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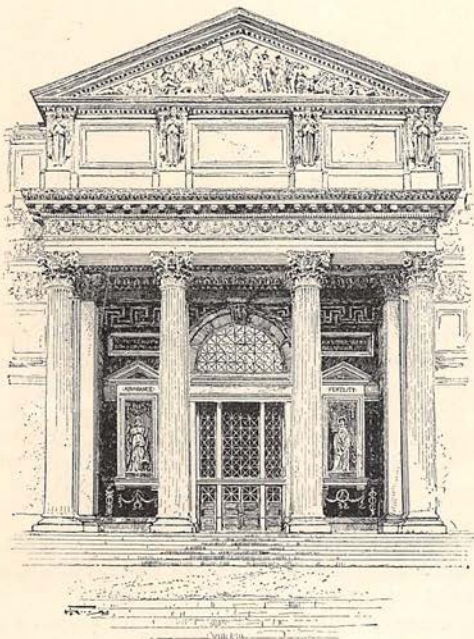
No. 3.

COLOR IN THE COURT OF HONOR AT THE FAIR.

AN international exhibition like that at Chicago is nothing if not an occasion for the increase of understanding between nations. Instruction is the primary object of the Fair, and it is tacitly demanded of every one who comes to it that he take his pleasure seriously. Certainly there is an abundance of data in Jackson Park from which to draw conclusions as to the development of this or that art or industry in this or that country. There is so much, in fact, that one is fairly stupefied by the mere magnitude of things before one has begun to search for sympathetic walks through the labyrinth. I suppose the surest clue to these walks is natural taste. It is curious, the way in which the specialist or even the man with a fad is guided to the object of his interest by a kind of instinct. But it is characteristic of crowds, which ought to progress as though from an impulse of irresistible logic, to drift with a delightful lack of purpose. This apparent aimlessness may be fatal to the statistician who is endeavoring to tabulate the relative powers of attraction of each industry represented within the limits of the Fair, but it is a source of satisfaction to any one in whom the taste for that which is picturesque predominates. To him the supreme charm of the Fair is that it is a pageant. It is a pageant in which the elements of beauty are not only infinite in number, but, as a rule, national in character.

I wonder to what humorist the introduction of the gondola to the waterways of the Fair is to be attributed? If there is one thing for which the Fates presiding over the evolution of the Fair are to be thanked, it is that a pseudo Venice was not devised by the architects to whom the designing of the buildings and grounds was intrusted. There are several bodies of water lying along the lake front, to be sure, and one of them is called the Lagoon, while others are described as canals; but these are generic terms, and they need imply nothing necessarily Venetian. As well call the Fair an American Venice because it has a few canals and gondolas, as call Holland the Northern Venice, a confusion of ideas which it is to be hoped does not succeed in imposing upon persons who have seen neither Venice nor Holland. I have observed with express interest the absence of any Venetian motives in the large architectural effect of the Fair, because those are exactly the motives which would produce a jarring note in the background prepared for the pageant which the life of the exhibition affords. There are few more interesting subjects for study in Jackson Park—few of an esthetic nature, I mean—than this background considered as such. I have thought it worth while for the present purpose to analyze the most important section of it—the Court of Honor—as an essential part of the pageant itself. In-

consistently enough, I have been tempted to draw a parallel between the court and a beautiful Venetian background, that which the Piazza di San Marco furnishes for the evening promenade of the natives, the throng of tourists who sit at the little tables outside Florian's and the other cafés, eating ices and watching the scene, and the military band which stands on an elevated circular platform in the center. However, a temptation of this sort is specious, and easily resisted. There are resemblances of proportion between the Venetian piazza and the Court of Honor at the Fair, and there are points of contact to be noted in connection with the arcades running around both quadrangles; but to say nothing of the Gothic and

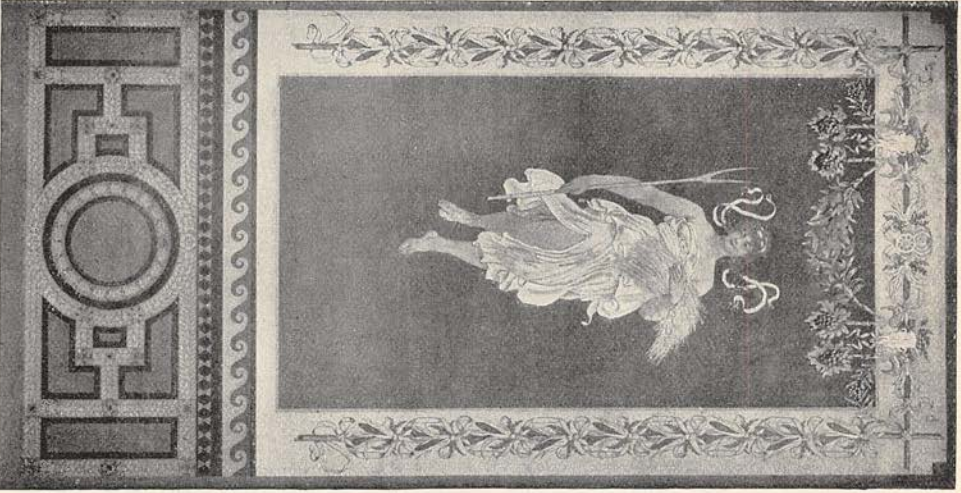
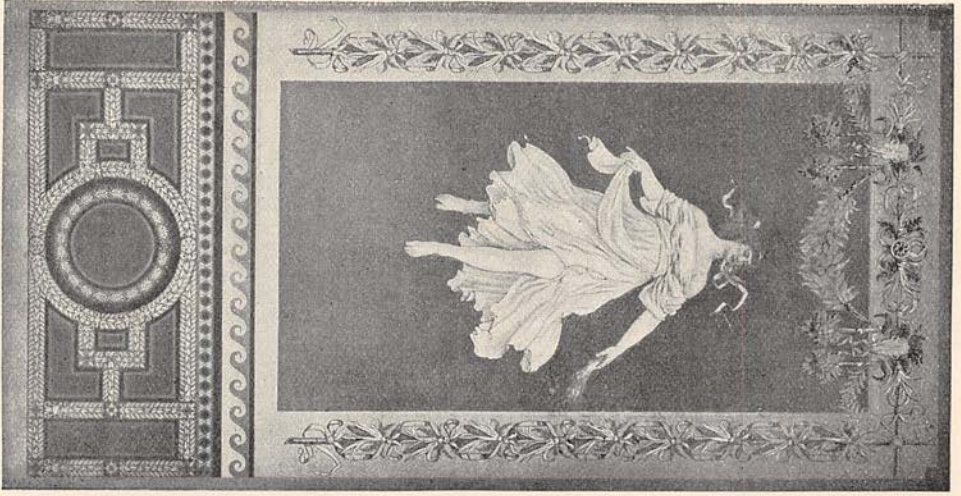


PORTICO OF THE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.

Byzantine influences which dominate the piazza, and virtually all Venice, there is the question of color to be disposed of, and this is the crucial point. There can be no comparison whatever between the color of an Italian and that of an American scene. It is not alone that the scale in the one case touches the highest possible notes, while the normal pitch in the other is raised to nothing like the same extent. The pervasive hue of the sky, which determines everything by day or night, is one thing in Venice and in Chicago quite another. The pictures of the island in the Lagoon, and a wing of the canal flowing across the head of the basin in the Court of Honor, show conclusively the specifically northern tone which prevails at the Fair.

A northern tone is bound to be temperate, and the peculiar merit of the coloration of the court is that it is not too warm. I have seen the buildings under conditions which seemed to require more brilliant passages of color here and there in the scheme—to make it more alive—than were anywhere visible. Under a cloudy winter sky, beautiful but excessively somber, the addition of a few vivid decorative effects would have modified acceptably the severity due to the classic style of architecture which has been chiefly used in the buildings. But the Fair is an institution of summer, and under sunshine the decorations of the buildings are warm enough. I speak, of course, of such decorations as serve to accent the delicate white which has been applied to most of the buildings. The choice of an “off-white” for the basis of the decorative plan of the Fair was in the last degree felicitous,—primarily because it offers the best field for the animating wizardry of the sun, and because it shows to the best advantage the beauties of architectural and sculptural ornament with which the buildings have been enriched, but also because it gives better relief than any other tone could give to the flaunting gonfalons on the cornices, to the turf, to the floral decorations everywhere, to the vegetation in the Lagoon, and, finally, to the stream of pedestrians which moves ceaselessly beneath the shadow of the mammoth buildings. Just because it does give such strong relief to any darker tints coming into contact with it, it is important for such of the latter as are comprehended in the painted decoration to be manipulated with taste. I think they have been, in the main, in the buildings on the Court of Honor. In that one of them, for example, which stands as the head and front of the exhibition,—the Administration Building,—the glimpses of color caught between the columns of the loggia in the second stage of the composition are of a character to heighten perceptibly the effect of the tonal scheme, and yet remain in the subordinate position which belongs to the recessed wall on which the decoration is laid. This wall is painted a dull red. Seen from the ground, the roof of the loggia throws a deep shadow behind the columns supporting it; but so large in scale is the building, that even at a distance the color actually counts, and is as distinct a factor in the beauty of the structure as are the white surfaces from the ground to the wall above the loggia, or the gilded splendor which thence up to the crown of the dome is the most dazzling mark on the horizon.

On the picturesque side of the Fair, Mr. Hunt's building grows in significance as it is studied. In the way in which its structural lines, its masses, and even its details are han-



PANELS OF SPRING, SUMMER, AND AUTUMN IN THE PORTICO OF THE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING. PAINTED BY GEORGE W. MAYNARD.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

“THE TRIUMPH OF THE REPUBLIC” (FOUNTAIN BY FREDERIC MACMONNIES).

d. Castaigne Chicago 93

ENGRAVED BY CHARLES STATE.

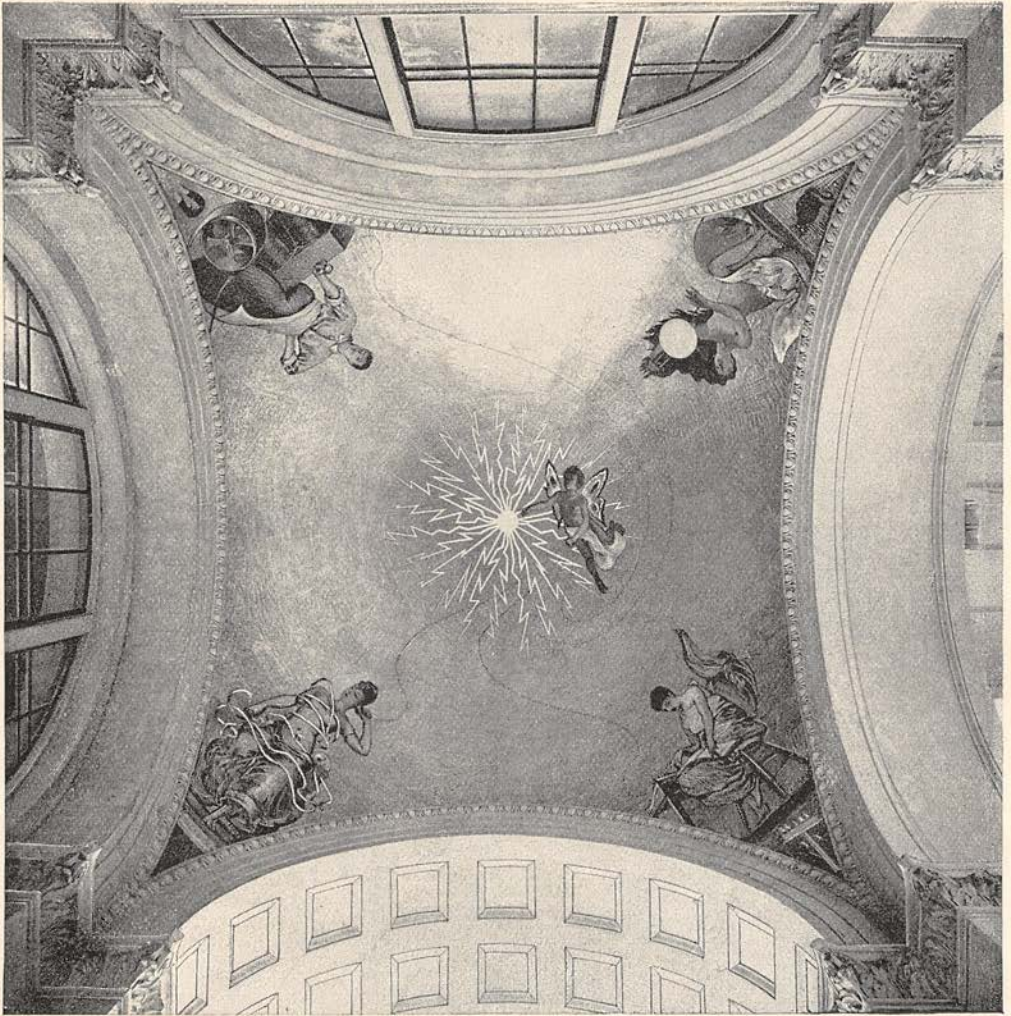


DOMES OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD.

dled, it is no less academic, I should say, than the Agricultural Building or the Fine Arts Building, both much more classic designs; but for all its formalism, it is brilliantly pictorial, and is really the central point in the panorama of the Fair. Circumstances combine to give it this preëminence. The design has a magnificence of its own, and the banners and gilded dome reinforce its sumptuous, festive effect; but in addition, the stately plaza before it is the busiest space in the grounds, and this, finally, is rendered more decorative by the fountain which riots at its edge. In the sketch of "The Triumph of the Republic," the barge is seen from the plaza, but it is not difficult to imagine the scene reversed, as in the drawing of the Administration Building, and the nervous composition by Mr. MacMonnies, yielding a still more picturesque effect through the

noisy sparkling water, brings into the base of the structure behind it the flamboyant motive which the gilding brings into the dome. The Fair is truly a spectacle, and nowhere is it so theatrical as at the entrance.

There is some decorative painting on both the buildings which immediately flank Mr. Hunt's. There is some in the enormous niche through which entrance is gained to the court end of the Electricity Building—decoration which strikes notes of pale blue and yellow in the chord. And there is some that is very artistic in the loggia of the Machinery Hall, which also gains a great deal, by the way, from the fashion in which the inscriptions and some other details have been picked out in gold. But the finest decoration of all that enters into a bird's-eye view of the court in its color significance, is that on the Agricultural Building, painted by



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY J. CARROLL BECKWITH.

Mr. George W. Maynard. Some conception of the charm of his figures, and of the conventional ornament inclosing them, may be gathered from the three panels reproduced in detail; but the value of his work is better understood from the little sketch of the porch of the Agricultural Building. This sketch indicates the chief virtue of his decoration—its architectural character. It would not tell as well as it does in a view of the Agricultural Building taken, say, from across the basin in the Court of Honor, if it were not resolutely deprived of strictly independent character, and treated mainly as an element in an architectural design. To have accomplished this may not seem to be a very serious thing, but the fact is that few decorative painters know how to do it. The key to good mural painting is a sense of relation, and what makes Mr. Maynard's decoration fine

is that there is so sure a balance maintained in it between the requirements of the subjects he set out to illustrate and the spaces he was given to cover with his paintings. It is always easy to tell too much. He eliminates superfluous details, and though there is vitality in his allegorical figures, they belong more to the domain of convention than to that of positive realism. The simple treatment of the backgrounds as so much tone, relieved above each figure by a little ornament, helps to preserve this condition. There is nothing restless or forced in the decoration, and as one surveys the building from end to end across the moving people on the pathways, under the arcades, and in the porticos and pavilions, the panels do not detach themselves as pictorial entities, but fall into the scheme for which they were designed as unaggressively as do the lovely works of plastic



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY KENVON COX.

art modeled for the building by Mr. Martiny. In the portico, the panels of "Abundance" and "Fertility" are done in light tones, with yellows and whites playing leading parts, and on the side walls of the same member of the building there are two beautiful panels depicting, in golden chariots, Cybele and Triptolemus respectively, and combining dark draperies with salmon backgrounds. But in the corner pavilions, the large panels with their figures in various subdued shades, and in the arcades of the building, the panels left covered with body-color and nothing more, bring a rich tawny Venetian red to assist the shadows in vivifying the long white façades.

The principal painted decoration on the exterior of the Liberal Arts Building does not, like that on the Agricultural Building, join with the white walls, the sky, the natural growths

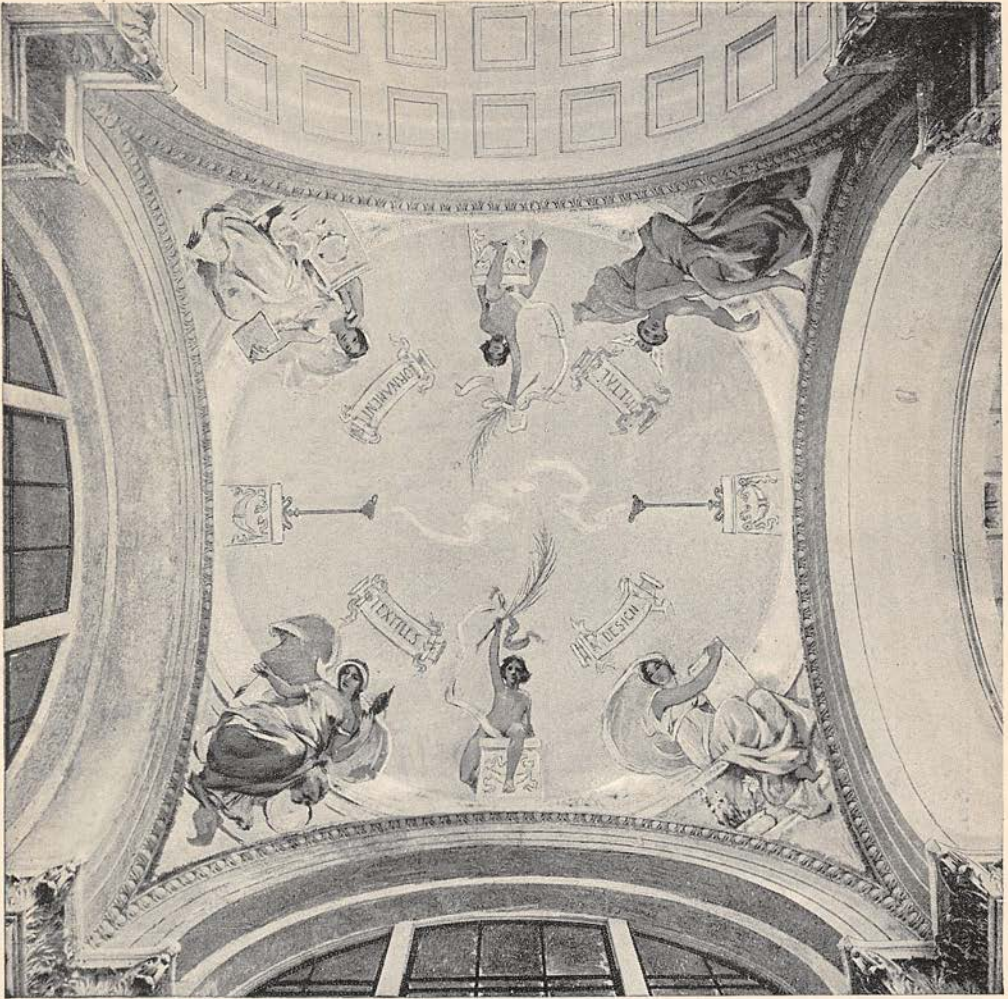
about the grounds, and the kaleidoscopic mass of human beings to produce a spectacular effect; but in the search for all sources of color in the constructions of the court, the ceilings of the entrance-domes of the Liberal Arts Building are speedily encountered, and they do not soon release the attention. There is a great deal of color in them. Yet if they have one merit more than another, it is that none of them is overloaded, or has the "holes," as artists call them, which dark tones and brilliant chiaroscuro are apt to produce unless the man who handles them is a consummate master, and which the painters of these decorations have all eschewed. The color in the domes is generally light. I have not been able to trace a very coherent system of symbolism through the series as a whole, the subjects for the typifying figures in each dome having been chosen with no reference to any



DOMES OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY C. S. REINHART.

other decoration about the building. On the other hand, the artists seem to have been unanimous enough in the method of distributing their figures, putting one in each pendentive, and leaving the centers of the domes bare of them, though not always of other ornamentation. The domes, as they stand, are extremely interesting as experiments in a field to which America has not thus far contributed many workers. In a way they are more interesting than the very successful work on the Agricultural Building,—not because they are better paintings, which is most decidedly not the case, but because they are attempts at solving more difficult problems. Mr. Maynard has had to deal with level surfaces involving no eccentricities of perspective. The decorators of the domes of the Liberal Arts Building have had to paint on curved surfaces to be seen from beneath, and

they have been met by difficulties, such as those of complicated foreshortening, which, it may be presumed, few American artists have been accustomed to attack under similar circumstances. If a lesson may be learned in the course of an inspection of the decorative side of the court, it is that science is of immense importance in mural painting—science, that is to say, of the sort which makes Paul Baudry's ceiling in the *foyer* of the Paris Opéra as wonderful a performance for its time as the work of Tintoretto in the Scuola di San Rocco is for the sixteenth century. It is possibly a shade too clearly in evidence in Baudry's work, and comes into the foreground sometimes when the beauty of his form and color should alone be apprehended. It might not unfairly be said that Tintoretto is every inch as puissant, and yet leaves the spectator unconcerned as to the



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY ROBERT REID.

means whereby his effects were gained. But the artist is never unconcerned in this way. On the contrary, he profits, obviously, by an understanding of the mechanism of a work of art, and it is probable that Baudry would do an American mural painter of to-day vastly more good than Tintoretto would, simply for the reason that there is more instruction, expressed in singularly modern terms, in the mechanism of his decoration—mechanism that is of extraordinary rightness. Among the painters of the domes, Mr. Cox has some of this science, and so has Mr. Blashfield. Mr. Cox has a share of that mastery of draftsmanship and the laws of perspective which puts something into a picture that goes through it like an electric shock. Immediately the figure painted by a man with this gift lifts up its head, as it were, and has a being on the surface which has re-

ceived it. Mr. Cox's figures have vitality, and they owe it to the fact that technically they are sound. But what also proves him a mural painter from whom much is to be expected if he is given other opportunities in the future, is the thoroughness with which he has done all his work. In decoration of this sort a shabby architectural background or a slovenly scroll will go far to weaken the entire effect. The balustrades and the bands for the legends in Mr. Cox's dome are drawn with a delightful firmness. Mr. Blashfield's dome is not distinguished by remarkable draftsmanship, but in a purely decorative way he has accomplished much. There was wisdom in leaving the domes free of form in the center, or only conventionally decorated there, as in Mr. Simmons's dome. Mr. Reinhart's graceful figures lose nothing from rising into an unbroken tone, nor do the



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY EDWARD E. SIMMONS.

figures by Mr. Cox require more decoration above them than they have in the inscribed ribbons. But Mr. Blasfield has shown that with a discreet management of the space every foot of it can be made expressive. I have not seen more deft and artistic touches of design in the decoration of the Fair than those which are embodied in his dome. By spreading the wings against it, the thick wall of mosaic before which his figures are placed is prevented from giving heaviness to the work, and then the open space which the wall surrounds is given point and liveliness by the scattering of a few birds in the blue. This is a good specimen of what mural design ought to be. The ceiling retains its architectural character, the proprieties of construction are not violated, and at the same time the painting has flexibility in the composition, and a certain amount of the pictorial interest

which is a characteristic of easel-painting that comes quite as much within the province of artists working on larger surfaces. Indeed, the larger the surface the wider the possibilities of thoughtful, even imaginative, composition. There are degrees of largeness, of course, which for all the purposes of *genre* might just as well be more restricted, actually, than they appear to be. Confined to comparatively small domes,—small as these things go,—the artists working on the Liberal Arts Building sought to do no more than depict a number of isolated figures with such accessories as might symbolize certain of the industrial and fine arts; and in this they were undoubtedly right.

Inside the Administration Building Mr. W. L. Dodge has been privileged to project a number of more than life-size figures upon the ceiling of the great dome. I say privileged,



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY WALTER SHIRLAW.

for I fancy there can be nothing pleasanter for a painter with a feeling for mural decoration, nothing more eagerly desired by him or more highly prized when secured, than an opportunity to cover a space of fairly unstinted dimensions. Then there need be no limit to his vivacity in respect to composition. He has *carte blanche* both as a matter of fact and of art. Mr. Dodge has had such an opportunity, and has risen to it. The executive accomplishments which are Mr. Cox's are his also—draftsmanship and good construction; and there is a virility in his work which makes it stirring. The procession before the throne of Apollo which he calls a “Glorification of the Arts and Sciences” is striking in arrangement and color, in its details and its general effect, and is a very clever piece of mural painting; but it enters into the background of the Fair militant even less than the domes of the Liberal

Arts Building. The lantern of the Administration Building's dome is nearly three hundred feet above the level of the pavement, so there is naturally very little coöperation between the color-values of Mr. Dodge's painting and those of the crowd which surges beneath it. One is struck first of all by the exquisite adaptation of a classic setting to a modern scene. The explanation, I take it, is to be discovered in the modernity of the Fair's architectural classicism; for the dress, nay, the carriage, the attitude, of the nineteenth century may never be expected to fall naturally into harmony with the accent of authentic antiquity. Nothing will ever reconcile the tall hat, the tailor-made gown, and the cab, those three products of latter-day civilization, to Bernini's colonnade before St. Peter's, for instance, or to the Loggia dei Lanzi. There they are discordant. The last word of modernity is to be



DOME OF THE MANUFACTURES AND LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING. PAINTED BY J. ALDEN WEIR.

found at the Fair, if anywhere; but there is no quarrel between it and the antique temper of the buildings on the Court of Honor—a temper which seems to have been modified by every possible expedient without having lost any of its native character, its equability. The buildings are classic, but they are illuminated at numberless points by picturesqueness and animation, by color and lightness. Taken in one comprehensive view, they have also something peculiarly modern in a sky-line full of graceful modulations and abrupt, telling transitions: this in spite of the practical uniformity of the cornice height. The latter is not disturbed; it is made, if anything, more effective by the soaring dome of the Administration Building, the lower but equally graceful roofs of Machinery Hall, which are given further variety by little turrets on the pavilions at the

corners of the building, and by the beautiful line which indicates the curve of the rotunda ceiling in the Agricultural Building. There is charm in the outline and in the mass, a mingling of dignity with piquancy in the Court of Honor as it is seen from the top of the Administration Building. The charm is there when the vision is directed over the Machinery and Agricultural buildings, the former alive with winged Victories on its roofs, the latter crowned with the Diana of Mr. St. Gaudens. It is there when the eye travels straight down the center of the court, and sees between the majestic façades Mr. French's noble statue of the Republic, and behind it the peristyle bearing above its massive columns the Columbus quadriga, a triumphal group looming superbly against the summer sky.

Royal Cortissoz.