OLD ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS WHICH INSPIRE MODERN ARCHITECTURAL BEAUTY

It is natural and also very wise to turn to the past for inspiration for fresh beauty, to study the work that has stood through many generations unquestioned in power. As architecture slowly developed, many experiments with proportion of wall surface and suitableness of detail have been tried out and their success or failure stands today as superb object lessons to whoever cares to observe them. The architects of today build according to their ideals as honestly and as fearlessly as did the old masters. The architects of the future will do the same.

We are showing a few pencil sketches by Mr. M. E. Freehof that hold great suggestions for builders of today. The grandly simple wall, exquisite detail, perfect proportion and arrangement of columns, masterly treatment of gateways of some of the old architecture surely hold rich suggestions for workers of today. To accompany these sketches we can find no more fitting comments upon the value of the past to the present than certain penetrating passages from Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture." We have selected some of his comments from the "Lamp of Beauty" and some from the "Lamp of Power" that hold particularly excellent advice to young architects about the handling of large wall spaces and the treatment of detail.

Of the many broad divisions under which architecture may be considered, none appears to me more significant than that into buildings whose interest is in their walls, and those whose interest is in the lines dividing their walls. In the Greek temple the wall is as nothing; the entire interest is in the detached columns and the frieze they bear; in French Flamboyant, and in our detestable Perpendicular, the object is to get rid of the wall surface, and keep the eye altogether on tracery of line; in Romanesque work and Egyptian, the wall is a confessed and honored member, and the light is often allowed to fall on large areas of it, variously decorated. Now, both these principles are admitted by Nature, the one in her woods and thickets, the other in her plains, and cliffs, and water; but the latter is pre-eminently

The combination of the straight line of power with the curve of beauty is beautifully brought out in this arch from Granada.
the principle of power, and, in some sense, of beauty also. For, whatever infinity of fair form there may be in the maze of the forest, there is a fairer, as I think, in the surface of the quiet lake; and I hardly know that association of shaft or tracery, for which I would exchange the warm sleep of sunshine on some smooth, broad, human-like front of marble. Nevertheless, if breadth is to be beautiful, its substance must in some sort be beautiful; and we must not hastily condemn the exclusive resting of the northern architects in divided lines, until at least we have remembered the difference between a blank surface of Caen stone and one mixed from Genoa and Carrara, of serpentine with snow; but as regards abstract power and awfulness, there is no question; without breadth of surface it is in vain to seek them, and it matters little, so that the surface be wide, bold, and unbroken, whether it be of brick or of jasper; the light of heaven upon it, and the weight of earth in it, are all we need; for it is singular how forgetful the mind may become both of material and workmanship, if only it have space enough over which to range, and to remind it, however feebly, of the joy that it has in contemplating the flatness and sweep of great plains and broad seas. And it is a noble thing for men to do this with their cut stone or moulded clay, and to make the face of a wall look infinite, and its edge against the sky like an horizon: or even if less than this be reached, it is still delightful to mark the play of passing light on its broad surface, and to see by how many artifices and gradations of tinting and shadow, time and storm will set their wild signatures upon it; and how in the rising or declining of the day the unbroken twilight rests long and luridly on its high, lineless forehead, and fades away untraceably down its tiers of confused and countless stone.

And among the first habits that a young architect should learn, is that of thinking in shadow, not looking at a design in its miserable liny skeleton; but conceiving it as it will be when the dawn lights it, and the dusk leaves it; when its stones will be hot, and its crannies cool; when the lizards will bask on the one, and the birds build in the other. Let him design with the sense of cold and heat upon him; let him cut out the shadows, as men dig wells in unwatered plains; and lead along the lights, as a founder does his hot metal; let him keep the full command of both, and see that he knows
how they fall, and where they fade. His paper lines and proportions are of no value: all that he has to do must be done by spaces of light and darkness; and his business is to see that the one is broad and bold enough not to be swallowed up by twilight, and the other deep enough not to be dried like a shallow pool by a noon-day sun.

"Consider first that the characters of natural objects which the architect can represent are few and abstract. The greater part of
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those delights by which Nature recommends herself to man at all times, cannot be conveyed by him into his imitative work. He cannot make his grass green and cool and good to rest upon, which in nature is its chief use to man; nor can he make his flowers tender and full of color and of scent, which in nature are their chief powers of giving joy. Those qualities which alone he can secure are certain severe characters of form, such as men only see in nature on deliberate examination, and by the full and set appliance of sight and thought: a man must lie down on the bank of grass on his breast and set himself to watch and penetrate the intertwining of it, before he finds that which is good to be gathered by the architect. So then while Nature is at all times pleasant to us, and while the sight and sense of her work may mingle happily with all our thoughts, and labors, and times of existence, that image of her which the architect carries away represents what we can only perceive in her by direct intellectual exertion, and demands from us, wherever it appears, an intellectual exertion of a similar kind in order to understand and feel it. It is the written or sealed impression of a thing sought out, it is the shaped result of inquiry and bodily expression of thought.

"Remember that the eye is at your mercy more than the ear. 'The eye, it cannot choose but see.' Its nerve is not so easily numbed as that of the ear, and it is often busied in tracing and watching forms when the ear is at rest. Now if you present lovely forms to it when it cannot call the mind to help it in its work, and among objects of vulgar use and unhappy position, you will neither please the eye nor elevate the vulgar object. But you will fill and weary the eye with the beautiful form, and you will infect that form itself with the vulgarity of the thing to which you have violently attached it. It will never be of much use to you any more; you have killed or defiled it; its freshness and purity are gone. You will have to pass it through the fire of much thought before you will cleanse it, and warm it with much love before it will revive. . . .

"HENCE, then, a general law, of singular importance in the present day, a law of simple common sense—not to decorate things belonging to purposes of active and occupied life. Wherever you can rest, there decorate; where rest is forbidden, so is beauty. You must not mix ornament with business, any more than you may mix play. Work first, and then rest. Work first, and then
AS INFORMAL COURTS were sometimes held in Old Gateways they were designed with suitable and impressive dignity: Our cities lack picturesque approach: Our architects may well draw inspiration from this Porte D’Ardon.
GATEWAYS WITH HOUSES ABOVE in which gatekeepers live or prisoners are held, are among the chief architectural interests of the Old World. This combination of pointed arch and square roof holds rich suggestions for our own builders.
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gaze, but do not use golden ploughshares, nor bind ledgers in enamel. Do not thrash with sculptured flails: nor put bas-reliefs on millstones. What! it will be asked, are we in the habit of doing so? Even always and everywhere. The most familiar position of Greek mouldings is in these days on shop fronts. There is not a tradesman’s sign nor shelf nor counter in all the streets of all our cities which has not upon it ornaments which were invented to adorn temples and beautify kings’ palaces.

“It is well, therefore, that the young architect should be taught to think of imitative ornament as of the extreme of grace in language; not to be regarded at first, not to be obtained at the cost of purpose, meaning, force or conciseness, yet, indeed a perfection—the least of all perfections, and yet the crowning one of all—one which by itself, and regarded in itself, is an architectural coxcombry, but is yet the sign of the most highly trained mind and power when it is associated with others. It is a safe manner, as I think, to design all things at first in severe abstraction, and to be prepared, if need were, to carry them out in that form; then to mark the parts where high finish would be admissible, to complete these always with stern reference to their general effect, and then connect them by a graduated scale of abstraction with the rest. And there is one safeguard against danger in this process on which I would finally insist. Never imitate anything but natural forms, and those the noblest, in the completed parts. The degradation of the cinque cento manner of decoration was not owing to its naturalism, to its faithfulness of imitation, but to its imitation of ugly, i.e. unnatural things. So long as it restrained itself to sculpture of animals and flowers, it remained noble.

“But, at all events, one thing we have in our power—the doing without machine ornament and cast-iron work. All the stamped metals, and artificial stones, and imitation woods and bronzes, over the invention of which we hear daily exultation—all the short, and cheap, and easy ways of doing that whose difficulty is its honor—are just so many new obstacles in our already encumbered road. They will not make one of us happier or wiser—they will extend neither the pride of judgment nor the privilege of enjoyment. They will only make us shallower in our understandings, colder in our hearts, and feebler in our wits. And most justly. For we are not sent into this world to do anything into which we cannot put our hearts. We have certain work to do for our bread, and that is to be done strenuously; other work to do for our delight, and that is to be done heartily: neither is to be done by halves and shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all. Perhaps all that we have to do is meant for nothing more than an exercise of the heart and of
INTEREST AND BEAUTY are obtained by a commingling of different materials and union of the three big principles of architecture, square, circle and straight line as may be seen in this old cottage close in Salisbury.

the will, and is useless in itself; but, at all events, the little use it has may well be spared if it is not worth putting our hands and our strength to. It does not become our immortality to take an ease inconsistent with its authority, nor to suffer any instruments with which it can dispense, to come between it and the things it rules: and he would form the creations of his own mind by any other instrument than his own hand, would also, if he might, give grinding organs to Heaven's angels, to make their music easier. There is dreaming enough, and earthiness enough, and sensuality enough in human existence, without our turning the few glowing moments of it into mechanism; and since our life must at the best be but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away, let it at least appear as a cloud in the height of Heaven, not as the thick darkness that broods over the blast of the Furnace, and rolling of the Wheel. . . .

"I would have our ordinary dwelling houses built to last, and built to be lovely; as rich and full of pleasantness as may be, within and without; with what degree of likeness to each other in style and manner, I will say presently, under another head; but, at all events, with such differences as might suit and express each man's character and occupation, and partly his history."