BEAUTIFYING THE STORM DRAIN DITCH: BY ALBERT MARPLE

HOW often we see home places, which are otherwise well located and attractive, practically ruined by the presence of an ugly, unbeautiful storm drain ditch. Instances of this kind are anything but rare in localities where hilly ground abounds, and where towns and cities are built largely upon a hillside. It is natural that water falling in the form of rain upon the sides of the hill shall run down the hillside in an attempt to reach the lower level. As the water proceeds and the stream becomes enlarged a ditch or storm drain is naturally established. As a result of the constant wear of the water the drain is enlarged and deepened until after a while it has become quite a large ditch and if permitted to grow will probably carry away a large strip of the property. This feature, aside from the fact that a ditch of this sort tends to prove extremely unhealthful, is anything but desirable.

If caught in time the growth of this ditch may be checked. Instead of being permitted to carry away a great section of the property it may be confined to the small strip of land where, naturally, the storm water should run. That this is true has been demonstrated by a resident and property owner of Hollywood, California. The piece of property where this improved ditch, which now is an ornament rather than an eyesore to the home place, was for months unoccupied. Strenuous efforts were made to sell it, but upon seeing the ugly ditch running through the property prospective buyers would refuse to consider it. After a long while there came along a buyer who could see more than the property in its condition at that time—he could see its improved state, or rather, what it would be if intelligent improvements were installed—so he purchased the property. The first thing he did after securing possession of the property was to begin improving the ditch. The initial step was to construct the concrete work of the ditch—this virtually consisting of a large concrete flume, with sides and floor of this material. The ditch at the bottom is nine feet in width, the walls five feet in height, while both walls and floor are six inches in thickness.

The concrete work done, beautifying was started. The arbor was built to about five feet above the edge of the concrete flume. This framework was made of 2x4 uprights, 3/4x2 inch slats and 1x3 crosspieces. At about the center of this covered flume, which is about 200 feet in length, there is a footbridge, over which pretty trelliswork has been built. The bridge is five feet in width and the trelliswork is eight feet in height, and is supported by 2x6 timbers.

At the extreme rear end of the improved section of this ditch is the automobile bridge, which connects the driveway on the
lot with the road at the side of the home, the footbridge connecting the side entrance of the home with the street. The supports of this automobile bridge consist of a number of 2x12 inch planks.

The most attractive part about this improved ditch is that it is beautified by growing vines, which have almost covered the sides and partly cover the roof of the arbor. These vines consist of climbing roses of various sorts, climbing geraniums, etc., which were planted at the foot of the arbor uprights. The value of the property on which this beautified drain is located has been enhanced several hundred per cent.

more than the cost of this improvement. It is now on practically an equal footing with the surrounding real estate, and this as a result of a little imagination and enterprise.

The storm drain, instead of being a problem, should in reality be a welcome opportunity for creating beauty in the home grounds. Even a ditch suggests a brook and a brook calls up pictures of fern borders, stepping stones and bridges. If the drain be lined with flags or rough stones, ferns could be grown in the interstices of the walls, for even a severe overflow would
not dislodge their roots. Or vines could be planted upon the top that would trail down and cover as with a veil the scarred sides of the ditch. Mesembryanthemum would fill a Western drain with color in little or no time at all.

Then there is always the chance for an effective bridge of rustic timber or stone. If there is no particular excuse for a path to lead up to and across a bridge, then a bridge of grass would be most charming. Such a bridge taken from those in common use in Japan is made by swinging an arch of wood over the drain, filling it with soil to a depth of eighteen inches or two feet and planting it to grass, as if it were a continuance of the lawn. At the edge of the bridge could be a box border or some flowers, such as nasturtiums, that would drip from the edge of the bridge, reaching down to the water, connecting it in very truth with the garden. Such a bridge could be an extension of a gravel path instead of a lawn, the gay plant border of the path continuing unbroken across the drained ditch.


A QUARTER of a century ago one man in New York City had a splendid vision of the possibilities of a university for the people. And he did more than dream about it. His vision would not let him rest. Fortunately for New York he possessed in rare degree executive ability—a genius for administration—as well as creative imagination. He saw not only the vital need of adult education, but also that the schoolhouses, hitherto used only for teaching children and used only six hours a day, could be utilized in providing it. He became the apostle of the open schoolhouse.

This man is Dr. Henry Marcus Leipziger, officially known as the Supervisor of Lectures of the Department of Education of the City of New York. For eight years he was an instructor in the public schools of the city and that experience imbued him with an intense love for democratic education. His experience showed him also the one-sidedness of the educational curriculum then followed, and after his resignation from the school system because of broken health, he found opportunity to study and reflect for a space on the problems of educating the people in a great city like New York. He became a pioneer in the cause of industrial education, advocating the training of hand and eye as an essential part of the school curriculum.

In 1889, following the suggestion of the New York World that lectures on historic and scientific subjects would be of great value to a large class of residents of the city, and having secured the necessary legislative sanction, the Board of Education started in a tentative way a system of free lectures “for the benefit of workingmen and workingwomen.”

This public lecture system is not a series of miscellaneous lectures. It is systematically organized. Hundreds of courses are given and several centers have been devoted for years to lectures on specific subjects. Nothing is done by chance. Every detail is worked out as a coherent part of a great and complex plan. Dr. Leipziger’s constant aim is to make the courses of studies se-