MODERN COUNTRY HOMES IN ENGLAND: 
BY BARRY PARKER: NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

Among the many problems that confront both architects and home-makers is that of rebuilding and adapting old houses to new needs. Sometimes, when a worthless old house in an old and well-established garden has been acquired, the only practicable plan is to pull down the house and build an entirely new structure upon the old site. In this way the beauty of the old garden can be preserved, with perhaps only a few slight changes that may be necessary to link the new home with its environment. This method appeals to people who do not wish the responsibility of laying out a new garden and would rather be content with surroundings already established than wait for the slow maturing of a garden of their own creation. And as a matter of fact, charming results may be attained in this way, provided that the old garden had been planned in happy relation to the old house. The new house may then be contrived to fit into the scheme of the grounds and to look at
home among the trees, shrubbery, lawn and flower-beds of the original environment.

It happens more frequently, however, that the old house is too valuable to be pulled down, although it may be ugly or inconvenient, or both, the accommodation provided to meet past requirements being most inadequate for the needs of tenants of a later generation. Such a house provides opportunity for the exercise of whatever ingenuity the architect may possess, and may be a source of very fruitful experiment to whoever undertakes to alter and adapt the building, to give it a more beautiful form and render the interior more convenient for modern living.

Much of the charm and picturesqueness of old towns and villages which afford us such delight are the outcome of a gradual process of alteration, modification, adaptation and addition carried on from age to age like the growth of evolution. And it is interesting to observe that the result of this process is
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delightful wherever it has been carried on in the conviction that the new is better than the old. On the other hand, the effect is unsatisfactory only when it indicates scorn or contempt for earlier work, and when it shows evidences of an attempt to simulate rather than to emulate and advance the work of preceding generations.

For these reasons it will be readily appreciated that the adaptation of an old building to meet new requirements involves many-sided problems that demand most painstaking care and consideration from various points of view.

An arrangement must be contrived that will suit as admirably as circumstances permit the needs of the new inmates, and while the fatal mistake of creating “imitation old” must be avoided, no charm which the original building may possess should be lost. Perhaps, for instance, the structure to be worked upon has distinction of proportion and emphasis, simple dignity and breadth of effect. These qualities are so easily destroyed that it is only by the most watchful care that they may be preserved.

Some old cottages that presented most of the essentials of beautiful building were those at Norton which afterward became "The Manor Farm," and those at Shelford, near Cambridge. At Norton three cottages were restored and converted into one building, and at Shelford two cottages were made into one structure.

At Shelford some modern windows of poor proportion and design were removed. At Norton little work of this nature had to be done, but three modern cottage staircases had to be cleared away, as well as
COTTAGE AT SHELFORD, NEAR CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND, REMODELED FROM TWO OLD HOUSES.

LIVING ROOM IN THE SHELFORD COTTAGE, SHOWING FIREPLACE AND GLIMPSE OF STAIRWAY.
THE MANOR FARM, HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND, REMODELED FROM THREE OLD COTTAGES.

SLEEPING BALCONY ON THE MANOR FARM, LOOKING OUT INTO THE COURT.
THE COURTYARD AT MANOR FARM, SHOWING CONSTRUCTION AND ROOF LINES.
A CLOSER VIEW OF THE COURT.
THE OLD VICARAGE AT THORNTHWAITE, CUMBERLAND, ENGLAND: SHOWING COMPLETED BUILDING AFTER ALTERATIONS.

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all the brickwork and ranges with which the big Tudor fireplaces had been filled. Most of the walls of the cottages were built of roughly squared timbers, to some of which the bark still adhered. These timbers were framed together and the panels so formed were filled with basket lathing and clay—"wattle and daub." At Shelford a new wing had to be built out at the back to contain the new staircase, bathroom, garden room and an additional bedroom. To this wing we gave a form of roof specially characteristic of the locality. We did not build the walls of this addition, however, of timber framing and "wattle and daub" like the rest of the cottage. We revived instead an old building tradition of the neighborhood, and made "batts" of tempered clay mixed with straw and dried in the sun—similar, no doubt, to the brick which the Egyptians forced the Israelites to make "without straw." This construction produced a warm, dry wall at a lower cost than the ordinary brick wall. The new work, like the old, was plastered inside and out with clay, and then whitewashed, producing a texture and surface which cannot be obtained with lime or any other plaster.

In one of the large open Tudor fireplaces, behind the brickwork and rubbish with which it had been filled, we found the little niche with the molded brick head shown in one of the photographs reproduced here. The hood for this fireplace was made of lead, and we decorated it slightly by covering it with grease, scratching the ornament on the grease and then tinning it over. The tin, of course, adhered only where the grease had been scratched off, so that when the remaining grease was removed the ornament showed in the slight difference in color and texture between tin and lead.

In speaking about "The Manor Farm" and the cottage at Shelford I must acknowledge my great indebtedness to Mr. Satchell of Letchworth and Mr. Clement J. Jude of Harston, who carried out the plans for these houses, respectively, entering wholeheartedly into the spirit of the undertaking and sparing themselves no trouble in order to achieve the results desired.

In the remodeling of these two places all our efforts were directed toward regaining the charm which the old buildings had possessed,
and at the same time strengthening them and rendering them sanitary and suitable for the requirements of a newer age. In the reconstruction of the old vicarage, Thornthwaite, Cumberland, and Carrigbyrne, County Wexford, Ireland, we were confronted with a different and more difficult problem, for in these instances the buildings had been erected without the slightest feeling for beauty, and our task was to invest them with both character and comeliness. In remodeling Ralph’s Mill, in Suffolk, similar efforts were necessary, chiefly in the interior of the building. It is such work as this which puts the architect’s skill and ingenuity to a sharp test. For he must manipulate other people’s work, subordinate his own ideas to a great extent to existing requirements, and use every means to achieve out of an uncomfortable and sometimes ugly building a practical and beautiful home. The foregoing is the last chapter of “Modern Country Homes in England.” Readers of The Craftsman who have followed this series with interest and enjoyment will be glad to hear that this work of Mr. Parker’s will be published shortly by us in book form. A more detailed notice of the volume will be found on page one hundred and twenty-five of this issue.