THE GIRLS' NEW HOUSE, AND HOW THEY FURNISHED IT.

While Nora and Mabel were completing the last finishing touches to their "hall and staircases," with whose appearance they were more than satisfied, a startling but very pleasant piece of news was communicated to them by their father.

The vicar informed them that he had been presented to a living within a very few miles of town, which fact necessitated their speedy removal; but that as the parsonage house, lately erected, was as yet unfurnished, he had been offered the loan of a furnished house for as long as he chose to occupy it while furnishing his new home.

"So, my dear girls," he added, "we must appeal to your cousin, Evelyn Tremaine, for her kind guidance and help; under her clever tuition, doubtless, judging from the great improvement she has effected in this house, we shall be able to furnish our new home conveniently and elegantly at moderate expense."

Mrs. Tremaine's delight at having the girls so much nearer town was as great as theirs, and she entered most heartily into the work of planning the decorations and furniture of their new abode.

After a preliminary visit to the vicarage, to judge of its needs and capabilities, she commenced, what Nora called, her "course of lectures" as follows:

"Let us first consider the principal features desirable in our purchases. They are, taste, economy, and durability. The first will lead us to select only what is beautiful in itself, but suitable for the place or purpose for which it is intended. Economy will teach us so to expend our money as to obtain for it the best value and to resist the temptation of mere prettiness, unaccompanied by more solid qualities; and the desire for durability will cause us to look deeply and thoroughly into the workmanship and good-wearing qualities of everything we buy.

"As we do not want to re-furnish the house every six months, we will carefully avoid any of the 'Elegant furniture, sold at a great sacrifice by an officer ordered abroad,' or 'a lady whose health prevents her living in England.'"

"Furniture advertised in this manner is sometimes purchased by persons short-sighted enough to imagine it possible to procure good things at a tenth of their value, or whose desire for a grand effect is greatly beyond their means of achieving it. It is not at all unusual for the articles composing this 'sacrifice'—which are often merely stuck together for sale—to come to pieces under the melting influences of a good fire.

"I distinctly remember seeing a chair of this class that had been inadvertently left on the hearth, shedding g演习 tears at the barbarity of being subjected to this 'fairy ordeal.'"

"We can never bear too strongly in mind, whether in the choice of furniture or of dress, that 'judicious expenditure is the most perfect economy.' Therefore, what we must buy, we will purchase of good quality; and, if doing so necessitates our going without a few ornaments we wished for, we must supply their place with something less expensive. Because you cannot afford ornamennts of secondary value is no reason why your rooms should be destitute of our adornments. Some of the most effective and the most truly artistic can be procured at a very small cost. The great success of the home-made furniture and decorations of "Our Drawing-room," "Bedroom," and "Hall and Staircases" is sufficient proof how much may be achieved by taste and judgment, aided by willingness to work.

"All the ornaments and arrangements we made then will do for our new house; and if similar ones are required, we shall only have to refer to our former directions."

"This house-furnishing is really a formidable undertaking to arrange even, when you see how very many different things, both great and small, will be required," said Mabel.

"System, system, is the only thing that will see us through our difficulties," said Mrs. Tremaine. "If we take the house and its various parts in proper order, we shall come to clear understanding as to what we must have and what we can do without. We will divide our labours thus: hall and staircases, drawing-room, dining-room, study, morning, or work-room; and bedrooms.

"But that makes us four reception-rooms," exclaimed Nera. "Will not they involve four elegant suites?"

"By no means," was Mrs. Tremaine's response. "The study and morning-room are
not show rooms, they must have every necessity, and as many comforts as we can procure, but they do not require anything grand in the way of furniture.

The master of the house should have some room to himself for his correspondence, and to receive the visiting card of some friend. He should have a room in which ladies can keep all their work, and pursue their various occupations, without distastfully or utilising other rooms, is a logical and useful idea. There are many things more irritating to the average masculine mind than going home to a room strewn with pieces of needlework in various degrees of completeness, in which one sees more than ever in a house where girls are, as you are clever enough to do some house dressing. A room intended for the use of your private occupation will require only a little furniture, and that of an inexpensive character; in fact, there will be but few things required that you can not purchase.

If we commence with the rooms leading out of the hall, the first is the dining-room, and I fear that we shall find its arrangement more difficult than the other. We have been beguiled by the numerous little articles of lady's work that give an appearance of elegance and home life to our drawing-room; yet there are few finishing touches that will add greatly to its adornment.

The possession of a work-room and study will prevent the necessity of this dark room, which is living room as a living room. Likewise, there are many occasions on which it may be used otherwise than as a thorough sitting-room, and we could not content ourselves with the mere necessities required at meal times.

The faults of average dining-rooms are either the necessity of such a length of table to accommodate the guests, or the want of space, or scantiness of furniture and ornament, producing a dreary and uninhabitable appearance. We want plenty of space in the centre of the room to allow of sitting at the table, or moving round it with ease; plenty of light, well managed and equally diffused; and that qualification, as rare as it is desirable, an air of warmth.

In many modern houses the doors and windows are arranged in such a manner that there is no escape currents of air in different directions; in a dining-room especially, where the food is cooked, and from the place to another, this is as ruinous to the comfort of the occupants as it is to the warmth of their food. If your dining-room is so arranged, the only way to obviate this very serious defect is the introduction of one or two screens. These can easily be placed so as to screen from draught without taking much room, and their appearance can be made to contribute greatly to the beauty of the apartment. The clothes-horse, i.e., with folding legs, is of wonderful utility and convenience for the reception of great ornamentation. It may be covered with a handsome chenille, brocade, Perse; or the cotton, embroidery I have already described is a suitable choice, and less expensive. The embroidery, more or less gilded, or crewel embroidery on serge. I do not advise picture screens for dining-room use, but there could be no objection to the use of a portion of it, so beautifully covered with a handsome artistic wall paper, while your more elaborate covering was in course of preparation.

The border of our doors we shall cover with permane of potash, in the way that answered so well with our hall. In the centre of the room we must have a carpet; of course, it must not comprise the whole of our floor, but a Turky carpet, but these are very expensive, and, I fear, beyond us. Failing that, there are many will answer our purpose, and if you do not insist on having the last new fashionable design, which you are too wise to do, one may be purchased, at the close of the season especially, at moderate price. It is far better to be clear and distinct, so that the pattern is not too large, and the pattern small and not too defined. For my own part, I think nothing better for the purpose than a very dark green ground, with a light border of ferns in a few lighter shades.

In summer the carpet may be removed and Indian matting substituted for it; this will not only keep the room cool, but, the floor being thus more open, it naturally makes your carpets last twice as long. I needly hardly tell you your carpet must be well beaten before it is put away.

"Is it not likely to get moth-eaten when rolled up and put away?" asked Mabel.

"More than likely. If no precaution is taken to prevent it, but this is easily done by putting pieces of brown paper or unbleached calico—the coarser and worse colour the better for the latter—the folds of carpet, and the ends, especially, should be made fast by joining the broodls to completely cover the carpet when rolled up. It is a fact known to many who have charge of carpets, that the most adventurous moth will not approach unbleached calico. The heartstrings of carpet, must match the rest, but I must prefix the word 'light'; the most brilliant colour is always counteracted, with its brilliant and soft hair, has an especially luxuriant effect, and goes well with any colour.

"Do you think it is a good plan to have an old carpet under the new one? Some persons do," asked Mabel.

"By no means. Where the underneath one is not worn, and can be cleaned, there is no reason why it cannot be used, and it will keep the dust and soil in. What I cannot too highly recommend is a thick brown paper made upon purpose; it is four feet wide and only costs twopenny yard. By-the-bye, as the carpet does not go all over the floor it will require a border. This is no additional expense, because one simply has less carpet, and the Brussels borders, in all the leading designs, cost nothing. If you buy two shadings and unshadings, thirteen inches wide.

"Our next task is the decoration of the walls, doors, and ceiling; then we shall have made our dining-room as fine a piece of furniture as we have chosen. As we have chosen green for the prevailing colour of our dining-room, our walls must of course correspond. If we decide upon papering them, I propose a plain tint of medium or light green, or one with a small running pattern of a darker shade. A dado of the deepest tone of all we employ, with cornice, borders, and pilasters, should form the whole. There is an immense variety of these, commencing so low as twopenny yard. A frieze to match, but on a smaller scale, will give our walls a very elegant and distinguished appearance. The ceiling should have a light border, and the walls should be plain. Without a little of the green being introduced, but sparingly, on the ceiling. If this is papered, a very pale shade may be purchased; but if painted or white-washed, a little green is introduced in the material used—very little is required—will save us from the cold, cheerless, glaring paper that you see so much in the new buildings. As we are commencing with the component parts of the room itself, our next item is the furniture, which on much of the elegance as well as comfort of the dining-room depends. If our furniture is not in accordance with our tastes we must content ourselves with endeavouring to improve it, for the substitution of a new one would be a great expense.

"One thing I must insist on, namely, that the greatest amount of heat from the fire should be bestowed on the occupants of the room, and not on the chimney, as is the case with most of the modern fireplaces.

"The best grate for our purpose is one which allows the fire to be very close to the hearth, and is extended by means of a cast-iron firebrick, the front being of round iron bars. Fire-brick is much more economical than iron, it becomes red-hot, and throws out great heat. If the coal is properly cut and the grate piece made to fit the grate, it will be thoroughly consumed instead of being half-wasted in cinders. The great point is to arrange your fuel, whatever it may be, that the most quantity is turned to the front of the fireplace and the smallest to the chimney.

"If your fireplace is so shaped that you can have it lined with bright glazed tiles they will greatly improve the appearance of it, and thrown into the room, and the same effect is produced by a tiled hearth.

"The decorations of the fireplace should be quiet but good in style, the mantelpiece valance—if you have one—of dark velvet or cloth—cut in gracefully-shaped scollops. No ornament can be more effective than such as a brass tray, or large mirror, or a pair of heavy bronze vases. For, unless these are added to the mantelpiece, the room will be a failure. This is the case with so many rooms. If you have a mantelpiece, the fire may be placed on the mantel, or at either end of the mantel, or at either end of the fireplace.

"The mantel should be a large looking-glass, a mirror, over the table," suggested Mabel.

"That is not necessary; nor, in the case of the present room, a shelf covered with velvet-covered shelves, with rows of china plates, like we saw at Captain D——'s. It should be a shelf of lace, and an eccentric—I mean aesthetic—kitchen dresser.

"Please not to abuse velvets, shelves, and china plates, Nera," said her cousin, for I mean to have some in the room, but not too many. I must express my sentiments with regard to looking-glasses. They say "a room without a looking-glass is like a man without a soul. An unobserved looking-glass, with a black and gold or a carved wooden frame, covered with velvet.

"We can buy at any frame-maker's frames of all sizes, ready for gilding, for very reasonable prices, as can the gilding that adds so much to the cost. This frame we can cover with our black enamel paint, putting a line of liquid gold round the inside, and introducing the appearance exactly on this plan. A bracket each side of the glass, fastened to the wall, and made either of dark carved wood, or plain wood covered with velvet, to match the frame, or fancy paper, or a fancy pot with some pretty plant; and with this addition I think we shall have every cause to be satisfied as far as our fireplace is concerned. By-the-bye, speaking of flowers, window boxes are an absolute necessity for a dining-room.

"Necessity, as far as ornaments go," Mabel remarked.

"Pardon me; necessity to comfort," said Mrs. Tremaine. "The flowers and leaves kept green is one of the essentials of a room; even the temptations of the dinner table are not strong enough to overcome their repugnance to foliage, especially that of geraniums. It is a fact that cannot be too widely known, that no fly will approach a geranium leaf, and many an invalid owes some sweet repose in the summer to a few geranium leaves. We want both a feeding and a leaf. The flower boxes should be of wood, as this neither receives or retains the heat to the extent many other materials do; a framework with painted paper, with or without glass, or ever ornaments you may prefer, may be fixed to the outside of the window, in such a manner as to hide the boxes, so that there should always be two boxes to each window, so that as soon as one becomes a little shabby it may be changed for another. This is not so expensive a plan as it sounds, for
it gives the time to raise flowers from seed in the one absent from the window; or, if this plan is not quick enough, there are many of the most effective plants that may be purchased very cheaply, and few persons are without some country friends who can spare a few cuttings from their superabundance.

"What shall we arrange next?"

"A little system, if you please, ladies," said Nora, with a sardonic smile. "We have done the window boxes; what about the window curtains? The usual thing, I believe, is rep.

"Then we will not have the usual thing," said Mrs. Trestmaine. "Reps always look in formal lines; there are hundreds of materials that form far more graceful drapery than reps, and are less expensive." I never could see, in any case, for having everything dark or still in a dining room; on the contrary, its general aspect should, I think, be cheerful. It is the first room we enter after leaving our bedroom—the first place of rendezvous to commence the day; and a pleasant breakfast with our family, among cheerful surroundings, will, I believe, go a great way towards deciding the tone of the day during the day. I think it a good plan to have two sets of dining-room curtains, one for the summer, the other for the winter, this does away with the monotony of the curtains year after year, and enabling each set to have a rest, causes them to last double the time. Suppose, therefore, we say we will have a twofold curtain for the dining room. These are sufficiently thick to hang well; they wear admirably, and may be had in an immense variety of patterns at prices ranging from 8d. to 2s. I saw one the other day with a design of chestnut-tree foliage, profusely covered with the leaves and prickly fruit, and beautifully grouped and shaded, which will serve as a most suitable pattern for summer use. For the winter there are some curtains recently introduced, of very handsome effect and artistic design. These are made to order, and ready to put up, at much less price than we could procure the materials themselves. The "Cubil" is in elaborate designs in black and gold, and the price is 2½d. per yard. The "Singapore" is still less, being only 18s. 9d., it is made in two shades of colour—brown, blue, artistic red and gold, in elaborate Oriental designs, and costs 5d. and handsome border in front. Of course you know that curtains are no longer made to trail on the floor, they merely reach the floor, but the quantity of material saved naturally enables them to be sold for a lower price."

"Suppose we must have one of those great, awkward dining tables, with extra flaps," suggested Mabel: "there seems no other way of arranging that would enable the same one to do for either small or large parties."

"There is a better plan than that," Mrs. Trestmaine responded, "that I have seen adopted with great success—viz., to have your table the size you require for your ordinary parties: then this table can be added, a long, narrow table at each end; these must, of course, be exactly the same height, and as long as your table is wide. We do not require this to stand about as little occasional tables. A few years ago, it was customary for the dinner-cloth to be removed and the dessert put on the table. It was necessary that this should be perfectly polished, and presentable in every way. Since that fashion has gone out, it has been seen without a cloth; and it really does not signify whether the top is of wood to match the legs or of plain deal. The substitution of the latter naturally makes a considerable difference in price. We cannot, however, follow this plan with the smaller tables, without we cover them with a fancy cloth when not in use, as adjacents to our dining-table. As to chairs, no one can realize how much of our comforts during dinner depends on their construction, till they have been forced—as I was lately—to sit, through a long dinner, in a chair so elaborately carved that it leaned back for an instant against its elaborate protuberances was a painful experience. Our chairs must be substantial, but not too heavy to move easily, and thoroughly comfortable. The shape I prefer for dining-room chairs is that with square-padded seats and backs, known as the "Cromwell." As we have determined to do everything that is possible for our very own selves, we will purchase our chairs merely covered with the canvas that is always used as the outside of the chair, and have not spoken for a long time. What do you think our next step should be?"

"To buy the material, certainly," said Nora, "as it is impossible to cover them without."

"Wrong, Nora, the first step is to take the patterns of the seats and backs, allowing them a little larger for turning in. Multiply these patterns in paper, according to the number we require, and put them all together, spread out on the floor; this will enable us to see how one can be cut out with another, and with how little material we can contrive. We will decide what we can do afterwards, but as we are speaking of the work itself, I will finish the directions. The material is to be cut out and nailed to the chair, putting one at each corner, taking the utmost care that the cover is perfectly flat, and not drawn out of the straight line; a tack in the centre of each side assists to keep the material in its place, and others must be put in afterwards wherever required, for firmness. The fancy gilt-headed nails merely serve as ornaments, and must be put in at equal distances. We shall require two easy chairs. One we shall "upholster" in a similar manner, and make it very ornamental by adding the leather to the arms and the top of the back. These we will make of satin sheeting, embroidered in crewel or armorial, and edged with tassel fringe of the same colour and material, of course, each arm-chair shall be still more thoroughly "home made." We shall frame them for us by some neighbouring workman."

"There is a sketch of the frame. The boards at the back and sides must be covered with strong canvas, and a piece of the same firmly fixed across the seat. Two thin cushions, covered with canvas first, are made for each portion of the chair, and joined together at the upper edge. These are put over each of the pieces of wood composing the chair, the wood being between the cushions, and the lower edge and sides being fastened to it by small nails. A cord is sewn round every edge to tie the canvas to correspond with the outer cover surrounds the lower part of the chair. A material of Oriental colouring and design is the most suitable for this chair, and many in this class may be purchased at no very great cost. If we cannot get one to our taste for the sum we want to expend, we must—"

"Go without," suggested Nora.

"Wrong again, poor dear Nora; the contemplated end of my sentence was—make one."

"A woolen material of Eastern pattern on a dark ground will be our purchase; our improvement on it, the outlining of the design, with long stitches in cressets, and a few silk lines for the veins of the flowers." A sideboard is an absolute necessity, because it will contain so many things. In the dining-room; one end of the lower part should have shelves; the other, one shelf half-way down, and under that a deep drawer with divisions. To each of the partitions there must of course, be a shelf. There should also be, for convenience sake, drawers above them and in the centre. So much for our sideboard from utilitarian point of view. We will not stop at that, however.

"A piece of looking-glass at the back is a great improvement, serving to reflect the silver and glass on the sideboard, if the light falls on the corner of the room where the latter is placed. I have lately seen a very handsome or un-common looking sideboard made from a large carved oak chest. The inside had been fitted up in the way just described, and three doors had been cut in the front. At the back a looking-glass, with velvet-crown frame, had been fitted, and I can assure you the whole effect was far superior to the expensive carved montrosities we see so often."

"We might, perhaps, have the chance of making one in a similar way, or, could we procure some old carved panels, they might be offered to a frame of plain deal, and answer our purpose completely."

"If you would like black and gold furniture, a very handsome sideboard is by no means beyond our reach. It may be made perhaps plain with no pattern, all being of plain deal, japanned black. A few mouldings made of the same wood of which picture-frames are composed might be bound in small carved panels, and have the panels to the doors and any other ornament. The carving of these we would "pick out" with the liquid gold, and a few small panel pictures painted on gilt backgrounds can be set in wherever desired. These will be your own work, and I will give you directions as to its accomplishment when we are arranging the drawing-room."

"Should you, for any reason, prefer buying a sideboard to trying any of those I have suggested, you would find the American salvaged oak furniture very good, as well as cheap. Before you decide on your purchase let me advise you to go to the South Kensington Museum and see the specimens of sideboards and doors there. Though you will not be able to procure any like them, their inspection will give you correct ideas as to what such things should be, and you will gather by the hints as to decoration."

C. DE L.