

## ECONOMY IN THE PLANNING OF CELLARS.

To many home owners and prospective builders of homes, the houses overseas have a homelike charm the reason for which is not apparent at first sight. Most of us would admit, however, that these same houses would become commonplace and lacking in interest if they were lifted two, three, or four feet above the ground. Imagine a Warwickshire cottage set up high enough to allow for a well-ventilated cellar, for example, and a part of the reason for the beauty of the English village street is explained.

Most of the old houses in Southern England have gained markedly in design from nestling so close to their setting of shrubbery. Here in America, however, the disadvantage of a climate of greater extremes produces less natural beauty in domestic architecture. In England it is common to use many fireplaces, and deep cellars with central heating plants in old houses are rare.

Lately, with a view to producing the artless cosiness of the overseas cottage, architects have attempted to build closer and closer to the ground with an increasingly questionable result due to the progressive deepening of the cellar.

For winter comfort in a climate of extremes such as ours, a deep cellar forms a convenient pocket into which the cold air in the house may drop. The air there is not much affected by cold snaps and forms to some extent a regulating body of air for the house above. The heating plant serves to keep the air well ventilated and this in turn warms the floors above so that they remain comfortable to the feet.

But a study of construction costs and a searching analysis of possible sources of economy in new construction reveals the fact that the cellar, if planned as compactly as one would plan accommodations upstairs, contains a waste of about three-fourths of its cubage.

Perhaps, it should be noted here, parenthetically, that this statement assumes that the cellar is only for such things as are suitably accommodated there. The cellar is the worst place in the house for the laundry since the floor and walls in contact with the cool earth do not dry readily in summer. It is not a good place for the refrigerator. What housekeeper will suffer the inconvenience, repeated many times daily, of going up and down stairs for food? Let us then say that the cellar, if not too deep, is the right place for the furnace or the house heating plant, for the coal bins and possibly for the storage of kindling.

Let us provide room there, too, for stairs, ash cans and a generous supply of wood, as well. Yet with all these requirements compactly arranged we have used only one quarter of the cubage of the usual cellar. What about the remaining three-quarters?

The truth appears to be that the cellar does not earn its expense.

This conclusion is rather confirmed than shaken if we turn to the condition of the cellar in summer. Then, the moist air in contact with the cool inner surface of the walls and floor is chilled below its dew-point and condensation results.

Uncovered cold water pipes in the cellar are an even worse source of moisture and cases are not infrequent where quite a quantity of water accumulates on the floor from the two causes mentioned above. In one such case, it looked as if a contractor's reputation had been permanently smirched. The alleged reason for the wet cellar, in this case, was leakage through poorly constructed masonry

walls. Covering the water pipes with insulating material and providing better ventilation saved the contractor and proved that his masonry was of better quality than had been admitted.

The conflict between esthetics and practical planning will go on indefinitely but in the special case under consideration—the desire to design a house that will nestle close to the ground and at the same time have a full story under every part of the house—the solution comes from a recognition of the meteorological conditions and the separating of conflicting features in design.

If, in the bungalow type of dwelling, the living room, dining room and kitchen are set on the same level, with a cellar below them set only three feet into the ground, and if the bed rooms are set a half story above these rooms, there results a type of plan with a minimum of masonry and no condensation to dread from the deep cellar floor. Our cellars can be dry, well ventilated and well lighted if we will not insist upon placing our living rooms two feet above the ground with deep cellars below them, our entrance can be one step above the ground under the bed rooms. We can place back of our entrance such rooms as a garage, a plant room or a shop—all in the part of the cellar under the usual bungalow which goes to waste. An illustrated article in the *Woman's Home Companion* for October, 1921, will indicate the scheme in greater detail.

Furthermore, we gain the desirable effect of closeness to the ground characteristic of the English cottage.

The result indicated above owes its existence to a study of the physical conditions described by the meteorologist and it is with a feeling of gratitude and eagerness to learn all that science has to teach that the men who are studying better planning must turn for the solution of their problems and the foundation of better building methods.—*J. T. Tubby, Architect*, 143 Liberty St., New York City.

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#### COMMENT.

##### *Have colds disappeared from Africa since 1742?*

In a note on page 53 of the April, 1921, BULLETIN, Mr. Marcossou after a tour of Africa is quoted as follows:

"It is one of the ironies of civilization that after passing unscathed through all the fever country I caught cold the moment I got back to steam heat and all the comforts of home."

In a book entitled, "Physical Observations on the Coast of Guinea," published by a naval surgeon in 1742, appears the following:

Sleepy Distemper gives no other previous notice than a want of appetite two or three days before; their sleeps are sound, and sense of feeling very little, for pulling, drubbing or whipping will scarce stir up sense and power enough to move; and the moment you cease beating the smart is forgot and down they fall again into a state of insensibility.

This is a description of the later stages of "sleeping sickness," but Surgeon Atkins goes on to ascribe the cause of the disease to "catching cold," "to diet and way of living," "to weakness of the brain; some or all of these causes co-operating to it." He is referring to the native savages. (Quoted from *Journal American Medical Association*, 76-114, April 2, 1921, p. 957.)

Again, from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Jan. 18, 1919, p. 204:

"Influenza Expedition.—A dog team expedition has left Dawson, Yukon, on a trip of 500 miles, with supplies, medicine, and masks for combating influenza among the Indians and Eskimos in that remote region. It was dispatched by the commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, Canada."