

## Home and Studio - *The House Beautiful*

### THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

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#### Successful Houses

How often does the architect, while creating the most beautiful effects for others, attain a satisfactory result in his own house? The mind which can plan and originate for a living seems inadequate when it comes to planning for pleasure alone. Though often good enough as far as mere laying-out of rooms goes, the homes of many architects, which naturally should be demonstrations in taste, are uninteresting, commonplace, and lacking in originality. Why this is so is difficult to say. Perhaps the architect, wearied with endless shop, gladly seeks a relief from all responsibility, knowing that he will have to answer to no one but himself. Perfectly satisfied if it be convenient for the routine of life, comfortable and warm, his only concern is that it shall be of irreproachable exterior design, for there only he seems to feel the pride of his profession.

That there are frequent exceptions to this condition should be taken as a sign of advancement, for when an architect really gives his house thought and study, the result of the combination of this with the professional training is most agreeably apparent.

As recent impressions of the house of Mr. Frank Wright at Oak Park are very strong it will serve as an example of the exception.

Here is a case where nothing has been done hastily or carelessly, and every room has been arranged with the intention of obtaining a complete composition. The house outside is of no particular character, being built at different times, but it has attained a very comfortable and livable appearance. It is so practically buried in trees and foliage that all its defects are softened and concealed, and the [windows] complete the furniture. The ampleness of the window seats does away with the necessity for a great many chairs, which only clutter up a room, bringing in conflicting elements of many styles.

Another point of interest is the lack of a large assortment of pictures, the few examples all being especially good, at the same time only units of the whole, and not in the least obtrusive, as is often the case. A good proof of the Shere Mill Pond, a landscape by Turner and one by Wendt, with a couple of rare Kakimonos, are of special interest.

A large Mecca rug at one side and two smaller, a Kurdestan and a Yourdes (this of rare beauty) cover the floor and the placing of these is most commendable. From the front door back into the library extends a chain of rugs, each blending into the other, producing an effect which is difficult to describe, except by saying that they seem to be a part of the floor, instead of rising up aggressively, as is the manner of many rugs, a veritable mosaic, in fact.

The fireplace is in an alcove at the right of the entrance, and is most unusually grateful in its effect. The chimney breast rises straight up almost to the ceiling, while in front hangs an iron lantern, the light of which is reflected in a mirror placed above and back of the fireplace, giving a most surprising result. The material used is dull red Roman brick, built around an arched opening, flanked on either side by a Russian samovar. The alcove is just

deep enough to allow of a short bench at each end of the mantel, which adds to the very comfortable appearance.

The walls of the library are the same as the living room, except that the green dado has an overlaid design in gold. The room is practically filled with a large heavy table, while on the north side is a long window with a wide ledge and books on either end. One or two Japanese prints are about, while the table is eminently a workroom above all else. These two rooms are in a sense only one, as the door between is very large; but still an element of seclusion is possible in the library, while the perfect unity of decoration and style gives all the effect of one room. The first glimpse of this vista on coming in at the front door is charming. This is as it should be, as the first impression is what counts.

Exactly opposite the front entrance is another door leading from the hall by means of a short passage into the dining-room, which is a most radical departure from tradition. The most austere simplicity prevails, there being absolutely no unnecessary furniture. The whole south end is filled with a series of casements, forming one large window, with a seat of great width. At the opposite end is a fireplace of great simplicity of design, the face being soft red tile, carried up from the floor, which is made of the same material. Walls and ceiling are covered with golden brown arras, and only one to two pictures break the lines. The table and chairs, of heavy massive style and cupboard on either side of the window are the only furniture, but owing to the great south window and the rich color of walls and floor, a delightful "mellowness" pervades the room.

Great ingenuity has been used in the arrangement of the electric light, which, practical as it is, is not effective in its unsoftened state. There is not a bulb in sight, but let into the ceiling and actually part of it, is a screen of intricate pattern, covered with thin paper. The light is turned on above and filters through much subdued.

All through the house much adroitness has been exhibited in avoiding unsightly fixtures. The problem of light is always difficult, governed in a measure by necessity. Candles and lamps are desirable from the standpoint of effect, but electric light saves a great amount of trouble. Here the problem has been solved in a very ingenious way; in fact, any house where it has been done equally well, does not come to the writer's mind. The ideas used in the dining room are easy, and at the same time so desirable, that it is a wonder that it is not used a great deal oftener.

Upstairs are the bedrooms and the great play-room, the most remarkable of all. The bedrooms are all attractive, and have not the slighted appearance in regard to good pictures so common to sleeping-rooms. Leading from these, which are the front of the house, is a little arched hall, scarcely higher than one's head, through which can be seen a glimpse of the great room beyond, the crowning feature of the house.

The first impression on standing in the door is of the great height of the ceiling, forming a perfect half-circle. The surface of the plaster is broken by strips of oak, giving, in a measure, the effect of arches. Most conspicuous at the first glance is the fireplace at the farther end, which is a square opening into the brick of the wainscot, there being scarcely any perceptible projection of the chimney breast. It is just the height of the perpendicular wall (about five feet) and is surmounted by a shelf, most useful for the children's toys, which runs all around the room. The shape of the wall above the mantel is, of course, semi-circular, and is practically filled by an allegorical picture of *The Fisherman and The Genii*, painted on the plaster.

Going farther into the room the windows are apparent, one on each side, of great length and depth, projecting out from the room. These are, as usual, a row of casements with panes of special design.

In looking back at the entrance door the ceiling is seen to go much farther than first appears; being carried over beyond the entrance of the room. It is met by a series of galleries rising from the brick wall, the last one right under the roof, and with barely enough room for a piano and bench.

In the ceiling is a screen similar to the one in the dining-room, only, of course, much larger, while other lights are at the sides and over the gallery. Very little furniture is about—a chest or two and a carved chair on each side of the fireplace, and only one rug (at the entrance) on the hardwood floor. In the daytime a great amount of light, which is most essential in a room for children, comes in at the large windows and through the screen. But at night, when it is pre-eminently for older people, it is just as beautiful in another way. With a wood fire on the hearth, the only light coming from two candles on the mantel-shelf and the screen above, lighting up strangely the face of the Genii looking down into the room, and illuminating at the other end the Victory over the door, standing out white and strong against the shadowy galleries beyond, the reality only begs description.

The governing idea of all this is one of the strongest theories of the whole house. It cannot be questioned but that children brought up in a room like this, with its simple beauty and strength as a daily fact will little by little feel its influence and come to regard it as only natural that all rooms should be as this one is. It is to be expected then, that a beautiful taste and instinct will be firmly established by such surroundings, instead of others cheap and trivial; and the child should grow up with a perfect recognition of what is good and what is bad in the art of the house. Had more of the present generation been started under similar circumstances the effect might be most apparent.