

AN ARCHITECT'S STUDIO

(The House Beautiful VII by Alfred H. Granger, December 1899)

When one attempts to describe almost any modern building, the first question to be asked is, "What style?" Were I to attempt to define the reason for the present sterility in architecture. I should give as chief cause the slavish desire on behalf of our people to reproduce some given style which in its lifetime was vital and full of beauty, but which cannot be adapted to modern life without a sacrifice of many of its most charming features. This is why the modern Italian, Roman, or French building is, in our country, so generally "flat, stale, and nonprofitable." The American client is too essentially a man of his day willingly to sacrifice comfort or convenience, so he compromises with his architect, to the discomfort of both: and to see the result we have only to look around us. That the present practice is baneful is apparent to all. To combat this archaeological influence, many men are giving the best in their lives. One of the most radical of these opponents is Mr. Frank L. Wright, whose house and studio I have the privilege of describing. To do full justice to this subject in a short magazine article is out of the question, and I shall have to depend very largely upon the accompanying photographs to convey to the reader the charm of this unique establishment.

The house has already been so well described in a former number of THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL...that I will only call attention to the photographs of the dining-room and the nursery.

One's first impression of the dinning-room is its simplicity—no rugs, no curtains, and only the necessary furniture, which, however, is in perfect harmony with the room. One entire end of the room opposite the fireplace is practically of glass, laid in leading of a very delicate design, which was evidently inspired by the lotus flower. The view from these windows is upon clumps of shrubbery, which must be as beautiful in winter, with snow fallen on them, as in summer, when a mass of leaves and flowers. The door and the facing of the high mantel are of a deep red tile laid in an unusual pattern and highly polished. The oak woodwork, which is carried round the room to the height of the window-sills, is designed to emphasize the horizontal line, a very wise thought in a small room, as the horizontal line gives breadth and size, while the vertical line, by accentuating height, contracts. The color of this oak is a golden brown, a happy mean between the very dark of Flemish and the muddy yellow of natural oak.

The harmony of color between the brown and the red is perfect, and is accentuated (if one can accentuate a harmony) by the color of the walls and ceiling, which are covered with arras of a soft brown, and which give to the entire room a golden tone such as one sees in a rich sunset. In the center of the ceiling is a design of exquisite tracery, through which at night a soft light filters, and gives to the whole room a warm, rich glow. Here we have a room in which there is absolutely nothing superfluous, but which is so full of the charm of simplicity and truth that on leaving it, one wonders why no Que has so treated dining-rooms before. The room has all the feeling of the exquisite university dining-halls in England, and yet this room has no feature that is not American and of today. It is simple, easy to clean (a delight to the house-wife), and beautiful withal.

Upstairs is another room, the like of which I wish could be found in more houses of today, the nursery. It is very large, being about seventeen by twenty-six feet in size. The walls are wainscoted to the height of about seven feet with brick of a rich, mottled golden brown. This wainscot forms the chimney-breast for a large, generous fireplace. The windows are in

groups on either side of the room, deeply recessed so as to allow ample window-seats, and placed near the floor so as to be a delight to little people. The distinctive feature of the room is the ceiling, which is a barrel vault, springing from the top of the wainscot, and decorated with flat ribs of wood, which carry out the barrel idea. Between the ribs the plaster is the color of rich gold.

This vaulting gives great height to the center of the room, but does not break the effect of breadth and coziness. The end of the room over the fireplace is charmingly decorated in an allegorical manner, which must be a delight to the children, but of which unfortunately I have no photograph. A fine old chest and some chairs are all the furniture of this wholly admirable room, where the children can dance, romp, and play to their hearts' content, with no fear of breaking anything.

These two rooms, the dining-room and nursery, were to me the most remarkable in a wholly interesting house: and now let us go down a few steps from the private library, through a corridor, which encloses a beautiful growing tree, and enter the studio, where the man really lives in his work.

The plan which accompanies this article shows where you enter the large draughting-room from the corridor connecting the studio with the house. This draughting-room, where the men work, is two stories in height, with a gallery running around the second story. Instead of looking like a workshop, it has the air of a charming living-room.

The fireplace is large, and at once makes you feel at home, while wherever you look is some interesting bit of plaster, or some quaint motto, or a jar of wild flowers. Inspiration everywhere, the right sort of inspiration, which recognizes the wondrous beauty of the works of the past, while at the same time it lives in the world of today and cares for its simplest flowers.

The walls of the draughting-room below the gallery are of a dull, quiet red, while the walls of the gallery are of a tawny yellow, which harmonizes delightfully...

Off from this large draughting-room is Mr. Wright's study—again wild flowers, with the same choice bits of plaster. Connecting the draughting-room is Mr. Wright's study—again wild flowers, with the same choice bits of plaster. The walls of the outer office are colored a deep, rich red, while the woodwork throughout is of oak, filled enough to give it the rich, golden tone which Mr. Wright seems especially to love.

The most beautiful room in this series which forms his studio is the octagonal library. The windows in this room are all high enough from the floor to make room for the book-cases and cases for drawings beneath them. The furniture consists of a center-table and the same strong, straight, beautiful chairs which are used throughout this studio. The color here is rich olive-green.

I was especially impressed with the artistic arrangement of the electric lights, coming as they do out of the slender octagonal columns. The woodwork throughout the house and studio is very flat, almost without moldings of any sort, but so judiciously used as to be far more beautiful than elaborate moldings or carving could possibly make it. Everywhere are thought and a fine feeling for fitness. Nothing could be more beautiful than the entrance to the studio from Chicago Avenue. Its proportions are so wholly satisfying as to repay the closest study, while the detail is an integral part of the building and not an applied

decoration. The accompanying photographs show how careful study will make a work of art out of the simplest materials, with no extravagant expenditure of money.