

COTTAGES AND CONTENT



CONCERNING COTTAGES AND CONTENT: ALICE M. RATHBONE

TOGETHER with the rank growth of luxury in modern life, there flourishes the tonic herb simplicity. Only the resolve to secure a bit of this spreading root, on the part of natures in full accord with simplicity, would, at first thought, seem necessary to its possession; but it happens, unfortunately for many, that the simple life, in its highest sense, is always just out of reach, because of over-much simplicity of income.

"To live content with small means" comes first, with much significance, in Channing's beautiful "Symphony;" nevertheless, if peace and comfort are to dwell with us, a restful abiding place is needful; hence, this proposition: the small income, plus an inexpensive cottage, equals content. This is largely a woman's

problem, although there come to mind instances like that of the old sea-captain who drifted happily with his lovely wife into a pretty cottage on his son-in-law's estate. There they rounded out their lives in their own way, with loving grandchildren close at hand to pet and spoil, while yet they were secure in the blessed quiet of their own fireside, when just to be together seemed the best possible of all fates.

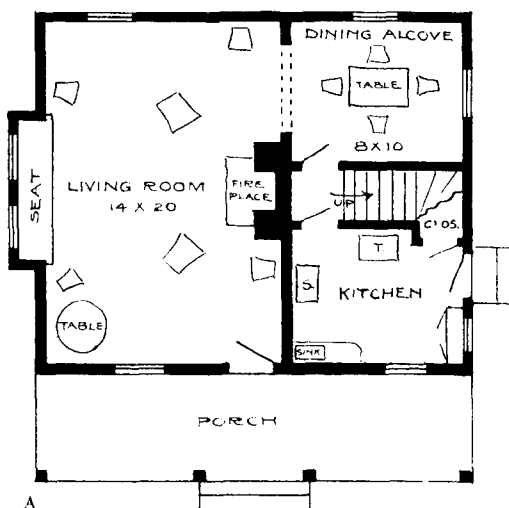
It is, however, the middle-aged woman stranded in some forlorn hall-bedroom, or in, yet not of, the home of others, who would most welcome the dignity and content to be given by a home of her own, which might be shared by a relative or close friend in similar need.

Let us suppose this woman to be well-gifted with culture, domestic tastes and independent spirit; one who, although poorly endowed with this world's goods, can go to



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her dictionary, and read without dismay the true definition of cottage: knowing that, if it come within her very small means, the



“humble habitation” must be located where land is of low value,—probably in some quiet little village. Here is simplicity to test the soul.

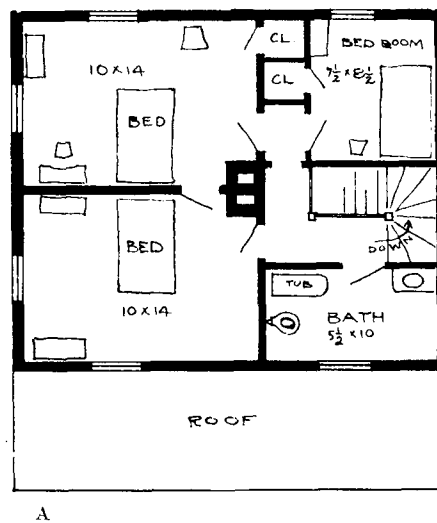
If overburdened with bric-à-brac and fine clothes, the inhabitant of such a cottage would find herself miserably cramped; but the woman lightly laden with what she “knows to be useful or believes to be beautiful,” has room for development in the narrowest limits. As regards location, the woman of culture is too resourceful to find village life uninteresting, and the village has need of her powers and personality.

And so, seeing large possibilities in a small income and a cottage,—could one be found to fit the other,—our seeker for a modest roof-tree sets out upon her quest for a house-space as small as can be devised for the comfort of two persons; a house placed, with its little garden plot, amid pleasant surroundings, and obtainable for the very

low rent on which her hope of a brighter life depends.

But there are cottages and cottages. If this pilgrim of hope follow the direction of the guide-post pointing cottageward, she may find herself before a Newport palace, and, from that extreme, down the descending scale of habitations, she will rarely come upon the object of her search: namely, the veritable cottage, which because humble, needs not to be wholly commonplace, since simplicity lends itself most kindly to artistic touches everywhere.

An interesting attempt to solve our proposed problem was made, a few years since, in England, by Miss Mary Campbell Smith, who made a business of renting detached or semi-detached cottages of four or five rooms, to gentlewomen of scanty means. Her capital being small, Miss Smith found it best, at first, merely to rent and improve laborers’ dwellings. These she furnished simply,



comfortably and prettily, providing always for two tenants. Two friends, says Miss Smith, if capable and domestic, can live

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comfortably, on a very small income, in one of these compact little homes, which have proved a distinct success.

This would be a practical and beneficent experiment for the woman of large means to make, in our own country, in behalf of the woman of small means: both women holding to the cottage in its true sense; the one for the safety of her investment, the other for the safety of her peace of mind, to be assured by living within a fixed income, however small it might be.

More and more do we see two women of comfortable means joining forces to make one more pleasant home in the world, and if, by means of the cottage - of - the - low - rental, modest incomes could do the same, why, so much the better for the world!

An advantage of limited house space is that cares lessen; leaving hours of leisure for out-of-door life in sum-

mer, and for all the indoor pleasures of winter. Thus for women loving home, books and gardens, a life approaching the ideal might be led in a cottage, the home of content, which "is our best having."

The spirit may open wings as wide as the firmament, in a cell as narrow as the human hand.

—Alfred de Musset

CERTAIN CRAFTSMAN COTTAGES

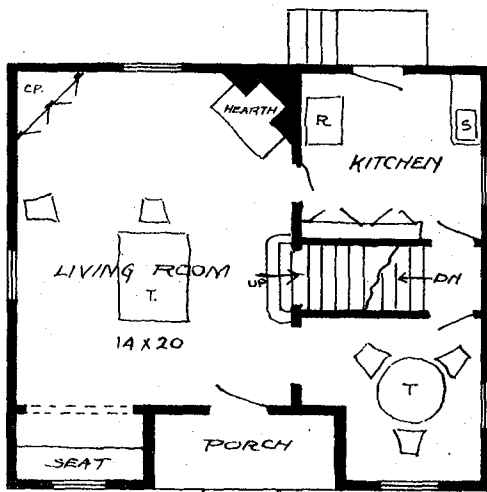
IN conformity with numerous requests which have been recently received, The Craftsman presents a series of illustrations and plans of small cottages designed to afford a safe investment and a comfortable home to one or two persons of narrow means. The purposes governing the work have been to employ solid, econom-



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ical materials, and to produce therefrom that beauty which is the companion, rather than,



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as is too often believed, the opponent of simplicity.

Although primarily intended as dwellings for two single women, these cottages might equally well serve as the first home of married couples who begin their life in common upon an annual income not exceeding five hundred dollars.

The building costs of any one of these houses would, it is believed, fall below nine hundred dollars; thus making the costs of ownership—that is, those involved in the interest upon the investment, the insurance, and the taxes—such as might easily be borne by persons having the above-mentioned yearly resources.

It is hoped that the designs will speak for themselves, by creating in those who shall see them the desire of ownership; verbal explanations being necessary alone to recommend the use of certain materials.

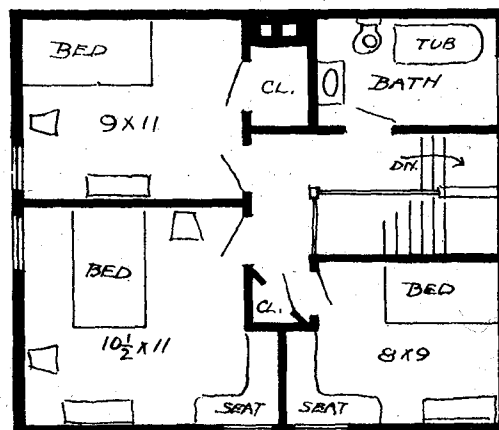
In all the elevations shown, the exterior

walls are faced with California red wood shingles, which have been dipped in oil and thus given a deep, rich brown tone. The roofs also are shingled, the wood here being left without stain.

The interior finish in all the cottages is of whitewood, which is made to assume a soft, dull, satin finish by the application of lacquer. It may be added that, in order to assure an effect suited to the size of the houses, as well as to minimize expense, all woodwork is made as light as possible. The floors are of hard pine, stained to accord with the color-scheme; the cost of the superior wood and the treatment being less than that of a cheaper floor for which a carpet would be necessary.

The walls and ceilings are of plain plaster, tinted in water colors, or preferably painted, and the fire-places are built with ordinary, hard-burned brick.

The construction must receive especial attention, so that the joints be weather-tight; since all the rooms have exposure on



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two sides, at least, and, in consequence, are colder than those of a larger building, in

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which one room serves to protect another. This precaution taken, a further economy of heat may be insured by limiting the ceilings to the height of seven and one-half feet.

The plan and the choice of building materials being thus adopted, personal requirements may yet be amply maintained, and each home acquire a distinct, individual appearance: becoming, in all that concerns construction and use of color the equal of a house of ten times its monetary value. ^C

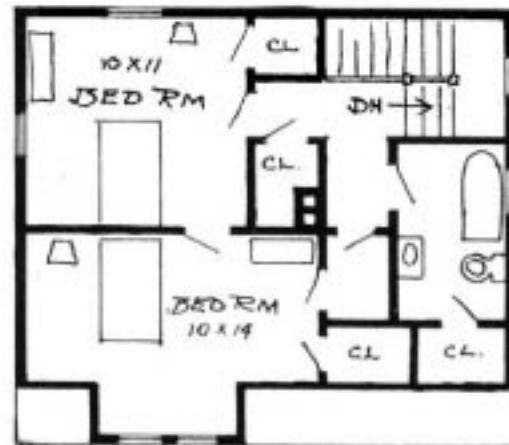


If the interiors here presented be examined, it will be seen that certain constructive features, while serving their original purpose, also furnish and decorate. This is

ed accent to the otherwise too dominant brown of the woodwork. The fireplaces thus treated, form in two ways the focus of the rooms in which they are situated: firstly, by offering warmth, light and companion-



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true of the chimney pieces, with their brick of varied, ruddy color, which gives the need-

ship, and secondly, by providing aesthetic gratification to the eye, through their build-

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ing material, and also through the means which they provide for the display of objects of glass, burnished metal, or other brilliant surface chording with the glow of fire.

To emphasize a previous expression, it may be said that these important features of construction, as well as the thoughtful arrangement of the windows, doors and stair-rails, both furnish and decorate; thus



leaving a much less than usual need of movable pieces. Of these latter, the greater number can be made by the local joiner, or even by an amateur, especially if use be made of the working drawings which illustrate the first two articles of the Manual Training Series, now current in *The Craftsman*.

Seen when owned by persons of taste and domestic sentiment, when enlivened by growing plants and that agreeable scattering of small objects which is the evidence of occupancy, these "humble habitations" grow eloquent upon the text of "Cottages and Contentment."

RUSKIN'S EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

TO-DAY the last survivor of the great writers in the first half of the Victorian reign attains the patriarchal age of fourscore years. John Ruskin keeps his eightieth birthday. It is sixty years since he published his first piece—the prize poem of 1839—a student's exercise, it is true, but one that was soon followed by the

first decisive work of the "Oxford graduate." For fifty years—from the early "Newdigate" down to the last memoir in *Præterita*—a torrent of thought, fancy, and exhortation continued to pour forth from the fiery spirit endowed with the eye of the hawk. And now for ten years the old man eloquent has kept silent even from good words, resting in profound

calm amongst those he loves, softly meditating on the exquisite things of nature and of art that surround him; his manifold work ended, his long life crowned and awaiting its final consecration; at peace with God and man.

A great French writer, whose book is entitled *Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty*, tells us that Ruskin discusses morality, industry and religion in order to lead us up to a higher sense of art. It would be more true to say that John Ruskin began by preaching to us a higher sense of art, in order to lead us to a truer understanding of morality, industry, religion and humanity.

—*Frederic Harrison in London Daily Chronicle, February 8, 1899.*