

THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE

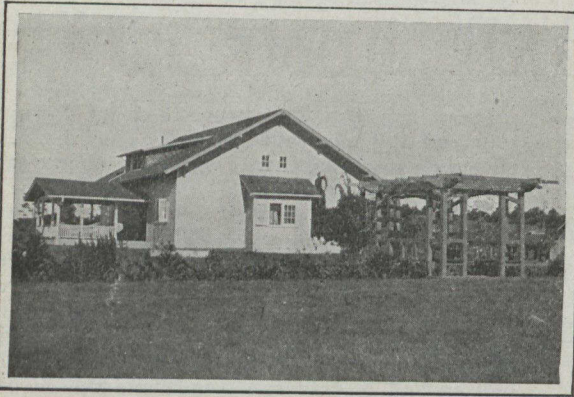
By G. M. WEST

AS each year rolls by it is apparent that a great advance is being made in our standards of architectural design, and in no branch of the profession is this more marked than in the development of our domestic architecture. It is fitting that this should be so, but while on the one hand much improvement is shown, the wave of building which has swept over the country has, in many cases, outstripped the improvement, and there are many architectural horrors still being perpetrated.

Doubtless this is due largely to the fact that in many instances, particularly among the humbler class of dwelling, no architect or designer is employed, and the builder then becomes the architect. Unfortunately, builders seem very prone to feel that in order to give a man "his money's worth" and make a satisfactory "show," it is necessary to supply in the one building features enough for a dozen, and to try out all the available materials by giving a foundation of stone or concrete, and, perhaps, a first storey of brick or clapboard and a second finished with shingles stained a violent hue.

What to Build. It Of

When a layman faces the problem of deciding of what his house shall be built, the wide choice of materials is possibly rather staggering, for the limitations of transportation and other devices which forced our forefathers to build with the materials at hand and therefore to build simply have been to a great extent removed. The temptation is to try too great a variety. Our homes should pretend to be nothing but what they are, and we



A good type of suburban home made entirely of wood.

should, I think, where possible, use the local materials with which to build. There are localities where some kinds of stone are plentiful. Indeed some of our smaller cities are largely built of stone found often directly on the site of the building themselves. In others certain kinds of lake stones in characteristic shapes and colours are at hand. Localities without stone have their various clays from which bricks of varying colours and textures are made; though some of these are far from beautiful. Gravel and sand in others furnish excellent material for concrete or stucco, and in spite of the prejudice against plastered houses in other days many a good house has been built of wood and

coated with plaster. There are, around Toronto, old pebble dashed rough-cast houses nearly fifty years old, with the original plaster still intact.

It is ridiculous to imagine that to be a success a house must be built of stone, or brick, or of wood. There are successful examples of each. The trouble arises when we try to adopt wood construction and details to a masonry house. Personal preference is naturally a large factor in all decisions, but it should always be governed by good taste. If a man's love of a certain site prompts him to build there, let him build in a style to suit it, but if his admiration of a certain style governs let him then select a site to harmonize instead of trying vainly to combine two antagonistic forces. Don't try to put a formal colonial house on some rocky point where it would be sadly out of place.

Simplicity And Proportion.

The two most essential points in any good design are simplicity and proportion, and the "one material" house which is rapidly coming into favour is a step which helps us largely in obtaining the former. It is much easier to avoid the temptation of putting in miscellaneous, meaningless features or ornaments, if we are building our house from foundation to eaves of the one material than if we are introducing a little plaster here and a bit of clapboard there with a shingled piece, stained a different colour, around the corner.

But simplicity alone will not make a house—four walls and a roof with a few holes for windows would be simple but not necessarily beautiful. Proportion must be borne in mind. For instance, it is almost a hopeless problem to make a house built on the plan of a square anything but ugly, while the same area containing a house with the length twice its width will not only gain a hundred per cent. in appearance, but it will permit of more exposures in the rooms if the long side is placed the proper direction.

One of the first laws is to have one dimension dominate, and this applies not only in laying out the plan; the need for this domination dimension being one of many good reasons for keeping our houses low. Two stories should be sufficient and there is much charm in rambling single storey wings in the form of verandahs or other features. There is no reason why, in the majority of cases, the first floor level should be more than twelve inches above the finished grade, and a six inch step from floor to grade gives much repose to the buildings, permitting as it does one to pass through the casement windows of the living or dining room to the lawn or terrace. A house built high is seldom so friendly to a garden or lawn, and light can be arranged to the basement by providing area ways at suitable places.

Treatment Of the Roof.

Unquestionably the treatment of the roof in a country house is another of the principal points and a properly handled roof, housing as it does the whole structure, can give it at once a kindly feeling of homeliness. A study of the English cottages will bring forth this fact, and their sweeping, unbroken roof lines and surfaces will make a lasting impres-

sion. Shingles are without doubt the most successful and satisfactory material in general use in our country, though sometimes slates of beautiful colourings and textures can be obtained for the more expensive houses. For country work, however, shingles are always easily obtained and handled.

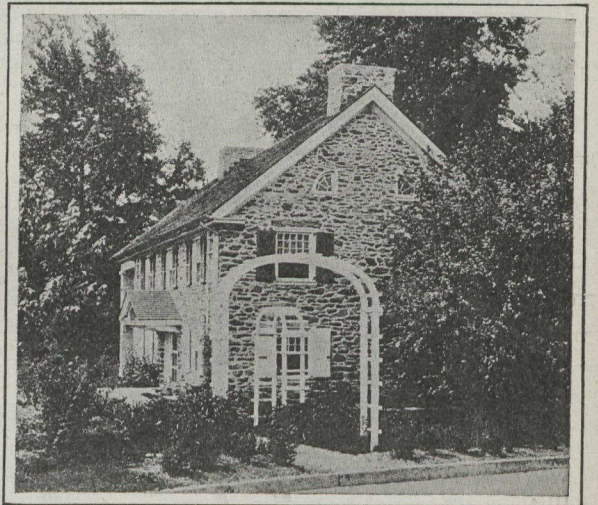
By careful planning and the use of the two storey idea, we can avoid much unnecessary cutting up of our roof surface with numerous dormers and intersecting gables. Similarly the chimneys should be planned to occur where the roof is highest, not where it is low and they will have to be carried many feet skyward to avoid down drafts. Keep them in the ridges of the roof, and if you have to carry them up do not make them similar to the thin, spindly single flue erections which are so popular with speculative builders.

Colour Scheme.

Another important point about the outside of the house is the colour scheme, and here again we must raise the cry for simplicity. There is nothing more distressing than to see so many houses spoiled by the use of a multiplicity of colour; the writer counted on a rather pretentious country home the other day no less than seven different shades and colours.

It is well to treat the roofs all in the one shade, and is almost always in the case of brick stone or plastered dwellings advisable to use only the one colour, often a cream, or a stone tint, for the remainder of the woodwork. There are, of course, exceptions such as when shutters occur which must receive special consideration.

In fact, in building a house, the opportunities, not to say temptations, for an unskilled designer to



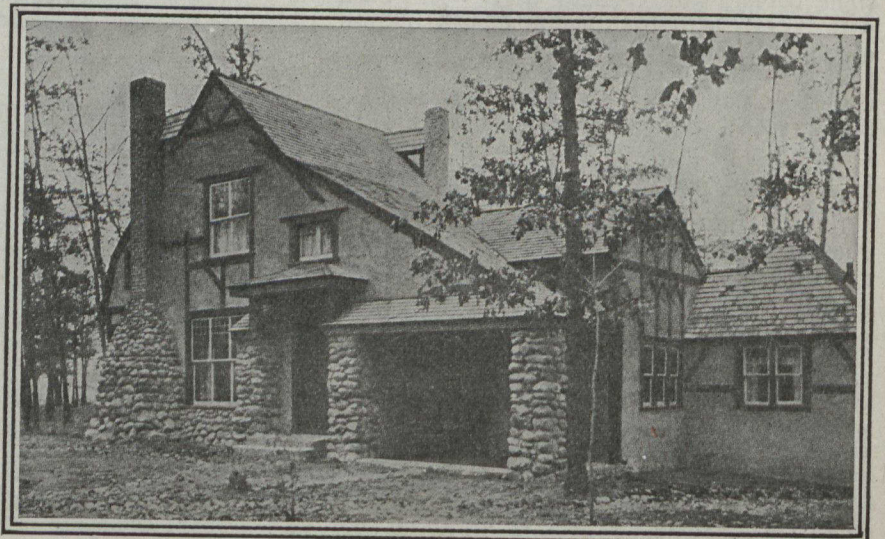
Type of suburban home, constructed wholly of stone.

blunder are legion, and so if our houses are to reflect credit on us it is necessary that we admit that not every man can design a house, and when we build to search out one who can and will crystalize our ideas and requirements for us. The architect as a professional man ranks with your doctor and lawyer. Put some trust and faith in him and do not expect him, solely because he is an architect, to build you a ten thousand dollar house for considerably less, and lastly, when your house is built and you are proud of it, don't be guilty of that bromidic speech, "We designed the house ourselves, the architect just drew it out for us."

TWO CHARACTERISTIC SUBURBAN HOMES



A brick and cement residence at Glen Ridge, N. J., practically fireproof



A modest house, unusual and by no means ugly.

From "Suburban Life."