Charles F.A. Voysey: An Introduction to the Architect and his Work

Certainly one of the most enigmatic figures encountered in histories of modern architecture is the Englishman Charles F.A. Voysey (1857-1941). In most discussions of this architect's work only three of his buildings have generally been illustrated. These are: the Forster house in Bedford Park (1891) (fig. 30 & 31), the Briggs house ("Broadleys") near Lake Windermere (1898) (figs. 72, 73, 74 & 75), and occasionally the small studio for Britten in West Kensington (1891) (figs. 28 & 29). Only in the past few years have more extensive studies been published which give us a more complete view of Voysey's design for buildings, furniture, wallpaper and textiles, and the printed page.[1]

If indeed Voysey is as important for the new architecture of the twentieth century as historians have insisted, then why have we been kept in the dark—not only about his work, but about the man himself? A partial answer lies, as one would expect, in the historical construct of modern architecture and its intensive desire to devise and to sell some sort of a plausible "tradition" for itself. Nikolaus Pevsner placed him high in his list of pioneers of the modern movement in 1936, while in 1937 Henry Russell Hitchcock writing of the Briggs house of 1898 noted, "The continuity of roof

lines, the avoidance of ornamental details, and the boldness of such features as the plain stone, mullioned curving bay windows toward the lake gives it nearly as positive an aesthetic modernism as the epoch-making contemporary houses of Frank Lloyd Wright in America."[2] Jürgen Joedicke in his *A History of Modern Architecture* (1959), and earlier Arnold Whittick, carried on a similar theme.[3]

As a "pioneer" of the modern movement, Voysey's image has been so well packaged and subsequently sold that there are surprisingly few who have felt that they were in a position to question the merchandise. There are a few exceptions. John Summerson has waxed hot and cold on the subject. In 1963, in contrast to his earlier writings, he took a more negative view and wrote that Voysey was significant ". . . not because he was a brilliant architect but precisely because he was not. Voysey's willful idiosyncratic, nursery simplicity was a more effective touchstone in the climate of 1900 than any amount of brilliance."[4] John Brandon-Jones, who has written the most carefully documented study on the architect, views any attempt to catalogue him as a "pioneer" as ". . . a rash simplification . . ." and ". . . hardly a satisfactory label to attach to a man of Voysey's opinion . . ."[5]

And what was the reaction to Voysey's work during his own active years—1890 to 1914? Was he looked at as a proponent of a new architecture or as a continuator of the old? Surprisingly his own contemporaries were mixed in their feelings about him. Horace Townsend, in the 1899 *Studio*, wrote, "Simplicity of thought and perfection of proportions distinguished it (a Voysey design) from the ordinary architecture of the day."[6] An American critic noted in the August 1904 issue of *Architectural Review* (Boston) that ". . . of Mr. Voysey it is perhaps enough to say that every work of his deserves the careful attention of architects and visibly influences the design of many lesser men."[7] Hermann Muthesius, the German critic who did much to propagandize Voysey's work on the continent, wrote that he was "the most active and most well-known . . ." of contemporary English architects of the period; of Voysey's work he accurately noted that "this means of expression remains within the frame of greatest simplicity, so that his houses always have the sign of primitiveness."[8] And his contemporary, M.H. Baillie Scott, wrote appreciably that "to look through a set of drawings prepared by him, is to recognize, in every sheet, how all possible errors are eliminated by the most careful and conscientious forethought. The scheme is worked out on a paper so fully and completely that it explains itself."[9]

Other writers of the '90s and early 1900s were either reserved or hostile. In a review of the annual architectural exhibition at the Royal Academy of 1899, the *British Architect* said, "Among the most interesting house designs are some again by Mr. C.F.A. Voysey; which, we must say, do not smack of architectural merit so much as the somewhat vivid water-colour views he sends."[10] Warren H. Langford writing in the *Architectural Review* (Boston) of 1904 was even more reserved, "His work is well considered and not without attractiveness, but the sloping buttress-like termination to the gable ends of his stucco-covered houses, the exaggerated forms of overhanging gables, are notes of affectation which mar otherwise pleasant compositions."[11] Another American, Francis S. Swales, wrote (with Voysey's houses used as illustrations), "Nothing could be easier than to attack the type of small house which has grown up in England during the past decade or two, which consists principally of a vast roof with numerous chimneys resting upon walls not much higher than the curb of a cyclone cellar, in which appear rows of little windows, reminding one of the side of a tram car, and elaborated with the sort of detail so much approved of by the school of 'new art'." He went on to satirize the cuteness of ". . . little green shutters with heart-shaped holes cut in them and the oversized green barrel to catch the rain water . . ."[12]

H.S. Goodhardt-Rendel, who represented all that Voysey detested in the return of English architecture to Renaissance ideals, showed how strong the antagonism to Voysey could be, when he wrote in his *Architectural Memories, 1905-1955*, "When I was a child I was excited by fairy-tale houses having enormous roofs and practically no windows, by doorways to wonderland, heavy arches so low that an ordinary person would need to eat one of Alice's reducing cakes in order to pass under them, by tables whose legs not only went down to the floor but sprouted upward toward the ceiling, by patterns made of cockyolly birds inspecting with surprise square trees slightly smaller than themselves; but when these phenomena pranced out of picture books into reality, my excitement gave way to distaste."[13]

Added to this mixed reception of others to his work was the ambivalence (apparent and otherwise) of Voysey himself. At one

moment Voysey would seem to be denouncing the use of traditional forms in design, as when he wrote in 1901, "To ask for a Gothic building nowadays (using the term as it is commonly understood) is to demand nothing but parrot-like repetition of familiar forms . . ."[14] His dictum that one should return to nature for the source of inspiration, or that one should honestly use materials (". . . suit our design to the natural character of the materials."), gives one the feeling that we could just as well be reading Wright or any of the other proponents of the new architecture.[15]

Yet Voysey continually insisted that his task as an English architect was to remain faithful to the English Gothic tradition. For him the one and only English tradition was Gothic, and the principle of Gothic was that it was a style which evolved out of ". . . local conditions and requirements."[16] Though he insisted on the moral righteousness of individualism, he continually denounced its incursion into architecture. "The wish to express oneself is corrupting to the soul and intoxicating to personal vanity."[17] Like other English architects of the time he loathed the self-consciously new l'Art Nouveau; he characterized it as ". . . mad eccentricity . . ." and as "the spook school."[18] Later in life he was equally strong in his denunciation of the International Style, and above all, of his own supposed connection with it. In a letter to the *Architects' Journal* (1935) he wrote, "It has more than once been stated and printed that I was in a measure the instigator, pioneer, or original cause of the modern movement in architecture; in some way responsible for the square box, roofless buildings we now see, unfortunately, not only in our own country. I am sure that those who express such views have no intention of libelling me. I make no claim to anything new. Like many others, I followed some old traditions and avoided some others. I made the most of my roofs, seldom, if ever, making them of a less pitch than 55 degrees. Steel construction and reinforced concrete are the real culprits responsible for the ultramodern architecture of today."[19]

We are left then with a picture of Voysey which is filled to the overflow with built-in contradictions. He stoutly denied he was an innovator, and yet the facts are that he was. He lashed out at those who sought to establish a new architecture, whether the proponents of l'Art Nouveau or the International Style. Yet many of his early designs did enjoy a close kinship with the works of his l'Art Nouveau contemporaries, and his buildings, and much of the architectural philosophy which lies behind them, are more than casually related to modern architecture of the twenties and later.

Ironically, Voysey's work was rich enough (and contrasting enough) so that it could fit comfortably into various twentieth-century architectural movements, many of which have little in common. His cozy "cottagey" architecture helped to pave the way for the thousands of quaint stucco middle-class houses which filled England's suburbs both before and after World War I.[20] Certainly, he along with his contemporary M.H. Baillie Scott helped to encourage some of the innovation in the '90s and early 1900s of Frank Lloyd Wright and other members of the Prairie School.[21] Finally, it is all too evident that the presentation of his designs in German and Austrian publications was one of the English-Scottish sources which encouraged the central Europeans to formulate the new architecture of the twenties.

A brief glance at Voysey's work would leave one with the impression that here we have another turn-of-the-century continuator of the Arts and Crafts movement. But to so pigeonhole Voysey would be as erroneous as seeing Wright or Irving Gill as just another pair of Arts and Crafts exponents and nothing more. His designs are permeated and contaminated by other ideas, many of which are contrary to what we have come to think of as the norm for the Arts and Crafts. Compared to such contemporaries of his, as say Wright or Mackintosh, Voysey's designs ooze with ambiguities, conflicts, and contradictions. In a sense this is part of the richness of his work. It has, therefore, been possible to extract, in a smorgasbord fashion, the most opposite elements imaginable from his designs, without distorting or maneuvering the facts of the case. That which is omitted, though, in all of these extractive processes, is a comprehensive view of Voysey the architect, or Voysey the man.

What then were the principles which seemed to govern his highly complex work and what sources did this architect draw from in developing these principles? Architecturally, Voysey was a late product of the English Gothic Revival; but in contrast to such earlier nineteenth-century figures as Pugin and Ruskin, the Gothic which mattered to Voysey was not the high art Gothic of the church, but the low art forms of vernacular rural cottage buildings. His use of this rural cottage vocabulary was modified and enriched by his encounter with the more avant-garde English designers of the late seventies and eighties, particularly Arthur H.

Mackmurdo. His entire architectural career may be seen as a desire to bring these two sources together into a completely coherent work of art. In his earliest work (ca. 1888-1892) it was the avant-gardism of Mackmurdo which dominated; from 1893 on, it was the rural "cottagey" tradition.

Architects (and in fact artists as a group) generally fall into two distinct groups: those who utilize a wide and varied vocabulary, going from one form to another, and then those who seize upon one idea and work out innumerable subtle variations on this single theme. Voysey, of course, fits perfectly into the latter group. In an article of 1931 H.M. Fletcher noted, "He must have wrestled with himself in early life over every detail of a house, and settled each of them once and for all—or so it seems. Walls must end in battered buttresses, chimneys in a creasing, a flaunching and black pots. . . . Plans are unusually long and narrow, and it is astonishing how much variety he has worked into one type of housing varying little in size."[22] His task, as he conceived it, was to take up and to reorganize the form and details of the rural cottage (with a slight pinch of the avant-garde). As he himself wrote, "I remain faithful to tradition, but not its slave."[23] And again as he wrote in a letter to John Betjeman, ". . . I have only applied old tradition to new conditions . . ." and "there is nothing new in my architecture, but new thought and feeling."[24]

Though Voysey always insisted that his arrangement of these traditional elements was based upon utilitarian considerations, the fact is that these features were sophisticatedly composed in a highly abstract fashion. From the beginning his predilection was to limit the basic form of the building to a single (or as few as possible) volume. "So you will gather your flues together, and collect the rooms in such sequence that will enable you to cover them with one roof, or as few roofs as possible. . . ."[25] This rectangular volume with its high-pitched gable or hipped roof was treated as a series of flat surfaces upon which were arranged gables, windows, doors, rain pipes, and other elements. The governing principle here was that of simplicity. As he wrote in 1893, "To be simple is the end, not the beginning of design."[26] The International Stylists of the twenties and thirties were correct in feeling a strong kinship with Voysey, for both they and he were rigorous puritans in architecture. Both purposely limited their surface patterns and restricted the forms of their volumes, and both organized each of their containing surfaces into highly abstract patterns. Both also developed

an architecture which, while it was spatially three-dimensional, lent itself well to the two-dimensional drawing. Voysey's facades read beautifully as black and white illustrations (whether as drawings or as photographs) on the printed page. In fact Voysey's buildings are far less convincing as an art object when they are overgrown with vines, surrounded and engulfed by shrubs and trees, and when the rough cast stucco is no longer gleaming white.

Voysey's buildings have as well two other qualities with the later Internationalists, the almost complete elimination of the personality of the client, and his passionate insistence on the moral basis of architecture. Though Voysey wrote that the architect's "personal taste and preferences should not be allowed to obtrude themselves when we are striving to build for another . . .," his buildings like those of the Internationalists convey, ". . . the absence of any trace of the client."[27] If a client did seek to inject his personality into the environment, through his own furnishings and odds and ends, these appeared as intruders glaring into the world the architect created.

Except for his religious bias, Voysey's dictum about the relationship between architecture and morality could just as well be read as a chapter from the writings of Sullivan, Wright, or Gropius. "Simplicity, sincerity, repose, directness and frankness," he wrote, "are moral qualities as essential to good architecture as to good men."[28] How Sullivanesque is Voysey's remark that "it has often been observed that the architecture of a people must always be a true reflection of their moral and spiritual condition."[29] Carrying this philosophy to the visual world Voysey wrote of his ideal in design, "Try the effect of a well-proportioned room, with white-washed walls, plain carpet and simple oak furniture, and nothing in it but necessary articles of use, and one pure ornament in the form of a simple vase of flowers, not a cosmopolitan crowd of all sorts, but one or two sprays of one kind, and you will find reflection begin to dance in your brain."[30] Simplicity, use, and fitness were the qualities which he wished to convey through his architecture, but like the Internationalists, these characteristics were communicated by anything but simple means.

There is one important aspect revealed in his work which not only disturbed and turned off the later Internationalists, but also turned off many of his more serious high art compatriots. This was the nursery, fairylike atmosphere which permeates almost of his architecture and certainly a good share of his other designs. For a

serious high art-er like Goodhardt-Rendel, Voysey's "Alice in Wonderland" could only cause irritation and discomfort. For where in the socially and aesthetically serious world of architecture was there any room for these open references to the playful, the humorous, and the make-believe world? The scale which Voysey employed in his architectural design—ranging from the lowness of his exterior walls dominated by immense high-pitched roofs and towering chimneys, to the closeness of the low horizontal space—and the rooms with their small "Hansel and Gretel" windows are visual values which have more to do with our childhood experiences (and our reminiscences of them) than to any traditional aesthetic ideals. Voysey's fondness for the heart as a motif or his large green barrels to receive the runoff of water from his roofs must not be seen simply as sweet sentiment; they are visual features which bring into adult life some suggestions of the richness of our childhood world. This richness of childhood experience is also present in many of Voysey's designs for fabrics and wallpaper. While his two-dimensional designs are impressive as flat patterns, their real impact is to bring the reality of the child's view of plants and animals into adult life.

Voysey, of course, was not alone in his desire to utilize the intensity of our visual experience as a child. Similar qualities occurred in the work of his continental contemporaries such as J.M. Olbrich and in such American designers as Bernard Maybeck or Ernest Coxhead. Probably the most surprising thing is that this attachment and sympathy with the world of the child should have come out of such a stern moralist as Voysey. The picture which has been left to us of Voysey is anything but that of a warm, humorous, and loving man (or father). But while the image he conveyed was that of the serious adult, this did not prevent him from letting the world of childhood enter into his architecture and other designs. It is fascinating to observe that the visual imagery which he used in his designs was not the one prevalent in his own childhood but that which was contemporaneous with his own adult life and that of his children.

The architect's own youth does not seem to have been overabundant in a wealth of child-oriented experiences. He was born in 1857, and for his first fourteen years he and his seven brothers and sisters lived in the small remote village of Healaugh in Yorkshire where their father was the local vicar. Because of the wide separation of ages between the children, Charles tended to live in

the adult world of his father rather than in the real, non-real world of a child.[31] Charles's father would seem to have been a mixture of the stern Victorian father and a warm and loving companion to his son and the other children. As with Charles's own wife, his mother never seems to emerge (in his own reminiscences) as a personality in her own right.

When he was fourteen years old the family moved to London and settled in Dulwich. In 1871 his father was forced out of the Anglican Church because he would not subscribe to the doctrine of everlasting hell. Because of his popularity his father founded his own sect (the Theistic Church) and successfully continued as a minister. Charles spent two years at the Dulwich School and then eighteen months under a private tutor. As a student it was apparent that he was "no great shakes." Martin S. Briggs observed, "Voysey, the eldest (boy) of a large family in strained circumstances, seems to have been a timid repressed little boy, a slow learner who could not read until he was nearly fourteen. . . ."[32] Deprived of so many of the realities of childhood, Charles seemed to have found it difficult to relate closely to other children and to their world, whether in play or school. His was the serious adult world deprived on the surface of the richness of childhood.

In 1874 at the age of seventeen he was apprenticed to the architect J.P. Seddon. He remained five years in the Seddon office. Seddon was a competent but not particularly brilliant exponent of the Gothic Revival. Voysey stayed on an additional year as an assistant in the Seddon office; he then went to work in another London office, that of Saxon Snell; in 1880 he joined the much larger "prestigeous" office of George Devey. Voysey worked two years in Devey's office and this experience unquestionalby set the stage for his own early designs as an independent architect. For Devey was not simply another Gothic Revivalist, he was also a proponent of the then arising Queen Anne Revival and he was one of the first of the English architects to go directly back to the rural vernacular (Gothic) for inspiration.[33] Voysey described his employer's approach to design, "When asked by his client to join a house party, Devey would make the most fascinating catch-penny sketches while dressing for dinner and present them during dessert, charming everyone but getting them worked out by his clerks who had to make all the details on the traditional lines of a bastard Jacobean period."[34]

At the age of twenty-five, he set up his own practice in West-

minster, and in the following year he married Mary Maria Evans. What was this young designer's view of the current scene in the mid-1880s? "Stylism," he wrote, "was still the dominant principle . . . but thanks mainly to Ruskin, pioneers arose to set us free; men such as E.W. Godwin, A.H. Mackmurdo, J.D. Sedding, Norman Shaw, Bentley, Bodley, Burges and others, all of whom gave devoted attention to detail. And nearly all designed stained glass, wallpaper, fabrics and furniture of every kind."[35] The one figure which Voysey kept at arms length was that of William Morris. Voysey felt that if he came too close to Morris he might succumb, as so many had, and he would simply become a minor imitator and follower. Having determined to avoid Morris he went one step further, and except for the rarest of occasions, never wrote or spoke of him at all.

The one great influence, which he himself acknowledged during these early years, was that of A.H. Mackmurdo. Mackmurdo befriended the younger man, showed him how to prepare cartoons for fabrics, wallpaper, and carpet designs and also introduced him to several manufacturers including Jeffery and Co. who accepted his first design (for a frieze) in 1883. From 1883 on he sold numerous designs to Jeffery, to Essex, to Sanderson, and others.[36] Most of these early designs were patterns built up by means of ". . . juxtaposition of varying shapes."[37] Peter Floud has pointed out that "Voysey is almost the only English pattern-designer who has successfully transformed natural objects into abstract repeated shapes . . .," something his closest contemporaries, A.H. Mackmurdo, J.D. Sedding, and Lewis F. Day, were never able to do successfully.[38]

Voysey's success as a designer of wallpaper and fabrics far outshown his work as an architect even as late as the beginning of the 1890s (fig. 5). It was Voysey's two-dimensional work which was exhibited at the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, and it was his wallpaper which established his initial contact with the fledgling l'Art Nouveau movement in Belgium and in France.[39] During the eighties his income from these designs provided his major livelihood until he could establish his architectural practice.

From Macmurdo he derived several elements which were to constantly appear in his architecture. His fondness for flat, broad, uninterrupted white surfaces, both within and without, certainly was inspired by the older man. Then too, the classical controlled atmosphere of Voysey's work perfectly matches that of Mackmurdo. Finally such details as the narrow perpendicular shafts (generally square or hexagonal in plan) often topped by thin square or round shelflike tops—which Voysey used in his buildings and furniture—were variations of identical details employed by Mackmurdo.

Voysey's early career in architecture has a familiar characteristic ring. His first design for a house was too expensive for his client, so it was abandoned. He entered a national competition for the new Admiralty offices in London and, of course, did not win the commission. Besides the usual remodelings and redecorations, which often fall to the lot of the young architects, he did design a crematorium for Sundrum in 1884 (not built) and in the following year he designed a house for himself (again not realized). In both cases he wisely appreciated that the best way to get a maximum mileage out of these unrealized designs was to publish them. The crematorium was published in the *Building News* in late 1886, while the design for his own house was published in the *Architect* in 1888 (fig. 19).[40] As hoped for, the publication of the drawings of this house brought him a commission. It was noticed by M.H. Lakin who asked him to do a variation on it. This commission was received in late 1888 and the house was built at Bishop's Itchington in Warwickshire in 1889. Having received a good lesson in the value of public relations through publication, he proceeded during 1889 to bring out numerous designs ranging from "A Country Residence" (built around a courtyard) to "A Tower House," two versions of "An Artist's Cottage," "A Verandah House," "A Country House with an Octagonal Hall," and several others[41] (figs. 20, 21 & 22). These designs were all published in the "prestigeous" *British Architect*, and there can be no question that the publication of these designs served their purpose well, both in obtaining additional clients and in establishing Voysey's reputation within the profession. Voysey supplemented this method of exposure by exhibiting his architectural drawings at various exhibitions including those sponsored by the Royal Institute of British Architects (R.I.B.A.).

By 1890 Voysey was well on the road to establishing a small but certainly adequate architectural practice. Throughout the nineties his drawings were continually published in the *British Architect* and elsewhere (even in the *American Architect and Building News* as early as 1890)[42] (fig. 23). His success in the two-

dimensional realm continued unabated, and he was represented in exhibitions in Chicago and Boston, in Antwerp in 1892, and in Paris in 1900. His design was used for the first issue of *Studio* (in 1893), and he did advertising design for the Essex Co. For the Thomas Elsley Co. he designed an entire line of metal prefabricated fireplaces, and by the early nineties his furniture was beginning to be well known and appreciated through exhibitions of the Art Workers Guild (he became a member in 1884) and through its publication in architectural journals and later in the pages of *Studio*.

By 1900 Voysey could look back on a decade of success. His buildings and other designs were now widely known, not only throughout England but also abroad, particularly in Austria, Germany, and in the United States. His work of the nineties helped to encourage the new architecture of both Europe and the United States. Though some of his best work was to come out of the next fourteen years (abruptly ending with the advent of the first World War), these later years were to witness a consistent and steady decline in his architectural fortune. Why? In part it was certainly due to the strong surge of classical (Neo-Georgian and the like) architecture which established itself as the dominant mode of the high art English architectural establishment.

By 1900 the Gothic Revival cause was on the way out and Voysey was well aware of it. As he wrote in 1906, "We need only to look at our modern public buildings to be convinced of the fact. What do they remind us of but money, worldly power, and fraud—all manner of earthy ideas. See them like lifeless corpses, exhumed from foreign soils, glaring at us, glassy-eyed, like so many mummies."[43] One could easily feel the biting frustrations and anger of Voysey's, "Men steal the expression of others, because they are not honest enough to express their own . . . let us give up masquerading as Greeks, and sincerely express our natural characteristics."[44]

What on the surface is surprising is that Voysey was personally to benefit so little from the continued widespread popularity of the rural cottage mode—a mode which was to visually dominate English suburbia—as a fact and even more as an ideal right down to the present day. Perhaps Voysey was too vehement a puritan even for English taste. Then too his architectural environments were far too simple (and abstract); there was no place within them for the countless objects and "treasures" which make up the visual

material world of the middle-class Englishman. Nor would his high art values and their "clean" surfaces be an appropriate background for the small-scale do-it-yourself suburban garden with its confusion of plants, shrubs, walks, pools, bird bath, and ceramic elves and frogs. Voysey's high art taste and the low art taste of the average Englishman, when put together, always end up in a continually running battle.

The "Alice in Wonderland" quality of Voysey's designs had never quite been accepted and bought by the middle-class English public; its appeal was restricted to a very limited group of "high arters." And even this group pretty well abandoned it (as a fashion) by the end of the first decade of the new century. In 1900 the pages of the *Studio* were filled with the world of "Alice"; by 1910 the respectable world of serious art (academic, not modern) had replaced it. But while one can detect a slight diminishing of the "Alice" element in Voysey's work after 1900, he never really abandoned it.

It is difficult to know why Voysey did not continue to see that his work was as well published in the 1900s as it had been in the '90s. Was he resting on his laurels, was he becoming more irritable and egocentric, or what? One suspects that having made his reputation, he now expected potential clients to come to him rather than have to go out and advertise for them. While Voysey had always made it quite apparent even in the '90s that he knew precisely what the truth was, these truths began to jar more and more with new social/economic values which were coming to the fore in the '90s and early 1900s. Voysey's primitive nineteenth-century laissez-faire individualism put him out of sorts with even the mildest ideas of social responsibility and his attack upon building regulations and town planning were vehement to the extreme. "The town-planner," he wrote in 1912, "is a collectivist, his idea is to direct humanity into line and regulate his outward movement regardless of his inward needs."[45] Thus Voysey not only found his designs slowly going out of style, he also found that his beliefs which were only marginally "in" during the '90s were completely "old hat" and out of fashion by the 1900s.

An ambidextrous M.H. Baillie Scott or a suave Edwin Lutyens were able to continue their successful practice in the 1900s and again during the '20s because their commitment was to architecture as form, not to "truth"—Voysey could not. The P.R. picture which Voysey cultivated was beautifully summed up in the

first of a series of articles published on the man and his work in the *Building News* in 1927. "Voysey, however, is like a rock among successive seas; inveterate in his likes and dislikes, unyielding to any fashion of thought or of sentiment, unmoved by changing vogues, a man whose artistic convictions are at one with his spiritual ideas and identified with his whole attitude toward life and work. . . ."[46] A client might swallow this sort of image in the '80s and '90s, but by 1920 this is hardly the sort of image which would bring droves of clients to one's door.

His only productive work during the twenties was in wallpaper and fabric design. For all intents and purposes he was finished as an architect. In 1924 he was elected a Master of the Art Workers Guild; in 1929 he was elected a Fellow of the R.I.B.A.; in 1936 he was honored by being made a Designer for Industry by the Royal Society of Arts; and in 1940 he received the highest award England can offer an architect, the Gold Medal of the R.I.B.A.; and the following year he died in the midst of the devastation and chaos of the second World War.

Like most English designers (of past and present) Voysey felt the pressure of tradition not only to state his case in a visual language but equally through the written word. The correlation between the visual and the written can at times be reasonable and close, but in most instances they are worlds apart and, one might add, fortunately so. For example, Voysey's visual language was in no way as narrow and constrained as his written comments. Voysey's written views of the world and of design are intriguing, not primarily for the light they may cast on his designs, but as an important aspect of his total personality.

Voysey fits perfectly into that generation of nineteenth and early twentieth-century European and American architects who passionately married design to morality, who looked to nature as a biological analogy to architecture, and who often spoke of the need to honestly express materials, structure, and needs. The most complete presentation of his idea is contained in the small volume, *Individuality*, published in 1915.[47] Here he quotes Ruskin, "'Good taste is a moral quality.'"[48] Later on he noted, "Love of truth would lead us to a more candid avowal of practical construction and check us for disguising it, or the materials of which it is made."[49] Earlier in 1909 he had written that ". . . we should feel that all ugliness was to be avoided as a form of sin . . ." and in 1912 he observed, "Fitness is divine law."[50]

Nor was Voysey wishy-washy in his stern moralism. "So, too," he wrote, "human suffering of all kinds has a softening and mellowing effect and stimulates the growth of all our virtues. Pain produces endeavor, and sorrow brings wisdom. Physical suffering is the parent of pity."[51] One suspects that even Sullivan would have winced at this. But a look at a 1900 photograph of Voysey in his house at Chorley Wood (fig. 1) should easily convince us that he meant every word of it.

From Pugin, Ruskin, and Morris, Voysey extracted the belief that it was in the natural order that man must reach for his visual salvation. In the first issue of the *Studio* in 18[illegible] he is quoted as saying ". . . but we should go to nature directly for inspiration and guidance. Then we are at once relieved from restrictions of style or period, and can live and work in the present with laws revealing always fresh possibilities."[52] Or in his paper, "Remarks on Domestic Halls," of 1901, "Go back to the Woods, and feel once more the sublime breadth and repose of a natural glade. . . ."[53] These comments are admittedly loose and romantic, but Voysey had very specific ideas in mind as to how one should experience nature and what one should get out of such an experience. In his book, *Individuality*, he wrote that the designer should ". . . gather his knowledge of form by making careful diagrams of flowers and plants, by drawing plans and elevations and sections, he will then learn the true form of every part, with its structural relation of parts. . . ." And he goes on to say, "We learn in this way the interdependence of parts, the laws of construction, and how one form helps another and is delicately related to it. . . When this knowledge is stored in the mind, individuality has its opportunity of expressing afresh its facts so gleaned. . . ."[54]

As with his other beliefs Voysey was as passionate in his puritanism as everything else. As early as 1894 he wrote, "Too much luxury is death to the artistic soul."[55] Looking around at the typical English house of ca. 1900, he noted, "With much worrying movement, vulgar glitters and display, halls are fast becoming more and more like railway stations—one vast expanse of advertisement."[56] While Voysey admitted that the material excesses and visual confusion of the eighties and nineties ". . . perhaps led some of us to excessive puritanical simplicity . . ." still he never abandoned his view that in design, "We cannot be too simple."[57]

Voysey's affair with the machine could best be described as schizophrenic. Put in the simplest terms, he was willing to use the

machine, even to express it in various aspects of his designs, but he really disliked it, and wished it were not around. To assert as Pevsner has done that ". . . with Voysey we come to a designer whose activity was devoted to industrial art, and no longer to handicraft . . ."[58] is, to put it mildly, an overstatement of the case. In 1911 he wrote that one must approach architecture and design ". . . with open minds ready for all healthy development, and be prepared to accept conditions which we cannot alter, such as the advent of the machine, and the improved conditions of transit and commerce."[59] In 1909 he delivered two lectures at Carpenter's Hall in London, and he said, "When you design tables and chairs, you will think of the machine that is going to help in the making, and choose such shapes as are easily worked by machinery."[60] It would be fair to say that much of Voysey's non-architectural production did take the machine into account and even more importantly, he expressed the presence of the machine in the imagery of these designs. But this could hardly be said of his buildings, for they are not only hand-crafted products, they purposely convey the image of their non-machine origin.

Though Voysey's buildings may on first impression seem traditional, he was not a revivalist, either of a nineteenth or twentieth-century vintage. As he wrote in 1911, "What domestic habits King Henry the Eighth chose to adopt may be very interesting to the historian and archaeologist, but they must not be allowed to usurp our thoughts to the exclusion of consideration of modern modes and manners."[61] And he amplified a similar theme in his writings of the twenties, ". . . we must leave the door perpetually open for progress and welcome (critically if you like) all attempts to improve our traditional modes and methods, whatever they may be . . ." and "as long as the law of fitness governs our regard for traditional methods, tradition as such will do no harm."[62] For Voysey, traditional, i.e. the rural cottage tradition, was the source and point of departure; it was the architect's task to modify, arrange, and amplify these forms to meet the utilitarian, social, and visual needs of the twentieth century. Modern architecture then was to be a phase of a historical continuum, it was not to make a sharp precipitous break with the past.

In his talks and writings Voysey was often quite down to earth and specific as to why he introduced this or that element of design. In speaking of his low horizontal interior space he said, "One's approach must be a sense of repose. Let us not ignore the immense value of horizontal bands and lines, and the simple reposeful effect so produced."[63] Even in the few examples where he used a two-story space, he insisted that "whatever size the hall may be, its length and width should have pre-eminence over its height . . ." and "anyone may well ask, what is right proportion? Why if my room is 18' by 12', may I not have it 10' or 12' high? The answer is that it would be wasteful; and therefore, unfit and ugly."[64] He went on to observe that "we remain standing in our rooms only when we cannot be at rest. . . ." Interior space should then be oriented around a sitting position, not a standing position.[65]

What was the ideal which Voysey was seeking for his interior spaces? "We must have light, bright, cheerful rooms, easily cleaned and inexpensive to keep. . . ." He felt that light, and particularly south sunlight, was far more important than a view through a window. And while he insisted on the separateness of interior and exterior, and of the independence of each of his internal spaces, he partially countered this by the use of wide doorways. "The doors will be wide," he wrote, "in proportion to height, to suggest welcome—not stand-offishly dignified, like the coffin lid, high and narrow for the entrance of the body only."[66]

Did Voysey's clients either singularly or as a group really understand what he was about—both intellectually and visually? The answer is probably yes! As H.G. Wells wrote, ". . . we found an architect in C.F.A. Voysey, that pioneers in the escape from the small snobbish villa residence to the bright and comfortable pseudo-cottage."[67] In writing on his relationship to his clients Voysey wrote (in the third person) that it was ". . . the chief characteristic of his work being severe simplicity which attracted many Quakers who as a sect were noted for their love of genuineness and simplicity."[68] One can readily see why Voysey's working habits and the way in which he dealt with his clients kept those who had come and brought others. "Punctuality and business-like habits such as immediate attention to answering of correspondence was rigidly insisted on."[69] "Fortunately the intensive desire to be practical made him find it easy to get on with the wives of his clients. By avoiding allusions to art and attending sympathetically to all domestic requirements, he was also expressing the dominant feeling of his time which was essentially materialistic."[70]

Though Voysey conveyed the impression of sternness and determination in his dealings with his client, he was not as inflexible as might be supposed. This is revealed in his correspon-

dence with Cecil Fitch for whom he built a house at Wimbleton in 1899.[71] The client wished to see some change made in the service area of the house which would have necessitated modifying the roof pattern and proportions of this part of the house. At first Voysey wrote that "I cannot spoil my proportions by cutting off the stable roof." The client persisted, and in the final drawings this section of the house was revised. Two other statements made by the architect to his client have a familiar ring, whethern then or now. On December 4, 1899, he wrote, "All artistic questions you must trust me to decide. No two minds ever produce an artistic result." In a letter dated May 9, 1899, he stated, "The greatest help will be for you to make up your mind that you cannot have first class material and workmanship without going to a first class builder and paying first class prices."[72]

As a group, Voysey's clients were individuals who wished to return to the country, to nature, and to simplicity. The desire to have a country house was an old and intense English tradition, but to have the visual form of this house rural and primitive was not. His clients ranged from literary personalities such as H.G. Wells and Algernon Methuen to a wide range of upper middle-class businessmen and professionals. Although Voysey wrote that his clients ". . . seemed to drop from the skies, invariably from strangers . . ." they were in fact drawn to his work either through personal knowledge of his buildings or by the publication of them in professional art and architectural journals. Once having dealt with the architect there was a strong tendency to return to him for other work and to recommend him to others. Voysey noted that of 247 major clients, 53 eventually returned with additional commissions.[73]

Voysey's method of working places him midway between the gentleman architect of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the businessman architect of the twentieth century. For his first fourteen years of practice (from 1885-1899) his office was in his home. With the completion of his house at Chorley Wood he established an office in downtown London on Baker Street which he maintained until 1913.[74] At the most Voysey had only two or three assistants working with him so that he could make all of the basic design decisions.

As a draftsman-delineator, Voysey was at best only fair—which in a way is surprising for a person who had a real flair and talent for designing two-dimensional patterns and layouts (wallpaper, fabrics, etc.). His architectural sketches and even his watercolor presentation drawings have none of the finesse of a highly trained Beaux Arts designer. Obviously he viewed drawings as a means pure and simple, not as an end in the architectural processes. Even his vividly colored perspective drawings are sloppy and at times even inept in their perspective. Voysey's drawings show that he did in fact adhere to his dictum about how one should study nature. He worked through separate parts, i.e. floor plans and elevations, not through isometric or perspective sketches and drawings. The whole—as a three-dimensional object—was assembled in his mind. The drawings were the expression of each of the parts, which he the architect gathered together into a unified whole. Perhaps consciously or unconsciously Voysey felt that the primitiveness of his drawings was simply another way of indicating the primitiveness and simplicity of his buildings.

Turning our attention to his development as an architect, we can observe that his work up through 1890, while not yet committed to a single mode, was already individual and strong. His 1884 design for a crematorium at Sundrum is Gothic, but it is Gothic abstracted.[75] In the 1885 scheme for his own house he produced a design that fully anticipated his typical country houses of the '90s and early 1900s[76] (fig. 19). Here in "A Cottage for C.F.A. Voysey" is a single two-story rectangular volume only slightly modified by a low square tower and a single-story section to the rear. The architect has rigorously subdivided the interior into a series of self-contained spaces, all of low scale. While the half timbering and the excessive number of buttresses on the front are a bit busy, still it is the single simple volume which dominates the composition. Half timbering, rough cast stucco walls, rows of horizontal windows were of course common fixtures in the work of the 1870s of Norman Shaw, George Devey, and others, but they were never as abstractly contained and organized as in this design of Voysey's. One can be less certain about the sources of the low square tower with its hipped roof and the thin linear row of vertical metal gutter supports. If the source of the tower is Italianate, whatever prompted Voysey to couple it with the form of the rural cottage and to transform it from a vertical object to a squat earth-hugging form?

During 1889 he published three houses (all of which were most likely designed before 1889), which reveal an amazing variety of sources. These three projects were: "A Country House with

Octagonal Hall," "A Verandah House," and "An Artist's Cottage"[74] (figs. 20, 21 & 22). None of these designs match the unity of his project of 1885; in fact, all of them seem purposely encyclopedic and even confused—perhaps the result of his desire to produce a picturesque composition in the Norman Shaw tradition. Not only do all three designs employ different external sheathing materials (brick, stone, half timbering, stucco, and slate shingles), but these materials are arranged separately as single blocks to enhance and to emphasize the visual separateness of each part of the building. "An Artist's Cottage" seems to be casually composed of three separate buildings, brought together only by accident. The plans of these three houses are remarkably open for Voysey, something he was not to do in the '90s and 1900s. The "House with Octagonal Hall" and the "Verandah House" are very Shawian in feeling, except, of course, that the "Verandah" itself hardly smacks of the English Queen Anne Tradition. A clue as to the possible source for these open plans and of the verandah is revealed by the circular stair tower with its curved conical roof which dominates "An Artist's Cottage." This is pure American Queen Anne (the Shingle Style). The American Shingle Style was relatively well known in England through illustrations published in British architectural journals, and even through the erection of an actual Shingle Style house at an exhibition at Earl's Court, London, in 1887.[77] So here we have a very likely instance of the insular Voysey sampling a fare as far from home as the United States.

Voysey's most important commission of 1890 was the country house for R.H. Cazalet ("Walnut Tree Farm") at Castlemorton, Malvern (figs. 23, 24 & 25). The architect extracted the maximum publicity from this house, for it was eventually published in six different journals over several years. Except for one or two features the Cazalet house, like the earlier 1885 house for himself, is a prototype for Voysey's characteristic country houses of the next quarter of a century. All the interior spaces of the Cazalet house are contained in two rectangular volumes arranged as an "L". The white rough cast stucco is meant to be read as a thin surface and the rows of differently scaled horizontal casement windows are abstract patterns placed on the surface or parallel to it.

Even more rigorously organized were the surfaces of his projected small "Cottage" (1891) (fig. 26), and his "An Artist's Cottage" (1890) (fig. 27). In the "Cottage" the horizontal bands of windows were placed directly under the eaves, and the overhanging hipped roof acts as a sheltering termination to the building itself. In "An Artist's Cottage" the rows of ground floor windows and the flat overhanging entrance roof are horizontally connected together as a single band at their tops by a line produced by the outward curve of the stucco surface. As in the Cazalet house, the surface plane of the dormer windows, as well as the front chimney, is a continuation of the lower wall surface. The horizontality of the front surface of the house and of the roof plane is broken by a buttress which defines the chimney within and by the upward thrust of the battered chimney. The rain gutter is carried out in front of the chimney and the pair of dormers, suggesting in a linear way that the wall surface is cutting through the edge of the roof plane.

The closest Voysey came to the realization of the aesthetic idea contained in these two projects is in the small story-and-a-half studio for W.E.F. Britten in West Kensington (1891) (figs. 28 & 29). though the studio is a single rectangular volume, it is in reality two volumes of the same width attached back to back. The first half is a Voyseyesque hipped roofed cottage; the rear, the studio proper, is almost industrial with its hammered plate-glass gabled roof. The chimney has now been elongated a little bit more; the flat entrance porch roof seems tenuously suspended from a single angled strut, and the thin vertical steel fence with its upward projecting posts surmounted by plate-like shelves creates a linear screen intervening between the street and the studio which lies directly behind it.

Even more fairly tale like was Voysey's scheme, "Studios for a London Street" (fig. 39). Here an existing house and the two new structures are tied together by a single flat facade. The facade is terminated in a stage-set fashion by a stepped, undulating parapet and by two make-believe low towers. The surface openly says that it is a stage set, and this unusual quality is enhanced by grouping and placement of the windows and doors. While all of these elements—the roofs, windows, and doors—are essentially traditional, Voysey has taken each of the features out of its normal historical context and has mixed (and clashed) the several historic styles together. In a similar fairy-tale vein was his later alternate plan for a studio for Miss E. Forster at Brook Green (1893) (fig. 37). The upper edge of the street facade is curved up as a parapet whose edges are irregularly cut as if by a cookie knife. The upper lunette window with its classical implications clashes with the

informal shed-roofed, kitchen-bedroom wing below, while the very wide door seems in scale to be unrelated to the small round window to the side.

Unquestionably, the most startling of Voysey's designs in the early 1890s was his well-known studio house for J.M. Forster in Bedford Park (figs. 30 & 31). Brandon-Jones has pointed out that the original designs for the Forster house (drawn in 1888) were anything but way out.[78] If one takes into account Voysey's work at this time, there are no new or startling features in the final design which one could not find in other schemes of the same period. What makes the Forster house stand out so sharply is its purity and severity, its highly disciplined abstraction, and its verticalism (i.e. the fact that it is urban rather than suburban). As with most Voysey designs, the plan is rather ordinary and dull, and while the top-floor studio is large, airy, and open, it could hardly be claimed that it constitutes a great interior space. The impressive visual quality of the house rests solely on its exterior, as an object in space. As with his other designs the white stucco surfaces of the Forster house define a single rectangular volume but at the same time they retain their independence. The relationship between the patterns of windows and other details, and the extensiveness of the white stucco surface is especially impressive in the Forster House because of the small scale of all of the details. Since the horizontal edges of the overhanging eaves of the hipped roof are unbroken on the two sides which are normally seen, the roof appears as a thin cardboard object lightly supported by the row of vertical metal gutter supports. Though the architect obviously went to great lengths to minutely arrange and proportion his surfaces, he countered his high art composition with a haphazard arrangement of a pair of exposed pipes which run from the ground to the roof (that these are not afterthoughts can be seen in the original drawings for the house).

How necessary was the white stucco to his compositions can be seen in his two town houses on Hans Road in Kensington for Archibald Grove (figs. 33, 34, 35, & 36) where he substituted brick for stucco sheathing. The traditional brick surfaces decidedly soften the visual contrast between surface and opening which Voysey normally relied on. Before the building was finally built, Voysey made several other changes in the street facade which took away even more from its abstract effectiveness. He pushed the facade up one more floor and eliminated the lower row of dormer windows, he then added a third narrow curved bay at the mezzanine level and he elongated the main mezzanine bay window of the right house. These last two changes destroyed the dominance of surface over windows and bays, and the raising of the roof removed it as an effect element in the composition. The plans of these row houses (only two of which were built) were quite urban and well thought out and the variation in floor level brought a movement into interior space which Voysey seldom accomplished.

Equally marginal in solving the problem of a vertical urban design was his project for "A Tower House" (1891) (fig. 32) and his project for "A Staircase" (1892) (fig. 38). The exterior of the "Tower House" works fine until one reaches the fourth-floor studio which was covered with a busy pattern of half timbering. The interior of his scheme for "A Staircase," with its contrast between vertical space and the horizontality of the bands of windows, would have been exciting, but on the exterior, where he tried to emphasize the horizontal through bands of stone connecting tops and bottoms of windows, he was not very successful.

Voysey's major commission for 1893, the J.W. Wilson house at Colwell in Malvern, is both typical and non-typical of his designs (figs. 40, 41, 42, 43 & 44). The garden front of the house would be perfectly at home in an American suburb of 1900, while the entrance front, which is entirely different, seems more related to his work before 1890 than after. The small square tower of the Wilson house with its reverse curved roof seems purposely to contradict the horizontality of the house itself. And as is the case with so much of his early work, the informality—the "folksy" quality—of the plan of this house is in striking contrast to the organization of the exterior surfaces of the building.

In his E.J. Horniman house ("Lowicks") near Frensham in Surrey (1894) the great chimneys dwarf the house below (figs. 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 & 50) while the delicacy of the mullioned windows, the thin metal gutter supports, and the small Tuscan columns suggest that the interior has been turned inside out to form the exterior. In the interior of the Horniman house one can sense Voysey's meticulous and loving care, ranging from built-in cabinets and storage areas (fig. 49) to venting grills with their patterns of cutout birds and trees (fig. 50). It could well be argued that the presence of the designer is so strong that this country house is far more urban in feeling than vernacular and "cottagey."

To one degree or another this visual sense of order permeated

all of Voysey's designs of the nineties. It is to be found even in his smaller buildings, such as his entrance lodge for the Rev. W.L. Grane at Shackleford (1897) (fig. 60), or in his small house for Mrs. Scott in Hampshire (1897) (figs. 58 & 59) where he brought together the living quarters, stable, coach house, and wash house within a single rectangle. Voysey obviously felt that in the smaller buildings there was even a greater need to use a single volume and to interrupt his white stucco surface with the fewest number of features. The purely picturesque aspect of these smaller buildings was usually limited to a tall chimney(s) and the overscaled green barrel.

In his medium-sized house of the late nineties he faced and solved two different sets of problems: how to tie far distant patterns of openings together and how to maintain the intimate scale of his buildings. The groups of casement windows and doors were held together by bands of stone or by horizontal shadow lines created by the outward curve of the drip line of the rough cast stucco.[79] Horizontal bands of stone (which were always kept flush with the stucco surface) connecting windows together can be seen in the house for his father ("Annesley Lodge" in Hampstead (1895) (fig. 53) and in the much larger Julian Sturgis house at Pittenham (1896) (fig. 54); while in his own house at Chorley Wood (1899) (fig. 79), the C.A. Sewell house at Limpsfield, Surrey (1898) (figs. 77 & 78), and in his proposed house at Colwell (1897) (fig. 68), one can see how effective the stucco drip line could be in tying windows together. In his own house at Chorley Wood ("The Orchard," 1899) (figs. 79 & 80), this stucco drip line becomes the curved hood over the entrance—and in the gable ends it not only tied the windows together, but it helped to create a lowness of scale by breaking up the verticalness of large stuccoed areas. In the F.J. Mayer house (Kidderminster, 1899) the drip line was used to link various openings together not only horizontally but vertically as well.

In designing these intricate surface patterns it is fascinating to note how often the anti-classical Voysey had recourse to classical schemes of balanced order and symmetry. The narrow ends of the rectangular volumes of his houses were often perfectly symmetrical (figs. 65, 70 and 100) or the balance might be more subtly expressed with some elements symmetrically placed and others not (figs. 69 & 71).

Voysey's approach to scale in his designs can be seen most dramatically in his larger houses. If the building was essentially a single rectangle he would break it, as in the Julian Sturgis house (nr. Guildford, 1896-97) (fig. 54), by angled or rectangular bays; or as in the Rev. W.L. Grane house (nr. Shackleford, Surrey, 1897) (fig. 62) where the facade is divided into a series of separate gables. In the house for Mrs. E.F. Chester (Fernhurst, Sussex, 1900-01) (fig. 89), the chimney protrudes as a slanted buttress which cuts the facade in two, while the great two-story window suggests a change in scale sufficient to contrast with the groupings of horizontal windows, entrance, and flat porch roof. In his A.C. Briggs house ("Broadleys," nr. Lake Windermere, 1898) (figs. 72, 73, 74 & 75), in his J.W. Buckley house (nr. Lake Windermere, 1898) (fig. 76), and in the projected H. Rickards house (nr. Lake Windermere, 1898) (fig. 70), he maintained his scale by carrying the two-story bays through the horizontal eave line and by varying the placement of his flat-roofed dormers, sometimes protruding them out of the roof and on other occasions continuing them as extensions of the wall plane. Another method used to fragment the building and thereby maintain scale was through the garden itself. At Algernon Methuen's house ("New Place," nr. Haslemere, Surrey, 1897) (fig. 65), and at Miss Comant's house ("The Pastures" North Luffenham, 1901) (fig. 90), he introduced major changes in the ground level, enhanced by stone walls, hedges, and other plantings which created a series of independent spaces from which one could view the house.

The low squat tower, which he had used on earlier occasions, continued to crop up in his work of the mid and late nineties. In his service buildings (stables, etc.) such as that for Julian Sturgis (Hog's Back, nr. Guildford, 1897) (fig. 63), its placement closely followed the design of the 1893-94 stable for J.W. Wilson (Colwell, Malvern) (fig. 51). The towers in both of these service buildings were buttressed at the corners and they were covered by a low curved roof.

Both the Sturgis and the Wilson service buildings have clocks, weather vanes, and other detailings which are "new art" in spirit and like his project for a monument to Queen Victoria (1895) (fig. 52), convey the feeling that the interior and its furniture have been brought to the exterior.

With a few exceptions (such as the Arthur Newbold house, Westmeston, Sussex, 1898) his towers were always simple and blunt.[80] As the Julian Sturgis house (fig. 54) and the A. Barker

house (Bexhill, Sussex, 1898) (fig. 71) indicate, these towers were never used as a focal point to attract attention to the entrance. In the interiors, these towers completely disappear; their purpose is purely an external one.

There were many specifically classical features which Voysey used to heighten the contrast to the vernacular. At the Grane house (1897) (fig. 62) a quarter of a domed turret covers each of the two first-floor bays at each side of the chimney. Above these a curved roof occurs as a symmetrical motif out of which in strong contradiction springs the tall chimney. A similar treatment is present in the entrance facade of the Methuen house (1897) (fig. 65). Equally classical in feeling is the curved library bay with its half-domed roof on the Methuen house and the entrance of the U.C.E. Brooke house (Thorpe Mandeville, 1897-98) (fig. 64) with its arched hood over the door, its modified Palladian window above, and the curved parapet which terminates the front of the entrance bay. Voysey's occasional use of small lantern towers such as that on one of the proposed studios for Alfred Sutro (Studland Bay, Dorset, 1897) (figs. 56 &61) and his fondness for circular windows, either singularly or in pairs (fig. 82), illustrate how often he went outside of the Gothic vernacular for his visual details. The clash between these classical elements and the vernacular is generally mild and subtle and in no case are the classical features ever allowed to overshadow the vernacular source of the design.

Since Voysey passionately believed in the horizontal, it is intriguing to see how he tried to solve the problem of an artist studio with its traditional need for high vertical space and extensive north light. How he approached this sort of problem can be seen in several schemes for studio houses which he developed for Alfred Sutro at Studland Bay. In one of the schemes (dated 1896) (fig. 55), the story-and-a-half studio is almost hidden; only a flat projecting bay with an angled window can be seen. In his next design (1897) (fig. 61) and in his double studio house (1897) (figs. 56 & 57), large glass window units create a discord between the vernacular cottage form and what is almost industrial and factory-like. Voysey, of course, could easily argue that these studio houses perfectly reflect his dictum that the traditional must continually lend itself to modification in order to reflect present needs.

Voysey's non-domestic work represents a strange mixture of designs. Several of them—his wallpaper factory for Sanderson and Sons (Chiswick, 1902) (figs. 93, 94, 95 & 96) and his project for the

Carnegie Library at Limericky (1904)—are far less traditional than his most way-out domestic work.[81] On the other hand his project for the Lincoln Grammar School (Lincoln, 1901) is downright dull and his regularized Gothic scheme which he entered into the competition for the Government Building at Ottawa, Canada (1913) comes close to being simply inept. In the Sanderson factory and again in the Carnegie Library project, Voysey divided the facades into a series of repetitive bays with the spandrels and their accompanying windows being recessed.

The upper silhouette of the Sanderson factory, with its gentle curved parapets and the vertical projection of the piers, seems closer to Voysey's furniture than to his buildings. Black brick creates a dark zone at ground level and above, bands of black brick connect and define each of the large factory windows. On the east elevation, this banding creates a highly abstract, stepped pattern composed of two horizontal windows which are joined to two vertical windows. A small enclosed iron bridge, reminiscent of a railroad passenger car, extends over the narrow street to connect the new building to an existing structure. The delicacy of detailing and the pristine white and black surface of the Sanderson factory reminds one immediately of the Viennese Secessionists and particularly Josef Hoffmann.

The small Atkinson and Co. store on Old Bond Street, London (1911) (figs. 129 & 130), conveys a domestic interior feeling with its board and batten display cases and its low hooped roof. On the exterior he draws attention to the store and its entrance by placing what appears to be a fragment of a large-scale Gothic stone tracery window directly above the double doors. Only in the center portion of his street-level windows does he provide a small tantalizing glimpse of the wares of the firm. Equally evident of his care in detailing and his practical approach to design are several interiors which he produced for the Essex and Suffolk Equitable Insurance Co. (1906, 07, 10) (fig. 119). In these offices he provided rows of built-in file cabinets, semi-screened work spaces, and an ingenious design for weighted ceiling lights which could be raised or lowered.

Voysey was never involved in any of the large-scale suburban developments around London with their acres of attached or semi-detached row houses. At Normanton in York he did design a group of twenty-nine row houses, accompanied by one detached house and the Workmen's Institute for the Whitwood Colliery (1904)

(figs. 101 & 102). He introduced variety into the scheme by having paired two-story houses separate the groups of story-and-a-half units. In his pair of attached cottages (nr. Haslemere, 1903) (fig. 98) and in a group of row houses for G.E. Marshall at Brighton (1910) (fig. 128), he simply placed the two living units within the single form which he used for a one-family country house.

There are really few changes which occurred in his many small and medium-sized houses (and lodges) between 1900 and 1914. If one can generalize, perhaps one can sense a tighter control which results in a degree of dryness. The plans of a good number of these houses began to be more formal and self-consciously organized—as if Voysey was responding to the new academicism of Lutyens and others. He began to use octagonal spaces as in the proposed house for C.T. Burke (Penn., 1905) (fig. 110), in the S.C. Turner house at Frinton-on-Sea (1905-06) (fig. 109), and in the house for Miss F. Knight at Henley-in-Arden (1909) (figs. 123 & 124). There are a few cases where he increased the openness of interior space (more than likely the result of the craftsman client) as in the A.W. Simpson house (Kendal, 1909) (figs. 121 & 122), where an "L" shaped living-dining area is separated from the kitchen by only freestanding pass-through counter and cupboards. In the small project for a country retreat for his brother at Slindon (1909) (fig. 127), a long single space brings together the functions of the living room, dining room, and hall, and on the second floor an open sleeping porch was connected to a single large bedroom.

In his one American building, the courtyard house for Mrs. Tytus at Tyringham, Mass. (1904) (fig. 103), the dining room was a raised open alcove directly off the living room. His two other experiments with the courtyard-oriented houses, the project for S.C. Turner (Frinton-on-Sea, 1907-08) (fig. 120) and the miniature Gothic stone castle for T.S. Cotterell (nr. Bath, 1909) (figs. 125 & 126), revert to the separate independence of each of the interior spaces. Of these late houses the Cotterell is the least typical and in many ways the most delightful—it is a medieval castle reduced to the size of a doll house.

So far nothing has been said—except for certain aspects of his plans—about Voysey's approach to the strictly utilitarian problems. This is an area of British architecture which an American historian finds difficult to look at in a very sympathetic and objective way. If one posits that a core ingredient of modern twentieth-century architecture is the increased ability to fully control

our environment, then Voysey would hardly rate very high (nor as a matter of fact would any English architect during these decades). While Voysey did on occasion use central hot-water heating, this was usually the result of the pressure of his client, not a reflection of his own desire. His plumbing—compared with American plumbing of the time—was almost medieval. The layouts of his kitchen (and sculleries) and baths were not well conceived, conveniently planned, or visually pleasant places to be in. Even his plans are frankly a bit bewildering for an American to appreciate. In a large house a living hall of some size makes sense, but when reduced to small dimensions and with no living room whatsoever provided, the functions of this space as a communication link and as a living area almost cancel each other out. In some of his smaller houses where the living hall accommodated a vestibule with a wide front door as well as the staircase, one wonders how a person could have been physically comfortable, even if seated directly in front of the fireplace.

But while Voysey accepted much that was traditional in the English plan, he was not entirely uncritical. His ingenious venting of fireplaces made most of his rooms as comfortable as is possible with the open fireplace being the single heat source. His manufactured cast-iron fireplaces were as efficient as one could ask (figs. 11 & 12). Voysey was very much concerned about providing adequate natural light to his interior. By placing his windows close to the ceiling (and often using a gentle hooped ceiling), he was able to reflect a maximum light from it and off his white plaster walls. On occasion, particularly in his work of the nineties, he used his externally picturesque domed lanterns to provide light for interior halls and staircases.

In a broad sense it is certainly reasonable to see Voysey as an exponent of the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts movement, though it should be noted that his designs are on the whole hardly typical of the products of that movement. In his furniture, for example, he generally used oak, and like the other Arts and Crafts designers, he left the wood as is or simply had it oiled or waxed (figs. 17 & 18). He also insisted, like them, on simple basic shapes and forms, and his "jointery" of individual pieces of wood was as direct and uncomplicated as possible. What sets his pieces off from the run-of-the-mill Arts and Crafts examples is that his forms tend to be more traditional (vernacular); the individual components are much more delicate and refined; and, as in his architecture, he

often injected playful, childlike features. He lightened his furniture by cutouts—usually of course using the motif of the heart—by elongating the vertical pieces, by narrowing the upright members at top and bottom, and by using hardware with cutout designs as a surface pattern to enrich the object. In looking over Voysey's furniture, it is difficult to see that there was any great change from his designs of the early nineties to those of twenty years later. Perhaps, taken as a whole, his furniture of 1905-1914 is, like his architecture, somewhat more traditional, but single pieces pop up in these late years which are identical in spirit to his more adventurous work of the early nineties.

The same could be said of his designs for fabrics and wallpaper (fig. 5). While it is true that one can loosely divide these designs into an early and late style or, as has been done, into three styles, it is not at all easy to pigeonhole them in set time periods of Voysey's life.[82] The truth is that he often produced his flat-patterned, simplified, naturalistic-styled schemes at the same time as he was designing his "Alice in Wonderland" wallpaper and fabrics.

Many of the motifs which he used—not only for wallpaper and fabrics, but for book plates, advertising, and cutout patterns for hinges—are similar to those employed by Arthur H. Mackmurdo and later by C.R. Ashbee, Walter Crane, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. But Voysey's designs always remain both more traditional and more naive and childlike. Such designs as his "Head with Hair of Flowers" (ca. 1890) (fig. 4) or his book plate for Richard Walter Essex (ca. 1896) (fig. 6) are as close as he was to come to the English proto l'Art Nouveau.

Voysey, then, did not really belong to either of the major groups to be found in English design and architecture at the turn of the century. He certainly was not a classicist like Lutyens, nor was he really a member of the more way-out avant-garde group (or groups) represented by C. Harrison Townsend in England or by Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Scotland. While he was continually credited with establishing a style which influenced English architecture at the time, one can search far and wide among his contemporaries to find anything equivalent say to the situation of Frank Lloyd Wright and the spread of the Prairie style among other designers. A look at the work of M.H. Baillie Scott—with whom the name of Voysey was often linked—will not only show that Scott could never approach Voysey in quality (except in his drawings) but will also demonstrate that the two men were really

trying to do something quite different. The closest one can come to Voysey would be a few of the country houses of Walter Cave and of Ernest Newton.[83] But if one places even the best of Cave's or Newton's designs alongside those of Voysey, they are at once pallid and dull. One therefore cannot help but come to the conclusion that Voysey's individualism and preeminence—during his own day—was well deserved.

It is, of course, difficult to say how much Voysey specifically influenced continental design and that of America. Mention has already been made of his several exhibitions and the publication of his work in the United States. On the continent he exhibited at Antwerp in 1892, at Paris in 1900, and at Turin in 1902. His two-dimensional designs and his architecture were published in the nineties in Belgium, in France, and in Germany. His wallpaper was used by Victor Horta in the Solvay house (Brussels, 1895-1900) and Henry Van de Velde came to know and admire his wallpaper as early as 1892-94.[84] In the 1900s Hermann Muthesius brought Voysey's work to the attention of German designers and architects. It would probably be fair to say that the major effect which Voysey had abroad was a negative one, namely a cleansing one, rather than a positive one. Voysey demonstrated just how far one could go in stripping and reorganizing traditional vernacular forms. If one wished to go further than this, one would have to throw aside his basic premise. And this, of course, is just what the exponents of modern architecture—the Internationalists and the Modernists—did in the twenties and thirties. Voysey's most direct connection then, with the twentieth century, does not basically lie with the modern but with the imagery and the ideas which lie behind such movements as the Spanish Colonial Revival of Southern California during the twenties or of this woodsy Bay tradition of the San Francisco region of the thirties and later the forties.

NOTES

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