

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE HOME.

By MRS. THEODORE W. BIRNEY.

That architecture is as responsible as any other material agency in shaping the destinies of man I am convinced, and, as for woman, its influence on character is marked. I hear an invisible chorus proclaim, "That is so." I close my eyes, forget my own environment, and lo! I am in the midst of theirs.

In a corner of a cellar there appears a woman gathering up kindling and filling a scuttle with coal, and although the entire house is lighted by electricity she carries a tallow candle! The architect, in planning the house, could not, of course, consider so trifling a matter as a coal-bin, and so the only spot where one could be placed and be near the furnace was in the darkest, most inaccessible corner. The man who adjusted the electric wires in the cellar, although several degrees lower in the social scale than the architect, was still above an acquaintance with coal-bins. He had put the fixture on a brick pillar at an angle which precluded a single ray from falling where it was needed. And so every day in the year the candle had to be lighted when a fresh supply of fuel was needed. The master of the house had said repeatedly that he would have the light changed or have another fixture added, but such obscure inconveniences, or those which confront our servants only, are easily forgotten.

One of the ghostly throng that rose before me told me her predecessor had, one Summer day, neglected to take the candle with her. Stepping on a coil of rope which had been accidentally left near the door of the bin, she shrieked in terror at the thought that it was a snake: as she turned to run her foot became entangled in the rope, and when she finally freed herself and reached the kitchen she fainted. She was a nervous creature, with some heart trouble, and four months at a hospital succeeded this shock.

Another of these shadowy, retrospective shapes hobbles on a stick over to my side and points to a ladder-like ascent from another cellar and then up three similar structures to an attic. She had carried many burdens up and down those so-called stairs, but once when overtaxed by a day of unusually hard work she had attempted to take up two great scuttles of coal at the same time, she had felt a sharp twinge in her back, and since then she had never been "any good." In her case misfortune seemed to follow this unfortunate beginning, and she had at last been forced to place her children at the County Asylum for Orphans and had gone herself to the Almshouse. And she was a woman who had begun life with more than the average amount of strength and courage.

With a strange, wistful smile another spirit turns to me and beckons to a grand *front* stairway; up we pass, over rich carpets, past open doorways with rich hangings, the ascent so gradual it is scarcely perceptible as the foot sinks from one velvet pad to that above it. *She* has no burdens to carry: hers is the upward, easy path. Ah, if the architect had sacrificed a few feet of the over-spacious drawing and dining rooms and the lofty ball-room, some of my companions might not now be wearily shadowing me. It is so much more humane to sacrifice material things than health, hope and even life itself.

Back stairways, attic stairways and servants' rooms often seem an afterthought of the architect, grudging concessions to necessity. There are many vast generously lighted attics to which nothing larger than a medium sized trunk can be transported, because of the trap-like construction of their entrances. A sweet-faced woman in a neat sitting-room points to an open fireplace upon which the sun is streaming; her tidy soul has been vexed for years by this direct combination of firelight and sunlight—a thing which no architect should permit, since it is positively disagreeable and renders even the cleanest fireplace a most unsightly object. There is a great host of women lamenting with uplifted hands that there is no spot in their chambers suitable for a bed and that the dressing-tables have to be placed regardless of the adaptation of light to the mirrors. Another company proclaims that in store room, pantry and kitchen it daily and hourly suffers needless inconvenience, many women are without even a storeroom, and the cupboard built in a dark corner, unlighted and unventilated, is what has been dignified by the architect by the title of pantry.

But away with these lugubrious messengers! I open my eyes and see in my own and my neighbour's houses enough defects to rouse one's antagonism to the indifference of some architects to what they doubtless regard as the unimportant

details of their profession. With the eyes of a nation, a state or a city upon him, an architect may achieve notable success in the erection of a building which appears to meet all requirements. But with dwelling-houses the results are different; a great proportion consists of failures—from more points of view than one. To the onlooker there seems not a shadow of excuse for perpetrating some of these errors in wood and stone.

Have an abundance of light and ventilation, but don't have your house all windows. Avoid the double windows; one very wide window is much more handsome from within and without, is more effectively draped and, when outside blinds are used, is infinitely preferable to the double window with its necessarily awkward shutter adjustment. Where practicable, have small, oblong or square windows placed in closets; a larger window interferes with closet space and is not requisite for purposes of lighting or ventilation.

Another word in regard to windows. A recent invention does away with the trouble caused by window frames sticking. There are side pieces and a lock adjusted to accommodate themselves to any expansion or contraction of the woodwork, the sash sliding easily at all times, and the mechanism being so simple that a child can manipulate it. It renders a window practically burglar-proof unless the glass be broken, and a delightful feature is that either sash or both can be securely locked at any point desired. That of itself would recommend the invention to timid souls who, realizing that fresh air is essential in sleeping apartments, are yet afraid under some circumstances to lower the upper sash, as the window cannot then be fastened. When possible select the glass for your windows yourself, if you wish to be fully satisfied in this important particular. Have your attic windows in door shape and to open outward; do not have blinds to these windows. A thick, green shade answers perfectly for excluding the light. The cellar windows should be well above ground, or miniature Niagaras down your cellar walls after a heavy Summer shower or a melting snow drift will result. Use as large panes of glass as you can for these windows: they admit more light and are much more easily cleaned. Have screens placed in your cellar windows as soon as the frames are in. Insist upon having fastenings to all shutters which will allow them to be kept open on windy days and you will not have the experience of dependently sitting in semi-gloom with all the blinds on the living side of the house closed on account of the velocity of the wind. Of course, you will not have door sills!

Have your main stairway wide and the back stairs as easy of ascent as the front. Let the entrance to your attic stairs be open and free from projections, and have the stairs broad and shallow: the many purposes for which an attic may be used demand this convenient arrangement. A large attic makes an excellent drying-room for laundry purposes in stormy weather and, when the clothes are out of the way, becomes a grand play-room for the children. If it can be heated, it may be used daily for such a purpose: if not, the children may be warmly dressed in coats and caps and sent to the attic for a change of air and a frolic, when the weather will not permit outdoor recreation.

Have your fireplaces broad and shallow and with sufficient draft to prevent smoking. Do not economize on your hardware: have the best. Order two keys to your kitchen door and six latch keys for your front door, if your family is of any size. It is a simple matter to keep two or three carefully put away and a comfort to know they are available when needed. Have your room lighted from the side: the center chandelier is objectionable, and, if you are inclined to believe you appear well in the evening, avoid sitting directly under it: otherwise you will disillusion your most partial admirers, for a strong vertical light of this kind brings out every line in the face and casts most unbecoming shadows about the eyes and mouth. Have the electric lights or gas jets placed to overlook your piano and on both sides of your dressing-table: see to this yourself, as many architects or electricians will never think of these particulars, and a tearing up of floors, breaking of plastering and re-papering will ensue sooner or later, when you finally determine to have the work done.

Have a well-shelved closet in your library—a small one will answer: if there is to be no library, have a closet in your sitting or living room. Let the shelving in the closets through-