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The Royal Academy And Architecture; With Notes On Some Designs At The
Present Exhibition.

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The Royal Academy and Architecture

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THE ROYAL ACADEMY AND ARCHITECTURE; WITH NOTES ON SOME DESIGNS AT THE PRESENT EXHIBITION.

ARE they right, or wrong, the people who tell us, occasionally, that the Royal Academy is seriously solicitous about the welfare of architecture? That the Royal Academy professes to be so is true; but if this profession of its goodwill to architects is believed in some quarters, it is certainly disputed in many others. There is a large and thoughtful public to whom it appeals merely as a stereotyped example of official humour. We are thus brought in contact with two bodies of opinion, the one favourable, the other distinctly



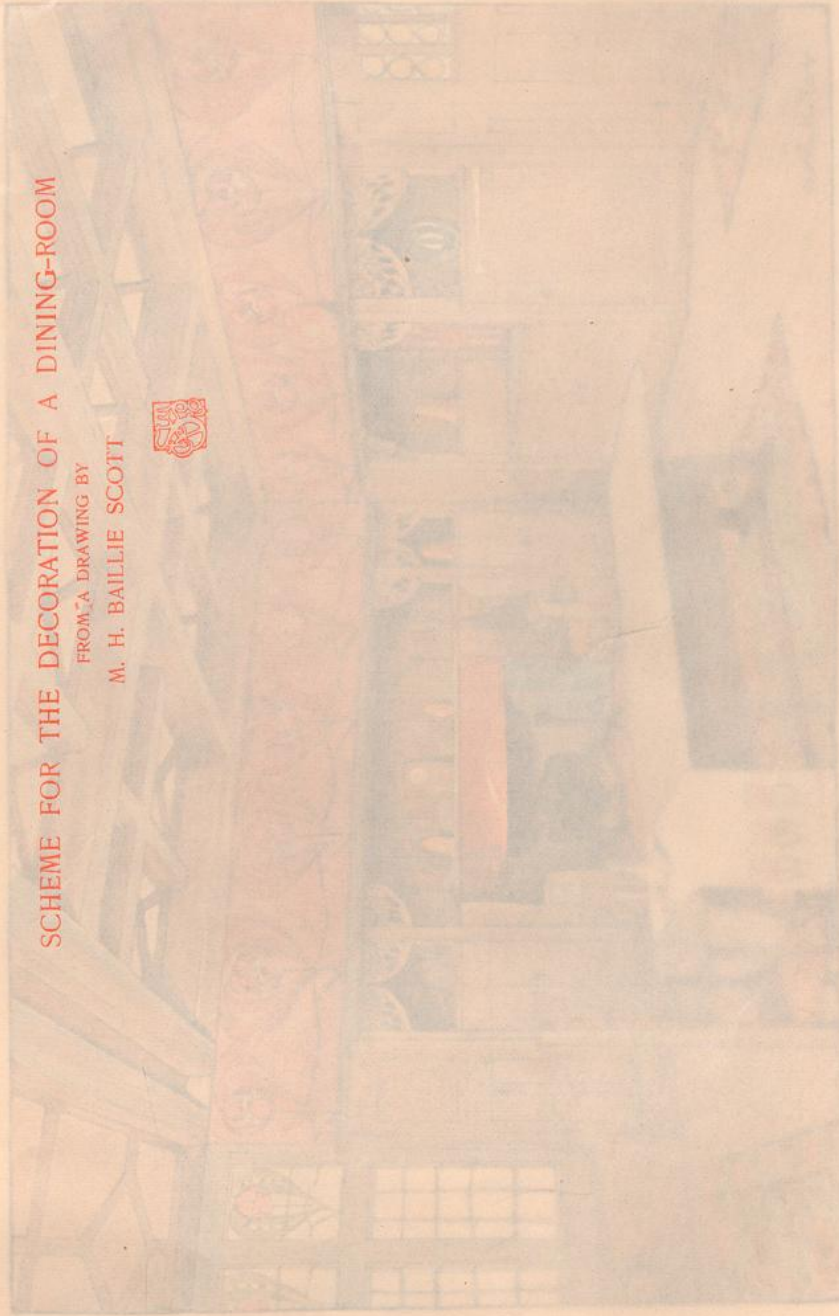
A HALL
94

M. H. BAILLIE SCOTT, ARCHITECT

SCHEME FOR THE DECORATION OF A DINING-ROOM

FROM A DRAWING BY

M. H. BAILLIE SCOTT



The Royal Academy and Architecture

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ARE they right, or wrong, the people who tell us, occasionally, that the Royal Academy is seriously solicitous about the welfare of architecture? That the Royal Academy professes to be so is true; but if this profession of its goodwill to architects is believed in some quarters, it is certainly disbelieved in many others. There is a large and thoughtful public to whom it appears merely as a stereotyped example of official humbug. We are thus brought in contact with two bodies of opinion, the one favourable, the other distinctly



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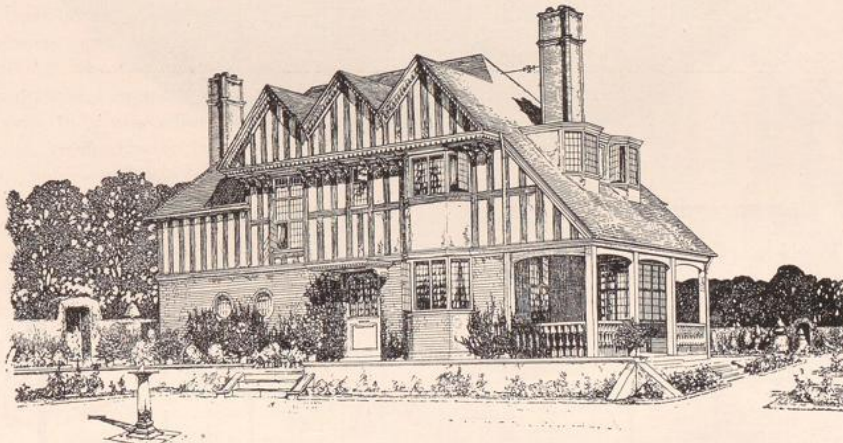
antagonistic, to the treatment that architects receive from those who at present hold office in Burlington House.

Now, as the importance of architecture to the State increases with that industrial enterprise which tends to make life in towns ever the more ugly, we cannot but feel that the Royal Academy of Arts has stirred up a conflict of opinion in which the nation at large ought to take a keen interest. Even in a time much less friendly to ugliness than our own is, it would be a very serious and deplorable thing to underestimate the national value of good architecture, for none can afford to see discredited, even for a little while, any means by which a people may express and foster its dignity of character. Noble buildings, spacious and impressive streets, and beautiful design and workmanship in the homes of a nation—what are these good things but great thoughts materialised? They are manifestations of our better selves. They constitute an unwritten form of history, so full of worthiness that everybody should be anxious not merely to preserve it but to add constantly to its riches. Yet, it would almost appear that the directors of the Royal Academy look upon architecture as a trivial province of art, for they deem it worthy of only one small room at their annual exhibition.

It is doubtless for this reason that but few

at Burlington House, in perhaps one small drawing, which, not unfrequently, is an artificial thing by some clever perspective draughtsman. If photographs were admissible at the Royal Academy, as they really should be, architects of known names could show representations of their finished work; and the public would then have its interest quickened by seeing in a completed form the mouldings and the other details that architectural designs do not adequately suggest to an uninformed public. But the Royal Academy, as though eager to discourage an invaluable art as much as possible, has decided that there is no space for photographs of good architecture, though plenty is always found for third-rate oil paintings.

It has also decided, as is common knowledge, that all the architectural drawings must be framed and glazed. Why? The answer to this question is, we presume, that such drawings, when sent in on workmanlike strainers, are not sufficiently picturesque. But whatever the reason may be, the result is that much work of the highest possible interest and value is exempted. In these days, when so much attention is given by architects to interior decoration, we should like to see some encouragement accorded to the production and exhibition of drawings in which the

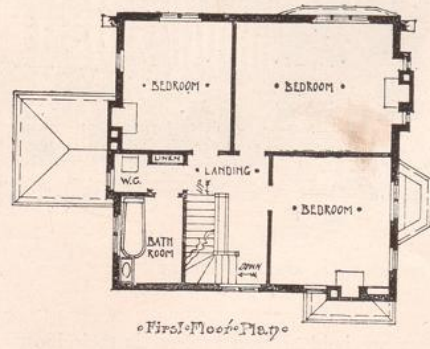
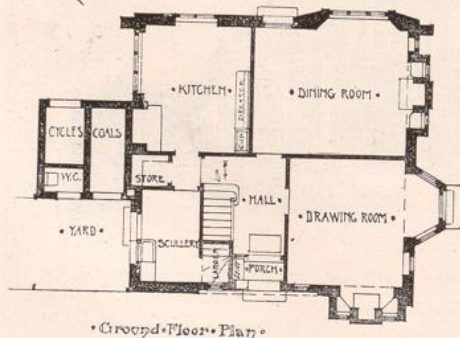


PIPER'S HILL, BYFLEET, SURREY

MESSRS. NIVEN AND WIGGLESWORTH, ARCHITECTS

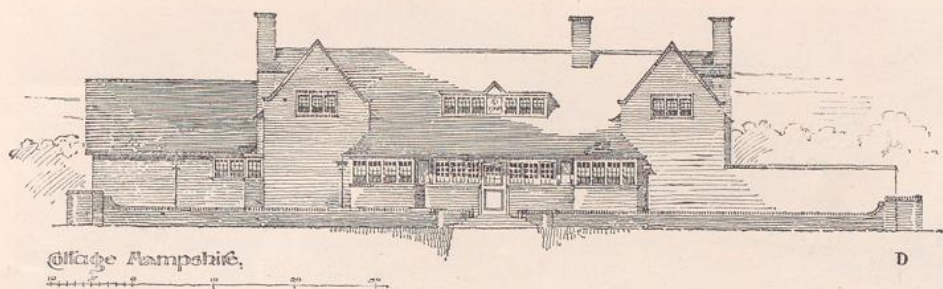
architects are bold enough to send in their most serious efforts, the space allowed being so absurdly insufficient for the display of drawings and designs on a large scale. The whole of an architect's thought in a great undertaking is summed up,

colour schemes as well as the details of interior decoration are adequately represented. The small scale upon which such drawings are usually made tends to mislead rather than to aid the public in their estimation of the work.



DESIGN FOR A HOUSE AT PINNER
E. B. WETENHALL, ARCHITECT

The Royal Academy and Architecture



DESIGN FOR A COTTAGE

THOMAS DAVISON, ARCHITECT

Large drawings of certain recent decorative work by north-country architects, or of such foreign efforts as Dr. Hoffman's designs for the Austrian Courts at the Paris Exhibition, would be of more educational value than acres of third-rate oil paintings of which so many occupy valuable space on the Academy walls.

We pass on now to another point. Why is it that the Royal Academy does not exhibit, year by year, some of the best work done in its architectural school? If the students in this school produce nothing of sufficient merit (as might be inferred), why should the Academy spend large sums of money in a vain effort to teach architecture? It cannot be wise to award a gold medal and a travelling studentship of £200 to anyone whose work is deemed unworthy of a place in the architectural room. The last gold medal was won by Mr. Charles Hide, and we hasten to add that it was won very creditably. Yet Mr. Hide's design is not to be found at Burlington House, so that an official distinction seems to be invidiously drawn between him and the winners of the gold medals in painting and sculpture, whose prize-works are exhibited.

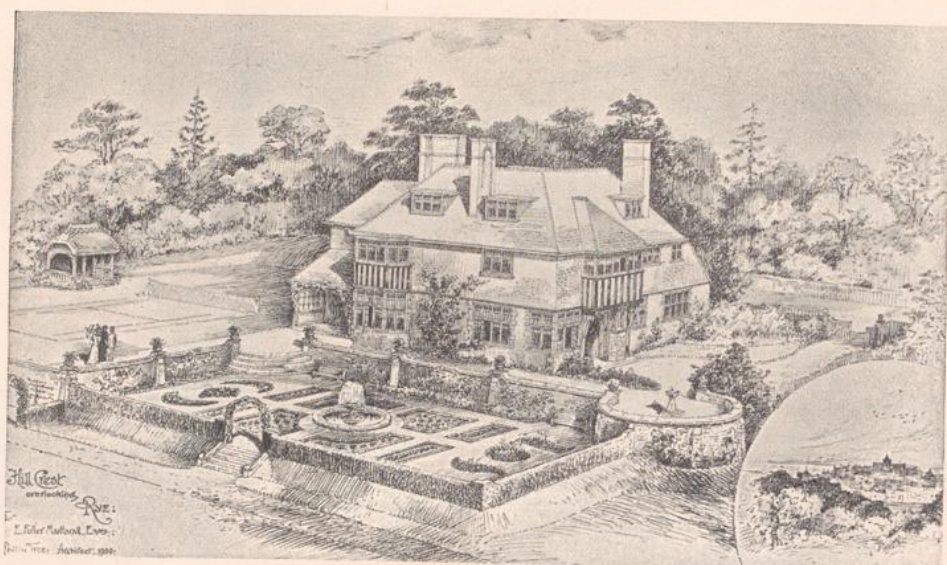
Other points might be mentioned here, other suggestions given, but in one brief article it is impossible to deal thoroughly with this subject. The principal point of all, however, is simply this: the Royal Academy does not accord to architecture,



STUDIO AT "HILL CREST," RYE

PHILIP TREE, ARCHITECT

The Royal Academy and Architecture



"HILL CREST," RYE

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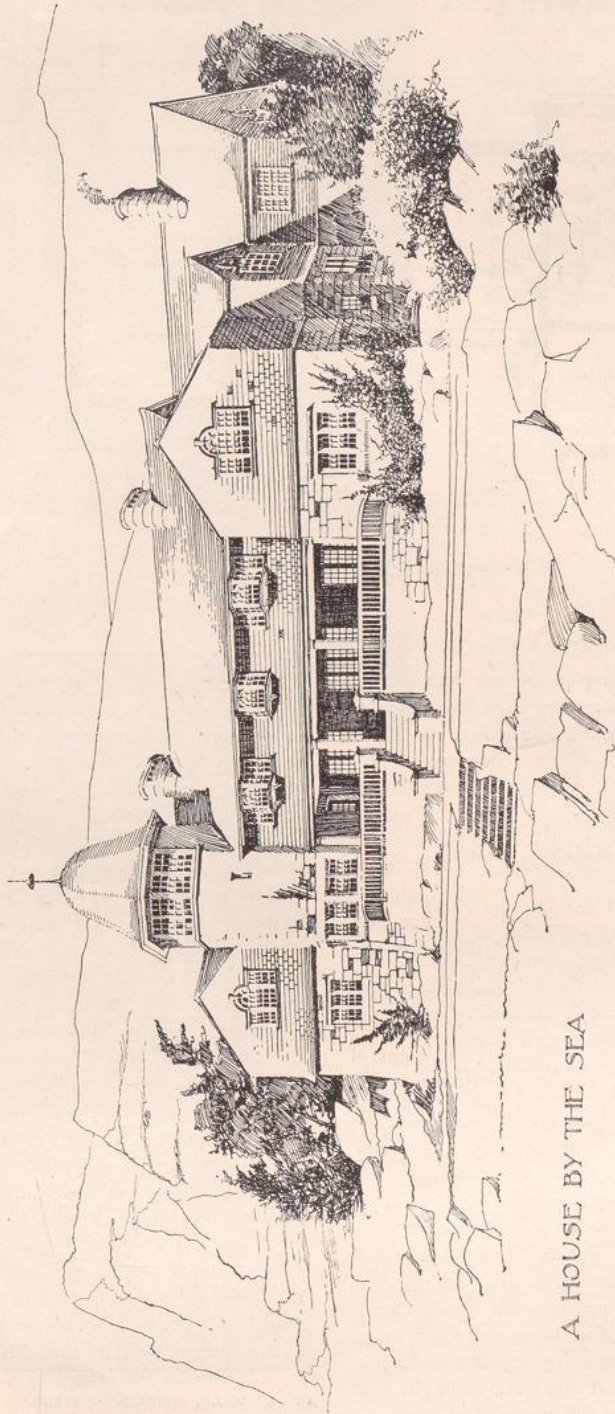
the most useful and the noblest of the arts, that attention which is rightly its due. A well-known French critic, M. Georges Lafenestre, commenting on a similar grievance in his own country, remarks : — " Dans la vie sociale d'un peuple, la peinture, qui est un complément et un agrément, ne doit pas tenir le premier rang, au détriment de l'architecture et de la sculpture qui sont des nécessités. C'est un fait historique que, lorsque la peinture mobilière prend le premier rang et qu'on ne s'occupe plus que de collections de tableaux, tous les autres arts tombent en décadence,—et spécialement tous les arts décoratifs."

This is quite true, and hence we remember gladly that there are now many hopeful signs of public sympathy for all those decorative arts which may be called the handmaidens of architecture. This revival of popular interest in "the minor arts," stupidly so called, is not at present fostered by the Royal Academy ; but it is still only a young revival, and many of us may live to see half of the rooms at Burlington House devoted every year to the encouragement of architecture and its handmaidens. This is what we need, this is what we should all struggle to obtain.

This means that the Royal Academy ought to be the national protector of all forms of art, and none can say with truth that its present policy is beneficial even to its favourite art, the art of painting, which for some years has been coddled far too

much. To fill eleven rooms every year with more than a thousand pictures, largely second and third rate, serves no useful purpose ; it would be far wiser, far more serviceable to the cause of beauty, to raise the standard of works hung. If this were done, as it certainly ought to be, space enough would be found at Burlington House for the due encouragement of architects and craftsmen.

Greatly as we deplore the absence of so much that we should like to see to-day at the Royal Academy, we still desire to make more widely known all the good things to be seen there. This month, by kind permission of several architects, we reproduce a few designs in domestic architecture. There is an excellent, half-timbered house, with a remarkably fine roof, by Messrs. Niven and Wigglesworth ; a cottage, good in style, by Mr. Thomas Davison ; an attractive house by the sea, a kind of two-storied bungalow, by Mr. Arthur Stratton ; another house, pleasingly austere in type, and planned most economically, by Mr. Wetenhall ; and a charming little country home by Mr. Philip Tree. Mr. Baillie Scott, with his discreet furniture and his early methods of decoration, is well represented by two characteristic drawings, while Mr. Howard Seth-Smith gives a picturesque solution of the problem of the semi-detached house. These designs do not give a complete idea of the general progress of domestic architecture in England, but they are good and varied in their simplicity of



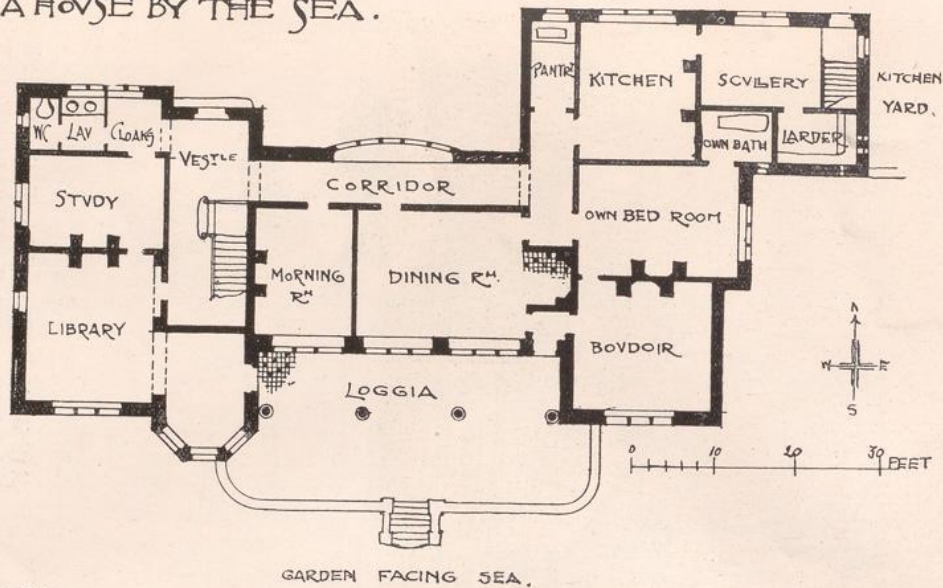
A HOUSE BY THE SEA

C. D. BACH, ARCHT. 1906.

DESIGN FOR A SEA-SIDE HOUSE
ARTHUR STRATTON, ARCHITECT

François Maréchal

A HOUSE BY THE SEA.



PLAN OF SEA-SIDE HOUSE

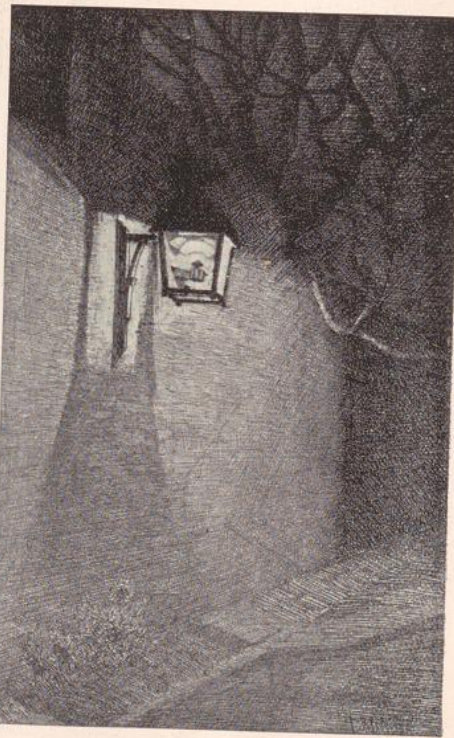
ARTHUR STRATTON, ARCHITECT

type, and we note with pleasure that the garden has received in some far more consideration than architects gave to it about a decade ago.

FRANÇOIS MARÉCHAL, A LIÈGE ETCHER. BY FERNAND KHNOPFF.

In the year 1893 I saw in the album of the Brussels Society of Aquafortists a number of panoramic views of Liège, signed "F. Maréchal." I was struck at the time by their skilful composition, their somewhat rough but solid touch, and by their air of truthfulness and sincerity. Since then I had come across nothing bearing the same signature, until in the studio of M. Rassenfosse I saw it again on an extraordinarily varied series of etchings, representing "bits" and types from the outlying suburbs, and numerous night scenes on the quays, with the trembling lights reflected in the waters of the Meuse. To a sense of admiration for the works themselves was added a strong desire to see their author.

Shortly afterwards I was accordingly introduced to him, and found myself in the presence of a man, still young, of very interesting appearance, small, spare and wiry, with short thin features, bright and piercing glance, and the full forehead of a man of



AN OLD WALK, SUBURBS OF LIÈGE
FROM AN ETCHING BY F. MARÉCHAL.