

## THE GIRLS' NEW HOUSE, AND HOW THEY FURNISHED IT.

WHILE Nora and Mabel were completing the last finishing touches to their "hall and staircases," with whose appearance they were more than satisfied, a startling but very pleasant piece of news was communicated to them by their father.

The vicar informed them that he had been presented to a living within a few miles of town, which fact necessitated their speedy removal; but that as the parsonage-house, lately erected, was as yet unfurnished, he had been offered the loan of a furnished house for as long as he chose to occupy it while furnishing his new home.

"So, my dear girls," he added, "we must appeal to your cousin, Evelyn Tremaine, for her kind guidance and help; under her clever tuition, doubtless, judging from the great improvement she has effected in this house, we shall be able to furnish our new home conveniently and elegantly, at moderate expense."

Mrs. Tremaine's delight at having the girls so much nearer town was as great as theirs, and she entered most heartily into the work of planning the decorations and furniture of their new abode.

After a preliminary visit to the vicarage, to judge of its needs and capabilities, she commenced, what Nora called, her "course of lectures" as follows:—

"Let us first consider the principal features desirable in our purchases. They are, taste, economy, and durability. The first will lead us to select not only what is beautiful in itself, but suitable for the place or purpose for which it is intended. Economy will teach us so to expend our money as to obtain for it the best value and to resist the temptation of mere prettiness, unaccompanied by more solid qualities; and the desire for durability will

cause us to look deeply and thoroughly into the workmanship and good-wearing qualities of everything we buy.

"As we do not want to re-furnish the house every six months, we will carefully avoid any of the 'Elegant furniture, sold at a great sacrifice by an officer ordered abroad,' or 'a lady whose health prevents her living in England.'

barity of being subjected to this 'fiery ordeal.'

"We can never bear too strongly in mind, whether in the choice of furniture or of dress, that "judicious expenditure is the most perfect economy." Therefore, what we must buy we will purchase of good quality; and, if doing so necessitates our going without a few ornaments we wished for, we must supply their

place with something less expensive. Because you cannot afford ornaments of *pecuniary* value is no reason why your rooms should be destitute of *any* adornments. Some of the most effective and the most truly artistic can be procured at a very small cost. The great success of the home-made furniture and decorations of 'Our Drawing-room,' 'Bed-room,' and 'Hall and Staircases' is sufficient proof how much may be achieved by taste and judgment, aided by willingness to work.

"All the ornaments and arrangements we made then will do for our new house; and if similar ones are required, we shall only have to refer to our former directions."

"This house-furnishing is really a formidable undertaking to arrange even, when you see how very many different things, both great and small, will be required," said Mabel.

"System, system, is the only thing that will see us through our

difficulties," said Mrs. Tremaine. "If we take the house and its various parts in proper order, we shall come to a clear understanding as to what we *must* have and what we *can* do without. We will divide our labours thus: hall and staircases, drawing-room, dining-room, study, morning, or work room; and bedrooms."

"But that makes us four reception-rooms," exclaimed Nora. "Will not they involve four elegant suites?"

"By no means," was Mrs. Tremaine's response. "The study and morning-room are



"HAND IN HAND WHEN OUR HAIR IS GRAY."—Darby and Joan.

"Furniture advertised in this manner is sometimes purchased by persons short-sighted enough to imagine it *possible* to procure good things at a tenth of their value, or whose desire for a grand effect are greatly beyond their means of achieving it. It is not at all unusual for the articles composing this 'sacrifice'—which are often merely *stuck* together for sale—to come to pieces under the melting influences of a good fire.

"I distinctly remember seeing a chair of this class that had been inadvertently left on the hearthrug, shedding gluey tears at the bar-



not show rooms, they must have every necessity, and as many comforts as we can procure, but they do not require anything grand in the way of furniture.

"Such rooms, when practicable, are great comforts to their occupants and everyone else. The master of the house should have some room to himself for his correspondence, and to receive any of his parishioners undisturbed; and a room in which ladies can keep all their work, and pursue their various occupations, without disarranging or untidying other rooms, is a boon to the whole household. There are few things more irritating to the average masculine mind than going home to a room strewn with pieces of needlework in various degrees of completion. A workroom is more necessary than ever in a house where girls are, as you are clever enough to do some home dress-making. A room intended, as this will be, for your private occupation will require only a little furniture, and that of an inexpensive character; in fact, there will be but few things required that *home work* cannot provide.

"If we commence with the rooms leading out of the hall, the first is the dining-room, and I fear that we shall find its arrangement more difficult than that of any other. We cannot beautify it by the numerous little articles of lady's work that give an appearance of elegance and home life to our drawing-room; yet there are many things to which we can contribute a few finishing touches that will add greatly to its adornment.

"The possession of a work-room and study will prevent the necessity of occupying your dining-room as a living room also. Still, there are many occasions on which it may be used otherwise than as a thorough *salle-à-manger*, so that we will not content ourselves with the mere necessities required at meal times.

"The faults of average dining-rooms are either that of over-crowding and consequent want of space, or scantiness of furniture and ornament, producing a dreary and uninhabited appearance. We want plenty of space in the centre of the room to allow of sitting at the table, or moving round it with ease; plenty of light, well managed and equally diffused; and that qualification, as rare as it is desirable, an utter absence of draught.

"In many modern houses the doors and windows are so arranged, that there is no portion of the room in which one can escape currents of air in different directions; in a dining-room especially, where persons cannot change from one place to another, this is as ruinous to the comfort of the occupants as it is to the warmth of their food. If your dining-room is so arranged, the only way to obviate this very serious defect is the introduction of one or two screens. These can easily be placed so as to screen from draught without taking much room, and their appearance can be made to contribute greatly to the beauty of the apartment. The clothes-horse, *i.e.*, with folding leaves, is by far the most convenient, and admits of great ornamentation. It may be covered with a handsome cretonne, broderie Perse—the cretonne embroidery I have already described to you—stamped leather, real or imitation, more or less gilded, or crewl embroidery on serge. I do not advise picture screens for dining-room use, but there could be no objection to your screen being temporarily covered with a handsome artistic wall paper, while your more elaborate covering was in course of preparation.

"The border of our floors we will stain with permanganate of potash, in the way that answered so well with our hall. In the centre of the room we must have a carpet; of course nothing will wear so well or look so handsome as a Turkey carpet, but these are very expensive, and, I fear, beyond us. Failing that, there are many will answer our purpose,

and if you do not insist on having the last new fashionable design, which you are too wise to do, one may be purchased, at the close of the season especially, at moderate price. It is far better to go to a good dealer, who will conscientiously tell you which are the best wearing qualities, than to trust to your own judgment or to be tempted by a merely pretty pattern. The ground should be dark, and the pattern small and not too defined. For my own part, I think nothing better for the purpose than a very dark green ground, with a thickly-covered pattern of moss and ferns in a few lighter shades. In summer the carpet may be removed and Indian matting substituted for it; this will not only keep the room much cooler and free from dust, but naturally makes your carpets last twice as long. I needly hardly tell you your carpet must be well beaten before this putting away."

"Is it not likely to get moth-eaten when rolled up and put away?" asked Mabel.

"More than likely, if no precaution is taken to prevent it; but this is easily done by putting pieces of brown paper or unbleached calico—the coarser and worse colour the better for the latter—between the folds of carpet, and making a sufficiently large piece by joining the breadths to completely cover the carpet when rolled up. It is a fact well-known to many who have charge of carpets, curtains, and articles of clothing, that the most adventurous moth will not approach unbleached calico. The hearthrug, if of carpet, must match the rest, but I much prefer the long skins so fashionable; the black bearskin, with its brilliant and soft hair, has an especially luxurious effect, and goes well with any colour."

"Do you think it is a good plan to have an old carpet under the new one? Some persons do," asked Mabel.

"By no means. Where the underneath one is worn it rubs out the new one. What I cannot too highly recommend is a thick brown paper made on purpose; it is four feet wide and only costs twopence the yard. By-the-by, as the carpet does not go all over the floor it will require a border. This is no additional expense, because one simply has less carpet, and the Brussels borders, in all the leading designs, can be bought at two shillings and ninepence, thirteen inches wide.

"Our next task is the decoration of the walls, doors, and ceiling; then we shall have made our dining-room ready for the requisite furniture. As we have chosen green for the prevailing colour of our dining-room, our walls must of course correspond. If we decide upon papering them, I propose a plain tint of medium or light green, or one with a small running pattern of a darker shade. A dado of the deepest tone of all we employ, with conventional designs in lighter shades; there is an immense variety of these, commencing so low as twopence the yard. A frieze to match, but on a smaller scale, will give our walls a very elaborate appearance; and I must insist on a little of the green being introduced, but sparingly, on the ceiling. If this is papered, a very pale shade may be purchased; but if painted or white-washed, a little green introduced in the material used—very little is required—will save us from the cold, cheerless, staring aspect of a white ceiling.

"As we are commencing with the component parts of the room itself, our next item is the fireplace, on which much of the elegance as well as the comfort of the dining-room depends. If our fireplace is not in accordance with our tastes we must content ourselves with endeavouring to improve it, the substitution of a new one would be a great expense.

"One thing I must insist on, namely, that the greatest amount of heat from the fire should be bestowed on the occupants of the

room, and not on the chimney, as is the case with most of the modern fireplaces.

"The best grate for our purpose is one which allows the fire to be very close to the hearth, and is surrounded by upright walls of fire-brick, the front being of round iron bar. Fire-brick is much more economical than iron. It becomes red-hot, and throws out great heat, and the coal, not adhering to it, is thoroughly consumed instead of being half-wasted in cinders. The great point is so to arrange your fuel, whatever it may be, that the greatest quantity is turned to the front of the fireplace and the smallest to the chimney.

"If your fireplace is so shaped that you can have it lined with bright glazed tiles—they will add considerably to the amount of heat thrown into the room, and the same effect is produced by a tiled hearth.

"The decorations of the fireplace should be quiet but good in style, the mantelpiece valance—if you have one—of dark velvet or cloth—cut in gracefully-shaped scrolls. No ornament can be more effective on such a mantelpiece than a tazza, jugs, or vases of Doulton ware, Lambeth *faïence* as it is called, the rich tint, subdued colouring, and elegant ornamentation of this, giving exactly the required tone to your decoration. One or two bronzes will also be very acceptable additions."

"Are we to have a looking-glass—a nice large looking-glass, or a mirror, over the mantelpiece," asked Nora; "or a set of velvet-covered shelves, with rows of china plates, like we saw at Captain D——'s? It looked like an ecstatic—I mean aesthetic—kitchen dresser."

"Please not to abuse velvets, shelves, and china plates, Nora," said her cousin, "for I mean to have some in the room, but not over the fireplace; I must own to French sentiments with regard to looking-glasses. They say 'a room without a looking-glass is like a landscape without water.' We will have a looking-glass, with a black and gold or a shaped wooden frame, covered with velvet.

"We can buy at any frame-maker's frames of all sizes, ready for gilding, for very reasonable prices, as it is the gilding that adds so much to the cost. This frame we can cover with our black enamel paint, putting a line of liquid gold round the inside, and introducing the same sparingly on the principal ornaments. A bracket each side of the glass, fastened to the wall, and made either of dark carved wood, or plain wood covered with velvet, to match the frame, will hold a vase of flowers, or a fancy pot with some pretty plant; and with this addition I think we shall have every cause to be satisfied as far as our fireplace is concerned. By-the-by, speaking of flowers, window boxes are an absolute necessity for a dining-room."

"Necessity, as far as ornaments go," Mabel remarked.

"Pardon me; necessity to *comfort*," said Mrs. Tremaine. "The flowers and leaves keep flies from entering the room; even the temptations of the dinner table are not strong enough to overcome their repugnance to foliage, especially that of geraniums. It is a fact that cannot be too widely known, that no fly will approach a geranium leaf, and many an invalid owes some sweet repose in the summer to a few geranium leaves scattered over the pillow and bed. The flower boxes should be of wood, as this neither receives or retains the heat to the extent many other materials do; a framework with painted tiles, virgin cork, or whatever ornaments you may prefer, may be fixed to the outside of the window, in such a manner as to hide the box itself. There should always be two boxes to each window, so that as soon as one becomes a little shabby it may be changed for another. This is not so expensive a plan as it sounds, for



it gives the time to raise flowers from seed in the one absent from the window; or, if this plan is not quick enough, there are many of the most effective plants that may be purchased for a mere trifle, and few persons are without some country friends who can spare a few 'cuttings' from their superabundance."

"What shall we arrange next?"

"A little *system*, if you please, ladies," said Nora, sententiously. "We have done the window boxes; what about the window curtains? The usual thing, I believe, is rep."

"Then we will not have the usual thing," said Mrs. Tremaine. "Rep always hangs in formal lines; there are hundreds of materials that form far more graceful drapery than reps, and are less expensive." I never could see any reason for having everything dark or stiff in a dining room; on the contrary, its general aspect should, I think, be cheerful. It is the first room we enter after leaving our bedroom—our place of rendezvous to commence the day; and a pleasant breakfast with our family, among cheerful surroundings, will, I believe, go a great way towards deciding the tone of our feelings during the day. I think it a good plan to have two sets of dining-room curtains, one for the summer, the other for the winter, this does away with the monotony of seeing the same curtains year after year, and enabling each set to have a rest, causes them to last double the time. Suppose, therefore, we say we will have a twilled cretonne for the summer. These are sufficiently thick to hang well; they wear admirably, and may be had in an immense variety of patterns at prices ranging from 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>d</sub>. to 2s. I saw one the other day with a design of chestnut-tree foliage, profusely covered with the leaves and prickly fruit, and beautifully grouped and shaded, we will have this or some similar pattern for summer use. For the winter there are some curtains recently introduced, of very handsome effect and artistic design. These can be bought thoroughly made, and ready to put up, at much less prices than we could procure the materials themselves. The 'Cabul' is in elaborate designs in black and gold, and the price 25s. 6d. the pair. The 'Singapore' is still less, being only 18s. 9d., it is made in two shades of colour—brown, blue, artistic red and green, in elaborate Oriental designs, with a deep dado and handsome border in front. Of course you know that curtains are no longer made to trail on the floor, they merely meet the ground, and the quantity of material thus saved naturally enables them to be sold for a lower price."

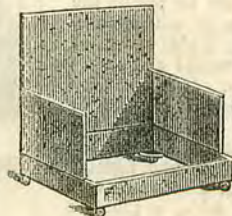
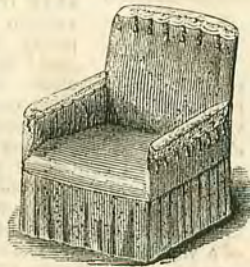
"I suppose we must have one of those great, awkward dining tables, with extra flaps," suggested Mabel; "there seems no other way of arranging that would enable the same one to do for either small or large parties."

"There is a better plan than that," Mrs. Tremaine responded, "that I have seen adopted with great success—viz., to have your table the size you require for your ordinary party, and when this is increased, to add a long, narrow table at each end; these must, of course, be exactly the same height, and as long as your table is wide. When not required for this purpose they can stand about as little occasional tables. A few years ago, when it was customary for the dinner-cloth to be removed and the dessert put on the uncovered table, it was necessary that this should be perfectly polished, and presentable in every way. Since that fashion has gone out, and the table is never seen without a cloth, it really does not signify whether the top is of wood to match the legs or of plain deal. The substitution of the latter naturally makes a considerable difference in price. We cannot, however, follow this plan with the smaller tables, without we cover them with a fancy cloth when not in use, as adjuncts to our

dining-table. As to chairs, no one can realize how much of our comforts during dinner depends on their construction, till they have been forced—as I was lately—to sit, through a long dinner, on a chair so elaborately carved that to lean back for an instant against its elaborate protuberances was a painful experience. Our chairs must be substantial, but not too heavy to move easily, and thoroughly comfortable. The shape I prefer for dining-room chairs is that with square-padded seats and backs, known as the 'Cromwell.' As we have determined to do *everything* that is possible 'our very own selves,' we will purchase our chairs merely covered with the canvas that is always used as the first covering. Now, Nora, you have not spoken for a long time. What do you think our next step should be?"

"To buy the material, *certainly*," said Nora, "as it is *impossible* to cover them without."

"Wrong, Nora, the *first* step is to take the patterns of the seats and backs, allowing them a little larger for turning in. Multiply these patterns in paper, according to the number we require, and put them all together, spread out on the floor; this will enable us to see how one can be cut with another, and with *how little* material we can contrive. We will decide *what* material afterwards, but as we are speaking of the work itself, I will finish the directions. The material is to be cut out and nailed to the chair by small tacks, first putting one at each corner, taking the utmost care that the cover is perfectly flat, and not drawn out of the straight line; a tack in the centre of each side assists to keep the material in its place, and others must be put in afterwards wherever required, for firmness. The fancy gilt-headed nails merely serve as ornaments, and must of course be arranged at equal distances. We shall require two easy chairs. One we shall 'upholster' in a similar manner, and make it very ornamental by adding fancy covers to the arms and the top of the back. These we will make of satin sheeting, embroidered in crewl or arrasene, and edged with tassel fringe of the same colours. Our other arm-chair shall be still more thoroughly 'home made,' for we will have the frame made for us by some neighbouring workman. Here is a sketch of the *frame*. The boards at the back and sides must be covered with strong canvas, and a piece of the same firmly fixed across the seat. Two thin cushions, covered with canvas first, are made for each portion of the chair, and joined together at the upper edge. These are put over each



of the pieces of wood composing the chair, the wood being *between* the cushions, and the lower edge and sides being fastened to it by small nails. A cord is sewn round every edge to hide the joins, and a fringe to correspond with the outer cover surrounds the lower part of the chair. A material of Oriental colouring and design is the most suitable for this chair, and many of this class may be purchased at no very great cost. If we cannot get one to our taste for the sum we want to expend, we must—"

"Go without," suggested Nora.

"Wrong again, poor dear Nora; the contemplated end of my sentence was—make one."

"A woollen material of Eastern pattern on a dark ground will be our purchase; our improvement on it, the outlining of the design with long stitches in crewels, and a few silks to match for veining the leaves.

"The sideboard, which is our next item, will, I fear, be an expensive one, its construction being very far beyond our powers, and those of the aforesaid 'village carpenter.' The wood must, of course, correspond with that of the table and chairs, and I trust you will select it dark, as it will be so much more advantageous as a background for the display of your silver, glass, and white drapery. A sideboard is an absolute necessity, because it will contain so many things required in the dining-room; one end of the lower part should have shelves; the other, one shelf half-way down, and under that a deep drawer with divisions. To each of these portions there must, of course, be a door. There should also be, for convenience sake, drawers above them and in the centre. So much for our sideboard from an utilitarian point of view. We will not stop at that, however.

"A piece of looking-glass at the back is a great improvement, serving to reflect the silver and glass on the sideboard, and also to lighten the part of the room where the latter is placed. I have lately seen a very handsome or un-common looking sideboard made from a large carved oak chest. The inside had been fitted up in the way just described, and three doors had been cut in the front. At the back a high looking-glass, with velvet-covered frame, had been fastened; and I can assure you the whole effect was far superior to the expensive carved monstrosities we see so often.

"We might, perhaps, have the chance of making one in a similar way, or, could we procure some old carved panels, they might be affixed to a frame of plain deal, and answer our purpose completely.

"If you would like black and gold furniture, a very handsome sideboard is by no means beyond our reach. It may be made perfectly plain with the necessary fittings, all being of plain deal, japanned black. A few mouldings made of the same soft wood of which picture-frames are composed might be bought at small expense, and fastened on as panels to the doors and any other ornament. The carving of these we would 'pick out' with the liquid gold, and a few small panel pictures painted on gilt backgrounds can be let in wherever desired. These will be your own work, and I will give you directions as to its accomplishment when we are arranging the drawing-room.

"Should you, for any reason, prefer buying a sideboard to trying any of those I have suggested, you would find the American solid black walnut furniture very durable as well as cheap. Before you decide on your purchase let me advise you to go to the South Kensington Museum and see the specimens of sideboards and dressers there. Though you will not be able to procure any like them, their inspection will give you correct ideas as to what such things should be, and you will gather many hints as to decoration."

C. DE L.

