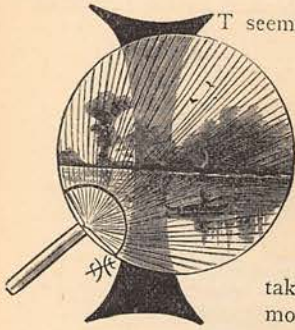


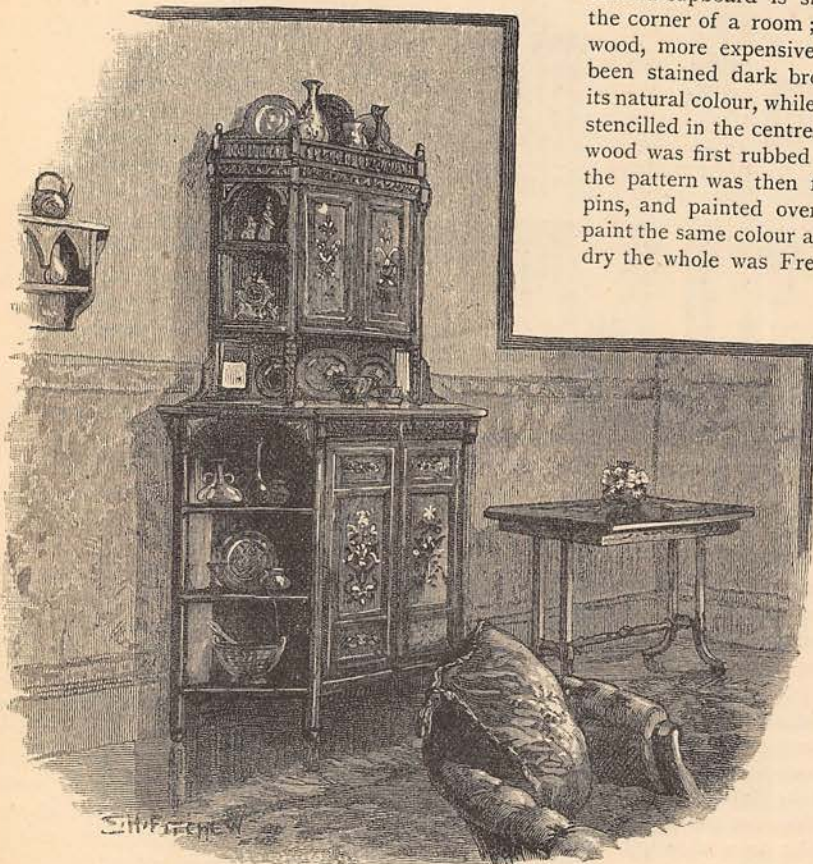
SOME HINTS ABOUT HAND-PAINTED FURNITURE.



It seems strange that, although so much time and money is spent in acquiring the art of drawing, we see so little practical result in our own homes. The artistic mind does not apply itself to furniture, or, perhaps more truly, artistic fingers do not often take it in hand. Yet, what is more important? Our furniture is always with us either to charm or disgust. As only the rich can afford frequent changes, the man of moderate means should begin by buying articles of good form and design, which will delight and not weary the eyes as the long years pass on. But such things, in every way perfect, cost money, perhaps more than can be rightly afforded. Then what can be done? Perhaps the would-be purchaser possesses a gift worth very much—the art of using the

pencil and brush. Let him, under such circumstances, turn his steps from the fashionable furniture shop, and seek a good carpenter, who is also a cabinet-maker. With him he can begin at the commencement; he can visit the wood-shed and choose his own particular wood, see it cut and gradually turn into the chair or table he may have ordered. The carpenter will generally enjoy carrying out original designs, and will throw much individual skill and interest into the work. But good carpentering is not all that is required. Able hands must be busy in the studio, where persevering work and art-knowledge are necessary adjuncts. Let us examine this large room of furniture, all of which is "home-decorated." The three corner cupboards first attract attention. The first of these is made of deal; it is high and narrow, with an arched top; it is painted white; the centre panel of the door is filled with lattice-panes of glass, around which is painted a plain band of red; below the arched top a motto has been traced in old English letters (this, too, is in red, and looks very quaint); below the door is a shelf upon which stands a tall Indian pot. The second cupboard is smaller, and is made to hang in the corner of a room; it is made of white American wood, more expensive than deal; the outer rim has been stained dark brown, but the door has been left its natural colour, while a conventional pattern has been stencilled in the centre. To do this, the surface of the wood was first rubbed quite smooth with sand-paper; the pattern was then fastened upon it with drawing-pins, and painted over with a large brush filled with paint the same colour as the staining. When perfectly dry the whole was French-polished. The third cup-

board looks like old carved oak; it is difficult to believe that it is only deal. It has two doors, and stands high; some wide and narrow Lincustra-Walton had been used; it was of the pomegranate pattern, which is one of the best. The wide piece had been cut into two pieces exactly the size of each door; these had been securely fastened on to the wood, while the narrow pattern had made a border for the sides and top, and ran round a little shelf just below the top. When all the Lincustra was ready, the whole cupboard,



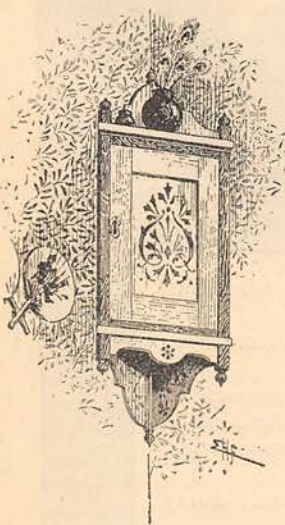
CABINET, CHINA-SHELF, AND TABLE.

woodwork and Lincustra, had had several coats of black staining, and had then been well varnished. This had taken much time and trouble, but its appearance well repaid it. The brass handles and locks and keys on each door give a brightness to the black, and the whole effect is of a beautiful example of carving.

At the other side of the room there stands a handsome piece of furniture. It is a large cabinet with upper and lower cupboards and shelves for china, and with a railed top for large jars and vases. It is made of American walnut, and the doors have been decorated with a beautifully painted conventional pattern in gold and bright sea-green. A little gold rim also runs round the shelves and up the sides. Several coats of French polish, well hardened, have given it a delightfully transparent surface. On each side of this cabinet there hang two china cases, copied from the Chinese. They are both made of English oak, but have been differently treated. One has been painted that bright vivid scarlet which is so common in China, but so difficult to meet with in England. It has then had a pattern of storks and flowers painted on it in gold, then it has been French-polished. The other has been ebonised, and when a very good black had been arrived at, a pattern had been drawn and painted with Chinese white, put on very thick. When the white was thick enough to make the pattern stand out from the wood, and when it was perfectly dry, all the white had been covered with gold. This kind of decoration cannot be polished or varnished without injuring the pattern, so some good varnish should be mixed with the ebony, if any is required.

There are several tables worth attention. One has been beautifully carved by a lady who has been giving

her mind to the study of wood-carving. She has found it needs patience and skill, and long practice; and her first finished work bears traces of toil and pains. Two simple tables are stencilled in darker shades than the background, which is of natural wood. This art of stencilling is very easy and one that any one can learn, as it comes within the most moderate means. The patterns can be drawn and cut out at home, so there are hardly any expenses connected with it. It can be applied as a decoration to all kinds of



A CORNER CUPBOARD.

things, from the walls of a house to delicate china plates. People who know nothing of the art think



LARGER CORNER CUPBOARD.

it fine to despise stencilling as inartistic. They forget that as much knowledge of drawing must be brought to bear upon making the patterns and cutting them out as there would be if they were simply drawn, only that with the help of a stencilling pattern much time and trouble is saved. A pretty set of dining-room chairs had been made at a small cost. They were deal, rush-seated chairs, such as those often used in churches. They had been painted white, and upon the top cross-bar of each a crest was painted in colours; the rush seats were hidden by dark blue velvet cushions. These chairs look well stained black or walnut, with the crest in gold. At the large furniture shops they can generally be bought unpainted for 3s. 6d. Of course, made to order, they would be more expensive.

The last article to be noticed here is a set of bookshelves made of deal covered with Lincustra-Walton, the whole having been coloured with metallic paint, which is much used for Lincustra. The shade is copper; but for a book-case the effect is more startling than pleasing, and a little light oak book-case, quite plain and unvarnished, standing only four shelves from the ground, with a railed top for ornaments, was a much more successful piece of furniture. Another time I hope to speak of the art upholstery work which decorates this room.

worth the while of speculators to make so many offers of these kinds. There is nothing new in them, except their multiplicity.

Besides these offers of work easily done and well paid, and these agencies for helping to make others happy, comfortable, and rich, there is yet another description of advertisement addressed to the literary, the intellectual, the amateur who would fain see himself in print, the writer who would be an author could he but get ducats for his thoughts.

"Come!" cry the voices of more than two or three societies; "come to us; we will help you; we will advise you. Your talent need no longer be hidden. You have offered your wares in the market, and in vain. Ah! publishers are unappreciative; editors are over-busy; but we—we have nothing to do. We will read for the publisher; we will advise the editor. Your MS. shall be weighed and sold—at least, we hope so; if not the first, then the second, the third,

the fourth. Continue to write; continue to send us your guinea yearly; subscribe to our magazine, and do not fear—we will try what we can do for you. Look at our list; did you ever read any of the books to which we have acted guardian? Look at the names of our patrons, and be persuaded. Just for the sake of a few guineas will you let your MS. remain ever a manuscript? You think that from a publisher or an editor you have the best chance of getting a right judgment. Do you not know that the world is governed by go-betweens? Pay your money and confide in us."

It is strange indeed if, between art, literature, and finance, sensational tales, society paragraphs, Stock Exchange syndicates, and word competitions, something is not to be gained by the experience one derives from the tempting offers of would-be benefactors.

Something—but it is a salutary lesson, to find that work is work, all promises to the contrary notwithstanding. C. W.

MORE HINTS ABOUT ARTISTIC FURNITURE.

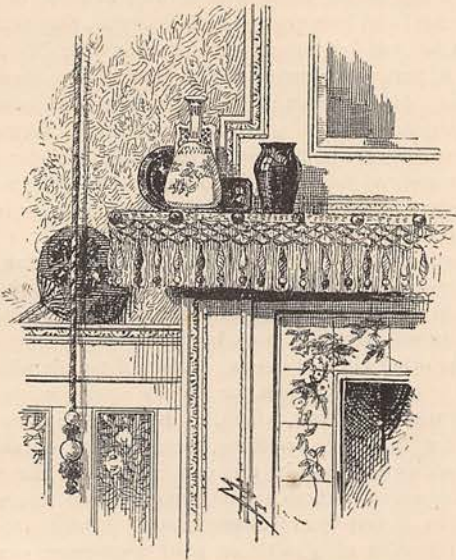
HANGINGS.



AS I turned to examine the carpets, curtains, and furniture coverings in the set of rooms I was describing last month,* I was struck with the wonderful change the last few years have worked in such things; instead of the then fashionable magenta and pea-green rep curtains which, in turn with stiff netted cotton,

used to adorn our windows, we now see soft hanging serge, art plush, and the lightest Madras muslin. The largely-beflowered, many-coloured carpets are things of the past; even in first-class lodging-houses they only live in memory. In some rooms the white wool hearth-rug is still a cherished idol, upon which no chair may ever be placed, but its reign is nearly over: it is being fast hurried to the dye-pot, and will end its days a peacock-blue or sage-green harmony instead of a white atrocity.

To properly describe the hangings in this set of rooms, it will be best to take them one by one, as only minute details can give an idea of the appearance of the whole. The first room I entered was small and square, with two rather large windows side by side; it struck me as being very richly furnished. The same tone of colour was used for walls, carpet, curtains, and coverings, but in different degrees: the walls were papered with a plain unpatterned paper of light Venetian red; a wooden dado ran round the room and was painted white, the same colour as the door and the window-shutters. The mantelpiece was also of white painted wood, and it stood out well from the Venetian red background. The entire floor was covered with Indian matting: not the ordinary cheap substance of white and red, for this was dyed in colours of the old Egyptian mattings, and is therefore just the thing for putting under Persian carpets; it can be bought in London at from two to four shillings a yard, according to quality and width. Over this was a Persian carpet, covering the centre of the room: it was fourteen feet nine by eleven feet one, and had cost twenty-nine pounds ten shillings; it was a small pattern, an Eastern design in quiet colours; it had been down for some years when I saw it, but showed no sign of wear. The Persian carpets cost money



MOORISH MANTEL-FRIEZE AND BELL-PULL.

* "Some Hints about Hand-painted Furniture." CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, December, 1886, p. 30.



A WELL-ARRANGED ROOM.

to buy, but are exceedingly durable. The chairs and sofa were covered with a new and very beautiful material called Brockham plush: it costs twelve and sixpence the yard at present, and is a wide width; the colour of this was a Venetian red ground, with a quaint design in gold and pink; the substance of the stuff is so thick that it does equally well for curtains. It had not been used for curtains in this instance, for the money spent upon the plush had been saved in the windows, though the uninitiated would be none the wiser; the curtains in material looked like rough and very thick bath towels; they were of a Venetian red ground, with diagonal stripes of red, blue, sage-green, and white; they are called Moorish curtains, and only cost sixteen and sixpence a pair. They can of course be bought in many colours. Much care and artistic work had been bestowed upon the smaller details in this room: the footstools, for instance, had been covered with Venetian red serge, and worked in crewels in an Indian pattern—blue, olive-green, and white.

In the adjoining room the decorations were of a different style. The room was large and long, with four high windows, and here economy had been the order of the day, for, in spite of care, a room of this size cannot be furnished for nothing—and yet what a pretty room it was! Taste and knowledge do so much more than money where beauty is concerned.

The floor was stained and polished, and the dark

boards made a beautiful surface, upon which were thrown three or four large rugs made of dull Indian red felt, trimmed with a thick fringe of the same colour; these rugs are inexpensive, and look very well. I have seen them in bright orange-colour, when the effect upon the dark staining is exceedingly good. Two long sofas were covered with loose-fitting covers made out of Madagascar mats; these mats are woven in a pattern of well-blended stripes, and are most useful for furniture or for using on the floor. They are six feet six long, and cost about four and sixpence each. Some of the chairs were also covered with this material, while a dyed and patterned canvas, called kalamet, had been used for the others, as it went better than anything else with the mats; it can be bought from elevenpence the yard, and is very strong, and therefore most suitable for chairs. The mantelborder was made out of a mat, but instead of a fringe or lace edge, it had a novel and very pretty border of mosaic pottery balls of bright red, yellow, blue, green, and many other colours; it was just the edging to go well with the material, as it gave it the bright colour it seemed to want. A bell-rope made of cord and the same kind of coloured pottery hung at the side of the fire-place. These pottery trimmings are quite new, and are, I believe, only sold by one firm in London.

The window curtains were the chief triumph of art;

they looked like very coarse serge, but in reality they were made of ordinary house-flannel. Many yards had been bought at a small cost, and had been immersed for three or four days in a bath of coffee. They had come out a beautiful colour, and had since been embroidered in cross-stitch in Indian red. The embroidery went in the form of a wide band at the top and bottom of each curtain and across the middle. Cross-stitch was chosen for these particular curtains, because it is more suitable, in company with Madagascar coverings, than crewel patterns; but I have seen house-flannel worked with a bold crewel pattern, but not in crewel wools. The single Berlin wool is what is used, and it can be obtained in all the crewel art colours. A pattern of oranges, pomegranates, or cherries with the blossom, looks very well on this material, the fruit, when shown, being raised by French knots.

The dinner-table was being laid at one end of this room, and our attention was caught by a very pretty centre-piece for the table. A piece of white linen had been worked with a running conventional pattern, in china-blue washing cotton; this had been surrounded by a five-inch border of china-blue plush. Upon the centre of the work there stood four little wire horse-shoes, which were entirely covered with moss and flowers.

In the bed-room, the Madras muslin curtains were a pretty feature. They were cream ground, with a quaint pattern in darker colours of birds and flowers. These

curtains are two yards wide, and only cost one shilling a yard, so they are within the means of many, and are constantly used for drawing-room windows. A very pretty screen had been made from a clothes-horse; the frame was painted black, and a piece of pretty blue and white cretonne had been lightly nailed from the top to the bottom. Another of the same kind had been painted bright scarlet, while white dimity had taken the place of coloured cretonne.

At the first sight this room looked like a sitting-room: there was no sign of a bed or a washing-stand; a comfortable sofa stood by the fire-place, and another delightful-looking wide couch was near the window. This, to our surprise, we found was the bed; it was one of those comfortable low beds made with no high foot-rail. In the day a loose-fitting cover of pretty chintz was placed over it; it kept the bed-clothes free from dust, and made the bed an ornamental adjunct to the room. The washing-stand was hidden by one of the pretty screens. The floor was covered with Indian matting of the ordinary kind, in a pattern of red and white. An Indian dhurrie had been used for the sofa and arm-chair. Dhurries measuring five feet in length can be everywhere bought for four shillings; for the coverings of chairs it is best to get them in dark colours—they will then wear for a long time.

The painting in this room had been confined to the back of the mantelpiece, where a piece of dark red American cloth had been fastened. It was the same length as the mantelpiece, and about three feet in width; it had been beautifully decorated with a group of white dog-roses and a flight of pale blue and yellow butterflies. A tiny shelf had been fastened over it, which ran the entire length of the cloth, and held some blue and white plates.

In buying American cloth for painting, great care should be used to obtain the dull kind, as the highly glazed sort never looks well.

I have left the exterior of the fire-place as the last object to describe. The mantelpiece was covered with a plain piece of velvet, which ran along the top and fell down on each side, but did not hide the front of the mantelpiece. The colour of the velvet on the mantelpiece was dark red, but the two side pieces were blue. This is considered the latest fashion in mantel-borders, and it is not so ugly as it sounds.

The interior of the fire-place was large and old-fashioned, with wide bars. To each bar little wire hooks had been fastened, to which blue and white plates had been hung. A large dish was at the back of the grate, and in the grate itself and on the hobs stood blue and white pots filled with india-rubber plants and palms, both of which grow easily anywhere. The bottom of the grate was covered with a piece of Indian matting, like the rest of the room.

