

a little heap of sago, which had been previously dyed a pale-blue colour; the sago clung in tiny particles to the stems, and the result was as graceful as it was unexpected.

So vast is the manufacture that it is only possible to suggest its leading process. The better kind of flowers are built up as it were, each petal being separately wired.

As the workpeople are paid according to the amount of work they produce, rapidity is the first essential of competence; but this rapidity is at the same time one of the greatest drawbacks to the improvement of the manufacture, since it condemns each flower-maker to be a specialist. It was said that there was not a single woman in the factory in question who could make a flower entirely from start to finish. Many were able to make a considerable portion of certain flowers, but directly they prove themselves an adept in one branch they are only employed in that special department. There were also a great many who were practically experts in certain portions of the work, but they were utterly ignorant of any other outside their own scope. In many manufactures specialism is a necessity, but its consequence in that of artificial flower-making is in artistic production, the flowers, taken as a whole, being hopelessly unlike their prototypes in Nature.

In France an artificial flower-maker will take, say, a rose, and standing it in a glass of

water by her side, will copy it so minutely and exactly that it is almost impossible to detect the difference between the imitation and the imitated. None of the lighter and more delicately made blossoms, such as heath and feathery grasses, are ever attempted by our manufacturers, these being carelessly resigned to the monopoly of foreigners.

The French girl is taught during two or three years a complete and exhaustive knowledge of flowers, the imitative rendering of natural flowers and foliage in the bud, in growth, and in decay, together with the utmost perfection of colouring and shading; and she is taught to lay every tint, every shadow upon her work separately, until she achieves an harmonious combination. Thus she starts in the world equipped with a dual knowledge of Nature and Art, whilst the English girl, with no proper training, can never hope to produce anything better than the false and exaggerated caricatures that are issued from our workshops.

Our system calls for a speedy remedy. All the best and most expensive flowers are made by French women, or by English women trained in France, and to place another means of livelihood within the reach of girls who desire to support themselves, a scheme has been started which it is hoped will remedy the present existing state of things, and raise the standard of English production to the level of that of France or Germany.

Several ladies interested in the commercial outlook of women have arranged, with the sanction of the London County Council, that classes in artificial flower-making by hand, not by machinery, shall be added to those already existing for technical education at the Borough Road Polytechnic and at the Battersea Polytechnic Institutions, towards the end of the year. After much research and deliberation, they have come to the conclusion that there is an assured future before English girls who have a thorough knowledge of the making of artificial flowers, since, instead of sending to France for workwomen, the better class of manufacturers will draw upon the supply of English girls that will be provided by the adoption of this scheme by the London County Council.

There is no reason why this admirable innovation should not be imitated by other County Councils, and by bodies that control technical education in large towns, and, probably, when its success is fully assured, girls all over the country will have an opportunity of gaining the requisite knowledge. Of course it is an experiment, but with such urgent need for an artistic manufacture, its success should be assured. Proficient instructors have already been engaged, and with the commencement of the new year there will be another outlet for the energy, the inventive powers, and the artistic ability of women.

FRANK HIRD.

OUR ARTISTIC HOME.

MY DEAR EDITOR,—I have just returned from seeing such a delightful home. I must tell you something of it, for it is just what you too would admire. The whole house is a poem indeed, but it is my lady's bedroom that I especially want to describe to you. It is so artistic, full of such charming colouring, such sweet ideas, and called the Rose Room.

You will want to know every detail, so I will begin by mentioning that the walls are covered with pale blue watered paper with a frieze of trailing pink roses on a cream ground, and the ceiling with a cream embossed paper.

The furniture as well as the doors and dado is of light unpolished oak finely carved (none of that coarse work that one sees so much of nowadays). The parqueted polished floor is also of oak, and here and there are rugs of soft colouring.

Three windows facing south are draped with pink and blue silk curtains, and on the pale blue linen blinds a few roses are delicately painted. One window has a deep window seat. The bed-hangings are of the same silk. One long narrow curtain of each colour falls on either side in straight folds, caught back with large ribbon bows. The linen coverlid is embroidered with roses of many varieties, and has a broad insertion and border of thick lace.

Silk interlaced in the carved oak at the foot of the bed forms a charming background to a dainty rose silk sofa, on which are three cushions (blue, rose and cream), each with a beautifully worked rose upon it. A down *couvrepiéd* compressed with silk cords, forming either a cushion or a quilt, was shown me as the latest novelty.

On the toilet table, which is draped with pink and blue silk, is a cream muslin toilet cover, embroidered at irregular intervals with rose petals. I remarked that the pin-cushion was not up to date, and ventured to offer suggestions for another, but my hostess replied that the Rose Room is a room of love, and

the pin-cushion the gift of a dear old servant, and she would not change it for worlds.

All the chairs in the room are different and of beautiful designs and colouring. Cornerwise, leading to a recess, is a carved oak *prie-dieu*, near it a little table on which are the New Testament, the Prayer Book, the *Daily Round*, and other appropriate books. This recess is panelled throughout, its walls adorned with many of the pictures we love so well, such as "The Light of the World," and "The Good Shepherd."

I was delighted with the washing-stand. The jug and basin formed of china rose petals, and a soap dish of a large single perforated petal over a curved red-brown leaf. In place of the conventional water bottle and tumbler is a classically-shaped antique cut glass jug and glass. And for hot water one of those picturesque brass ewers from Cherbourg. The fireplace you would be charmed with. The wrought-iron grate standing far back in its deep recess, blue-tiled, with a frontage of exquisitely painted china plaques.

The room is full of pictures, each perfect in its respective style and each style hung in a distinct group. I noticed a pink bell-rope of thick soft silk tied in at intervals with blue cord, and its fellow in blue silk tied with pink cord.

Each room in the house has an appropriate verse or motto. On entering the Rose Room one is greeted by these lines:

"If by each rose we see
A thorn there grows,
Strive that no thorn shall be
Without a rose."

A. H. Church.

My hostess drew aside the bed coverlid and showed me that the sheets were marked in large blue and pink monograms, as well as with a rose, a pretty device for aiding the housekeeper in the assortment of the linen for the various rooms. The fine face towels

were too dainty for words, and had the same elaborate markings on a smaller scale.

Adjoining is the Violet Dressing-room, also with light oak furniture. The paper is so pretty, violets scattered over a rose-tinted ground, and now and again caught together with rose ribbon in tiny lovers' knots. The pale violet window-curtains are lined with delicate rose colour. The motto here is again by A. H. Church.

"TO THE VIOLET.

She would not be the same
Sweet Spring to me,
If with all else she came
Yet not with thee."

I have already written a longer letter than I intended, and will only add that three other rooms are named after flowers. The Lily Room with yellow hangings and doors and furniture of white enamel, on which are painted dear little pink flushed cherubs. And opens into the Mignonette Dressing-room with similar furniture and hangings.

On the same landing is the Chrysanthemum Room full of lovely indescribable tones of colour, with mahogany doors and Chippendale furniture. You would delight in the brass candlesticks and other antique treasures which this room contains.

These friends of mine are as good as they are rich, and do not spend all their money on themselves. When we meet I shall enjoy telling you of all they have done and are doing for their village, and of the fine church they have built. All in this house is regardless of expense and far beyond the reach of imitation of poor folk like ourselves. But we may surely gather many ideas from it, and if we cannot surround ourselves with all that is most beautiful, let our surroundings be in their humble way beautiful. If we choose the true in all the beautiful must follow.

My dear Editor,
Yours ever, ZAIDA.