

"Ay, mony a time. Mat an' me have spent mony a day i' seekin' 'em," said Simon promptly, "an' we could fand no moore than that papper tells"—referring to a sheet in the questioning feoffee's hand.

"Then how do you date the boy's age with such precision?"

The nurse now sidled confidently to the front.

"If it please your honour's worship, aw wur called to stiff-backed Nan's dowter in the last pinch, when hoo wur loike to die, an' that little chap wur born afore aw left; an' that wur o' th' fifth o' May, seventeen hundred an' nointy-noine. Aw know it, fur aw broke mi arm th' vary next day."

"And the mother died."

"Yea!—afore the week wur eawt.

"And you think she was lawfully married? Where was her husband?"

"Aye! that's it. Hoo had a guinea-gould wedding-ring on; an' owd Nan said it wur a sad thing th' lass had ever got wedded, an' moore o' the same soort. An' aw geet eawt o' her that they're bin wedded at Crumpsall, an' a' th' neebors knew as th' husband had had a letter to fatch him to Liverpool, an' had niver come back. Onybody i' Smedley knows that!"

"And you think they were honest, industrious people?"

"Aye, that they were, but rayther stiff i' th' joints, yo' know—seemed to think theirsel's too good to talk to folk like; or mabbe we'd ha' known th' lad's name an' o' belongin' to him. They owed nobbody nowt, an' aw wur paid fur moi jcb."

Jabez was called forward and examined; and he came pretty well out of the fire.

They found that he could read a little, knew part

of his catechism, and they saw that he was a well-behaved, intelligent boy, with truthful dark grey eyes and a reflective brow.

There was a long and animated discussion, during which the boy and his friends were bidden to retire.

It was contended that the marriage of the boy's parents was not proven, that his very name was dubious, and that the founder's will was specific on that head.

Then one of Mrs. Clough's friends rose and grew eloquent. He asked if they were to interpret the will of the great and benevolent man, whose portrait looked down upon them, by the spirit or by the letter? If they themselves did not *feel* that the boy was eligible, as the nurse's testimony went to prove? That this was a case peculiarly marked out for their charitable construction. And he wound up by inquiring if they thought Humphrey Chetham would expect his representatives to be less human, less charitable, less conscientious in dealing with a bounty not their own, than that poor, struggling, hard-working tanner and his daughter, who had maintained and cherished the orphan in spite of cruelly hard times and still more cruel slander.

And then he told as an episode what Sally Cooper had confessed, and how and why Bess had lost her lover.

This turned the quivering scale.

"Jabez Clegg and his friends" were called in. The verdict, which turned the current of his life, was pronounced—Jabez Clegg was a Blue-coat-boy!

Before the night was out, while the flood-gates of all their hearts were open, Matthew Cooper, though nearly twenty years her senior, asked Bess to be his wife!

END OF CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

"HOW SHALL I FURNISH MY DRAWING-ROOM?"

BEFORE we proceed to any decided step in buying furniture, there are several points which should be taken into consideration, and by these our minds should be more or less influenced.

When we purchase our goods and chattels, one of our first thoughts should be, Is the room a large or a small one? What is its shape? is another question to be answered. Is the house which contains it an old building, or one of modern date? is a third important point. And lastly, what is the aspect of the room itself—do its windows face north, south, east, or west?

One can readily imagine that the table, and couch, and chiffonier which might look remarkably well in a large and lofty room, would appear heavy for, and would overcrowd, one of smaller dimensions. As a rule, therefore, no large piece of furniture should be

brought into a small room; at the same time it must be remembered that it is a possible error to go to the other extreme, and have everything on too diminutive a scale. I lately went into a drawing-room (*not* in an old maid's house) wherein were six little stands, and the chairs were all of such a slight and elegant style, that I ran my eye round the room, wondering on which I dare venture to sit down!

Again, old-fashioned pieces of furniture, which look so very picturesque, and which agree so admirably with diamond panes and latticed windows and old oak floors, appear quite out of place in a room which bears the date of to-day. It is also easy to suppose that furniture well suited to a square room would most probably not adapt itself comfortably to the requirements of a room that happened to be long and narrow.

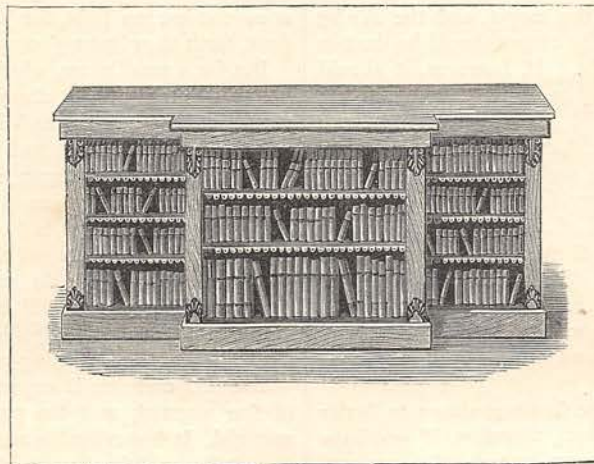
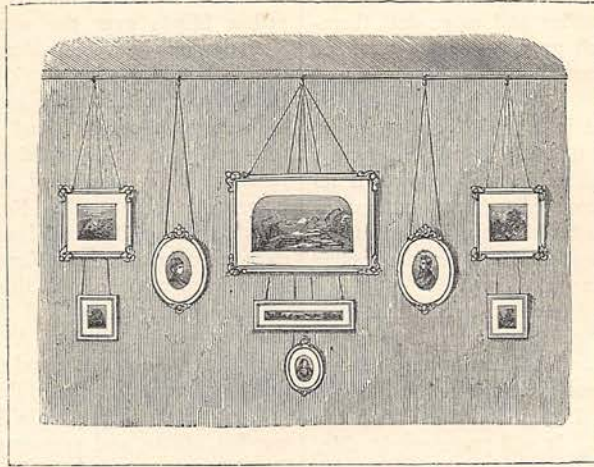
Lastly, a room which is rarely or never cheered by the sun's rays requires to be differently furnished in some respects to the one which is often, or it may be continually, brightened by sunshine.

In buying the contents for, and arranging, our drawing-room, our great aim should be to make it a comfortable, cheerful, cosy, and yet withal an elegant room.

This desirable combination is, strange to say, rarely achieved, for how seldom it is that we enter a room which bears the marks of these various qualifications!

This one looks stiff, that one bare, another overcrowded, a fourth looks cold and uninhabited, a fifth too grand for daily use. Where is the feeling of home comfort in any of these apartments? But let us end these disparaging remarks, and see where the fault lies.

It partly arises from the mistaken notion so prevalent now-a-days that money, money only and money alone, will accomplish everything. In a certain sense, of course, this assertion is true enough; but in the question now before us, good judgment and good taste are two handmaids which give immense help, and their absence is at once perceivable. Money procures luxuries, but it is not money alone which produces comfort. I have seen a few drawing-rooms which always struck visitors with a pleasurable feeling, and they have invariably exclaimed, "What a charming room!" "What a comfortable and pretty room!" and when on several occasions I analysed the contents of the room thus apostrophised, and mentally put a price on the several pieces of furniture, it was surprising to think how inexpensive each article was in reality, and when I considered that the room had nothing in itself to form the attraction, I was forced to conclude that the effect was almost wholly due to the wisdom displayed in the choice of furniture and other etcetera, and the judgment exercised in the arrangement of it. If you wish to verify my words, pray call at two or three houses in any one terrace, and you will sometimes be almost startled—for, really, I have been—in entering a room which you naturally expected to be a complete fac-simile of the one just left, to find what a striking contrast existed.



I have sometimes been ushered into drawing-rooms whose very appearance chilled me on entering, and cast a gloom over my spirits—rooms which were furnished expensively. Costly were the curtains, carpet, and chairs; handsome were the ornaments; and yet the result was not satisfactory to the eye of the beholder, for a certain stiffness accompanied the grandeur, which effectually robbed it of all appearance of home comfort.

Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is quite possible for an expensively furnished room to look inviting and cheerful, and also for a poorly furnished room to look cheerless and unattractive, but in neither case would the presence of money make the required alterations.

For my own part, I think those drawing-rooms the prettiest which have been gradually furnished, rooms to which little additions have been made from time to time, whenever the owners happened to desecry anything which suited the style and character of them.

It is possible to have a ten-roomed house furnished throughout in twenty-four hours—so we learn from the advertising columns of our newspapers—and were we to give an order for this to be done, we should of course be saved much time and trouble; but methinks we should soon grow heartily weary of our hastily gotten possessions, for there would be a great sameness about them.

Generally speaking, it is much more difficult to exercise taste in the furnishing of a town than of a country drawing-room, for frequently the former are somewhat dark, and small in size, and square in shape, all of which drawbacks a certain amount of duplicity and art is required to conceal and overcome.

We must now come to something more definite, and the first question to decide is, What paper shall we hang on the walls? A light-coloured one is invariably chosen, but even in this choice we must keep in mind the points which I enumerated at the commencement.

Experience affirms that a large-patterned paper

apparently diminishes the size of a room, and makes it look smaller than it really is; and that a striped paper on the wall of a long room has the effect of adding length. A mediæval pattern will only suit the room if the house is built in that style of architecture.

Have you pictures? Then choose a small-patterned paper. Is the room cold or dull? Then a white paper will make it look colder and more dull, therefore find one with a French grey, a delicate green, or a pale pink ground, and steadily eschew all buffs and drabs.

The choice of a carpet is a weighty matter, for carpets are costly articles; it is astonishing how many, many yards even a small room will require, if its boards are to be entirely covered. And then, besides the original cost of the material, there is that of the fitting and sewing, therefore it behoves us to consider well before we make our final decision.

If you aspire to an Axminster carpet, see that your purse is well stocked with golden guineas before you give the order. I should be well content with Brussels, a good *bonâ fide* Brussels, than which none will wear more satisfactorily. If you find the outlay too great, get a Kidderminster. It will prove serviceable, and is less expensive, for it is a quarter of a yard wider than Brussels. The only objection to this make of carpet is, that custom has awarded it its place in the bed-room. Some people prefer a tapestry carpet, but the patterns of these are usually of so florid and glaring a character, that they detract much from the general effect as it ought to be. It is considered correct taste to represent the earth by the carpet, and the sky by the paper—that is to say, the carpet should be dark in colour, and the paper light. If, however, it should happen that you are obliged to study economy, and to think of the future, I should advise you not to buy a carpet having a dark ground, for undoubtedly it will become shabby very much sooner than one having a light ground. Every dusty footmark shows on the dark carpet, and at the end of a year every place over which there has been much passing to and fro will show visible signs of the traffic, whereas on the lighter ground threadbareness is not nearly so discernible. The most economical colours are different shades of drab, but even a white ground is more useful than one of claret or maroon.

It must be owned that the furniture shows to better advantage on a dark carpet; therefore, if you have freedom of choice, and are not tethered by any consideration for the future, pray indulge yourself, and select a rich crimson, or a deep green, or a dark brown.

The hearth-rug should match the carpet in colour and general appearance, unless you prefer to have one of white wool.

The fender and fire-irons look all the handsomer if made of bright steel, but whether we go to this expense or not, we can exercise good taste by choosing a neat design. There are a great many fenders about in the world which are wondrously ugly, ponderously heavy, and elaborately showy in style.

Having papered the walls and put down the carpet, it is time we thought of blinds and curtains.

In buying the former, it is well to think of the outside, as well as of the inside appearance. Now, coloured blinds are doubtless more useful than white ones, especially in town houses, but green or crimson shed a much pleasanter light than yellow. You may deem me fastidious, but truly my eye dreads to see yellow blinds over the windows of a brick house. Venetian blinds are considered indispensable by some people, but in reality outside sun-blinds are far preferable, and are not more costly. The main object is to keep the room cool and shady. In the one case this end is certainly attained, but at the same time much fresh air is excluded, and all connection with the outer world is shut out. For myself I feel half suffocated, and wholly bewildered, when ushered into a dark room in which the Venetians are down.

To keep a room cool, the sun's rays must be kept off the window-panes, and this is what is effectually done by outside blinds. At the same time you may have the windows open, and the blinds inside the room drawn up, and thus cheerfulness instead of gloom will predominate. Silk or satin damask, rep, either silk or woollen, chintz, and cretonne, are the materials for the drawing-room curtains. The first three mentioned are costly materials, but woollen rep or chintz comes within the reach of ordinary folk. For a large room, or one which has a cold aspect, a bright warm-coloured rep is the most suitable. Crimson invariably looks well and at all seasons of the year—so also does blue if you can only find the right shade, which is a medium one—one not too light, for it soon soils; and not too dark, for it then looks gloomy.

But for a small room, what is there to compare to a pretty chintz? Chintz always looks cheerful, never seems out of season, and is most economical. It never fades perceptibly, and when soiled it can, for a small cost, be passed through the hands of the cleaner, from whence it emerges as bright and smiling as ever. The choice of patterns is immense; but even if your room is a small one, do not choose a very minute and prim pattern. If you do so, when the curtains are made and hung, you will be disappointed; for the pattern will look too insignificant, and more fitted for the bed-room than a sitting-room.

The real cretonne is expensive, because it is made of fine worsted, and the pattern is woven into the material. It is serviceable and wears well, but as much cannot be said in favour of the common cretonnes which now abound in our shops, and attract many by their gay and lively colouring and design. The patterns of these are merely printed on cotton, and the surface not being glazed (as is the case with chintz), the colours fade in consequence, or are quickly rubbed off, and all too soon the lovely flowers disappear, and the whole looks shabby.

For the white muslin curtains, a small decided pattern, such as a fern or rose leaf, will be found to be more effective than any very elaborate design; for the folds into which the curtains naturally fall, prevent any large pattern from being properly appreciated.

If these curtains are lined with pink or green book-muslin, they remain in good order for a much greater length of time; and the general effect, especially as seen from outside, is good. Broad ribbon of the prevailing colour of the room is now used to hold back curtains instead of cord and tassels. According to my notion, a valance looks better than a pole, however handsome the latter may be. Dwellers in towns declare that valances harbour dust, and soon become smoke-begrimed and soiled. I must leave the decision on this point to individual taste; probably to some people the absence of a valance, and the presence of a pole, may *not* convey the idea of a bare and unfinished window.

We now come to what is pre-eminently termed "the furniture." What about our tables and chairs? Well, gilt is of no use in an every-day room, and rose-wood and ebony are somewhat expensive; walnut is less so; and if none of these come within our reach, we must have plain wood stained in imitation, and polished; and if this offends our eye, we can easily contrive to show as little of it as possible, by covering the tops of our tables with cloth, and by having no visible framework to our easy-chairs and couch.

An oval table is preferable to a round one, as now one never sees a table placed exactly in the centre of a room. An oblong table, kept exclusively for writing, is always useful, and may be made ornamental if the writing materials are selected with taste.

Then a little gipsy table sets off the room, especially if covered with a bright-coloured cloth. These are rather expensive pieces of furniture for the size, but if you like to be at a little trouble, they need not cost you so much. Get the joiner to turn a trio of legs, to stain and polish them, and to make an octagon top of common white wood. Then buy some cloth, fringe, and ornamental nails, and the table will soon be finished. The greater the variety of tables, both as to shape and size, the better will be the effect, and the same may be said respecting chairs. There should be chairs to suit all tastes and all ages, some high and some low, some with tall backs and narrow seats, some with short backs and broad seats. Easy-chairs should predominate, but two or three ordinary chairs will be found useful—for instance, one for the writing-table, and the others for occasional use.

In ordinary rooms a couch is more useful than an ottoman. If the room is large enough to hold the two, then a circular ottoman in front of the hearth-rug is a comfortable piece of furniture.

The coverings of the chairs and couch should match the curtains, but the introduction of another material is quite admissible. Sometimes it happens that a certain arm-chair is a prime favourite, and is soiled sooner than any of the others; this might be covered with a cretonne.

For over-covers a small-patterned, light-coloured chintz, or brown holland piped with crimson braid, is the prettiest and most serviceable.

A room without books looks desolate, and a room without ornaments looks bare. One seldom sees a pretty drawing-room book-case, and inlaid cabinets

are not to be had for small sums of money. For myself, I would rather possess good, handsome books, and lovely ornaments, than spend all my money upon a handsome cabinet or chiffonier. A very pretty room, with which I am acquainted, has a long, low book-case, some six feet in length and three in height; there is a centre compartment, which projects about four inches in advance of the wings that flank it on either side; the depth of these wings measures eleven or twelve inches. The large and heavier books occupy the central division, while the smaller volumes fill the side shelves. On the top of this book-case are reared china bowls and plates, tall vases stand sentinels at either end, and cups and other knickknacks fill up the vacant space. The *coup-d'œil* is most pleasing.

It is not within my province to advise as to the choice of a piano, but I may just remark that the instrument should be placed in such a position that it will not be in danger of draught from door or window.

I think that we have now enumerated all the necessary pieces of furniture; it is almost impossible to offer any remarks as to their arrangement, except to say that the chairs must be scattered about the room, and the contents of the tables should not be arranged with mathematical precision. The ornamental adornments must be left entirely to the individual taste of the owner; I can only throw out a few hints on this subject.

It is better taste to have good photographs on the walls than badly-executed water-colours. In hanging the pictures, if there is not a picture-rod round the walls, put the nails which support the cord as close to the ceiling as practicable. A mirror over the mantelpiece always adds much to the cheerful appearance of the room; and if you would display good taste, let the frame which encircles it be neat in design. Brackets placed in the corners of the room, or elsewhere, take away much of the stiffness, especially if the room is a square one. Flowers here, there, and everywhere except on the mantelpiece always shed brightness and beauty.

The evil tendency of the present day is to have too many knickknacks about, until all home-feeling is banished, and one is inclined to think that the room has been converted into a shop.

We can render a room uncomfortable by too great a display of needlework. The fire is unapproachable because a fine flowered fender-stool bars the way. This chair must not be sat upon because its seat is covered with satin, that one because it contains a delicate cushion, another because its back is robed with a precious antimacassar. Away with such discomforts! Certainly, have needlework, and wool-work, and some dainty devices, for they bear traces of woman's presence, and give a home-like look to the room; but do not deck it with too many of these works of art, and by thus doing exclude all comfort and use; for let us ever bear in mind that we rob the drawing-room of its greatest charm and beauty, when we make it into an apartment which bears the marks of being either unused or uncared for.