

## SOME HOME-MADE EFFECTS.

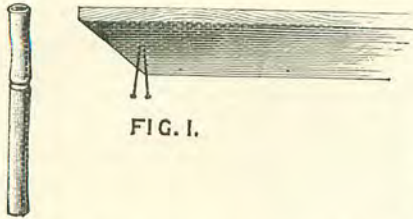


FIG. 1.

"You ought to do something to that ugly black mantelpiece," said Celia.

I said, "Yes, I ought," because I was too lazy to discuss the matter or point out how very well the mantelpiece could wait.

"Japanese Lhaga mats would do nicely to cover it with, and go well with the rest of your room."

"They would be just the thing," I acquiesced placidly.

"They are quite cheap, too, only 1s. 6½d., and nearly three yards long."

"Are they really as cheap as that?" I asked with polite interest.

"And you should get a broad board and lay on the mantelshelf; it is too narrow as it is."

"That would be a great improvement," I agreed.

"I will come Tuesday morning and help you to do it," said Celia, decidedly.

So I was in for it; my very laziness had been the means of forcing me to action. I undertook to have all the materials ready in time. Celia took her departure, leaving me rather glad that, being of a naturally lazy and procrastinatory temperament, I have friends of taste and good nature who keep me up to the mark; my ugly black mantelpiece had long been a discredit to me and an irritation to my friends, an untidy blemish in an otherwise pleasant room.

I thought the business over. The mantelshelf was fifty-four inches long and eight broad. The chimney projection much wider, being seven feet across. The mantelshelf was rather low, and therefore would not look well if it were made wide. The best thing would be to keep the small shelf as it was, and run a wide shelf right across the projection some eighteen inches above it.

Accordingly I ordered from a carpenter a piece of board seven feet long at twopence half-penny a foot—this came to 1s. 5½d. Then after careful search I found the right place to buy Lhaga mats. I say careful

search, because at the two shops I visited first, though they had the mats, they were short, narrow, ugly, and twopence dearer than those I had seen in Celia's house. Those I bought finally were the full length, four yards, and the width from twenty-three to twenty-six inches. The best Lhaga mats are very beautifully toned in soft, clear natural colours, browns, yellows and terra-cottas, with a little blue-grey, grey-green and white, just the colours of an autumn landscape seen through a mist.

Celia arrived punctually on Tuesday and we set to work just covering the black mantelshelf, using the middle out of one of the mats. About nine inches was left to fall over the edge, then the top covered and the rest of the width carried up the wall. The next business was to fix up the wide shelf. This was to be done with bamboo uprights, as iron brackets would have been out of place among the Japanese mats; but bamboo is hollow and could not be nailed to the board, nor could anything at all be nailed to the stone mantelpiece. Our first idea was to burn holes in the board with a poker and fit the bamboo into them; but presently Celia hit on a better plan. This was to drive large nails into the board side-ways, the points close together and the heads about three-quarters of an inch apart (as in sketch 1). These pressed together and thrust into the hollow of the bamboo would spring apart of themselves and hold the bamboo's support so firmly that a row of nails above and below the edge of the board were all that was needed to make the shelf perfectly firm.

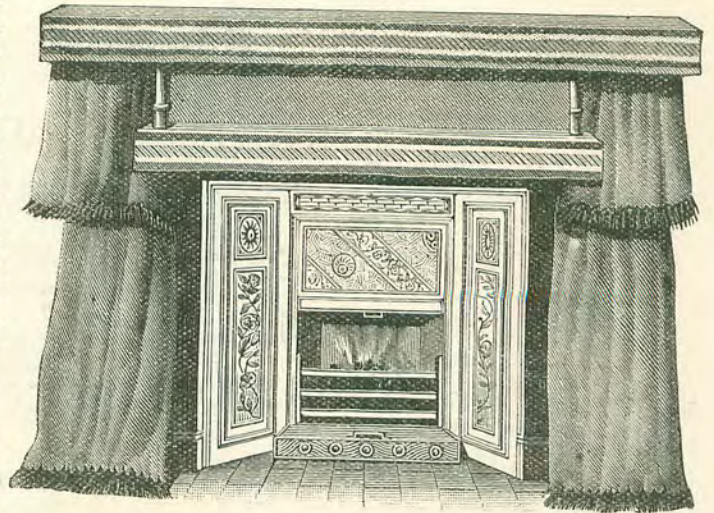
The upper shelf was then covered, a valance falling over the edge. This shelf being so long, only two ends of twenty-four inches in length

were left from it. These arranged with a pleat or two under the ends of the upper shelf, just reached the level of the second shelf. The longer ends left from the short shelf pleated on underneath them reached to the floor, so that the whole projection was covered in the matting to the height of the upper shelf, and the fire-place effectively framed (sketch 2).

The cost had been—two Lhaga mats at 1s. 6½d. each, 3s. 1d.; seven foot of plank at 2½d., 1s. 5½d. Total, 4s. 6½d. The bamboo uprights do not count, as they were pieces left over from another piece of work I had just finished. The result, simple as it is in effect, is very pretty indeed, and has been much admired.

The other piece of work of which I have just spoken was a bamboo grill to hold the curtains (sketch 3). This is a very simple thing to make, and costs just 1s. 3½d. The materials are—three bamboo rods about six feet long and averaging an inch in diameter at 5d. each, a little glue, and a few yards of invisible black wire (it is for these two

FIG. 2.



last items I have allowed the extra half-penny).

Saw the bamboo into the required lengths, and then where the rods cross saw half through each of them (sketch 4). This is a little troublesome as the bamboo is apt to split. Then patiently chip the sawn pieces out with a sharp knife. Fit the rods together where the piece has been sawn out, using a little glue, and binding them round crossways with the invisible wire; it needs Japanese skill to rivet bamboo successfully, but the glue and wire will serve. Fix the short uprights between the two long rods. Fill the hollow centres of them with wadding, shredded-out wool from old stockings, torn strips of old art muslin or any rubbish you have by you. Soak in a good deal of weak glue and water, so that the rags or wadding will stick to the inside of the bamboo; leave a little of the wadding projecting. This when soaked in glue will fit itself to the shape of the bamboo rod it has to join (sketch 5), and the glue drying will take exactly the same colour, so that the junction will scarcely be noticed. Bind the two long rods together with stout string, tightening the bands by pushing in nails between them and the rods after you have tied the string. This will hold the uprights in place till the glue dries. Lay the grill on the floor between newspapers. If the ends show any tendency to slope one way or the other, force them into place with flat-irons or heavy weights of some kind, and leave the grills to dry. When it is dried you can cut off the strings and put it in its place by means of nails driven into the walls or the window-frame.

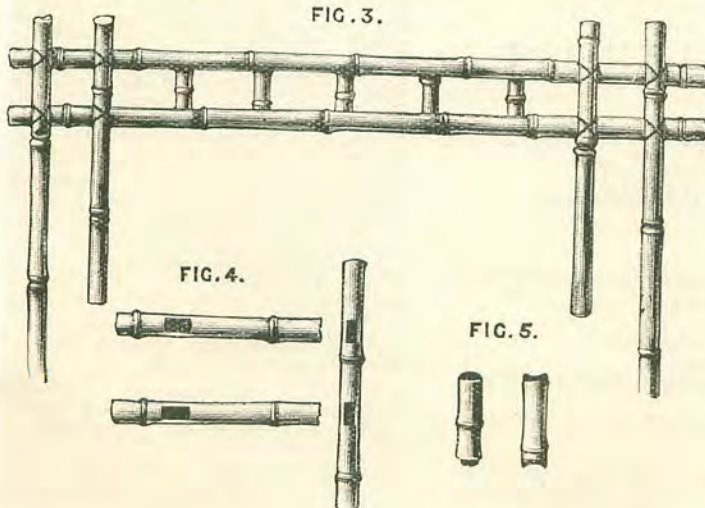


FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

FIG. 5.