Gas fires and their settings / [Sir Lawrence Weaver].

GAS FIRES AND THEIR SETTINGS · SIR LAWRENCE WEAVER

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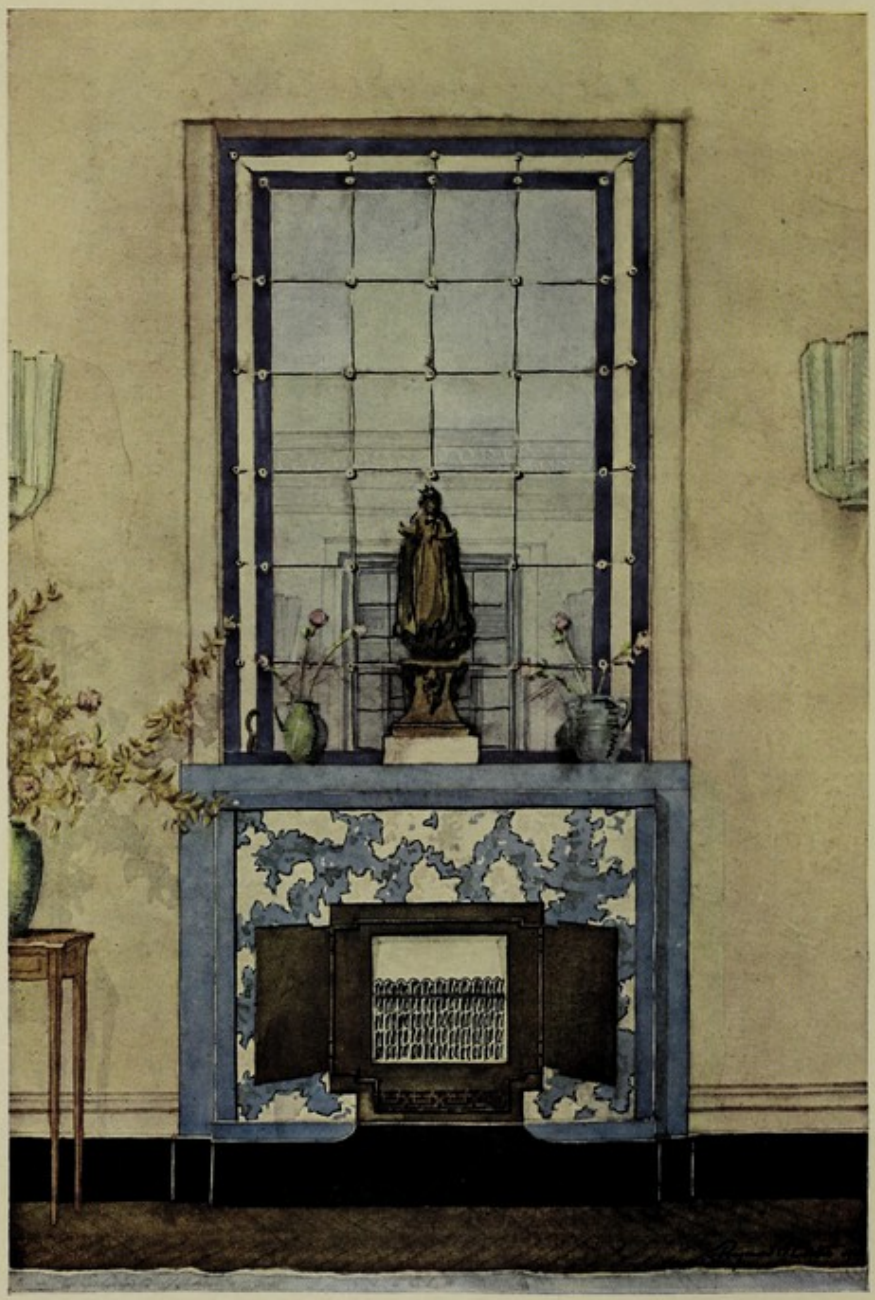

A new sort of gas fire without a hearth. *Architect: P. Morley Horder*
From a drawing in colour by Raymond McGrath

GAS FIRES AND THEIR SETTINGS

SIR LAWRENCE WEAVER, K.B.E.

F.S.A., Hon. A.R.I.B.A.

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PREFACE

I have first to make grateful acknowledgment to the Editor of the "Architectural Review" for his courteous permission to reprint the following pages from the issue of the "Review" for February, 1929.

The article was based on an address which I had the privilege of reading before the Annual Conference of the British Commercial Gas Association in October, 1928. It will be seen that it is a review of the æsthetic development of the design and setting of gas fires. It is also in some sort an appeal to the architectural profession to devote to the further improvement of their design the thought and ability which architects have used so dexterously in the improvement of all kinds of internal fittings for buildings.

But, just as the "Architectural Review" is a paper read not only by architects, but by a large body of laymen, and, may I add, laywomen, who take a delight in "fitness for purpose" in architectural interiors, so I trust that the following pages will interest many outside the profession.

I take this opportunity of thanking my many architect friends who have supplied me with interesting material, and with luminous suggestions that have given to what I have written any value it may have.

If there is one point I may emphasize here—a severely practical one—it is the outstanding importance of providing every room in

every building with a flue. All the best scientific opinion seems to be concentrated on the importance of installing only such systems of heating as require the provision of flues. Only so can ideal ventilation be secured. No building can be regarded as properly equipped in which heating and ventilation have not been considered as a single problem, and effective radiation of heat as the mainspring of hygiene and comfort alike. I am here concerned with the design and setting of gas fires rather than with their technical values. But the vigorous support given by so eminent an authority as Professor Leonard Hill, F.R.S., to the new type of gas fire "radiants," as the best means of yielding the infra-red rays, is too important to be ignored by anyone who writes about gas fires. It is because gas fires are the best element in room ventilation, the most efficient vehicle of the infra-red rays, the most important element in home labour-saving and the best solution of smoke abatement, that they grow continually in popularity with both the expert and the layman.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

GAS FIRES AND THEIR SETTINGS

As the eye roves over the industries which owe their life to architecture, the variation in the interest taken by architects in their efforts and fortunes is seen to be very marked. This must be due to one of three causes. Either the industry is concerned with products incapable of reacting to the designer's thought, or the industry does not seek the aid of architects in improving its level of design, or architects are blind to its possibilities. Some struggles at the British Empire Exhibition to get gas fires of seemliness had made me think about their design, and I set about taking stock of the position. The conclusion soon followed that all was not well with gas fire design; that the subject deserved more attention from manufacturers and architects alike; that it had not fully dawned on the

manufacturer to ask the architect for help, and that, not being asked, the architect had not in fact helped.

It is common experience, in relation to other architectural fittings daily used by architects, that they are apt to design something that meets their sense of the decency of things. That is the test of the interest they take in the sort of fitting, whatever it may be. So I asked some of my friends whether they had ever designed a gas fire; if so, could I see it; and, if not, why not?

I got a budget of very disconcerting replies, and give a few typical extracts:

1. Of course some architect ought to have designed a gas fire long ago, but I have not come across the man.

2. With regard to the treatment of gas fires, we use a great many of these, but . . . frankly treat them as a means of heating the room and not in any sense as a chimneypiece or fireplace.

3. I wish I could help you on the question of gas fires, but I have never done more than make sketches for gas fires by themselves, and these were never executed. I have designed special electric fires.

4. It will be a splendid thing if someone can design a gas fire that has the character peculiar to itself. So far one has had to use

a combination which is really, in my judgment, unsatisfactory, and certainly there is nothing on the market that at present fulfils the purpose.

5. I am sorry I cannot help you. I have had to put up with the fires supplied by the trade. I am glad you are taking the question up, as it is very difficult to get what one wants from stock.

6. I have always felt that they ought not to look in the least like coal fires.

The authors of these gloomy views are all leaders in their profession.

One more extract is illuminating:

I have never put a gas fire into a house, although my clients have very often done so, after I have gone, and they have merely adapted what I had suggested as an open fireplace, which I do not think is an ideal thing to do at all.

This brings us to the root of the trouble.

Gas is too often a second thought, and suffers from all the disadvantages that follow when a problem is not logically examined from the beginning.

It is my opinion—for what it is worth—that the inset fire, or the gas interior, or the built-in fire, whichever name may be preferred, is æsthetically a right type, and that the self-contained fire, necessarily standing forward

from its surround (instead of being incorporated with it), presents to the designer difficulties, with which he can hardly hope to contend with perfect success.

The self-contained fire is an important element in the industry for an obvious reason. Where gas is being installed in place of a coal fire, it means far less trouble and expense to employ the self-contained type than to tear out the coal grate and begin all over again. The householder, converted from coal to gas, wants to make the change with the minimum of mess and expense.

It is reasonable to guess that architects have taken their impressions about the artistic amenity of gas fires from the self-contained fire, and do not generally realize the possibilities of the inset fire. This is in no way astonishing. It is only eighteen years since the first inset fire was put on the market, and eighteen years is a very short time in which to convert so wisely conservative a profession as the architect's.

There linger in architects' minds the memories of gas

fires of the 'eighties. They were made, it must be admitted, to designs both fearful and wonderful. I have amused myself, though sometimes with a shudder, in going over catalogues of that decade, and gas fires of that type still survive in economical homes. It is not so long ago that I expelled a fire with asbestos tufts interspersed amongst cast-iron radiants in a frame of contorted ugliness.

When I made my enquiries, my purpose was not so much to discover what variety of settings—whether in tile or marble or metal surrounds – and what mantelpieces my friends might have devised for the best inset fires taken from manufacturers' catalogues, as to find what any one of them might have achieved by tackling the design of the gas fire itself. To that particular query there was a universal negative.

The way I think the design problem of the gas fire should be faced is this: Gas, as a method of heating in the form of an open fire, is as distinct from burning coal in an open grate as electrical heating is distinct from

gas heating. What are the requirements of a coal fireplace? Broadly, that it should consist of some form of basket or shaped basin of fireclay or iron grating, associated with some method of achieving a draught for a mass of combustible material which leaves substantial waste products in the way of ash. This apparatus needs so to be arranged that, when burning material falls out of the basket or the shaped basin, it shall fall safely on to an incombustible hearth.

The gas fire presents an entirely different problem. There is no burning matter to fall on a hearth. There is nothing needing disposal but burnt gases, which are carried up a flue far smaller and far simpler than is necessary for a coal fire. When the designers of gas fires first got away from the idea that they need only supply a small independent frame to take radiants (whether of cast-iron, or of silky asbestos, or of the tubular fireclay type, which is now standard) they visualized this frame as something which stood forward into the room and

was connected with the existing open-fire chimneypiece behind by a large elbowed pipe. The development from this primitive arrangement was to get the gas fire closer to the existing chimney and to hide all flues and elbows more and more carefully, until now they can be altogether invisible. Moreover, the best gas-fitting practice now provides that the pipes supplying the gas to the fire shall be fixed under the hearth instead of trickling round the tile surround above the hearth.

In 1905 the single vertical columnar radiants were introduced. They made it possible to get rid of the front bars that had held the old radiants in position, and called for no more than a thin clip. This reform, in conjunction with the invention of the injector ventilator and the adoption of the new type of flue, amounted to a revolution in gas-fire design. In 1910 new patent fires were invented to fit completely over the front of a coal fire. They went some way to remove the impression that the gas fire was merely an addition and an after-

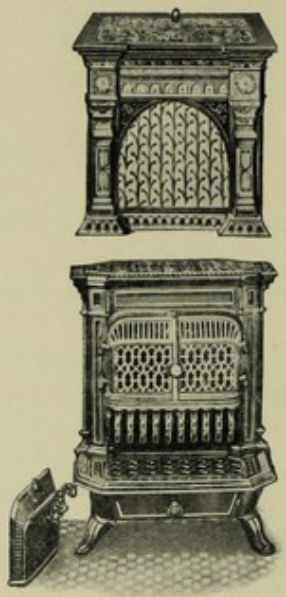


Fig. 1. The art of the gas fire in 1885

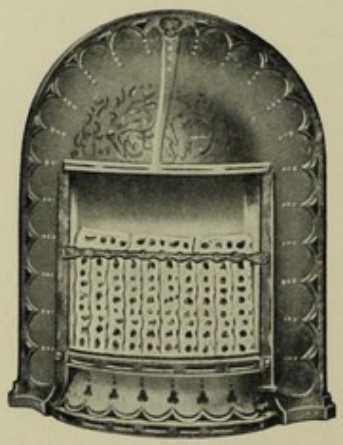


Fig. 2. Vertical columnar radiants were introduced in 1905, and this fire was then regarded as a startling æsthetic development, as indeed it was

thought, but the new type was also adapted as an interior or inset gas fire.

This development incorporated the Thermo fire front, which was introduced for the first time in 1909. By the Thermo, heating was concentrated on radiation, and a preponderance of convected heat became ancient history.

In a catalogue of 1885, which followed the International Smoke Abatement Exhibition at South Kensington, there appear all manner of gas appliances which have disappeared from use. A more striking example of the development of art in industry could hardly be found than that which is shown by

a comparison between the fires of 1885 and those of 1929.

My inquiries about gas fires were followed by a search for examples showing the degree of effective thought given by architects to the best use to be made of the available types of fire.

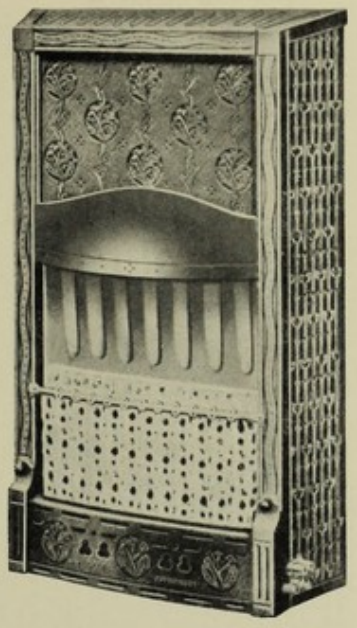


Fig. 3. The first gas fire to cover an existing coal grate, 1910. The same pattern was also adapted for an inset fire

The makers have, in one respect, done a considerable service. They have striven to produce gas fires of varied decorative character, suitable to various historical styles. There are available Jacobean or Georgian or Adam gas fires, as well as fires of perfectly simple form which take their place inoffensively in any scheme.

In producing historical types the manufacturers have met what is no doubt a specific demand, because many people suppose that a good effect is secured only by

having everything *en suite*. I do not hold that there is virtue in having Jacobean ornament on a gas fire: indeed, I think it tiresome. A gas fire is a modern thing, which ought to avoid the pretence of having existed in the reign of James I or Queen Anne or George III. But it is the makers' business to satisfy the requirements both of architects and the general public, and the main demand for such things in historical manners comes from the public and not from the architect. Be that as it may, it is possible to illustrate a great variety in the setting of admirable types of gas fires.

There could hardly be more convincing evidence of the good opinion in which gas fires are held by the architectural profession, than the freedom with which they have been installed at the home in Conduit Street of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Three examples of their substitution for coal grates are illustrated in Figs. 4, 5 and 6.

Mr. Walter Tapper, A.R.A., Past President R.I.B.A., has

Fig. 4. Royal Institute of British Architects, Conduit Street, W.
A General Office

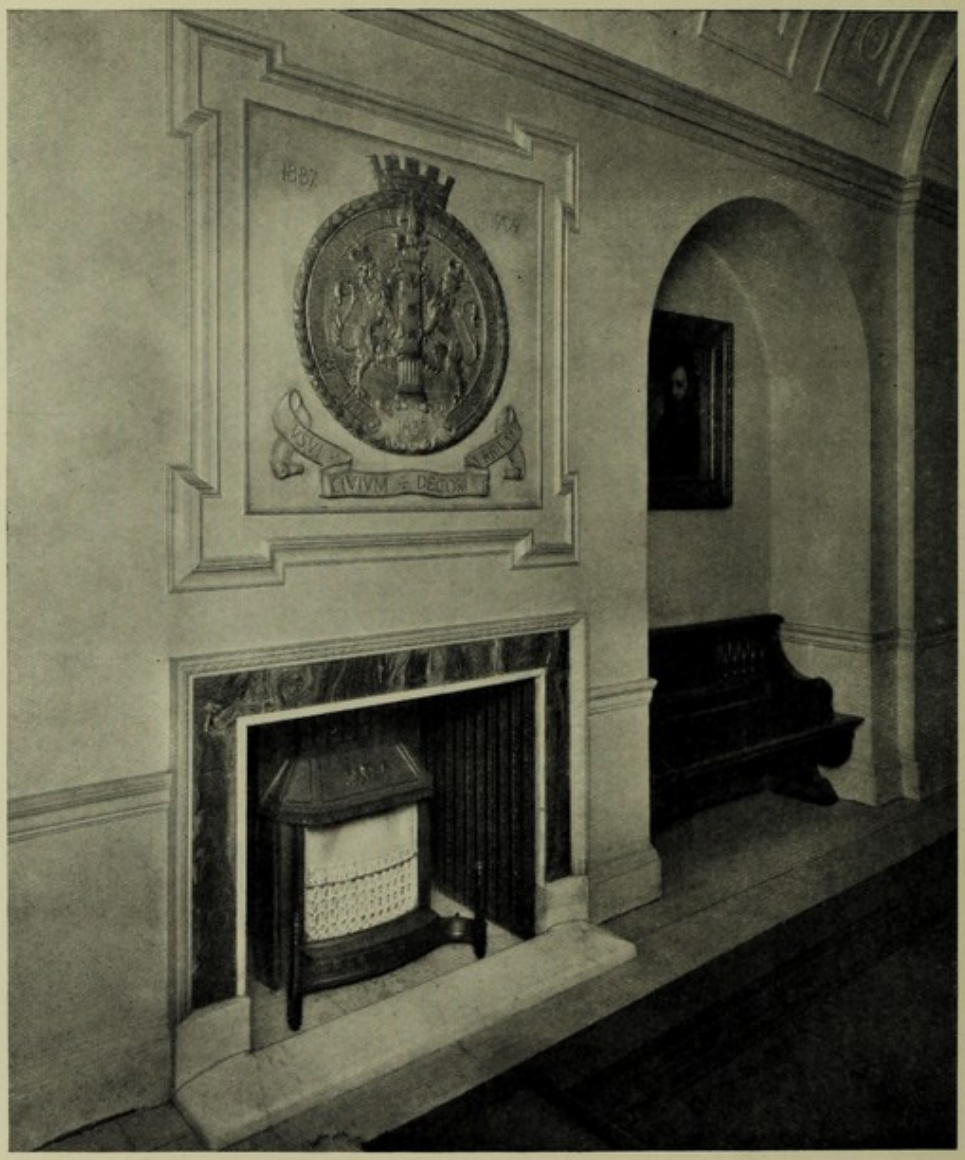


Fig. 5. Royal Institute of British Architects, Conduit Street, W. Entrance Hall

Fig. 6. Royal Institute of British Architects
The Office of the Secretary

Fig. 7. A Library Fireplace
Architect: Walter Tapper, A.R.A.
Past President R.I.B.A.

given much thought to the settings of gas fires. There are many possible alternative treatments. One of them touches the question of the vertical plane in which the gas fire is set. Figs. 7 to 11 show some examples designed by Mr. Tapper. They mark the range of practicable recessing varying from fixing the fire flush with the wall face to setting it back between 13 and 14 inches. They begin with an interior which is flush with the front of the mantelpiece, and go on with others set back to a moderate or a considerable depth with splayed surrounds. The deep-set fire-places are rather less efficient

Fig. 8. A Doctor's Waiting Room
Architect: Walter Tapper, A.R.A., Past President R.I.B.A.

Fig. 9. Fire set 9½ ins. behind front face of the marble surround which projects 4 in. from the wall, giving a net recess of 5½ ins.

Fig. 10. Fire set 10½ ins. behind front face of architrave which projects 2 ins. from the wall, giving a net recess of 8½ ins.

as heating units, but economy in consumption is not always a primary necessity. On the whole the most popular treatment is to have the gas fire about flush with the wall surface, as shown in Mr. Tapper's Doctor's Waiting Room (Fig. 8) and in Mr. Darcy Braddell's room at Bedford House, Chiswick (Fig. 12).

Mr. E. Guy Dawber emphasizes this form of treatment in its most logical expression, in a West End shop, by providing nothing in the nature of a mantelpiece and setting the gas

fire in a panel of plain tiling, with a simple decorative border. It looks, and is, a thoroughly practical and pleasant way of solving the problem, and the absence of a mantelpiece prevents space being lost in a shop of moderate dimensions. (Fig. 15).

At a house in Essex, Mr. Edward Maufe has made good use of Hopton Wood stone as a surround, and his studio fire-place at Lady Hilton Young's house is an interesting composition. (Figs. 14 and 16).

The little fire devised by

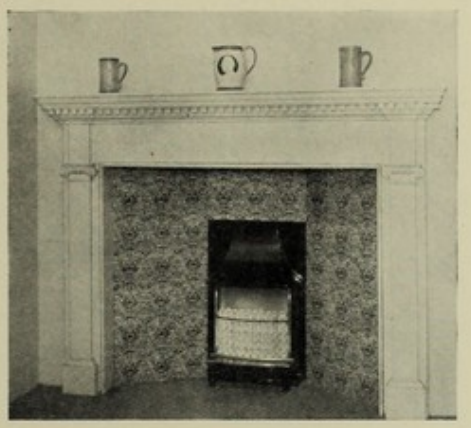


Fig. 11. Fire set 17 *ins. behind front face of mantel which projects* $3\frac{3}{4}$ *ins. from wall, giving a net recess of* $13\frac{1}{4}$ *ins.*

Fig. 12. Bedford House, Chiswick. A bedroom fire flush with wall face
Architect: Darcy Braddell, F.R.I.B.A.

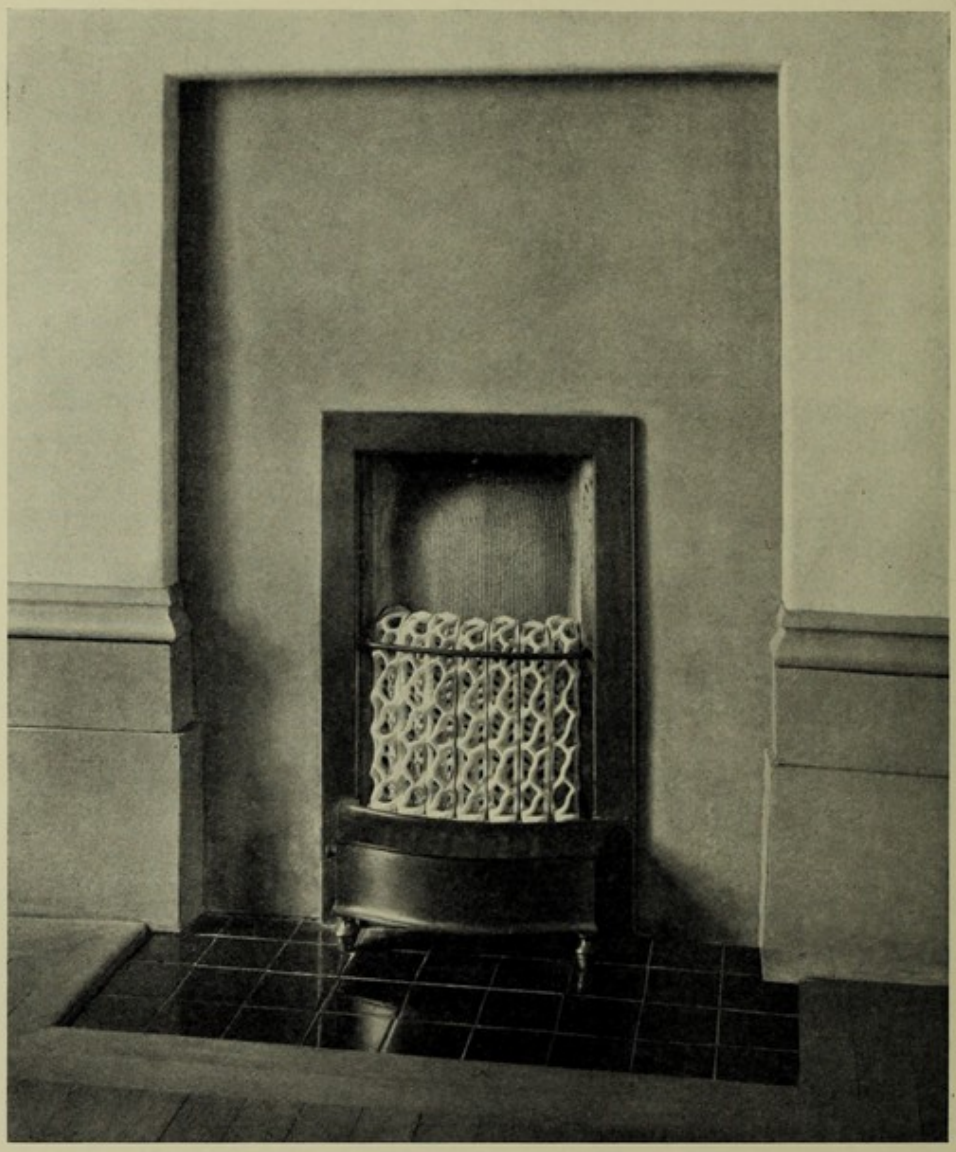


Fig. 13. At No. 4 Bentinck Terrace, Regent's Park. Gas fire with painted asbestos backing. Architect: Cyril Farey, F.R.I.B.A.

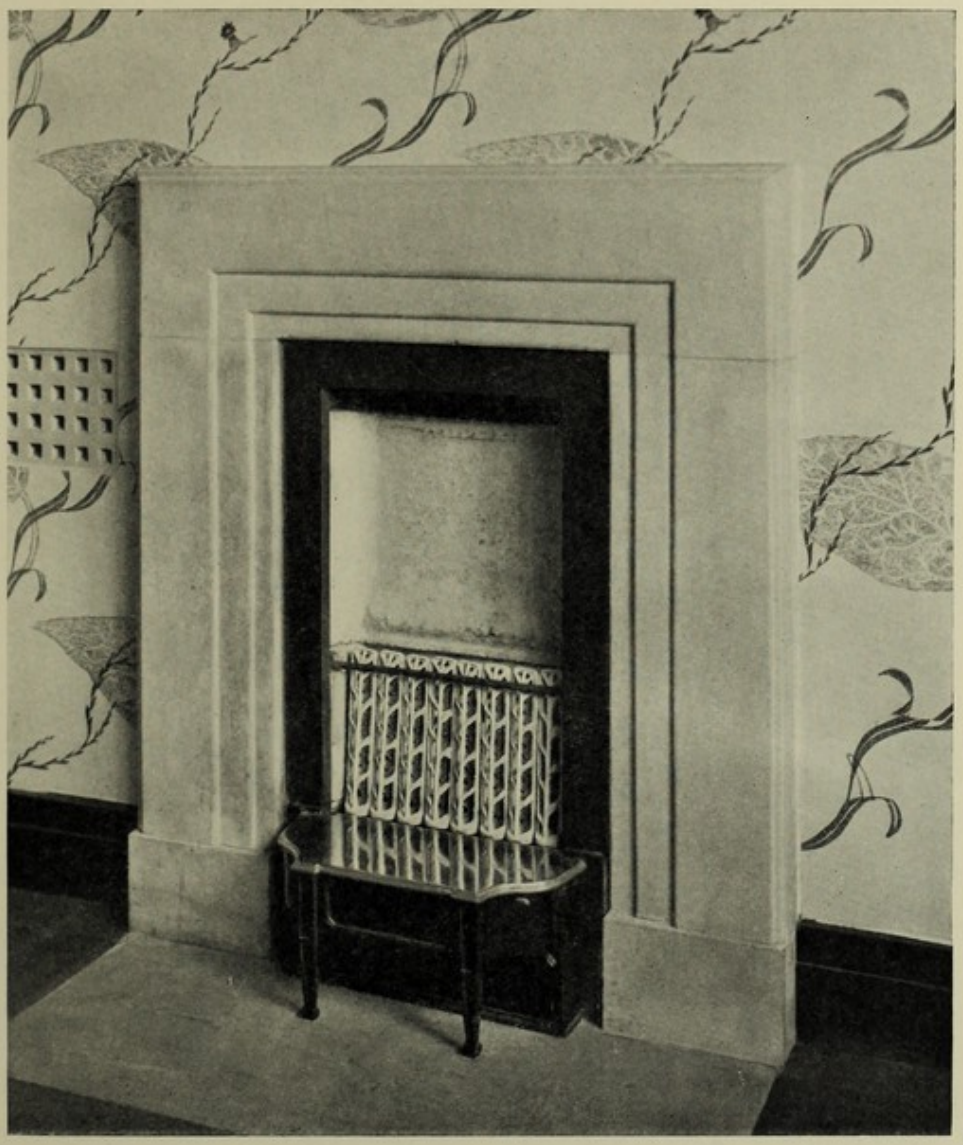


Fig. 14. At Mansard House, Loughton, Essex. Gas fire set in Hopton Wood Stone
Architect: Edward Maufe, M.A., F.R.I.B.A.

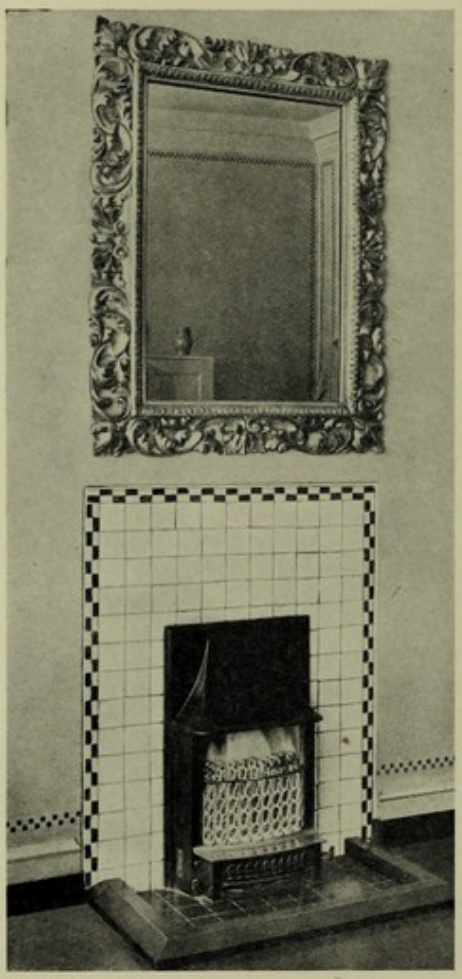


Fig. 15. In Madame Auret's Showroom, Wigmore Street, W. Tile surround without mantelpiece Architect: E. Guy Dawber, A.R.A., Past Pres. R.I.B.A.

Mr. Cyril Farey (Fig. 13) shows the charming character of a stark simplicity, the surround being of asbestos painted the same colour as the skirting which returns into the recess. The asbestos surround is recessed about one and a half inches from the general wall surface, so as to form a stop for the wall paper.

A good contrast to the last illustrations is furnished by the fire-place in Sir Frank Baines' private office, which shows a canopied interior set back a substantial distance and framed by an imposing mantelpiece. (Fig. 17).

Fig. 16. Lady Hilton Young's Studio, Leinster Corner House, London, W. Architect: Edward Maufe, M.A., F.R.I.B.A.

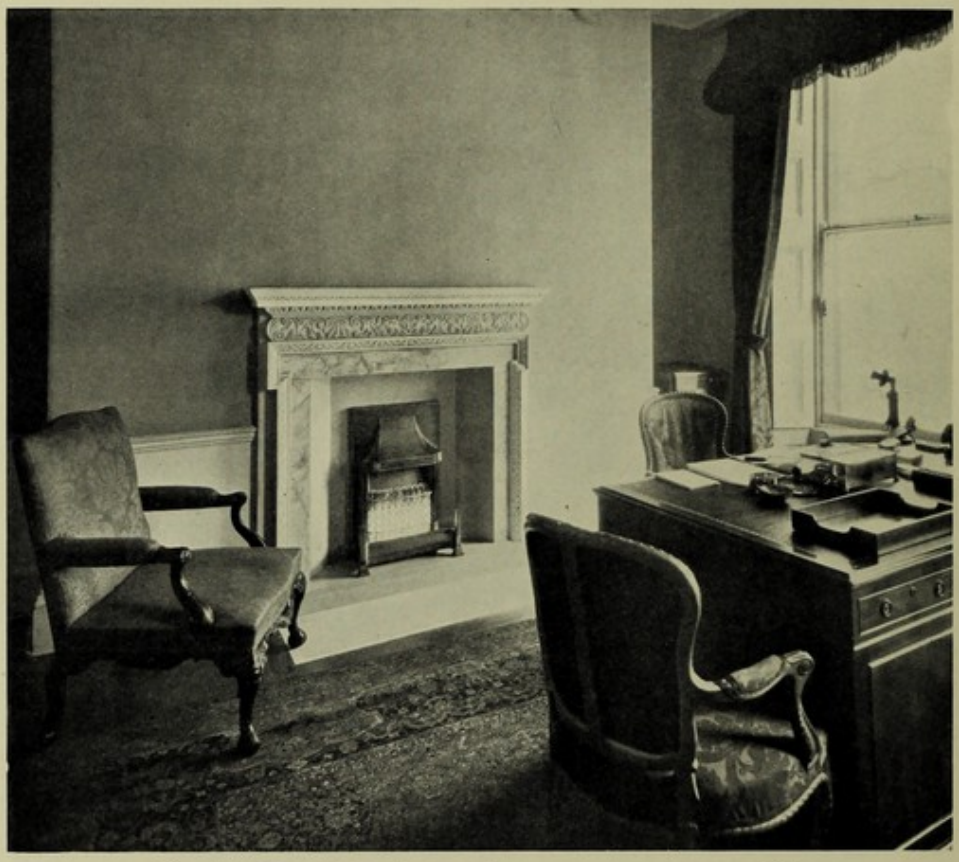


Fig. 17. No. 13 Dean's Yard, Westminster. Private Office
Architect: Sir Frank Baines, F.R.I.B.A.

In Fig. 18 is shown an example, designed by Mr. Morley Horder, where the width of the fire-place opening was directed by a necessity that it should line up with a large picture set in the panelling of the room.

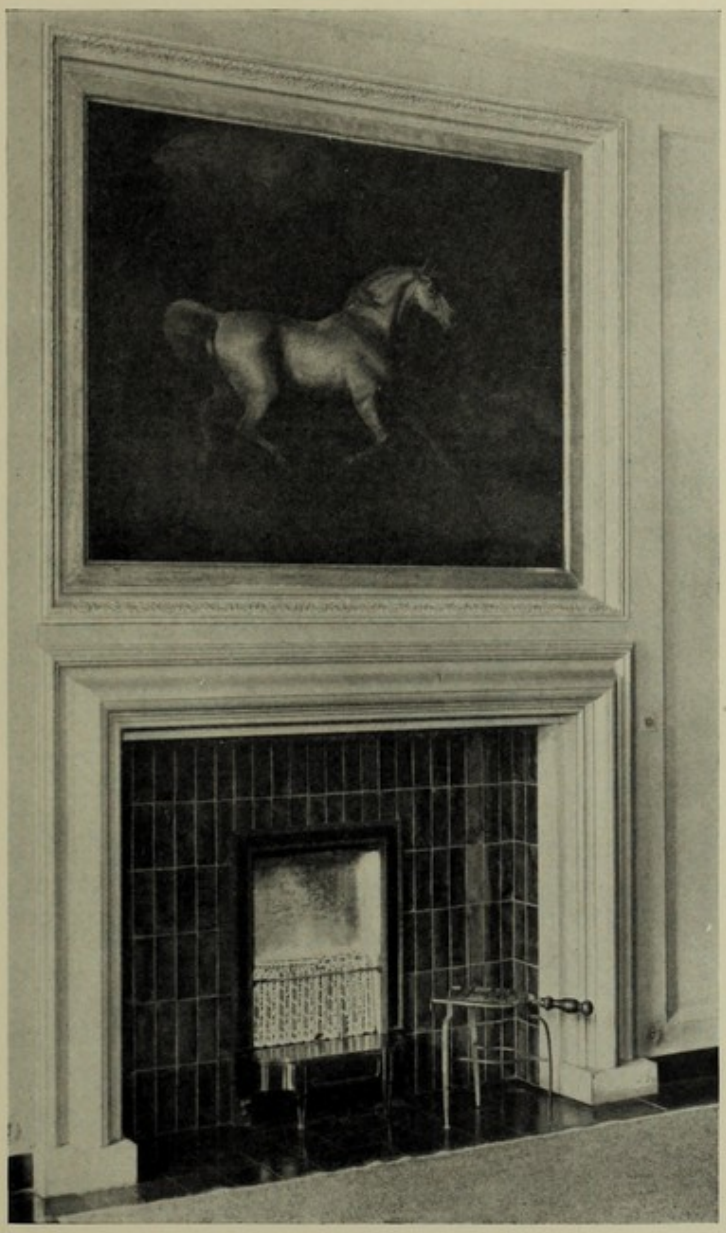


Fig. 18.
At 38 Hamilton Terrace, N.W.8
Gas fire inset in wide tile surround

Architect:
P. Morley Horder

Fig. 19. At 39 Holland Street, Kensington. The drawing-room. Gas fire with canopy and dogs. Architect: H. Austen Hall, F.R.I.B.A.

Fig. 20. At 39 Holland Street, Kensington. A bedroom—wide inset gas fire with fourteen radiants. Architect: H. Austen Hall, F.R.I.B.A.

Two admirable settings, devised by Mr. H. Austen Hall, appear in Figs. 19 and 20. The bedroom gas fire is of an unusual width.

Messrs. Worthington & Son fixed simple interiors very pleasantly in rooms of the hostel at the Manchester

Fig. 21. Sitting Room, Women's Hostel, Manchester University
Architects: Thomas Worthington & Son, FF.R.I.B.A.

University (Fig. 21), and Mr. Holden, of Messrs. Adams, Holden & Pearson, has in his own room a gas fire in a setting of great simplicity and charm. In this case there was no hearth or flue in the room, so breeze blocks were laid on the floor to form a bed for the tile hearth, which was

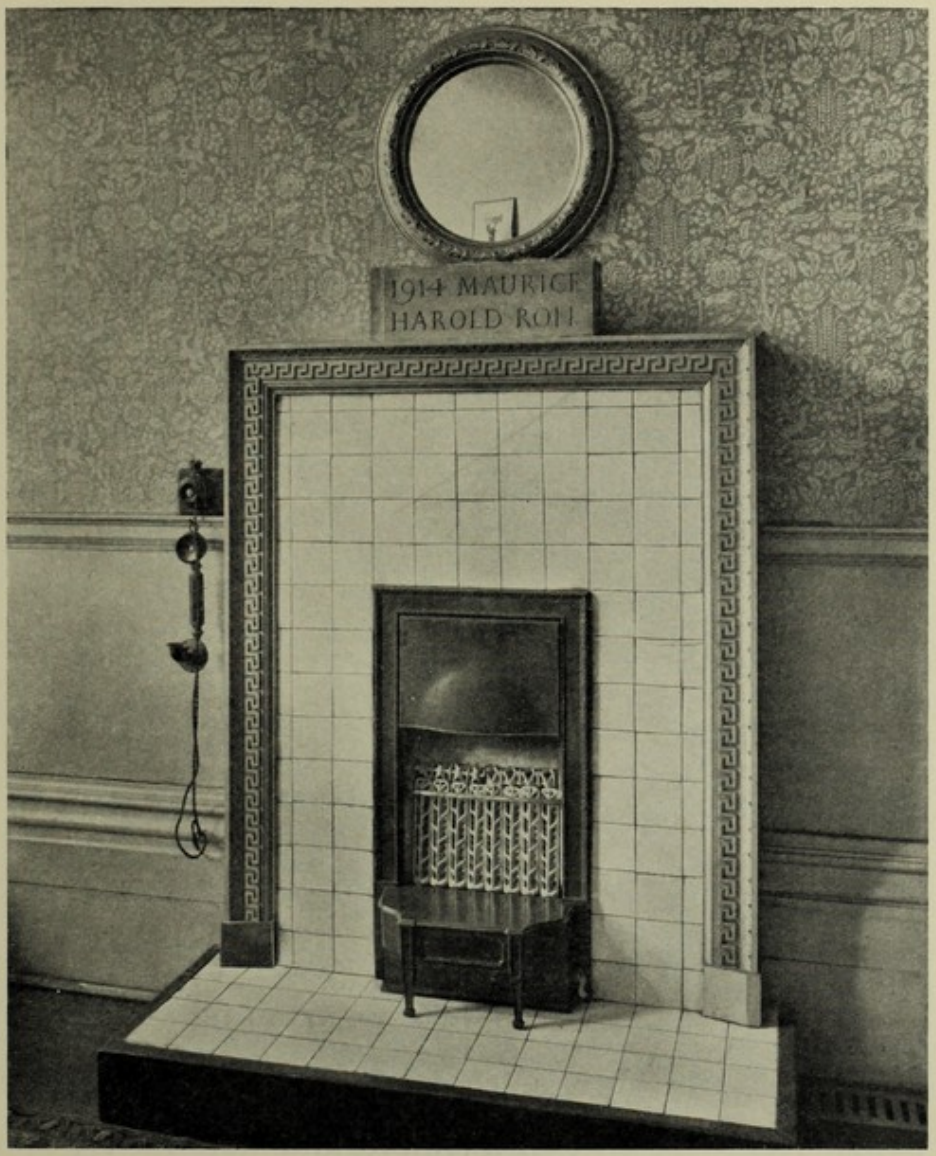


Fig. 22. At No. 9 Knightsbridge, S.W. A gas fire with flue introduced into a room previously without a flue. Architect: Charles Holden, F.R.I.B.A.

Fig. 23. At No. 22 Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea
Architect: Humphrey C. D. Whinney

finished with a teak margin. The recess for the gas fire was formed by building similar blocks on the wall face. The only cutting of the wall was for a shallow flue. (Fig. 22).

Mr. Humphrey Whinney, of Messrs. Whinney, Son, & Austen Hall, has utilized a simple and familiar type of canopy fire in a setting of decorative tiles which are all

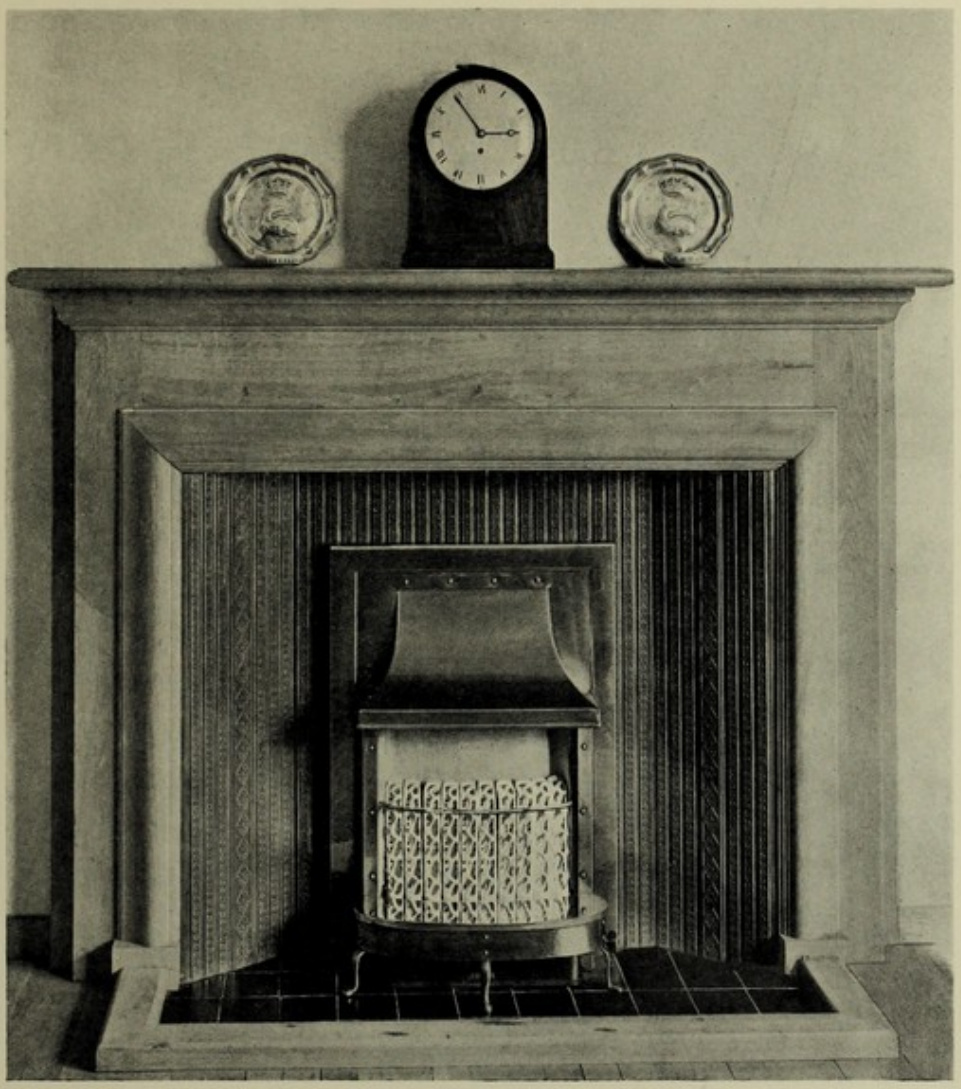


Fig. 24. At Hazeley, Bidborough. Gas fire set in ornamental cast iron surround
Architects: W. G. Newton, F.R.I.B.A. & Partners

the more agreeable because there is a double row of them above the fire. (Fig. 23).

At Hazeley, Bidborough, Messrs. W. G. Newton & Partners have returned to an eighteenth century practice in employing a decorative cast iron panelled treatment instead of tiles or marble (Fig. 24), and a good deal more might be done in this way. It is, however, rather more popular at the moment, when a metal surround is desired, to use sheet copper or armour bright steel, as is seen in the Doctor's Waiting Room, by Mr. Walter Tapper, on p. 23.

There is a great deal to be said for the sheet metal treatment, because makers now supply this type of surround in an adaptable form, which suits openings with a fairly large range of sizes, and this facilitates securing appropriate surrounds from stock at short notice.

In Mr. J. S. Gibson's dining-room at 17 Eaton Place, the motif of an open fire-place has been employed. The gas fire is of dog grate type, with the radiants sloping instead of

vertical: this no doubt goes some distance in creating the illusion of a coal fire. (Fig. 25).

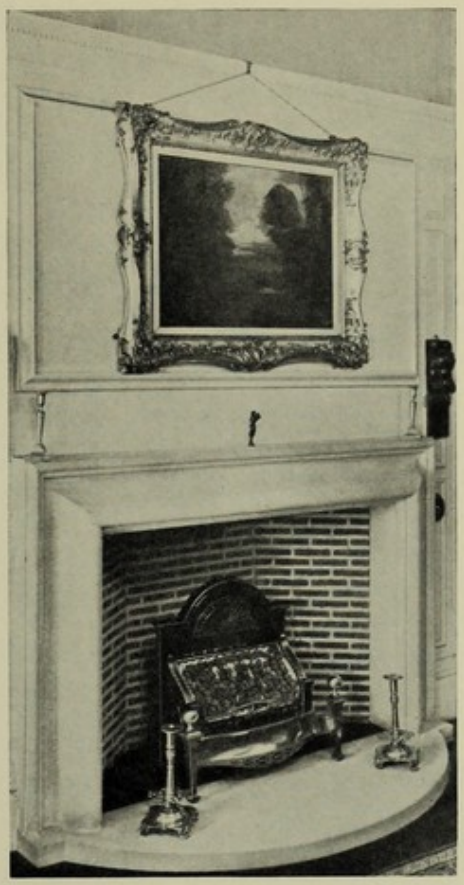


Fig. 25. Dining-room, 17 Eaton Place, S.W. Architect: J. S. Gibson, F.R.I.B.A.

Gas has achieved no greater architectural honour of late than to be used in Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's own home, Chester House, the first piece of domestic work to be awarded the R.I.B.A. gold medal for the most important building of the year in London. Photographs of the dining-room and two bedrooms show with what fine taste the gas interiors have been set. (Figs. 26, 27 and 28).

Mr. Joseph Emberton has made a success with a flat treatment of two beautiful marbles. (Fig. 29).

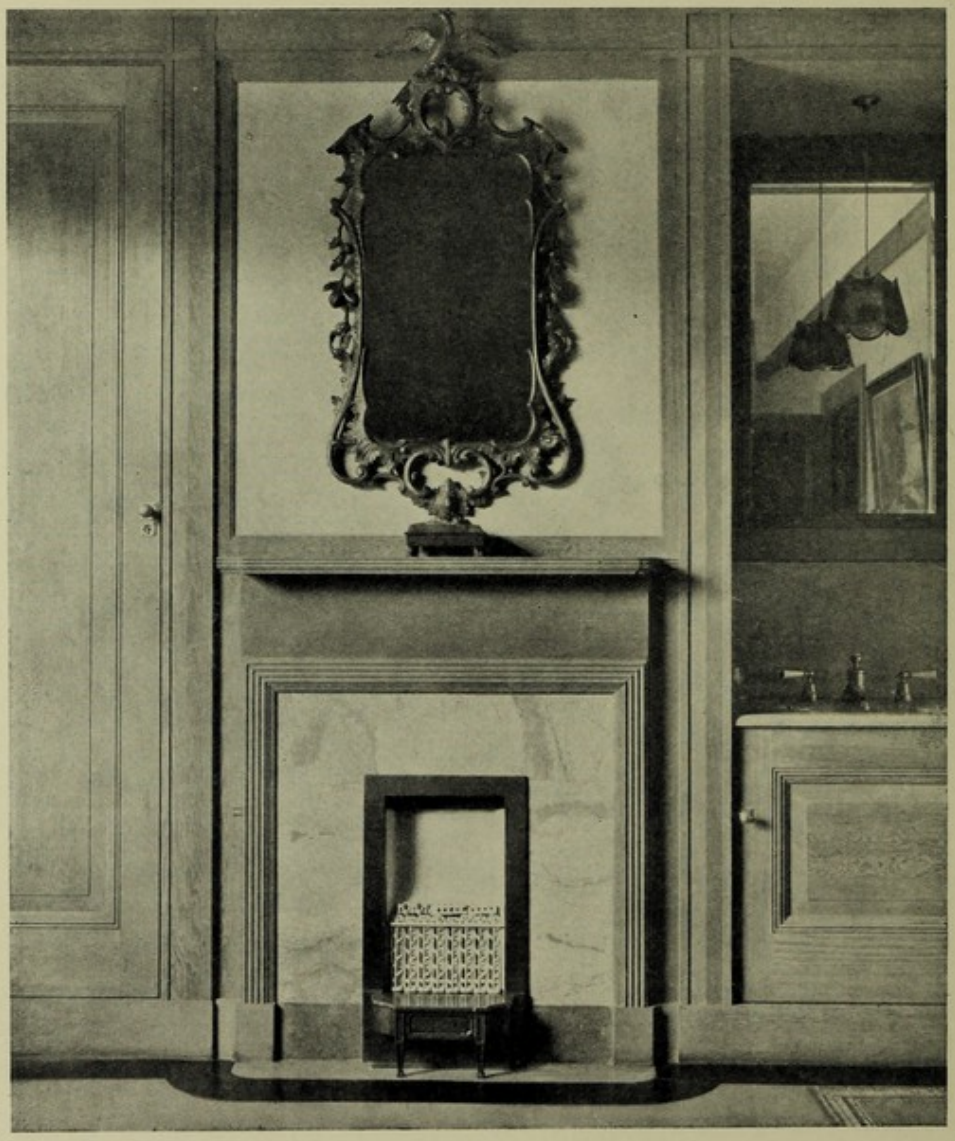


Fig. 26. A bedroom at Chester House, Clarendon Place, W.
Architect: Sir Giles G. Scott, R.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Fig. 27. A bedroom at Chester House, Clarendon Place, W.
Architect: Sir Giles G. Scott, R.A., F.R.I.B.A.

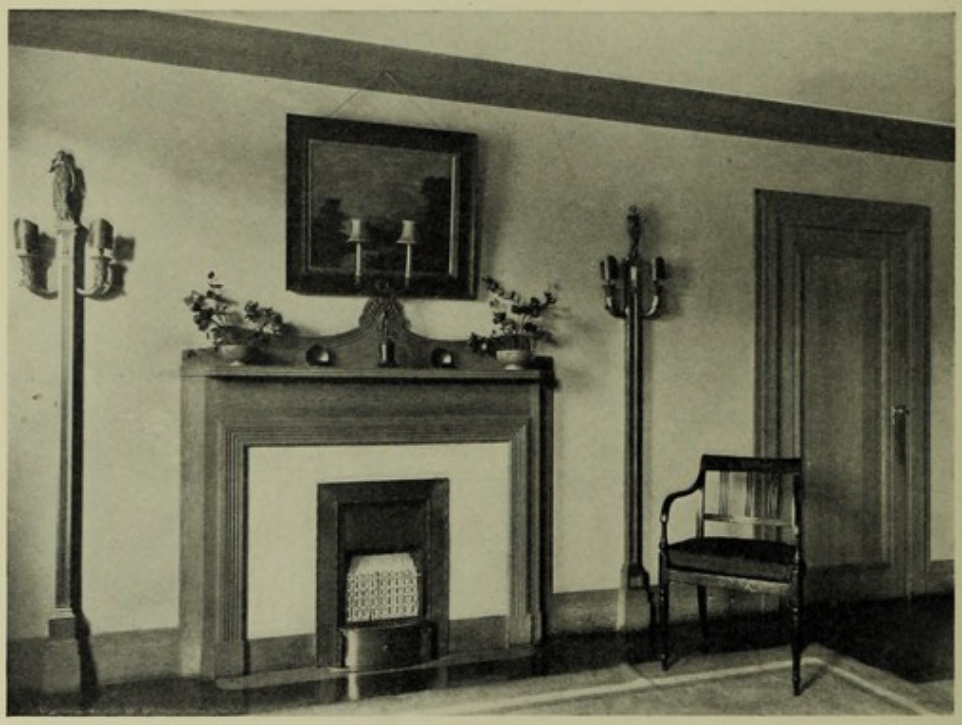


Fig. 28. Dining-room at Chester House, Clarendon Place, W.
Architect: Sir Giles G. Scott, R.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Also in a modernist manner is the setting of the gas fire in the drawing-room of Mr. Thomas Tait, Fig. 30. The type of fire here used is seen in greater detail in the three following illustrations, Figs. 31 to 33.

I find it difficult to give a generic title to this class of fire, which is made by more than one manufacturer with

Fig. 29. In a private office
Architect: Joseph Emberton, A.R.I.B.A.

some difference in detail. Its broad characteristic is that the radiants slope back from the front. They are covered with a non-combustible material, such as cokette, which looks rather like coke when the fire is out, and glows like a clear coal fire when the radiants beneath it have been burning some time.

In another variety there is no loose coke-like material on the top of separate radiants, but the radiants themselves have a blacked and appropriately shaped top surface, which suggests the glowing surface of a coal fire. Perhaps the main advantage of this type is that it can be adapted very readily for use with an existing coal grate. But several architects think that it is, in itself, a superior type, and should be installed *de novo* instead of the ordinary inset interior gas fire with vertical tubular radiants. The main point is that it is not necessarily attached to any one form of interior frame or even to a frame at all.

In the case of the Hanover Square example, in Mr. Oliver

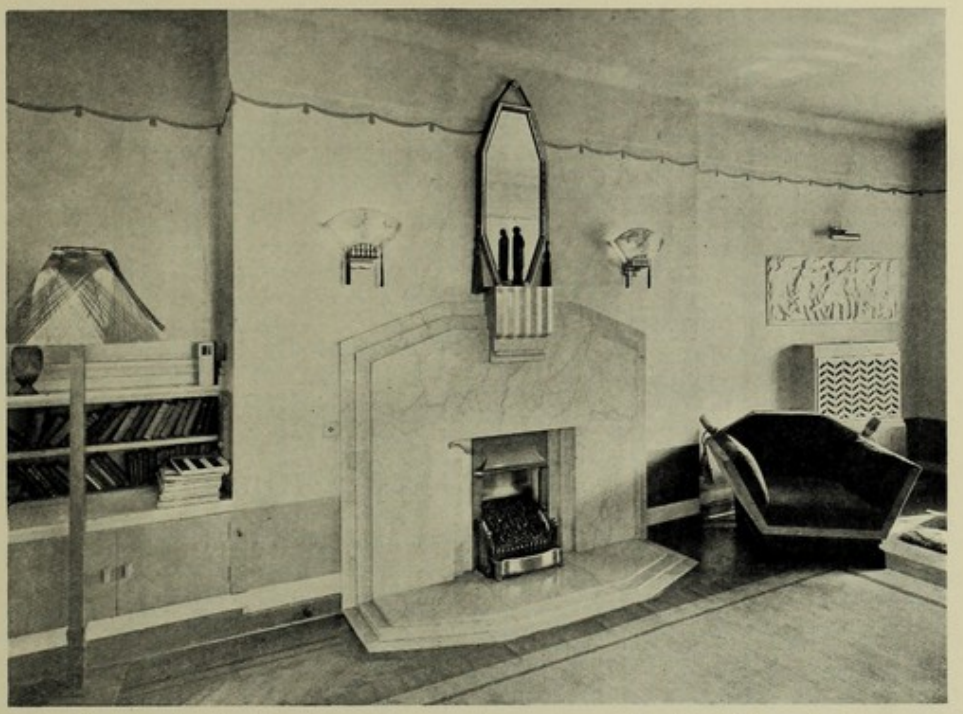


Fig. 30. In the drawing-room at Gates House, Wyldes Close, N.W.11
Sloping type of fire with canopy
Architects: Sir John Burnet, R.A., & Partners

Hill's private office, shown in Fig. 31, he was satisfied to fit the grate against the brick back of an old coal fire opening. It will be observed that the distance from the fire surface to the lower end of the flue is very considerable. Did I not know that the fire works well without any gaseous products of combustion coming into the room, I

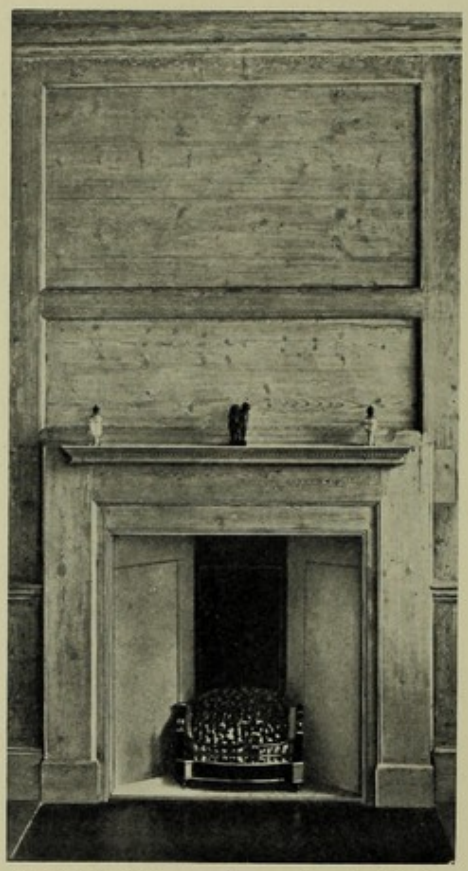


Fig. 31. At 9 Hanover Square, London, W. In a private office. Sloping type without interior frame Architect: Oliver Hill, F.R.I.B.A.

should have condemned it as impracticable. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and although there is only a four-inch hole in an iron plate immediately behind the underside of the mantelpiece, there is obviously so righteous a draught in the old chimney that what appears a dangerous expedient does in fact work well.

In the example designed by Mr. Lidbetter (Fig. 32), the broad handsome frame of the interior is a coal grate, in front of which was placed a gas fire of the sloping variety I am discussing. He did this as many architects do, on prudential grounds. The client needed a gas fire, but

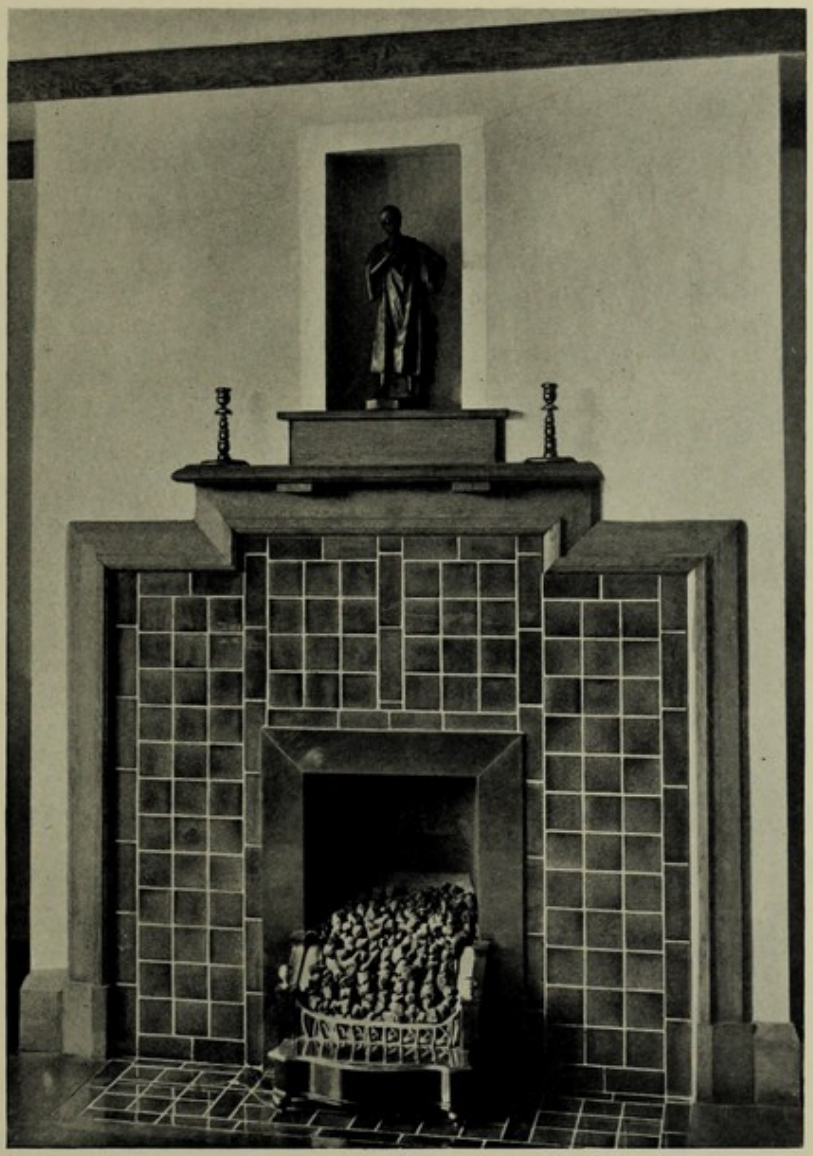


Fig. 32. At 20 Middleway, London, N.W. 11. A wide interior in tile surround, with sloping fire fitted to it. Architect: Hubert Lidbetter, F.R.I.B.A.

thought that some future occupier might want to go back to the less enlightened ways of coal. Mr. Lidbetter, indeed, makes a practice of providing, wherever possible, a 9in. by 9in. flue in every room instead of using the smaller and less expensive gas flue, which is ample where it is certain that there will be no reversion to coal.

Fig. 33 shows another example of the same type set against a comparatively low interior frame with a canopy, the whole surrounded by Mr. Walter Tapper with a very pleasant treatment of marble. On the whole, this type, with its comparatively small space between the top of the fuel and the underside of the canopy, is the safest and best if the disappearance of all burnt gases is to be swift and certain.

But there are three other ways in which a gas fire may be introduced, in seemly fashion, where coal has previously reigned. One of them is not very often feasible, but it is good when it can be contrived. Fig. 35 shows a mantelpiece with white marble surround, which was fitted with an ordinary coal fire interior. Mr. Morley Horder

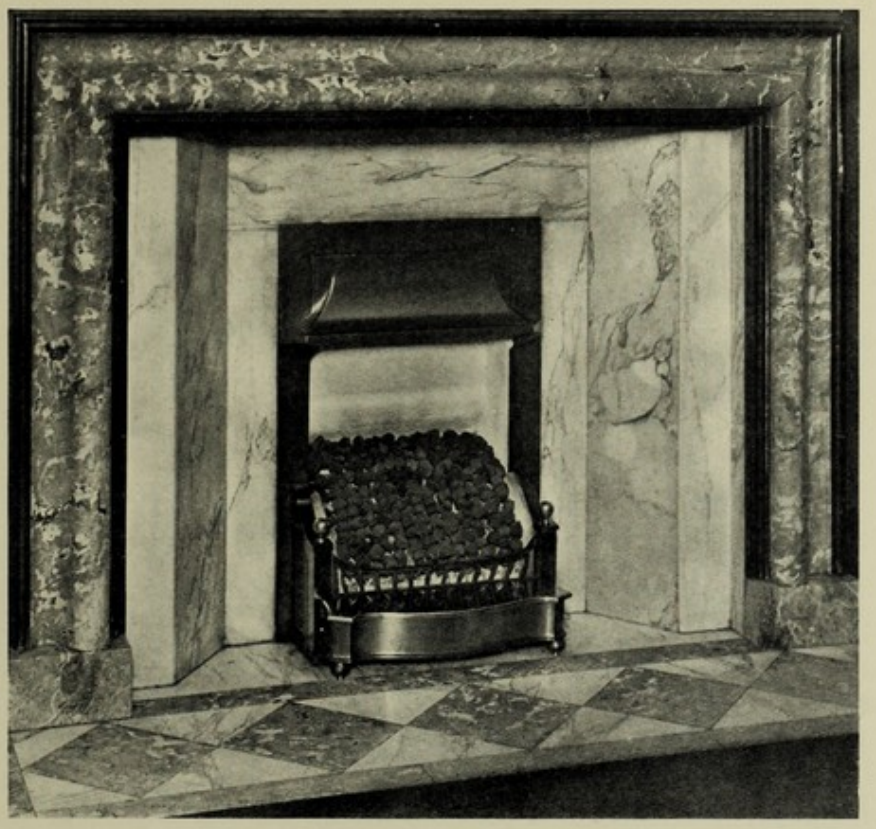


Fig. 33. Gas fire of sloping type fitted in front of existing coal grate
Architect: Walter Tapper, A.R.A., Past President R.I.B.A.

was successful in finding a self-contained gas fire with a frame exactly the same size as the existing interior. The removal of the ash-pan front left nothing projecting, and the gas fire was fitted neatly over the existing

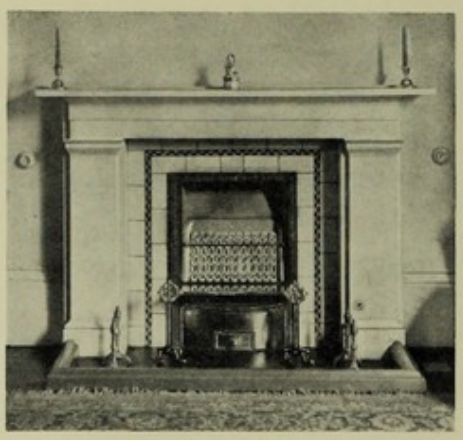


Fig. 34. Another type of gas fire adapted to an existing coal grate without damaging it or disturbing the setting

interior without disturbing the marble work. But a gas fire of so obliging a size is not often available.

It is impossible to impose a gas interior on a coal interior if the latter has a projecting and irremovable curved fret. This was the case in the example shown in Fig. 34. The difficulty was overcome by using a stock form of gas fire, consisting of a group of radiants set in a fireclay frame. This is fitted into the fireclay back of the coal interior, and the curved fret is partly masked by an arrangement of trivet and "dogs," which holds the frame of radiants in position. The "dogs" are of an extensible type, so that the gas fire may be fitted at any height required. It is a flexible device for cases where the existing coal grate is of troublesome shape. But if neither of the two methods last described

Fig. 35. A self-contained gas fire placed in front of a coal grate over which it fits exactly, involving no disturbance of existing surround. Architect: P. Morley Horder

prove acceptable, the sloping type of fire illustrated in Figs. 31 to 33 provides the only good way out of the difficulty, short of replacing the old coal grate by a built-in gas interior, or the method of adapting the coal grate in the most direct way, i.e., by fitting radiants within the original bars.

If an old grate has a distinctive character, and is of one of the old types, which are beautiful in themselves, it is too much to ask an architect to destroy the special value which an old room derives from a contemporary fitting of merit by tearing it out and putting in a modern device, or by inserting a new fitting which changes its character. The examples devised by Mr. Darcy Braddell (Figs. 36 and 37) are representative of such adaptation without interference with the structure or the appearance of the old grates. The insertion of asbestos radiants in this way is, however, not an economical proposition in respect of consumption, and may, under adverse conditions of chimney draught, have hygienic disadvantages.

Fig. 36. Bedford House, Chiswick. The Study. A dog basket grate adapted to gas
Architect: Darcy Braddell, F.R.I.B.A.

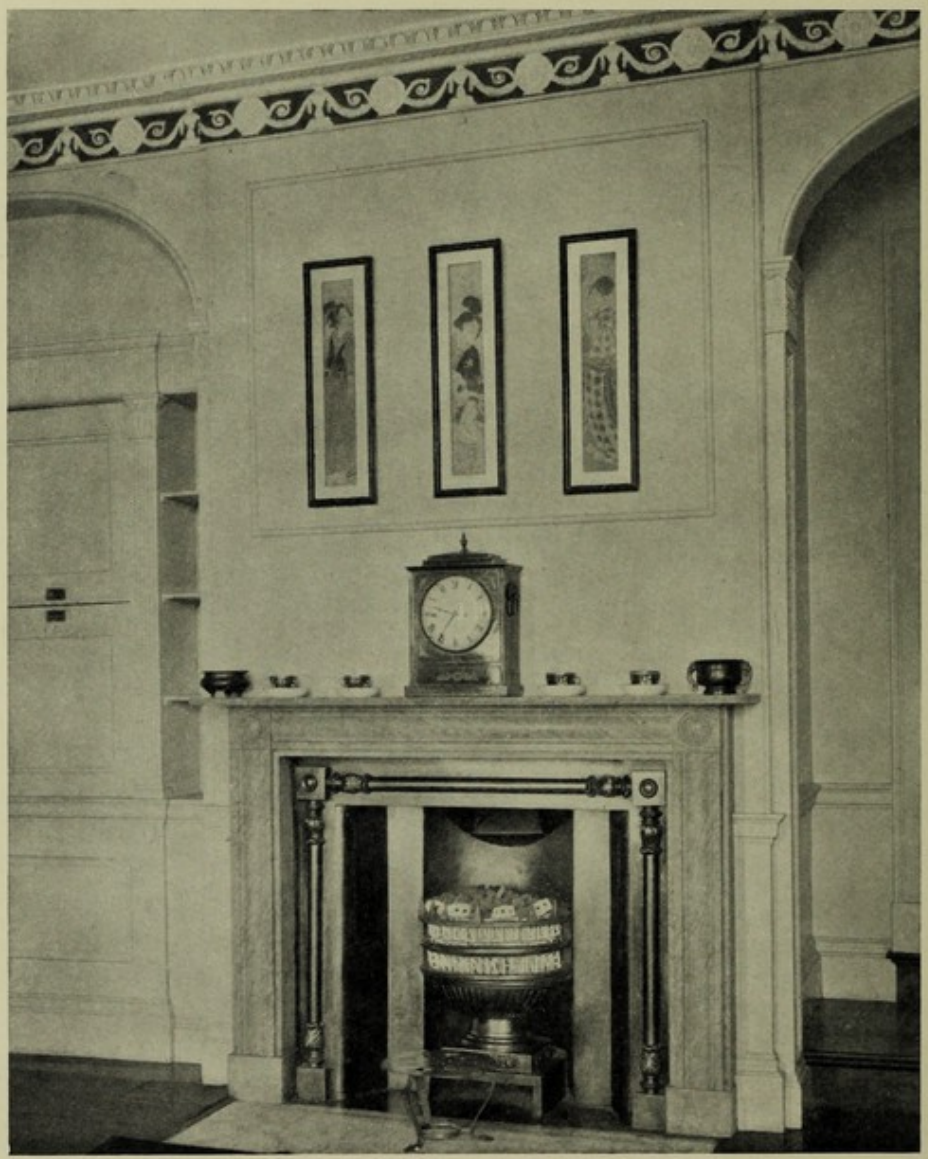


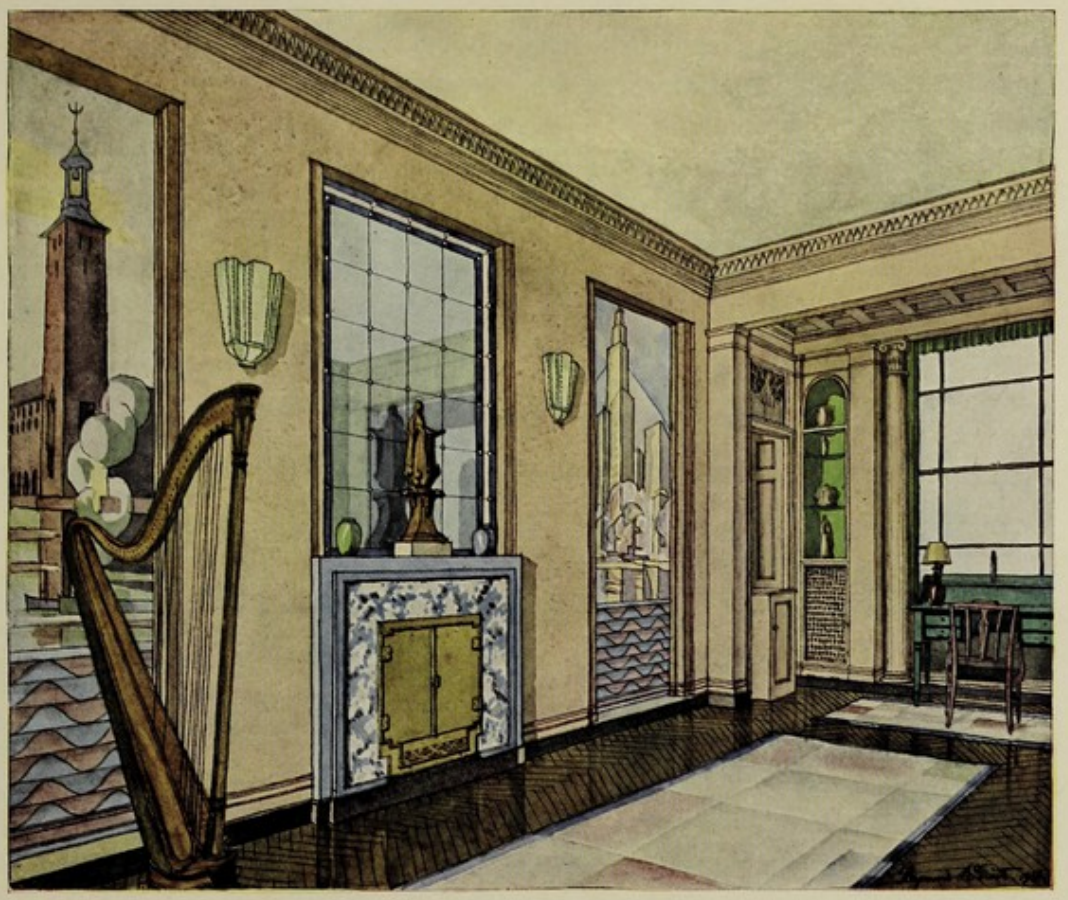
Fig. 37. Bedford House, Chiswick. The Dining-room. An oval basket grate adapted to gas. Architect: Darcy Braddell, F.R.I.B.A.

I now come to the possibility of importing a modern note, comparable with that seen in many other fields of architectural effort, into the design of gas fires. Unless this can be done more visibly than in the past, it will be difficult to make architects believe that their æsthetic interests are being fully considered by the industry.

When the inset built-in fire began to be developed about eighteen years ago, the designers not unnaturally turned for their models to the best type of coal interior then existing—and there were many attractive and simple types. The coal precedent determined the type for the new gas interior, with the comparatively small difference that radiants took the place of vertical or horizontal bars. That was before the well or open-hearth type of interior had superseded the old barred fire. In this type of interior, therefore, the great wealth of technical ingenuity possessed by the gas fire makers has been directed to perfecting a gas fire which is based on a coal fire, in so far as it invariably sits on a hearth. It is generally equipped with the ordinary

type of surround and hearth in tile or marble, which is, in turn, furnished with a kerb, as though it was necessary to guard the outer floor from a cascade of incandescent ash. The gas fire is a much more flexible thing than this. There seems to be no reason why it should invariably be fixed so as to toast the toes rather than the body. When, therefore, Mr. Morley Horder was concerned with the problem of a music room of some dignity, the decoration of which should express, with the aid of an able painter, the outlook of a person whose chief interest was architecture and its development, and when inquiry was made as to how best the demands of modernity might be served in the equipment as well as the decoration of the room, two questions arose.

First, the provision of a fire, round which it would be pleasant to sit, which should also be seemly-looking during the summer when its services are not required, and should represent a rather modern than a wholly traditional outlook on design; and, secondly, the choice of auxiliary heating more easily controlled and more flexible



A Music Room in St. John's Wood, heated by a new type of gas fire without hearth and by four gas radiators in the corners of the room.
Architect: P. Morley Horder. Decorations by Clive Gardiner

than heating by hot water or steam.

The answer to the latter requirement, no less than the former, seemed to be gas.

The task fell upon Mr. Horder of devising a wholly new type of gas fire and of disposing gas radiators in a fitting manner, and he took counsel with a manufacturer who was ready to work out the technical problem. It was fundamental that the effort to secure a fresh æsthetic effect should not prejudice the full efficiency of the fire, and the raising of the fire ten inches above the floor level involved no disturbance of the necessary technique. The bronze fitting appears in a surround of Lap, and the word "surround" is used for the first time in its full significance, for the Lap —a new artificial stone made in any colour, but in this case of blue with splashes of silver—does in fact surround the fire on all four sides. The owner of the room was determined that no system should be used which meant the omission of flues, and, therefore, the strangling of ventilation. This tragedy is sometimes, and unfortunately,

observed in very modern buildings that rely on hot-water heating or electrical heating or both, but ignore the significance of moving air that flues make possible. The bronze doors, which lie open when the fire is lit, are closed upon the radiants when it is not required. This treatment reveals gas for what it is, a volatile substance presenting a square of radiant heating surface in a manner which is at once attractive, logical, and efficient.

I come now to the question of radiators. The room is 28 ft. by 14 ft., and rather lofty. A single fire, if big enough to heat it thoroughly, would be intolerably fierce at close quarters when the occupants sought to enjoy fireside pleasure. It was obviously ideal to heat the room also at its four corners. By treating the room *ab initio* as an architectural unit into which should be absorbed faithfully and gracefully the mechanical necessities of its comfort, gas radiators have been used with success practically and æsthetically. Four of them are set in recesses beneath china cupboards and covered with grilles. Each recess is ventilated to the

Fig. 38. Gas Radiator behind grille (below china cupboard)
Architect: P. Morley Horder

outside, and there is no possibility of any gaseous products of combustion getting into the room. The system is ideally elastic, because any number of heating points—from one to four—can be used, and as each radiator has its own by-pass, the temperature of the room can be adjusted constantly as required by turning a tap.

Perhaps a word may be added about the room's equipment, though it has nothing to do with its heating. The room is called a music room, and that is its main purpose. It was felt that music is to-day, with all the magic of wireless and electrical recording and reproduction, something like a necessary service in the civilized house. There seemed no more reason to cumber the room with a case to contain the needful mechanisms, and a great trumpet to transmit the sounds, than to bracket a gas meter on the wall. A recess was accordingly formed to take the mechanisms both of wireless and gramophone on the Electramonic system. Two loud speakers were concealed behind a suitable grille of pierced wood, one of a series of four such panels which

Fig. 39
Venice: The Campanile and St. Mark's

Fig. 40
London: St. Paul's and Waterloo Bridge

By Clive Gardiner

form logical elements in the architectural treatment. All that is necessary to do is to lift a lid, switch on the desired station or attach the desired record, and the room is filled, as Caliban said of Prospero's Island, "with sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not."

For the rest, the architectural note of the room is completed by four painted panels: of Venice from the Grand Canal, of St. Paul's from the Thames, of the noble City Hall of Stockholm rising from its lagoon, and of New York's splendid buildings towering above the Hudson — two examples from historic art, Gothic and Renaissance, and two illustrating the new building outlook of to-day — all presented by the revealing brush of Mr. Clive Gardiner.

Finally, I would say that the main significance of this room seems to be that it shows gas, not as an afterthought, not merely as a convenient labour-saving substitute for a coal fire, but as a system admirable in its own right, standing on its own merits, copying no other system in its æsthetic adaptability, and justifying itself

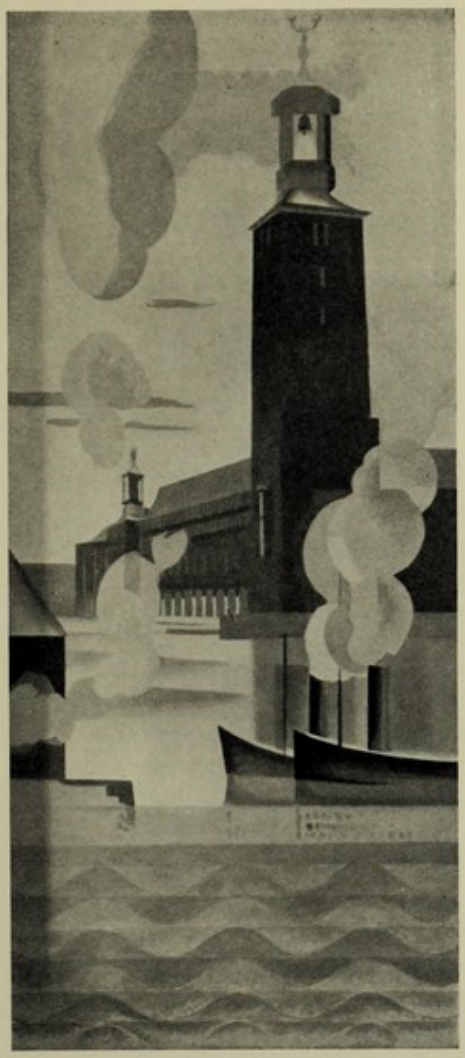


Fig. 41
Stockholm: The City Hall

Fig. 42
New York: A group of Skyscrapers

By Clive Gardiner

on all counts whether of efficiency and seemliness.

From the consideration of what has been done in a case where gas was regarded as a heating system valid in its own right, two main points seem to emerge. Firstly, both wings of the industry interested in gas fires, namely, the sellers of gas and the makers of appliances, should co-operate in raising the level of gas-fire design. Secondly, it is reasonable to expect that architects shall second such efforts by aiding in the development of design of gas fires, seeing that gas offers the real solution of smoke abatement, labour saving, and heating associated with ventilation. If architects will take a hand in this task they will have in their own control the assurance that these advantages can be secured, without loss of artistic interest in the rooms so equipped.