

Improvement of Farm Homes.

W. J. Rhoades,

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Improvement of Farm Homes.

"Agriculture is the first and noblest of all occupations." Since Adam kept and tended the Garden of Eden, it has been the leader of civilization, for upon the cultivation of the soil all progress in human affairs has depended. History brings to light the far reaching influence of agriculture. In ancient Egypt, the cradle of agriculture, husbandry is found to be the only vocation of importance. In Phoenicia, the traders depended on the products of agriculture for their commerce. In ancient Greece and Rome, the patricians took up the work as a pastime and pleasure work, and here it is found to have reached a high degree of development. During the dark Ages as the Monks preserved the learning of ancient times, it was the agriculturist who made that preservation possible, and so today we find husbandry an honorable occupation of civilized man. - a central power, around which all other means of living and enjoying life revolve in close relation.

But farming has lately assumed a different aspect from what it had in former times. While

yet considered honorable, it is to many unattractive and unpopular. The attractions of city life are drawing thousands from the farm and country. They leave the pure air and freedom to pen themselves up in town with offensive odors, sights and sounds, in order to get away, perhaps, from the loneliness of the country. The monotony of the average country home is depressing, indeed. With all its barrenness and isolation from congenial associates, it weighs down the boy of the farm and makes him long for a wider life; it settles on the girl and she longs to leave her small world and dreams of a brilliant future; it weighs down the father and mother and their drudgery becomes almost unbearable, and they seek to free themselves in the whirl and buzz of city life.

In the midst of all this we wonder how many ever consider for a moment the cause of the dissatisfaction with country life. A close observer, after an hours drive in the country might answer all inquiries.

The average farm home is an unsightly place. It is too often built on that part of the farm, which the farmer from an econom-

ideal point of view considers fit for nothing
 else. A low, flat stagnant place, or else a
 clay or rock hill is generally a chosen site.
 And more often still, where the site of the
 farm home has been selected with con-
 sideration as to sanitary conditions and
 conditions adapted to decorative planting
 and improvement, they have been grossly
 neglected. For instance here is a farm
 home situated on a gentle raise from the
 public high way. There is good drainage, and
 abundance of pure water. But the house and
 out buildings have been thrown together with-
 out a plan and are unpainted and repulsive
 to see. There is no yard fence, a hog
 pen in close proximity and the poultry runs
 at will. Probably a few ugly trees have
 resisted the unfavorable conditions and
 have forced their existence. Shrubbery
 has never been planted and a pretty bed of
 flowers is unknown. Instead of the shrub-
 berry and pretty bed of flowers, is a profusion of
 rubbish and litter the result of years of
 accumulation, with perhaps here and there
 a broken reaper or some other implement
 bleaching in the sun. This is not a

picture of all farm homes but it is about an average.

The repulsive, unattractive sight might be gotten rid of, and thus dispel much of the monotony and tediousness which accompanies the farm. Men plea as an excuse for not making their homes pleasant and attractive, economy and lack of time. A half hours work a day will keep an ordinary yard in neat trim, and it will prove to be economy though he labor under the weight of a heavy mortgage. It is safe to say that it is not the want of funds or time that makes so many unpleasant looking country homes. It is a lack of taste and art, a lack of a desire to know the beautiful. Then too, men are so much absorbed in money making as to think but little of improving their homes.

When we consider the many things that depend on agriculture and that it is a calling as necessary in the affairs of men, as is the sun, it becomes highly important that country homes should be made attractive and pleasant. Let not men be forced to it; but let them set high ideals and work them out.

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There are three principal features in the making and improvement of a home. These are: the selection of a site; the building which is to serve as the home, and the planting of the grounds which surround it.

The selection of a home site is important, and the "fitness of purpose will extend to the choice of a situation"; selecting a sheltered site neither too high, as upon the exposed summit of bleak hills, nor too low, as in the lowest bottoms of damp valleys, but preferring those middle grounds which while they afford a free circulation of air, and a fine prospect are not detrimental to health or the enjoyment of the occupants. The site should be selected with reference to tree furniture, and natural surface, and good sanitary conditions. A varied surface is better than a uniform one, but this can seldom be had. Smooth swells or level plains constitute the sites of most homes.

There are two kinds of new places - a place without any foliage or possibly

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a few stunted or unavailable trees, where all the effects are to be produced by the shade in planting, and secondly a dense wood, where the place is to be made mostly by the ax. A natural growth of trees is invaluable, not lofty trees - but broad spreading and shady trees. The first form is the one with which most people have to work with.

As to the building that is to serve as the home little or much may be said. It is not necessary that it be a mansion, or a pile which represents a display of wealth. Scott, says, "It is not necessary to have wealth to have an attractive home, for we all have noticed some remarkably attractive and pleasant old homes where little care seemed taken to make them so, and yet they possessed an air of comfort and even elegance, that others with wealth lavished upon them, and a gardener in constant employ, with flowers and shrubs and trees in profusion, all failing to convey the same impression of a pleasant home. A well cut lawn, a few fine trees, a shady back ground.

with comfortable looking buildings are the essentials, and walks, shrubs and flowers only the embellishments and finishing touches of the picture.

In building a house the most important point to consider is its use, of whatever character, the comfort and convenience of the occupants should be the first and most essential consideration. In many of those articles of furniture or apparel which luxury or fashion has brought into use, fitness or convenience often gives way to beauty of form or texture; but in a habitation intended to shelter us from the heat and cold as well as give us an opportunity to dispense the elegant hospitalities of refined life - the neglect of the various indispensable conveniences and comforts which an advanced state of civilization requires would be but poorly compensated for by a fanciful exterior or a highly ornate style of building. So then in building a dwelling, whether it be a plain, unpretentious house, a cottage or a mansion, let it be convenient, and fit for the purpose.

It is depressing to see a large barny looking house, poorly lighted and ventilated, with out a shady veranda or porch of any kind. In building a home the convenient arrangement of the rooms, lighting and ventilating should be looked after with much care. Where funds will permit additions in the way of heating by steam or hot water, or a conservatory will give the appearance of comfort, or even luxury, besides being more economical in the long run.

Probably the most effective way of improving our farm homes, and the one in which the farmer will find the most lasting enjoyment and pleasure is that of decorative planting. The home grounds of most farms are barren in the extreme. Where there has been planting, it has been done by placing a tree here and there without any thought of arrangement or meaning. Too often no planting is seen, and the front yard is a wilderness of weeds and rubbish. Every farmer should make decorative planting a study and plant his home grounds accordingly.

The objects of decorative planting are various: first, the pleasure of working among and developing beauty in nature; secondly to make ones place attractive to other eyes; third, to have a large variety of trees, flowers and shrubs. The highest object of all is the appreciation of, and desire to create with verdant nature charming effects of sunlight and shadow or lovely example in miniature, of what we call landscapes. Decorative planting should have for its highest aim the beautifying of the home. In combination with domestic architecture it should make every man's home a picture.

Neither the beauty of trees and shrubs nor the loveliness of flowers will make a place beautiful unless they are properly arranged. The situation should be studied and planted so as to give the most pleasing effect. Hide all offensive objects and throw open to the eye those views and scenes which will be pleasing. Mr. F. J. Scott, in his work, entitled, "Beautiful Homes" gives six general rules for arrangement and planting. Rules in laying out grounds cannot always

be complied with, but it is well to have a few definite principles by which to work. The rules are as follows:

Rule I. Preserve in one or more places (according to the size and form of the lot) the greatest length of unbroken lawn that the space will admit of. If the grounds are small there can be but one unbroken space of lawn; but if it is large there can be as many as the space will allow.

Rule II. Plant between radiating lines from the house to the ~~rest~~ side of the lot, so as to leave open lines of view from the principal windows and entrance porches. Also find where with out injuring the views to and from the house, the best vistas may be left from the highway into the lot, and from point to another across the grounds or to points of interest beyond.

Rule III. Plant the larger trees and shrubs farthest from the center of the lawn so that the smaller may be seen to advantage in front of them. It is very necessary to observe this rule in small places, and one should have a thorough

knowledge of the character of trees and shrubs, so that each may be planted to show its peculiar beauty with out interfering with the other, and at the same time form a harmonious whole.

Rule IV. On small lots plant no trees which quickly attain great size, if it is intended to have a variety of shrubs or flowers. If this rule is not followed in the planting of small lots, the larger trees will hide all the beauty of the smaller trees and shrubbery.

Rule V. In adding to belts or groups of trees or shrubs plant near the salient points rather than in bays or openings. The ignorant planter often violates this rule. The desire to plant a tree where there is the most room and where it will show handsomely makes him forget that a few such plantings will break the prettiest lawn. The sunny projections and shady nooks are often spoiled in this way.

Rule VI. Shrubs which rest upon the lawn should not be planted nearer than from six to ten feet from the front fence, except where intended to form a continuous screen

of foliage. This rule is some times hard to follow where lots are small and the house is near the road.

It would be just as easy to arrange a home lot in accordance with these simple rules as to plant in the usual careless manner. The cost would be slight and the benefit. If the planting is properly arranged the natural growth of the surroundings would develop a harmonious whole. If a man lives in a refined home he must live a refined life and if the farmer refines his home, his life will become better and more attractive. More tasteful homes on American farms would settle the question as to how to keep the boys and girls on the parental homestead.