

The Lay Figure

THE LAY FIGURE: ON HOUSE DESIGN FROM THE HOUSEWIFE'S POINT OF VIEW.

IF, as most people seem to believe, we are to have a new type of domestic architecture after the war, what kind of changes, do you think, are we to expect in our houses? asked the Critic. "Will new conditions of existence alter the whole character of our surroundings?"

"I suppose in that, as in everything else, there will be reconstruction and rearrangement," replied the Man with the Red Tie. "New conditions produce new necessities, and by new necessities in life our houses are certain to be affected."

"I am sure I hope so," broke in the Housewife; "and I hope that under the new conditions something more practical and convenient will come. Even war would not be an unmixed evil if, as one of its after-effects, it gave us a better type of house to live in."

"Are things as bad as that?" laughed the Man with the Red Tie. "Have our architects done their duty in the past so inefficiently that a war has become necessary to induce them to attempt something better for the future?"

"No, that is an exaggeration," returned the Housewife. "But I think architects have been in the past so taken up with their own idea of what a house ought to be that they have been apt to forget what the people who had to live in it would be likely to want. They have been so anxious to make a place look pretty that they have lost sight of the need for comfort."

"There is something in that," agreed the Critic. "What I should call the wilfully picturesque house is not as a rule either convenient or comfortable."

"And very often it is expensive to work and not particularly healthy," declared the Housewife. "Both these considerations, from my point of view, ought to be given serious attention in the house-planning of the future. What I want from the architect is less fancy and more common sense."

"In other words, you want them to look at the house more from the woman's point of view," suggested the Critic. "You think that the man's habit of mind makes him unduly inattentive to detail."

"Yes, I do," asserted the Housewife; "and

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it is just this detail that seems so important to a woman because it is with the details of a house that her work is mainly concerned. The more her work is simplified the better she is pleased."

"Then by all means let the architect make her his first consideration," laughed the Man with the Red Tie. "What do the opinions of a mere man matter so long as the woman is kept in a good temper?"

"That is one of the most sensible remarks you have ever made," cried the Housewife. "Man's comfort depends a good deal upon woman's temper, and if you give a woman the things she wants it is the man really who reaps the benefit."

"Well, give us a list of the things you want the architect to provide," said the Man with the Red Tie. "Cupboards, I suppose, would come first on it—all women want cupboards."

"Cupboards, of course," agreed the Housewife; "because without cupboards to hold one's belongings it is impossible to keep a house tidy. But there are bigger things than that to be taken into account. For instance, in the construction of a house a good deal of the comfort of the rooms depends upon the way the doors, windows, and fireplaces are arranged so as to avoid draughts and to secure warmth without an extravagant use of fuel. If the rooms are too high they are difficult to heat and ventilate and are simply reservoirs for bad air. If you have too many projections and odd corners dust collects and incessant turning out and cleaning become necessary. If the ground plan of the house is straggling there is too much running about for the servants. There, that is something to start with."

"And a very good list too," commented the Critic. "I agree with you that all these things matter in the construction of a house, and I can see many other counts that might be added to your indictment of the architect. But as woman has become now a power in the world, the solution of these questions can be left to her. Really, you know, it is her job."

"She is going to make it her job, anyhow," retorted the Housewife. "If she and the architect are to be friends, he will have to put her needs first and his fancies a good way second. After all, a good architect ought to be able to fit an attractive outside to a house properly planned inside; but he has got to think about the inside first."

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