

ART IN HOUSE-FURNISHING.

BY ELLA S. ATKINSON.

The word "art" pursues the house-furnisher, who, nowadays visits the great shops on an important buying mission. She hears of art squares in Brussels and Milton, art silks, art curtain stuffs, art screens, art wall-hangings and art pottery.

She holds her hands to her puzzled ears, and says over and over to her inmost conscience that she must be a law unto herself and that the question is not what to buy, but what to avoid buying.

She has a few clearly defined ideas. She knows her floor-covering and wall-hangings must be subordinate in tone to the other furnishings of the room. She appreciates the wise law that enjoins her to keep the darker colors low down, and allow the walls and ceiling to fade away into delicate tints. She remembers that masses of color must be judiciously introduced, and so she compels her tired-out eyes, her love of bargains, her sense of beauty in form, and even her purse to own the mastery of the laws of harmony in coloring.

A room may be expensively furnished. The richest of brocatelles and Wiltons and gold-finished hangings may cover window-panes, floors and walls; the designs may be of the newest patterns; the furniture of the most precious woods, elegant in finish and perfect in detail; but if the color-scheme be not carefully worked out the effect of the whole is vulgarly ostentatious and without artistic strength.

On the contrary, simple furniture, inexpensive carpets and window-hangings, which owe their beauty more to the delicate perception of the mind that set them in their places than to any splendor of dye-stuffs or trick of

the loom, may unite so harmoniously that the entire agreement of tints and textures breathe out an air of artistic refinement that greets one at the doorway.

It makes little difference what furnishings cost if only they fit into their designed places and harmonize with their environment.

So much for the coloring. It is of the greatest importance and should receive the first consideration.

But after the laws of harmony have been fulfilled, there is yet the artistic sense of form-beauty to appease.

With regard to the arrangement of rooms, the ideas of to-day are strangely at variance with those of the yesterdays, and even among humble people of small means.

This is true of the taste in colors as well, for who cannot remember the vivid greens and flaming reds of those old-style carpets: who can not bring to mind those horse-hair chairs with backs to the four walls of the room, the tables placed exactly in the centre of the middle bunch of flowers in the carpet, the worse than cushionless sofas, and the awful primness of the few best books on the before mentioned table?

Now drawing-rooms are broken up into sections, chairs are placed ready for the stranger who may not be able to grope his unaccustomed way in perfect dignity to the nearest wall against which there are empty chairs. Little tables have replaced the centre horror, pots of palms and baskets of ferns, books and pretty photographs relieve the eyes from direct contact with the picture-hung walls, which last are not now, as then, covered with the faces of dead ancestors.