

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF WASHINGTON AS IT WILL LOOK WHEN THE PLANS FOR COMPREHENSIVE BEAUTIFICATION NOW UNDER WAY HAVE ALL BEEN CARRIED OUT.

A City's Dream of a City.

By ERNEST POOLE.

FROM our airy pinnacle, high above, we were looking down into the city.

"In less than a hundred years from now," said the engineer beside me, "such cities as the one down there will have vanished from the civilized world, remembered as monstrosities, replaced by other cities, which will be to Paris as Paris is to this."

He belonged to that new profession of rude, gigantic surgery which in recent years has suddenly come into prominence in scores of our crowded cities and towns. For the past twelve months he had been employed to diagnose a city, to find where and how to operate, and to draught a plan for the city's future growth. His offices were perched at the top of twenty-two storey building. And we had stepped out on the roof to have a look down at his patient.

The patient seemed in great distress. Heavy columns and billows of smoke rose up from every direction, rose up and whirled and eddied, and settled in sluggish, sprawling clouds that veiled and befouled the light of the sun. Noises rose. The very air was alive with a muffled, quivering roar. And, looking down through the scurrying smoke—at the streets that were long, tumultuous tides of people and things; at the buildings of all shapes and ages, squeezed and wedged together into a grimy, mammoth heap, some of them suddenly towering as though for a breath of air—the whole aspect of the mass below was that of congestion and fever.

"Cities fit to live in," the engineer began, "don't grow by themselves. They have to be made, moulded, planned to suit humanity's needs. They are being made in Europe. Paris didn't fit to grow by itself. It has already been remodelled several times. Napoleon III did in two short years spent fourteen hundred million francs in opening boulevards, radial avenues, and streets—and the work in Paris is by no means ended yet. It has been the same in Vienna; the German cities have taken it up; even old London has become fearfully busy of late. And now over here, in at least a score of cities, the work has already begun—the work of moulding our cities instead of allowing our cities to mould us.

"The health of a city," he went on, "like the health of your body or mine, depends on its circulation—that is, its veins and arteries—its streets. In this city the circulation is clogged.

"Look down again and you will see that all its streets run due north and south or east and west, with rectangu-

lar blocks between them. We call it a 'Gridiron City.' The first and chief promoter of the Gridiron was no less a man than William Penn. Having seen the tortuous, winding streets of the ancient cities abroad, he decided that crooked-

ness was a work of the devil, and that in decorous Philadelphia the blocks should all be squares. It seemed a sensible idea. The newer American towns began copying Philadelphia. Soon it became the regular thing. And now at

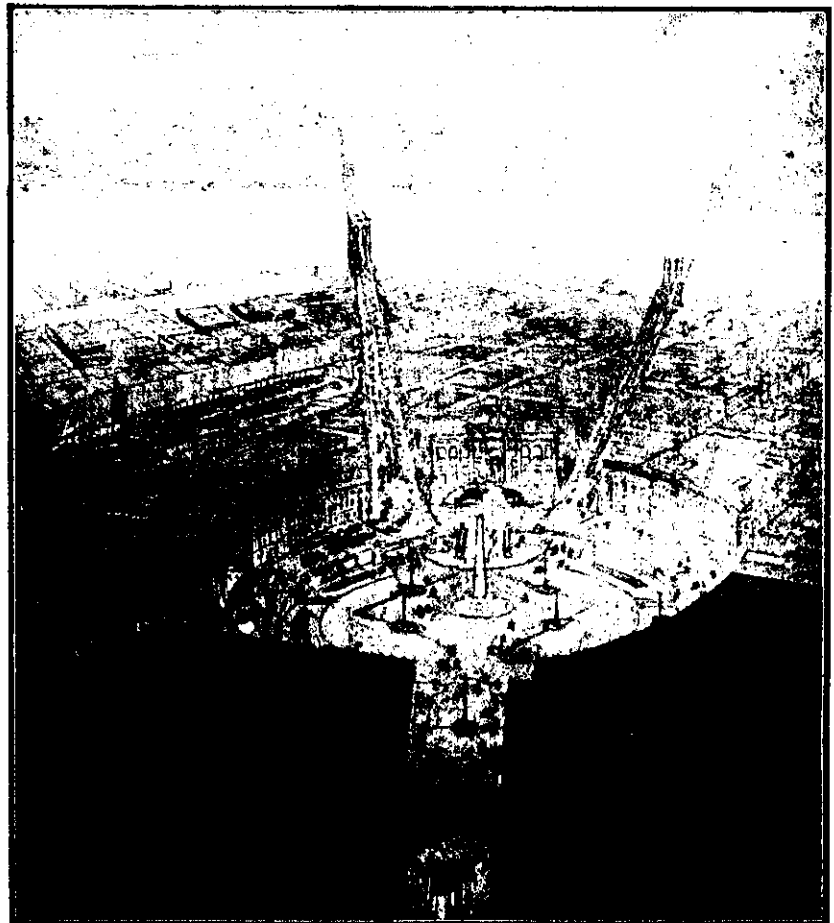
least nine out of ten of our cities and towns are of the Gridiron type.

"The dreary ugliness of the scheme, the monotony of hundreds of blocks all shaped exactly alike—is only a part of the trouble. The most serious part is this: Down there in the heart of the city today are nearly a million people, workers and shoppers who will soon be going home. Half of them, at most, those whose homes lie due east or west or north or south, will have direct routes home. But the homes of the other half are north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west—and to picture the homeward route of this luckless half million, you need only imagine an immense field two or three miles square, over which you wish to go from the north-west to the south-east corner. You are not allowed to cut straight across. You are forced to take a zig-zag path or else go all the way around.

"So much for William Penn's idea. About a century later, another American planned a city. His name was George Washington—and he was an engineer. So far-sighted a builder he was that his conception for the capital, worked out by Major L' Enfant, was an object of amusement to short-sighted men for generations and is now a model for all of us to follow.

"To follow—not to copy. For we are beginning to learn these days, that every city has its own topography, its own peculiar needs and possibilities, and therefore must be studied by itself.

"But to clear out a city, relieve its congestion, the plan of our first great engineer is acknowledged now as the best by authorities the world over. To treat the heart of the town as the hub of a wheel, to open up broad diagonal thoroughfares (like the spokes of a wheel) straight out in all directions to the regions where the people dwell—this is the idea in the rough, to be varied according to need. This radical scheme has already been adopted in part in many big cities of Europe. And a study of the plans recently put upon paper for a score of American cities will show an almost universal agreement that these



THE PLAZA PROPOSED TO REPLACE CITY HALL PARK IN NEW YORK CITY.

A broad open space bordered by municipal buildings and open to the entrances of the Brooklyn and the Manhattan Bridges as recommended by the New York City Improvement Commission.