

## CHILDREN'S DAY AND NIGHT NURSERIES

*Their Furnishing and Their Adorning*

### NURSERY FURNISHING

*By Annie R. Ramsey*

**W**RITING of the nursery I am tempted to make the word plural since I so firmly believe in the English plan of two nurseries in every house, one for the day, the other for the night; but our architects make such luxuries impossible for all but the very rich, and in arranging our rooms we are forced to use what we find. We have some choice, however, in the position of the nursery, and let me beg you to defy the time-honored custom of using the top story of the house as a cage for your birdlings. It may be a great sacrifice to give up the "second-story front" or the room in the "L" which is generally used as the family sitting-room; but if your nursery is to be what it should, one of these rooms must be devoted to it. If not, and you recognize your duty to supervise nurse and children day and night, you must either have them in your part of the house most of the time or else spend enough of your life on the stairs to wear out ten backbones.

**I**T goes without saying that the nursery should be as sunny as possible, with plenty of windows for light and air, and an open fireplace; whether the fire is ever lit in it or not, this last is necessary for perfect ventilation. In days not so very far back it was decreed that a nursery should be as bare as it could be made, so that the "children should not hurt anything," but we have changed all that, and the present danger is that we shall smother our children in luxury and beauty. Modern philosophy, however, points to a golden mean and insists that while a child's sense of beauty is a gift—a precious one—worthy of all cultivation, it should not be overburdened by too much at a time, and modern aesthetics is showing us how to make decoration cheap and strong, yet artistic and effective.

Given the sunny room and bright outlook there are still a few preliminaries to be insisted on: First, the carpet should not cover the whole floor—this custom only results in a perfect dust trap. It should be replaced by rugs over a waxed or painted floor. I prefer the last, as a wax floor is apt to be slippery if kept in good condition, and very dirty if not. I said rugs advisedly, for if you have one big rug it is almost as impossible to give the necessary beating and shaking as if it were a carpet; therefore several small rugs put close together make the best floor covering. The best color for the floor is in most cases a deep golden-brown, or even a buff if the room is used in summer principally. No dark paint should be permitted in the floor or woodwork of the nursery.

**A** PRETTY color scheme is pink walls, buff paint (which is a cross between pink and yellow), white window curtains, under over-curtains of buff cretonne, with bunches of deep red and pink roses, and all of these may be found in materials cheap enough to allow of their frequent renewal. In almost all stores nursery papers are sold, on which are illustrated the dear old stories from Mother Goose and the fairy books. These are not pretty papers, but they have the merit of interesting children, who love to pick out Tom Thumb, Cinderella and their other favorites, and if chosen of a delicate general tone they make a not inartistic background. I have used with great success a paper, where, in spite of the brilliant spots made by numerous Boy Blues and Red Riding-hoods, the general tone was a pale olive, and this, with Indian red in my woodwork and red roses on an olive cretonne for curtains, made a really charming nursery.

All around the room should run a strip of moulding, some four inches deep, as a chair rod. This should be just the height of the back of a chair, so that the wall is protected when the dear boys thrust their chairs back too suddenly, or when the tiny toddler is pushing a chair before her as she makes her first voyage across the floor. Below this moulding, cover the walls with thick brown paper—when your babies reach the scribbling age—and on it allow the children to draw and paint freely. This affords them the keenest delight, and the paper, though not pretty, is easily replaced when it becomes too highly decorated, and too much of an eyesore. By insisting that their artistic efforts shall be confined to this dado the lesson is given of care for mamma's pretty things in other parts of the house, and with a little judicious oversight some training is given to the child in drawing and observation. I have known one nursery to be treated in this way with blackboard paper—costing about fifty cents the square yard.

**A**BOVE these naïve mural decorations should always hang some really good pictures. I do not mean that these should all be *chefs d'œuvre*, but some few masterpieces I insist upon. Children like pictures whose story they can feel, whose bright colors they enjoy. For these tastes there are many provisions in the colored prints and photographs which now abound, only choose them carefully so as to lead the tastes to better things, and mingle with them pictures which are really good to all the world, some autotype of a Raphael or Murillo, a Madonna whose glorious face shall grow to be a part of the childhood on which it shines.

**T**HE furniture of a nursery should be as simple as possible: A square table, with rounded corners, steady and solid, with a cover of baize tacked on with nails under the projecting edge. This for the older children makes the best place for games and for writing, and the safest place for the evening lamp—where one is needed. I think each child should have his own low chair, but not with rockers, please, to gnaw off the paint from the washboard and trip up the younger babies; and there should be one cozy, comfortable seat for mamma or nurse, to gather the little ones about her at evening. These chairs and the table, with a big sofa, are about all your room needs if you have capacious closets. If you have not, long, low presses may be built into the wall filling up the recesses on each side of the chimney projection. These presses should be partly drawers and partly shelves, and each child should be given his special shelf and drawer as his place of safety for his toys. They should be low enough for the children to reach to every part, and the inexorable rule should be, that as the afternoon wanes and supper-time draws near, each child should put his belongings in order and make the room tidy for papa's visit—a habit easily taught and a wise custom on both sides. The sofa I have spoken of is a great delight to children, and is indispensable in these days of illness, when the drooping head is too heavy for play, but able to be propped up over books and paint-box. And what a glorious playground it is—serving for every imaginable beast on which to ride, and to build every conceivable form of building in which to live. A cheap sofa may be made from a box six feet long, two and a half feet wide and two feet high. The box is put on castors, and the lid is not solid but a frame over which burlap is stretched taut, and on which a mattress is made to fit. The whole is then covered with some bright, stout stuff—cretonne or jute. This with three square pillows makes a luxurious sofa, and should not cost more than ten or twelve dollars. The box part serves admirably as a hospital for broken toys, or a storehouse for nursery linen and such conveniences.

**T**HE night nursery is simply furnished by a bed for each child, a small table, and the usual toilet arrangements of a bedroom—the only object worthy of special mention being the bed for the baby, who, by-the-way, should have his individual couch from the hour of his birth, and not begin life in mamma's. Of course, if you have plenty of money his lordship is easily served, and you have but to choose among the dainty *barcelonnettes* with their satin upholstery and frills of lace; but if money is a consideration you naturally feel that no great sum should be spent on a bed which must so soon be discarded, and yet any mother does want a dainty, cozy nest for the coming joy. For my first little daughter I prepared, from an ordinary clothes-basket, a bed which cost me about five dollars. I selected a deep oval one of medium size, made a sack of ticking the same shape but larger than the bottom, and filled this with feathers from two old pillows. Then a mattress to fit over this was made by an upholsterer, who filled it with a cheap grade of hair for two dollars. I lined the basket with pale blue silesia, and outside I hung around it a deep ruffle of white dimity edged with lace, which entirely concealed all the wicker, except the handles and the brim around the basket; these I wove with pale blue ribbons, making voluminous bows at each handle, and when I had put in a pair of "baby" blankets and a small hair pillow, my bed was ready. Very pretty it looked perched up on two chairs turned face to face, and most convenient it proved, for not only could it be taken from room to room with greatest ease, but in moving around the world I found it a blessing; on shipboard it was brought on deck for Miss Baby's nap in the open air; when we landed it was packed with all her belongings, and, sewed up in linen, was sent as a trunk from place to place.

**A** VERY good bed for a summer baby is a small hammock filled with soft blankets. This can be hung across a corner of the room out of draughts, and has the advantage of occupying small space when not in use. A hammock, I need hardly say, should be part of the nursery possessions when you migrate for the summer, and the child allowed to spend much time in it, in the shade of the trees or porch. The chief objection seems to be the ease with which our small tyrants tumble out, but if the hammock is swung low, and watched with ordinary care, the chances for a tumble are not great. And who has yet invented a bed from which a healthy active child cannot contrive to fall? Later in life this first bed is replaced by a crib, and I urge upon mothers the necessity of providing a brass or iron one with a woven wire spring, and a good mattress and pillow made of a good quality of curled hair. A feather pillow should never be used in either crib or cradle.

### PICTURES FOR THE CHILDREN

*By Alice Graham McCollin*

**H**OW many people realize what a wealth of artistic material there is available for the furnishing and decoration of the apartments which are devoted to the little lords and ladies of creation? Not until one actually sets upon a search for pictures which are suitable and which will appeal to a child's interest and emotion, does he realize what an assortment there is from which to select. To the very young in the nursery, pictures of children appeal more directly than any other subject. Copies, colored or in black and white, of Sir John Millais' world-famous "Cherry Ripe" and "Bubbles" have a charm which is unequalled. The little "Master of the Hounds," with his dogs and hunting toggery, is also most attractive. Within the reach of almost every parent are the colored copies of Ida Waugh's and Maud Humphreys' charming children, and Kate Greenaway scarcely needs to be suggested. Some of E. A. Abbey's drawings appeal to childish tastes, and F. S. Church's cupids and maidens arouse feelings of pleasure in whoever sees them. Photographs and engravings of Sir Joshua Reynolds' little people of a bygone century, charm and lead to intelligent and instructive talks of a past era. Landseer's and Rosa Bonheur's animals offer an almost unlimited field for choice. Bouguereau has exquisite children to offer. Copies of the portraits of famous children, such as "The Little Dauphin," "The Princes in the Tower," "The King of Naples," should not be given to very young children, as the stories which must be told in answer to the questions about the subjects, are too painful for childish imaginations to dwell upon.

**P**ICTURES of Napoleon, of Joan of Arc, of Ferdinand and Isabella, of Columbus, of Washington and of Lincoln are interesting to children who are old enough to be told something of history. Pictures of historic events, such as "The Discovery of Steam," a charming portrayal of the boy Watts with the spoon and kettle; of Franklin with his kite; of "The Signing of the Declaration"; of "Washington Crossing the Delaware," and of his "Farewell to His Army," are valuable in themselves and for the historic knowledge they will bring.

Military pictures are as charming to boys as those of Court scenes and famous beauties are to girls. Copies of famous statues are good in themselves, also as an education of the artistic sense. Pictures which have an unlimited power for good, and are of unending charm to children of all ages are those of Christ and of the Madonna. The picture of the infant Christ in the manger, of the adoration of the Wise Men, of the Shepherds, of the Boy in the Temple and in the carpenter shop, and of the Man Christ blessing little children, are beautiful and inspiring. There are so many exquisite and beautiful Madonnas that it is difficult to suggest any one more than another which would attract the eyes of childhood. Raphael's "Sistine Madonna," with its background of angel children's faces and with the famous adoring cherubs below, should, however, have a place in every nursery. The tradition runs that while Raphael was painting this Madonna for Pope Sixtus he happened to glance down from the scaffold where he was at work, into the church below him. There he saw two children leaning in the attitudes which he has rendered immortal, gazing up at his work. Instantly the idea of the adoration of the children seized upon him, an idea which the finished canvas portrays with exquisite and undying skill.

This is but one, but so famous an example of the Child in Art, that it seems well to repeat this legend.

Frames of light oak prove most durable for nursery pictures; the dainty white ones which will appeal to most mothers very soon lose their freshness, and gilt frames are apt to tarnish.