

by the Archangel Gabriel would be effective delivered from the village pound which is by courtesy termed a pulpit.

However, these young people went to church. On a Sunday evening the vicar, returning home, would hear them playing hymns, or trying the recitatives out of the *Messiah*. The vicar was not quite sure about the *Messiah*, not being musical, but the sound of the hymns delighted him. At Christmas Mrs. Lindley-Seymour sent a guinea to the Mission, and the vicar could hardly restrain his emotion; he felt inclined to give thanks publicly in church, but reflected that this might offend his other parishioners. So he contented himself with preaching an eloquent sermon on "Lay not up to yourselves treasures," etc., with the result that half the congregation, feeling their pecuniary delicacy hurt by this shameless hint, were absent next Sunday.

The novelist wrote a story on them, in which Mr. Lindley-Seymour figured as the son of a duke who had married a poor, but angelic damsel, and was disinherited by his evil-minded father in consequence.

The musical critic continued to admire them ardently. She watched them having tea on the lawn in the most rustic way in the world. It was quite charming; the little flies dropped into the teacups, and small, green, serpentine things spread themselves on the bread and butter. And Mrs. Lindley-Seymour would shriek and brush them away,

whilst Mr. Lindley-Seymour laughed at her in the most delightful manner.

But at the end of six months the dwellers in Bath Road woke up to discover that their innocent neighbours had departed. Nobody knew what had happened. The musical critic was quite distressed. She met Jinks next day, and asked him whether the Lindley-Seymours had gone.

Jinks, of course, knew everything. Oddly enough, the novelist had just crossed the road to ask the same question.

"Gone," said Jinks moodily; "I rather thinks they *is* gone! Very much gone! There's a lot more's gone with 'em, too. They've cleared that 'ouse of its furniture as clean as this pavement—every blessed stick 'ave they taken. An' they howes bills all round, an' me thirteen shillings—thirteen shillings and eightpence—for putting up shelves. A lot o' that thirteen shillin's I shall ever set eyes on! Gone! When you see 'em again you let me know. They're about as clean gone as yesterday's dinner!"

The musical critic and the novelist said nothing, but they looked unutterable things. The musical critic reviewed the work of a young composer that night in a way that drove the wretched man to the verge of suicide, and wrote an article on Wagner that turned her editor's hair grey. Then she took a good supper, and felt better.

But the novelist, being much too honest a man for a writer of fiction, went home and put his MSS. work behind the fire.



## AN OLD MAID'S SANCTUM.



THE FIRST DRIVE OUT.

MY sanctum is a flat in the Marylebone Road. I don't care to dignify it with the name of home, it is so utterly different from the sweet home of my youth; and though the word in the dictionary rendering only means "the place in which one resides," it seems impos-

sible to call a place "home" in which we live alone. A home must have at least one person whose coming is all the world to us, and whose going (for there is always a parting) means the end of life, the end of love, the end even of a home.

I chose the Marylebone Road because of the endless stream of passing vehicles—a stream which begins in the early morning and goes on till long after we have fallen asleep. Some people might object to the noise; but if you are to live alone, you realise that a so-called quiet neighbourhood is dreariness itself. You want to hear something of life, without the peep-show at the domestic side with which you are inundated in a quiet street, where you soon know everyone by sight, and are shown through the open blinds cheerful family scenes, of children's play, of fathers and

mothers, of brothers with their sisters, or with somebody else's sister as we notice two heads very near together in those endless firelight talks that lovers have.

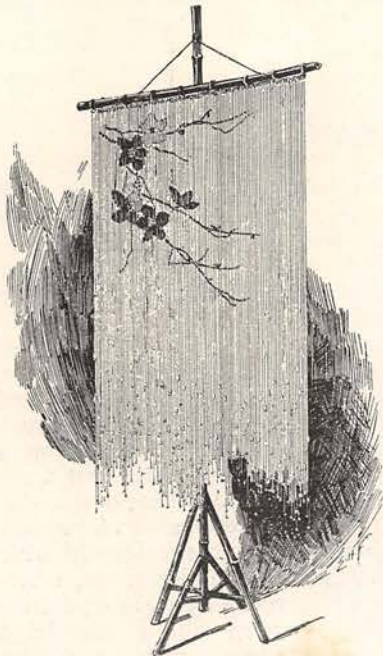
It is better to watch the market carts and the crowded omnibuses than all this ; while as for institutions, no other road abounds in such a large number and variety as this one. There are charities for every ill that flesh is heir to. Doctors and medical students are on their own ground here, and certainly one-fourth of the congregation of the great Marylebone Church consists of the nurses from the many Homes and hospitals in the neighbourhood.

I am a woman with a profession, busy all day and have no time to spare, so, beyond giving alms, I can do little in philanthropic work ; but I have my interests, and, like all old maids, my opposite neighbours are among them. The house on the other side of the street is large and roomy, and is in no sort of way an institution. It is simply a surgical Home, many of which abound in and near this road. These houses have sprung into existence only of late years : they are strictly private places, in which patients can be operated on and nursed at a certain charge, and they combine the advantage of good nursing with perfect sanitary arrangements. Many people come up from the country to benefit by London surgeons, while others who live in town often choose these houses in preference to their own homes.

How sad are some of the faces of those who go in, and how terribly anxious their friends look ! Only at first, however ; for if the operation succeeds—as, thanks to the great strides made by science, they constantly do



AN INVALID VISITOR.



FIRE-SCREEN OF BEAD-WORK.

—the clouds lift. The patient who was carried into the Home a fortnight ago goes for his first drive a new man ; soon he takes a turn in the sunshine, his face is beaming, and his wife's anxious eyes are radiant with joy.

Disease is stronger than science, so sometimes operations fail. Occasionally, though very rarely, the man who went in blind does not recover his sight, and a weary disappointment becomes his share in the world's division of spoils. Sometimes, too, a patient arrives alone, and remains unvisited, and then my heart aches. Think of lying day after day by yourself, with only a paid attendant ! Think of going down to the valley of death and leaving no broken heart on this side ! and think, too, of the dreariness of getting better and having to do all the rejoicing for yourself ! The doctors may tell you you are cured, but you must see your joy reflected on the face of another before you can realise the full meaning of their words.

Years ago, when I first came to my flat, I cared nothing about it. I just wanted a place to eat and sleep in, and as long as it was clean anything would do. My furniture was thrown

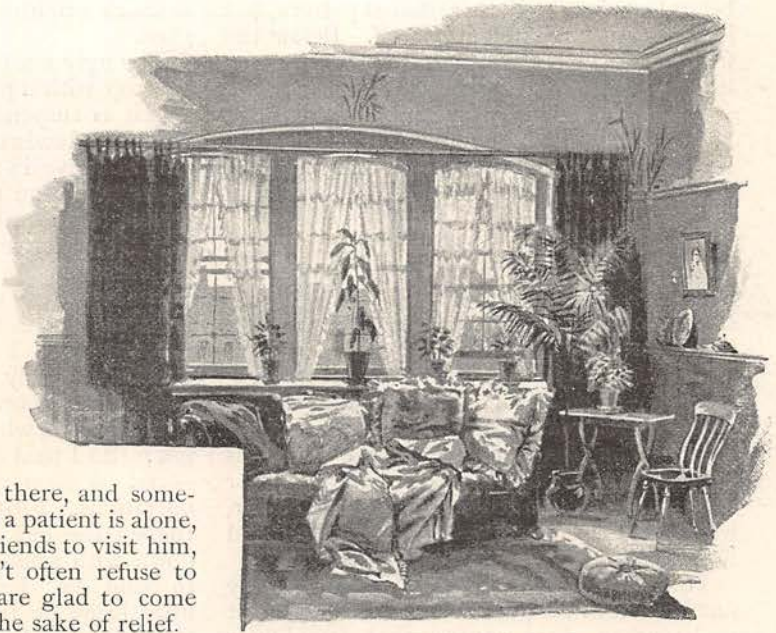
in and hardly arranged ; my books remained in piles on the floor. My writing-table was in wild confusion, and, in fact, no room looked more unlike an old maid's sanctum than mine.

And then, as I told you, an interest crept into my life—the very prosaic interest of watching my opposite neighbours—and out of that interest grew pity and the desire to aid. I made acquaintance with the matron of the Home ; soon acquaintance ripened into friendship. I am often there, and sometimes when she tells me that a patient is alone, with neither relations nor friends to visit him, I ask if I may. They don't often refuse to see me, and almost always are glad to come over to my rooms, just for the sake of relief.

I, who never intended to have any more friends in the world, have made many new ones, and have awakened to take a deep interest in their histories. How much they have told me while they have rested in my quaint room ! which some of them have called an oasis in the desert.

And thus it came to pass that I cleared up, and tidied and turned out, and papered and painted, and in fact became once more like other people.

But I hope my oasis in the desert is not

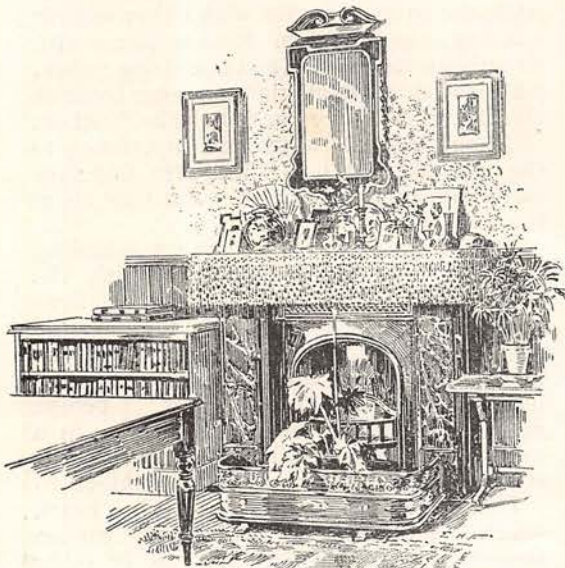


WINDOWS AND COUCH.

quite like every other drawing-room. Probably the owners of the drawing-rooms will echo this hope : they have spent hundreds on their soft carpets and plush curtains, while I have had only a few pounds to spare. But the study of a working woman ought to be plain. Few women work to provide tables and chairs for themselves ; bread and cheese, and funeral expenses, and almsgiving, ought to be their chief consideration, artistic rooms the last.

My first act was to have my walls washed and thoroughly stripped ; and greatly they wanted it, for six different papers were underlying each other. Small wonder that the door and windows could not be shut for long without the room smelling stuffy ! When the walls and ceiling were really clean I chose my wall-paper. I could not afford to give more than a shilling a piece, for though I quite believe that a good thing is cheapest in the end, I have never had the means to pay for that good thing and test the truth of the theory ; and about wall-papers in a city I do not think it would hold good, as a room ought to be stripped and papered every three years if possible.

My paper cost the requisite shilling, and is also extremely pretty ; it has a white ground covered with a design of small, well-drawn feathers in dull peacock-blue colouring. The frieze, which is three feet in width, has been distempered pale yellow (the same shade as the ceiling), and upon that is painted groups of storks and water lilies a dark blue. This can be done more quickly for a large room by



MIRROR, BOOK-CASE, AND MANTEL-BOARD.

being first drawn on to a stencil pattern, but in my case I painted it myself. Below the frieze ran a yellow picture-rail, made out of a lead gas-pipe painted in oils.

My paper did not go down to the floor as I had a dado of polished birch-wood, with a narrow shelf on the top, which was delightful for old delf plates, which wire held safely in position.

All this cost a very small sum, and my bedroom paper was half the price again, and nearly as pretty. A glass door led from the sitting-room into a little passage ending with the bedroom door. This passage I decorated in an exactly similar manner, the bedroom ceiling was washed a faint shade of salmon pink, and a salmon pink line ran above a pale green frieze. The paper at sixpence the piece was buff, and very nice it looked; while the door was painted in two shades of the same colour, with finger plates of deal painted buff and French polished.

You will not be surprised to hear that my furniture is of no particular period. I ought to be ashamed to confess that my dinner table is only a plain deal one; but tables are so expensive, and I always dine alone. I have a chair with arms low and wide, made of polished birch-wood, and beneath my window is a low and comfortable couch much appreciated by my invalid visitors. I manufactured it out of a small iron bedstead: first painted the legs and sides white, then I covered all the iron work of the top with a loose cover of blue arras cloth, and stuffed it well with picked sheep's wool, of which all my pillows are made, and delightfully soft and comfortable they are. I covered the mattress with the blue material, and, instead of a frill, put a long straight piece, cut on the cross, all round the sides and ends. This arras cloth is like very strong canvas, dyed in art colours, and as it is exceedingly wide and only one and sixpence a yard, it is a most useful article; an Italian rug in blue and gold is used as a *couvre-pied*.

My floor is covered with an olive-green linoleum, which looks very well and can be constantly washed. These art linoleums are very thick and soft, and act instead of carpets, and before the fireplace I have spread one of those many-coloured Kurd rugs which are now so cheap. My window curtain is a thickly embroidered art blanket, dull blue upon olive green, with a red diagonal stripe; this gives warmth in the winter, while for summer I use butter muslin. Notice that my curtain is made short, with nothing to catch dust or drag on the floor.

I paid twenty-two shillings for my old mirror, and the gilt and polished wood adds

as much brightness to the room as does the glass.

The ugly marble mantel-shelf is covered at the top with a piece of blue velveteen, from which is suspended a mantel border of the Macramé beadwork; it is easy to make and very effective in appearance, especially if the beads are large and bright. I have a fire-screen of the same—both of which I made myself; while my long, low book-case filled with my treasures is of home manufacture. I happened to see in the window of a pawnshop a notice that a linen cupboard was for sale within; so in I stepped, and found a large cupboard nicely fitted with shelves, and possessing a door.

If for linen, why not for books, I asked myself? So I paid its price—seven and sixpence—and as soon as it was sent home began operations. First I took off the door, then rubbed the out and inside of the case well down with sand-paper, to get a good surface to paint on. I painted it white, gilding the little ledge on the top and the edges of the shelves. It did not stand quite steadily, so I had to screw it into the wall; but this was very easily done, and now my books have a happy home.

Every woman can become an upholstress and so save much money, and I only wish my readers could try the straw chairs which I have padded and covered, in which my invalid friends find so much comfort. These chairs cost from five to six shillings each, sometimes less: first of all, their patterns should be cut out in paper, then a large, loose, linen cover should be made, and drawn on, turning the chair upside down while the cover is stuffed with either wool or wadding, which is sewn down in places with an upholsterer's needle and fine string; then, when the shape is all right, another cover of chintz, cretonne, or serge should be fitted on.

These directions will sound superfluous to the initiated, but it is strange to find how many women have no idea how to set about the work.

Thus I beautified my room; it is simple, certainly, and plain enough to satisfy the greatest economist; but there are large numbers of women workers in London now who cannot afford much more than the few pounds I spent, but those few pounds laid out have brought in a large interest. I benefit daily; for I have ceased to live quite as a working automaton, and have begun to think of something beyond bare money-making.

I have realised that I have still a heart, which I have opened, as all lonely women should, to the joys and sorrows of other people.

EDITH LONG FOX.