

HOW WE MOVED FROM CAMBERWELL TO KENSINGTON.



AS my husband's business was turned into a company, who paid handsomely for it, moreover making him the working manager for some years, with a liberal salary, we began to think that our old home at Camberwell was hardly suitable to our altered circumstances. But as we came to look about us we discovered it was not quite so easy a matter to find a new home as we had anticipated. We had been accustomed to a good garden and large rooms, and though we were prepared to pay double the rent, that seemed to help us very little.

We answered the advertisements in the papers with persevering industry, and, as a rule, the more they tallied with our wishes the less the house did. The several agents supplied us with orders to view in any abundance, and with little discrimination, for it frequently happened after an expedition unusually long and tiresome, the house we had gone to see had been let a week or so. In time our circle of research narrowed, and for several reasons we decided to live at South Kensington. Brooks, considering it a rising neighbourhood, thought a house there a better investment than elsewhere, and to me it seemed the only place where you could get a really nice abode in a fashionable quarter at a tolerably moderate rent; for what was the use of leaving Camberwell for Bloomsbury or the Regent's Park? Brooks wasn't one to sink his money in a premium, and these seemed invariably to be required for any house in a good London square or street.

We didn't fix upon a house even at South Kensington in a minute; but I am sure there are plenty to choose from in every state of progress, for whole squares and streets are still in the workpeople's hands, and I expect are likely to be for some time. When we did at last decide on one it was a mere carcase, with no internal decorations whatever; but that enabled us to choose our own papers and finish it according to our individual taste, and all at the builder's expense, who undertook to do anything and everything we wished. Neither Brooks nor I knew much of modern fal-lals, but, of course, we wanted to have things like other people; and in a short time I flatter myself I knew as much about dados as any one else. Of course we had dados up the staircase as well as in the drawing-room and dining-room, and there were so many consultations and pros and cons about my boudoir that I left it at last to the decorator, who was well up in the mysteries of high art, and

as he promised to make the same arrangements for me as he had successfully carried out for an illustrious princess whose artistic taste is proverbial, what could I wish for more?

Time glided by: at first everything was forgotten in the delight of having really found a house to suit us at last, and we were very busy, what with daily visits to the new abode to see how things progressed, and the overhauling our possessions at home to decide what was to be kept and what disposed of. Everything we did keep, which had looked well enough in its old quarters, was said to require renovating. Ours is the good old-fashioned furniture people like now-a-days; but polish and gilding were wanted everywhere, though I didn't have half done they said ought to be. Elbow-grease and the following recipe did wonders with wardrobe, chairs, and tables:— $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Castile soap, 1 oz. beeswax, $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. white wax, $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of turpentine. The wax and turpentine first melted, then the soap boiled in a pint of soft water. When melted and cold the whole were mixed together and stirred till of the consistency of plain cream.

Brooks' taste was always rather artistic. We had a store of what I call rubbish, made to harbour dust and nothing else, though I don't tell him so—old arms, antlers, &c. All these we thoroughly cleaned. The old Louis XIV. marqueterie clock, of which he is not a little proud, became quite bright and beautiful when rubbed with some very diluted oxalic acid; and our iron umbrella-stands and scrapers we made as good as new by painting them over with Berlin black, which costs only a shilling or two. It is astonishing, if you will take the trouble, how much you may do in the way of successful renovation at a very little cost. From what I have seen of workmen lately, I have come to the conclusion that they have an easy time of it; if we were let into a few of their trade secrets we should spoil their market considerably. Poor women, what a hubbub there is about their employment! Most of them work twice as hard as the men, and how rich they would think themselves if they earned sixpence an hour, instead of the masculine tenpence!

What with deciding about cleaning chintzes and carpets, gilding frames and cornices, polishing furniture and parting with some, my hands seemed full. I disliked the selling part the most; it really did disgust me to let things go for a few shillings which had cost pounds, knowing if they had to be replaced they would cost as many pounds again. The system these men have! They look at all you wish to sell, state no special price for any article, and then make you an offer in a lump sum, which, when you come to look through the list of what you propose parting with, you find is about one shilling apiece for everything all round, or some equally ridiculous amount. But buying and selling are two different things, and you have, as a rule, to make the best of the bargain.

What a useful article gas-piping proved, too, painted

and cut to the room, with small brass acorn mounts at either end! It looked well, and saved us the expense of brass picture-rods, and we did without cornices by advancing the architrave on either side of the windows an inch or so, and adding a transverse piece at the top, between which we placed a piece of gas-piping for the curtain-rings to run upon.

Getting out of the old house was bad enough. What a heap of rubbish we had accumulated in the course of time, and how loth we were to part with it! As long as you are stationary it fits into its place and is forgotten; but once move, and it assumes Brogdignagian proportions. And the accumulation of dirt! I consider myself a careful housewife, and never all my life neglected spring and autumn cleaning; but when the large pieces of furniture were moved the dust clung to the wall like beeswing to old port, and I felt almost ashamed the workpeople should see it.

"Three moves are as bad as a fire," they say, and I feel quite sure it is true. Though the people who undertake the business are always at it and up to their work, it is astonishing how little information you get as to the best way of proceeding beforehand. I think we adopted the best plan for a move to a long distance such as ours. We made our selection from several estimates sent in by different firms for a lump sum for the job, which included packing, removing, and re-putting up beds, &c. If we had only moved a street or two, I should have done a great deal by hand and paid so much for each waggon. The men came days beforehand, with crates and cases, and packed the china, &c., and all they did arrived safely; but in the scramble at the last the servants put a little together themselves, most of which was broken; which taught me a lesson for another time (though I hope there will never be another time for me of that kind), viz., to make the packers do it all. One or two other things I learnt also. Whatever you may be told to the contrary, chests of drawers and wardrobes should be emptied; wardrobes are often too large to be taken up the staircase, and have to be drawn through the windows, and as likely as not are deposited bottom upwards, to say nothing of the increased weight, which makes the carrying and lifting all the more difficult. The several drawers in a chest are taken out to be carried up-stairs, and if heavily filled the bottoms are apt to come out. If the weather is wet, the contents run great risk of spoiling, the chance of which it is far better to avoid. It is as well to pack up all you can; sharp corners, carving, everything gets knocked about and chipped; and the more protected they are, the more the property is spared. Books should be tied up in bundles, back and front alternately, and wrapped in paper.

The expenses of moving into a new house are endless, and store is no sore; where every little thing has to be bought, many old and despised stores prove of value. We had made up our minds to new carpets and curtains in one or two of the principal rooms, but in the others we were able to turn what we had to account. The fashion of painting the margin of the floors is a great help where carpets are concerned.

With a background of fresh paint and paper, it is astonishing when old things are thoroughly cleaned how well they look. Not that I thought anything looked well for a long time.

We had let our old house and were obliged to leave to the day, so we could not alter our plans, even when we found that the new one was not half ready, and that we had to deposit our goods and chattels in rooms which were still being painted, the dust flying about, and the smell of the paint overwhelming. For the latter we found our best remedy was a disinfectant placed about the rooms. Pails of water, the usual plan, will spoil the paint. How I detested our possessions for a week or two! No room was thoroughly finished, and the furniture never seemed to find a quiet resting-place, but was perpetually moved about: wearisome work! We lived in the most primitive fashion, and got to be thankful to find plates and glasses to use, a bed to lie upon, or a chair to sit on. My patience was greater than Brooks', and we both of us bore the inconveniences better than the servants, who might have been brought up in a palace all their lives, to hear them talk. We smelt paint, tasted it in the food, and we got covered with it—every dress I wore was spoilt by it. Moreover, we seemed to live in public, the workmen swarming everywhere. How impatient we were to get rid of them, and how they dawdled! Whatever meals our servants were taking, there was sure to be a cluster of them in the kitchen; and they waited about, gossiping with aggravating coolness, discussing audibly enough the political questions of the day, with a knowledge and acumen which made me wonder. I come of an old-fashioned Tory lot, and could not help thinking they would have done better to attend more to their own business; but Brooks is a Liberal Conservative, whatever that may be, and didn't approve of such sentiments on my part.

All this was only the beginning of troubles. As we got our gas-fittings up leakages were discovered, the men spoiling the wall-paper in rectifying them, and poisoning us with the smell. When at last we did fairly get the water into the house, it had a trick of appearing through the ceilings, or refusing to run off comfortably through the pipes. Whatever tradespeople we had to employ invariably left their work half done. It took days to get our blinds; the rollers arrived, but not the people to put them up—who, when they did come, looked in for an hour or two and then left, and the work half done too.

In a new house there are not any fixtures to pay for, but everything has to be bought, and you learn to realise what a number of trifles are required to fulfil the requirements of modern civilisation.

Seeing how, in the late commercial difficulties, hundreds have had no homes left at all, it seems wicked to grumble at these minor worries and inconveniences; and now that our troubles are wellnigh over we can afford to laugh at them.

To those who contemplate a removal, my advice would be—lay your plans well beforehand, and tie the builder down to some agreement to be ready to time, the infringement of which would entail a fine.