

ON GIMCRACKS.



IN almost every drawing-room or woman's bedroom that one enters, in a multitude of gay and tempting shop-windows, in every list of wedding-gifts bestowed upon a bride, the tendency is shown of the modern mind to delight in flimsy trifles, popularly believed to be ornaments.

To take the drawing-room first. Does not the average specimen suggest a fancy bazaar, rather than a home to live a useful life in, when we look at its array of rickety little tables, silk draperies, brackets, wall-pockets, screens, photo frames, ornamental crockery, and multiplicity of little pictures on the walls? In the homes of the wealthy, the travelled, and those blessed with naturally good taste, these items are often individually very beautiful things, but their beauty is eclipsed by the crowd of incongruous odds and ends by which they are surrounded; but to the humbler imitator of the fashionable craze quantity, not quality, seems the end for which to strive.

I was once shown into the parlour behind a village shop, which was such a caricature of the modern drawing-room, that I had difficulty in keeping my countenance sober while I conversed with its complacent mistress. It was a good-sized, pleasant room, and with sufficient tidy furniture, but there were gorgeous antimacassars on every chair, glass vases innumerable, some holding paper flowers, some of a bright-blue colour, with heads of plummy pampas-grass, dyed magenta, green, and orange.

Every available inch on table, whatnot, and piano, was crowded with cheap and hideous

trifles, and the pictures and brackets on the walls were beyond description!

It did not look like a room in which the master of the shop could enjoy his well-earned Sunday rest with his little children—indeed, I doubt if the bairns were ever allowed to set foot within its sacred precincts, yet the house was a small one, and what folly it seems to sacrifice the comfort of the home, to the empty glory of impressing an occasional caller with its splendours.

Another objection to these crowds of ornaments is the work they make for mistress and maid.

In the days of our grandmothers, when spinning and sewing, baking and washing, preserving and pickling, were all of necessity done at home, there was no time to waste on fancy dusting, and middle-class parlours were bare and sombre, even to dreariness. We do not wish to return to this style, but to find the happy medium of beauty and utility.

By all means have some pictures—a few really artistic ones, on which the eye can rest with pleasure. In these days of etchings and photographs it is easy to find such, but do not frame the children's school drawings, or ordinary oleographs, unless some special interest is attached to them. We remember one middle-class household in the old days, where the walls were entirely pictureless. The means were small, the family large, and the father said that he knew what good pictures were, and would not spoil the taste of his children by having cheap and inferior ones always before their eyes.

Liberty-silk and art-serge are in many cases a delusion and a snare; they are so inexpensive, and so fresh and pretty at first, but in the sooty atmosphere of our town homes, what faded, dingy, dust-traps they become, before we can bring ourselves to put away some dear Ethel's or Helen's clever handiwork! For this reason china ornaments are most desirable. If kept from breakage they never get faded or shabby, and soap and water make them like new again. Most families

have some pretty old china, and very graceful and artistic things can sometimes be picked up at small cost among the legions of crude and tasteless articles at fancy shops.

Flowers, both cut and growing, are some of the best adornments of our rooms. To keep them in order and well-arranged takes a good deal of time, but they are a fresh and living interest, and surely it is better to spend sixpence on a good hyacinth root, than fourpence three-farthings on a trumpery photo frame or a china dog.

In bedrooms, for health's sake, all dust-collectors should be avoided; but we must not banish all pleasant objects for the eye to rest on during our waking hours, or in illness. Here we can have around us those mementoes of happy days, which can be rightly described as "of no value except to the owner;" and here also is the place for those family photographs which always give a common look to sitting-rooms, when displayed in frames on the wall.

In dress for ordinary occasions, there has been a tendency of late years to renounce gimcracks. In spite of rumours to the contrary, the sensible plain skirt continues in favour, in agreeable contrast to the meaningless buttons, bows, fringes and flounces, which bedecked the skirts of fifteen years ago. Dangling eardrops, locketts, and showy bracelets have also disappeared from the persons of well-bred women, and also the long curls, which were not always growing from the head to which they were supposed to belong!

Would it not be well if the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER were to resolve to spend their money on books, and really useful things, instead of buying cheap, frail prettinesses for presents, and also earn a little more precious leisure for self-improvement, and helping the needy, by banishing from the living-rooms one-half of the trifles which now crowd them, and endeavour to induce their friends to join in the crusade against the multiplication of useless gimcracks?

MAUD MORISON.



MY BABY.

By AMY IRVINE.

SHE was such a dear little thing; and I was the proudest mother in the land. All day long I had her in my arms; I could do nothing else but mind my baby. They used to speak to me about it, and tell me my house was not fit to be seen, and it was my duty to attend to it and my husband, and I was angry. I had a little maid, and it was her business to see to the house. Why couldn't they let me alone to enjoy myself with baby? What did I care for the house while I had my treasure to myself?

She was my first. When I looked into her solemn eyes that always seemed to be gazing far away into heaven, I used to feel that God was near, and that my little one would lead me to Him; perhaps she saw Him even then.

"Why can't you put her down?" asked Mrs. Grieves, crossly; "you're for ever mauling at the poor little thing."

"Put her down!" I exclaimed, and I felt the angry blood rise in my cheeks. "Do you think I'm going to leave her crying in her cradle, like some mothers I know?"

"If you mean me, my dear," she said, laughing, "it shows you know just nothing about it. I know as I don't carry 'em about all day long, like you do, and you won't when you've half-a-dozen, neither; but what I mean is, as it isn't good for neither her nor you, and if you knew what the neighbours say about your house, you'd set to and clean it down. It was the tidiest little home in the yard before the child was born, and your husband was that proud of it, he was for ever telling mine how he'd got the best wife in