

"No, don't; she's frightfully busy."
 "I'll just get permission and come back again."
 He left the room without waiting for another word. Sybil buried her head in a great bunch of lilies of the valley, and laughed a low silent laugh into their bells.

What a day it was! How different from yesterday, with its shadows and its distress. Yesterday Sybil felt stern and virtuous; the path was of thorns, but she would tread on them, and not wince when they pierced her. To-day the path was of roses, and she felt that she was part of an idyl, and that Tennyson ought to write about her and Mark.

Margaret's letters were written and posted, and soon after a merry party of five went down to Richmond. They had a boat and went on the river, and afterwards dined in a private room in the "Star and Garter." A feeling of rest was over all four girls. Disgrace had nearly touched them, but it had gone away again. Danby and Sybil laughed and quizzed one another unmercifully. The other three made plans together. The

old life was to be resumed, and now it was to be truly a perfect life, for no debts could be contracted.

Three of the girls talked of money, for the want of money had been their sore sorrow of yesterday. But Sybil, who, had perhaps, felt that sorrow the most keenly the day before, had soared high above the region of money now. She laughed, and jested, and avoided personal topics, but all the time her heart was singing the sweetest of all songs, and her eyes looked like dark violets.

The girls came home in the dusk of the evening, and Danby bade them good-bye under the shade of the porch at No. 80.

"I'll see you to-morrow," he whispered to Sybil.

She turned her head away. He took her silence for consent, and ran off happy.

The girls went into the house. A plain man, dressed very plainly, was standing in the hall.

"Can I speak to you in private, ma'am?" he said to Margaret.

END OF CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

MY NEW DRAWING-ROOM.



AM not one of those wonderful women who furnished and decorated my house for thirty pounds, neither do I belong to the category of those who keep their husband, servants, and children in the lap of luxury for a pound a week. Such women are only invented to torment other women's husbands by their "high-flyings," which I, for one, do not believe in. It is aggravating enough, all the same, to find one's husband poring over the pages of a fashionable journal, and believing

like Gospel the assurance of a certain Mrs. Macalister, who tells her readers that it is the duty of every good housewife to collect all the scraps of fat left on the plates and have them melted into dripping, which becomes the very favourite food of good Mrs. Macalister's husband, governess, and six children!

On the following Monday morning I received, as usual, my allowance of a pound a week for each person in the house, but it was given me with a sigh—a sigh which, as I well knew, was for that ideal housewife, the Macalister.

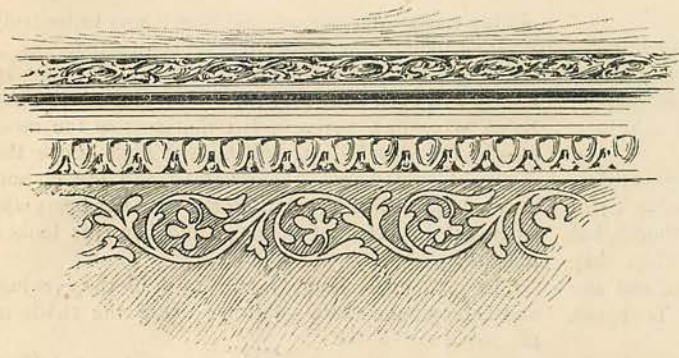
To return to decorating. My house is supposed to be pretty—people are kind enough to admire it—and as I have spent very little money upon it, I have

promised to describe some of my things, thinking the account may perhaps interest others.

Here, again, you must not expect much, for I cannot make furniture, never having learned carpentry, and I cannot do wonders with packing-cases, which the people who write papers seem able to conjure into every conceivable article of furniture. Where they get their packing-cases from, I often wonder. I doubt if I ever had more than one at a time. Whenever I get anything from a distance which arrives in a case, a request is certain to be sent with it that the "returned empty" is to go back at once on pain of a fine, and so, alas! my visions of wardrobes and tables remain in the air, and my genius has no vent.

I have lately been re-decorating my drawing-room. I cannot tell you how much I wish that it was a room in an old house with thick walls and oak panellings. But it is only the drawing-room of a modern semi-detached villa, and the walls are such that we not only hear our neighbour's piano, but can generally tell you what they are going to have for dinner.

When we came to the house the drawing-room was hung with a white and gold paper, which made the very light room a glare of whiteness. It was too good to take down, and we endured it for years, till one unfortunate day the silk curtain caught fire, and the paper was spoilt. In a few seconds the room was on fire, and it was wonderful that we were able to put it out and lost as little as we did. It was, as I well knew, entirely my fault. What woman in her senses would have bought Pongée silk for



MY FRIEZE.

grate curtains : velvet or serge would not have caught, or, if they had, would not have blazed up.

When, through this accident, it became absolutely necessary to re-paper the room, I found it was very difficult to get one to suit it. The room was so light and so commonplace—it was so exactly a second-rate villa drawing-room.

The judicious spending of money would transform it. I knew what was wanted—I was perfectly able to design and to order—but the most important item—the money—was wanting. It would not have been right to spend more than a very small sum, so coloured glass, Morris papers, and carved wood must be dismissed from the mind, just as if they had never existed. Do you know the thick brown paper in which parcels are wrapped? I do not mean the crackly brown, but the thick dull brown. In most large towns there are several paper manufactories or large stores where this paper can be bought at a very low price, and can be cut in any length or width required. I had the walls and the door papered with it ; I then bought a wide transfer pattern in a conventional design, and had it ironed off as a frieze just below the cornice. Of course, in ordering I was careful to see that I got a pattern which would iron off yellow, for the other shade, blue, would not have shown.

When this process was finished I proceeded to paint. It was difficult to reach the top of the room, and the house steps felt so unsafe that I determined another time to have my frieze cut separately, and paint it before pasting it on the wall. I painted the pattern only in one colour—deep orange. I used oils, and mixed plenty of body colour to prevent the orange sinking in ; round the edges of the design I painted a line of dark brown, which made the whole thing stand up. It was a great success. I did not paint the panels of the door, but over the top I had a cone-shaped panel, with an arrangement of the same design.

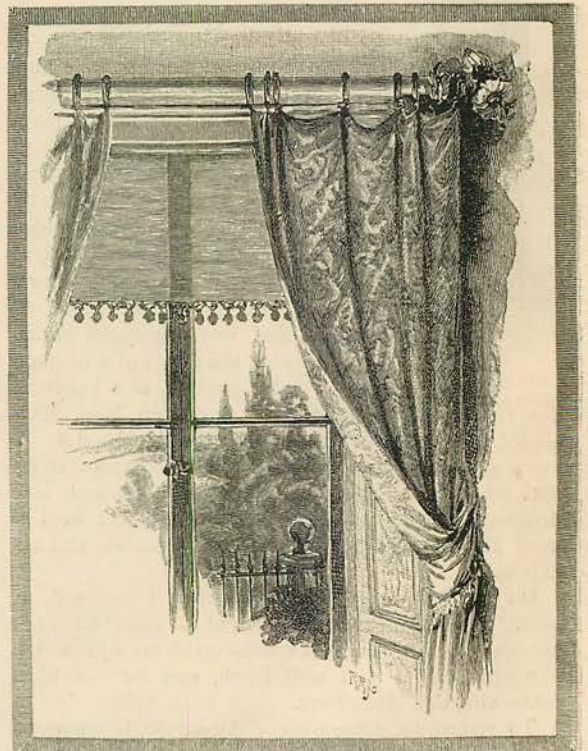
When the paint was quite dry, I had the whole thing sized and varnished. Varnish darkens the colour, and makes the paper keep clean much

longer, but I think it looks just as well without it. I have seen the same paper since with only the frieze varnished, and the effect was quite as good.

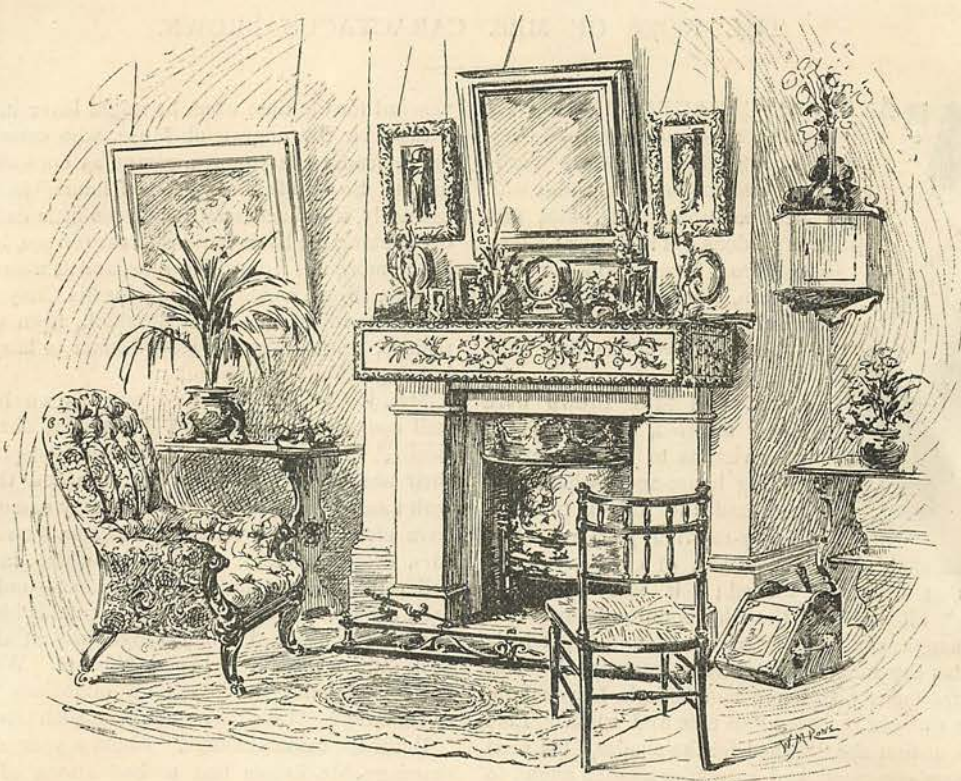
As the house was new when we came to it, we had fortunately never had the wood-work painted, so I was able to have the shutters and wainscot left as they ought to be for that style of decoration—in the plain wood, and simply French-polished. Before I polished the shutters I ironed a pattern on, and painted it in sepia.

I was determined to have no more mantel-covers to burn, so as the mantel-shelf was very ugly, I had a case made in white wood, to run along the top and go down in front, just as a mantel-border does. On the front of this I painted bunches of oranges and their blossom, making a little conventional border in brown at the edge. When this was polished it looked beautiful. People who cannot draw could make one equally well by ironing on a pattern, or by having one cut and stencilling it on.

For curtains I bought the new printed sheeting—white, with a delightful pattern in orange. These curtains are two-and-ninepence the yard, and they are so thick that they serve equally well in winter and summer, and nothing wears and washes like them. As I wished to darken the room, I made



HOW I TREATED THE WINDOW.



THE FIREPLACE.

for the top part of the window little curtains of orange Pongée silk; I did not frill these, but edged them with a ball silk fringe. I fastened them top and bottom with little rings attached to a piece of wire.

My carpet went all over the floor, and was in colour greenish blue, with an almost imperceptible orange pattern; it was a Windsor, and cost about three pounds.

Over my mantel-shelf I hung a beautiful square oak mirror, which had been made to my order. The frame was solid oak, very well moulded, and the glass had a bevelled edge about one inch in width. This cost me sixteen shillings, and will last for ever. I burnt my initials on the back with a hot knitting-needle, as I wished my possessions to have some identity for future generations!

This mirror, with pictures framed in carved oak and black ebony, looked very well on the walls. As one of the corners wanted colour, I bought one of the prettily-cut corner shelves which are now so

cheap. I covered this all over with Japanese gold paper, and the effect was excellent.

I had two occasional tables made in American walnut, from my own design; these I stained with oak staining and French-polished.

I covered some of the arm-chairs with a new tapestry in blue and straw colour: it is fifty inches wide, and one-and-sixpence the yard.

The sofa and two other chairs had a blue and orange cretonne covering—a very large orange pattern on a china blue ground. These large patterns have more character than the smaller designs.

My small chairs are black, with rush seats, and I have a long rush-seated music-stool and a bamboo bookcase. This last is long and narrow, only three shelves high, and a bamboo rail at the top makes a safe shelf for china.

In place of a second sofa, I have a cane couch, or reclining chair, at twenty-five shillings, with an adjustable back. This, with two or three silk pillows, makes a delightful resting-place.

