I PURPOSE this month to extend somewhat farther the series of considerations with which, in the October number of this magazine, I opened my plea for a rehearing of the imminent and now all important question of securing appropriate and simple decorative elements for the modern house.

In the former article I dealt mainly with the making of furniture in the workshops of The United Crafts at Eastwood, giving a glimpse of the daily life among the workers, briefly outlining the frank handling of well-prepared material, and in a general way citing those conditions of industry which have given such flavor to one of the most vital subjects of the present day.

Now I write of the house itself, and I have selected the house of Mr. Stickley as an illustration, because it is so singularly free from pretension. It contains evidence of serious thought and honest intent, with abundant freshness and wholesomeness, which are innovations in these days of machine carving.
and jelly mold enrichments. Here is a house that has qualities generally lacking in architectural schemes, where their details too often smack of the dust of the drawing-office. Quiet harmony is the prevailing note of the composition, characterized by singular uprightness and sturdy independence. The work of a leader who, striking out a path for himself, following neither school nor man, it is yet devoid of restless, picturesque or wilful irregularities. No one would accuse Mr. Stickley of being blind to the strength of ancient traditions, though he scornfully rejects their coercion. In olden times a man in building unmistakably revealed his character and nationality, but now, thanks to Europeanized architects, whose smooth, intuitive touches exhale but little flavor of the soil, we have a cosmopolitan house, as international as the people who
design them or who live in them. We have taken plans, eleva-
tions, sections, from every country, adapting and readapting them
to our needs and to the demands of our climate. Big halls and
firesides from dear, moist
old England, verandas from sunny Italy, general sense
of proportion from France,
robust, simple, vigorous pan-
eling from Spain; while
many of the huge beams
which now support our ceil-
ings remind us of Russia,
Norway and Sweden. Yes,
from the Norse we too often
borrow without acknowledg-
ment. The internationaliza-
tion of the house is an entirely
new feature of modern civil-
zation. There have always
been, it is true, architects who
possessed a universal appeal,
due in some cases to a fine,
academic reflectiveness and in
others, of a broader type, to a
disregard of mere social dis-
tinctions.
In France, the most conserva-
tive of all countries in art,
many workers have freed
themselves from the cosmo-
opolitan influence, and given
us the style they call new, or

L'Art Nouveau, which, however, somewhat embarrasses the archi-
tectural world and adds rather to its difficulties by a sensational
imposing of amazing contradictions presented in a fascinating
manner.
A Visit to Mr. Stickley’s House

The struggle for simplicity can never be regarded as a detached episode in house-building, or even as an unavoidable crisis in the long work of bringing together the various needs of the details and of securing a final adjustment of their proportion. It must permeate the very conception of the original design; only so can it be vitalized in the complete dwelling.

Much of our modern house building is characterized by a lack of finality. Ours is eminently a nervous epoch, too often approaching the hysterical. This latter phase is to a very great extent due to the recent, extraordinary progress of womankind. Years ago woman ceased to be submissive; to-day she is aspiring, with a high sense of responsibility and with serious thought for education. She designs, as well as dominates, the house, and so the majority
A Visit to Mr. Stickley's House

of modern houses are built to meet the ideas of women, whose tendency is still to emphasize emotion—to minimize reason. Their houses overflow with generosity, they are blind to justice. They exhibit a dearth of proportion and of discipline. They run riot. Unlike modern literature, in which, if we are wise, we say all we can, the matter of house building needs some of the outward bar-

riers of repression against the false enthusiasm that promotes tinsel at the cost of sterling gold, and modern shams in place of sound principles. And a curious fact remains, that in spite of all our modern ease of communication, men still remain individual. Interchange is powerless to subdue it and man can still, by giving thought, stamp his individuality on his house, so that when you look at the house, you view the man. Ideals are as portable as
A Visit to Mr. Stickley's House

bonds, and individuality alone, despite the value of coöperation, frequently shapes the destiny of man and house. This is brought home to us in viewing the house of Mr. Stickley. I purpose to confine my remarks to the interior of the house, remembering certain limitations which had to be accepted because they were imposed by the general plan.

When I enter I note a rich grandeur in the passion for size, scale and sense of bigness. How soothing—wistful—simple, is this house. The quiet sense of humanity pervades it. The soul of the workman is manifest in his work. We hear his rugged laugh, half defiant of criticism. There is daring, and I might say almost arrogance, in some of the detail. It has been said that the reign of the fireside is over and that with it, the sense of home has perished from among us. Surely a glance at these liberal hearths shows that this statement is not yet true. The square impost which marks the entrance to dining room and library, denotes a very much plainer, franker use of structural features than is usual. It looks really able to support the house. The scale is big—it thrills. It has neither base nor cap, even that would be a mistake. The composition is stronger as it is.

Let us look at the casement windows for a moment. They are well proportioned, long and low, with millions of severely simple outline, cutting the window into four equal openings. As we pass from one window to another, we note how well adapted they are for plants; how happy they would look then, with the sun streaming in, and what great secrets can the children
tell as they hide behind the cushions in the long deep seat beside them. This hall is large for a comparatively small house and impresses one with a sense of grandness by its well-considered contrast. When it is said that the most clearly and typically expressive of modern homes do not hold us in awe with their linear dimensions, but rather cheer by the welcome they extend to us, surely, this house should be included in the category. We do not often get vaulted interiors in these days. The Anglo-Saxon has always been a lover of beamed ceilings. Here beams, row after row, mark and intensify the perspective, leaving long panels of plaster between them. Tastes differ as to the color the surfaces should show. White or shades of ivory is the tone generally in favor with the professional mind. In this instance the surfaces are white. This gives a variation of texture, a play of light and shade, which reminds us of the monastic buildings and cloistered courts of Spain and Italy. One point of unlikeness to the conventional house is in the floors, which instead of being laid with narrow boards, have broad chestnut of varying widths and lengths, frankly showing nails; the wood being darkened by aqua-ammonia and rubbed and polished with a mixture of beeswax and turpentine. The fireplaces are of common red brick, built solidly into the house, not added on as a mere lining to conceal a poorly constructed frame. When we look at the drawings of interiors here presented, we must remember how difficult it is for sketches to retain their freshness when added to the frigid zone of a page of type. They are intended to be “strong,” not “pretty,” and to illustrate facts rather than enthusiasm.

It is like hoisting a danger signal to speak out loud to Mr. Stickley of ornament, yet all people do not know this. “It is very grand,” said one visitor, “but have you no ornament, carving or draperies in your house, Mr. Stickley?” “No draperies, thank you, and as for ornament,—have we not our friends?” “Ah! a courtier, I declare! In a measure you are right. The truest ornament to a house is the family—the wife and children, then, as you say, the friends.”
A Visit to Mr. Stickley's House

No fiercer architectural battle has been fought than that in which the question of ornament supplies the field. Some ornament represents leadership. It affects to govern and not with a small voice, but with a shout. Not content to be seen, it must be heard. It eschews moderation. Assuming that collective ignorance represents dominant wisdom, it justifies its intolerance by its popularity.

The lovers of accessive and aggressive beauty clamor for more ornament, which grows as it goes, a snowball on a muddy road. Not alone is this house remarkable because of its conspicuous absence of carving, molding, and inlay by way of ornament, but because of the singularly frank manner in which they have been omitted. No false construction is allowed to take the place of
these popular idols by presenting rudely wrought, primitive forms as an architectural expedient. So I salute the man who, refusing the many dangers which confront him in the search for an acceptable solution of the house-building problem, rescues from the dust of ages enough of the fundamental characteristics of the past to present so valuable an illustration of the true understanding of the problem. This severe treatment is truly a welcome understanding, disciplined, chastened, yet always wholesome, modest and noble. I like Mr. Stickley’s house because it is strong, robust, wholesome, free from affectation, vagaries; yet it might be, and I trust it will be, softened with the addition of furnishing details. Nature would help with her flowers, plants and potted shrubs, never more welcome than when they show against a background of polished oak.