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Our sketch this month is of Mr. Herbert Baker, F.R.I.B.A., whose work and influence in South African architecture have marked him as one of the masters and leaders of his profession in this country, in which he has lived for nearly twenty years. His early studies were in the office of a church architect—a pupil of Sir Gilbert Scott—to whom he was articled. He worked afterwards for several years under Mr. Ernest George, A.R.A., the distinguished architect who ranks in the highest position amongst the members of the Royal Institute of British Architects. During this period he was a student at the Royal Academy, and also attended the lectures of the Institute, where his time was not spent without honour, for in the examination for associateship he headed the list, thereby becoming Aspitel Prizeman for his year.

Mr. Baker's brother came out to farm in South Africa, and it was doubtless the news contained in correspondence, and the public interest which was then aroused in the country's potentialities and progress that caused Mr. Herbert Baker to decide upon paying a visit. The moment was opportune, for Rhodes was beginning to find expression for the rough, untutored art that was in him by planning colossal ideas of building, and in the young Englishman he discovered one who could adequately carry into effect the thoughts of his "immense and brooding spirit." Both men had realised the rich heritage which South Africa possessed in the architecture of the early settlers. Rhodes expressed a genuine appreciation for its fine, good quality, its simplicity, and strength; and the artist in the younger man was quick to detect in its quiet taste and originality a style that might be carried further. He spent his time measuring and sketching its details, and his collaboration with Rhodes began on the re-modelling of "Groot Schuur," which, however, was shortly afterwards destroyed by fire. Rhodes commissioned his architect to rebuild the house on a new model, yet retaining the characteristics of the old homestead, and the result is familiar to most South Africans. "Groot Schuur" now ranks, alike for its peculiar beauty and associations, as one of the historic and artistic homes of the English-speaking world.

The younger man's proved ability to carry into effect Rhodes' dreams of laying under contribution the great Greek and Roman models in his schemes for memorialising those who had served and given up their lives for their country, such as Alan Wilson,

and his desire for stately buildings to be an influence ennobling the people of a new country, led Rhodes to send Mr. Herbert Baker on a visit to the land of those "dead and sceptred sovereigns" who still rule the spirit of builders from their urns. The commission, characteristically written in pencil on a scrap of paper, may be quoted:—

March, 1900.

I desire you to see Rome, Pæstum, Agrigentum, Thebes, and Athens. I am thinking of erecting a mausoleum to those who fell at Kimberley, a vault and a copy of Pæstum. Your expenses as to trip will be paid; and in case I undertake any of these thoughts, you will receive the usual architect's fee of five per cent.

C. J. RHODES.

The fine memorial at Kimberley was the result. Greater schemes were under way when, in 1902, Rhodes' lifework was cut short. Mr. Baker's tribute to the memory of his patron was the building of the great granite memorial on the slopes of the mountain behind "Groot Schuur." "As in all lofty art" (says a writer) "the beauty of this temple is inexplicable, the mystery incommunicable. Its sincerity and nobility are apparent. To see it is to realise with Goethe that "Architecture is frozen music."

Mr. Baker has made his name famous in South Africa in connection with the influence his art has had upon domestic architecture. To-day the "Baker" houses are the choicest possessions of this country's architecture. His greatest work, however, is the new Union Buildings in Pretoria. The task of erecting this magnificent pile will certainly win him the appreciation of posterity. In concluding this brief sketch, we cannot do better than quote the words of one of his fellow architects and admirers, when he says that "Mr. Baker's work is now at its most equitable level of good architecture, matured by considerable experience and study. This is evident both in the studied simplicity and quiet dignity of the 'Villa Arcadia,' at Parktown, and the new Railway Station in the administrative capital. There are many years of useful work before Herbert Baker yet; and whatever he may do in the future, the creations he has already wrought are more than sufficient to signalise him as one of the master builders of our age. His work has the power of wielding a great influence on future generations, and leaves them a rich heritage of which they cannot be robbed."