

The Modern Dwelling.

Ellen Elizabeth Norton.
1896.

Contents.

Introduction	Page 1.
Modern Dwelling defined.	" 2.
Site, things to be considered.	" 2.
Healthfulness.	" 3.
Water supply.	" 4.
Beauty of surroundings.	" 5.
Character of neighborhood.	" 6.
Style of Building.	" 6.
Amount to be spent.	" 6.
Materials to be used.	" 6.
The claims of beauty	" 7.
Plan.	" 7.
Arrangement of rooms.	" 7.
Plan to save work.	" 8.
Only one story if possible	" 8.
The mistress of the house to have most to say in planning it.	" 8.
Principal rooms to open from hall.	" 9.
Kitchen first to be considered.	" 9.
A parlor a superfluity.	" 10.
Desirability of a library.	" 11.
The bedrooms.	" 12.
The bath-room.	" 13.
The dining room.	" 13.

Need for verandas.	Page. 13.
Turn of to the architect.	" 14.
Heating.	" 14
Furnace, and fire-place,	" 14.
Cheepness of it.	" 15.
Ventilation a necessity.	" 15.
Especially in bedrooms.	" 15.
Methods.	" 15.
Water system.	" 16.
Carry into principal rooms	" 16.
Expense consideration.	" 16.
Diferent systems.	" 16.
Drainage.	" 17.
Pure air and pure water.	" 17.
Avoid escape of gasses.	" 17.
Carry off far enough.	" 18.
The Grounds.	" 18
Home not complete till they are planned.	" 18.
Grounds must be large	" 19.
Natural arrangement.	" 20.
Corrispondence with surroundings.	" 20.
For use as well as Beauty	" 20.
Things to look out for.	" 21.
Conclusion,	" 21
The home life and its influence.	22.

The Modern Dwelling.

About forty years ago there appeared in one of our popular magazines an article entitled, "Hints for House Builders," in which the following statement was made:—"Square boxes, small and large are springing up in every direction, constructed without any attempt at proportion, or the slightest apparent desire to make them agreeable objects in the landscape. These tell their tale simply and unceremoniously, they demonstrate that the capacity for enjoyment, and the appreciation of what is really desirable in life is wanting. Each of these bare, bald, white cubes, tells its monotonous story of a youth passed with little or no cultivation of the higher natural perceptions, and a system of education in which the study of the beautiful, in its most simple elements, is neglected and apparently despised."

What was true then is true to a

certain extent today. It is only in the most cultured communities that the people have succeeded in getting away from this utilitarian idea. But the history of architecture carries the comforting assurance that structures can be both beautiful and useful.

The modern dwelling is one in which these two important ideas are combined. By the modern dwelling I mean the dwellings of the middle classes, those who compose the great mass and the strength of our nation. Conditions have changed to such an extent that there is a hungering for something better than our fathers had. It is my purpose to point out some of the ways in which this higher ideal may be reached.

In building a house there are many things to be considered, but first among these is the site. It is obvious that this will be decided in a general way by the business of the one who is to occupy it, but there are general principles that

must be observed wheather it is to be a city, ~~stoberban~~, or a country house.

The first of these is the healthfulness of the site. Good drainage is essential to health, and it is impossible to have this on low ground. The center of a knoll from which the water may run off in every direction from the house, if possible to obtain would be preferable, but if this is not to be had then the builder must make sure of a place where he can build on a penetrable strata, so that the surface water will not stay in the soil. Another thing that affects the healthfulness of the site is the relation of the stables, out-buildings, cess-pools, etc. to the house. All these things must be far enough away that they cannot possibly affect the water used for household purposes. An absurd mistake that is often made is to have the stables on a higher level than the well; no wonder the inhabitants sometimes have the fever. There is no necessity for barns and stables to

be as near the house as we often find them. They should be far enough away that the odors will not reach the house, unless, indeed, the wind is from the wrong direction, and in this land of prevailing winds that can very easily be looked out for.

The next thing to be considered is the water supply. Of course it should be as near as possible, but that is subsidiary to the conditions already spoken of. Water can be carried in pipes and health cannot, if the house is in the wrong place.

"The best system is to bring the water from a higher level, by which an impetus to carry it throughout the house may be obtained." If this water supply comes from a spring much labor and expense is saved, but if it is from a well then it must be raised in some manner. A wind-mill is a favorite system of raising it to the surface, but as some one has said "to see these awkward spiderlike structures dancing fan-

dangoes before our eyes disturbs the repose, and mares the landscape of our otherwise beautiful homes." If the towers be constructed in imitation of the old Holland windmills they become a pleasing object in the landscape, and also serve as a store-house.

There are situations where even wells are not to be had without great difficulty; in which case a cistern will prove an excellent substitute. One with an ordinary charcoal filter and in addition a partition across one corner, through which the water percolates, the pump going into the smaller part, is considered the safest and best.

There are two very important points to be considered in choosing a home that I am afraid are too often never even thought of. The first of these is the beauty of the surroundings. Beautiful scenery has an ennobling and refining influence on most na-

tures, and especially on children. The second point is the character of the neighbors, for they will, to a large degree, be your associates and companions, the ones who will influence your home life most nearly, and will to a certain extent, help to form the character of your children.

The style of the structure to be built will depend on how much is to be spent on it, and where it is to be built. The material to be used may be of either wood, stone or brick. Of these wood is the least desirable, and in this country are, already, houses gone to ruin. Of the other materials mentioned there is not much choice as regards durability, but stone has the advantage of being the most appropriate thing to use; for architecture should "partake of the character of nature and become a part of the scenery." This object can be most easily accom-

plished by using the local building material where possible.

The style of the building should be regulated to suit the general character of the country, "generally speaking, I think we may say that, in spite of occasional exceptions, a stern and severe landscape demands a massive and severe style of architecture, a quieter and more wooded landscape, a graceful and delicate style." If we are to pay any consideration to the claims of beauty we must carry nature's laws and harmonies into our building. This applies to color as well as to the form of the building.

The general style of the building, however, will depend on the plan, for any kind of a roof can be put on a house, and be made to fit, much easier than the convenience of the rooms can be made to fit the roof.

The arrangement of the rooms will depend on who is to live in the

house, for what would be suitable for one family would be entirely distasteful to another. The house should embody the character of the owner, and must be planned to save the housekeepers as many steps as possible. So that they may enjoy their home without being tired out body and soul. To do this it is advisable to have but one story, as this will save the extra steps of going up and down stairs; while the expense is just about the same, for the extra roofing will come to no more than the finishing of the stairs and upper hall-ways. Still some women prefer to have their sleeping rooms upstairs, 'away from the dirt and dust.' And if the house is somewhat larger this must be done, for it cannot be made to spread over too much ground or the symmetry and proportion will be spoiled.

In planning the arrangement of the rooms the woman who is

to live in the house should have the most to say, for she is the one whom it will most concern. She spends her time there, it is her place of business, while for the men it is usually but a place of refuge from the cares of business, when the day's work is done.

The principal living rooms should be arranged to open from a central hall which may be used as a sitting room. All these rooms must be light and airy. The kitchen should receive first attention, and should be large and light enough to be convenient, and not, as is too often the case, be stuck off in any dark corner as good ~~enough~~ enough. To quote from an article on "The Ideal Kitchen," in the "Ladies Home Journal,"— "In the model kitchen of the present, as in the old, the walls should be of glazed tile or enameled brick to the height of six or seven feet. In place of these painted brick or plaster may be used. The

tile or brick should be carried clear to the floor, no base-board of wood must be used. The floor should be of tile, plain mosaic, stone or cement, all hard and dirt-resisting, and easily kept clean. Have as little wood work as possible, and what you are obliged to have let it be plain, with as few joints and crevices as possible, and have it well varnished." While most of us would not be able to finish a kitchen with the tile and mosaic, we can use the brick and cement, and the result in labor saving and in cleanliness will soon make up for the additional expense. The cellar is closely related to the kitchen and requires much the same finishing, with especial care to avoid dampness.

A parlor is a superfluity is a medium sized house. The home is for those who live in it, not for the outside world; moreover, most families have not so much money that they can afford to throw it away on a room that is seldom used, and that

usually takes up the best part of the house. As often happens a woman will work herself to death to get fine furniture for her parlor, only to be laid out ~~amid~~ its gloomy splendor just at the time of life when she should be enjoying the home she has helped to make. Still some one objects. "What are we to do with our company? We can't take them into the living rooms." Why not? Do they come to see you or your house? We do not want any one in our home who does not come for our own sake, to see us in our home life.

The best plan, though, is to let a library take the place of a parlor, put the price of the furniture and carpet into books; the shelves they are on will not matter much just so they are neat and substantial. This, I say, is the place to take your friends, and if they are not the better for spending a few hours in company with such

great minds as Dante, Shakespeare, Bacon, Emerson, Carlyle, and the modern poets, they are not the ones whose friendship we care about cultivating. A man is known by the company he keeps, and if others desert you, you still have friends among the wisest of the earth, who are always ready to welcome you to a quiet hours chat. There is no better home surroundings for children than the influence of a library, it makes men and women of them. Then by all means discard the parlor and substitute the well lighted, well filled library.

The bedrooms should be so planned that they will have plenty of sunlight, and so there will be a good circulation of air without danger of a draft over the bed. There should be a good supply of closets, as indeed, there should be in all the rooms. In finishing bedrooms avoid papering

the walls, or in any way making places for disease germs to collect. The bath room must be conveniently situated and well supplied with water pipes and other conveniences.

The dining room has, for so long been considered as merely a place to be given over to eating and drinking, that it has not had the consideration it deserved. Often it is the only meeting place of the family, and it should be one of the best furnished rooms in the house. The whole house should be well lighted with windows. All the rooms must have their relation to one-another taken into consideration. "If the windows and doors and walls are not correctly proportioned no amount of beautiful or expensive applied decorations can ever make the rooms seem in good taste, or atone for the primal defects."

There is one feature in the houses

of this country that climate makes necessary; that is the verandas, and there should be plenty of them, good wide ones. Now when the general plan is all made out, turn the work over to your architect and let him work out the details. When it comes to the actual building be sure the house has a firm, strong foundation.

The best plan for heating the house is to have a furnace in the cellar, and then have fire-places in the principle rooms, and the bed rooms, too, if possible. In the first place, after the furnace is bought and the chimnies built the expense of running them is far less than to run the number of stoves it would require to keep the house warm, unless it be a very small one. The second consideration is that the fire-place serves the double function of heating the rooms when it is

not cold enough to start the furnace and giving additional heat in very cold weather, and of ventilation as well. A fire place is said to be the best ventilation for a living room. To me the best thing about an open fire place is the cheerfulness and comfort it adds to home life. Who that has ever heard them can forget the fire-side stories of his childhood days.

Ventilation is a necessity to a dwelling house as much as to a public hall, and this is especially true of bedrooms, where about one-third of the time is spent without a change. The simplest and so far as I can find, the most perfect mode of ventilation is the plan of raising a window two or three inches up from the bottom and placing a board under it. The air then comes in from between the sashes flowing in an upward direction, thus causing no draft, for it diffuses

above the height of the head. The out flow of air is up the chimney, or through a flue at the side built for that purpose, with an opening near the ceiling. The schemes for ventilation are many and some of them very good, but they are apt to get out of fix and cause trouble.

It is no longer considered that a house is perfectly finished without having the water brought inside, for the expense of bringing it would be more than counterbalanced by doctors bills at some time or other, if it were not put within easy reach of the busy housewife. It should be carried into all the principal rooms, and of course into the bathroom. After it is once in the house it will not require much more expense to carry it on. The pipes used are of great importance. In many places lead pipes are preferred but in some cases there will be mineral substan-

ces in the water that will probably result in affecting the pipes so that some one will be poisoned. The best pipe at present is the galvanized iron one. The water does not affect it, and it is not very expensive. In the kitchen all water pipes, and drain pipes as well, must be left exposed, not hidden in any way. This is to insure cleanliness and make them easy to get at in case they need attention.

¶ The whole problem of drainage may be summed up in this:—"pure air and pure water." To have pure air great care must be taken in adopting a system of drainage that a good one is selected. Care must also be taken, to keep the drainage from water-closets and that from the kitchen separate, and there must be no direct connection between either of these and the water used for drinking and cooking, or trouble will ensue. Another thing to look out for is that the drainage

is carried off far enough that there will be no trouble from that source. In cities, of course this goes to the main sewers, but in the country the best plan is, instead of having a cesspool, to use the drainage for fertilizing purposes. If used in that way it does not collect.

A home is not complete till the grounds around it have had their share of attention, for they are the setting that brings out the house, the central object of the whole picture. To quote from a lecture of Prof. Mason's: "There are many people willing to employ and pay a good architect who will not think of paying a dollar for planning the grounds around the house. More than this, they will begin without any plan or idea what they wish to produce." "But a definite plan to work from is as essential in making beautiful grounds as a beautiful house, and the attainment of the best results

requires quite as much professional skill." There are many principles that enter into the planning of grounds that no one who has not made a study of the matter can understand. Still even a slight knowledge of the simplest points will be of great value to the home builder.

In most of our country homes the ground set aside for the door yard is entirely too small, the farmer seems to think it a waste of valuable soil, but he could easily make up for what he loses there by cultivating the rest of his farm better. Then he almost always has a meadow, why not let this come in connection with the house grounds? The hay will be just as good, and the place will be worth more because of the added beauty.

Probably the most important thing to urge is the need of carrying nature's methods into the

planting. Who ever saw trees grow of their own accord in straight rows, or directly opposite each other so as to be equally balanced on either side of a walk? A natural arrangement is always acknowledged to be the most beautiful.

Plant the grounds to correspond with the style of the house and the natural surroundings. A small cottage would look out of place in grounds suited to a mansion, and the same arrangement would not do for prairie that would suit a wild, mountainous region. Still there is a chance for great variety.

It will not do to plant merely for beauty, however; there is a use in everything, or there would be no need to have it. Plant for shade, but don't have so much that the house is made damp as a consequence, or all the pretty views shut out. The best effect is secured by having all the open lawn

possible with the trees where needed, and views are secured by planting along radiating lines from doors and windows, to the object worth seeing. Plant for shelter from the wind in winter and from the sun in summer. Plant so that all unsightly objects, such as stables, etc., are screened from view. The walks and drives require much attention, a naturally curved one is best, but the curves must be natural, not an unnecessary crook or turn is admissible. The whole problem is simply this, — a way to get where you want to go by the shortest and most natural route, but this don't mean a straight line in most cases. The easiest way to find out where to put a walk or drive is to let it put itself.

A house that is planned to make the work lighter, the life of its inmates easier and everything about it more beau-

tiful, will certainly have a home-life within it that will send out such an influence into the surrounding community as will tend to make everyone the better for having come in contact with it. The children that go out from such a home will go out to bless the world with whatever they do, and the memory of their early home will be cherished as long as they live.

Bibliography.

Modern Dwellings. H. H. Holly.
 Inland Architect, Vol. 10, p. 63.
 Vol. 13, p. 68, 86. Vol. 16, p. 72.
 Dwelling Houses, Their Sanitary
 Construction and
 Arrangement. W. H. Garfield.
 Healthy Dwellings. S. Galton.
 Notes on Prof. Masons Lectures
 on Landscape Gardening.
 American Architect. Sep. 30, 1876.
 Harper's Magazine. Vol. 11, p. 763.
 Garden and Forest. Vol. 4, p. 385.
 Ladies Home Journal. Dec. '95, p. 36.