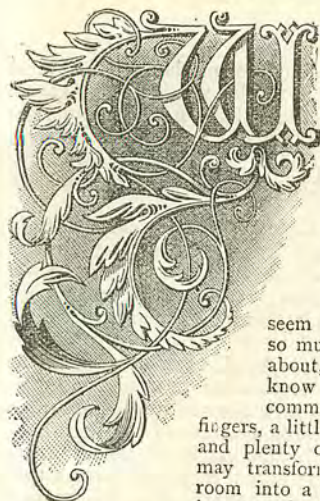


HOME UPHOLSTERY.



WHEN I begin to think over my subject and of the number of things that can be done at home in the way of upholstery, I seem to have so much to write about, I hardly know where to commence. Deft fingers, a little neatness, and plenty of patience may transform an ugly room into a pretty one in a very short time. No

girls should be ignorant how to use a hammer or plant a nail.

Well, out of innumerable items, I elect to begin with curtains: window curtains. There are many nice stuffs of excellent appearance, which may be had for as many shillings as their substitutes cost pounds years ago.

There are oriental stuffs, real and imitation, a good deal of what is called tapestry, and many serviceable materials made of jute, wearing admirably, and having so good an appearance, they look worth twice the money they cost. Most of these are so striped and figured that neither lining nor trimming is required—a remark which does not apply to plain goods; for these, galons and ball fringes are most in use. The very soft silks of artistic colouring replace muslin curtains sometimes now; and I also notice that in lieu of holders, many curtains are tied back with scarves of this same soft silk, especially velvet and plush curtains of dark, brilliant tones, and the thick woollen brocades interwoven with gold thread. I cannot dwell so much as I should like upon the different quite cheap materials that can be used for curtains, Bolton sheeting and charity blankets, roughly worked with bold designs in crewels, coming first on the list, though I give the preference to unbleached linen and hop sacking. A new and favourite form of trimming is to attach a worked dado of some contrasting colour on a plain curtain, say from twenty-five inches deep. But we will suppose you have selected the curtains; it is then that home upholstery comes into play; for, of course, you will want to hang them. The usual length, according to the height of the room, is from three to four yards long, shorter by some quarter of a yard than they used to be, as they no longer are looped up, or rest much on the ground, but are slightly caught back with straight holders towards the middle of the window. One and a-half to two breadths will be required, and will sometimes border the edge, but is not absolutely necessary. Chintzes require lining, and must be tacked to the outside at each seam, and be subsequently bound with galon. Cornices are going much out of fashion, and rods have taken their place; sometimes painted iron, with ornamental ends. For these, the tops of the curtains should be box-plaited on to a webbing, placed, say, three inches below the top, thus leaving a heading; to the webbing, rings or hooks are sewn so as to be slipped on to the end.

Fireplace curtains have this drawback, that if kept closely drawn they stop the free circulation of air. The best plan is to have an iron rod or tape beneath the mantelpiece, to sew

rings on the curtains, and allow them to draw; in this way the tops will be hidden by the valance to the chimney-piece. Nothing looks better than a band of crewel or arrasene embroidery on the valance, and down the centre of the curtains. In the country, chintz or coarse linen embroidered for bedrooms is quite admirable. Ecu linen worked in red crewels and bordered with red Spanish fringe has a very good effect.

Besides, however, embroidering your mantle curtains and border, you may very much improve a dull room by an overmantel, if it is nothing better than red twill or satin sheeting stretched over the wall, with photographs and china attached to it. If you happen to be the lucky possessor of an old oak chest, or indeed any carved woodwork, you may do a great deal more, for it is convertible into a fifteenth century sideboard, or a mantelpiece, of course by dividing it. The lid laid flat against the wall just above the mantelpiece the bottom used as a shelf above that, the ends as smaller shelves, and any extra pieces laid against the wall. With but little upholstery and some pre-arrangement, a very handsome erection is the result. I have found the best plan both for the sideboard and mantelpiece was to get a good drawing from some art or upholsterer's catalogue, and to work up to that, as far as materials admitted. But even without such a treasure as old oak, a black painted board pointed at the top, and arranged with china, a brass plaque in the centre, then an ordinary mantelpiece, is twice as ornamental as a pier glass with gilt frame.

If you care for home upholstery and wish to adorn your rooms at little cost, keep your eyes open. Many a pretty bit of brass-work, old candle branches, &c., may be picked up for an old song at second-hand shops, if you only know where to seek them.

A more useful article, but not so ornamental, is a corner wardrobe, made by fixing shelves into a lath frame, with a door made of laths, the front covered with chintz; it can be moved from the corner of one room to another, and takes up little space and gives a good deal.

I daresay you have often noticed ordinary chairs covered with some material and tufted with buttons at intervals, giving the appearance of being quilted. This looks intricate and difficult, but is not really so. Of course, before re-covering, all the buttons must be removed, and a long tufting needle must be procured; then with strong string you first pass the needle through the button and then right through the chair or sofa, tying it tightly below. If you can manage this, you will find little difficulty in covering a dining or drawing-room suite—a costly process if sent to the upholsterer's. Old horsehair chairs, for example, look extremely well covered with a green or dark coloured serge, and bordered with close set rows of brass-headed nails. If the wood is hard, I find it a difficult matter to send the nails in, but punching a slight hole first will get over the difficulty; and be sure to hit your nail straight. These hints are worth remembering, if you attempt to cover an occasional table with plush or satin, using ornamental nails, which are expensive and easily broken.

The way to make loose chair covers is to take the exact pattern in paper, lay this on the material, and baste it round and cut it out, allowing turnings; then stitch with the machine. The back of the chair will sometimes have to be gathered, and pulled here and there to the front. It is a great improvement to put a gathered flounce round the chair covers. Where absolutely necessary, fasten with buttons and buttonholes. Use as few strings as you can; they are apt to hang down unwarily, and look untidy.

A very usual seat in a drawing-room now is a Moorish or oriental pouf, having the appearance of a couple of cushions, laid corner-wise across each other, or three one above another, with one for the back. They are easily arranged. Let a carpenter make the slight wooden frame, then put the cushions on this, and fasten them together at the corners. The lower cushion should be stuffed with horsehair, so as not to be easily flattened; they look best covered with some oriental material.

If you wish to have an ornamental, and at the same time very inexpensive, chair, buy a folding one with wooden frame, and holland for back and seat. Some sprigs of crewel work or chintz appliqué scattered over the holland make it most pretty and elegant.

I have often turned packing cases into ottomans by lining the inside, so that the seams go next the wood. Then made the outside complete, slipping it on when done. It must be sewn to the edge of the inside lining only, taking care to stuff the top with flock, well pressed between the wood and an inner cover. The lid is secured by hinges, and a piece of tape should be nailed from the sides to the lid to prevent it going too far back; the edges may be finished with cord, or tassel at each corner. Ordinary hassocks, which you may buy for a shilling a piece, may be converted into pretty footstools by covering them with serge worked with yellow daffodils, or any other flower you like.

Bed hangings are going out of fashion, but still they are seen, not in the form of the old four-poster, but as part and parcel of Arabian bedsteads. The prettiest and most healthy plan as non-air excluding is a half tester roof, supported by two posts. The roof has to be covered, a curtain hung at each side, which should be drawn back as much as possible by sloped holders to the bedposts, where a large ribbon rosette adds to their beauty. A head valance completes the arrangement, best bordered by fringe and festooned. No words will really explain all this; it is best to obtain an upholsterer's illustrated catalogue, and copy as closely as you can. Indiarubber rings instead of brass ones for securing the curtains to the poles save noise. Ornamental quilts add to the appearance of a room; an eiderdown in a Turkey red cover bordered with lace, with large bows at each corner, is effective, or an Austrian blanket, or squares of linen, a flower embroidered in each lace round, and lace insertion between the squares, or even a Bolton sheet bound with red, with square bouquets of crewel embroidery all over it.

If you have a plethora of books, get a carpenter to make a wooden frame with no back, and a series of shelves. Set this against the wall, cover the top with any fabric you may think suitable, and the sides; border it with ball fringe, as also the shelves. Put your books on these, and your china, etc., on the top, and you will have, not only a useful, but a handsome piece of furniture. Three slips of wood strung at each corner with blind cord, knotted when through, so that they cannot slip, the four pieces tied together at the top, and passed over a nail, give a convenient kind of bedroom book shelves, which can be arranged for a very few shillings. My space warns me that I must, however, conclude.

ARDERN HOLT.

