The Next-to-Nothing House

ALICE VAN LEER CARRICK

"From Me to You"

THE NEXT-TO-NOTHING HOUSE

The old green door and the brass knocker of much responsibility

The
NEXT-TO-NOTHING HOUSE

By

ALICE VAN LEER CARRICK

And I said to myself, if I were a poet or a painter I would take the common things, and show the wonder and the beauty of them. — Black

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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To Grace Kimball, lacking whose wise and pleasant counsel my book would never have been written; to Betty and Bill who love my old furniture, and to Anne and Gene who don't; and to all those who have visited me, either in person or in print, I dedicate "The Next-to-Nothing House."

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PROLOGUE

SOMETIMES, as I look back over the long years, I am glad that when we went to housekeeping we, as the Man with the Duster would say, "were inconveniently poor." Otherwise I know what we should have done: we should have hastened to build, and lived to regret it; we should have filled our house with furniture which, in later days, would have been a remission of sins just to look at — debased, ungainly sleigh-front bureaus, the lower part of highboys bought under the ingenuous impression that they were lowboys, and many plates of the too-ubiquitous willow-pattern. We might have been comfortable, but we certainly should n't have been beautiful, and truly there is no bliss in ignorance when it touches our own lives. And instead of all these misfortunes, we moved into a little modest white cottage befitting our modester income, and allowed its eighteenth-century loveliness to be our gradual education. I believe that making a home should be a matter of both leisure and affection; lacking either quality people get "a roof over their heads — an address," but nothing else. And I think also that you have to love your house as you do your children, because it exacts a price, because it is a bother, a blessed bother; you must be willing to offer oblation and sacrifice.

Of course we made mistakes, but not many; we did n't have money enough to go very far in the wrong

direction. Besides, all the time our house was training us; the minute we put the wrong things against the walls or on the mantels, it rebuked us gently but persistently, keeping on until we had acknowledged our fault and removed the offending object. All of which brings me to the subject of my dear antiquities; very soon we realized that anything but old furniture looked silly in our small cottage, and, little by little, we began to acquire it, by purchase, by "swapping," and, occasionally, by fortunate gift and inheritance. I think I am very like the man who "never wanted to bring up a young house"; yes, I greatly resemble him, and I admit a frank and honest inclination for old chairs and tables that so well accord with old walls. But I also admire old furniture in a new setting; L——'s young house is a thousandfold lovelier because of the rested, restful, bygone furniture which fills it. But there are n't enough antiquities for everybody, you insist. Probably not, but that 's just why I urge you to begin collecting at once, for unless you understand old furniture you 'll never recognize a good reproduction when you see it, and until you know old furniture from the pocketbook point of view — why, you just never *will* know it! After all, everything does go back to the economic basis, and we are more apt to appreciate what we have to pay for. Most of us, too, have the nucleus of a collection, or a few heirlooms which will look better with the right sort of

copies than the wrong kind of reproductions. When I behold some pieces of furniture I always want to quote Gellett Burgess: —

> Now take that gaudy pseudo-chair,
> A bold, upholsterrific blunder.
> It does n't wonder why it 's there,
> We don't encourage it to wonder.

Sad to say, a great deal of present-day furniture is blundering, whether it is upholstered or not; inaccurate, expensive travesties of once lovely and forgotten modes, lacking both subtle line and cunning craftsmanship, I am disheartened every time I see these tawdry *ameublements* advertised. One especially quaint recommendation I am very sure I shall never forget. It ran, "A fine William and Mary Suite in the popular Jacobean Finish." Poor William of Orange! The Battle of the Boyne might never have been fought at all! For beyond everything else, *furniture is tangible history*, and unless you can realize its background, the periods which made it, the influences which shaped it, why, you 'll do very well to leave collecting alone.

But let 's go back to luck. There 's lots of it left, really. For your encouragement I will say it has been computed by experts that, unless collections are willed to museums or historical societies, they come upon the market every twenty-five years. So there will always be something to buy! Moreover,

the broad road that stretches has n't yet lost its enchantment, its lure of beckoning fortune. Last summer B—— found an excellent bannister-back armchair for fifteen dollars — it had moved out on the piazza, that halfway house to the shed — and I got a beautiful old, *old* "drawn-in" rug and two pieces of Stiegel glass for even less. And but recently we acquired a fine maple blanket-chest for eight dollars, and knew the misery of just losing the prettiest of rope-carved bureaus, which went to an earlier bird for only twenty dollars. (I really do think it 's fearfully *nouveau collector* to boast of how little you pay, but I am guilty of this antique indiscretion because I want to show you that it actually can be done.) But you must take time and trouble for these results; you must rise early and toil late; follow many clues, and learn to become "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles"; and, above all, cultivate a Favorite Dealer, an Esteemed Secondhand Man, and an Obliging Junkman. Thus will your collection increase; your heart and your purse grow light together, although your money will also go farther than by any other method.

All this if you are, like me, "inconveniently poor." I often wonder why some women look at collecting from such a queer angle; they would n't expect to get their gowns from Worth or Paquin, yet it never seems to occur to them that there are "shabby shops" on dingy little side-streets where frequently there

are adorable things to buy. Nor, to continue the dressmaking analogy, can I understand why a woman who will study a fashion magazine with almost passionate intensity, will embark so lightly on the purchase of furniture that she must live with every day, regardless of what it signifies, of what goes together. I have seen rooms so unrelated in decoration: part boudoir, part withdrawing-room, part "den" (atrocious word!), that I instinctively remembered Claire's advice to Sidonie, "Trop de bijoux, mignonne. . . . Et puis, vois-tu, avec les robes montantes on ne met pas des fleurs dans les cheveux." And yet it is n't hard to learn. All this knowledge is as much yours as mine; where I got it you may find it, too: in books, looking at collections, wandering pleasantly through museums.

Perhaps, if you are rich beyond the dreams of avarice, all this does n't apply to you; but, rich or poor, what a happy life is a collector's! There is that best of all things — anticipation; there is always something to want. If I had known Alexander the Great, he would n't have wasted his time weeping, for I 'd have persuaded him to enterprise the pleasant pursuit of historical glass cup-plates, and then he would n't have had any desire to lament a conquered world. It would still be unconquered, you see; completeness would ever have eluded him!

That 's the way it should be. Build your house like Aladdin's, forever to lack a window. Mine

lacks two at present. There 's a dreadful, disfiguring radiator in my front hall. It refuses to be ignored, and it straddles insolently across the only place I could ever hope to put a highboy. When it 's out of my way I shall be a moderately contented woman. And then I want an Édouart silhouette; for choice, a dear little New Orleans *fillette*, with a nosegay in her hand, or her lips just parted to sing "Cadet Rousselle" or some gay *bergerette*. And when I have this, some other window of desire will swing magically open, and so I shall go through life, my reach always exceeding my grasp — the real heaven on earth for a true collector.

A. V. L. C.

Webster Cottage
Hanover, New Hampshire
June, 1922

THE NEXT–TO–NOTHING HOUSE

I

THE PICTURE POST-CARD HOUSE

SOMEWHAT back from the village street it stands, this little, low eighteenth-century cottage of ours; white-walled, green-shuttered, peeping at you from behind a screen of lilac and syringa bushes and an outer ambuscade of the "green, inverted hills" of lofty elm trees. But notwithstanding its demure shyness, it has its moments; all summer long it is "snapshotted" (is that a proper participle?) by the passing tourist; and it has the honor of having its photograph on at least five different picture post-cards for sale at the local shops. You see, it is one of the oldest houses in a town that has, perhaps, pushed aside too much of tradition and charm in its civic haste to improve.

Besides, the founder of Wellesley College was born here; and — more than anything else — Daniel Webster roomed in the little south chamber when he was a Sophomore at Dartmouth. That 's the real reason of its popularity. To misquote ever so slightly the words of the great man whose mantle of fame protects my little house, "It is a small cottage, but there are those who love it." I am one of them, and yet, I confess, the word "small" is rankling at present;

rankling because, lately, in a moment of exasperation, my Candid Friend told me that it was just the size for two maiden ladies and a pussycat. And there are five of us, besides a pussycat — a great dust-colored animal who stretches himself at ease on the rosy damask of my Chippendale chair, and fancies that he completes the pink-and-gray color-scheme of my parlour. Since then I can't help feeling that we bulge like a tenement family.

Yes, just eight rooms for five of us *and* a pussycat and a maid whenever we can capture one and persuade her to stay. Would you feel slummish? You see, after all, the cottage is set in a lawn of wide greenness, and the rooms *are* large. Our hall now — usually these little "story-and-a-half" New England houses have most inhospitable entries: unwelcoming, perpendicular stairs which, with but the width of a doormat between, speed the parting guest like an arrow from a bow, by almost pitching him out of the front door. I have a theory about our little cottage; I think that it was built in that long-ago summer of 1790, by some Southern optimist who did n't do the climate justice, but who wanted a hall; the South being accustomed to halls and hospitality. So he cunningly contrived his stairway, turning it at an abrupt angle, thus saving a really worth-while space. Steep the stairs certainly are; the craggy Alps would hold no terrors for my children, brought up as they have been in these domestic mountain

"The Picture Post-Card House" as it stands somewhat back from the village street.

fastnesses; and, as a reducer of unnecessary avoirdupois, they are unequaled. My slenderness commends them.

But, seriously, I have never seen a hall in so small a cottage planned quite like this, with an eye to so much room. The photograph does not show half its charm, or, even, half the hall. On either side of the front door shallow closets are built in, and so I am spared the anachronism of an otherwise necessary hatrack. The angle of the stairway forms another tucked-away closet, not so high, but deeper. That is directly behind my little "snake-foot" light-stand — a gracious gift and one of the most attractive pieces of the kind I have ever seen; made just of birch, but showing what New England cabinet-makers could do in the way of delicate line, when they chose. And they often *did* choose, despite popular theory to the contrary. On it stands a brass candlestick, seven and a half inches high and well-proportioned; a substantial base with cut-off corners; then a bell-shaped standard and three lessening bulbous turns — I paid a dollar for each of them, and I assure you I got a bargain! Of course, I might have this candlestick wired for electricity; but since it is destined to light the hall when the central electric lamp fails me, after some crashing thunderstorm, I prefer to keep it as it is, and occasionally enjoy the softer radiance of earlier days.

On the left wall, above the table, hangs a Consti-

tution mirror, medium large and with very good lines. I bought it some years ago from a small dealer, for six dollars, and it was in such excellent condition that all that had to be done was to put in a new glass. Even the eagle's head was intact, a most unusual piece of good luck; and I don't believe that the whole mirror cost me more than nine dollars.

And here may I make a declaration of furniture truth? Unless the old glass is particularly interesting and in good condition, with a super-beveled edge and the charm of fine antiquity, I think I should replace it — unless I were planning a museum, and who that has a real home wants to do that? Though I might keep just *one* example of the kind described in that lovable "Story of a Bad Boy" — "When it reflected your face, you had the singular pleasure of not recognizing yourself. It gave your features the appearance of having been run through a mince-meat machine." But only as a curious bit of antiquity, you understand.

My chairs were bargains, too. One is a bannister-back with mushroom finials, and a curved top vaguely recalling the Stuart crest. This L—— and I found in a little summer shack on the shores of Lake Mascoma, and it was worth the stumbling, slippery winter walk along the frozen edges; for the farmer-owner sold it for five dollars, and refinishing and a wide splint bottom cost but three dollars more. (I have a particular affection for that chair; you see, it

The front hall with the angled, steep stairway, the old round rug, birch light-stand, and Constitution mirror.

was the first bannister-back I ever owned.) The slat-back, of course, is a commoner type; but still, four slats are better than three, just as five slats are more desirable than four, and these simple chairs, especially when well turned, are always worth buying. My "butter-and-eggs man," fired by my antique enthusiasm, rummaged in his barn-loft and found this discarded chair, which he sold me for a dollar and a half. The seat was gone, — naturally, that was to be expected, — but renovation and a good rush bottom (this was in those blessed days when work of this sort cost less) added four dollars to its price.

These chairs stand facing one another, each just beside one of the little built-in closet doors. Do you like my silhouettes hanging above them? I hope so, for I do extremely; and, let me tell you, I worked for a long time before I could get just the effect I wanted. I tried pictures; and, pretty as these small gilt-framed notes of color were, they did n't please me. Next, I hung mirrors — small Constitution glasses which, good in themselves, became the space not at all. And then some luckiest chance made me send in a casual bid to a Philadelphia auction, and I got the pair for six dollars and a half apiece. I never expected to, for, see, they are marked, with meticulous fineness, "Day Fecit." You know how rare a signed silhouette is! *Where* were all the Pennsylvania collectors that morning, to let me buy these

treasures for a fraction of their value? Besides, they are not cut, but painted in olive-green and gold, an unusual combination; and they are in their old mahogany frames, the protecting glass being decorated in black and gilt in early-nineteenth-century fashion. They are not only a pair of profiles; they are probably betrothal silhouettes, Sarah Fenton and Edward Trego, done in the long-ago month of May, 1834. And here I have separated them, like the chairs; no longer they hang side by side, as was originally intended, but opposite each other, parted by the width of a hall. Still, when I look at Sarah, I am not sure but it is for the best. She seems a "magerful" woman; certainly, at least, the dominant half of the happy couple.

My rugs are not so rare, but they are interesting, too, and fairly old, for both were made "up-t'-Etny-way" more than forty years ago — a moderately ancient age for a "drawn-in" rug. I bought them for a dollar apiece, from a most indignant old lady — indignant, be it said, because to her these rugs were so much rubbish, "old culch," already nearing their last long home on the back piazza. To take those inferior things when I might have some of her new ones, vivid with greens and reds! I remember her saying disdainfully to her daughter, who was preparing to brush them, "Ellen, I want you should let those rugs alone. Don't shake the dust out. *She* likes everything old."

View of front hall showing the wide-boarded front door, my bannister-back chair, and the silhouette of Edward Trego.

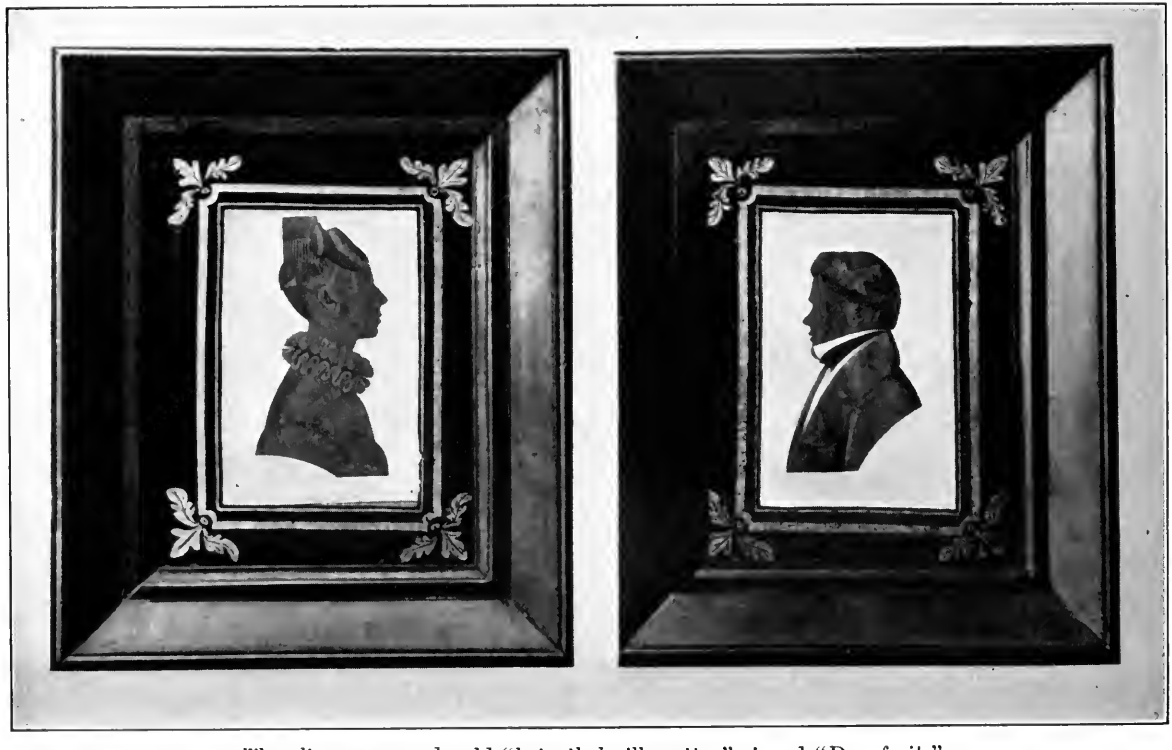
One is an oblong, just the door-width, and a most agreeable dulled blending of blacks and faded roses and blues, worked in primitive patterns; for this old woman had the positive virtue of creating her own naïve designs. The other is a circle a little more than a yard in diameter; a crocheted border, with a gay centre of formalized roses and buds worked against an écru background. It goes most becomingly with a curtain that separates the hall from a narrow passageway, the flowered surface of the chintz always reminding me of the decoration of Kershaw valentines. Moreover, it has all the qualities of the curtains that Laura Pendennis and Charlotte bought at Shoolbred's in Tottenham Court Road, for it is "cheap and pleasant and lively to look at." Sometimes I think I 'll put some of its brightness at my narrow windows on either side of the door; but then I think I won't, because the écru glass-curtains (raw silk costing a dollar and a quarter a yard) linger so harmoniously between the gray-brown of the wall-paper and the cream of the woodwork.

The paper was a successful experiment; in the days of our decorating youth we tried several different sorts, — dark and light, figured and plain, — despairing until we found this copy of an old paper. It is light enough to give space to the hall, and its diamonded pattern sufficiently soft to be restful. Best of all, its quiet tones are a prelude to the panel of quaint wall-paper at the head of the stairs. That

was brought over from France in a sailing vessel just after the War of 1812, and three Hanover houses were adorned with the splendor of its cargo. This piece is all that is left to us of its Empire classic charms; and so, striving to make it visual to you, I cannot help but remember the comments of our local paper hanger, we being as proud as Punch, you see. "Well, Professor," he said with sympathy, "if I was you, an' the College would n't do any better 'n that by me, I 'd paste *newspaper* over it!"

How I wish I could show you the door — no, I don't really intend it at all in the rude way it sounds: I mean the outside of my Colonial green door, that you might lift the heavy brass knocker, and observe how roundly it raps. It is n't the original one; that, alas, was purloined the night before we moved in; some antiquarian dilettante, we suspect, for, of course, the days of knocker-wrenching for pure sport were in the past, even with us. But ours is much finer — one salvaged for five dollars from the wreckage of an old Salem house, this knocker that I must keep perpetually, blinkingly bright.

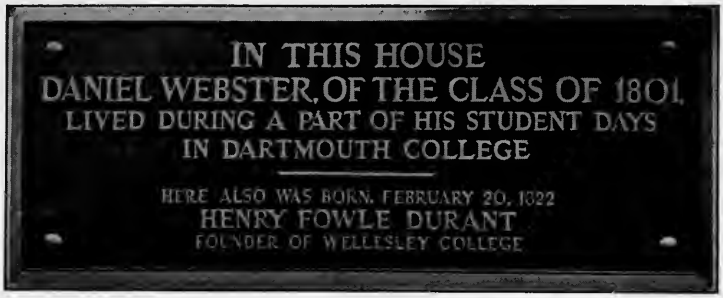
Living in a picture post-card house is such a responsibility! It imposes an ideal upon you. You know, my cottage is like an old, old lady who has been very beautiful in her youth, and who must now go softly all her days. That 's why she is so much lovelier by candlelight: that is why her brasses must shine, her windowpanes glisten, her shutters be



The olive-green and gold "betrothal silhouettes" signed "Day fecit."

firmly latched back, that she may not present the aspect of a little, rowdy boy winking at the passers-by. Certainly, she is an evening beauty; loveliest, I think, on midsummer nights, when the full moon, white and high, paints her afresh, and weaves for her a background of velvety shadows.

Sometimes, to be quite frank, my ideals are unrealized, and then I am unhappy. I am, also, remaking a proverb. It begins, "People who live in picture post-card houses," and so on. Everybody is always coming, and I love to have them come; and, since my welcoming tablet has been placed beside the door, the public believe that the house is a museum, and "lift up the latch and walk in." It 's fortunate



that I positively adore showing my house; that at almost any time I am ready to drop my daily tasks and expound historical fact to congenial people. Naturally there are trying hours — and guests! For instance, I don't at all like the people who come, and, gazing at my old wall-paper, say, "What an interesting bit! But I know a woman who has her whole

hall and drawing-room done in just this paper, only it is in much better condition"; or who, perceiving my few pieces of Sunderland lustre, detail the intimate beauties of "a whole set, perfectly lovely, a deeper rose than this, you know," that some friend holds in happy possession. They affect me very much as the Red Queen did Alice, when she waved her hand triumphantly, and said, "Why, I could show you mountains in comparison to which this would be a valley!"

Then there are the visitors who kindly set you right about your furniture; its date, nationality, and previous condition of servitude. O—— entertained the last one; I was informed later that he was a diamond in the rough; but I was out in the kitchen "a-spicing marmalet," and far too busy to take any hand in his polishing. Fragments like this drifted in to me:—

The Rough Diamond (pausing before my Empire card-table). That 's a good old piece. English eighteenth century.

I could hear O——'s pained protests that it was Massachusetts nineteenth; but the man waved aside his objections; "No, English eighteenth," he said firmly. "But," he added kindly, "you 'll learn in time. [Here the White Queen popped into my head.] You see, I have an aunt who has a lot of this old stuff lying around; that 's how I happen to know so much about it."

The panel of old wall-paper; probably French and put on in the year 1815.

But most people are so nice, oh, so very nice and appreciative. That little pleased man who comes each year, — always from some different Middle Western state, — and asks for just one of my autumn blossoms to keep in memory of his visit. And those delightful tourists from the Pacific slope, who were prepared to love and admire everything they saw. It was very early in the morning, and the plants had gone out from the dining-room window-boxes to be sprayed on the porch. I was just preparing to apologize for their empty appearance, when one of the women clapped her hands in ecstasy and cried: "Oh, those delightful old kitchen sinks! Where *did* you get them? I never saw any before!"

I am usually truthful, but I had n't the heart to snub her by a correction.

My sense of humor was not always working on time, however. I remember, back in the limbo of early household struggles, when there were three of us, and the Big Daughter was the Baby, that a number of gigantic people came to see the house. How big they were, and how many they seemed! Perhaps there were only four of them, but they appeared to fill the cottage. I know I have a memory of one huge lady wedged into my steep stairway, as she sought to ascend to the sacred chamber, asking coquettishly: "Did you say Noah or Daniel?"

Maybe I should not recall this with such bitter pleasure if, after they had gone, the Baby had n't

run to me with outstretched hand and cried: "Look, Mama! The man gaved me a shiny penny."

It was a quarter! I gasped my horror. To think of being tipped for having shown my home! All its sanctity seemed violated. "Run after them! Make them take it back!" I commanded.

But O——, who bore it more philosophically, said: "They 're liberal. It 's more than I used to give to see an Italian palazzo."

And then the Gordian knot was cut by the Baby, who trotted back wailing, "I 've lost my shiny penny down ve 'teps."

There it lies to this hour, unsought, the hidden memory of my one *douceur*.

Nowadays it would n't bother me a bit; one of the privileges of advancing age is that your humor keeps pace with your years. Otherwise I should be distressed by the horror of the moment when I suddenly discovered, after showing some particularly nice New York people over the house, that I had developed a real professional patter. Like this, you know. "And *here* Nelson fell," and "Queen Elizabeth slept on this *very* bed." But I did n't mind; I just changed my technique.

Come and see if I have not. Besides, Our Town is worth visiting; quaint and storybookish; our College founded in romantic idealism on the edge of the wilderness, the old white buildings still circling its campus. And the most beautiful elm trees in all

The "Katy-did" row: the old steepled church, the parsonage, Berry Searles's home, and the Nunnery.

the world, I think. Pray observe that row of stately buildings. When you were little, you read "What Katy Did at School," did n't you? Well, this is where it all happened, where Katy and Clover lived; the last house — now swept out of the path of progress — was the Nunnery; but next to it, still standing, is the old President's place,[1] where Berry Searles used to tie cakes to the strings that the girls dropped from the windows; and, directly around the corner, is part of the fence past which Rose Red paraded, adorned with soap and towel and sponge, on her way to the bathhouse.

I think it 's so pleasant to know this; it made me feel friends at once with "Hillsover." And that, when all is told, is the real thing about life, is it not?

[1] Alas, this too has been moved by "civic haste."

II

MY PARLOUR

Sometimes I wonder if I ought to cut down my syringa bushes — or, at least, trim them. I should hate to, they 're such big, blossoming things, laden with white flowers twice a year — once in fragrant June, of course, and after heavy January snowfalls. And always they are lovely, tapping with intimate fingers against my old windows — but they *do* make my front rooms dark.

My parlour presented itself to me as a problem from the first; it is a moderately large room, sixteen feet square, with three doors and three windows, a fireplace, and a huge, intractable radiator; and the squareness of it all, and the lack of continued wall-space were, I own, baffling in the beginning; for I had been brought up on modern city apartment architecture, where walls jut out or angle in, and there are bay windows and cosy corners. I doubt if ever I could have managed at all, if I had n't served my 'prentice-year in the oldest house in town. Built in 1773 that was, and I had consequently quite a feeling of modernity when we next moved into a house a whole seventeen years younger.

Frankly, it is only of late that we have solved our decorative equation. You have to live with a house to understand it; if it 's the right sort, your soul will

grow, and contentment abide with you; but if it 's the wrong sort, move out as fast as you can, for it will do dreadful, unnamable things to your character. Why, I have seen rooms that made me realize that I was a potential murderess!

But will you not forgive my past mistakes, and let me tell you of the pleasant now? You remember that the hall was gray, with the merest hint of brown? Well, the parlour walls are a still lighter tint; faint, fernlike leaves against a soft background, and little, almost imperceptible, green dots. You really have to see it to understand how becoming it is; as soon as it was on the walls the room seemed to grow at once more spacious and sunny. (Just here may I say that I have never seen any suitable treatment of a Colonial room where the wall effect was solid and unbroken — with the exception of a painted interior, that is. Often it is not practical to use the noble landscape patterns of a hundred years ago, — large and generous spaces are needed to make this decoration valuable, — but it is always possible to avoid the density of cartridge paper.)

Next, the woodwork was painted a glossy cream-white, and the old pine floor a soft, smooth gray, to harmonize with the paper. Light had come into my room as if by magic; now I had to contrive color. At the windows I hung straight valanced curtains of pinky chintz, new, but printed from an old English design: roses climbing a lattice, and looking as if a

Sussex summer had bloomed itself into my parlour. Fourteen yards of this chintz, at sixty-five cents a yard, — unbelievably cheap even for five years ago, and to its everlasting honor, lovely yet, — cost just nine dollars and ten cents; and for my floor, at a mark-down sale, I was lucky enough to find a domestic rug in a Persian pattern for thirty-five more. Of course I would rather have an authentic Oriental carpet — who would n't? But nevertheless, this rug of mine, deep rose for the most part, with little notes of blue and black and écru and dull green, is very attractive. Moreover, it is suited to my circumstances. I recently heard that a well-known architect had expressed a horror at figured rugs; plain, restful carpets, and nothing else, should be used. Ah, my heart goes out to him, but I also realize that he has never looked at the world from my particular angle. I had to consider my three children's feet, and the geometric progression of *their* friends' footsteps, also the fact that there is a long Open Season for mud in Our Town. When I think what a discreet taupe would look like after a few weeks' wear; when I remember what my delicate rose-carpet *did* resemble, I am convinced of the wisdom of my later choice.

Well, when my curtains were up and my rug was down, my color-scheme was completed: gentle and soft, it still was radiant. All that the room needed now was the sheen of the brass and copper in my candlesticks and bowls, and the happy glint of my

Parlour ensemble looking toward the syringa bushes.

gold picture-frames — frames that hold glimpses of country gardens and vistas of blue sea; a street in distant Segovia, and two simple heads in red chalk done by an artist friend of mine. And there 's a little engraving of Daniel Webster when he was young, enclosed in a frame of really old gilt. That is all — except my silhouettes, of course. (But if I had hung upon my walls sepia prints in fumed oak frames, I should have chilled and deadened my room beyond belief.)

The setting was ready; I could begin to think of the arrangement of my furniture. My parlour—you will see that I like and insist on the word; it lacks the artificiality of living-room, the pretentiousness of drawing-room, and really means the place where people sit and talk — is a mingling of styles, as it is a gathering of personalities. It is the one room where a combination of types and periods is not only right, but desirable. But, even then, you must be careful to have furniture as agreeable as you would have your guests. None of my pieces is later than eighteen twenty, and my earliest might date in the very early seventeen hundreds; but they all are similar: mahogany or mahogany-finished, and made by American joiners. They are like the members of a happy family — some older, some younger, but all akin. A Gothic oak chest or an Italian Renaissance table, completely beautiful in themselves, would destroy the harmony of the whole room.

That first chair, a modest type of Chippendale, is an especial favorite of mine. Incidentally, it 's a favorite of my cat's, the one he loves to lie on. I got it for fourteen dollars at one of the shops in Boston where more magnificent dealers buy their wares. You see, the inconspicuous middlemen of the trade gather many treasures together; rather higgledy-piggledy, it is true, and it takes experience and taste to select from so much furniture flotsam. Still, if knowledge is money, it 's a currency we all can afford to have. The wood of my chair is old black cherry, and it was in such good condition that only repolishing was needed — a matter of just a dollar more. But the upholstery was terrific; large and buoyant springs had been put in the old slip-seat, which then had been covered in violent figured plush. Now, reduced to normal flatness and decked in rosy damask, it is very engaging. The splat is vase-shaped, and the legs are straight and plain in the later Chippendale manner; altogether, a comfortable, dignified, self-respecting sort of chair.

As a connoisseur's piece it is not remarkable — not nearly so fine as the tip-table beside it. This I especially like to talk about, not only because it really is the loveliest one of my acquaintance, but also because it is the visible proof of one of my pet theories, that a collector should buy by line rather than by wood. Wood may be improved, line never! When I found the table, — the dealer had just bought it

My Hepplewhite tip-table, and the eighteenth-century chairs that usually live with "nice people."

from a junkman for seventy-five cents, — it was a dingy gray, and the top so warped by sun and rain that it was almost bow-shaped. But I saw how slenderly beautiful the base was, with its delicate little spade-feet; and when the dealer offered it to me for ten dollars, all done over, I jumped at the chance. The warp was steamed out of the top, and iron bands on the back held it in shape; scraping and polishing showed the mahogany to be full of fire, and a narrow marquetry of holly and ebony appeared around the edge. It is an example of Hepplewhite, in which wood and line and inlay have beautifully met. The surface is so softly polished that you can see a shadowy face as you bend over it. That 's the way it should be; never listen to any renovator who tells you that the old way was to reduce wood to a dull, gleamless level. Long-ago housekeepers knew better than that. One of our family traditions is of my grandmother telling Claiborne, the small dining-room boy, always to polish the table until he could see himself grin in it. And, should you despise domestic legend, I can quote literature to you: old Mr. Hardcastle storming at Charles Marlowe, "Then there 's a mahogany table that you may see your face in!" I am dwelling on this point at such length because the potential treasures of so many people are ruined by just this lack of understanding.

The mirror that hangs above the tip-table is another type of Constitution, not so large or so fine

as the one in the hall, — only a little more than twenty-five inches, in fact, — but certainly cheap at seven dollars, and very appropriately related to the piece below it. The gilt ornament is a far-away likeness of the Prince of Wales's feathers — the memory of "battles long ago," when the Black Prince rode gallantly forward on the field of Crécy; and, although accounts differ, and some say that Hepplewhite followed the fortunes of the Prince Regent's party, and others that this exquisite designer was merely commissioned to make a set of drawing-room chairs for His Royal Highness, certain it is that, in the inlays and carvings and brasses of his particular school, you will frequently find the symbol of the Three Feathers.

The chair at the right is an honest eighteenth-century piece from old Newburyport, not especially rare, not particularly common. Twelve dollars it cost me, at the same shop where I bought the vase-backed Chippendale, and renovation and rush-seat were only four more. Now here is a thing to remember: if you pay enough in the first place to ensure a sturdy frame, your repair bill will be just so much less. It amounts to the same thing in the end, but, personally, I should rather begin with my big expenditure; you 're surer of the stability of your purchase. But, to go back to my chair, the splat is pierced, — the kind of splat, you remember, that Chippendale adopted and embellished, — and joined firmly to the

seat. This one, three quarters of the way down, perhaps, meets a little separating bar; the legs are straight; the bottom rushed — a type of seating I both like and approve, although it should not be used too constantly in a room where color is desired. It accords well with the Chippendale; the bowed top has just the same simple, harmonious lines.

Do you know what I like to do, at night, when I 'm walking up Main Street alone? I like to look at our little cottage, and pretend I don't know who lives there, and wonder if they 're really nice people. I walk by, trying to feel just what a questioning stranger might. And then I see the tops of my two pretty chairs outlined in the rosy dusk against the windows, and I know that the occupants are all they should be; I should "admire" to know them.

My slant-top desk I 'm very fond of; it 's the only one I have, to begin with, and it 's a good piece as well: mahogany, made with a craftsman plainness and sense of line, and with excellent oval brasses. A third virtue is its inexpensiveness; it really was a bargain. You see, we had two big, rather pompous, pseudo-Colonial bureaus — wedding-presents they were. We used to think them quite grand, but, oh, my dear Friends in Collecting, why were wisdom and time bestowed upon us but for our tastes to improve? As we lived, we learned; and we were fortunate in finding a dealer in antiquities who had a brother in the secondhand business, and who wanted the

bureaus badly enough to take them *and* twenty-five dollars, and give us the desk instead.

My dear mother says that we have no sentiment at all. I deny it, and point as proof to our sofa. That 's not valuable; it 's agreeable rather than elegant, and hardly more than a century old; and yet we would not part with it for anything. It has worn various liveries: chintz and tapestry, and, at last, has settled down to a comfortable old age clad in moss-green velours, which has lasted marvelously, for it was covered some years ago, and cost in those fortunate times but ten dollars for cloth and work. Of course I should love a slender Sheraton piece, with a suave marquetry of satinwood inset above the fluted legs; or an Empire sofa, with spreading claw-feet, carved, bountiful cornucopias, and, perhaps (though, I admit, this is asking much of any Furniture Fate), outstretched eagles' heads. But, even if I ever find these miracles, so long as O—— and I live, our plain, unpretentious sofa will stay with us. It is endeared by long association; our first antique purchase it was, and we bought it for four dollars from some people who were moving away, and who also threw in an Early Victorian rocking-chair for good measure.

And now, walking around the room, we have come to my greatest problem: my irrepressible radiator — an unbeautiful part of a most necessary heating system. At first, we lived with shy, self-effacing, and

The slant-top desk I "swapped" two bureaus for; Oriental ginger jars and a piece of Pennsylvania-Dutch pottery adorn the top.

quite inefficient registers; and, candidly, we welcomed the change; but what to do with these colossal metal things, which straddled conspicuously across a valuable wall-space, and could n't be scrapped, we really did n't know. And then, in a clever friend's charming apartment, I found just the solution of my problem. She had capitalized her disabilities by using her radiators as the basis for bookshelves and for heating closets. Asbestos paper, *plus* a water-tin on the radiator, will prevent an unpleasant overheating and drying of the books; and when both shelves and radiator are painted to match the rest of the woodwork, and friendly, delightful volumes ranged in colored rows, you are really not conscious of your Frankenstein monster any longer. Rather, you have added to the agreeable warmth of your scheme by the tones of your bindings; and, besides, a room without books is a dead thing, don't you think? For further concealment, I have a large snake-foot tip-table,—birch, but stained mahogany,—which I picked up at a secondhand shop for eight dollars; and, since I refinished it myself, that is all it cost, unless you add the price of my immortal soul, which it very nearly exacted. It is completely useful; it not only hides the radiator, but is an excellent table on which to serve afternoon tea. The small Dutch chair beside it is another trophy from my "butter-and-eggs man's" barn, and cost just what the slat-back did. It has been cut off at the bottom — a fate that many of

these old chairs endured; but since it is still a pleasant height, especially for children, I have not had it built up.

My piano I do not count as a piece of furniture, because a piano never should be so regarded. If I could but destroy the popular belief that a piano is essential just because it marks social advancement, I should feel as if I had accomplished a nation-wide service. "There 's an organ in the parlour to give the place a tone"; I can't keep the words of that old street-song out of my mind! So often pianos are never really used; seldom-opened, draped pinnacles of respectability they are; eminences on which to place statues or flower-vases, both inimical to music's existence. Everard Wemyss, who had red baize cloths specially constructed, who raved about the loss of a protecting button, is an extreme and awful instance of this type of mind, which actually does exist. An unused piano is a decorative vulgarity! Ours is an upright, as plain as plain can be, the merest hint of a carved capital at the top of the legs, and is finished in mahogany, of course, to go with the rest of the room. I have no doubt that a mellow eighteenth-century *scrutoire*, restrained in line and blooming with all the patina that worthy age gives, would better become my wall; but I am forgiving the piano because the Littlest Daughter is beginning to play. In fancy, I can see the years going by, and O—— and I growing older and sitting there in the

The desk again, our "four-dollar" sofa, and the bookcase which mitigates the radiator's ugliness.

rosy dusk, listening, listening to melodies we love: Grieg and Chopin, and, because we are romantic, old Jacobite airs. Candlelight, candlelight and shadows, and that Brahms Intermezzo in B Flat! Can anything in the world be lovelier?

Perhaps you will think me meticulous, but I don't like piano-benches or stools, either, though I should adore having one like that dolphin-carved treasure in the music-room at Mount Vernon. Instead, I use one of my Empire chairs — an easy, comfortable seat, and one well adapted to the height of the piano. And the chair just back of that — but maybe I 'd better describe my centre-table first. It 's a little cherry piece, a Pembroke, with two small side-leaves that lift and are prettily cut off at the corners. There is a slight inlay of ebony and holly at the ends, and on each leg, about an inch up, is a narrow band of ebony outlined with holly. When I first saw it, it was standing modestly in a corner, holding the cheese and crackers that we who had come to the auction were later to eat. I don't believe its owners had thought it worth anything at all, — of course it was old and dimmed by time; nobody, apparently, had polished it for fifty years, — and I know the auctioneer was astonished when I asked him to put it up for sale. And then, when the bidding began, somebody said fifty cents, and I said seventy-five, and my enemy went a quarter higher, and by little, climbing fractions, it was soon mine for a dollar and seventy-

five cents. Again my theory of buying by line had been justified; besides which, it was in such excellent condition that three dollars more refinished it.

On the right-hand side, facing the fireplace, is my bannister-back armchair; a big chair for a big man, and easy enough for any reasonable person. I found it when I was looking for pewter at a farmhouse a few miles beyond us, and bought it for ten dollars. Then it was painted black, but since it is quite consistent to finish such chairs in mahogany, I had it done. The finest bannister-back chair, and one of the oldest that I know, was finished just this way. Renovation, which included a new rush-seat, — for the old splint-bottom was too shabby, — brought the chair's price to fifteen dollars, not an unreasonable one when you consider all that it means. You see, it 's a country cousin of the stately Restoration chair, and a type that persisted long after the House of Hanover came to rule England. I don't suppose that the rustic joiner who carved the crested top had any idea he was saying in furniture language that King Charles had come to his own again; but so he was. I have seen better crests, of course; this one is quite crude; but the bulbous-turned brace is so unusually fine that I can honestly commend it.

The side-chair at the left is even better. It is what is known as a Transition type, which means that it borrowed its back from the Dutch *motifs* which William of Orange brought with him to

The old Franklin "fire-frame," and my steeple-top andirons.

England, but retained the baluster-and-pear turning and Spanish feet which characterized the later Jacobean period. Theoretically, these two opposing types of straight and bending line should not be combined; but here they come together in perfect harmony, because the splat, while keeping its shape, has abandoned its curve. My chair is one of the best balanced I have seen, worthy of the old city it came from, — Portsmouth, — where it started life, in the early seventeen hundreds, as one of a set of six. Alas, that so much beauty should perish from the earth! All those others were chopped up and burned for firewood. I bought mine from its noble rescuer for ten dollars, and, as the rush-seat was small, the whole chair cost me just fourteen.

Maybe I am too boastful of my fireplace; but then, Franklin fire-frames are so rare, — not made at all nowadays, — and mine is a very good one. Besides, I did n't put it there; Franklin invented his fuel-saving stoves in 1742, and mine has always stood where it does now. Therefore I can be as impersonally proud of it as I like, and I *am* rejoiced at understanding it. The lines have an almost Attic simplicity, and its spiritual discipline has dominated my whole room. That 's the real beauty of Colonial decoration properly valued. Superfluous furnishings seem a waste of ideas, and a desolation of bad taste. You observe that the whole scheme of my mantel decoration is restrained — a bust of Dante, four candle-

sticks, and as many silhouettes. The central candlesticks are French, and at a Paris rag-fair cost two francs. They are very old, as the disk to catch the wax-drip indicates. The others are American, and I paid two dollars for the pair at a small shop on Charles Street. My steeple-top andirons and shovel and tongs I got from my Favorite Junkman for twenty-five dollars, and, almost immediately, a dealer who had heard of them offered me, without seeing them, double the price I had paid. To-day, at an expensive city shop, I suppose they would bring a hundred. I still live in hopes of buying the completing jamb-hooks from my tall, lonely old man across the river. You can still see the places where once they were on the stately white columns, and there, too, are the markings of a pair of knobs, meant, I suppose, to hold a fan-screen and a tiny hearth-brush. These I won't replace until I can find just the blue-and-rose Battersea enamel pair which my collecting soul craves.

The small ones, under the Empire mirror, are Austrian; green and white glass set in a brass rim, and not at all expensive; only a dollar and a half they were. But they support my mirror, my "tabernacle mirror" as some English authorities would call it, quite as well as if they were more costly, and they have the satisfactory quality of harmonizing themselves with the surroundings. My mirror, too, was a bargain: just eight dollars, all done over; mahogany,

The Empire corner, showing the tabernacle mirror and rare Miers silhouettes.

with a shallow-carved cornice, minikin brass rosettes, and the slender grooving that recalls an earlier Sheraton influence. This is my Empire group: the mahogany work-table (eight dollars, too) has well-proportioned, tapering, rope-carved legs, and two small drawers with brass pulls, a very good example of early-nineteenth-century American cabinet-making; while my chair — its mate stands by the piano, you remember — was made at the same period; Daniel Webster is reputed to have had a set of them when he first went to housekeeping. Is n't that interesting? Not that these of mine were even remotely connected with his life, for I bought them at a winter sale in Vermont, at a house where they had always lived. For five dollars the pair, too! They were so excellently preserved that all they needed was rubbing down and re-upholstering, which I did myself— and made an awful mistake. Thrilled with the feeling that I was completing my parlour, I covered the slip-seats with some of my rose chintz, and, my *dears*, the result was appalling! Even the lovable carved rosette and the delicate supporting acanthus leaves looked muddled. So I ripped the material off, and replaced it with a thoroughly Empire fabric, inch-wide stripes of deep gray alternating with a lighter band worked in small and patterned bouquets. And now my chairs are appropriately dressed, for the striped design carries out all the rhythm of their lines.

Can you see my silhouettes at all? I wish you

could, for they deserve your careful attention; you must let me show them to you some time. I know nothing that so much adds to the presence of an old house, that is so eloquent of time past, as these artless little profiles. My adorable Bache lady, my two fine, gilt-touched Miers, in the old pear-wood frames, and O——'s frilled India-ink ancestor, — familiarly known as the "Blot on the Scutcheon," because he was a Loyalist, — all were given to me, just as my pictures were. The six others come to twenty-eight dollars, and only one was a real extravagance. And yet, can I call him so? A signed "silhouette *colorée*," not cut by machine, or "scissorgraphed," but painted with meticulous care, for only fifteen dollars. It is nothing at all! I bought it at a most exclusive shop on a most exclusive street, probably because the proprietor, as he frankly admits, knows nothing about silhouettes. (By the way, that is frequently the luck by which most poor but "knowledgeable" collectors come by their treasures!) I do want to tell you the story, for it is one of my most romantic "antiquing" episodes.

When I bought this handsome gentleman in his oval frame of repoussé brass, I knew that he was Governor Arnold of Rhode Island, and that he had recently come from a Newport collection. But such insufficient knowledge failed to satisfy me; I proceeded to look him up in our College Library, with the result that I found him to be Lemuel Hastings

Governor Lemuel Hastings Arnold of Rhode Island, who graduated from Dartmouth College in 1811.

Arnold of the Class of 1811, Dartmouth College. From the costume the profile must have been made about the time of his graduation; possibly it was the equivalent of that time for a Senior photograph. Think of it — he had come back to his Alma Mater after all these voyaging years; come back, still young, to rest in my old parlour, where, no doubt, he had often sat and talked through long, candlelit evenings about Predestination and Infant Damnation, as was the cheerful fashion of those bygone days.

Oh, I do love my square, many-doored, three-windowed parlour, perhaps all the more because it was so hard to achieve. Of course it 's frightfully difficult to do twentieth-century housekeeping in an eighteenth-century cottage; but, honestly, I don't want to live anywhere else. I know, because the other night I dreamed an awful dream — a night-mare! It appeared that I had gone away for a brief time, and the Powers That Be had nefariously given my dear house to somebody else. I came back to find my old furniture displaced, my cherished rooms full of Mission and golden oak.

As I left in wrath and indignation, my supplanter remarked sweetly: "But you 'll come and see me again, won't you?"

"What, Madam! After this desecration!" I cried. "Never!!!" (Usually I am not so Johnsonian in my phrasing; I suppose despair drove me to it.) I stalked out of the house — and I woke up crying.

Now O——, who is a bit of a Freudian, insists that my subconscious self was really dramatizing a desire to be rid of my antique cares; and when I argued the question hotly, he replied that my resistance merely proved the psychological point. But it is n't so at all. I love my Next-to-Nothing House the way I do my family; exactingly, even, at times, reprovingly, but always with an abiding affection.

III

THE PARLOUR BEDROOM

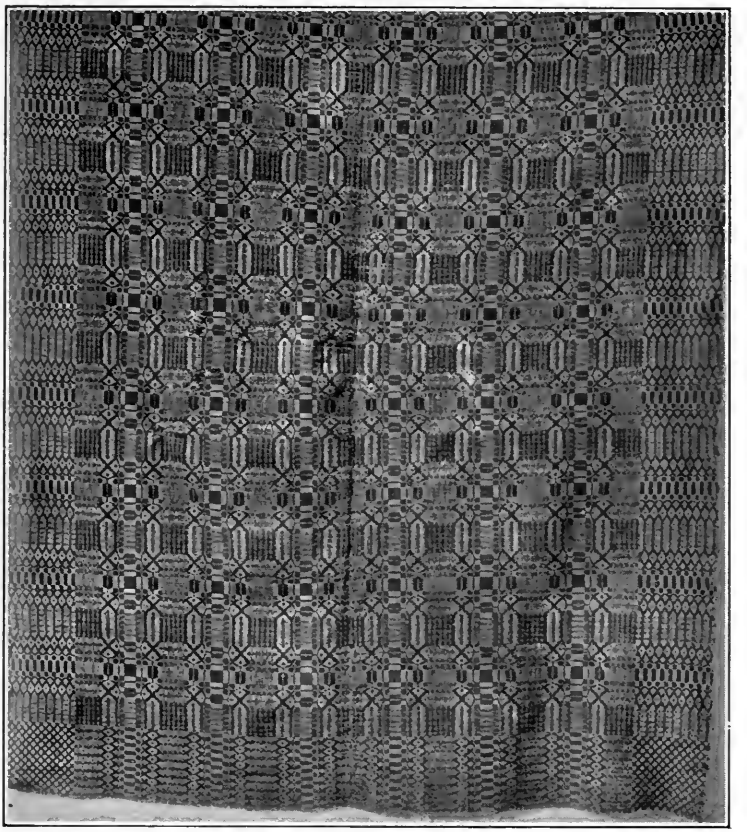
STRAIGHT from the parlour you step into the "parlour bedroom," a small space that in reality was just cut off from the length of the old farm kitchen. Yet, frankly, I am very proud of it, for it is quite twelve feet square and has two doors, whereas, most of these spare chambers were large enough to hold only a bed, a bureau, and a chair (our ancestors' hospitality being infinitely greater than the space they had to bestow), and boasted but one entrance. So, you see, my room has a certain aspect of grandeur. Also it has had varying fortunes: first it was a day nursery (we fairly rattled round in our eight rooms when the Big Daughter was the only baby), then it was a guestroom, and now, at last, it has come to the high estate of O——'s study.

The reason I am so positive about the dimensions is because, very recently, I have spent two happy days on my hands and knees, painting the floor a warm yellow-brown. Theoretically, I loathe painting; actually, clad in large, protecting rubber gloves and sheltering apron, with all the time in the world at my disposal, I love to spend leisurely mornings making a floor just the color I want it to be. And this is such a delightful floor, with the old, old, irregular boards, some of them more than twenty

inches wide. Even when my ship comes in, or the Powers That Be see fit to bestow upon me the suavity of polished oak, never, never shall this floor be changed! Such a nice color it is, too. Spruce was over-yellow, and brown too dark and uninteresting, so I just mixed them both together and stirred and stirred, and the result is a sunlit effect, precisely the hue I wanted; for the study had to *glow*, to deepen the roses of the parlour into a crimson, to warm the buffs of the dining-room into richer tones — and all to live up to our splendid, gorgeous coverlet, an heirloom from the eighteenth-century Lowlands, which hangs like a gallant banner on the wall.

No mediæval châtelaine ever was prouder of her costly tapestries of *haute-lisse* than I am of this simple, homespun web. The pattern is very old, far older than the coverlet, I suppose; the bow-and-arrow design might date back even to Anglo-Saxon days. The warp is linen — in itself a sign of many years — and it is overshot with wools of crimson and deep indigo, until it is as rich in color as an Oriental rug. And yet, with all its beauty, it is a wholesome, homely thing; it has qualities that completely unite it in feeling with my woven rag carpet, a "hit-or-miss-it" pattern, which has reds and blues and écrus and blacks mingled with kaleidoscopic charm.

Now I *was* lucky about that, for I bought it at a country-town auction for two dollars and thirty cents. Yards and yards I bought — enough to make



O——'s "linen-warp" coverlet from eighteenth-century Scotland.

a nine-foot square for the study, and to cover the ell-chamber. Often this happens: nobody wants these old carpets; maybe the colors are not right; perhaps the rural buyers have grander Axminster aspirations; more than once I 've seen rag rugs literally go a-begging. But for me it was gallant good fortune; and when I had paid three dollars to have it dry-cleansed, you can see that the cost was not excessive. Let 's call it two dollars and sixty-five cents.

Do you like my color-scheme? Then let me show you the whole room, that you may observe its harmonies. We 'll walk in through the parlour and out by the dining-room. (Ah, those two doors are such blessed avenues of escape! Never are you cribbed, cabined, and confined. O—— can elude an afternoon tea-party with easy unconcern; and bands of inquiring students be piloted to the safe haven of the study, without disturbing the rest of the family. Take my advice, especially if you are professor-people, and *always* have two doors.) As you enter, at the left hand, is a small walnut dictionary-table — early nineteenth century, prettily turned, and with wood deepened to real beauty by time. O——'s father picked it up years ago in the Provinces, for a small sum; and, as it was gently used, it never has needed anything more than occasional waxing and rubbing. Brown walnut is as lovely a wood as this world affords, and our table has all the golden lights and glints that belong to it when properly finished.

And now we are come to the silhouette wall. The paper, a warm, deep-toned écru with a little self-figure running over it (not enough to break the unity but sufficient for interest), makes an admirable background for these shadows of the past. I always wanted to have a silhouette gallery, and here was my chance. You know, one of the explanations of the name is that Étienne de Silhouette, wise and luckless Minister of Finance to prodigal Louis the Fifteenth, was so charmed with these *profiles à la Pompadour*, as they used to be called in eighteenth-century France, that he devoted a whole room in his château to their displaying. That 's why I think a silhouette wall in a French professor's study is eminently appropriate. It 's an interesting group, is n't it? And valuable! It numbers two extremely rare Austrian shades and four fine American profilists: Brown, Doyle, Hanks, and Howard. The rest are nameless, as so many of these bygone shadows are; but all are excellently done, with, perhaps, the exception of the small boy at the right, for that is O——,"scissorgraphed" at the age of fourteen, on a windy Boston street-corner. (Like rosemary, it is for remembrance.)

Of course, a photograph never can do silhouettes justice; but still, can't you see the abstraction and dignity of worthy Dr. Prince as he walked through Salem streets, knee-breeched, shovel-hatted, literally in a Brown study; or the characteristic pose of Mr. William Oliver, locally known as "Old Step-Over-to-

The appropriate silhouette wall, the rope-carved writing-table, and little walnut dictionary-stand.

Lynn" (you perceive him at the moment of stepping); or the extreme delicacy of that miniature head cut by Everett Howard — a shadow portrait as rare as it is small? A few of the frames are old, but most of them are new. And here, by the way, is a silhouette suggestion for you: if you have one of these antiquated profiles, but lack a frame, do not despair, but instead bind it with simple black *passepartout*, and the effect will be both becoming and appropriate. Not only was this method employed in America, but I have two eighteenth-century Austrian silhouettes which are miracles of black-and-gold *passepartout* delicacy. The group, framing and all, cost me twenty-three dollars (to be quite frank, four of the most valuable were given to me); but even a conservative estimate would place their worth well beyond a hundred.

The armchair I bought, all done over, at a country dealer's, for the inconsiderable sum of six dollars and a half. A late form of Windsor, it has traits that hark back to earlier centuries. You notice how the arms end in crudely carved hands? Well, that 's a characteristic of certain Gothic oak armchairs of the early sixteenth century, and the *motif* may date back to classic times, for all I know. The frame is maple, the seat and curved top-rail, old pine; and though it is not at all beautiful, it is sturdy, sensible, and most comfortable — very much the type of chair you can imagine a village judge sitting in while dispensing wise counsel to his rural clients.

The writing-table — no slant-top desk would fit into the room, for the light from the one window must fall just so to be practical — is maple, stained mahogany, and, including renovation, cost me sixteen dollars. It is of the Pembroke type, being supported by little wooden rests which pull out in the oddest fashion; and the legs are rope-carved and beautifully proportioned, a large rope tapering down to a small foot. Now, rope-carving at its best is exceedingly good, indeed; but it can be very clumsy, and, if I were you, I should always try to pick out the kind that tapers; it has the same relation to furniture that a shapely ankle bore to the delicate limbs of our Victorian ancestresses.

Have you noticed my Dutch curtains? They 're the recent solution to a problem that very much vexed me. At first, I tried to carry out the scheme of blue and crimson, with the result that the curtains formed a big, dark blot at the window. And so I ruthlessly discarded them, and bought, instead, four yards of unbleached cotton at fifteen cents a yard, and with blue wool cross-stitched down bands of red raw silk; brilliant enough by day, but, by artificial light, fairly luminous. The silk cost two dollars a yard, and as I used less than eighteen inches, that meant only another dollar. The cross-stitching was continued around the sides and top, and the effect is very like some Russian peasant-work I have just seen. Naturally, all this meant time and

The judicial-looking Windsor armchair with carved hands.

trouble; but then, very little that 's worth while in this workaday world is n't purchased just this way. And, if my curtains had cost ten, twenty times as much, they could n't be lovelier or more appropriate; for harmony, thank Heaven! is not the handmaid to mere money.

And now you are round to our big lantern-clock, which journeying friends brought us from Bavaria. It is not old, but a clever modern copy of one of the most ancient types of clock, and its black-figured, deep-cream dial and brass pendulum and weights fit admirably into my color-scheme. The little chair below it, another late Windsor variant, I picked up recently at a "shabby shop," and as O—— painted it, will add only the price of a small can of black Jap-a-lac.

Please look with attention at the built-in bookshelves; I don't believe you 'll ever see them so tidy again. Our house literally *bulges* books: every room except the dining-room has some, and occasionally they stray even in there; while, as for the study, at times that resembles Vierge's "Don Quixote in His Library." Still I should rather have it that way; how awful it would be to have to say, "O——, your Alice wants to read"; and then wait for glass doors to be opened, and a brightly bound, stiff-backed, unread volume to be placed in my hands. Ah, that book, "Vera," haunts me!

The slat-back armchair, a characteristic late-

eighteenth-century type, — the finials, and the well-turned arms that extend just half the width of the seat, are particularly good points, — I bought at a farmhouse in the sleepy little across-the-river village, for four dollars and a half, and a country joiner charged me three dollars to paint it black and put in a splint-bottom. It is a comfortable chair to sit and rock and read in, though honesty compels me to say that, if you swayed too vigorously, you *might* go over backward. And yet these short little rockers, just the same length in front as behind, prove the chair's ancientry, hence its collecting desirableness.

The couch I am rather proud of, too; it 's not only a couch but a strategic move, a bit of fine diplomacy. For, beyond any other piece of furniture, I detest a Morris chair: I detest it on principle, and, besides, I knew that in this little study it would sprawl all over the floor in most unseemly fashion. So I said to O——, "What a pity it is that we have n't room for *both* a Morris chair and a couch. Still, since we must choose, I do think a couch will be more generally useful and comfortable." And so we compromised on a couch. (Shall I count its price? You see, we had had it around the house forever, and I really don't remember. Then, too, a couch is something you can pay as much or as little for as you please; I should suppose a good average was about fifteen dollars.) The cushions — two covered with blue endurance cloth, the third with unbleached cotton, a broad

The built-in bookshelves, the straight-backed rocker, and the indigo "Doors and Windows" coverlet.

strip of blue cross-stitched on with crimson silk adorning the centre — were, altogether, four dollars and eleven cents; but, of course, it is the more expensive coverlet that makes the couch's beauty and interest. This is a fine piece of double weaving, in the pattern that is known in Virginia as "Doors and Windows," and the color is resplendent, the very essence of blue, a high tribute to the worth of the old indigo dye-pot. It came from a little shop in West Philadelphia, and cost only twenty dollars.

I like a map for a man's study, don't you? Naturally, if I had my way, I 'd hang an early map of New Hampshire in its place, but my family seem to prefer the usefulness of this one. An old mantelpiece, plain and not especially beautiful, used to stand where the map now hangs; but, as the chimney communication had been destroyed, and there was no way of adjusting even a Franklin stove without an ugly and unconcealable pipe showing, I had it taken down, for a mantel not related to a fireplace is purposeless decoration, and one smacking too much of the cheap modern flat. But, alas, I could not so easily do away with the old stovepipe hole just above the door that leads to the dining-room; to take it down would have been to tear the wall to pieces, so here I hung a concealing plate, fortunately colored in harmony with the room. Delightful in itself, with a slightly lustred edge and border decoration of dark-rose and light-brown scrolls, it is interesting because

it once belonged to Andrew Jackson, and was part of a set of china given by him to my grandfather, a neighbor and close friend in those early Nashville days. The pattern is called "Corinthian," a ware that I seem to remember having seen advertised in my beloved "Columbian Centinel," in the eighteen-twenties. But I do wonder sometimes what Daniel Webster would say, if ever he returned, to see his old-time enemy's plate adorning a Hanover wall!

The little brass kettle there in the corner — can you see it? — I picked up at my Obliging Junkman's for a dollar. They are easily found in the North Country, these little kettles, and they are highly usable in a variety of ways: to fill with flowers, to hold a fern pot, or, as I have done here, for a small wastebasket. You must admit that it is as fireproof as one of those dappled metal abominations that desolate so many men's studies, and that it 's infinitely better-looking. I should like to show it to you, really, just to let you see how eminently practical it is.

And, oh, I do wish you could look at my Scotch coverlet, as it hangs there against the wall — so fine, so glowing; the colors of blue and crimson and deep écru continued in the hooked rug below. Ah, whenever I behold that rug, I know I 'm a lucky lady! It was presented to me by a friend whose own collection is a marvel. The edge is black, the background a pleasant mingling of light browns, grays, and

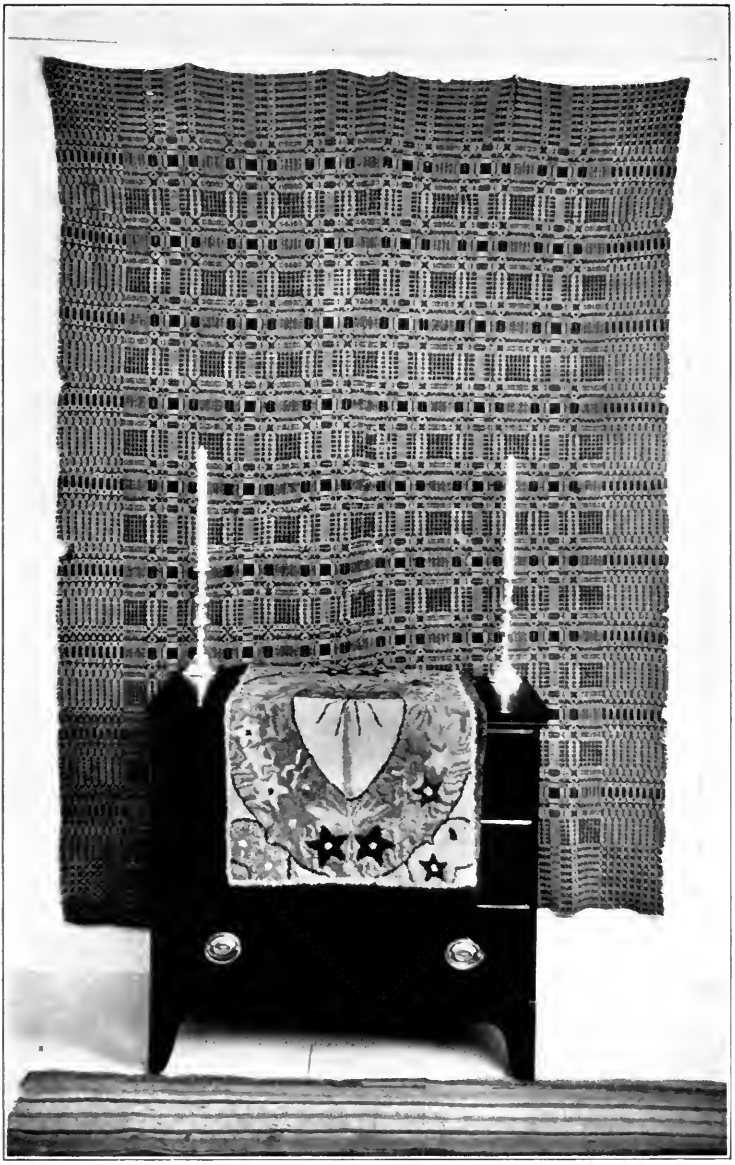
The "Corinthian" plate; once owned by Andrew Jackson.

touches of coral; and though it is small (the dimensions are two feet by three and an inch) it is the most notable rug in my possession. In the centre is the American shield, very much like the shields that my eagle cup-plates bear, and thirty-one stars are worked around the shield and in the corners. In the days of its youth it was a swaggering, truculent bit of color. Time, thank goodness, has beautifully softened all that, while still leaving the patriotic sentiment. For two reasons it does not lie upon the floor: first, because it is too valuable (patriotic designs always ranking higher, from a connoisseur's point of view, than any other pattern); second, — and very much greater, — because it 's a national emblem. I have never been able to understand why loyal and high-minded New England women persisted in working the two sacred symbols, the Cross and the Flag, on everyday rugs! Its beauty of color, as well as its significance, justifies its lying in a glowing strip across my old linen-chest, in happy companionship with the coverlet above it.

As for the pine chest, a good eighteenth-century piece, I bought that for eighteen dollars, and painted it black myself. It is proportioned with fine plainness; its height is thirty-four inches, its width thirty-five, while the depth is seventeen; the base shows the Hepplewhite French foot, and the drawer has two fine oval brasses. I suppose this drawer held the sheets and pillowcases, while the upper chest, which

has a lifting lid and simulates two drawers, was intended for the blankets. It is a desirable chattel, and most useful, since it supplements the storage-space of the three cupboards below the built-in bookcases.

Until I worked seriously with my "parlour bedroom," I had no idea that such a small chamber could be made at once so agreeable and so practical. There are crimsons enough to warm it in winter, and blues enough to make it tolerable in summer, when, if the sun glares too hot because it faces full south, I can close the heavy, old-fashioned, green shutters; though, I admit, it does seem a shame ever to shut out the tall, inquisitive hollyhocks and the briary bush that smells so sweet. Still, never can the sense of color and life be utterly banished, no matter what you do. It is a sufficiently attractive room when sunlight splashes the floor, and all outdoors calls you; but behind a curtain of cold rain, in the pleasant company of old, rested, restful furniture, with the forever fresh adventure of books and reading, shut in, safe, and sheltered, what more could O—— want? — unless it were a Morris chair!



The black-painted linen-chest and historical "drawn-in" rug.

IV

THE OLD FARM KITCHEN

I AM not the spider, and you are not the fly; nor am I spinning you a web of deceit; but, since I have so "many curious things to show you when you're there," won't you walk into our dining-room — the "dining-parlour," as I like to think my beloved Jane Austen would have called it. In reality, it is nothing half so grand; it probably was the old farm kitchen; a very large room for my little cottage, because, at its greatest length, it measures twenty-six feet, and is quite fourteen wide. In those late-eighteenth-century days, when Democracy was something more than a mere name, no doubt farmer and farm hands alike ate in this long, low-ceilinged room. The fireplace has the old brick ovens at one end; brown bread, beans, and pies were baked there; and, as far as possible, we have restored its honest, useful appearance of domesticity as 1790 knew it.

The house was full of problems when we took it. As I said, it was badly placed — so built that it gets hardly any sun. Perhaps, in the free days when it was first planned, when it stood in the centre of wide fields, without shadowing trees or encroaching buildings, its aspect was different. Now, although the exposure of the dining-room is southwest, it is anything but overlight. Naturally I experimented

with wall-papers — I knew, oh, so bitterly little, then! First a dense crimson cartridge-paper, because I wanted something "cheerful." That was an abomination! It not only swallowed up the light, but, by the relentless law of color, made the room seem smaller. My next venture was a flowered paper in a tapestry effect; better, but far too modern in design. Now, by a combination of great luck and the advice of my Candid Friend, I have found just the right background: a soft grayish-brown, — perhaps there is the merest mist of green in it, — not solid in surface, but faintly dappled so that there is the constant play of light and shade on it. Its color relation to my parlour is both fortunate and intended; one room leads directly into the other, and the gray in each paper binds them together. My curtains are fashioned from the same joyous "Kershaw" chintz that hangs in my hall, and three windows are made gay with its blossoms. It matches my old-fashioned garden outside; and, since it holds the bright hues of my faïence, the dulled gold of my stencil chairs, and the gray-green of the wall-paper, it unites harmoniously the color-feeling of the whole room.

The woodwork is painted a glossy ivory, a trifle deeper in tone than my other room; and we now have the grandeur of a hardwood floor. It used to be soft pine: wide boards that splintered incessantly, and joggled if you stepped on them too hard; long-cracked things that permitted wavering lantern-

The dining-room looking toward the sideboard and Rosinante-Dapple's stable-niche.

streaks to flicker up as O—— plodded his weary way to the furnace; for that was in the High and Far-Off Times, O Best-Beloved Collectors, when we lived with the light that our patient ancestors knew — probably the reason why to-day we have so many candlesticks. But at present the floor is a serviceable one, dulled to a darkish-brown with coats of oil and constant rubbing; and because of this treatment it tones in with the room as a light, overvarnished surface never could. And I have four medium-sized rugs: three old "drawn-in," one modern braided — but these I want to tell you about in detail later on; as yet, it suffices to say that they complete my room as a larger central rug never could do, for that would lack the aspect of antiquity.

And now that I have shown you my background, I want to tell you about my furniture, its period and arrangement. I am flattering myself that you are standing beside me, listening to me as I talk, and not at all bored. We have just walked in from the study, and directly we are in front of a small Empire work-table, a wedding-gift, plain but quite charming. It is a type frequently met with through New England: a pedestal, two leaves that let down, two drawers with brass knobs — the upper one fitted for a discreet correspondence, with its little square of green felt, and tiny cubby-holes for ink and wafers; and a longer one, for pens, I suppose.

Even disregarding its older purpose, such a table

is extremely useful to-day; the small drawers hold tea-napkins most agreeably, while the leaves, outspread, are just the size for a stencil tray laden with pink lustre or gilt-banded china. At present its employment in my *ménage* is a double one: the drawers are full of old linen, but the table-top supports my pottery lamp, which I like so well that I hope you will pay me the compliment of imitation by copying it. The base is a jar of old Portland ware, twelve inches high perhaps, gracefully shaped and with a beautiful glaze — brown, with a little green cast and splashes of yellow that give it a fine vitality. I bought it at a New Hampshire auction for half a dollar, because it was so good-looking; but it was not until I got it home that I saw how it would become my dining-room. Having it wired for electricity was fairly expensive, — about eight dollars if I remember rightly, — and the shade was nine more; for, to get the results I wanted, I had to have precisely the right fabric and color. In the daytime, the feeling of the lamp is a yellow-brown, so for the outside I bought luminous Tanjore silk, which precisely expressed the color-value. But for the lining, since the lamp was to glow with a saffron splendor at night, and *hold* the dining-room and parlour together, I chose the same material, but in an orange that gave a hint of rose. The combination is all I had dreamed of, and the flame-tinted bulbs that light it serve to increase its luminous radiance. Perhaps you think that such a

lamp is extravagant for a Next-to-Nothing House to own, and, if you do, my answer is a thoroughly Yankee one: another question. "Did you ever try to buy a really beautiful and suitable lamp at a special shop, or even at a good department store? And if you bought it, how much did you pay?" Moreover, always remember this: that restful, fine, and appropriate lighting is never a thing for narrow economy.

I like my lamp placed as it is, because it is so pleasant to sit by the hearth and read; and if it were not just there, I could n't, for the fireplace has been built in a peculiar fashion, quite at the end of the room. Whenever I look at ours, I like to remember what Lord Bacon wrote, that "there is no exceeding beauty without some strangeness in the proportions." Logically, my "friendly fireplace," as G—— calls it, ought to be in the centre of the room; but in reality it 's infinitely more effective where it is. The shelf is high and white and narrow, and the blue Staffordshire plates above it are hung there for precisely the same reason that "Old Hickory's" dish decorates the study — because the Dispensers of my Destiny would n't let me tear down the old stove-holes. Well, they serve another purpose, too: they echo the color of the china ranged on my mantel. First, there 's my old Nankin teapot; next, a "sugar-box" (Stevenson, I think), so charmingly pastoral in design, — a shepherd with a lute is tending his flock, — that I call it Theocritus in blue, and love it more

every time I look at it. And then comes a small Wedgwood sugar-bowl, a gift from an old Long Island house, and, under the clock, a Shepherd cup; then, the companion Wedgwood teapot, the same grapevine pattern, and an indigo-hued Enoch Wood bowl. But none of them compare with the Bristol piece at the end of the mantel-shelf; the dreaming potter who made that so long ago must have remembered all the loveliest blue things in the world he knew: larkspurs and the curve of a hot June sky above them, and the distant harbor, where all the Spanish ships came in.

But, after all, it is my amber glass candlesticks that are my particular jewels. They are dolphins, which obligingly balance the sockets upon curved tails; their height is a full ten inches, and their modest worth of six years ago has increased by leaps and bounds, until the last New York price that I heard quoted was sixty-five dollars. Frankly, they cost me just four and a half, and are one of the best arguments I know for buying before a collecting fashion becomes general. They are, however, very attractive, and their quaint charm and rarity, plus the magic name of Sandwich, — for that is where they were made in the early nineteenth century, — has raised their value out of all probability.

The mantel-clock is an heirloom, made at Bristol, Connecticut, by E. & G. W. Bartholomew. I wish the photograph showed even the least details more

The "friendly fireplace," showing the Empire clock and blue china on the shelf; the ovens and old cooking-utensils below.

perfectly, for it is the best clock of the type that I know — a mingling of two styles of Empire decoration: carving and stenciling. At the top are carved pineapples, symbols of hospitality; the decoration in between is stenciled in gold, dulled by time, but very lovely; the design, a heaped basket of fruit. The pillars are gold-stenciled, too, but with a formalized acanthus-leaf *motif*, and the feet are the carved lion's claws. The dial is charming: white with delicate gold spandrels and figures; and the picture below shows a dignified Georgian house set on the banks of a placid stream; it always reminds me of one of those stately James River mansions. Altogether it is such a clock as one prays for but seldom gets.

You will notice that I have a number of old skimmers and ladles, — brass, copper, and pewter, — hanging there; a warming pan, a waffle iron (that 's unusual), a corn popper, and a variety of pots and pans and griddles. (I have even an ancient boot-jack, which the children find an immense help in taking off rubber boots.) All these oddments I picked up at various times and places through the countryside, for mere snatches of songs, really nothing at all. The kettle is my wood-box in winter, and in summer I fill it with yellow flowers, the largess of my old-time garden, for the color-feeling of this room is gold, as that of my parlour is rose. As for my firedogs, they 're frankly iron, and crude; made, I imagine, by some village blacksmith. I got two

pairs at an auction for something under three dollars, and, while they are not so beautiful as brass, they are infinitely less trouble, and quite as appropriate for an eighteenth-century cottage. Sometimes — in heavy winter weather — I use both pairs. Do you think me absurd and whimsical? I assure you I 'm not. You see, I very much dislike ugly and unsuitable fire-screens, and the four andirons are actually four alert watchdogs for blazing rolling logs, and really form an excellent fire-protection.

All this time you have been standing on one of my "drawn-in" rugs, one of my bargains, too, for I bought it from a small dealer who was eloquent in his persuasive arguments not to buy "that old thing," but to take instead a hideous, staring rug, with a design of sportive green and red kittens romping with a ball against a black background. Well, that was ten dollars and my rug was three; but had the prices been reversed, my choice would have remained the same, my color-sense (or perhaps the lack of it) being a North Country wonder and despair. When I got it home, I realized what a prize I had found: the pattern is lovely and personal, by which I mean that the woman who made it went to her own mind for inspiration, instead of working one of those stereotyped "boughten" designs, which so many of them unfortunately use. The color is brown for the most part, with a cream centre adorned with formal red roses and bluebell sprays; and roses with gray-green

leaves ornament the corners. The work is very fine and close-clipped, and the foundation is not burlap but old homespun linen — a very rare happening, indeed, and an indication of decided age.

As you stand by my fireplace and glance around, you will see that my furniture is of one period and type — an essential of a dining-room, to my way of thinking. It is plain Empire; not so gracefully beautiful as Hepplewhite or Sheraton, but dignified, simple, and suited to my "middling house." It is, also, much less expensive than either of the other styles. The necessary things — by which I mean chairs, table, sideboard, and secretary — cost just a hundred and forty-one dollars. When you add my curtains, the price runs up to nineteen dollars and eighty cents more; while everything together — and this includes my Staffordshire china, my pressed-glass candlesticks, my Stiegel flip-mug, my pewter, brass, and copper, my rugs and wheel-tray and lamps — amounts to two hundred and fifty dollars and eight cents. Often you pay more than that for a wretched reproduction, a period suite, "William and Mary in the popular Jacobean finish."

That card-table by the door is another heirloom; a piece, too, of which I can say again that it is one of the finest of the type I have ever seen. Most of these lyre-based tables — I do not include Phyfe's designs in this statement, for they are in a class by themselves — are either overtrimmed and ornately ugly,

or underdecorated and stingy in proportion. This, with its tiny carved rosettes and really graceful base, is as good-looking as such a table well can be. When I first saw it, it was standing isolated from the mid-Victorianness of the rest of the room, though draped disguisingly into respectability by some sort of tapestry cover, and was used as a telephone table. I rescued and repolished it, and my reward was immediate. The "fire" in the mahogany is wonderful — all life and tone and warmth. No other period shows off the actual value of the wood itself so well as Empire does.

The candlesticks and tray, all are gifts; I cannot itemize them in my expenses. The teapot and cup I picked up at a village sale for a dollar and a half. They are old Staffordshire, the decoration the loveliest thing, soft roses on a deep-cream ground; I felt proud and happy when lately I tried to buy a tiny creamer of the same pattern, not half so good, and found that it cost nearly five times as much. The platter above is pewter, an auction trophy which I bore away for a dollar and twenty cents, and it hangs from an old hand-wrought nail that was taken from the house where the plans for the "Boston Tea Party" were made. (I think it must have been the meeting-place of the South End Caucus, for, of course, the "North Enders" met at Paul Revere's beloved Green Dragon Inn.) Hanging high on the wall over my platter are my French faïence plates—Strassbourg-

A dining-room view looking toward the parlour and study. You can just catch a glimpse of my pottery lamp.

ware, dating back to the late eighteenth century; perhaps they were being made in that ancient city when the fiery young lieutenant, Rouget de l'Isle, was writing the triumphant "Marseillaise." The potteries in which my plates were fashioned were burned to the ground in 1830, but in the Luneville china of to-day you can still trace a family resemblance of *motif* and feeling. I am perfectly aware that it is anathema to certain decorators to think of using plates in any scheme of room-furnishing. I know this rule, and, knowing it, I am perfectly justified in breaking it. The side wall of my dining-room is blank and dark and rather uninteresting; these plates, in their happy, naïve colors, are the cheerfulest things you can imagine, and they bring the sensation of warmth so necessary in an underlighted interior. These, too, were gifts; I am fortunate in my friends.

On either side of my table are stenciled chairs; a pure Empire type developed about 1815. I have six of them. I bought them way, way up in a little hill-village, from the nicest old farmer in New Hampshire. They were in perfect condition; cane seats and stenciling looking just as well as they did a hundred years ago, with the added benison of gentle Time—Time who to me is n't a brusque, white-bearded man, with hourglass and terrifying scythe, but a mild and elderly lady, who brushes away the ugly newness from our possessions, who fades gaudy

colors, and folds memories away in rose-leaves and lavender and lays them in prim old drawers. I don't know whether this was the farmer's philosophy or not. When I asked him how he had ever been able to keep them so unspoiled, he answered, with the drollest twinkle in his eye, "Well, ye see, up here in the hills we 's so busy hustlin' round for a livin' that we don't scurcely git a chance to set down." He was delighted to sell them at a dollar apiece; it was his own price, and, lest you think me a Shylock, I want to say at once that these chairs were up in the attic, neglected, and his parlour was filled to overflowing with plump, green-upholstered, exuberant mahogany.

In the corner is my sideboard — Empire of the plainest type, but dignified and ample. The handles — old pressed glass — and the brass escutcheons are the original ones, and the mahogany veneering, particularly that on the doors, is beautifully toned. Under the drawers there is a quaint little butler's slide, which pulls out when you tug at a small brass knob; and at each end are panels made of rich, dark curly maple, an interesting and thoroughly New England combination of woods. I paid sixty-five dollars for it, when I bought it some years ago from our Favorite Dealer, and this price included its complete renovation.

The top looks much better than it did my first experimental year. Because a "beginning collector" finds it hard not to put everything pretty or odd

The rescued Empire table and stencil chairs. Above my Strassbourg-ware plates.

she has out for admiring eyes to see: brass, pewter, silver, stencil, and glass — she wants to show it all. "To-morrow is also another day" is not a favorite maxim of hers, nor has she a sense of Japanese restraint. It took me months before I realized how much better my sideboard looked with very little on it; that glass and pewter or silver became it, but never the deeper tones of stencil and brass. Now it bears the burden of my Lafayette decanter, flanked by two pressed-glass candlesticks, my Stiegel flip-glass, — ah, that's a treasure! — and a graceful Victorian sugar-bowl of the bellflower pattern. This is just the glass; but, besides, there are two discreet pewter teapots, a little English pepper-shaker, three idle dram-glasses on their eighteenth-century tray, and a plain substantial hundred-year-old silver mug. It sounds like a lot, I know; but, oh, you should have viewed it in the days of *my* unrestrained youth!

Can you see the old "drawn-in" rug that lies in front of my sideboard? If I had planned its size, it could n't be more accurate. This is one of my great and fairly recent "finds" — the reward, really, of taking a long, muddy, exhausting tramp with some camp girls, after maple sugar. I think the old woman we visited must have been a domestic artist, for she made excellent sugar and superexcellent rugs. This to her was an old carpet that she had hooked thirty or forty years before, and the central design was in memory of her former home — an attempt

at Late Georgian architecture, I am sure, and certainly an effort which increased the rug's value, for landscape and house-designs rank next to historical patterns. The coral-and-gray border, however, reveals a much earlier *motif*, and the work is even and fine, more durable since it is not clipped. Of course, I am careful with these antiquated rugs; I mend them solicitously as soon as there is the least sign of wear; I prefer proper brushing to vacuum-cleaning, since sometimes this method catches loose strands, and I never shake them, for that is apt to snap the worn fibres of the burlap. The other two rugs lie in front of the kitchen-door and the radiator; but as they are agreeable blendings of hues rather than definite patterns, they hardly merit detailed description.

My dining-table is simple, one of those drop-leaf cherry tables so common in the early nineteenth century; square, with slightly rounded corners, and very serviceable. It is not my ideal of what a dining-table should be, — it cost just ten dollars, — but I know where there is one: six-legged, rope-carved, and charming. Some day I hope to have it, and then I 'll be obliged to tell you that my dining-room is forty dollars more expensive than it was. That 's another joy of collecting; always the distant horizon of anticipation; forever one more block to place upon our House of Dreams.

My last piece of furniture is my secretary. This,

The mahogany-and-maple sideboard with its discreet adornment of glass and pewter.

also, is plainest Empire, made beautiful by the dignified simplicity of the line and the richness of the mahogany. The handles and escutcheons are all old, cast from that delightful brass which polishes to such a clear pallor. (May I recommend lemon and salt vigorously applied, as an excellent remover of age-stains?) Years ago this secretary was bought on the common of a near-by village, for five dollars, and next was "swapped off" for a roll-top desk. Then the owner sold it to me for forty-five dollars, and, even at that advance, I'm sure I got a bargain. Now the cabinet above holds, not books, but my collection of old pressed glass against a background of gay china.

I hope you like my dining-room? I have tried so earnestly to make you see it — this long, low, eighteenth-century farm kitchen of mine; furnished in a little later period, but always in honest faïence feeling, not a single bit of imitation porcelain about it. Have you counted the doors? Seven of them, and there used to be nine, but two were ruthlessly done away with. Still, there are enough to sigh suddenly open on lonely nights, as if some gentle ghost had just flitted through. And have you observed my stable, that little embrasure between the sideboard and the closet? That's where my wheeled-tray lives; my useful wheeled-tray which bears the names of two famous steeds, for it is Rosinante when, gaily caparisoned, it carries my Queensware tea-set into the

parlour, but Dapple when it disappears through the kitchen-door, laden with the discarded dishes. You see, I want you to notice all our improvements. I know that the whole effect must be pleasant; so many people have used that very word to me. And I have been told that my fireplace is the "most delightful one in the world to sit and talk by." I like to believe it is true, because I have been able, even with my simple things, and only a little money, to combine the harmonies of rest and warmth and color. After all, it is the "presence" of a room that is the final thing, that really counts.

The Empire secretary where my historical glass lives.

V

MY KITCHEN

If you had sat with me in my kitchen this afternoon, my warm yellow-brown kitchen with its gay braided rugs and its gayer red geraniums; sat there and rocked in the stenciled rocker, while my kettle hummed on the stove and, outside, the snow sifted and tinkled against the windowpanes and whitened all the world — well, I am sure you would have loved it as much as I do.

Now, I must confess frankly that I do not care for a laboratory-like kitchen, a sterilized-looking place, though at first I *did* begin with aspirations and a boudoir decoration, all blue and white. Oh, my inexperience! But I soon learned how brief and transitory are all such delicate painted pleasures; how long and cold and frozen a winter here could be; and how warm and cheering I might make my kitchen with a brown-and-yellow livery: a yellow that had the tone quality of those old mixing-bowls; a brown with just enough red to brighten it and keep it from looking chocolate-y. You see, I had to create interest in an utterly uninteresting room.

My kitchen represents the new and rather prosaic ell that took the place of the rambling, picturesque sheds and outhouses which straggled half across the dooryard, and which had crumbled beyond any pos-

sibility of repair. That eighteenth-century kitchen was wide and ample, with queer little nooks and corners; and I should have loved so to play with it, restore it, keep it in outward semblance what it used to be. My kitchen to-day is trim and compact (ten by twelve feet), with a good-sized pantry opening from it, two windows (a third in the pantry), five doors, and no imagination whatsoever. That quality it was my task to supply, and this is how I did it.

Of course, my color-scheme established at once the decorative truth that I wished to present: a kitchen that should be warm and cheerful, with a sense of simple joys and homely intimacy, rather like a crock of spice cookies or a pan of hot gingerbread. I had, then, merely to elaborate it, to gather accessories that should continue the feeling, to take creams that deepened to yellows, and yellows that softened to browns, and black, with little touches of gilt; to make, in short, a kitchen that would be pleasant to sit and knit in while I waited for my dinner to cook; for the domestic pauses between maids grow longer and longer, and it is but wisdom to prepare for the inevitable.

When you come in from the dining-room and shut the door, I think you will see precisely what I mean. (By the way, I 'm rather proud of that door, because it 's the old one, made just of two broad planks, one fourteen, the other seventeen inches wide. They don't build doors like that any more.) I wonder

The Caldecott curtains, my big braided rug, and the red tablecloth

what you would notice first: my clock, or my rocker, or my rugs? Or my red geraniums on the window-ledge, or my cider-mugs, or my old Tole-ware? Let 's "play" I am taking you round the room and showing you.

There 's my big braided rug in front of the door, effective with its wide and heavy strands, and its blendings of yellow and red and black. Like the "house-rug" in my dining-room, if I had designed it and had it made for me I could n't have achieved anything more adapted to the place where it now lies. Indeed, I doubt if I could have thought out its heavy suitability — the outside braided, the inner strip closely knitted. And I bought it for seventy-five cents, at a rainy-day auction in the hills — an auction where there was nothing, apparently, but iron beds and Victorian maple bureaus, until I found this cheerful rug crumpled up and bundled away in one corner. My geraniums catch the twinkle of red, and my straight-hanging curtains (thank goodness, my windows, though not old, are small-paned!) take the yellow of the rug and the green of the geranium leaves, and weave them into a fabric that Caldecott himself might have used in his quaint and charming drawings. Yet the material was not expensive (twenty-five cents a yard), for I bought it ages ago, and I could n't have used more than nine and a half yards.

Then there 's my rocker: cane-seated, cane-backed,

the most comfortable chair in the world. This last statement I am sure of, because the family, who often revile me for my straight, uncompromising, old-fashioned chairs, all fight to sit in this one. The stencil for the top is full of color and delightfully unusual; the frame of the seat and the front stretcher are patterned with a mellow design, of a dim goldy-green, for the most part, though the top has touches of crimson, and, when the light catches it just right, a lustrous underbloom which reminds you of old lacquer. I got it for three dollars and a half at an auction, the most rural auction I ever attended, and, because of that naïve simplicity, one of the most interesting gatherings I remember seeing.

There were other good things that went for little or nothing, too: old pressed glass and china — one farmer remarking scornfully that he would n't give a cow's tail for all the old "crockery" he saw there; a lovely astral lamp, more chairs, a few drawn-in rugs, and one or two interesting chests. And I got a stunning black-and-gold bas-relief mirror — one of the handsomest of this type that I have seen — for eleven dollars and a half. F—— bought another glass for five dollars, a great big one with a wide frame of that beautifully veneered mahogany they used so much in the early nineteenth century; R—— staggered under a topping load of Vermont imprints and old lanterns; and we all felt that we had done very well.

The stenciled rocker and my shelves of yellow pottery

My table is a little younger than my chair (I should date that about 1830) and is very Victorian — brown walnut, with an elaborate curlicue-ing base and a round top that is scalloped like a cooky. It looks very well uncovered; it appears to even better advantage draped with a red-and-white cloth that makes you think of home and mother. This "goes" excellently with my color-scheme, for the scarlet echoes the red in my braided rug, the hue of my geranium blossoms; and yet it is the spiritual quality that I prize more, the mental note that it gives — a value too often overlooked in decoration. It was seventy-nine cents a yard, and I bought two yards of it in a little Vermont "corner grocery," which is, in reality, a great department store in miniature: a place where you get guns and crackers and veils and fresh eggs and taffeta ribbons and cowbells and prints and saucepans and neckties and molasses — everything! All in the tiniest compass! And as the shop lies just across the river from my house, I felt that it was most appropriate.

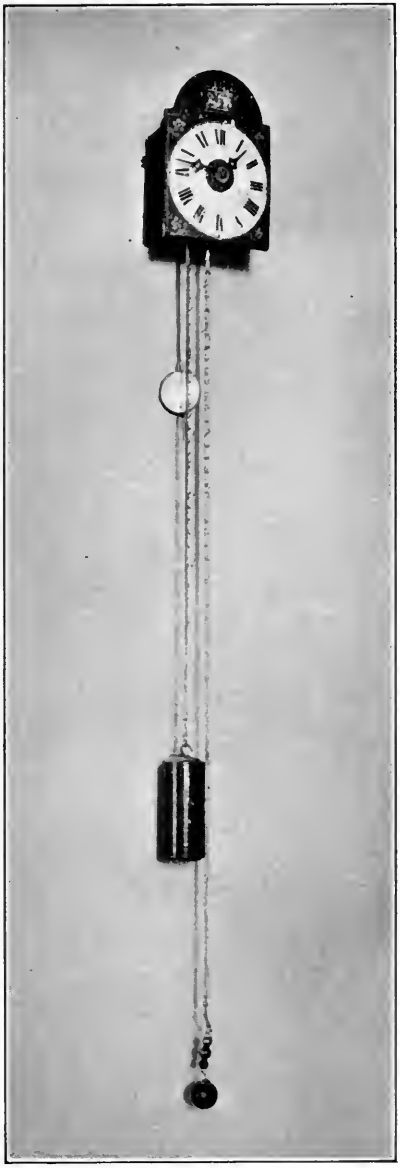
Don't think for a minute, however, that this red arrangement discounts kitchen usefulness, either; it does n't, for underneath is a covering of harmonizing oilcloth, so that the table may be used for culinary purposes, or to sit at and sip a pleasant cup of tea. Spaced above the table are the shelves holding my cider-mugs, a generous cider-jug, and a capacious faïence bean-pot brought from Scotland. All these

I bought here and there at different places in northern New England, and in reckoning up their cost I find that I got the entire lot for something under three dollars.

Take my advice and collect cider-mugs. As yet they are easy to find, they cost very little, and they are jolly things to serve even ginger ale in — the height of praise. Two of mine are Mocha-ware, one matching the pitcher with a broad band of white clouded with blue, the other decorated with a wavering design somewhat like a brown-and-yellow shell. The third, of yellow pottery, has bands of white edged with black, and the fourth (and prettiest) is stoneware, a creamy gray with stripes of blue. As for the bean-pot, that is a lovely, fat, deep-buff thing, with fleckings of light brown and a ridged design at the bottom. Why, the Tailor of Gloucester might have used them all, and they make me think of the nursery rhyme that those rude little mice sang:—

> And then I bought
> A pipkin and a popkin,
> A slipkin and a slopkin,
> All for one farthing.

As for my "wag-on-the-wall" clock, that 's Caldecott, too. His engaging "Bye-Baby-Bunting," "The Frog Who Would a-Wooing Go," and "Mary Blaize," all have illustrations of these talkative little companions that might be ticking away on my kitchen



The "wag-on-the-wall" clock

walls now. Mine came from the Black Forest; O—— brought it from Europe twenty years ago; for it is a peasant type, which is common on the Continent and in the British Isles, lasting much later than its first date, which was toward the close of the sixteenth century. Then they were called "lantern" or "bird-cage" clocks, so named from the shape, much older, of course, than "grandfather" clocks. As Hayden says, "Long-clock cases came into being when the long or 'royal' pendulum required protection by having a wooden case." Mine is painted blue, a bright, full blue, with scarlet flower-sprays in each spandrel, and above, on the lunette, the picture of a little peasant girl whose costume definitely dates her about a hundred years ago.

The braided rug that lies just beyond has all my colors in it: the blue of the clock, the green of the geranium leaves, the yellow of the walls, and a faint and faded red. This was more expensive than my first, for I paid five dollars for it in one of those little needlecraft shops that are springing up all over the countryside; an excellent movement, since it means that many of the old domestic arts are, in consequence, being revived. But I more than atoned for this extravagance when I bought the scarlet-and-écru rug that you catch a glimpse of through the pantry door, for that I got with four other rugs, at an auction, for a quarter. Since this was rather the best of the lot, perhaps it could be valued at all of fifteen cents.

The pantry has other attractions, too: if your tastes are modern you may admire my porcelain sink, my kitchen cabinet angled discreetly away; if you incline to the antique, — there 's really no reason why you can't enjoy both; I do, — just glance at my ample Shaker milk-pans of brown pottery, my darker brown faïence jars, my graceful sirup-jug of blended shades, with a charming little cluster of grapes at the base of the handle. Then there are my little yellow custard-cups, very like the ones at the Aldrich House at Portsmouth. The "Bad Boy's" mother used to bake cup-cakes in them, and I know how she got that deep, lovely surface color, almost mahogany, and so smooth and inviting to bite into. She rinsed out the cups with milk before each baking! Some day let 's try this old recipe. Best of all, there are my Bennington crocks and jugs; I need never use one of those modern, ugly-shaped, underglazed products of commerce, and not beauty, again; for I have jugs for cider and vinegar and molasses and maple sirup, and crocks for cookies and doughnuts and fruit cake. And as my circumstances are very much those of the Little Boy who lived by himself, because the rats and the mice *do* lead me such a life, you can see how essential they are to my happiness. They are a good "antique" investment, too, for this old pottery, made at Bennington, Vermont, in the early nineteenth century, is being eagerly sought for by collectors; and a well-decorated crock or jug bearing the

Old stoneware — some of it Bennington — with blue decorations

Cider mugs and jugs and a brown-and-cream sirup pitcher

Brown jugs and a capacious Shaker milk-pan

authentic mark often brings as high as ten dollars. (Two of mine were given me, and I paid fifty cents apiece for the rest at country shops and auctions.) They are not as yet actually rare, but they are beautiful, some of them as lovely in shape as a Greek amphora; and nearly all of them have a fine, deep glaze that sets off their quaint blue designs of birds or flowers or scrolls on grounds of soft grays and écrus.

You don't want to hear about my stove, do you? Because it 's just a stove, with its good days and its bad days, rather temperamental and having to be humored, very much like your own, I fancy. Besides, I want to hurry on to my shelf of Tole-ware. Not that it is entirely of that antique tin, for the teapot is a plump and comely pottery lady, who brews tea delightfully and who wears for a gown a dark-brown glaze, brightened with white and red and blue enameled flowers and bands of gilt. This pretty thing was given me when I was a girl, by an old, old gentleman going on to ninety, and he told me that it had belonged to his mother. The snuffers and tray were presents, too, as was the little tin tea-caddy painted gay with green and red, and now used for a match-box. The candlesticks, however, I did buy: old tin ones, they are, redecorated with wreaths of rosy flowers and gold lines. They were a dollar and a quarter for the pair, and I paid a dollar and a half for that tall, graceful, black pitcher adorned with splashes of red and scrolls of yellow.

And now we are around to the wide door again, and to my fourth shelf, which is filled with cookbooks: old books, new books, American, English, French, Italian, Belgian, and even Chinese cookbooks; I think I have nineteen in all. They are my pride and joy, for cooking is the one domestic task that I am wildly enthusiastic about, and in my most ecstatic moments I compare myself to Balzac and Dumas, who could both cook and write, and in both were equally skillful. I am fond of sitting in my rocker and reading these pages of fascination. Would you like to know how to make Marigold Soup such as Miss Edgeworth's virtuous little Rosamund knew? I can tell you. Will you have Nuns' Puffs from South Carolina; or Regency Sauce made for Queen Victoria by M. Francatelli; or Gaufres de Bruxelles; or Currant Wine fit for Jenny Wren to sip; or Whigs? One book, "The Young Housekeeper's Friend," even takes my culinary conscience into its keeping. "How often," says this printed wisdom, "do we see the happiness of a husband abridged by the absence of skill, neatness, and economy in the wife? . . . However improbable it may seem, the health of many a professional man is undermined and his usefulness curtailed, if not sacrificed, because he habitually eats *bad bread.*" Which quite justifies my interest, you see.

I have been so happy doing over my kitchen, giving that important part of my life the setting

My cookbook shelf, the Tole-ware, and a stenciled side-chair.

that I felt it ought to have, inside and out! In the summer my green window-boxes are full of spicy kitchen herbs — marjoram, basil and thyme, with an edging of frilled parsley; and I look on an old-fashioned flower-garden, fragrance and color all blended together — mignonette, larkspur, sweet alyssum, balsam, and stock, the quaint favorites that our ancestors loved and brought with them from the old country. "If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter"; ah, but it *is*, lovely! That 's what I mean you must know; that 's what I mean you must feel: beauty in everything, even a kitchen.

VI

THE ELL-CHAMBER

Really it is very much like a lustre plate, this little ell-chamber of mine. I mean, it has the same gay, whimsical brightness, and it is so cheerfully unpretentious, so pleasantly naïve, that I can't help making the comparison. The architecture is analogous, also. Have you ever heard the jingling description of pink lustre done by some old-time Salem lady?

> Its decoration chiefly shows
> House, tree, and fence all tinted rose;
> Where walls stand on a crooked slant,
> And roofs are at a dangerous cant.

Well, that 's the way this room is. You can stand upright by the door wall, in the window nooks, and in the middle of the room, and that 's all. Otherwise, beware how you raise your head suddenly, for the roof slants so that, for the most part, it is abrupt angles. Briefly, the room measures twelve and a half by nine and three fourths feet; add to that two recessed windows set about three feet back, and you have an idea of the floor-space. Of course, this room was an afterthought; it did n't belong to the original structure of my house, and in the wide and pleasant early days, no doubt, a rambling attic took its place. And then, when the old ell was torn down, and my

small and unimaginative kitchen built on, this little, angled room was the logical upper story.

When I look at it I recall Rudder Grange, and the requisites of that floating mansion for a maid; my establishment has the same limitations: she must be *small!* But maids, big or little, you know, are difficult to get nowadays; and when my friends, considering *all* my writing and *all* my letters, say, "My dear, you *ought* to have a good secretary," I always answer meekly, "Oh, please, I 'd *so* much rather have a good cook." Still, since I am sure that somewhere in the world there is a not impossible She who shall command my stove and me, I made up my mind that I must prepare for her: give her such a pleasant room that she would live with me long, long years, like Félicité, of the simple heart and beloved memory.

My first problem, of course, was space: where to put the few pieces so necessary to even the most elementary existence. A good-sized, single couch would fit agreeably along the low wall at the back; a table to hold books, a candlestick, and a glass, could be placed at the couch's head; against the opposite wall, a large shirt-waist box. On the right of the door there was just room enough for a small side-chair; while on the left was my one really respectable wall-space, the only place where a bureau could be put, and an accompanying mirror hung. And now I am come to the crux of my difficulty, to my real

problem. *If* I had a bureau there was, literally, no room to write; and I have found that my maids, almost without exception, transient as they were, wanted a place for their correspondence. Also, since the domestic situation in a college town is frequently met by employing a student, who thereby earns his way through school, and acquires certain culinary facts which will, later on, make him invaluable to some woman, I simply had to have a desk, on the off-chance of that not impossible He. But, if I used the ordinary desk of commerce, there would be room for writing, but none for clothes. And thus I cut the Gordian knot: I bought a slant-top desk, — new, of course, but built along the old lines,— and so had two pieces in one. Desks, in the middle years of the eighteenth century, were called "bureaus," you know; and I really am proud of my consistent solution, because it so completely economizes space. I commend it to all dwellers in small houses and apartments, for the slanting top lets down, and there, directly at hand, are your writing accommodations in shallow drawers and pigeonholes, while below is your ample drawer-room.

And now I was ready for the glad adventure of color, always a pleasing occupation. First, I had to consider the seasons: a white, interminable winter, an autumn which comes early, a spring lingering late, and a sudden summer, which can be almost tropically hot. That room, if I painted it in grays,

My painted desk and very Victorian chair

would be vastly depressing in bleak weather; a yellow might be oversultry for summer; blues would be charming in June, or rose-pink in January, but neither would make you happy the whole year through. Those painted walls — too slanting for any paper hangings to stay on them — closed so tightly overhead that you could n't take any color risk. Then, as I was puzzling, I fell in love with a glazed English chintz, warm and cool all at once, and sweetly patterned with butterflies and roses. The surface color lingers between brown and gray, the hovering butterflies are very blue, and the roses deep-pink, with daring little dashes of yellow. Here, then, was my color-scheme! I had the walls painted the same gray-brown, and the floor a slightly darker tone. The chintz I used in roller-curtains at the windows — a method which, as they were small, would give decorative color, and exclude less air than any other. Alas, that I cannot show them to you; but to do so was a photographic impossibility, and, instead, I display a strip of the flowered chintz for your attention.

On the floor I put the other half of my rag carpet, — leaving a broad border of painted board, — and that part of my harmony was complete: rose-red, blue, écru, black, and yellow; all the chintz colors were woven in those homemade strips. For the couch-cover I used an old woven coverlet, picked up for four dollars at the same wayside auction where I

bought my rag carpet. Or rather R—— picked it up, and then, wailing at his extravagance, besought me to take it off his hands. Which I did, and I have never regretted my kindness. It is a homely, butternut-dyed fabric, and its primitive pattern, by name "Sunrise," is the mother of a number of more intricate leaf-designs: "Muscadine Hulls" and "Hickory Leaf," for example. Its colors — brownish-écru, buff, and quite a bit of black — agree excellently with the rest of the room; and, for cushions, I have two of bright medium-blue poplin, and one of coarsely woven light-brown burlap — a cloth that conveys, as a finer piece could not, the feeling of the coverlet texture.

But nothing in my cheerful room gives me the pleasure which my decorated furniture does. For I did n't think I could do it, — paint not being my natural method of expression, — and when I found I could, I knew all the blessed joy of an artist blending his hues for some masterpiece. You see, I trustfully bought the paint from a color-card, assuming its veracity; but, when I applied the first coat, O—— complimented me upon my pretty *lavender* chairs. Which was n't at all what I intended; so I took that paint, and I shook that paint, and I added blues and a suspicion of yellow, and stirred vigorously, and painted samples of wood, until I got just the soft brown-gray of the chintz. My little chairs are the spindle-back sort that you must remember seeing at

The glazed chintz, patterned with butterflies and roses

your grandmother's; very Victorian they are, and virtuous; sitting on them, you could n't think anything but blameless thoughts. The frames I painted to match the walls and chintz surface, but the spindles I colored blue, to consort with those bright butterflies. And, that the rose-pink might not be lost, I adorned either side of the top-rail with little gay "button roses." Shall I tell you how to do them, how to get just that quaint and artless effect? I borrowed a thought from my old lady's rug-making memories. She had contrived her roses in the "cup and saucer" fashion, tracing around the saucer, making scallops with the cup. I took two sizes of buttons and did precisely the same thing (first studying the roses on a pink-lustre ancestral plate), painted them a bright rose outlined with blue — and, do you know, the result is most engaging. My desk I decorated in similar fashion, the wooden knobs adding the bright blue note; and my naïve, good little table has a gray body and blue spindle-legs. On the piazza I did my work — an ideal way to paint, for it was mid-April, and I rose every morning very early, before either the wind or my neighbors were awake. I had the whole empty world to myself! I could almost see the daffodils pushing their green spears up through the turf, and I learned that the crows in my tall trees talked very differently in those matinal hours, saying not "Caw," but "Ca-*aw*!" most emphatically. Ah, I loved everything then, for mine was the joy of creating!

May I confide to you how much my little lustre-plate room cost? I think I 'll itemize it for you, excluding, of course, the expense of painting the floor and walls, for this had to be done anyway, and, besides, I do not consider it a logical furnishing item. Well, to begin with, my rag carpet, as you know, was two dollars and sixty-five cents. Perhaps, even, you could count it a trifle less, since I still have some usable strips left. My little chairs I got at an auction in Our Town; and, as they were put up at different times for bidding, one was fifty cents, the other sixty. The small, spindle-legged table, found at a secondhand shop, was seventy-five cents more, and my desk I bought for sixteen dollars and seventy-five cents, from an enormous emporium where you may purchase anything from a pound of prunes to an incubator: and, all told, the paint could not have amounted to more than a dollar. The chintz I paid a dollar and ninety-five cents a yard for, — a modest price for such posied prettiness, — and three yards made my roller-curtains. Let me see, that 's five dollars and eighty-five cents, is n't it? Eight yards of blue poplin for covering the shirt-waist box, making the large pillow-covers, and the small, tufted chair-cushions, came to only four dollars more; the burlap was forty-seven cents, and the three pillows averaged a dollar apiece. Oh, yes, and I must n't forget my little brass candlesticks, — five dollars for the pair, — nor my other touch of gilt, the chaste oval mirror

The naïve good little table and the Sunrise coverlet

which actually started life as a picture-frame; it was the gift of a collecting friend, and I followed her example and put in, not a bygone picture, but a looking-glass, which cost but a dollar and a quarter. As to my silhouette and old French print, they were moderation itself: framing and all, they were less than five dollars — four and sixty cents to be absolutely accurate. And as for my coverlet, that, as I told you, was four dollars.

I have just added up a long column of figures: fifty dollars and forty-two cents is the result. You must not think I am urging you to impossible economies. The desk you may buy at the same price that I did; as to the chairs and the table, they are not unusual finds; I would guarantee to start out, and come back with a round dozen at the end of any perfect collecting-day; in spite of their domestic prettiness they are still unsought. The carpet and the coverlet might present more difficulties; still, all large department stores are selling machine-made rag carpets which are inexpensive, durable, and, oftentimes, quite agreeably colored. And the woven coverlet might appropriately be replaced by one made of burlap, denim, or, even, unbleached cotton, banded with the window-chintz. In a little room of this sort it is a matter of harmony rather than expenditure; it is a gentle simplicity, not luxury, that you want.

And now that I have satisfied your curiosity, can

you gratify mine? Do you happen to know of a brisk and willing maidservant (small), who likes rustic retirement, and is fond of children and cats and old furniture? If you do, such an one will meet with good encouragement, I assure you!

The colored French print framed in narrow black

VII

THE HEPPLEWHITE BEDROOM

Down the backstairs, through the kitchen and dining-room and parlour, out into the front hall again. That 's the way we have to go, because my Hepplewhite bedroom lies just across the hall from the parlour, and is much the same ample, square, high-studded sort of chamber — a trifle larger, that 's all.

But, perhaps I 'd better go back and begin with a story, a story which concerns L——'s redecorated drawing-room, long and lovely and full of some of the most delightful furniture that I know. I said to B——, "It 's so beautiful that, when you first see it, you just gasp!" "Ah," replied B—— sadly. "Nobody 's ever going to gasp at my drawing-room except my husband, and that will be when he gets the bills!" Which is precisely what I am afraid of now with you; but oh, please do gasp *both* ways; because my yellow-and-blue chamber *is* charming even if it is expensive. And, really, I am not so sure that it is; expensive, I mean, for lately I have been reading furniture advertisements, reading them not for idle curiosity, but to arrive at comparative values.

At quite a modest, unfashionable shop, I found I could buy a Louis Sixteenth Walnut Suite (four pieces in all) for two hundred and ninety-nine dollars, and it had been reduced from four hundred and ten; at

another furniture "Emporium," an Antique Ivory Bedroom Suite (I quote most accurately though I have n't the remotest idea what Antique Ivory is) was just eight dollars and seventy-five cents less, while Queen Anne, William and Mary, and Tudor inaccuracies ran from twenty-five to fifty dollars under the first price. Now my furniture — and it includes a bed, a bureau, a tall chest, a day-bed, three chairs, a light-stand, a shaving-mirror, and two bas-relief looking-glasses — was just three hundred and three dollars and a half. And my accessories, by which I mean rugs, coverlet, tester and valances, curtains, lamp, stove, and various oddments, were only seventy-five dollars and fifty cents more; altogether, you perceive, three hundred and eighty-nine dollars for the whole room — less than some of my friends have paid for a single piece. And my dear furniture was not made wholesale for a credulous public, nor sold at just one enormous single shop, but was fashioned mostly by North Country joiners who loved their craft with a leisurely affection. Two exceptions there are: my sturdy, rather primitive day-bed, which came from a Pennsylvania Dutch settlement, from Manheim where Baron Stiegel had his famous eighteenth-century glass factories; and my lofty, lovely "four-poster," which may very well have been made in England.

There is an engaging legend hereabouts which concerns itself with an Englishman who came to

The Pennsylvania Dutch day-bed with the Chariot-Wheel coverlet

Norwich in pre-Revolutionary days, and, in this little New England town, built a mansion of magnificence, costing, so tradition says, anywhere from thirty to sixty thousand dollars, a really great sum for those days. Workmen were brought from England to carve his stately mantels, much furniture was sent out to embellish his house, and my bed, found in this little hamlet, could easily have been one that he ordered from some London cabinetmaker. From Hepplewhite, perhaps; anyway I like to think so, and certainly, in his "Cabinetmaker's and Upholsterer's Guide," there is a design given which is very similar, except that I truly think mine is finer, that a slenderer grace informs it.

But I am beginning in the middle when I ought to be showing you the room itself, telling you that it is sixteen feet square and nine feet high; that there are three windows, two doors, a mantel, and a Franklin stove, and another defiant radiator which also I have subdued by my gentle books. As to the exposure, why that 's northeast, and the room could be a desolate winter chamber were it not warmed by yellows and touches of gilt, and made interesting by just enough blue in the counterpane and coverlet and rugs. The woodwork is painted a deep cream, and the old pine floor is colored a cheerful hue, which is not spruce, nor pumpkin, but a pleasanter, more sunshiny tone than either. Oh, the room was full of perplexing questions, and I pondered them long

before I found the right answers. Of course, originally, there had been a fireplace in the chamber — the tall and narrow mantel proved it; but, alas, it had gone long ago to the limbo of lost things, and an abominable air-tight stove took its place. That we speedily got rid of and then, obviously, there were but three things to do: to make the best of our affliction, to tear down the mantel and put a piece of furniture where it had stood, or to ferret out some antiquated Franklin stove and have it adjusted to the chimney.

It was the last solution which we chose, it being suited both to beauty and economy; besides, before the furnace fire is lighted in the fall, or when it goes out in chilly May, my cherished Hepplewhite room can be a barn for comfort, a barn where there is n't any hay to snuggle down in, and a wintry wind whistles through the cracks. For it is directly over the cellar, and that cellar has a dirt floor and *endless* corridors. Sometimes, when the spring floods are with us, I think of giving gondola parties; such romantic arches there are to pass through, and there is one shuddering, bricked-up place that always reminds me of "The Cask of Amantillado." Still, comfort aside, I think I 'd rather have my Franklin stove than the finest highboy in the world, for a fire "trims" a room; even without my silhouettes, my "Peace Mirror," or my old faïence, the leaping flames would make that side wall lovely.

The Hepplewhite bedroom showing the mantelpiece wall

The "Peace Mirror," my old Franklin stove, and the slat-back rocker

My firedogs are the plainest things; stout and black and a little crooked; wrought, I suppose, at some farm smithy. They are scarcely the andirons of my dreams, but then, you would n't have me sit down, Alexander-like, and weep because there were no more antique worlds to conquer, would you? The stove is plain, too; not half so fine as the fire-frame in the parlour; but I have seen early-nineteenth-century advertising-cuts which greatly resembled it, and its shiny brass knobs and rosettes make me very happy. And it was cheap! It came from that so-justly-celebrated wayside auction — I promise never again to refer to it — where I got the rag carpet and the butternut coverlet; and it was only ten dollars, about a fourth of what a new one would cost, and much less than is asked usually for a really old Franklin stove.

At the left is a small maple light-stand, quite unadorned by marquetry, but with simple, slender lines; and above it hangs one of my most treasured possessions — an engraved portrait of Horace Walpole, done after the Romney painting and framed in black with a little inner line of gilt. It bears his familiar signature, "Hor. Walpole," and the date, April 28th, 1790 — oddly enough, just the year Webster Cottage was built. True it 's only the signature to a receipt; but then, such an interesting receipt, made out to Cha. Bedford (his deputy at the Treasury) for one thousand, five hundred and six

pounds and six shillings. Of course I 'd rather have a letter, for choice, one to Henry Conway, or the Countess of Upper-Ossory, or to his artistic protégée, Lady Diana Beauclerc; but then, Walpole letters are hard to get, and I am very lucky to have this. Do you accuse me of burning candles to him? Well, why should I not? He is the patron saint of all good collectors, an example for us, his neophytes, to follow. Just recently I read a letter of his concerning a manuscript he very much wished to possess: "But the one you mention is more curious, and what I should be very glad to have; and, if I can afford it, will give whatever shall be thought reasonable; for I would by no means take advantage of the poor man's ignorance or necessity, and therefore should wish to have it estimated by some connoisseur." To my mind a lofty pinnacle of collecting virtue!

My silhouettes, too, deserve your attention. They were found in a little bookshop in Carlsbad, and given to me by a traveling friend who remembered my passion for these old profiles. Three are unique in my silhouette experience, and all are charming in their frames of gilt *passe partout.* Look closely at the two eighteenth-century shadows; they are cut with meticulous fineness, and the bits of silk and velvet and brocade introduced into the costumes are as fresh as they were a hundred and fifty years ago. The little one at the right is a rather unusual size, half the figure instead of the accustomed profiled

Horace Walpole, the patron saint of all true collectors

My eighteenth-century Austrian silhouettes framed in black-and-gold *passe partout*

bust; and the revealing white lines are delicately etched as in some of Edouart's rare examples. And such lovely, intricate *passe partout* patterns! If only they did work of this sort nowadays!

Can you see all the excellences of my "Peace Mirror," I wonder? It is quite large, thirty-two inches long and seventeen wide; the gilt is unmarred although dulled by time, and the bas-relief at the top is still perfect. The plain, slender columns have bandings of acanthus leaves: at the top and bottom and in the middle, and the overhanging cornice shows thirteen pendant balls. I 'm so glad that it 's just this many, for, of course, the number differs according to the size of the mirror, running from nine to sixteen or seventeen; now I, gazing at my looking-glass, can so much more easily credit the legend of these balls symbolizing the Thirteen Original States. (In England, I am told, they are called "Nelson's Cannon Balls," but I disavow so unpatriotic a suggestion!) In the centre of the bas-relief is the figure of a woman dressed in flowing, classic robes, emblematic of Peace; for she holds two doves, and, on either side, are heads set in blazing suns, celebrating, no doubt, the Proclamation which put an end to the troublous War of 1812. I wish I knew who made it; I haven't the faintest idea; but, perhaps, in some faded newspaper I 'll stumble unexpectedly across the advertisement of its merits. I do know that one S. Lothrop had a Looking-Glass

Warehouse in Boston, on Court Street, near Concert Hall, and I have seen a most exquisite mirror made by some Newburyport craftsman whose name, unfortunately, has escaped me.

On the right hangs an engraving of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, from the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller; another receipt, another signature, "13 July 1710, Recd in full, S. Marlborough." I do not love her so well as I do my gentle Horace — who could? — but since I like ambitious women, and since even her worst enemy certainly could n't accuse her of a lack of that quality, here she hangs, to my great admiration. I had meant to put the Duchess and Walpole closer together, directly on either side of the mantel mirror, so that they might gossip companionably about the House of Hanover, and compare notes on bygone courts; I know from the anecdotes which Walpole has left that he was amused by her mordant tongue and unfettered speech. But the arrangement was not suitable; neither was agreeable to it, and now Sarah Jennings hangs nearer my cornucopia bas-relief mirror and matches its black and gold with her old frame. This looking-glass is smaller and not so fine as my "Peace Mirror"; I think it is a little later, too, — the turned sides would indicate that, — but it is very handsome and well-proportioned, and in excellent condition.

But all this time you may be saying to yourselves, "Why *does* she use Empire mirrors with Hep-

"S. Marlborough," a most ambitious woman. After the portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller

plewhite furniture?" I 'll tell you; these "tabernacle framed" glasses are not only semi-architectural, but they are a direct legacy from eighteenth-century classicism; and furniture of the Hepplewhite school is filled with this spirit. Besides, in Hepplewhite's book of designs many of the pier glasses are rectangular in shape, quite as mine are. Consequently, they fall in with the lines of the room better than if they were of the oval variety, which, by the way, are improbably scarce and impossibly expensive. My bas-relief mirror is a fitting companion to the small, straight-front mahogany bureau below, not only in the simplicity of the structure, but because the oval brasses, too, are adorned with graceful cornucopias. And a further embellishment is the inlay: a little line of holly around each drawer, and a broader band of marquetry just above the gracefully turned apron. I am showing it to you in its simplicity; just a cross-stitch pincushion, a yellow glass perfume bottle, a powder-puff stand, and an old glass lamp.

The powder stand has an interesting story; may I tell it to you? It once belonged to the lovely Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, "the best-bred woman in England," in George the Fourth's opinion. It is beautifully carved, part of a toilet set made from bog oak (thus the legend has been handed down in my family) by the tenants on her Irish estate,— Lismore, I suppose,— and presented to her as a

token of their loyal affection. In the early nineteenth century, when her foster sister left England for distant America, the Duchess gave her this powder box as a keepsake. Later, the woman's daughter, a seamstress who sewed for our family, gave it to an aunt of mine who, in her turn, bequeathed it to me. Even if I distrusted this tradition, — which I don't, — I still should love it; it is so graceful, so tenderly colored by time. The carving is really fine and delicate: clusters of grapes and grape leaves set in a flaring lily-cup, while the little knob a-top is formed by four joining acanthus leaves.

The powder stand, carved from bog oak and once owned by the lovely Duchess of Devonshire

But now, lest you think I consort overmuch with

My straight-front bureau with cornucopia brasses which match the bas-relief mirror hanging over it

duchesses, and delight only in the society of the *beau monde*, let me say that the yellow glass perfume bottle was found in a tiny North End shop, and that the old whale-oil lamp was sent me by a collecting acquaintance in the State of Maine. It is most useful; for I had it wired for electricity and bought a little ground-glass shade, an accurate reproduction of what it once must have had. In the evening, by its admirable light, I may bind my hair; at night I can read in bed without danger of burning the curtains, a frequent accident in candlelit times.

I remember, in reading "Crime and Punishment," that Dostoevski said every human being must have a "theory of life." Well — so must a room; the theory of mine is the bed, by which I mean that the square tester-rails decided the type of the rest of the furniture; said emphatically, that the chest and bureau must be straight and not swell-front, that the chairs should be of the slat-back variety (at least until I could find the Cottage Hepplewhite which my soul craved), and my day-bed utterly lacking in curves. The valances, too, must be straight-hanging, the side-curtains merely looped back, but ready to fall in vertical folds, the mirrors "tabernacle framed." I have seen many of these old beds robbed of all their dignified beauty by using too thin a fabric (muslin or net), and draping it in a rather *bouffant* fashion, a treatment highly suitable, of course, for field bedsteads. I chose unbleached

cotton — a dead white would have been ugly and cold — and really the effect is very much that of the old-fashioned fustian, which was a mixture of linen and cotton. And most becoming and appropriate to an ancient bed it is; you must recall how full Judge Samuel Sewall's "Letter Book" is of references to "beds of fustian." Altogether I bought twenty-seven yards; at fifteen cents a yard the cost was almost negligible. It seems a lot of cloth, I know, but I had to allow enough for a deep floor-valance, for the back drapery, for ample side-curtains, for a tester-valance and a canopy-cover.

Did you ever see one of these old beds with just a silly frill finishing the top; with no sheltering curtains or protecting back draperies? Yet there is an excellent reason for their existence, and no square-testered bed can be complete without them. Before the sixteenth century discovered tall pillars, these curtains were suspended from a *ciel*, all for the protection of our ancestors from draughts—draughts which still existed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — and the reason why our more immediate ancestors often left the head-posts uncarved, knowing that the curtains would conceal the absence of adornment. Draughts may have disappeared in our better-built houses, but the decorative reason for draperies has not vanished with them; and so, if you cannot face the thought of curtains, why, give up all ambitious ideas of a canopy

My fine-lady bed, and my great-great-great-aunt's patchwork counterpane

bed, so naked, so purposeless without them, and content yourself with an undemanding "low poster." My tester-valance and side-curtains are bordered with tassel fringe — dangling tassels to match the carvings on the foot-posts. Oh, those adorable posts! No photograph in the world can do justice to their tranquil beauty, to the reeding which tapers so harmoniously, springing from its cup of leaves, to the carven draperies and tassels, bold yet delicate — ah, that craftsman knew how to handle his tools! — to the graceful spade-feet.

But I must moderate my "gladness," for, do you know, my greatest earthly dread is to be called the "Pollyanna of Old Furniture"! Yet I am tempted to be quite as exuberant over my counterpane, because it was fashioned by my great-great-great-aunt Alicia, the eighteenth-century ancestress for whom the Littlest Daughter was named; long, long ago she made it, when she was a young girl in Ireland. My mind reels at the number of persevering pieces in it, well over twenty-five hundred, and "I never at all saw stitches so small." The pattern is very similar to what I have heard called "Job's Patience," a fitting name, I assure you; for seventeen small hexagons make up a nine-inch six-sided figure, and these are banded together by a sash-work of white. In the centre is a lovable piece of copperplate chintz, a quaint bouquet of tulips and roses and sweet, forgotten blue flowers; and the many, many

pieces are bits of ancient prints and percales, dimothys, callimancoes and sprigged muslins — the tangible testimony of ancient dresses long ago worn out. The dominant colors are yellow and blue, which is why it goes so admirably in my room; but, like all really old and satisfactory counterpanes of this type, it has other colors: greens, pinks, browns, and even reds, all blended into a subtle harmony.

Sometimes I wonder if my great-great-great-aunt knew, as she sat taking her dainty stitches, that I, her admiring descendant, 'way across the ocean and more than a century later, was to have a blue-and-yellow room in which her patchwork counterpane would be the chiefest adornment. For some reason the work was never quite completed, never cut at the corners or quilted; and, at first, I intended to have both things done for me by some local Ladies Aid Society; but when it came actually to putting scissors into that beloved cloth — I could n't do it. And so, instead, I have arranged it as you see; and it is not quilted but lined with the finest blue-sprigged muslin I could buy. My "pillowbiers" are old, too, made from half a homespun sheet presented to me by B——; an excellent way to use old linen, let me tell you; for half a sheet just makes a pair of proper pillowcases, which, edged with handmade linen lace of some antiquated pattern, will give entirely the suggestion of age your canopy bed needs.

And now that I have made the bed visible to you,

Another view showing also the built-in bookcases and my writing-table

described its outward signs, let me tell you of its inwardness, the effect its spiritual qualities have on various people. B—— insists that I receive my friends *à la ruelle* like Madame de Rambouillet; anything else is unworthily inconsistent, she declares; and really, the feeling of the bed is so stately that my room becomes a *chambre de parade* as well as a *chambre de gîte.* To me it always seems like an old lady who, choosing to live simply, is *grande dame* none the less. And a small girl of my acquaintance says that it reminds her of the bed where Hop-o'-My-Thumb found the Ogre's seven daughters asleep. There, you have it from three angles!

Maybe you will think my homespun rugs unworthy of companionship with my fine-lady bed. Two are braided, two are "drawn in," one is knitted and crocheted, and all have just the right colors to look well upon my happy floor: blues and yellows and browns and firm touches of black. Four are old, picked up through the countryside and at small dealers', and the new one was made for me by a skillful rug-woman who understands the almost forgotten art of vegetable dyes, and who possesses a fine naïve sense of design. I feel frugal whenever I look at it; it contains all the devastated stockings that I hated to darn and hated to throw away. If I were you I 'd begin to save all of mine this very minute; it 's an infinitely better use than making cleaning-cloths of them.

Yes, my rugs may be homespun, but, just on that account, they better comport with my blue Chariot-Wheel coverlet, and anything finer than this woven web would be quite out of place on my old Pennsylvania Dutch day-bed. I am very fond of this artless oak-and-maple piece; it has a sort of homely dignity; it is, to my way of thinking, very much like the simple, sturdy folk of that region. Finding it was one of my rewards for going last June to Manheim, to the Feast of Roses held in loving memory of Baron Stiegel; the other was the joy of taking part in one of the few really romantic festivals America can boast. "In the month of June, yearly, forever hereafter, the Rent of One Red Rose if the same be lawfully demanded." A poet as well as a glass-maker wrote that!

Have you a moment to spare for the silhouettes which hang just above the day-bed? Two of them, the mother and daughter in the dress of the middle eighteen-thirties, are Austrian, and belong to that rarest type which is not only cut, but indented, in a most interesting way, so that features, ornaments, and even wrinkles are indicated. They are the only profiles I know that reveal the actual lines of age. Their setting is very effective; mounted on azure paper, and framed so that they are recessed, these women might be looking out into the dusk of some blue Danube night. The upper silhouette is a photographic shade of the Littlest Daughter, a

More silhouettes from Carlsbad; mother and daughter, and of a fine, rare type.

method I commend to your attention in case family photographs seem to you, as they do to me, over-modern for old walls.

The coverlet color is just a little darker shade of the same blue that is in my curtains. These are made of simple Tussore silk, looped back by gilt bands made in the shape of acanthus leaves. Perhaps these bands are a little later in period than the rest of my room, although Sheraton's second book does show a similar draping; moreover, the *bonne femme* type of curtain, used in several of my other rooms, hardly suited the proud bearing of this chamber. And ordinarily I do not care for glass-curtains; but, in a ground-floor bedroom, they are highly essential, especially when a bronze tablet, interesting to the passing tourist, is placed next the right-hand window. Still, my dotted voile is so sheer that it becomes merely the veil of privacy, and shuts out no necessary light or air.

There is a fainter shade of blue, indeed almost cerulean, in the strip of old challis which lies on the top of my tall, six-drawered chest. I put it there for two reasons: first, because the top of such a chest is rarely so well finished as the rest of the piece; secondly, because the "Tree of Life" design, in saffron and cream and subtle greens, wandering across that gentle blue, is one of the loveliest blendings of color I have ever beheld. I have no doubt at all of its being some Oriental fabric brought to this country years and

years ago. I found it in the old farmhouse where I bought my little stenciled stool and my three-dollar coverlet. It was lying in one of the drawers of an old chest very much like mine (though, thank Heaven, I have nothing like the two framed coffin plates which hung above it!), and the chest the farmer did not want to sell, albeit we were welcome to anything that it held. This charming strip became mine for twenty-five cents; I bought it without any definite idea of use—just because it was attractive. And behold my reward!

The maple chest is fifty-four inches high, straight-lined and ample, and the oval brasses show that interesting oakleaf-and-acorn pattern. At the top is a small shaving-glass which came to me all the way from Seattle; not at all elaborate, — two little drawers with two little glass knobs, — but adapted to this room because of its squarish effect.

My table does curve a little; still, not too much to be incongruous; and its delicate marquetry and straight, tapering legs, banded with little lines of holly, mark it as belonging to the Hepplewhite school. It is, strictly speaking, a card-table, but I use it as a place to write. Indeed, I am using it even now, writing these very words on an inconsistent machine when I should be employing one of my old quill pens. My other belongings, however, are most accordant: an olive-green Stoddard glass ink-bottle, so dark as to be almost black; and, for a paper weight, a heavy lump

My writing-table and the tall maple chest with the square little shaving-mirror

A closer view of my writing-table. Please take particular notice of my old "plain-featured" doll

of crude Stiegel glass, blue as a sapphire, purple as the western ocean. My old, plain-featured doll sits in an older chair, and since she has known many generations she is my wise counselor as to bygone days and customs. Did you ever think how much a doll has a chance to hear when nobody knows she is listening?

I love my blue-and-yellow room, but when I love it most I scarcely know: at high noon in August its cool tranquillity is like a soothing hand; it delights me to waken very early on May mornings, and hear the birds, and watch the first sunlight just fingering the heavy green shutters; and, those same shutters closed tight on winter nights, I love to lie secure in my tall bed, and read, and admire the firelight, trimming my room. Perhaps my candid chamber is to me as the old song was to that long-dead King of Spain, who heard it night after night with happiness, and rewarded the singer with "a dukedom and wealth beyond the dreams of avarice." I know I shall never tire of it: it is something like a dream come true!

VIII

THE UPPER HALL AND BATHROOM

The steps are so high and the treads are so narrow! They always remind me of a Mother Goose jingle; and, though I never *have* had to carry anybody home in a little wheelbarrow, I 'm always expecting to, so perilous are they to the uninitiated. I measure my guests' agility by the way they climb! The stairs' ladderlike steepness has another disadvantage, too: the treads are so shallow that the descending heel invariably scrapes a long line, and the rise has to be repainted every month, to look well-kept. Once I tried ordinary carpeting — and the effect was appalling: staring and inappropriate. But, if ever I find just the right old lady, with just the right old loom and a real eye for color, I shall have her weave me a rag carpet to echo my chintz, "gay and lively to look at," rather like the stripes which decorate the study and the ell-chamber, but with more écru and less crimson, of course. There is a stately house in tranquil white Woodstock, where the stairs are carpeted this way; the rag carpet repeats the colors in the antiquated wall-paper, and the resulting harmony is far finer than if even the most expensive Oriental strips were used.

Come, climb my twelve steps with me, and cling tight to the banisters, if you like. The upper hall

Another view of the old wall-paper; the little birch light-stand and my benign Benjamin Franklin

is small and quite pointed at one end; then it suddenly broadens out and gives me space for a table with a gilt-framed picture above, and a deep nook for a linen-chest and a chair. You can see the old panel of wall-paper much better here, although I do think its fantastic contours and quaint figures are more effective viewed a little lower down.

A small "drawn-in" rug, another one from the old, disdainful lady, lies in front of this pictured space. It is not particularly fine work, but the colors are agreeable — black and light brown and dulled pink; while the design always reminds me of the figures you see when you suddenly close your eyes — queer, brilliant triangles coming out of a surface of darkness. As oddly primitive as that; hence its decorative, un-selfconscious charm.

My table was still less costly: seventy-five cents, from a family who were moving away, and who did n't want to take "any old stuff" with them. They did n't; I know this to my sorrow, for an hour's delay lost me a lovely swell-front Hepplewhite bureau, inlaid and with "E Pluribus Unum" brasses, which they sold for five dollars because a back foot was broken. Though, had I bought it at that price, my conscience might have troubled me; whereas now it does n't keep me awake o' nights at all, for my table is just an ordinary birch light-stand, but with gracefully turned legs which redeem it from utter plainness. Above it hangs a familiar lithograph of Ben-

jamin Franklin; you remember, don't you, that benign face and the waving locks which fall long upon his fur-collared coat? The frame is ancient, but still bravely gilt, which makes it most useful here, not only as adornment, but to give an additional light effect to the hall, which it needs, since it is decidedly overdark. It has much worth, but no price, being the gift of friendship; and it has just come from an attic of marvels where it abode in the pleasant companionship of old and beloved furniture. And the brass candlestick — that was two dollars — adds its burnished touch, besides being helpful in case the electricity goes off, which frequently happens, alas! for my son is interested in wireless, my Russian maid not sympathetic with my iron or toaster—and fuses are but fuses, after all.

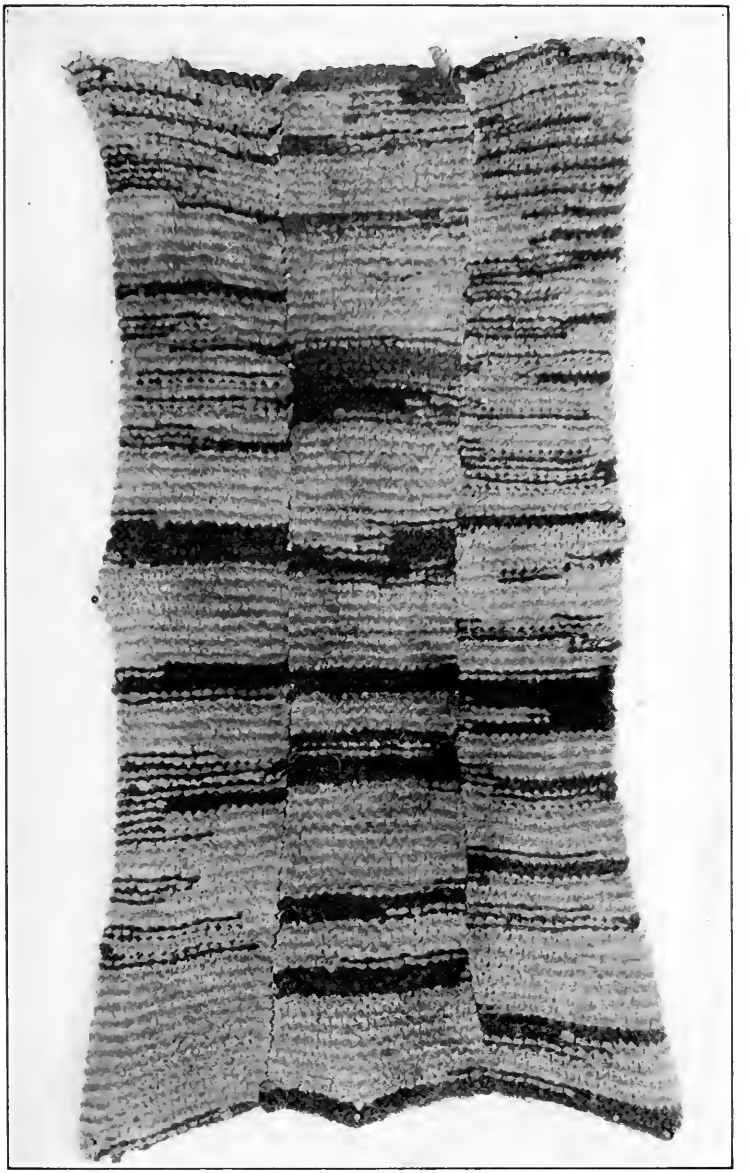
Of course, it 's even darker in the linen-chest nook —you lucky housekeepers with built-in linen-presses, shelves and shelves, and more room than you need, don't know how blessed you are; the one thing that consoles me is the fact that I was able to achieve my storage-space and light-effect at the same time. I bought a capacious old pine-chest, and painted it a bright, clear blue, "cart-blue," we call it hereabouts. It just fits in against the side wall, and, as it is divided into two compartments, I have a place for my towels and a place for my bed linen, pieces which are destined to immediate use, instead of having to dash downstairs and open grudging,

The "cart-blue" chest and chair which thrill me domestically whenever I pass them

stingy drawers in my china-closet. I paid just a dollar and a half for my chest, and it delights me to know that it very much resembles the ones our Puritan ancestors brought with them, corded and tied and full of fustians and "wallen counterpaines." Joiners kept on making them steadily through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and, no doubt, through the early nineteenth, for chests are as old as civilized man, and while civilization lasts I predict they will endure. Where did I get it? Ah, that 's a secret I want to impart to you. You must avail yourself of the beauty of simple things, you must become "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles." Hardly anybody nowadays wants one of these old, unpretentious chests, although they are very useful, and have a certain rough and homely charm. I bought mine at a secondhand shop where I often find treasures: once I got a Bennington jug, with the finest glaze I ever saw, for half a dollar, and a pressed-glass Venus and Cupid creamer for twenty-five cents. Even at the risk of repetition, I insist that your collecting life must include an Esteemed Secondhand Man, a Favorite Dealer, and an Obliging Junkman. All three have their necessary places, and are vital to your antiquarian interests. My small three-slat chair I bought for a dollar, years ago; it has had changing colors and various abodes, and now has settled down in a bright-blue coat as a companion to the chest. Very useful it is to sit in, as

I put away my sheets and "pillowbiers," and, if I were bromidic, I should add that it brightens the corner where it is. Truly, I get a domestic thrill of happiness every time I pass my dear, homely blue group.

Just the same shade decorates my bathroom: blue walls, white ceiling and woodwork, and porcelain fittings. I feel a pride in that single bathroom which you, O Fortunates, possessors of many and tiled splendors, can never know. Because there was n't any, naturally, when we took the house, and I had visions of bathing primevally in country fashion — with a small jug of hot water for finishing touches. And then the Powers That Be decided that a large, unenclosed landing, at the head of the stairs which lead from the dining-room, could be turned into one, and O—— and I rejoiced, having been accustomed to the effete life of cities. If you could remember, as I do, that squalid square, with three untidy students' beds—yes, the adjective fits both nouns — just jammed in anyhow, you 'd understand what a triumph a neat, tidy, compact bathroom was. True, the walls slant a little, and part of the space is taken up by the sturdy central chimney; but who cares? I don't; there are blue-checked gingham curtains at the window, my favorite bath-salts come in a blue-trimmed bottle, and my chosen soap looks — and smells — like a great wet violet. Moreover, for antiquities, I have another slat-back chair, white with a "cart-blue" seat, a small gilt-framed mirror



My blue and gray and white bath-mat knitted after an old method

with an upper painted panel of a valiant ship a-sailing on a cerulean sea, and, for a bath-mat, a knitted rug, done in the old manner in gray and white and vivid blue.

My small ship is symbolic, and, when it comes in, and I either make or inherit millions, I shall build myself a stately mansion with, not just a single bath for each room, but two, one for summer and one for winter: cool greens and lucid blues and pools that make you think of water lilies; warm, glowing yellows and russets, and fireplaces with leaping tawny flames. How 's that for Spanish real estate?

Don't think I do not love my queer "cart-blue" bathroom. I do; and I am amazingly fond of the odd little windowed closets, which stretch almost the length of my small cottage, two at front, two at the back; closets in which youth delights, but where maturity bangs its head. Actually they do very well for storing trunks and old magazines, for holding the children's clothes, and providing an upstairs broom-closet; while one, gilded by fancy, is the Littlest Daughter's play-place, known to her friends as "Cubby House." Of course, in the summer, being just under the eaves, it is unbearably hot; and then she removes herself and her household cares to the shelter of the box maples in the backyard; but, if you will come some winter's afternoon, I know she will be entranced to pour you a cup of cambric tea, and offer you the hospitality of her real rooftree!

IX

"THE PRETTIEST ROOM"

You see, I can call it that because it 's a quotation — what the Littlest Daughter said when she first saw it; and since she, with her big sister, is joint owner of its charms, I for one shall not dispute her title. And of course I feel flattered, for, in planning this room, two problems immediately presented themselves. First, the exposure was northeast, and warmth of color had to be contrived; with us so many months of the year are downright cold and bleak. Yet not too much, for a low-ceilinged upper chamber in one of these old "story 'n' half" houses can be unbelievably hot when loitering summer does at last come our way. Warmth, rosy warmth, I must have; but equally I had to temper it with hints of cool blues, and a proper background was the first consideration. Dense, unimaginative cartridge paper would have defeated my purpose; and stripes, even in the right colors, had the effect of a little, dumpy woman who dresses for length and then stands on tiptoe to make herself look as tall as possible. Quite by happy chance, as well as experiment, I found the flowered paper now on the walls, a semi-conventional pattern, more pink than blue, so that both seasons were suited. And its old-fashioned, sprigged design is in harmony with the idea of the room — naïve and child-

My valiant ship symbolic of high good-fortune

like, as I meant it to be. I like to think it resembles the wall-paper that Anatole France describes in his lovable "Livre de Mon Ami," when his mother, marking a single flower on that blossom-strewn wall with her embroidery needle, said, "Je te donne cette rose."

My second difficulty you may already have guessed — certainly, if you remember my earlier confession that five of us — and a pussycat! — must be fitted, somehow, into eight rooms. Why, I simply *can't* have a family skeleton; I have n't a suitable closet to hide him in. This room — roughly speaking its dimensions are sixteen feet by twelve — had to be adapted to the needs of two girls of quite different ages, one of the first conditions of all being that they should not sleep together. Now, those of you who have hunted for old beds, and whose search has been blessed, can bear me out when I say that these low-posters very seldom come in pairs. I have never seen two exactly alike, and, even if I had, I could not have got both beds into that room at once. So observe, please, my compromise: a low-post bedstead, and a couch, comfortable and cushioned by day, which magically transforms itself into a cot, pillowed and comfortable, by night.

But will you begin, just as you always do, and walk around the room with me? I can show you so much better. Is n't the ceiling delightful — rounded just like an ancient field bed, or the top of one of those

antedeluvian horse cars that we used to ride on when we were children? On both doors are H and L hinges, those magic initials which stood, so they say, for Holy Lord, and, by pointing to a cross in the door, kept witches away. We are not superstitious, — anyway O—— is n't, — but we are fond of them, and when, recently, a pair broke, we very naturally carried them to be repaired at our village blacksmith's, and laid great stress upon their worth. Now, of course, you know and I know that professors are not supposed to be overpractical, "book-learning" in our North Country being a direct negation of that quality. "Professor," said the kindly artisan, "did n't you know that you could get a good, new pair of hinges at the hardware store cheaper 'n I could mend these for you?" (I emphasize this story to show the countryside attitude toward old things.)

The little desk I picked up for two dollars in a Vermont village. Most of the frame is soft wood, the drawer alone being butternut; but I kept it, not only because it was so convenient for a child to write at, but for its real grace of line. If you will notice the legs, you will see at once how well they are turned. I have frequently seen the feet of reeded Sheraton tables with just the same pretty shaping. That is why I am inclined to class it as a fairly early Empire piece. On it I have placed only the necessary reading-lamp and an old Chinese lacquer jewel-box, which repeats again the brown-and-gold notes of the

mahogany furniture, and makes an admirable receptacle for a small girl's paper and pencils. The chair in front of the desk is early nineteenth century, too, and is stenciled in a flowing vine pattern in gold, with vivid touches of green and black. This I bought at the same shop for a dollar.

Next you come to the couch, and I am wondering if you will at once recognize the coverlet upon it. It is the three-colored, three-dollar one which I bought at that little, mist-hung farmhouse on an autumn hillside; just the colors to suit the room: cream, coral-pink, and deep indigo; and in the cushions I was fortunate enough to match the shades exactly. My rugs, woven in tones of blues and pinks, are modern, alas! and here may I give you a bit of my own experience? While you frequently find old drawn-in rugs which are very desirable, and, at times, braided rugs which are very pretty, you almost never discover delicately colored woven rugs, they, apparently, having long since gone to a worthy rest. But mine, modern as they are, are attractive, durable, and have the added advantage of costing something less than five dollars; for the price, to be exact, was precisely four dollars and thirty-six cents.

But all my economies fade into nothingness beside my real, triumphant bargain — the acanthus carved bed. It is one of the two loveliest low-posters I have ever seen, with its graceful, flaring leaf-carving and its incised acanthus design in the three rounds. For

eight dollars it became mine, and I shall never forget the anxiety with which I gazed at the one post displayed in a corner of the shop, and wondered if there were three others to go with it, or if it alone had been rescued from the woodpile; for such, in the past, was the custom of the country. Of course, getting it into condition to use doubled the price; but, after all, what was sixteen dollars for such excellence?

The old man who sold it to me is dead now, but he lives in my memory, not only on account of this bed, but because of many other bargains. Because, too, of a certain whimsicality, which made conversation with him a beguiling pastime always. I remember once, — now, to get the full flavor of this, you must remember that it was a small, small village he lived in; one sleepy, wide main street with shading elms above it,— when we spoke of the city, and the magic name of Wanamaker was mentioned, he drawled: "Well, I can't say as I am pussonally acquainted with Mr. Wanamaker, but, of course, we 've corresponded considerable."

Are n't my pillow shams attractive and becoming in their effect? A contemporary suggestion would ruin the bed, you know; but this pair I copied from some I saw way back in the country, and I am so devoted to them myself that I am happy in passing the pattern along to you. But, oh, my dears, do look at my counterpane! It is an heirloom, woven in East Tennessee surely a hundred years ago; woven

The pine desk and the colored coverlet

and embroidered by my great-grandmother's slaves, diligent and beloved handmaids that they were. The pattern is even older; it has that central vase design that you see so much on old glass and samplers and faïence, and in its myriad stitcheries it resembles a seventeenth-century fabric. The vine-sprays meander pleasantly, and there are large leaves of that variety which William Morris described as "inhabited," and little leaves and tendrils and grape-clusters and flowers. Lovely, original, and so easy to do! I know, for I tried; and all you really need is some good linen, not too closely woven,— I 'd take an old sheet if I had one,— a moderate-sized embroidery needle, and white knitting-cotton, number eight for the heavier, outside stitches, twelve and fourteen for the more delicate effects. As to the stitches themselves, their name is legion: outline, long and short, chain stitch, feather stitch, satin stitch, buttonhole, and cross; simplicity itself, but such effective simplicity! The corners were not cut, but that was a fault easily remedied, and now, edged with ball-fringe, and hanging over a valance of striped "dimothy," it is precisely the modest adornment that my old bed needed.

Over it hangs Rubens's Madonna of the Parroquet, in brown tones that match the mahogany; a protecting little picture, too, and you can fancy so readily a small child every night kneeling down and saying, "Four corners to my bed, four angels round my head." It 's that kind of low-poster, you see.

But the flowered background is not one to encourage many pictures, and so I have but four, and two mirrors; the first, that small Constitution hanging over the rope-carved worktable beside the bed. It is not the loveliest mirror of this type that I have ever seen, although it is very engaging; but it assuredly is the oddest. It is twenty-three inches long; it is carved with a rosette-like ornament both at top and bottom, and all its little curvings and shapings are delicately grooved. There is not a touch of gilt about it, and, somehow, this omission makes it all the more pleasing and unusual; I 'm very sure that all of you would have been willing to pay what I did for it — a dollar and a half. Maybe I was the first person in the shop that morning and appealed to the proprietor's trade-superstition, or perhaps he was influenced by the fact that the mirror was in wretched shape, *sans* finish, *sans* glass; anyhow, it 's my proving exception of buying furniture in good condition and so saving cabinetmaker's bills, for I paid five times the purchase price to have it renovated.

The worktable is my one piece of Southern mahogany, the first family piece to cross Mason and Dixon's line, and I am sure that all my "kinfolks" prayed for its soul when it did. We call it the "Table of the Grandmothers," because it was made for my daughters' great-great-grandmother in 1802. The little bead-bag that lies upon it, and echoes the colors

My carved "four-poster," all four posts alike, and my old linen counterpane from Tennessee

of the room in its shading of pinks and blues, was given to the great-grandmother when she was a tiny girl, by a tribe of the Cherokee Indians in Tennessee; and the old *papier-mâché* workbox, inlaid with roseate mother-of-pearl, was a Victorian tribute to the grandmother. Actually, and apart from all sentiment, this table is the most unique piece of old furniture I possess; rarer even, I think, than my Hepplewhite tip-table; the kind of treasure, you know, that every connoisseur stops to look at, and pay the tribute of interested inquiry. It is made of San Domingo mahogany, with sides of old black cherry; and the little lower shelf is formed in a very unusual curve. It is the only table of precisely this design that I have ever seen.

The rocking-chair I bought in Vermont for a dollar and a quarter, too; a low, very comfortable rocking-chair of the early nineteenth century; and, indeed, being something of a Jingo, I am immensely proud of the defiant gold eagle stenciled with such bold, broad, sheltering wings upon the top-rail.

The bookshelves had to be built in; a room of this sort in a house of this kind would never have had such things, you know; but, as we decided before, rooms must be alive, must n't they? Notice, please, the small brass bedroom candlesticks sitting there in each corner. How many, many, little sleepy children they must have lighted to bed!

The curtains at my windows are a good quality

cotton crêpe; a happy, vigorous shade, the color of the geraniums on the window sill, and of the old hundred-leaf roses on the lawn: roses as old as the house itself; roses that look, when they first bloom in early summer, like folded bands of pink satin. But just because my curtains *are* happy and vigorous, they must not hang in direct contrast to the very green blinds; and so, between them, there is the coolness of sheer, creamy voile, finished with bobbing ball-fringe to match the bed. Still, I like to think that my pinky curtains go together in friendliness with the roses outside. Once, in some book, I read: "And there was nowhere in the room an indication of any sort of recognition of the loveliness of the view from the window." I hope it is n't so with me, and especially in "the prettiest room," the only place where the windows command a view. The other glimpses are friendly: white barns and houses, my neighbor's white Wyandottes, and a village street that curves under arching elms; but from here we look upon high Romance — a wondering hill, with a sky line of trees that curvet and prance along in the guise of a circus procession. Night after night we have watched them limned against the saffron background: first the coach, then the camels and elephants, and last the cages of *r-r-roaring* lions. Ah, my poor, starved country children have seen just one circus in all their lives! Do you suppose they mind? For our magic trees belong to us alone; as

The "table of the grandmothers," the stenciled rocker, and my most unusual Constitution mirror

pleasant as familiar fairies they are, and the only fee, a willingness to look at the western sky before the first stars come out.

But I digress. Now you are round to the bureau; but stop a minute first, please, and look at my old Valentines, characteristically early Victorian and *larmoyant*. The one at the left depicts a gentleman in black smallclothes and Byronic despair; the other, a lachrymose lady in *rose tendre*. From London they came, and the verses are so beguiling that I am quoting them entire to you.

THE GENTLEMAN

Amid these wilds I wander in despair;
I sigh for her, so faithless yet so fair.
Ye streams, ye woods, ye breezes tell
The agony of love for her I feel.

THE LADY

In this recess my passion here let sway;
To disappointment my heart 's a prey.
I cannot long these pangs endure,
Despair alone will yield a cure.

Evidently love was a most unhappy thing then!

The bureau is more prosaic, but useful and suitable; of a good plain Empire type, the wood being butternut and mahogany — a frequent combination with us in New England. I bought it for ten dollars, and the brasses — which are reproductions and an accurate copy of what might originally have been on it — were three dollars more.

It 's the mirror above that 's perplexing my soul! If I count it at what the dealer charged me, eight dollars, then my room, for everything,—furniture, refinishing, curtains, cushions, rugs, even the bookcases, — would come to eighty-nine dollars and fifty-eight cents. And yet, you know, it did n't cost that much, because I "swapped" things for the mirror—dreadful modern things that I loathed and never intended to use again; for we have a way, L—— and I, of going through the streets like Aladdin's magician crying out, "New lamps for old, new lamps for old!" Why, once L—— traded a pair of andirons, some tongs, a cot-bed and mattress, and a wicker chair — all twentieth century, of course — for a lustre pitcher; but then, the pitcher was lovely, and the other things — were n't! However, these gilt mirrors, long, and without a division, are rare, and I was very glad to get mine at any reasonable price.

Do you remember the wee chair beside the bureau? It is the one that the old, old lady way up in the hills gave the Littlest Daughter; and although it antedates the rest of the furniture, perhaps, by more than fifty years, I like to keep it here because it seems to belong to the setting.

It really *is* "the prettiest room." I wish you could have seen it in all its pinkness the other evening, when we sat and told fairy tales about Rosy and Mousey, two wonderful little bears, the marvel of whose adventures gilds the dullness of our workaday world.

The mahogany and butternut bureau, and the Littlest Daughter's Chair

Outside, the sky was streaked with rose, too; and at my feet, in the wee chair, the Littlest Daughter listened, her cheeks as pink as the curtains, her dress and eyes matching the room's blues. And I sat and rocked and was very happy. It was one of the experiences which make you rejoice in life.

But still something troubles me, and I want you to help me solve this problem in moral values. Since I "swapped" for my mirror, what did my room really cost?

X

THE SOUTH CHAMBER

First of all, let me say that Daniel Webster was not born in this house; that his father did not build it; nor am I, to my great regret, in any way related to our most distinguished American statesman. I frankly tell you all this to spare you, perhaps, a certain grief; for there are pilgrims who come to my little cottage, pause at its threshold, and, when they have learned all these disheartening truths, say, "Thank you, but I think we *won't* come in." Others there are, also, who view my old furniture and remark, "So Daniel Webster had all these interesting old things when he was here in college." And they are disappointed when I tell them that he was poor, so poor in those early days that the farm at Salisbury had to be mortgaged to send him to Dartmouth; that he eked out his scanty resources by contributing to a little local journal, earning thereby fifty or sixty dollars, enough to pay his board for a whole year. If your interest is as theirs, you must not read further.

No, I don't believe that Webster then could have owned even my modest treasures, and the rent of the little "south chamber," which I am going to show you, where tradition says he spent his sophomore year, was probably not more than a dollar a month. Can I make you see him as *really* as I do —

this young lad in his middle 'teens, full of ambition, "long, slender, pale and all eyes"; this wonderful youth who in later life made Carlyle think of a cathedral? Truly, I wish he *had* been here in his senior year; for, in reading an old history, I have found such a delightful fragment of a letter written then to a classmate; so delightful that I want him to have composed it in this little room before this little fireplace. May I quote it? It seems to be about a charming visitor from Massachusetts, whose fascinations were then enthralling Hanover. "Salem! enchanting name! who would have thought that from the ashes of witches, hung a century ago, should have sprung such an arch coquette as should delight in sporting with the simplicity of — Daniel Webster."

Does n't it make him "come alive"? You see, with us here at Dartmouth, his memory is very present in many ways besides buildings and portraits; I wish I could show you, behind my house, the lovely Vale, which bears his name because, they say, he used to pace up and down there, studying his lessons.

The little "south chamber" that you are looking at is very small, so small that I don't think Daniel Webster could have had a roommate while he lived here; smaller even than "the prettiest room," which is just across the hall; and I had to plan and contrive to get in all the necessary pieces of furniture. Most of it is Empire, a few years later than the type Webster must have used; but how could I put a self-

respecting, twentieth-century, growing-up boy in a canopy bed? The paper, however, is a reproduction of an English pattern, which might have been on the walls in this eventful year of 1799: a light paper, with interlacings of grays and lavender-ish blues, because the room is directly south and always sunny. The ceiling is low and rounded; there are three doors, one opening suddenly upon a steep, unexpected stairway, — you know, I can't for the life of me see why my little house should have five whole pairs of stairs! — and the room would be an oblong if, at one end, the walls did not abruptly angle in a little fireplace. That is the first thing you see as you enter. The andirons came from a Vermont hamlet, — village is too big a name for so small a place, — one of those tiny, tiny places tucked away in the shouldering hills; and I paid a dollar and a half for the pair. They are just hand-wrought iron, made, maybe, at some homestead forge; but they suit the narrow, shallow, black hearth as no elaborate pair of brass andirons ever could.

Above the simple mantel-shelf hangs an engraving of Daniel Webster in middle life — not one of the rare ones, of course, but a good, characteristic picture, which I was able to garner at an auction, frame and all, for a dollar and twenty cents. The small mahogany mantel-clock came from a Pennsylvania-Dutch settlement, and was a present to me, so I can't count that. The little pewter candlesticks at

The old, turned leg light-stand, the portrait of Daniel Webster, and my protecting witch ball

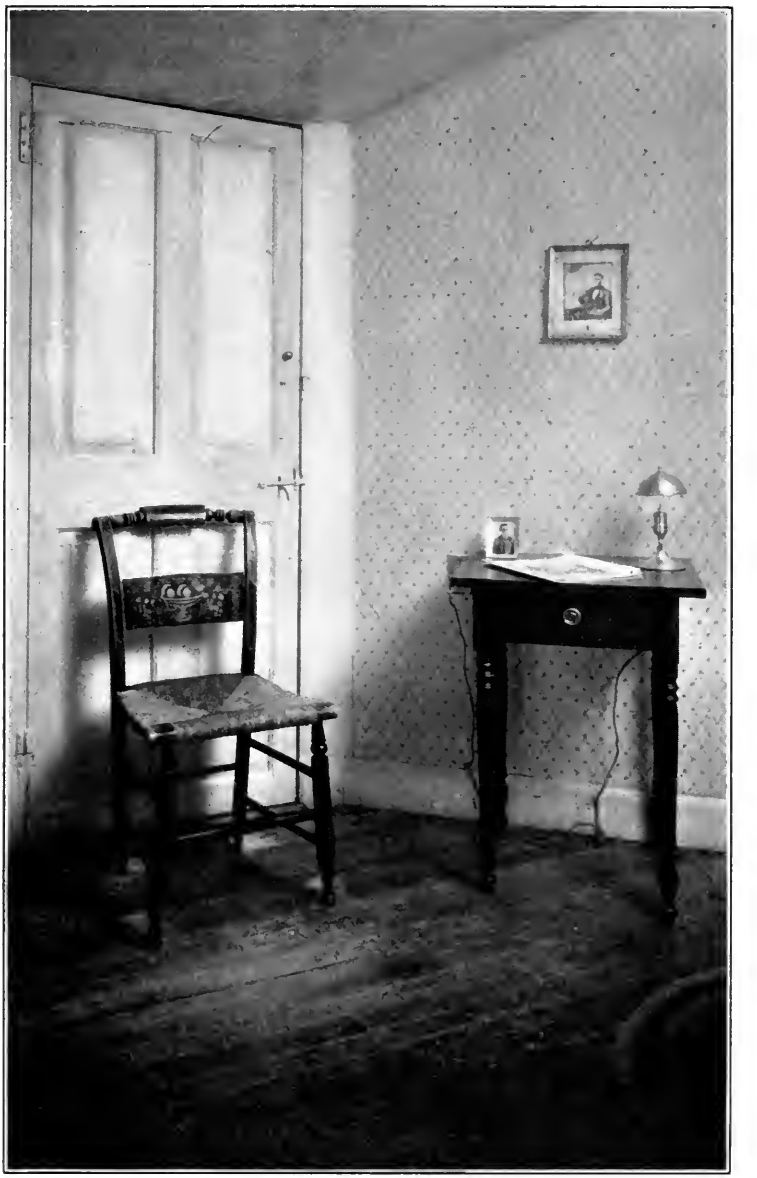
each corner are really whale-oil lamps with the wick-tops unscrewed; and for one I paid a dollar, for the other, a dollar and a half, and they were bought at the shop of the old man who had "corresponded considerable" with Mr. Wanamaker. How I miss that dusty, beguiling abode of bargains!

And look, just at the left! Can you see that dangling glass ball, and do you know what it is? It 's an old "Witch Ball," and it was bestowed upon me by a kind admirer, anxious, I suppose, to protect me from all malign powers. In ancient days their use was this: they were filled with water, and then hung from the rafters of the house, more potent even than a horseshoe; for as long as there was a drop of water in the ball, no sorceress could enter, to do you ill. I 'm dreadfully proud of mine, for they are rarity itself. And, naturally, I hung it up at once, even though we have the H and L hinges in this room, too. I was n't going to take any chances; so it dangles from an antiquated brown riband, attached to a still older hand-wrought nail.

The little table standing at one side of the hearth — for my son thinks that it is such a pleasant thing to read and study beside a friendly fire — is plain Empire, with well-turned legs and a pretty brass pull on the drawer. It is made of cherry, and, I think, cost me three dollars. Above it hangs the early-nineteenth-century picture of a ministerial great-grandfather, and its note of gold is repeated in the

modern reading-lamp and in the little gilt photograph frame. The stenciled chair just beyond came from that old vine-hung house in the hills, and I paid fifty cents for it. It does n't sound true, I know, but the dear old lady insisted it was n't worth more than a quarter, and I had hard work to make her take half a dollar! I had to have it re-rushed, — you seldom find these chairs with the old seats in good enough condition to use, — and that added two dollars more to my bill of expense.

Next we come to the bed; to one of my difficulties, too, for my son had given me strict orders as to the masculine effect of the room. Well, of course, a bed of this kind simply *had* to have a valance,— they always did,— but it took my most masterly argument and persuasion, as well as the promise of a pair of military hairbrushes, to do away with the chagrin of what he calls "frills." The counterpane is made of seersucker, in creams with two shades of blue, an écru stripe, and a tiny thread of red, the colors which are repeated in the window curtains; for I long ago discovered that a white coverlet *and* a small boy are a contradiction in terms. The material cost twenty-five cents a yard, and it took twelve and a half yards to make it. As to the bed, it is a good, plain maple low-poster, with a very engaging headboard. Beautifully finished in the full cherry tone, it came from the shop of the man L—— and I call our Favorite Dealer. I am rather proud of the way I concealed my



The stenciled chair from the old vine-hung house, and the H- and L-hinged door

pillows. Ruffled shams were denied me by my stern son; white would be the wrong note against the counterpane; so I bought — what do you think? Two and a half yards of blue-bordered crash dish-toweling. A little cross-stitch red line runs just above the blue, and in the corners I worked formal, miniature trees in the same shades. The small cherry light-stand beside the bed was three dollars more. On it are an old brass candlestick — another gift — and a much-adored and worn copy of "Treasure Island" — my son's bedside choice. The straight-hanging curtains at the windows were made of cotton crêpe costing fifteen cents a yard, — ten yards made them, — and the colors and effect are charming.

The modest black Windsor rocker I want you especially to notice, it is such an agreeable chair, admirably proportioned, and thoroughly comfortable to sit and read in — the reason why it has its place near the window and beside the bookshelves. It is joined with wooden pegs, and you will realize my luck when I tell you that two dollars was its price. It is earlier in type than the rest of the furniture, but, somehow, it fits in with the feeling of the room as if it were a sister piece.

The bureau is one I got for eleven dollars and a half at an autumn auction that I went to with L——; quite a wonderful auction, for she bought a large mahogany mirror-frame for twenty-five cents and an etched globe for an astral lamp for a nickel, while

I secured my warming pan and the loveliest old brass latch you ever saw for a dollar and a quarter. I think we started at daybreak; on such quests we are like Chaucer's heroine, "up rose the sun and up rose Emilie," and we were equally matinal. It was an old, old house by our North Country way of reckoning, and I talked to a kinsman of the people who were moving away, tired of farming. He lamented their lack of interest in the homestead, and the decay of the family fortunes, and told me that his great-great-uncle, a country cabinetmaker, had built my bureau himself. It is made of birch, with the drawer-fronts of beautiful bird's-eye maple, and time has darkened and enriched the color of the woods so much that it goes becomingly with the mahogany mirror hanging above it. The mirror represents one of my "trades," but I know that its value — the glass was in it — was two dollars, and having it put into condition was two dollars more. I am getting almost superstitious about this figure, for the old "Star" rug at the side of the bed was also two dollars; but I am breaking the spell, because the leather, brass-bound, nail-headed trunk, which you can just barely catch a glimpse of, and which affords such an excellent place for magazines and oddments, I bought at another auction for ten cents. (And here 's a collecting "tip," by the way. Oftentimes it 's worth while buying these antiquated trunks, just for the gamble of what may be inside. R—— paid

The maple "low-poster," my new-old braided rug, and a glimpse of the bookshelves

The small black Windsor rocker, excellently proportioned and agreeable to sit in

fifteen cents for one once, and was rewarded by finding, among other pleasing things, a really beautiful oblong snuffbox, richly inlaid with mother-of-pearl.) But let me go back to my "Star" rug. It is quite unique in design, a type that does not seem to be reproduced nowadays. An old up-country woman told me how it was made, a secret I pass on to you. The border is formed of two rows of dark braid, but the stars are worked on eight-inch squares of woolen cloth which are afterwards cross-stitched together with bright crewels. Gay colored yarns, too, are used in making the six-pointed stars, and these are worked across a pattern cut out of tin,—a stiff cardboard would be quite as good, I am sure,—the stitches being taken over and over, and then slit down the middle, so that the tin-form can be removed. Last of all, the yarn is clipped close, so that it resembles in effect a drawn-in rug which has been carefully sheared. It really is very pretty, very simple, and, oh, so very softly toned! I *do* wish Time did lovely things like that to human beings!

The round rug in front of the fireplace is old and quite delightful, too: a combination of knitted centre and crocheted border, the design a black and écru cart-wheel. We found it on one of our "rugging" expeditions, at such an interesting house, little and low, and set just at the edge of a brown trout-stream. I remember thinking how enchanting it would be to stand on the shady back-porch, and

catch a few trout for breakfast every morning. The house was as neat as wax inside, and the floor was covered with the fruits of the housewife's industry, lovely rugs that she would n't "part with." Mine I found, doubled up and thrown in a corner under a bench on the piazza; if I craved those old things, I could have them for seventy-five cents apiece, though what in creation I wanted with them, *she* did n't know. When I asked her how she ever managed to accomplish so much, she told me of the white and drifted winters, — ah, don't I know them! — not a neighbor near, and the hours that would be so lonely if it were not for her work. The beauty she created was her consolation.

My braided rug is new, one of the most attractive examples of modern work that I have ever seen, and done with commendable fineness. I furnished the rags, of course, and the work cost six dollars. In it are blended our sartorial hopes and fears for years past. Do you realize what a family record a braided rug may become? I think you would, if you could have beheld the Littlest Daughter the other day, lying flat on the floor, and chanting a litany that ran something like this: "And here 's Mama's green velvet, and my blue dress, and Sister's blue dress with the white dots, and the used-to-be hall curtains, and Daddy's gray trousers!" Just try saving your old rags and see what an account of the everydayness of existence they will sum up for you.

The curly-birch bureau with bird's-eye maple drawers, a combination now much sought after

My pictures are not many; besides the two I mentioned, is a pair of valentines just as engaging as, although more robust than, the two in "the prettiest room." They sing the loves of an Early Victorian soldier and sailor, in verses that breathe a noble sentiment, but that do not always rhyme. But what matters a mixed metaphor or so, or *give* and *revive* being supposed to chime, when intention is so worthy? Church and State go together in these tender missives; the soldier points reassuringly to a church, — his is no light flirtation! — and the sailor waves a Union Jack as sheltering to Love's messenger as ever it was to little Rose Maybud in "Ruddygore." What on earth did those carping critics of the "Gentleman's Magazine" find to object to in such guileless tokens? Seriously, I am very fond of them, and always a great believer in the value of these old, charming, inexpensive prints for maintaining the proper *wall-feeling* of a room of this sort. Over the trunk hangs another black-framed picture, a little French print, Le Chien Savant — which gives interest to that rather blank space.

All told, this little south chamber cost slightly less than sixty-three dollars. Do you like it? I hope so, and yet, when you come to see me, it may look different; for now I am showing it to you unadorned by my son. Then it may be the banner-hung, trophy-filled room of the small boy who lives in a college town. You see, our cottage is fairly ringed

round with fraternity houses, and they all have ash-piles; and when a student throws a thing away, it is ready for its last long home, goodness knows! I don't think that any of you can imagine how quaintly antique the Venus of Milo looks until you see her without her head. Besides, my son is suffering at present with what Mr. Tarkington calls "Bingism." Only the other day I surprised a frowning arsenal of wooden revolvers nailed up against the wall. Oh, well, a boy's will is the wind's will, and sometimes it does blow into a hurricane! I am endeavoring to lose my interior decorating instinct, and trying to be just a good mother. Why should I resent his mechanical constructions spread broadcast over the floor? They are the little, tangible symbols of his dreams and ambitions, and I confide to you a secret: I am hoping that the mantle of greatness of our Elijah is going to fall upon his shoulders.

The ten-cent leather trunk, and the small colored print

EPILOGUE

At first, when I began to write these words, I looked round my parlour to see just which of my old and cherished pieces best could speak my words of farewell, the epilogue of "The Next-to-Nothing House." Should it be the Hepplewhite tip-table, a slim, pretty lady, ready to drop a curtsy, and make a gracious speech, or my capacious bannister-back armchair, which must have held in its time so many judicial, portly figures? And then, suddenly, I decided that, since I had dramatized my own domesticity, it was I who was the chief protagonist; and so it is Myself that is speaking to you.

Now, if you have done what I never under any circumstances do, read the "Prologue" first of all, you know my philosophy of collecting. May I share with you, also, my philosophy of housekeeping, which is, indeed, for most women just another phrasing of the dailiness of life? It implies much care, much work, but, after all, there is n't much wrong with work itself. It 's "worry that 's the rust on the blade." If I had my way with this world, I 'd make everybody, men and women alike, work usefully with their hands some part of the day.

That was really the trouble with the Garden of Eden; in this purposeless existence there was nothing for Adam and Eve to do; everything was miraculously accomplished for them. *But* if Adam had had to dig

around the roots of that Tree of Knowledge, loosen the dark, sweet-smelling earth of springtime; mulch it and prune it and pick the apples and pile them in great, golden mounds, he would n't have had time for discontent. And if Eve had had to pare those apples and make them into luscious pies, or stir a bubbling cauldron of lucent amber sirups, she never would have harkened to that very subtle serpent. Rather she would have said, "Adam, if you don't drive away that pestiferous snake, I simply can't make my jelly jell!"

No, the thing that is wrong with housework is monotony, the endless monotony of uncreative routine; washing the *same* cup and hanging it on the *same* hook on the *same* shelf three times a day without any hope of change. But so are created order and system, you argue. (Others besides Alice in Wonderland enjoy contriving imaginary conversations.) And I reply that these two virtues are excellent but not sufficing. I am trying to be fair-minded. I frankly own that there are times when I adore a wild spree of intense domesticity; but, to be equally honest, this impulse generally occurs when I have n't been doing a lot of it. And there are other women who, like Hilda Lessways, hate it and so do it "passionately and thoroughly." And I want women to like it; it 's got to be done, and, properly interpreted and rewarded, it 's a fine, big, intelligent piece of work. Besides, dear knows, no man can

ever do it! It was the way of a man with a house that first made me an ardent suffragist.

Nor do I believe that it is solitude which shatters the domestic nerves. I greatly admire Dr. Myerson; for the most part I live his willing protestant to be, but I do not always agree with him. I cannot admit that solitude, conducive to daydreaming, is in itself a bad thing. I like to work swiftly and alone, thinking, all the time that my hands are busy, pleasant things about my house; thinking pleasant thoughts, and writing them down. And even if my sisters under their skins have not precisely this pleasure, I still want them to have something, some blessed *material* good, to long for and look forward to — and get! If a woman must have solitary confinement in her housework, at least fill her home with agreeable things, the things that are tangible desires. You remember, don't you, Maud Muller's daydreaming,

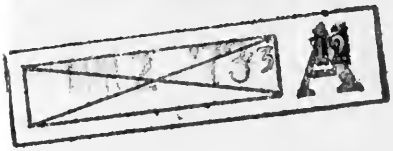
> The weary wheel to a spinet turned,
> The tallow candle an astral burned.

Well, I want those monotonous cups to change, somehow, to pretty pink-lustre tea-sets, the shelves to a corner-cupboard, shell-topped, *lovely*.

Moreover, my creative routine implies a really much bigger thing, the economic independence of women: for which I have Scriptural justification. Turn to your "Proverbs," and read about the woman whose price was "far above rubies," whose valiant

soul resembled a merchant-ship. "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. . . . She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. . . . She considereth a field, *and buyeth it.*" *Her* routine was creative; *her* household was well worth careful guidance. Figuratively speaking, I behold you diligent with spindle and loom; but what I also want is to see you considering a field, and buying it if you want to!

So, my dear Friends in Collecting, I am wishing you this greatest of good things. I wish you, also, high, incomparable adventures along the broad road that stretches, and everything you desire — almost. Not quite! Leave something forever to anticipation; keep, I pray you, always one fair Aladdin's window, for nothing you can ever buy will be so lovely as that.



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