

The Primary School at Pietersburg

(By Gerard Moerdyk.)

"Schooldays are the happiest days of one's life," says the proverb; and the most impressionable, adds the psychologist. We should therefore see to it that our schools, where children spend so great a part of the day, bring happiness and make a lasting impression for good.

Our typical Transvaal school, that square uncomfortable looking brick building, with its rows of uninteresting windows, looks more like a penal institution than like a place where happiness lives and high ideals are born. The influence of surroundings upon placid as well as sensitive children has been entirely neglected.

Our education system tends of necessity to uniformity—to mass production—every child goes through the same syllabus, in the same way, at the same pace and according to the same rules. Our schools have been built all according to stereotype plans, one as alike to the other as peas in a pod, each as poverty-stricken as its neighbour, as regards originality of construction and beauty of design. These buildings have not been put up at poverty prices either, each one of them has been built for a fair and often for more than a fair price, but bricks and mortar alone cannot produce a building capable of inspiring children with the traditional love for their school or ambitions for their future.

All children instinctively like beautiful things. Many live in drab homes, amid drab surroundings. That is unavoidable, but it is possible to give them beautiful schools, without spending any more money than in the past. Why then condemn them to those dismal, colourless white classrooms, all alike and arranged in stiff rows like so many telegraph poles. The child's nature must react unfavourably to this uninspired monotony.

Our system in the past has been all wrong. One cannot turn out art by machinery; just as impossible is it for a government department where everything is done by rule and line instead of by interest and inspiration, to build

schools which do not bear the brand of duplication. It is only by individual application that individual work can be achieved.

In the design for the Pietersburg Primary School an attempt has been made to combine the useful, the hygienic and the beautiful. The design comprises four wings, radiating from an octagonal open-air amphitheatre. This space was originally intended for a central hall, but as no primary school is allowed a hall, this open-air meeting place was evolved.

Maybe the parents of the little Pietersburg scholars will be glad later on that that central hall did not go through, for this open-air

one, with its roofed stage, three small columned porticos, which could provide shelter in case of rain, and pergolas covered with bougainvillia, which grows so luxuriantly in Pietersburg, will be an ideal spot for school concerts and festivities of all kinds.

There are eight classrooms, two storerooms, a staff room and a principal's office, besides cloakrooms and lavatories. There is an entrance for girls and one for boys, under the direct supervision, on the one side of the principal's office, on the other of the staff room. Waterborne sewerage makes it possible to place the lavatories next to the cloakrooms inside the building. This scheme prevents wet feet and subsequent

colds in the rainy season, as well as doing away with those unsightly little buildings at opposite corners of the playground.

There are four long verandahs which provide covered playgrounds on very hot or wet days, besides sheltering the classrooms from the sun in the afternoon. The building will be so placed as to get the maximum of air as well as a graded amount of light. Every classroom gets direct sunlight in the morning, but by 9 o'clock the sun is too high to make the rooms uncomfortable by shining into the long windows, which can, if required, be entirely opened.

The interior will be made as interesting as funds will allow. The walls of the classrooms will be

painted in various pleasing tints, the ceilings too, will not conform to monotonous white. The exterior will be plastered in rough stucco, which, with its play of lights and shadows, lends a most fascinating effect. And the gables, at the ends of the four wings have been based on the "Hartebeesthuisie" gables, that form of architecture which the Transvaal may truly call its very own.

As a result of the Administrator's decision to entrust the designs of schools and school hostels to private architects, new and original buildings will replace the type we all know so well. It will be interesting to watch the various ways in which different men will interpret local needs, climatic requirements and educational ideals.

