

Architecture and Building

Comfort in the Modern Home

These notes may be of use or interest to those about to build or buy a house. The first consideration is, of course, locality in relation to distance and means of locomotion to and from one's place of business. To the proud possessor of a motor these matters may be of little moment; to the average man they are of considerable importance, and will govern his selection of a place in which to live. One thing is certain, if he is going to live more than two or three miles away from the heart of the town, he will have to choose one of the suburbs linked up with the tram or railway.

Having chosen the locality, the selection of the site itself should be made with due regard for a pleasant sunny outlook, and last, but not least, water and lighting supplies and drainage. The condition of the roads, and the average price of ground in the neighbourhood are also of importance. The drainage of a house is a matter that very greatly concerns the comfort and health of the inmates, and the term must be understood not only to apply to the conveyance away of sewage, but also to any necessary drainage of the site.

The planning of houses demands most careful attention, and requires unusual skill on the part of the architect to get half as much into a small house as the client usually wants for his money.

The average man is very apt to base his ideas of a home on the combined advantages and features of four or five houses that he knows, or has visited. Thus the house of A is small but beautifully filled up with oak-panelled rooms, marble bathroom, etc.; the house of B has much greater accommodation, but is very plainly fitted. The prospective home builder conceives a home having the accommodation of B's house with the decorative effects of A's, and cannot quite see why the cost is so much greater than the respective costs of the houses of either A or B.

The keynote of the ordinary house should be simplicity. Many bays, gables and wings, generally, cost more than their effect warrants, and if the house is small, will necessarily look trivial and small also. Breadth of effect is by no means impossible in a small house, but the attempt to crowd into it all the features of

a large mansion invariably ends in disaster, both to convenience and artistic effect.

A plain roof is one of the most economical features; once you begin to throw out bays and patch on gables you incur heavy and unnecessary expenditure in your roofing. More beauty can be secured by a well proportioned plain roof with well-placed and finely designed chimney stacks than with any number of elaborate gables and decorated large boards.

The arrangement of the rooms so that the chimney flues can be collected into one or two large stacks not only tends to economy, but also greatly increases the possibility of artistic effect. A number of

wish, however, that, generally speaking, its treatment was a little happier. Too often the unfortunate little roof supported on skeleton posts gives an uncomfortable feeling that it is stuck on to the main building as an afterthought. The satisfactory arrangement of a verandah requires some effort on the part of the architect, and in most of the successful case it will be found that the verandah forms an integral part of the building.

In area, the verandah is now being made more extensive than it used to be, and in particular the depth is greater. In some modern houses the kitchen or dining-room is planned to open on to the verandah so that meals can be served there in hot weather if desired.

In the arrangement of the interior everything depends upon the accommodation to be provided. There are certain elementary rules in the planning of all houses, large or small, which may be briefly catalogued. The principal rooms should face the north or east; the kitchen south or west. The kitchen must be handy to the dining-room, and the range should be lighted from the left wherever possible. The larder should be on the south.

The ordinary bedroom is by no means irreproachable. Considering the length of time passed in bedrooms, their shape, cubic contents, window space and ventilation are all matters of hygienic importance. Science would demand that our bedrooms should be even larger than our sitting-rooms, because of the greater air space required.

The demand of scientific men for larger bedrooms and more window space has generally been met with the retort that people should leave their bedroom windows open. We know perfectly well, through the modern treatment of tuberculosis, that it is quite possible, under skilled medical attention, for very delicate people to sleep in the open air. But such patients are always carefully screened from draughts. And in many modern bedrooms it would be impossible for anyone to sleep with open windows without catching a violent cold or incurring perpetual neuralgia. It is not sufficient to say "Open your window"; the bedroom must be so arranged that there is not a continual draught across the head of the bed.

There are two main defects in many bedrooms, and these are their shape and arrangement. Too often there is every



SMEETON'S BUILDINGS, QUEEN STREET, AUCKLAND.

Winkelmann, photo.

small spidery chimney stacks make breadth of effect quite impossible. Chimney stacks are better placed at the ridge of the roof than on the slopes and centre stacks as a rule look better than stacks at either end. As regards the roof, tiling is pre-eminently the best material. The interlocking composition tiles are better than the Marseilles, as they stand the weather better, and do not become so discoloured, particularly in smoky neighbourhoods. The porous nature of the Marseilles tiles makes them particularly liable to collect smoke and dirt, so that in a few years they have a very dingy appearance compared with the first-mentioned tile of the same age, though one cannot deny that the Marseilles tile has the more handsome appearance when new.

The verandah is one of the most important adjuncts to the home. One could