



HOUSEHOLD DECORATION

THE autumn months are generally a season of preparation for the stern, cold days which are to come. There are usually several rooms to be re-papered or refurnished. There are summer rugs and hangings to be put away, and cosier winter equipment to be secured.

There are also table appointments to be considered, and in connection with this subject it may be well to reflect upon the words of a Canadian authority on "Housecraft" who remarks:

It is a far cry from the handsome, dignified appointments of the dinner-table in a home that for generations has sheltered the descendants of some family of distinction, to the glittering array of distressingly new, gorgeous, but rather heterogeneous articles acquired with ill-considered haste by the inexperienced home-maker or that have, perhaps, been bestowed on a young couple in the form of wedding presents by friends of every degree of taste and judgment. Better by far the bare simplicity of cheerful poverty, unpretending but honest than the sham grandeur which in the shape of elaborate electro-plated ware, "near china," or cut glass, and fal-lals of one kind or another disfigure so many dinner-tables in modern middle-class homes. The eye quickly wearies of a confusion of bright colors, intricate patterns, and unusual designs, and turns gratefully from such an inartistic welter to the unstudied effects that in the truly tasteful home seem to compose themselves as a matter of course by the mere necessary juxtaposition of articles at once beautiful and serviceable.

Thus, for the guidance of beginners in housecraft, or those in doubt, it may be laid down as an axiom that mere decorative details or accessories for the dinner-table should be carefully shunned, while all possible care and taste should be lavished in the direction of making its necessary features beautiful and dignified.

With handsome, heavy napery, cutlery of the best quality and simplest forms; china of a recognized design or period, in which colors and gilding are used rather sparingly than otherwise; glass that is crystal-clear, not necessarily "cut" to death; a bowl of pleasing shape or a few slender vases filled with sweet flowers; graceful or massive candlesticks of silver, or in the mellow Sheffield plate—this is all the equipment necessary for the proper celebration of the most formal rites associated with the ceremonious service of the evening meal.

Those who wander far from this standard of severe simplicity rarely achieve satisfactory results. Artistic enjoyment is not derived from what dazzles the eyes but only from what charms and soothes them. The aim, therefore, of all good housekeepers should be to strive for dignified effects in the dining-room rather than for merely showy or surprising ones.

A WRITER for *The Gentlewoman*, in discussing good taste in household decoration, remarks:

It is in curtains, walls, carpets and draperies that the real opportunity for the display of good taste begins, and it is just here where mistakes are oftenest made.

In the matter of wall decorations there is little to be said; for America has the finest and the most artistic wall papers in the world.

And the combining of the plain papers in the soft, dull colors with the bright flowered patterns is carried out in the homes all over the land in a fashion which is not equalled in any other country. The damask papers, rich and thick almost as the real brocades which they are made to imitate, make wall coverings for the salon and the reception rooms which it takes a close observer to distinguish from the expensive silks which are so much in fashion in France for the panelled walls.

The fashion of dividing off the walls into panels like so many pictures is, by the way, an almost wholly French custom. The French salon is divided into so many panels, between which there is wood carving, or a stucco which imitates it. After this each panel has its appropriate picture, and usually, before it sits a certain chair or other piece of furniture. This gives a stiff, formal look to the average French salon which is much criticized by strangers, and with reason.

In the matter of ceilings, it is the Italians who, of all the civilized people of the earth, have

the handsomest and most elaborately decorated ones. The French put in a lot of stucco in artistic patterns, but they usually leave these white. But the color-loving Italians have inherited their taste for gilded and painted ceilings from their old masters, from Raphael and Leonardo. The churches in Italy have in the ceilings masses of gilding and paintings in gorgeous colors. So that the ordinary Italian house painter or decorator is perfectly capable, with a few strokes of the brush, of turning the commonest ceiling into a pleasing picture of sky and flowers, in which the color scheme is most artistic.

We have taken up this idea in many of our wall papers, and now we have charming ceilings which come ready for putting up, and which give a much warmer, more pleasant effect to a room than the old-fashioned white ceilings. All shades of green, in the treatment of walls, are in such vogue at present that the rest have been pretty much neglected. The two dangerous rivals of the greens are the dull blues in several tones, and the Venetian reds. The green color scheme for interior decorations of all sorts undoubtedly comes from England, where it has attained its highest state of perfection. Some of the Londoners go to the extreme of painting their front doors a bright green or even red, and this is being followed in Colonial houses in America. And the stranger, passing through the miles of dull-looking brick houses, which seem never to have had a coat of paint, is startled, here and there, by seeing a bright green door peeping out, with perhaps a bright red one next door. It shocks at first, but,

on the whole, it gives an idea of good cheer within.

The thing which the visitor sees first on entering a room is the window. For it is in the dressing of the windows that one may best gauge the calibre of the hostess. And here, again, the American woman has much to be thankful for. For, however attractive the French windows opening in the middle for the full length, as they do, they are very difficult to drape and arrange.

The American style, besides letting in much less cold and draught, is altogether more accommodating when it comes to the subject of the curtains. With a drapery across the top, the arrangement can be a fixed affair, whereas the drapery for the French windows must always have cords to pull it back in order to open the windows ever so little. Unless, indeed, one resorts to that system current in France of building out the canopy at the top to permit the window to open inside of it.

I once knew an old French lady in America who, although she had lived in the country for thirty years, always bumped her head against the raised window sash when she tried to look out of doors. And in France the American can never get used to the pulling of a half dozen pairs of cords before they attempt to open the window, and even if they do not bump their heads they tear the curtains on the corners of the windows, and get into a temper at the "unpractical French."

Any properly dressed window should have not less than three pairs of curtains and draperies not counting the blind, which makes four. The first one which goes over the glass can be of any thin material not to shut out the light, or it may be tinted so that any desired tone may filter into a room. Raw daylight for a reception room is not desirable.

French women are fond of putting pale pink tulle or net over the window pane. Net is the most practical, as it washes and is not expensive. If it fades it can easily be dipped. The next curtains are also white, open in the middle, and draped back. These are oftenest of lace, or a combination of lace and muslin or tulle. But there is such a rage for net at present, the nets, both in white and creams, are being worked out into delightful patterns for the second pair to the window.

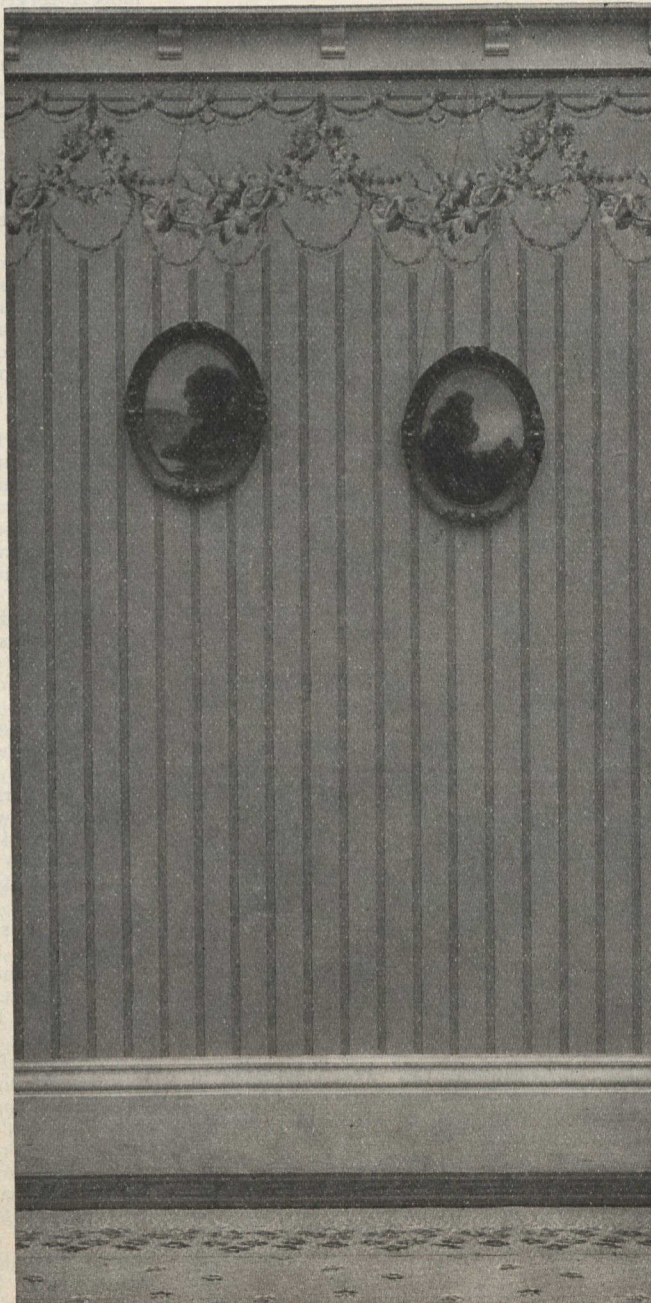
This is done in Paris in various ways, either in wash ribbons, tone on tone or in colored ribbons. The patterns are applied on the tulle in bow knots, into flower designs and in art patterns too numerous to mention. Some snappy ones are done in the creton flowers cut out, or in the much-revived toile de jouy, which is much the same thing, only handsomer. It is sometimes only the top of the curtain which is thus treated, leaving the lower portion loose and light. Net in some form or another has for the moment almost completely ousted the old conventional lace curtain, which for modern grace is considered much too heavy and stiff.

The third pair of curtains is, of course, the drapery, which must be in keeping with the rugs, or carpets, and with the furniture of a room. It is practically only this third pair which cost anything. A drapery should be selected which is not stiff. The handsomest of all is the silk damask in raised patterns of the same tone, and these lined with a soft plain silk.

At present there is a furore for applique curtains, which were first brought out by Liberty of London. A sort of rep silk, which may be part cotton, is usually employed in light, or the art colors, and on to these are applied the tortuous patterns in another color of a darker shade generally, or in a darker tone of the same shade.

But in the selection of curtains, or rather, most of all of the draperies, the room to be furnished must be considered, and also the kind and color of the wall decorations. The curtains of all the windows in a home should be made as far as possible to look alike from the outside, but here the likeness ceases.

For decorations in the sleeping rooms the canopies for beds are important. The old style affair which covered the bed in such a way as to hinder the free passage of the air is, of course, not to be thought of. There is such a thing as placing a curtain around the back and head of the bed against the wall, which gives much more the look of luxury and finish than a bare wall, and which in no way interferes with the hygienic arrangement of the room.



THE "RIENZI"—A DAINTY WALL PAPER.