

HOW TO DECORATE A GIRL'S SITTING-ROOM.

By FRED MILLER.

THE coloured design which is given with this month's GIRL'S OWN PAPER was drawn from a room I decorated some little time since—last summer, in fact; and as it is hoped that the drawing may be of practical help to many readers of the G.O.P., a few suggestions as to the best way of setting about carrying out this, or a modified form of the design, may make the drawing a still further help.

COLOUR.

The first thing to consider in decorating a room (by decorating I mean painting, papering, as well as actual decoration, either in the way of stencilling or hand-painting) is to fix in the mind the general tone of colour that is to pervade the room—the “key,” as artists say. The question of colour is one often of individual taste, but there are certain considerations of a practical character that influence us in our choice. Generally speaking, rooms that suggest warmth are preferable in all countries where there is much dull, cheerless weather, to cold-looking rooms. As one decorator said to me once, “Decoration should suggest sunlight.” There are occasions when a grey or cold tone of colour is pleasant, or even desirable, and it is often safer where there is much miscellaneous furniture, draperies, and accessories, to select some neutral tone of colour—Wedgwood greys, for instance. But I cannot help thinking that rooms in neutral tints are apt to look unnecessarily sombre. The fashion for low-toned colours that prevailed some few years since was a needful protest against the crudeness and vulgarity of the decoration of a generation ago. But, after all, colour delights the eye and has a great effect upon the spirits, and I am an advocate for colour in decoration—contrasts of colour, in fact, rather than monotonous neutral tones. And it is quite possible to get a great deal of colour into a room and still obtain harmony and repose. Colours want careful management, I know, and those who doubt their colour perception had perhaps better avoid the difficulties to be encountered in harmonising conflicting colours. I would here note that in reproducing the side of a room, as in the coloured sketch, on a small scale, the colours are apt to look stronger than in the room itself, and the general effect of the sketch will thus appear somewhat crude. I rather feel this with regard to the illustration in this month's G.O.P.

The Indians, in weaving their carpets and textiles, have such a true colour perception that they can, without effort, put the most opposite colours together, and withal the general effect is rich and harmonious. English people have not this delicate colour perception, but there are many rules that can be learnt by practice or from others that will enable the tyro to avoid glaring mistakes.

TONE.

There are, generally speaking, two schemes of decoration that can be adopted—harmonies and contrasts. The former is the easier and more general scheme, the latter the bolder and more striking when successfully managed. Our illustration is one of contrasts. As will be at once seen, the red of the walls being opposed by the greens of the woodwork. If we had coloured the woodwork in darker tones of red, as we might have done, and as many would have done, we should have had what, for brevity, I call a scheme of “harmonies” of red. The plan adopted by many house painters is to paint the woodwork in the tones of the wallpaper they are using. It is cer-

tainly safer to do this, as one cannot go far wrong in such a scheme. But there can be no question that “contrasts” are much more striking and decorative than “harmonies.” In contrasting colours, the laws of colour should be remembered. The three primaries are red, yellow, and blue, and the complementaries are in the order given—green, purple, and orange, produced, of course, by mixing any of the two primaries. The general tone of our decoration, as given in the sketch, being red, green would naturally be the contrasting colour. But the knowledge of this law will not always make us successful decorators. Apart from an eye for colour, which is a natural gift, many successful combinations are the result partly of accident and partly of experiment. A useful plan to adopt in harmonising colours is to “break” or tone each colour with the tint to be used next to it. We will take, for example, the three tints used in the room of which the illustration is a reproduction. The red of walls is made of Venetian red, vermilion, and a little chrome yellow; the dark green of dark blue, or Brunswick green, toned with burnt sienna, chrome, and yellow ochre; the grey green of French ultramarine, yellow ochre, and lemon chrome. You will thus see that each colour is toned by the addition of opposing colours, as, for instance, the green with burnt sienna. But suppose we had merely mixed up Venetian red, Brunswick green, and the ultramarine with yellow ochre (of course, it is understood that white is added to these colours in varying proportions), we could have toned the red with a little Brunswick green and yellow ochre, the Brunswick green with the red and yellow ochre, and the grey with yellow ochre and Brunswick green. In other words, we could have “broken” each colour by the addition of a small quantity of the other two. This method is to some extent mechanical, and the result will not be so rich and transparent as it would have been where we toned each colour with other pure colours, as the Venetian red with yellow, vermilion, and, perhaps, a suspicion of Antwerp blue. In arranging the colours for a house painter to work from, make up a little of each tint yourself, and brush a little on to a piece of mill-board, keeping a small quantity of each tint for the painter to work to. Some readers may like to try and do the actual painting for themselves. In that case you must carefully wash the existing paint with strong soda and soap, to remove all grease (for paint will not dry where there is any grease), and having got your colours made up at some colourman's or good oilshop (it will cost you more to try and mix the colours for yourself), and borrowed a large and small paint brush of the people who mix your paint, which you can readily do by leaving a deposit, put on the first coat of paint as evenly as possible, letting the brush travel over the woodwork lightly and in one direction, or rather in the direction of the grain of the wood. Put plenty of colour on, and then smooth it over as I have just directed. Allow this coat to dry hard, which will take two or three days, longer perhaps in damp weather, and then apply another coat, rather thinner than the first one, taking great care to get the paint on evenly. If you colour in the beads with a distinct colour, as indicated in illustration, these must be put in last with a small flat hog's-hair brush.

DISTEMPERING.

The walls might be distempered, for it is out of the question attempting to paint them, and paper-hanging is difficult. If the walls are covered with wallpaper, this must be

stripped off. Thoroughly soak the paper with hot water by brushing it over again and again with water until the paper can be peeled off. The walls must then be gone over with a little whitening, mixed up with a good quantity of size. Break a couple of cakes of whitening up into a large zinc pail, and pour upon them as much hot size (to be purchased at an oilshop) as will make a quite thin liquid. See that the whitening is thoroughly incorporated with the size. Leave this to get cold, when it will jelly, and then brush it on with a large whitewash brush (that you can borrow at the oilshop for a small fee). When this is dry, mix up the colour for the walls. This is done in the way just indicated, only there must be more whitening in proportion to the size, and the whitening must be tinted to the required colour with powder colours, that you can buy at a good oilshop or colourman's. Distemper will last three or four years or more, and most charming soft tints can be produced in distemper. Soft greys can be made with Antwerp blue, yellow ochre, and lemon chrome, and greens with ultramarine, middle chrome, raw sienna, and burnt sienna, while Venetian red, vermilion, and the chromes help you with the warm tones.

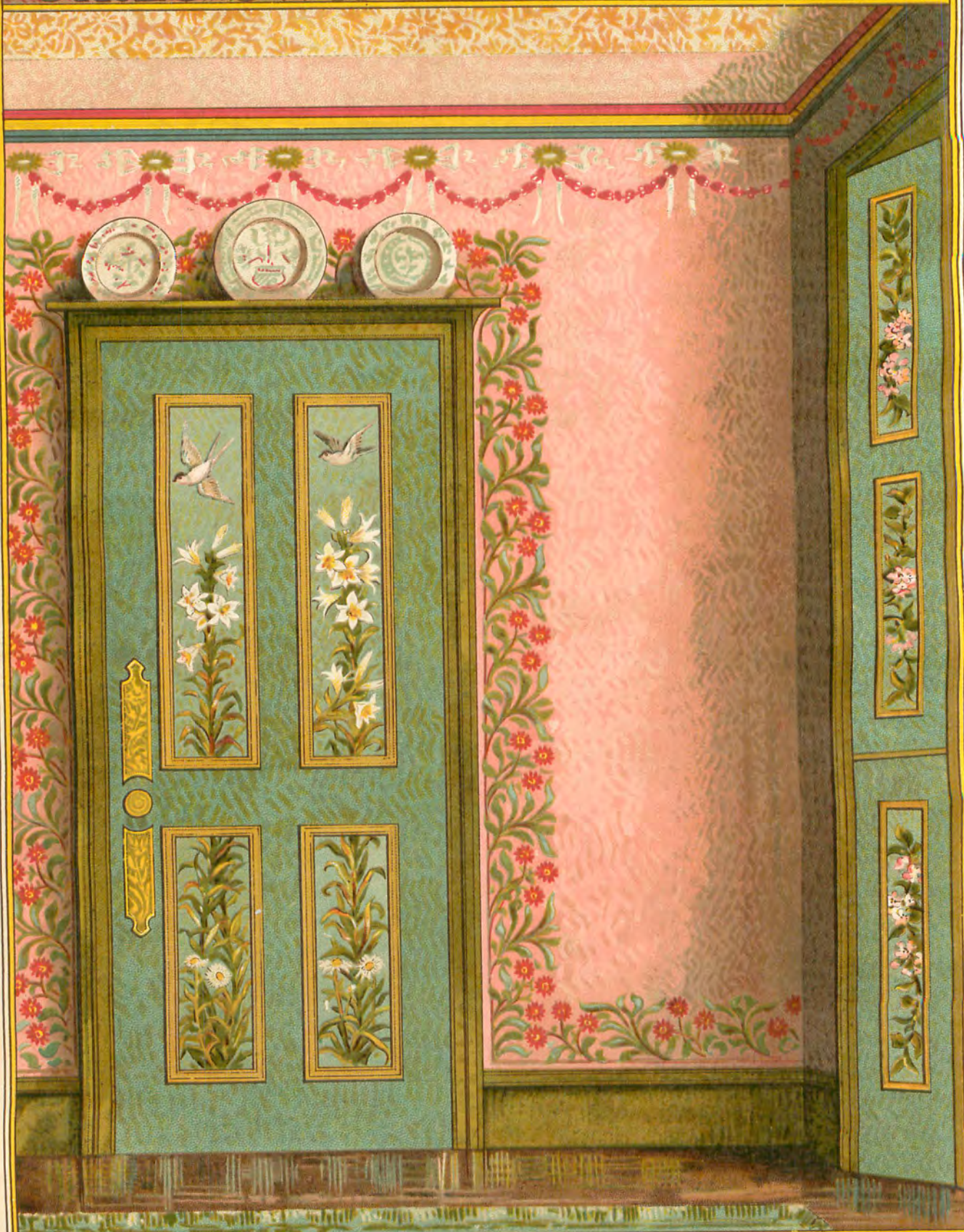
The ceiling is coloured in the same way as the walls, but the colour should not be as dark as the walls. Perfectly white ceilings are a mistake, as they give a cold appearance to a room. Those who can afford it will find papered ceilings an advantage. There are papers designed expressly for ceilings, quiet all over patterns, and geometrical ones in one or two soft colours; and not only is the effect handsome, but where the paper gets dirty it can be restored two or three times by going over it with dough. Remember, in distemping a ceiling, the old whitewash must be thoroughly washed off, and a first coat of size with a little whitening in it applied, as in the case of walls. The ceiling should be finished before beginning walls.

WALLPAPERS.

I have said that hanging wallpapers is a troublesome task. But if any reader is determined to try her hand, let her bear in mind the following: First trim off with scissors the plain margins to the paper. Having stripped off old paper and gone over the walls with hot size and allowed it to dry hard, spread out the paper, cut to the required lengths, upon a long board or on a clean floor, and thoroughly paste the back of paper with the whitewash brush. When pasted, fold the paper together, so that the pasted sides come together. This allows the paper to soak, for paper, when wetted, stretches; then take the paper, and starting at the top of the wall, fix upon the wall the top portion of the paper. Then pull out the whole length of the paper, so that it hangs down but does not stick to the wall; and having seen that the pattern tallies with the last piece hung, go over it with a dry cloth to make the paper thoroughly adhere in every part to the wall. In hanging the first piece you require a long piece of string with a weight at the end, to see that the paper is hung perpendicularly. Hold the string at the top of the wall, but so that the weight does not touch the wall, and then make the edge of your paper tally with the plumb-line. The two points to be observed in hanging paper are to get the pattern to run right through all the pieces, and to get the paper upright.

A little shelf screwed on to the top of the moulding of the door, to hold a few plates, is sometimes effective. A carpenter will do this for a few shillings.

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DESIGN FOR DECORATION OF GIRLS SITTING ROOM FRED MILLER