

the floor, his lips pressed together, and his brows meeting in a straight black line across his forehead. Another minute and the carriage rolled away. He peeped out of the door in time to see a little figure fly out into the driving rain, and walking slowly towards the school-room came face to face with Mrs. Asplin.

"Gone?" she inquired sadly. "Well, I'm thankful it is over. Poor little dear, where is she? Flown up to her room, I suppose. We'll leave her alone until tea-time. It will be the truest kindness."

"Yes," said Robert vaguely. He was afraid that the good lady would not be so willing to leave Peggy undisturbed if she knew her real whereabouts, and was determined to say nothing to deceive her. He felt sure that the girl had hidden herself in the summer-house at the bottom of the garden, and a nice damp mouldy retreat it would be this afternoon, with the rain driving in through the open window, and the creepers dripping on the walls. Just the place in which to sit and break your heart and catch rheumatic fever with the greatest possible ease and comfort. And yet Robert said no word of warning to Mrs. Asplin. He had an inward conviction that if any one were to go to the rescue that person should be himself, and that he, more than anyone else, would be able to comfort Peggy in her affliction. He sauntered up and down the hall until the coast was clear, and then dashed once more into the cloak-room, took an Inverness coat from a nail, a pair of goloshes from the floor, and sped rapidly down the garden-path. In less than two minutes he had reached the summer-house and was peeping cautiously in at the door. Yes; he was right. There sat Peggy, with her arms stretched out before her on the rickety table, her shoulders heaving with long, gasping sobs. Her fingers clenched and unclenched themselves spasmodically, and the smooth little head rolled to and fro in an abandonment of grief. Robert stood looking on in silent misery. He had a boy's natural hatred of tears, and of anything like a scene, and his first impulse was to turn tail, go back to

the house, and send someone to take his place, but even as he stood hesitating he shivered in the chilly damp, and remembered the principal reason of his coming. He stepped forward and dropped the cloak over the bent shoulders, whereupon Peggy started up and turned a scared white face upon him.

"Who, who—oh! it is you! What do you want?"

"Nothing. I saw you come out, and thought you would be cold. I brought you out my coat."

"I don't want it; I am quite warm. I came here to be alone."

"I know; I'm not going to bother. Mrs. Asplin thinks you are in your room, and I didn't tell her that I'd seen you go out. But it's damp. If you catch cold your mother will be sorry."

Peggy looked at him thoughtfully, and there was a glimmer of gratitude in her poor tear-stained eyes.

"Yes; I p-p-romised to be careful. You are very kind, but I can't think of anything to-night. I am too miserably wretched."

"I know; I've been through it. I was sent away to a boarding-school when I was a little kid of eight, and I howled myself to sleep every night for weeks. It is worse for you, because you are older, but you will be happy enough in this place when you get settled. Mrs. Asplin is a brick, and we have no end of fun. It is ever so much better than being at school, and, I say, you mustn't mind what Mellicent said the other night. She's a little muff, always saying the wrong thing. We were only chaffing when we said you were to be our fag. We never really meant to bully you."

"You c-couldn't if you t-tried," stammered Peggy brokenly, but with a flash of her old spirit which delighted her hearer.

"No; of course not. You can stand up for yourself; I know that very well. But look here, I'll make a compact if you will. Let us be friends. I'll stick to you and help you when you need it, and you stick to me. The other girls have their brother to look after them, but if you want anything done, if anyone is cheeky to you and you want him kicked,

for instance, just come to me and I'll do it for you. It's all nonsense about being a fag, but there are lots of things you could do for me if you would, and I'd be awfully grateful. We might be partners and help one another—"

Robert stopped in some embarrassment, and Peggy stared fixedly at him, the pale face peeping out from the folds of the Inverness coat. She had stopped crying, though the tears still trembled on her eyelashes, and her chin quivered in uncertain fashion. Her eyes dwelt on the broad forehead, the overhanging brows, the square, massive chin, and brightened with a flash of approval.

"You are a nice boy," she said slowly. "I like you! You don't really need my help, but you thought it would cheer me to feel that I was wanted. Yes; I'll be your partner, and I'll be of real use to you yet. You'll find that out, Robert, before you have done with me."

"All right, so much the better. I hope you will, but you know you can't expect to have your own way all the time. I'm the senior partner, and you will have to do what I tell you. Now I say it's damp in this hole, and you ought to come back to the house at once. It's enough to kill you to sit in this draught."

"I'd rather like to be killed. I'm tired of life. I shouldn't mind dying a bit."

"Humph!" said Robert shortly. "Jolly cheerful news that would be for your poor mother when she arrived at the end of her journey. Don't be so selfish. Now, then, up you get. Come along to the house."

"I wo—" Peggy began, then suddenly softened, and glanced apologetically into his face. "Yes, I will, because you ask me. Smuggle me up to my room, Robert, and don't, if you love me, let Mellicent come near me! I couldn't stand her chatter to-night!"

"She will have to fight her way over my dead body," said Robert firmly, and Peggy's sweet little laugh quavered out on the air.

"Nice boy!" she repeated heartily. "Nice boy, I do like you!"

(To be continued.)



"IN MINE HOUSE."

By LINA ORMAN COOPER, Author of "The King's Daughters," etc.

PART I.

ITS CUPBOARDS.

MINE house is not an old-fashioned, picturesque one; it boasts of no mullioned windows or deep embrasures. It is like hundreds of others to be found scattered over England—built after the same plan and decorated after the same fashion. It stands in a street, and is reduplicated on every hand like a cardboard expanding toy. It draws a peaked gable roof over its red brick face, and has no originality to awake attention.

In one thing only is mine house unique. Its general architecture it owes to its builder, its cupboards to a certain little old lady who lived therein for many years. Every spot has been utilised, and I rejoice in the most comfortable interior it is possible to imagine. "A place for everything and everything in its place" is a motto easily followed in this mine house.

Nowadays most matrons have wakened to the delights of a well-cupboarded "manio," or abiding-place. The first thing looked for in taking a new house is its capabilities in this

direction. The long-headed woman values every recess and corner as a possible press. She knows a few shillings spent in pine-boards, hooks, curtains, and locks, can transform dust-collecting angles into dust-resisting receptacles. With a little forethought and contrivance, our carpenter can be so superintended that such work need not be made into "fixtures"—sliding grooves and panels, a few staples and screws, insure easily taken-down wardrobes, and need not strain the purse of even a frequent flitter.

The first necessary cupboard in mine house

is the linen press. This should, if possible, be built over those unseemly hot-water pipes which supply the bath from our kitchen boiler. There should be graduated shelves in it—wide ones to hold sheets, narrow ones for table napkins, d'oyleys, etc. Every shelf should be neatly lined with white paper, and one at least must have linen laps to tie over our least-used napery. Plenty of lavender bags—measuring the length of the press—should be placed everywhere; not tiny satchel-like things, which rumple into corners and get mislaid, but at least a yard in length and just as wide as each shelf.

On the door should be pasted a list of the linen stored in this our press. This list varies much in each house; but I will tell you what I consider absolutely necessary only. First, there should be six Irish linen tablecloths for parlour use and three breakfast cloths; six fine table-napkins for every member of the family. For kitchen wear, three smaller coarser cloths are required, and, if you wish to inculcate habits of nicety in your maids, three napkins apiece must be provided. This allows for one in use, one at the laundry, and one in reserve. Half-a-dozen fringed tea-cloths, half-a-dozen sideboard slips, a couple of dozen oval, round, and square d'oyleys, and the embellishment of the dining-table is secured.

We next come to the sleeping rooms. In our press we must number three pair of sheets for each bed—each upper one frilled and embroidered with our monogram. These sheets may be of twilled cotton, but their accompanying fellow slips must be of linen. Linen wears better, looks better, and feels nicer than cotton. There should be six to each single bed. Cash's hem-stitched frilling gives a dainty finish to these slips, and will wear as long as the linen. Beside the bed-linen should lie chamber-towels; of these it is nice to have several dozen, with different borders, when possible, so that each room may keep to its own set. Cheap towels are most expensive in the long run; those flimsy honeycomb ones requiring incessant laundering. Buy good huckaback, or satin diaper, and beautify them with marking initials in cross stitch. This is easily done by tacking a small square of coarse canvas into the corner and withdrawing its strands after working. Ingrain cottons of all colours can now be bought for this work; the red wears and washes best.

Our dressing-tables also claim a niche in our linen press. Three sets of covers being necessary for each.

At the very top of our press, it is well to have some very wide shelves fixed. They will be overhead, so may jut out into the room. In this cupboard—lined with brown holland, and scented with camphor balls—we shall do well to store spare blankets in the summer, down quilts when not in use, and any straw pillows. They will always be warm and ready for immediate service, as the hot-water pipes will keep them well aired.

So much about furnishing our linen press. The replenishment of it should be constant. Even when we use our dozens of towels in rotation, they will wear out, and it is necessary to keep up the stock by occasional purchases. Careful mending, too, is necessary. No pillow-slips minus buttons or tapes, no tiny hole in a tablecloth, should be seen in a well-kept linen press. When sheets wear thin, they should be split in half, sides brought to the centre, and the worn edges hemmed. When constant folding brings frays in a tablecloth, the laundress should be directed to fold them across instead of lengthways. This will double the life of our finest diaper. Towels, when ragged, can be doubled and made into bath cloths and chamber rubbers; loops of tape attached will be useful for hanging in place.

The next cupboard claiming attention in mine house is the crockery one. Here are stored cups and saucers, plenty of spare glass, water-jugs and crofts. It is well to keep in this press extra lamp-chimneys and gas-globes. Best dessert dishes, too, should be placed on the top shelf and any ornaments not in daily use.

Hanging presses are a great boon to the tidy housewife. One for spare dresses should be built on any landing large enough. American pegs screwed into the wall over a sheet of well-stretched holland answer the purpose of skirt-hanging. To each of them should be tied a double width of the same material to wrap round our silk and muslin robes. Sometimes bags, forty-six inches long, are preferred to draw over the skirt and to hang with it from a peg. With these bags it is unnecessary to have doors to this cupboard, as their use is a safeguard against dust, even if a curtain only be hung in front of the recess.

A remnant cupboard is not always met with, but what a boon it is in mine house. My old lady had one fixed in a spare room. A top shelf is ready for rolls of wall paper, remnants of curtains, calicoes, and flannels, old square of blanket fit for scouring purposes, old linen for dust-cloths fill its pigeon-holes, whilst a rag-bag of red twill hangs below all, and is stuffed with scraps too small to be rolled or folded.

A medicine cupboard is a necessity in mine house. One hung not higher than one's head is best. This should be divided in half; one partition provided with a well-locked door, the other protected only by a curtain. In this latter portion may be kept narrow and wide bandages, goldbeater's skin, and sticking plaster, cotton-wool, and a pair of scissors, some strong thread and tape, vaseline and powder. In the locked part all the family pharmacopoeia must be secluded. "Poisons" should be printed legibly on the door, and the key should never leave our own *châtelaine*. Have in this a bottle of sweet nitre for feverishness, and some pilules of aconite; spirits of camphor for a cold, and a screw of lump sugar; a two-ounce bottle of castor oil with an old teaspoon near it, spongia, Ipecacuanha wine, and syrup of squills ready for croup; a tin of linseed, another of mustard, a flask of sweet oil, a bottle each of eucalyptus, camphorated oil and glycerine; belladonna tincture for sore throats; carron or green oil for a burn; and liquorice powder or Cascara pellets for constipation. In mine house all these things are necessary, and should be found in the medicine cupboard.

A jam press is a nice addition to our housewife's corner. Every pot of marmalade or jelly should have a label on it stating when it was made.

"Raspberry jam,
No. 1 boiling,
July 20th, 1899."

In a dry situation there is no need to cover each crock. If well boiled and made of fresh sound fruit, it should "jell" enough to keep without excluding air. A sheet of newspaper laid over the rows of pots is all my old lady ever thought necessary for her home-made jam. But then her jam press had air-holes bored in the door. These were masked with finest wire netting, and effectually prevented mouldiness.

A boot cupboard lengthens the lives of all our bottines. Two shelves about two feet apart should be protected in front with a chintz curtain hanging from tiny rings to a brass pole. Every pair of boots should be kept here, protected from dust and ready for wear. Trees fitted into each are really economical, as they double the existence of all

outdoor footwear. Damp boots, too, can be filled with oats, and dry slowly in this cupboard, instead of being hardened and shrivelled over the kitchen range.

Of course a store press is a *sine qua non* in mine house. I do not keep this locked, for servants should be trusted in a family. Here everything likely to be wanted in an emergency is kept—tins of salmon, herrings and tomatoes, collared head, *pâte de foie gras*, corned beef, pickles and chutneys, potted meats, bottled fruit for pies, capers, peppers, spices, lentils by the stone, and all farinaceous preparations; soap by weight cut up and dried, currents washed and picked ready for use, raisins, sultanas, soda in a sack, etc., etc. In order to keep these things really nice and fresh, stone jars with covers are the best to put them in. But when these prove too expensive, wide-mouthed pickle bottles may be used, labelled clearly so that their contents are recognised at once. Flour should be kept in a tub, apples and sugar in casks. This store cupboard must be cleared out once a month, its shelves swept down, and fresh lining paper put there on them. It is easy then to note where our supply is running short, and to supplement it, easy to see where a bag has burst, or bottle is leaking, and to substitute other ones.

A *multum in parvo* cupboard is one of the comforts in mine house. Here, under lock and key, are kept spare dozens of cotton, spools, papers of needles, boxes of pins, both hair and dress, tapes and measures, paper and envelopes, pens by the gross, and pencils by the score. These can often be picked up at sales for next to nothing, and a constant supply of such necessities is at hand.

A carpenter's cupboard is a boon to every household. In mine house one is fitted up in a tiny closet under the stairs. So many little things go wrong in the framework of our homes—locks grow stiff, handles come off, window cords break, nails want driving. How well it is when the mistress of a house can wield hammer and gimlet and screwdriver; and yet how often are such tools missing when required. In my carpenter's cupboard there is always a heavy-headed, light-handed little hammer for adjusting carpets or putting in tacks; also a coal-hammer for heavier work. Here a gimlet may be found, and several different-sized screwdrivers, a box of assorted nails; hooks and screws are also found there when wanted. A small sharpening plate and flask of oil for keeping the family couch in easy trim, a smoothing plane and saw, wire nails and coils of thin cord, a pair of pincers, and a good knife. I find a stitch in time in carpentering saves more than the proverbial nine.

And now I think I have told you about most of the cupboards in mine house, and what is found therein. I have not described the housemaid's closet with its hairbroom, its pope's head, its twig, its besom, its dustpan and brush, or its other *et ceteras*. Every mistress of a family knows what is required therein, only let me suggest that her usual feather-head dusting-brush should be conspicuous by its absence. Never was so senseless a plan devised for flicking particles from one place to another as that same feather whisk. Let the housemaid have plenty of damp dusters at hand, and germ-pregnant dust will be effectually removed.

I have omitted, too, all account of the butler's pantry. Houses nowadays that keep such an official are governed by a housekeeper, and not by the mistress herself. Besides, I am writing about small establishments in which women do the work. For that reason, my next paper will be all about the inglenooks in mine house, and how to economise these.

(To be continued.)

A DREAM OF FAIR SERVICE.

By C. A. MACIRONE.

CHAPTER I.

DOMESTIC SERVICE.

SITTING in a cool green shade of trees and flowers, in the still heat of a summer afternoon, I read in your most interesting paper, dear Mr. Editor, a record of noble women who, from the slippery places of wealth and ease, had sprung a mine of happiness in lightening the burdens, and in sympathies for the sorrows, of many who had no helper.

I read and enthusiastically admired, and while admiring tried to appreciate the difficulty which women so placed would find in realising sufferings of which they could know so little by experience—of some troubles they could absolutely know nothing—the want of bread, the deadly fatigue of overwork, the misery of children crying for food, the bitterness of bare poverty, of homes which do not shelter, of empty fireplaces in cold, and shadowless rooms in the heat—and in such heat as we have been taught lately can be suffered even in this dear England of ours.

In the intense heat of the day—while the roses drooped and seemed to sigh for rain, and the birds were silent, and by the shaded pool, at the dark water's edge, the cows were enjoying some freshness, and the white flocks of waterfowl cowered and waited for the evening breeze—in the stillness my thoughts floated away to curious visions, partly suggested by a lovely series of pictures in the *Arabian Nights* of magical help and daring exploits, and one, the last (not in any English edition), of a range of mountain caverns, with glittering temptations, through which the prince has to fight his way till he comes to the last vast hall shrouded in darkness and ended by dim heavy curtains, which opened, disclosing the radiant islands in the seven seas, where his love reigns, and the water-nymphs receive him as he leaps into the waves and, singing, bear him to his queen, to rescue and love her.

Visions are curious and arbitrary things, and while dreaming of this often haunting story, I thought that, instead of the gigantic fiend who in the story waves his scimitar over the lover, I saw two radiant angels parting

those magic curtains as I in my dream gazed, and they said to me—

"You have loved and revered the courage and self-devotion of the noble servants of the Most High, who have abandoned the luxuries and repose of wealth to save their fellow mortals—the poor, the helpless, and the suffering. Would you know what more can be done?"

"There are records in the kingdom of our Master of fellow-servants of ours—women, with no power but their faith, no means but those like the feast for five thousand provided by their Lord by the Galilean lake from a few loaves and small fishes, no strength but the divine energy of love—these servants of God, poor, weak, alone, have done work which has caused joy in Heaven and saved those who, but for them and others like them, would have been lost. Will you dream on, and we will show you visions of some of these?"

In breathless expectation I waited, and gradually the vision resolved itself before me into a wild mountainous country. A castle up the hills was besieged by a horde of savage and furious soldiery. Defence was hopeless, but the few loyal retainers held their own till the three little orphan children of the lord were hurried out of the back postern by their nurse and one (the only) trooper who could be spared to drive the mule on which the two little leddies were seated and to carry the young lord.

Heaven helped them and they safely reached the hut where, concealed and protected by Elspeth the nurse, they escaped the search of their enemies. By day and night this devoted servant worked for them, tended them. To feed them she starved, to clothe them she managed to get by night and hidden mountain paths to the few nobles still left on whom she could rely with the words "My young leddies need this," "My little lord needs that."

Years go by, and the brave old Scotchwoman has fulfilled her trust. The young lord has regained his inheritance, and now they all plead that she to whom they owe everything should accompany them to the noble home she has so helped them to regain. But I see her, in advancing years, still spinning on in

the Highland home. At all times of need, whether of joy or woe, they call for Elspeth, and she is with them again; but she died as she lived, in the poor home of her fathers, but up-borne by the prayers and the reverence of her people. "Poor, yet making many rich."

It was in vain the young lord and her leddies claimed her for their richer life of competence and power, but the old Highland woman said, "Na, na." She would go to them when on great occasions they wanted her, but her strong independent life was still to be lived among the hills she loved and among her own people; and by the work of her own hands she would still live, and in her hut she would die.

The dream curtains slowly descended, but my last look at the beautiful Highland scene was on the cottage on which the sunshine of Heaven's blessing still lingered, and on the noble peasant woman who had saved her chieftain's children.

I might be allowed to mention that, remembering this touching story of fidelity and loyalty as it was told me by the Earl himself years ago, I have searched through many volumes of the history of this great family for further details of the time and place, but in vain, so I must leave the little history as I heard it from the chief's own lips.

In writing of servants, an anecdote of Lord Shaftesbury, mentioned in a recent work—*Collections and Recollections*—is worth remembering.

"Speaking of his early and troubled childhood, he said, one only element of joy he recognised in looking back to those dark days, and that was the devotion of an old maid-servant, who comforted him in his childish sorrows and taught him the rudiments of the Christian faith. In all the struggles and distresses of boyhood and manhood, he used the words of prayer which he had learned from the good woman before he was seven years old. And of a keepsake which she left him—the gold watch which he wore to the last day of his life—he used to say, 'That was given to me by the best friend I ever had in the world.'"

(To be continued.)

"IN MINE HOUSE."

By LINA ORMAN COOPER, Author of "The King's Daughters," etc.

PART II.

ITS INGLE-NOOKS AND HOW TO ECONOMISE THEM.

IN olden days the ingle-nook was the centre of the home. Built in a deep recess of the wall, with its copper or brazen cupola, it had benches fitted into its chimney corner on each side. Here, after a day's work was done, assembled the mistress with her distaff, maidens with their lovers, sons with their netting, and the father with his book. Here chat and song and sacred lore flowed freely and fast. On its wide breast lay large logs of hazel and oak, beechen boughs and green ashwood. Bit by bit as they smouldered away fresh limbs were added, keeping up a crimson glow on the wide hearth.

Nowadays, in mine house slow combustion grates and stoves reign supreme. By their use much of the picturesqueness of our fires is done away with, but a wonderful economy in the coal-bill effected. This is not the case, however, if our particular Mary Jane be allowed to make and mend at her own

sweet will. The "Eagle Range" is quite as omnivorous as its namesake if cook keeps every damper out and every cross-door shut. Unless she cleans each flue scrupulously, the "Eagle" and its ilk will only consume lumps of best Orrell—and consume them much faster than an open fireplace would do.

In mine house the first lesson taught a new maid is how to lay and light a fire. Scientifically done, it takes far less kindling wood and far fewer matches than when built up at haphazard. There are two methods of laying a fire. A range or stove must burn from the bottom upwards; the open grate may be ignited on the top.

We will consider our drawing-room fire first. See that every bit of ancient fire is raked away and every cinder riddled on the spot through a 6d. wire-shovel. The meshes of this instrument are wide apart, so only the large cinders are retained by its use; all small morsels and dust fall through without raising a "pother," and may be sifted afterwards. Now fit a sheet of brown paper across the

lower bars and lay over it some lumps of clean round coal. On the top of these empty your cinders, and over them again place wood and bits of crumpled paper in the order named. One match applied to this topmost layer will ignite the tissue, and very slowly it will burn downwards until the Orrell be reached.

This glowing mass must on no account be poked. In fact, if this mode of lighting our sitting-room fires be adopted, sets of fire-irons should be conspicuous by their absence. A very distinct saving is effected by this; first we are spared initial cost of purchase, and afterwards constant extravagant use of the poker is avoided.

Some folk seem to think that flames alone give heat. Now, as a matter of fact, it is the glowing mass which most quickly warms a room. Others talk of "the cheerful blaze." In mine house we esteem the red heart far more beautiful. As a matter of fact, in mine house, which boasts of ten grates, only two pokers are *en evidence*. Yet last winter our

next door neighbour—who burned double the quantity of coal—complained she could not get her parlour to register 60°, whilst my sitting-room pumped up to and maintained 70° without any difficulty.

There are two ways of minimising the consumption of coal in our modern grates—either get a firebrick to fill up the back thereof and burn only a frontage of bottled sunshine, or leave it as the builder intended and after drawing every bit of round coal to the front bars and seen them well alight, pack the cavity behind with a bucket of well-damped "slack" or coal-dust. This mass will gradually heat and ignite all through and throw out a heat never attained by the ordinary lump fire.

The very best Orrell slack is like small coal, and costs only from 6d. to 8d. a sack as against £1 1s. a ton for bright coal. A fire made up after this economical plan will burn from morning till night without attention. Then, breaking up the solid cake, a bright cheerful result is gained for the hours of twilight and night. Such a fire, too, is invaluable in a sick room—requiring no noisy repairing when sleep ought to reign.

In mine house the kitchen range is scientifically treated also and consumes every bit of refuse.

I allow neither ashpit, pigbucket, or dustbin at the back door. Such extravagant conveniences should never be tolerated where economy in fuel is an object. Even if we have no poultry or porcine animal to devour potato peels, vegetable parings, or scraps of meat, our kitchen range can have its omnivorous mouth filled daily with such. Of course every house mother knows that when cooking is being done, a clear good fire is necessary.

Mary Jane may during those halcyon hours pile on the best coal and be allowed liberally to "rake" it with a heavy poker, otherwise she will send up flabby pastry, raw potatoes, and half-cooked beef. But directly the mid-day meal be over, every scrap of green stuff, cabbage stalks, every bone—fish or flesh—is laid on the glowing embers of the range in mine house. A layer of wet coal-dust is added, the iron rings are put in place, the door is shut, and all dampers are pulled out. Thus, *sans odeur*, those atoms of waste food are consumed which, left to lie on an ashpit, would infallibly breed fever of all sorts.

When, at six o'clock, another meal is required, the range is opened, lungs perforated through its crust, some knots of coal allowed, and a liberal use of the "curate" recommended.

For toasting or ironing purposes we utilise a heap of clean cinders which has gradually been accumulating in a corner of the yard. The dews of heaven have kept these damp, and the raindrops have cleaned them before we shovel them on to the fire. Ram them into the grate, and thus provide the best (because most smokeless) fuel for laundry work. Our flat irons, heated by these cinders, are not smoke begrimed or sooty, but keep bright and smooth all the year round.

In the ingle-nook of mine house open fireplaces are, in two rooms, replaced by American stoves. One of them stands about two and a half feet high and cost only 15s. It juts well out in the study—close to the writing-table—and keeps my toes and fingers warm and comfortable at a minimum cost of fuel. An iron arm elbows its way up the closed chimney, and a sheet of zinc nailed over the ordinary grate gives a good draught. The fire-space in this stove is very tiny—a handful of shavings and a spoonful of coal makes it light up cheerfully, and a little damp slack keeps it at furnace heat for hours.

This wee warming-stove has saved its cost over and over again, and is so easily lit up that I manage to have the comfort of a fire

long before my house-maidens have quitted the beautiful land of nod. All undue dryness of the atmosphere is counteracted by keeping a pipkin of water steaming on its face, and it is so clean that even the most delicate curtains are not soiled by its use.

The value of having a smutless, smokeless, dustless fire can never be over-estimated in this uncertain climate. Even many evenings in July or August call for a small fire, and the easiness of lighting this stove in the ingle-nook of mine house prevents such a necessity (as I consider it) being considered a luxury.

I do not think I need speak of the virtues of gas as a heating agent. We all recognise the desirability of its use; but, alas! where economy has to be considered in our ingle-nooks, we cannot recommend it. In place of coal gas is desirable; but in addition to coal it is fearfully expensive. In mine house—when dog-days protest against any artificial heat—we use paraffin.

Rippingill has invented and patented so many excellent elaborate cooking-stoves that it is easy to do without our kitchen range. At the cost of about four farthings a dinner consisting of half a leg of mutton, boiled potatoes, peas, cauliflower, and a rice pudding can be cooked to perfection. Even after these are done the ovens will be still hot enough to bake a cake for afternoon tea or some pastry for supper.

The equable temperature maintained by an adjustable flame enables me to "rise" all kinds of fancy bread in my "A.B.C." stove splendidly, and for making jam it is invaluable. No longer do I dread the annual eruption of stones of ripe raspberries or the arrival of hairy, sweet gooseberries by the gallon. The winter supply of jam in mine house is made without burnt brows or scalded fingers over the little Rippingill that stands in the store-room.

"But don't the stoves smell fearfully?" is a question often asked. I answer truthfully that they are absolutely odourless when properly attended to. Loose particles of charred wick cause a loss of proper ventilation; drops of oil spilt outside the reservoir, clogged burners, all prevent proper combustion and produce a bad effluvia.

I find that constant supervision is necessary when we use oil in mine house. Then only are the wicks well rubbed, then only are scissors tabooed, then only fags and edges flame not, then only doth economy wait on comfort in my ingle-nook. It requires skilled fingers to keep chimneys clear enough to read by. A drop of ammonia added to the water in which they are washed helps towards this crystalline condition. Then no longer

"Our wasted oil unprofitably burns
Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns,"
but sheds round a clear shining light.

Perhaps a word or two about kindling may not be out of place in considering this subject of economy in our ingle-nooks. Our grandmother's axiom was—

"A fire well mended
Is a fire well tended."

But I think the making of a fire is even more important than its mending or tending. To give our maids inadequate lighting material is very false economy. Well dried, well chopped, well seasoned faggots are a necessity in mine house.

"Ash green" may be "fire-wood fit for a queen," but it makes bad kindling. Bundles of small sticks may be bought so cheaply nowadays that we should never be without them. Unlike Hamlet, we need not "for the day be confined to fast in fires" if we provide these and a few medicated wheels for hasty work.

On the other hand Mary Jane must be

impressed with the fact that twelve bundles represent twenty-four fires at the least. Half a dozen sticks laid lightly in a basket-fashion will do the same work as a whole handful lumped on together. "Waste not, want not," is a motto much to be observed in this matter.

It is a good thing to have a regular weekly supply sent in, regulated by the number of fires in general use. For extra ones, half a dozen medicated wheels should be kept in the store press, and only given out when one is unexpectedly called for.

I cannot quit this subject of the ingle-nook in mine house without speaking a little about the summer ornamentation thereof. As I hinted before, I personally consider the best ornament of our fire-stoves to be a fire, even in August—or, at least, the makings of a fire if required.

In my best room we lift out the leaded bars and replace them with bright brass ones, filling in the space with faggots and coal and firebricks. The glistening rods do not prevent our having an occasional blaze, for a rub with "Globe" polish soon polishes them after use. We do not lift away the pierced brass curb or dogs, but amongst and behind them a few pots of ferns are stood about. They do not mind the draught up the chimney (N.B.—No register is ever drawn down in mine house), and can be judiciously damped as they stand on the tiled hearth. A second suffices to shift these when a fire is called for.

I think easy removal is the primary rule in decoration of our ingle-nook. Thus, heavy, dust-collecting curtains should never be attached to the mantelpiece; much less may art muslin draperies be tolerated. I have seen them in some houses with all their suggestiveness of downright tragedy veiled by flimsy unreality. One spark, one splutter, one fizz, and flames would lick them up like paper. A hammered brass and iron screen—a sheet of looking-glass—if you must hide the settee. On the other hand, a fir or larch bough, with its red-brown stem and crimson tassels, may be laid across the set fire, and one has decoration enough.

Nothing can be beautiful in our ingle-nook which conveys a false notion of the purpose to which it will be applied. Decorative art requires that the nature of construction should as far as possible be revealed or indicated by the ornament which it bears.

"The beauty of fitness" must be borne in mind when we are tempted to fill the fire-baskets in our ingle-nooks with tinsel and shavings, paper designs or artificial flowers. In the huge chimney space of an ancient fireplace logs of wood carelessly piled on dogs was a fit and appropriate decoration. So a well laid fire is, after all, to end with as well as to begin with the best ornament we can stand in the ingle-nook.

Perhaps no object in mine house speaks of higher things in a louder voice than does the fire in its ingle-nook. Scenes of terror and beauty in the Bible often surround a hearth and a flame. The burning bush which hid Jehovah; the flashing fire enfolding itself (Ezek. i.) displayed Him; a furnace lit up the first covenant (Gen. xv. 17), and so on through the whole book.

In one of the Significant Rooms of the Interpreter's House a fire burned all the year round upon which rival forces poured oil and water—a picture this of God's grace overcoming the evil one.

And so we weave round the most sacred spot in our homes a fabric of thought and poetry and prayer—

"Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom."

A little cricket still chirps of love and help and warmth and all that makes life lovely.

(To be continued.)