque,"—just as San Gemignano, perched among the Tuscan uplands with its little forest of towers hemming in the central Piazza delle sette Torre, is the key to the architectural backgrounds of half the paintings of the Quattrocento. But in Venice the survival is virtually complete, and in the latest school of painters we have the true effigy of the generation which prepared the way for Campo Formio. Venice, to tell the truth, had become a little shabby. The quays and landing steps against which the water lapped as wistfully as to-day, had grown weedy and dilapidated. Russet sails which dotted the lagoons were often torn. Doors, shutters, gondolas, ships—all their paint seems to wear thin, the very roofs are pale and anaemic. We praise Palladio, and Wren, and Arnolfo di Cambio, for making their buildings conform to their purpose, and we chide the later giants, Fuga and Vanvitelli because their churches resemble theatres; and yet here in Venice the palace becomes a tenement and the monastery a warehouse, without apparent loss of dignity and with none of picturesqueness. But if her colouring had become dim, if the ardent tones of the famous Venetian scenes by Carpaccio or Tintoretto had given way to a subdued palette, the inhabitants themselves kept their love for bright clothes and vivacious society. The ordinary scene on the Piazza of San Marco supplies the clue to the enigma of Venetian decay. We see an animated affair. It is partly a gathering of commerce, business men talking to mariners and foreign traders,—Chinamen, Negroes, Levantines, Indians, Northerners, all are there—partly, too, the avocations of local trade by retailers of vegetables and fish; but pervading the whole assemblage and ever mixed up in haphazard confusion, one sees Venice taking the air, promenading up and down as they gossip, laughing at the mountebank, coaxed by the cheapjack, cajoled by the quack doctor, tempted by the peepshow, cheated by them all; conjurers, peasants, hawkers, cutpurses, stroll about among the smart set, here and there a lawyer or a priest, a fantastic medley of life, a kaleidoscope of humanity,
all busy, all idle. Many wear masks in this unending carnival. Perhaps there was something feverish in their gaiety, and concealed beneath those flowing cloaks one may suspect the stiletto. The intention of these shallow souls was towards indolence. The obligations of service had disappeared. Venice had become the Kingdom of the Flâneur. All life was a harlequinade, a little world of make-belief.

The background to these scenes of nonchalance is the staunch unchanging San Marco. Seville Cathedral gives us the sense of spaciousness. In St. Peter's we get the much more commonplace feeling of distance. In San Marco I rejoice because the interior is small. No church so far as I know is better placed in relation to its town than San Marco. Its site is unrivalled in that all activities cluster about it—Government, Palace, Municipio, Prison, Mint, Library, Commerce, Caravanserai—all men must converge on that Piazza interwoven as it is with the ambitions of every Venetian of every age. The Campanile too, now a frank and honest replica, gave aerial scale which is exactly what the low frontage of the Church and the rhomboid shape of the Piazza require. One is grateful, too, for the calm and reflective outlook which noiselessness ought to confer.

No trams! They are sibilant in Milan. At Naples they shriek, at Bologna they scream like frightened children, and in lots of other places they howl. I remember Walter Pater once saying that when he first visited Florence he felt that he was in a "carpeted city." One might equally apply the happy phrase to Venice.

The collapse of the Campanile in 1902 was a cruel blow, and it was only when the fatal diagnosis was at last pronounced by the engineers, that Venice quite realised its affection for the familiar tower, visible for miles around, and marking from the most remote corner of the lagoons the central pivot and landmark of the province. For several days before the final disaster the Piazza had been crowded with people who hurried in to pay their homage of devotion, to pray mercy for the threatened monument. They pushed close up to the base. Troops were paraded and forced the people back to a safety line, where a strong cordon was maintained till the end. Great fears were felt both for St. Mark's and for Sansovino's Libreria Vecchia which is only a few yards from the tower: but when the building fell it subsided on to its own foundations, into itself so to speak, a slow and even deliberate descent which spared its illustrious friends. Never
was dissolution more scrupulous and considerate. Even some of the precious sculpture at the base was afterwards recovered intact.

A few months later when I went to see the débris (ever so much smaller than I expected) I happened to meet a priest of San Giorgio Maggiore, the massive church across the Giudecca canal. He described the closing scenes. He had watched the tragic dénouement by day and kept vigil by night. It appears that the bricks had grown desiccated. Their cohesive power had perished, and the tremendous weight of the fabric ground them into powder. Dust to dust. A few hours before the end, la morte as he called it, the Tower began to bleed to death. Little streams of water seemed to spurt out, first at one point then at another, sometimes three or four of them at once, and constantly changing their position. After falling a few yards from the wound they vanished, for they were jets of sand from the pulverised bricks which were dispersed when forced into the open air.

The priest could see the crowds in the Piazzetta at a safe point by the water edge. They were awed. Occasionally low gusts of subdued conversation would come across to San Giorgio, but generally the crowd was silent, assisting at a deathbed. Zanipolo and the great church of the Frari rang the passing bell: and I think he said there was a service on the Piazza. At last the tower collapsed. He described it as if the movement were leisurely, a gesture of fatigue and slow to the point of reluctance. It fell without any apparent crisis, and one may be sure with unconquerable dignity. Then the pent-up emotions of the Venetian crowd gave way, bursting out deep and uncontrollable. This poignant cry of distress, the collective lamentation for a bitter and ineffaceable loss, swept across the broad canal to the sorrowing priest: a cry so heartrending that he must have learnt that the soul of New Venice was true and responsive as ever. And I, too, feel that we may forget the Treaty of Campo Formio.

Towers and towns may fall, towns and towers will rise again: sometimes according to the old pattern, but much more often the effort of a fresh generation or a different race. Not very long ago the Obijwaway tribe of Red Indians had a settlement on the shores of a huge inland sea, and their humble village of log huts was dedicated to the God of Thunder. Its name was She-kag-ong, now softened into Chicago. It is a curious name, a soft and euphonious name even if it does mean something dreadful; but somehow it does not quite seem to
characterise the town. To use an expression in vogue in Chicago, the name lacks "Pep." This word is not a tribute to the incisive prose of Mr. Samuel Pepys: it is merely the diminutive form of pepper. You will remember how Sir John Falstaff peppered two rogues in buckram suits. Chicago possesses more pep than its easy-going name suggests. It is all pep,—*civitas pepissima*. One likes to read character of citizenship into the name of a city. Sparta will always be a masculine town, Versailles a feminine town. Canberra, the budding capital of Australia, conveys nothing to my mind, except to remind me of something I never encountered before. I am sure it will be a neutral, sexless, pepless place. There is a proverb that the names of neighbouring burghs in the old kingdom of Fife, typify the degree of energy (shall I say of pep) displayed by a workman when engaged on time-work and piece-work respectively. When on time-work he sacrifices to the shrine of Auchtermuchty, Auchtermuchty; but on piece-work to the name of Cupar o' Fife, Cupar o' Fife. What a busy pepful rhythm that is. I am always stimulated by the thought when I pass through Cupar which has thus come to possess what is called a slogan. In old days the slogan was the gathering note of the fighting tribe. Now it is a hybrid nickname—not the thoughtful and discriminating epithets which honoured Italian towns—*Padova la dotta, Genova la superba, Mantova la gloriosa*—other epithets are *fedele, grassa, degna, l'armata*. The slogan is something invented *ad hoc*. Chicago has earned its share of credit, for she pepped away blithely at the recent Convention of Advertisers at Wembley. They were good enough to send me their propaganda. They called it literature. There were fervent appeals to the Goddess of Truth, a certain amount of onomatapœia, and a good deal of familiarity as well: I was not mollified by their frequent terms of endearment. It is all part of the Gospel of Pep. Right or wrong does not matter so long as you repeat it often enough. Pep pays. For instance a seaside resort beginning with the letter B, must call itself Breezy or Bracing:—Blackpool, Brighton, Broadstairs, etc. The initial C? Cromer, Cleethorpes, Cowes for Cruising. Deal, Douglas, they obviously Delight, so do Dungeness and Dover. Dundee and Dublin, with their golden sands, will probably pirate the slogan as well. These publicists are not the first to give new and unearned reputations to towns, or to patent medicines either; but their pleasure in this benevolence is so open and
unconcealed as to conciliate. Yet some places suffer from these enthusiasms. Lots of people fancy that Munich, Yarmouth, and Cheddar do nothing except brew beer, smoke herrings and press cheese. Towns find it hard to live down some idle prejudice. All Montaigne could remember of Urbino was that wherever he went, he had either to climb up or climb down. I have heard the whisper of prejudice directed against Wigan, and quite unjustly. Wigan is a great personality with a homely face. Voilà tout. Chicago herself suffers from her prowess in packing pork: 7,500,000 hogs every year, and if maize is cheap the number will rise to 10,000,000. Also 3,000,000 cattle and 4,000,000 sheep are carved, canned, and corned annually. There are side lines in bristles, fertilizers, and glue. It is a horrid vocabulary and a horrid process, however toothsome and succulent the goods; and this legend of canning is so deep-rooted that people who live quite close enough to Cook County, Illinois, to know better, believe that Chicago’s soul has got immersed in the pursuit. Of course it is a busy place. Its briskness is aggressive, its noise indescribable, and its prose diffuse. But Chicago as it emerges from a sequence of disastrous fires becomes more and more a proud city, a city built for and by proud men. There are competing, even conflicting motives, which is common enough—as in St. Andrews between Golf and Learning, in Windsor between a College and a Court, at Doncaster between Industry and Sport. No doubt in Chicago the goal of commercial success is specially magnetic. Nothing is left to chance: but big business apprehends new and vital aspects of leisure. There is a notable and growing public spirit, hampered by the problem of assimilating large and diverse racial elements, but gradually overcoming this sectionalism, and unifying what will one day be the greatest urban community in the world. The structure of the city reflects a strong and vigorous personality, though perhaps a little speculative in method. But decision is seldom absent. The Pyramids look as though they had been built by slaves, Salisbury Cathedral by craftsmen, the fine Woolworth building in New York and similar structures in Chicago, by virile and emphatic minds. Much of the recent architecture in the United States is quite admirable in quality and scholarship, and nearly always strong as well. The future of Chicago is an absorbing theme. Its precocious growth is being controlled with indomitable courage and boundless resource. Chicago has a vast horizon.
Lake Michigan stretches for twenty-five miles, the distance from here to Halifax, and the lake is as big as Scotland.

There are few high towers in Manchester though there are many accomplished chimney-stacks. I have never tested the view. Were I to do so I should naturally recall Leland’s observation that Manchester is the “fairest, best builded, quickest and most populous town of Lancashire.” How far has the judgment of 1538 been upheld? I wonder what I should see, and moreover what I should not see, for the horizon is circumscribed by a capricious climate and other discouraging features. But Manchester would stand out as a centre of tremendous power and responsibility. A radius of thirty miles from this building must enclose the biggest population for its area in the world. It is a city surrounded by a constellation of towns and villages. For every time the word “town” occurs in the Bible, the word “city” must be used thirty or forty times — cities with their villages, and cities with “suburbs for cattle.” Here the term city is justified by scale, and by its close relations with smaller communities, perhaps nascent cities themselves, in the neighbourhood, all connected by commerce and personal affinities, while maintaining the forms and status of complete autonomy. But of the city itself, the central focus of Manchester, what would one see? Firstly of course the site of the new Art Gallery: then perhaps the University and the Rylands Library,—late arrivals, for after a long history we are finishing where Alexandria began,—but striving manfully and with success to overtake lost opportunities, and to provide the equipment which grows more and more vital to every phase of enterprise. Then a long narrow shaft of light would define itself as a stream of water running to the sea, affording direct access to Baltimore or Shanghai or Bombay, and giving a long-drawn perspective to all who can project their minds to the beyond. Descending from the tower one would find oneself in a busy scene, “the quickest town” as Leland said:—so busy that all are pressed for time, so busy that the evening paper appears before high noon, so busy that leisure has become a rush, and repose the most elusive of occupations.

I should learn that Manchester boasts a name which is partly a compliment, partly a sobriquet, “Cottonopolis,”—the city of the fabric that all must wear, a source of comfort and cleanliness and health. It is a grand family of towns which bears the surname “polis”:—the
cities of Constantine, of the Emperor Hadrian, of our own good Queen Anne: there is Helipolis the City of the Sun, Acropolis the glamous summit of Athens, Metropolis and Cosmopolis in general parlance, even Necropolis the most diffused of all, for the City of the Dead has claimed its station in the heart of every living community. Let us admit that Cottonopolis is not always applied to us with the unreserved wish to flatter: It has perhaps a nuance of something drab and smoky with a suggestion of objectives which exact but little spiritual or intellectual effort. I am glad that Professor Reilly has recently been demonstrating that Manchester contains fine buildings, not merely honest and serviceable structures well suited to their purpose (which alone authorises praise), but buildings notable for harmonious and scholarly design. He has been telling us this, just because so many of them seem to do small justice to themselves, and a / f r t t r t to the City as a whole. Their setting is too often inappropriate or apologetic. I quote, but I do not endorse, the dictum that virtue is like a rich stone, best plain set: and the intermediate buildings of Manchester, the interlopers which provide the plain setting, traduce the gems.

We are bewildered by the incongruities, hesitations and congestions of our great cities. "Quelqu'un demandait à un paysan: Avez-vous vu Paris? Non, répondit l'homme des champs; j'y suis allé une fois, mais les maisons m'ont empêché de voir la ville." And what was true of Paris before the advent of Baron Hausmann is even more applicable to big English towns, where the tradition of corporate sentiment in town planning perished a century ago. Fitness of the town was forgotten in searching for fitness of the building, so much so that at last the unit of the building lost cohesion and good sense, and the tradition of beauty and romance which still prevailed in the eighteenth century architecture, grew dim. Many places which enjoy a world-wide reputation for efficiency are inchoate and chaotic as towns. Marked skill is shown in the organization of everything except the fabric of the town itself. We are now emerging from a period which showed lamentable dereliction of this civic duty. We are beginning to take stock. Let me mention the recent case of Sheffield. Mr. Patrick Abercrombie was commissioned by the Corporation to take stock. He has inventoried the place, audited it, surveyed it;—not merely as regards the actual levels and contours, geology, minerals, and watershed,
but he has analysed the influence of these factors upon urban development, passing on to the industrial survey of zoning, transport, and housing, with all the concurrent problems of health, open spaces, and education. We have in effect the basis for a reconstruction plan, improving the town without making the fatal gaffe of suburbanising the country. Much can be done for the future of Sheffield, but no more can be recorded of its situation to-day, of the datum line from which all fresh progress must start. Sheffield now knows herself better than any great town of the Empire. Her knowledge is the best guarantee that the errors of yesterday will not be repeated, and that her efforts of to-morrow will be fruitful of public weal. Henceforward Sheffield can never make a mistake arising from faulty knowledge or defective study of existing facts.

I have often thought that every town of note should have its own honorary architect, the consultant to whom questions of policy style or conservation, should be referred,—but I generally conclude that jewels like Rothenburg, Pienza, Delft, or Pickering would never have survived a succession of such appointments. But that every great city should know itself I entertain no doubt. The introspection may produce remorse from which repentance flows, and whence amendment is almost certain. The scale of stabilized error is so gigantic that we can never make good all our follies and omissions, but the future is before us. The Soul of a City may be imprisoned, lying concealed below the surface, yet so near it; ever striving to arise and grasp the full measure of its hopefulness and endeavour. The Soul will always be there, varying from one generation to another; at one moment thrilled by success and shining in the virtues of accomplished good; at another darkened by affliction when the victim of pestilence or the invader; or else when shackled by the worst of all its enemies, apathy. While the soul of man changes its stature, it is influenced by the environment of its home, just as its home though inherited must reflect the character of its citizen. In the history of an ancient town we march at the very end of a long procession, the rearguard of our ancestry, the vanguard of our successors. Yes, while the present is ours we must learn to look upon the future as more than ever ours too. Our descendants will profit by our forethought or suffer from our neglect, judging us as we judge the earlier figures in the vanished pageant of urban life. What better work can we achieve than make their path more easy, their
homes more intimate, their public buildings more noble, their gardens more green—in a word that the city they inherit from us shall be more honourable, stately, and true. Of all earthly ideals that of the perfect city is the most romantic and inspiring, for it comprises the happiness of our race and the welfare of those who follow. The youngest, those nearest to ourselves, shall be the first to reap the harvest.

. . . On either side the street
  Which was exceeding fair and wide
  Sweet mansions there mine eyes did meet,
  Green trees the shaded doors did hide.
  My chiefest joys
  Were girls and boys,
  That in those streets still up and down do play
  Which crowned the town with constant holiday.