Jessamine Wall Paper.

THE
DRAWING-ROOM

ITS DECORATIONS AND FURNITURE.

BY
MRS. LUCY ORRINSMITH.

"The place is dignified by the doer's deed."

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To GEORGE LILLIE CRAIK,

At whose suggestion this little book was written, it is dedicated by

LUCY ORRINSMITH.

BECKENHAM, *September* 1877.

PREFACE.

THE author of the following pages has endeavoured to give more particular directions as to the furnishing and adornment of the Drawing-Room than was possible in the Miss Garretts' volume treating of the whole subject of *House Decoration.* She has, however, by no means confined her remarks to the style known as "Queen Anne," but has recited and applied those universal rules of taste which may be considered common to all styles. Mrs. Orrinsmith has further directed her attention to the cost of such drawing-room decorations as she recommends, and while giving the fullest particulars of the most magnificent adornments which money can buy, has not neglected the still more important rules by which to guide amateurs who, from want of means or

any other reason, wish to do the work as cheaply as possible. With this view she has insisted on the prime necessity of good taste in everything, and the not less obvious need of harmonious design in form and colour.

This volume will therefore, I hope, be found useful, not only to those who can choose a style without regard to cost, but also to those whose love of Art at Home can only be gratified by an expenditure of personal thought and handiwork. In issuing this manual to readers of the Series, I can only wish that every one who follows Mrs. Orrinsmith's guidance may find his Drawing-room made comfortable and pleasant as well as beautiful.

W. J. L.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

EVILS AND REMEDIES 1

Drawing-rooms.—Taste.—Money.—Commonplace Furniture.—Contentment.—Ornamentation.—Colour.—Art Education.—Novelty.—Trifles.—Ladies' Work.—Personal Culture.

CHAPTER II.

WALLS AND CEILINGS 10

Wall Papers.—Dadoes.—Paint.—Distemper.—Matting.—Cornices.—Wall Draperies.—Colours.—Ceilings.—Imitations.

CHAPTER III.

FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYPIECES 31

Mantelpieces.—Hearths.—Fenders.—Home-painting.—Grates.—Woodwork.—Corner Fireplaces.—Fire-irons.—Coal-scuttles.—Tiles.

CHAPTER IV.

FLOORS AND CARPETS 50

Flooring.—Staining and Polishing.—Parquetry.—Matting.—Persian Carpets.—Rugs and Mats.—Colours and Patterns.

CHAPTER V.

PAGE
WINDOWS, DOORS, AND CURTAINS 63

Light and Air.—View.—Glass.—Blinds.—Poles.—Curtains.—Embroidery.—Portières.—Inner Windows.—Doorways.—Screens.

CHAPTER VI.

FURNITURE 81

Comfort.—Elegance.—Old Furniture.—Queen Anne.—Chippendale and Sheraton.—Decorated Work.—Cabinets.—Marquetry.—Sofas.—Chairs.—Tables.—Modern Furniture.—Curves.—Corner-cupboards.—Staining and Painting.—China-cases.—Pianofortes.—Footstools.

CHAPTER VII.

LIGHTING AND FLORAL DECORATION 111

Gas.—Lamps.—Candles.—Sconces.—Chandeliers.—Flowers and Leaves.—Winter Bouquets.—Peacocks' Feathers.

CHAPTER VIII.

PICTURE FRAMES, MIRRORS, ODDS AND ENDS . . . 123

Frames.—Convex Mirrors.—Looking-glasses.—Books and Bookshelves.—Ornaments.—Pottery.—Antique Things.—Étagères.—Fans.—Door-furniture.—Ideas.—Conclusion.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
JESSAMINE WALL-PAPER . . . . . *Frontispiece.*	
A BRONZE INKSTAND	9
ROSE PATTERN WALL PAPER	13
VINE PATTERN WALL PAPER	17
CHINA JAR AND BRACKET	30
AN ORDINARY MANTELPIECE	33
A DECORATED MANTELPIECE	36
AN OLD-FASHIONED FIREPLACE	39
A FIREPLACE WITH OPEN GRATE	42
A CORNER FIREPLACE	45
MIRRORS	49
BARE BOARDS	52
A PICTURESQUE CORNER	57
FERNS IN A SHELL	62
CURTAINS FOR A WINDOW	69
CURTAINS FOR A DOORWAY	76
A JAPANESE SCREEN	77
A PEACOCK SCREEN	78
SÈVRES CHINA	80
A JACOBEAN CHAIR	87
A SATINWOOD CABINET	91

PAGE

A "SHERATON" SOFA 94
A PICTURESQUE CHAIR 95
A COFFEE TABLE 99
AN "AS-YOU-LIKE-IT" CHAIR 100
A CORNER CABINET 103
A CHINESE CHINA-CASE 107
CORNER BRACKETS 110
A WALL SCONCE AND ÉTAGÈRE 115
A SILVER CHANDELIER 117
A CANDLESTICK 122
MIRROR AND CABINET 127
BOOK-SHELVES 131
HANGING CHINA-CASE 135
A CORNER CUPBOARD 137
ODDS AND ENDS 139
CABINET AND ÉTAGÈRE 141

THE DRAWING-ROOM

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

CHAPTER I.

EVILS AND REMEDIES.

IT is obvious that there is as much artistic consideration shown in avoidance as in execution. The first step towards improvement in taste is the perception of past and present error. We may therefore be allowed a short review of matters as they have been—as they even now are in many places.

Who does not call to mind the ordinary lower middle-class drawing-room of the Victorian era? The very head-quarters of commonplace, with its strict symmetry of adornment and its pretentious uselessness. All things seem as if chosen on the principle of unfitness for the fulfilment of any function; everything is in pairs that possibly can be paired. The cold, hard, unfeeling white marble mantelpiece, surmounted by the inevitable mirror, varying in size

only with the means of the householder, totally irrespective of any relation to the shape or proportions of the apartment; the fireplace a marvellous exhibition of the power of iron and blacklead to give discomfort to the eye. At the windows hard curtains hang in harshest folds, trimmed with rattling fringes. On the carpet vegetables are driven to frenzy in their desire to be ornamental. On a circular table (of course with pillar and claws) are placed books—too often selected for their bindings alone—arranged like the spokes of a wheel, the nave being a vase of, probably, objectionable shape and material. Add a narrow ill-curved sofa, and spider-legged chairs made to be knocked over, dangerous as seats even for a slight acquaintance, doubly dangerous for a stout friend—and all is consistently complete.

Such is the withdrawing-room to which, because of its showy discomfort, no one withdraws; wherein visitors do penance at morning calls; where the common-sense that often rules the living-rooms is left behind at the threshold, and nothing useful is allowed to enter lest it fail to be ornamental. All in the first instance being subservient to brand-new gloss, the pursuit of brightness leads to tawdry garishness. The desire after elegance begets weakness and uncomfortable inefficiency, and so-called *elegance* in fact elbows comfort from the room.

In households where means are limited, this drawing-room is a sort of appendage to the house, not quite kindred to it. It is tabooed to the children, and avoided, except on occasions, by the dwellers, who are deterred by its lack of comfort and the false tone of its general

arrangements. Efforts that have been at least tolerably successful in other rooms, where a want has been felt and befittingly satisfied, seem to fail utterly in the drawing-room, where an attempt to do so much does all things ill.

If it be urged that a low type has been chosen for our illustration, it may be maintained that where good taste does not rule the house, the amount of error is but a question of degree. A higher position in the social scale, or the possession of larger means, will do little to modify the unsatisfactory state of things, unless personal interest in the drawing-room arrangements, and an earnest effort after culture in matters of taste, are most strenuously insisted upon.

More money merely enables us to use better material and more costly ornament, and thus to dispense with unsatisfactory substitutes; it will never serve instead of the wish to put the impress of our individuality, in order, beauty and grace, on our abiding places. There are plenty of errors in taste to be found in the mansions of the rich, and if wealth cannot do what we require, neither can intellect, without special culture. It seems to be often assumed that those who have attained success and a position in literature, science, or music, have acquired a right to speak with authority on such trifling matters as questions of taste in household adornment, yet we must be aware that numbers of persons of knowledge and refinement—often, too, admirers of all that is good in art—are apparently content to sit down at home surrounded by ugly form, bad colour, and conventional deformity.

Presupposing no indifference to the beautiful, nor any lack of time or inclination to take that active part in the arrangements of a house necessary to ensure a happy result, it is obvious that a peculiar kind of culture in art is requisite for decorative purposes, since examples are found of good taste in colour, proportion, and ornamentation, in comparitively uncivilised races, while we are indebted to such advanced countries as France and Germany for much in the way of *objets d'art*, in which, to say the least, the taste evidenced is of a more than doubtful character.

It is generally supposed that, after a period of decadence, popular taste in domestic art began to amend some five-and-twenty years ago; but a page or two may be occupied in an endeavour to show that there still exist sins of ugliness in our midst, amply sufficient to warrant the efforts of the writers of the "Art-at-Home" series to bring about an altered state of things.

Here is an advertisement taken, haphazard, from a number of such published every day:—

FINE ITALIAN WALNUT DRAWING-ROOM FURNITURE, comprising a luxurious lounge, lady's and gentleman's easy and six well-carved chairs upholstered in rich silk, centre table on massive carved pillar and claws, the top beautifully inlaid with marqueterie, large size chimney-glass in handsome oil-gilt frame, chiffonière with marble top, lofty plate-glass back and three doors; lady's work-table lined with silk, occasional table on spiral supports, two papier-mâché chairs and coffee-table to match, five-tier what-not, pair of handsome ruby lustres, and gilt and steel fender and fire-irons, with ormolu heads, &c. &c. &c.

It may be safely affirmed, without even seeing the particular furniture in question, that all the articles

mentioned in the foregoing advertisement are objectionable from an æsthetic point of view.

Add to these such things as coal-scuttles ornamented with highly-coloured views of, say, Warwick Castle; *papier-mâché* chairs inlaid or painted with natural flowers or pictures; hearthrugs with dogs after Landseer in their *proper* colours; mats and footstools of foxes startlingly life-like with glaring glass eyes; ground-glass vases of evil form and sickly pale green or blue colour; screens graced by a representation of "Melrose Abbey by moonlight," with a mother-o'-pearl moon. Carpets riotous with bunches of realistic flowers, chintzes with bouncing bouquets, chairs with circular seats divided into quarters of black and orange, their backs composed of rollers of the same in alternate stripes; cheffoniers, with mirror-doors too low for any purpose save to reflect the carpet in violent perspective, or perchance a novel view of a visitor's boots.

All these things are still not unfrequently seen, and the catalogue might be multiplied were it desirable to be unduly iconoclastic. A critic usually has the air of a cynic, a discontented being who uncomfortable himself, is desirous to make others equally so. It must at once be avowed that we do not enjoin contentment in matters of art: "What next?" is a valuable motto; and "Excelsior!" is assuredly not the cry of a contented mind.

At the outset of this attempt to lead our readers into what we consider to be the right way, arises the difficulty of dealing with those excellent contented folk who say: "We are not artists; we are people of

plain common sense, wishing to be comfortable, and knowing what we like, without reference to any æsthetic asceticism." If there be any such people, and they care to proceed with this book, they must forgive our reminding them that if an Englishman's house is his castle, he has no right to make it a suite of artistic "chambers of horrors," nor is the fiction that a man may do as he likes with his own to blind him to the fact that our rooms are decorated and pictures hung, not only for our own pleasure, but for the delectation of our friends and guests. It therefore becomes a social duty to strive to attain to some guiding principles which may prevent an exhibition distressing to a visitor of, perchance, more educated taste than our own.

Bad taste, though sometimes apparently intuitive, is mostly perverted taste, depraved by long habituation to evil models. This is the most active enemy with which we have to deal, since it relies on its traditions, and has deeply-rooted convictions that it is in the right, whatever others may think or say.

It must have been remarked that great artists never choose to represent an ordinary modern English house, either inside or out; the "why" is obvious. Our houses are crowded with ugly shapes disguised by meretricious ornament. The general forms are usually so bad as to require to be loaded with excrescences, which, while they blunt the critical power of the eye, leave the mind dissatisfied. It has been truly said that we should not construct ornament, but ornament construction. A tree stripped of its leaves is still a noble object full of beauty and grace; take off the

frills, flounces, and furbelows, from many of the forms in our human constructions, and what should we say to the shapes that would be revealed!

In all questions of colour, advantage will be found in reference and deference to experts, for although the perfect colour-vision of a Titian is as rare as is absolute colour-blindness, degrees of this malady are of not unfrequent occurrence, and they cause the yielding to uneducated fancies, with results often doleful indeed. An inability to perceive the beauties of colour is no such uncommon failing, and we may remember that to a friend who said that he never could see in nature such colours as were displayed in Turner's pictures, the painter retorted, "Don't you wish you could?"

The best art education is to be found in recourse to approved examples of decoration, and constant familiarity with fine qualities as to which there cannot be two opinions. Nothing will be well done if we fly to the popular decorators and purchase their most admired works only to find that fitness for our special requirements and for the relative positions the goods are to occupy has been overlooked, or at the best ill-considered.

Novelty is a jack-a-lanthorn to many of us, and leads too often in unwholesome directions;

> "The present eye praises the present object;"

and the latest thing of the day, be it even an old fashion revived, offers irresistible charms to some; but it should not be forgotten that frequent change of fashion is the most fertile source of inferiority in

material and handiwork. It is obvious that goods of an ephemeral character will be produced if they are to be speedily superseded by newer things. How steadily the standard of lasting excellence requires to be kept up is evident by the notable deterioration in Persian, Japanese, and other ornamental work so soon as the idea gets abroad that the production is for a fickle and fleeting English market.

It cannot be too strongly insisted that the most trivial details of decoration in the surroundings of our daily life are important; for who can define the pleasure that the numberless trifles in a well-garnished drawing-room may be made to afford to the eye, and thus to soothe and satisfy the mind? Viewed from such a stand-point, there is no such thing as a trifle; and we might almost lead ourselves to believe that it would be impossible to commit a mean action in a gracefully furnished room. Has it not been written that the advantage derived from the study of objects of beauty is akin to the contemplation of virtue, in its ennobling effect on the mind?

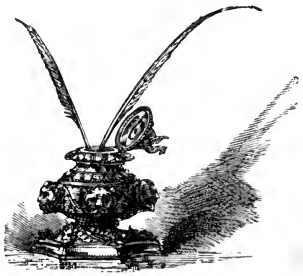
Let us take lower ground, and say that a well-dressed room, like a well-dressed dinner, conduces to a suave and equable temper.

In the work and thought requisite to bring about a desirable and satisfactory result in our drawing-room, there is much healthy contentment and refining of the nature. The search after objects of charming colour and delicate form, and intercourse with them, are in themselves a perpetual education. If there be artistic taste in a family, experiments may safely be made; and the

trouble taken, the knowledge displayed and experience gained, will always make such experiments interesting to those, both outside and inside the home, who care for art. There is no doubt that much good decorative household work might be done by ladies, who are so often gifted with accuracy of perception at first sight, and refined judgment as to graceful effects. They waste these talents on the production of weak and unsuccessful, because too ambitious, sketches and paintings.

Does it not seem the better course for us to select and create the beauties that are to be our own daily companions out of our individual taste and knowledge, rather than to be compelled from sheer ignorance to bow to, and bind ourselves by, the judgment of any decorator, whatever his ability? Should we continue to be contented to be *told*, not caring to learn to *feel*, that certain harmonies of form and colour are admirable and desirable?

In the hope to assist to a more self-helpful Art-knowledge, the following chapters have been written.



CHAPTER II.

WALLS AND CEILINGS.

THE first look at an unfurnished bare drawing-room, probably a good deal knocked about by the exodus of the late owners; or, if it be a new house, smelling and tasting of plaster and paint everywhere,—is far from encouraging. The flat, unfriendly walls, the blank, straight, staring windows, the cold steel grate, give one a feeling of repulsion; but we must not be disheartened. The greater number of people are obliged to live in houses built, not after their own hearts, but by clumsy hands, and after designs by uneducated heads. What may be done in such houses to make rooms look comfortable and pleasant, by persuading walls and ceilings to like each other, rather than to *be* like each other, is the subject of these present pages.

It is not necessary to insist upon any one particular style as *the* desirable style in preparing the walls and ceiling of a drawing-room for the reception of their associates—carpets, curtains, and furniture · for what

is suitable in one case might be absurd in another. Now-a-days so much more knowledge and thought are brought to bear upon designs for paper-hangings, wall-draperies, colours for paint, distemper and stain, that with care and painstaking one can scarcely fail to be right, where but a few years back one could scarcely fail to be wrong.

In the usual middle-class drawing-room, probably already papered or prepared for papering, with a glaring white ceiling, a heavy cornice, and a skirting-board of a height neither one thing nor another,—perhaps the readiest and, at the same time, the most inexpensive plan to produce a pleasing and restful background, is to choose a paper (of course with relation to pictures and ornaments) of a calm and suggestive decorative floral pattern, showing knowledge of design. With the chosen paper in view, select for the paint of the room, one or perhaps two shades of the prevailing tints of the paper, and instead of cold whitewash use a creamy or greenish-white for the ceiling; thus bringing ceiling, walls, and woodwork into one harmonious combination.

But a few years since the ideas of designers of wall papers seemed limited to stripes alternating with wreaths of flowers, or fruit, more or less ornamental; intersecting lines, curved or straight, producing larger or smaller squares or lozenge shapes, inclosing a wearisome repetition of the same stupidly-drawn ornament; or realistic and gorgeous bunches of flaunting flowers, coloured after nature, on staring light grounds. Worse even than these were the *purely* ornamental designs, the patterns hideous and meaningless, suggestive

of nothing but confusion and unpleasantness; the colours alternately bright and brilliant, or dirty and dingy. It was hopeless to look for a soft background, it was useless to look for an artist's touch. All bore the stamp of ignorance and meanness, and prices varied only with a more or less showy effect. Gilded stripes, with stars, spots, or fleurs-de-lys on a white-watered ground, were the only things for a drawing-room, whatever its nature, wherever its position.

Those whose natural instinct told them that all this was wrong, took refuge in paints and distempers, and fared the better; for if the colours were still faulty, no evil shapes were there to shock the critical eye. Real genius, true art, have of late years come to our aid; and in London, at all events, one need not long be ignorant of the vast improvements which a short time has produced in one important branch of drawing-room decoration—wall papers.

Paper-hangings, simple or elaborate, rich yet grave, calm yet cheerful, mostly moderate, rarely immoderate in price, all equally bearing the mark of earnest desire for the legitimate use of nature in decorative art, are now attainable.

Careful examination of the tiny drawings of wall papers here given will help our readers the better to understand what is meant by *suggestive* floral decoration. Notice the beautiful arrangement of lines in the reduced copy of the "Rose" pattern paper on p. 13, *suggesting* entirely the growth and sweetness of the rose plant. The flowers and leaves in this paper, of which only a faint idea can be given in black and

ROSE PATTERN WALL PAPER.

white, are of two different shades of yellow-green; the undergrowth of dusky yew and the background are in two shades of blue-green, the rose-stems of dull yellow; there is entire harmony of colour about the whole, and no strong contrast to fatigue the eye. With this paper all woodwork would look well painted in shades of either blue or yellow-green; but even with other delicate soft colours, one could scarcely injure the calm and quiet effect of such a paper.

In the "Jessamine" paper, our frontispiece, observe the strict following of nature in the clinging and graceful branches and separateness of the starlike flowers opposed most exquisitely to the sturdier stems and clustering blossoms of the hawthorn intermingling with them. The contrast of form is sufficient, and shades of greens, white, and dim yellows give a precious harmony to the whole.

The "Vine" pattern (see p. 17) gives the rich luscious growth of leaves and fruit, wisely combined with the simple slender boughs of the willow, whose delicately-toned leaves contrast with the amber bunches and dark-green leaves of the "gadding vine." This paper must always look noble, and suits a wide space, but with a golden background is positively magnificent.

The entire covering of the walls with choice, but not necessarily expensive, papers of any one kind can be strongly recommended. It is a purer style than the placing of two papers one above the other, which might, however, be favourable to certain drawing-rooms, where from skirting-board upwards to within about three feet of the ceiling, the walls should be covered by a dimly tinted paper, continued to the cornice

by one of more delicate treatment: a narrow ledge or beading being fixed at the junction of the two papers.

Papers suitable for such a combination are to be found in a diaper that looks calm and warm in two shades of olive-green for the lower space of wall, and a loose-trailing pattern for the upper portion in shades of blue on white with freer floral treatment, which would give cheerfulness to an arrangement otherwise quaint and quiet. The like of this has been seen with sets of pictures in long narrow frames hung just below the junction of the two papers; and at a lower level bright water-colour sketches, bold and effective, in slim gilt frames, giving the necessary relief to the duller region.

Papers of the best quality, varying in the number of the colours employed, and in the elaboration of the design, may be procured at prices ranging from three to fifteen shillings a piece, of twelve yards. Rich effects, almost like old painted Venetian leather, are now produced by a certain working in gold upon very solid thick paper, which would look gorgeous in rooms sufficiently large, but in a small space would be overpowering. These are naturally more expensive, and would rarely be obtained under thirty or forty shillings a piece, but such wall decorations would last a long, long time; and if the surface of wall to be covered is reduced by the dado space, the cost would be materially diminished.

If expense is not an object, and the drawing-room is large and in an old picturesque house, or one newly designed with artistic knowledge, more elaborate

VINE PATTERN WALL PAPER.

schemes for wall-decoration easily suggest themselves. A wooden dado with a surbase, or chair-rail, is always comfortable and convenient, affording a resting-place for many a tile, picture, or curiosity, pleasant to look at, perhaps of individual interest, not so valuable as to be entombed in a cabinet, but happily common enough to be within hourly reach of eye and hand. Above this wooden dado may be paper, paint, or distemper, and as we have already talked about papers, elaborate and simple, let us pass on to paint, which, when used on walls, should be of soft tints, light tones, and should *never be varnished*, the shiny surface of varnish being objectionable.

Where pictures and ornaments are varied, and consequently many bits of bright colour are about, paint may make a warm and comfortable background. The colours chosen should never be vivid; quiet olives and blue-greens make an excellent dressing for walls. In distemper soft colours are easy to get; but though cheaper than paint it is not so durable; it presents, however, a charming surface for painting in body-colour; and decorative floral or other designs if used upon it, look uncommon and artistic. They should not be of too elaborate or difficult a nature, as the surface is perishable. A painted frieze, two feet deep, above a dado, in two shades of green with dull-red flowers on a lighter green distemper looks rich and rare. Such work, if there be an artist at home, may be of domestic manufacture, instructive and interesting.

A diaper flock paper, with the pattern in strong relief, covering the wall to the height of the dado,

headed by a surbase of moulded wood, the whole painted and flatted in tender tones of green, with the upper part of the wall decorated with creamy or delicate dull-blue paper, perhaps finished by a hand-painted frieze and simple cornice, would make an unusual but pleasant combination.

A Japanese effect in a drawing-room may be produced at but slight expense, by the dado being composed of fine yellowish matting, headed by a surbase of ebony, or ebonized oak, or walnut or stained wood, the wall above distempered a pure pale Japanese green or gray, divided into compartments by mouldings, which should match the surbase. These compartments might be decorated delicately and slightly after old Japanese models, or each compartment filled with genuine paintings from Japan on the finest matting; which may now be purchased at various shops devoted to foreign decorative art. Where there are but few ornaments or pictures they have an interesting and charming effect. In this case as much Eastern furniture as possible would be desirable.

Different widths and qualities of Chinese matting, suitable for wall-coverings, of varied tones, diapers, and patterns, in shades of dim-greens and yellows, with sometimes intermixture of orange or dull-red are now easily obtainable. Prices vary, but the cost will rarely be found to exceed three shillings, while many kinds may be bought for one shilling per square yard.

More ambitious views on the subject of mural-painting might suggest panels richly decorated with figure

or floral subjects, perhaps with golden backgrounds, placed at intervals above the dado; but of course all hand decoration requires able design executed by efficient workers. For any elaborate scheme of this kind of painting very few decorators could be found who have the power to carry out such plans at a moderate cost, with purity of style, knowledge to decide the due degree of decoration, and instinct to appreciate the natural advantages of any particular drawing-room.

How pleasant it is to have to deal sometimes with other than four straight walls, one need hardly say. A little recess, a step up to a bay window, an odd corner, a different level of ceiling; such things give brightness and interest to the soberest surroundings. Unfortunately, in at least nine houses out of ten, uniformity of shape and a close attention to all things being on the square, are the rule and will continue to be so as long as builders, and too often uneducated builders, are their own architects. From such hands we get our rinds of buildings, with their poor rooms, whose walls scarcely give support to the nails for picture-poles, and our cracked ceilings with their frightful centre ornaments and heavy unsuitable cornices.

There is ordinarily no need for elaborate cornices; a simple but good moulding of plaster or wood would be sufficient to break the hard line between wall and ceiling. A very large and lofty room may of course require a more important cornice, which should be thoughtfully suitable. Builders might with advantage take copies from some of the houses in Bloomsbury,

Soho, and other parts of old London and elsewhere. Here and there one may still see the charm of careful detail and generous liberality in the construction and proportion of rooms where the mouldings of cornice and surbase, and the wood-carvings, are evidently the work of thoughtful heads and practised hands, where the result of using good material in the proper way is shown by a stubborn resistance to the rubs of time.

Much ingenuity might be displayed, to the advantage of cornices for small rooms, which are often lofty out of all proportion. Here it would be found an improvement to let the major part of the cornice be *upon the wall*, only intruding slightly upon the ceiling area, which would look the larger for non-interruption. A simple border of ivy, oak, or other shapeful leaves, stiffly suggested in plaster, would suit many rooms better than the usually too assertive mass of badly proportioned linear mouldings.

If there be no dado in the drawing-room, and the effect of one is desired, but the expense of wood-panelling thought too great to be lightly incurred, a fairly good substitute may be found by papering the wall from skirting-board upward to the height of the chair-rail, say about four feet, where a ledge or moulding of stained or painted wood, or ebony, should be placed. The paper used for the dado space should be a simple diaper as referred to in our talk upon papers; it has been excellently successful in such a position, and may be obtained in two greens, or in yellow on white; the former colours are advised; the skirting-board, ledge, and general woodwork of the room, if

black be not approved, should all agree in tone; the wall above might equally well be papered, painted, or distempered.

If the reader or intending decorator is tired of wall-papers, be they never so artistic, and cares not for the even surfaces of paint or distemper, be they never so charming in colour—if there are but few pictures or ornaments to please the fancy—there are still resources for the embellishment of our walls.

Fine and rich effects are produced by certain first-class designers, through the judicious and learned mixture of large masses with lighter and smaller decoration intermingling, surrounding, and filling up spaces with interesting detail, drawn with masterly knowledge of the necessities of decorative art, coloured with extreme artistic taste, and applied to various kinds of beautiful woven materials for draperies on walls, or for curtains. These may be had of velvet, silk, wool and silk, wool, and woven or printed cotton.

If the wall hangings are of silk, they may be tightly stretched without pleats or folds; if of wool and silk, wool, or cotton, they must have groups of pleats with intervals of about twelve inches between. Hooks should be fixed at the junction of the wall and ceiling, and rings upon the hangings, which may be edged with a more or less elaborate fringe, and hang loosely down to the skirting board or surbase.

Silken hangings are naturally expensive. Some there are, beautiful as could be desired, from twenty-five to twenty-seven inches wide at from seventeen to twenty shillings per yard. For a small ante-room to

a drawing-room, yellow silken hangings may be suggested, with amber velvet curtains, and dull toned blue velvet-pile carpet. It is not necessary that the larger drawing-room, annexed to such an ante-room, should also have silken draperies; it would only be needful to carry out a certain harmony in colour. There are drawing-rooms which have been enlarged by the removal of the partition walls of contiguous rooms, the various shapes of those rooms being retained, and the walls severally treated with different colours with no inharmonious effect.

It will be readily understood that in a room where there are silken or woollen hangings, there should be no other decoration on the walls; the chimney-piece should be ornamental, and might have a superstructure reaching to the ceiling with shelves and brackets for china, and possibly with small mirrors introduced here and there, forming with a suitable grate a central spot of brightness and beauty in the midst of the surrounding calm comfort. The wall underneath the drapery may be distempered, and the paint of all the woodwork in such a drawing-room creamy-white, or, if preferred, of colours harmonizing with either hangings or carpet. The ceiling should also be of a creamy-white instead of the usual thin blank whitewash.

If the cost of silken hangings for walls be too great, there are delightful materials of silk and wool, mixed judiciously, so that the silk coming in masses on the wool, produces, to our mind, a better effect than the silk alone. Here we get the advantage of greater width, from fifty to fifty-four inches, and prices ranging about twenty-five shillings per yard. Such

material should have folds, with plain intervals; for the patterns on this solid silk and wool, generally being grand and large, do not require much fulness.

A rather long, large drawing-room would look well with cool blue woollen and silken draperies, woodwork creamy-white, or, for choice, two tones of olive green; chimney-piece to match, or perhaps ebonized, with ornaments of eastern china.

At a more moderate price pure woollen material may be obtained, fifty-four inches wide, and varying in cost from ten to eighteen shillings per yard, according to the degree of design and colour. Cotton damasks with woven patterns, printed cottons, and Bolton sheetings can be had at a still lower rate. If care and order reign in the management of such decoration, silken, woollen, or cotton draperies will prove themselves in the end lasting and therefore economical; we recommend them heartily, as an unusual and desirable style for furnishing drawing-room walls, and one strongly suggestive of comfort.

A broad rule, with but rare exceptions, should be observed in the choice of patterns for all folded hangings whether for walls or windows. All stripes of colour or design, whether distinct or indistinct should have a horizontal, not perpendicular, arrangement; for it is obvious that an upright stripe may be altogether lost in a fold, whereas the horizontal line must continually reappear at the same level, when the eye easily supplies the idea of the part lost in shade or fold. Very sharply defined stripes in patterns are not to be recommended, but rich blending of decorative forms, full of suggestion is better.

For the accommodation of those who will not, or cannot, venture to adopt extensive draperies for walls, yet who have a longing for something beyond paper or paint, and are willing and able to bestow time and labour, let us propose a drawing-room with dado, doors, windows, and chimney-piece all painted in two shades of olive or blue-greens, the wall from dado to ceiling distempered, or painted of a lighter shade than the woodwork. Above the dado may be hung a strip of green serge or cloth, about fifteen or eighteen inches in depth, embroidered with crewels in shades of green, and dull yellow flowers. The curtains should be of the same coloured serge as the hangings, also similarly embroidered, though in a larger style, and if liked, with a slight intermixture of pale blue flowers. If such uniformity of colour be objected to, it will be found that dull crimson-red or delicate blues, or amber-yellows, suit calm greens.

It may be urged that our colour treatment for paint and walls shows a too strong partiality for shades of green, and indeed we have only included in our list of the desirable, green, white, yellow, black, for paint and stain. It will be allowed that blue and pink are colours rarely suited for paint unless combined with extraordinary purity and delicacy; yellows as tints for, and partners with, white, are admissible, but reds and browns are unsuited to a drawing-room. The variations of tint between greenish-yellows, yellowish-greens, blue-greens and grey-greens are innumerable; we can scarcely imagine any colour that would not find itself in tune with one or other of these tender tones.

Those whose taste for colour has not been properly developed, will find that at first a steady hold to delicate, perhaps for a time they may think, dull colours, will afford comparative security; a kind of Quaker uniformity the very reverse of vulgarity. When knowledge gives strength, fancy may venture on bolder flights, always remembering that in the choice of the decoration for drawing-room walls, we must be strongly guided by various circumstances. Are there many pictures to be hung? Are there many ornaments to be placed? In either case the colours of paint, the patterns of paper, or other decorations must be soft and subservient or they will impair the effect of the beauty of form and tint in pictures and pottery. Is the room in question too low? A perpendicular treatment will relieve the eye. Is height the objection? The line of a surbase will suggest length, and detract from height.

Perhaps a dull sunless room is the difficulty; or one overshadowed by trees, charming but sombre; here much may be done to brighten. All the woodwork (and if there is an old-fashioned chimney-piece of carved wood so much the better) may be painted a creamy-white, not varnished, the white of the ceiling relieved by a creamy tone, the walls papered in shades of yellow. This arrangement, with an amber-coloured or blue carpet, would do much to counteract gloom and give a sunlight brightness to the room.

For a room that glares with sun in summer, dark rich tones and sober tints will be found refreshing. There is a general impression that all drawing-rooms should be light and cheerful, white and gold, pink and

pale, blue and bright, but in all cases, such circumstances as aspect, size, form and requirements should appoint the colours and decide the decorations. When we have talked of rich colours we have not meant brilliant crimson, orange, or bright blue, for the colours on walls should be bland and quiet or they will assert themselves in spite of all efforts to calm the effect by pictures and hangings; but where there are few pictures or ornaments, the wall decorations may be of a brighter and busier nature, the designs of papers and other hangings more elaborate and with more varied tones of colour.

Our readers may steadfastly believe that bits of vivid colour in flowers, mirrors, china, or pictures will glow and glitter the more for sober soft surroundings. There is a beauty and brightness that invites repose, and is superior to the brilliancy that excites unrest. The earnest decorator is advised to look at nature, to study her blues, greens, reds, and yellows, in sky, grass, trees, and flowers, and to contrast them with the commonly accepted bright colours offered by our manufacturers in their papers and other decorations. This study will help the anxious inquirer to understand what we mean by soft calm tones as opposed to brilliant colours.

There is a little to say about ceilings and painting generally, before proceeding to other and not less engrossing decorative details. Rooms doubtless look better with the ceilings left undecorated, but with the usual blank whiteness relieved by a creamy or greenish tint, which gives a thicker, warmer impression than common whitewash. If decoration be wished, and

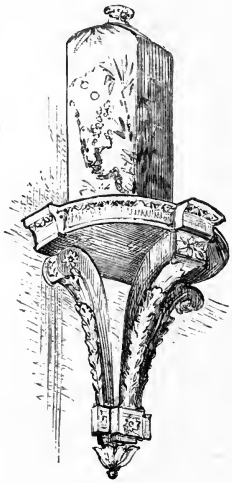
the ceiling is uninterrupted, hand painting, slightly, even roughly, though correctly done, with a simple diaper in faint colours, yellow upon white, pale blue upon greenish-white, green upon greenish-white, according to the selected colours of the wall coverings, would have a good effect.

Paper for ceilings cannot be strongly recommended, as it is very difficult to find a sufficiently low-toned or unobtrusive pattern. In old houses or new ones of architectural pretensions, ceilings are met with, divided into squares, oblong or lozenge shapes by mouldings of wood or plaster; these spaces could be toned or painted, or papered with discretion, the mouldings being stained or painted, if of wood, or coloured, if of plaster. We have seen such ceilings with slanting sides coming down to meet the walls of the room, with decorated panels and white mouldings, producing altogether a rich good effect, though slightly too heavy. In rooms lofty out of all proportion, much benefit might arise from an obtrusive ceiling, which would remind one of its existence.

Paint upon woodwork in rooms should always be of pure and simple colours and "flatted," the ordinary "graining" to imitate different kinds of wood being, in our opinion, mere dissimulation, and as such, it should be entirely reprobated; the more cleverly it is done, the more absolute the untruth. As the old French saying has it:—*Mieux être que paraître.* We incline to assert as a broad rule, with but few exceptions, that no material should pretend to be other than it is, and provided that form and colour be good, no honest material need to be ashamed

of itself. The details necessary to this assertion require perhaps fuller demonstration than there is here room for.

Staining as applied to delicate mouldings, ledges, and beadings, should be carefully and toilsomely executed, as we shall more at length inform the reader in the chapter upon furniture, to reach which in due time, we now stay our consideration of walls and ceilings.



CHAPTER III.

FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYPIECES.

WHILE windy winter, with its fogs, and frosts, and dusky, dripping days of rain and snow, is with us, the genial glow and sociable warmth of brilliant fires diminish to a great extent the blank bare blackness or cold shiny steeliness of the usual drawing-room fireplace; but when we open our windows to breathe the mild fresh air of spring and feel that a fire is at last an undesirable companion, then the real undisguised ugliness of the once-vaunted register stove breaks upon us and we hasten to cover it up, to adorn it—save the mark—with strips and chips, and ornamental devices of various kinds, all of them bad and unsightly.

The most prejudiced when asked to look disinterestedly at their drawing-room fireplace, must acknowledge that it lacks every point of beauty. Until lately no one has ventured to break through the rigid rules which regulate its style. An ugly semicircular shape, ornamented more or less (accord-

ing to the dignity of the room) with steel, brass, or ormolu, surrounded by a straight, narrow, white or coloured marble or stone mantelpiece, with pretentious posts or pilasters, supporting an unimportant shelf on which stand the inevitable mirror, clock, and vases. A fender bent into ungraceful curves of no particular pattern, too low for protection, too highly elegant to be touched by frozen feet. Any one can recall hundreds of such fire-places, in so-called pretty drawing-rooms, each one of which would answer sufficiently to this description.

The marble, the steel, the iron, all unite to counteract in appearance, as far as possible, the visible presence of warmth. Stone and marble are intractable materials, and require the greatest possible knowledge to produce good effects, with cleverly designed carving and moulding, which to suit such heavy and solid stuff, should be large and grand in composition. In past days, when good sculptors did not disdain to carve mantelpieces, fine work was certainly done, but at the best colour was lacking; and that is such an important point in our sunless climate. Once attain freedom from the traditions of a lifetime and surely the natural result would be to wonder why all fireplaces should be the same. Why should not two shelves be above, or even three, or none, if another idea appear convenient? Why should mantelpieces always be of cold marble or stone, which give but a chilly welcome to one's fingers, and a dangerously hard standing-place for china?

Every effort should conduce to make the hearth the rallying spot of the home, to collect around

AN ORDINARY MANTELPIECE.

it the richest rugs, the softest sofas, the cosiest chairs, the prettiest treasures. In this chilly climate a natural tendency when entering a room is to seek the hearth. The seats of honour and affection are on either side; all will allow that it is a spot chosen to be cherished, that every one should strive to render it as attractive as possible, and as we desire gradually to prove that much is possible, we will suggest what appears to us improvement upon old and firmly established custom.

It would be rash at once to propose the entire removal of the register-stove with all its dismal belongings. To many, such an uprooting would be distasteful, inconvenient, or too expensive, but by thought and a little artistic management the eye may be led to dwell upon surrounding beauty, and in its brightness lose some of the central blackness.

To aid description, on page 33 is a drawing of a very ordinary mantelpiece and stove simply treated. In it we see the mantelshelf covered with a board, of substantial thickness to prevent warping, projecting one or two inches beyond the marble. A rich soft covering of velvet, serge, or cloth, the overhanging part, from six to eight inches deep, simply or elaborately embroidered, would give softness, warmth, colour, and enhance the beauties of the vase, glass, or Japanese fan. Instead of the usual lofty mirror, with gilded frame, twisted into fantastic ornaments, useless in its size and height, we have three separate glasses set in a frame made of some hard wood, which has been delicately painted black or ebonized. Above this there is a shelf, with a rail to

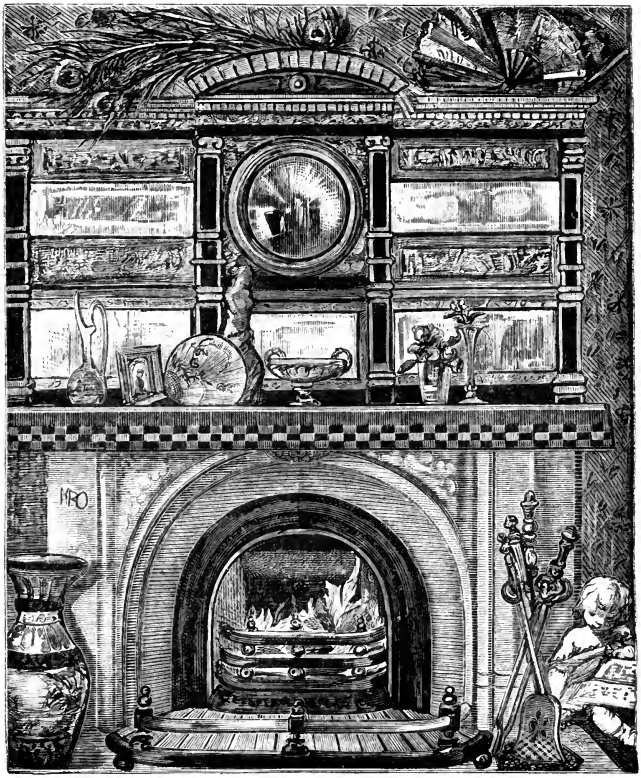
protect china plates or vases of distinct, bold pattern, that are perfectly effective at that small height, and pleasingly guide the eye upwards to richer beauty, after the glance at the mirrors.

Looking-glass is not in itself a beautiful object, and in large masses is even unpleasant; it should always have some prettiness to multiply, for then it becomes reasonable and acceptable. This accounts fairly for our total objection to a lofty mirror, the greater part of which reflects nothing but the ceiling and upper walls, where usually there is blank space.

To guard the hearth we have an old brass fender, which by its beautiful golden colour and delicate workmanship must and will give pleasure, be it in winter by firelight, or in summer by sunlight. Such fenders must now be sought for seriously, and when found, purchased as a kind of investment, their solid and conscientious make will stand much doing up, and each day they are becoming more rare, and more expensive, because more in fashion.

On page 36 is shown another commonplace stove with a more elaborate arrangement of the mirrors, which are, however, small pieces which do not cost much. Here we see the fire-irons placed in a group with brass brackets to support them, and a little mat beneath. On the other side of the fireplace is a jar of eastern ware, of not too valuable a nature. On the covering of the mantelshelf may be vases, flowers, or statuettes. A few peacocks' feathers, those spots of gorgeous colour, are placed carelessly, yet effectively, with one or two fans, above the glass. The central mirror is a round convex one,

gathering as it were the whole contents of the room into a handful, perfect and pretty. For an arrange-



A Decorated Mantelpiece.

ment of mirrors and woodwork as elaborate as this, certainly a design should be made by a notable

person, but an intelligent cabinetmaker or clever carpenter could, from our illustration, make such framework for the mirrors, with divisions and shelf as is shown on page 33.

The cost of making, with the pieces of glass, would not be great, but if fine delicate painting or ebonizing has to be done, this of course much enhances the price. The framework would look extremely well if made of American walnut wood, which has a fine rich colour of its own, and only requires rubbing with linseed oil.

There is no reason why the painting of delicate woodwork should not be done at home, as our readers will learn in the chapter on furniture. We should like to see our grown-up girls who have given up lessons, and who cannot read, practise, or visit all day long, don some pretty blouses and devote themselves to practical beautification of their own particular parts of home. Certainly there could be nothing degrading to the daintiest hands in such a worthy use of art-knowledge, far more serviceable to society than amateur sketches and copies which modesty fortunately saves from exhibition, and which find a suitable sarcophagus in portfolios, as lasting examples of killed time.

Very much better, in the way of fireplace, is that shown in the plate on page 39. Most probably the opening of this fireplace had a date anterior to the register-stove. Such grates would have had rather a high level and hobs, but fell into disuse from a supposed loss of heat and an inclination to smoke. In our drawing, an inclosed square-shaped stove, with very

delicate sharply cast ironwork around, has been set in the opening—notice the waving line of bars and the generous width.

Beyond the iron are tiles, probably old Dutch, charming and interesting in colour and subject; or possibly modern blue and white, which may now be purchased, of a few decorators, well designed and moderate in price. Perhaps—and in these times of kilns and pottery-painting exhibitions, every day a less doubtful perhaps—they are of home-execution; in either or all cases the result would be infinitely superior to our old enemy the iron or steel stove.

The tiles are inclosed by a wooden moulding, with pleasant elbows in it, and above there is a perfectly independent shelf of simple lines and solid treatment; this with the moulding round the tiles might be painted or stained to agree with other woodwork in the room.

Again we have the brass fender, and a little trivet supporting a curious old kettle from Japan, whose pretty cosy shape will excuse its introduction into our drawing-room. By the side of the brazen fender stands an elderly coal-scuttle of gleaming copper, whose rich red glow loses nothing by its juxtaposition to the golden brass of the fender. None could refuse to allow that comfort, refinement, and simple beauty have places by such a hearth as this, and those who will, may readily find the way to a reproduction of such a hearth, as there is nothing in it elaborate, expensive, or out of the way.

Having once emancipated our ideas from their

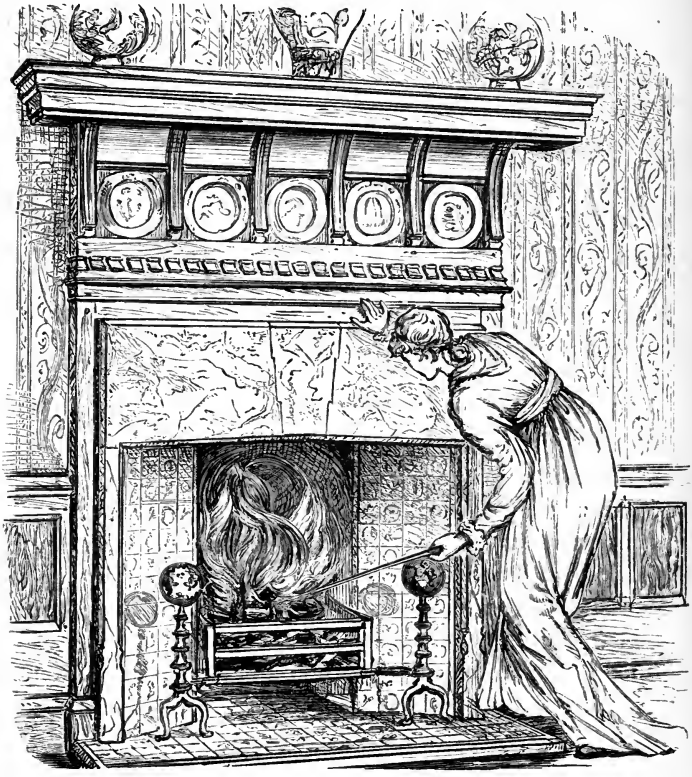
An Old-Fashioned Fireplace.

thraldom to the objectionable semicircular stove, many pretty plans present themselves. If the drawing-room is to be treated with soft and dainty colours, the stove also should be light and delicate, with brass instead of iron-work around. If new and unfinished, the fireplace might be left open, the brick walls inside, plastered and covered with tiles of a simple decorative pattern; the hearth laid with tiny red, brown, or green Lambeth stoneware tiles, which reflect heat and do not easily break. The interior of the fireplace will then admit of soap-and-water cleansing instead of the usual grim blacklead. Upon these strong rich-coloured floor-tiles may stand the separate grate, supported by brass fire-dogs, or even by its own little iron feet. In the summer the grate might be taken away, and the cool clear space filled with evergreen shrubs or large bowls of flowers.

Such a fireplace as this might have a border of more elaborate tiles outside; or, in the midst of such warm surroundings, even a fine piece of delicately marked and moulded marble; the whole being inclosed by carefully-executed woodwork, which might be carried upwards (with shelves for plates, and panels filled by small bevelled mirrors), ultimately forming a cove or canopy to give a kind of noble dignity to the whole. The woodwork might be painted a delicate green, of course with due relation to the walls. With this colour, old blue-and-white plates, or vases of old Nankin blue, or even Delft, would have a cheery look. If preferred, the woodwork might be of American walnut simply rubbed with oil.

On the next page is a drawing of a fireplace, treated

in a rather heavier style than that just suggested. The spaces between the supports of the lofty



A Fireplace with Open Grate.

mantelpiece filled with plates—the shelf above resting upon simple wooden brackets, suited to the massive forms of large vases of which we have a partial

view above. Here may be seen marble used as an accessory instead of a principal. The slanting sides of the opening and the hearth are covered with tiles, the hearth inclosed by a marble ledge. The dogs are of brass, and would glow gloriously when flaring flames are sending forth the most delicious light that winter can boast. This grate looks ample and hospitable, and comfort reigns within its reach. Choice old pottery, painted plates and tiles, brass and wood and little bits of marble, combine to make a pleasant picture, for which in summer days no one need seek to find a veil.

If varied pieces of old china cannot be obtained, a rich mellow colour can be gained by filling in the spaces occupied by the plates in our drawing with exactly fitting pieces of old Venetian leather. Squares of bevelled looking-glass or hand-painted tiles would be equally effective, and in either case the woodwork of this chimney-piece should be stained or ebonized.

Elaboration may be detestable to many who seek for simple severe beauty; there are others who are utterly out of reach of even a clever carpenter, yet who sigh for release from the commonplace of *local* talent; some have not spare means to spend on costly treats. But comfort comes to one and all with the knowledge that simplicity has beauty. Only honest material, straight lines, wholesome tiles, earnest intention, are needful in order to attain a good fireplace.

Plain, tall, or broad square iron grates are now frequently made, with or without ornament. A perfectly simple surrounding band of blue-and-white tiles set in a moulding of wood, perhaps with a double row

of tiles at the top to raise the mantelshelf to a more dignified height, could not fret the critical eye. In summer-time a slim rod might be fitted closely to the upper part of the iron stove to carry a curtain of velvet, cloth, or serge, embroidered, or depending for beauty upon colour and material. A vase of peonies intensely red, of golden sunflowers or flaunting dahlias, of orange and scarlet mountain-ash berries, or the yellow globes of the passion-plant glowing upon the hearth, would surely be an exquisite exchange for the old cut and curled paper-strips, shavings white and gilt, or coarsely made artificial flowers, which once absolutely held sway. Such trumpery without meaning, without suggestion, without a single particle of prettiness, must at once with firm resolve be discarded by any one who has the slightest wish to cultivate art in the house.

Occasionally one may meet with a fireplace in the corner of a room. Very pretty such a position may be when used discreetly. Corners are frequently useless bits of space, but are undoubtedly cosy when warmth is concentrated by two inclosing walls. They are not suited to a large party, but for one or two on either side, a table with lamp, books, and work between.

The fireplace on the next page evidently belongs to a bachelor who has no one to look after him, and therefore smokes in his drawing-room—witness the pipes; but bachelors may love beauty and tobacco too.

There is the copper coal-scuttle open and ruddy, the friendly bellows, the gorgeous fender. The wall from shelf to ceiling is hidden by a picture surrounded

A Corner Fireplace.

by dried ferns,—or perhaps Christmas greenery and Japanese fans huddling amongst all. A plan to utilize picturesquely the space above the mantelshelf suggests a little cupboard to fit it with glazed lattice-work; small shelves above and below, filling up vacant space; with looking-glass to back the shelves and reflect china infinitely. Tiles set at intervals in the woodwork at the back of the shelves, would give the charm of soft colour if china is not used.

Of course it would be grievous that any comfortable and suitable fireplace, chosen and approved for its decorative though modest design, should be marred by the presence of ill-conceived and badly-executed fire-irons. It is not easy to procure new ones of good shape and material at slight cost; nay, the fact is that they are very expensive. Three, five, or even seven pounds would be a common charge for a set delicately wrought in iron or brass. The seeker after such things may obtain, at a much more reasonable rate, charming *old* fire-irons of brass. Sets of modest worth have been obtained from Oxford and other old towns, at prices varying from thirty shillings to three pounds; the costlier, being of dainty patterns admirably suited to deserving hearths.

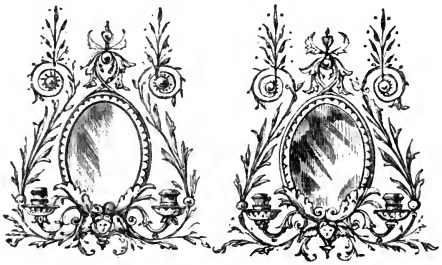
Old coal-scuttles of brass and copper are still at large, substantial and satisfactory. A modern coal-scuttle of good shape and material is scarcely to be seen. In nothing could frightful misapplication of ornament be more grievously exemplified than in the badly-executed landscape, floral, figure, or other designs, painted, mother-o'-pearled, or otherwise illegitimately carried out on the lids of the deformed

boxes that have until lately been of universal use in our drawing-rooms. Good oaken boxes with brass or ironwork about them, suggestive of strength and suitability, have improved matters a little, but they have not the ruddy shine of the old copper nor the golden glow of the brass, and in our sunless climate, surely wisdom should always wed herself to colour.

As tiles have been frequently talked about, a few details are now given of the prices and patterns of those painted by hand. Many clever, ingenious, energetic minds have been at work for years, making colours, fluxes, enamels, and lustres, and striving to combine due decorative detail with the least possible cost. At present hand-painted over-glazed tiles in blue and white, or yellow and white, may be purchased at certain well-known London houses, at prices varying from one shilling to two shillings each. A tile called the 'Longden' pattern can be recommended for surrounding borders or slanting sides of grates or hearths. These pattern tiles form a strong and effective diaper, and vary in price from one shilling and fourpence for a five-inch, to one shilling and eightpence for a six-inch tile. Others, such as the swan, sunflower, or bough patterns, differ but slightly in price and are all suitable.

Perhaps the inclination of some might tend to the production of home-painted tiles, and in that case a little inquiry is all that is now needed to find out proper colours and assisting kilns. Good examples for imitation abound at South Kensington, where the Persian and old Dutch tile paintings are specimens of

entirely different and successful work, and are eminently worthy of attention. But lest unwittingly the absorbing topic of tile and pottery painting should lead to lengthy digression, we will here bring our chapter to a close, trusting that the simple views advanced may lead some of our readers to success won through personal trials and mistakes, and that bright grace and beauty may shine this winter from many a newly decorated fireplace and chimney-piece.



CHAPTER IV.

FLOORS AND CARPETS.

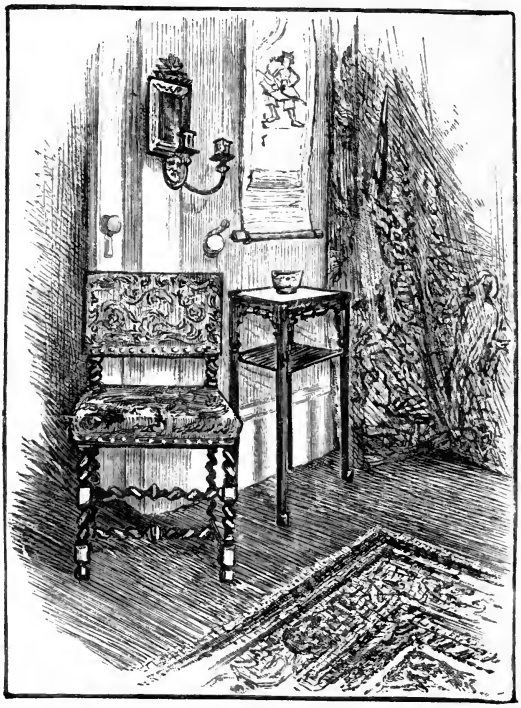
THE flooring of modern houses is a rather melancholy subject, and one about which it is impossible to speak favourably. The cost of well-tempered wood, the increased wages of superior carpenters and joiners, forbid the hope that any satisfactory and sound floors will be found in a newly-built residence, large or small, unless some special and costly arrangement be made to that end. Experience has taught us to be certain, that in but a few short years a piteous parting 'twixt the planks will come, intervening spaces will appear, boards will warp and shrink, and between the floor and skirting-board cracks will abound—to become traps for dust, inlets for draughts, homes for insects, and hindrances to wholesome scouring. Luxurious habits cause all floors to be entirely covered, it is therefore found absolutely necessary to lay an under-covering of stout paper, to shield the more or less expensive carpet from strongly-defined lines agreeing with the boards

of the room, and to assist in combating the cold currents of air that unpleasantly flow upwards.

In the matter of flooring, as in so many other points, old-modern houses are infinitely better off than new-modern ones, in which latter class all houses built within the last twenty-five years are included. The great inclination for dwelling out of town has caused a quick growth of suburban-district houses, built rapidly and sold cheaply. Labour and material are in much request, and continually increasing in cost; as a consequence, all dwellings are doomed to an inferior standard in their construction, and a daily deterioration in the sterling sincerity of work and solidity of material. There are houses, built within the last eighty years, neither large nor pretentious, in which a crack in the woodwork or a gap in the floors large enough to admit a pin's head could hardly now be found. There is no irregularity of surface, no starting of joints; all is sound, solid, and satisfactory; floors so smooth and polishable, that covering carpets are necessary only for softness, not for concealment. A cataract of water on the floor of an upper room would cause no anxiety for the ceiling of the drawing-room below.

What is to be done to make our modern drawing-room floors more wholesome and pretty, is the present much debated question. Without doubt, and in this Dr. Richardson would agree, no carpet should *entirely* cover a floor. What will be our reader's dismay, at such an apparently dogmatic and dreary statement, but we trust to be able to show that cheery comfort and dainty beauty are not banished by bare boards.

Look, for instance, at the skilfully treated and cosy little corner figured below, where evident and richly coloured boards suit the quaint beauty of the twisted Stuart chair, with cushions richly 'broidered,



BARE BOARDS.

the little Chinese table, the Japanese scroll and eastern carpet. Surely all will acknowledge that comfort is no whit lessened by the wholesome, if comparatively diminished, dimensions of the carpet.

It is impossible that a drawing-room carpet, in daily use, with fires burning in the room for seven or eight months, and windows open for the rest of the year, can be kept delicately clean with a slight brush-over once a day, perhaps a hard brush-over once a week and a shake out once a year. Any one who doubts this need only to watch the process of shaking the said carpet at the expiration of twelve months' wear. One can only wonder where the dust and dirt have come from, how one can have lived in it, and what is the use of sweeping. It merely requires a little observation to be sure that the action of sweeping a carpet is not effectual; it removes a certain part of dirt; other parts float upwards into the air only to fall again, and by far the greater part is impressed into the carpet. The thicker, the woollier, the richer, the greater its capacity for the reception and retention of dust.

The only effectual way to keep a carpet clean is to shake it frequently, and in order that this may be done without difficulty, no heavy pieces of furniture, such as bookcases, pianofortes or china-cabinets, which require the exertion of great strength to move them, should stand upon the carpet. Doubtless some readers will say: "Oh! how cold, how wretched, how uncomfortable!" but better be all these—though it is quite needless—than be defiled with dirt.

A reduction of superfluous carpet, and the resulting bare boards are not proposed without a few comfortable and substitutive ideas being suggested for warm and congenial colouring. It has ere this been plainly shown that *colour* is all important, and the lack of it

in ordinary planks is probably one reason why (without knowing why) it has been usual to improve wan wood by questionable carpets. In any old-modern drawing-room the flooring will most likely be of sound wood well seasoned, when a careful filling up of all cracks and spaces by the fitting in of pieces of suitable wood—a process technically called "slipping,"—and a general planing and rubbing down to a smooth surface, will sufficiently prepare the floor for stain, and ultimate polish with the ancient and wholesome beeswax and turpentine. It is not needful to stain and brush a space of floor that is to be entirely covered, but all should be soundly repaired and levelled. If the polishing is effectually done in the first instance, it requires but a slight amount of daily brushing to preserve brightness, the labour being about equal to that of sweeping the same surface of carpet.

Good colour for floors can also be gained by paint, but it cannot be heartily recommended, as, being on the surface, it quickly wears away; while the stain sinks into and becomes part of the wood, and the polish is a protector and disinfectant. If a drawing-room floor is very unsatisfactory, it would be advisable to have the boards planed down one quarter of an inch, and covered all over with narrow oaken or well-seasoned pine planks of that thickness and three or four inches in width, fitted with extremest nicety. Oak only requires age and polish to acquire golden-brown colour, and it is an excellent wood to receive stain, of russet or green, which does not hide its beautiful natural markings.

A more elaborate and, it need hardly be said, a

more expensive way of perfecting a drawing-room floor is to have it prepared for, and covered with, carpet-parquetry one quarter of an inch in thickness. Parquetry, as our readers most probably know, is diaper-work of oak or other light and dark woods, and may be readily obtained in various patterns at prices varying from one shilling to four shillings per square foot. The preparation of floors for carpet-parquetry consists of the filling in and planing down before mentioned, and if preferred, it need only be a border around a room. It looks warm, rich, and comfortable, and with a carpet overlying a few inches, bordered with deep black or coloured fringe, could not but please the most fastidious fancy. Those who aspire to delicate effects may satisfy their craving by a border of shining satin-wood parquetry and dainty gaily-tinted carpet with bright fringe. When extreme solidity is desired, or in the case of very cold or imperfect floors, parquetry one inch in thickness would be advantageous, but the laying of this involves the taking up of the floor; and although the greater thickness cannot fail to be superior in many cases, the quarter-inch is usually all that is necessary to secure a handsome, comfortable, lasting and elastic floor.

With a drawing-room floor entirely smooth and shining it becomes only a question of personal taste where to place the carpet or carpets. General choice clings to the central position, or to the space chosen for domestic favour, near the hearth. If the carpet be of English make, the size can suit the requirement of the drawing-room, and only miss the larger furniture. If fortunately an eastern carpet is in question,

often long and narrow in shape, it may be assisted by rich rugs placed where frequent footsteps should fall softly, or wherever a cosy corner with cushioned seats invites to warmth and rest.

Those who are indisposed to interfere with present flooring, yet are willing to resign the total covering of carpet, would find pleasant material and colour for the sides of a floor in many Chinese, Japanese, and Manilla mattings, which are made of suitable widths and in various soft yellow, green, and dull-red diaper patterns. If such a bordering of matting be wiped daily with a damp but not wet cloth, it may be kept very clean, for it does not absorb dirt like carpet. When there chance to be many varied bits of Japanese and eastern furniture, painting, and possibly carpets, a bordering of fancy Chinese matting would be suitable, and, in a drawing-room (such as that suggested on the opposite page), would be cheerful and appropriate.

For any floor, be it stained, painted, parquetried, or matted, one cannot desire worthier coverings than Persian, Turkish, or almost any eastern carpets. If old so much the better for colours and make, if rather the worse for wear. The Persians doubtless were the teachers of carpet-making, since the richest and most glorious of their specimens date from and before the reign of a certain Shah Abbas at the end of the sixteenth century, when Europeans had but lately risen from rushes and straw; and the general though inferior similarity of other eastern carpets in clever design and gorgeous colouring makes it probable that all derived their original ideas from one powerful source.

Ancient Persian carpets are so rare and costly

A PICTURESQUE CORNER.

except to the traveller, that few need hope to possess them, but should such luck befall, there is no fear of inharmonious combination with other decoration. The potent yet dusky shades of reds, blues, and yellows, the congruous combinations of strong contrasts, which with our poor modern crude tints would be most objectionable, the elaborate and almost invariably small decorative patterns, give a strange beauty, unequalled in these lack-lustre days. There are carpets from which emanate a brilliance like burnéd gold and veritable gems; such colours, so intense without glare; such forms, so suggestive of absolute perfection of design, cannot fail to convince those who study them that all other carpets, old and new, for beauty fall far behind the ancient works of the masters of decorative art.

Although inferior in almost every point, modern carpets, rugs, and mats from Persia, Turkey, Morocco and Algeria, are much to be desired for solid stuff, for richness of colour and appropriateness of pattern. The Mohammedan religion forbids the copying of natural objects for decoration, and in nations who strictly adhere to this faith, doubtless decorative work gains strength by the rule—which, by the way, obviously was not rigidly observed in Persia. We have seen fine carpets of eastern colour and pattern bought in Algeria at a not enormous price—about eight hundred francs each—from wandering Arabs, who may (for who can trust an Arab's word?) have brought them, as they said, from Kabylia, a part of Algeria only lately encroached upon by strangers, and quite innocent of any European knowledge or art.

From that country come also carpets of long and short wool, of wool on string, and cotton and wool, with colours of cloudy reds, dusky blues, golden yellows and creamy whites; delightful bargains, to be discreetly made in little dingy shops abroad, or with wandering Arab pedlars, at prices comparatively insignificant when contrasted with the English rate for such rarities.

As few of those who love eastern goods can go so far to seek them, they will find much to content them in various assortments of foreign carpets now abundantly offered for sale in England. There are several kinds of modern Persian carpets, and those made in Kurdistan are the most expensive, costing as much as from three to four pounds per square yard, from this descending by various degrees to about fifteen shillings per square yard. Eastern carpets are usually long and narrow, and two of different colours and patterns lying side by side in a large room give perfect congruity of effect. Modern Persian, Turkish, Scinde, and Morocco rugs, all having special virtues of rich colour and hand work, vary in price from one to ten pounds, and the wearing qualities of each may fairly be judged by the difference in cost.

There is however no necessity to forsake English carpets in a search after beauty. It is true that for many years bad taste ruled, with rare exceptions, in the patterns of carpets, whether velvet-pile, Brussels, or Kidderminster. For drawing-rooms, brilliant bunches of full-blown blossoms, convulsed scrolls, and inexplicable twistings and twirls, in bright colours on white or light grounds, were "the correct style."

One cannot now look into decorators' shops without being aware that a great change has gradually taken place in the class of patterns and colours in carpets displayed for the admiration of passers-by. Low tones, twilight shades, olive greens, peacock blues, cloudy reds, small suggestive patterns, sound materials; all mighty improvements upon the boldly white or brilliantly flaunting natural lilies, roses and ribbons worked in velvet-pile, or Brussels or inferior stuffs, crushing out other less demonstrative beauties in divers drawing-rooms.

It is comparatively easy now-a-days to buy a carpet of rich delicate tone and good design, and it is not necessary that the cost should be great. Carpets with one universal cool colour do not readily get shabby. Patterns should defer to general effect, so that their slight relief of colour would not strike the eye at once, but rather gently remind it of their existence.

Wilton and velvet-pile look charming in pale blues and low-toned yellows and amber, and are made with borders and rugs to suit, the cost of such carpets being about ten to twelve shillings per yard. A very good class of carpet is the patent Axminster, which, at a lower cost, has a rich effect. Other and inferior carpets there are, but the seeker for beauty in them will require more painful care than when dealing with the higher class of goods on which more thought has been spent. Fortunately the fashion for the duller treatment of colours has interfered in true beauty's behalf, and simple patterns in quiet hues may be encountered by chance, and hailed with delight in the most unexpected quarters. A *cheap* carpet is not ultimately

inexpensive; but there are so many cases in which it may be so absolutely necessary an extravagance, that it is useless to advise or protest against the economy of the moment.

The old flowery carpet, bravely discarded, will form an excellent lining for a simpler substitute more gracefully gay, which might be made up to a square or oblong, or to suit the shape of the room. The new carpet, surrounded by a thick woollen fringe matching prevailing colours, will form a pleasing groundwork on which one old eastern rug will work wonders of richness. The formed judgment which discreetly chose the carpet would find real relish and enjoyment in the beauty of the rug; to the better recovery of good taste, and the enrichment and refinement of ideas, to be hereafter exhibited to the benefit of future floors and carpets.

CHAPTER V.

WINDOWS, DOORS, AND CURTAINS.

EN, nay, one hundred chances to one, against any architectural goodness being found in the windows of a drawing-room. Doubtless they will be large, for there is less labour and expense in making one large than two small windows. The panes will be extensive, suggesting glare, whatever or wherever the outlook. The woodwork, possibly showy, but of untried grain, promises future cracks and draughts, and there is little chance of variety in shape or arrangement.

The inevitable first step in furnishing a drawing-room has hitherto been to shroud all windows, as quickly as possible, with Venetian or roller-blinds above; and frequently with wire or cane dwarf-blinds below. Then comes a superstructure of curtain-poles and valances, with as abundant a display of curtains as possible, which exclude, most effectually, necessary light and air. Yet no one can wonder that it is the universal custom to drape windows; for they are

usually so ugly that there is nothing pleasant about them to look at. The light they admit in one unbroken flood, if divided into portions, would be most acceptable. The air, if allowed to float calmly through, and to escape, laden with impurity, by some other window, would be a blessing indeed; but it becomes too often quite the reverse, if the windows are confined to one side of the room; and blinds are lowered, and curtains drawn, to darken daylight and defy draughts.

Many may say: "Oh! give us light, give us air!" Certainly for the sake of morals, health, and art, it is most desirable to do so, provided that they be distributed in discreet doses. Some may say: "How can we have too much of such natural things as light and air?" Fire and water are equally the gifts of God for the good of man; but in such absolutely abnormal abodes as English houses, how warily must they be treated, how carefully confined, lest desolation and destruction result instead of beauty and benefit! Of course, compared with such outrageous elements, light and air are easy to deal with; but to be beneficial in our living-rooms, they must be, as it were, educated to accord with indoor life.

When once a house is built, great difficulties stand in the way of any alteration in the position or shape of the windows. To treat with them as they find them is the fate of most people. Large sheets of plate-glass have, doubtless, won favour, as affording little or no obstacle to the view—if there *be* a view—from the window; they can have no other virtue, for no one could possibly detect properties of

beauty in a large sheet of glass. They are expensive, liable to be broken, and one can only wonder at their adoption where their obvious intention must fail of its object.

What thousands of highly respectable houses there are, with no better sight from either front or back windows than dusty or muddy streets, town gardens, out buildings and backyards! It can only be the lack of inward resources that makes people care to contemplate such sorry surroundings. To prove the inartistic nature, the unpicturesque character of such windows, our readers are again referred to the fact, that no such large glassy spaces would be admissible into a picture. It is from this absolute unpicturesqueness that even the worst cases might gain recovery by zealous thought.

If the view be very fine, let part of the window be devoted to it; but the first object of the window being to bring light in, the first question is, "How can this be done effectively, not garishly, but softly and with modulation?"

Even if the lower part of the sashes must be left blank, the upper part might be filled with small quarry panes, leaded up, either with or without ornament. Glass used for these window-diapers is usually shaded in green or yellow, and forms a pleasing variation of colour, admitting, but toning light. Delightful little patterns may be procured at the moderate cost of from ten to twelve shillings per square foot; such diapers form a lovely window decoration, and prevent the need of either Venetian or roller-blinds. When the sash is opened at the top, great benefit will ensue from the free

ingress of air, as there is no blind to guide it down to a draughty level. Under these more favourable circumstances there would be few days, even in mid-winter, when the window might not be open slightly at the top, to allow pure air to get in without chilling the lower part of the room. More elaborate stained and painted glass, with figure or other subjects, would be still more interesting; but if it is sterling work, leaded up, and of clever design and good colour, it is naturally very costly in the first instance.

If windows be picturesque in shape, it becomes still more desirable to treat them picturesquely, and the most pleasing prospect could never atone for the desertion of such a duty. The lozenge or square shaped quarries of toned glass are to be recommended, with or without pattern or picture, as eminently suitable.

If our readers will not admit of such an innovation upon usage, at all events let the question of air be considered. Venetian blinds are the most ventilating in common use; but they are heavy and ugly, and continually out of order. If windows are too sunny, nothing is so effectual to give shade as jalousies, such as one sees continually in France and Italy, and, they are most furnishing in their outside effect upon a new or bare-looking house.

Roller-blinds have a stiff, harsh look, and though sedate colours, with modest stripes and better material than the usual white, have lately won favour amongst us, there is still the disadvantage of the absolute necessity to draw them up entirely, if air is to be admitted effectually, for then an undecorated window

becomes a staring blank in the room. Instead of blinds, little curtains are suggested of delicate soft material, such as white muslin, Tussore silk, or Madras muslin, with tiny rings sewn on, to draw on slim brass rods, which should be fixed just above the top of the upper and on the top of the lower parts of sash or other windows. These little curtains should divide in the middle, allowing of partial or entire withdrawal, when a perfectly unobstructed space, smaller or larger, would be left for airiness. Fine holland makes very pretty curtains, and offers fair opportunity for effective embroidery. The charming folds of delicate stuffs; the pleasant semi-transparent background; the arrangements for withdrawal, allowing only the most pleasant views from the window—for there is art in the drawing or withdrawing of curtains—the perfect freedom for ventilation, commend them to favourable consideration. The simplest style of outline embroidery, such as a row of stiff daisies slight and slim, yellow and white, with green leaves outspread, placed along the lower hem of each little curtain, would look charming. The Madras muslin, being faintly coloured and patterned, needs no embroidery. This muslin, or Tussore silk, or other soft delicate material, would be most suitable for festoon blinds, which draw up by means of many runners into graceful folds, and, although they are not to be as heartily recommended as the dainty little hangings, are a great improvement upon the old, stiff roller-blind.

A window with woodwork well painted, lattice panes with coloured diaper, and such small curtains, or perhaps festoon blinds, would scarcely need the heavier

drapery, although long curtains, if of suitable material and make, could never fail to give an acceptably comfortable and rich effect. When drawn at dusk, their thick warm folds will sufficiently prevent the chill air which is entering at the top of the still open window.

The old-fashioned thick, gilt curtain-pole, with its heavy appendages at either end, as well as the carved and gilded cornices, festooned and fringed valances, are opposed to art and usefulness as applied to curtains, and will be unnecessary if there is nothing *ugly to hide;* the need for concealment being a frequent cause of many unreasonable ideas in domestic decoration. Curtains are meant to give warmth, to darken, or to comfort rooms when dark, and should draw and withdraw easily. The usual elaborate arrangement of hidden strings and rings is troublesome and needless. It requires violently energetic labour on the part of an upholsterer to fit and keep it fitted and in working order. The pole should be visible; and being visible, should be good to look upon. Either brass poles with pure ornaments to screw in at both ends, or strong mahogany poles stained or ebonized to perfect polish, terminating in balls with gilded lines on them, afford smooth surface on which brass rings may travel lightly. Secure position is gained by brass brackets fixed to the lintel of the window. If there must be valances or fringes, they should be behind the pole, which, standing aloof on its brackets, leaves free space for the passage to and fro of rings and curtains. An example of curtains hanging on a simple and evident pole may be seen in the accompanying illustration, where, with an eager desire to encourage wholesome-

ness even at the expense of beauty, the pole is at a level below the lintel, thus leaving room for free admission of air. In the case of a highly orna-

CURTAINS FOR A WINDOW.

mented ceiling or painted frieze, the upper light gained by this arrangement might be an advantage; otherwise the idea does not commend itself.

When windows become pleasant to look upon, the wish to cover them will disappear, and curtains

will be desired for their proper use and beauty, but always without the old adjuncts. Taste and knowledge gained by dealing picturesquely with window-glass and hanging blinds will guide the selection of suitable stuffs for curtains.

An impression has long prevailed that curtains for drawing-rooms look pretty made of gaudy velvets, crackling silks, stiff damasks, or harsh reps, varied by flimsy lace, net, leno, or muslin looped with cords and tassels, bands and bows,—crowding windows, using space, and altogether too elegantly arranged to be hastily withdrawn. A mass of uninteresting material, hard in texture, coarse or poor in colour, gathered out of all natural folds, cannot be said to answer in any way the original intention in curtains.

It is not always easy to strike a proper balance of utility and splendour, but in the matter of curtains, which, from their position, have but slight wear and tear, and if of honourable material may give life service, it will be economy to be rationally liberal in views. Richness of colour and softness of material are eminently desirable points in window curtains, and are to be found in velvet, velvet and silk, silk and wool, or wool alone, as described in that portion of our chapter on walls which deals with draperies. In rooms where there is sparse decoration, patterned curtains will have their advantage, and active hands may gain a long reward by fitting embroidery. If it be desired that curtains should be long and looped back with bands, choose only for colour and texture. If rich patterns are chosen, the curtains should fall in simple unbroken folds and just reach the

ground, or in the case of a window-seat, or panelled or decorated dado, or interrupting furniture, they should reach the bottom of the window only.

For summer curtains, instead of the usual white, which keeps out neither heat nor light, and is therefore equally useless and unbeautiful, may be suggested (as before for little window shades) the delicately hued and patterned Madras muslin, delightful to look upon, and possessing a gentle power of softening light and looking cool. This material in various patterns and colours is two yards wide, and costs from five to six shillings per yard. Indian Tussore, the silken fabric used for dresses, makes exceedingly pretty curtains, and when slightly lined is an effective ground for embroidery, which might be done elaborately in silks, or outlined in crewels, with slight shading here and there. Good embroidery has a pleasant way of standing washing or cleaning, and never seems to wear out or get shabby.

Bold, not coarse, patterns in chain-stitch, worked in crewels, suit loose serges and cloths; but thicker, firmer, costlier materials, demand slower and more solid treatment.

Bear firmly in mind, when choosing colours for embroidery, how much brighter they will look when worked, than they do in a quantity together. Do not let blues and pinks be bright; reds and yellows gaudy; or greens emerald or arsenical. The pattern first carefully designed (with needle and wool always in view) and drawn out, it may be pricked carefully, pounce rubbed through the holes, and the marks fixed with a hot iron on smooth, and painted care-

fully with a brush, on rough, surfaces. The best possible lessons in design, colour, and diversity of stitch for embroidery may be found in the careful study of old examples of Indian and Persian work at the South Kensington Museum. There also may be seen Turkish and Cretan stitchings with gold and silver thread on fine muslins, that are very instructive.

The unpractised designer in embroidery should be content with simple patterns and few colours; distinct, suggestive forms, softly not harshly defined, and not crossing or intermingling. Strong contrasts should be avoided, but if absolutely desired, should be, as it were, gradually approached. If the ground colour be very light, with flowers and leaves in dark rich colours, an edging of a lighter shade to all patterns will prevent harshness in the contrast. If many hues are chosen for embroidery on a coloured ground, a general edging of white or yellow will conduce to an even surface of tone.

Those who have the wish to embroider, and would fain do it in the right way, yet feel ignorant as to how they are to begin, should remember the knowledge and power displayed by untutored savages, such as the New Zealanders, in the proper use of ornament. The result of perfectly pure, unacquired taste for beauty, fitness, and balance of form and colour may be seen in decorations whose simple primitive beauties rival or excel the productions of more civilized races: an encouraging fact for those who live remote from Schools of Art, Museums, or Exhibitions.

A few combinations of various colours in materials

and wools suited for curtains, *portières*, or furniture cushions, are here offered for consideration :—

A bold outline pattern worked in long chain-stitches in varied tones of crewels, from deep dull red to the most delicate yellow-pink, upon serge or cloth of a middle tone of the chosen shades of red, would look delightfully calm, warm, and rich. For a greater contrast, the same dull red crimson ground, with the pattern worked in darker and lighter shades of blue, chosen most carefully to avoid brightness, but to gain fulness and softness of colour. If a material in quiet green be selected, it may be decorated with dull gold colour shaded here and there with deep orange.

The constant repetition of the word "dull" is necessary to impress sufficiently the fact, stated elsewhere, how *very* much brighter wools and silks look when worked in stitches than when seen in masses.

On yellow-green—embroider with sage-greens, and delicate pale blue and faint pink flowers. On blue—in shades of deep red gradually fading to a yellow tint. The combination of *proper* blues and reds has a splendid effect, and is suited to large patterns and fine rooms. Heavy patterns worked upon holland, cut out and sewn on serge and cloth, with an edging of filoselle or twisted silk, make decorations suitable for portières.

For lighter curtains, bold but delicate outline patterns, simply run closely on soft white or yellowish muslin, look lovely ; and Tussore silk with chain-stitch work in salmon-coloured pink ; or Bolton sheeting, or twill with green sprays and yellow flowers. Materials with no definite colour allow of a combination of more

numerous tints for embroidery. Curtains of Tussore, enriched by a border of two shades of delicate yellowish green, and flowers of many tones of yellow alternating with flowers of plum-coloured purple —a charming tint for a light ground—suggest beauty.

With the curtains richly dight or fair embroidered, hanging in noble folds from their evident poles, and the windows transformed into things of beauty by good colour, stained glass in lattice panes, and dainty little draperies; the objectionable cornices and valances will be no longer needed, for there will be nothing to hide. The curtains, if hooks are sewn on to fit into the rings on the pole, can be removed with the greatest ease, and will repay such attention by lengthened service.

Before concluding these remarks upon windows the question may be raised, "Why should windows always be in an outer wall?" A pleasant little latticed opening into another pretty room, giving perhaps a through glimpse of distant views, otherwise shut out, and the admission of sunny rays or cool breezes, is surely a desirable thing; many a blank space might be thus furnished, many a dull room thus brightened. A tapestried curtain, itself a picture, when drawn would give perfect warmth and privacy. No drawback presents itself to this plan but the lack of common usage, a very insufficient obstacle, and one that tends terribly to tiresome and vapid imitation. Rest assured that the more we endeavour to employ our own faculties, to satisfy particularly our own needs, the richer our store of comfortable inventions

will become. The more we do the more we can do, "while genius rusts for want of use."

Great comfort, especially in small houses, would be gained by making doorways between front and back rooms, not the old acquaintance of our drawing-room, folding-doors, using and making useless one side of both rooms; but a simple opening made in the most convenient part of the partition wall, not necessarily in the middle. Space, air, light, sun, view, may all be gained by this plan, as well as an extra chance for graceful folds of comfortable curtains. The decoration of rooms thus connected need not match, but should agree. Objections may be urged against this scheme,—one may dislike the supposed lack of privacy, another may fear chilling draughts. Regrets have never been heard on either score from those who have tried the plan, and it is more than probable that any one who is bold enough to assert original ideas for home comfort will find them cheerfully accepted, perhaps imitated, provided always that the innovations include elegance and ease.

A pole and curtain, or curtains, should be placed in each room, when such a doorway is made, and an apparently generous width may be gained by the poles being long enough to admit of the curtains extending beyond each jamb of the doorway. Double curtains afford effectual warmth and cosiness, and when partly withdrawn, or looped back with thick worsted or silken cords, allow a partial view of either room, fascinating in its look of comfort.

Doorway curtains or portières should, of course, look well when seen from either side; they are fitting

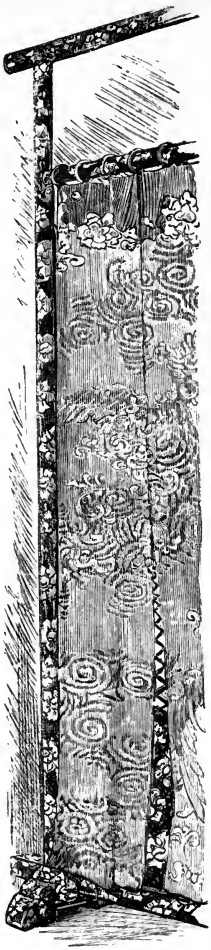
subjects for elaborate embroidery. Our illustration shows the desirability of a horizontal treatment of

CURTAINS FOR A DOORWAY.

stripes as pointed out in a former chapter. Thin Persian carpets made of cotton, with a curious kind of open-work introduced, and a long loose fringe,

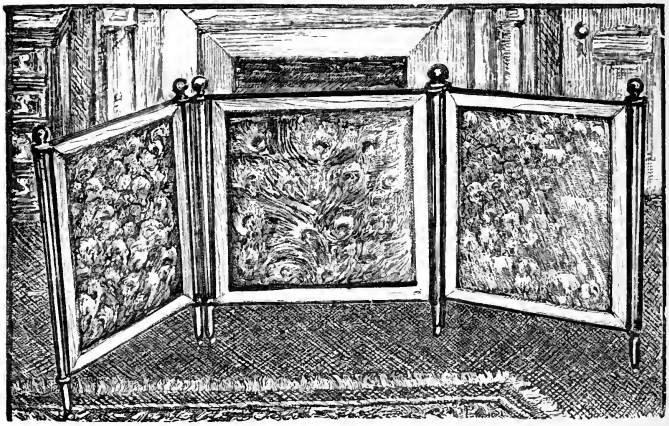
do excellent service as portières. Indian durries, which are also of cotton, and have richly striped patterns, might avail in certain positions. Portières look well made of serge, or serge-cloth, in soft greens or peacock blues, and may be decorated most simply with an ornamental stitch worked in silken cord all round the edges, harmonizing or contrasting gently with the chosen colour. Silk with a stamped velvet pattern and silken lining would make a rich-looking portière.

An effectual protection against any chilly effect of a doorway, may be gained by the introduction of a most decorative piece of furniture, that is, a screen, which may be made in folding divisions or in one frame. A very satisfactory and pretty design is shown in our woodcut, where an embroidered curtain hangs from rings, on a lacquered and gilded frame. Or pieces of embroidery might be stretched tightly in the divisions of a folding screen. The frame should be simple but strong, and may be ebonized and gilded, or painted and



A Japanese Screen.

decorated with a slight relief of the same colour. Lovely pieces of Japanese embroidery are shown below worked in glowing silks, representing peacocks' feathers, most beautiful and useful as a folding screen. Old Venetian leather, richly patterned velvets,



A Peacock Screen.

or eastern materials, may be considered suitable for screens; but we strongly recommend less expensive materials enriched by personal energy and endeavour —energy, to begin untried work, which afar off seems impossible to untried hands; endeavour, which conduces to the aptitude and dexterity inferred in the oft-used words "artistic taste."

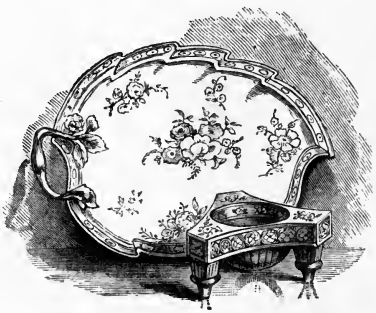
True intention makes sincerity of work. Our greatest living writer says, "All true work is sacred: in all

true work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of Divineness." Nothing that we could say to encourage need be said after this.

The usually poor proportion, mean mouldings and panellings of modern doors, cause them rather to detract from than add to the beauty of drawing-rooms. In old houses the woodwork of doors in best rooms was frequently elaborately shaped and carved, and carried up into a pediment, or sometimes a cove, which gave dignity and height, making the door an important feature in the room. That a want of something was felt, even in meaner abodes, is evident in the old custom of placing a shelf for ornaments above the door—this indeed is a great improvement. The shelf should be about eight inches in width and agree in length with the architrave of the door, like which it should be painted, and upon which it should rest; supported by brackets, or fixed to the wall by means of glass-plates. A handsome jar or jars of good shape and colour, such as may be met with at moderate cost in Flemish grey ware, suit such a position, which is benefited by a background of Delft plates or blue tiles, rich in colour but not too delicate in treatment, resting on the shelf and leaning against the wall.

Another plan is to place along and above the architrave a back piece of wood, large enough to admit a row of pattern tiles, or possibly pretty decorative china plates, to stand side by side; and above these a repeat of the upper moulding of the doorway, painted like the rest of the woodwork. A simple row of tiles or plates resting on the top of the architrave, and

cleverly secured in position by effective but invisible means, would give the eye something more satisfactory to dwell upon than inferior carpenter's work. If these details seem to some such minor points in drawing-room decoration that they urge against us an inclination to waste words on trifles, let them reflect that life's joys are made up of trifles. We look for sympathy from the earnest—from those upon whom the dull routine and tame reality of ordinary every-day life weigh heavily. We place before them the idea of progress towards the beautiful, with its unceasing, if faltering, efforts after realization, giving happiness and interest, even when centred in nothing more important than windows, doors, and draperies.



CHAPTER VI.

FURNITURE.

ITHOUT doubt, the desire to be comfortable is universal. Some satisfy their craving in one way, some in another; each is convinced of the correctness of the chosen plan, if not truly satisfied with its result. There is an equally universal impression that, "East or West Home is best," that is, most *comfortable;* and as we are dealing with so important a part of home, and have now arrived at the very core of all drawing-room decoration—the Furniture—it behoves us most carefully to consider the desirable quality of comfort, and above all things to see that it is included in our suggestions for artistic furnishing, as opposed to the late general inclination in almost all classes to covet gay elegance at the cost of solid comfort.

It is rather difficult to define elegance. All art-work is not elegant, for Greek statues are simply beautiful; yet true elegance must be akin to beauty, though perhaps suggestive of inferior parts of that beauty.

Beauty must have dignity and grace; elegance may be graceful, yet lack dignity;—beauty is suggestive of severe straight lines and strength; elegance of flowing curves and weakness. Elegance and beauty in form seem to stand in the same relation as fancy and imagination in thought.

One has only to study the tables, chairs, and sofas of past generations to be aware that, in their days, comfort was the chief consideration in the composition of furniture for drawing-rooms. The luxury of the present day, coveted, and attained to, by most classes, was then confined to one. Uninterested inactivity, productive of indolence, was then almost impossible. Women of the middle and upper classes could not disdain to take an active part in the management of their households, for, as comparatively few servants were employed, there was absolute need for their mistress's help. Ladies cooked and dusted, knitted, sewed, and spun, their lives were more busy, therefore more healthy and more tired, their chairs were made for rest, their sofas for repose, their tables for substantial needs. Fitness was desired before beauty; beauty was sought rather than elegance.

Our ancestors had not our temptation to travel, so with content abode long in one house, beloved from associations, passing from one generation to another. Fashion in furniture did not, as now, change rapidly to please fleeting taste, but slowly, to meet the requirements of gradual advance. Money, not having attained its present pre-eminence, was not the only test of prosperity. Well-filled chests of homespun cloths made a valuable addition to a daughter's dower,

and the furniture of the father's home served its time to a succeeding son and to his children after him.

The furniture for the drawing-room was then treated by clever workmen with a view to fitness, comfort, and durability. Elegance was rather a natural result than a primary object, so that although we find in the furniture dating from the reign of Queen Anne, and for nearly a century later, great elegance, it is throughout subservient to a general air of strength and solid worth. At the present time there is a quite different state of things. Furniture for a drawing-room must, above all things, be graceful, light, *showy*. As it is not likely that the children born to, and bred up in, continually changing fashions will be content with things as they now are, when it is their time and turn to choose for themselves; there is no object to be gained by solid, honest, inward depth and goodness of construction, or by the use of valuable material; all produced must have the greatest effect at the least cost, for a short time—and the result is that, broadly speaking, modern drawing-room furniture is superficial, showy without worth, elegant without beauty, and elaborate without fitness. Witness the lofty gilded mirrors, the ormolu cheffoniers with marble tops, the papier-mâché chairs and coal-scuttles, the tables of indifferent make inlaid with inferior marquetry, the spirally supported occasional tables that tumble over with a touch, the badly formed padded lounges, the bulging easy or uneasy chairs, the suites of ugly shapes, the coverings of brilliant-hued material: all designed by those who

lack knowledge, and principally executed by machines instead of hands.

In the chapters on walls and ceilings, fire-places and floors, gentle progress has been urged from the safety of simplicity to the difficulties of elaboration; so have the constructors of furniture ascended gradually from the absolutely necessary to the convenient, from the convenient to the beautiful; and we cannot do better than bring before our readers examples of furniture more than a century old, which, by their present excellent condition and fitness for modern needs, are the best proofs of the desirability, for art and comfort's sake, of clever, earnest, honest handiwork, brought to bear upon such everyday articles as tables, chairs, and sofas.

As it is obvious that the stock of old furniture is limited, and that all who desire them cannot be the fortunate possessors of Chippendale, Sheraton, or Hepplewhite chairs and tables, a portion of this chapter will be devoted to the consideration of the virtues of old furniture as it is; and the latter pages to new furniture as it might be.

A very vague idea prevails with many people as to what is really meant by "Queen Anne furniture," the fashion and passion for which have so lately revived, causing anxious search and high prices. Any handsome old mahogany chair, delicate table, or roomy sofa, is put into the same comprehensive class; while the facts really are, that some of the older pieces of such furniture were designed, and probably executed, by the great cabinetmaker, Thomas Chippendale, who published his book of designs in 1754. A great deal

of the same class of furniture was made by his disciples and imitators, and at a later period that style of work was continued by Thomas Sheraton, who published, as lately as 1791, a book of designs for cabinetmakers. As may be judged by his most excellent drawings for chairs, tables, "sophas, buroes, cloaths-chests, and china-cases," he was even a purer designer than Chippendale; who, although many of his undoubted works are excellent in design, and all of them in the sterling honesty of work and matter are standing rebukes to modern cabinetmakers, was led slightly astray by the then fashionable inclination for Chinese, Gothic, French, and rococo styles of ornament, disfiguring to, and incongruous with, a make otherwise well adapted to English needs, and thoroughly suitable and comfortable.

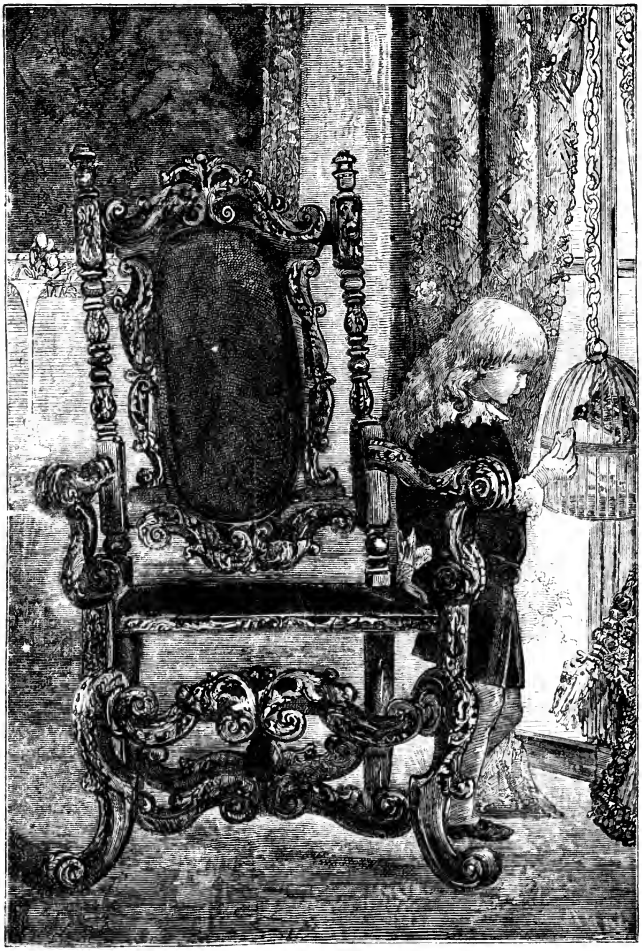
There is ample proof that there was well-designed and handsome furniture, in good and bad taste, before the reign of Queen Anne. Specimens of splendid carving on chests and chairs of the Jacobean and Stuart times may now and then be met with, but they do not abound, for of course a hundred years or so will make a difference to furniture, and the pieces of a date so far back, handed down from generation to generation, now to be gazed upon as models of true construction and sound workmanship, are usually grand articles of furniture not likely to have had common use.

Look at that magnificently carved oaken chair in the plate on page 87, and it will be readily understood that only persons of certain age and degree could, in the more respectful and reverent days of our

ancestors, have ventured to seek rest on such a regal seat. Most probably such a chair would be designed and carved, lovingly and carefully, by one excellent artist-workman, gloating over and rewarded by its growing beauties.

The latter end of the seventeenth and the commencement of the eighteenth centuries brought greater wealth and importance to the middle classes, and naturally a growing demand for a less elaborate but still handsome style of furniture; this, assisted by increased facilities in dealing with foreigners, caused large importations of Dutch, French, and other cabinet work. Chairs, tables, sofas, of carved ebony inlaid with ivory, were in favour, as were also boldly-designed and exquisitely-worked specimens of marquetry on tables, clock-cases, desks, and other articles, by the illustrious *ébéniste*, Riesener, and others. These foreign elements in fashionable furniture to a certain degree influenced and sometimes warped the originally pure taste of the later worker Chippendale, as may be seen by the unsuitable style of ornamentation on some of his most important designs, such as large book-cases, wardrobes, and "sophas." The wood used at this time was usually mahogany, decorated by carving of a greater or less degree of relief, and by nobly-worked brass knobs, handles, and plates.

There is a general appearance of comfort in "Chippendale" chairs, arising from generous breadth of seat, and a prevailing intention to support the backbone at a reposeful slant, leaving spaces free from hard wood for the easy reception of shoulder-blades. There are few families of bygone respectability of position who



A Jacobean Chair.

cannot produce or recall examples of these excellent ordinary works of art. They still remain in use amongst us and as serviceable as ever—proofs of a rare quality of make and matter. They are not here held up for imitation in modern work otherwise than as concerns their depth of nature. A slavish imitation of styles, probably unsuited in some of their solid qualities to the lighter and more variable tone of modern society, is not desirable. It is the ingenious, affectionate, master interest, and the truthful attention shown to the proper use of material, that are so delightful; these brought to bear upon present labour, combined with originality of thought, and knowledge of fit construction, would work wonders, to the recovery of the now ailing state of furniture manufacture.

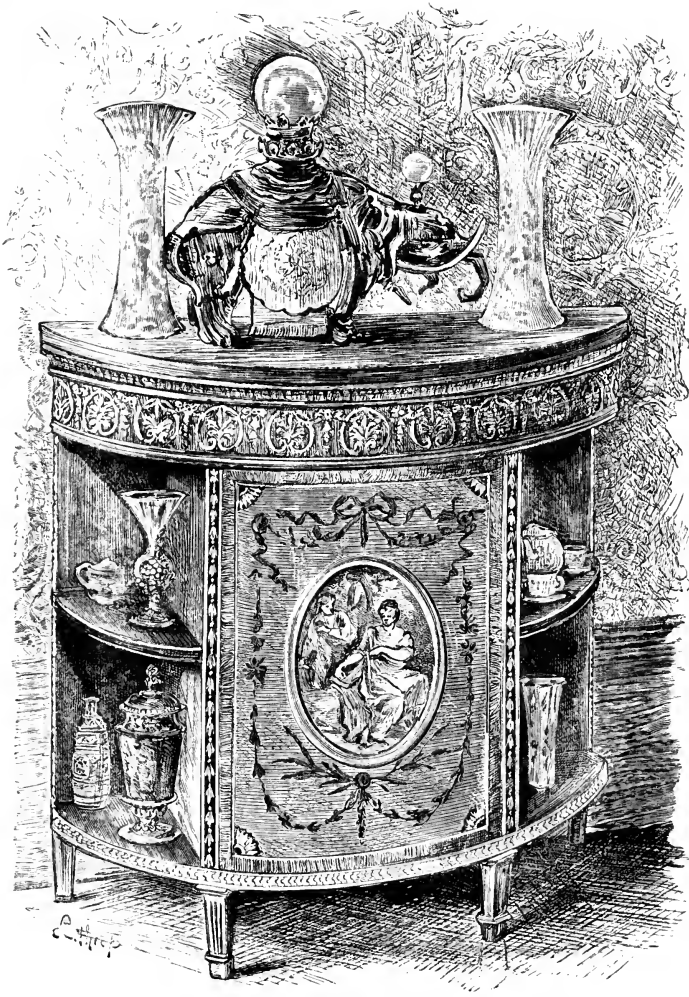
Contemporary with Chippendale designs was the more elaborate and delicate, painted satin-wood furniture, sometimes ornamented with admirable marquetry, or moulded and carved ormolu. Clever artists did not then, as now, disdain to paint chairs and tables, which may sometimes be met with daintily decorated with painted peacocks' feathers, garlands of flowers, bunches of ribbon, and figure subjects, all so beautifully touched, with rare talent, that one can hardly grumble at the unsuitable class of ornament, while the forms are so strongly constructed, that one can but allow a mistake in style to be a slighter fault than ignorant workmanship.

On page 91 is a drawing from a cabinet of satin-wood with a panel painted by Angelica Kaufmann, and otherwise gorgeously ornamented with delicate

little borders of marquetry and ormolu. It stands sensibly upon four legs, which raise it to a comfortable level for view, and leave clear space for cleanly sweeping underneath—a most important point worthy of attention in modern china and book-cases; for it is obviously impossible to sweep *truly* and *closely* to any furniture resting upon the floor, without injury to it, or to its contents.

At a later date we have Thomas Sheraton, who, while agreeing entirely with former great cabinet-makers in absolute sincerity of execution, conceived original ideas, not as elaborately decorative as some, nor as largely solid as others; resulting in abundantly clever and ingenious designs, with divers mechanical contrivances, for tables and cabinets, refined strength being a chief characteristic of all his works.

On page 94 is a copy from one of his sofas, with wide seat, plentiful legs, slanting back, sloping ends, and movable cushions; a very combination of comfortable conditions. The framework of a sofa such as this would be made of mahogany, with or without inlaying or any other ornament than suitable moulding lines; the back and seat of strong fine canework, the cushions covered with a more or less splendid covering. A form so suited to its duties must charm every eye. It is needless to cover such an elegant and attractive shape with bulging bosses and lumpy cushions. Contrast it with a fashionable drawing-room lounge, with its four stumpy legs, and mean frame, embossed into bursting magnificence that makes fatigue feel quite ashamed of itself. Remove the cushions from the Sheraton sofa, and it is still a perfectly finished and



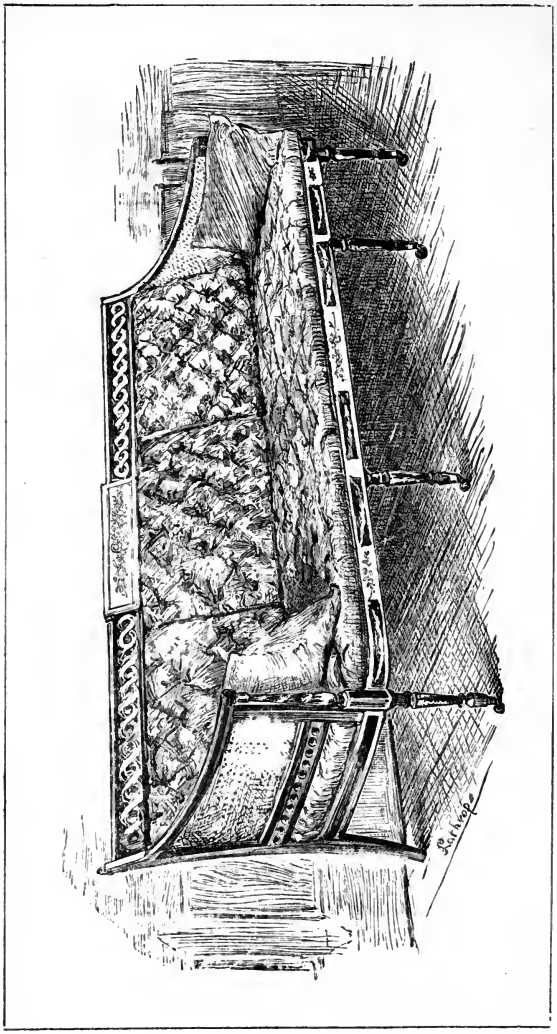
SATINWOOD CABINET.

graceful piece of furniture; take off the padding from a modern lounge, and what remains is more utterly devoid of beauty than an artist's lay figure or a tailor's block.

It would be much easier and less expensive to try to reproduce such a sofa as the one just described, than to attempt a revival of Chippendale and Sheraton chairs, which are almost invariably ornamented by carving, boldly and cleverly executed. A modern workman able to do work of such an advanced character, by the standard of these days, could fix no saleable price that would repay him and be agreeable to a purchaser. A chair is a little thing, and many are wanted; but a sofa, being a more important article, and not needed by dozens or half-dozens, admits of a higher charge.

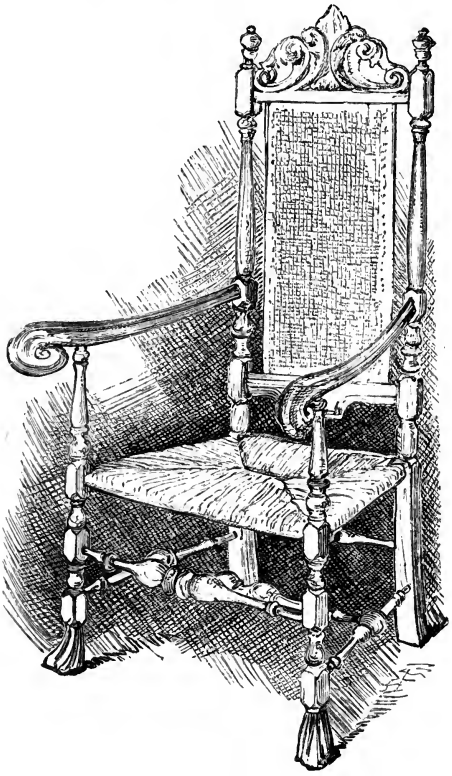
If purchasers would only insist upon less show and greater *truth* in what they buy, manufacturers would give their attention to the desired points; and improvements would at once appear. What can be said, that is sufficiently strong, about the flimsy, fragile, factory-made seats of papier-mâché, bent wood, painted, silvered, or gilded, to make them "smart," without one honest, artistic, earnest personal thought about them! With such furniture, perhaps, "suites" are a blessing—one ugly form, and all is over; one vulgar, coarse colour, and the pain is ended.

Buy old furniture for the drawing-room, cover its cushions with blue, green, or yellow, of the favoured calm nature, and each thing would be so delightful in its integrity, that incongruity would be as impossible as if varied virtues in a human being were in question.



A "SHERATON" SOFA.

What an inviting look there is in the lengthy outstretched arms, rush seat, and cane back of



A PICTURESQUE CHAIR.

the picturesque old arm-chair above. Now-a-days rush seats would never be combined with carving. Notice that not only are the upper and more visible

parts cut into decoration, but all the lower supporting rails—quite an unnecessary nicety in modern drawing-room arm-chairs. Put into this chair cushions of the richest velvet, or the coarsest serge, and it is still the "true lady" or "well-bred gentleman" of chairs, stately, dignified, kind, reposeful; and although exception might be taken to the incongruous style of ornament, it is still a picture in itself. Such things give an atmosphere of beauty which dims the glare of surrounding ugliness, and none need fear incongruity as a worse evil than wholesale deformity.

There is something so inexplicably refined, graceful, and picturesque, about the tables of the Chippendale, Sheraton, and Hepplewhite period, that those who are in need of such articles of furniture for their drawing-rooms cannot do better than seek until they find them. *At present* they are not so *very* rare; some people are still foolish enough to wish to part with "the old-fashioned things," to buy new gawds, to the benefit of their wiser brethren.

Various are the shapes, and dainty the fashions, of these slim ancestors of our modern massive "pillar and claw" class of table. Most frequently they are of the best mahogany, dark and rich in colour; often inlaid with fanciful borders in satin-wood; with beautiful brass handles to the invariable drawer or drawers; with flaps to fall down; with four or more slight but firm legs, always well shaped, often delicately decorated. Small, large, oval, round, square, round-cornered, square-cornered, card-tables, Pembroke-tables, pier-tables; each and all, models of what tables might still, and ought to, be—usually as

firm and stable after their century of use as in their first year, with wood so sound and thick, without clumsiness or veneer, that careful scraping to remove scratches, and fresh polish, make age a matter of no moment.

Tables with movable legs that never get out of joint, allowing a half turnover, converting a square into an oblong or triangular shape; little quartette tables, that fit and hide, each under and within the larger, to emerge separate and distinct whenever required to do so. Those who have been fortunate enough to see specimens, or even the drawings, of such tables, can bear witness to their invariable grace and picturesqueness, most absolutely fitted for, and worthy of, a place in the daintiest drawing-room.

Doubtless a good plan to secure such treasures now-a-days is to attend sales in old-fashioned towns, or places slightly out of the way of the fashionable run after old furniture.

But as the present object is to point out that there are modes of making the best of modern ways, rather than to dilate upon the rarely attainable results of past efforts, it is time to draw attention to what may be called the Victorian style in furniture now attempted, and, in some cases, successfully carried out by a few cabinetmakers.

The intending buyer of modern furniture must, unless most liberally disposed, at once resign all ideas of wood-carving as a decoration. The ancient and honourable calling of carver and gilder seems to have utterly died out, or to have altered in quality of character so much as to be scarcely recognisable.

Dependence upon extremely good woods, and some excellent construction, from designs made by men firmly attached to the rule that honesty of purpose is indispensable to successful result, is the only safe plan when seeking for important pieces of new furniture.

Cabinets, hanging-shelves, tables, sofas, occasional tables, may be made in American walnut, mahogany, or oak. They may be French-polished, or first stained and then French-polished, which, if the stain be black, is called "ebonizing." Such furniture cannot be called "cheap," the price of good wood and clever labour forbids it. Cheap furniture is a delusion, lasting for a short time only, with a quickly attained shabby apology for its former superficial gaiety.

Models of form are not wanting, manual dexterity is still amongst us. On the opposite page is a coffee-table, with a little under-shelf, divers supporting rails, and three well-separated legs for firm upholding. Nothing but deliberate intention could overturn this light and elegant little table, which would look well, made in English oak, American walnut, or mahogany, ebonized, French-polished, or hand-polished. A little covering of amber velvet, with heavy bobbing fringe or dark green cloth, with a border of buttercups and leaves worked in two dim yellows and two shades of green, would add richness and comfortable softness to this already pretty and convenient thing.

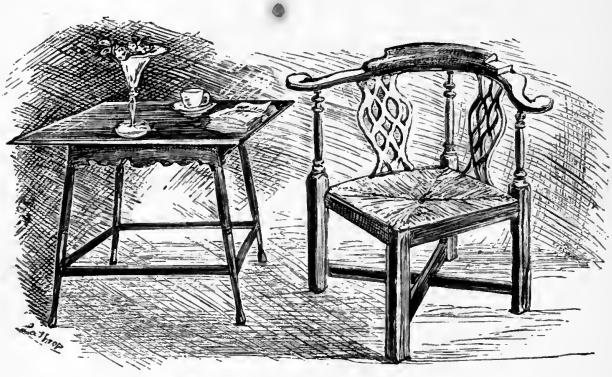
On page 100 is another idea for a very possible occasional table, and really easy chair. The four slim legs of the table have a bold sprawl, which looks

neither inconvenient nor awkward, overhung as they are by the projecting slab of the table. The chair is a copy of an antique shape (probably of Stuart date),

A Coffee Table.

which has been reproduced at intervals with but slight changes. Obviously the intention of such a form is to allow entire change of position, yet in any

case to give easy support for back and arm. A row of nicely-moulded little rails would satisfactorily take the place of the two carved supports, which might suggest insurmountable difficulties to the ordinary



AN "AS-YOU-LIKE-IT" CHAIR.

cabinetmaker. Both chair and table could be made of mahogany, and perhaps stained dark green or black, and French-polished; suitable cushions and covers are always efficient in giving a look of comfort and luxury.

The pertinacious attachment of modern furniture-makers to curves, and these almost always ugly curves, is one of the greatest hindrances to amendment in cabinetmaking. When looking through the furniture-design books published by Chippendale, Sheraton, or Hepplewhite, one cannot fail to notice the prevailing inclination for *straight* forms of construction; and if curves are introduced, it is usually

in the ornamental part of a piece of furniture. A slightly increasing favour for curved lines may be seen in the later designs of these makers; but they are only graciously slight deviations from the straight, and always in the right place. An ordinary modern rosewood, walnut, or mahogany chair, easy-chair or cheffonier, has so many bendings in and out, so many excrescences and knobs of carving, that it is often difficult to carry away any idea of the real shape of the article.

Certain designs for drawing-room furniture, made by a few present time cabinetmakers and decorators, exhibit, in a high degree, the possible beauty and grace of straight lines delicately moulded, and arranged with educated ideas of construction and proportion.

The corner cabinet and china-case on page 103 is a decorative piece of furniture, making the most of a commonly-neglected part of space in a drawing-room. This highly ornamental, useful, and movable article, with upper and lower cupboards and shelves, would look very well if made of American walnut, with a few gilded lines here and there, and brightened above and below by glowing beauties of china. It stands, in the approved way, on legs that raise it from the ground. The uppermost rail might perhaps advantageously be dispensed with. If preferred, such a corner cupboard might reach only to the surbase of the dado, and be supported, from thence, by delicately-turned legs, leaving valuable space underneath—a great benefit in a small drawing-room. Indeed, if many ornamental pieces of furniture, such

as cabinets and cheffoniers, were carried up and hung upon the walls, or could stand upon slim legs, leaving roomy spaces underneath, not only would freer scope for walking result, but material benefit would arise from better freedom for sweeping and convenience for carpet-shaking.

Very dainty corner cabinets are now designed with little doors of lattice panes, and shelves introduced for convenience and beauty of arrangement. An intelligent cabinetmaker could, from the drawing here given, construct a more or less elaborate piece of furniture of the woods before mentioned, stained and French-polished to a surface and colour like ebony.

The process of staining, often referred to, is very simple, and only requires the stain, and patient energy; the woodwork must be free from all grease, and be rubbed with fine sand-paper or brown paper to a smooth surface. The stain, if black, should be put on with a broad smooth brush, evenly and quickly, leaving no time for patchy marks; several coats are required, with time left between for the perfect drying of the wood, and the gentle rubbing down with paper. When a tone of perfect blackness is obtained, the wood is ready for the French-polish, the application of which, to be effectual, requires patience above all things. The polish should be poured on to the wood in small quantities only, and rubbed diligently round and round, with soft linen or silken rags, until a *slight* feeling of stickiness is felt, when a little more polish must be added. Much labour is required to produce the transparent surface that, once gained, lasts for

A Corner Cabinet.

long years. If a green colour is wished, the number of coats of stain should be limited by the desired tone. Oak wood stained with two coats of green, and then one of black, and French-polished, has a charming effect for tables or shelves.

The painting of delicate little articles of furniture, if properly managed, may be a domestic occupation without appreciable annoyance. If possible a room not otherwise in use should be chosen; and the work should be carried on with as little movement as may be, to prevent the dispersion of dust, which, falling upon the paint when wet, would greatly mar its smooth surface. The object to be decorated should be conscientiously rubbed to a glassy smoothness, with sand-paper and brown paper. The paint, to suit the sensitive artist, should be picture oil-paint, sold in single, double, and treble tubes; turpentine must be gradually mixed in, until the paint is of the consistency of thin cream, when it may be laid on *thinly* with variously-sized soft brushes, avoiding streaks, blots, or smears. After a coat of paint has been effectually applied, ample time for drying, in perfect stillness, should be given; then should follow a patient rubbing down, with soft paper, to ensure smoothness. This process should be repeated until the artist is satisfied with the depth and soundness of colour. Delicate little diapers or other decorative ornaments may at last be executed, in harmonious colours, and when the work is perfectly hard and dry, a coat of the best hard white varnish should be quickly applied. Good shades of suitable greens for furniture may be gained by differently

mixed quantities of middle-green lake, chrome, black and white.

China plates look very pretty upon little green oaken shelves, ranged around a room at one level, or, if preferred, one above another, or over a doorway; they may be of the most inexpensive nature, requiring only proper dimensions to allow plates to lean safely against the wall, and to be protected from slipping by an upright ledge of correct proportion.

Wall-brackets for vases or candlesticks, little bookcases with a shelf above for ornaments, and a narrow under-ledge for tiles or plates, tiny hanging china-cases, are all objects within most reasonable reach, with the assistance only of an intelligent cabinetmaker, and an ingenious and thoughtful domestic designer.

The simple form and clever divisions of the little Chinese china-case shown on the opposite page will admirably illustrate what may be done by good use of straight lines. The effect of the two drawers might, at choice, be produced by cupboard-doors (with well-wrought brass handles) opening to the right and left. Good hard wood ebonized, would give nearly the same effect as Chinese lacquer; and although the gilded decoration on the panels of the door would be lacking, the brilliant brass handles, which should be carefully chosen for delicacy of finish and propriety of form, would give relief, and brightly-tinted china and glass would supply the needed colour.

A most usual thing in the drawing-room is the cottage or grand pianoforte, almost a pleasing spectacle in spite of its ungraceful exterior. Picturesqueness

of shape is certainly not to be found in pianos. The costlier they are, the uglier they seem to become. The ponderous legs and squat form of the "cottage,"

A Chinese China-Case.

the ungraceful curve, and unpleasantly flat surface of the "grand," and the inconvenient bulk of both, make them most difficult articles to deal with in a picturesque arrangement of a drawing-room.

There must be some special difficulty in combining proper musical mechanism with a pleasing form,

otherwise, surely, some ingenious mind would have endeavoured to benefit the shape of a grand pianoforte. As it is, it must be endured for the sake of "the soul in it, ready to waken at a touch and charm us with *invisible* beauty." The cottage piano is a little more amenable to slight alterations, that could not interfere with any musical tone, however tender. If the frame were of oak or walnut, stained or otherwise, with simpler, slenderer legs, perhaps two standing close together at either end, so as not to interfere with duettists; if the lid were of straight lines instead of curves; if there were less carving and "fretting," but better wood and sounder workmanship, a worthier result would certainly be obtained than the usually over-dressed piece of furniture. The silk introduced into the front is usually of an evil tint, and there is rarely a line of beauty to be found in the carved woodwork by which it is commonly inclosed.

If this silk and fretwork were entirely removed, and a rich piece of velvet or delicate embroidery substituted, if the lid at the top of the piano were made with a more liberal projection, a better, if not a good effect might be produced. There would, however, most probably, be great difficulty in persuading the guild of pianoforte-makers to alter their adopted ideas for the sake of the fancy of a few, and it can only be through strong combination of determined minds that any improvement can be brought about in the shape of these musical instruments.

The ordinary music-stool is usually an ugly, and uselessly heavy article of furniture, and a pleasing substitute might be found in the old-fashioned four-

legged single seats, which are otherwise picturesque and convenient, and may, when not in use, be pushed under the piano, table, or long-legged cabinet. Our ancestors must have been so comfortable, in their broad low-seated chairs and sofas, that they did not require footstools, so rarely are they to be seen amongst old furniture. They seem to be a modern idea of luxury, very modern in their gaudy seeming and comfortless capabilities. A very convenient form of footstool is the ordinary *hassock*, which can, by desire, be made small or large, round, square, or oval, or indeed of any height, size, or shape required. Covered with embossed velvet, or with richly embroidered serge or cloth, it may be made as decorative as one could desire, and while it gives firm softness for the feet, it does not offer a ponderous obstacle to free passage. If several footstools are required, it is comfortable to have them of different heights and sizes, to suit varied positions and chairs.

Our space will not admit of detailed description of all the varied and suitable pieces of furniture for a drawing-room. An intending purchaser once firmly convinced that personal needs and tastes ought not to be, cannot properly be, entrusted to the wholesale superficial knowledge of fashionable furniture dealers, will gain much wisdom by the exercise of individual fancy improved by use and increased by experience.

In all furniture, insist upon honest material, little glue, and good, sound workmanship, even if a sparsely decorated apartment be the temporary result. The lasting powers of these properties will pay high interest, and save money for other future wise specu-

lations. Be proof against padding, let cushions be independent, make sure that comfort reigns within the arms of an easy-chair, and that to sit at ease upon an ordinary chair is not ludicrously impossible. Of course, even those whose thoughts upon these subjects are agreeable, may not or cannot depart suddenly from long existing fashions in furniture. "By degrees must freedom from such follies come."

CHAPTER VII.

LIGHTING AND FLORAL DECORATION.

THE subject of lighting the drawing-room is entered upon with hesitation, for there is one way so easy, so accessible, so universal, that we tremble to denounce it as utterly bad, hurtful and dangerous for heads, hearts, and hands. Any doctor will answer the inquiry, "Is gas a *wholesome* light for the drawing-room?" in the negative. If unwholesome, it must, more or less, affect the body, through that the mind, and thence hearts and hands. Few but have felt the overpowering and sickening influence of a room liberally lighted by gas, and closely shut up, as frequently rooms are, at the time when gas is most required. It is equally injurious to decorations, be they pictures, papers, ceilings, or hangings; quickly making them dingy and dirty. The light given is intense but hard; and concentrated, as it usually is, in the middle of the room, is equally unpleasing from its potency when near, or its inefficiency when far off. For the reader, writer,

embroiderer, or artist at ease, it is at once irritating and ineffective.

Many plans have been tried to soften and manage the refractory brilliancy, but for a carefully and thoughtfully decorated drawing-room they are unavailable; ground glass globes are ugly in shape and poor in colour, by day or by night. Shades of paper, silk, or metal, succeed, it is true, in collecting the light for the convenience of industry; but the deep and gloomy shadows thus cast around and above are fatal to all favourable effects. The plaster centre ornament with a pendant constructed of glass, bronze, gilt, or silvered metal, commonly of a weak and ill-conceived pattern, is a blot upon the face of the fairest ceiling, and would ill accord with any of the dainty schemes proposed for drawing-rooms.

Of course it will be expected that after this crushing condemnation, an efficient substitute will be proposed for acceptance; and a feeling akin to shame is ours, that in this matter the needs of nations have produced nothing satisfactory since the time of the Ancients; when the Egyptians, Jews, Greeks and Romans had their oil lamps and candlesticks of various devices, in divers materials, invariably executed with knowledge, sometimes with magnificence, and always admirably fitted for the function of supplying and supporting a comfortable light.

Ere discussing the merits of a very few varieties of oil-lamps and candlesticks, we would solace the desponding feelings of some, who, while sympathizing with our views, cannot, for many reasons, hastily decide to exclude from their drawing-rooms a light

which saves much daily labour, is instantly and easily available, and confessedly economical. If gas light must be chosen—(woe worth the day !)—and a central arrangement is desired, choose, if possible, a brass pendant ; simple, slender, suitable in shape, and consistently elaborate. Well worked brass is never cheap ; the simplest form, with two or three lights, would rarely be obtainable for less than three pounds, size and detail causing a rapid increase in price ; but zeal will do more than knowledge when desire is firmly fixed upon pure and simple beauty at moderate cost ; and search, even for a pretty gas-pendant, will readily be rewarded by success in the present day, when brasswork has found new favour for domestic decorations.

Gas light, in a large room, would be much more available if dispersed through pretty, straight, or branching burners on brackets at convenient intervals around the walls ; and would have a far better general effect than the usual centre glare. Perhaps some might find their advantage in tiny one-light pendants, hanging by dainty chains, in the four corners of the drawing-room. Simple brass gas brackets are not very expensive, and some look very graceful. Brazen sconce plates are costly, but, with rich *repoussé* and chased work, highly decorative, and have a brilliant effect.

In the matter of oil-lamps suited for drawing-rooms there is really little to be said. Some new form, skilfully wrought, to meet modern need, is much wanted. The lamp that finds most favour now-a-days is the moderator, which burns colza oil, and yields a

soft clear light; but it is almost invariably ugly in shape, it requires a solid table to support it safely, has an inconvenient habit of easily getting out of order, and the oil it consumes is expensive. A few are picturesque, where the receptacle for the oil is of blue and white earthenware, and the globe of ground-glass of a greenish tinge; but these are very expensive, and what is wanted is some efficient oil-lamp of simple good form and material, which might be adapted for standing or hanging, and which should not be costly.

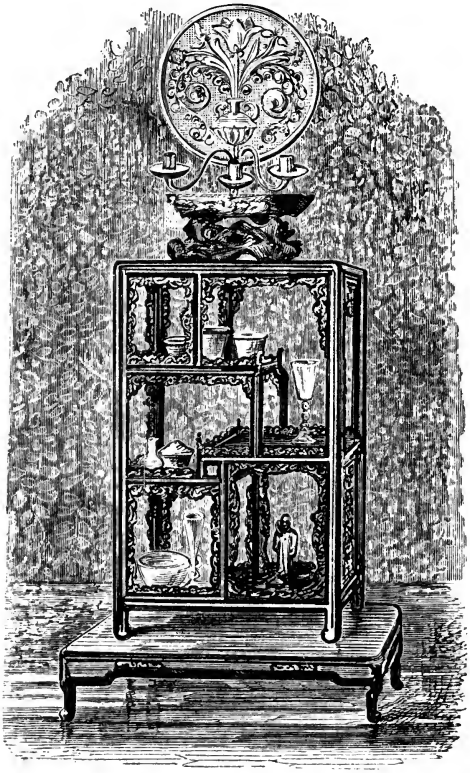
There are certain lamps, used for state cabins, that are picturesque, and look very well in wrought brass; they might be hung by little chains from a hook fixed firmly, but neatly, in the centre of a ceiling, or, if the room were large, at two or more points. The scarcely perceptible swing in such lamps would not be unpleasant; they would diffuse a soft and mellow light, and, if well cared for, would emit neither smell nor smoke.

There is a light called the "duplex," which seems to possess the merit of simplicity. is easily kept in order, and burns a wick that lasts for a long period.

This and many other lamps are constructed to burn different spirits and oils, but they cannot be commended for any advantage, save the doubtful one of greater cheapness, and they are to be avoided for the explosive or inflammable nature of their contents.

It is difficult to understand why candles gave way so readily to gas and oils; they are not much more costly than the latter, give much less trouble, are more cleanly, *never get out of order*—(repairs form a large

proportion of the expense of a lamp)—require no winding up, and have freed themselves from the need of snuffing—that difficulty of bygone days.



A Wall Sconce and Étagère.

No light is so charming as that of many candles, be it for general effect or for particular purposes; the

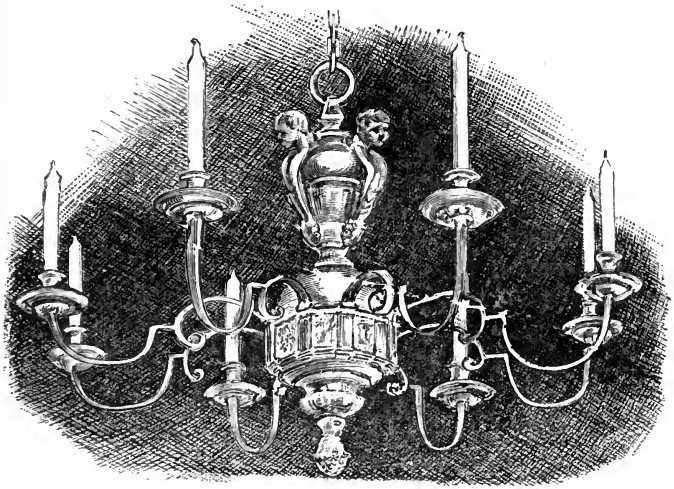
old-fashioned sconces or branching candlesticks could not be surpassed for slender, delicate grace; and beautiful shapes in brass have, in late years, met with the approval they deserve. Those who aim at a truly picturesque effect in their drawing-room cannot do better than seek for old silver-plated, brass or even iron, candlesticks, with *repoussé* wall-plates. From Germany and Holland we get most charming examples of such metal work; the designs on the back-plates boldly executed in patterns which are perfect studies of fitting form. Picked up abroad, at old shops, they are often very cheap, yet undoubted treasures for the seeker after decorative beauty; the bright back grounds reflect the light of the candles, but there is no glare in the brilliancy.

Of course there are modern sconces, with and without reflectors, good and bad; but it is better not to put new and old side by side. Very good *repoussé* work is done, but it is very costly, and it is painful to many to pay heavily for so simple a thing as a candle or gas sconce and its appurtenances.

On page 115 is a drawing of a sconce for three candles, attached to a beaten-brass wall-plate; not growing out of the jade-dish surmounting the étagère, as it appears in our woodcut to do, from want of a little more space. This lighted up by its three candles would shed a rich glow, brightening many a yard of space around, and giving subdued light even to the extreme points of a good-sized room.

Delightful little old brazen sconces, for three lights, with delicate ornamental borders, have been bought at shabby shops in seaport towns; and there are

doubtless many like them, in other retired shops, looking dingy and dubious to the eyes of ignorant passers-by; only awaiting an inquiring and appreciative purchaser, and a slight but meaning rub, to brighten into unsullied beauty.



A Silver Chandelier.

Hanging chandeliers are not common objects; they were chiefly used for grand rooms, when grand rooms did not abound as they now do. Specimens are still to be seen, distinguished by delicacy and real elegance of treatment; strength where needed, and lightness, not weakness, in the curved branches. Chain-pulleys, and such mighty machinery, are the workings of a darker day of decorative art.

The accompanying illustration is a copy of an

old silver chandelier, with a certain massiveness about the centre, fitted to sustain an octave of lights; while the single branches are suited, in their slimness, to the slightness of their duties; the saucers of the actual candlesticks are of a generous capacity, to defend from fear of falling wax, and the whole thing has at once dignity and grace, "a silvery pyre of brightness." Very delightful candelabra might be fashioned, after this kind, for three or five lights, of brass or plated metal; to please fastidious eyes and yet not distress moderate means.

Single candlesticks are of more simple intention, but have an upright dignity of their own; and possess the advantage of being readily moved to the most convenient spot; if made in shining silver, or gleaming brass, with tall white, or red, not *pink*, candles in them, either standing closely together on the busy side of the table, or separated only by a vase of flowers, or apart at either end of a mantelshelf, or placed on tiny brackets, they may be made picturesque touches of brightness, supplying a sweet and kindly light equally sufficient for social or domestic need.

In deciding the position of lights, there is an art to be learned by trial and experience; and by duly consulting the shape, size, decorations, and other points of the drawing-room. That centre chandeliers are usual is no rigid reason for that style of lighting, if choice or convenience urge a superior comfort in wall-sconces, or candlesticks on brackets, shelves or tables. On this point, as on all others in this little book, it is wished to encourage individual

fancy, personal arrangement, self-willed ideas; productive of more varied and more comfortable results, than are to be met with by a close adherence to the "correct style."

No drawing-room is complete without floral decoration, in which is included vegetation of many kinds. Green leaves are lovely and last long, and are available in winter to all, when only a few are favoured with blossoms; but skill is necessary to make the best of flowers brought into unnatural positions. Beautiful as these are in form, colour, and scent, they may suffer from inappropriate combinations; while the brightness emanating from their pure colouring, judiciously dealt with, may go far to atone for the lack of more costly ornaments.

Those who live in the country know no stint of floral decoration; if there be no garden, or greenhouse, to produce the curious or rare varieties, every lane or field has its diversities of form and colour in flowers; many quite as beautiful as their more cultivated relations; prized perhaps for rarity equally with worth. No flowers can be more delicious than the yellow daffodil, or primrose, the violet, the hyacinth, the scented dog-rose, and the honeysuckle, the ox-eye daisy, with its amber boss and pearly points; the golden buttercups. While gathering such gems of pure colour and form, Nature gives a hint for their arrangement: invariably are they met with in masses of colour, not broken up into varieties; and the lover of floral decoration will find it effective to study harmony in the disposal of flowers in vases.

Any single form or colour is often insufficiently

loved and honoured; and a conviction of this will instinctively strike any one who sees a group of yellow daffodils, with their scant green leaves, in a vase of Flanders grey; which with a background of an olive-green or peacock-blue serge curtain, makes a perfect picture of colour and form. A green Algerian flower-pot, with four handles, brought from the Aures mountains, or a more polished specimen, good in colour and more expensive, by Deck, of Paris; filled with a gradually ascending mass of green leaves, from the yellowest olives to the bluest greys, is a study in shades of green, worthy of attentive consideration.

Variety of form and colour is not to be disdained when arranged harmoniously, but the preference must surely be given, as in music, to the theme, as more impressive than the cleverest variations. Individual interest and activity are to be urged upon the dweller in town, who will find difficulties, and who may have to feel content with tiny bought bunches of fading flowers without leaves; yet almost every one has some country friend who would occasionally send branches of "ivy never sear," which with care and washing would last for months; and raised leaf by leaf, supported by tall branches, with touches of colour, if only of hips and haws, or the scarlet berries of holly, has a dim sedate beauty of its own.

Fine bits of colour may be gained by dried leaves, such as those of the Schumack, which turn red before falling; and if gathered and pressed between blotting-paper retain their rich colouring. Bracken ferns in some parts of England change from green to the

brightest yellows, reds, and richest browns, long before dying down; and though when dried they lose much of their ruddy brightness, beautiful shades of yellows and browns remain. A large jar filled cleverly with these has varied natural form and much sober colour to delight the eye.

A severe yet splendid winter bouquet can be made of bulrushes, dark and solemn, contrasting with the light, and spreading sprays of the Pampas grass, either intermingled thoughtfully, or, to give more decided contrast, the grass might be arranged as a sort of feathery bed, from which upsprings a crowd of the rich spikes of the massive bulrush.

Peacocks' feathers, though not floral, are so entirely decorative that they cannot fail to be appreciated if properly placed. Their slim white stems, their mysteriously metallic and changing colours, where, in spite of gleaming brightness, one fails to match a tint, mark them for the favourites of artistic eyes, and one can imagine no more fitting filling for a splendid vase, in a proper light, than a mass of these Nature's jewels.

These *very* common objects thus suggested for consideration are only "wonders at which habit has made us cease to wonder," and their marvellousness may be renewed at pleasure by simply "taking thought."

One single flower with sprays of green, in a cup or vase of good colour and shape, on a bracket by a chair, would give a tinge of homelike comfort to the dreariest room. It is the inborn love of natural beauty, seeking undeformed expression in affection

for the forms and colours of flowers, that snatches the stigma of entire vulgarity from the arrangements of many a richly-furnished room; so that education into artistic comprehension of the beauties of pure form and colour will, it is hoped, gratefully include floral, in drawing-room decorations.

CHAPTER VIII.

PICTURE FRAMES, MIRRORS, ODDS AND ENDS.

"MAY we exhort such of our readers as have no pictures hanging in their rooms to put up one immediately? We mean in their principal sitting-room; in all their rooms if possible, but, at all events, in that one." Thus writes a deceased English author, not so much read as his works merit; he adds that pictures "serve to refresh us for endurance; to render sorrow unselfish; to remind us that we ourselves, or our own personal wishes, are not the only objects in the world; to instruct and elevate us, and put us in a fairer way of realizing the good opinion which we would all fain entertain of ourselves, and in some measure do; to make us compare notes with other individuals, and with nature at large, and correct our infirmities at their mirror by modesty and reflection."

With this quotation shall our consideration of pictures and prints begin and end; and for all good and sound advice on the subject the reader is referred to the able rules for choice and purchase given by

Mr. Loftie in his book, *A Plea for Art in the House.*

Frames for pictures may be of various materials, and have in late years suffered from the usual desire for magnificence at the expense of purity of form and decoration. When it is considered desirable to give a gilded surrounding to a picture, it is open to choice whether it shall be a flat mount inclosed by carved ebony, ebonized oak, oiled walnut, or other wooden border, or whether the entire frame should be gilded. In the latter case ornament should be most carefully chosen, and should not interfere with the sincerity of the outer and inner straight lines of the frame. Moulded lines should be fine in proportion to general size.

Simplicity, with most delicate detail, for such a naturally attractive object as a gilded frame, is desirable. Ebony, or ebonized frames, with lines moulded or cut into slight relief, are effective when combined with gilded oak mounts. Gilding may also be discreetly introduced in the decoration of ebony frames.

It is a wise plan to consult congruity in the framing of pictures, and to attend to the rule that *all their bases should range* at one level. If there are so many pictures to be hung that one row does not include all, the remainder may form a second line, with regular intervals.

Attention has been previously drawn to the utter disregard of utility and beauty in the size and position of the frequent "drawing-room lofty mirror." Looking-glass properly inclosed is a pretty thing when doing its duty and making the most of its sur-

roundings, but when raised aloft to some ten or twelve feet from the ground to multiply many square yards of whitewash, it becomes actually unpleasant from the falsity of its position, and wonder grows in thoughtful minds, how people can have gone on so long spending large sums of money on such individually unbeautiful material inclosed in frames of falsely conceived twisted rope, foliated, and other patterns of *no* particular style or shape.

Those who are the unfortunate possessors of one of these costly modern mistakes would confer the greatest benefit upon their drawing-room decoration by having it removed from its aerial position, and the plate, which is probably of good thick glass, cut into two or three oblong pieces. These put into narrow gilt, ebony, or other frames, and hung at a level where pleasant reflections are possible, would have far more than double or treble the effect of the one large surface.

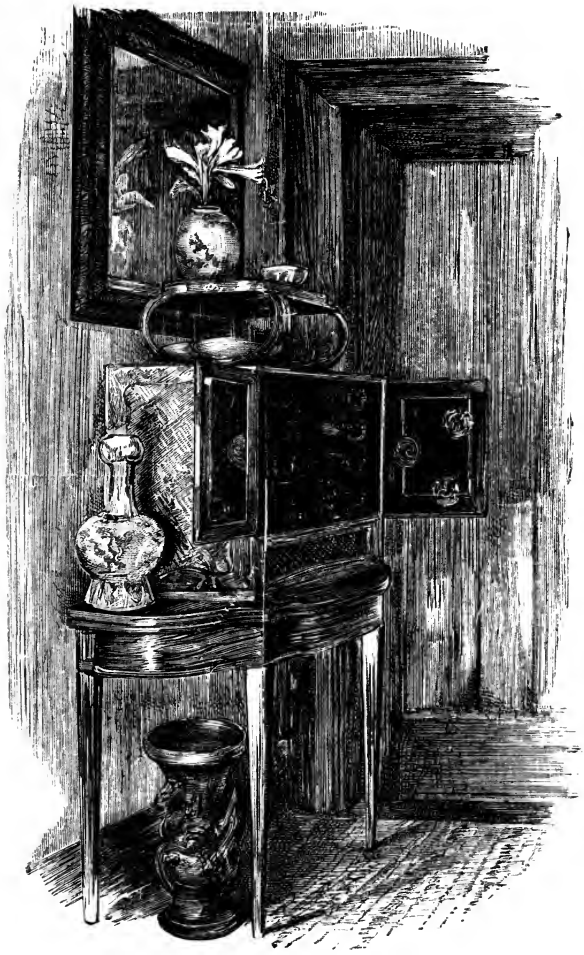
Old fashioned mirrors may sometimes be bought, often with bevelled glass and moulded ebony mounts, surrounded by a slight, but invariably elegant, gilt, oblong, oval, or square frame. Square bevelled mirrors, in solid ebony frames, splendidly moulded with telling lines, are also occasionally seen, such as the one shown on page 127, where position ensures utility, and allows for easy rubbing and brightening of the glass, an all important point.

Convex mirrors, until lately neglected, and left forlorn, in old inns, country houses, and brokers' shops, were frequently to be purchased for a few shillings, when with proper cleaning and re-gilding, their solid

old-fashioned make enabled them to appear in perfect beauty. They are probably all of the last century, and either of French manufacture, or made by French colonists in England, they are usually surmounted by an eagle, well moulded, and carved, and sometimes have side branches for candles. Their frames are massive but delicate, elaborate but honest; decorated with tiny chains and balls, they form splendid spots of sparkling reflection, and are at last elevated by *fashion* to suitable rank and position.

It would be, as was shown in the case of old furniture, most expensive to try to have copies made of these old, slower-time works of art. If workmen could be found capable, which is very doubtful, the prices of such articles would so far exceed reason, that they would forbid purchase. If new plain mirrors are desired, an effort should be made to have the best plates, finished by a gently bevelled edge of about one inch in width, following the shape of the glass. The frame, either of carved and gilded wood, ebony, or ebonized oak, should be refined in style and carefully executed, when brightly gleaming bits of decoration will result.

If strong unwillingness should exist to have large plates of glass cut into pieces, an alternative which, if not admirable, is still an improvement upon the large unbroken surface, remains for choice. An ebonized oak or "oiled" walnut-frame, altogether inclosing and dividing by cross-pieces the surface of the glass into compartments, and leaving perhaps one uninterrupted, oblong piece, about eighteen inches high, at the bottom, with a trellis work of shelves and



MIRROR AND CABINET.

brackets filled with bright china, carried up from thence to the top, would give forms and tints to reflect and enhance the lustre of the glass by the contrast of dark wood-work. At a convenient height for easy access, little rows of book-shelves might be introduced by clever arrangement, or small cupboards with tiny latticed doors, giving a through glimpse of the glint of rare treasures within.

Custom has not assigned a suitable abiding place for books in the drawing-room; people are not supposed to be in the mood for reading when the hour comes for retiring to the withdrawing-room. Conversation and music are the proper things, and the chief impression to be gained from books, if present, is that they are well bound and cost a good deal. But the mere titles of books often suggest conversation. What sweeter companions can be had than books all about, here and there and everywhere, within reach, and in the most convenient spots? The varied tones of books, soberly bound, make a rich bit of decoration, and suggest consolation and calmness. Recesses filled with book-shelves affectionately open, treated as delicately and ornamentally as may be chosen, cannot but look suitable anywhere, and if well filled must be proper and comfortable. A great deal should be thought of comfort in all cases, and it cannot but be considered discomfort to concentrate the principal imaginative luxury of life into one apartment, oftentimes remote and gloomy. It is a rare case for any one to possess enough really sterling books to make a separate apartment for them necessary.

Glazed book-cases interfere with easy access, and

are therefore undesirable. A certain worn look about the outsides and insides of books is better than brand-new gloss, and shows them to be old familiar friends. It is not needful here to dwell upon the varied beauties found in rare old binding, since the reader can consult Mr. Loftie's treatment of the subject in his book, *A Plea for Art in the House.*

Searchers for old Chippendale and Sheraton furniture may chance to meet with simply formed, but dainty little hanging shelves for books, of mahogany, more or less ornamented with carving or with inlaying. The upper shelf often offers standing room for ornaments, or indeed if so chosen, the lower shelves only might be filled with books, resigning others to less solid beauty and worth.

Let us suppose an ugly ill-proportioned recess, giving no depth for the reception of cabinet or table. Bookshelves of well-seasoned deal reaching from skirting-board to cornice, might with advantage be introduced, and painted to agree with other woodwork in the room. A pretty, if unusual look, might be produced by projecting bracket-shelves, on one side, agreeing with the arrangements of the bookcase, the whole overhung by a well-wrought cornice. The brackets, filled with specimens of pottery, the shelves with interesting books, will together ably cloak a builder's errors. If preferred, the lower shelves, inclosed by doors with brass handles, form convenient cupboards for magazines and papers.

On the opposite page is a light and easy kind of bookcase, fitting comfortably into, and projecting beyond, the surbase in a drawing-room, and forming a pretty

recess for a convenient writing or reading-table. Strength and simplicity are here admirably combined ;

BOOK-SHELVES.

the shelves passing through apertures on the upright supports, need no glue or other doubtful

fastenings to keep them steadily in position. A more elaborate treatment of the same idea, might be chosen. There might be more shelves with smaller distances between, delicate carving on sides and edges, tiles and plates ranged on the lowest, and Venetian bottles, old Delft vases, or old Nankin cups arranged on the upper shelf.

Books at arm's length only, or lying about on one of the tables in a drawing-room, have a happy look. Choose for such positions those likely to interest at a moment's notice, perhaps of present, if of passing fame; points for conversation, when amusements are flagging, and in all cases comforting additions to other not more, not less, important items of drawing-room decoration.

If rooms be small and ornaments and treasures varied, great scope is given to ingenuity and contrivance to gain a suitable resting-place for each art-object. It is excellent practice for the eager mind to have to battle with inconvenience, and to fight out a clear, if not perfect, path from the difficulties of trying to make the best of ugly proportions and coarse shapes; but there difficulties end, for colour is one's own to choose and may cover a multitude of other sins.

Mistakes must be made, failures are inevitable; but experience is gained by each disappointment, and knowledge is a natural consequence. Too much content is dangerous and conducive to an unprogressive policy. "What shall be added next?" should be a constantly-recurring thought, and it is

well if it can be illustrated by gleanings from foreign countries to give zest to arrangement.

To an appreciative mind, not spoiled by the luxury of wealth, what keen pleasure there is in the possession of one new treasure; a Persian tile, an Algerian flower-pot, an old Flemish cup, a piece of Nankin blue, an Icelandic spoon, a Japanese cabinet, a Chinese fan; a hundred things might be named, not one being costly, yet each, in its own way, beautiful and interesting. Where to place it, for the best, is a fertile topic of conversation: then the bracket must be made; the tiny shelf designed. A delight as pure as that of a child with a fresh toy, and superior to that in its lasting power, is open to the aspirant after the beautiful in art.

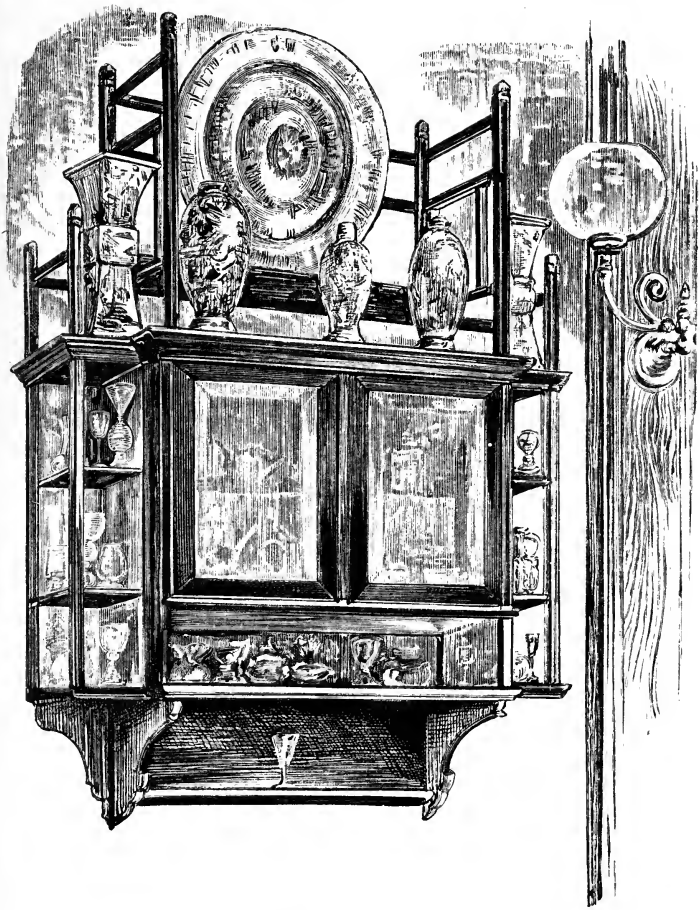
Probably those whose means are limited, so that the sum to be expended in ornaments is comparatively small, have quite as much, if not more, pleasure in their occasional acquisitions than the wealthy, with whom to wish for is to have. Slow acquirers have time to dwell upon qualities of colour, to examine details of workmanship; they are not distracted by another thing until they have this one by heart, and the pleasures of anticipation and possession must surpass those of the latter alone. To be able to purchase immediately, without any doubts, without a certain preparation, does not strike one as the happier state.

Surely there are not to be found more lovely bits of ornament for a drawing-room than rare old china. It is not proposed here to give details of all the hundred pottery and porcelain marks, with all their

differences as known to the connoisseur; to attempt even a list of the varied beauties in china would leave no room in this chapter for other scarcely less important items of decoration. The *disposal* of such bits of tender colour and shape will be more to the purpose, and of course they should always be placed where they can be perfectly seen, without being touched; for would not one rather fracture a limb than break a friend's old Persian or Chelsea, or Nankin?

All articles of delicate, minute work should be on a level with, or not much above or below, the range of the eye. Cheffoniers with cupboards and shelves close to the floor, for valuable and interesting ware are unsuitable, dangerous and inaccessible. Here is a drawing of a hanging cabinet of hard wood stained black and French polished, with bevelled plate-glass doors, shelves above, below, around, lined with mirrors and filled with fine old Venice glass and Indian pots and pipkins; the whole a gorgeous display, to some tastes perhaps too gorgeous. The idea might be carried out with more simplicity of detail, depending more upon pure proportion and good material, and the various bits of antique china could but gain by the contrast to their brilliant brightness.

Here a few words may be fittingly said about antique things. It is a sad and acknowledged fact, that modern decorative art, at home or abroad, cannot compare in delicacy, conscientiousness, or knowledge with that of past times; even present Persian art is not to be desired, like that of days gone by. Looking over Japanese toys, the difference between



HANGING CHINA-CASE.

new and old is marked and marvellous. In ancient art a great knowledge of suitable decorative effect is

evident, and loving toil, willing to spend any time to gain goodness at last. In modern work, attention is still paid to effect, but it must be attained by the least amount of labour possible. Perhaps other reasons for decadence need hardly be sought.

It is not that artistic power has left the world, but that a more rapid life has developed itself in it, leaving no time for deliberate dainty decoration, or labours of love; hence, all crave to possess specimens that are at present unequalled, and beauties that may possibly never be rivalled. When they are fortunately obtained, we cannot take too much care of them, or enshrine them with more than sufficient thought and heed.

Very pleasant places for tender cups, teapots, and plates, are corner cupboards, either resting upon legs or hung upon the walls, they may be small and decorative, or roomy, severe, and simple.

The picture on the next page gives a good idea of an old-fashioned one, with a pediment at the top, and lattice doors. An evidently appreciative couple are gloating over the inclosed wealth of glass, silver, and china. Such a cupboard gives us for choice either the support of a surbase, slim legs, or an under cupboard.

A corner cupboard that has solid, unglazed doors, either flat or rounded, would gain richness by the insides of the doors being covered with choice bits of old Venetian leather, or, failing that, a painted diaper, perhaps with gold leaf back-ground: when such doors are opened and laid back against either wall, the warm fine colour would be a valuable

adjunct to, not interfering with, the brilliant beauties of shelved treasures.

A Corner Cupboard.

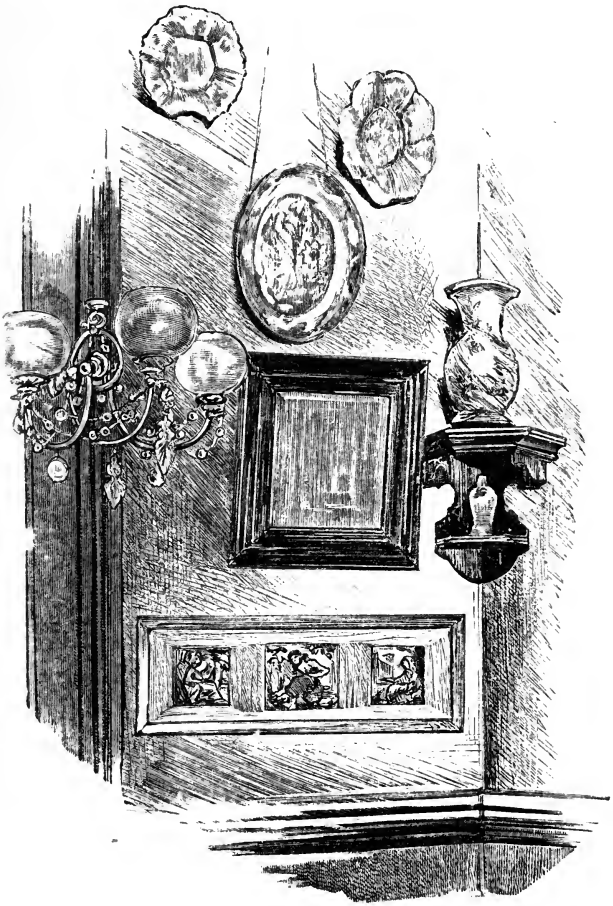
Vases of large size and bold pattern and colour may advantageously stand aloft, on the top of book-

case, corner cupboard, or bracket, or on single stands, or even on the floor in retired corners.

Plates of peculiar and dainty ware may be placed on tiny shelves either connected like bookshelves, or independent, and thus placed they *look* safer than when suspended by cord or wire, as shown on page 139, where ideas are given for dealing with varied ornaments. A double and decorative corner bracket for large and small vases, three hand-painted tiles in ebonized frame with oak mount, and a bevelled mirror reflecting the graceful shapes of gas-bracket and vases.

For purely decorative purposes, fine form and rich colour are to be desired, and they may be met with without large outlay—often a question more of fashion than of beauty. Old Delft ware has good form, fine colour, and suitable design. Old Nankin possesses the most beautiful blues; new Flanders-grey boasts charming shapes, clever hand-work, and fairly good blue, for modern days. In Algeria and Spain, much unspoiled natural taste is shown, with touches of acquired Persian knowledge of decoration. Green glazed vases from the Aures mountains, common Spanish unglazed water-bottles, Tunis coarse clay and terracotta jars; all have beauties that recommend them heartily as interesting and satisfactory for any drawing-room shelf or bracket.

Very good copies of green and blue enamel ware, excellent in colour, are produced by M. Deck, of Paris; and in Belgium one may meet with desirable modern specimens. No one need be reminded of eastern china, perhaps more suited than any other

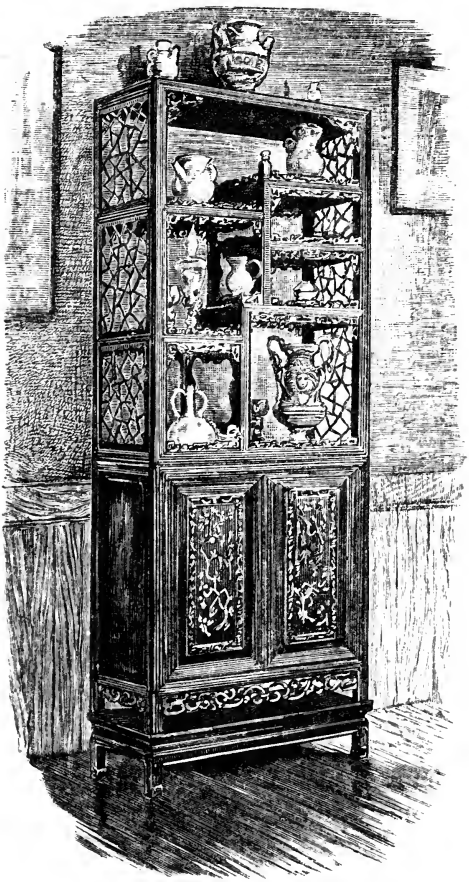


ODDS AND ENDS.

pottery for decorations, and ordinarily of moderate cost. Even in English exhibitions, it is evident that taste for, and knowledge of, ceramic work has started a new growth amongst us, and should be rewarded by encouragement.

One more little cabinet and *étagère*, and other odds and ends must be briefly considered. This is of Chinese make, and has the desirable legs, a lower shelf suitable for coarse but decorative pieces, such as saucers and bowls, little compartments oddly and charmingly arranged, and delicate wooden fret-work. It is not offered as an example to be copied, but rather for favourable comparison with the usual magnificent, marble-topped, low-shelved, glass-backed, ugly cheffonier, with which every one is too well acquainted.

Fans of Chinese and Japanese make, demand a passing notice. Those who have the ordinary cheap Japanese fans of a few years back will do well to consider that in Japan, as elsewhere, purity of natural art is gradually being distorted by acquired fashions and tastes; and that probably in a very few years such frail fans will be more rare, less attainable, more valuable. An efficient plan for their exhibition and preservation from injury is to have pieces of ebony or other wood, fixed against a wall and pierced at intervals to allow the handles to slip through, thus sustaining them in an upright position close to the wall. Such an arrangement, carried round a room, with the fans touching each other, at a level just above the dado, would suit a room calm in colour,



CABINET AND ETAGÈRE.

and with such Japanese arrangements as seem always to tone well with old English furniture.

Handles, finger-plates, and bell-pulls are small details in drawing-room decoration that contribute greatly to a good or bad general standard. Those made of gilded and decorated china have but one recommendation—cleanliness; for their cold hard surface and colour, generally utterly at variance with other ornaments, make them startlingly unpleasant objects. In old houses, door-furniture and bell-handles may be seen made of beaten brass, chased and fretted into delicate honeycomb patterns, and lately reproductions of old, and many new, ideas have been offered for approval by a few brassworkers. A very convenient form for finger-plates is when the upper and lower parts being in one, a projecting piece forms a back-plate to the door handle; these are made in brass, ebony, ebonized oak and other woods, and are, in different degrees, elaborated by carving and fretwork. It would not be difficult to get *original ideas* for these small objects, carried out at a not very exorbitant price, although good brass work, which is nearly everlasting, can never be what is called "cheap."

The encouragement of original ideas has been throughout the motive of this book. Those of our readers who from circumstances have never witnessed the gradations by which any worthy art is acquired, who have only seen the successful issue of an infinite number of unsuccessful attempts, are, we trust, by this time convinced, that personal perseverance in the search after pure decorative beauty will be rewarded by results apparently unattainable except by those who have some gift of the nature of inspiration.

We urge such sympathetic minds to seize every chance of studying acknowledged, beautiful, and varied works of art. To fix a high standard for their own efforts, and to prefer to stumble often in a tedious ascent rather than to rest content at a lower level. Honest progress towards a higher, rather than mean accomplishment of a lower type, is desirable in many other things as well as in Drawing-room Decoration.

In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to render tangibly practical some of the ideas now dawning in the minds of those who, though as yet uneducated in domestic art, incline naturally to better things.

On awakening to a sense of the ugly, innumerable schemes for amendment present themselves, but vagueness is their chief characteristic. In matters of action, thinking "at large" seldom leads to useful results, and even experts in decorative art are, perhaps, a little apt to talk widely; hence the uncultured mind, bewildered by a multitude of new ideas, finds much difficulty in concentrating itself on the immediately possible: the things to do first, and now.

Most of us live in a "row," either of houses in a street, or of villas in a suburb. As regards our outward walls, the livery of sameness is donned by

all, but there is scope for originality within doors, and surely our rooms should be made to suit our individual tastes and characters.

Not very long ago, taste in domestic art seemed, if not defunct, at least moribund; it is now, let us hope, convalescent, if not yet robust. Even the changed character of the display in the windows of our leading decorators, indicates an altered and, in most cases, an improved taste.

It has been again and again urged in these pages, that most old furniture is beautiful, and ought as such to be sought after. The preference for it is well grounded, since, added to the charm of beauty and fit design, we have the old craftsman's rare skill and conscience. The very fact that so much old furniture exists in good condition, is evidence of its workmanlike character; for it must have resisted the wear and tear of at least a hundred years.

But obviously there is not enough old furniture for us all. While it deserves to be loved and cherished, and its masterpieces pointed out as types to be followed, we should remember that there are amongst us, not only imitators but inventors copying and developing the old ideas. Such designers and manufacturers can well supply genuine and beautiful furniture; if the public cares sufficiently for the right things.

Readers of the "Art-at-Home" Series do not need to be told that the style of house decoration now in favour is, if novel, in many respects ancient likewise. This book is an endeavour to put into words the result of convictions and experiences of the truth of the teachings of the new-old school.

But the theme is inexhaustible; it is scarcely possible to lay too much stress on the lasting pleasure derived from personal care for, and interest in, the decoration and embellishment of our homes. There is a certain happiness even in incompleteness, because it ever leaves something more to be done. To do that something, be it small or great, and to know how to do it in the best and most practical way, is what we have been trying to teach our readers.

THE END.

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