THEIR STUDIO HOME: BY PERSIS BINGHAM

IT must have three bedrooms and a kitchen—” began the practical lady of the house; “and a great big studio with a fireplace, a balcony and a platform for recitals—”, eagerly added the son, “and a quiet, quiet place for a desk where I need not be disturbed,” finished the head of this musical family, Mr. Henry Schoenefeld, the composer, for whom the studio-home was to be designed.

The location was Los Angeles’ most charming residence section, the Wilshire district, the exposure western, the construction to be frame. The lot sloped slightly toward the front and was fifty by one hundred fifty feet, with an alley entrance. After numerous more or less unsuccessful attempts at an up-and-down board studio, finished in rustic redwood and built on to the rear of the living part of the house, that plan was abandoned and a new one started. “The House built ’round a Studio” might well have been the title of this new plan. The studio dimensions were twenty by thirty feet, an inglenook with balcony above was placed at one end, and a bedroom, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, screen porch and small washroom were placed down stairs, with two bedrooms, bath and sleeping balcony upstairs.

In order to gain head room over the inglenook it was necessary to have the studio ceiling fourteen feet high at the wall line. This ceiling height was lower than the second story ceiling and higher than the first, which left the second story roof ending in midair, several feet above the studio ridge. It was not until the second story had been roofed at right angles to the studio and the second story roof extended over the latter’s ridge that the two unequal ceiling heights became reconciled.

The studio was possessed of an independent personality from the start. Rather saucily it seemed to stand, complete in itself, with a self-satisfied air of its own as much as to say, “Oh yes, Mr. Rest-of-the- House, you may grow right up there beside me, but you know, I’m the really important part which their souls require and you just come along to fulfill their bodily needs.”

But, as evil is ever the result of misdirected energy which rightly used would produce good, this fault, rightly treated by the resourcefulness, tact and judgment of Mrs. Schoenefeld, has been the cause of the studio’s great success. We cannot help but feel that the charm which this house radi-
ates is the result of that love which Charles E. Jefferson commends, when he says, "A house is a product of human handicraft, a home is a creation of the heart. A house is built by gold, a home is built by love." He laments that in this day and age, too often we place the house before the home. We spend too much time with the material things of our house, our old masters, our new silverware, our rare china, neglecting for them the development of the home spirit, the essentially vital need.

The studio-home of an artist or musician designed to suit his own particular needs is invariably more interesting and more successful than the home of the follower of any other profession. This is because the artist studies the environment in which he finds it most congenial for him to work and creates it, loving it as he does so because he knows that environment aids him in his work. His workroom therefore exists for a definite purpose. It is built and furnished to aid him in the attainment of his ideal and utility is the secret of its success.

So the studio-home built to aid the musician in his work must fulfill the first law of existence: utility. In the Schoenefeld studio every feature
has been planned with a view to its ultimate use. The high wooden ceiling and heavy exposed rafters act as a sounding board; the landing over the inglenook serves as a balcony for guests at recitals; the wide French doors hinged to fold back in pairs unite the dining room and studio; the torchere aids both physically and aesthetically the interpretation of music and the inglenook harks back to the innate craving of all mankind for the cheering glow and warmth of fire.

The general color scheme is green gray. The wall tone is a dull gold paper which is carried to nine feet above the floor, and forms the best possible background for pictures and furniture. Above the paper the wall is paneled in wood finished in the same manner as the ceiling. The roof is an asbestos composition laid on Oregon pine sheathing surfaced on the under side, with battens placed over the joints. This sheathing is stained, as are the exposed rafters. The non-heat-conducting qualities of the asbestos together with the extra high ceiling prevent any excessive warmth in the room during summer.

As the piano, harpsichord and much of the furniture are of different periods of design, the woodwork of posts, railings and balcony has been kept simple and plain, no caps or molds being used and as little paneling as possible. In this way all ornament is concentrated in the furnishings of the house. The rare gift of so gracefully combining the old and the new as to prevent one from encroaching upon the other is possessed by few, and Mr. George Schoenefeld has cultivated this gift during his long searches through the old book shops of Paris for harpsichord compositions of the French, English, German and Italian schools.

The lighting of the studio is with interesting little oak candle holders finished in verde antique, placed at intervals around the room and up on the balcony, while for special purposes there is a hand-wrought copper torchere brought over from Paris. It is designed with peacock feathers as the motif, and in its metal shade are set colored glasses and stones of red, blue and yellow, through which the lights shine, forming all the primary and secondary tints of the spectrum in rotation as hidden clockwork changes the lights from red to blue and from blue to yellow. The delightful effect of this interesting lighting fixture can only be fully appreciated when Mr. Henry Schoenefeld sits at the piano and plays in the evening.

At the far end of the studio is the fireplace! What an invitation it extends! Wide, low seats on either side, heaped high with downy cushions invite the weary one to rest.
It needs no inscription to proclaim “East, west, hame’s best.” An opalescent, hammered, copper hood reaches out to catch the smoke of a jolly little fireplace while slender candle holders lift lights aloft on either side. A hard wall plaster laid on common brick and colored in oil by hand has been used as a facing for the fireplace. Skillfully and unobtrusively the artist has blended the gray green of the woodwork with the burnished brown of the copper on this plaster wall until the two seem to unite on its surface.

The dining room faces south and west, and across its thirteen foot width a sideboard answers for serving table and china closet. Above the sideboard two artglass windows soften the light of the southern sun, and, hanging from the picture-mold to plate-rail, a rare old French tapestry blends with the brown stained paneling of the wood below.

The kitchen proves the old adage which begins, “Too many cooks,” for there is room for only one. Compact, complete, in every detail, it has never made its owner slave to work. The sink before the windows, the cupboards up above, the cooler to the left and range to the right assist in the speedy despatch of the work.

Adjoining the kitchen and opening to the studio by double French doors, a tiny breakfast room does service as a refreshment room when occasion demands. Two long squat benches serve as seats, a little cupboard with glass doors holds the breakfast china, and two casement windows open to admit the morning light. The room is finished in white enameled paneling with a soft blue mural scene above the plate rail.

The glass doors at the end of the studio lead to pergola and rose garden. On the left is the downstairs bedroom and on the right an entrance to a small washroom for the convenience of students.

The spacious balcony above the inglenook is both lounging room and workroom. One corner is occupied by a built-in writing desk while a couch is pushed up against the railing, with a grotesque Chinese lantern hanging from a sturdy rafter overhead.

From the balcony three steps lead to the second floor, where are bathroom, two bedrooms and a sleeping balcony. Both bedrooms are corner rooms, one having south and east exposure and the other south and west. The sleeping balcony faces the east, and is entered from either upstairs hall or bedroom through French doors.

It is not a cool, reserved, unresponsive creation, this studio-home of the Schoenefelds. It reaches out to greet the visitor to make him feel at home. It is not enough to say the Schoenefelds knew the design they wanted, they also knew how to furnish it to its best advantage so that it would express their idea of their home and studio.

If people would, without regard to the building convention of the day, make their homes after their own need and sense of beauty, our cities and towns would be distinguished by a more interesting architecture. We have too many rows of houses all alike as things now are. They are monotonic to look at and deadening to live in. More individual houses such as this one would make a pleasant diversion.