ARCHITECTURE AS AN EXPRESSION OF PERSONALITY: RELATION OF OWNER TO ARCHITECT: BY FRANK CHOUTEBAU BROWN

SINCE it was first evolved to shelter the childhood of the race, architecture has passed through many changes; but despite the varied guises it has assumed, from the lowliest peasant’s home to the stateliest palace, it has always retained a more or less definite relation to the life of the people. It has reflected not only the manners and customs of each period and land, but also the personality of both its creators and those for whom it was designed.

The simpler the building, the more intimate this relation has been—especially in the case of a primitive hut or an old-time villager’s cottage, where the owner himself was architect and builder combined. But in the larger and more pretentious structures—fortresses and castles, manor houses, cathedrals and public buildings—the individuality of the architect rather than that of the people was uppermost. And this was natural, for while such buildings were of recognized importance, and while their dignity or magnificence was a source of interest and pride, their planning, building and decoration were left mainly in professional hands. And this accounts for a certain remoteness or aloofness from daily home life which so many European residences possess. They are interesting examples of domestic period architecture, rather than intimate expressions of personal home ideals.

Today, however, this condition no longer holds—at least in America. People are outgrowing the stage of ready-made homes, among both the moderately well-to-do and the more prosperous classes. They are no longer satisfied to leave such an important matter entirely in the hands of another, no matter how great his technical knowledge may be. Those who have given

DETAIL OF ENTRANCE TO HOUSE ShOWN ON PAGE 614: A SIMPLE BUT INTERESTING TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION.
THIS ATTRACTION BUNGALOW, WHILE BASED ON A SUGGESTION FROM A SWISS CHÂLET, SHOWS AN EXCELLENT ADAPTATION TO AMERICAN LIFE; THE COTTAGE-LIKE EXTERIOR IS ESPECIALLY IN KEEPING WITH THE WOODED SITE.
the matter serious reflection wish to coöperate with the architect, to take an active part in the planning and supervising of the various details as well as the general scheme, so that the final result will be as close as possible to their own conception of what the “ideal home” should be.

Personal interest in the subject and close coöperation with one’s architect are not enough, however. In fact, they are likely to prove rather disastrous unless backed by a certain amount of technical information and an understanding of the various problems of layout, construction and design which confront one at every turn. In order to achieve any degree of success, the home-builder must fortify himself with as much practical knowledge as he can acquire, must grasp clearly the most essential architectural principles, and familiarize himself with the best forms of modern construction and the most satisfactory and appropriate materials. Armed with these facts, he will be in a position to help instead of hinder his architect, and the two together, working with mutual interest and with an understanding of the limitations and opportunities of the case, will stand a fair chance of achieving a thoroughly comfortable, beautiful home.

Indeed, it is only through such collaboration and through the judicious criticism and appreciation of the general public that American architects can be expected to put forth their best efforts. And no widespread national architecture can be built up until the in-
intelligent interest of the people as a whole is aroused, until their eyes and minds are trained to recognize good work and to refuse what is imitative and inferior.

One of the most serious defects against which architect and layman alike must guard, is that of pretension. The desire to create a home of distinction and charm is legitimate enough, for every one has a right to attempt the finest of which he is capable. But unfortunately this desire to excel—whether in size, originality or decoration—often leads to insincerity in design, or an artificial, forced arrangement of the interior for the sake of exterior attractiveness.

Now beauty and utility are not necessarily things apart, and neither need be obtained at the expense of the other. The architect who understands his business, who knows his materials and appreciates the possibilities of site and plan, can usually find some way of adjusting the practical elements so that the result will please the eye as well as satisfy all utilitarian requirements. And he will find, as a rule—especially in small homes—that simplicity is the factor most likely to guide him toward the attainment of homelike and appealing charm.

This point is illustrated by the houses and cottages presented here, for all of them are simple in design. They show almost no attempt at historical treatment. The exteriors
are simply the natural development of the plans, which in turn have been fixed by local factors—such as the necessary points of entrance, relation to the street, points of the compass and also grade contours of the site. The first house, page six hundred and seven, is a brick cottage or bungalow, somewhat unusual in its treatment. Although based originally on a suggestion from a Swiss chalet, it was adapted in both arrangement and materials to American conditions, and was planned especially as a week-end country sleeping capacity. The large two-and porches provide for comfortable life: the latter a matter of wise.

Another interest is the one on the edge Newtonville. As the north frontage, home, with ample storied living room indoor and outdoor and especial consideration. The type of house of the woods at lot had not expanded as the owners desired to have an exact south exposure in two bedrooms, and to provide one with a sleeping porch and the other with a fireplace, a rather unique plan was devised as the floor plans reveal. The design was also restricted by cer-
The two views on this page show an unusually attractive though simple home which was built in Chestnut Hill, Brookline, a suburb of Boston: The house is set among trees on a level lower than the street, its exact location having been determined by two large trees on each side of the front path—a delightful concession to nature on the part of the architect, and one which is amply justified by the result: The copper hood above the porch, the brown and reddish tones of the roof and the brighter reddish brown of the shutters look particularly well against the plaster walls, while additional variety is added by the flower-boxes at the front windows: The quiet dignity of this simple home seems to fit it especially for its New England surroundings.

The houses shown in the photographs, plans and sketches which illustrate this article were all designed by Frank Chouteau Brown, Architect.
BRICK HOUSE AND DETAIL OF ITS HOODED ENTRANCE, BUILT ON AN ESTATE AT LINCOLN, MASSACHUSETTS: THE HIGH-BACKED SETTLES HAVE AN OLD-FASHIONED AIR THAT IS QUITE IN KEEPING WITH THIS COLONIAL TYPE: FOR PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR SEE PAGE 615.
TWO VIEWS OF A FARM COTTAGE NEAR SALEM: THE ROUNDED SHINGLES ABOVE THE TILE WALLS ARE REMiniscent IN THEIR CONTOURS OF AN ENGLISH THATCHED COTTAGE: ON PAGE 615 THE FIRST FLOOR PLAN OF THIS BUILDING WILL BE FOUND.
This tree-encircled home in Chestnut Hill, Boston, is an interesting example of adaptation to an irregular woodland site; the terraced effect of the approach is in harmony with the lines of the building, and the simple roof seems to complete the contour of the knoll; white-painted boards and shingles of yellowish green and gray with green shutters form a color scheme appropriate for such woodland surroundings; the plans will be found on page 616.
tain trees which it was desired to save.

The house overlooks the street from a knoll and the lines of the steep roof and tall chimneys are in harmony with the natural undulations of the site. In irregular plans of this character a saving in hall space is usually effected, particularly on the first floor—an economy that generally suffices to counteract the additional expense incurred by the irregularity of outline. While involving more effort and ingenuity than the ordinary cut-and-dried arrangement, a house of this sort is nevertheless well worth the extra trouble, for it gains in distinction and charm as well as in comfort by its unusual features.

The first page of photographic illustrations shows a plaster house in Chestnut Hill, Brookline, a suburb of Boston. This home is set among trees on a level lower than the street, its exact location having been determined by two large trees on each side of the front path. The copper-hooded porch, the simplicity of the exterior molding, the plain columns and caps, the lattice rails are all suggestive of German influence, although not exactly imitative. The color scheme is equally distinctive, the roof being in browns and copper reds, and the shutters a rather brilliant reddish brown. Additional touches of interest are provided by the flower-boxes at the front windows, as well as by the dormers and the clipped-off corners of the gables which prevent the house from seeming too high and narrow for the lot.
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The brick house shown next was planned for a large estate at Lincoln, Massachusetts. And as the main residence, to be built later, was to be of brick, Colonial in type, the same style was adhered to here. The cornice is composed of a simple coved section, broken out as a cap around the square conductors. At the entrance a simple hood provides the needed protection from the weather, and two highbacked settles furnish comfort in a semi-secluded way. At a side door is another porch with a balustrade of brick and a brick seat backing against the chimney.

The site suggested other attractive details. The lot faced a country road where a natural growth of shrubbery partly screened the high bank upon which the dwelling stood above an old field-stone wall. A few large flat stones were selected to give a seemingly natural and informal passage across the gutter, an old piece of ledge that slightly projected into the road at this point was made useful by cutting a few steps across its face, and the old wall was readjusted a little to provide a pleasant approach to the house without disturbing the rustic naturalness of the country road. The possibility of such an entrance had indeed been the determining factor in the final location of the house. The inside an arched trellis that gives to the passerby the first little picket gate caps these steps hint of habitation.

The interior comprises a simple entrance and stair hall with a room on either side, a small kitchen "L" and four sleeping rooms on the second floor. The house is roofed as simply as possible, with an intersecting ridge ending in a gable at
each end, and the attic storage space is lighted by semi-circular gable windows.

Durability and simplicity were the essentials kept in mind throughout the arrangement, design and construction of this house. As a result, its eight-inch brick wall requires no treatment year after year, except the occasional painting of the window finish and cornice; the stained shingles of the roof will last the longest possible time, and the porch floors of brick, concrete and tile require no renewal.

Almost as simple in construction is the little farm cottage near Salem, seen in the next two illustrations. The building faces north and is about two hundred feet back from the road, the space between being occupied by an old apple orchard along one side of which the driveway to the cottage was made. An inexpensive and durable structure being desired, a hollow terra-cotta tile was used, plastered inside but not on the exterior. The ceilings and exterior walls were kept as low as possible, to save labor, materials and expense—hence the low lines and rounded roof angles shown, which suggest somewhat the contours of an English thatched cottage. The edges of the eaves and hips were rounded, and shingle courses were even used to smooth over the ridge, thus eliminating the awkward “saddle” or ridge board and giving the roof a uniform tone of stained shingles from eave to eave.
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The colors used for this cottage added to its interest. The tile of the walls varied from buff yellow and terra-cotta pink to a bluish brown, the whole effect being a sort of bisque. This color scheme was utilized for the entire building. The wood under-eaves were stained a reddish brown; the sash, lattice and other painted finish were given a brownish pink tone, and the shingles were separated into three lots and stained three separate colors, a reddish brown, a tannish yellow and a soft green, care being taken to mix them thoroughly before they were laid. A year’s weathering mellowed this rather brilliant roof into harmonious relation to the walls.

The next photograph is that of a house in Chestnut Hill, the exterior and plans of which embody a number of attractive features. The site was rough and wooded, and the house required a rather steeply graded approach. While this necessitated a somewhat unusual design, nevertheless great simplicity was adhered to. The walls were covered with heavy “box boards” painted white; the shingles were stained yellowish green and gray, and the wide-panelled shutters were painted a similar green. A semi-detached house which I designed, but which there is not space to show here, presents an important type. It is quite unlike the average two-family dwelling which we see in so many American suburbs, and which is generally rushed together in the least expensive fashion for tenants who can pay only a low rental. In most houses of this type, half the building is designed and the other half
repeated as an exact duplicate of the first, reversed. But in the present case both sides are different, adapted to practical conditions, based upon the points of the compass. The result is that each home presents a different interior arrangement which not only provides a maximum of convenience but has the further value of appealing differently to various tenants.

The summer dwelling called Hotel Lake Pearl was built on a rather difficult site. It stands on a steep bank back to the lake, and as it is far below the main cross street, the front (not shown) is handled so as to obtain an effect of height, while along the lake the horizontal lines are emphasized to obtain just the opposite impression. The plans provide a reception room or office, a living room and large dining room with serving room and kitchen beyond; the upper stories contain about twenty bedrooms, and most of the service work can be carried on in the basement which is entirely above ground at the rear. The whole structure is shingled and stained, while rough plaster is used between the supporting framing timbers.

Near this hotel is a small narrow island which was purchased by a physician for a summer camp, and the plan and sketch presented here show the proposed house and its surroundings. In spite of the fact that this attractive plan has never been carried out, it is worth observing for it solves several interesting problems. Cement retaining walls were to hold the earth in place and stairways were to connect the different levels of the island. The balustrades, wall and steps seemed adaptable to Italian treatment, and this style is shown—for although we are accustomed to consider Italian landscape architecture as elaborate and expensive, it is capable of great simplicity and economy. The upper stories of this island home are shown with several sleeping porches and balconies.

The foregoing illustrations, while informal in technique, give a fair idea of the relation between these architectural schemes and their environment. In some cases the houses have been built, in others they have not yet been commenced. But in any case they indicate helpful solutions of several problems of design which confront our architects, and suggest a few ways in which homes may be evolved in harmony with American conditions and life.

As has already been said, discriminating and intelligent appreciation on the part of the public will go farther than anything else toward improving the aspect of our towns and suburbs, and developing an American style of architecture. Such a style cannot be forced by a few thousand practicing architects, however seriously they may regard their work. It can only be the outcome of united desire and effort of the people for comfortable, sincere and democratic homes.