

Homes and Gardens of Canada

5.—The Country Residence of Mr. Mortimer B. Davis in the Laurentians

By A. G. SCLATER

PERCHED on a man-made plateau eleven hundred feet above sea level, a hundred feet above a horseshoe-shaped lake that lies like a splash of blue in a sea of green, Mr. Mortimer B. Davis' country home in the Laurentians, near Ste. Agathe des Monts, commands a panorama of mountain scenery that is probably unsurpassed in Eastern Canada.

The house—a greyish, low, long structure of wood and rough-hewn stone with gabled roof and a long, wide verandah, built in a style which is apparently an adaptation of the native architecture of the province of Quebec—stands in the centre of an estate of three or four hundred acres, on a steep hillside opposite the little village of Ste. Agathe.

High up on the hillside among the firs and pines the house seems to stand on the side of a gigantic amphitheatre, wherein the ranges of hills like tiers of seats, roll away to meet the sky in the blue distance. It is estimated that on a clear summer's day one can see mountain ranges fully forty miles away from Mr. Davis' front windows.

In summer, when all these rolling, round-topped hills are covered with green, and the lake below is a sparkling blue, but a shade darker than the vivid blue of the sky above, one could not ask a more appropriate picture for the caption "Canada in Summer." Here is peace and coolness, the delicious peace and coolness for which most city people yearn, when the sun is high and the days are warm. Mountains and mountain air seem to have a singularly soothing effect on jangled nerves. The mountains are so big and still and man in comparison is so small, that no matter how important our worries may seem in the market places of the cities, in among the mountains there seems to occur a rapid readjustment of our sense of perspective, that occurs in no other part of that non-citified region known by the generic name of "the country."

No Jarring Sense of Newness.

Standing on Mr. Davis' verandah, in midsummer, looking over the rolling hills and down on the blue lake below, dotted perhaps with darting motor boats, and slow-moving canoes, one can understand why in the olden times sages and saints fled to the hills for peace and why to-day the modern business man and city dweller grown wise with the increasing age of the world, seek the hills to place themselves again in that state of mind from which they can gaze upon the busy affairs of mankind, from the outside and from above.

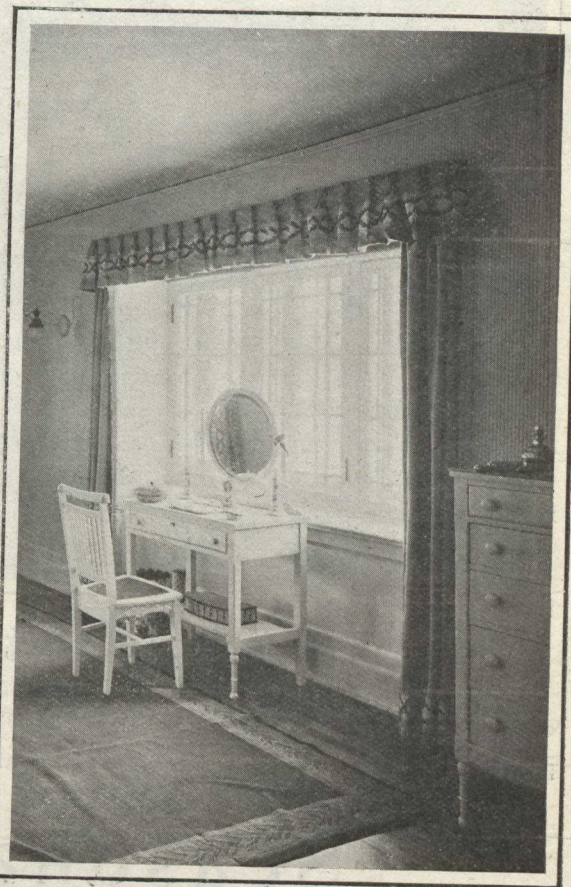
Mr. Davis' home on the mountain side is but slightly over a year old, but owing to the skill with which the architect has adopted his style of archi-

ture to the landscape in which the house stands, there is none of that jarring sense of newness which one experiences in coming upon a new house built in the country. The stone from which the house is built—limestone cut in that zigzag style that is peculiar to the stone work of old French-Canadian manor houses—looks old and grey and weather-beaten and might easily have been in position a hundred years. Although the grounds and terraces about the house are still uncompleted and in the early stages of an evolution from a rocky hillside, which will end finally in the velvet lawns and luxurious flower beds which the skill and art of the landscape gardener makes possible, they are, however, far enough advanced to give one some idea of the beauty of the estate which will surround the house when they are completed.

House and Furnishings.

At present the interest of a visitor to Mr. Davis' home in the country is confined principally to the house itself and the beautiful scenery in the midst of which it stands. One enters the house from the north through a sun parlour, and comes at once into the living-room, in this, as in most country houses, the most important room in the house. As was the custom in the old French-Canadian manor houses, the house is built one room deep and the living-room occupies the full breadth of the house from east to west, overlooking a panorama of lake and mountain on the one side and looking up the mountain side on the other. The furnishings of the living-room, and the manner which the architect has decorated it, form a singularly attractive combination of the ultra-modern and the Old English.

The room, conforming as it does to the general shape of the house, is long and wide, with rather high ceilings, rafters in dark oak, with a floor of light oak, white walls and the high, narrow windows buried very deep in the thick walls, that are so characteristic of the sturdily-built Canadian houses after which the house is partly patterned. At either end of the room are built from ceiling to floor, stone fireplaces of rough, rounded boulders, with dark, very heavy andirons, which harmonize marvellously well with the heavy proportions of the fireplaces. The walls and the spaces between the oak rafters are white and unornamented in keeping with the scheme of decoration which holds good throughout the house. There are no pictures on the walls, although at first owing to the skilful way in which the wall space is cut up, the omission is not at first noticed. The absence of the usual rows of pictures



This Bedroom Window of Generous Light Affords a Splendid View of the Distant Laurentian Hills.

on the walls is appreciated as being essential, after one has seen the rest of the house as to the carrying out of the motives which animated the architect in designing the interior of this lovely home. Down the centre of the room runs a long oaken table of antique design, with bench-like seats of a similarly antique design with rattan seats on either side. Before the fireplaces are drawn up old-fashioned winged-back chairs, covered with gaily-coloured cretonne.

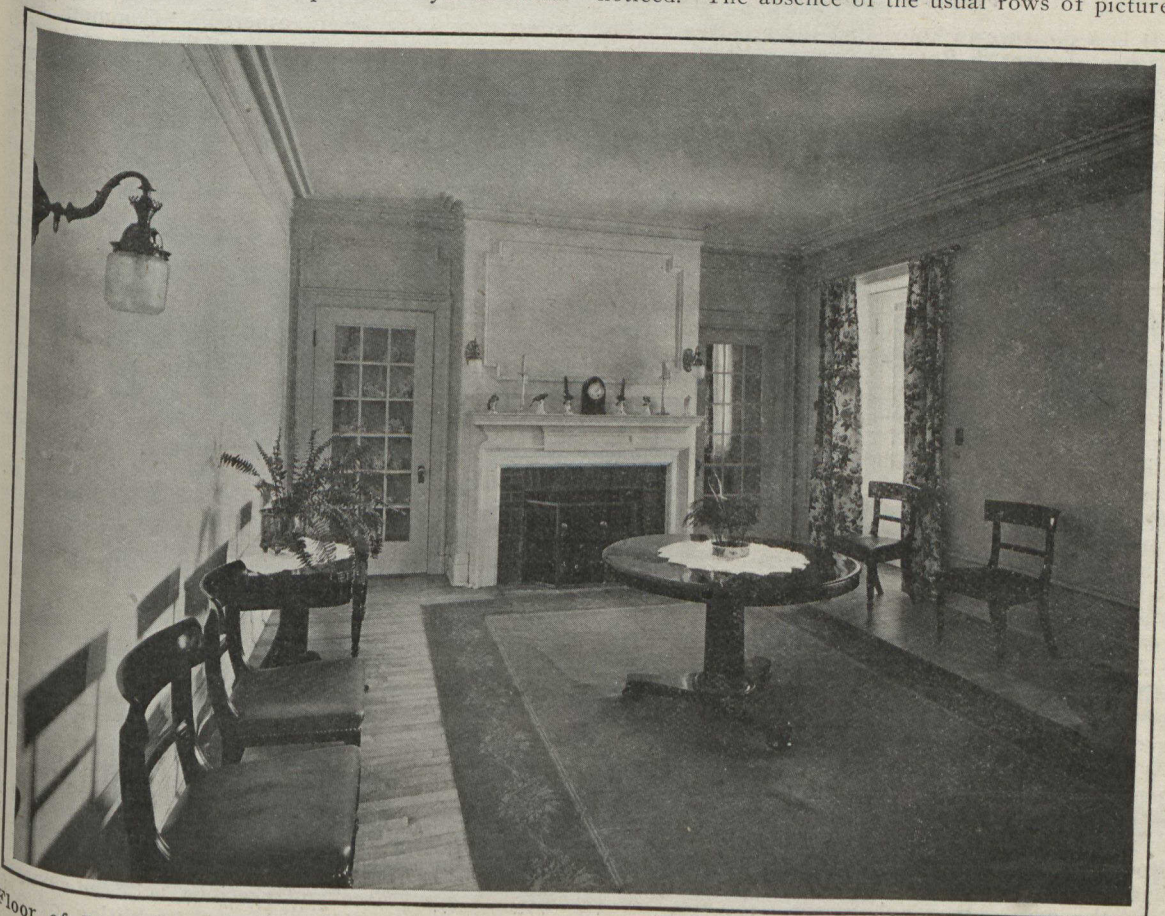
The carpet is of green, with a border of conventional flowers in dull red, and the window curtains are of a quaint pattern that somehow or other helps to heighten the antique-modern atmosphere of the room. All the furniture is antique, time-blackened and of oak, and the most of it has been brought from England by Mrs. Davis herself.

As in a good picture, every detail is put in for a definite purpose and heightens the effect which the whole room is intended to convey. Everything seems to fit into a definite place in the whole scheme of decoration and one gains the impression on entering the room that the designer of the decorations and the buyer of the furniture, the carpets, and the window curtains, had a definite idea as to how the room was to look long before its different parts had been brought together. There is a clearness, a brightness, a cheerfulness, and an art about it all that is wholly satisfying.

A Home in the Truest Sense.

The interior of the house is the same, and the coldness and stiffness of the "monochrome" system of decoration, which forms the basis apparently of the scheme of decoration adopted, is relieved and brightened by the dark, warm colours of the oak, mahogany and rosewood furniture, which is used in most of the rooms. Without exaggeration the interior of Mr. Davis' house can be said to be a work of art, and the designing of it is credited to Mrs. Davis, who is regarded to be, among those who know in Montreal, one of the most tasteful women in matters that have to do with the interior fittings of a modern house. If Mr. Mortimer Davis' house at Ste. Agathe does not bear out this contention, his Montreal house most certainly will.

Of course, besides being a work of art, Mr. Davis' house is a home in the truest sense. It is lighted by electricity from Ste. Agathe and by "blaugas," a liquefied illuminating gas that is brought from the haunts of civilization in tanks. Incidentally this gas is used for the cooking. Then there is spring water to drink, brought from a mountain spring far up on the hillside, and water for



Floor of Light Oak, Rosewood Furniture and Decorations of White and Blue Constitute an almost Perfect Dining-room.