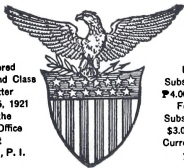


Entered
Second Class
Matter
May 25, 1921
at the
Post Office
at
Manila, P. I.



Local
Subscription:
₱4.00 per year
Foreign
Subscription:
\$3.00 U. S.
Currency, per
year



January, 1934

Vol. XIV, No. 1

Single Copies:
35 Centavos

WALTER ROBB
Editor and
Manager



For a Suitable Style of Home in the Philippines

"Thinking is easy. Action is difficult. To act in accordance with one's thought is the most difficult thing in the world."—Goethe.

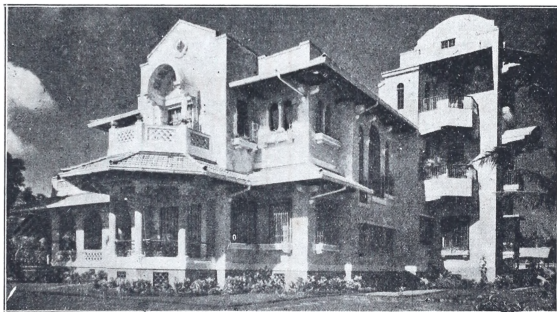
Given the depressed condition of the building-materials market and the low current values of real estate, it is obvious that now is an opportune time for the building of homes. Let us, then, take time out to think of what a home in the Philippines should be like. It is obvious that it should not much resemble what most homes already built in the islands are like: if they are comfortable, they are not prepossessing—a home architecturally successful should be both comfortable and of inviting outward appearance. No one has quite struck on just how a home in this country should be built.

Those homes will be most successful in catching the observer's eye that best utilize native materials. Let that stand as an axiom. If you build where stone is, use stone. Our gray stone, the tuff that abounds in the hills of our suburbs, goes well with brick. Besides hardwoods of rich grain and color, the home-builder at Manila may buy very cheaply, tuff, which the purveyor will know as *gualanipe*, brick of the best quality, rubble in many selected sizes, and cement for mortar and concrete. The failure of our home architecture is not due, then, to dearth of varied material; it is due to the little thought we give the subject.

The first failure is with the roof. The rich man has no excuse here, the poorer man is more to be pardoned. Whoever may be at fault, rich man or poor man, the fact remains that an iron bonnet is not a prepossessing roof; it is incongruous with the materials of the house itself and can never be otherwise. Our houses are never more than 2 stories high; of even the few that rise to 3 stories, the eye's first glance is at the roof. There it is, iron, flimsy, thin, artificial iron, baldly glaring in the sun or baking beneath paint. Never mind the rest of the house, the roof ruins the whole effect and there's nothing to be done about it. No house with an obvious iron roof can ever achieve the dignity of a home, so far as its exterior is concerned; the most to be hoped of it is that it will be unlike, seemingly a sheltered place to house oneself, not a place really to live in and call by the sacred name of home.

When you build, you ought of course to submit your hopes to an architect. If you want an iron roof on your house, have it; there are practical reasons for it, it is light and inexpensive; but make your architect conceal it—the only way you can make it harmonize with the house itself is to keep it out of sight from the street. Visible iron roofs are bad enough in any climate, in the tropics they are positively insufferable. The wealthy who can afford it should eschew iron and build roofs of tile, a material with which any architect can do wonders—which indeed no architect however inept can destroy the pleasing effect of. Tile your roof and you are perfectly safe, you are past the first hurdle in the strife for a beautiful home.

A cardinal rule of successful home architecture is that the



The Tomas Mapua Residence: Taft Avenue Extension

One of Manila's newest and better residences, the Mapua residence illustrates many points made in the accompanying article; though of course the article was written with residences of moderate cost only in mind, the points made are quite as applicable to richer homes.

house accommodate itself to the comfort of the family, in contrast to the family's being compelled to accommodate itself to the shortcomings of the house. This doesn't mean the house must be large, it may be small; but whatever there is of it should be adapted to comfort rather than mere appearance—it is the quality of being comfortable that makes a home livable. The thatch hut built by the Philippine cottager is, for its size, a model of comfort: its bamboo-strip floor is cool for the sleeping mat, and easily kept clean; its sharp-pitched roof forbids the sun. The typical 2-room log hut of the patriarchal families of the Blue Ridge region of America is similarly a successful type of home, not because of the 2 little rooms but because of the cool open dogtrot between them, where comfort in hickory-bottomed chairs is to be had.

There the grandmother sits to knit, there the children play, thence the patriarch casts a wistful eye toward the still, listens for his son's familiar footfall on the path; and there the cool water and gourd dipper are. At the window of the Philippine cottage, water in an earthen jar evaporates to coolness. Trust unspoiled taste everywhere to ascertain

(Please turn to page 12)

For a Suitable Style. . .

(Continued from page 3)

comfort and provide it. It is when man attempts more ambitious home-building than the cottage that his taste may not be unspoiled and he will be led away from comfort—to the fatal undoing of his plans for a real home.

This leads us to the main aspects of the house.

The first requisite of comfort within doors in the tropics is coolness. Many Manila homes are hot because they are jerry-built, either the architect planned wrong or there was no architect considered. Height of ceiling gives coolness, so does pitch of roof; and so does a tile roof, if one can be afforded, but coolness is to be had without tile—coolness may be planned. Don't make wide windows and doors on one or two sides of a room and shut the other sides in; the breeze through such a room is deprived of sweep, the room will be hot. There are hundreds of dining-rooms so planned in Manila, or combined dining-sitting rooms. No homebuilder who commits this fault can escape regretting it. The shut-in sides not only confine the breeze, but exclude the light; to suffer your meals in such a room is to grow irritable and dyspeptic.

Plan ventilation with the prevailing direction of the monsoons in view; catch the southwest wind, and the northeast—let them play through the house.

On the other hand, take decent care that the walls of bedrooms are not articulate; and especially, the walls of children's bedrooms. Let the means of ventilation here be the doors and windows. But a bedroom is, besides a dormitory, a sanctuary—eschew those loud-speaker grilles at the tops of the partitions around them. What child, building a castle of blocks, wants to be conscious that elders overhear as he tumbles down one Babylon and erects another—overhear and perhaps laugh, and gibe at the giggling age. Let them be at ease with dignity with each other if grilled walls broadcast their whispered secrets to all the household? Let the bedroom be a lair, where the hinterlander trots softly, whence the world is effectively barricaded. You will find the children getting their lessons better, their lives sensibly happier—their home the more beloved because a spot in it is their very own.

Their mother also has the right to a place whereshe may lay her scissors down and find them again when she wants them, where her needles don't take mysterious flight, where the things essential to her busy hands are laid out at her will. And you, the children's father, have the right to your particular place; even if it can be no more than a corner of a room and a favorite chair, insist that it be yours invariably.

Now the reception room, the *sala*. It must be as big, open, light and accessible as possible. It too must be built to this climate. If makeshift must be resorted to, to obtain bigness—for the girls will want to entertain at home, as they ought, and will want to dance—make the *sala* so another room or two may be poured into it by an ingenious fling, and girls at the *siglo* age. Let them be at ease with dignity with each other if grilled walls broadcast their whispered secrets to all the household? Let the bedroom be a lair, where the hinterlander trots softly, whence the world is effectively barricaded. You will find the children getting their lessons better, their lives sensibly happier—their home the more beloved because a spot in it is their very own.

So you see a home architecturally successful is not a simple thing to build. It has to be well imagined, then well planned and put firmly into blueprints lest its intricacies escape the builders. In the Philippines there are few sound precedents to go by. Home architecture, above the cottage, truly indigenous to the country, is still a thing of the future. Our residential streets display Swiss chalets, Spanish country-houses, French town-houses, Indian bungalows, and so-called *mission* houses. These houses are seldom at home with their surroundings, therefore they are not homes. There is psychological disaster in all this. Where you find a people with a dominant love of home, the Philippine cottager,

the Englishman, the Swiss, the Spaniard, the eastern-seaboard American and he of the south, you find a people whose homes deserve the name: the persistence of culture is in them, they belong where they have been placed. Yes, they belong there, and they don't belong in Manila; there is to be worked out here, in homes, with the exquisite cheap materials we have, something "indigenous," something that belongs—something that within and without, the eye at once approves.

Let us get on to other features of the house. It is immaterial whether you build porches or not. If you don't have them, build the house porch-like. If you have them, you will live for the most part on them. Therefore, make them wide as well as long. Twelve feet is really too narrow a width for a porch; another three feet is far better and costs but little more. If you think of only eight or ten feet of width for a porch, don't build it at all: it will be an abomination. The tropical house must have an atmosphere of spaciousness, whether really spacious or not, and the narrow porch destroys all possibility of this. Besides, a narrow porch is simply not usable. If you sit or lie, and relax, the first person that passes disturbs you; you must pull back your feet, or suffer your lounge to be bumped. . . it is far wiser to dispense with such a porch and put up hurdles for the children's hop-skip-and-jump exercises.

To drop off to sleep in your porch chair and let your newspaper or book or magazine fall, only presently to have it trampled and rustled about—this is no proper utilization of a porch and comes of porches being built too narrow. Or you play bridge on a narrow porch, and are about to rise to your partner's challenge for a slam bid, when your chair is unceremoniously tipped, an elbow roughs your hair and an itinerant dummy from another table murmurs "Excuse me, I just wondered how my husband was getting along at the next table." But she consoles you when she says, "I'll be right back!" You prepare for another encounter. If a porch is built in the Philippines it has but two legitimate purposes, use and the illusion of spaciousness; and the narrow porch fulfills neither purpose.

The sleeping porch upstairs, connected perhaps with bedrooms with doorways wide enough for the beds to be moved in and out, is adaptable to the practical Philippine home. If sumbathing is wanted, there it is to be had; but

the comfort of such porches comes with the evening, and during the dry season, when the temperature there is several degrees below that of the house itself—and the moon may be riding high and the stars out to be counted, old legends of them recalled, the astronomers' ghostly distances and magnitudes remembered. There is a form of science that is pat, *condition* as a verb. Environment *conditions* our lives materially, i. e., influences them arbitrarily, whether we are conscious of it or not. There is no more wholesome environment than the open sky, the heavens that declare God's glory, the firmament that shows his handiwork, so it is worth-while in planning a home to provide for the open upstairs porch; and it can be made an economy by integrating it with the roof, it can be the roof of the porch below, or of the part of the house below.

If when the general outline of the house is decided upon, you will have the architect give his first attention to the roof—that it be comely, since it is the thing that strikes the eye first—the whole appearance of your house will not fail to give satisfaction. The moment you think of it, you realize how esthetically repulsive most roofs of homes in Manila are; and for these monstrous assaults on the senses there is not the slightest excuse.

A paper in next month's issue will address itself to details of building, the genius for taking pains that the competent builder and architect have. The illustration for the present paper is an engraving of the Mapua home on Taft avenue. The owner is the head of the Mapua Institute of Technology and has honored Manila with one of its most attractive homes. Examination of it leads to the suggestion that much may be done with the *entresuelo*, the first story. In old days when police protection was deficient, first stories were strongholds. Nowadays, with grilles and windows and tile, they ought to be light and airy and useful—even the favorite portion of the home for lounging and informal ease. Many have been made so, an excellent innovation owed to the American influence on home architecture in the islands.

The possibilities of remodeling old places should not be overlooked. It is an expensive pastime, but a delightful one. The most notable instance of what it offers was the rebuilding of Malakana during the administration of Dwight F. Davis.

MAKE YOUR SHOPPING HERE!!

YANGCO MARKET BUILDING BAZAR VILLALOBOS BUILDING

The most popular markets in Manila where all kinds of goods, native and foreign, are sold; you'll be met by the proprietors and merchants with courtesy and *low prices*

STALLS FOR RENT

For information. . . . Telephone 2-37-18

BAZAR "SIGLO XX"

(de TEODORO R. YANGCO)

HARDWARE—MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION and PAINTS

101,103 Plaza del Conde — Telephones: 4-97-04—4-97-06

BRANCH OFFICE:

542 Azcatanga — Telephones: 4-97-23—4-97-38