

THE PARLOR, ETC.

FLOWER FURNISHING.—One of the first things, in France, that strikes a foreigner, is the use made of flowers in furnishing.

The flowers there belong as much to the rooms, as the chairs and sofas. And another striking thing is, the material used; nothing that is effective is despised for commonness. The common white field daisy, dahlia, sunflowers, golden-rod, and asters, all are perfectly welcome; and, what is more, quite beautiful, and entirely in their place. There you do not see a flower-stand looking disconsolate somewhere; but just in the window-framing, the light as it were, there will be a long flower-box—just an edging of flowers inside. People in a room turn so naturally to a window, that there is no describing the bright effect that this flower-box has.

The windows opening down have simply a low box along them, and the plants at the sides, perhaps, are, now and then, rather higher.

White should be sparingly used. Nothing in its proper place gives such effect of color to other flowers, or such lightness; but when too much employed, it invariably produces a blotchy, muddy look. It sounds, perhaps, paradoxical to say that white gives color. But take a pot of pink hyacinths and another of red tulips, and put in between them a plant of the large white primrose, and you can then decide whether color is lost or gained. The time when white weakens color is, when in a vase, or in anything, you have a perpetual breakage, a little dab of one color, and then an atom of white. There can be no real color—nothing but muddiness there.

Abrad, the beautiful light, ferny asparagus-leaves are very much used. Here, perhaps, they would be pronounced vulgar. The long foliage is cut quite low down, tied carefully into a bunch made up with moss, or other stalks, exactly to fit the size, and then, being tightly tied, the bunch is forced firmly into a hyacinth-glass quite full of water.

Any narrow-mouthed jar would answer the purpose just as well. This method applies, moreover, to many things more in glasses. To be beautiful, these tufts of leaves must be light. Ferns and grasses, and branches of the mist-tree are also charming. These long boxes give an indescribable brightness and home-likeness to a house. But, above all things, avoid a crowding. A couple of pots of white primrose, or sweet aysun, a plant or two of crimson, and a pot of violets, with the green, will be sufficient.

Few persons understand the immense effect produced only by a mass of green. A flower-stand filled with green plants, moss, and even but a couple of flowers in bloom, is most attractive. Setting off one gem is far better than collecting a crowd that detract from each others beauty. Each flower is thus allowed to be distinct.

One of the most beautiful decorations we have ever seen for a dinner-table, was one superb cactus flaming above a mass of dark chestnut-leaves. The celery-stand, in which the bouquet stood, was hidden by drooping chestnut-branches. When more than one colored flower is used, let it be detached from all others by a mass of green.

We must mention, too, the trellises that are covered with growing ivy, and that stand all summer time in front of the empty hearth. In winter they are moved merely to the window. These long boxes have a trellis attached at the back ends. A plant or two of ivy is enough to twine over the trellis, and then, through all the season, a succession of flowers is kept up, in a way that is particularly effective.

A range of hyacinth-glasses are in the box. The glasses are, of course, completely concealed by the moss; and in each of these said glasses is a tightly-bound bunch of something—it may be asparagus-leaves, as I have described

just now, or it may be Japan lilies, or, still oftener, gladioli. Either of these flowers is perfect for such uses. The tall, white lily, also, is exquisite in this way.

The boxes should be lined with zinc, if possible, in order to save the carpet when the watering takes place. They should be about eight inches deep, and say ten wide, a slight cane trellis, looking like rods for basket-work, merely stained dark green on the back and ends, coming about as high as an ordinary chimney-piece; ivy trained over the trellis, to cover it a good deal, but by no means thickly, simply to wreath about it, especially at the edges; purple asters, and scarlet gladioli, in hyacinth-glasses, with, between them, some pots of fern or grass, or of asparagus-leaves, is all that is required to make a particularly effective stand.

The ivy itself, in case of emergency, could be cut, and put in glasses, and trained to look all natural. And, after all, it is well to know this for any quickly got-up decoration, or for a screen to shut off some unused door-way, or ugly view. Horse-chestnut, acacia, and catalpa, could all be used in their season, by way of decoration, only by putting the cut end of the branch in a jar with water and charcoal, and then closing the mouth with a lump of the potter's clay. In winter, the glossy holly, with its clusters of red berries, are very available.

Boxes, like those just described, can be filled entirely with the ivy-grown trellis, branches of holly, some tall and tapering, others low and spreading; and with some one white flower—a calyx, a white rose, or the simple large-fringed Chinese primrose. Then pots of one of these white flowers among the holly would look perfect. Much green, with a little color, is a rule that has a wide reign. Let each flower repose quietly on a bed of green—that is, after all the natural view of flowers.

For actual use on dinner-tables, the prettiest fashion is the large open vase supported on gilt branches, always so arranged so as to look wide and low in proportion to its height.

Of course, in the center of the table, there must be something high; but there it seems so much more natural to have lights—a tall branch, for instance, with candles, and only at the feet two or three groups of flowers; three groups of flowers or fruit, forming a natural ornament round the foot of some high center. Much green is again especially desirable in this place, because there is always a certain glare of light and plate, and table-cloth and dress; and a mass of green is, therefore, more than ever welcome to eyes that feel slightly weary. We should suggest, then, having, if for a large or long table, some center-piece of this kind, and placing the vase already described at the top or bottom. But for a small table, especially a round one, the said vase itself is charming, when used for the center ornament.

Any tall, large glass bowl, such as is usually used for fruit, would answer the purpose. Let it be filled with either wood-moss, or some of the easily-grown *lycopodiums*. The moss must be raised in the center, however not leaped up.

But comparatively few flowers are needed, only be careful to arrange the colors properly. Let each flower be simply laid down on the green, fairly round the vase; no attempt made to fill up the center at all. The flowers should just touch, and each have its own green leaves; the stems, of course, must be hidden slightly in the moss. The effect will be bright, fresh, and beautiful. If preferred, the flowers could be scattered over the moss, one, either scarlet or white, crowning it.

The same general rules apply to hand bouquets. A good deal of green, separating the flowers of different colors, should always be employed; and the fewer varieties of color, even then, the more effective the bouquet.