The Architectural Record

Country House Number

November 1924
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The Edward N. Riddle Company, Toledo, Ohio
Originators of cast aluminum residential lighting fitments
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF DORKING, SURREY

Rendering by Birch Burdette Long
CURRENT COUNTRY HOUSE ARCHITECTURE

The PENDULUM OF DESIGN SWINGS

By Russell F. Whitehead

THE Annual Country House Number of The Architectural Record has come to be, at least in the mind of the writer, an occasion for stock taking; a time when he is forced really to examine the current domestic work of our architects, in order to write about it intelligently. Every year as the material comes in, we begin to wonder what there is to say about it, what can be said that is not desperately trite and horribly forced about a subject which is discussed annually by a dozen or more capable critics. Yet each year, when the selections are finally made, somewhat to our surprise, we find there is really something we want very much to say about the latest group of houses. We have perhaps no great message, only a desire to record our opinion of current tendencies hoping these may be of some value to the architect of today and not too great a joke to the architect of the future.

We have a healthy fear of that future architect, and of what he may think of contemporaneous opinion of current work; and when we see, or think we see some change in ideals and in execution this year from the past, we may be deceiving ourselves sadly. The art of architecture does not change so rapidly as that. It is as if by looking at the hour hand of a clock for one long minute one could say, "how fast it moves"; yet the year in architecture to the life of even our fast moving period is less than the minute to the hour. Therefore, the remarks we shall make upon the work illustrated in this issue, must, in so far as they are general, be considered tentative only, and corrected by the reader's own observations of current work. It may be,
the material published in this number only happens to indicate that
American architecture is headed in a particular direction, and that
a wider choice would prove something else. Although the selections
were not made to support a thesis, but to represent broadly the work
in the United States, it is undeniably true that, by careful selection
almost any thesis could be supported, and we could prove, (or appear
to prove) by most excellent examples, that our future architecture
will be an unmixed derivative of, shall we say Colonial, or if you
choose, Spanish or Italian art.

This is obviously not the case. We have often pointed out the
wide field of precedent from which our architects have drawn their
motives—and in too many cases their "inspirations"—to believe our
art is or is ever likely to be anything but a mixed product, and while
it will very likely grow strongly upon its own stem, it will neverthe-
less be the result of cross fertilization and not a plant of guarded in-
breeding. Our civilization, political and economic, has drawn upon
the older civilizations of Europe to an extent that only the foreigner
recognizes; we have created a new race consciousness of which we
are less aware than the stranger within our gates. So in architecture
we have developed a type of our own of which we are less aware than
is the foreign critic. If we are not fully aware of our contribution
to the growth of an American style, we are fully conscious of what
we are striving for; far too conscious to achieve it, nor do we strive
continuously for one thing. Last year or some other, it was dignity
and balance, this year it seems to be, above all things, charm; and
while in the past we have sometimes set ourselves upon things which
could be attained by taking thought, we have this year attempted
the unattainable. What girl can make herself consciously charm-
ing? She can be honest, or chaste, or reserved, or dignified and even
intelligent, but in seeking charm, she achieves only affectation.

We do not wish to imply that the houses illustrated in this issue
are pieces of affectation, but there is to be noted something of a ten-
dency which, carried to excess, can result only in affectation. Far
too much current work is at best in the class with the peasant village
Marie Antoinette caused to be erected in the Trianon Gardens; ex-
cellent in design, thoroughly picturesque, but which was when com-
pleted, only a delicious piece of stage scenery, a thing as apparent
today as when it was built. So appear many of our modern houses.
We have the same Norman peasant's cottage, the primitive New
England farmhouse, the Italian country villa, reproduced (even to
the cracks in the plaster) with a fidelity only approached in the
movies, and offered as suitable habitations for dwellers in the suburbs
and country districts. We are asked to accept these as authentic
reproductions of the things that delight us most in Europe and as
guaranteed to produce a similar reaction wherever located.

*Text continued on page 417*
RESIDENCE OF H. F. C. STIKEMAN, ESQ., CHESTNUT HILL, PENNA.
Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects

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RESIDENCE OF JOHN L. SALTONSTALL, ESQ., TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Richardson, Barott & Richardson, Architects
RESIDENCE OF H. H. EVERIST, ESQ., SIOUX CITY, IOWA
William L. Steele, Architect

First Floor Plan

Second Floor Plan
GROUP OF HOUSES IN "THE FRENCH VILLAGE," HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
Perpect & Walter S. Davis, Architects
LAYOUT OF "THE FRENCH VILLAGE," HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
Perpont & Walter S. Davis, Architects
RESIDENCE OF S. V. NORTON, ESQ., BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

Howard Shaw, Architect
RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM TEMPLETON JOHNSON, ESQ., SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Wm. Templeton Johnson, Architect
RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM TEMPLETON JOHNSON, ESQ., SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Wm. Templeton Johnson, Architect

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Floor and Garden Plan
COTTAGE OF J. E. ROBINSON, ESQ., CRYSTAL CITY, MISSOURI
J. E. Robinson, Architect
RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ.: Jekyll Island, Georgia
David Adler and Robert Work, Architects
Floor Plan and South Garden

RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ., JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA

David Adler and Robert Work, Architects
RESIDENCE OF RALPH F. BIXBY, ESQ., ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
Ferrand & Fitch, Architects
RESIDENCE OF CHARLES P. STOKES, ESQ., NARBERTH, PENNSYLVANIA

R. Brognard Okie, Architect
RESIDENCE OF DR. A. C. ERDMAN, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
Edward Buehler Delk, Architect
Second Floor Plan

RESIDENCE OF ANSON BARTON, JR., ESQ., STONEHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
Derby & Robinson, Architects

First Floor Plan

[Image of floor plans with room labels and dimensions]
"JANE'S ACRE", RESIDENCE OF E. P. MELLON, ESQ., BEDFORD, NEW YORK

E. P. Mellon, Architect
"JANE'S ACRE", RESIDENCE OF E. P. MELLON, ESQ., BEDFORD, NEW YORK
E. P. Mellon, Architect

Living Room

First Floor Plan

Second Floor Plan
We have had occasion to point out that good architecture is based upon two principles, sound design and good taste, and that no great architecture can exist without these two elements. We reiterate this axiom, this fundamental of the art. We have commented on the fact that sound design was usually to be found in the better part of our work, but that much of even our good work was without charm, because while our designers showed thorough knowledge of proportion and a mastery of the lineal and spacial elements of design, they neglected or were indifferent to the subleties of surface and of color which seemed to the man of exquisite taste of almost as great importance as the former, so that, while our excellent buildings were many, our inspiring ones were few. It is invidious to mention names; but it is only too easy to find the feet these shoes may fit.

Then, quite suddenly came the great discovery that American homes lacked charm. Forthwith American architects went about the business of providing it; as the decorators say, they gave their houses “atmosphere.” The results have been, to say the least, various. We have had more magnificently successful country houses in these last few years, sometimes great houses and sometimes small ones, and in all of them have been apparent the qualities which make us believe our architecture is a living art; a real development of the exterior from the plan and from the necessities of the site, a genuine feeling for mass and fenestration, and a logical use of materials in such a way as to accentuate the values of the design. The principal difference between current work of the best sort and that of twenty years ago, is in the more thoughtful use of texture and color, and a greater consideration of landscape (either natural or developed) as a part of design. We no longer regard a tree as an unfortunate accident, and have come to consider each portion of a façade in relation to its surroundings.

On the other hand, the architect who has not perceived that charm is something inherent in perfect work but regards it as a thing which can be drawn or specified into a house as definitely as a slate roof and as independent of other
Flower Garden

Terrace

MONROE DOUGLAS ROBINSON ESTATE, SYOSSET, LONG ISLAND
Ruth Dean, Landscape Architect

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factors, has produced a great number of "stunt" houses, which attract immediately, but eventually become tiresome. It is this type of man who thinks a ragged and broken slate roof, chopped up timbers and bad brickwork create a house with the charm of the antique. Far be it from us to intimate that a picturesque building is ipso facto a poor piece of design, but we do assert that the man who strives for "picturesque charm" regard-

less of good construction, proper lighting and comfortable plan, is not an architect. He may be a good designer of stage scenery.

Even in houses which are something better than stage scenery (including several in this issue), we find a tendency to consider the parts rather than the whole, a natural reflection of the trend of the times toward the picturesque. In many ways this is perhaps of value, since archi-

unified composition, it must be remembered that perhaps it is not and never can be seen in its entirety. On the other hand, we have received many photographs of detail either exquisitely correct or of charming qualities which deserved to be applied to far better designed buildings than is the case. For many years we designed masses with little attention to detail, now we design detail with little regard for mass.
Garden House
MONROE DOUGLAS ROBINSON ESTATE, SYOSSET, LONG ISLAND
Ruth Dean, Landscape Architect

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That is, of course, an over-statement, but if caricature is the truest portraiture, then such an over-statement is fact. Certainly in even so excellent a lot of material as is illustrated in this number, it is evident the beauty of detail is of a higher quality than the design of the mass, even where that is very good; at least the greater part of the houses are without that unity of composition which used to be considered essential. The Beaux Arts principles as they were once applied to our country houses, gave us a series of rigid and balanced plans reasonably well expressed by elevations which expressed nothing else; and certainly not American domestic life; but to ignore the plan in the elevation is even worse. If one is stupid, the other is foolish.

Fundamentally the Beaux Arts teachings are not incompatible with good country house design, but quite the reverse. They insist on easy circulation, on logical plan and on expression of that plan. They do not insist on columns, swags and symmetry, the commonly accepted attributes of the Beaux Arts School; nor do we suppose the bad taste prevalent in French design today is necessarily inseparable from these qualities. But where our American designers seek for the picturesque and charming at the expense of the other vital elements, can we believe them to be of better taste than those they deride? The future of American architecture lies neither in one path nor the other; intelligent selection we must have, but not direct copying. For a while we seemed to have passed beyond that stage, but it appears we have become too accurate in our memories of precedent, even if drawn from so great a variety of sources. Heterodox we may be, but at least let us be less orthodox in our heterodoxy.

We had fully determined when this article began not to mention any house by name, for we find something admirable in each of those selected, and to single out a few for comment seems hardly fair to other and perhaps better houses; but in order to drive home our point more clearly, you are asked to compare the house of Mr. H. F. C. Stikeman, at Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, by Mellor, Meigs and Howe, the John L. Saltonstall house at Topsfield, Massachusetts, by Richardson, Barott and Richardson, and the house of Mr. H. H. Everist at Sioux City, Iowa, by William L. Steele. Here are three houses about as far apart

(Text continued on page 436)
House and Porch from below

RESIDENCE OF H. F. C. STIKEMAN, ESQ., CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA
Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects
Garage and Service Entrance
RESIDENCE OF H. F. C. STIKEMAN, ESQ., CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA
Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects
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Enclosed Terrace

RESIDENCE OF MRS. JOSEPH C. FRALEY, CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA

Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects

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Loggia

RESIDENCE OF MRS. JOSEPH C. FRALEY, CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA

Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects

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Entrance Court

Floor Plan
RESIDENCE OF B. A. ILOWAY, ESQ., CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA
Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects

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South East Front
RESIDENCE OF B. A. ILOWAY, ESQ., CHESTNUT HILL, PENNSYLVANIA
Mellor, Meigs & Howe, Architects

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COUNTRY HOUSE FOR S. V. NORTON, ESQ., BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

Howard Shaw, Architect
COUNTRY HOUSE FOR S. V. NORTON, ESQ., BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN
Howard Shaw, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF CHARLES P. STOKES, ESQ., NARBERTH, PENNSYLVANIA
R. Brognard Okie, Architect
RESIDENCE OF CHARLES P. STOKES, ESQ., NARBERTH, PENNSYLVANIA
R. Brognard Okie, Architect

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in their stylistic elements as is conceivable even in America of today; the first of English cottage genesis, the second of American Colonial and the third of what Mr. Hugh Garden called "the style of the western plains." They are all alike in possessing the unity of composition essential to sound design, in appearing without affection, yet in this house as in the others, there is an honesty of purpose, a proper subordination of its parts to the whole that place it in our opinion far above the "pretty pretty" type so common here in the east, so easy to do and so little worth doing.

For the Salstonstall house we have no

precisely what they are, American country houses, and in being developments from precedent and not literal transcriptions. Two of them possess charm, at least for us, and the third, the style of the western plains, may possess it to those who can sympathize with that particular form of architecture. We are able to perceive and admire the power and force of the design, its honest expression of purpose and plan, without in the least being stirred by it. Ours is an admiration reservation; the stark simplicity of the design might, in less capable hands, have become sheer stupidity. There, the perfect relation between the central block and the subordinate wings; the excellent fenestration and the beautiful detail have produced not only a skilful piece of design, but a house of genuine charm without affectation. Quite likely the designers knew before the house was built it would have this most elusive quality.

(Text continued on page 447)
RESIDENCE OF JOHN L. SALTONSTALL, ESQ., TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Richardson, Barott & Richardson, Architects
RESIDENCE OF JOHN L. SALTONSTALL, ESQ., TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
Richardson, Barott & Richardson, Architects

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Entrance Detail
RESIDENCE OF ELLERY SEIDGICK, ESQ., BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS
Richardson, Barett & Richardson, Architects

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South Porch Detail

RESIDENCE OF ELLERY SEDGWICK, ESQ., BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS
Richardson, Barrett & Richardson, Architects
RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ., JEKYL ISLAND, GEORGIA
David Adler and Robert Work, Architects
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Loggia

RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ., JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA
David Adler and Robert Work, Architects

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RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ. JEKYL ISLAND, GEORGIA

David Adler and Robert Work, Architects

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Looking into the Court

RESIDENCE OF R. T. CRANE, JR., ESQ., JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA

David Adler and Robert Work, Architects
Main Façade

RESIDENCE OF ROBERT ANDERSON, ESQ., MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY
Francis A. Nelson, Architect

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but we can hardly imagine it was consciously designed with that in mind, as the sole purpose of a country house; it is a by-product of good architecture and good taste interacting upon each other.

The third of these three, the Stikeman house, must also have been thought of as a whole, and not as an opportunity to work off an urge toward the picturesque. The composition is as unlike either of the other two houses as they are unlike each other, but it is as truly a unified whole and not an assemblage of unrelated parts as they are. It is less easy when working with English cottage elements to withstand the impulse to incorporate all, or as many as possible of the amusing pieces of detail one has seen. The tendency far too frequently, is to use a doorway from Kent, an arcade from Caen, the dormers of Athelhampton and to tie them together by a straggling sort of roof, excusing the slovenly design by the "picturesque effect" thus obtained. Mellor, Meigs and Howe do not design that way; their knowledge of precedent is complete enough to include most of the Kentish doors and Athelhampton dormers that other people know, but the selective process is to be seen in their designs; the details are subordinate to the composition of the whole.

It is in the work of architects of the class of these men that the hope of our architecture lies. Perhaps we have no reason to be discouraged at its present condition. It is true the great mass of American buildings has improved enormously; the real estate development of today will be found greatly improved over that of five years ago, and jig-saw ornament is nearly extinct. These are good signs. On the other hand, that

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Stair hall

RESIDENCE OF ROBERT ANDERSON, ESQ., MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY
Francis A. Nelson, Architect

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Main Façade

COUNTRY HOUSE FOR A. G. BECKER, ESQ., RAVINIA, ILLINOIS
Howard Shaw, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF H. H. EVERIST, ESQ., SIOUX CITY, IOWA

Wm. L. Steele, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF H. H. EVERIST, ESQ., SIOUX CITY, IOWA

Wm. L. Steele, Architect

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Dining Room

Stair Hall

RESIDENCE OF H. H. EVERIST, ESQ., SIOUX CITY, IOWA
Wm. L. Steele, Architect
RESIDENCE OF J. F. LAWRENCE, ESQ., KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
Edward Buehler Delk, Architect

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DETAILS OF HOUSES IN "THE FRENCH VILLAGE," HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Pierpont & Walter S. Davis, Architects
RESIDENCE OF IRVING WRIGHT, ESQ., SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
George Washington Smith, Architect

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Terrace Detail

RESIDENCE OF IRVING WRIGHT, ESQ., SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
George Washington Smith, Architect

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“BLACKHAWK RANCH,” ANSEL M. EASTON, ESQ., OWNER, CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CAL.

Louis C. Mullgardt, Architect.
RESIDENCE OF M. H. ADAMSON, ESQ., LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
Elmer Grey, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF M. H. ADAMSON, ESQ., LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
Elmer Grey, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF WM. TEMPLETON JOHNSON, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Wm. Templeton Johnson, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF WM. TEMPLETON, ESQ., SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
Wm. Templeton Johnson, Architect

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Porch and Street Façade

RESIDENCE OF DR. W. HUMES ROBERTS, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA
Myron Hunt, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF DR. W. HUMES ROBERTS, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA
Myron Hunt, Architect

Garden
Dining Room

RESIDENCE OF DR. W. HUMES ROBERTS, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA
Myron Hunt, Architect

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THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD.

RESIDENCE OF F. MURRAY FORBES, ESQ., NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
Richardson, Barott & Richardson, Architects

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HOUSE AT NEW CAANAN, CONNECTICUT
Clark & Arms, Architects
THE HIGGINS HOUSE, NEW CAANAN, CONNECTICUT
Clark & Arms, Architects
RESIDENCE OF CHARLES E. GREENE, ESQ., WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Derby & Robinson, Architects
RESIDENCE OF CHARLES E. GREENE, ESQ., WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
Derby & Robinson, Architects

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RECORD.

Architects

THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD.

Front Elevation

Rear Elevation

RESIDENCE OF CHARLES E. GREENE, ESQ., WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Derby & Robinson, Architects

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RESIDENCE OF H. H. SPANGLER, ESQ., MERCERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
R. Brognard Okie, Architect

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Entrance Detail

RESIDENCE OF JAMES A. TWEEDY, ESQ., BABYLON, LONG ISLAND
Charles M. Hart, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF JAMES A. TWEEDY, ESQ., BABYLON, LONG ISLAND

Charles M. Hart, Architect

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RESIDENCE OF WALLACE GILL, ESQ., GLENCOE, ILLINOIS

R. C. Hunter & Bro., Architects
RESIDENCE OF WALLACE GILL, ESQ., GLENCOE, ILLINOIS
R. C. Hunter & Bro., Architects
RESIDENCE OF WALLACE GILL, ESQ., GLENCOE, ILLINOIS
R. C. Hunter & Bro., Architects

Second Floor Plan
"JANE'S ACRE," RESIDENCE OF E. P. MELLON, ESQ., BEDFORD, NEW YORK

E. P. Mellon, Architect
amalgamation of styles to which we have been looking to produce a strong fine architecture of our own is still in a state of flux, with a recession rather than an advance in the last year, and the study of color and texture which some years ago we confidently hoped would lead us away from the trite and stupid, has gone so far it oftentimes has become absurd. It can be remembered that some years ago the wall built of large round boulders with no mortar showing was considered a desirable feature of design; but its apparent instability was eventually felt by the discerning, and today it is disliked by the very architects who try for texture in a brick wall by using wide rough joints which let in the water, and fill the surface with protruding hats set anglewise to cast shadows. That such a wall will stand is a tribute to the quality of our cement, not to the structural sense of our architects.

The pendulum swings; after the Victorian era came that of balance, line and symmetry, of hard metallic surfaces and raw flat color. Now we are abhorring symmetry and even repudiating balance; the value of the plain surface is forgotten in a time when windows are reduced below the necessary minimum to obtain plain surfaces. And this not entirely by the great horde of imitators who follow the successful architects, and hope by aping their tricks of detail to emulate their design, but by some sober, sound and capable practitioners, men whose work needs no such specious clothing to render it presentable. It is when we consider these facts, especially as shown in our country houses, we are cast down, for the American architect has had and will continue to have, in country houses the greatest field the world has ever known.

The composite American architect has had and will have the most remarkable opportunity of any artist since the world began. His resources are tremendous. He has all the knowledge of past ages to draw upon, he has a volume of work never before equalled; where older archi-
RESIDENCE OF JOHN H. ALLEN, ESQ., GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT
Arthur C. Holden and Associates, Architects

Photos by Derle Darves

Facade
tects have had to work within the limits set by local materials, he has literally the materials of the world, both natural and manufactured, at his disposal; he has mechanics whose skill has never been excelled; and if it be true a man learns by his own failures, he has had failures enough to be as wise as the Deity. He has methods of drawing which enable him to give a far clearer picture of the work which he intends to produce than has ever before been the case; he has technical education, money enough and few limitations. Under these circumstances he should have produced the finest work the world has ever seen. Has he? The answer is sadly apparent.

Yet, if we have not succeeded in proportion to our opportunities, we have at least succeeded in a large measure, as is well proven in the preceding pages. If there is nothing which for sheer beauty rivals Wolfeton House in England or Suynes in Touraine, or the Lombard villas, we have at least designed and built a multitude of small and unpretentious houses which far surpass the average of modern work outside of this country. We therefore dare to hope that our failure to measure up to our opportunities is not due to any inherent incapacity in our architects, but to some obscure factor working through the conditions which appear to favor us; and that in time, this may be met and overcome. In the meantime, we may be thankful that so many of our men are working humbly, honestly and faithfully toward the time when all our country houses will meet the requirements of everyday life and be as lovely as those in the preceding pages.