

Modern Tendencies in House Building

Conclusions Drawn From a Study of Two Score House Designs in the "Architectural Review."

IN studying a group of two-score house designs it proves interesting and instructive to note certain general tendencies to be discovered by an analysis of the various houses. The prevailing "mode" seems to be for the living and dining room to adjoin each other, extending entirely along the southern front. Where this can be obtained without undue sacrifice of the remainder of the floor plan, it makes a cool and decidedly pleasant arrangement.

Decidedly less interest obtains in the plan combining the conventional central hallway extending through the house from north to south, with a living room opening on one side and the dining-room and service portion upon the other.

Comparatively few plans indicate any recognition of the fact that the best location for the living porch is toward the west. There are also a considerable number that ignore the opportunity or need to obtain morning sunlight in the dining-room and kitchen, thus securing a cooler outlook for these rooms for mid-day or late afternoon. There exists, of course, some difference of opinion as to whether morning sun in a bedroom is always desirable.

Many plans show a refreshing tendency towards a larger, more spacious and open hall, probably in justifiable reaction from the crowding of staircases and hallways imposed by clients demanding larger rooms than they can reasonably expect for the money they have available. This lack of space in the first storey hall is a regrettable defect found in most small modern houses. Nothing so adds dignity and hospitality to the dwelling as a carefully proportioned and gracious entrance hall.

It is also interesting to find so many of the houses that have, for their exterior treatment, some variation of the old Colonial *farmhouse* motive. This character has undoubtedly been avoided in recent years largely because most house-builders desire a more pretentious home than their investment justifies, and probably this new tendency somewhat snobbishly results from the fact that a few wealthy owners have more recently had the judgment and good taste to adopt this very type of house for their country or summer use.

Judging from the drawings it is to the younger architect starting in practice, or the architectural draughtsman as yet unknown as an architect, that we must look for the most distinctive and most interesting low cost house designs. It is a regrettable fact that many architects—some even among those of established

reputation—are content to conduct their business along lines that cannot help but produce in their work a sameness or monotony of effect. Many, without apology or pretense, continue intentionally to reproduce a particular type of house again and *again* and AGAIN, until their clients, making a circuit of adjacent suburbs, find their own homes repeated along almost identical lines a dozen—or more—times. Some clients there are who accept this as a subtle and delicate complimentary tribute, while others as violently protest. Suffice it to say that these architects soon become known, and this tendency noted, and that they probably do not impose upon their local public very long without being found out and very correctly numbered.

Other architects as unblushingly strive to base each new problem as nearly as possible upon some preceding plan, beginning to think along these lines as soon as the new commission begins to suggest or recall the old; and so the inevitable result is again a duplicate, not only of plan, but even, *quite* as probably, of elevation as well. The wildest and most daringly original idea ever entering their minds extends perhaps to the combination of an exterior of one house with the plan of another. This tendency, too, makes for monotony of appeal, besides a conventional and commonplace plan; and the architect practising either of these methods does little to maintain his responsibility to the community of giving of the best of himself, and treating each new problem so as to draw out the utmost of individuality and interest of which the surroundings—or the clients—are capable.

It is well for the beginner in his profession to remember that those architects who have made themselves finally and acknowledgedly successful, in *any* line of architectural work, have done so only because they have seized upon every opportunity to make the utmost individual and distinctive design out of each and every problem that came to them to be solved. While many clients may, in the first place, have very similar ideas for the plan of their home, it yet rarely happens that the type of plan they have in mind is entirely appropriate to the kind of lot they have selected, and no architect is true to his best self, or to his best ideals, if he does not seize upon every unusual element of plan arrangement—every extra complication of the problem imposed by plan or site—that provides opportunities for new and individual types of treatment, in even so hackneyed and universal a problem as a *home*.