A LITTLE HOUSE ON A HILL
BUILT IN FRIENDLY INTIMACY WITH THE TREES: BY CLARA GRABAU WARNS

In the early days of this country's history it was not unusual to see here and there, on hillsides, among trees or out on the plains, distinctive little houses that seemed essentially to belong to the landscape. The pioneers were forced to provide their own shelter and had to make use of whatever material lay at hand—the logs of the forests, field stone, if it were plentiful, or failing these, even the clay of the site was utilized.

The pioneer had little time for dreaming, yet often his home was an expression of a, perhaps unconscious, dream of shelter, a haven in a troubled existence. In those days a home was a vital thing, and had to be of staunch sturdy construction, affording the utmost resistance to attacks of the elements, and human and animal foes. Later, when the population became greater, and the need of protection was not so urgent, the homes became more superficial in construction, and followed fashions rather than the needs of the people who were to occupy them. Nowadays, however, some of us are beginning to turn back to first principles, to feel the urge of the pioneer spirit in homebuilding, and here and there, as in former years, are seen homes of individuality, structures that express their owners' needs and conform to the landscape of which they are a part.

In the West the pioneer spirit in homebuilding has long been manifest; in the East it is also beginning to show itself, and the people are awakening to a realization of the interest and comfort of living in homes absolutely suited to their needs and tastes.

The little house shown here was built by Mr. Harry L. Smith, a New York artist, who turned to first principles in the construction of his home. The idea was one of slow growth, as it should be, and many changes and eliminations were made before the exact expression was found for the little home that Mr. Smith had dreamed of building for his mother and himself. Mr. Smith had had the advantage of architectural training, and so was enabled to draw his own plans and thus be sure that his conception of the house would find the exact form that he wished for it.

The site selected was on a rolling hillside in New Jersey, about a mile south of the village of Stirling, Somerset County, and perhaps fifteen miles from Craftsman Farms. All the work was done by Mr. Smith, or under his supervision, and the only labor employed was that of some Italian workmen who lived not very far away.

These men had been accustomed in their native country to build houses without plans, and they received all their instructions verbally.

The stones for the foundation and lower story were gathered from the nearby fields, and were laid up in light-colored cement, with here and there a stone projecting, in order to give variation to the treatment of the exterior walls. The upper half-story is of clapboards, painted yellow; the roof is shingled and all the window frames are painted white. Owing to the kind of labor employed the house has been long in building, and although it has afforded adequate
shelter for many happy vacation days during three summers, there are still a number of essential details to be added.

A deeply recessed porch, with a cement floor, extends all the way across the front of the house and is sheltered by the roof of the upper half-story. Heavy columns of field stone laid up in cement support the roof at either end. At one side a flight of stone and cement steps will afford access to the porch. The foundation has been built high for a country cottage, but this was done in order to afford space for windows large enough to admit plenty of light to the big cellar, which is intended eventually to be used as a workroom. Around the porch will be built a wide field-stone parapet, and the porch floor is to be finished by a layer of red tile.

The floor plans are extremely simple, containing only three rooms and den on the first floor and a large attic on the half-story above. Two long French windows open directly from the porch into the large living room, which is the most important and also the most interesting room in the house. At the right, as one enters from the porch, has been built a massive field-stone fireplace, large enough to hold huge logs. The hearth is made of cement in the natural color laid out in squares. At either side of the fireplace are tiny small-paned windows set high in the wall, under one of which a built-in seat is to be constructed. A heavy wood mantelshelf supplies a setting for some old china heirlooms. The walls are plastered, rough finished and untinted, and the many pictures hang obviate any look of bareness. The wood used for the interior is pine, stained brown, except for the doors and baseboard, which are of chestnut and cypress.

At one end of the fireplace a stairway leading to the upper story is to be built. This will have a square landing a few steps up, where the stairs will turn, and in the angle thus formed a built-in seat will be placed to face the fire.

A little later Mr. Smith hopes to be able to make the living room still more interesting in treatment. He is planning to put a high wainscoting of oak around the walls, and to add a frieze that will depict various scenes of the neighborhood. He does not want these pictures idealized and has a plan for carrying them out that does not entail any especial artistic ability. He will take photographs characteristic of the nearby landscape; for instance, scenes in a neighbor's farmyard, probably the old church at Basking Ridge, in whose yard Betsy Ross is supposed to be buried, or any other picturesque place that is significant to the neighborhood. These photographs will be enlarged to the width of the frieze, and painted in colors to add a bit of decorative quality and also to render the photographs more lasting.

Thus the decoration of the walls will be definitely related to the house. It is an idea that can be carried out almost anywhere, and there should never be any temptation to repeat it exactly for any other house, for every setting can hold its own suggestion for wall decoration. The panels are to be framed with strips of dark wood, leaving each a separate picture.

Directly back of the living room a projection in the floor plan shelters a den, fitted with a built-in couch possible to use as a bed. At the left of the living room is a cozy bedroom with two casement windows, one overlooking the porch and one on the side of the house. Back of the bedroom is the kitchen, which may also be reached from the outside by a flight of steps leading up from the side of the house. This room is most compact in arrangement and is rendered cheerful by two long windows that extend to the floor. A built-in kitchen cabinet occupies the space between the bedroom door and the flight of rustic steps that lead to the upper story. The kitchen is small, but is therefore an easy place in which to work, as there are no long stretches of floor space for weary feet to tread.

The upper story has as yet not been partitioned off into rooms, but arrangement
has been made for curtaining spaces that may be used for bedrooms. This part of the house is lighted by a cluster of three small windows set in a dormer and a larger window at each side of the house. All the windows are casement, opening out, set with small panes.

It is not possible to reproduce the floor plans of the house, as Mr. Smith drew up only rough sketches which were often changed and destroyed immediately upon being used. For this reason he feels that the house grew rather than was built.

When the plastering was to be done it was impossible to find an experienced plasterer to do the work, so Mr. Smith had to instruct the workman hired in the use of his tools. Later on when even this help failed him both he and his mother plastered part of the walls themselves. So much of the work was done at odd times and by varying kinds of labor that the exact cost of the construction was not obtainable, but it was most moderate for the charm and comfort that have been captured for this summertime home among the hills.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH: BY FRANCES BOWMAN

THE average country church is producing little that is likely to appeal to people who have not already formed the church-going habit. New members are not coming; young people are not held; attendance is falling off, and the church is not meeting the needs of the community.

The church has failed to do what its members have done in other departments of life. The farmer has discarded his old-fashioned tools for modern labor-saving implements; the housekeeper has her vacuum-cleaner, bread-mixer and modern ways of doing work; the country merchant depends largely on his advertising to help his sales, and is fast imitating the city merchant in disposing of his stock in trade. Yet the country church which was formed eighty or a hundred years ago is doing business on the same old plan. The church program is identical with that of past years with a possible young people's society, which is usually an exact copy of the old folks' prayer-meeting.

A young theological student, a man of vision, came as a candidate into our little country church one summer Sunday. As he looked over the order of service he decided to change the anthem. Consequently he requested the choir to sing it for the second number and to sing a familiar hymn just before the sermon. Of course he didn't realize that it was an unwritten law handed down from past choir generations in our church that the anthem should be sung directly after the collection had been taken and just before the sermon. Neither did he realize the fearful consequences which were sure to come to one who tried to dictate to the choir. He preached a splendid sermon. It was free from dogma and creed, and emphasized right living and the power of the love of Christ to transform the life. The keynote of his message was love and service.

At the conclusion of a business meeting held after the evening service, a deacon, a man of stern Calvinistic views, domineering and narrow, informed the minister that the church had voted against him. He said: "The choir won't stand for any change in their program, and we don't want to hear so much about love. We want the terrors of the law."

It's the "terrors of the law" that is closing many a small church's door. It is driving people into lodges and social organizations in the smaller places. It is compelling the thinking people to stay away from church service. For the country church congregation is made up largely of two extremes: A few refined, thoughtful, progressive people, and that larger class who are ignorant, dogmatic, intolerant, and who are fearful that every new idea and method is a direct blow to destroy the church.

Now it is a serious thing in a small community to offend the church. Consequently when a man in his own mind comes to think that he is not sure endless punishment awaits the sinner, that he is not sure that Christ Jesus and God the Father Almighty are one, and that he does not believe in total depravity or the fall of man, he would better keep his thoughts to himself. There is a choice of two ways before him: He can keep on attending church service where he will be urged to believe many things which he does not consider necessary to the Christian life; or, he can leave the church and become forever branded as an unbeliever, an atheist, and an infidel.

That is one of the problems, perhaps the most serious in the country church. How