

SUBURBAN & COUNTRY LIFE SUPPLEMENT

CHARACTER IN THE HOUSE

Points That Must Be Kept in Mind if Good Taste Is to Be Attained

By G. M. WEST

THERE is a saying that a man is known by the company he keeps, and in a like manner we can almost say that he is known by his house, whether it be a pretentious city dwelling or a simple country home. This being the case it behooves us, therefore, to be watchful of our reputations and to see to it that our homes conform to those canons of good taste with which we would desire to be associated. It is perhaps in the smaller and average type of suburban house that the problem of obtaining character is most difficult, and it is here that lack of taste or lack of knowledge of what is fitting is very liable to crop out; there are so many items which go to make up the successful whole that numerous chances for error are afforded.

The Type.

How often indeed is the interior of a house designed with

utter disregard to the character or style of the exterior, though truth to tell, in many cases it would be difficult to name the style of the outside. It is not, however, satisfying to pass from the contemplation of an external design reminiscence of the early Colonial or Georgian types into an interior whose chief character is pronouncedly "Mission" or some style whose traditions are at equal variance. If, therefore, we wish to build on "Colonial" lines, this motive should govern throughout and should be our guiding principle in all that has to do with our home, or, if some other style is our hobby let us assume its characteristics along which to build. Particularly is this so, to my mind, in country work where the relationship between the living rooms, the garden and terrace should be so much more intimate. The task of subdividing modern domestic architecture into various styles is entirely too great to be taken up here in any detail and we shall only speak at all of the "Colonial" and that which is sometimes called "Modern English" or "Modern Gothic."

Some Colonial Characteristics.

We are, or should be, all familiar with the outward characteristics of the "Colonial" or more correctly called "Georgian" type; the simple, straight-forward mass with uniformly disposed windows and doors, the simple porch and cornice of classic detail, and the staid formality of the whole, typical of this style, being noticeable in many of the older form of houses and homes of Ontario. This same spirit, simple formalism and classic detail should be



A Modest Dining-Room—According to Modern Ideas.



Sitting Room of an old Colonial Homestead built in 1796.

the key-note of interior design for this type. Bay windows are not frequent and the rooms therefore are usually large, roomy and rectangular, the openings are more or less uniformly spaced.

The trim is simple, sometimes of a classic order, with fine moldings suitable to the white finish which is usually given it. The mantels are low and of classic line and molding. Very often flat fluted pilasters support the shelf and enclose the tiled breast. Sometimes a mirror is hung above in

its own frame. A plastered cornice of simple formal design is usual in the important rooms. The stairs, perhaps, most express this style, open strings more or less elaborated with slim daintily turned balusters, veneered newels or often no newels at all, with gracefully curved and ramped handrails are characteristic. Pleasing contrasts are obtained by staining and finishing the balusters, newels and rails and sometimes the doors in fine deep reds or other tones, against the white of the general trim.

The Furnishing.

In furniture design it is not hard to obtain modern couches and other items on the lines of the old which will fulfil our needs in this respect. The spindle back arm chairs of other days and the comfortable and inviting wing chairs upholstered suitably are well known. There is a strong tendency to return to the roomy and comfortable upholstered seats and couches of the last generation. Neither do we find it difficult to obtain wall coverings in pleasing flower patterns or beautiful grass cloths in suitable tints for our purpose, and it is not usually hard to match these with hangings and upholstery in similar patterns and colourings. The lighting fixtures, hardware and numerous household articles with a little search and a discriminating eye, can be found which, if not strictly Colonial or Georgian, have at least, sufficient grace and refinement to pass muster in such classic surroundings. Here let me note that the term "Georgian" does not indicate connection to the state of Georgia, but rather, denotes the relation of this type to the English art at the time of our own kings of that name.

The Other Style.

In contrast to the "Colonial" or formal type there is that other style of house to which the classification of "Modern English" has sometimes been given. Though in all good work still retaining simplicity of mass and detail this lacks the formality and classicism of the "Georgian" and the freedom which manifests itself outwardly in the use of gables, bay windows and other features, which might be classed in a sense as "Gothic," continues throughout the interior. This very freedom makes the difficulty of obtaining character and is the cause of most failures to do so. We become lost in the maze of things we can do, and try to do them all.

Perhaps the most striking contrast to the "Colonial" type is the complete change in colouring and the neglect of classic traditions. The trim is simple but usually coarser. Brick mantels of carefully selected colourings and bond are very suitable, an overmantel of oak or other hardwood with beautifully grained selected panels often occurring. The rooms are sometimes wainscotted to various heights in hardwood, which is stained or fumed to beautiful browns and other tints. Beamed ceilings of various kinds, always designed with regard to their structural significance, are pleasing but sometimes much overdone. All such features must be