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Creators: McKee, Harley J.

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THE BEAUX-ARTS BALL

By HARLEY J. MCKEE
Department of Architecture

One of the most interesting traditions of the schools of Architecture in the United States is the idea of some annual costume ball. It is quite likely that we have taken this, along with our whole scheme of the study of architecture, from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, although it is doubtful if, with our different conventions, we could really put on an affair that the French students would recognize as a descendant of their "Quatres-Arts" Ball.

In thinking of the coming Beaux-Arts Ball, to be held February 28, at the Ohio Union, I recall several which I witnessed while at the University of Illinois. "Arch. Fetes," they are usually called there. Until recent years, before the department of architecture moved into their new building, these Fetes were held in the Ricker Library, a room some sixty feet square, and in the adjoining hall, some fifteen feet wide, and perhaps one hundred fifty feet long. The rooms were, of course, decorated to represent some historic period.

The arrangements for the affair, which was sponsored by the Architectural Society, were placed in the hands of a business manager and a chairman of the committee on decorations. Sometimes the decorations would be selected after a student competition, but usually were designed in mass by the chairman, and then the detailed portions designed by his immediate assistants, who were helped in the execution by all of the students. The walls of the hall were usually covered with building paper, which had been painted to represent some appropriate scene, such as a narrow street. That much was comparatively easy to do, except for two things—heroic plaster statues of Apollo and Hermes, which were not allowed to be moved for fear of breaking them. Of course the year that the decorations were Greek, these gods were quite appropriate, and were allowed to remain visible. On other occasions they were masked by a framework covered with papier-maché, and represented beings varying from Egyptian deities to Chinese devils.

In the library, where most of the dancing was to be done, preparations included moving out the tables and pushing books over into one corner, after which the walls were hung with black cloth, upon which decorations could be pinned. The windows were covered with some sort of a tracery cut from building board, behind which were placed some dimly lighted painted scenes appropriate to the style of the period. The lights were covered with chandeliers made of pierced cardboard, in which had been pasted colored tissue paper, and by six or seven o'clock of the evening scheduled nearly everything would be ready.

Some two weeks before the Arch. Fete was to be held, ticket applications were received. As the tickets were always very much sought for, the fortunate ones were chosen by lot—the architects, however, being given a greater chance than other students. Later, the costumes to be worn were approved by the committee, to make sure that they would harmonize with the decorations. On the night of the fete, prizes were awarded to the best

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original costumes; of course, people who had rented theirs were not eligible for this prize.

The next day, as usual, was not so very pleasant. The decorations were taken down and thrown away, the tables moved in again, and work started with renewed enthusiasm.
