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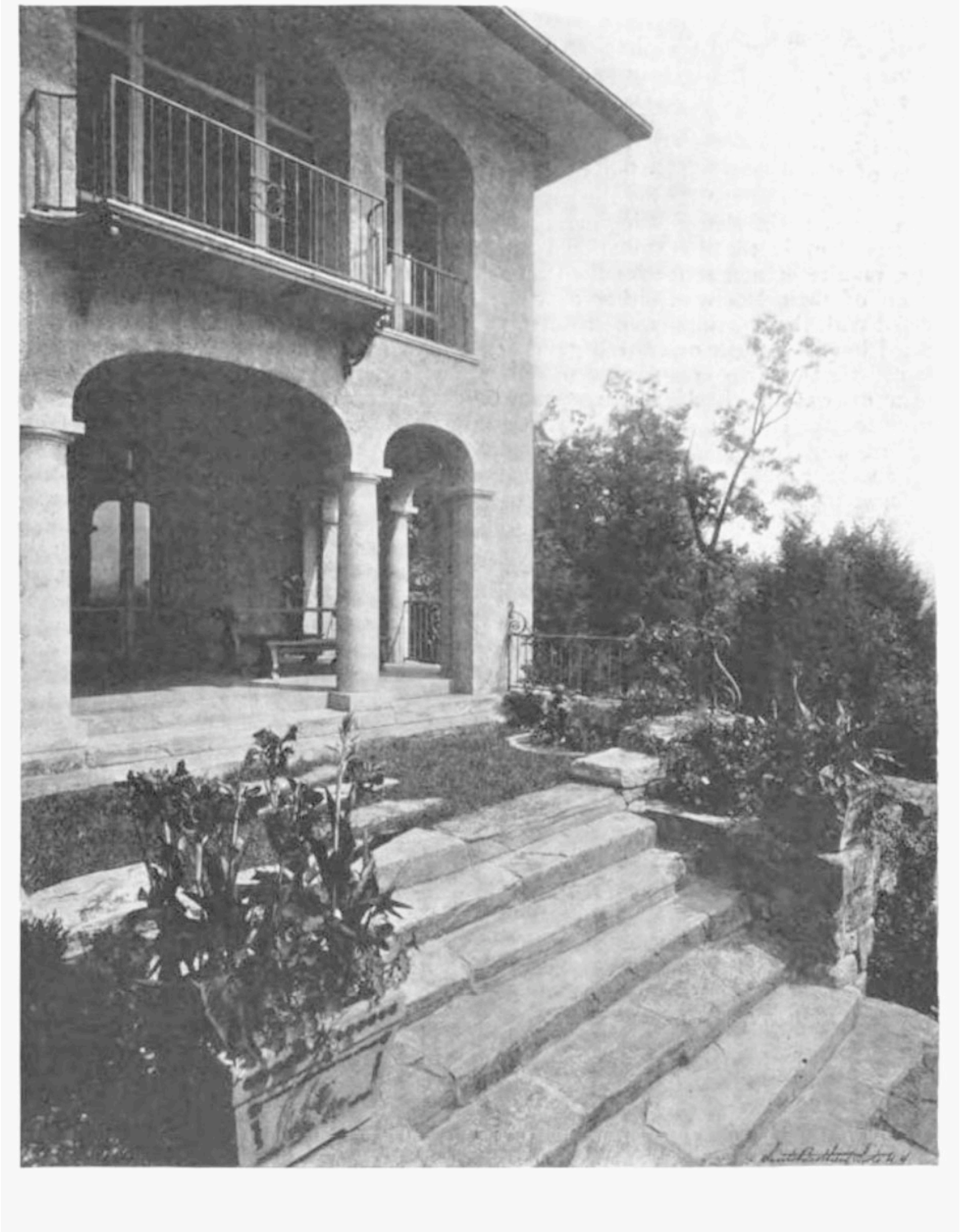


DINING ROOM LOGGIA—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y. BOWEN BANCROFT SMITH, ARCHITECT.

DINING ROOM LOGGIA, LOOKING SOUTH—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.

THE HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ. AT MONROE, N. Y.

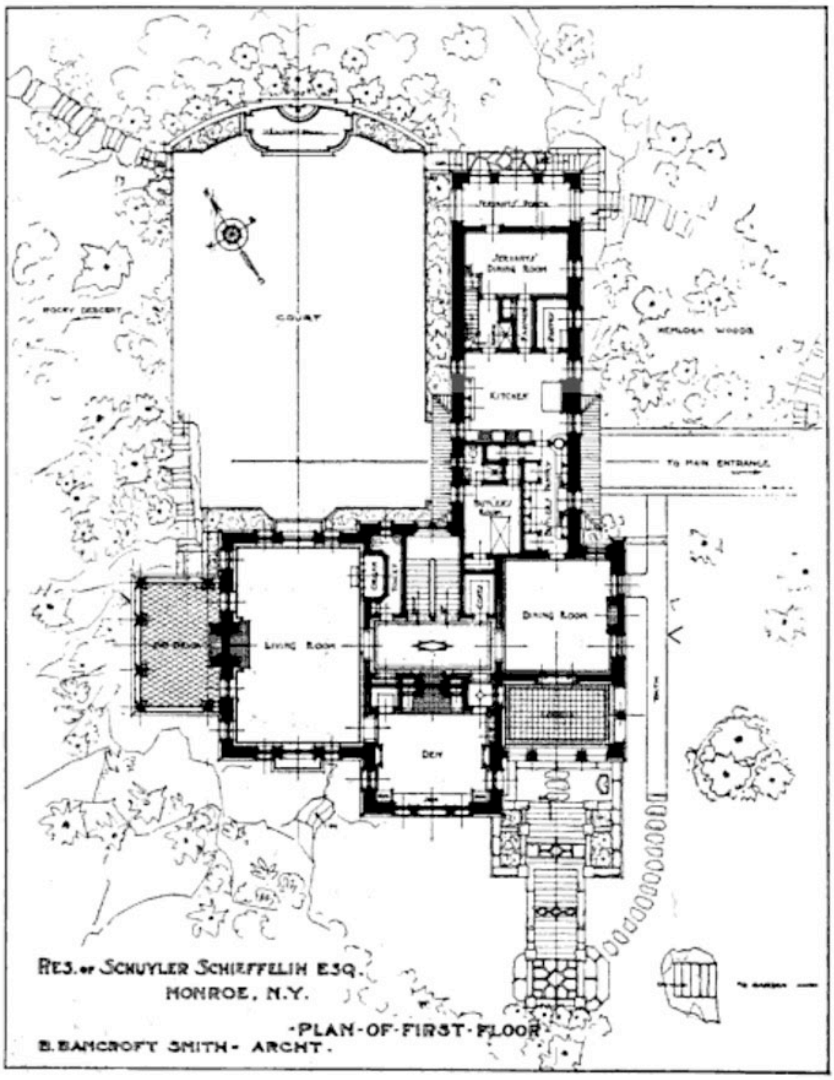
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect

By JOHN TAYLOR BOYD, JR.

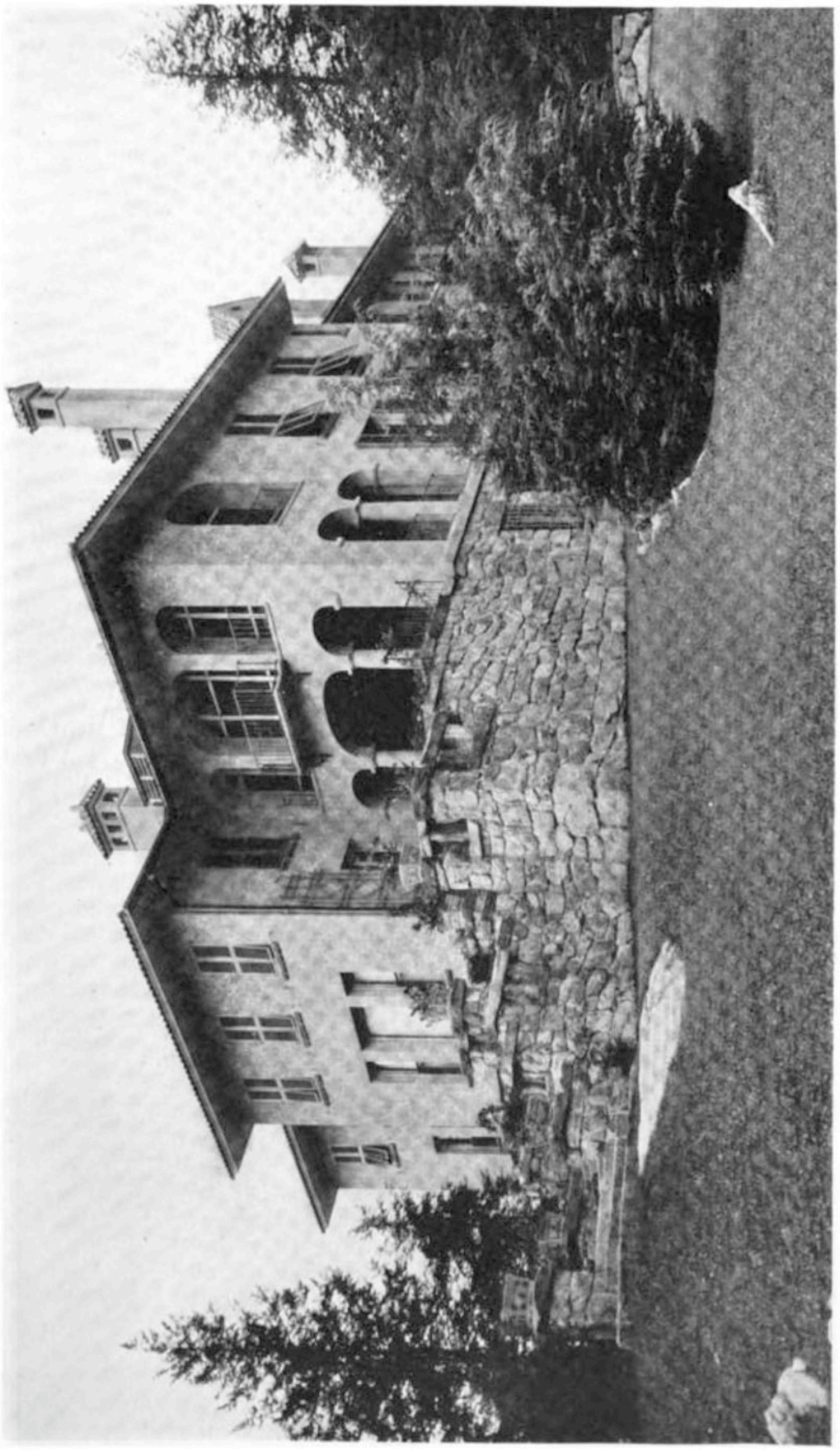
THIS work of Mr. Bowen Bancroft Smith, the country residence of Mr. Schuyler Schieffelin, in Monroe County, New York, may hardly be classed with the usual types of country houses that are erected in seashore or rural communities. It belongs instead with those occasional permanent dwellings located in wild and distant regions where only hunters and campers are wont to go. Indeed, that is what Mr. Schieffelin's house is—a permanent wilderness camp in the shape of a completely equipped house of the kind one finds near towns and cities. In Europe such houses are more common than with us, and in this case there is a certain resemblance to the more inaccessible villas hidden away in the Italian hills.

The resemblance of Mr. Schieffelin's house to the remote hill villas of Italy is a striking one, occurring again and again in the various aspects of the scheme. It furnishes the keynote of the whole design, provided that one realizes always that this similarity does not result from imitation or even from adaptation, but arises instead from like conditions expressing themselves in analogous architectural forms. The house has been made as much a part of its site as it well could be, for it seems to grow right out of a bowl-shaped hollow on the side of a wild steep valley running north and south. A stream, with a waterfall thirty-five feet high, which courses through the valley, has been dammed up to form a charming lake, some forty-five acres in extent, of irregular shores and containing some sixteen wooded islets. Overlooking the lake stands the house itself at an elevation of one hundred feet at the level

of the sun parlor, which is perched on a precipice rising out of the water. Such are the unusual features of the site of Mr. Schieffelin's house, and one may conceive some idea of the great beauty of its location if one thinks of it as growing out of the dark rocks and partly



built of them, its cement walls and reddish tile roofs enframed by woods of hemlock, spruce, and pines—most of them "old" growth of primeval trees—amid the sounds of the wind in the pines and the rushing of the waterfall nearby, all under the blue native sky. With this picture of the house in mind, its more particular features will repay careful attention, both in themselves and in their carefully studied relation to the whole impression for which they are so carefully designed. It will cause no surprise to learn that this unity is the result of consistently following the conditions of the site and that some unusual effects were arrived at in the course of the process which was carried so far as to influence the decoration of the interior walls of the house. On the exterior, the fine stonework of the basement walls is of rock quarried on the grounds with especial zeal to preserve the natural face of the stone wherever it had been exposed to the weather. A fairly dark gray stone it is, covered in places with green moss



SOUTH FRONT—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y. BOWEN BANCROFT SMITH, ARCHITECT.

and relieved by patches of black mica and reddish spots. Above the first story the walls are of concrete, water-proofed with a cement coating that preserves the color and texture of the concrete. The sub-basement for the heating plant under the porte-cochère was blasted out of the solid ledge and the excavated material used to construct all the house walls except for a few minor stud or brick partitions. The water table and all independent window sills are bluestone and the belt-course at the second story window sills is of cement. For the roof, S-shaped Spanish tiles were chosen to give a reddish tone, by selecting four hues of tile from deep brown to vermilion red, and mixing them at random to give a variation or "vibration" of color. The window blinds are painted a bright "mitis" green. Then there are the touches of the wrought iron railings and balconies, the cypress exterior woodwork treated with two coats of stain, the pink-and-green of the porphyry marble columns and the slab of the flooring of the loggia balcony.

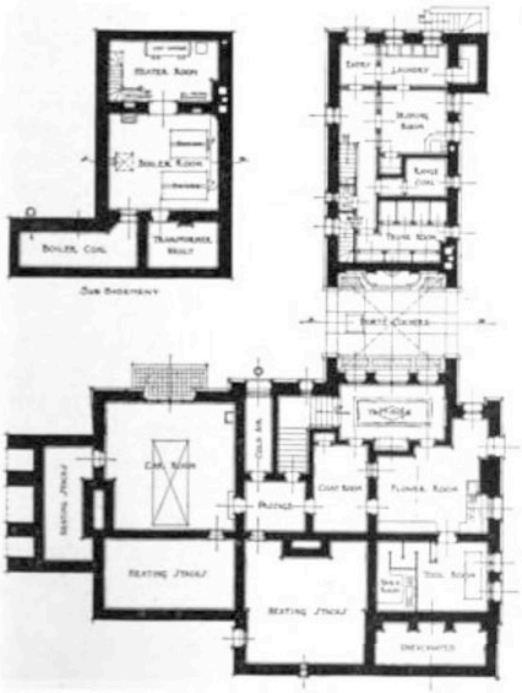
Altogether the exterior of the house has been simply designed to provide large wall spaces and roofs as a contrast for the black green foliage of the pines and hemlocks. Herein does Mr. Schieffelin's house recall the Italian hill villas in the effect of offering a foil or background for the planting, rather than the opposite arrangement—to which in northern countries we are more accustomed—of having the planting act as a foil to set out the building. This feature of the villas of Italy is one too little appreciated, and is the result of the decorative character of the foliage of that country—the cedars, cypresses, and stone pines—which is extremely statuesque, and which may be used architecturally even more effectively than stone or brick or other materials of construction. Were it not for the trees that surround them the villas in Italy would be often a sad disappointment, for many of them consist merely of bare walls and roofs of slight architectural merit. Of course I am not speaking of those perfectly wrought works of architecture which the better known Italian villas most certainly are, but refer more particularly to the countless villas which dot the hills throughout that country.

Such statuesque foliage is lacking in northern Europe, and in our own country for the most part as well, and consequently to get results, architects are forced to concentrate decoration and architectural features in the building, using the planting either to soften the contrast between building and site, or else to set forth the building itself more effectively. In California, where a statuesque flora is found similar to that in Italy, the architects have been quick to seize upon the advantages offered by the "architectural" foliage.

In the Schieffelin house, Mr. Smith seems to have chosen middle ground. He has created a simple house, yet at the same time endowed it with enough features of interest to set it out against the pine trees which count as decoration in masses rather than in individual specimens. The planting and landscape work around the house is naturalistic, consisting of steps, walks, etc., of rough stone set in small patches of green lawn immediately about the house. To the east is a formal garden in process of construction.

Such are the main features of the exterior as they have been schemed in intimate relationship to the site. The interior reveals the same controlling motive. Since the only approach to the house is by the roadway, entrance to it is found in the porte-cochère under the wing, whence one ascends to the main floor. Automobiles pass under the porte-cochère into a paved court, where they may turn around or else be left in the space marked "Car Room" on the plan. This "Car Room" is a touch of convenient planning; it is not the garage proper, which is located away from the house, but it is designed to allow the owner to keep one car always ready to be taken out at short notice without sending down to the garage. The porte-cochère is simply and skillfully treated, as the photograph shows, with a flat groin-vaulted ceiling set off by lines of inserted green tile. At the

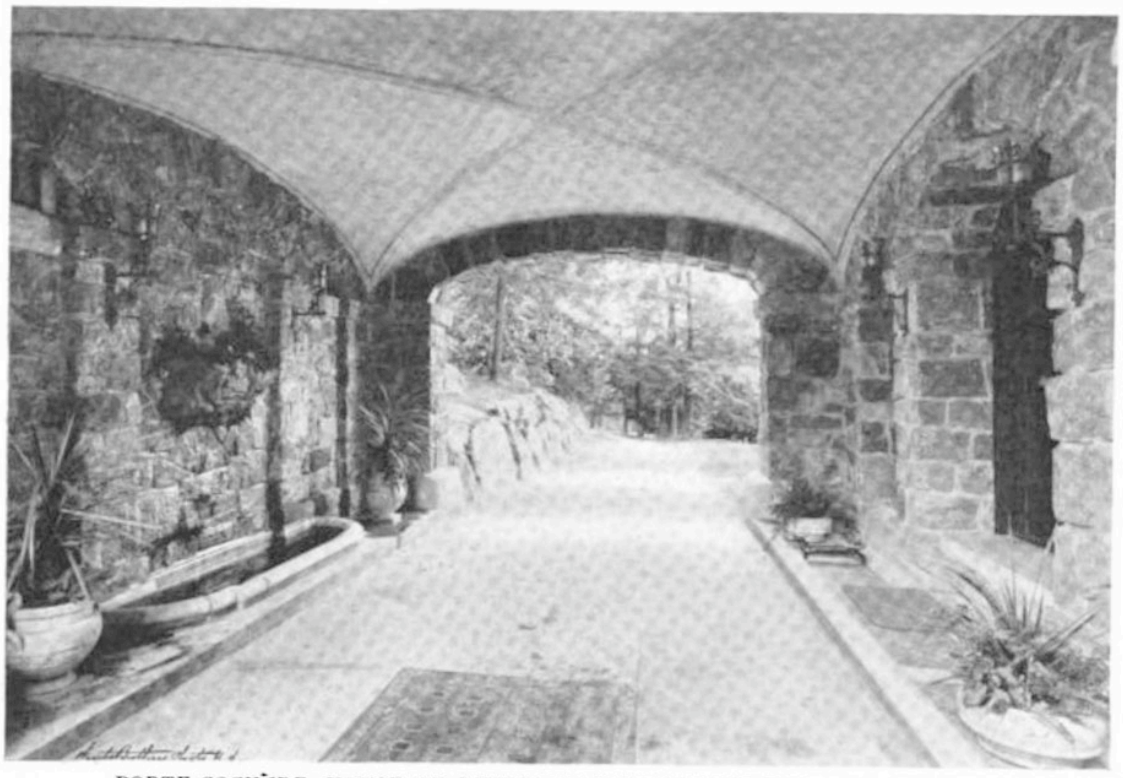
COURT—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.



Plan of Basement.

Plan of Second Floor.

HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.



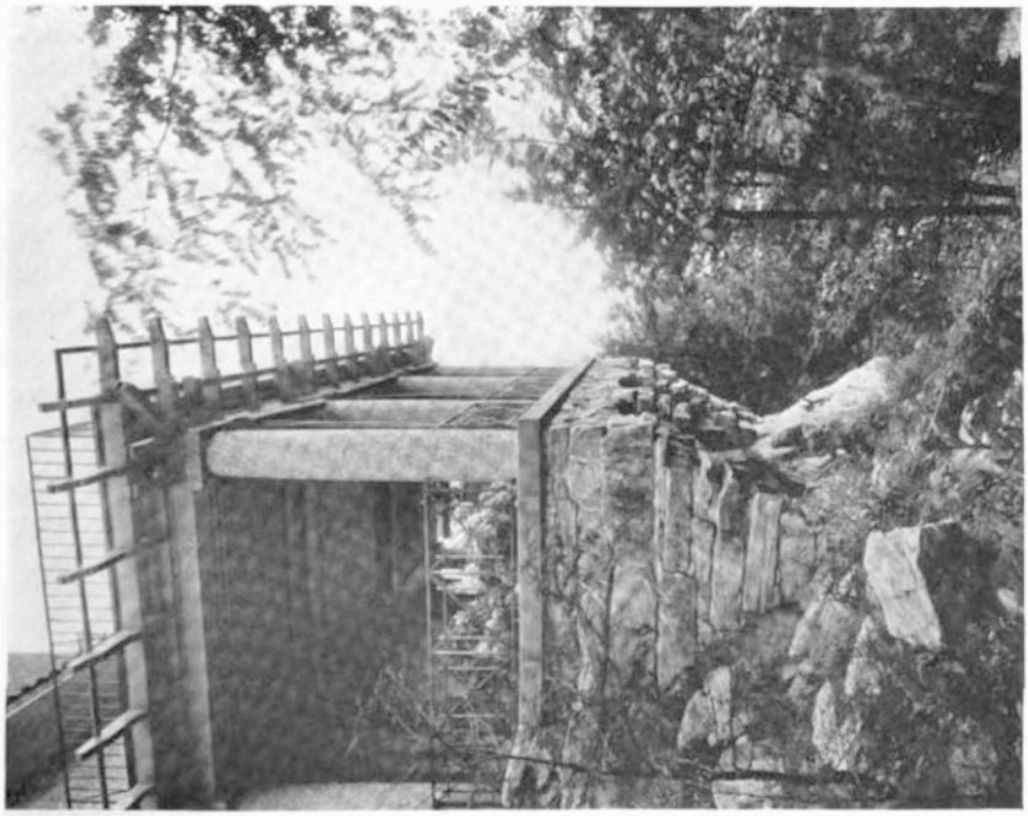
PORTE-COCHÈRE—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.

level of this basement entrance are the usual conveniences of coat-room, toilet, etc., and on the opposite side, under the wing, the laundry equipment.

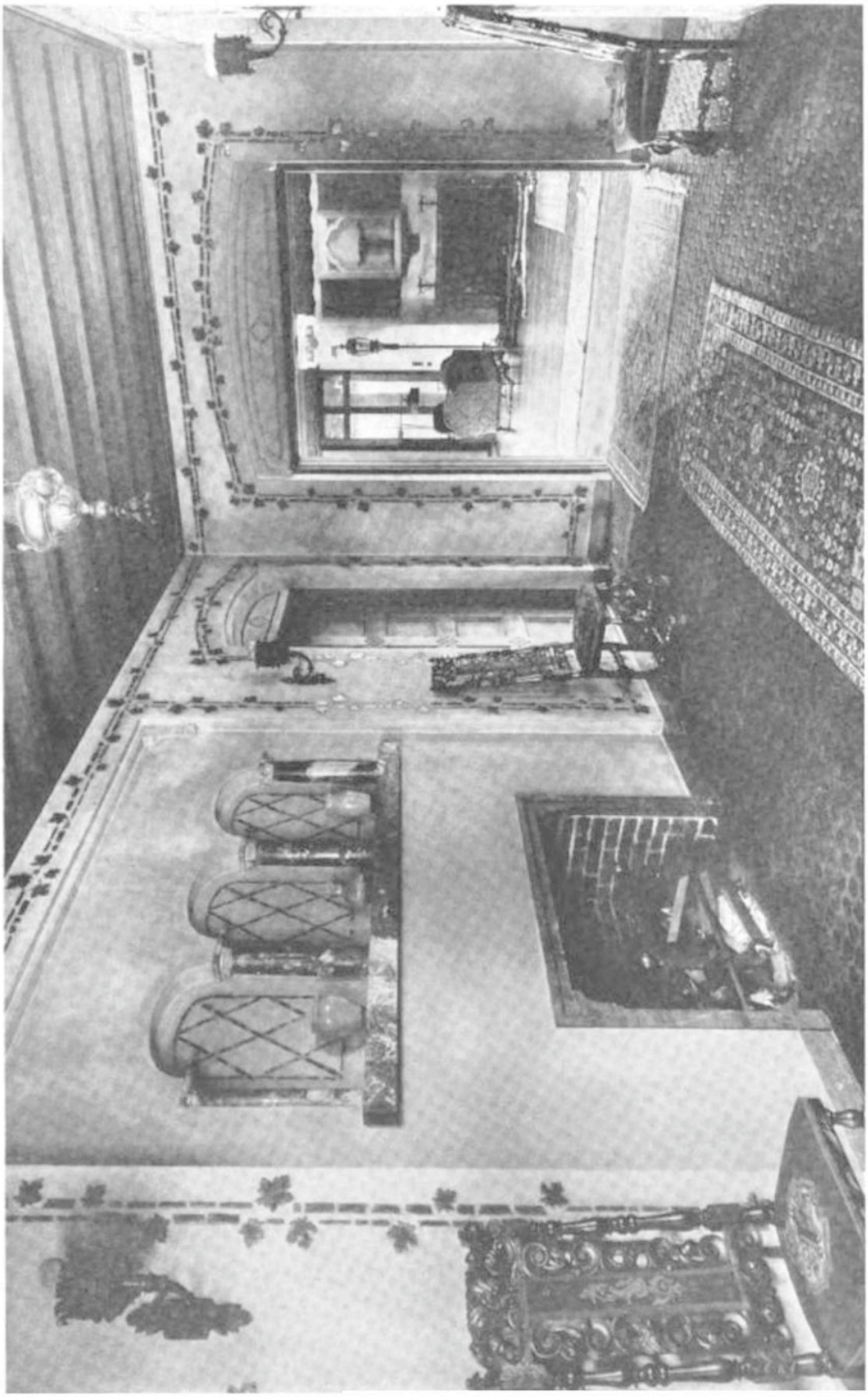
One ascends to the first floor to find to the left and east of the dining room, off which is the loggia referred to looking south over the lakes; then turning to the right one enters the large living room, with the sun parlor beyond hung over the precipice above the water on fine massive rough stone corbels; while ahead one sees a fireplace *en axe*, with doors at each side opening into Mr. Schieffelin's study. The kitchen wing stretches to the north from the dining room. Above, on the second floor, are the owner's room, with sleeping porch, four guest chambers of various sizes, with bath for each, and five servants' rooms, closets, etc. Taken as a whole the plan, like the house of Mr. H. H. Rogers of Southampton, Long Island, shows an arrangement that is symmetrical superficially, but which on account of the informal entrance has rather the effect of informality than of axial balance.

But in the whole design of Mr Schieffelin's house there is nothing more significant than the interior decoration. Not only does the work show high artistic ability of conception, along with skill and sureness of execution, but, still more important, reveals the use of new methods which seem to point to new fields of imagination and effort in the architecture of interiors. In accomplishing these results, Mr. Smith has simply followed out the same honest, logical methods of treatment that find expression in the plan and exterior. What he has done is this—besides building the house of the stone and ledges found in the ground and using the material to construct the interior concrete walls, he has recognized the concrete surfaces of these walls and, refusing to hide them in plaster or paint or imitation stone work, has simply finished them off in a coat of cement and then decorated them with tile, tapestries, hangings, bits of marble, etc. The resulting effect, instead of being crude, is wonderfully finished, decorative, rich in color and texture. In a word, the architect has successfully

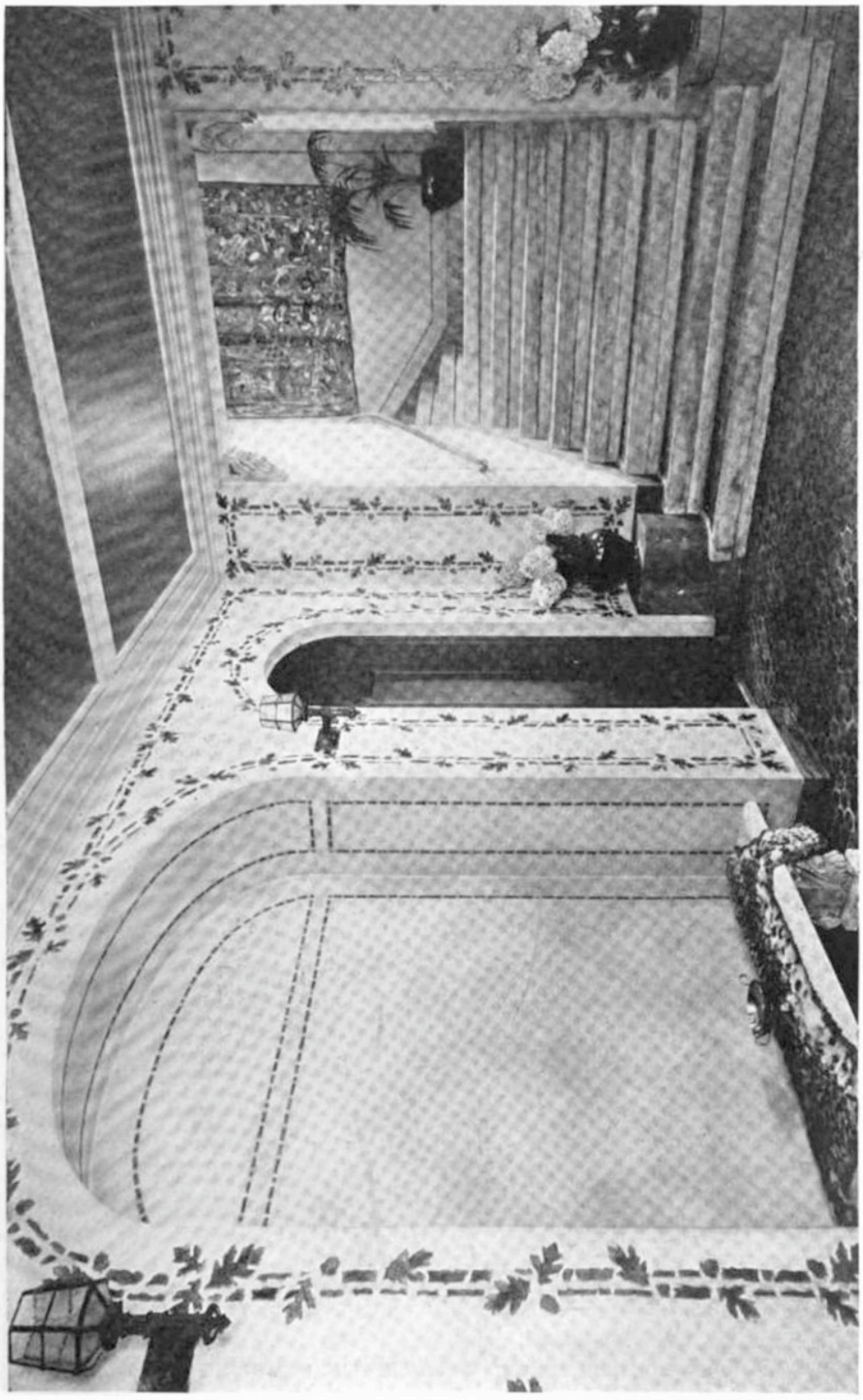
PORTE-COCHÈRE ENTRANCE—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.



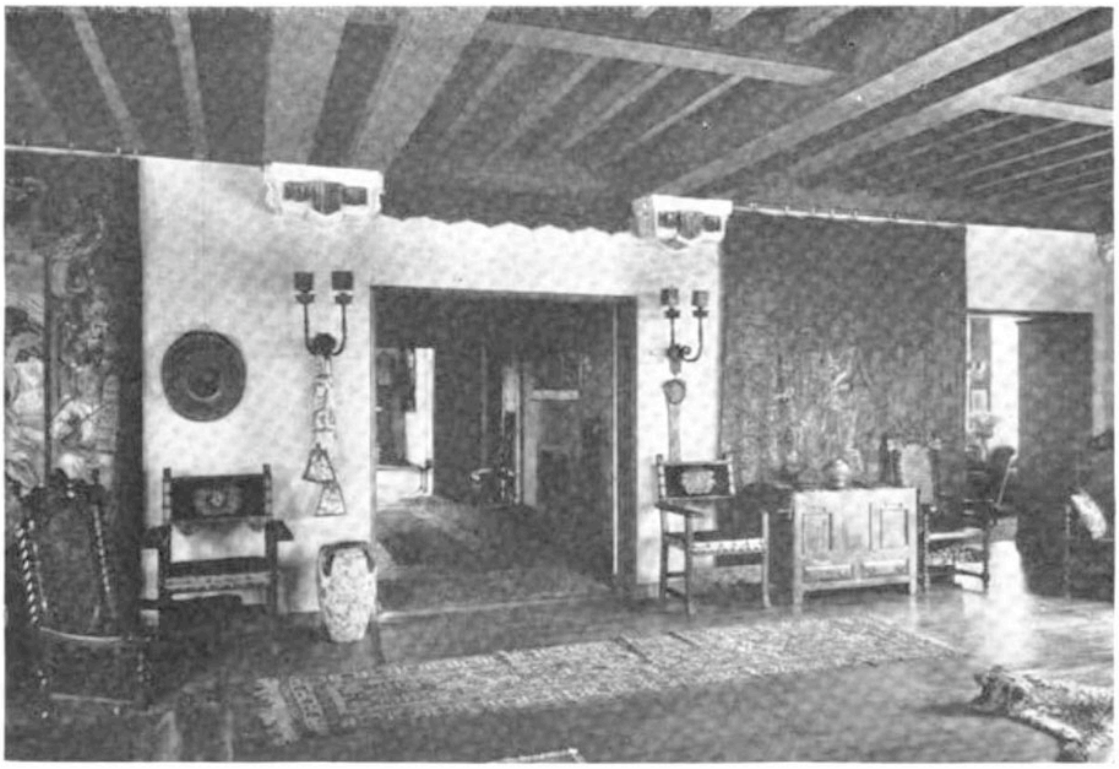
SUN PARLOR—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.



FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y. BOWEN BANCROFT SMITH, ARCHITECT.



ENTRANCE HALL AT BASEMENT LEVEL—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y. BOWEN BANCROFT SMITH, ARCHITECT.



LIVING ROOM—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.

DEN—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.

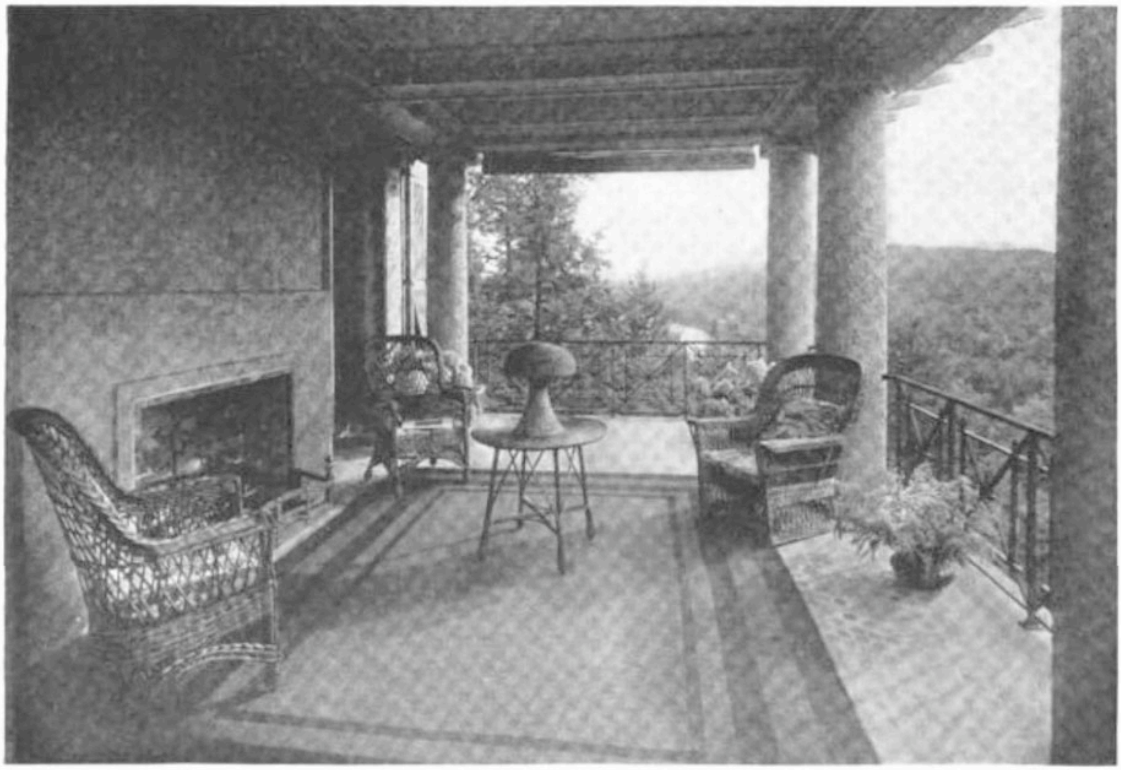
worked out a direct technique of treating interior concrete walls decoratively. It is a distinct achievement in architecture.

In thus designing what is practically a fireproof house and decorating it as such, it is to be hoped that a custom has been established that will become more widespread in the next few years. Not much longer will Americans be willing to risk large sums—and perhaps even their lives—in structures containing valuable furnishings which may burn in a night with slight hope of salvage, when for an expenditure of but a few percent more on the original cost a fireproof house might be obtained that would be reasonably safe from all but a very slight conflagration limited to a single room Architects should heed the cry of "Safety first!" which deserves to be introduced into house architecture in this country. In fact, each year sees more fireproof houses built, and, with the increasing cost of lumber and skilled labor, we may soon come to a point where concrete or other fire-resisting materials will be cheaper in first cost than wood frame construction. With this increasing use of fire-resisting construction of concrete or cement coated walls architects will be inclined to give more attention to the surfacing and decoration of such walls.

In decorating the cement walls, Mr. Smith has depended largely on tilework, in which he takes an absorbing interest. The photographs show some features of the floor tiles, but give no idea of their fine qualities of color and texture. The hexagonal tiling in the halls, dining room, entrance hall and sun parlor are three-inch pieces of leathery reddish color, porous in texture, relieved by frequent but irregularly spaced figured tiles. The rectangular, tiles in the loggia are one inch by two inches of somewhat the same color, and varied with an occasional two-inch square ornamental tile. But the most interesting pattern of all is the maple and the oak leak decorations in the entrance and first-story hall respectively. It would be impossible to exaggerate the beautiful color of these tiles or the truthful representation and remarkable vitality of their outlines, equalling the most skillful carving. The stems are of exquisite glazed blues and bluish purples, while the leaves themselves have green centers, mottled and speckled as if by fungi, with yellow tips, resembling leaves in the first turning of autumn foliage. Mr. Smith experimented with the collaboration of several tile manufacturers for nearly a year in an effort to create tile work leaves before finally satisfactory ones were submitted to him. Once he obtained the desired samples no pains were begrudged to use them to best advantage. In order to arrive at geometrical patterns and yet preserve a free-flowing line and an appearance of naturalistic growth in the leaves and stems, full size drawings of the tiles were made in which a place for each tile was established. This work Mr. Smith did himself instead of leaving it to a draughtsman. After they were manufactured, the tiles were pasted on brown paper, and applied to the wall on grounds prepared for them, much as mosaics are set. Then a "brown" coat of cement was brought around the tile, and a final coat of cement applied over the whole wall and wiped off the face of the tiles. A long process it was, studied with greatest care and ability, executed with high technical skill, and consequently expensive. It will be readily seen that such work, however simple to describe, is not so simple to do, and that any who desire to practice such methods should use them warily, else what seems a fine beginning will be discredited by careless or unskilled imitators. Perhaps with experiment a simpler technique will be perfected which, at not too great expense, will put into common use new methods of wall design of great merit. There is nothing more beautiful than some of the tiling made by American manufacturers and it deserves greater attention from architects and decorators than it has hitherto received.

A few other features of the interior decoration of the Schieffelin house merit a brief description. In the entrance hall the ceiling is of gold leaf applied in one and one-half inch pieces to furnish a texture, which pieces were further lacquered to remove the

DINING ROOM—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.



SUN PARLOR—HOUSE OF SCHUYLER SCHIEFFELIN, ESQ., MONROE, N. Y.
Bowen Bancroft Smith, Architect.

shine usual in gold leaf. The stairs have concrete risers and tile treads. In this connection it will be recalled that in the Rogers house, referred to above, and built later, a house showing the same bold direct handling of materials decoratively, the main stairs were of brick treads and risers topped with a simple rail. The room base throughout the first floor of the Schieffelin house is red marble harmonizing with the floor tiles.

One of the most successful parts of the house is the main floor hall. The beamed ceiling of chestnut adzed by hand, the fireplace left as a plain opening with the niches above of fleur-de-peche marble enframement, the tile oak leaves on the walls and brownish hexagonal floor tile, all combine in unusual distinction, harmonizing with the general scheme of the entrance hall. Following much the same treatment, the large living room has a heavy beamed ceiling, a floor of large oak planks relieved by a slight pattern of oak pins, marble room base and concrete walls. Here, however, instead of the tile for the decoration of the concrete walls, Mr. Smith has depended on tapestries and on bands of ecclesiastical embroidery of gold (appliqué on Genoese red velvet) hung directly all around under the ceiling beams. The dimensions of this room are twenty-four feet by thirty-six feet six inches, by eleven feet six inches high. Another interesting room is the den, twenty feet long by sixteen feet six inches wide, finished in chestnut of silvery stain, this woodwork detailed with the minimum of mouldings and relief to show the figure of the grain. An interesting feature of the den is the recessed fireplace flanked with bookcases to hold those more evanescent types of literature which, on vacations, afford the reader distraction without setting up undue strains within him. In the dining room, except for the tile floor, there is a departure from the consistent treatment of the rest of the house. This is a conventional Georgian room, about twenty feet square, paneled in small panels up to the ceiling. As integral parts of the first floor scheme, the loggia and sun parlor are both simply and finely treated, in keeping with the rest of the house.

The isolated situation of the Schieffelin house demanded that an independent mechanical plant be installed. An adequate water supply is pumped by an oil engine from a well located some seventy feet above the house, through a four inch main into two large tanks on the roof of the house. For fire protection there are standpipes with connections on each floor for hose of three inches diameter, somewhat larger than is customary. The sewage disposal plant consists of receiving chambers and syphon chamber, some distance below the house, which open into three fields by means of a cloverleaf valve, which permits only two fields to be used at a time and which is expected to be turned once a month. Among the electrical features are power outlets located conveniently throughout the house, especially in bathrooms, pantries, etc., for heating irons, chafing dishes, etc.; and as a sort of burglar protection, a switch located back of the owner's bed turns on one light in each room of the dwelling which cannot be turned off except at the same switch. In addition, there is a system of intercommunicating telephones through the rooms, arranged to be extended to the garage and to any future outbuildings that may be erected on the estate.

On the basement plan will be noticed one or two additional features of mechanical interest. These are the dark room for photography, so arranged that access is had to it by means of a small labyrinth of passages permitting the door of the room to be opened without admitting light; and a flower room for arranging flowers with sink, concrete floor, and a bench running around the room.

Such are the essential features of this highly successful work of Mr. Smith's—a house built almost entirely of fire-resisting materials, mostly quarried on the site, boldly and honestly designed, executed with skill and precision; to which distinct achievement the higher one has been added, that of unusual artistry in color decoration, obtained by using unappreciated materials in a new way.