

HOME GROUNDS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649505616

Home Grounds by Alexander F. Oakley

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ALEXANDER F. OAKLEY

**HOME
GROUNDS**



Oskey and Jones, Architects.

ENTRANCE GATE.

Appletons' Home Books.

HOME GROUNDS.

BY

ALEXANDER F. OAKLEY,

AUTHOR OF "BUILDING A HOME."

NEW YORK:

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,

1, 3, AND 5 BOND STREET.

1881.

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HOME GROUNDS.

I.

GENERAL ARRANGEMENT OF GROUNDS.

"Strength may wield the ponderous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home;
But elegance, chief grace, the garden shows,
And most attractive is the fair result
Of thought, the creature of a polished mind."—COWPER.



THE average human being first devotes his energies to acquiring his three daily meals, what he considers necessary raiment, and what he considers a fair lodging; but, when born to these necessities or

when supplied with the means of providing them, he devotes his leisure to seeking what he considers enjoyment. It is in this search that his temper, his taste, and his aspirations show themselves, and by nothing more than by what he has done or left undone in improving and beautifying his immediate surroundings. Who can not fairly judge of the sanitary, intellectual, and moral status of a community or of a private dwelling by its outward conditions? The straggling squalor of the outskirts of cities is much more than sensually shocking in its analogy to the souls who are content with such surroundings. In short, where no prospect pleases, it is hardly to be wondered at if man is vile. It is futile to preach against alcohol to a man who finds in it a relief from the hideousness of his daily life. Our parks have already afforded a respite from the exigencies that largely support the rum-shops; but, until landscape gardening in its broadest sense is recognized as a constant necessity, we shall hardly do more than better the physical condition of a few people here and there in our large towns. In proof of this assertion—the constant efforts of philanthropists in sending poor children away from the cities with satisfactory results—without sentimentality, it is not too much to say that in a tour of our tenement-house districts, we shall find the happiest and most respectable families to be those who have a well-cared-for box of plants in their window. In short, he who has no love of nature lacks at least one quality of a man.

From all this it would seem that the duty of beautifying one's home is not altogether a selfish matter. Even a tastefully ordered backyard in a city will in time influence the standard of cleanliness and sightliness of the neighboring inclosures, rivalry among housewives, if no higher sentiment, often transforming in a few years a row of dreary garbage pens into trimly kept grass plots, where nothing more unsightly is ever permitted to appear than the fluttering forms of suspended underwear drying in the sun.

One of the advantages of a suburban home, with an acre or more of ground surrounding the house, is that even this washing-day spectacle can be concealed from the inmates of the house and from the neighbors.

The first province of landscape gardening is to abate nuisances of every kind and degree. With this object, to take all possible sanitary precautions in drainage, in nature of soil, and in character and extent of vegetation, natural advantages should be made available, and injurious changes, that often in time alter the conditions that constitute desirable or undesirable sites on land that is uncared for, should be considered. Of course, the most thorough and scientific precautions may be nullified by the carelessness of near neighbors, especially if their grounds are so relatively placed as to drain through. For the nuisance of noxious odors arising from neighboring pig-pens, oil or soap factories, there is no cure but a legal process or a removal to windward; but the nuisance of unsightly