

Let Bad Enough Alone

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esthetic distinction, is insufficiently protected if it can be harmed so much, and so arbitrarily. Mr. Stewart is reputed to be fond of the Capitol. Must each man kill the thing he loves?

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Now that the "architect" of the United States Capitol, J. George Stewart, has replaced the building's historic east front with a vast new expanse of gleaming marble, he has his sights trained on the west front for similar dubious therapy. Since the first operation, performed against the advice and pleas of the country's most responsible architectural and historical organizations was less than a smashing success, perhaps the patient should now be left alone.

The destruction of the old sandstone front—which we strongly protested at the time—and its reproduction in marble has wrought a peculiar change in the country's Number One landmark. The typical nineteenth-century character of many aspects of its monumental design—the fine, foolish mixture of mythology and great men in its sculptured details, its confident, unorthodox use of classical motifs—has lost its simple, period naïveté for a kind of hard, grotesque vulgarity. What was charming in the original became pretentious in the copy. Time and grime will soften it, but never restore its authenticity. The changes inside are even more deplorable. The highly prized office space created by moving the east front forward has been designed with depressing banality.

Obviously, this singular American landmark, which possesses a great deal of irreplaceable

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