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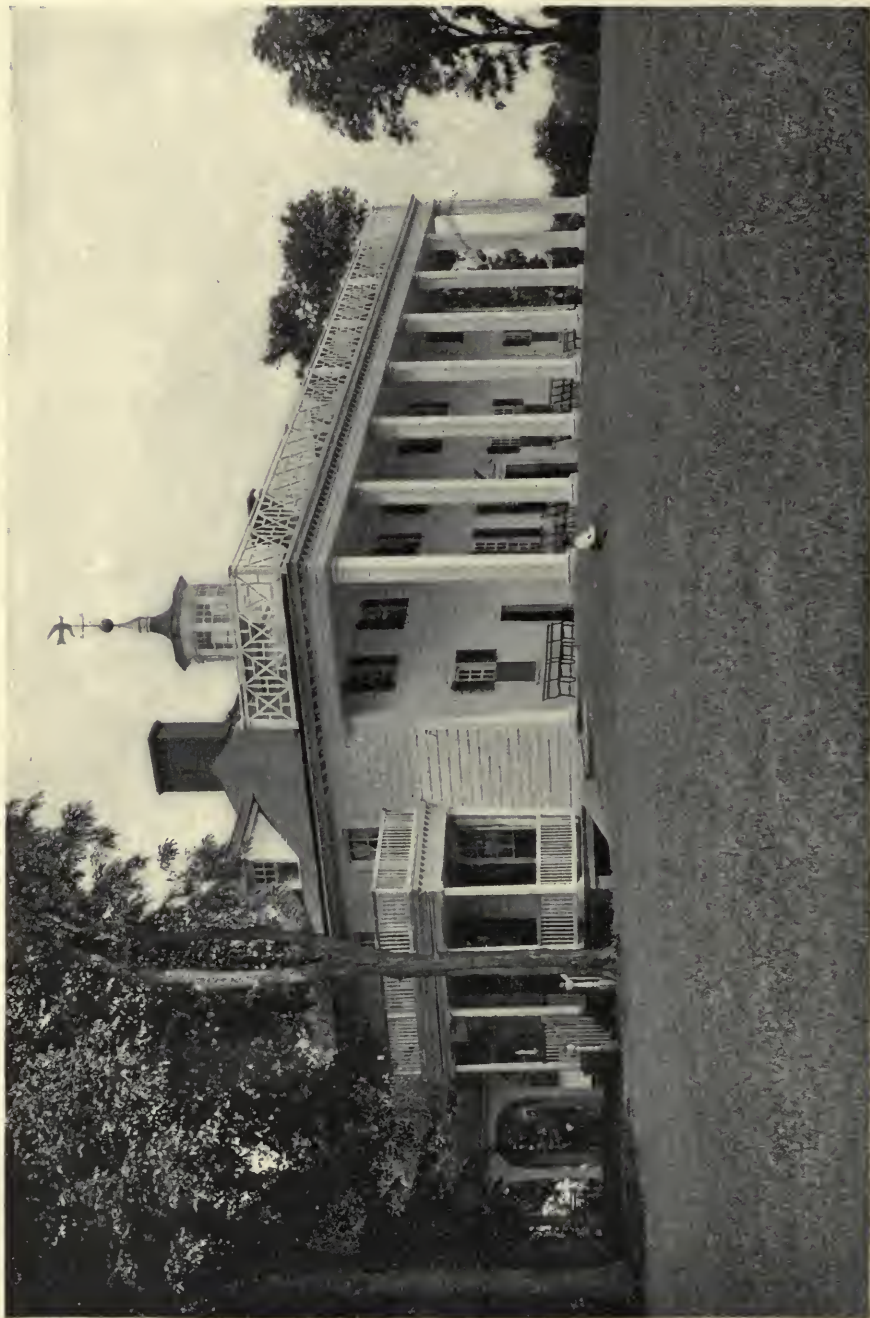
STATELY HOMES IN
AMERICA



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MOUNT VERNON.

Front View.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

FROM COLONIAL TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

HARRY W. DESMOND

AND

HERBERT CROLY

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED



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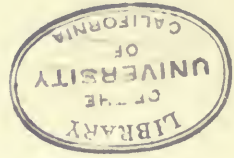
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MOUNT VERNON.

Rear View.

MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES



CHAPTER I

Men Who Build Fine Houses



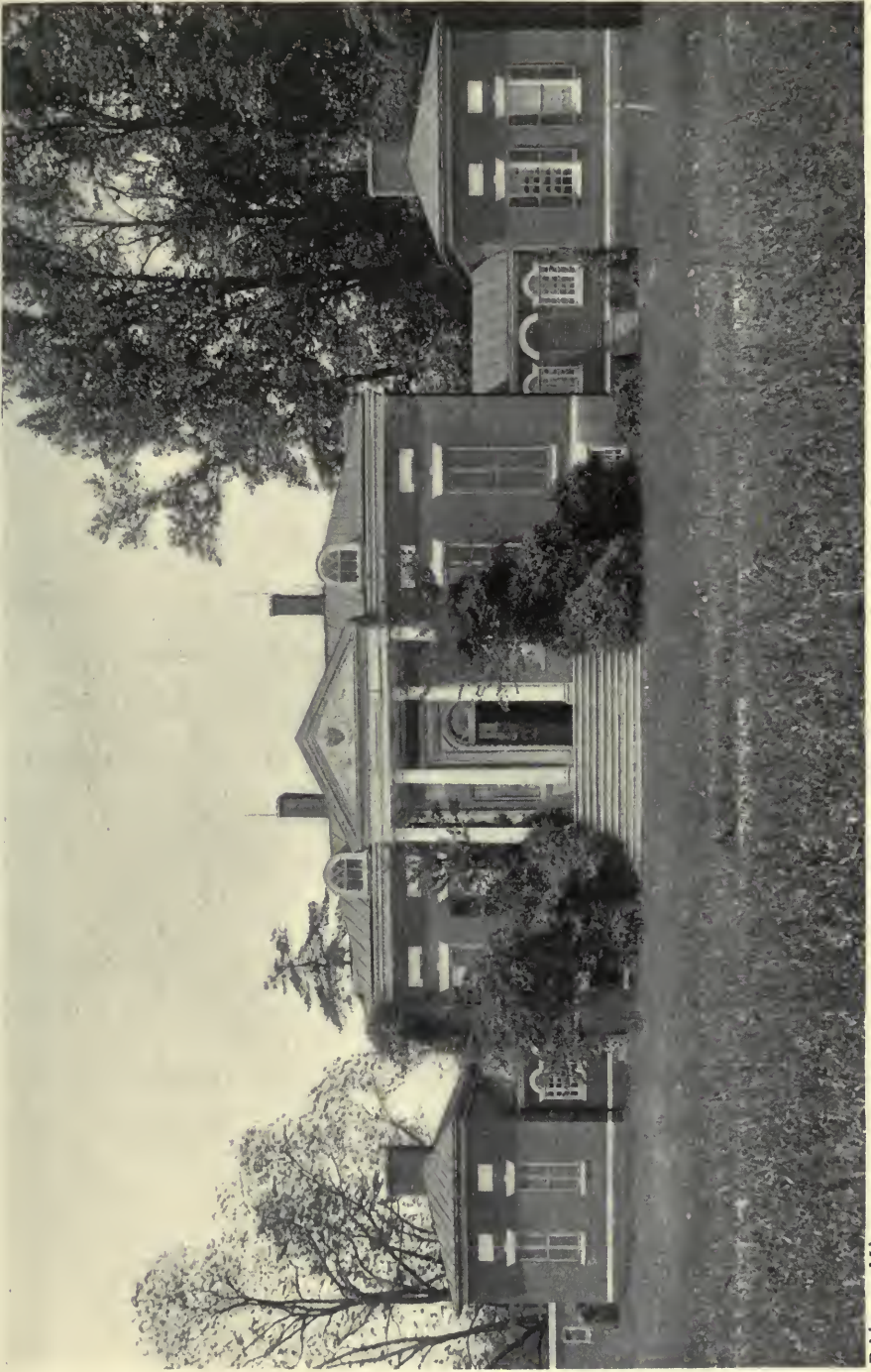
URING the past fifteen or twenty years there have been built in the United States a large number of expensive and magnificent private dwellings. These houses have had their predecessors, of course, but hardly any precursors. They are as different in size and magnificence from the earlier types of American residence as the contemporary "sky-scraper" is from the old five-story brick office. And since they are a comparatively new fact in American domestic architecture, it may be inferred that they are the expression of similarly new facts in American economic and social development. They are the peculiar product, that is, partly of the most recent American architectural ideas, and partly of the tastes, the ambitions, the methods, and the resources of contemporary American captains of industry.

No apology is necessary for offering to the public, in a permanent form, a full illustration and explanation of some of the larger and more sumptuous of these dwellings.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

They naturally arouse a lively curiosity, and this curiosity is perfectly legitimate, because the buildings are, both from the architectural and social point of view, novel and representative. They furnish, perhaps, the most complete and significant example which has yet been evoked, of the sort of things which give æsthetic pleasure to certain selected Americans of the present day; and the best witness to this fact is the effect which they have upon foreign visitors. There was a time when European travelers in the United States found nothing to attract their attention in our domestic architecture. Their references to it are most casual.

Mrs. Trollope, who was interested in such things, ignores our dwellings until she reaches New York, and then devotes only a few lines to their description. Their lack of distinction fitted in very well with De Tocqueville's views about the commonplace æsthetic character of American life. Frederika Bremer published in 1853 two volumes upon the "Homes of the New World," apparently without finding anything worthy of description in the "home" buildings. Of course, Miss Bremer was a high-minded person, and used the word "home" to express a spiritual rather than a material meaning; nevertheless, her attitude and that of the others is significant. There seems to be a tacit understanding among travelers in this country before the war that the surroundings of American domestic



Baltimore, Md.

HOMEWOOD.



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

life presented nothing worthy of attention. Even Mr. Bryce, at a very much later period, passes over this aspect of American social growth with no specific consideration. The contemporary European observer, on the other hand, is immediately attracted and impressed by our domestic architecture. He may not altogether like it; he probably misunderstands its significance, but he cannot ignore it. Our larger dwellings have become conspicuous in the great show of American life.

It would be strange if this were not the case, for a great deal of money and talent have been expended in the effort to make them effective. The money would not, of course, have counted, had not the talent been there to use it; but as a matter of fact, the very best architectural ability and training which the country possesses has been employed upon these houses. If one were to enumerate the contemporary American designers whose work is most distinguished, and whose reputation has the best chance of proving permanent, the names would include those which are given under the plates of this book, and not very many besides. Moreover, the better American architects have had in the case of these dwellings a freer hand than they have had in any other important class of work.

The designing of commercial buildings, of churches, and of institutions is hampered by severe restrictions of

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

money and of space. The architect, from the time he lays out the first sketches on the boards until the time he turns over the keys to the owner, is confronted by the most rigid practical requirements, and the most detailed supervision and criticism. Naturally, he is not entirely emancipated from such supervision and criticism when he comes to design a rich man's residence; and in the case of a house erected in New York City, the site at his disposal is often far from satisfactory; but still, on the whole, the planning of such building is a matter of easy adjustment, while in the design and the decorations he can do very much as he pleases. He is treated, that is, by his clients, as a thoroughly competent expert, whose training gives him a certain authority, and who is to be allowed, within limits, to have his own way.

It follows that these dwellings are the better American architect's characteristic method of expression. They show him, as near as possible, in an easy and natural frame of mind. The "sky-scrapers" are triumphs of engineering, but not of architecture. The architect designs them because he has to do so, but he designs his big residences out of the fulness of his knowledge, and with the best will in the world. They betray his likes and dislikes, his æsthetic traditions and tendencies, and the limitations both of his training and his point of view. They betray, for instance, his conservatism, his impersonality, his French predisposi-



Albany, N. Y.

THE VAN RENSSELAER MANOR HOUSE.

MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

tions, and finally his preference for æsthetic, rather than structural and social proprieties. What he wants above all is to get a "stunning" effect; and he is comparatively indifferent whether that "stunning" effect is anything more than an architectural picture. It is as if American designers were reacting violently from the neglect with which the purely æsthetic point of view was treated in this country until a few years back, and are now determined to pay any price for a good-looking result.

Be it straightway added that the American architect succeeds in what he attempts. The town and country houses which he designs, particularly his interiors, are nothing if not "stunning." He has had it in his mind to reproduce on our soil, buildings as interesting and as effective as the great historic mansions of Europe; and his residences, if they possess only the secondary interest of an historical imitation, are in a very real sense to be classed with the palaces of the Italian princes, the châteaux of the French nobility, and the great country-seats of the English landed aristocracy and gentry. Of course, there are differences vast and innumerable between these American residences and their historic predecessors, and many of these differences are the immediate result of the palpable fact that the latter were "the real thing," while the former are only a sincere, ambitious, and necessary pretence. Yet in spite of these differences, the classification can be main-

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tained on good grounds. Unlike any previous type of residence erected in this country, these great modern dwellings are something more than personal and domestic products, something more than pleasant and appropriate houses, in which to live and bring up a family; and this "something more" stands for a different point of view on the part of their owners. They indicate on the part of these gentlemen, not the pride of station and position of a European noble, but a very conscious delight in the opportunities to be publicly effective, which are offered to them by their wealth and by the freedom of American life. They exist, in part at least, in order to display that wealth, and to celebrate those opportunities in a worthy and conspicuous manner; and it is this fact that puts them in a different class from other American residences. They are the outcome of a certain kind of social and æsthetic ambition, and thus unmistakably suggest the effective prominence and the grand style of their European predecessors.

The epithet that comes nearest to describing comprehensively the most characteristic of these houses, is the familiar newspaper adjective, "palatial." They are the dwellings of merchant princes, comparable, not in artistic originality and propriety, but in general atmosphere and style, to the palaces of the Florentine and Venetian nobility. Of course, there are many very handsome American residences which do not fit this description at all, and



Germantown, Pa.

THE WASHINGTON HOUSE.



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

which, so far from having anything palatial about them, are merely the unobtrusive homes of wealthy gentlemen ; but in an introduction such as this, it is only characteristic tendencies which can be described, and the typical big American residence of to-day is more like an Italian palace than it is like any other historic type of residence. This comparison will have to be justified from an architectural point in another chapter. Here I merely wish to indicate that certain suggestive analogies can be named between the social standing and psychological point of view of the former owner of an Italian palace and the present owner of a typical American château.

The nobles of Renaissance Italy were not a landed aristocracy with a definite, time-honored, and unimpeachable social status. Except in the case of Venice, they were for the most part self-made men, or at least, were the immediate descendants of self-made men. They were, that is, usurpers, who had to fight for their positions, and who lived lives of strong and perilous excitement. In many cases, also, they were merchants and bankers. Their power was founded as much upon commerce as upon military force ; but it should be added, no social stigma attached to power and prominence acquired in this way. They were not like the Fuggers of Augsburg, or Jacques Cœur, socially inferior to a landed aristocracy which constituted an estate of the realm.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

The Italy of that time was, with obvious limitations, a rough democracy, in which any man, who had the necessary luck, brains, and will, might struggle to the top and fight for the privilege of staying there. The houses in which these men lived reflected their manner of life and their social status. They wished these houses to be effective and conspicuous; to display their power, their wealth, their pride of success and life; and they were not restrained from so doing by the fear that their wealth might be filched from them by their political masters, or by the consciousness that after all the best figure they could cut was that of a "bourgeois gentilhomme."

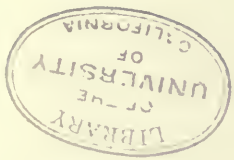
The modern American millionaire has, under totally different conditions, some very similar characteristics. He is, in the first place, a self-made man, or the son of one. Economically and socially, he is, if not a usurper, at least an experiment. (Never before have such vast quantities of wealth and such enormous powers for good or evil been concentrated in the hands of private citizens. As yet, no one can say with any certainty what the outcome will be—whether, that is, the great American fortunes will become a national and social danger, or whether they will constitute excellent humanizing and economic agencies. There are tendencies which look in both directions; and the whole movement, of which they are a part, is still in its earliest and most tentative stages.)



Near Annapolis, Md.

WHITEHALL.

Typical Southern home of old Colonial days.





Near Annapolis, Md.

WHITEHALL.

Rear View.



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

The point is, however, that the position of these millionaires is insecure, or unstable; they are still fighting to maintain or to advance their industrial standing; their heads are teeming with bold and far-reaching plans of industrial organization; they are continually taking large risks, and undergoing the high excitement incident to the achievement of well-planned but hazardous schemes; every circumstance combines to make them conscious of their power, their opportunities, and the flexibility and daring necessary to turn this power and these opportunities to good account. It is still necessary for them to play the game—and play it all the time.

No doubt it is a somewhat narrow game, compared with that played by an Italian despot. The American millionaire is not risking his life. It rarely happens that he is risking even his accumulated fortune; he is occupied merely with schemes to increase it; but these schemes require so much breadth of mind and imagination, and so closely resemble in method and effect great political constructions and combinations, that their authors deserve comparison with the Italian nobles—even though the risks of the latter were greater, and their natures more profoundly and completely stirred. The American “Barons” have not as yet succumbed to the great danger of money-spinners and become mere annuitants—that is, economic parasites. They are still much more in-

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terested in playing the game than in pocketing or spending the stakes.

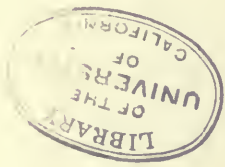
Of course, some of them spend money freely enough, for unless they did there would be no residences such as are illustrated in this book. Yet since these men are really living a life, instead of reaping the reward of someone else's life, it is no wonder that their residences show something of the same pleasure in rich and "stunning" furniture and fabrics, something of the same love of strong and compelling effects, something of the same willingness to advertise their wealth and power—as those of the Italian nobles formerly did.

In one respect, however, the position of these Italian despots, however insecure, was very much more definite than that of the American rich man of to-day. They were, except in certain instances, such as those of the earlier Medici, officially recognized as public leaders. Their wealth, while frequently possessing a commercial origin, was intimately and indissolubly associated in those turbulent times with political power and official position. In this respect American millionaires occupy a totally different situation. In the course of accumulating their fortunes, they have frequently made use of not very reputable political agencies; but although they have exercised at different times great political power, they have rarely sought that power for its own sake. Their status has not



Portsmouth, N. H.

THE PENHOLLOW HOUSE.
Old Colonial type.



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

been different from that of any other American citizen ; and it has no tendency to become different.

This fact has had curious and significant consequences. On the one hand the rich American is, for better or worse, perhaps the most conspicuous figure in American life. His comings and goings, his plans and his utterances receive a large share of newspaper attention. The most notorious of his class cannot attend a theatre or a horse-race without becoming objects of a disagreeable public sensation. They are literally pursued by reporters and photographers, and have to take the most drastic measures in order to preserve any decent privacy. The amount of their wealth, their habits, and their plans are almost as frequent subjects of conversation in American "social circles" as are the peculiarities of the royal family among English middle-class society.

In short, while often remaining in taste and feelings modest and reticent private citizens, they are, as a matter of fact, public characters; and the notoriety to which they are subjected, while not as irksome as that of a European potentate, is in its ordinary effects exceedingly disagreeable, just because this notoriety is, as it were, informal and unofficial.

Some of these gentlemen, as we have said, complain of the amount of attention they receive, and even resent it, while others appear to bear up under it extremely well;

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but no matter how they like it or dislike it, they are utterly powerless in the matter. This notoriety is so manifestly inevitable that the objector is very much like that common acquaintance who seeks to enjoy the bottle, but evade the headache. It is, moreover, the direct issue of the ambiguity of their position. The ordinary American citizen has all the chances he needs of seeing his presidents and governors, of hearing them speak, and even of grasping them by the hand—all this because the American executive, and to a less extent the legislator, must, for the most part, play his game in a room to the door of which almost everybody has the key.

But while this same citizen is quite as much interested in the industrial as he is in the political leaders of his country, he has by no means the same opportunities of personally "sizing up" these captains of industry. Their operations are carried on behind doors which are triple-locked, and which, generally speaking, are not opened until the laws are made, executed, and expounded. Under the circumstances they naturally appear as little as possible in general society, and associate almost exclusively with other men of their own set. Hence, in order to feed his very legitimate interest in these people, whose operations so vitally affect the cost of his beef, his oil, his tobacco, and his sugar, and whose fortune appears to bring with it the chance of obtaining everything wanted by the person



Salem, Mass.

THE EMERTON HOUSE.
Old Colonial type.





Residence of President Madison, Orange County, Va.

“ MONTPELIER.”



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

who does not own it, the good American citizen naturally falls back upon newspaper and social gossip. The mysterious nature of their operations enhances the value and interest of their personalities in general conversation, and consequently the social position which they occupy is not only unstable but ambiguous.

At an earlier stage of civilization deeds of corresponding moment and effect would have converted their perpetrators into some kind of an aristocracy. There are people who believe, or who profess to believe, that a similar result will eventually develop in this country. Mr. W. J. Ghent, for instance, in his ingenious book entitled "Our Benevolent Feudalism," argues at length that the American millionaires are developing into a baronial caste, which is gradually organizing American life on a feudal plan, and which will differ from a feudal aristocracy only because it will be benevolently disposed toward its retainers.

But if Mr. Ghent has convinced himself upon this point, he certainly has failed to convince very many other people. Most of us cherish a plausible belief that the democratic institutions and spirit of our country have become part of its life-blood; and that the social organization suggested above could be consummated only after a revolutionary struggle, which would ruin both the supposititious barons and their retainers. However, there is not

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the slightest indication that the American industrial leader has any such political ambition. His peculiar position at the present time cannot be understood unless it is kept constantly in mind that, whatever the issue of his activity, his purposes are special and personal; and the ambiguity and instability of his position is due to this combination of special and personal ambitions, with results that are of the utmost national and public importance.

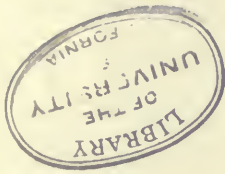
As we have already intimated, the semi-private and semi-public standing of the American captains of industry is expressed in their characteristic dwellings. Since they are practical men, their residences are, of course, built first of all to be inhabited. The best mechanical ingenuity to be found in the country is employed in making them mechanically complete—in supplying them with every “improvement” which will add to the owner’s comfort and convenience. But while they are built to be inhabited, they are built almost quite as much to be admired. These houses have about them a species of conscious publicity; they have been put together and adorned in order to make a brave show—as if their owners were very well aware that people were watching them; and it is characteristic of these owners that they want the exhibition to be not only brave, but genuinely admirable. They know that in order to get a genuinely admirable building they have to employ the best architects—just as, when they want to learn the



Restored by McKim, Mead & White.

EAST-ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE.

Washington, D. C.



MEN WHO BUILD FINE HOUSES

value of a mine or a railroad, they employ the best experts. Thus it is that the best American designers get their chance, and thus it is that the best American residences express both the highest contemporary æsthetic standards and at the same time the instincts and pleasures of their owners.

The fact that the sort of houses which the best American architects like to design do not differ from the houses in which the rich Americans like to live, can be readily explained. There has been much talk in this country about native styles of architecture and native forms of art; but it has rarely happened that this talk has issued from the artists themselves. The truth is that in all intellectual and æsthetic matters, Americans are extremely conservative. While they undeniably possess the instinct to be effective as well as efficient; they want to be effective in an entirely safe way; they want to avoid being crude and ridiculous.

The æsthetic conservatism of the American designer consequently harmonizes well with the conservatism of the American business man—in all matters outside of business; and the consequence is that the “stunning” effects that appeal to the artistic sensibilities of the designer appeal just as much to the personal and social sensibilities of the owner and the inhabitant. It is easy and obvious to say that the complete product is not in any

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

genuine sense a domestic style, and that there is a manifest incongruity between the lives of these men and their dwellings. All of which is true enough ; but it is not the aspect of the truth on which it is helpful at the present time to dwell. A style of dwelling-house is the ripe product of a complete and definite social growth, whereas in our own country social forms remain undeveloped and ambiguous.

The whole movement is in an extremely experimental stage ; and while it remains experimental, the round, full, speaking congruities of a complete form are not to be expected. Be it sufficient to note that there is some propriety between the generous habits of mind of the men who live in these houses, their love of splendor and distinction, and the peculiar character of the houses themselves.



Washington, D. C.

Restored by McKim, Mead & White.

STATE DINING-ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

CHAPTER II

The Colonial Residence



WE have said that the greater American residence of to-day had predecessors in the architectural history of the country, but hardly any precursors. It is not the outgrowth of a native style of domestic building. It has not been developed by a process of long and edifying local experimentation. It is, on the contrary, the product of specifically modern economic conditions and æsthetic standards. American life changes rapidly in all its departments, but in none of them does it change more rapidly than in the character of its building. Houses are built, destroyed, and rebuilt with a celerity for which there has been no parallel in Europe. It frequently happened on the chief streets of New York that four or five different buildings succeeded each other during the course of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, architectural fashions are altered even more quickly than are the buildings which they clothe, and one "revival" succeeds

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

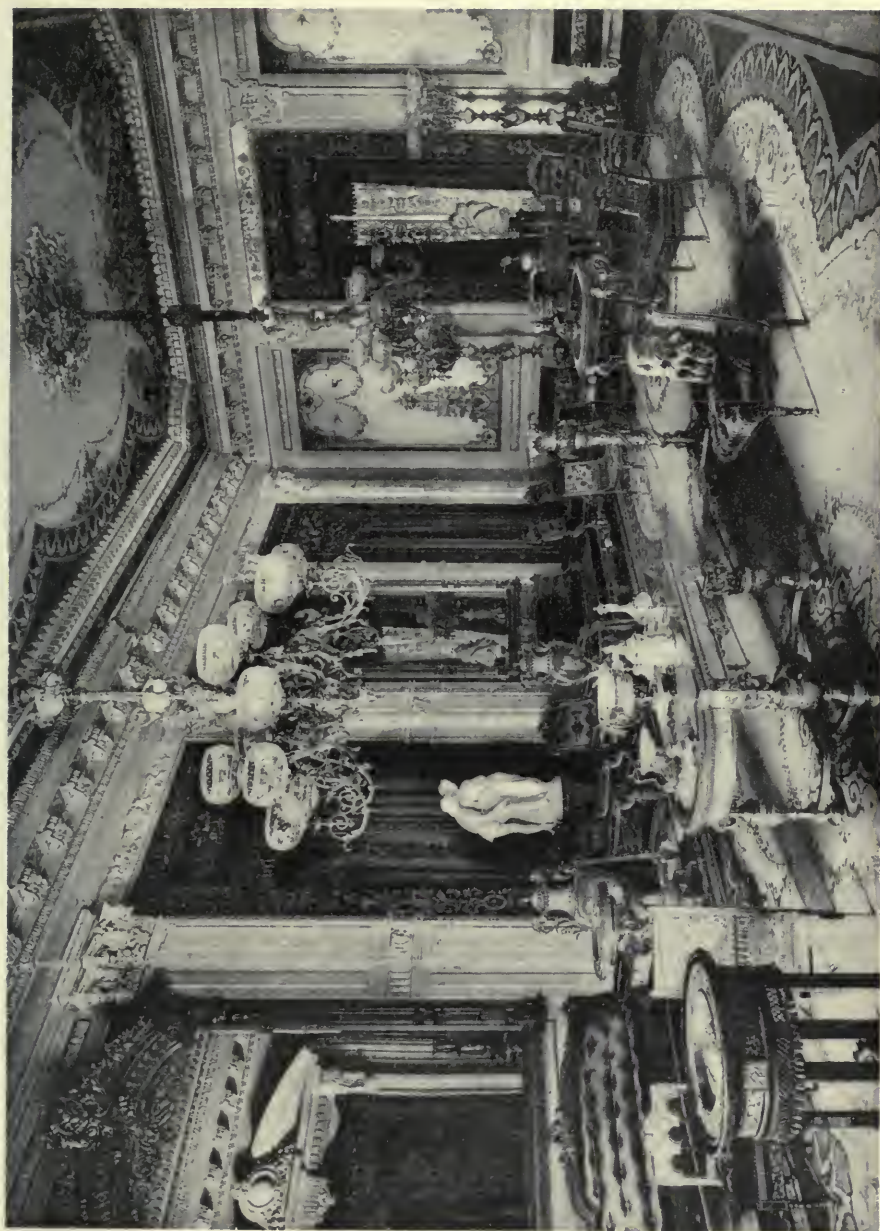
another with so much assiduity that the hasty observer gets an impression of a confusion of senseless imitation.

Yet essentially modern as these greater American residences are, their importance and significance can be understood only in the light of the historical development of American manners, social and economic forms, and domestic architecture. In the making of them, both their designers and owners have had at the top of their minds certain magnificent European models, the like of which was never seen in this country; but this very dearth of native American styles, after four generations of national life, this seeking after "stunning" but exotic effects, itself requires a good deal of explanation. Why has our domestic architecture been so completely subject to temporary fashions? Why is it that one form has not succeeded another in something like an orderly and continuous fashion? Why was it that the instructed architect of to-day, when he came to design the greater American residence, was forced to cut away from what his predecessors had been doing, and seek new European models both for the style and spirit of his buildings? Unless questions of this kind are fully and correctly answered, the whole meaning and promise of the greater residences of to-day will be misunderstood, and they cannot be properly answered without a review of previous types of American residences, and the conditions which made them what they were.



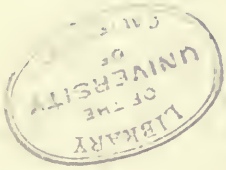
New York City.

HALLWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE A. T. STEWART.



New York City.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE A. T. STEWART.



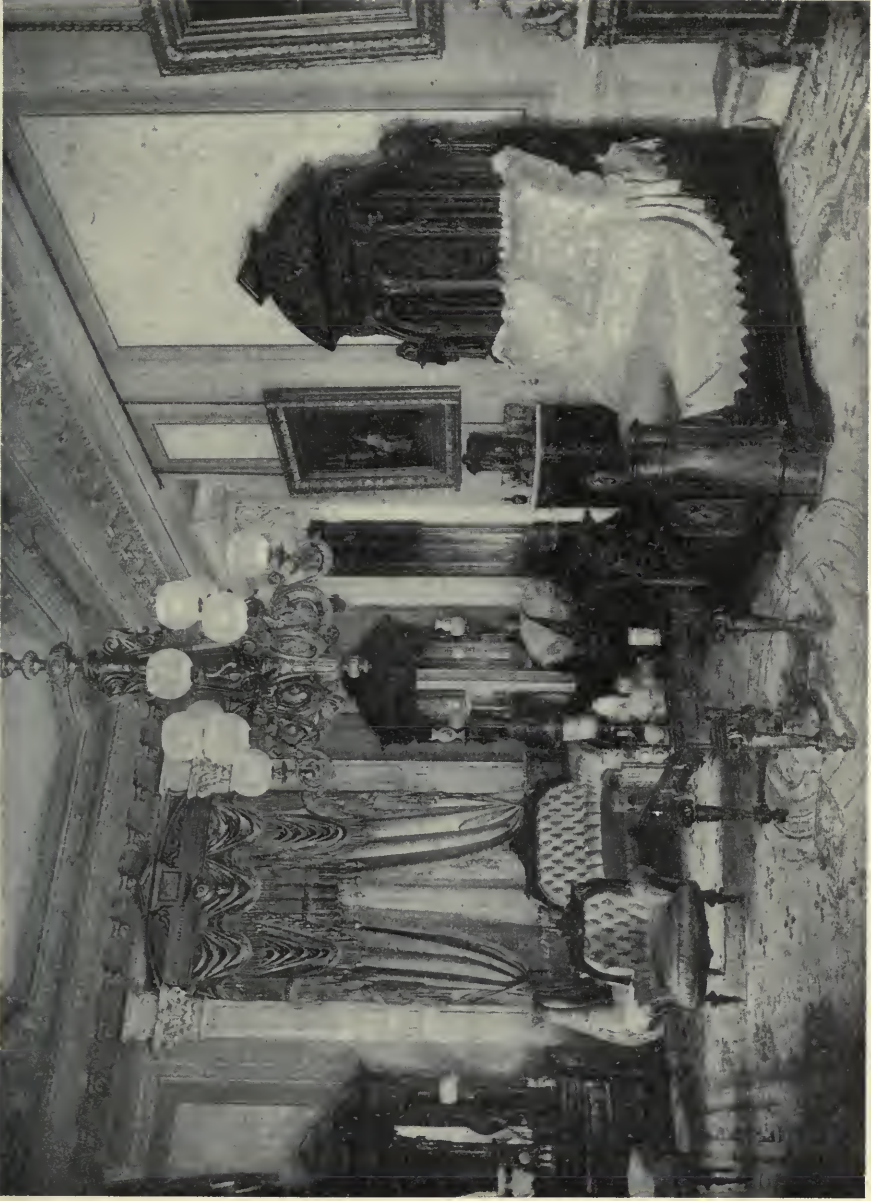
THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

From the very beginning styles succeeded each other in this country as rapidly as buildings. The earliest residences were, of course, log-cabins, and considering the absence of saw-mills, and the economy of this class of building, it might be surmised that these log-cabins would be developed into some local and desirable variety of log-dwelling—as has been the case in Scandinavia and Switzerland. But no! From the very beginning, Americans with the talk of a new America on their lips have been instinctively seeking to build up a new Europe or for a time a new England. Unless the persistence and in a sense the legitimacy of this instinct be granted, the history of this country in ideas and æsthetic forms cannot be at all understood. The new America, which the colonists sought, was a place in which there was to be more room for economic growth, and more freedom for social and religious ideas. In these respects the new country was from a very early period genuinely original; but its power of being original was thereby exhausted. In all ideas that were not of a practical importance, particularly in all æsthetic forms, the colonists willingly fell back upon European precedents; and this persistent colonialism was very much assisted by the constant and increasing immigration from the other side. These immigrants were frequently men of property, who could afford to build for themselves and their families substantial dwellings, and they naturally built

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

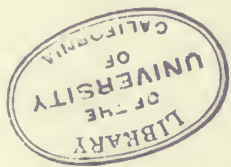
a modification of the kind of dwellings to which they were accustomed in the old country. Thus it was that in erecting new and better types of building there has been no attempt to improve local predecessors. The colonists simply turned their eyes abroad, and borrowed something which seemed better, because it was guaranteed by familiar European practice.

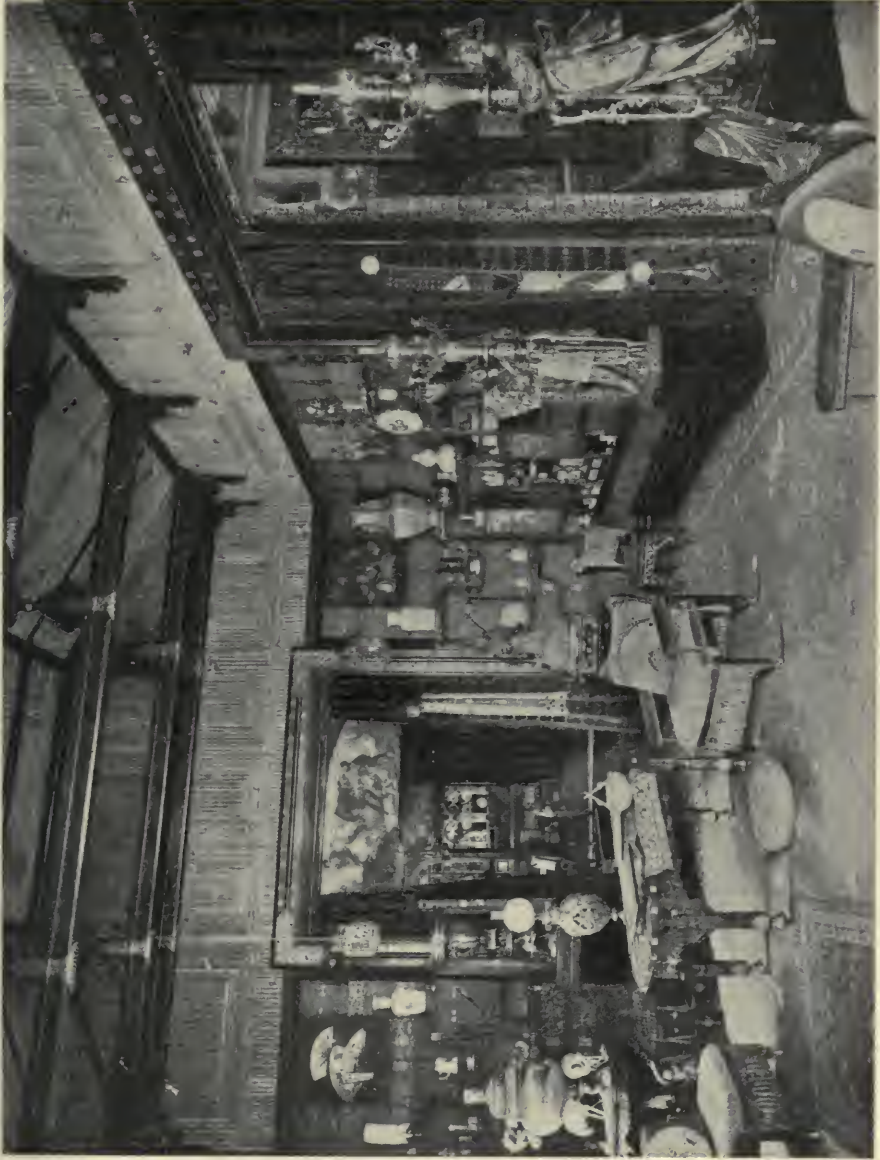
For the purpose of the present review, we have no interest in tracing in detail the history of colonial building. We are dealing here, not with American domestic architecture as such, but only with the greater domestic architecture—with the dwellings that had some pretense to size, splendor, and distinction, and whose owners were people of wealth and social standing. Such buildings did not come into existence in any considerable numbers until the middle of the eighteenth century. By that time there were numbers of families in all the older colonies whose wealth and position was such that they needed comparatively spacious and imposing habitations. The source of this wealth and the character of this position varied widely in the different colonies; but their possessors had certain common characteristics, which issued in buildings conforming in some respects to a common type. For one thing, no matter what the origin of the colonies, they had by that time become thoroughly English. Albany was, perhaps, the only town between Canada and



New York City.

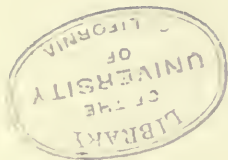
BEDROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE A. T. STEWART.





New York City.

JAPANESE ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

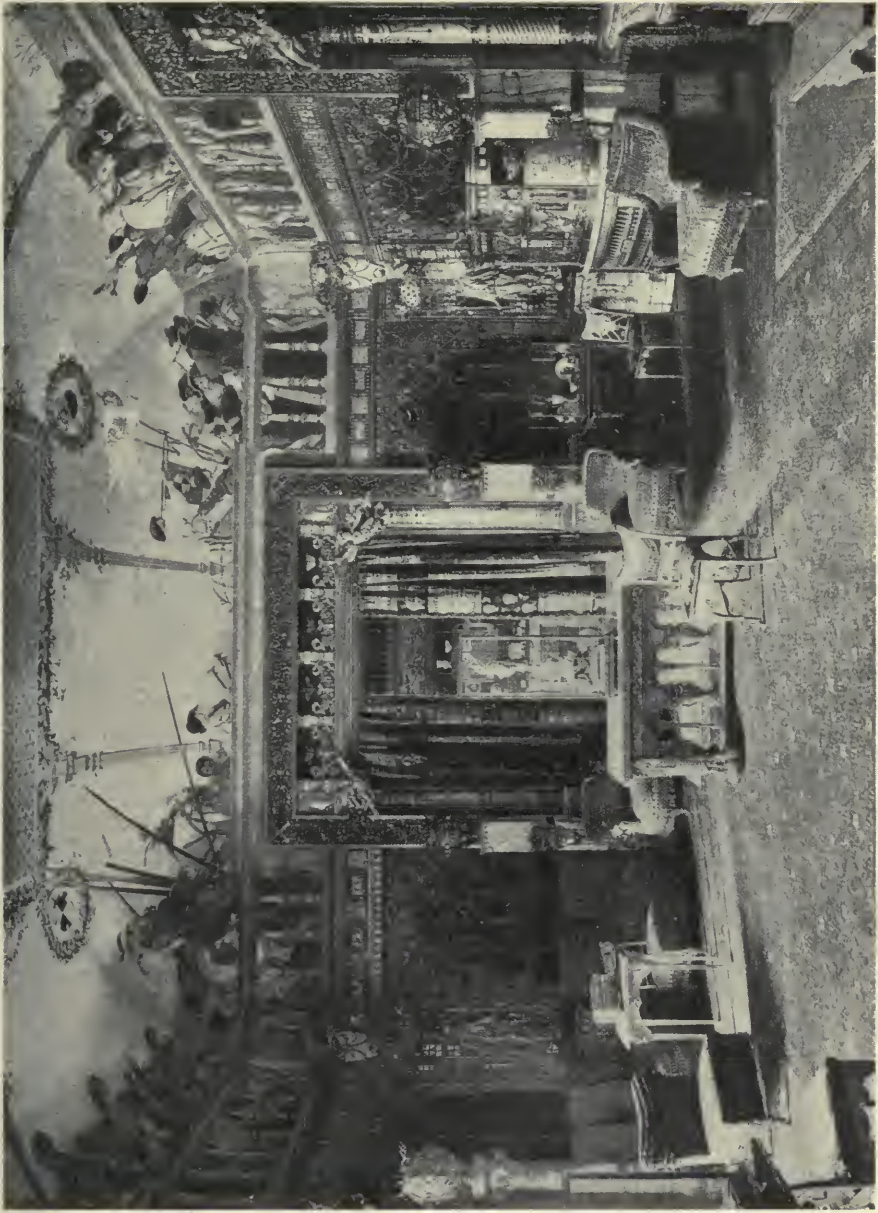
the Floridas which had anything but an English appearance. New York had left New Amsterdam far behind. Being English in feeling, in manners and ideas, the colonists naturally went to England exclusively for their architectural forms. Of course, there were many varieties of domestic building in England—among which the Jacobean is one of the best types ever wrought; but the colonists showed their disposition and taste by the type they selected to imitate. They copied, not the older and more interesting Elizabethan and Jacobean buildings, but the contemporary residence of the well-to-do London merchant; and this they did, because it was contemporary and because they were much more familiar with London merchants than they were with the English aristocracy.

Aristocratic and exclusive as was the best society of the colonies, it possessed no leisured class. The well-to-do New Englanders, the social leaders of the colony, were merchants. The well-to-do Southerners were not men who lived on the rent of leased farms; they were planters, and merchants also, who shipped their agricultural products to the English markets and whose prosperity depended chiefly on their own exertions. It is customary to speak of the "Barons of the Potomac and the Rappahannock"; but manorial and even feudal as in some respects those estates were, their possessors were more akin to the London bourgeois than they were to the

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English lord. There has never been a class of men in this country that was leisured, wealthy, and highly cultivated. The Virginian planter, who was at once a lawyer, a politician, a social leader of the county, and a planter, doubtless came nearer to the English aristocrat than any other well-known class of American; and the type persisted in the South until the time of the Civil War; but it was essentially a working rather than a leisured class. When these planters came to build handsome dwellings, they copied, as did the New England merchants, the houses of the London bourgeois; and this was partly because they were themselves at bottom men of business.

The origin of the English "Georgian" style of residence is somewhat obscure. All that is known is that with the revival of domestic building, which took place early in the eighteenth century, these brick buildings began to be erected in very considerable numbers. Two of the earliest examples of the style, one at Chichester and the other at Wandsworth, are known to have been designed by Sir Christopher Wren, during his declining years; and while it is possible that these were the very first buildings to be designed in this manner, the precise chronology of the whole movement is as uncertain as its precise origin. Whatever its derivation, it rapidly came into favor, and since a large number, although by no means all, of the domestic buildings of that period consisted of semi-subur-



New York City.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT.

THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

ban houses of the merchants, who were beginning to be rich and influential, the great majority of these dwellings consisted, not of country mansions, but rather of detached or semi-detached but very substantial suburban villas.

The chief characteristics of these houses are summed up by Mr. G. A. T. Middleton, in a paper on "English Georgian Architecture," published by the *Architectural Record*, in the following words: "Built in almost all instances of brick, with timber enrichments, such as cornices and doorways, painted white to represent stone, the buildings commonly took the form of rectangular cubes, somewhat after the manner of the Italian palaces, having deep modillioned cornices, proportioned to the total height, and with either a steep roof or a parapet above the roof frequently having a flat top. The window openings were large and absolutely unornamented; but the doorway, centrally placed in the front, was marked in some way with order, pediment, or hood. Dormers of a plain description were common in many instances, hidden behind the parapet; and it is usual to find small horizontal string-courses, marking the division of the front into stories." Frequently the houses were situated some fifty feet or more from the street, the grounds being enclosed by a brick wall, and entered through what was often a very beautiful wrought-iron gate. These gates, which were frequently the only elegant, purely decorative accessories of the style,

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

and which contrasted curiously with the substantial respectability of the houses, gave the chief touch of distinction to the Georgian type of dwelling.

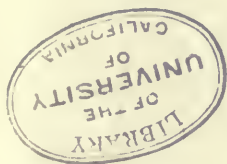
This Georgian residence naturally took very different forms in the different colonies. In New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Salem, and Portsmouth, the wealthy people were merchants, whose requirements were not so very different from the English merchant whose dwelling they borrowed. New England never possessed a landed gentry. Its wealthy people have always lived in the towns, and made their money in commerce. This is not so true of New York, the soil of which is richer, and whose land was early parcelled out in large manorial grants. Each of these manors at one time possessed a house of some pretension: but most of these dwellings were of wood and few have survived. The manor-house of the Van Rensselaers of Rensselaers Wyck was the most considerable of these; but it was one of the very few fine houses north of the line of Chesapeake Bay, the owner of which lived on the land. When we reach the South, however, a very different condition of things prevailed. In Maryland and Virginia there were many very large and bountiful country estates, the owners of which built handsome residences, and whose requirements in building them were entirely different from those of a city merchant.

In describing the estates of the Virginia planters as



New York City.

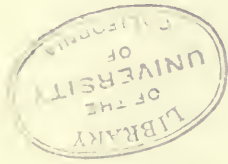
DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT.





New York City.

PICTURE GALLERY IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

“manors,” the word is used with almost its full meaning. A manor has always been an agricultural estate, which is more or less completely self-supporting—an estate which raises almost everything it consumes, and which neither sells nor buys to any large extent in outside markets. Of course this description is not completely true of the Virginian and Maryland estates, because the planter derived a certain part of his income from the export and sales of his tobacco; and the sale of this commodity gave him cash to buy many objects of refinement and luxury, which he could not have manufactured on his own estate. Still, to a large extent these Virginian estates did conform to the historic type of manor. As in the case of all manors, unskilled labor was cheap and plentiful, skilled labor was scarce—particularly in Virginia. Of all kinds of produce there was an abundance, but money was not so plentiful. Circumstances encouraged a prodigal and lavish manner of living. The climate was pleasant and open; the soil rich and naturally productive; the planter himself was socially inclined and much given to lavish entertaining. Jefferson eventually ruined himself, because of the open house he kept. Washington possessed one hundred cows, but was sometimes obliged to buy butter. All this was as different as possible from the frugality and simplicity of the colonial New Englander; and these differences found full expression in the houses which the planters built.

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These residences were generally spacious, rambling structures, suitable both for the entertainment of a large number of guests and the accommodation of an equally large number of servants. Frequently the house consisted of a square central building two stories high, very simply and plainly treated. This central building was usually connected with two wings, which were generally smaller in scale and only one story high. The wings were sometimes used for the accommodation of the domestic servants, and sometimes for guests; and in addition to them there were hard by many smaller frame out-buildings, which have rarely survived the vicissitudes of the last one hundred and fifty years. Whitehall near Annapolis, Homewood, Monticello and Upper and Lower Brandon all conformed to this type more or less completely. In some cases, as in that of Shirley and of several of the homesteads in Annapolis, the buildings are higher and more compact; but for the most part they are long and low—covering a good deal of space, and thereby distinguished from their somewhat contracted English predecessors.

Just as in the exterior of the house, it was in the composition and treatment of the wings that the designers of the Southern residences made their most distinctive departure from the English type, so the plan of the house also had a character that was partly dictated by local condi-



New York City.

STAIRCASE IN THE RESIDENCE OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN.

THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

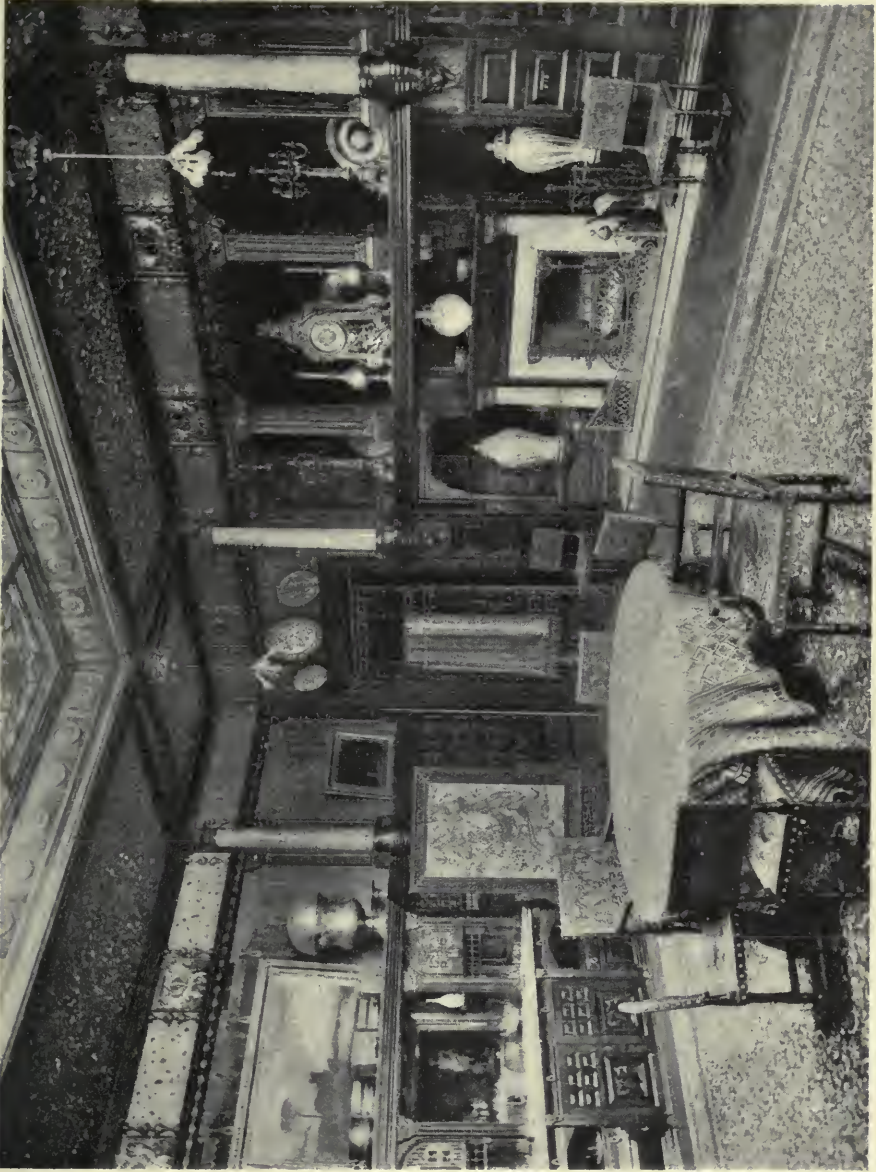
tions. In the early colonial years, say until 1650, the "hall" was naturally the chief room of a residence; and this practise has had a considerable influence both upon the later colonial plan, and even upon the laying out of modern American dwellings. In the beginning this hall was almost the whole house—except for the kitchen and bedrooms. It was the living-room, in which the big fireplace was situated, the dining-room, and frequently even the room in which a guest was necessarily lodged. The common life of the family centered about this room, and whatever the owner could provide in the way of good furniture and fine trappings was arranged therein. Later when the colonists could afford to build more rooms, the hall lost its eminence as the one public assembly-room of the house; but it always remained a prominent division of the plan, and occasionally even it was still treated as a large assembly and living room. Sometimes it ran clear through the building and sometimes it did not; but in later Colonial days its dominating feature was the spacious and handsome stairway leading to the second story. Besides the hall this lower floor generally contained four rooms, which were of good size and which tended to be square. Three of these rooms were always the parlor, sitting-room, and dining-room; and the fourth was sometimes another parlor, sometimes a reception-room, and sometimes a breakfast or morning room. The wings were

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

used for various purposes. For the most part, one of them was given over to the kitchen and laundry; and on this side the connecting building would be used for a pantry. The wing on the other side was devoted sometimes to an office and library and sometimes to guest-rooms.

The dwelling of the city merchant, whether in Baltimore or Portsmouth, differed from the one above described chiefly in being more compact. The square central structure became, almost universally, three stories high, and the wings and outbuildings were cut off. Sometimes this third story obtained light and air through dormer-windows, which broke through a high-pitched roof; sometimes a lower third story was added, and a roof gently sloping off on all four sides and culminating in a square level place outlined by a balustrade, finished off the whole structure. The Carroll House in Annapolis could boast of four stories, but this was an exception—appropriate to the peculiar position of the family that occupied it. In the North, of course, the third story was used chiefly in order to supply lodging for domestic servants, who from that day until this have been more difficult to obtain and more expensive to maintain there than in the South.

The exterior of these houses was exceedingly simple and plain. Very often there were no projections at all, the porches and verandas having been added subsequently



New York City.

DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN.

THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

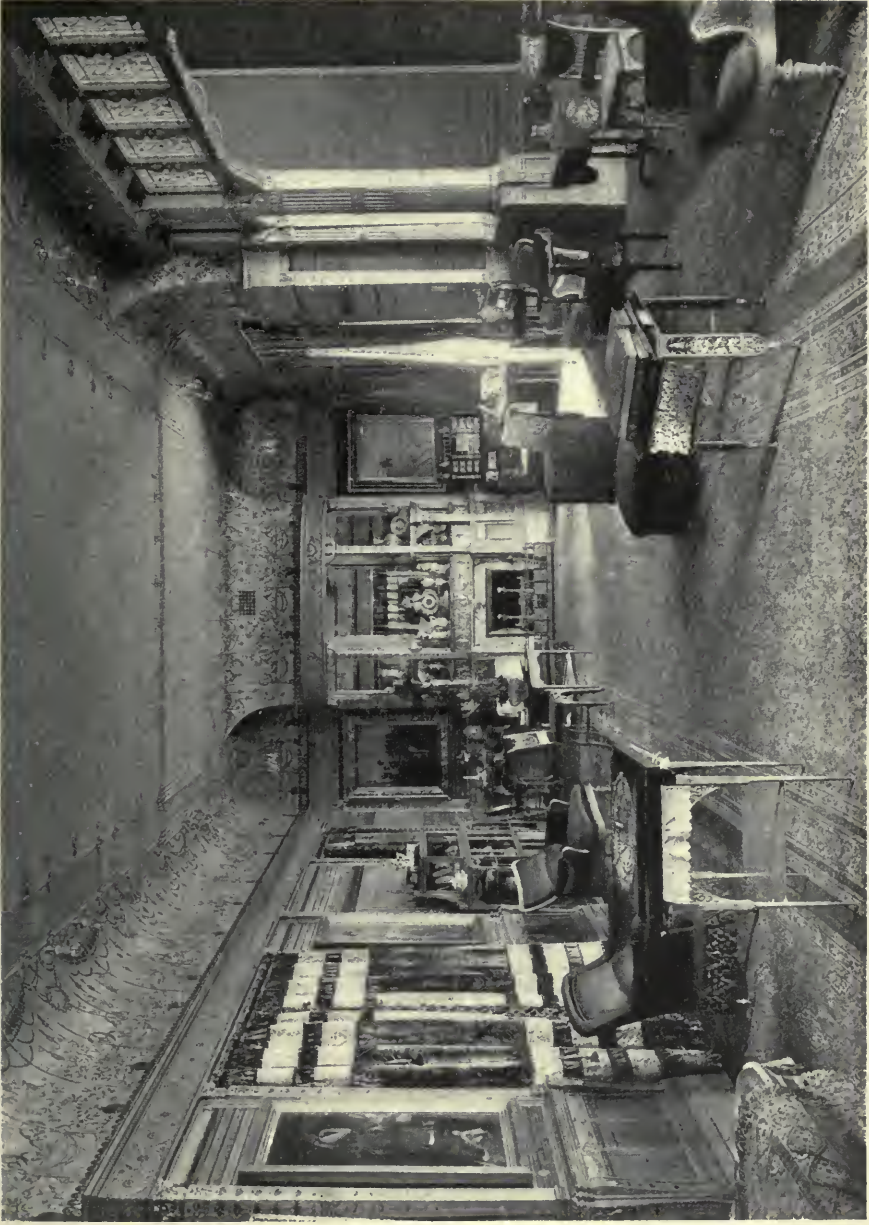
by descendants, who were seeking a natural protection against the sun. The architectural effect which these homes produce is obtained almost entirely by the proportion of the masses and the distribution of the openings. Occasionally the central division of the house is emphasized by a projection on the face of the wall and by a gable above the cornice line, as in the case of the Scott House in Annapolis. More frequently a plain string-course of brick outlines the stories, and emphasizes effectually the horizontal dimension of the house. Of exterior ornament there was little; and that little generally consisted of a more or less elaborate doorway, treated as a rule with a pair of well-proportioned columns and a pediment. In some few cases, particularly in the North, distinction was given to the design by a more elaborate handling of the window above the entrance—the window which served the hall on the second floor. A few houses survive in which the windows are arched; but as a rule the openings were square and were capped by a course of upright brick.

In all these dispositions a certain necessary economy is plainly visible—not so much of money as of skilled labor; and the simplicity of the exterior of the colonial residences is largely due to the necessity their constructors were under of making the most of meager resources. The same necessity for economy did not apply to the interiors, which contained a profusion of elaborate woodwork. The ex-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

planation doubtless is, so it has been surmised, that in the scarcity of handicraftsmen, the mere bricklaying was all that could be done on the spot, while elaborate woodwork could be imported from England, and only put in place by native workmen. But just what part of the materials and contents of these houses was imported and just what part was manufactured in this country is a matter which historical research has not been able definitely to ascertain. As early as 1696 native brick was used in the colonies; but in 1770, when Jefferson built Monticello, the bricks for his mansion were burnt upon his own estate—which, perhaps, may be regarded as proof that even at that late period bricks were not being regularly manufactured in Virginia.

In some cases the bricks may have been imported; and as stone-cutters were more scarce than bricklayers, stonework in the few houses in which it was used was, perhaps, also imported. It is significant that the original owner of Westover, who did things more extravagantly than his neighbors, went so far as to fetch over urns of stone, hewn in England, forged-iron gates, and even, in anticipation of a modern practise, a genuine Italian stone mantelpiece. On the other hand, it is agreed that much of the woodwork was done upon the spot, because “old works of architecture are now extant that were in use in the middle of the last century, from whose pages it is very



New York City.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN.



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evident that some of the designs for finish of certain houses were taken.”

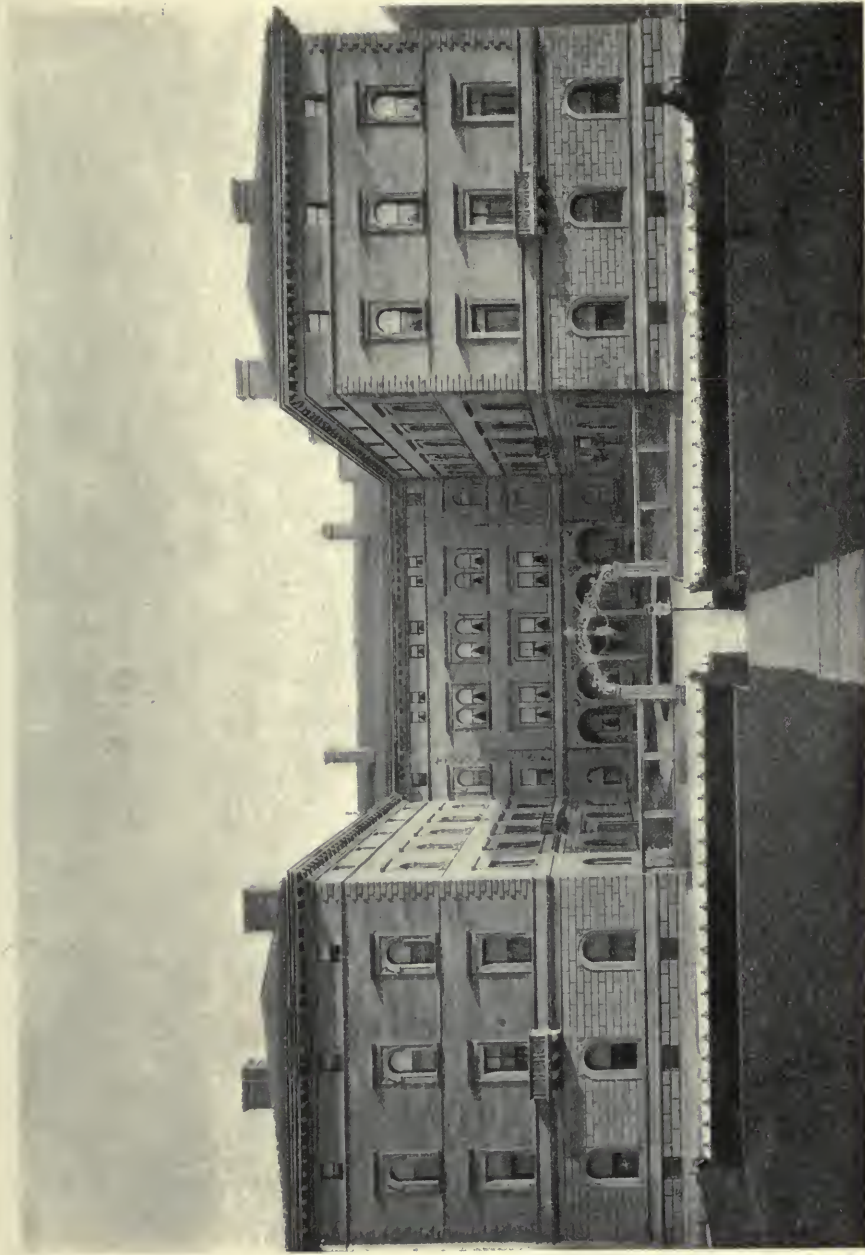
Whatever the practise in the beginning, and whatever proportion of the old woodwork was imported, it may be taken for certain that the proportion thereof wrought in the colonies gradually increased, and that the peculiar distinction of our colonial interiors was due chiefly to the excellent traditions and reverent spirit of the colonial woodworker. Perhaps it is not sufficiently recognized how closely American architectural practise of colonial times approximated the forms used at the same time in England. Similarity is generally admitted; but this similarity bordered upon actual identity. The great source of difference consisted in the material chiefly used in the colonies—to the fact that the carpenter instead of the mason gave expression in the new country to the traditions of the old. How reverently the early builders stuck to their models, how insular and English they remained, even when confronted by the novel conditions of a new continent, is indicated by the fact already mentioned, that the veranda, an obvious and indispensable device for mitigating the semi-tropical heat of an American summer, was not introduced until the colonial period was nearing its end. Even the use of brick for the larger houses, in a country in which timber could be had for the asking, while it may attest an appreciation of the more monumental and endur-

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ing character of that material, shows, also, at what cost the colonist insisted on reproducing the rectangular, sober, dignified mansions of Georgian England.

Much as the colonist might desire, however, to reproduce literally, the force of circumstances was in one respect too strong for him; he could not wholly escape from the fact that wood was his natural, almost his inevitable material. It was, as we have said, the carpenters and woodworkers who gave the decorative accessories of these colonial houses their chief distinction. Many of the most serviceable and valuable materials, which add richness, variety, and an admirable structural propriety to the greater European domestic interiors, were beyond the reach of the colonial builder. He had nothing except plaster, wood, and paper; and out of these elements he was obliged to make his interiors. Since good plasterers were scarce, since all varieties of wood were plentiful and cheap, and since carpenters were probably the most numerous of the handicraftsmen, it is no wonder that the woodwork of the colonial builder remains his chief title to recognition.

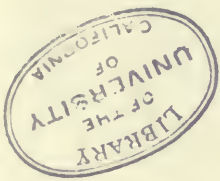
Hence it is that our colonial architecture has well been defined as "the carpenter's interpretation of the Renaissance." This is, indeed, its one unique characteristic. In no other country was the carpenter permitted a rendering of the great classic revival. Even in South Africa, where there is an "old colonial" style, the remi-

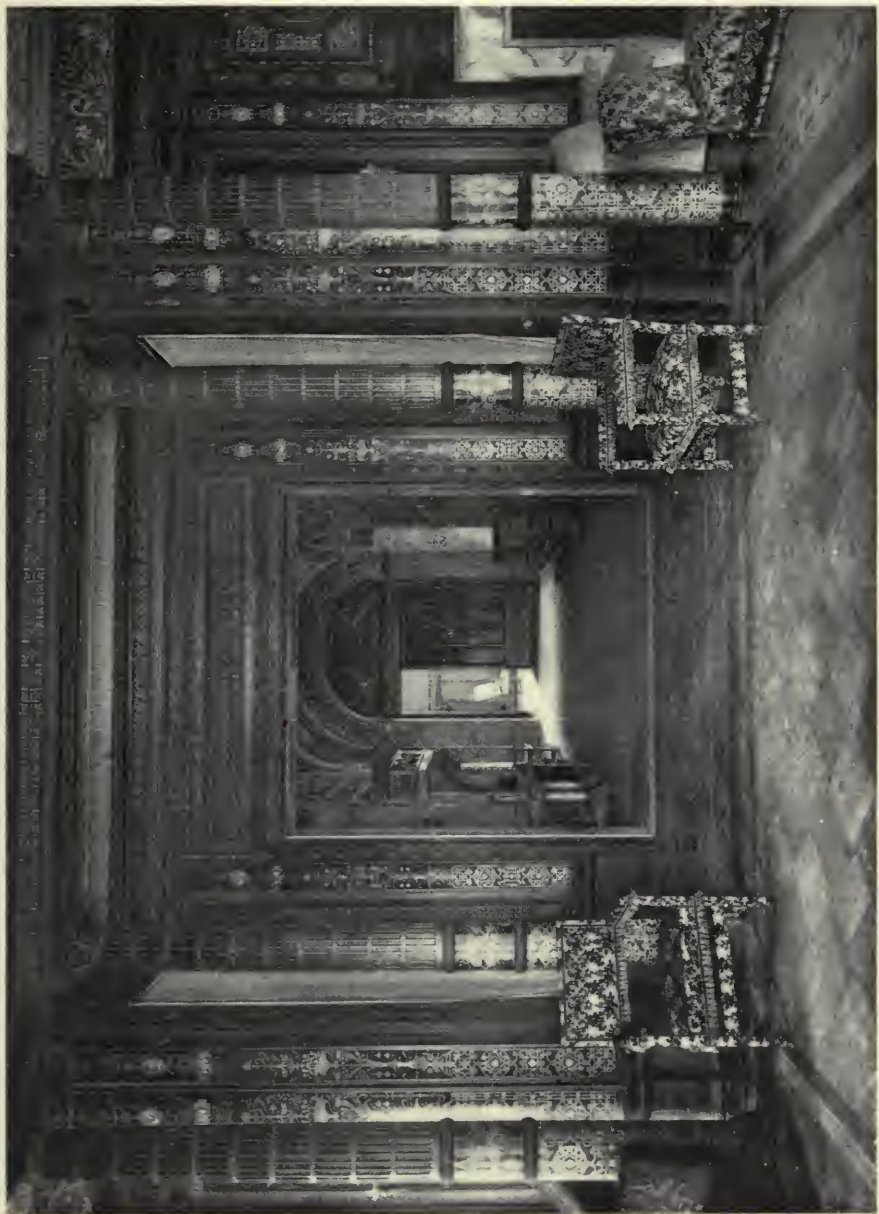


New York City.

RESIDENCE OF THE LATE HENRY VILLARD.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.





New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

HALL AND RECEPTION-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE HENRY VILLARD.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

niscences which the expatriated Hollanders preserved of the Renaissance are formulated chiefly in stucco and plaster. This predominance of the carpenter rather than the mason, arising immediately from the great variety and abundance of native American woods, is from the start one of the most important facts connected with American architecture; and to the present day it has not lost its importance. In structure and ornament the American house has been made largely, too largely, of wood. In colonial times, while a good tradition prevailed, the use made of the material was acceptable; but later when the craftsman had deteriorated, the excessive importance granted to a building material that is flexible, cheap, and tempts the unwary into multiplying members and elaborating detail, was partly responsible for some of the most grotesque wooden malformations which the world has ever seen. Moreover, our woodwork, founded as it was upon forms that pertained properly to the mason's materials, has always betrayed a leaning toward a decadent principle, which has not been without a generally corrupting effect upon American practise.

Upon the character of this colonial wood and plaster work it is unnecessary to dwell in detail. Whether the former was imported or wrought in this country, it did not pretend to be more than a faithful copy of the current English designs; but the necessary readjustments as to scale and



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position were usually made with rare discretion; and it is this discretion, overlaying English practise, that constitutes the only claim of the American mechanic to artistic originality. The classical forms and motives were used without any sense of their structural function, but simply for their decorative value; but they were adapted with a very admirable feeling for their proper proportions and uses. As says Mr. A. J. Bloor in his essay on "American Domestic Architecture": "The cutting up of the interiors into numerous rooms gave a much larger field for the employment of moldings, as applied to the finish of doors, windows, chimneys, paneling, and the like. The mantelpieces were generally of good, though perhaps rather attenuated design and frequently carved with delicacy and skill. Wainscoting was frequently added, sometimes treated as a dado—that is, as a covering to only the lower part of the walls—and sometimes carried up from floor to ceiling; but almost always proportioned, molded, paneled, and occasionally carved, with satisfactory effect. The paneling in particular was apt to be very good, the mantelpieces and other special features being often surmounted by a single panel made out of one piece of wood of very large dimensions. The staircases, too, with their landings and their returns, their twisted newel-posts, and prim balusters, are, many of them, very quaint and picturesque."

It should be added that this woodwork was all painted



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

MUSIC-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE HENRY VILLARD.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

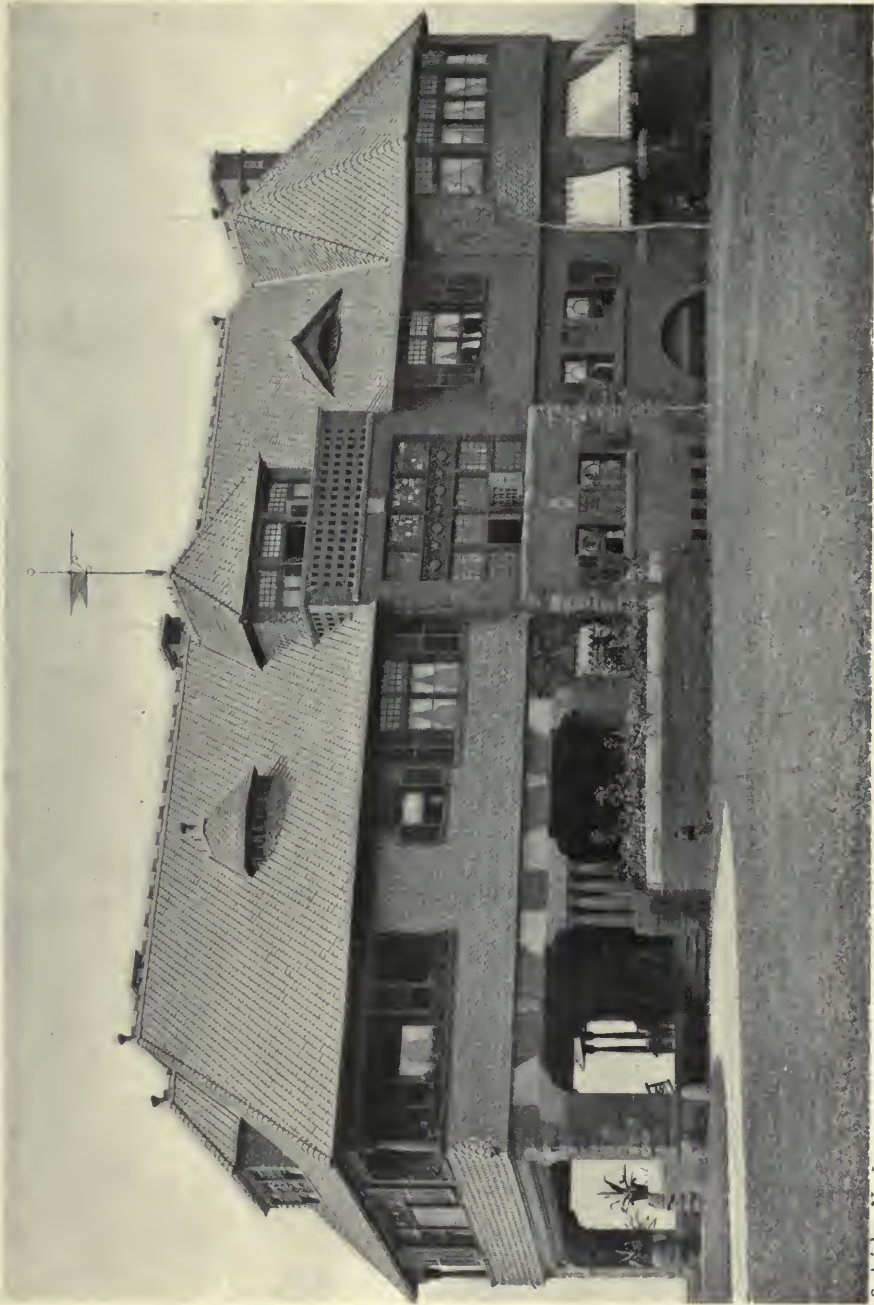
white—except in the case of the doors, which, in the more expensive houses, were made of mahogany, and formed an effective contrast to the prevailing tone of the room. The furniture was, of course, always of mahogany or of some other dark wood, and the designs harmonized pleasantly with the prevailing character of the woodwork. The detail throughout was most carefully and elaborately worked. Often it is somewhat stiff and lifeless; but it is almost always moderate and correct; and occasionally it is of an exquisite and delicate simplicity.

Such, in brief, was the kind of dwelling which our colonial ancestors built; and which is the one type of building in our architectural history which bears the marks of a definite style. It is strongly distinguished from every subsequent style of residence, because it was used in the colonies for something over a century, and because, throughout all of that time, it prevailed absolutely. The fact that during the whole of the eighteenth century there was only one style in which a rich American could build a house, prevented the waste and desolation which characterized the necessary and incessant experimentation of the nineteenth century. The colonial social forms and ideas were comparatively stable. While there was no real aristocracy, there was a privileged class, particularly in the South, and less fortunate people accepted its leadership with something of the instinctive loyalty of the English-

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man. These social leaders wanted to live in dwellings which expressed not merely their comparative wealth but their social distinction. They observed a certain form in their lives; they demanded a certain form in their domestic surroundings. They derived that form from the dwellings of the class of Englishmen with which they were most familiar; and while it was a borrowed and somewhat decadent form, it was genuine, because it was simply and faithfully accepted.

It should be added that these were really very modest dwellings—comparable in size and cost to the manor-house of a second-rate English country squire. Their owners were nothing more than ordinarily well-to-do men, who had enough money to live in a pleasant and generous manner, but who very distinctly could not afford any considerable extravagances. Consequently, while they built substantially they were also obliged to build economically. One of these old brick houses frequently took many years to erect, and required on the part of the owner and builder the utmost patience, as well as the utmost ingenuity in overcoming obstacles. They did not have the benefit of much expert assistance. There were practically no professional architects in the colonies until the very end of the colonial period; and they were engaged almost exclusively in the design of public buildings. The only assistance upon which a man who wanted

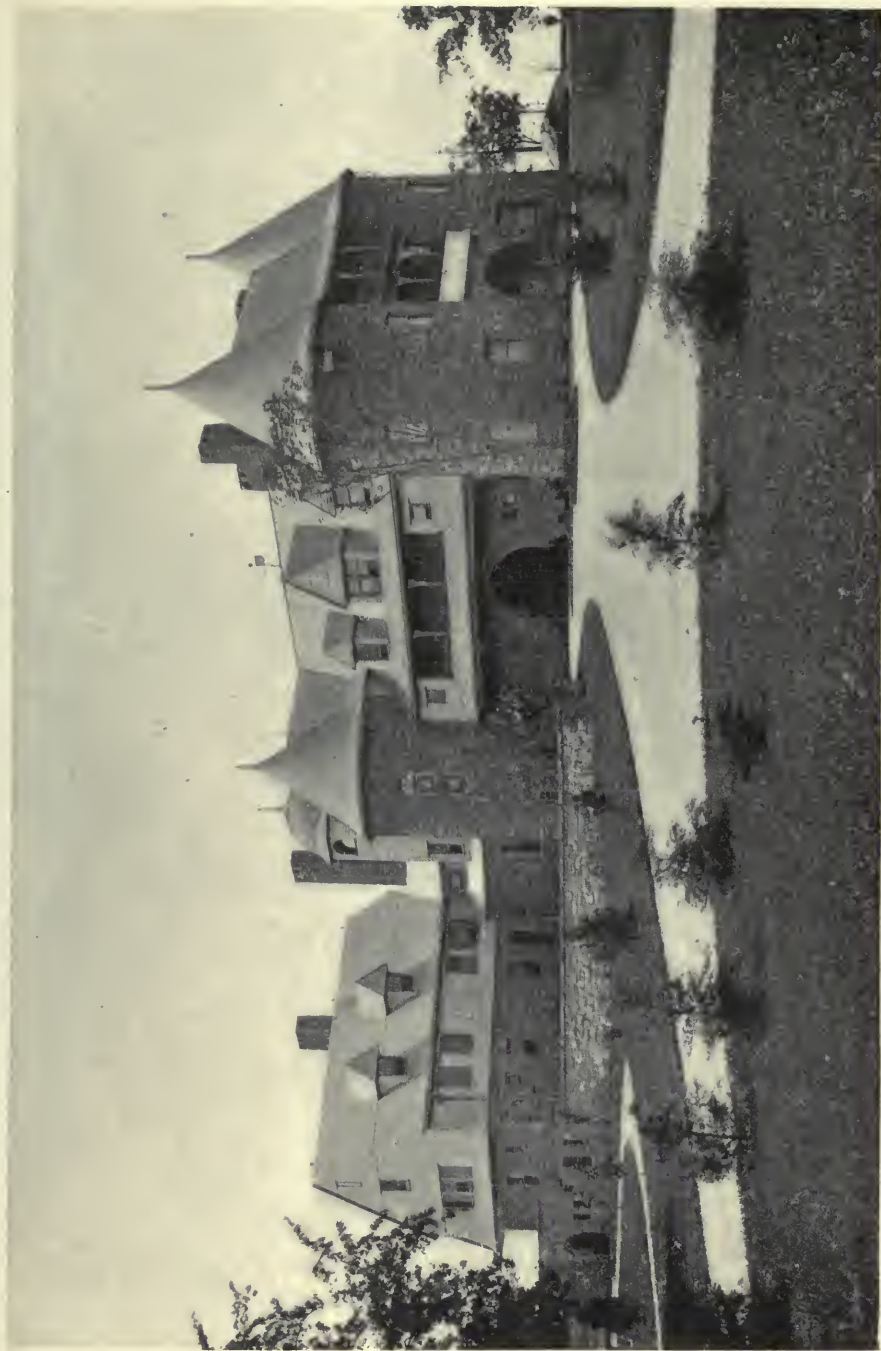


Seabright, N. J.

RESIDENCE OF GEORGE P. BAKER.

Bruce Price, Architect.





Mamaroneck, N. Y.

Chas. J.

RESIDENCE OF *Wm. J.* OSBORN.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE COLONIAL RESIDENCE

to build could rely was that of trained mechanics, who were frequently imported for the purpose, and who naturally built according to rule. That under so many disadvantageous conditions the result was often so admirable, is most excellent testimony to the training of the eighteenth-century handicraftsmen. They had been educated in a good school; they knew how to do certain things only, but everything they did was well done; and if their tradition and method of work had only survived for two or three generations, we Americans would have been spared a convention of ugliness—particularly in woodwork—which persists among American carpenters to the present day.

Thomas Jefferson, who was almost the only American statesman who had taken any interest in building, has left behind him his opinion of contemporary architectural conditions in the statement that “the genius of architecture seems to have shed his maledictions over the land”; while a popular historian of the United States has dared to assert that there did not exist in the country “in 1874 a single piece of architecture which, when tried even by the standard of that day, can be called respectable. Not a church, not a public building, not a house, has been preserved to us that is not a deformity.”

As against such adverse judgments as these, there has recently been a very strong reaction, until at the present time there is a tendency, perhaps, to overvalue the colonial

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

residence as an architectural model. The fact that it was the only style ever adopted with a fair degree of success in this country should not blind architects to its limitations, both as to exterior and interior. At the time it prevailed it was admirable, because it was safe; but in view of the immensely richer materials and larger opportunities which architects of the present time have at their disposal, they cannot afford to accept the colonial tradition too seriously.

Both as regards outside and in, the excellence of the colonial dwellings depended on their decorous and unobtrusive character. They aimed studiously at understatement. Their owners were people of taste, in whom the ideal of respectability was still fortunately allied with some notion of good form, and who would not for the world do anything to violate the prevalent proprieties. But it lacked structural and functional character; its range of expression was extremely limited. It is associated somehow with a tea-table respectability, an old-maidenly reserve and propriety; it is quaint and stiff and charming; but it lacks the richer tone, the deeper harmonies, the grander style of some French and Italian models. It remains, nevertheless, one of the best sources from which to derive the forms of a modest and inexpensive modern dwelling, for its designs are simple, its materials cheap, and the character of its expression adapted to the houses of quiet people of good taste, and without much originality.



Lenox, Mass.

RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM D. SLOANE.

Peabody & Stearns, Architects.



THE MEANING OF THE
TRANSITIONAL DWELLING



CHAPTER III

The Meaning of the Transitional Dwelling



THE Colonial Period of American architecture did not end with the Declaration of Independence, or the signature of the Treaty of Paris. It persisted, or more correctly, it lingered, for the space of a generation after the definite beginning of American political independence. The Revolutionary War had wrought so many changes, and had impaired or destroyed so many fortunes, that there was not erected during these years any very considerable number of expensive residences; but in those that were erected the colonial forms were still used. Several of the most beautiful old dwellings in the Carolinas date from the first decade of the nineteenth century; and while in these dwellings there is evidence of a greater freedom of handling, of a less rigid loyalty to precedent, the innovations were of no particular importance. Just as American politics remained fundamentally colonial during the first five or six administrations, and just as the country for the first quarter of the century continued without ques-

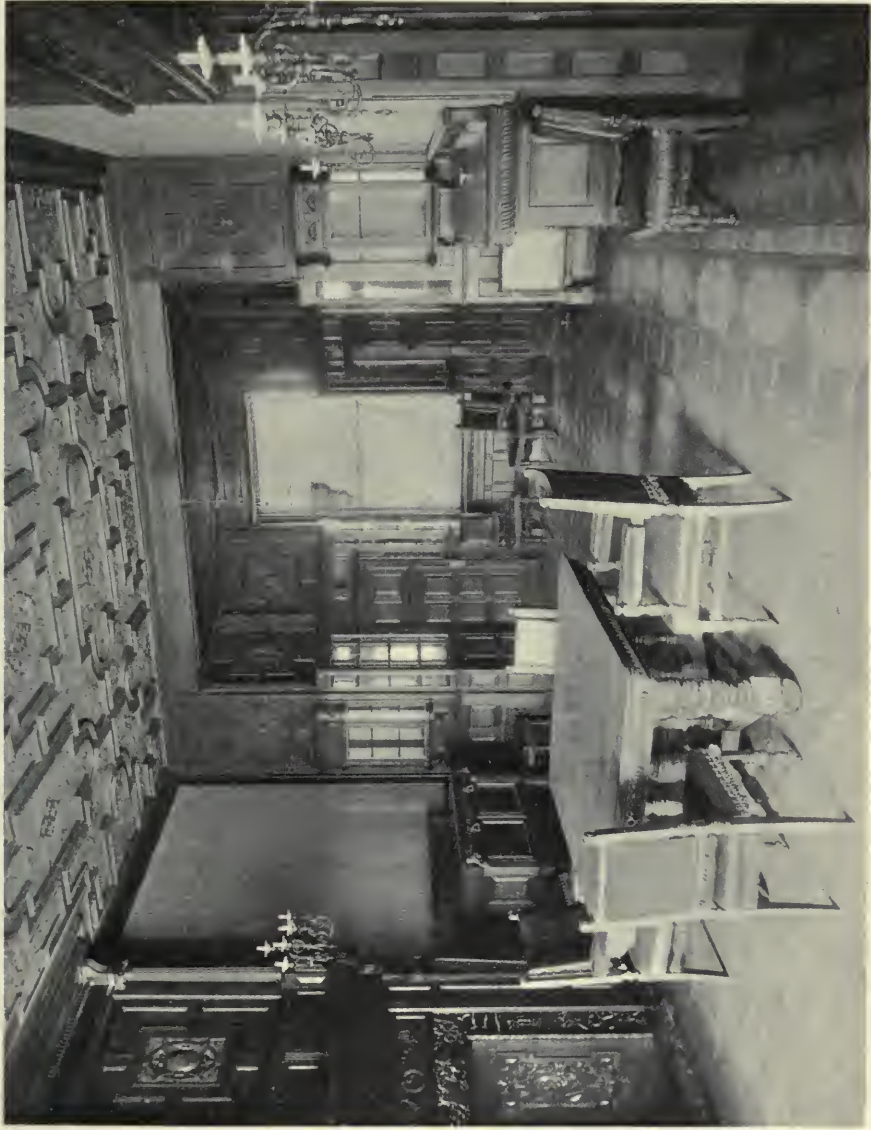
STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

tion to accept the leadership of the group of Virginian statesmen, so architectural forms continued somewhat listlessly in the colonial tradition.

The finest and most important residence erected during these years, the White House in Washington, was the reproduction of a planter's manor-house, in a different material and on a somewhat larger scale; and it was fortunate, indeed, that this house was built before the colonial convention had vanished. In subsequent years as much as possible was done to pervert and vulgarize its distinctive character; but the value of the original design was triumphantly affirmed, when, under better contemporary influences, it was found that the best way to renovate the White House was in large measure to restore it.

However, colonial architecture was only a survival and was as plainly doomed to perish as were the privileges enjoyed by the people who constructed it. Product as it was of restricted economic conditions, of an aristocratic social system, and of an innocently and loyally imitative habit of mind, it could not withstand the impact of the new and somewhat lawless forces which were coming to prevail in American society and politics.

The first quarter of the century was really a period of reconstruction, in which certain new national habits of mind were formed. The old political privileges were gradually but irresistibly cut away; politics and business became the



New York City.

DINING-ROOM IN THE MARQUAND RESIDENCE.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

absorbing occupation; every man began to consider himself as good as his neighbor; any claims to superiority were fiercely resented; the characteristic American became a shrewd, good-natured, easy-mannered, hustling fellow, who could and did turn his hand to many things. He had abundant faith in the future, but very little conscious respect for the past. He prided himself particularly upon his versatility, his restless energy, his good-fellowship, and his hopeful elasticity. According to a phrase of Mr. Howells, democracy, which is a faith in the East, became the life of the West. The democratic society and state had been born and was growing and bellowing with a will.]

This democratic state and society was soon the subject of interested and vivacious comment upon the part of European and particularly of English observers. They complained particularly of the want of distinction in American life, of our rough, crude ways, of our bad manners, and of our mercenary preoccupations; but these English travelers, such as Captain Basil Hall and Mrs. Trollope, made the mistake, which was not avoided even by De Tocqueville, of charging to the account of democracy a great many characteristics for which the country's economic immaturity was rather responsible. Had the territory of the United States been confined to the Atlantic seaboard it is obvious that the form which the American democracy assumed would have been entirely different.

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The United States of the "Middle Period" was the result quite as much of pioneering as of democratic conditions; and the necessities and state of mind of the pioneer had almost as much of an indirect effect upon the Eastern States as it had a direct effect upon the new States in the West. The momentum, the restlessness, the economic instability, the free and easy manners, the hopeful versatility, which originated on the border reacted upon the older parts of the country and gave the dominant and characteristic tone to the whole body of American civilization. Its strength consisted in its flexibility, its elasticity, and its energy—in its complete fitness to the needs of a rapidly growing country; its weakness consisted just in the fact that was so eminently and so immediately practical. Under the influence of its purely practical preoccupations it was forced to slur over many secondary interests and pursuits, which required a disinterested frame of mind, a long and special training or a somewhat exclusive attention, and among the interests thus neglected were those connected with art and architecture.

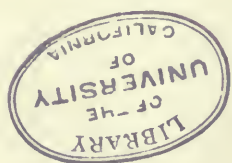
In describing and criticizing the architecture of the transitional period it is easy and natural to drop into the use of strong expletives. Mr. Montgomery Schuyler, in his "Studies in American Architecture," declares that the typical residence of this time was the "most vulgar habitation ever built by man"; and there are no good grounds for disputing



New York City.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

MOORISH ROOM IN THE MARQUAND RESIDENCE.

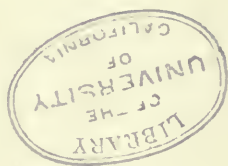




New York City.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect

HALL OF THE MARQUAND RESIDENCE.



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THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

the superlative. But since the extremely vulgar habitations of the mid-century have a very definite place in the history of American residences, and since they illustrate very well some of the prevailing motives of American architectural history, they must be approached for our present purpose in a somewhat different spirit.

The action of the new social and economic forces was, undoubtedly, to vulgarize architectural forms. Good architecture is peculiarly one of those things which require for its creation premeditation, protracted and careful training, economic maturity, and a social atmosphere of urbanity and good manners. It would assuredly have been a wasteful process to have devoted much premeditation and training to buildings which, whether erected on the border or in the cities of the East, were in effect nothing more than temporary habitations. What was equally to be expected, however, but what was even more unfortunate, was the deterioration which took place in what may be called the technical manners of the mechanic.

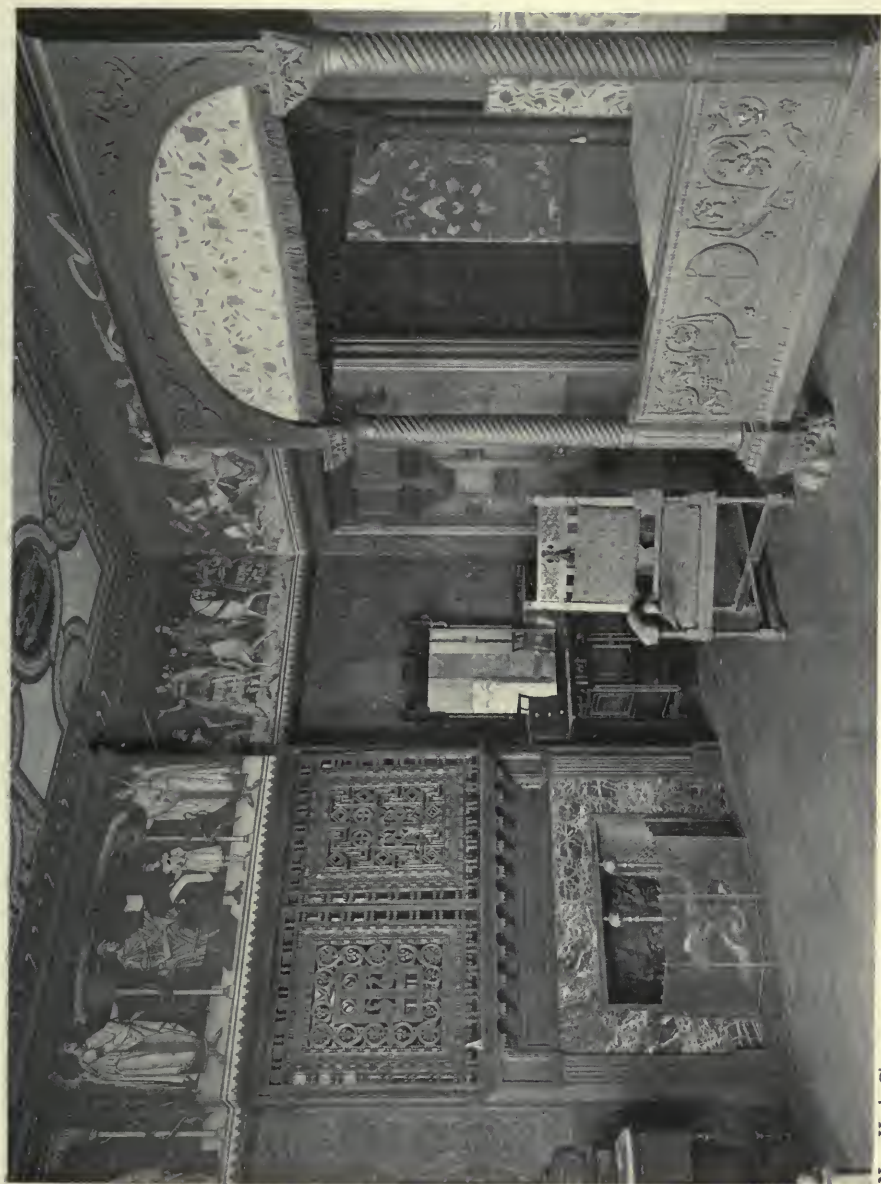
The colonial mansion was, as we have seen, the work of well-trained handicraftsmen; and if the tradition of good form had persisted among these mechanics, respectable dwellings might have been built—even though they were intended to be occupied only a few years. But the mechanics also lost their tradition of careful work, and their familiarity with pleasant and shapely forms. In New Eng-

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land the tradition of good work and good forms lingered late; and many of the better farmhouses erected in the north New England States during the first half of the century have some quaint and well-turned woodwork in them; but in the end the stone-cutters, plasterers, and carpenters were all demoralized by the tendency to make most kinds of a mechanic out of one man.

The habit of doing thoroughly good work was succeeded by the habit of doing work which was only good enough. On the border it was much more important to build the houses quickly than to build them well; and while in the East they still built substantially, the mechanics lost their innocent fidelity to establish forms. Little by little their decorous trade manners disappeared. In order still further to demoralize the all-important carpenter, the jig-saw was introduced. Everybody knew enough to build a house, and after a while any style was good enough in which to design it. The spirit of the man who bolted his pie and doughnuts in shy and self-conscious silence pervaded the land.

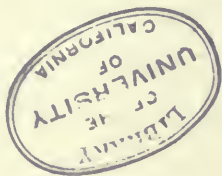
As we have said, the English travelers of 1830 or thereabout could see nothing in all this but the vulgarizing effect of democracy. The American people had been cursed with social and esthetic slovenliness, because they had forsaken the guiding and chastening influence of lords temporal and spiritual. But, fortunately, at about the same time, there



New York City.

BEDROOM IN THE MARQUAND RESIDENCE.

Richard M Hunt, Architect.



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happened to be a Frenchman, who visited the United States, and whose intellectual equanimity was not disturbed by the absence of bishops and dukes, and no one can understand either the performance or the promise of American democracy without a careful study of the observations and conclusions of M. De Tocqueville and a comparison of them with the country's subsequent achievements.

De Tocqueville made many errors. He mistook several occasional phases of American life for permanent characters; he attributed many traits to the democratic spirit which should have been attributed to the predominance of pioneer conditions; above all he underestimated the craving for refinement and distinction of form, which is as essential to the American spirit as its good humor and good-fellowship. But what he did recognize and was the first to understand and emphasize was the essential conservatism of the American democracy. The Englishmen saw nothing in this country beside a sort of lawless and vulgar irreverence of manner and action; but the Frenchman divined that beneath the quick changes of American life and its apparent instability, the indispensable conditions of a progressive state was secure, that property was respected, that order were maintained, and that the people cherished their peculiar institutions and ideas. And this discovery was original with him and was important for the generation that succeeded the French Revolution.

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That the American democracy is essentially conservative has quite as important a bearing upon the architectural and esthetic history of the country as upon its political and social history. It is true that De Tocqueville failed to understand the significance of this conservatism on American intellectual development; and it is true it sometimes manifested itself in outlandish ways; but with the experience of the whole of the nineteenth century behind us, both the fact and its significance are fully evident. Americans have done a vast amount of talking about native American styles of architecture and forms of literature; the good critical judgment of the country has always been prone to urge that Americans treat American subjects in an American manner, and it has generally welcomed with the utmost good nature the first tender growths of American originality; but American practise in the arts has persistently remained cautious and conservative.

This attitude of mind has sometimes been called by harder names. American art and letters are stated to have remained timidly imitative, and at bottom nothing more than colonial until very recent years, and to have failed wholly in the prime duty of adapting themselves to the sort of American life. But, as we shall see presently, colonialism is only one form of conservatism, while the imitative habit is the very foundation of a many-sided civilization. This artistic conservatism, which showed itself just as plainly



Minneapolis, Minn.

THE WASHBURN RESIDENCE.

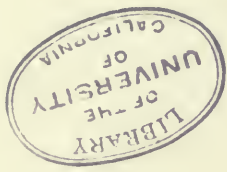
E. Townsend Mix, Architect.





Chicago, Ill.

RESIDENCE OF THE LATE POTTER PALMER.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

during the barren vulgarity of the middle years as during the comparative refinement of more modern times, must be looked at somewhat closely lest its significance escape us.

American domestic architecture after 1825 or thereabouts ceased to be colonial; but it was far from beginning to be enterprising or independent. While it lost its own traditions and denied its own past, it did not show any originality or self-confidence. Instead of imitating the forms to which it was accustomed, it began to imitate contemporary European architectural fashions. If it had possessed any genuine instinct for independence it would have worked over the colonial forms until they had become a vital and vernacular expression of American life; but the colonial forms were associated with a colonial past, and the new American democracy must have a new style of building.

Unfortunately, style in this very contemporary and "up-to-date" country of ours has been considered synonymous with fashion; and fashion was derived from Europe. We dressed our houses as we dressed ourselves—according to the latest French and English models. The very consistency in our own national life made us, as long as one fashion lasted, the more consistent in our copying; but one fashion rarely lasted very long—not much longer, indeed, than the seven years or more that it sometimes took merely to construct one of the fine old colonial dwellings, and when it is remembered that these fashions were worked out in de-

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tail by ill-instructed mechanics, it is not surprising that the dwellings erected became "the most vulgar habitations ever built by man."

This may seem to be a queer way of showing the esthetic conservatism and the latent sense of form mentioned above; but the sense of form, although it obtained early expression in literature, had not as yet any chance to show itself in art, while a conservatism which has nothing adequate to conserve is working under a disadvantage. The colonial dwelling was all very well, but it was assuredly better to throw away these colonial forms than to cut off American architecture from the fountain-head of architectural and esthetic form. It was a safe and a wholesomely conservative instinct which kept American architectural fashions dependent upon those of Europe. Undoubtedly the immediate effects could not have been much more unfortunate, but that was due not so much to the habit of imitation as to unfavorable local economic and social conditions. No work that required premeditation, careful training, and a relish for formal beauty could thrive during these transitional years.

But even in the midst of their most persistent, indiscriminate, and insincere imitations they were trying to do right. Only, as is so often the case when people cut loose from tradition, they could not find the right path until they had exhausted many opportunities of going wrong. The new world they were constructing was founded on experimenta-



Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia.

RESIDENCE OF EDWIN N. BENSON.

T. P. Chandler, Jr., Architect.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

tion. It was essentially liberal, eclectic, and open-minded. It welcomed the immigration of European architectural fashions, just as it welcomed the immigration of European labor—with full confidence in the assimilative and educational powers of the country. This policy does not mean necessarily that one man is as good as another, that one idea is as good as another, or that one architectural style is as good as another; it merely means that in the beginning all should have their chance. The American citizen and the American style must be worked up out of this indiscriminate material by selection and education—a process more appropriate, perhaps, to the region of civics and politics than to the region of art, but at the same time our only road to esthetic salvation.

That this persistent dependence on Europe was inevitable is sufficiently shown by the way in which European art and history has cast a spell upon the imagination even of the most patriotic Americans. Very few of them whose work has been in any way identified with the arts of expression have been free from it. Our men of letters have almost universally hastened across the water as soon as they could find the means, and their travels have had a profound and lasting influence upon their work. Take out the results of European experiences from the writing of Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, and Lowell, and doubtless much would remain; but how radically would it be

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modified! Add the effect of long European travel to the work of Bryant and Poe, and what a transformation would be wrought! The negative effect of European models and ideals was as all-important upon Whitman as the positive effect upon Lowell. The former's polemic against the influence of feudal literature and life upon American ideas only served to show the futility and sterility of an exclusive Americanism. Moreover, if the artistic proprieties and historic memorials of Europe gave both material and form to American letters, it has been the very life of American art. Our men of letters have gone abroad to amplify their material and to finish off their training; the American artist has more frequently gone abroad to lay the foundation upon which the structure of his work was to be reared.

Upon the immediate and essential practical activities of American life, such as politics and business, the influence of Europe has since the beginning of American nationality naturally been very much less important. The originality and the enterprise of the American people in these two fields are a plausible indication that when the proper time comes they can vindicate as well their intellectual independence. It is remarkable, indeed, how little the most important American men of action from 1820 to 1870 were affected by the influences to which the men of letters were most indebted. Neither Jackson, Webster, Lincoln, nor Grant owed anything to Europe except the general heritage of English law



Beverly Farms, Mass.

RESIDENCE OF MRS. HENRY P. KIDDER.

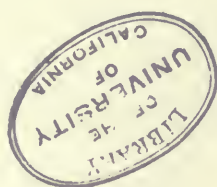
Sturgis & Brigham, Architects.





Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF MRS. WILLIAM ASTOR.
One of the older Newport homes.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

and letters; and the very qualities which we most prize in them are qualities which have the most peculiar American flavor. At the same time it is useful to remember that even such very American heroes as Lincoln and Grant, little as they owed to Europe, did not escape its spell. One of the very first moves which Grant made after the expiration of his second presidential term was to take a trip around the world; while Lincoln was looking forward to a voyage to Europe as soon as he was relieved of his immediate political responsibilities.

All social activities must, however, be guided by precedent and tradition. In the primary affairs of business and politics the American people have had time and opportunity to make precedents of their own; in the secondary affair of art they were obliged, since they must have some precedents and traditions, to seek them on the other side; and the great thing to remember is that this was the perfectly normal and natural method of procedure. It is conceivable that the prophets of an American and democratic art and letters might have established some system of intellectual protection which would have served to discourage the importation of foreign forms and models; yet if such an effort had obtained any measure of success it would have served, not to naturalize an American art, but rather to denaturalize it—to make it even more forced and self-conscious than it subsequently became. While American architecture and art has

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undoubtedly been wanting in spontaneous power and instinctive propriety, it could not have obtained such unconscious propriety by means of systematic forcing.

The system of intellectual protection would merely have helped to make and keep American art extremely conscious of its differences from Europe, and consequently to prevent it from becoming in any real sense naturalized. For a spontaneous and instinctive art is not one which has dispensed with traditions; it is rather one which cordially accepts the traditions it possesses and is thoroughly satisfied with them. The American conscience could never have been satisfied with some application to art of the formless democratic protestantism of Whitman. Such a protestantism had about it nothing edifying and constructive. Before originating native forms the sense of form itself had to be acquired, and to this end certain European forms had to be naturalized. In short, they did what other people, even those possessed of the highest artistic originality, have always under similar circumstances done: they did not try to begin all over again, but they borrowed what they needed.

These general remarks, while they apply to all the arts, apply with peculiar force to architecture. The fascination which the Old World exercises upon the New is much more resident in its historical buildings, and the painting, sculpture, and adornment appertaining to them, than it is in its museums. For architecture, while it is capable of less defi-



Residence of Levi P. Morton, at Rhinecliff-on-Hudson, N. Y.

“ELLERSLIE.”



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

nite human expression than is painting or sculpture, is also incomparably richer in its historic and human associations. The momentous historic periods are illustrated in their painting and sculpture; but in proportion as they were mature they were incarnated in their architecture. The cathedral of Chartres and the château of Coucy sum up the most and the best of medieval France. It is the actual handwriting of the medieval Frenchman which we are reading, and it makes an appeal to the historic imagination as swift and profound as the reader is impressionable and disinterested. To have escaped the influence of such impressions would have been a confession of spiritual impotence. To have felt the impression, but to have forcibly resisted its practical consequences, would have been a confession of priggish barbarism. There was nothing to do but to submit to the fascination.

Moreover, it may be doubted whether, whatever the case in the other arts, any escape from architectural imitation was possible. Architectural forms are not immediately borrowed from nature; they are rigid and conventional. In the course of long historic experimentation certain special forms have been found to be peculiarly appropriate to certain special human purposes and to certain typical states of mind. The classic forms, for instance, are most pertinently used in buildings not dominated by personal feeling; and wherever it was proposed to design a building, the purpose of which

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was to be public and the effect of which was to be impersonally and serenely beautiful, these classical forms are recommended by a sort of archetypal propriety. On the other hand, the Gothic forms, particularly as applied to domestic architecture, have about them something very personal and intimate; and the more personal and pertinent to domestic life a dwelling becomes, the more inevitable seems the use of some modification of the late Gothic or early Renaissance domestic models.

This conception of architectural types, to which buildings in which a sincere attempt is made to reach some kind of architectural propriety have a tendency to conform, is undoubtedly a dangerous one, which might easily be overworked; but it is one which is justified by architectural history and which justifies American conservatism in the application of architectural forms. Our greater modern dwellings are, indeed, far from fulfilling any very appropriate type of domestic architecture; but there is a good chance that incessant and very intelligent attempts which are now being made to adapt certain historic types to American conditions will result eventually in one or more species of dwelling that will be both grammatical and idiomatic.



Chicago, Ill.

THE GLESSNER RESIDENCE.

H. H. Richardson, Architect.

THE CHARACTER OF THE
TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

CHAPTER IV

The Character of the Transitional Dwelling



THE first attempts made by the new Americans to copy a current European architectural style was as far as possible from being either grammatical or idiomatic. In the beginning Europe as a source of architectural forms meant for Americans England only, and at least part of the decadence of American dwellings from 1825 on was the direct result of the decadence of English architecture. The publication of Stuart and Revett's detailed plates of classic architecture had encouraged European architects about the beginning of the nineteenth century to acquire merit by building modern Parthenons—that is, by the precise and literal duplication of classic temples; and our countrymen, who have always had a weakness for the grandiose, were not long in following this example.

Latrobe's amendments to the design for the portico of the Capitol, executed in 1815, gave the first indication of the new movement, which later produced, among other buildings, the Girard Bank, the Second Bank of the United States,

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and the Mint, all in Philadelphia. This Greek revival dominated American architecture until 1840, and after; it remained the official style even until 1860. Its most notable examples, in addition to those just mentioned, are the Treasury Department, the Patent Office, the general Post-Office in Washington, the Sub-Treasury in New York, and the present Custom-House in that city, built in 1841 for the Merchants' Exchange from the designs of Isaiah Rogers.

These public buildings, unlike the colonial dwellings, were many of them designed by architects who had some training; and it is worth while to pause for a moment and consider what the status and character of the architectural profession in this country was just at that period. We have said that the colonial dwelling was the work of mechanics, and the statement is true; but it must not be supposed that the colonies had been entirely without men who had some theoretic knowledge of architecture. Throughout the later colonial period the local amateur architect played an important and seemly part, and did much, not to supersede the skilled mechanic, but to supplement him.

The earliest examples of these local amateurs were Dr. John Kearsley, who designed Christ Church in Philadelphia in 1727, and Andrew Hamilton, the well-known lawyer, who in 1731 designed the State House in Philadelphia, since known as Independence Hall. These men were the predecessors of Jefferson, Dr. Thornton, and others, precisely as



Residence of Ogdan Goelet at Newport, R. I.

“ OCHRE COURT.”

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

“ a Mr. Duff, the architect from Scotland,” who came to this country at the invitation of Governor Blanden to erect St. John’s College at Annapolis, and Peter Harrison, a pupil of Vanbrugh, who was imported in 1747 to design and superintend the building of King’s chapel in Boston, were the precursors of Latrobe, Hallett, Hadfield, and Charles Bullfinch—the last by repute the first American who embraced the profession of architecture.

These early architects were—that is, almost exclusively—men who were born and trained on the other side of the Atlantic; and it was inevitable that they should introduce into this country the latest thing in English architecture, which was, of course, the rigid classicism mentioned above. If the use of this style had been confined to large public buildings the result, while sometimes tolerably inconvenient, would not have been wholly incongruous, but we showed our foolish lamb-like originality by adapting it to domestic buildings and by substituting wood as the material for stone. The well-to-do American of the fourth decade of the century built for his country, and occasionally even for his city, house a wooden Doric or Ionic temple.

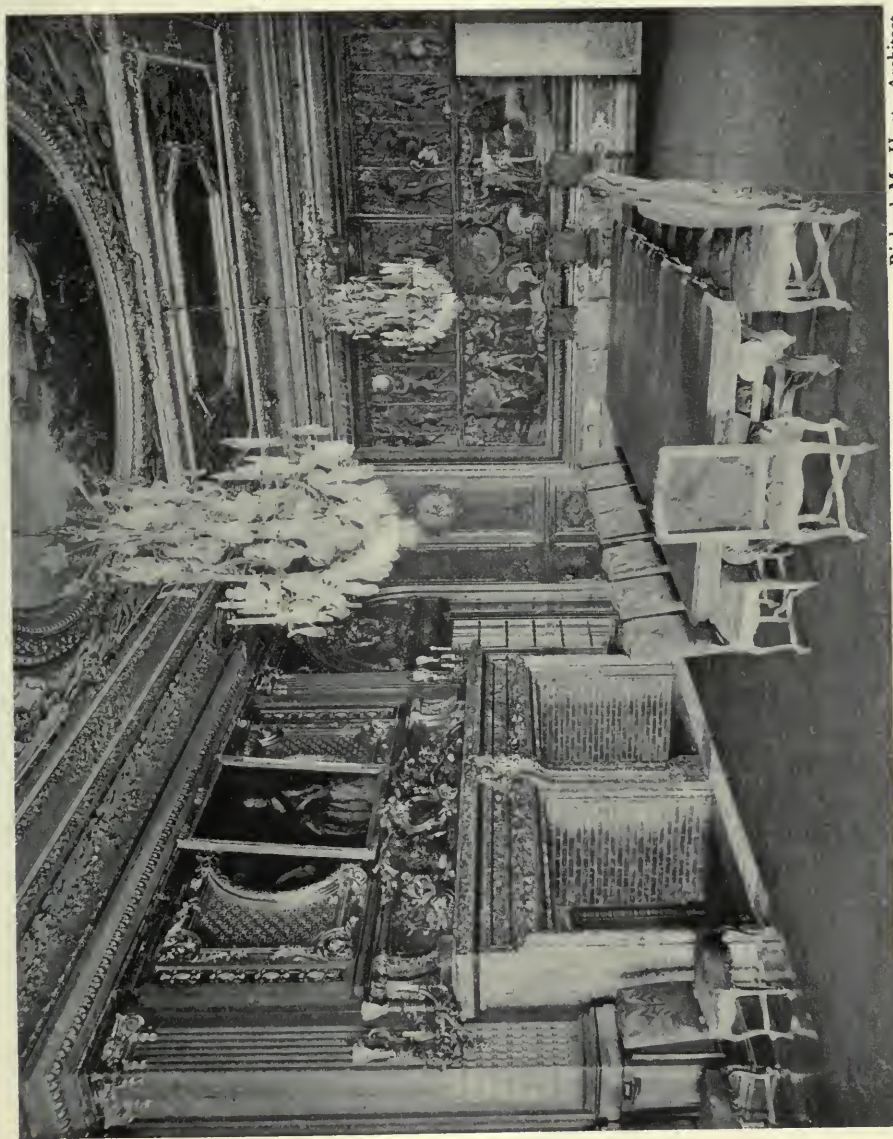
Of course, in a residence of this type the order could be nothing but a structural excrescence; but at about this same period, or a little earlier, a veranda, which afforded some protection against the sun, was becoming a popular and useful addition to the country dwelling; and by running the

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order up through two stories, and enclosing the veranda by means of it, the architectural and practical innovations were united in one incongruous and meaningless result. Buildings of this class, which were sometimes designed by comparatively well-instructed architects, were by no means so decadent architecturally as some of the residences which succeeded them; but they were a singular example of inappropriate pretension and practical inconvenience. The order and the pediment gave the whole building an architectural scale which it could not maintain, and at the same time it darkened the rooms on the second floor.

That practical-minded Americans should have submitted to such an inconvenient arrangement is one of the curiosities of architecture, and would be hard to explain were it not that one meets with so many other examples of the same thing. The lamp of self-sacrifice is surely one of the seven lamps of bad as well as of good architecture. The people who owned and occupied these buildings doubtless thought that they were suffering in the good cause of architectural dignity.

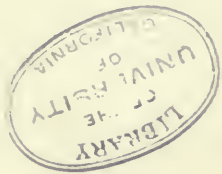
Dwellings of this class were built for very many years all over the North, but as many of them were erected on or near the banks of the Hudson River as in any other section of the country. The Hudson appealed to the mid-century American's sense of the picturesque in nature. Just as he liked to compare the bay of New York with the bay of



Newport Residence of Ogden Goelet.

DINING-ROOM IN "OCHRE COURT."

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

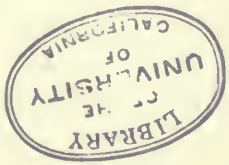




Newport Residence of Ogden Goelet.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

HALL IN "OCHRE COURT."



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

Naples, so he flattered himself with contrasting the natural beauty of the Hudson with the romantic beauty of the Rhine.

Having no architectural ruins with which to enhance the beauty of its banks, he substituted in their place the ruins of architectural styles. Miss Frederika Bremer, who visited this country about 1850, and who stayed for some weeks in the house of Mr. A. J. Downing at Newburgh, remarked upon the number of Greek or Doric "temples" which lined the border of the river; and it pleased our sentimental visitor that the American home should assume these sacred forms; but by the year of her visit Americans of the North had abandoned their attempt to make their residences revive the perfected glories of Greek architecture.

For long thereafter New Yorkers of taste, however, remained true to the Hudson. The stately mansion in the "Greek" style was succeeded by the "picturesque" villa. Artists particularly satisfied their craving for literary landscapes by country houses that commanded some entertaining view of the river, and no single fact could more suggestively point the transformation of our esthetic ideals than the extent to which the Hudson has lost the peculiar preeminence which it once possessed for the American "artistic" imagination.

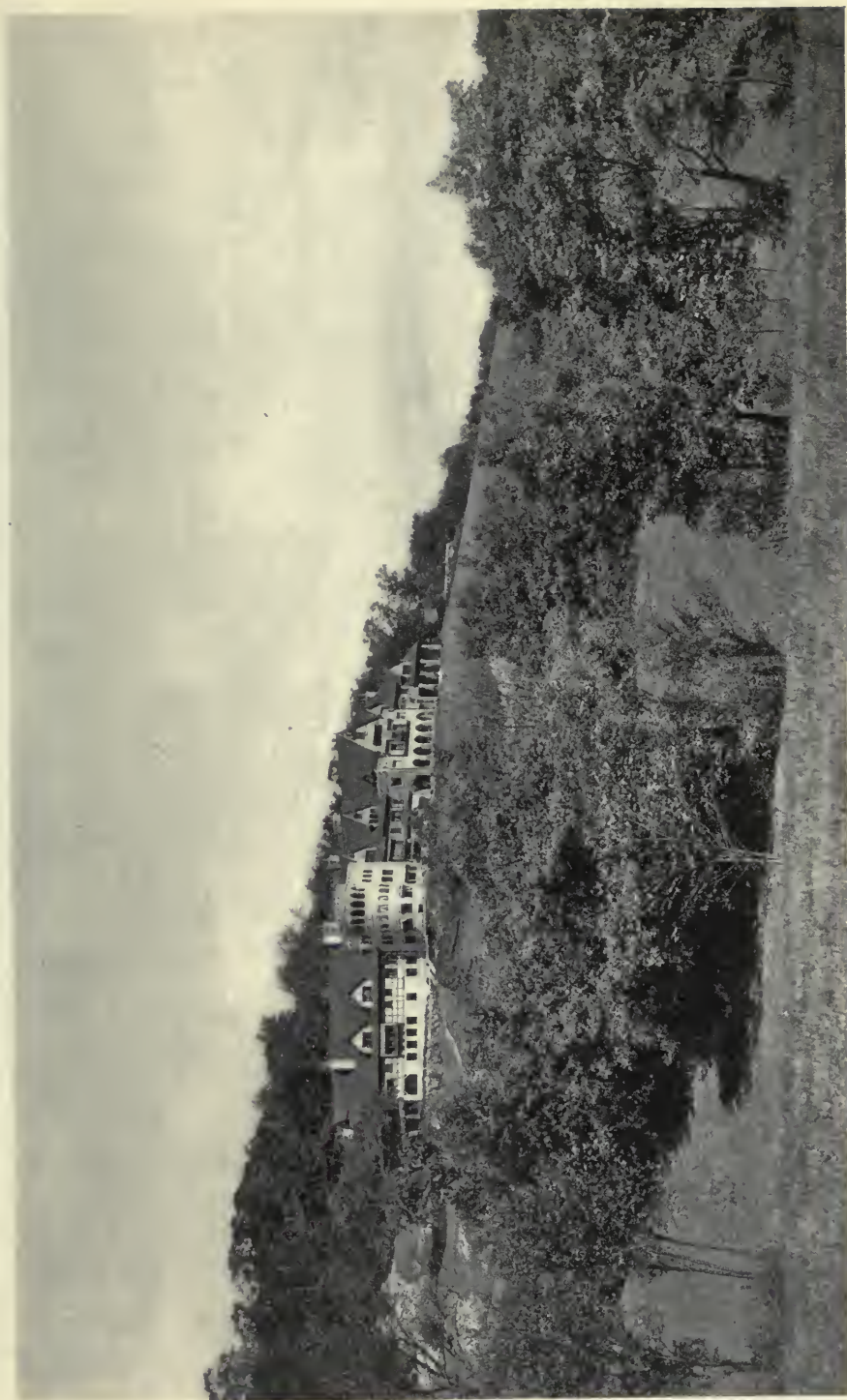
The stately wooden Parthenon, while, however, it was soon superseded in the North, satisfied a much more permanent demand in the South. Social conditions were relatively

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stable in that section of the country until the ruin of the Civil War descended upon it. The Southern planters had no picturesque ideas, but they had a conviction of their own social eminence, which was satisfied by the pretentious grandeur of the wooden temple. The great practical defect of the style, which consisted of the darkening of the rooms on the second floor, was even somewhat of an advantage for people to whom it was an object, during the larger part of the year, to mitigate the rigors of the sun's rays; and not infrequently the veranda and the rows of columns were run around three sides of the house. The high, spacious piazzas obtained in this way were further screened by large trees, which were always planted in the immediate neighborhood of the building.

In plan and purpose these dwellings followed very closely along the lines of the colonial manor-house. They tended to be cubical buildings, the ground floor of which contained the usual parlor, sitting-room, dining-room, and library or offices. The outbuildings were numerous but unimportant, and were intended for the accommodation of the domestic slaves. In every detail except plan this type of dwelling was as much of an exception and incongruity in American life as the domestic institutions and social system on which it was based.

The very fact that they were built for the most part of wood, stucco being only occasionally used in the far South,



Pittsfield, Mass.

RESIDENCE OF ANSON PHELPS STOKES.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

was an indication that the economic basis of the system was shifting and restricted. The rich Southern planter rarely had much money ahead; his receipts varied considerably in different years; he spent his income generously upon his living and upon his dependents; and he was rarely in a position to erect really substantial and permanent buildings. That he would have done so eventually had the South succeeded in gaining its independence, and had the economic conditions in that part of the country become more stable, is most certainly to be believed, for the Southern planter was thorough in his own way and stood for good manners in all the aspects of life; but as it was he was never in a position to build for more than a generation.

At about the time when the wooden temple came in, a class of building which we have not yet had any occasion to consider was growing in importance. We refer to the city house built immediately against the adjoining house, and forming with it and other neighboring houses a city row or block. Hitherto the prominent types of American residences have either been rural or at most suburban; but during the first three decades of the nineteenth century the cities on the Atlantic seaboard, and particularly New York, began to grow very rapidly, and as they grew, the urban houses, even of well-to-do people, began to be huddled together in as small a space as possible. In describing these houses we shall deal chiefly with the New York examples,

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

because their decadence during the middle period and their renewal in more recent times have been most conspicuous and can best be traced in that city.

It fortunately happens that we have a very good contemporary description of the sort of block dwelling with which New York started, and which to this day remains better than any which has succeeded it. In 1826 James Fenimore Cooper, in the interest of his praiseworthy but futile ambition to explain America for the benefit both of Americans and Europeans, published a book called "Notions of the Americans, or the Notes of a Traveling Bachelor." In his assumed character of a European traveler he has a good deal more to say in this book about contemporary buildings than has any European traveler of that date; and he shows in his comments on this and other matters a considerable and discriminating knowledge of the methods of life and habits of mind of his countrymen.

Cooper distinguishes two types among the residences of New York, the first of which he describes as a "species of second-rate genteel house." "They have," he says, "as usual, a story that is half sunk in the earth, receiving light from the area, and two floors above. The tenants of these are chiefly merchants or professional men in moderate circumstances, who pay rents of from \$300 to \$500 a year. You know that no American who is at all comfortable in life will share his dwelling with another. Each has his

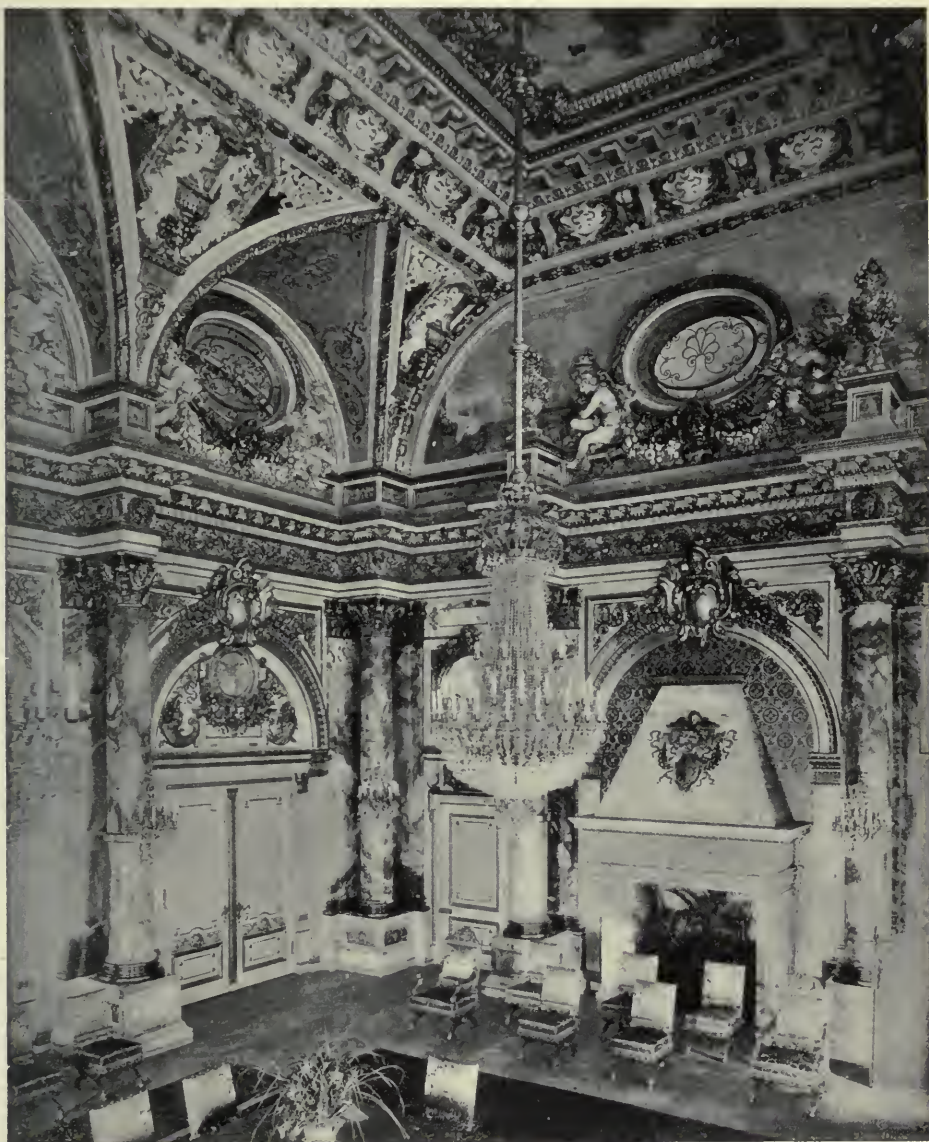


Residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt, at Newport, R. I.

“ THE BREAKERS.”

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.





Newport Residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

DINING-ROOM IN "THE BREAKERS."



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

own roof and his own little yard. These buildings are furnished, and exceedingly well finished, too, to the attics, containing on an average six rooms, besides offices and servants' apartments. The furniture of these houses is often elegant, and always neat. Mahogany abounds here and is commonly used for all the principal articles, and very frequently for doors and the railings of the stairs. Indeed, the whole world contributes to their luxury. French clocks, English and Brussels carpets, curtains from Lyons and the Indies, alabaster from France and Italy, and marbles of their own and from Italy." "In that classical taste," he adds, "which has been so happily communicated to your French artisans, they are, without doubt, miserably deficient; but they are good imitators, and there is no scarcity of models."

In the same ostensible letter Cooper enters into a description of a house, the proprietor of which is "a gentleman of the first society of the country and of what is called easy fortune." "The house in question," he says, "occupies about thirty-four feet on the Broadway, and extends in the rear between sixty and seventy more (sic). There are no additions, the building ascending from the ground floor to the attics in the same proportions. The exterior necessarily presents a narrow ill-arranged façade that puts architectural beauty a good deal at defiance." (The building had a high stoop and contained four stories.) "The first floor is occupied by two rooms that communicate by double doors.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

These apartments are nearly of equal size, and, subtracting the space occupied by the passage and two little china closets that partially separate them, they cover the whole area of the house. Each room is lighted by two windows, is sufficiently high, has a stuccoed ceiling and cornices in white, hangings of light, airy French paper, curtains in silk and muslin, mantelpieces of carved figures in white marble (Italian in manufacture), Brussels carpets, large mirrors and chairs, sofas and tables in mahogany. In one of the rooms, however, is a spacious, heavy, ill-looking sideboard in mahogany, groaning with plates, knives, and spoon cases—all handsome enough, but out of place where they are. You will see by what I have written that the Americans have not yet adopted a style of architecture of their own. Their houses are still essentially English.”

We have quoted from Cooper at length because of the fulness of his descriptions, and because the time his observations were made (1826) marked almost the end of the old and the beginning of a new period in the domestic architecture of New York City. The houses which he describes were an urban product of the colonial tradition; they were built by well-trained mechanics, by carpenters and plasterers who were accustomed to good models, and were, as Cooper says, good imitators. They were the outcome of a loyally accepted convention, which for the time being no one thought of disturbing. Consequently, Mrs. Trollope, writing about



Newport Residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

HALL AND STAIRWAY IN "THE BREAKERS."



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

five years later, finds them somewhat monotonous; but if so, the monotony was very decorous. The dwellings mentioned have been well described by a good judge as "the most respectable and artistic pattern of habitation New York has ever known."

This description, however, applies better to the smaller than to the larger of the two houses. The smaller house possessed a position and delightful esthetic quality: it was decidedly more "elegant" than the analogous habitation in Puritanic Boston or Quakerish Philadelphia—perhaps because New York had neither a Quakerish nor a Puritanic past. "These small houses," says Mr. Montgomery Schuyler, "owed their elegance to the ornament which was applied to it very modestly and very sparingly, but none the less effectively. In the first place, the area was protected by a well-designed railing of wrought iron, continued or varied as the hand-rail of the stoop, and the posts, if hollow cages can be called so, in which these hand-rails terminated, were elaborated in various degrees of ornateness." The doorway was the other decorated member of the house, and while occasionally executed in stone, it was more often an order of Ionic or Doric columns—treated with unflinching propriety of effect. These houses were as comfortable to inhabit as they were pleasant to look at, for they generally measured about 25 × 40, and all the rooms were spacious, well-proportioned, and well-lighted.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

There are evidences, however, that the larger dwelling which Cooper described belongs to a somewhat later period. The building is four stories high, and the entrance is reached by a much higher stoop; the roof is entirely concealed, and the façade lacks the distinction and the opportunity for ornamentation which the dormers gave to the smaller dwelling. It appears, indeed, to be much the same type of residence which survives at present on North Washington Square and which was somewhat influenced by the Greek revival, which at that time was beginning to have its effect. This larger type of building, while it retained the respectability of its more modest predecessor, lacked the elegance; and thereafter, until the influence of the distinctly modern movement began, respectable is the very best word which any man would dare to apply to American residences.

It is interesting to note, however, that the interior decoration and furnishing of these houses show more considerable departures from the colonial traditions than do the exteriors. The general effect of the rooms was doubtless very much the same, but the use of marble mantelpieces was a plain innovation, while the conspicuous references to Brussels carpets shows that the days of well-waxed hardwood floors were over. The newer furniture was departing from colonial models, although, of course, many genuine colonial pieces were still in use.

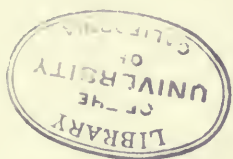
In 1810 or thereabouts the so-called "Empire" style



Newport Residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt.

LIBRARY IN "THE BREAKERS."

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

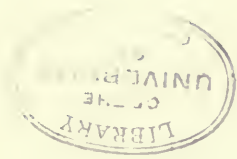




Newport Residence of the late Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

MAIN HALL IN "THE BREAKERS."



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

began to prevail among well-to-do people, particularly in New York, which has always been the port of entry for foreign influences; and this is extremely significant, because it is the first indication that models other than those derived from England were beginning to be copied. The American residences, as Cooper remarked, were still essentially English; but the second war with Great Britain, the comparative popularity of French ideas, and the increasing familiarity of Americans with France and the other continental countries were beginning to have their effect. The "Empire" furniture was a modification in mahogany of the French style of the Empire. Its characteristic forms were heavier and clumsier than those of the colonial furniture; it lacked the refinement of line and simplicity of form of the latter. It was more chunky, solid, and bourgeois, and was consequently well adapted to a society in which the respectable man no longer needed to be a man of taste. Later even the comparative excellence of the Empire style was gradually lost, and the prevailing forms ran over into meaningless complications and a sort of stupid solidity. At the same time the taste for loud and shining upholstery waxed rampant, and the Dark Middle Age of American interior decoration began.

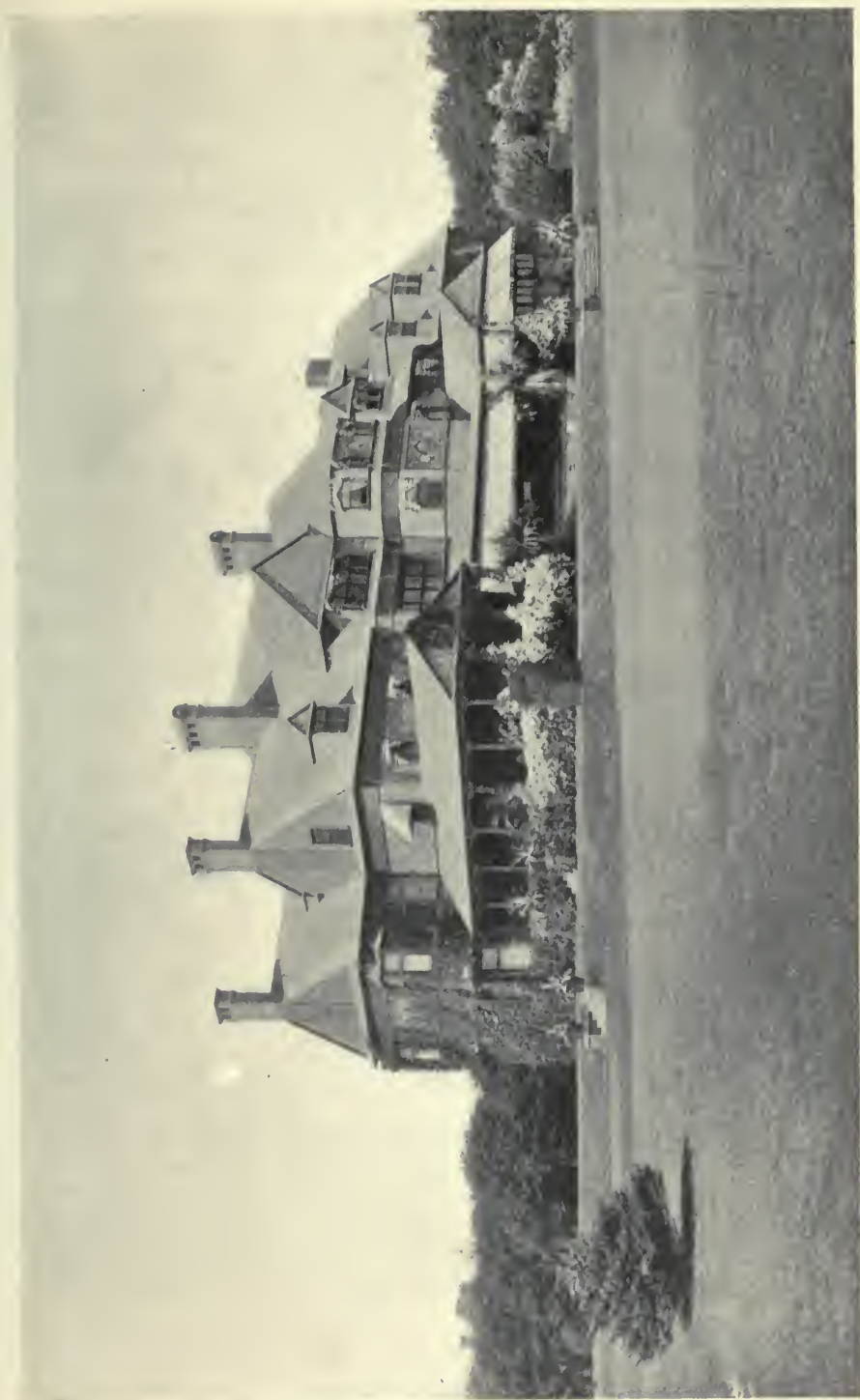
The process was analogous to that which was going on in the architectural forms proper, but its effects first became conspicuous in the interior of the houses. French influence

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

was intruding into all the divisions of American life, the doors of which were easily opened. It began with the French dancer and dressmaker. "Broadway," says Mrs. Trollope, "might be taken for a French street where it was the fashion of very smart ladies to promenade. The dress is entirely French; not an article (except, perhaps, the cotton stockings) must be English, on the pain of being stigmatized as out of fashion. Everything English is decidedly *mauvais ton*."

It soon spread, however, to the other favorite preoccupation of polite society. Americans began gradually to realize that if they wanted good form in everything, except men's clothes, they must go to Paris instead of to London; and it was a gradual realization, for which, no matter how unfortunate and frivolous its first effects, we Americans of the present time may be devoutly thankful. (Some of us, at all events, like to believe that the American democratic spirit has within it a latent sense of form and a submerged but deep-rooted passion for ideas which is more French than English, and that consequently the rejection of French influence, which would have resulted either from a continued close alliance with England or from the adoption of a system of artistic protection, would have meant a distorted or mutilated American intellectual growth.)

However that may be, New York, which had always been composite in blood and tradition, and which was just then



Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF ROBERT GOELET.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ALABAMA

THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

beginning to welcome the earliest of the Irish immigrants, was also becoming more cosmopolitan in ideas and tastes. French wall-paper and clocks, and ornaments brought apparently in miscellaneous profusion from other European countries, betray the increasingly varied sources from which New Yorkers were beginning to derive their ornaments and hangings. Mrs. Trollope supplies additional testimony to this effect. "The dwelling-houses of the higher classes," she says, "are extremely handsome and very richly furnished. Silk or satin furniture is as often or oftener seen than chintz; the mirrors are as handsome as in London; the chiffoniers, slabs, and marble tables as elegant; and in addition they have all the pretty tasteful decorations of French porcelain and ormolu in much greater abundance, because at a much cheaper rate. Every part of their houses is well-carpeted, and the exterior finishing, such as steps, railings, and door-frames, are very superior."

Mrs. Trollope's taste was evidently as English as her ideas. She liked New York interiors because they reminded her, even in their indiscriminate use of imported knick-knacks and gimcracks, of the domestic scenery of London; but nevertheless the scenery was even then in the way of being shifted. And how plainly does she foreshadow in her description the heavy, tasteless, pretentious, frivolous, meaningless, complicated, cosmopolitan stupidities and superfluities of the "Dark Middle Age."

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

That middle age was in truth fast descending upon New York. The types of dwelling described above lasted for only a few years longer, and every change was a change for the worse. The dormer was soon entirely abandoned; the ironwork lost its simplicity and charm; the stoops became higher and ill-proportioned; the houses frequently had another story added to them, and the bloated metal cornice began to replace the wooden cornice and parapet. The plan of the houses deteriorated with the design. The average house began to be narrower and deeper, and to have a middle room, which was necessarily very badly lighted. The basement floor was generally raised somewhat, and the dining-room, which had formerly been the rear of the two rooms on the entrance floor, was sent down-stairs to the front basement.

Most fatal of all, a stone was gradually substituted for the brick, which had been hitherto the exclusive material—the first stone which had ever been used to any large extent in American building. “They are now using,” says Mrs. Trollope, “a great deal of a beautiful stone called Jersey freestone. It is of a warm, rich brown, and extremely ornamental to the city wherever it is employed.” This quotation is an excellent reflection of the prevalent opinion throughout many years of the favorite building material of New York. New Yorkers congratulated themselves that in this brown-stone they had near at hand an easily worked economical and



Newport Residence of O. H. P. Belmont.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

“BELLCOURT.”

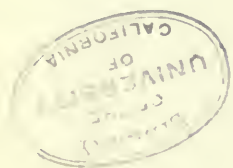




Newport Residence of O. H. P. Belmont.

INTERIOR COURT OF "BELCOURT."

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

good-looking building material; and the references to it in periodicals until the last twenty-five years was one of almost fatuous self-complacency.

At the time Mrs. Trollope wrote it was not being used in very large quantities, but thereafter it rapidly grew in favor, and in the end entirely displaced brick for the outside coating of a building. Surely no great city ever selected such a bad material for exclusive use, and no city ever used a bad material worse. "The rubbed slab of brownstone," says Mr. Russell Sturgis in his essay on "Stone in American Architecture," "set up edgewise and attached after a fashion to a wall of brick behind it, has been instrumental in developing perhaps the most unintelligent style of street architecture of modern times. Nor was the stupidity of the architecture in question much relieved by the use of the same stone in more solid blocks, as in the retaining walls and facing of areas in the stoops, or even in the columned porches by which the stoops were crowned. All partook of the same spirit of dull, flat, dusk-brown monotony, and there is no doubt that there was a reaction, and that other materials than stone seemed to be identified with any artistic reform."

In 1840 this New Jersey brownstone was being used largely for New York residences; ten years later it was being used almost exclusively; and from that time until about 1885 its reign was almost undisputed. Its use, moreover, was not confined to inexpensive dwellings; it dominated Fifth Ave-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

nue even more than it dominated the lower-numbered streets. The expensive brick dwelling ends at Washington Square; it crept into a few houses on Fifth Avenue between that square and Fourteenth Street; but for the most part the "rich, warm" stone prevails even on that part of the avenue. The wealthy people had no inclination to draw any marked distinction between their houses and those of their poorer neighbors. Indeed, it has been characteristic of New York that the dwellings of the rich did not until very recently differ from the dwellings of only moderately well-to-do people—except in size and sumptuousness.

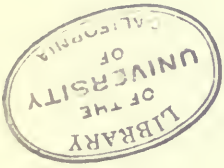
During all these years the city was growing so rapidly that not infrequently the population ran ahead of the house-room. It happened several times in the spring of the year that many families who were obliged to vacate their houses could not find other accommodations, and had to submit to the humiliation of being temporarily lodged in jail and of seeing their household goods stacked under cover in City Hall Park. It was this rapid and irresistible growth of the city which has given the peculiar economic importance to the New York speculative builder. Year after year, in order to meet the demands of the rapidly increasing population, rows upon rows of houses were built, and they were built so rapidly and their character was so completely dominated by economic necessities that they became extraordinarily uniform in plan and appearance. The houses of the rich did



Newport Residence of O. H. P. Belmont.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

HALLWAY OF THE SECOND STORY OF "BELCOURT."



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

not escape this influence any more than the houses of the poor.

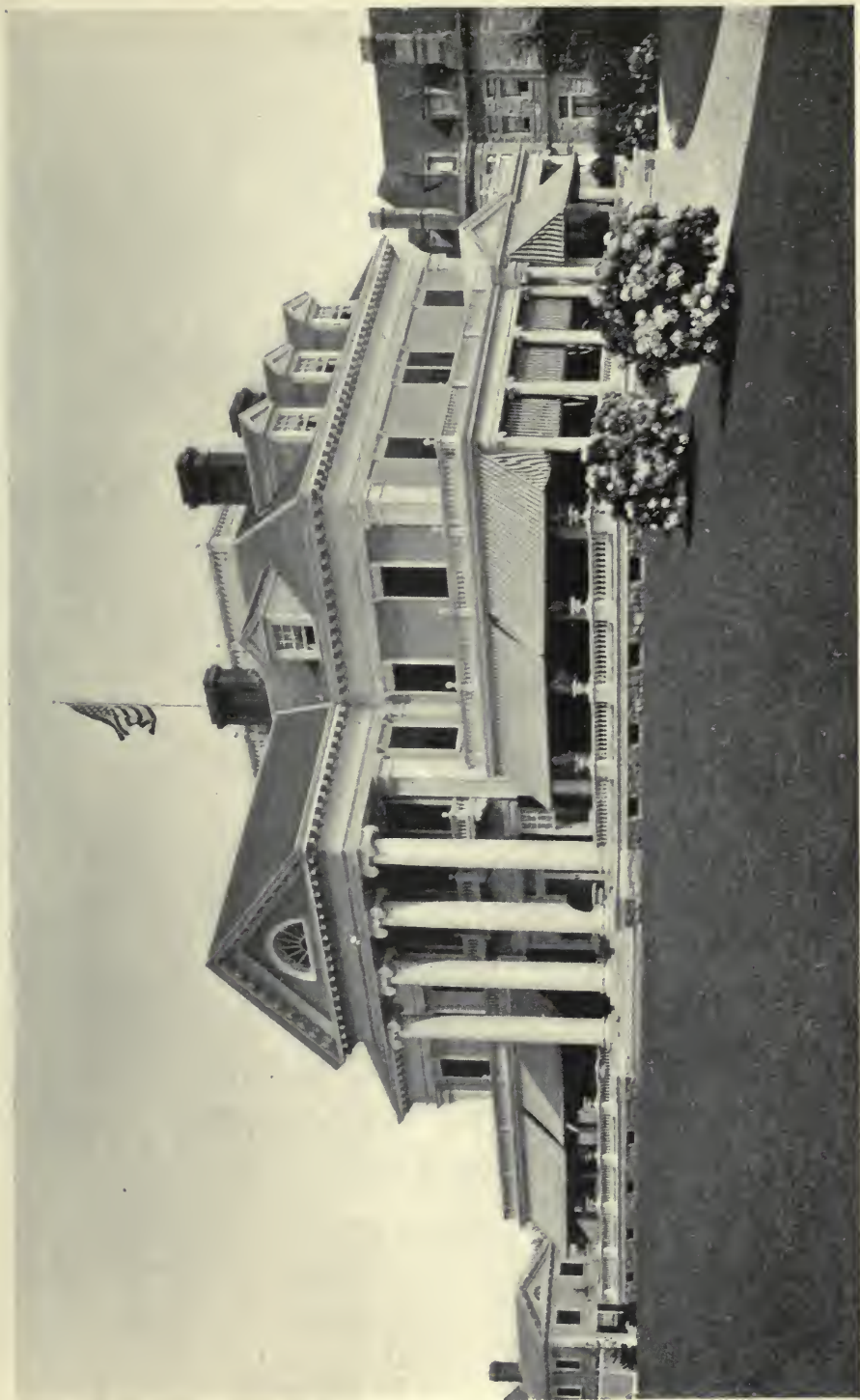
In the other Eastern American cities dwellings of wealthy people tended to be specially designed, partly because there was never enough demand for such houses to make it worth the while of speculative builders to erect them; but in New York, both because it contained so many wealthy men and because, owing to the rapid growth of the city, these wealthy men were obliged to change their residences so frequently, the speculative builder erected and sold expensive houses as readily as he did cheap ones. The great majority of Fifth Avenue houses were erected in rows as a speculation by the purely commercial dealer. This custom has continued until the present day and has had a deadening and impoverishing effect upon the design and plan of the greater residences of New York.

It was, however, during the decade between 1850 and 1860 that we get the first glimpses of modern New York. Early in the decade the city was being transformed by the destruction of old and the erection of new buildings; and the movement seemed as unique and as extraordinary to the New Yorker of that day as the more complete transformation now in progress seems to our contemporaries. The reconstruction was taking place quite as much on the residential as on the business streets. Large numbers of very expensive dwellings were being erected, and by their more imposing size and

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

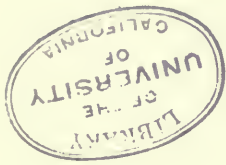
aspect were beginning to suggest the modern distinction of New York as peculiarly the city of wealthy people. In the spring of 1854 a writer in "Putnam's Monthly" set out to record the recent achievements of New York builders, and his comments upon the private residences then being erected on Fifth Avenue, from Washington Square to Twenty-third Street, are an interesting revelation of the way in which a New Yorker of that day, who was not without some architectural information, understood and valued the contemporary architectural eruption.

The writer overflows with metropolitan complacency. New York is the greatest city in the country, and the New York of 1854 is much superior, not only in size, but in dignity and elegance to the New York of any previous period. "The exigences," he says, "of our rapid growth, the sudden accumulation of large fortunes, the instincts of our building architects, are daily manifesting themselves in some remarkable examples of architectural ingenuity and external ornamentation which put all precedent at defiance and set at naught established rules. The new city has risen up like enchantment, telling of new times, a new people, new tastes, and new habits. The old houses on Broadway were all of brick, and plain in their exterior beyond belief;" but now "plain brick fronts have been succeeded by dressed free-stone and sculptured marble; plate-glass has become universal, and lace window drapery has displaced the old chintz



Newport, R. I.

THE THAW RESIDENCE.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

curtains which once flaunted their bright colors through small window-panes.”

He then goes on to describe some of the newer residences. The “most elegant Grecian mansion” in New York is, he says, situated in College Place at the corner of Murray Street; and he considers it a more successful example of architecture than the “Egyptian” house of Mr. R. L. Stevens on Barclay Street. These buildings, however, were old-fashioned in 1854. The “Grecian” style “both in this country and England had been succeeded by a revival of the “Italian style”—and more particularly “that modification of it which prevails at Florence.”

Many of the first brown-stone houses on Fifth Avenue were built in this “Italian style,” but it by no means exclusively prevailed. A building on the corner of Tenth Street and Fifth Avenue was taken to be a mixture of French and Italian, “with a remnant of the Gothic principle” traceable in some of the details. As he goes on he mentions a number of new “Gothic” residences, such, for instance, as those which may still be seen at another corner of Fifth Avenue, at Tenth Street; but the majority of the new houses were Italian, and this commended itself to the judgment of our magazine writer. He considered the houses to be of sufficient “solidity and grandeur to satisfy the architectural sentiment of even the exacting author of the ‘Seven Lamps.’”

He declines to believe that “anything more compact,

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cosy, comfortable, and elegant in the shape of a dwelling-house will ever be invented than the first-class dwelling-house now being built in the upper part of the city." Their interiors "are of a more elaborate, showy, and generally tasteful character than the exteriors," and "painted ceilings, gilded cornices, and floors of colored marbles, or inlaid with vari-colored woods, which were once very rare, even in the houses of the wealthiest merchants," had then become exceedingly common.

Our writer, however, with all the praise he bestows upon the contemporary New York residence, by no means approves the method of architectural imitation which prevailed. He wants an American dwelling to be as original and as thoroughly local as an American ship. He does not like it that the streets of New York have been filled "with costly and meaningless copies of Greek porticoes, of Gothicized dwellings, of ambitious imitations of baronial castles, Egyptian tombs, turreted churches, useless campanile towers," and the like. "As yet," he says, "there is no American architect whose name is known beyond the circle of his own employers," and he predicts that we must outgrow "our childish dependence upon the Old World before we shall be able to boast of our architects as we boast of our ship-builders."

This witness of 1854 has been quoted at length because better testimony could not be desired as to the condition of New York residential architecture in the "fifties," and be-



Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF H. MCK. TWOMBLY.

Peabody & Stearns, Architects.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

cause he is an amusing illustration of the prevalent standards of taste and confusion of ideas. The well-informed American culture of the time—that of the New England Renaissance—had no interest in any art save that of literature, and the only monuments it desired to rear were those of the spirit. The current movement of ideas in New York was represented on the one side by the languid, superficial, regretful European impressionism of N. P. Willis, and on the other by the sturdy but formless democratic protestantism of Whitman.

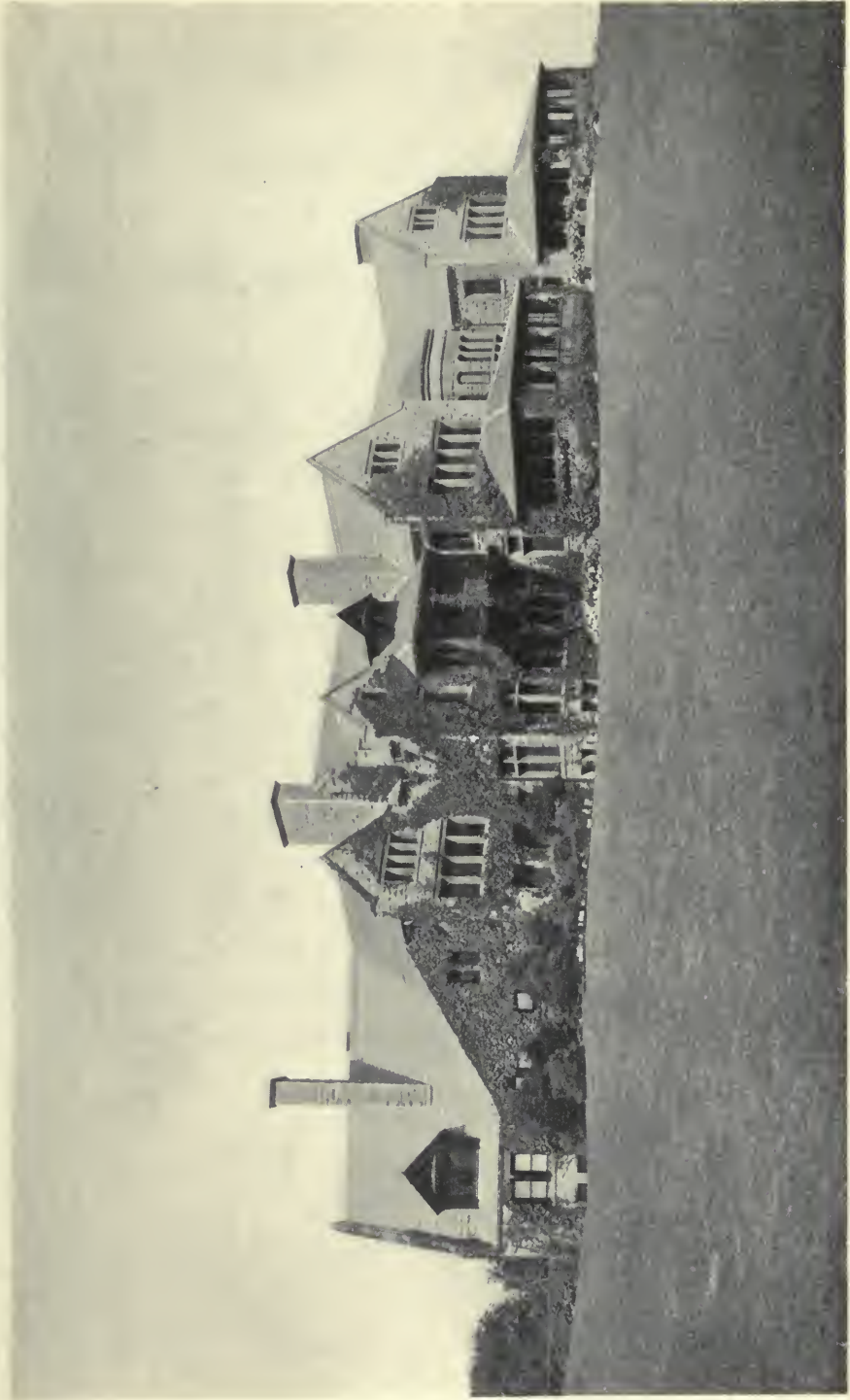
The writer in "Putnam's Monthly" was measurably influenced by ideas from both of these sources. Overflowing as he is with the inevitable local and national complacency, he is stimulated to place an excessive valuation upon everything American which he lacks the taste to disapprove; and nothing could show better both his presumption and his ignorance than his naive assertion that the author of the "Seven Lamps" would find himself well suited with the contemporary methods of building construction. But it is his confusion of thought which is most conspicuous and which plainly shows how much American artistic progress has depended upon instinct and how little upon criticism. Almost in the same breath he condemns American architecture for being imitative, and praises it because it "puts all precedent at defiance and sets at naught established rules." Perhaps the architecture of that day did set all precedent at

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

defiance; but if so, it was only because it broke rules by a sort of anarchy of imitation.

We have followed the transformation of the city dwelling in New York through several phases in order to secure some continuity in our account of it; but in so doing we have left unexplained a number of changes in architectural styles implied by these several modifications of the type of metropolitan residences. During the years between 1830 and 1855 the classic revival, except as applied to Government buildings, completely passed away. Its most conspicuous New York survival in any way connected with residential architecture is Colonnade Row, in Lafayette Place, which was built in 1836 from plans by Andrew Jackson Davis. Girard College, erected in Philadelphia in 1847, is, perhaps, the last building, not built by the Government, which was designed according to rigid classic precedents.

A different style of architecture had come to prevail in England, and American builders soon followed it. Owing to the influence of Ruskin, and the more careful study which had recently been made of the Gothic monuments, serious attempts were being made to use in England, both for public and private buildings, a modern version not of the Gothic structural principles, but of Gothic architecture as a consistent group of decorative forms. Under any circumstances these experiments would have had their influence upon American design; but this influence was very much intensi-



Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT.

Peabody & Stearns, Architects.

THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

fied by the introduction of a comparatively new force into American design.

We have mentioned the imported architects who drew the plans for American public buildings during the first two decades of the century. This importation of foreign designers practically ceased throughout the two decades following; but after 1840 young craftsmen of some technical education again began to "invade" the United States, and, like their predecessors, they brought with them the latest European Gothic fashions. The two of these men who arrived earliest were Leopold Eidlitz and Richard M. Upjohn, and their influence was immediately exerted—particularly on ecclesiastical architecture.

Hitherto American churches, even those of the Episcopalians, had been designed exclusively in some modification of the classic forms of Wren and Gibbs; but between the years 1846 and 1850 Mr. Eidlitz designed St. George's Church in Stuyvesant Square, New York City, while in 1846 Mr. Upjohn's Trinity Church was finished. This latter building, in particular, was in a quiet sense revolutionary. Ever since, Gothic has played a conspicuous and useful part in American ecclesiastical architecture; but its effect upon the design of residences has not been so happy.

Instead of copying those styles of domestic architecture which came into existence late in the middle ages or early in the Renaissance, and which contain the appropriate domestic

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

modifications of Gothic forms, these first American Gothic dwellings were only Gothic in the sense of having a gable here and there, and a little ornament derived from Gothic churches. The whole movement, as applied to residences, was even less respectable than the classic revival, and was perverted by a pernicious and irrelevant notion that the beautiful in nature and architecture was merely picturesque.

But at this period American design was not so narrow-minded as to confine itself to any one style. It was about 1855 that the fashion of indiscriminate imitation began. By the side of Gothic and classic residences the "Italian villa" was introduced as an attempt to adapt Renaissance motives to American buildings; and this "Italian style" was, as we have seen, the one chiefly adopted for the New York brown-stone dwelling.

Nor was this all. Having exhausted all the European styles upon which they could lay their hands, our emancipated fellow countrymen scoured both the remote past and the mysterious East for novel and untried forms. We have already mentioned the not entirely successful "Egyptian" dwelling erected by Mr. Stevens in Barclay Street; and this was matched by a number of freakish structures, chiefly, of course, country houses, which were supposed to have something original and oriental about them. There was an amusing book published in 1861 by J. B. Lippincott & Co., called "Homestead Architecture," in which the author, who was,



Newport, R. I.

THE MARBLE HOUSE.

Owned by Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.





Residence of Stuyvesant Fish, at Newport, R. I.

“THE CROSSWAYS.”

Dudley Newton, Architect.

THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

apparently, a practising architect in Philadelphia, offered to supply his readers with every known variety of design. For himself he has no choice; he offers them examples of "picturesque Gothic cottages," of urban "Italian villas," of stately classic mansions, and of bizarre oriental pagodas. There are several varieties in each of these "styles," and the selection of one or the other is merely a matter of personal taste. The spoils of the past were laid at the feet of the American home-seeker, and for the early carpenter's interpretation of the Renaissance was substituted a carpenter's interpretation of every kind of stone and plaster architecture that was ever known.

The ambition to break all precedents by means of daring imitations could take only one step further, and that was to combine all or most of these different styles in one unique building. In Mr. Winston Churchill's amusing novel of "The Celebrity," a new rich man describes his favorite country-seat in the following words: "I had all these ideas I gathered knocking about the world, and I gave them to Willis of Philadelphia to put together for me. But he's honest enough not to claim the house. Take, for instance, that minaret business on the west; I picked that up from a mosque in Algiers. The oriel just this side is whole cloth from Haddon Hall, and the galleried porch next it from a Florentine villa. The conical capped tower I got from a French château, and some of the features on the south from

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a Buddhist temple in Japan. Only a little blending and grouping was necessary, and Willis calls himself an architect, and wasn't equal to it. Now," he added, "get the effect. Did you ever see another house like it?"

To any but an American familiar with the ways of his countrymen this would sound like very wild satire; but, in point of fact, combinations quite as incongruous as this have frequently been made from precisely the same motives that Mr. Churchill's millionaire so comprehensively yet so tersely expresses. For instance, a house at Irvington is described as "suggesting parts of the Elizabethan cottage, the Gothic lodge, and the Swiss chalet"—all these "suggestions" being "materialized" in granite.

But perhaps the most amusing instance of the kind is that of "Armsmear," built by Colonel Colt in the neighborhood of Hartford between the years 1855 and 1862. A description of this wonderful building, which our author calls "a characteristic type of the unique," appeared in a number of the "Art Journal" for 1876. He says: "A long, grand, impressive, contradicting, beautiful, strange thing—such is the first feeling on beholding Armsmear, an Italian villa in stone, massive [a massive villa?], noble, refined, yet not carrying out any decided principles of architecture, it is like the mind of its originator, bold and unusual in its combinations." "There is no doubt," he adds, "it is little Turkish, among other things, on one side, for it has domes, pinnacles, and



Newport, R. I.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.

HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF E. J. BERWIND.



THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

light lavish ornamentation, such as oriental taste delights in." Nor was this all. Our author adds a final word. "Yet, although the villa is Italian and cosmopolitan, the feeling is English. It is an English home in its substantiality, its home-like and comfortable aspect."

These descriptions of houses built during the period with which we are dealing are a sufficient indication that Mr. Churchill's satirical mansion is one of a type which, while they are not numerous, are significant. They are result of a different set of influences from the wooden Parthenons or the picturesque Gothic villas. The classic and Gothic revivals, however, incongruous as were their effects upon American residences, originated after all among instructed architects, and had behind them the weight of well-informed opinion. They were designed in that way not because their owners had any preference for that sort of thing, but because that was the safe and fashionable sort of thing to do.

But houses such as "Mohair" and "Armsmear" have an entirely different origin. They derive, not from a well-informed architectural opinion, but from the "ideas" which some rich man has gathered when "knocking around the world." The ideas, that is, instead of being imported, are the outcome of the foreign travel, which at this period began to increase rapidly, and they were put together with the novel notion that the best way to break precedents was to convert them into a hodge-podge.

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Yet, after all, the people who erect such houses have the merit of some mental independence. Like our contemporary millionaires they want their houses to be effective and unique; but they have gone ahead and tried to make them so without the assistance of the architect, Willis of Philadelphia. Our contemporary millionaire has the assistance of his Willis, but his instinct is the same. He wants his house to be reminiscent of the things he has liked in Europe; he wants it to be impressive and magnificent; he wants people to say: "Did you ever see another house like it?" And his architect, Willis of Philadelphia, shows him how.

It should be insisted, therefore, that crude as were these "grand, impressive, contradicting, beautiful, strange dwellings," such as "Armsmear," they had a wholesome aspect to them. They were altogether ridiculous; they had nothing really original about them, except that they outraged all architectural proprieties; they were based upon the childish notion that positive originality can be obtained merely by breaking precedents; but at least they were no longer colonial. They were not a reproduction of the kind of dwelling which was fashionable at that time in England; but they were the first wild beginning of that gradual process of local experimentation with European forms which is the one method whereby any local types of building can be wrought. It was, that is, the beginning of our American architectural education—a process which even at the present day has not



Newport, R. I.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.

STAIRWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF E. J. BERWIND.

THE TRANSITIONAL DWELLING

gone very far, but which is the excuse and the explanation for much in American building that is otherwise inexcusable and inexplicable.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GREATER
MODERN RESIDENCE

CHAPTER V

The Beginnings of the Greater Modern Residence



THE years between 1865 and 1885 may be described both as the ending of the middle period of American residences and the beginning of the modern period. During the first decade the old influences continued on the whole to dominate the architectural situation. During the second decade some of the newer conditions and ideas had begun to make a noticeable impression. At the outset the ornamental woodwork, which the American carpenter continued to "commit," was ugly and distorted almost beyond belief. The designs of the exteriors of country houses were derived by a process of indiscriminate imitation from all parts of the world; the designs of city houses were dominated by a stupid routine in Philadelphia and Boston, as well as in New York; and the routine of the first two cities was better than that of the metropolis only because the brick was a comparatively modest and safe material. The interior of these houses continued to be on the whole "English" and home-like, but only in the sense of being dull, heavy, com-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

fortable, respectable, and dreary. If they ceased to be respectable and dull it was by becoming gaudy and ostentatious. For a good deal of the time some heavy mahogany lingered on in the drawing-rooms; but toward the end of it the machine-made furniture began to invade the cheaper houses, and many of the interiors ceased even to be respectable.

But while the average dwelling erected was perhaps in the beginning more rather than less vulgar, a different set of social, economic, and æsthetic conditions were coming to have an effect upon American life. During these years we can trace the origin of all those forces, which we have described in the introduction, as explaining the peculiar character of the greater residences of to-day. Just as the period of the pioneer began with the settlement of Kentucky and Tennessee a generation before the colonial architectural tradition disappeared, so the evidences of comparative economic maturity may be noted, while the distinctive outlines of a pioneering spirit still, on the whole, overshadowed the economic and social landscape. The distinctive mark of this period of the pioneer was, from our point of view, the peculiar value which was placed upon the man who was useful in all sorts of ways.

The country at this stage of its growth could not, except in certain directions, afford skilled labor; it could not afford to give men the time and the training needed to make them experts in any one direction. The exceptions were, of

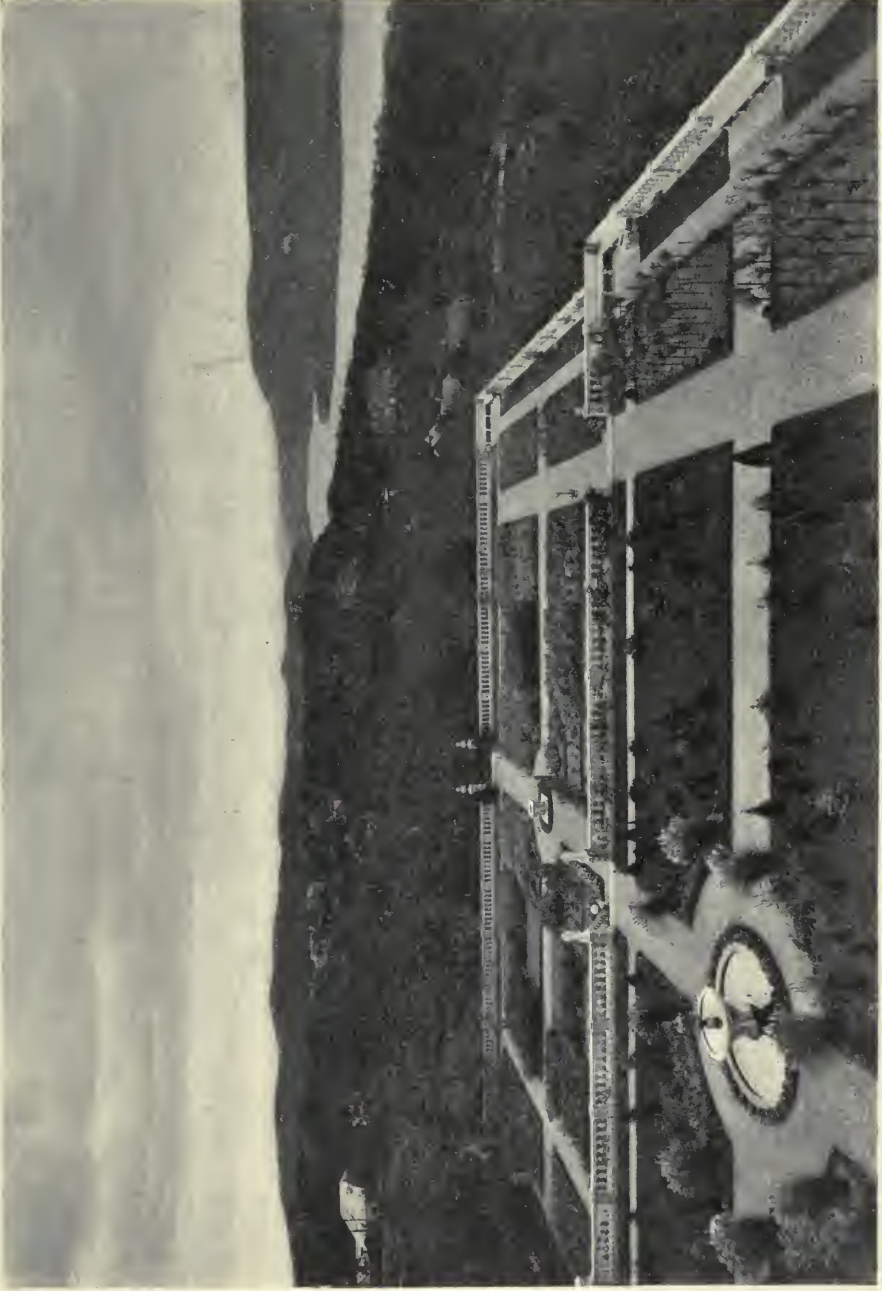


Tuxedo, N. Y.

RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

T. Henry Randall, Architect.





Tuxedo, N. Y.

GARDEN OF THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

T. Henry Randall, Architect.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

course, politics and the learned professions. The physician, the clergyman, and the lawyer were necessarily better trained than the business man, the mechanic, or the architect. The colleges, indeed, were devoted to turning out, not men of culture, but clerics and lawyers, because during this period of the pioneer, religion, politics, and litigation were of even greater social importance than they are to-day. But, on the whole, all economic and social conditions tended to keep the average American down to an average level, to make him very much like his neighbor in tastes, wealth, abilities, and acquirement.

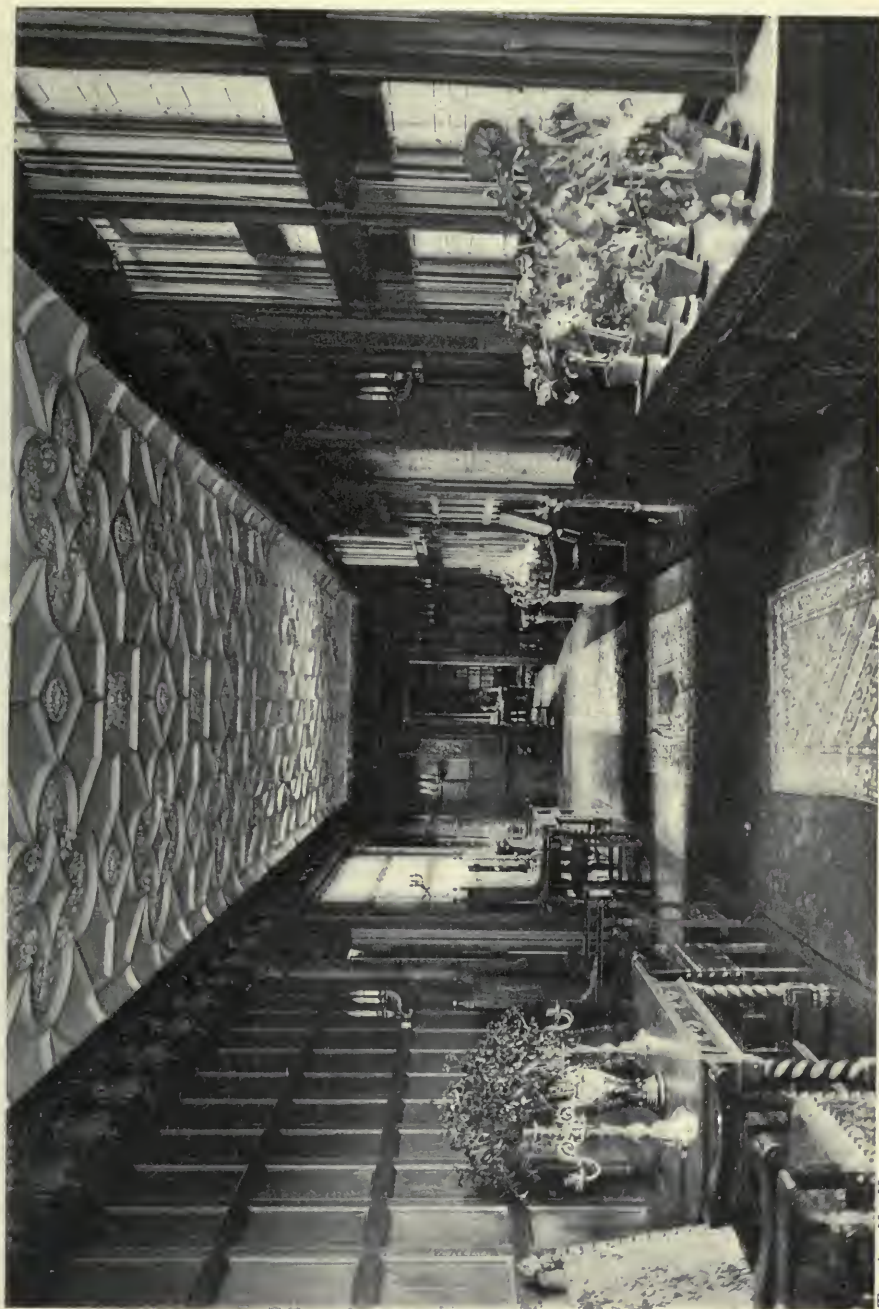
The whole country was swept along by a tide of irresistible economic expansion, which molded men into similar shapes. Owing to the fact that the nation was politically as well as economically an experiment, and had such a grave political problem as slavery to settle, the average American was as much of a politician as he was a business man and real estate speculator, but the characteristic tone of the country, as remarked by De Tocqueville, was that of a commonplace level of achievement, ambition, appearance, and habits of mind. There were great statesmen, great inventors, great lawyers, and in New England even great clergymen and men of letters; but there were few great fortunes, there were no great architects or artists, and there was very little distinction of manner, training, or thought or ambition among the great mass of Americans.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

After the Civil War new characteristics began to appear. The problem of slavery was settled, even if the problem of the negro remained. Politics became less absorbing; business became more so; and politics became increasingly occupied with business questions. The greater and better part of the country's energy was, perhaps, still engaged in the pioneering work of preparing the Far West for human habitation, but whereas the Middle West had been opened up chiefly by means of roads and watercourses, the Far West was opened up by means of railroad.

The railroad was a fertile source of distinctions. It demanded scientific knowledge, expert labor, long and arduous industrial training, and a talent for industrial organization. From the very start it exercised a formative influence upon business conditions. It was the beginning of the organization of American industry on a national scale; and it was as the result of such an organization that the great American fortunes were produced. Many of them originated in the years immediately succeeding the war. Until that period wealthy Americans derived their money for the most part from commerce.

Like their colonial predecessors they were generally merchants. Money made in trade was frequently invested in real estate; and, particularly in New York, some very large fortunes were gathered in this manner. In New England there were many wealthy manufacturers, but manufacturing



Tuxedo, N. Y.

T. Henry Randall, Architect.

GALLERY IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY

THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

had not become a very prevalent source of wealth. Except in the case of John Jacob Astor and a few others, the fortunes that preceded the Civil War were not very large. As in Europe, the amount of wealth that had been accumulated had not run much ahead of its possessor's opportunity of spending his income. After the war, however, the character of American wealth changed, both in respect to its size and in respect to its origin. Of course there were still well-to-do merchants, but they were dwarfed by the new men.

The railroad fortunes began to be conspicuous. The New York Central Railroad and the Harlem Railroad started the Vanderbilt accumulations; Jay Gould found a ready road to wealth by the making and breaking of such railroad systems as the Erie and the Wabash. The building of the Pennsylvania made many rich men in Philadelphia; some of the Western roads, as many more in Boston. Round about 1870 the Standard Oil Company began its career, and not only suggested the idea of similar organizations, but has been the immediate source of more large American fortunes than has any other corporation—railroad or industrial.

At the same time the steel manufacturing business was being founded, and during the next twenty years increased with extraordinary rapidity and left many a millionaire besides Mr. Andrew Carnegie stranded by the way. The fortune of Mr. A. T. Stewart, which was one of the largest of the period, and which was one of the few big American

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fortunes which has, up to this time, been dissipated, was derived from wholesale and retail trade; but this was an exception, its only parallel being, so far as we know, the fortune of Mr. Marshall Field of Chicago. For the most part the largest accumulations of wealth in this country have been derived from some form of interstate or national industrial organization or from the exploitation of some natural monopoly.

Later we shall consider more in detail what the social and economic effect has been of wealth which was accumulated by these means; but for the present we wish merely to point out that here was a new fact of the utmost social and economic importance which was destined to introduce all sorts of novel distinctions into American life. Evidently these new industrial organizations could not perform their peculiar tasks with the comparatively crude machinery and equipment which had sufficed in the past. They needed well-trained and efficient engines of all kinds, and the character of American training in all technical branches consequently began to improve during the years immediately succeeding the Civil War.

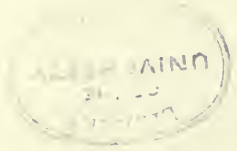
Of course we do not mean to imply that these new rich men were the only social force making for a more definite organization of American technical work. Specialization was bound in any case to come as the result of comparative economic maturity, but since the new millionaires were the

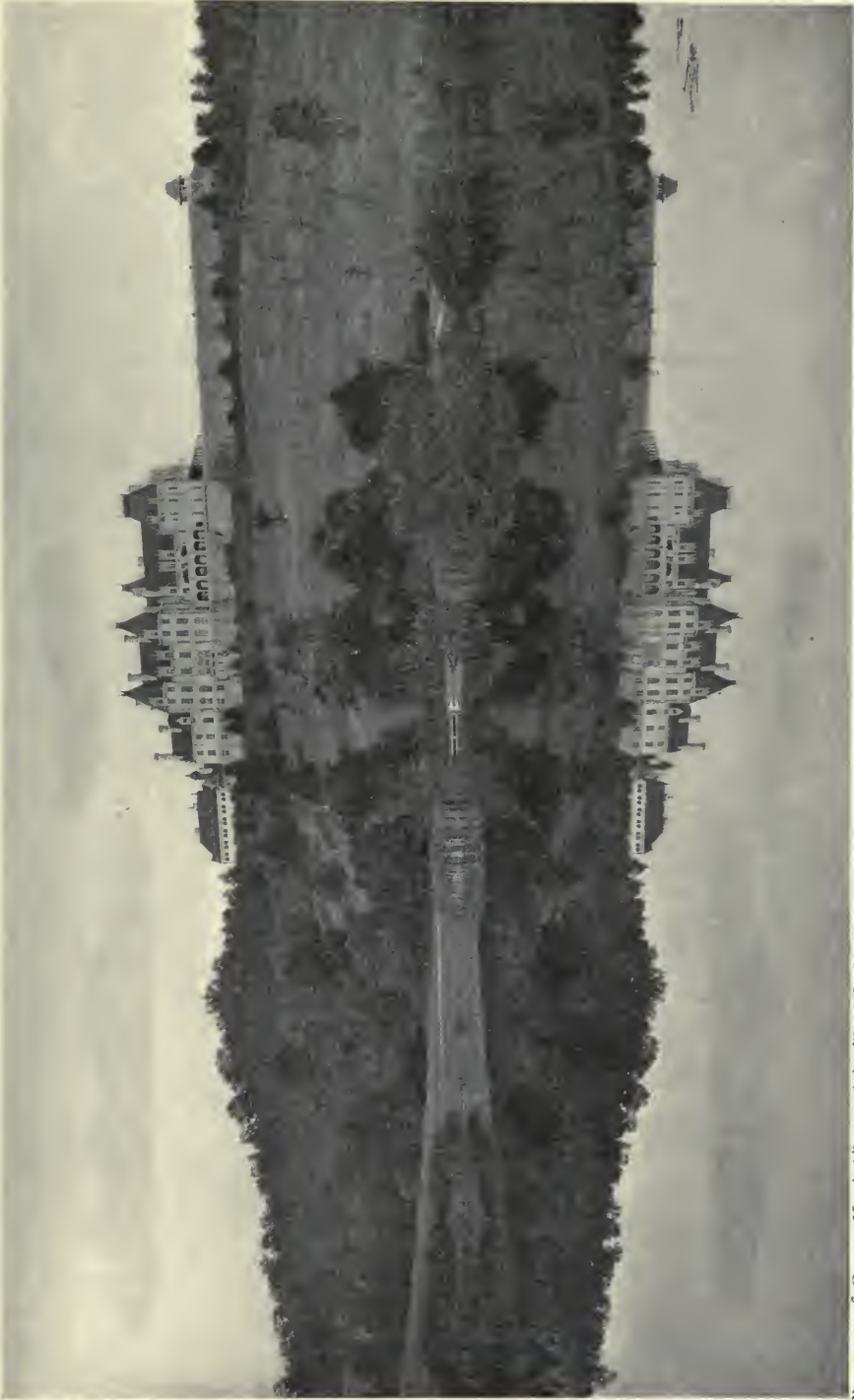


Residence of George Vanderbilt, at Asheville, N. C.

“BILTMORE” AND ITS GROUNDS.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect





Residence of George Vanderbilt, at Asheville, N. C.

A REAR VIEW OF "BILTMORE."

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

most conspicuous agents and products of this process of economic development, they unquestionably did a great deal during these twenty years to improve the training and equipment of the American engineer, craftsman, and mechanic.

The day of the comparatively well-instructed architect was beginning. We have already noticed how, as early as 1845, men like Leopold Eidlitz and R. M. Upjohn were practising in New York. From the start the studios of these capable and energetic designers became the training-places of many young craftsmen who were ambitious and who appreciated that American architecture was very much in need of a higher standard of practise. In a few years many of these younger men graduated from the workshops of their masters and set out themselves to carry on the good work.

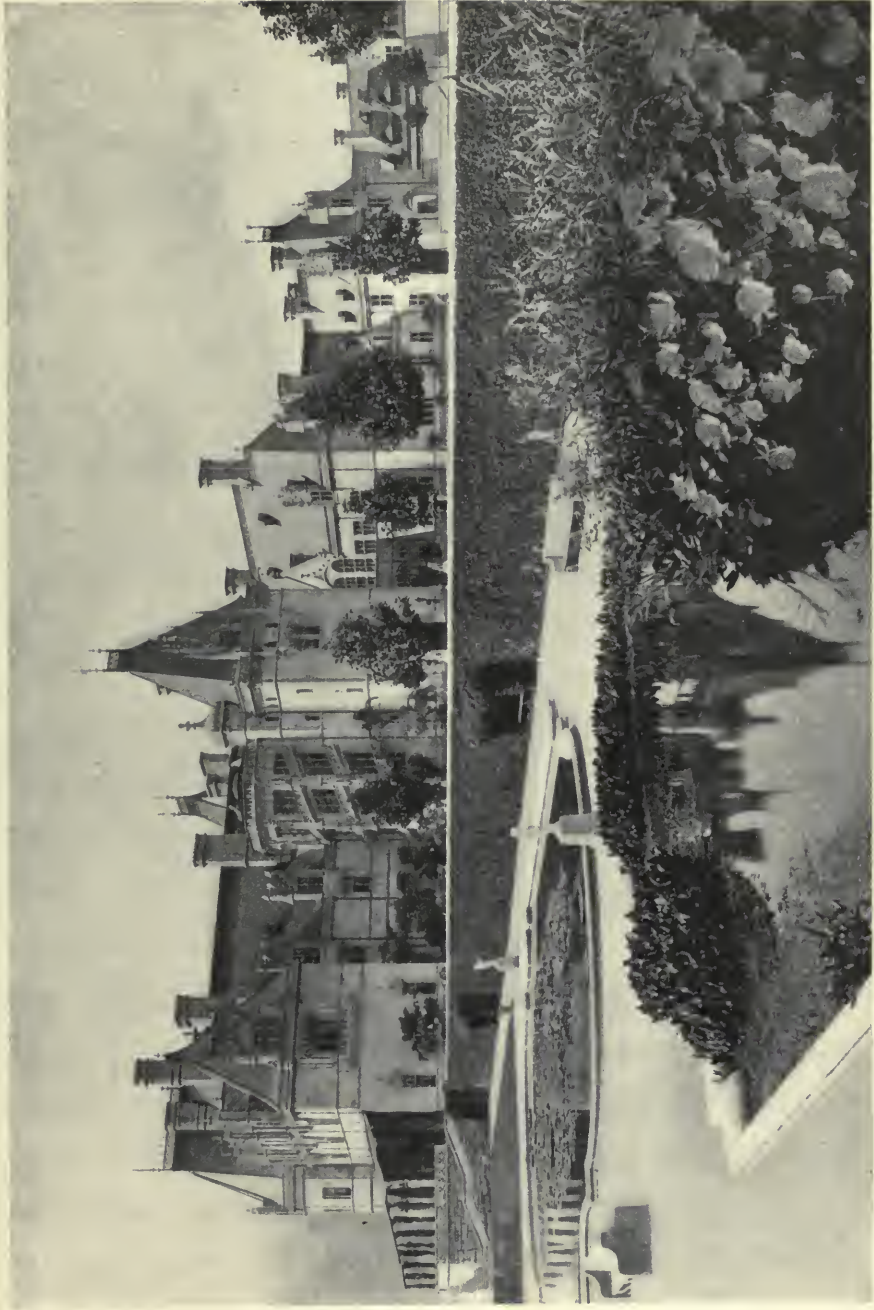
The consequence was that, what with architects such as Upjohn and Eidlitz, their pupils, and a number of recruits who had arrived from Europe, there was by the time the country began to recover economically from the effect of the war, a very respectable group of comparatively well-trained architects practising in New York and the other large Eastern cities. Among the New Yorkers may be mentioned Detlef Lienau, J. Wrey Mould, Calvert Vaux, D. D. Withers, E. H. Kendall, P. B. Wight, Russell Sturgis, George B. Post, and Richard M. Hunt.

The foregoing list is not, of course, by any means ex-

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haustive, and is given merely as an illustration of the rapid multiplication of competent designers. Nearly all of these gentlemen were more or less under the influence of the Gothic tradition, which still dominated English practise. Even Richard M. Hunt, who originally set up his studio in 1855, and who was, we believe, the first American architect to be trained at the *École des Beaux Arts*—even Mr. Hunt was for many years a designer chiefly of Gothicized buildings.

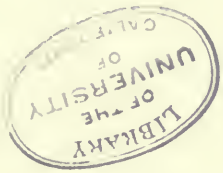
This Gothic tradition infected, however, only the better American architects. The bulk of the work was of the dull, mechanical, nondescript Renaissance type, which received its most tiresome and pretentious expression in the designs of John Kellum and Griffith Thomas. The Park National Bank building on lower Broadway is a conspicuous relic of this decadent style, while it so happens that among the residences the great show-house and the architectural wonder of the period—Mr. A. T. Stewart's mansion at the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue—was designed under this same influence. One great distinction, however, between these years and those which succeeded them was the persistent force of English esthetic ideas. Ever since the beginning of the century Americans had been borrowing a good deal from France in the way of wall-papers, bric-à-brac, and objects of art, and from 1840 down they were becoming cosmopolitan in many respects; but their instinctive esthetic sympathies remained English. They preferred



Residence of George Vanderbilt, at Asheville, N. C.

“BILTMORE” AND ITS AQUATIC GARDEN.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

pictures which told a story or carried a message, and their architectural standards were more influenced by associations, or by some appeal to their sense of the quaint and the picturesque, than they were by the severer technical proprieties and merits. These preferences persist in the popular mind until the present day; but they have almost wholly disappeared among Americans who practise and criticize the arts.

The brownstone dwellings on Fifth Avenue from Fourteenth Street north belong for the most part to these years. The majority of them were built in rows by speculative builders, but sometimes on the corners, and even in the middle of the block, they were built from special designs. Even when they were the work of some of the better architects mentioned above, it was a very rare thing for any material other than brownstone to be used. Here again the principal exception was Mr. Stewart's marble palace, although occasionally a combination of brick and freestone was slipped quietly in, as in the old Astor residences on Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets. On the whole, however, there is very little to be said about the exterior of these buildings. The revolution was taking place more upon the inside than upon the outside, and a very wonderful revolution it was, but one that is not easy to trace. The different influences are so complex that it is extremely difficult to disentangle and give them their proper value and sequence.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

The interior of the typical urban residence in this country reached its lowest point in the years immediately after the Civil War. Since then it has slowly improved, until at the present time the greater residences are much more remarkable for their interior decorations than for their exterior design. The architects whom we have mentioned above gave the character to the first movement toward better things. These gentlemen could not improve the taste of their clients, for good taste is a social product of slow growth; but they could and did give currency to better ideas. They tried to substitute a certain sincerity of style for the erratic, miscellaneous, and tortuous vulgarity which then prevailed; and the style they preferred was the equivalent, so far as the interior of a house was concerned, of their Gothicized exteriors.

The task was the easier because the corresponding forms had already been given some popularity by an Englishman, Mr. Charles Eastlake. This gentleman, who was a disciple of Ruskin, and who was moved to attempt a reform of the equally vulgar household trappings of early Victorian England, wanted to substitute some individuality for the dull prevailing conventions, and infuse simplicity and sincerity into the prevailing forms. He obtained for a while a very considerable following both in England and in this country, and accomplished a great deal by way of stirring the conscience of well-to-do people to the need of better things. During the "seventies" a large proportion of the handsome



Residence of George Vanderbilt, at Asheville, N. C.

Richard M. Hunt, Architect.

THE ENTRANCE TO "BILTMORE."

THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

New York interiors became Eastlakian in design; and under the influence of his ideas decorative art societies were established in many of the Western as well as of the Eastern cities.

His reform, however, must be judged rather by its intention than its result. As we turn over the reproductions of some of the woodwork which these societies sent to the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, under the naive conviction that they had wrought something most simple and shapely, it is very difficult to imagine that anybody could have created these ill-proportioned and uneasy forms with any such illusion in his head; but the Eastlakians, like so many other esthetic reformers, had more ideas than taste, and even their ideas were limited.

Some of the results in this city and country were grotesque beyond measure. We have before us, for instance, the reproductions of a very large and expensive New York house of the "seventies" in which these ideas prevailed. "The very door," says an enthusiastic commentator in an art periodical of that time—"the very door is Eastlakian and original. For the Eastlake style admits of indescribable variety; it has no pattern regularity, so that, if you are but quaint, original, and sincere, you may be as varied as you please." The designer "spread" himself on the library, which was nothing if not original and fancy-free. The woodwork at every corner and projection exploded into lion-headed gargoyles, while at the same time structurally it was shapeless,

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heavy, and uncouth. Dr. Charles Waldstein has recently made the statement that the first intimations of the modern style in interior decoration (the so-called Art Nouveau) were to be observed at our Centennial Exhibition; and after examining a good many samples of Eastlakian woodwork we can almost believe it.

It is very well for Europeans, who have every chance to acquire or develop an instinctive sense of form to experiment with novelties of this kind; but a new country, without esthetic traditions and with no domesticated styles, must proceed more cautiously. The Eastlake movement was useful just as any sincere and timely attempt at esthetic reform is useful; but it was distinctly only an episode in the story of the American esthetic revival. The chief legend runs in different words. Our esthetic conservatism soon resumed its sway, and all the more so because the influences which were mentioned at the end of the last chapter were becoming more than ever powerful.

If Americans were not gaining much in originality, they were at least gaining in initiative. Instead of copying the latest European architectural fashion, they were beginning to copy forms, which in their opinion they had some good reason to copy. They were beginning, that is, to select; and this showed a most significant degree of emancipation. The Eastlakian reform was the last English or European esthetic fashion, except the Queen Anne, which we imported, for the

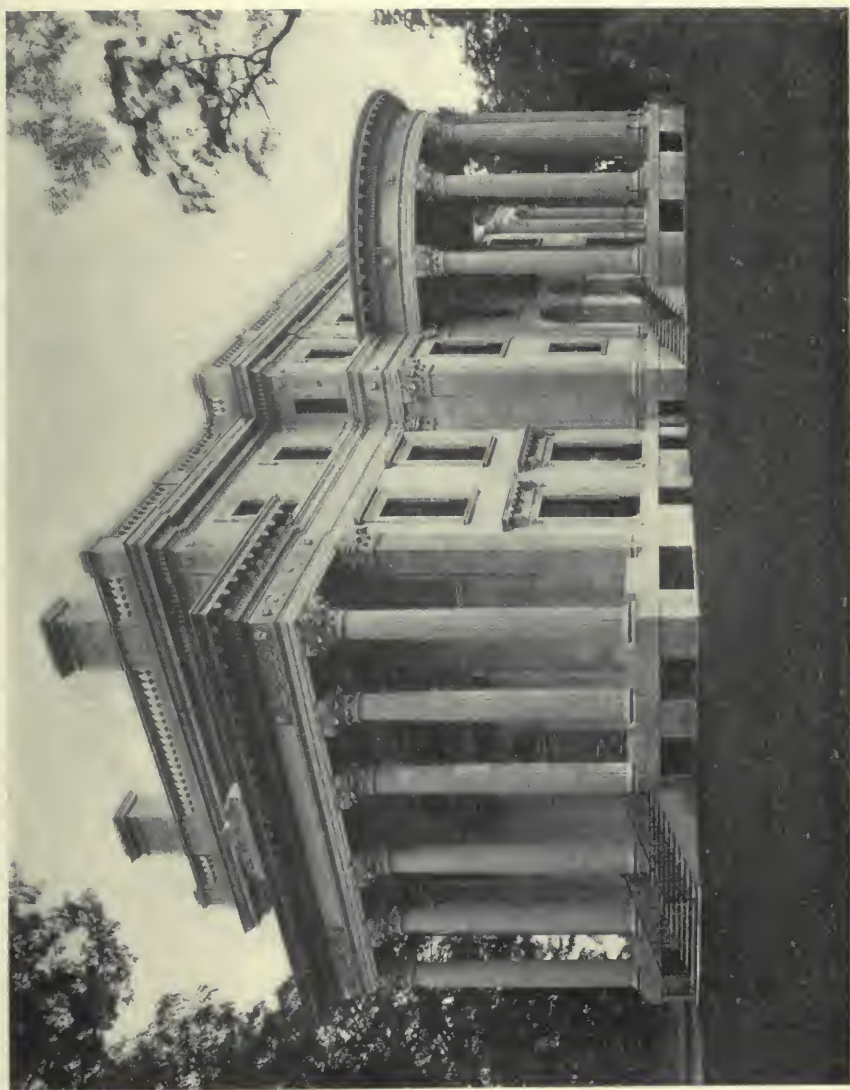


McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

Hyde Park, N. Y.

RESIDENCE OF FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT.





Hyde Park, N. Y.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE RESIDENCE OF FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

school of William Morris had very little influence on this side of the water, and the recent exhibitions of the "Jugend Style," or "Art Nouveau," have so far been practically ignored. The current popularity of certain academic French forms might seem to belie this statement; but, as we shall see presently, we do not believe that it does. The young Americans who have been fetching to this country the results of their training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts are really importing not a fashion, or even a style, but a technical method and a tradition.

In connection with this matter, also, it is interesting to note that just about this time the Eastlakian reform had spent its force American architecture made its first original experiment in the use of European models. The Romanesque revival, which began in 1877 with the completion of Trinity Church in Boston, was intruded into the situation by force of the extraordinary personal originality and energy of Mr. H. H. Richardson. The new style did not attain any marked ascendancy until some years later; but it was the most conspicuous fact in American architectural practise from 1885 until 1892.

This revival would be much more important in an account of the general development of our local architecture than in an account of the changes in American residential design, because, except in the West, there were few dwellings designed therein and because it had no effect at all

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upon interior decoration; but its importance in stimulating an increase in initiative by American architects can scarcely be overestimated. It is true that the revival scarcely outlived the revivalist, and it is true that his imitators showed precious little discretion in adapting Romanesque forms to the design of dwellings; but the movement, in addition to a number of notable achievements by its originator, assuredly gave excellent promise of better American architectural habit.

In the meantime the greater residences were being modified in a very different direction. The owners of large dwellings, as well as their architects, were finding reasons for making selections. They were getting an esthetic experience of their own. With the increase in wealth, and with the improvement in the transatlantic service, European travel became more than an occasional luxury; it became a pastime, a habit, a passion, and even a weakness. Beginning as mere sightseers, the rich became increasingly at home in Europe. They visited many of the great European mansions and estates, and had their ideas of domestic magnificence correspondingly enlarged.

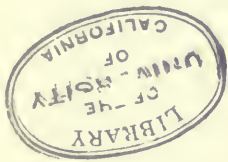
During the same years American artists were flocking to Paris in ever larger numbers, and American scholars to Germany. For the first time in the history of the country French esthetic traditions and standards began to dominate American painting and sculpture. The Society of Ameri-

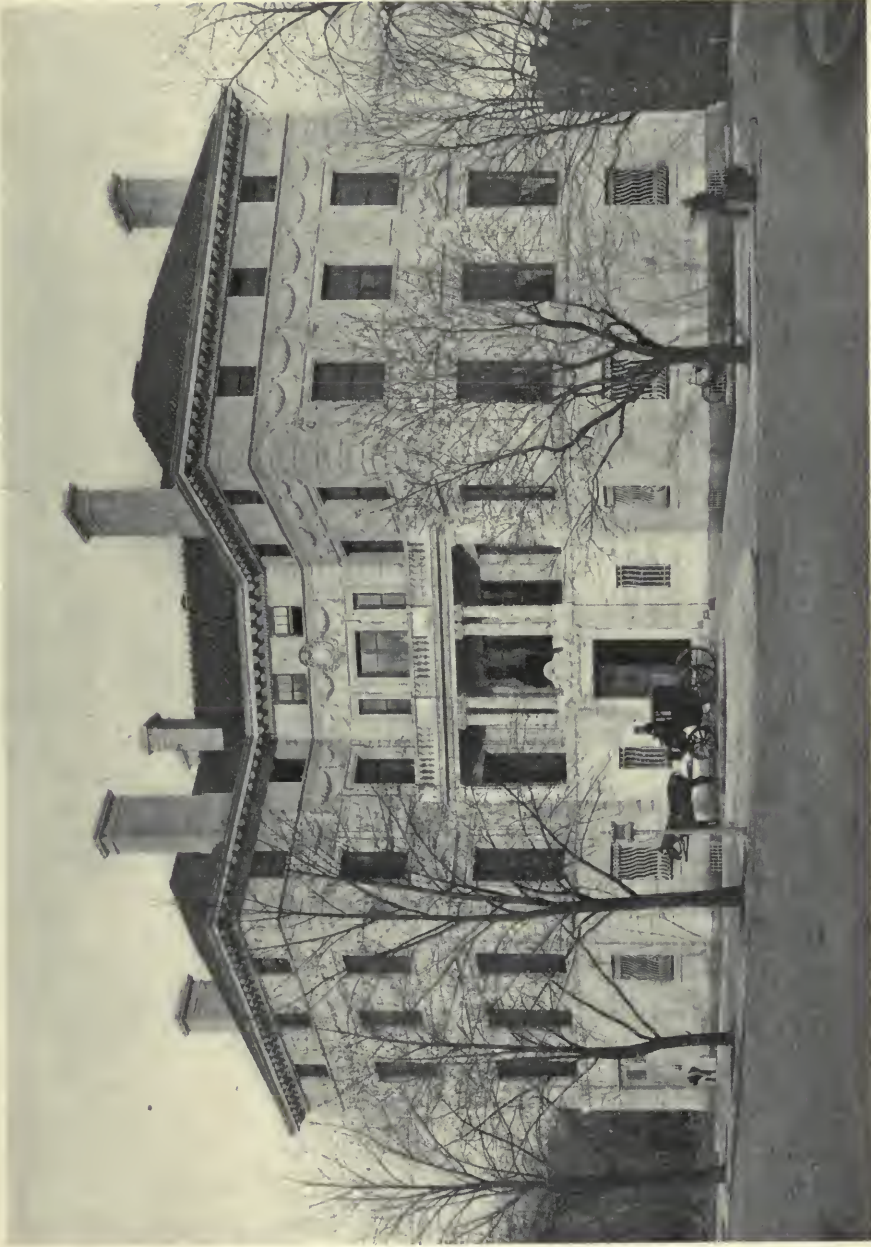


Residence of J. J. Emery at Bar Harbor, Me.

“THE TURRETS.”

Bruce Price, Architect.





Washington, D. C.

RESIDENCE OF R. G. PATERSON.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

can Artists superseded the old Academy of Design as the representative American art association. More than ever before, also, impressionable people went abroad, not merely for diversion or study, but from a sort of craving for spiritual enlightenment—out of the conviction that without a glimpse of the wider European horizon an American's intellectual growth necessarily remains narrow and stunted. The earlier books of Henry James, which date from the seventies, are full of "passionate pilgrims" who are discovering Europe for themselves, and who are cherishing these European impressions as the most precious and inspiring influence in their intellectual development. Of course they returned to this country with their imaginations steeped in their European experiences and almost as incapable of getting away from them as a child is from his ancestral instincts.

As a natural consequence of their edifying travels, rich Americans began to collect old European furniture, fabrics, mantelpieces, tapestries, silver, and china. At first the purchases were made indiscriminately and without very much judgment, and the articles were carted to this country and bundled into rooms without any sense of their proper decorative value.

But the rich American, while generous and willing to pay for a good thing, wants also to have some assurance that the thing is good. If, as is generally the case, he does not possess the requisite knowledge and taste himself, he is ready

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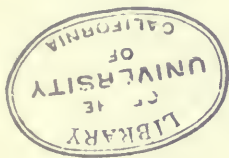
and willing to buy the judgment of other people. Some of the collectors, getting interested in their task, began to employ agents on the other side, while it did not take very long for other agents to make a regular business of importing rare and genuine antiquities from Italy, France, England, and even Spain. At the same time, of course, the work of copying genuine pieces, so that very much the effect of the original was obtained, was raised to the dignity of a handicraft. The whole business soon became very completely organized, and thorough-going and comprehensive measures were taken to collect these relics and spoils of the domestic past of Europe for the American market.

The next step soon followed. It naturally occurred to the importers of these beautiful and rare European antiquities that the best way to use them was to give them their proper value by grouping them together in certain rooms; and consequently toward the end of the "seventies" this began to be done. The most notable example of this phase of the growth of the modern residence was the house of the late Mr. Henry G. Marquand. He was, indeed, peculiarly a collector, and he always tended to make his residence more of a museum than the strictly domestic proprieties would admit, but he had rooms designed in certain styles, of which his Japanese room was the most famous; and in these rooms his extraordinary collection of rugs, tapestries, china, and the like were arranged. The pieces were brought, however,



Chicago, Ill.

RESIDENCE OF C. J. BLAIR.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

rather with an eye to their intrinsic value than to their place in a decorative scheme, and little or no unity of effect was sought among different apartments.

The Japanese rooms, for instance, which were so popular just at that time, were plainly the issue of a collector's point of view. They were the creation of men who were looking for curiosities, rather than that of men who had the primary purpose in their minds of putting together a series of beautiful and appropriate rooms. It is about this same time that also the rich men became ready to spend money lavishly upon their dwellings. The social ideal of mere respectability, which had prevailed so long, began to yield to the temptations and opportunities of great wealth. The American millionaire for the first time sought to make a big, brave, handsome show.

Writing about American dwellings in 1879 Mr. A. J. Bloor remarks that "our merchant princes, our large manufacturers, our money-coining miners, railway magnates, and financiers of all kinds are much more disposed to emulate the expenditures of the Medici of the old Italian republics than to conform to the habits of their thrifty forefathers." They were no longer satisfied with a dwelling differing from those of less favored people merely in the size of the rooms and the miscellaneous abundance of its furniture. They began to want a kind of habitation which, like Armsmead, was a "characteristic type of the unique"—but this

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distinction was to be obtained not by making it an architectural department store, but by a sort of lavish, ostentatious, and magnificent excellence.

Two conspicuous examples of this kind of habitation were erected before 1880 in New York City—the old Stewart mansion at Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue and the first Vanderbilt houses on the west side of Fifth Avenue between Fifty-first and Fifty-second Streets; and it is striking testimony to the rapid shifting of building conditions and esthetic standards in New York that the first of these has already been replaced by office-buildings, while the second has been undergoing a process of reconstruction and renovation.

In the case of the old Stewart mansion, the “palatial” idea made an early and obvious appearance. The location, the character of the design, the choice of the material, everything about the house, inside and out, showed that the old Irish merchant wanted to make a grand impression; and he undoubtedly succeeded in doing so—upon his contemporaries. But the time had not come when this grand impression could be made by adequate means. The architect which Mr. Stewart employed could design only in a florid and tasteless Renaissance manner; while in the interior the use of expensive materials, the profusion of marble statues, and the intrusion of grand stairways can not disguise the fact that it is merely an over-blown example of a New York interior



Chicago, Ill.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF C. J. BLAIR.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

of the dark Middle Age. The detail of cornice and column is the same; although there were some few good pieces, the stuffy upholstered furniture creates the same effect of being always in the way and out of place; there was the same devotion to bric-à-brac and statues on pedestals; and, in spite of the manifest attempt to get away from it, the atmosphere of the house bespoke merely the rich bourgeois.

The two brownstone houses which Mr. William H. Vanderbilt began to build on Fifth Avenue between Fifty-first and Fifty-second Streets in 1879 make, perhaps, the best transition of all between the old residence and the new. Its scale, its design, its plan, and its cost—all testify to the growing desire for ostentatious magnificence; and while the results fall very far short of contemporary buildings of the same kind, they indicate a considerable advance over the earlier Stewart mansion.

The design of the exterior, indeed, is very far from being either coherent or interesting; and the material selected, the old smooth brownstone, indicates a blind ignorance of the drift of American architectural advance; but the interior, while not without occasional symptoms of an amusing homeliness, indicated a much more advanced appreciation of the kind of materials which must be used in order to obtain the kind of effect desired. The contract for the interior decorations had been let to a firm of decorators, and called, so



STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

it was stated at the time, for the expenditure of \$800,000—an unprecedented sum for the purpose.

The manifest intention of the decorators was both to secure some unity of design and to give Mr. Vanderbilt his full money's worth in the way of gorgeous trappings; and if the result is without either distinction or any propriety of effect, such crudity was to be expected at this early stage of the movement. It takes long training to handle these old materials even correctly; it needs both experience and talent to handle them with any real sense for their best effects; and if such effects have ever been reached in rooms which were left exclusively in the hands of professional interior decorators we have yet to find the instance. Interiors which have been turned over entirely to them generally suggest either a furniture shop or a sample design. To perform the trick properly requires both a completer training and a more disinterested point of view.

There is not very much to say about the country house of this period, because the few that were built were not taking on any new or noteworthy characteristics. Those that were erected were designed either in the "Gothic" style or in that of the "Italian" villa—which, unless we exclude the mansard roof, contained not a character and detail which was not fiercely and hideously native.

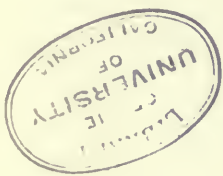
The most expensive country house, designed as a "massive Italian villa" with a mansard roof, was "Ogontz," the



Residence of H. M. Flagler, at Palm Beach, Fla.

“WHITEHALL.”

Carrere and Hastings, Architects.





Residence of H. M. Flagler, at Palm Beach, Florida.

BALL-ROOM IN "WHITEHALL."

Carrère & Hastings, Architects.



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

residence of Mr. Jay Cooke—about which it is sufficient to report that it contained seventy-two rooms and was said to have cost \$2,000,000. Mr. Jay Cooke, however, was one of the few rich men of that time who cared to spend much money on country places. The new millionaires were content with a vacation of a few weeks, passed at a summer hotel, and an occasional trip to Europe. Saratoga was their notion of a little pleasant rural relaxation. In the vicinity of Boston the habit of living in the country was much more general; but nowhere else had social custom become emancipated to any considerable extent from the hotel habit.

Beginning, however, in 1880, or even before, an obvious increase in country life and a revival of interest in the building of country houses is to be observed. Newport began to assume something of its modern importance, and the great Newport houses began to be built. Nor was this all. Very rich people began to want not merely a handsome villa, but a large, completely equipped country estate. The habits of rich and fashionable people became more and more adapted to living in the country during several months in the year and entertaining on a large scale. The way was prepared for the spacious and magnificent country houses which have recently been erected, chiefly in the vicinity of New York.

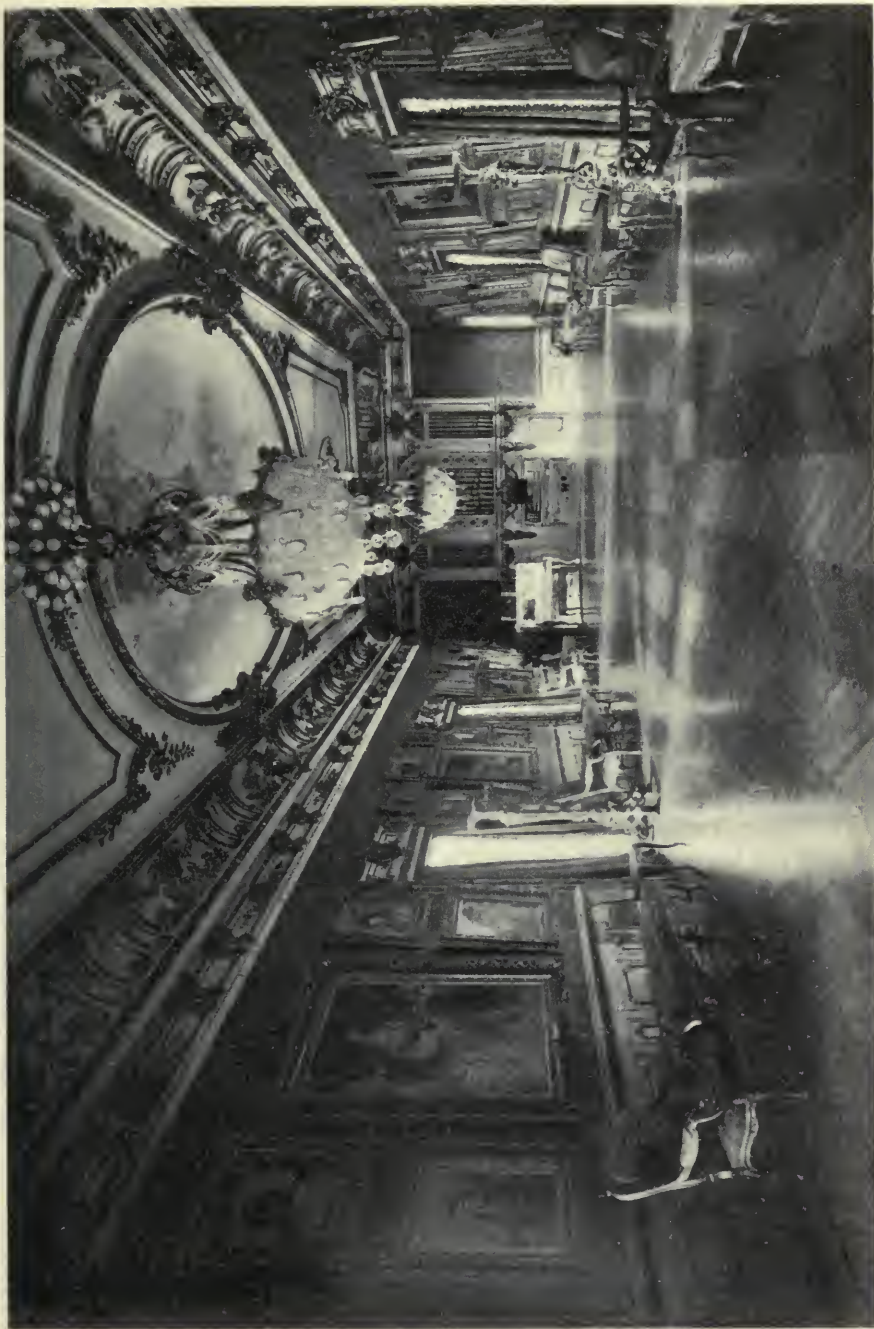
In this little sketch of the development of the greater American dwelling we have confined our attention chiefly

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

to New York and its vicinity, because the modern dwellings, to the explanation of which we have been leading, have been built for the most part in New York or by the architects and residents of that city. Whenever attempts have been made to erect residences in the West on the same scale the results have not been anything like so generally interesting and successful. In fact they suggest, not in detail and character of design, but in esthetic atmosphere, the New York residence of twenty-five years ago.

A higher standard prevails in Boston, but also a somewhat different set of architectural conditions, which lie outside the scope of this book. So far as the West is concerned, however, it is surely only a question of time when its residences will equal those of the East. That great and growing part of the country will possess all the requisites which has made the Eastern dwelling possible—great wealth, skilled architects, and a passion for social display—in as large a degree as the East, and particularly New York, now possess them. Moreover, the West, in respect to its city houses, will have the great advantage of offering much better sites for handsome dwellings.

The exterior of a house in a city like New York, which is built in solid blocks, is really an impossible architectural problem. A designer can hardly reach a satisfactory effect with only one or two façades at his disposal; but in the West the cities were built up after comparatively efficient means

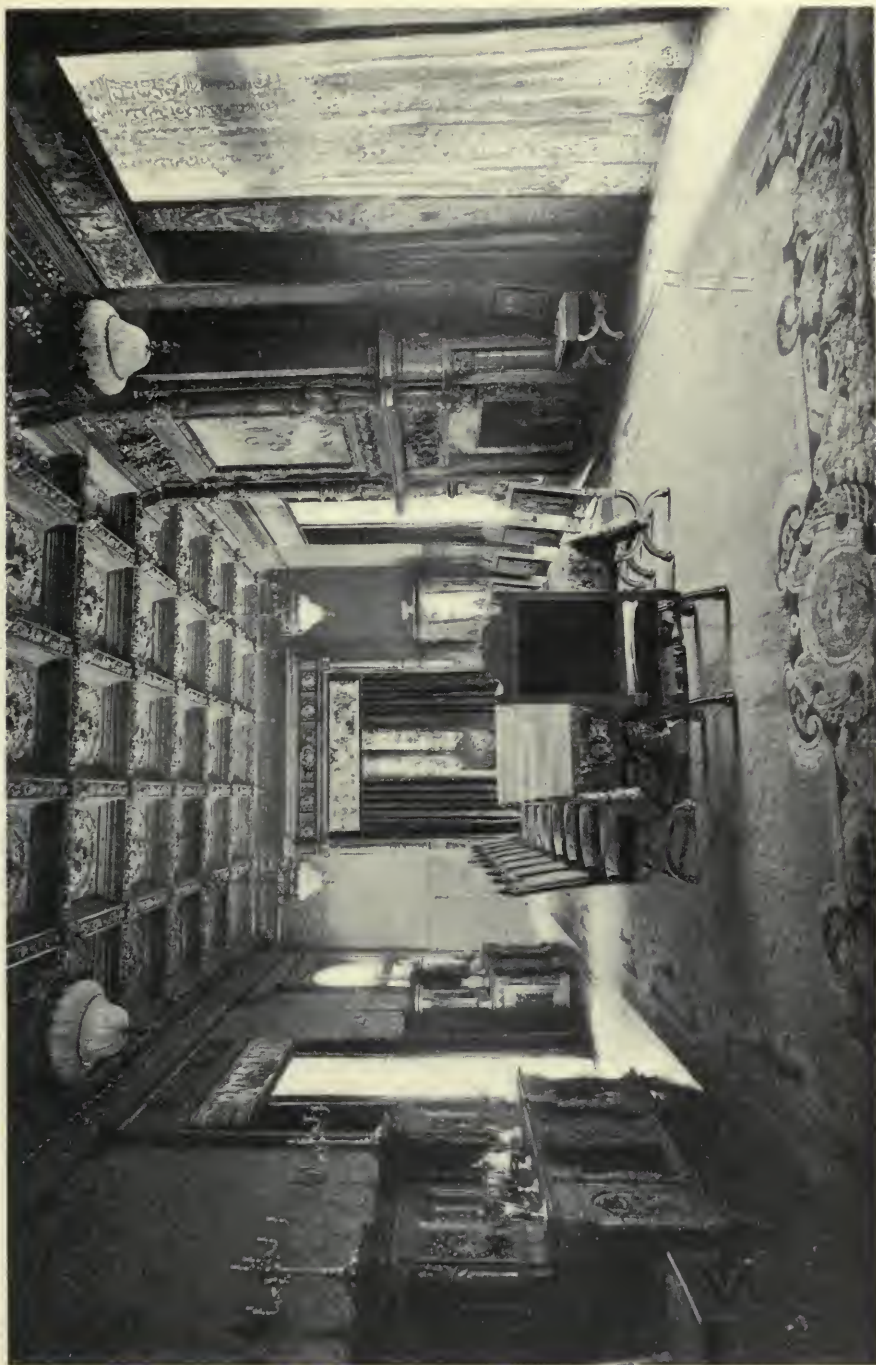


Residence of H. M. Flagler, at Palm Beach, Florida.

MUSIC-ROOM IN "WHITEHALL."

Carrère & Hastings, Architects.

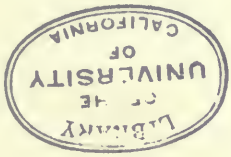




Residence of H. M. Flagler, at Palm Beach, Florida.

Carrère & Hastings, Architects.

DINING-ROOM IN "WHITEHALL."



THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

of urban transit were employed, and consequently the fine residential avenues of some of the Western cities offer the architect admirable opportunities. The building plots cover large areas, the houses are set back from the street for a greater or smaller distance, and it is possible to call in the invaluable assistance of terraces, landscape architecture, and effective planting both of shrubbery and trees. In fact it is by no means impossible that this class of semi-suburban dwelling on a large scale may not, with the assistance of the automobile as a means of transit, be developed into the most typical class of American residence.

That is a matter, however, for the future, and we are dealing with the present in its relation to the past. Just now the dwellings which we are describing are situated for the most part in New York and its vicinity, are designed by New York architects, and are owned by New York millionaires; and the preëminence of New York in this respect has been due to the fact that the several contributing forces which have combined to make the greater residence of today, and whose beginning we have been tracing, have all been localized, if at all, in New York. It is in New York City that many of the richest men in the country have either made their money or have come to live; it is in New York City that, with some conspicuous exceptions, the most prominent American architects practise; it is in New York City, and in New York City only, that the peculiar mixture of

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foreign ideas and native conditions with which we have been dealing could have come to a head.

We hope that in tracing the introduction of these foreign materials and origin of these native conditions we have made our readers understand how essentially educational the whole process has been. What seems at the first glance to be merely an anarchy of meaningless architectural imitation proves on closer examination to contain both certain dominant motives and a certain orderly development. These dominant motives have been, in the first place, the inclination to imitate the best available architectural forms, which has resulted in apparently endless experimentation, and which was really a deeper and a sounder motive than the conscious effort for independence; in the second place, the way in which the wish to be independent reacted on the habit of imitation and issued in a crude sort of architectural selection; and finally the growth in the facility and freedom, with which this selective motive has come to operate, until at the present time American architects may be said to be more original imitators than the architects of any other country. The peculiarity, however, of these prevailing motives of American architectural history is that they are all general and cultural, rather than specific and technical.

So far the development has been in ideas, in equipment, and in point of view rather than in the thrifty and vigorous use and improvement of certain particularly relevant forms;



Residence of H. M. Flagler, at Palm Beach, Florida.

HALLWAY IN "WHITEHALL."

Carrère & Hastings, Architects.



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and it is this fact which explains the somewhat paradoxical statement with which we started our review—the statement, viz.: that, while these greater contemporary residences are superficially modern and have no American architectural precursors, yet they can not be understood except in the light of the general architectural history of the country. The forms are still borrowed and European, but the reasons for selecting these forms exhaust the whole of our social and architectural past.

The development of residential design which we have traced has, we believe, been wholesome and normal, but if it remains in the stage of cleaving to well-selected and grammatical imitations it will continue to be neither wholesome nor normal. The time has distinctly come when the progress in knowledge, ideas, and in intelligence of selection must be succeeded by progress in specifically technical achievement. The foreign models which have hitherto been copied, and so well and usefully copied, must be used as the basis of a series of modifications which will make them more expressive of American surroundings and manner of life; and we suspect and trust that certain changes which have recently taken place in the training of American architects will assist them to begin this necessary process of technical and formal revision.

We all know that since 1892 the work of some of the younger men who have been trained at the *École des Beaux*

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Arts has been the most conspicuous fact in American architecture, that the proportion of French-trained architects is increasing rather than diminishing, and that the Beaux Arts methods and spirit have been to a certain extent adopted in the American architectural schools. So far the work actually accomplished under Beaux Arts influence has only helped to add one more style, viz., modern French, to the extraordinary collection of American architectural débris, but we do not believe that this will be the only outcome of the introduction of French influence. What Frenchmen particularly represent in our modern world is a sense of form and a devotion to form; and the value of the French training, whether received at first or second hand, will consist in the stimulus which it will give American architects to become interested in the purely formal and technical aspect of architectural design. The other styles which have been imported have not brought with them any similar stimulus; they have been the product of temporary fashions or reformatory ideas.

But at the present time American architecture seems to be laying the foundation of a vigorous native growth; it seems to be adopting the one distinctively artistic tradition without which under the conditions of modern national culture there can not be any continuous and vital expression in the fine arts. This growing sense of form and devotion to it must, of course, find its own specific and appropriate



San Francisco, Cal.

RESIDENCE OF CLAUD SPRECKELS.

THE GREATER MODERN RESIDENCE

forms by a process of gradual selection and improvement; but that process may be left to take care of itself—provided only it is perpetuated by men with the proper point of view and with adequate training.

THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS



CHAPTER VI

The Modern American Residence—Economic and Social Conditions



THE primary fact about the greater contemporary residence is that it is the house of a very rich man. All the greater residences of the past have been conditioned upon the possession of wealth; but they have primarily expressed something different—an established and impressive social position or some sort of propriety or luxury of life.

Our American residences, on the other hand, will not be understood unless it is frankly admitted that they are built for men whose chief title to distinction is that they are rich, and that they are designed by men whose architectural ideas are profoundly modified by the riches of their clients. This is an aspect of the matter upon which it is not pleasant to dwell; but it is also an aspect, both of American residential architecture and of American life generally, which it is impossible and even dangerous to ignore. If wealth, whether widely distributed or concentrated in a few hands,

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or both, is as bad a thing as some passages in the Prophets and the Gospels make it out to be, there is little hope for American civilization, for our civilization is assuredly conditioned on the belief that a high standard of comfort is not of necessity morally stupefying, or the possession of large fortunes inevitably a source of evil and corruption.

Unless we are to go back on the whole trend of our development, we must find some way of reconciling prosperity with heroism, and great wealth with moderation, refinement, and distinction. That we have already traveled far along that road it would be hazardous to assert; but we have traveled far enough to justify Americans in facing the prospect of a longer journey with some equanimity. In Henry James's story of the "Wings of the Dove" there is an American girl, whose disposition is that of an angel, yet whose personality both palpably and subtly exhales wealth; and we might take this very modern instance as the finer promise of certain current tendencies. There is something very palpable, and not in the least subtle, about the impression of wealth afforded by the greater contemporary residence. It has as little modesty about it, and makes as loud a proclamation of its own merit as any other characteristic American achievement. Nevertheless it does so much to deserve its frank splendor that it generally escapes the danger of showy and costly things—the inexcusable fault, that is, of being both wasteful and worthless.



San Francisco, Cal.

THE HUNTINGTON, FLOOD, AND CROCKER RESIDENCES.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

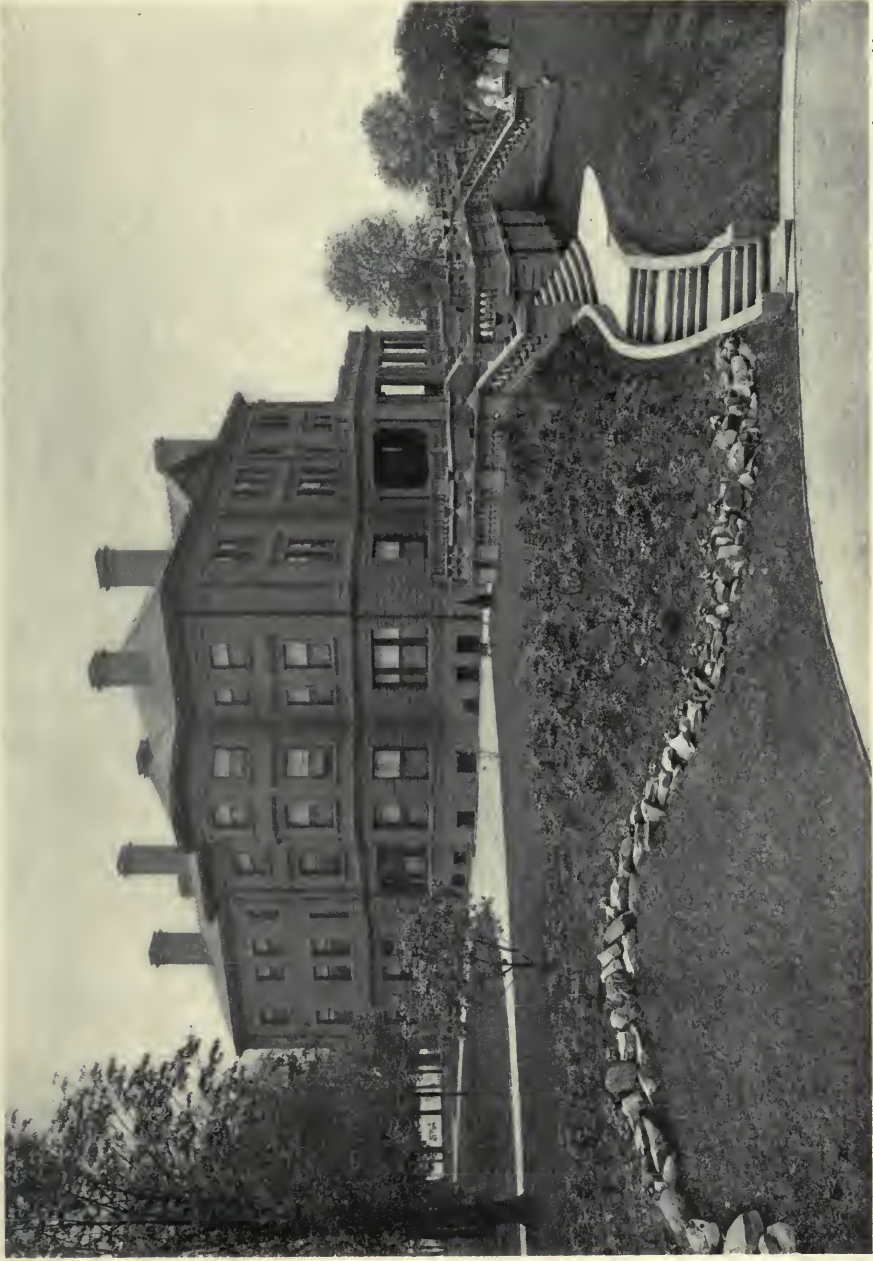
Since, however, these houses are built primarily to be inhabited by rich men and to please them, some short account of the American millionaire is a natural accompaniment of a description of his habitation. Just as we found that an historical sketch of the changes which have taken place in the better American residence consisted even more in a history of ideas than in a history of architectural forms, so in a description of the contemporary residence, we shall go astray unless we keep its inhabitants constantly in mind. The architecture of these buildings, meritorious as in some respects it is, has not become well enough formed and technically disinterested to justify an exclusively technical consideration. It remains architecturally in an experimental stage—the nature of the experiment being explained chiefly by the disposition and wealth of the owner.

If the wealth were any less than it is, and if it were not such an inexorable fact in the interpretation both of the owner's personality and his dwelling, this aspect of the matter could be passed over with less emphasis; but it is the essence of the whole situation that these fortunes are fairly overpowering. Their influence is not to be denied. Their owners can not escape them any more than an English duke can escape his title; and they have plainly hypnotized the popular attention and confused popular standards. The most important thing about a duke is not that he is a man, but that he was born a duke. The most important thing

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about a millionaire is that he has made and is making his millions. And just as an impoverished duke must live somehow in a ducal residence, so even a retiring millionaire must, as a rule, have his far from retiring house.

Nothing corresponding to this has been true, say, of the rich men who have been thrown off by the industrial expansion of Great Britain. The commercially wealthy Englishman of the nineteenth century has played an important and honorable part in the political, social, and economic life of his country; but he has been about as far as possible from assuming the dominant rôle, which is now being played by the American millionaire. Of course one obvious reason is that the wealthy commercial Englishman has been very much less wealthy than the wealthy American; but this difference is not so much a cause as an effect. The wealthy English business man has been less wealthy than his American prototype partly because he has had fewer opportunities, but also partly because he had a weaker purpose; and his resolution to be wealthy was weaker because the social rewards of wealth were smaller in England than they are in the United States. No matter how rich he be, the English tradesman is always overshadowed by the aristocracy. After he has accumulated a certain amount of money—as much as he thinks he needs—he tends to give up business, and to seek some share of that social position which can be obtained only by a certain way of living or by some



Pittsburg, Pa

RESIDENCE OF LAWRENCE C. PHIPPS.

J. Edward Keirn, Architect.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

service to nation or party; and his children who inherit this wealth rarely have much inclination to increase it, but rather to try by doing good work in the army, the navy, or the civil service to penetrate the English official and social hierarchy. Such is the effect of being born into an established and mature social system in which a high valuation is placed on social prestige.

The American millionaire, on the other hand, is born into a much more plastic society. The fluid nature of its economic forms gives him his extraordinary opportunity of making money; the fluid nature of its social forms allows and even encourages him to take full advantage of these opportunities. He is in no danger of being overshadowed by an aristocracy; he has as yet no strong social motives for abandoning his work after he has accumulated a certain income. On the contrary, whatever social prestige exists in American society attaches to the possession of a large fortune; but this motive has been rather a condition than an effective cause of the accumulation of such fortunes. The American business man goes ahead because of his momentous interest in the game he is playing, and without any particular reference to results. When he has \$100,000 he may cherish a notion that he will retire as soon as he reaches a million; but the million comes quickly, and when he has reached it he has nothing else to do but to go ahead. And so he continues to go ahead until the end.

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The consequence is that the incomes of these rich men are frequently entirely disproportionate to any possible expense account. It is said that John Jacob Astor used to say that a man who had \$500,000 was just as well off as if he was rich—by which Mr. Astor doubtless meant that a man ought to be able to buy everything he could reasonably desire with an income of \$25,000 a year. A good many people at the present time would consider this allowance remarkably small; they would think that ten or twenty or even fifty times \$25,000 per annum was no more than enough with which to buy reasonable luxuries; but no matter how high a limit is placed upon the amount of money a man can reasonably spend upon luxuries in the course of a year, it is obvious that the incomes of a great many millionaires far surpass that figure. They are literally in the position of having more money than they can spend. In other times such excesses of fortune were either possessed or appropriated by the political powers; and the latter found an easy way of dissipating it in schemes of political conquest; but, almost for the first time, private citizens are securely possessed of more wealth than they can possibly use for themselves and families, and the effect of this fact upon American life will be far-reaching and profound.

Wealth, of course, exists only for the purpose of purchasing with it other valuable things. These enormous incomes will in the course of time be spent somehow, for if

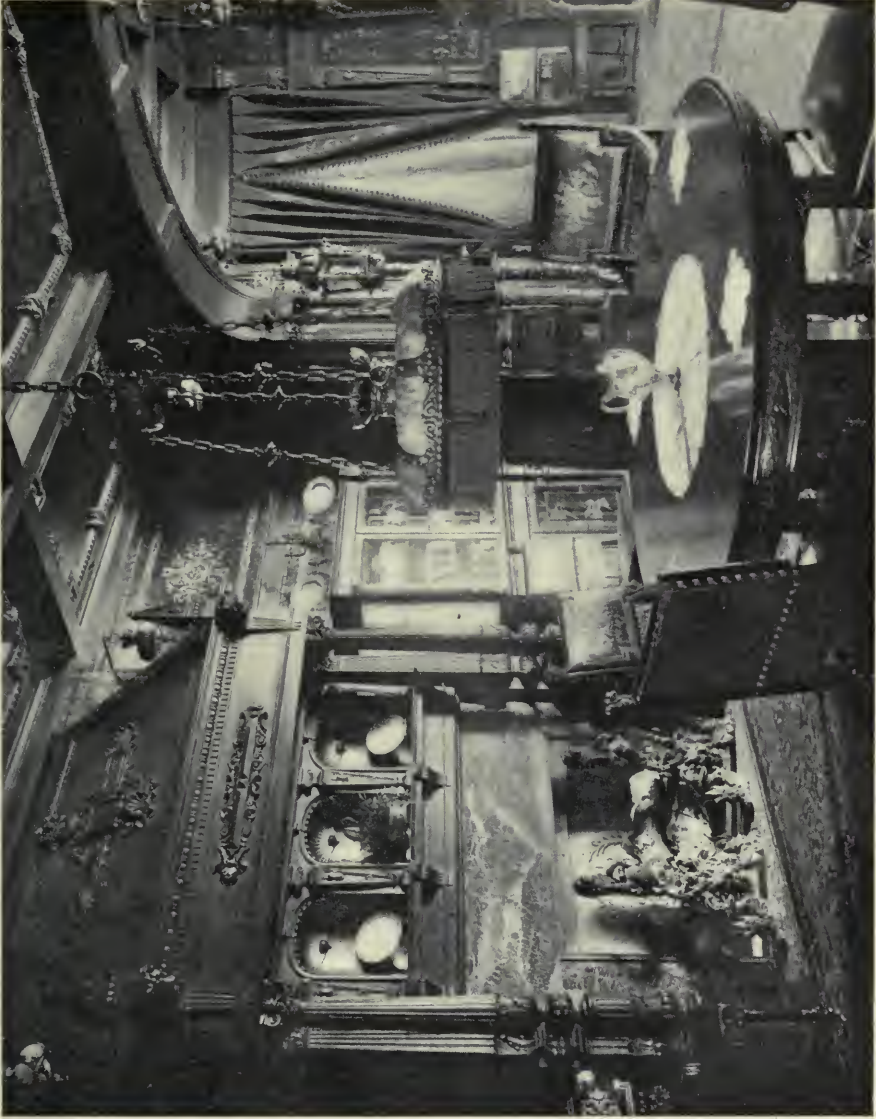


Pittsburg, Pa.

HALLWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF LAWRENCE C. PHIPPS.

J. Edward Keirn, Architect.





Pittsburg, Pa.

DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF LAWRENCE C. PHIPPS.

J. Edward Keirn, Architect.

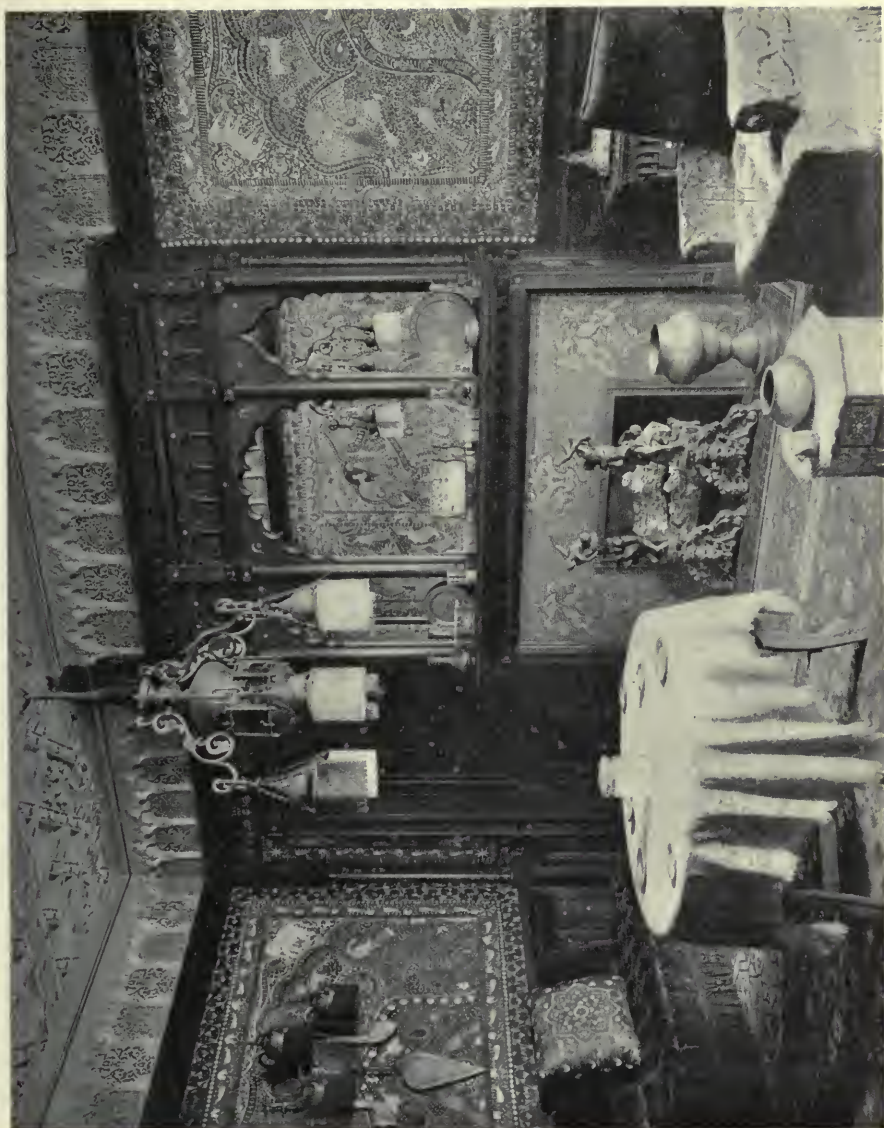
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

they were allowed simply to go on accumulating, it could only be because their owners were misers, who, even if they spent lavishly upon personal comforts, would have lost all sense of the value of money. But there is no indication as yet that the mere delight in accumulation either has been an effective motive in the making of these fortunes or will be an effective cause of their perpetuation. They have not been gathered together by the peculiarly French process of shrewd economies and persistent saving, for such a method of accumulation produces small results and is the outcome of a totally different habit of mind. They are the outcome, that is, of certain specific but adventurous and constructive mental qualities; and since these mental qualities will have much effect on the way the money will be spent, as upon the way it has been and is being made, it is worth while to pause for a moment and consider the methods by which the great American fortunes have been made and what manner of men they have made out of their makers. For it is the fortunes which have formed the men, quite as much as it is the men who have formed the fortunes. They may, for the purposes of this book, and fairly, be considered as a type, for they are the outcome of much the same influences and opportunities and exhibit many of the same characteristics.

As we have said, it was the fluid condition of American economic forms which gave the business man his opportunity. During the whole pioneer period everything was

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sacrificed to the all-important purpose of quickening local development—of getting the new lands cleared and settled, of building houses, laying out means of communication, and initiating the first general lines of manufacture and trade; and this great work of local development brought with it similarly plastic and unorganized social and political forms. Rapidity of development was such a prime practical necessity that very few checks were placed in the way of energetic men. Custom encouraged them to persist single-mindedly in the all-important task of founding the new country. It was the hopeful assumption that, if the pioneers were allowed to do their work much as they pleased, everything would come out all right; and very few laws were passed, contrary to what would have been done in an older community, to guide and direct their efforts. But as soon as the Middle Western States were well settled, and the pioneers began spreading out west of the Mississippi and along the line of the Missouri River, this very lack of guidance and direction by any central authority, and this very encouragement which society gave to private individuals to go ahead as far as they pleased, offered favored individuals the chance to usurp on their own account such guidance and control. They were given, that is, a splendid chance to take an economically unorganized country and organize it, and in effecting this organization they naturally did it in their own interest.



Pittsburg, Pa.

J. Edward Keirn, Architect.

SMOKING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF LAWRENCE C. PHIPPS.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

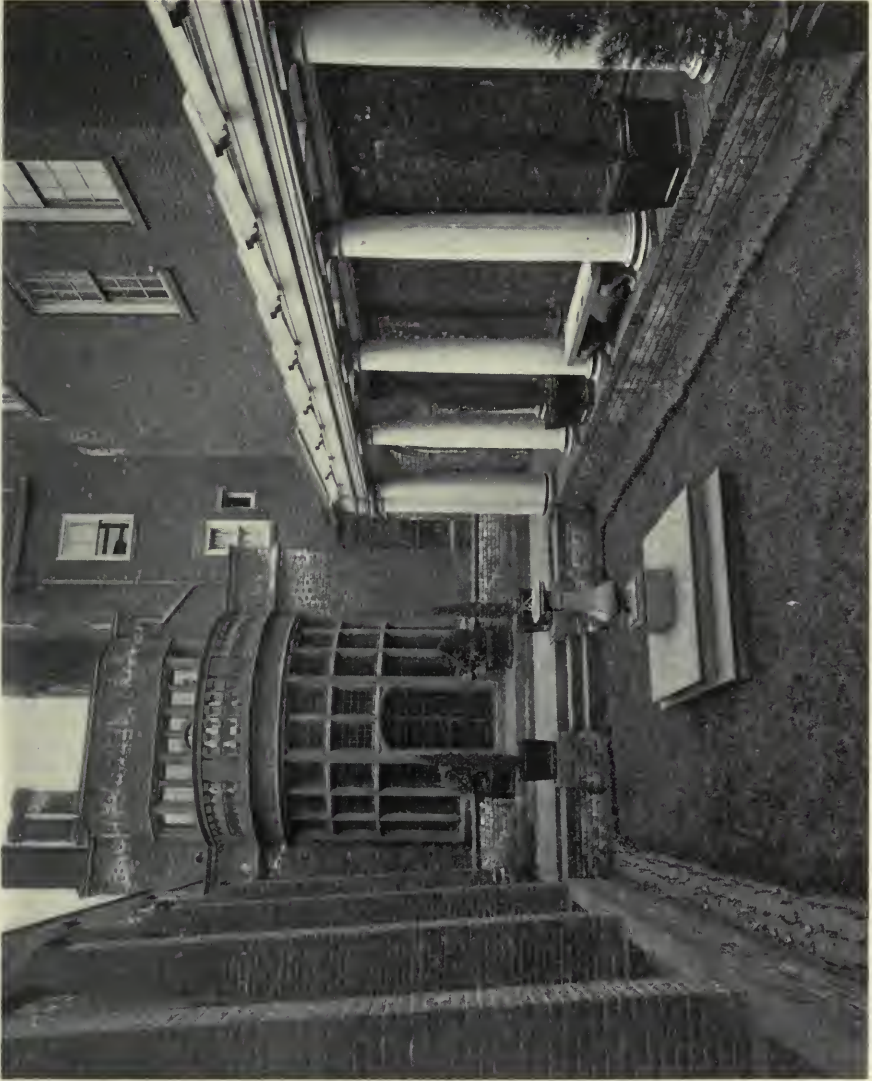
They placed themselves in a position to obtain the lion's share of the benefit of this organization; and one of the great political tasks of the next generation will be to correct the excesses which their very skilful and energetic use of their opportunities has generated.

In the beginning, of course, they had no conscious intention of organizing American industries on a national scale. But they were gradually brought to the necessity of organization and control because their interests were threatened by unrestricted competition. In a rapidly growing plastic country the extremes between which business varies are excessive. The manufacturer or the railroad that is making enormous profits one year may be skirting bankruptcy two years thereafter. Almost all the great industrial organizations were started because some far-seeing and audacious man, finding his own business threatened by the excess of competition, dared to attempt some control of his competitors. In older countries the necessity for self-protection would not have been so great; neither would there have been the same opportunity for unrestricted control.

Consequently, while the great American fortunes have originated in many different branches of industry, the manner of their accumulation has presented in the great majority of cases many interesting similarities. They have depended for the most part upon securing more or less complete con-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

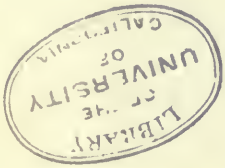
trol of the manufacture of a commodity or the furnishing of a service for which there was a steady and a large popular demand. Anything which satisfies a large demand, whether it be a railway train, a can of oil, or a pound of sugar, necessarily conforms to a definite standard. The grades of product may vary between the slowest local or the fastest express, or between a Pittsburg stogie and a Carolina perfecto; but each of these different grades become popular from the fact that all the products within the grade are alike—that all express-trains run on express schedule time, and that one Carolina perfecto is as good as another. But the standard products or services which have to be indefinitely duplicated are just the kind that can not be supplied without the large and efficient use of machinery of all kinds: and the use of machinery for all purposes, and to the very limit of its power, is characteristic of American industrial methods, and particularly of the men who have reaped the big rewards. For this efficient use of machinery steadily reduces the cost of production, while, owing to the equally steady increase in popular demand for all standard products, the profits accumulate at a tremendously rapid rate—at a rate proportionate to the increase of the demand and the completeness with which the market is controlled. Where the control is complete, as in the case of the refining of mineral oil, the profits are enormous. Where the control is less complete, as in the case of sugar-refining, the



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Frank Miles Day & Brother, Architects.

INTERIOR COURT OF THE RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT NEWBOLD.





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RECEPTION-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT NEWBOLD.

Philadelphia, Pa.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

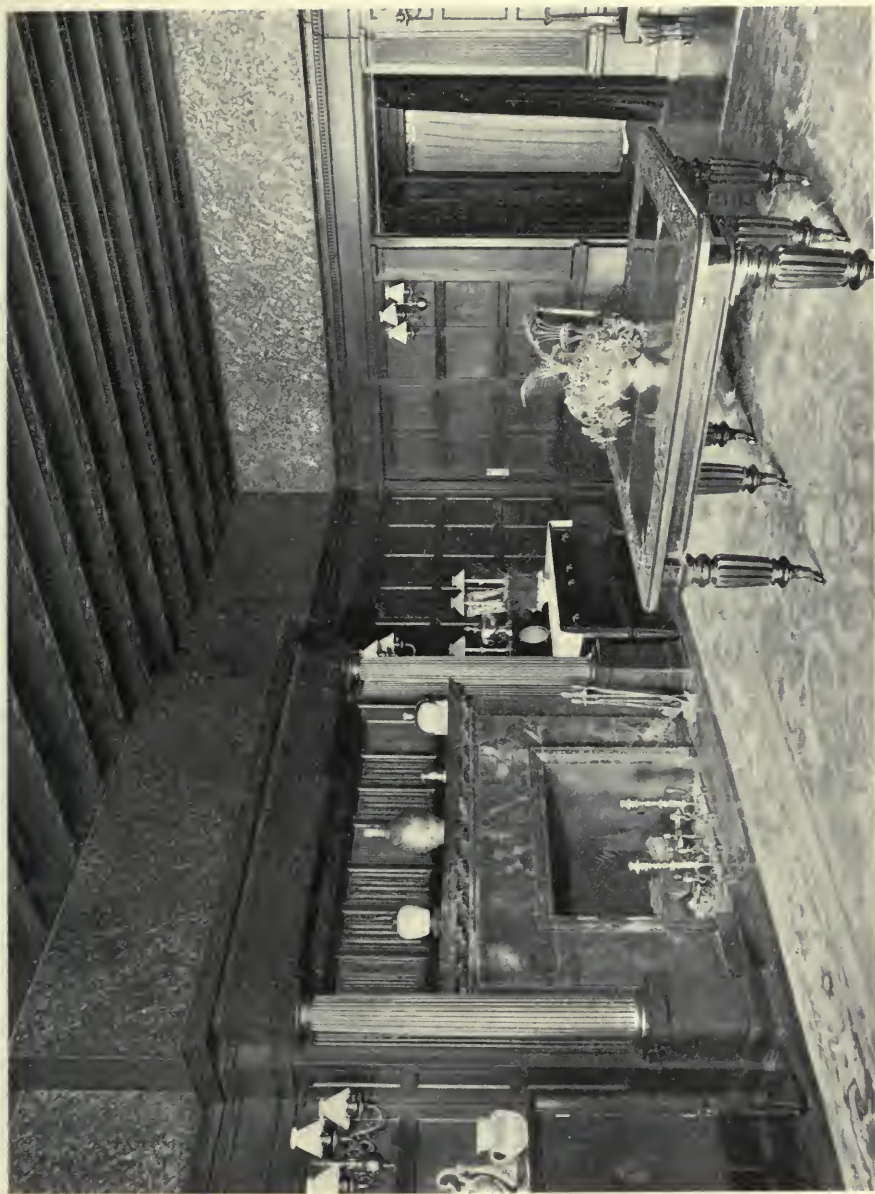
profits are considerable, but probably not disproportionate to the profits of ordinary business.

Of course the great difficulty always is to secure anything like complete control; and the method whereby this partial or complete control has been established in different industries is the salient feature of the whole process. Naturally it has varied a great deal, according to the kind of service or commodity that was produced. It has become most complete in certain natural monopolies, such as street-railways or gas and electric lighting, because it is possible absolutely to control such a service in a definite locality. It is less complete in the case of steam railroads, because the necessary area of control is larger and competition more effective; but the great railway systems have practically divided up the country into spheres of influence, within which certain interests are dominant and reap the advantage of the steady growth in population and business. In the production or manufacture of certain staple products, such as oil, beef, sugar, or steel, competition has not, except in one case, been entirely extinguished; but it has frequently been much reduced, and generally by very similar methods. In the steel industry, for instance, the Carnegie company had become so strong and so dangerous to its competitors that in self-protection they were forced to combine in order to buy Mr. Carnegie out. The merger which resulted created the richest and largest corporation in the world. No matter

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how much competition has been regulated, however, it is rarely entirely suppressed; it always remains to threaten a corporation that is managed on the assumption that there is any virtue in organization apart from efficiency. In the long run the retention of whatever partial or complete control these great industrial organizations exercise depends upon their ability to manufacture their product or to perform their service at an extremely low cost. The whole fabric rests on the assumption that a large product means a low cost of production, and that a low cost of production can be better obtained by the economical and skilful organization of a large business than by the unrestricted competition of a number of small businesses.

It is a natural consequence of the whole organizing process that these big combinations strengthen each others' hands, and by their joint operations tend to shut out the small producers. The concern that buys in large quantities has the same advantage as the concern that sells in large quantities; it is entitled to the best possible terms. The most notorious example of this is the help which secret railway rebates have afforded to the building up of industrial organizations and combinations; but the same principle finds a thousand intricate expressions, which are sometimes difficult to trace, because the action takes place behind the scenes. Indeed, the drama of modern American industrial organization may be compared to the French classical trag-



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DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT NEWBOLD.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

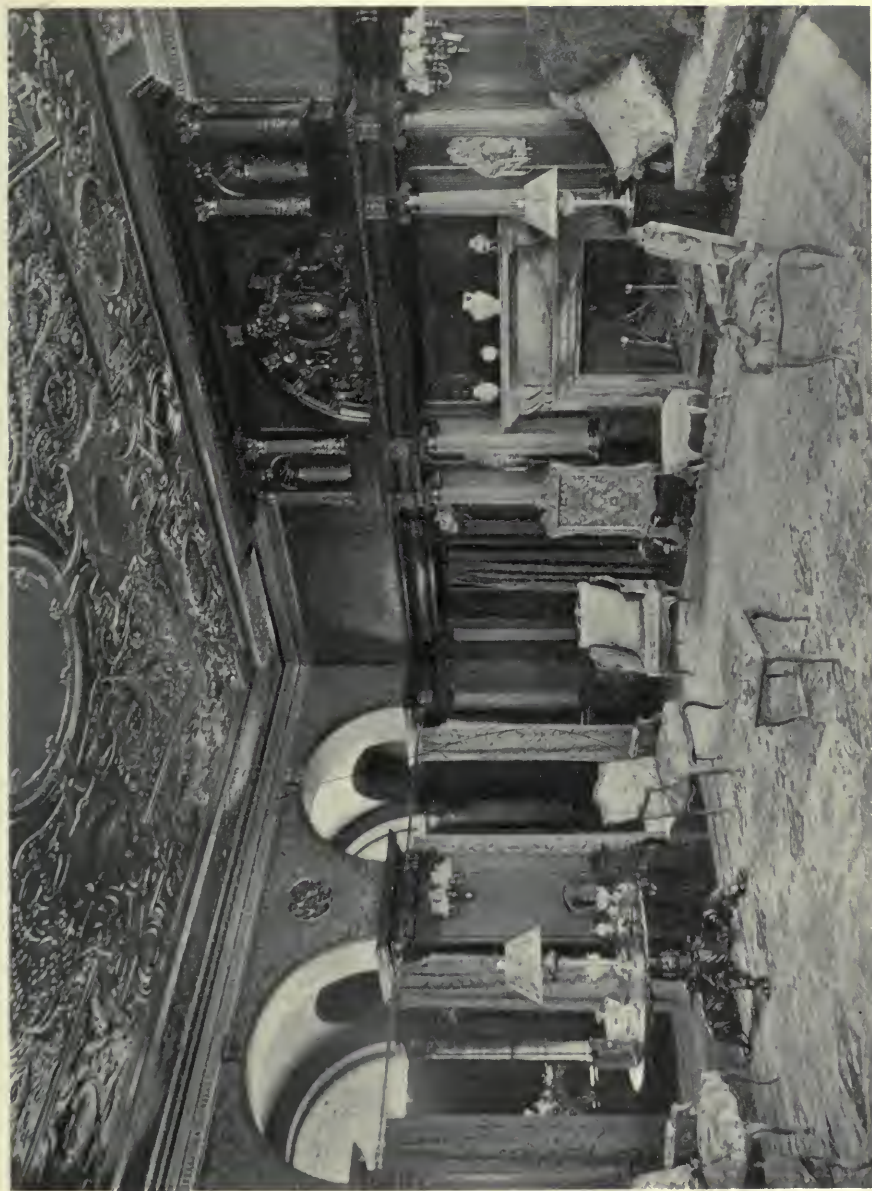
edy in which all the killing is done in private, and all the big effective speeches made in public. American industry, like American politics, tends to be conducted by conferences in committee; and the successful business man, like the successful politician, must not only be a skilful organizer, but a smooth and persuasive negotiator. This necessity and habit of negotiation, this constant practise of the big men of acting together, tends to turn them into a coterie, the different members of which know each other well, are much alive to common interests and enmities, and prefer to do business with each other, because they can negotiate much more effectively with men who have the same point of view and who exercise the same kind of power as they themselves. The fact that there exists a sort of personal bond among these rich men, and that they have the best reasons for associating chiefly with one another, is of the utmost importance in its effect upon their habits of thought, and generally upon their social significance and influence.

Thus the man who erects the greater contemporary residence is necessarily a man of great concentration of purpose, of intense and continuous activity, and of somewhat exclusive interests. He has had neither time nor need to be an all-around man, who has leisure for many things or who has many different ways of living. All his associations and habits tend to make him a man who is specially and continually occupied with the prosecution of large business

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affairs, and who finds his occupation excitement and perhaps no little amusement in planning and consummating such schemes. But, in proportion as he is successful, his peculiar faculty must consist of his ability to "size up" and deal with other men, and of judging whether these other men know their business thoroughly. Just because he sits in a New York office and directs the operation of all kinds of industries all over the country his whole scheme of industrial management depends upon his ability to buy the faithful and skilful service of other people. Indeed, that is just what organization means: the making of the right place for the right man. One of the main reasons why some at least of the big American business men have been so successful is that they have been wise enough not only to put the right man in the right place, but to pay him liberally for faithful and intelligent service.

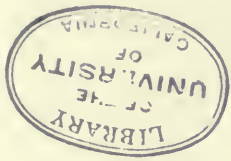
The organization of American industries, however, which has been accomplished by these industrial leaders has one characteristic which has a far-reaching effect upon other than industrial activities. This organization has been achieved by private citizens for special and private purposes, and it consequently differs radically from the organization of older countries, such as England or France—in which the special business organization is subordinated to the general, social, and political organization. In the achievement of his special purposes the American industrial leader needs the



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Frank Miles Day & Brother, Architects.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT NEWBOLD.

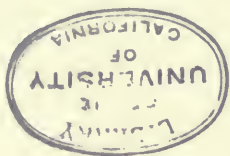




Philadelphia, Pa.

Frank Miles Day & Brother, Architects.

MAIN STAIR HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLEMENT NEWBOLD.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

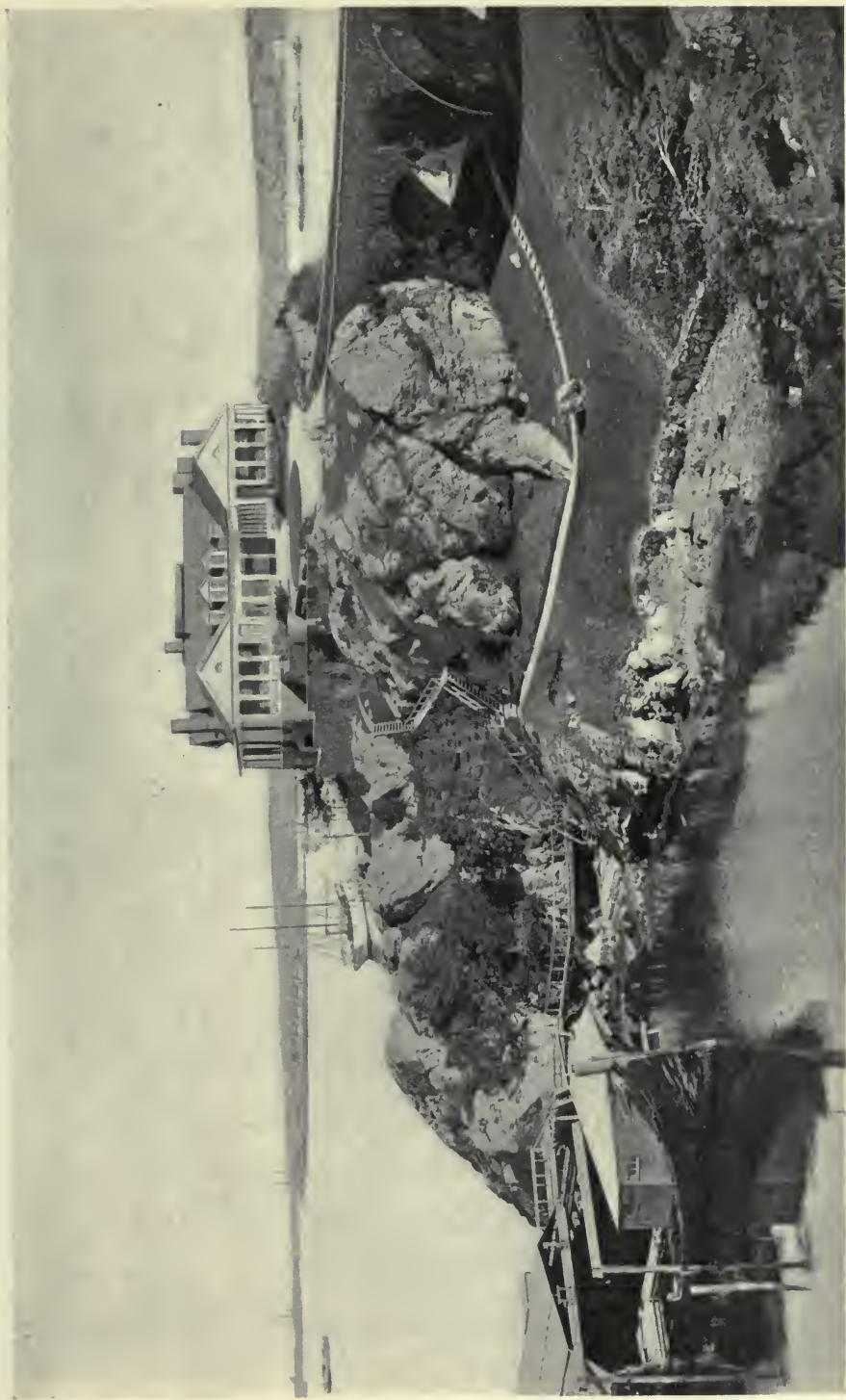
services of other people besides those of mechanical experts or good executives; he needs, for instance, a certain amount of legislation or protection against legislation; and because he is only a private citizen, with private and special instead of general ends in view, he can not demand the needed legislation or legislative protection; he is obliged to buy it. The whole machinery of American politics has been radically modified by this fact. From the very start the big corporations have bought the political power they needed, just as they have bought the mechanical skill that they needed; and the audacity and unscrupulousness that have sometimes characterized these purchases have produced the impression that these big capitalistic organizations contain in them something essentially inimical to public interests. One author, Mr. W. J. Ghent, as we have already mentioned, goes so far as to argue that our industrial barons have set out to organize not merely their own businesses, but the whole of American life for their own benefit, and that little by little they will purchase all the independence and rectitude that is left in the country.

If there is anything, however, in the foregoing account of the purposes and methods of the American millionaire, this view is wholly erroneous. [Our industrial leaders are not seeking power for its own sake; they have merely bought as much political power as they needed to build up the businesses in which they are interested. As soon as their cor-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

porate enterprises are thoroughly established, and have a definite legal position, which is protected against attack and restricted against excess, they will be glad enough to abandon their expensive and dangerous methods of purchasing political power. They have no general political ambition; their energies and talents are fastened almost exclusively on the protection and development of their businesses; and they are as far as possible from wishing to play the part of political usurpers. Indeed, it will be found that they are, at bottom and apart from their special talents and vocation, very much like ordinary American citizens in that they are conservative in their general ideas, extremely susceptible to public opinion, and very desirous of being esteemed by their fellow citizens.]

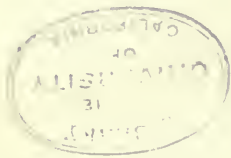
In short, they have not in the least an un-American disposition of going it alone. Americans take the greatest and the most justifiable pride in the fact that their two great national heroes, Washington and Lincoln, instead of being great in the brutal and unscrupulous Napoleonic manner, have managed to unite with their greatness a certain deference to public opinion, a considerable moral circumspection, and a kindly and humane disposition toward other people. Well, we believe it can be fairly claimed that [the modern industrial leaders of this country, although warped by the fact that their personal interests are frequently antagonistic to honest politics and wholesome social economy,



Benton's Cove, Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF E. D. MORGAN,

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

nevertheless conform to what we like to believe are the characteristic traits of our American democratic manhood. And this state of mind on their part is not, as Mr. Ghent would have us believe, a merely selfish benevolence; it proceeds from a genuine interest in the national welfare and a genuine desire to strengthen the social bond.] It is notorious, of course, that they have given their money more liberally for educational purposes than have the rich men of any other country or any other period; and, while the significance of this fact can easily be overestimated, it merely confirms what is known about their general disposition. It is certainly true that on the whole they are interested in estimable and civilizing things; and we believe it to be also true that the good effects of this interest in estimable and civilizing things will increasingly outweigh the bad effects of their too conspicuous extravagances and their hostility to the regulation of corporations for the national public benefit.]

However that may be, the house the millionaire has built is assuredly the product of a civilizing and constructive rather than a decadent and corrupting impulse. More than ever before he wants something really admirable. His ideas as to what are admirable are somewhat barbaric and are wholly lacking in that sense of economy which is such a necessary corrective of artistic extravagances and which lies so near to a native love of beautiful things; but what else can be expected? The strong, successful man wants to have

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his personal success strikingly but adequately commemorated. This "adequate" commemoration must be striking, because his success has been dazzling; and it must be admirable, because he wants this commemoration to be approved.

But he is a busy man, and generally has neither time nor inclination to take much interest in the details of the movement. Well aware that he knows nothing about architecture, he employs the services of the men who are recommended to him as the best architects; and, habituated as he is to trusting his interests to competent subordinates, he allows his architects within certain limits to have much their own way. His ideas about the house he wants will generally be very vague, and, in case they are definite, will be formed partly by those European reminiscences of which we have already spoken and partly by the kind of houses which his associates have been building. As these houses being themselves suggested by European reminiscences, there is no contradiction between the two sources of effect. Familiar local instances intensify grateful memories, and fashion lends a hand to the best contemporary æsthetic ideals.

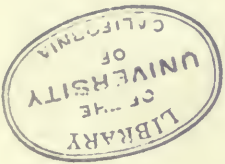
The architect, in designing dwellings of this kind, is not doing any violence to his taste. He is even more overflowing with architectural memories than is the millionaire; and he preserves them systematically in great big books. Like his client, also, he does not want to dispense with architectural traditions. Indeed, he clings to them; his work is

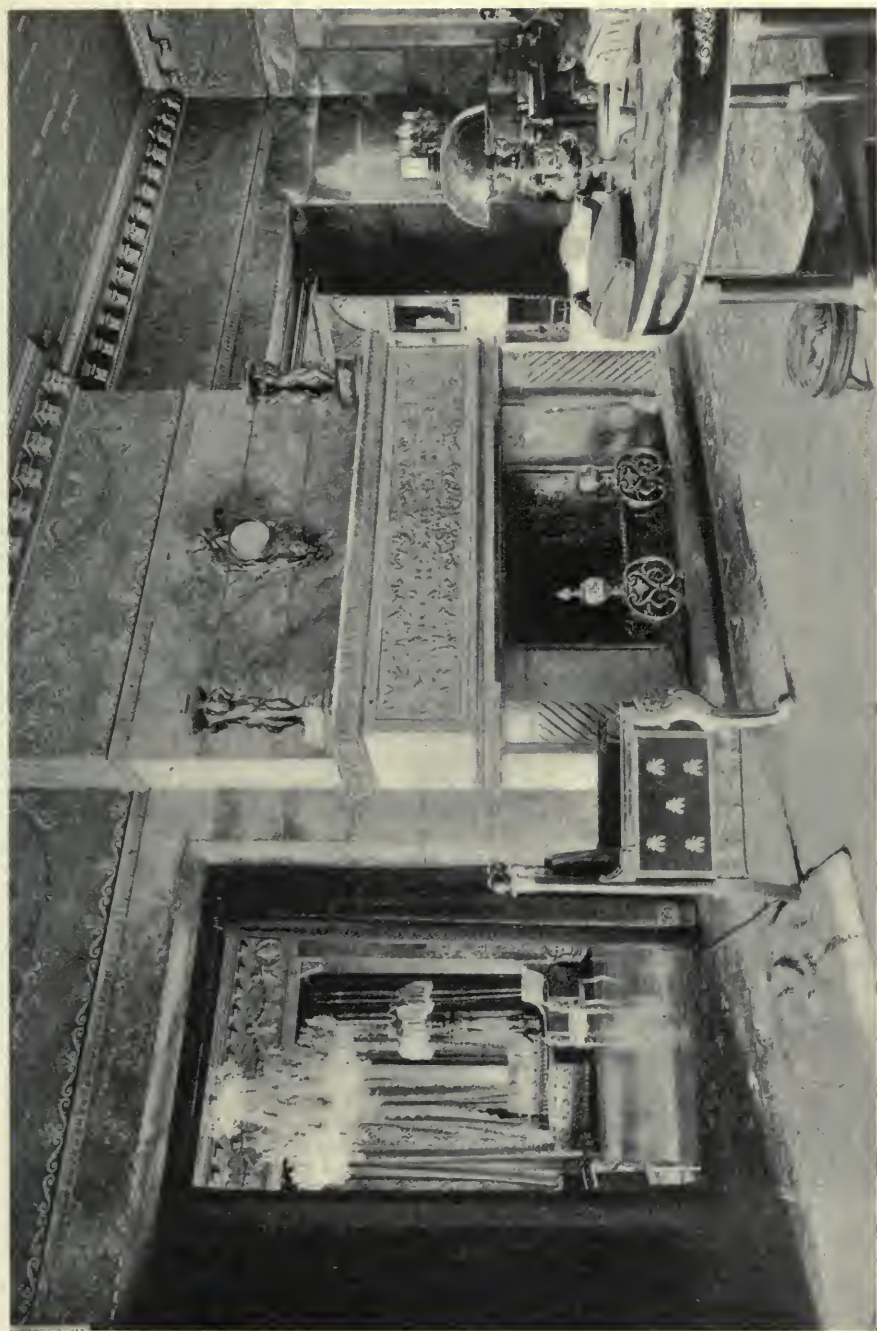


New York City.

Rose & Stone, Architects.

THE BROKAW HOUSE.

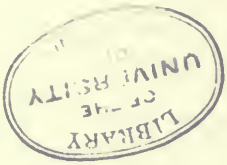




New York City.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE BROKAW RESIDENCE.

Rose & Stone, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

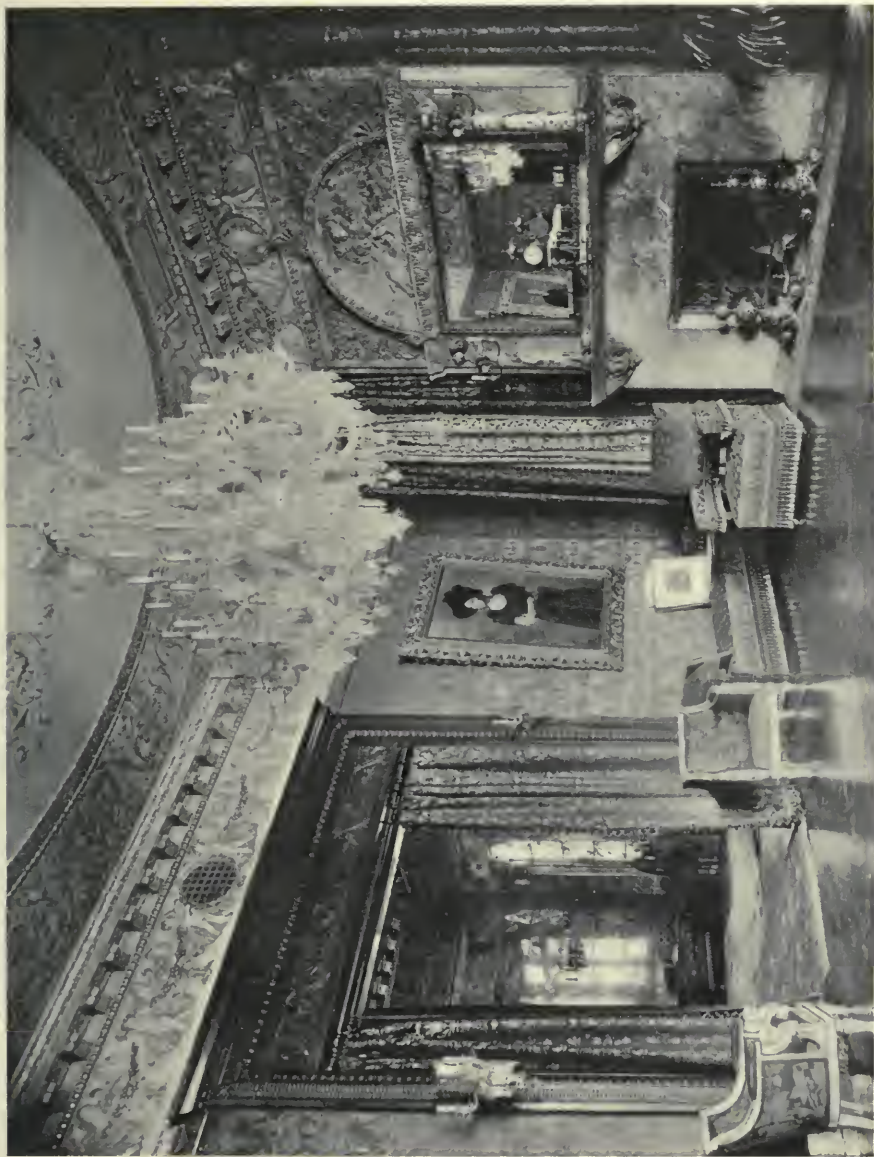
devoted to domesticating them in his native country. The use of these memories is still somewhat indiscriminate. If he does not attempt to blend an Oriental pagoda with a medieval castle, he also does not bother himself much about archeological consistency—provided he can obtain a consistent and striking effect. It is these striking effects for which he is always seeking, and that is the reason why he and his client generally get along very well together. In the pursuit of the striking effect money is spent with unparalleled generosity. The rich man does not stint his architect, but he insists on getting a million dollars' worth of good looks for a million dollars. The inconspicuous refinement, the modest understatement, the scrupulous economy of colonial architecture rarely appeals to him; and it happens to appeal just as little to his favorite designers. Economy, indeed, of any kind is not characteristic of the American disposition. Our countrymen want a big result in a short time; and even things artistic, unless they conform to this demand, are neglected. The architect instinctively feels that for the good of American art people must be startled into noticing and admiring these "palatial" mansions. At the present stage of American architectural esthetics they have the effect of monumental "posters," advertising to the world both American opulence and American artistic emancipation.

It does not require very much penetration to discern that the relations between the rich man and his architect are

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

controlled by very much the same logic as the relation between a railroad president and a political boss. The rich man is buying a service which he needs, but which lies outside of the compass of his personal or class organization; and he is buying it in a way and in a spirit which a few generations from now will, we trust, be unnecessary. Of course the rich American of the year 2000 A. D. will need well-trained architects, and plenty of them; but it may be doubted whether he will turn over his house to them as helplessly as he does at present. By that time, or sooner, he ought to know, or at least his wife ought to know, very much more definitely what he or she wants. They will take, that is, a very much more personal, intimate, and well-informed interest in the details of their own houses than they do at present; they will have become accustomed to certain forms, and will suggest directions in which these forms can be modified. The architect of that time will have clients who not only will submit to the effects he obtains, but will understand in part how these effects are reached. So far as the interior of the houses are concerned, they will ask him to do less, but in what he does do there will have to be a greater propriety and a more positive originality.

We make this prediction about the future relations between an architect and his rich client with some confidence, because their relations at the present time have a certain tendency in the direction we are describing; and in order to



New York City.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE BROKAW RESIDENCE.

Rose & Stone, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

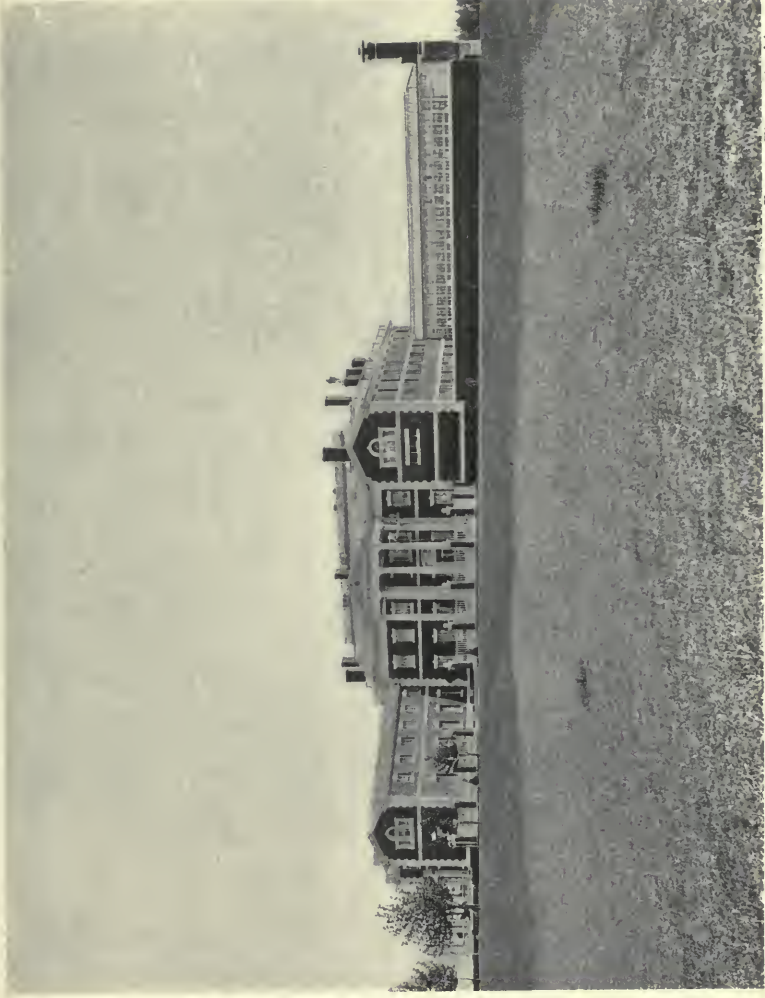
understand the transformation which is beginning to take place we must again fall back upon the conception of a genuine American art as something which is to be acquired by experience and practise. [In founding libraries and endowing colleges the American millionaires are helping to educate their fellow countrymen. In employing skilled architects to design these magnificent residences they are consciously or unconsciously helping to educate themselves and their families. No matter how busy a man may be, and no matter how crude his early training, the formative effect of being surrounded by well-proportioned rooms and good-looking furniture and hangings is too persistent and insidious to be denied. We do not mean, of course, that he becomes in a few years a man of unimpeachable taste and of well-conceived ideas about interior decoration; but we do mean that the gradual habituation of his eye to good forms, proportions, and colors makes him unconsciously crave that sort of thing; and in making this assertion we are not merely drawing an inference about what ought to happen. Architects who have more experience in working with opulent, well-intentioned, but ill-informed clients, very generally testify to the quick improvement which is brought about in the latter's taste by the contagion of good-looking domestic surroundings.]

The effect is naturally still more pervasive and profound upon the rich man's children. From childhood they are

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

familiarly accustomed to nothing else in the way of furniture and hangings but that which is comely, well-arranged, and rich in suggestion; and, familiar as they are with that sort of thing, they fall under the spell of good architectural manners much more completely and unconsciously than did their parents. Whenever they happen to be people with a native sense of form, or a strong interest in beautiful things, this early familiarity with richly and finely fashioned rooms enables them to handle this kind of material with some freedom and consistency, so that, should they come, as they frequently do, to build houses of their own, they are not quite such passive material in the hands of their architects as their fathers were before them. They have their personal likes and dislikes, their particular ideas regarding the proper effect of different rooms, or the value of different materials; and their houses consequently have a tendency to become less ready-made and more individual. The educational leaven has been working, and has been preparing the way for a different and better order of domestic esthetics.

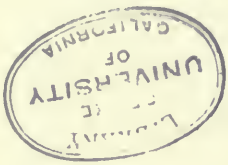
These considerations as to the educational value of "stunning" interiors upon the people who are habitually stunned by them remind us that it is time to introduce some system of classification into the group of rich men, who have hitherto been lumped indiscriminately together. For the most part it is fair to describe them as similar in their occupations and tastes, because, as we have already pointed out, they are



Oakdale, L. I.

RESIDENCE OF F. K. BOURNE.

Ernest Flagg, Architect.





Oakdale, L. I.

Ernest Flagg, Architect.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF F. K. BOURNE.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

molded by similar influences and constitute, socially as well as economically, a kind of coterie. Still there are discriminations to be made; and, as these discriminations are having their subordinate effect upon our greater domestic architecture, they can not be entirely ignored even for the purpose of the book. The most important source of difference among American millionaires derives from the length of time which they and their parents have enjoyed their money. In spite of the fact that they have almost all of them come to the front since the Civil War, their wealth is now being spent sometimes by the third or fourth generation; so that, new as the millionaire is in American life, he is beginning to have a little history and to suggest certain lines of transformation and development. The description which we have given of him in this book as an essentially busy man, whose business is the most of his personal life, is on the whole true; but it is not so true now as it was six or seven years ago, and in another ten years it will be still less true. The first generation of American industrial leaders was interested almost exclusively in playing their game, and went ahead without much reference to the value to themselves of the stakes; the same statement is true, although to a smaller extent, of the second generation; but wherever a third or a fourth generation appeared on the stage they have not unnaturally shown a somewhat different temper. They have shown, that is, a disposition similar to that of Europeans who inherit abun-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

dant incomes. They are more interested in devising ingenious ways of spending their money than they are in laying plans for its increase. They are tending to become, that is, a leisured class—the very first set of leisured and wealthy people which American life has developed; and in proportion as the number of these leisured and wealthy people increases, the whole aspect and significance of American residential architecture will alter.

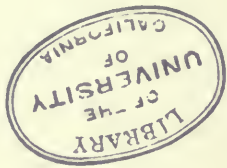
An account of the transformation which is now beginning to take place will be more accurate and instructive, in case we deal with specific names and instances. Neither the first of the Vanderbilts, the first of the Goulds, the first of the Astors, or the first of the Rockefellers evinced any interest in domestic or any other kind of architecture. They were or are content with respectable, comfortable, and ugly houses, which might or might not be on Fifth Avenue. The same statement is not true of Mr. Carnegie, who late in life built himself a handsome city house, something in the modern style; but he showed a survival of the thriftiness of his early habits, as well as his personal opinion of the big modern dwellings, by carefully instructing his architects to avoid designing a “palatial” building. On the other hand, in many cases, particularly among men who have made their money more recently, the very first generation of rich men, who are still entirely devoted to business, started in to erect really magnificent dwellings, and among them may be



Newport, R. I.

RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM EDGAR.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

mentioned the late C. P. Huntington, Charles M. Schwab, a number of the steel and Standard Oil millionaires, Mr. Charles T. Yerkes, Mr. Marshall Field, and many others.

If the craving for a "palatial" residence, however, sometimes escaped the first generation of millionaires, it rarely escaped the second generation. These gentlemen, of which George Gould, the late William H. Vanderbilt, and Mr. J. P. Morgan may be considered as types, remained as faithful to the vast business interests they inherited as did their fathers before them. So far from becoming the economic parasites which the possession of large inherited fortunes so frequently produces, they have succeeded frequently in making even bigger reputations for themselves as industrial organizers than their fathers possessed. At the same time, however, they have also taken a much more positive interest in the spending of their money, and have almost without exception allowed themselves the characteristic American esthetic luxuries and extravagances. The third generation has come upon the stage only in a few instances; but wherever it has appeared it has shown an increasing tendency to neglect business for leisured pleasure. Of the third generation of Astors, for instance, Mr. William Waldorf Astor is so completely possessed by the notion of cultivated, fashionable, and opulent leisure that he must needs seek its satisfaction in England. His brother, Mr. John

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

Jacob Astor, remains in his native country, but he is practically out of business. The third generation of Vanderbilts did not succumb so completely to the temptations of becoming annuitants. Of the four brothers, the two younger, Mr. Fred and Mr. George Vanderbilt, did indeed abandon any very active participation in the conduct of their family's affairs; but the two elder, the late Cornelius Vanderbilt and William K. Vanderbilt, while taking more leisure than their father did, still remained essentially men of business. As to the fourth generation of this family, which is already beginning to marry and show its metal, it looks very decidedly as if they proposed to abandon business, except in the capacity of occasional investors, and were going to devote themselves to the sports and amusements of country and city life.

How far this tendency will go, one would scarcely venture at the present time to predict. The statement that rich Americans are busy men still remains overwhelmingly true. The large American fortunes, except in the few cases mentioned above, are owned by the people who founded them or by their immediate descendants; and these people, although they exhibit a livelier inclination to enjoy themselves than they did fifteen or twenty years ago, are almost as much preoccupied as ever with the conduct and expansion of their business interests; and the conscience of the class to which they belong makes them infuse into their children very defi-



New York City.

HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. CLARENCE W. BOWEN.

Heins & La Farge, Architects.

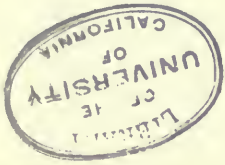




New York City.

LIBRARY IN THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. CLARENCE W. BOWEN.

Heins & La Farge, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

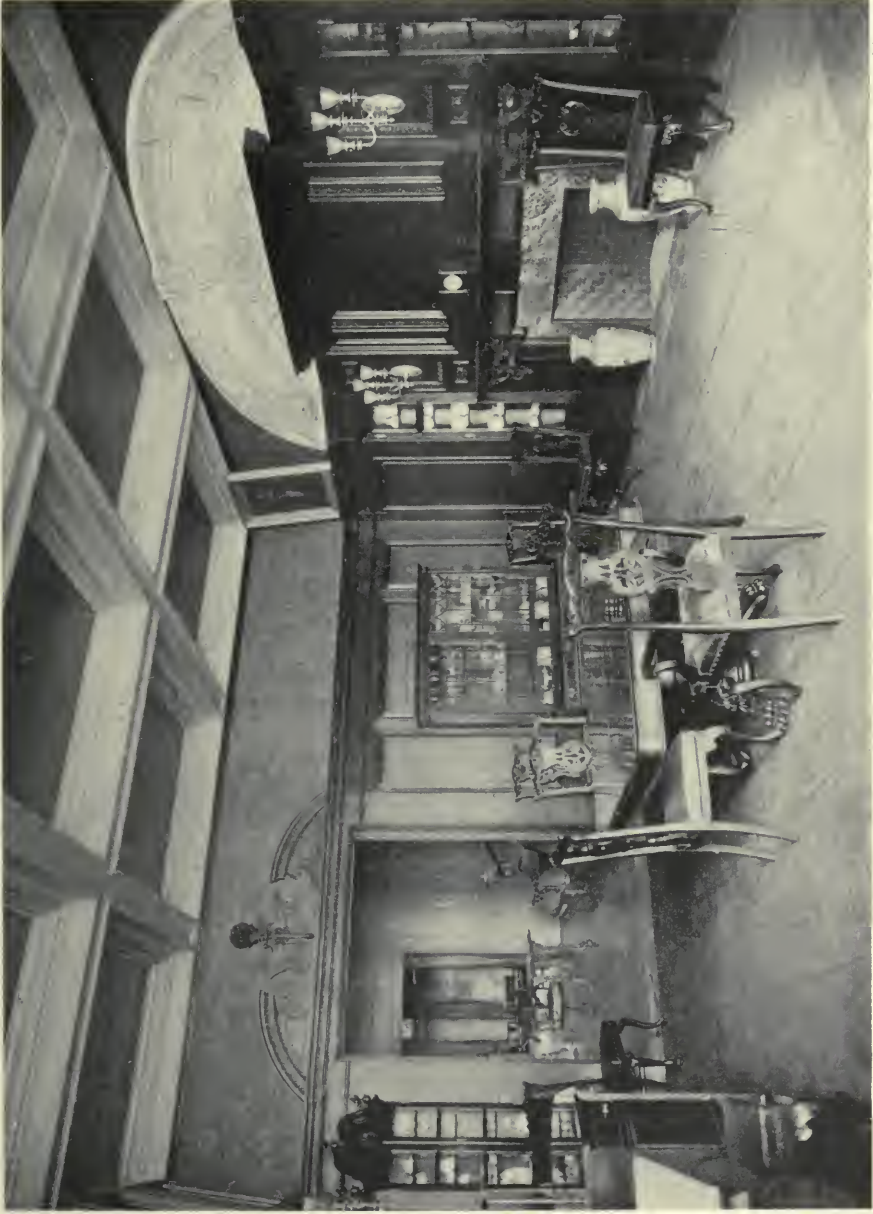
nite ideas about the responsibilities of rich men to the sources of their wealth. Many of these children are carefully and elaborately trained from childhood for the purpose of giving them the information and good judgment necessary to the protection and increase of so much wealth, and the strongest efforts are made, and successfully made, as in the cases of the Vanderbilts and the Goulds, to keep the family properties and interests together under one central management—no matter among how many descendants the actual ownership may be divided.

It remains true, moreover, that no other career except a business career is open to an energetic, ambitious, and rich young American. He generally avoids politics, because of the extreme difficulty of learning the political game and of obtaining any political standing—except by the use of money. The civil service, the army, and the navy, which attract so many well-to-do Englishmen, are in this country filled with poor men; and the professions, also, rarely offer many attractions for young fellows who are not dependent on their own exertions. Business is always the easy, almost the inevitable career, and largely because, as we have already noticed, there is comparatively little miscellaneous intercommunication among the different layers of American society. The rich men form a distinct and self-perpetuating set, who possess certain ideals as to the moral desirability of an active business life and the moral danger of merely elegant inac-

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tion, and who are doing their best to have their children inherit both their interests and their standards and manner of life.

That they will succeed, however, in keeping all their children at work is not to be expected. In every family which contains three or four boys, one or two of them will revolt against the confinements of business life and will prefer to accept the income he has, rather than give up the best of his life to the work of increasing it; and during the past six or seven years the influence of this disposition to abandon the game and to spend the winnings has had a peculiarly important effect upon our domestic architecture. The rich young American of good instincts who deserts the family office generally jumps to the opposite extreme and takes up with practically useless occupations. He becomes interested chiefly in pursuits that are peculiarly their own reward and justification. He becomes, that is, either or both athletic and esthetic; and both of these pursuits tend to make him divide much of his time between European cities and the American country. In particular he wants a large country house in which to entertain, big stables and barns to hold his horses and stock, and in general all the paraphernalia and appurtenances of a country gentleman's residence. This is the sort of life which the corresponding class in England has identified with itself, and there is every indication that rich and leisured Americans will follow in the same course.



New York City.

DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. CLARENCE W. BOWEN.

Heins & La Farge, Architects.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

With the growth of leisure will come a great increase in the desire to entertain on a large scale, and consequently also in the facilities for entertainment. The American house-party will become as elaborate and definite a function as the English house-party, but for a number of reasons fewer people will participate in it and the gatherings will last for a longer time. The rich American of leisure will, however, probably have much livelier esthetic interests than the rich Englishman of leisure, because American culture always seems to take a much more consciously esthetic direction. They are inveterate builders, are these American millionaires. What with the six or seven great New York houses of the Vanderbilt family, and their still larger number of country estates, it could be plausibly argued that among them they have invested as much money in the erection of dwellings as any of the royal families of Europe, the Bourbons excepted. Doubtless, also, other similar families have failed to do as well chiefly because there were fewer children and less money. But in the course of time other families will succeed in doing quite as well because the passion for building is almost universal among Americans. Moreover, the family property is much better distributed than it is in England, and this wider distribution permits the younger members of the family to set up for themselves. One or two family residences are not enough. There must be as many of them almost as there are uncles and nephews, and they will mul-

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tiplied even as the uncles and nephews are multiplied. In spite of the great rapidity with which they have been erected recently their number is not as yet in the aggregate very great, and the coming generation will build three or four to every one which the present generation has built.

THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE
ITS EXTERIOR



CHAPTER VII

The Modern American Residence—Its Exterior



THE opportunity now being offered to the American architect to design handsome dwellings is, as we have said, extraordinary; but before describing the result and estimating its value, we must take some account also of the disadvantages under which he suffers. It is, undoubtedly, in some respects very pleasant for him to have men for clients who treat him as an expert with acknowledged rights, and who allow him to do, within certain limits, very much as he pleases; but it must be remembered that the very freedom with which he is endowed testifies to somewhat restless social conditions and to an absence of guiding esthetic traditions that impair the value of his best efforts. A dwelling derives its fairest chance of beauty from the congruity with which it expresses a certain definite and distinguished kind of life—whether of a class or of an individual; and the life of a modern American business man, whatever its merits, is certainly lacking in distinction. It does not possess in itself that seemly and

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

permanent character around which any really appropriate domestic forms can be grouped. Even the less business-like occupations of the younger American are similarly lacking in repose and distinction. We Americans are too officious even about our diversions; and the appropriate habitation for a contemporary house-party, far from consisting of a series of well-fashioned rooms, would consist rather of a casino with billiard and card tables, bowling-alleys, a tank, and a tennis-court as the chief items of its equipment. The office and the play-room symbolize the two characteristic and natural extremes of American life.

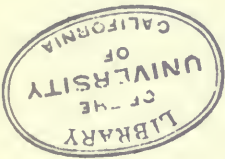
That our greater modern dwellings, starting with this initial disadvantage, should not only as a rule escape the danger of being vulgar, but should possess as many merits and as much propriety as they do, is best possible testimony to the consciousness which our countrymen show of their own deficiencies. Since the architects are unable to give their clients houses that are eminently and inevitably suitable, they must fall back upon providing for their clients houses which, even if unsuitable, are good in themselves and valuable as models. That their clients agree to this insidious method of education, and that the outcome has a kind of forced and anomalous propriety, we have already sufficiently explained; but this incursion of educational motives into a region which should have left the school-house far behind, places the American architect in an awkward



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

HALLWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

position. He is both too responsible as a teacher and too irresponsible as an artist. With no definite local traditions to guide him and in general but few really respectable personal demands to satisfy—except the demand that the plan be convenient and the effect rich and striking—he is naturally somewhat at a loss to find the really best models; and it is not surprising that he continues to vacillate among the historic domestic styles. He is experimenting almost as continuously as the less-instructed architect of twenty years ago, only he is experimenting more intelligently and with a better sense of esthetic effect.

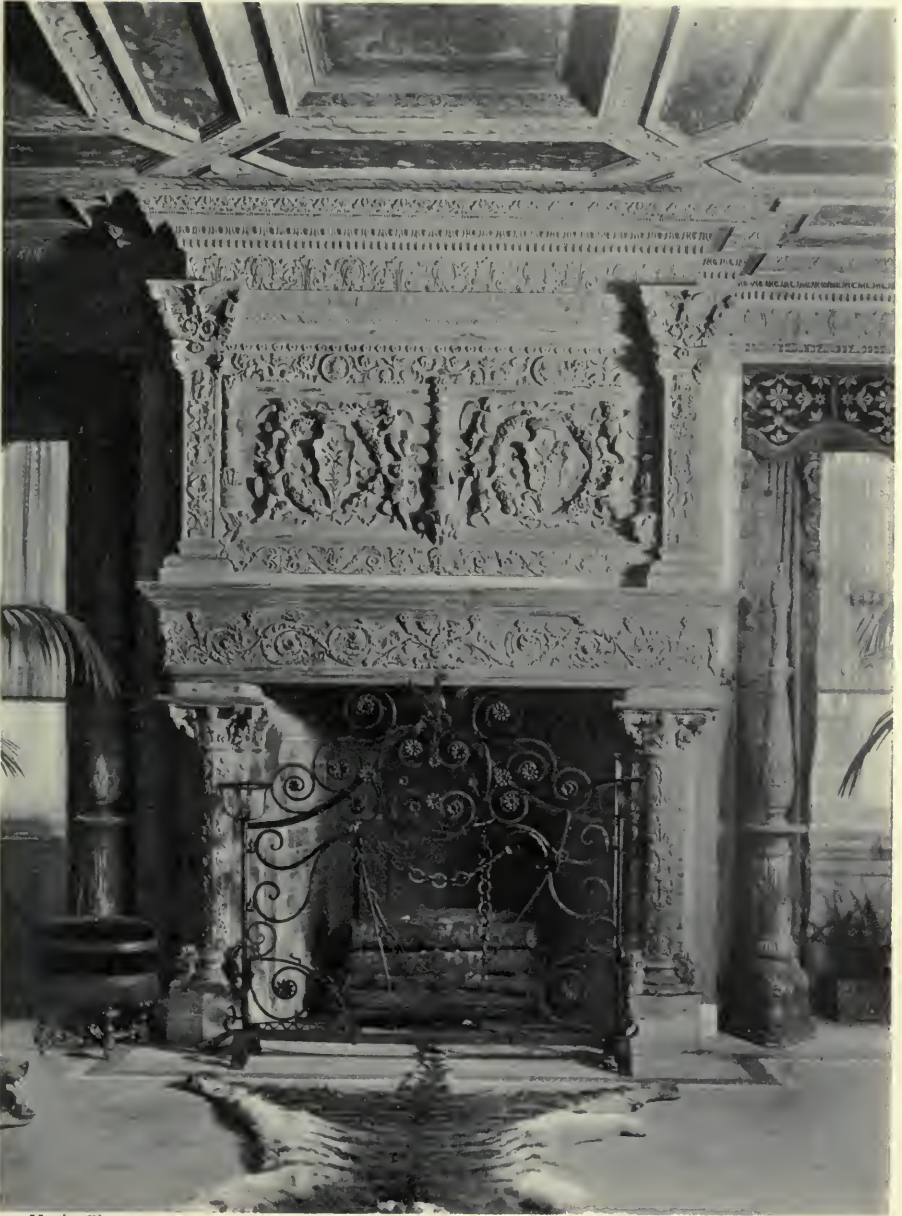
This statement is true both of his city and his country houses. In the larger cities, like New York, the monotony which prevailed in the appearance of private dwellings for fifty years has been superseded by the utmost variety both of material and design. Indeed, many of the old brown-stone dwellings are reconstructed, partly for the purpose of securing more convenient internal planning, but also partly for the purpose of setting them up architecturally for themselves.

The houses that are reconstructed are no longer built in rows. Even when they are erected by speculative builders, three or four at a time, each house claims the distinction of an individual design. Moreover, it is not too much to say that this claim is frequently made in the most deliberate and pretentious manner. Whatever such a house may be, it

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

must at any rate be different. It is as if New York domestic architecture, after submitting tamely for a generation and a half to the most distressing and lugubrious uniformity, had now decided to practise and enjoy the utmost possible limit of esthetic freedom. All conventions in the matter have been cast aside. It seems settled that for a while New York shall symbolize in the design of its private dwellings the incoherent multiplicity of its origins. It may be that in the course of time some desirable convention will be developed; but as yet this consummation is remote. Neither structure, nor prevailing taste, nor the use of the same dimensions, bring with it any significant similarity of design. The phrase "The Art Gallery of the New York Streets" has been used to describe the impression produced by the handsomest residential section; and it would be hard to find a better descriptive phrase. The new designs stand out like pictures against the brownstone background, and like easel pictures hung in a gallery they produce the effect of irresponsible self-satisfaction. They look as if they were intended for no particular place, as if they were wholly indifferent to their neighbors, as if they were expressive of no structural fact, as if they were independent of all local precedent, and as if they had escaped from any formative influence, except the knowledge and the taste of their architects.

Fortunately the knowledge, skill, and taste of the archi-



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

HALL MANTELPiece IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

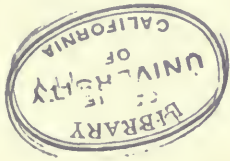




New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

A DRAWING-ROOM MANTELPIECE IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

pects are sometimes conspicuously present. The best of them are thoroughly competent designers, the average of whose work is lowered by the fact that they have too much to do, but who almost always exhibit in their designs an easy familiarity with good forms and a well-trained intelligence in using them. They have been brought up in a good school; they have participated architecturally in good society. The proportions, so far as they can control them, the spacing and the masses of their buildings are well considered; the materials are frequently well selected, and they have a number of very excellent and comparatively new materials, such as Harvard brick, at their disposal. After a tour among their buildings one gets thoroughly the impression that, however much they may lack positive originality and force, they embody an excellent and formative technical tradition. Indeed, one may go further and attribute to the very best of them a faint renewal of the architectural spirit of the Renaissance, both in its strength and its weakness. The better American architect has the same dependence on the past, the same indisposition to bother about structural consistency, but he also has a touch of the same artistic passion, an occasional trace of the same easy mastery over the borrowed forms he uses, a suggestion of the same refinement and charm in the effects he obtains.

The defects of the better American architects derive at least in part from the fact that, while they have learned

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

from their masters and their predecessors, they decline to learn as much as they should from each other. All of the larger offices have developed more or less distinctive office styles, which constitute in some measure their architectural trade-mark, and which attract or repel prospective builders; and the tendency consequently is, particularly since all these big offices generally have more buildings on their boards than the members of the firm have the time themselves to design—the tendency is to have this office style somewhat mechanically reproduced. In this way the very fact that so many architectural opportunities are afforded to the profession impairs the merit of the results. American architecture would probably have more character in case American architects had less to do, and there would be more chance also in that case for the quicker development of a desirable local convention.

It is difficult at any rate to trace even the beginning of a trusted and trustworthy convention in the exterior of the large contemporary city dwelling. So far as the largest houses are concerned, both in city and country, there have been made occasional attempts to use the domestic style of the French Renaissance as the most acceptable model for a "palatial" dwelling. The two houses erected early in the eighties on Fifth Avenue for William K. and the late Cornelius Vanderbilt were both of them modified French châteaux; and this example has been followed in one or two



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

CONSERVATORY IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

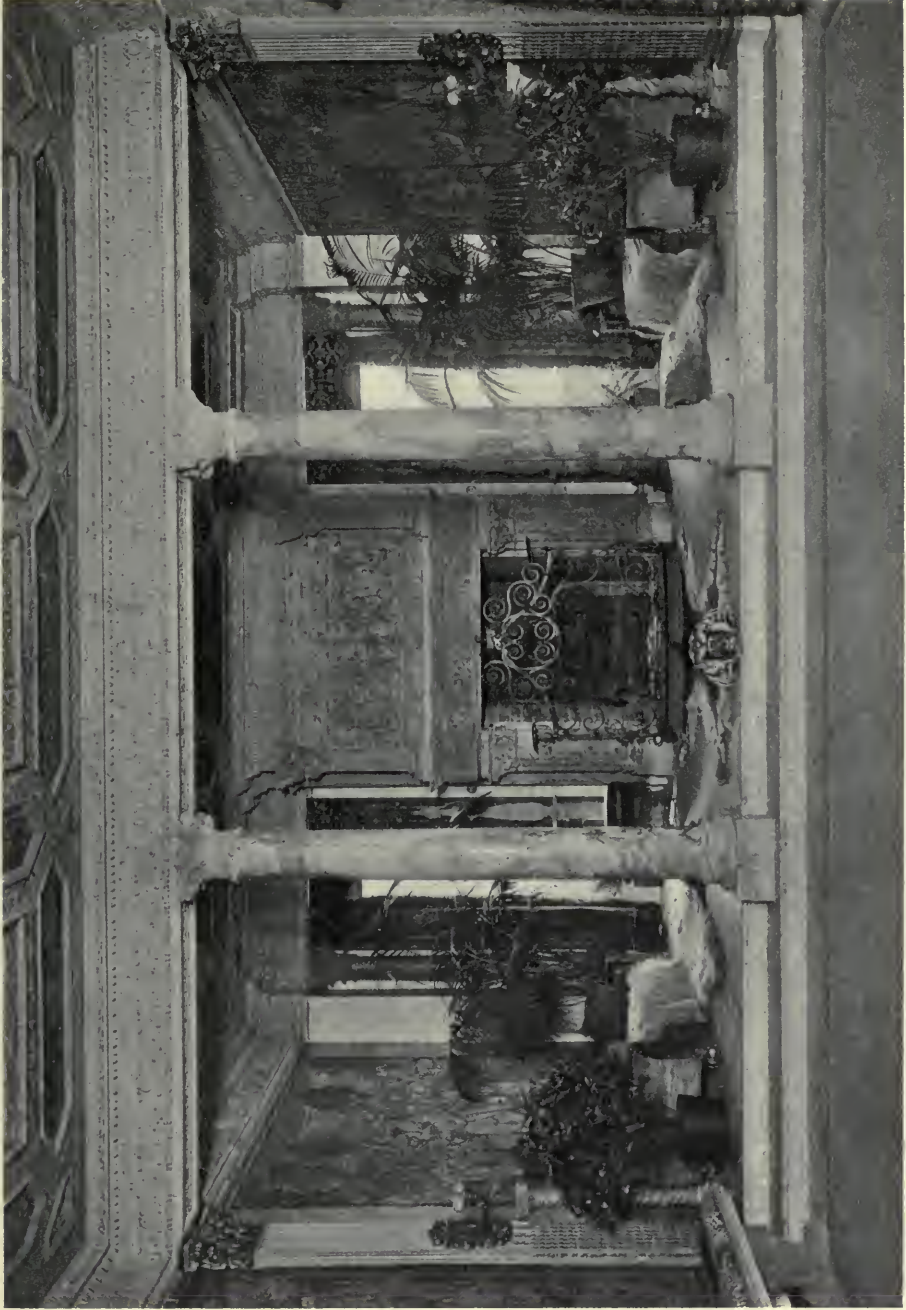
conspicuous instances farther up the avenue. Of late years, however, during which a very large number of expensive dwellings have been erected in New York City, the only important instance in which a similar model has been adopted is in the case of Mr. Charles M. Schwab's house now being erected on Riverside Drive. The fashion, so far as there is any, runs in two directions. Contemporary Parisian architecture is, on the one hand, being freely adapted to the different proportions of the private dwelling, while, on the other, there is use of, for comparatively modest houses, a distinct revival in the use of brick as a material, together with a very remote colonialism in design. This second tendency prevails much more in the vicinity of Boston than it does in that of New York; but it is being used in the metropolis also by several well-known firms. It is employed, however, frequently with a certain French smartness and precision which is very different from the spirit of the older buildings, and it obtains a character of its own from the fact that stone is nearly always used in the lowest division of the design.

It is probable that this increased use of brick, with a stone base and trimmings, is the most sensible tendency which the design of comparatively narrow city houses is exhibiting; but at best the outlook for the relatively small, though still expensive, city dwelling is not very encouraging.

New York is particularly the city in which the expen-

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sive urban residence is being built in large numbers and on a lavish scale; but it is also the city in which the conditions under which the exteriors of these buildings are designed are extremely unsatisfactory. The constantly increasing value of land in the really fashionable district has placed any but a very small lot beyond the reach of any but an extremely rich person. A well-situated site measuring 25 × 100 costs anywhere from \$70,000 to \$200,000, according to the desirability of the location; and as the cost of the house duplicates the cost of the land, it follows that \$150,000 would be the smallest sum at which a really modern house can be obtained within a block or two of the residence portions of Fifth Avenue, while on the avenue double that money would scarcely suffice. This high value of land has forced people to build very ill-proportioned and in some respects very inconvenient houses. Whereas formerly four stories constituted pretty well the limit of height, now they are becoming five, six, and even seven stories high. As a consequence of this height the internal machinery of these buildings becomes immensely more complicated. One or more automatic electric elevators is provided; the heating apparatus is bulky and occupies a great deal of the sub-basement; the hot-water supply of houses that contain anywhere from five to fifteen bath-rooms has to be enormous; and the internal telephone system is comparable to nothing less than that of a hotel. To design an acceptable façade



New York City.

SECOND-STORY HALLWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

for a building which is at most forty feet wide and five or six stories high is almost impossible. Many ingenious and interesting attempts have been made, but no one has yet succeeded in really incorporating in the design the top story. The depth of these houses is, moreover, the source of almost as much of a practical as the height is an esthetic stumbling-block. Fully three-quarters of the lot is covered by the building, in order to get as much area as possible out of the narrow dimensions, and the architect is confronted by the impossible problem of providing the middle rooms of a house seventy-five feet deep, that has access to the air only on the back and front, with any sufficient light.

Be it added that, while the reconstruction which the fashionable residential district of New York is now undergoing has been largely prompted by changes in esthetic standards, the better residential architecture of the city has not yet been emancipated from the baleful influence of the speculative builder. A very large proportion of the most expensive dwellings in the city, dwellings which in several cases have sold for as much as \$500,000, are still erected by these ubiquitous and "up-to-date" operators. They have been known occasionally to employ the very best architects to design their buildings; but usually they have merely made incoherent and wild attempts to imitate certain good types of design, with the result of vulgarizing the whole general appearance of the New York residential architecture in the

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fashionable district. There could not be a better illustration of the absence of strong individual requirements on the part of the purchasers of expensive dwellings than the fact that they will buy houses which are built to suit anybody—who has the necessary money. The result of it all is that, notwithstanding the excellence of certain selected façades and the enormously increased interest which our modern New York domestic architecture legitimately inspires, the general result is somewhat depressing, and in view of the difficulties under the most favorable conditions of obtaining a satisfactory effect in the design of a small slice of a large and rebellious block, some of the architects, who get the very cream of this class of work, do not bother at all about the exteriors. In the cases of three of the houses in New York which during recent years have been successfully reconstructed—those of William C. Whitney, Henry W. Poor, and Stanford White—the old brownstone exteriors, except for a change in the location and appearance of the entrance, have been left unaltered, and the taste and skill of the designer have been devoted exclusively to the making of a “stunning” interior.

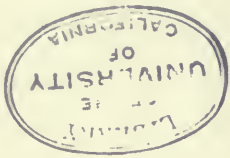
The domestic architecture of a people inevitably finds its best expression in its country houses, for it is possible to make a country house both complete and individual, whereas the design of a city house is necessarily mutilated. There have been in the past city houses that were individual and

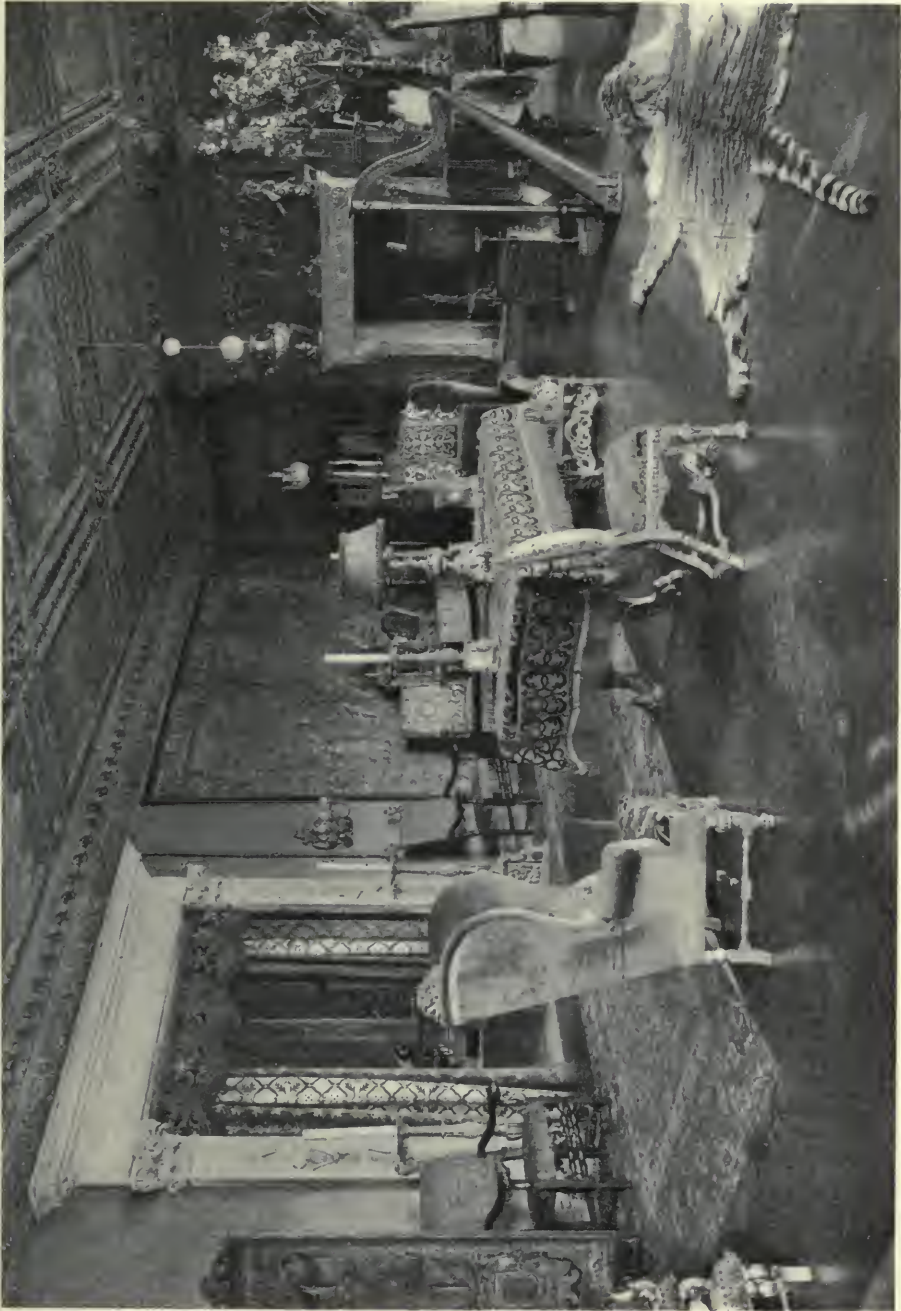


New York City.

DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.





New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF HENRY W. POOR.



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complete, as well as being architecturally very impressive, but generally these city dwellings, such, for instance, as the Maison de Cluny in Paris, or the palaces in the Italian cities, were partly surrounded by open grounds; and when this was not the case, the site was much more spacious than the New York architect can hope to control except in rare instances. It is very probable, however, that the conditions under which these city houses are designed will in the course of time be improved, for the quicker means of communication, both public and private, will enable people to live a greater distance from the center of business, while the center of business itself will claim for its imperative needs large areas in the inner circle now devoted to residence. Thus the greater city residence will tend to become suburban, and so to approximate to a country type, while at the same time there is destined to be an enormous increase in the number of country houses proper.

The first of the modern American country houses were villas, and generally seaside villas. Even during the middle period Boston people had built thickly along the north shore of Massachusetts, but it was not until after 1880 that well-to-do New Yorkers began to make "settlements" in the country. The first and most conspicuous of these settlements was, of course, Newport, which had a certain prominence even in the seventies; but less important gatherings at Elberon, on various parts of Long Island, and at Bar

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Harbor soon followed. Almost contemporaneous with the building up of the seashore "colonies" villas began also to be grouped at various inland resorts, such as the Berkshires and, later, Tuxedo. In the beginning, of course, there was nothing "palatial" about these villas. They were simply frame houses, built as a rule exclusively for summer residence, very spacious, pretty much surrounded by verandas, and eminently pleasant and comfortable. Architecturally they were generally influenced by what was left of the "Queen Anne" movement; but they really belonged to no previous type of country house. In many cases they were decidedly original. Everything about them, but in particular the largely wooden construction, encouraged freedom of treatment. In fact a deliberate irregularity, breaking out into bay-windows, towers, and all kinds of projections, was the key-note of this type of design, and the results were, in many cases, highly picturesque and charming. Appreciation is particularly due to some of the rambling, unpretentious shingled houses, designed by McKim, Mead, and White, the late Bruce Price, and the late Richard M. Hunt. It has even been held that these buildings show something more than certain distinct and pleasant individual qualities of design, that they exhibited characteristics which, if developed, might have been the basis of an interesting and vernacular local type of dwelling; but the fact that later they were both disowned by their authors and disregarded



Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

“GEORGIAN COURT.”

Bruce Price, Architect.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

by the profession at large in favor of a renewed experimentation in historic styles, indicates that they failed to satisfy current esthetic standards and current practical needs.

In truth these early villas were in effect wooden buildings, even when other materials were partly used; and the time was coming when wood was to be finally abandoned as the material out of which the greater American country residence was to be constructed. As wealth increased, and its possessors became accustomed to its possession and realized the opportunities it offered to them, the demand for a more imposing type of residence immediately set in; and a more imposing residence necessarily meant the use of stone or brick—the really structural materials. The “villa” had to become, if not “massive,” at least substantial and impressive, and the prevailing shingled houses were neither substantial nor impressive. Houses such as “Ochre Court” and the “Breakers” matched, so far as the country was concerned, the palatial châteaux which at about the same time were beginning to be erected on Fifth Avenue. The tendency to erect these more substantial dwellings was a remarkable evidence of the interest in the country which was more than ever being aroused. Once rich families had tasted the wholesome satisfaction of owning and occupying country houses they became fairly fascinated by it, and soon made up their minds to do the thing well.

It followed that the country houses which were erected

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became much more varied in plan, location, and function. They continued all to be villas, for a villa is, in its widest definition, a country residence occupied by city people. These "city people" may make the country residence their home for the large part of the year, yet if they do not live on the country, if they are not dependent on its produce for maintenance, their country house becomes in a very real sense a villa. They are independent of the economic conditions and restrictions of a farmer's business, and are living as and where they do merely for their own satisfaction and pleasure. In this sense all of our greater rural residences are villas, for they are all occupied by people who, no matter how varied and sincere their interest in their country places, spend their money upon the land without any reference to making money out of it. But whereas the earlier country houses were villas, in the more restricted sense of being rather fragile structures, intended only for temporary summer residence, the newer ones were intended partly at least for winter habitation, and were sometimes even occupied for a large part of the year. They were situated, however, for the most part in locations that were accessible from New York and could be reached in a few hours. The men of the family were rarely able to pass more than the week's end at their houses. Indeed, the American millionaire seldom remains for a very long time at any one place. He is a restless person, both whose inclinations and whose interests lead him to inhabit



Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

Bruce Price, Architect.

ANOTHER VIEW OF "GEORGIAN COURT."



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

for a large part of his time that most appropriate and luxurious of his habitations—the private car; and he will frequently maintain several large and expensive establishments for the pleasure of using them only during a few weeks of the year.

Recently, however, a type of house has been built which, while it still remains a villa, approximates in many respects to the family seat of an English country gentleman, and is the product not merely of wealth, but of leisure. The most conspicuous instance of this type of place is Mr. George Vanderbilt's country house and estate in North Carolina—"Biltmore"; but the same sort of thing is being frequently done all over the East. "Biltmore" differs radically from the Newport villas or Long Island estates, because it has been planned for itself and irrespective of the convenience of an active business man's life.

It is not situated near New York, so that its owner can go quickly to and fro; it is not designed merely as the occasional residence of a man who only sojourns from Saturday to Monday in his own house, and who is satisfied with a big veranda and a view. It has been laid out as the country home of a cultivated gentleman who has the use of his own time, who wants to build up an all-around country place, and who has all the time and money he needs in which to do it. Of course the cultivated gentleman is still essentially of the city, and is so independent of practical obligations to

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the soil that in a characteristically American fashion he can use his estate as a school of forestry. Nevertheless, it is the residence of a man who goes to the country for something more than relaxation and exercise, and whose example will be as useful to other people as to himself. That is the kind of country dwelling of which we need to see more, of which we are seeing more, and of which we are destined to see a great deal more.

We have stated that the architects much prefer the designing of country to city residences, because they can the more control the surrounding conditions which contribute to the effect of the country house. While this is undoubtedly true, yet at the best their control of these natural conditions is far from what they would like, and rather helps to expose than disguise the necessarily experimental and ready-made character of their work. The stone surface of a city house soon weathers, and begins after ten years or so to wear the aspect of age; and in the interiors, of course, what with the faded fabrics and the rich, time-worn texture of the old woods, the "tone of time" can be almost perfectly obtained; but there is no way of hurrying up the corresponding process of natural growth. Nature will not bestow the "tone of time" on the surroundings of houses which were built only yesterday.

The planting, which must be arranged rather with a view to its ultimate than its immediate effect, necessarily



Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

Bruce Price, Architect.

STAIRWAY OF "GEORGIAN COURT."





Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

Bruce Price, Architect.

DINING-ROOM OF "GEORGIAN COURT."



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

fails to rise to the architectural opportunity; and no matter how admirably the design is suited to the location, the location can not be suited to the design without the expenditure of much time as well as much money. Yet it is this suitability which the eye and the mind both desire more than anything else in respect to a country house, and which unfortunately is as yet almost entirely lacking in the American country building, whether it be a farmhouse or a château.

It is because the English country places are a more natural growth, extending through several centuries of time, that we instinctively associate them with our mental pictures of what we should like a country place to be. The character and charm of English rural domestic architecture is due chiefly to the fact that for several hundred years there has been resident on the English soil a class of well-to-do and well-educated country gentlemen, whose interests and affections were centered around their country-seats, and who, generation after generation, have spent their money upon the improvements of their houses and grounds. In their employment of architectural forms the English have generally been less skilful and less original than the French and the Italians; and during large parts of the last four hundred years they have been almost as imitative in their architecture as we are at present. Except the cases of the early Tudor, Elizabethan, and Jacobean buildings, the beauty of English domestic rural architecture is rarely derived from the excel-

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lence or originality of the design, or even from the way in which the designs have been deliberately fitted to their natural surroundings. It is rather that, by force of continual grading, planting, and tending, the natural surroundings have gradually grown up to and around the house; and the value of this effect is much increased by the peculiar quality of the English landscape—by the moderately human scale of its outlines and masses, by the rich greens of its vegetation, and by the way in which the evidence of loving and intelligent human handiwork has been woven into its fabric. Such are the tremendous advantages that English domestic architecture has had over that of Italy or France or Germany. Besides the possession of a resident landed aristocracy and a landscape that was throughout well composed and well tended, it has been able to turn its opportunities to good account and to preserve its achievements, because its country has never during that period been desolated by foreign invasion, and because its political and social history has been comparatively free from violent disturbances and breaches of continuity.

But, as we have already intimated, these peculiar advantages of English rural architecture are really inimitable. Of course there is no lack of natural beauty in the American landscape, and there are parts, particularly of New England, the masses and outlines of which are scaled to human habitation and which have been cleared just sufficiently to pre-



Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

J. Massey Rhind, Sculptor.

“GEORGIAN COURT.”



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

sent an effective alternation of open and wooded surfaces. But even the most habitable American country has not been so intelligently and consistently humanized as has the greater part of England; and it is entirely impossible within a few years to build up the immediate surroundings of country houses so that the architecture settles down harmoniously into the landscape. Even as regards the comparatively few instances in which colonial country houses and gardens have survived, they have not been continually improved and made more beautiful, but have, as often as not, been allowed to deteriorate; and it will take several generations of continued interest in country life before the initial proprieties of our rural domestic architecture can approach those of England.

If the effect of the American country place is impaired by the undeveloped condition of its surroundings, the architects are, of course, fully alive to the deficiency, and are now preparing for the time when they can count upon the assistance of twenty-five years of natural growth. The large country place has necessarily brought with it both a new interest in landscape architecture and a new outlook upon it. Under the mid-century conditions there was practically no landscape architecture. There was, of course, a prevalent method of treating the grounds around a house, which was derived from the English school of natural gardening, and which in its application to an American country house merely meant a big expanse of lawn, no straight lines, and an occa-



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sional shrub or tree. What flowers there were were grown as a rule in circular beds or borders near the house. This application of the principles of "natural" landscape design did as much injustice to that method of design as the "massive" Italian villas did to the best Italian rural architecture; but, such as it was, it prevailed almost completely. Furthermore, during the beginning of the modern period, while the shingled villas were being erected, no change took place in this respect, because the acreage of land on which the houses were built was generally small and the character of the architecture discouraged any very elaborate treatment of the grounds.

A magnificent French château, however, designed with the utmost correctness and surrounded by an estate of several hundred acres, demanded a much more formal and elaborate kind of landscape architecture; and during the past fifteen, and particularly during the past five years, the design, location, and the immediate surroundings of the newer houses have been profoundly modified by this fact. The lay-out of the whole place, including the location of the house, of the stables, of the chief approaches, of the flower and kitchen gardens, and of the tennis-courts, is carefully designed in advance. The point first selected is, of course, the best site for the house, and the line of the roads, the situation of the stables and the like are chiefly determined by this house-site, which, however, is selected in relation not merely to a pictur-



Lakewood Residence of George Gould.

Bruce Price, Architect.

DRAWING-ROOM OF "GEORGIAN COURT."



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

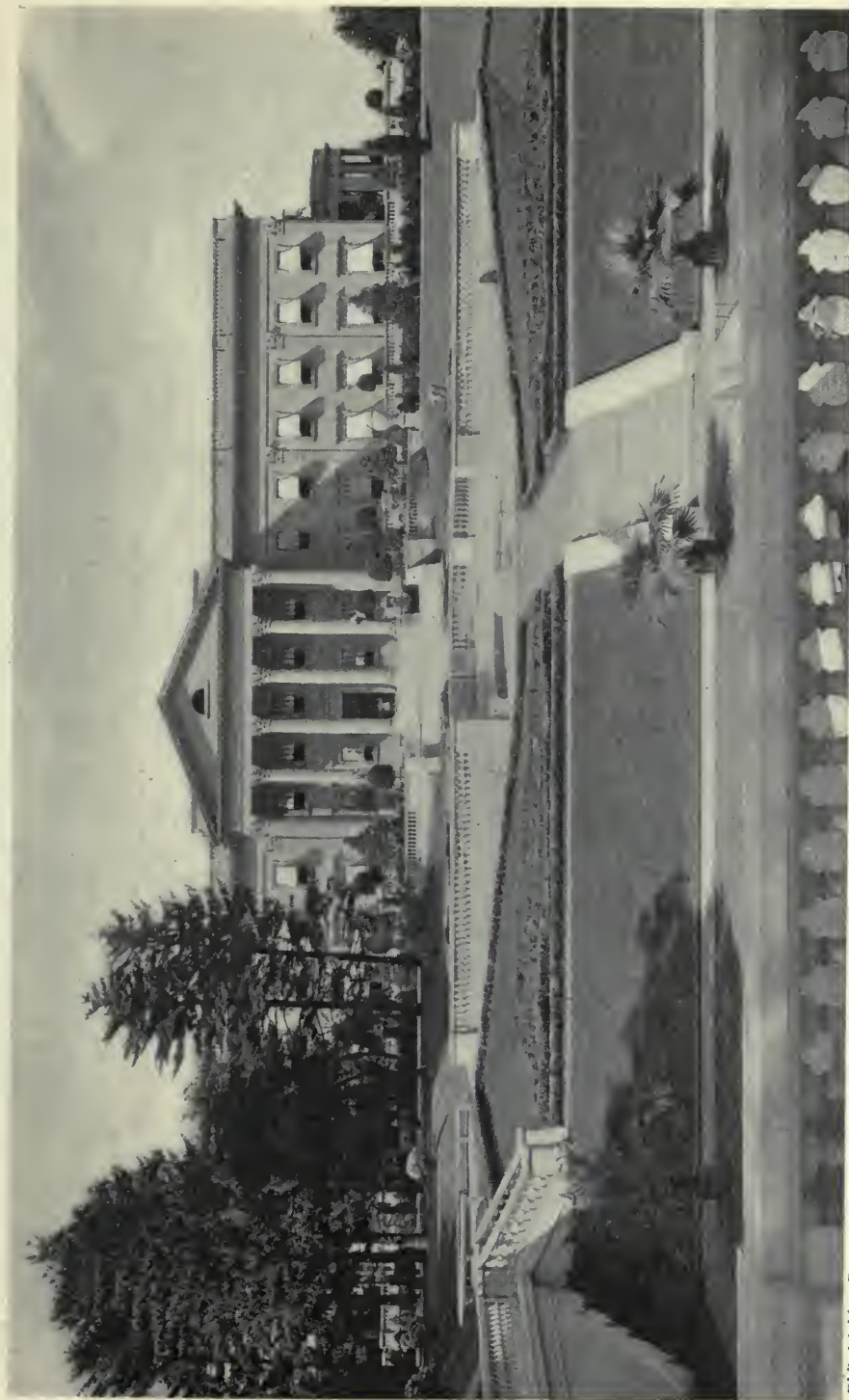
esque view, but to the complete practical development of the whole estate. The immediate surroundings of the house are as a rule treated formally, with an abundance of architectural embellishment, and with the planting subordinated to architectural effects.

It is becoming more and more the custom to include in the lay-out of the estates a "formal" garden, but this custom is one which has become general only at a very recent date. A number of houses erected only ten years ago have lately had French or Italian gardens added to their other attractions—a fact which measures very well the almost contemporary interest in this final refinement of country life. The gardens are laid out for the most part by the architects of the houses, who have not as yet had very much experience with this department of design, and whose work very generally lacks the feeling for natural effects which the older Italian gardens, in spite of their formality, possessed quite as largely as the most "naturalistic" English gardens. Their gardens become as often as not merely rooms that are outdoors, but without any proper outdoor feeling—and this deficiency on their part is intensified by the necessarily undeveloped character of the natural growth. While the planting of a formal garden is, from the nature of the design, subordinated to the architecture, yet it also has certain rights of its own; and the composition of the whole garden should be determined as much by the intention to make the foliage

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soften, enrich, and diversify the rigidity of the architecture as by the intention to have the chief lines and masses determined by the architectural lay-out. The average contemporary formal garden connected with the largest houses is rather a barren affair—with its barrenness not very much relieved by an abundance of beautiful old outdoor furniture; and to find the best American formal gardens of the present day one must hunt, not among the rich lions, but among smaller, tamer, and more modest animals.

There is probably no aspect of our big modern country places which will strike the European observer as so artificial as the gardens; there is certainly none which so irresistibly suggests the idea that the exterior, even more than the interior, of these houses gives the effect of an incongruous stage-setting. The incongruity, in case of the formal gardens, probably does run a little deeper than usual, because, of all the great classic embellishments of domestic life, there is none which so completely suggests cultured leisure on the part of its inhabitant, and so exclusively demands such leisure for its genuine enjoyment. A garden is a place in which one must stroll aimlessly and long. It is the peculiar example of the protected product which must be carefully sheltered from common dangers and ordinary associations—the peculiarly appropriate spot for highly cultivated people to talk and muse. These modern American gardens are not enjoyed in any such manner, for their owners are busy, practical

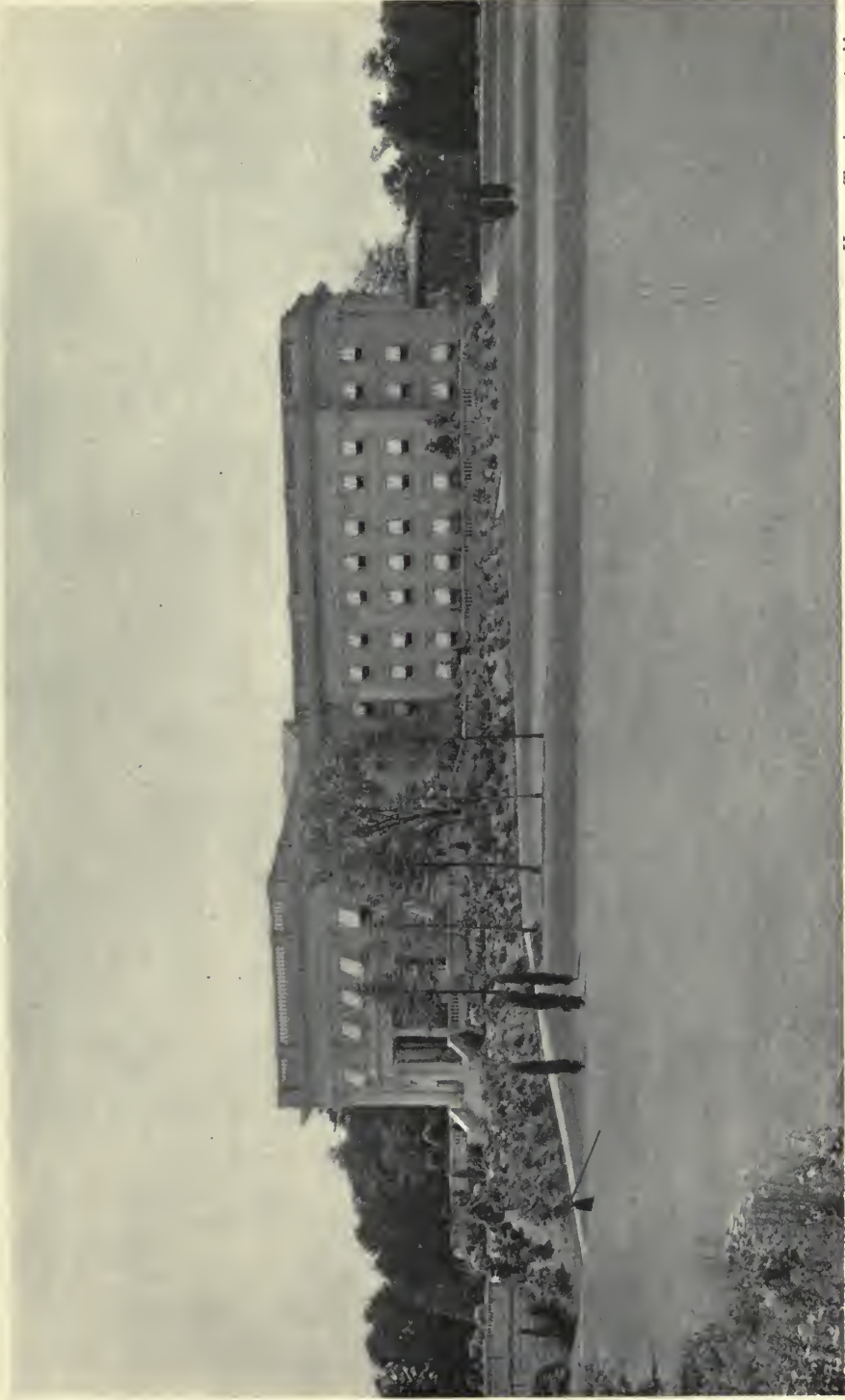


Philadelphia, Pa.

RESIDENCE OF P. A. B. WIDENER.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.





Philadelphia, Pa.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE RESIDENCE OF P. A. B. WIDENER.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.

THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

people, who take their pleasures as restlessly as they do their work, and in whom, assuredly, the spirit of reverie does not abide. Yet for this very reason they are perhaps of more educational value than any other single aspect of the modern American country house. The rich man or the rich man's wife or daughter who really becomes interested in the family garden will probably find that such an interest has more the effect of a liberal education than has any other aspect of the making of a congenial but good-looking house. A beautiful room or series of rooms can be made and left alone, but a garden has to be renewed every year. It contains, within the conditions imposed by the general design, room for many charming and novel effects; and if it is fatal to domestic propriety to leave the interior to an architect, it is even more fatal to leave the garden to the architect and a hired gardener. It is better not to have any gardens at all than to have our gardens entirely cultivated by hired people; and if Americans, particularly rich Americans, are in need of any advice at all, it is the advice that they should have and cultivate their own gardens.

Nothing is more absurd than some of the "Italian" gardens which have been built, such, for instance, as that which decorates the grounds of Georgian Court in very much the same manner that the weather-cock decorates the roof of a house; yet in adopting the Italian garden as the model for the American garden our architects have shown their usual

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appreciation of the best source from which garden forms can be derived. The Italian garden is, undoubtedly, the classic form of garden—that form which combines the most complete and beautiful architectural design with the most sympathetic interpretation of the proper values of foliage and flowers. Its precise forms can not and should not be reproduced in a country such as ours, in which social conditions, the value of the landscape, and the varieties of the vegetation differ so fundamentally from those of Italy of the seventeenth century; but it is nevertheless true that the Italian garden remains a living source of garden forms of unique assistance to the landscape architect. The English flower gardens, although much more numerous and of the highest interest, are not so valuable as models, because on the whole they lack the same originality, the same classic completeness of design, and the same technical perfection. The English have so frequently been led away by false theories, and they have at times held the balance so badly between a lifeless formality, on the one hand, and, on the other, an unnatural attempt at naturalistic imitation, that their garden history is as full of awful as it is of splendid examples. The unique value of English landscape architecture and art does not consist in the formal beauty of its country dwellings, or in many cases of the formal perfection, the technical propriety of its pleasure gardens. It is due rather to the fact that the English gentleman has for centuries lived in the country, and has suc-



Philadelphia, Pa.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.

HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF P. A. B. WIDENER.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

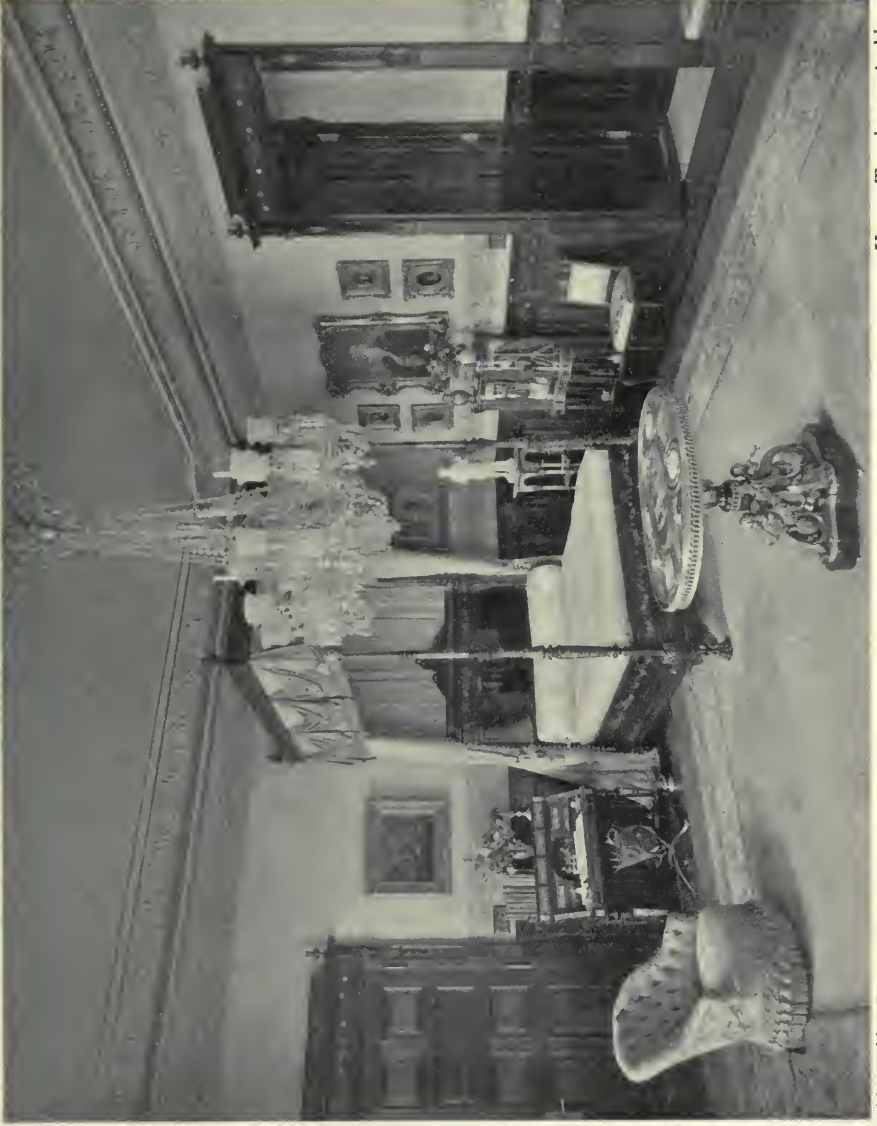
ceeded, little by little, and through the force of persistent interest, in making even his blundering homely and beautiful. Rich Americans may learn from the English the spirit in which to cultivate their gardens, but they may learn better from the Italians the kind of gardens to cultivate.

It was, perhaps, an appreciation of the fact that the peculiar merits of English country architecture were unattainable in a new country which has sent American architects chiefly to other countries for their models. At any rate, whatever the motive, there can be no doubt that our architects in coming to design country houses on a magnificent scale have for the most part neglected the characteristic English domestic styles. As long as the dwellings they had to erect were merely big frame villas, the outlines of which were dominated by the veranda, they remained pretty free from all direct imitation and designed houses which were at least original; but when wood was superseded by stone and brick, when loggias, porches, and external galleries took the place of the big veranda, and when effects at once brave, sumptuous, and substantial were desired by their clients, they sought for an historic type of dwelling which fulfilled these conditions; and, considering their continental training and predispositions, it is not surprising that they found them in France and Italy. The majority of our large private dwellings are either modified early Renaissance châteaux or modified Italian "palatial" villas.

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Both of these styles are, of course, sufficiently admirable in their own way. They belong to periods, the temper of which in its relation to the arts of domestic life finds its subdued and altered counterpart among the rich Americans of to-day and their designers.

They are magnificent, spectacular, impressive, and rather impersonal. They were inhabited by people who lived public lives, and to whom the exclusiveness of the Anglo-Saxon home did not appeal. Finally, they were designed by architects who were primarily interested in the more formal and architectural qualities of their buildings. In short, they are the types of that sort of semi-public domestic architecture which modern conditions have hitherto favored in this country. They have escaped from the meaningless frigidity of dwellings designed along classic or even Palladian lines; they have retained something of the more personal character which was infused into domestic architecture during the concentrated and exclusive family life of the Middle Ages; but at the same time the walls have been opened up, the sunlight has been let in, classic detail has been freely applied, and the whole building, while not losing, particularly in the case of the French *château*, traces of its origin as a fortified residence, wears a gracious as well as an impressive aspect. It is no wonder, consequently, that the modern American architect sought his models among French and Italian Renaissance buildings. The dwelling he designed had to be some-



Philadelphia, Pa.

Horace Trumbauer, Architect.

BEDROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF P. A. B. WIDENER.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

what impersonal, just because he was designing it without any reference to particular personal requirements except in the way of conveniences. But although impersonal it had also to be elegant, substantial, striking, and magnificent; and no other types of dwelling fulfilled these conditions so well.

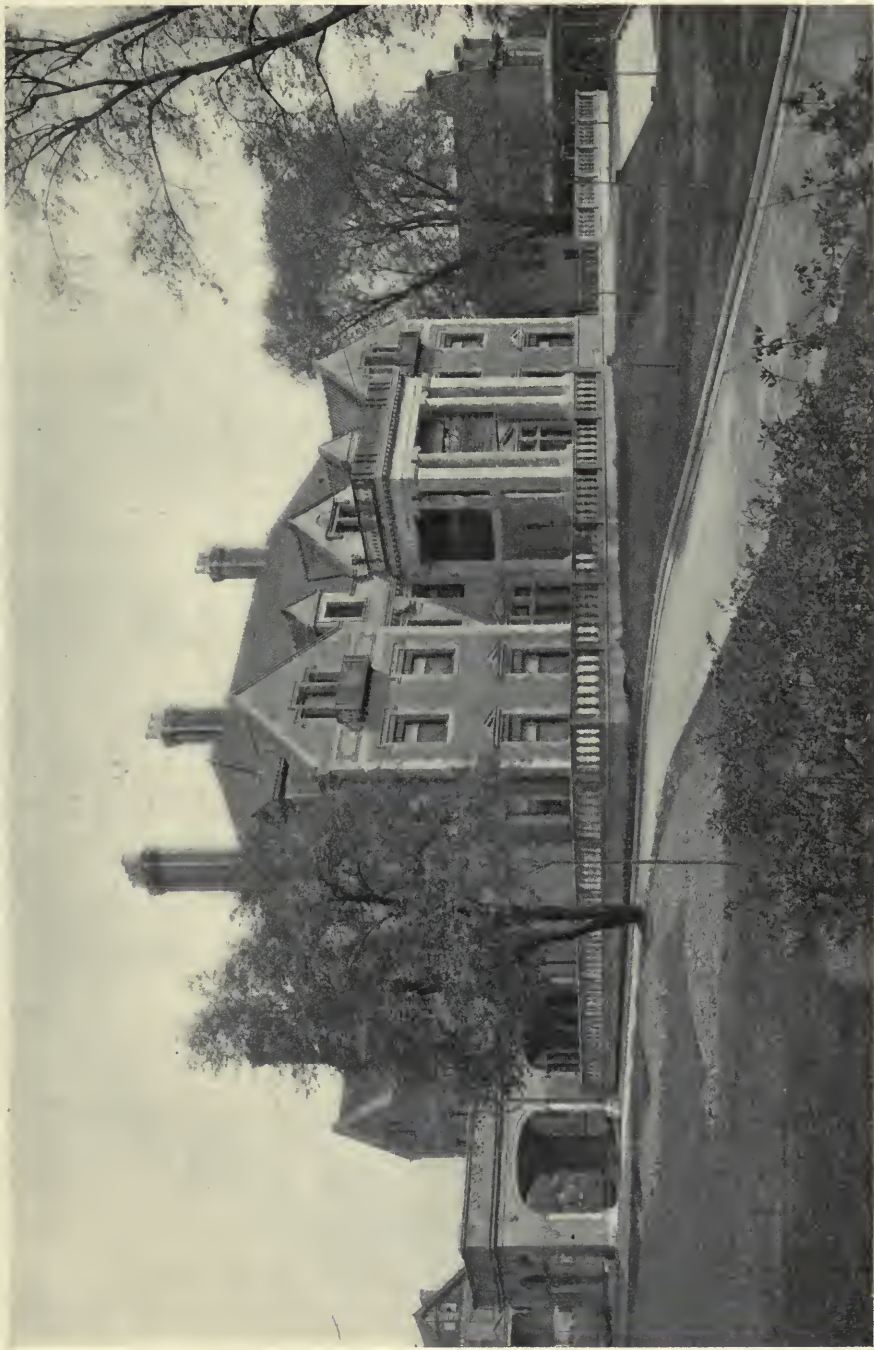
It may, however, be questioned whether these styles will retain their present hold upon the American architect. There are signs that some of the millionaires are revolting against the parade and the conscious publicity of the "palatial" dwelling. This revolt has in several instances prompted them to request their architects to design houses that were more homely and domestic; and this, it need scarcely be said, is asking something of the architect which the architect himself can scarcely supply. It is the owner's personality which should be resident in the building; the architect can only help to express it. But the mere fact that this demand is being consciously made is probably an indication that as time goes on the specious and incongruous publicity which the millionaire's great wealth have given them will be moderated. Under proper regulative laws their business transactions, so far as the public is concerned in them, will be published, while the mere gossip about their personal lives, the prevailing curiosity as to what they spend, and what they eat, and how many servants they have, will become less a matter of general interest. They will have become too familiar for exceptional notoriety, and also so

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much accustomed to the possession of wealth that it will not to the same extent pervade their personalities. Of course, the new-rich man will always be with us; but his particular ambitions will cease to determine the social relations of wealthy people to the community. And as the latter become less conspicuous they will wish for less conspicuous dwellings. The "palatial" residence will be in some measure abandoned, and a desirable mixture will be demanded of domesticity and distinction.

When this time comes the earlier, more irregular, and more characteristically English domestic styles are surely to be increasingly used. At present, indeed, an adaptation of the Elizabethan timbered and plastered dwelling is very popular in the suburbs; but neither of the Tudor, Elizabethan, nor Jacobean forms have been used to any great extent for the larger and more pretentious buildings. Very few of the architects seem to relish these styles. Mr. C. C. Haight is, perhaps, the only prominent architect who has consistently used any of them, while the house of Mr. Henry W. Poor at Tuxedo is one of the few of the greater dwellings which is frankly Jacobean. Yet it is not too much to say that the Jacobean house expresses more perfectly than any other just that combination of homeliness and distinction which embodies the highest domestic proprieties.

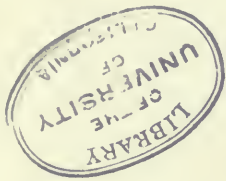
There are other domestic styles which have in some respects marked advantages over it. Its forms, for instance,



Pittsburg, Pa.

Alden & Harlow, Architects.

RESIDENCE OF A. R. PEACOCK.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

have a tendency to overemphasize the vertical dimension, and unless carefully managed will give the building an appearance of being cocked up and of failing to fit its site. In this respect the low lines, the well-distributed masses, overhanging eaves, and the gently sloping roofs of a Norman farmhouse or of some Italian villas are to be preferred; and particularly for the smaller frame and stucco houses these styles have great advantages. But this danger of Jacobean forms is one which can be avoided by an architect who has any power of using the style intelligently and who has not been perverted into seeking "picturesque" rather than strictly architectural effects. Putting aside the Tudor dwelling as heavy and archaic, and the Elizabethan dwelling as too quaint, the Jacobean remains as the most mature, the most consistent, the most completely domestic, and the most finely distinguished of the early English styles; and since the character of English domestic life at its best approximates to the character of American domestic life at its best, and since American architects are quick and flexible in discovering and using the forms best adapted to the needs which they are required to meet, one may very confidently predict the increased use of Jacobean or some similarly irregular forms for the greater American residence.

This selection of the Jacobean residence as one of the best, if not the best, models for the architects of the less "palatial" dwelling of the future to use, may not seem to

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

harmonize very well with the selection of the Italian garden as the best model for garden design to follow; but in neither case is literal imitation meant or to be desired. An Italian garden would have to be very much changed in order to go with a brick Jacobean house; but, as we have already intimated, it must in any case be very much changed before it can be properly adapted to American life and the American landscape. What needs not to be changed is the ideal of formal design, the propriety with which the natural advantages are used without any Procrustean mutilation of the lay of the land, the predominance of architectural effects, and the admirable feeling for the foliage and the flowers which enrich and diversify these architectural values. A garden of this kind can be adapted to a Jacobean as well as to any other style of dwelling. Moreover, the Jacobean forms themselves would undergo an analogous transformation, just as the modern "Georgian" houses are changed in many important respects from the old colonial. Neither must it be supposed that we are predicting or recommending the prevalence of any one historic style of domestic architecture. We are only suggesting that in proportion as the greater American residence tends to become less "palatial" and conspicuous, and more homely, it will naturally approximate to the homelier but not less beautiful forms of residential design.

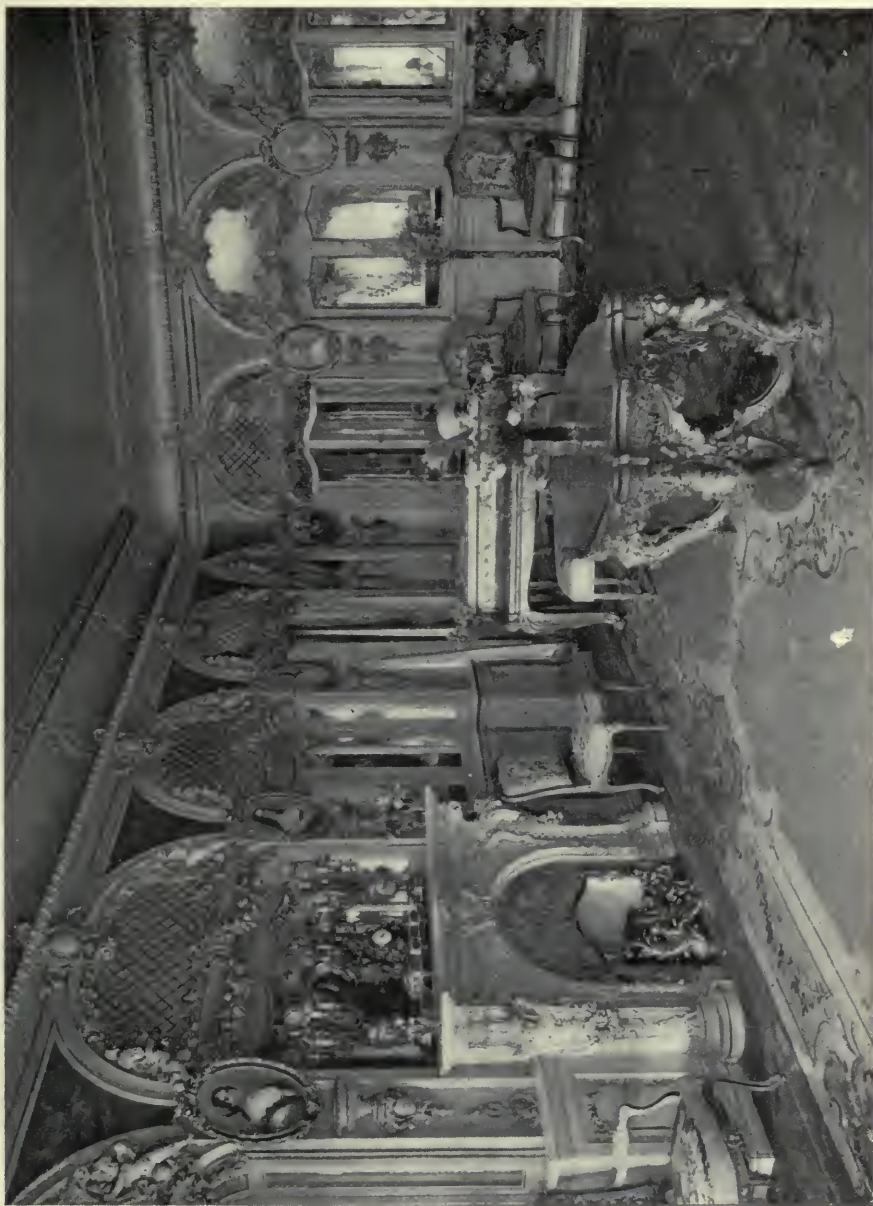
A suggestive illustration of the contention that the Jaco-



Pittsburg, Pa.

Alden & Harlow, Architects.

HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF A. R. PEACOCK.



Pittsburg, Pa.

MUSIC-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF A. R. PEACOCK.

Alden & Harlow, Architects.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

bean forms or some modification of them are peculiarly appropriate to the finer kinds of domestic life may be observed in "Idle Hour"—Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt's dwelling at Oakdale, L. I. This house was planned on the scale of the largest of the American dwellings, but its architect distinctly sought for some particularly domestic and home-like atmosphere. In obtaining such an atmosphere he was hampered by the fact that his training was French, and he had been accustomed to design almost exclusively with French forms in mind, so that his design for Mr. Vanderbilt's house, although it called for brick as the particularly domestic material, was shaped on the whole something like a château of the time of Louis XIV. At the same time the intention to get more of a home-like effect either consciously or unconsciously compelled the use of certain Jacobean motives. In spite of its French appearance, French even by virtue of many strictly Gallic qualities, the total expression of the building is somehow English; but if the gables or fractables, the arcade of the entrance, the chimneys, the symmetrical diversity of the parts, the color and proportions of the building all suggest the Jacobean manner, the suggestion is admittedly vague, and just strong enough to divorce the design from its expressed style. The case is a very suggestive one, because other architects, who are subject to the same demand, can scarcely avoid the use of brick, and a brick dwelling almost necessarily means a Georgian or

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

Jacobean design or some modification thereof. But between the Georgian and Jacobean styles it is not difficult to make a choice, particularly when the choice is assisted by the fact that the Jacobean forms are more readily adaptable to the large and spacious houses which will be required.

“Idle Hour” is one of the latest examples of the greater American dwelling, and, except for the fact that its grounds have been left in a very unfinished state, shows the influence of the most recent twentieth-century conditions. In order, however, to obtain a closer view of certain individual cases of this type it will be as well to turn to earlier examples, of which the earliest as well as the most noteworthy is to be found at Newport. It was there that the “palatial” country house first appeared; and it is there that its defects, if not its merits, can be most fully studied. One of the most obvious of these defects is the curious contrast, so suggestive of the way in which our practise precedes propriety, between the “suburban” character of the “lay-out” and the magnificence of some of the buildings. When the picturesque and unpretentious frame villas which we have already described were superseded by the more sumptuous type of dwelling, sites, which were appropriate to the smaller building, became wholly incongruous with the grandeur and pretentiousness of the latter. No one can look at “The Breakers,” “The Marble House,” “Ochre Court,” “Belcourt,” and the other Newport residences illustrated in this



Pittsburg, Pa.

Alden & Harlow, Architects.

LIBRARY IN THE RESIDENCE OF A. R. PEACOCK.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

book without a sense that the restricted setting of these buildings, and the stunted approaches to them, so far vitiates the very design that, in order to be fair to the buildings themselves, one has almost to go through a process of visual elimination.

After accepting, however, the utterly inadequate dimensions of the site and the necessary incongruity of a palatial "home," a house such as "The Breakers" is within these limits a very brilliant piece of work. It is the best "villa in the Italian style" we possess. The architect has achieved a real success in giving each of the large fronts a distinct physiognomy of its own, while at the same time maintaining a sufficient unity of effect. These fronts are, moreover, strictly architectural, and their central features, the porches and the loggias, are not mere redundancies of architectural expression, but are legitimately developed from the plan and are essential parts of the architectural composition. "Belcourt," on the other hand, while a much less finished piece of work, possesses more individuality. It has, indeed, been called a "palatial stable with an incidental apartment and an incidental ballroom"; but the "incidents" are most frankly and picturesquely treated, and with the interior court constitute one of the most charming bits of domestic work in the country. A much more magnificent but less interesting building is the "Marble House." It is formal, classical, monumental, institutional—everything which might

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be "palatial," everything which can not be home-like; but it lacks the gracious and smiling aspect which many even of the "palaces" possess. It invites comparison with some of our earlier post-revolutionary classic buildings, and it can hardly be said that the modern building gains by the comparison. The building is well composed and stately, and the detail is correct; but the omission of a visible stylobate greatly weakens the effect of the design of the main front. While more exact than the early classical experiments, it is less felicitous. The absence of charm robs it even of its impressiveness.

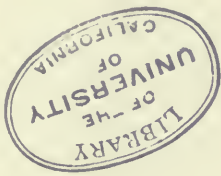
The later examples of the "palatial" dwelling possess adequate if not wholly appropriate sites; and of these examples the most interesting performance is unquestionably "Biltmore"—the dwelling of Mr. George Vanderbilt near Asheville, N. C. We have already used this estate as the best illustration of the large country place built for a man of wealth, refinement, and leisure, and situated without reference to constant attendance on an office. It follows naturally from this remoteness that it is the one American "château" which is surrounded by something like a domain. The architect, the late Richard M. Hunt, was fully equal to the unusual opportunity which was given to him. He had no diffidence in adapting himself to the unusual scale of the design. Standing as the building does in a landscape in which rude natural traits predominate, one is tempted to

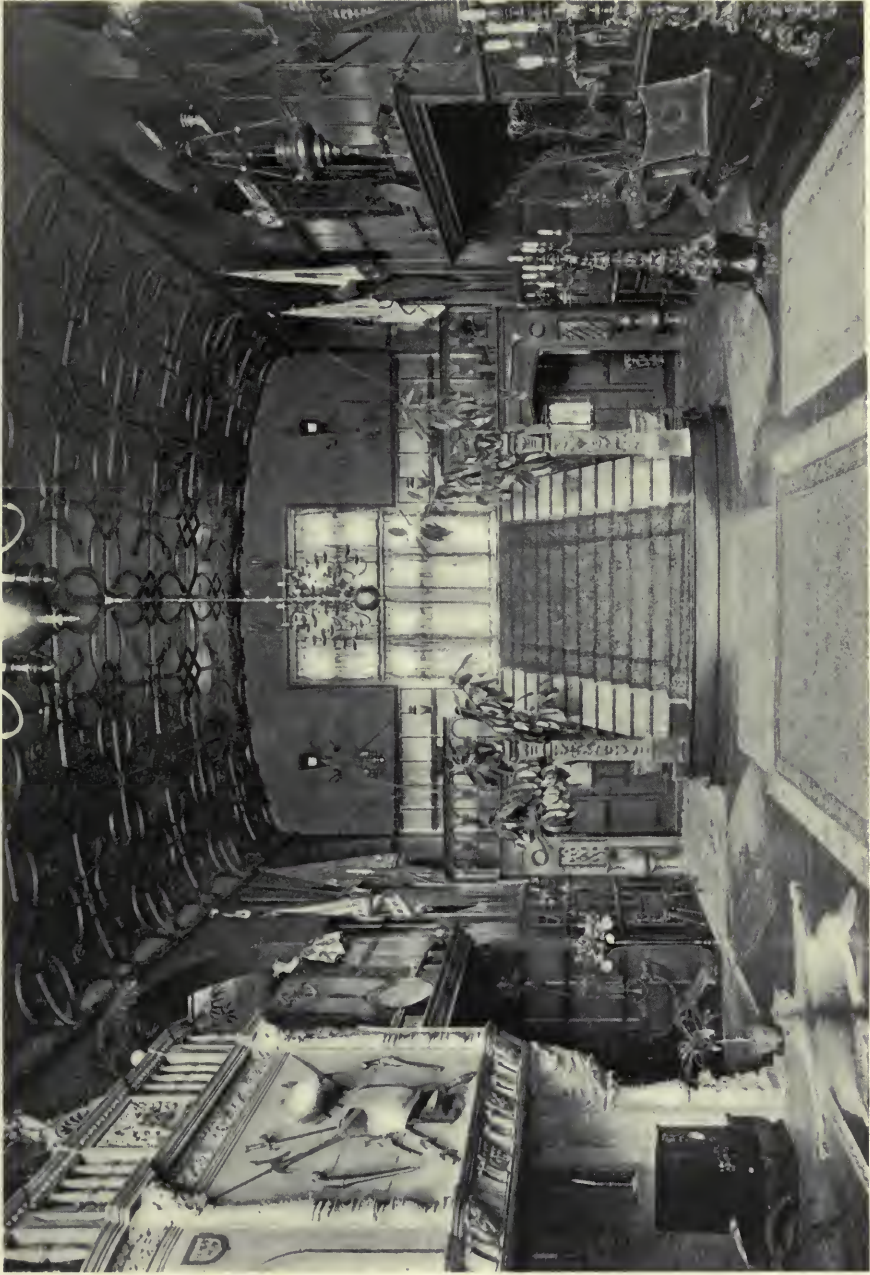


Ambler, Pa.

THE BERGNER RESIDENCE.

Frank Miles Day & Brother, Architects.





Ambler, Pa.

HALL IN THE BERGNER RESIDENCE.

Frank Miles Day & Brother, Architects.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

wonder whether the effect to be derived from reading a Provençal lay translated into Choctaw would be so very dissimilar from the effect produced by this immigrant from the Loire among the hills of North Carolina. But how skilfully the difficult translation has been managed! The architect has taken full advantage of the royal scale of the building, and has selected a plateau for the site which gives him the spaces and distances he needs. But while availing himself to the limit of the advantages of abundant space, he has very successfully maintained that sense of unity in freedom which is one of the chief characteristics of the style he adopted. The masses are bold, free, well-emphasized, and skilfully disposed, with an ease which evinces the native talent of the American for the "big thing"; and the general balance of the composition is excellent. Yet the contrasts of the design, also, are excellent. One can not overlook the effective richness of the front, with its refined detail appropriately adapted to the formal treatment of the grounds, as compared with the ruder treatment of the rear of the building overlooking a wide prospect of uncultivated country.

There could not be a better illustration of the experimental nature of every aspect of the great modern American residence, for the *raison d'être* of the estate is as experimental as its architecture. It so happened that Mr. George Vanderbilt, being interested in trees, selected a well-wooded

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

country for his house and purchased an enormous domain in order to have plenty of room for his arboricultural station. At the same time he wanted an impressive, magnificent, and highly civilized house, and the incongruity which resulted between his rude landscape and elaborate, princely dwelling is a frank expression of the incongruities of a society a member of which can in the most natural manner in the world wish to combine a royal residence with an uncultivated landscape and a hobby for tree-culture. In all probability just the same combination will not again occur, because the majority of people who build large country houses prefer farming to arboriculture and would naturally select a better cultivated and more civilized landscape. For this and other reasons "Biltmore" remains architecturally an experiment and an exception, which gives no chance for fruitful imitation; and an experiment which is never repeated is an experiment wasted. Yet in the same breath it must be admitted that such experiments in the mass add enormously to the picturesqueness of American life, and those people who criticize them in the spirit of an architectural purist lose thereby a great deal of pleasure and do their country an injustice.

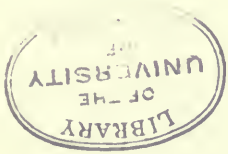
There are a number of American architectural critics who take an extremely unfavorable view of the architectural value of these contemporary dwellings. They dislike them particularly for the qualities which recommend them to their



Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Clinton & Russell, Architects.

RESIDENCE BELONGING TO WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

owners and to their architects. They do not at all like, for instance, the almost exclusively esthetic point of view which generally determines the design. They do not like the tendency, which even the best architects occasionally show, to copy the designs both of the façade and its ornamentation from some of those books of plates of historic dwellings with which their offices are filled. They complain of the amount of work which the offices of the most popular and important architects turn out, and declare that careful and well-considered designs can not possibly come from such hurried methods of professional design. It would be absurd to deny that criticisms of this kind are in the main true; but this book will have been written in vain unless our readers can by this time sufficiently qualify these criticisms. The greater dwelling of the present must be considered as one phase in a series of architectural and social changes. When we remember that it was preceded in this country by the "most vulgar type habitation" ever erected by man, and when we remember that its whole movement has taken place in less than a generation, we need not be surprised that dwellings with such predecessors and with such a short history will constitute an extreme and very imperfect type. "Stunning" buildings were needed in order to awaken popular interest in architecture, and these stunning buildings had to be designed along scholastic lines because it was necessary to naturalize certain acceptable and time-honored forms.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

Whatever the deficiency of these buildings they have at least accomplished this result. They have stimulated interest in architecture both in their owners and among the people generally; they have created the impression that the United States stands for something architecturally; they, together with the whole movement of which they are a part, have even become sufficiently celebrated to warrant foreign official recognition—as in the case of the English medal recently bestowed on Mr. Charles F. McKim. The effect which it all produces on an intelligent general critic may be judged from the references to modern American architecture contained in Prof. Barrett Wendell's chapter on "American Intellect" in the volume of the Cambridge "Modern History of the United States." "Within the last thirty years," he says, "something resembling a true architectural renaissance has declared itself in America. The great increase of wealth in the country has combined with various new conditions of life to demand from trained architects something like actual novelties—they have developed various types of buildings which are at this moment at least so far successful that to an American who visits Europe contemporary architecture in the Old World is apt to appear comparatively lifeless. Recent private houses in America display an opulent spaciousness, and at the same time an intelligent adaptation to the conditions of life which they are designed to serve, which are seldom apparent in



Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Clinton & Russell, Architects.

RESIDENCES BELONGING TO WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.



THE MODERN AMERICAN RESIDENCE

modern private houses in Europe." This estimate undoubtedly places too much stress upon the originality of American architecture; but since it represents very well the present popular opinion about contemporary American building among intelligent amateurs, it shows sufficiently the quality of the impression which the American architect produces.

THE MODERN RESIDENCE—
ITS INTERIOR

CHAPTER VIII

The Modern Residence—Its Interior



WE have frequently intimated that it is the interiors of these great houses which most arouse the interest of the designer, because it is in the interiors that his methods, opportunities, materials, and talents, all of them have their best opportunity for display. He is always seeking to enrich the surroundings of American life with remnants or reproductions of European domestic scenery; but, so far as the exteriors are concerned, he can not sufficiently control the conditions to give the result their full esthetic value. In the city he has to submit to bad dimensions and impossible neighbors; in the country to a crude and undeveloped natural environment. When he enters the house, however, he can shut the door on these rebellious conditions. The interior creates its own atmosphere and sets its own tone. If, for instance, it is something "palatial" that is wanted, the exterior can never really become a palace, because its site can not take on that commanding and official character which goes with the resi-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

dence of a European potentate. The interior, on the other hand, a throne-room apart, can be made as "palatial" as you please; and it is in the interiors that the American architects have made their most successful attempts to restore the splendors of the historic European residences.

In the case of the exteriors the architect can import only the designs, but in making his interiors he has the tremendous advantage, from his point of view, of being able to use the actual materials, the veritable fragments, of former European rooms. Moreover, it is not simply a matter of fetching over detachable furniture, fabrics, and tapestries. The agents of the rich Americans have invaded Europe and torn out the very walls and ceilings of these old houses, so that, in many instances, the paneling that once lined the dining-room of an English "baron" now adds a dim distinction to the meals of an American banker, while his drawing-room is focused by some fine gray Italian mantel-piece—firm, rich, delicate, and substantial. By the skilful use of these materials and fragments he can produce effects which would be impossible with modern materials; he can, above all, produce the effect of time and distinguished associations. He can surround the most modern of people with the scenery and properties of a rich and memorable historic past.

Of course they produce something of the effect of the stage-setting to a heavy drama very different from the quick,



New York City.

Louis C. Tiffany, Designer.

STUDIO OF THE TIFFANY HOUSE.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

informal comedy of modern American domestic life; but it should be added that they are equally incongruous, except on certain state occasions, with the prose of modern European life. Under any circumstances they have ceased to have very much social propriety. No doubt modern European life still remains a good deal of an official pageant. As long as there are emperors, kings, and dukes, we presume that palaces must be called something more than sets of scenery; but are they very much more? No matter how sincere and legitimate the parts they are playing, emperors and kings can not but be to our modern sense very much like actors; but they are actors who are trying to live up to the scenery of a play that was written some centuries ago. Americans, on the other hand, have no wish to act up to the borrowed scenery. For them it is sufficient occasionally to feel up to it; their obligations are esthetic and intellectual, and they have a much better chance of moderating the scenery to their lives than certain modern Europeans have of keeping their lives constantly on a level with the scenery.

With a certain class of Americans the love of it has become almost a passion; and these Americans on this particular point still find their most articulate representative in Mr. Henry James. While in his earlier stories he returned again and again to subjects suggested by the intellectual awakening which so frequently attends an American's first trip to Europe, more recently, after a closer study of Euro-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

pean life and its effect on Americans, he constantly derives not merely his scenery, but even his motives from the actual effect on the lives of people of noble, memorable, and beautiful houses. Just as in Stevenson's view romance consisted in the performance of certain fine and stirring actions in appropriate surroundings, so Mr. James, although he does not write romances, is always peculiarly solicitous about effecting some suggestive propriety between the man or the woman and the house. Generally it is the house which in a few suggestive touches reveals the person; but sometimes it is the person who is, as it were, beatified by the house. Thus, in the "Two Magics," a young English radical, who happens to possess a noble and mellow historic mansion, is gradually made to understand by a very charming American woman that the possession of such a house is incompatible with a narrow radical creed, and that the social obligation imposed by the former was more compelling than the obligation imposed by the latter. The instance is peculiar to the point, partly because the modern American woman has so much to do with the modern American house, and partly because the greater American house is one of the great conservative and mellowing influences acting on the economic radicalism of the American millionaire. Noble houses, even when the nobleness is a reproduction, in some measure oblige; and Americans want them because they feel the need and the value of the intellectual obligation.



New York City.

DINING-ROOM IN THE TIFFANY HOUSE.

Louis C. Tiffany, Designer.





New York City.

Louis C. Tiffany, Designer.

FIREPLACE IN THE STUDIO OF THE TIFFANY HOUSE.

THE MODERN RESIDENCE

M. Paul Bourget, who is one of the few foreigners who has partly understood some of the significance of the greater modern American residences, appreciates the terrible vacancy which their architects and owners wish them to fill. In writing of an American who criticized the weakness of his countrymen for the relics of European domestic life, he says: "In my opinion, he does not recognize the sincerity, almost the pathos, of this love of Americans for surrounding themselves with things around which there is an idea of time and stability. It is almost a physical satisfaction of the eyes to meet here the faded colors of an ancient painting, the blurred stamp of an antique coin, the softened shades of a medieval tapestry. In this country, where everything is of yesterday, they hunger and thirst for the long ago." This, however, is by no means the whole story. While Americans in building these residences do want to dress their modern improvements with as much as possible of the trappings of a former Europe, there is plainly an esthetic as well as a reminiscent purpose involved. From M. Bourget's description one might get the idea that the Newport villa was more of a museum than it was a dwelling. Well, the museum idea did prevail to a greater extent ten years ago, when M. Bourget visited this country, than it does to-day, but even then the use of these old materials was preferred on purely esthetic grounds. An attempt was already being made to hang them and arrange them with an eye to new and wholly original effects.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

The American architect and decorator in casting about for the materials and forms which he might use in order to make the interiors of a house impressive and distinguished really had no choice. Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century the arts and crafts of Europe had been as imitative and uninspired as its architecture. The intelligent American designer could find nothing in them worthy of domestication in this country. On the other hand, he could not set up for himself and dispense entirely with foreign precedents, just because there were no good and sufficient local precedents to follow and no skilled local craftsmen to carry out his ideas. The only thing to do was to attempt some domestication of the best styles and materials of a Europe which did possess an original, beautiful, and appropriate industrial art; and the result would have been the same even if the more recent "New Art" movement had been as popular abroad twenty-five years ago as it is to-day. The decoration of very few houses in this country were influenced by the ideas, so prevalent in England, of William Morris, while the native American designer, whose style, whatever we think of its merits, is most markedly original, has found no imitators. Foreigners can not understand why the New World does not take kindly to the "New Art"; but, to tell the truth, Americans have as yet no need of a revolt and of a conscious seeking after novelty in art. In a new country all art is in a very real sense new art; and in a



New York City.

RESIDENCE OF ANDREW CARNEGIE.

Babb, Cook & Willard, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

new country, also, good art is much more necessary than new art. Americans do not feel "safe" in such surroundings; they have no guarantee that it is the real thing, and consequently they are at present much more conservative in matters of interior decoration than are Europeans.

They are, however, undoubtedly coming to use the old furniture and fabrics with great originality of effect. Bedecked as the modern residence is with the spoils of palaces, the effect of some of the best rooms is often as far as possible from being merely stupidly and extravagantly "palatial." Year by year there has increased among the better American designers a thorough familiarity with the proper value of the materials they are using, so that, while dispensing with archeological consistency, they can still obtain an almost complete esthetic propriety of effect. The esthetic proprieties are much more carefully considered than the social proprieties, but it would be a mistake to assert that the latter are entirely ignored. There are houses, indeed, in which the architect has not apparently tried to do anything but spend his client's money in as lavish a manner as possible, with the effect merely of filling the rooms with gorgeous and expensive hangings and furniture. Careless and extravagant profusion is undoubtedly the danger into which the owner, the architect, and particularly the professional decorator are most likely to fall; but if in a new and experimental movement, such as we are considering, it is not

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

unfair to place the greater emphasis upon the best examples; and in the best examples the effect is rich and distinguished, and yet, if not homely and personal, at least not merely frigid and official. A modern American family, that is, can live in the rooms without being overpowered by their magnificence or chilled by their cold correctness. It should be admitted at once, however, that the number of designers who can use these materials with any sense of domestic propriety is very small, and that what is most needed in American decoration is the fulfilment of the finer promise which the best work of these designers presents.

The fact remains, however, that a practically new work of decorative art can be made by the idiomatic and original composition of these old materials, and the character of this new work of art has been so well described by Mr. Henry James that we shall fall back on him once again for the most significant and promising instance. In "The Spoils of Poynton," the whole motive of the book is derived from the passionate devotion to a beautiful house, which is aroused in the woman who planned it, by the danger of it falling into the hands of people who will impair its perfection; but it is the description of the house itself to which we wish particularly to call attention—so nicely does it correspond with the better performance and promise of the American designer. Writing of a sympathetic visitor, who for the first time was visiting the house, he says: "Wandering through

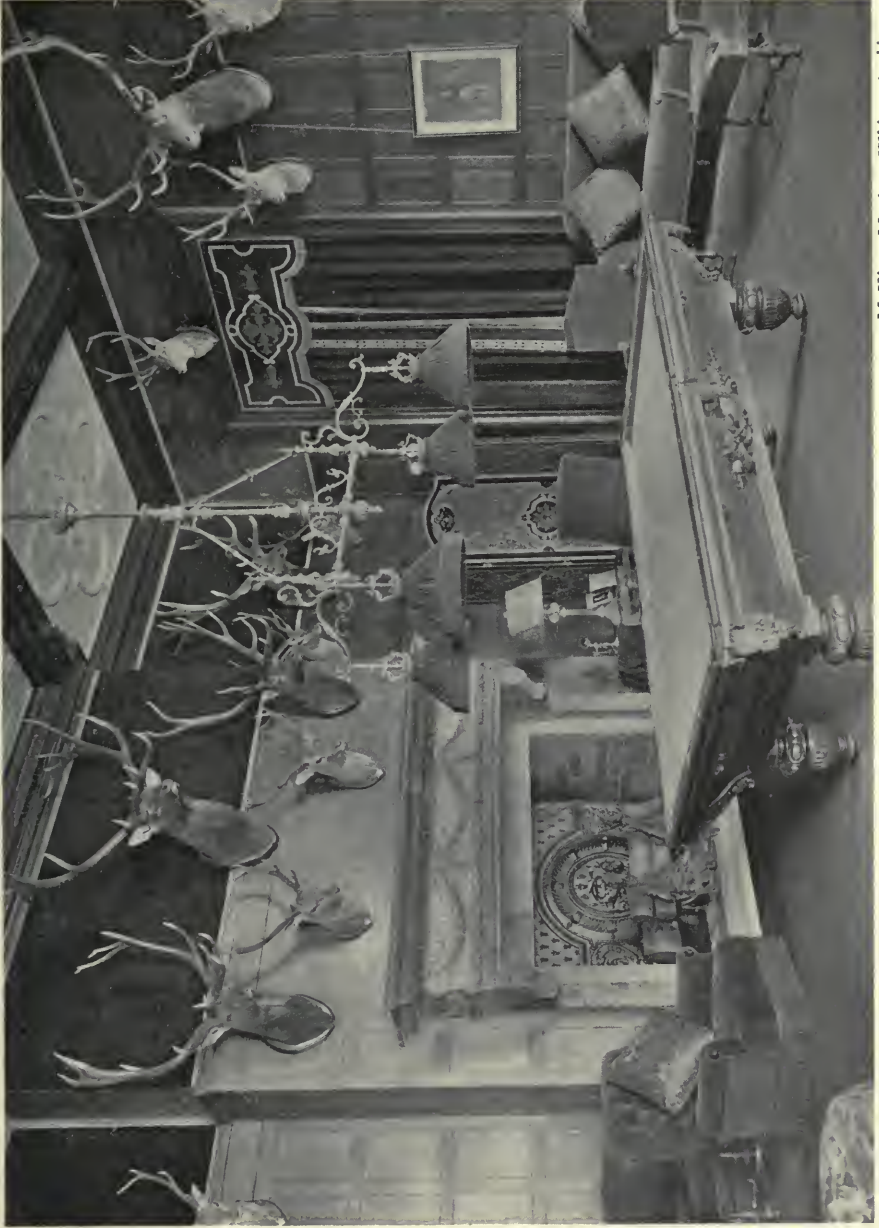


Roslyn, L. I.

RESIDENCE OF CLARENCE MACKAY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.





Roslyn, L. I.

BILLIARD-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLARENCE MACKAY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

clear chambers, where the general effect made preferences almost as impossible as if they had been shocks, pausing at open doors, where vistas were long and bland, she would, even if she had not already known, have discovered for herself that Poynton was the record of a life. It was written in great syllables of color and form, the tongues of other countries, and the hands of rare artists. It was all France and Italy, with their ages composed to rest. For England you looked out of old windows—it was England that was the wide embrace. While outside on the low terraces she contracted gardeners and refined on nature, Mrs. Gereth left her guest to finger fondly the glasses that Louis Quinze might have thumbed, to sit with Venetian velvets, just held in a loving palm, to hang over cases of enamels, and pass and repass before cabinets. There were not many pictures—the panels and the stuffs were themselves the picture; and in all the great wainscoted house there was not an inch of pasted paper. What struck Fleda most in it was the high pride of her friend's taste, a fine arrogance, a sense of style which, however amusing and amused, never compromised or stooped."

Poynton was in England and had the advantage of English landscape surroundings; but apart from this irremediable deficiency, the American designer succeeds at his best, very much as Mrs. Gereth succeeded. His materials, like hers, are derived chiefly from France and Italy, he

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

prides himself on his bland vistas and his total effect; and often there is something very arrogant and uncompromising about his sense of style. Of course the great difference consists in the fact that his interiors are not and can not be "the record of a life." He is making another person's house, not his own. He is spending another person's money, not his own. The only things of his own that he is spending are his talent and his time, and if he gives freely of the former, he is unfortunately obliged to be extremely economical with the latter. The result may be beautiful, distinguished, and in a way even pleasant and domestic, but it can not very well be individual; and since individuality in the interior of a house is beyond a certain point worth the sacrifice even of inerrancy and a pervading sense of style, this quality is the one most needed in the large American house.

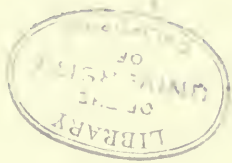
Many American houses of to-day are very individual; but as such houses usually belong to people of good taste but moderate means, who have been thrown decoratively upon their own resources, they do not come within the scope of this book. At the same time the fact that such high successes are frequently obtained with comparatively meager resources, and by people whose interest in decoration is not in the least professional, is an indication of what may be expected later in the bigger and more conspicuous dwellings. It is significant that what is probably the most beautiful residence on a generous "palatial" scale as yet composed in



Roslyn, L. I.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

STAIRWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLARENCE MACKAY.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

this country has been planned by a person who was not professional and who was doing it for personal comfort and amusement. That person, it so happens, is a woman; and we imagine that in the near future the process of individualizing the interiors of the greater houses will be chiefly the work of women. As we all know, the average American man has a strong tendency to believe that art—whether fine art or domestic art—belongs to the peculiarly feminine sphere; and the average American woman has no hesitation in accepting the responsibility which is thereby thrown upon her. Her influence is very certain to be felt much more decidedly in the near future, and during the present phase of American interior decoration this influence has every chance of being positive and wholesome. A woman naturally feels much more at home in the rearrangement of old furniture and stuffs than in the designing of new fabrics and forms. A part at least of the extreme decorative conservatism of this country is due to the desire of American women for the guaranteed European trade-mark or crest; and from the stories one hears one is inclined to believe that a “palatial” residence is sometimes the rich American girl’s compensation for the absence of a “palatial” husband. But the truth is, of course, that the fascination exercised by the European decorative remnants infects us all very much alike, and that the occasional feminine ambition for a coronet is only one expression of it.

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

If, however, the very best promise of American decorative improvement lies in the increased interest which the American woman will take in her own house, and her increased familiarity with good interior forms and materials, the worst danger is the excessive influence exerted by certain firms of professional decorators. This influence is wholly different from that of the architects. Designers such as McKim, Mead and White, Ernest Flagg, or Carrère and Hastings can not, as we have said, at best give clients anything better than a series of rooms, which are impersonally though frequently extremely beautiful; but they at least possess good taste and a proper sense of moderation. While they assiduously seek to persuade their clients to spend as much money as they can, they assuredly try to spend that money in the client's own interest. Occasionally they may fall into a certain extravagance, but for the most part the reckless profusion of expenditure, the general atmosphere of luxurious and meretricious superfluity is the work rather of professional decorators. They have a direct interest, which the architects have not, in overloading the rooms of their clients with miscellaneous lots of old furniture and stuffs, until the general effect is hopelessly incoherent and dull as that of a furniture shop; and their influence with certain rich clients does a great deal to lower the average tone of American interior decoration. Undoubtedly there are among these professional decorators some few who are capable of doing very



Roslyn, L. I.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF CLARENCE MACKAY.

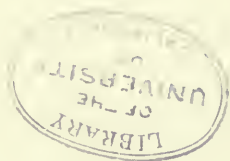




Roslyn, L. I.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF
CLARENCE MACKAY.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

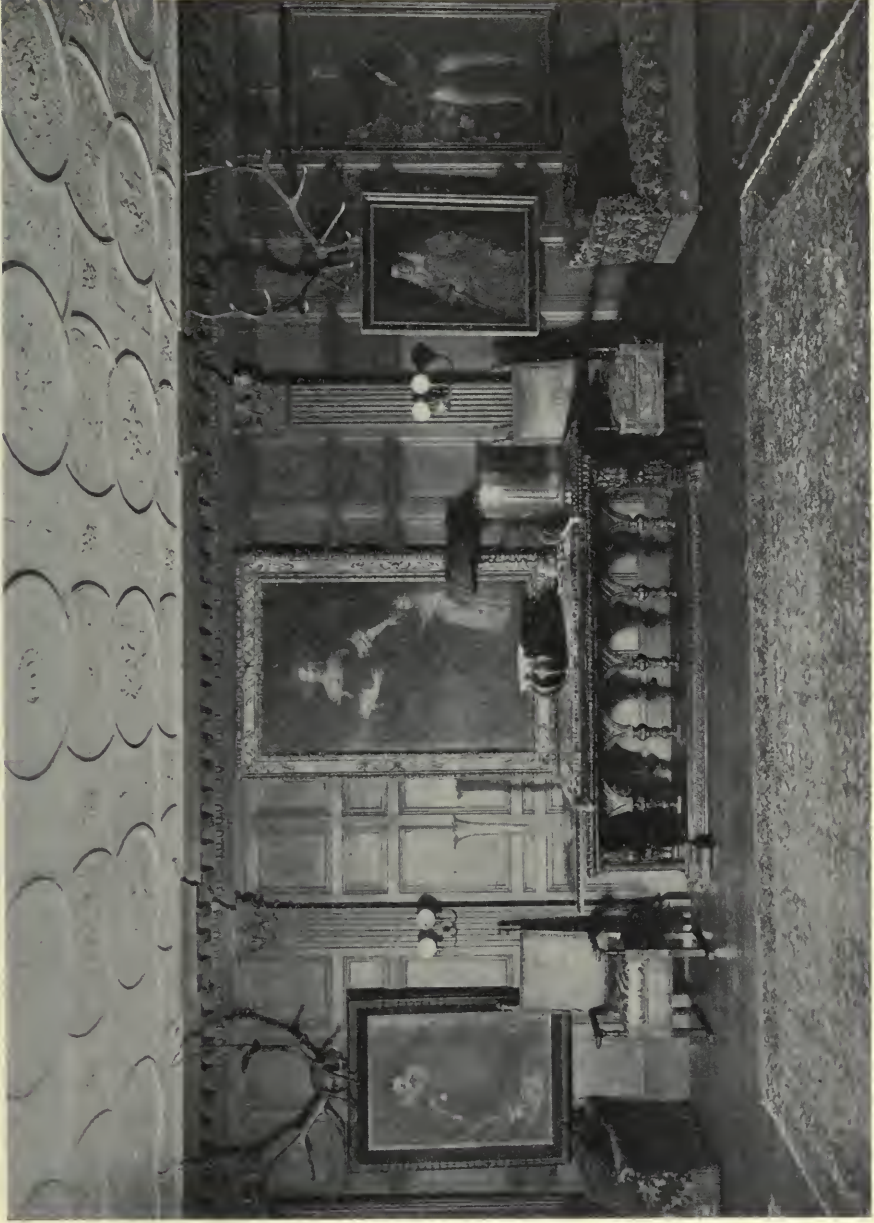
excellent work; but as a matter of general practise, it is certainly very much better that the designing and the trade aspects of interior decorations should be kept apart, and that it should not be to the interest of the designer to furnish more furniture and materials than the design calls for. It is better also for the general effect of the house that the man who determines the relations and proportions of the rooms should also have, subject only to the likes and dislikes of the owner, control of the selection and distribution of its furniture and hangings. The function of the trade decorators should merely be that of collecting and selling the materials which the architect needs.

It must not be supposed, however, that the transference of the spoils of European palaces and baronial halls to the pretended palaces of American millionaires constitutes the whole of American interior decoration. Even in those houses which are most completely furnished with European remnants, a great deal of original designing in woodwork, metalwork, and the like is necessary, and the standard of these designs must, of course, be excellent in order that they appear at home in such "swell" surroundings. Moreover, the architects are coming more and more to design rooms, as they do façades, in certain particular French styles—making only such modifications as the dimensions and the purpose of the room may demand. These rooms are for the most part much less interesting than those in which no set and

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

particular style has been adopted. The great successes of American interior decoration have been achieved in houses in which stylistic purity was ignored, and which reached really original effects by novel combinations of old and probably heterogeneous materials. Individual rooms in these houses, such as a music room or a boudoir, might be decorated successfully in a definite French manner; but the fact that so many of the stuffs and so much of the furniture belonged to no well-matured and coherent style, but were derived sometimes from churches, sometimes from castles, sometimes from palaces, or sometimes from the house of a well-to-do tradesman, laid the designer under the necessity of depending for his composition upon himself, with the effect frequently, as we have said, of great freshness and novelty. The rooms designed in a definite style, while they may be pretty and quaint, tend as often as not to become, like the exteriors, merely scholastic and correct, and one would regard this tendency as unfortunate, although inevitable, were it not that it has the incidental advantage of necessitating the actual performance of certain difficult and delicate work by American craftsmen.

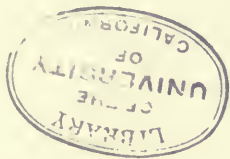
Few people outside the profession realize how much the architects have been hampered throughout the whole renaissance of interior decoration during the past twenty-five years by the deficient training of the American mechanic. Our better architects have been obliged not merely to educate



Westbury, L. I.

GALLERY IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

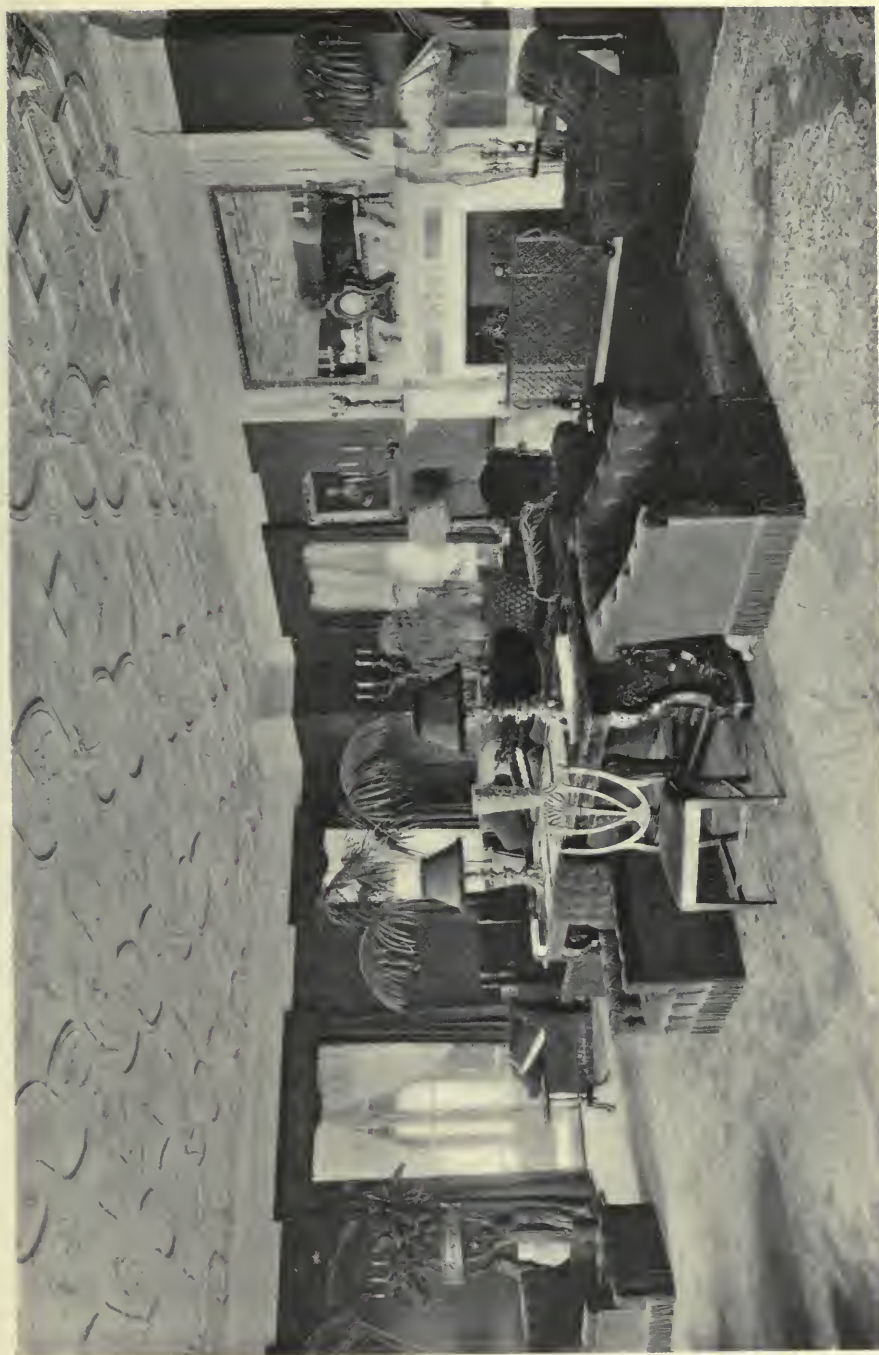
themselves and their clients, but their handicraftsmen. The really skilled mechanic had almost wholly disappeared during the dark "Middle Age." Technical education in the building trades, as in other branches of industry, was confined to the cruder processes. The stone-cutters, wood-workers, metal-workers, and plasterers had not only lost all familiarity with good forms, but were without the necessary training to execute anything but familiar routine plans, and the architect, consequently, even if he had been more ambitious than he was to use original designs, would have been forced to bring over European handiwork.

During the "middle period" the making of the interior finish of houses had gradually ceased to be anything but an ordinary manufacturing business. An American always tries to dispense as far as he can with hand labor, and to use duplicating machinery, the virtue of whose product consists in precise repetitions. Consequently any disposition to vary the profile of a molding from that which was given in the published catalogues was regarded as a foolish and wasteful expense; and it is scarcely necessary to add that the forms and methods of these factories were, from the view-point even of technical excellence, wholly detestable. Neither was this factory work confined merely to cheap dwellings. It was applied as freely to the houses of rich as to the houses of poor people, the only difference being that in the first case there was more of it and it was more elaborate. There was

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frequently so much of it, indeed, that the walls of the chief rooms of a rich New Yorker's house during the period immediately succeeding the war were, as a rule, completely enveloped by it.

Thus, at the beginning of the Modern Era, the trained architect was handicapped in every possible manner; and every architect of the early period has a pathetic story to tell of the stubborn tenacity necessary to the realization of his least ambitious plans. His best assistance at the time came from the immigrant. A certain small proportion of the newcomers were always well-trained craftsmen, and most of the good work done during the early period was produced by tools in the hands of Englishmen and Germans. The factory system was, however, so firmly established that architects could not get along without factory products, and it was the character of these factory products which most needed improvement, and were most difficult to improve. The improvement, of course, had to begin at the top. The training of a large body of skilled artisans and the elevation of the general factory standard were steps that could not be taken in a day, and indeed have not yet been taken; but to supply the special customer, small shops, with a small working force under the direction of a skilled employer, came into existence, and in the course of time these small factories not only gained in the volume and excellence of their product, but served as schools for the training of a better class



Westbury, L. I.

LIVING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.





Westbury, L. I.

LIBRARY IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

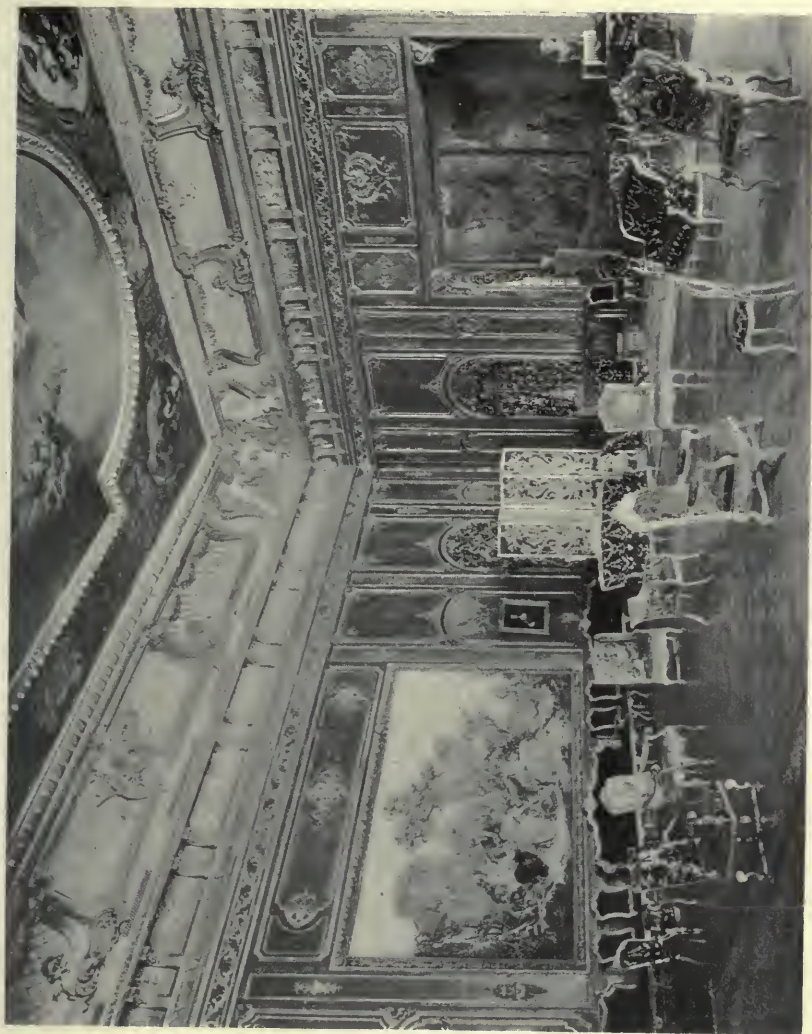
of artisans. At the same time technical schools were springing up all over the country, and were doing something more every year to improve standards and methods which prevailed in the industrial arts.

How enormous the improvement has been can not be appreciated unless one carefully compares the average work of twenty years ago with the average work of to-day; and the improvement would be still greater if a comparison were made only between the best work of the two periods. One by one in the last quarter of the century the different industries connected with the decorative arts were imported, established, and developed, among which may be mentioned such trades as bronze and ironwork, hardware, wall-papers, decorative marbles, mosaic, stained glass, fabrics of all kinds, and tapestries; and the whole of this development originated in the demand of the skilled architect for a higher grade of work upon the modern residence. From the beginning the better class of master artisans worked hand in hand with the better architects; and while the methods used in the industrial arts, the standards which prevail, and the enthusiasm they arouse are still much inferior to those of Europe, the tendency in the direction of better things has obtained so much momentum that it needs very much less coaxing and encouragement than formerly.

In the development of the decorative crafts the first to receive attention was wood-carving. It was the line of least

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

resistance and, at the same time, the line on which most force was needed to be exerted. Bad as American woodwork was a generation ago, it was and continued to be the natural, local material for both structure and decoration. It was so cheap, people were so much accustomed to it, the demand for it was so universal, that the improvement of its forms was the first and most essential step in raising the general standard of interior decoration. In beginning to effect this improvement, the earlier architects were much assisted by the fact that the Eastlakian reform in its influence on American interiors was embodied chiefly in woodwork; and while the grotesque forms developed at this time had to be thrown away, the work of turning them out had necessarily bestowed a training on certain American cabinet-makers. The Queen Anne movement, also, if it had any good influence at all, probably improved the average of American decorative carpentry. In the greater residence of to-day woodwork, while playing an important part, is, on the whole, much less important than it has been at any previous period of American residential architecture. The wonderful wooden mantelpieces which used in the "seventies" to dominate the rooms of rich New Yorkers, have disappeared, and stone mantelpieces, frequently imported, have taken their place. The halls and drawing-rooms also contain much less cabinet-work than formerly, while elegant metal railings often supersede the former wooden balusters.



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

DRAWING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.





New York City.

HALL IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

The libraries, dining and smoking rooms are still generally paneled, and timbered ceilings are more common than ever; but there is a certain tendency to dispense, as far as possible, with both wood and paper. This tendency prevails, however, only in the most elaborate houses. In the dwellings of ordinarily well-to-do people, the interiors of which, when they have any character at all, generally verge on the colonial, wood is as omnipresent as ever, but fortunately it is used, as often as not, with some discretion and good taste.

During the colonial period stone-carvers were scarcer and less in demand than any other class of mechanics, and it was not until the distinctively modern period began that stone, except in the case of New York brownstone, was very considerably used in American dwellings. Of late years, however, the majority of the greater residences have been at least veneered with stone, of which there is a large variety available, some of it most excellent both in the surface it presents and the opportunity it offers the stone-carver. Much of this tooling is done by machine, with the usual loss of effect; but much of it, also, is done by hand, and the better architects are making ever-increasing demands for expert cutting. Leopold Eidlitz and Richardson were the first architects to insist on a good deal of careful chiseling. Richardson, in particular, was a gigantic stimulus. As he himself said, "I love to punch holes in a stone wall;" but, more than this, his peculiar manner of design, his heavy

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friezes, and sturdy columns called for a great deal of monumental stone-carving. It may almost be said, indeed, that he domesticated architectural carving in this country; and in this task he was even more than ably seconded by the elder Hunt. Some of the finest American stone-carving is to be found on the residences designed by Mr. Hunt—particularly on the dwellings of Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street. It is in detail of this kind, however, that there is still the greatest room for improvement in American design, and it may be confidently predicted that the American stone-cutter will every year cut proportionately more stone than he does at present, and cut it better.

It is unnecessary to trace this process of development through all the various crafts. In the growth of the demand for more varied decorative effects, opportunities were provided for the iron-worker, the bronze-worker, the stained-glass maker, the ornamental plasterer, and the hardware manufacturer. The extent to which native American work has been demanded has varied with the extent to which it was possible to import available foreign antiques. The furniture, fabrics, and tapestries can be readily imported, and have been imported in such large quantities that, although local makers of these products are gaining ground, the imported product still dominates the situation. Ironwork and bronzework, while brought over in large quantities, is being



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

STAIRWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

THE MODERN RESIDENCE

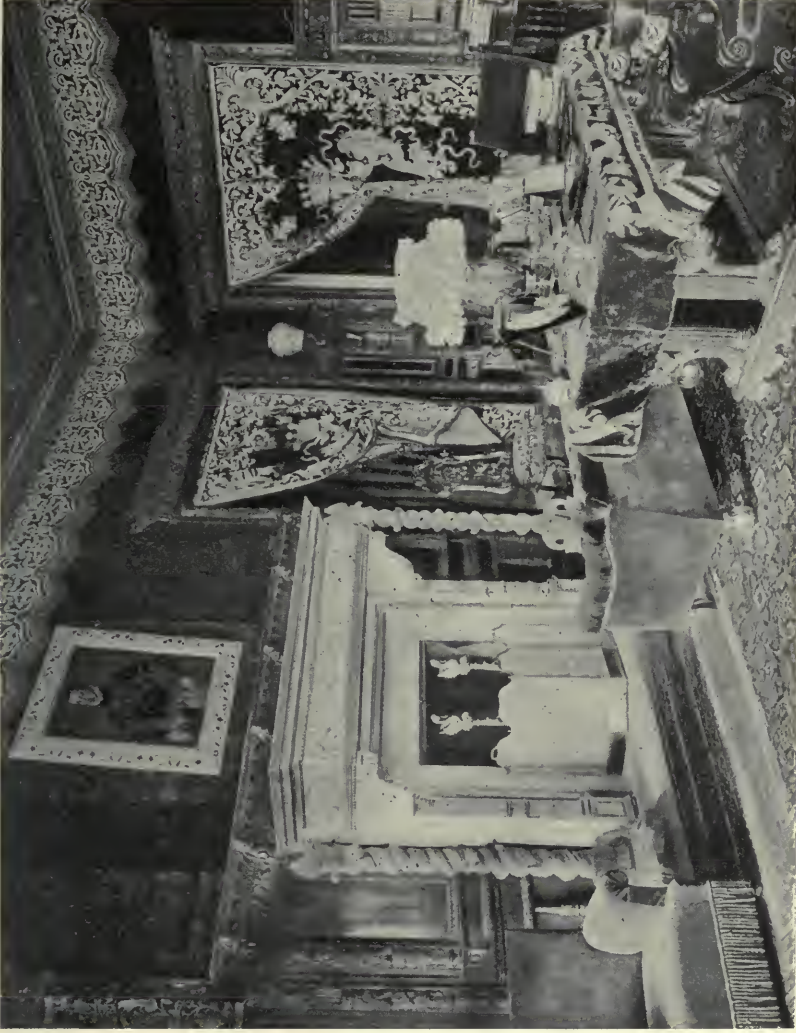
designed and wrought more than ever on this side, while the ornamental plastering is, of course, exclusively of American manufacture. The hardware also, although more or less importable, is naturally made for the most part in this country, because the modern American demands a standard of convenience in his metal fixtures which the older hardware, however beautiful, did not possess. The best hardware manufacturers are fully equipped to turn out all the hardware used in a dwelling from special designs harmonizing with the prevailing historic styles of particular rooms.

It stands to reason that the existing predominance of imported "antiques" in the decoration of the greater American dwellings can not last indefinitely. The supply of really good pieces and really beautiful tapestries has already become so much diminished that their prices have increased enormously—so largely that the reproduction of imitation "antiques" has become a recognized industry. By imitation "antiques" we do not mean frank contemporary reproductions of old designs or copies of old models. We mean furniture or fabrics of modern origin but old design, which have been carefully and elaborately "doctored" so as to make them resemble as nearly as possible the real old thing. Of course, it may be objected that such imitations are not quite legitimate, provided even that they are not sold as originals; but if American taste continues to demand the "tone of time"

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in its most beautiful rooms, there will be nothing for it but to elaborate carefully the processes whereby the newness of modern reproductions is tempered and mellowed. But if this work of imitation is legitimate, as long as it continues wholesome for Americans to use and reproduce the "faded and figured" effects of old French and Italian rooms, it will, in the course of time, assuredly lose this legitimacy and wholesomeness. It is very well for Americans in the beginning to domesticate the best European styles and forms of interior decoration; it is very well for them to seek and cherish time-honored domestic properties; but an indefinite persistence in that attitude would be a clear confession of both incompetence and esthetic sterility. The time will come, and that within the next twenty years, when both the owners of houses and their architects will and should become tired of borrowing and reproducing old things, and will seek either to find some fresh source of imitation or some local modifications of the familiar forms.

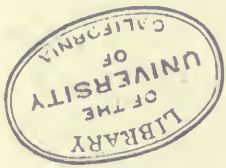
Unless all precedents fail, we shall in the beginning seek some fresh source of imitation, and that fresh source of imitation can only be what is known as "L'Art Nouveau" in Paris, and the "Jugend" Style in Germany. Hitherto these very modern forms of industrial art have met with small favor in this country, because Americans instinctively felt that what they needed decoratively was the good safe thing and not the latest innovations. But the "New Art" of



New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

LIBRARY IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.





New York City.

McKim, Mead & White, Architects.

DINING-ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

Europe will, in the course of time, lose this extremely fresh and dubious character. It has undoubtedly come to stay and will establish precedents and conventions of its own. It will, that is, inevitably become more sober and respectable; and when that time arrives American designers will be obliged in some way to come to terms with it. Trained as they are abroad, and keeping as they do one eye constantly fixed on foreign practise, they can not ignore the New Art; and while the process of introducing it will constitute a good deal of an experiment and will inject some very rebellious ideals and forms into American interior decoration, its introduction will have one great advantage—it should do more than anything else to raise the technical standard of the industrial art work in this country.

Whatever the esthetic merits of the “New Art,” it has certainly had, both in France and Germany, the great virtue of creating a body of sincere, enthusiastic, enterprising, and conscientious craftsmen. It stands for an ideal of technical achievement almost as high as that of the Middle Ages. The forms could not be imported into this country without fetching with them the ideals that accompany them, and such ideals are the great necessity of American interior decorative work. Just as the greatest advantage of the Beaux-Arts training for American architects is the technical standards and training which that school represents, so the “New Art” of Europe could not but make American craftsmen put more

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

enthusiasm, training, conscience, and energy into their calling. If they accepted, that is, the standards of the "New Art" sincerely, they would be obliged, not merely to seek a more modern and personal note in their various products, but they would be obliged particularly to spare no effort in doing the work well. It is, no doubt, entirely possible that the desire for a more original and modern industrial art will be satisfied by some interesting local modifications of the old forms now in use, and that is assuredly the kind of development in the industrial arts which would be most continuous and promising; but whatever the forms, the spirit and method must be that which inspires the New Art of Europe.

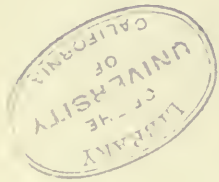
The craftsmen of whom we are now writing are not, of course, the mechanics who execute the designs of other people, but men who are both designers and artisans. Of these there are comparatively few in this country at present. Our artisans have absolutely no power of design, and are only beginning to be equal to the task of carrying out the difficult designs of other people. Our artists, on the other hand, are interested almost exclusively in the fine arts. The "arts and crafts" movement, which is putting forth a tender growth between the thrifty vegetation of the mechanic and the artist, has still much of the aspect and atmosphere of a fad. It has no recognized industrial basis, but depends upon special patronage and regular subsidizing. The most encouraging aspect of the existing situation is the extent to which men, trained

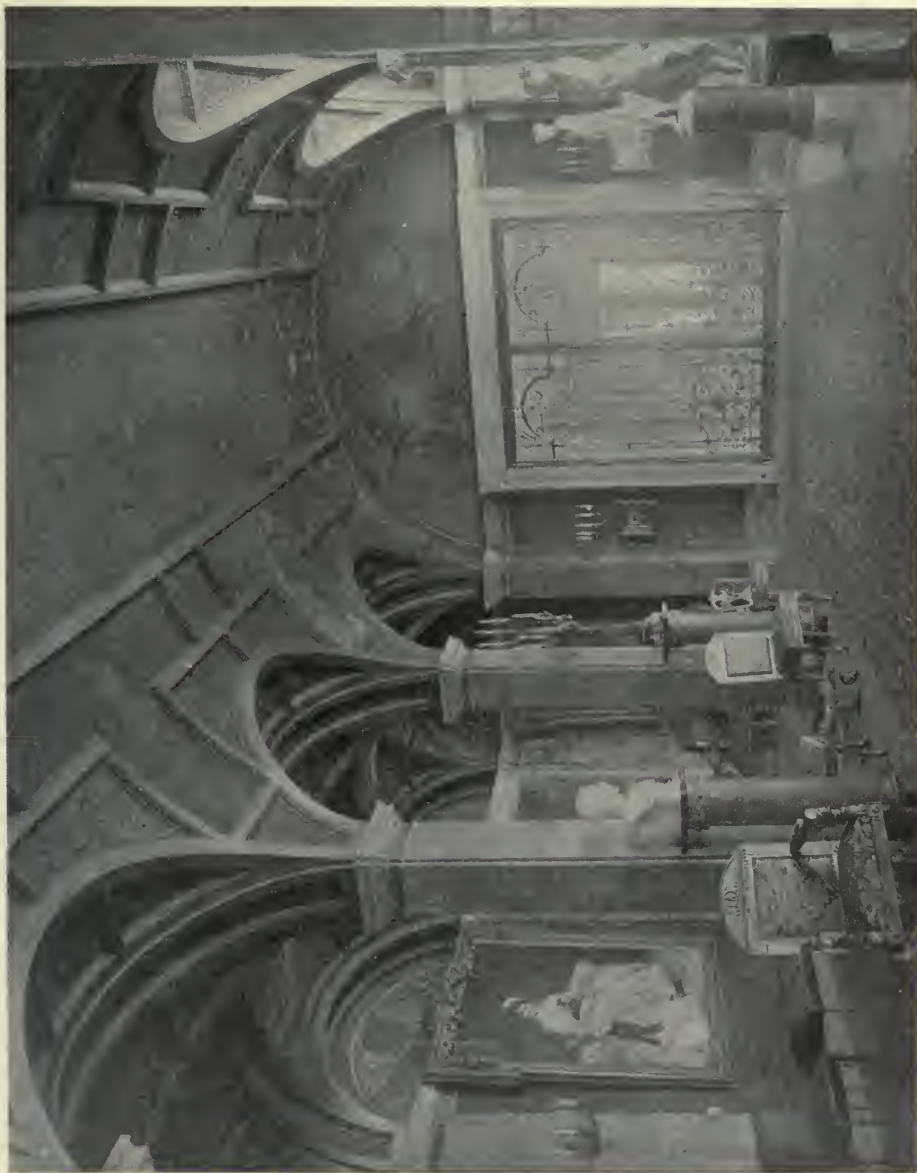


New York City.

RESIDENCE OF THE LATE CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.

George B. Post, Architect.

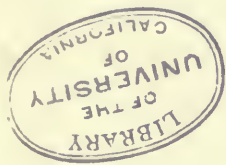




New York City.

George B. Post, Architect.

VESTIBULE IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

exclusively in the fine arts, are, owing to the demand for certain kinds of decorative art, taking up various branches of interior decoration. Not only, of course, is the number of mural painters and the number of painters who design glass increasing every year in order to keep pace with the demand for this kind of work, but very much the same thing is happening to sculptors. Architectural sculpture, whether exterior or interior, is an ever-increasing division of sculptural work, and is engaging the attention of the best American sculptors. In one notable case, a prominent landscape painter has become by easy transition an equally prominent landscape architect. It is safe to say also that the closer these artists have become identified with the exterior or interior of buildings, the more prosperous they have become. This is undoubtedly the line along which American decorative and industrial art may be expected to advance, and which offers the best promise for the immediate future. We have more painters than we need, and many of them whose work is excellent languish in obscurity and poverty. If it can once be shown that the taste and imagination they possess will be better recognized and remunerated in case they become, as so many fine artists in France have become, art artisans, they may be persuaded to give themselves to the industrial arts.

The greater contemporary residence, while it is chiefly designed in order to restore certain effects of age and old-

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

world magnificence, nevertheless owes a good deal to American art decoration. Many of these residences contain either mural paintings or reliefs, or both, from the hands of one or more of the better American artists. There is not as much of this sort of thing as one would like, but still there is enough of it in dwellings such as that of Mrs. C. P. Huntington, the residence of Spencer Trask at Saratoga, Georgian Court, "Idle Hour" at Oakdale, and the several other Vanderbilt residences, to suggest that some such decoration or relief is destined to become a recognized part of every really fine residence. Architects are undoubtedly trying to encourage this idea. They supply opportunities for their friends the painters and the sculptors wherever they can, although the few merely decorative and public rooms in a residence offer only a limited scope for this kind of adornment; and it is undoubtedly the very best use to which the talent for design of these painters and sculptors can be put. The architects, did they have the chance, would do quite as much to encourage the other more modest branches of American industrial and decorative art, and the amount of money which rich men are willing to spend for objects which are striking and properly guaranteed offers to native art artisans an inexhaustible field for cultivation. If American industry has been remorselessly practical, American art, owing to an inevitable reaction, has not been practical enough. Both the big rewards and the effective influence are bestowed on



New York City.

George B. Post, Architect.

MOORISH ROOM IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.



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those who find some method of using their talent and training to satisfy a useful, popular demand.

The American architect, the best paid and most widely recognized of American artists, has, as we have already observed, felt the influence of these too exclusively esthetic standards. His strongest point consists in his talent for design, and if, for pecuniary reasons, some sacrifice is necessary, he will almost always prefer a cheap structure to a less effective façade. American engineers have originated some very excellent methods of construction which the architect is frequently called upon to use, but in relation to which he has never attempted to adapt his designs. Nevertheless, the leading American architects are far from being impractical men, for if they were they could not give the satisfaction which they apparently do to their very business-like clients. The practical considerations, however, which they keep in mind are only those which appeal to their employers. The latter may not know much about structure, but he does want a convenient house, and such the architects give him. Whatever the esthetic merits of the greater dwelling of to-day, there can be no doubt that it is the best appointed and most comfortable residence which has hitherto been erected either in America or any other country. This is an aspect of the interior of the greater contemporary dwelling which deserves in itself a much more careful and elaborate consideration than it can obtain within the scope and limits of this

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

book. We have been considering these dwellings chiefly from the social and esthetic point of view, and have not attempted to describe or illustrate either their structure, plan, or mechanical equipment except by incidental references. Yet while it is the striking appearance and magnificent scale of these buildings which most impresses unprofessional observers, both American and foreign, what chiefly impresses professional foreign observers is distinctly not their appearance, nor still less their structure, but rather the excellence of their planning and the completeness of their mechanical equipment.

No very definite type of plan is used, any more than any definite type of design. The requirements have varied largely in different houses, and in satisfying these requirements the architects have not been embarrassed by inconvenient precedents. The houses are planned to accommodate fairly large families, at the outside a score or two of guests and a certain correspondingly large number of servants. The number of these servants is not, however, as considerable as it would be in a European mansion on a corresponding scale, because the expense of domestic labor in this country is a consideration even to millionaires, and this necessity of economizing service has in all grades of American dwellings done much to keep the houses compact and their internal arrangement convenient.

The great convenience and merit of these arrangements

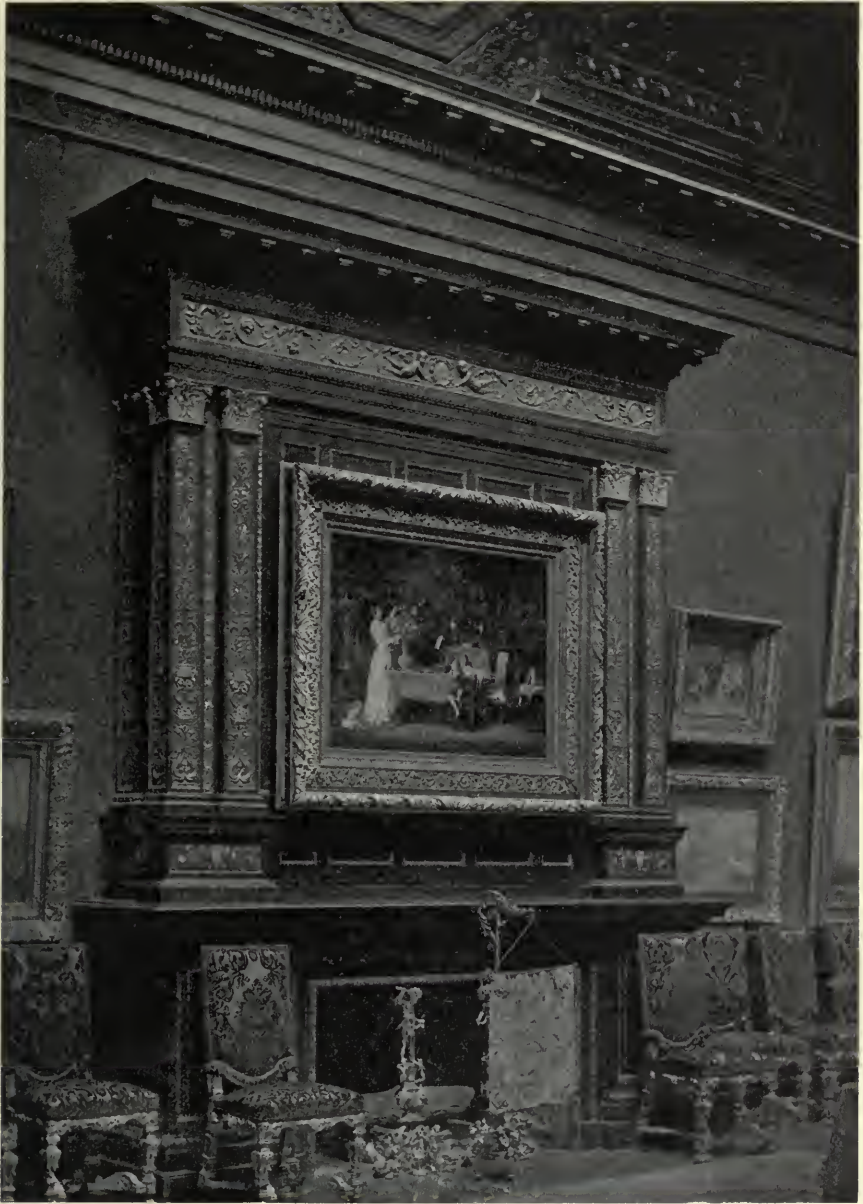


New York City.

George B. Post, Architect.

STAIRWAY IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.





New York City.

George B. Post, Architect.

DINING-ROOM MANTELPIECE IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE LATE
CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

consists chiefly in grouping properly together the different rooms devoted to a particular kind of service. Thus, in every house of any size there are a certain number of rooms which are meant for public assemblage—such as the drawing-room and dining-room; certain other rooms for the household business and the people who attend to it—such as the kitchen, pantries, servants' hall and bedrooms; and, finally, certain other rooms, which are personal to the residents of the house—such as private sitting-rooms and bedrooms. One great object of a successful plan is to keep the rooms devoted to these separate functions at once sufficiently separate and yet properly united. The servants and the domestic business should, of course, be kept out of sight just as much as possible, and yet should be so situated that they can obtain ready access to both the general and private sitting-rooms; the dining-room must be convenient to the kitchen, and long public halls are, so far as possible, to be avoided. Besides these general conditions which a house-plan should satisfy, there are many special requirements, varying with the location of the house in respect to the points of the compass, the situation of the gardens, and so forth. But the great merit of American plans which has frequently been admired, particularly by English architects, is the ingenuity with which the plan is adapted to the smooth working of the domestic machine, to the concealment of those aspects of domestic life which should be concealed,

STATELY HOMES IN AMERICA

and to the effective display of those which should be displayed.

The most prominent room in the great American city house is, of course, the drawing-room, which, as often as not, is a rather frigid apartment in some conventional French style. Sometimes, however, it is modified in the direction of becoming a large sitting-room—a room, that is, in which the family would like to assemble when they were not entertaining. In the country house there is a decidedly stronger tendency to do away with the mere parlor and to convert the largest room in the house, which is generally a most spacious affair, into a fine big living-room, in which people will sit and chat, and to which they would naturally go when they wished to see other people. This tendency has given an admirable opportunity to the interior decorator to create a really new type of room—one that is of “palatial” dimensions, but of domestic atmosphere and service. Next in importance to the drawing-room or living-room comes the dining-room, which is usually paneled, and in which there tends to be more original work than in some of the other apartments. In addition to these rooms there are others which appeal to less general uses. The city houses nearly always contain libraries, the country houses containing them much less often; but both of them are generally fitted with smoking and billiard rooms and with special sitting-rooms for the women of the family and their guests. The more

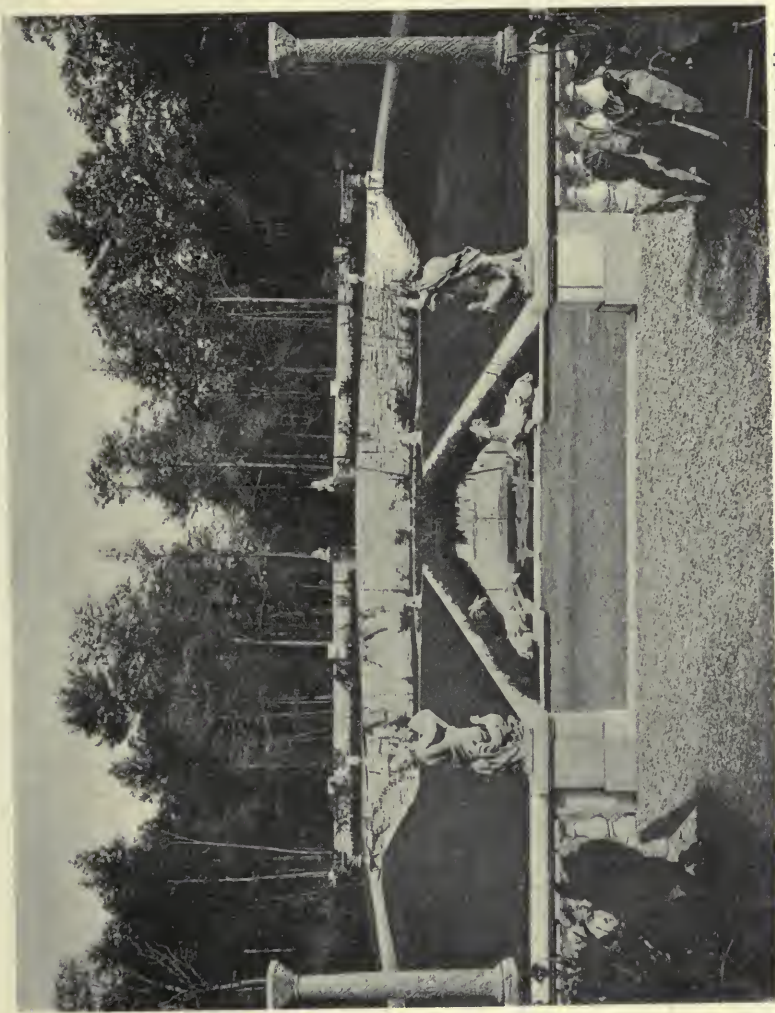


Lenox, Mass.

RESIDENCE OF GIRARD FOSTER.

Carrère & Hastings, Architects.





Carrère & Hastings, Architects.

GARDEN OF THE RESIDENCE OF GIRARD FOSTER.

Lenox, Mass.



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“palatial” houses necessarily make a great deal of the entrance halls and grand stairways, some of which are of really royal effect; but these entrance halls are moderated in proportion as the building assumes a domestic character.

The plan of these buildings and the number and character of the rooms they contain is a much less definite arrangement than it was in the case of the colonial dwelling or, indeed, of any historic type, and perhaps their most striking characteristic is the ingenuity which is shown in making these buildings comfortable and their appliances convenient. Desire for such comfort and success in attaining it has been characteristic of American domestic architecture of all grades for fifty years past, but only recently has the success been equal to the demand. Now, however, it is difficult to imagine anything more complete than the arrangements made for personal comfort in the best of these buildings. In the cities the sub-basement is filled with machinery to provide heat, light, and hot water; in the country a similar purpose is served by the large power-house which is a necessary part of their equipment. By these means the houses are kept at an even temperature in cold weather, but the rooms are so well ventilated that the heat never becomes excessive. Electric lights, agreeably subdued, pervade every room. Automatic elevators are ready in case there is more than one stairway to climb. The house and the whole estate are bound together by a complete internal telephone system.

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There are as many, or almost as many, bath-rooms as there are bedrooms; the bedrooms themselves are fitted with all kinds of ingenious devices for the convenient disposition of clothes; and the kitchen ranges are efficient and flexible pieces of mechanism. To the foreigner there is frequently something disagreeable and effeminate in the completeness of these arrangements for personal comfort, but they have become such a necessary part, not merely of the ease of American life, but of its economy, that the neglect of such arrangements is inconceivable. Moreover, it is this aspect of American building which the foreigners themselves are imitating most assiduously. The amusing part of this ingenious and elaborate mechanism is the way in which it is combined with a wholly different scheme of decoration, in such wise that the greater American residence is a mixture of the most modern mechanical improvements with the most time-worn decorative relics. A better illustration could not be desired of the peculiar contrast characteristic of American life.

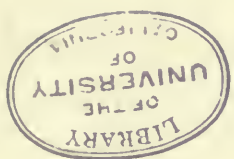
Such, then, is an outline sketch of the greater American residence, past and present. The sketch has necessarily been concerned more with esthetic and social terms of description than with strictly architectural terms, because these dwellings, except during the colonial period, have not conformed to any very definite type either in plan, structure, or design. They are a combination of social assumption and



Scarborough, N. Y.

RESIDENCE OF MRS. ELLIOT F. SHEPARD.

Haydel & Shepard, Architects.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

architectural experimentation, the product being given an educational twist, because anything in this country which both meets a popular demand and possesses esthetic merit must become educational. This is the aspect of the matter which foreigners find it so difficult to understand, but which must be constantly kept in mind in order to make a just critical appraisal of the movement.

The fact which stares one in the face in considering these residences is the incongruity between the scenery and the actors. It has been necessary again and again in this description to point out how deep-seated this incongruity is, and how necessarily anomalous any "palatial" private building must be in a modern democratic industrial community. Yet, in concluding this account, we do not want to leave the impression that there is anything perverse about these incongruities, or that they have not their relative justification.

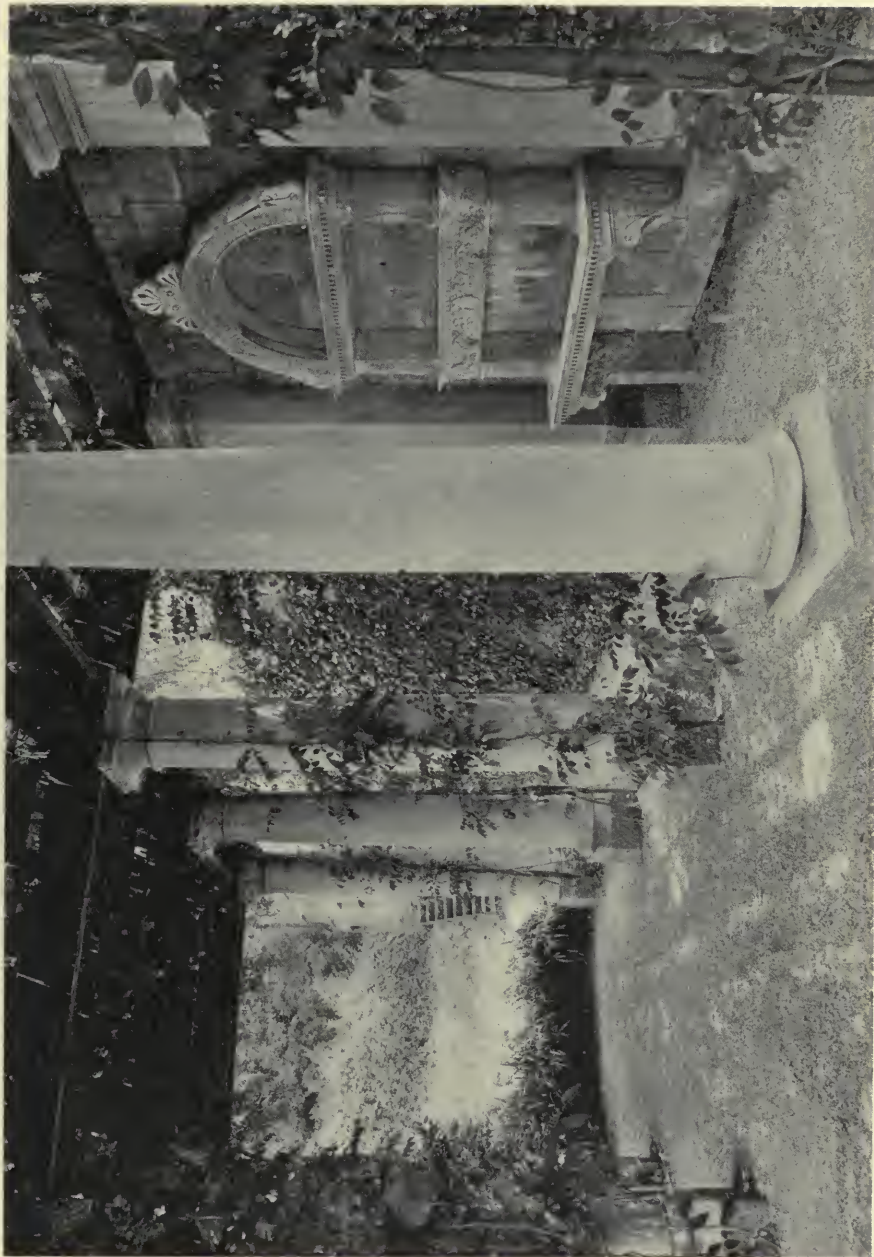
The great historic dwellings of Europe were planned and built for people who not only occupied an official public position, but the publicity of whose lives necessarily invaded their homes. A French château or an Italian palace was always crowded with the retainers of the resident family, the members of which had no idea of an exclusive domestic life in the modern sense of that phrase. Their houses were really public buildings, and in that respect differed radically even from the palaces of the reigning European families of to-day. Just because they were public

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dwellings they could with propriety be impersonally magnificent. They did not need any more individual character than that which a great contemporary club-house displays.

The combination of wealth, social position, and the desire for privacy came in during the eighteenth century, and then chiefly in England. The English lord possessed wealth and position, yet he wanted a certain kind of privacy. The people with whom he liked to fill his house were not dependents, but social equals, and his residence was adapted both to a certain amount of privacy and a certain amount of social display. Happily, however, in his case, the display was the natural outcome of a great inherited social position. His galleries, his portraits, his Jacobean woodwork, his tapestries, the whole splendid array of his domestic appurtenances had come to him with his title, and his dwelling could not but be as distinguished as that of his forebears, while at the same time undergoing continual adaptations to more modern domestic ideas. In this way the great English dwellings have become what we should like the rich American's to be—highly distinguished and yet thoroughly domestic.

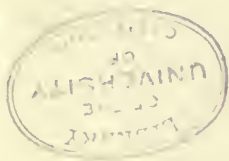
The amount and kind of publicity which the life of a rich American should normally contain is very much like that of an English nobleman. He needs a fine, large dwelling commensurate with the scale of his own life and in which he can entertain his associates. It is not enough that



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PERGOLA IN THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. ELLIOT F. SHEPARD.

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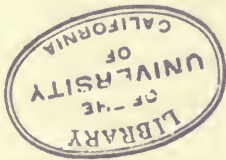




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GARDEN OF THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. ELLIOT F. SHEPARD.



THE MODERN RESIDENCE

this dwelling should be merely comfortable and home-like. The mid-century American residence, the most vulgar type of dwelling ever erected by man, was both comfortable and home-like. He wants it also to be attractive and magnificent, but unfortunately in making it attractive and magnificent he can not call upon his ancestors to help him; he can only call upon his architect. What wonder, then, that he occasionally builds himself a big club-house in which the desire for magnificence and distinction has overpowered any genuine domestic atmosphere?

It must be remembered that the domesticity is in the blood, while the distinction has to be acquired. While American dwellings of all types will, we may feel sure, come out sufficiently homely and individual because of the fundamental sincerity of the American character, great and continual exertions will be needed to keep the naturally sincere and domestic feelings expressed in really distinguished and edifying forms. That effort will have to be made for another generation at least, chiefly by the American architect; and during all this transitional period, while popular ideas are mostly bad and while a good convention is receiving the confirmation of time, critics should be extremely tolerant of the sort of incongruities which the greater residences so frequently contain. For the present it is absolutely necessary that architects should be trusted by their clients, and that the greater residences should remain chiefly their

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work. The specifically individual and domestic additions can be made little by little, as taste improves, conventions are established, and social forms become comparatively permanent.

THE END





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