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by Herbert Baker
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Our early settlers, bringing their traditions from Holland and France, have handed down to us very noble examples of how to build South African homesteads. The characteristics of these are the central house, designed symmetrically with large and simple detail, and long and plain masses of roofing; the range of cellars and slave quarters balancing each other on either side, and the big grass squares and avenues and paddocks of oaks and fir carrying the masses and the lines of the formal architectural composition far away into the landscape. Thus these houses are excellent examples of the principles of the "grand manner" simplified to meet the needs and conditions of colonial life. The charm of these old Cape homesteads lies much more in these larger qualities than in their picturesque detail. This fact cannot be too much emphasised as a warning to imitators that unless they understand and work in the spirit of the old builders they will assuredly fail to advance and establish this or any other style in South Africa.

We hear much nowadays of an original South African style, but it will never be achieved through copying and imitating borrowed detail, but only through impersonal subordination to the larger ideals and conceptions of architecture. We must choose the primitive and more eternal instruments of the art of building, either using the column and lintel alone, as the Greeks did, or combining the column with the arch and the vault and the dome, as the Romans. Then we must use these features, or whatever other we may choose, sparingly and only where necessary, without fear of repetition, which is often the best means of obtaining that most valuable quality of architecture, namely, rhythm. We must welcome rather than shun bare wall-surface, which is a quality of all great architecture, though rare chances of it are given by the exigencies of modern buildings. "Great spaces washed with sun"

are a characteristic of our landscape. It is the South African architect's privilege, and one much envied by his fellow craftsmen in northern Europe, to have always at hand the most valuable of all materials for his craft (which the Greeks and Romans also had), warm sun bathed wall surfaces contrasted with deep, cool shadows.

The northern architect in a dull or cold climate, and dim atmosphere, rightly seeks for wealth of detail and warmth of colour, on his chill and sunless facades. This is the explanation of the pleasure derived from the mixture of red brick and white stone on a building in England or Holland. But in the bright and warm atmosphere of South Africa we turn with relief from such parti-colour buildings to plain, cool stone walling or to the shadow-chequered whitewash of the old Dutch houses at the Cape.

In the newspaper criticisms of new buildings of South Africa they are often described as "of the Renaissance style." The real "Renaissance" style in the different countries of Europe, when architecture was being re-born and deserved this name, was an attempt, enthusiastic but often ignorant, to revive the forgotten forms of classic architecture. The earlier Renaissance architects were often pedantic imitators of detail, seeking the letter but missing the spirit; and if we go too much to them for our ideals to-day we are but copying the copyists, an unprofitable and hopeless task indeed. The great masters in the Renaissance period, such as Michael Angelo and our Wren, thought of detail as wholly subservient to the nobler principles of construction and planning. Through sincerity and faithfulness to the ideals which I have here tried to express lies the best hope that South Africa may give birth to a national architecture worthy of a great nation.

I would end with an appeal to our Government and educational bodies to remember that, though the best training ground for young architects and artists must be in England or northern Europe, where, mingling with their fellow students, they can catch enthusiasm (which Sir Joshua Reynolds said was of more value than the best teaching), yet the education of a South African architect cannot be complete without long study in Italy and Greece, where art flourished in countries and climates more similar to his own. The yearning for masses of superficial ornament and details which is evidenced in most of our colonial architecture would disappear after a sound study of the classic masterpieces in the sun of southern Europe. The high quality of French architecture is largely due to the foresight of Napoleon, who acquired for France the beautiful Medici Palazzo on the Pincian Hill in Rome as a home for French students of art. There is a British school at Athens but, until quite lately there was none at Rome. I can personally certify to the enormous help which such a school gives to a travelling student. Is it too much to hope that the new Government of South Africa may grant an annual sum - it need only be quite small - to these schools in Athens and Rome, in return for which genuine South African students of art working in those countries could claim as a privilege the great benefits which these schools have the power to confer?

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(I have since found further information about the beginnings of Washington. L'Enfant was not sent for from Paris, as he had fought through the Revolution. But in France he had been inspired by the work of the architect Le Nôtre, the great master of the "grand manner." He was assisted by Jefferson, the first Secretary of State, who had himself been an architect. Jefferson went to Europe and collected plans of the