every-day topic. "She is not a person, you know, to conceal her feelings."

Oliver's lips tightened rather ominously. "Darling," he said, "will you tell her that to-day's will be your last lesson to Miss Murray?"

"Oh no!" she cried, again half frightened, "oh no! I cannot be in such a hurry. Evelyn must finish her course. And now I really must go. Please give me my fiddle, Mr. Denzil?"

"That means you want me to go. So I will, darling, since you wish it. But tell me, first, when shall I see you again—to-day? When shall I come to see your father?" She turned quite pale.

"Oh, not to-day; please not to-day!" she cried. "Give me a little time."

"To-morrow, then," he answered; "not later than to-morrow, Barbara. And mayn't I see you again to-day, dearest?"

"Won't you wait till to-morrow altogether?" she pleaded. "I have always so much to do Saturday evenings," she added apologetically.

"If you wish it, dear," he said very gently.

"You are so good," she cried penitently. He shook his head and smiled.

"No," he said, "I am not good. It is only that I love you. Good-bye, my dear, beautiful love!"

He took her hand in his, gazing wistfully into her face. But she shrank just a little away, and he let it go again as he gave her her fiddle.

Then he stood and watched her until she was out of sight: her lithe upright figure, stooping a little this afternoon, her small deer-like head, the masses of her golden hair gleaming in the sunshine.

"She does not love me an iota," he murmured to himself; "and no other woman would I marry on such terms. But to win her"—and his face glowed at the bare thought—"I would sink every vestige of pride I possess; and when once she is mine, and I have her all to myself, once she really learns to know me, she must love me, because I love her so."

He lingered there another half-hour, getting as close to the house as he could without making himself visible, and listening if he might catch the sound of *her* fiddle through the open windows. It came at last in a slow wailing nocturne that sounded like Chopin. The clear notes, full of vague pain, floated out to him on the breeze, and he turned to go away.

"I cannot stand that," he muttered to himself. "If she is unhappy——"

At that minute the Murrays' stable-clock rang out five, and he quickened his steps, for he was engaged to meet Mr. Holmes at Denzilstone at five. A moment later, and the nocturne had changed to a strain of wild jubilant triumph, and he smiled as he heard it. "Sweet darling!" he exclaimed, "she will, she must be happy with me, because——" then he laughed aloud. "I am growing idiotic, I think, for I keep on saying the same thing. Ah! there is Holmes. Perhaps an hour with him will restore me to sanity."

END OF CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

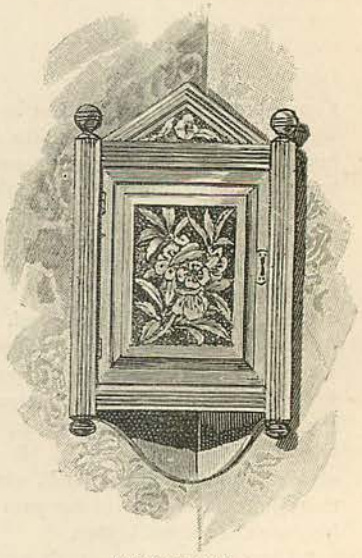
MY WOOD-CARVING EXPERIENCES.

IT is a dreadful thing to be a man of ambitions if you are unable to carry them out.

As a young fellow, I had many ambitions, and I was not quiet about them, either. I took all the world into my confidence: they all knew what I was going to do—the sort of wife I meant to marry and the kind of house I intended to live in. That was my mistake—I made too much noise about the thing. It was difficult to draw back or hold my head high when I had to do exactly the opposite.

Of course, about my wife I did not much mind. She was as different from the heroine of my dreams as one woman could be from another: she was not even beautiful: and as for being clinging and helpless and delicate, and having no way but mine: why, she would have laughed at the idea! However, when all is said, she was the woman I loved and who made me happy, so I did not care what the fellows said about my old ideal, who probably would have been a fool, and most aggravating to live with.

But my house was a different matter. How often I had held forth about it, criticising what I called the "Philistine" furniture of my friends, and calling upon them to keep their eyes open for the time when I set up for myself! My house should not be like my next door neighbour's.

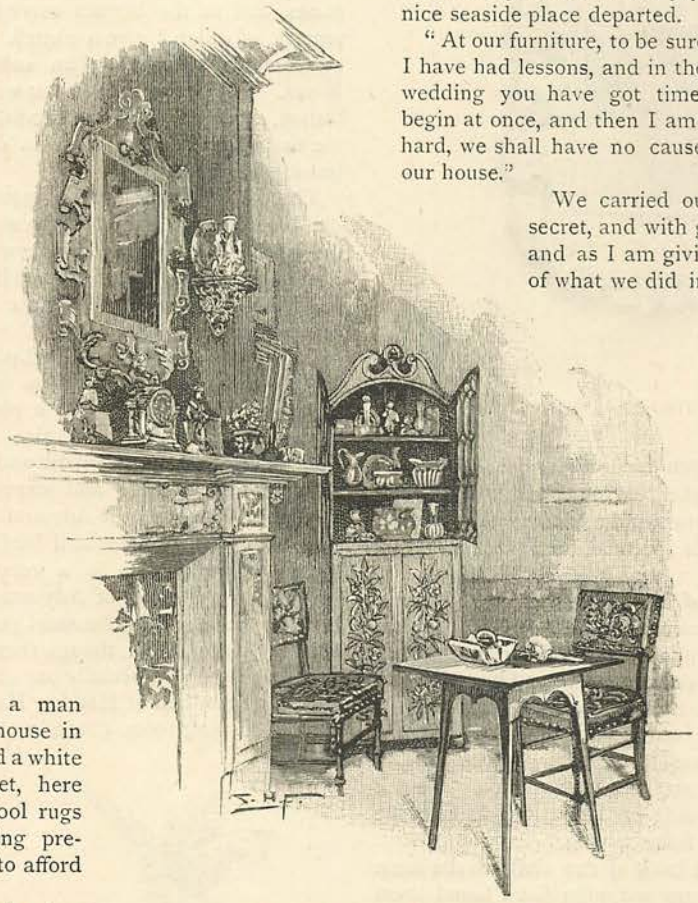


KEY CUPBOARD.

And now here I

was, going to be married, and they were waiting to see; and because Susan had not the fortune of my ideal, and because I had had to save every penny before I could afford to marry at all, I had omitted to take those delightful trips into the far East from which I had intended to bring back so much; and therefore, in spite of careful saving and as much self-denial as I was capable of, I had only just enough money to furnish my house with the most matter-of-fact conventional furniture, which would bear upon its every point the stamp of cheapness.

This really troubled me, though I was ashamed of caring till I made a discovery. Susan cared too — she cared very much more even than I did. She, also, was a woman of ambitions, and she confessed to me that she had constantly said that no power on earth — no wild horse, in fact — should ever induce her to marry a man who furnished his house in "suites," or possessed a white wool rug! And yet, here were we with two wool rugs given us for wedding presents, and only able to afford cheap "suites."



A CORNER OF THE DRAWING-ROOM.

We looked at each other in silence. It was a consolation to know that we both felt it so acutely, and that Susan had decreed that a wool rug should not part us, even though it had a blue and red lion upon it!

I was silent, but Susan settled it, and I felt thankful at that moment that she was a woman with ideas.

"You said, you poor old boy, that you intended going away for six weeks for our wedding tour. I asked you if it was to be abroad, and you said we could not afford that, but that you thought some sea-side place in England would be nice. I did not like to differ from you at the time, because it seemed so uncivil, but my heart failed me from fear. The sad sea-waves in the winter!—a deserted sea-side resort for six weeks! Do you think it is giving any two people a fair chance? Who could stand it—least of all, you and I? Now look here, Jack—do not let us have any tour at all; we should spend a lot of money, and get very little good. Here, in London, where we can do anything, let us just go for a drive after we are married, and then creep into our house, have an old woman to do for us, and let us keep up the shutters in the front and work all day, and dine out every evening at a restaurant. It will be such fun!"

"But what are we to work at?" I asked, while my heart gave a throb of joy as the vision of that nice seaside place departed.

"At our furniture, to be sure. It shall be carved. I have had lessons, and in the six weeks before our wedding you have got time to learn. Now, do begin at once, and then I am sure, if we both work hard, we shall have no cause to feel ashamed of our house."

We carried out this programme in secret, and with great joy to ourselves; and as I am giving this little account of what we did in the hopes of getting more people to take up wood-carving, I will try to give a precise account of what we made.

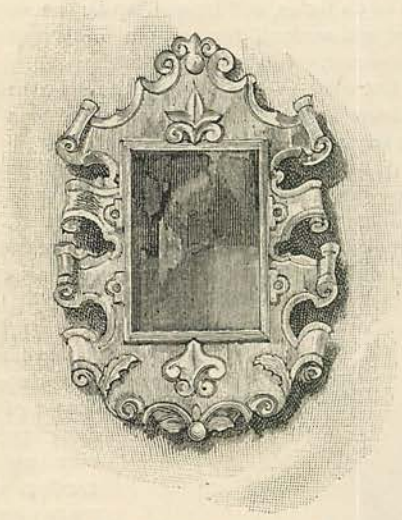
First of all, I was warned not to begin as an amateur. I was told that if I went for my lessons to a carver used to teach amateurs, I should find myself involved in a countless number of tools—fine instruments, that would snap off in my hands if I leaned at all heavily on them, and which would cost money to renew.

So I went to a working carver, and asked him to get me tools like his own. He said I should not require many at first, and he got me seven at tenpence each. He also got me a wooden clump, and two little clamps at sixpence each with which to fasten my wood to the bench; also a little cut nail, at sixpence, with which to stamp my backgrounds.

He began by showing me how to draw or trace the pattern on the wood, and strongly advised me never to glue on a paper pattern and cut round it—as so many do—as this blunts the tools.

I spent a long time in practising how to cut on plain pieces of wood, and I found that when once I had mastered that I had taken my first step in wood-carving. There was a long road between this and my first

panel, and I spoiled that first panel by cutting too deep, and made a hole which could not be filled up. My sixth panel I made into a little key cupboard, of which I give a sketch. The interior is fitted



THE DRAWING-ROOM MIRROR.

with hooks, upon which hang the household keys. Small panels also make into nice oak brackets and square stands for a flower-pot ; but I must not linger over the small articles I carved, for I want to get on to the furniture.

I began with a set of dining-room chairs. I found in a furniture shop some strong deal chairs, with deal seats, unstained and unpolished. They cost two shillings each. I bought one as a trial, and began.

I got an ordinary transfer braiding pattern — a conventional pattern, which would carve well. I ironed it on to the seat of the chair, in the form of a border ; it was about three inches wide. I cut a grooved line on either side of the pattern, leaving the centre of the seat free from carving.

I cut the rails at the back of the chair in the same manner, but as they were not quite flat I found them more difficult. There were two clumsy wooden balls at the top of the chair, and those I cut into the shape of a flower, which much improved them. I then, after first rubbing well with sand-paper, began to stain. I gave each chair four coats of oak staining, rubbing down with sand-paper between each coat.

It was a trouble, but I arrived at a splendid colour at last. I then French-polished, and, at the expense of a great deal of rubbing, got my chairs to shine like glass. They are very strong, and look as if they will last for ever ; and, though they cost so little, they will always have a value of their own as art-work.

Encouraged by the chairs, I carved an old deal table in the same way. I wanted to make it into a bedroom writing-table, so I bought a piece of red leather, fastening it into the centre, carving a border round it. The bright-red looked very well with the dark wood. We also had a large deal box, upon which I carved panels of dragons, which I copied from an old oak chest.

These were, I think, all the deal articles we carved. The drawing-room was furnished in oak in its natural colour, but oiled, as oil brings out the colour of the wood.

We had a pretty cabinet, upon which was carved bunches of cherries and their leaves. The top of the cabinet was for books, and there was a little shelf over it for china. We also had a beautiful corner cupboard, with the door at the top in glass with leaded panes, and at the bottom carved in a conventional pattern, of which I give a sketch. Over the drawing-room mantel-piece hung an oak mirror carved by Susan. There was not, as you will see from the illustration, much detail or fine carving in the frame ; but the shape, being taken from an old Italian one, was beautiful in itself.

The walls of the drawing-room were hung with a dull blue paper. I filled up the square from the top of the mantel-piece to the ceiling with a plain piece of black oak. Upon this hung the light oak mirror, and on either side two very elaborate brackets, carved by Susan some time before.

Later on, we carved a mantel-piece with our initials and a motto ; but there was no time for that now, so we covered the mantel with a plain piece of printed velveteen, with which we also made the curtains. This velveteen is most artistic and not very expensive, as it runs from three and sixpence to five shillings a yard. We chose the Adyunta pattern in peacock blue, with pomegranates and birds in olive green and shrimp colour. This is a reproduction of fresco-painting in the caves of Adyunta, in the Province of Bombay, painted two thousand years ago, and a very beautiful pattern it is, though there are several others equally beautiful, especially one copied from the hangings of a State bed at Haddon Hall. I covered some of my drawing-room chairs with "cuir Bouilli," or

ONE OF THE CHAIRS, AND THE CHEST.

stamped leather. This art is very easy, especially to those who understand wood-carving; it is also most durable as it lasts for years, and so many useful articles can be made in it. I was afraid of having my drawing-room too light, so I covered the backs and seats of some black ebonised chairs with light oak-colour leather, on which I had stamped or moulded a pattern. I then painted the pattern with Indian ink, and covered it with three coats of ebonising varnish. The effect was very nice; and I covered an old arm-chair with leather treated in the same way.

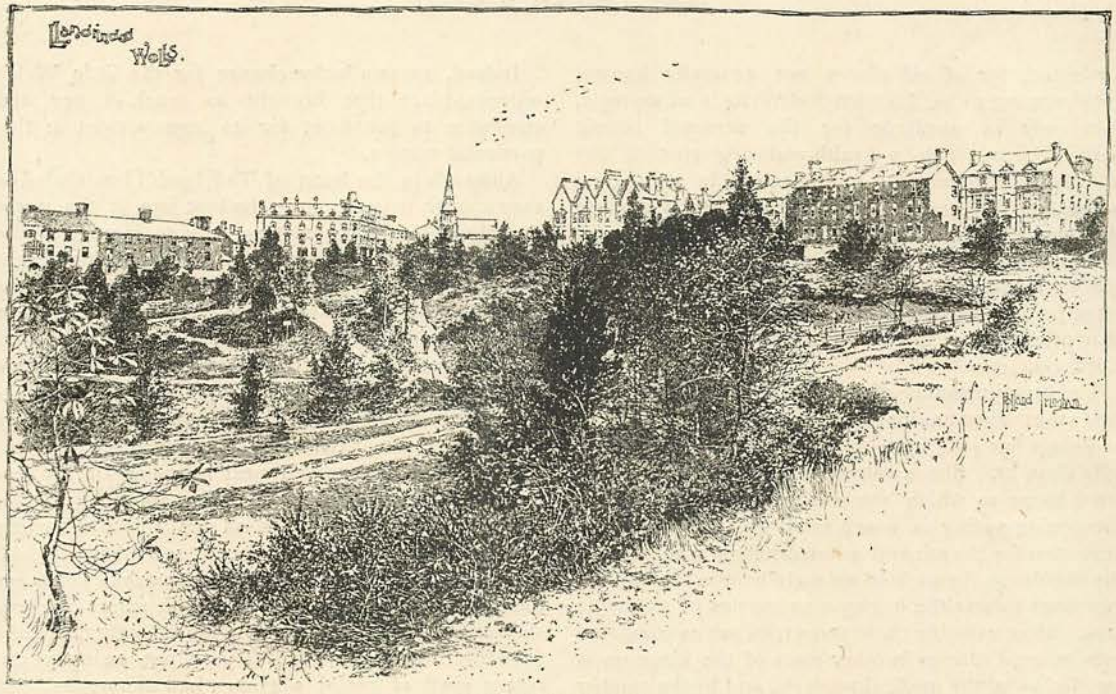
Two little chairs make bright spots of colour in the room, for I have stained the raised-up leather pattern in red, and blue and gold.

One little table I stained with green stain. This I like much better than paint, as all the grain of the wood shows through, and the stain simply becomes part of it; but it requires a great deal of care, as it dries directly, and unless a soft brush is used, and used very quickly, it will dry in lines. I found three coats necessary for my table, so I cannot say it was a cheap stain, though a highly ornamental one. We worked very hard; we made an awful mess in the way of wood-shavings; and we talked—oh, how we did talk, to be sure! Our engagement had not been a bed of roses. We had had more quarrels than most people, and we spent a great deal of time in talking them over. Susan was sure they were all my fault, and I knew they were entirely hers.

In our engagement days we had repented and apologised—almost with tears—one to the other; but, married, we found that those apologies meant nothing. We were neither of us sorry, but we could afford to laugh now, and we did; and if Susan got at all vehement she cut herself with her carving tool, and had to attend to her business.

It was all the fun in the world, and we were really sorry when the day came when our things were all arranged, and the old charwoman gave place to strange, awe-inspiring servants, and our door-knocker began to work, our friends trooped in, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Smith began the world.

"THE WELL IN THE CUCKOO'S GROVE."



LLANDRINDOD WELLS.
(*From a photograph by Hudson.*)

"WHERE shall I go for a change?" I asked myself this spring, for my whole system seemed out of tone and wanted bracing up and renovating after a particularly vicious attack of that uncompromising enemy "la Grippe." Where should I go? I was not long in deciding. A certain picturesque little spot in wild Wales rose up before my eyes, and I had good reason to remember it, for only two years ago I was there, breathing its pure air, and drinking of its famous mineral waters during a prolonged visit of several months. Famous, but by no means