

(FOR THE POST AND TRUE WITNESS.)

HOUSEHOLD TALKS.

SOME UNTHOUGHT-OF ECONOMIES.

Value of Scraps—Antique—Old Family Chests—Bag Carpets in and out of Place—Rugs.

VALUE OF SCRAPS.

Around every house, no matter how well regulated or arranged, accumulations of one sort or another steadily increase, defying the vigilance of the house-wife, till the yearly or semi-yearly house-cleaning drags them to light again, bringing up the ever recurring question often asked before: "What shall we do with them?"

It is amusing to notice the way in which some articles, of no use whatever in themselves, are hoarded, year after year, on account of some sentimental interest attached to them, or perhaps some exaggerated estimate of their use.

Now if we are ever to have cleanly and pleasant homes we must at once and forever get rid of these two ideas in connection with household rubbish. It is sentiment that is indulged in, let it be associated with such articles as shall be pleasing to sight, and not cumbersome in the keeping. As for the rest—the money-value of articles is generally a fair criterion of their worth. This is a safe plan at any rate to go on at house-cleaning time.

ARTIS ANTIQUES.

When the craze for antiques came in, a wholesale clearing up of articles all over the land took place. But was comfort increased thereby? I fail to see it; simply because the rubbish was retained in the house, and not put out of it. All this fuss dragging down and burning up antiques, and setting them in the parlor to be admired by the casual visitor was the very worst nonsense, because they served to use as a house-keeping. We can go back to the wood-burned monuments to carry us back to associations connected with them. So that affection, and sham ancestral pride had a great deal to do with the showing off of family antiques. It is altogether too ludicrous to see the spinning-wheel of the great-grandmother brought down, and placed beside the great-grandfather's chair, and the like. It is almost too comical a contrast between the good old hard-working days, and these of luxury and idleness.

If there are any high, straight-backed, hard-settled chairs also in which a by-gone generation has sat, for comfort's sake don't bring them down to be looked at, nor set in—the greatest danger of these antique articles is that they are a temptation to the young. Not all the ribbons of old or peacock blue, tied into bows over them, make them endurable for their legitimate use, so let them go.

Old furniture is seldom cast aside until its day has indeed passed, and it would be foolish to say that our present articles of furniture, light in the handling, easy in the using, should be displaced by the same, ungainly, unwieldy furniture of former days.

Cabinets might be rescued from this sweeping denunciation, but that they favor the accumulation of trifles of little interest or value—at best, mere curiosities—and no sensible person is desirous of making home a museum.

OLD FURNITURE.

But when we come to textile fabrics—wall-closets, we may be induced to pause in the work of destruction—here we may be forced to admit superiority in the make and finish of material—especially in the very warp and woof of those old-fashioned stuffs, and thoroughness in the handwork not to be found in these easy-going, easy-made days.

We cannot find much fault with the taste that de-luxated such things as these. Old-time smiles keep some of the rarest of their toilet articles in massive oaken chests, where fold of old antique silk and satin and brocade have lain in perturbed darkness through the quiet years, unvisited by young or moth, unshaken out of their slumber, save when removed for the adorning of some young beauty of the ancient house.

And the fitness of those days, even still worn to the thinnest thread, how firm and strong they are, and how soft when torn at last into strips to bind up the wounds and hurts of a later generation.

Every one, except people of unlimited means, know how expensive it is to furnish the rooms, even of a moderate sized house, with carpets. The cost per yard of the tapestry, hemp, felt, and other low-priced carpets in the shops, is very small, it is true; but even so, many people are compelled to allow some rooms to go uncarpeted, for when the number of yards to cover even a small room is considered, the amount required is often a startling alarm.

The expense of furnishing, in other respects, is so great that economy steps in to have a word to say in the choice of floor-coverings.

For the interior rooms of a house nothing is so durable and comfortable, where warmth is considered, than the some-time despised rag-carpet. Here the treasures of the attic, old half worn clothing, which must be got rid of at any price at this season, come in of use.

For carpeting kitchen halls, back stairs, the kitchen itself, entries, attic bedrooms, or even on occasion, the basement or extension dining-room, it would be hard to find a substitute of inferior more wear at less cost.

You must see my nice new dining-room carpet, said one of our neighbors, leading her visitor into the pleasant room where the family took their meals. The floor was covered with a pretty striped carpet, broad gray stripes alternated by with narrow crimson ones. "Not very like a rag-carpet, is it? Well, I made that myself—not in a day however. It was my pastime for a long while. I had some time on my hands, and an abundance of old clothes in the attic. Some of them were too worn to give away, but there were good pieces to be got out of all. I sorted out all the cloth garments into a heap by themselves. Of course they had been laid away clean, so there was no delay washing them. Then I sorted out the dark from the light-colored. I cut them one kind at a time into narrow strips, and joined them, overlapping the ends firmly, and sewing with strong thread. Then I wound these long strips into balls. The dark ones I kept in one basket, the light in another. The light ones I colored a deep crimson. Of course, the dark ones were the most numerous, so I told the weaver to make the crimson stripes much narrower. It took me a good deal of time, but I liked the work, and the cost of getting it woven was small—so I got the attic riddled of the old cloth coats, trousers and jackets that had been put by there for so long, doing no one any good. Now they make a nice soft carpet for our dining-room, are comfortable under our feet when we sit at meals, and help the room to look really cheerful."

Her friend, glancing around, could not help agreeing with her.

Fashion that retraces her steps, every decade or so of years, has lately taken up the rag-carpet idea with enthusiasm. Rag-carpets are now not only to be seen on the floors of the most aristocratic mansions, but are even used as coverings for the most elegant drawing-rooms. Of course, in such cases the materials are costly, as scraps of satin, silk or velvet, but the arrangement is the same, and the colors being placed at hazard, instead of in set figures, the effect is mixed, which, in the employment of scraps, is always the best that can be produced.

The rag-carpet craze is a decidedly crazy patchwork in wood-burned cabinets, chests, cupboards, which at best are but the expedients of people of limited means used to eke out an insufficient income, and as such evidence of thrift and management, are painfully out of place in rooms crowded with rich furniture and costly draperies.

They are, as I have said, the outcome of thrift seeking to make the most of what it has, and of a desire to be economical. They are, in fact, a waste of time, therefore, exclude them, where their use could only suggest incongruity.

RUGS.

Some very pretty rugs may be made out of the leavings of a rag-carpet. There are generally one or two balls left over, as rings of

any sort, woolen or cotton, will serve, a good rug may be manufactured in a short time at home.

A very pretty rug, and soft almost as velvet, may be made by forming the strips into several folds, leaving the loops about half a finger length, or a little longer. Sew each cluster of loops tightly together at one end. Then place on a foundation—a piece of coarse burlap, or some other cloth, if it be whole and strong, will do—after all the clusters are sewed in rows very closely together, out the loops and shake out the ends a little, and you will have a rug that will last for years and always look well. The brighter the colors and the more variety in them the better it will look.

Odds and ends of carpets are easily obtainable at carpet warehouses in the form of remnants when such are not to be found in the house. They make lovely mats if bound with braid of contrasting color to the ground tint of the design, and are so cheap and easily made, besides furnishing so much comfort in the bedrooms and elsewhere, that it is a wonder they are not often used.

THE REMAINS OF CITY LIFE.

Every year, at the first of May comes perilously near, in the calendar, the heart of the nomad stirs amid the dust of city life, and the quonids with the quickening breath of spring. A desire to be up and away comes upon many an otherwise monotonous-minded dweller in city homes, and he feels the impulse without understanding why.

Probably you are asked him you might receive for an answer that the time of his lease is up, or that the landlord gave him warning last quarter, or that his present place of abode does not suit him.

One thing is positively certain, he would stare at you in open-eyed wonder if you told him that it was none of these things that was influencing him in seeking a change of residence—that it was simply the recurrence of the desire implanted long ago in the obscure, nomadic history of the race, and that he was acting in this way.

But your remark would be nevertheless true; else why this yearly repeated paeon of moving.

PROFESSION OF THE WATERPROOF.

It is said that the cow of one crew is the sign of spring, but there is a surer and earlier sign than that. The dimly chilly, drizzly, never-quit-at-one-with-themself days of April witness the harbinger of spring in other guise than the solemn clerical black of the crowd, for these harbinger, as the olden poets might have called them, dance the thimble and rubber gossamer-cloak, and rush up the doorsteps of house-agent offices, and drive respectable landlords for are not landlords the very essence of respectability) out of their customary aplomb, and impatient out-going tenants with pertinent and expersitate enquiries as to the condition and advantages and otherwise of the house they are vacating.

And do they not, as they stand dripping in the hall, and their umbrellas discharge torrents of muddy water over your clean oilcloth, manage to peer into your "best parlor," and take you into their confidence then and there as to what they think of its dimensions, and what their ideas concerning the furnishing of it would be, which, of course, are glaringly opposed to your taste as displayed in the present arrangement? They do not know how to let them tell you "a prep upstairs," just in time to catch Master Reggie, your own dimpled three-year-old, marching out of his bath, naked and chubby, with poor Fluff, the kitten, lank, uncomfortable and wretched-looking, the reluctant sharer in his ablutions, slinking at his heels!

And then do not those damp strangers go prying into your bedrooms, opening the doors, wall-closets, poking with their umbrellas into your closets, and even dislodging an ancient cobweb or two?

You are thankful enough when they take their departure—but somehow you feel all out of sorts for the day, and as if your home, the dearest spot on earth yet to you had undergone desecration.

A VERY EXCITING KIND OF SHOPPING.

House-making is an art just as much as shopping is. In fact it is a kind of shopping. You cannot hope to be suited in one or in the other unless you start out with a clear idea of what you want, and how much you are prepared to give for it. You must, in fact, have a sort of plan made in your mind concerning what you desire and expect, allowing ample margin for subsequent changes, which are almost certain to be imposed on the original draft.

It is always so much easier to work with a plan than without it. Sir Walter Scott said that, while working on his romances, he first of all drew out a scheme of the whole plot that he intended to develop throughout the story, but that while proceeding, although he diverged in many places, he never lost sight of the main lines of guidance, still the having of a plan of work helped him immeasurably.

If this be true in literature, the same rule also holds true in household management.

But to return to our illustration of the shopper. It is seldom one sees a good shopper. Every one is familiar with the restless one. She is a constant clerk, for she does not know her own wants, but depends on the patient salesman to find them out for her, just as in her school-days, she expected her clever school-mate to work out the arithmetical problems for her. She has a bored and fretted look just as if she had got hold of the wrong end out of the bull of existence and were working away with all her might to find that end which she does not know how to handle.

But the good shopper, on the other hand, is a pleasure to see. Her methods are so pleasant and simple. She does not drive the salesman and salesgirls desperate in seeking to divine her wishes, but quietly draws a card or piece of paper, and on which beforehand, she has jotted her requirements, as they are met and supplied, she checks it off her list, and passes on to another. If she cannot always get exactly what she wants, she gets as near to it as she can, and always makes it a point to, at least, appear satisfied, when the best is done that can be done. She has her lines drawn, enclosing certain bounds that she will not pass, and all arrangements of spring openings and sacrifices save her power over the goods.

But the busiest day's shopping that was ever known, never even approached in interest one good day's house-hunt. Why, one would take off rubbers and waterproof at night with abundant material for a sleep full of dreams that, if written down in shorthand at the moment, might make the fortune of a Robinson.

No wonder the veteran house-hunter rises equal to the occasion and sallies forth every rainy April that comes with spirits as eager and wild curiosity as shary-set as at the first timid venture. But even in the midst of this keen elation, a dampener comes—the thought of the household exodus with all its horrors, but of that we shall not speak here or now.

THE CHOICE OF A HOME.

Why should not the choice of a home involve much thought, and what is doubly valuable, forethought, as the purchase of a spring suit?

So very much of the real happiness of life depends on the proper selection of the house wherein we propose to dwell.

A hasty decision may leave as much room for regret as any other of the mistakes of a lifetime.

How we are housed may be and almost always is a question fraught with deeper import than where whither we shall be clothed.

Many take the matter indifferently, saying, in effect, that one house is as good as another to live in, that the question of neighborhood need not be considered, and that only fussy people go peering about in unvisited corners, examining traps on drains and baths, and hanging their heads over sinks to convince themselves, by some olfactory evidence, of the non-escape of sewage gas.

But with the indifferent ones time works a sure revenge. Even these easy-going individuals will have their eyes opened sometime, and when they do, they will find that the satisfaction of life had no neighborhood, or the mother of the house wasting away under the slow poison of malaria, even they may be brought to acknowledge that after all the questions of location and sanitation in connection with the choosing of our homes can scarcely be over-estimated.

A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

In some vague, indistinct way, Hilda knew what was coming. Her simple, loving heart fluttered and beat so quickly that she could hardly breathe. She did not cease speaking, it would be said, but when she ceased speaking, it was as though some exquisite strain of music ceased. Yet she would have deferred it if she could, the speaking of those words that were to open a new life to her. She longed to hear them, yet felt frightened at them.

"Hilda," whispered the low voice at her side, "do forget those lilies for one moment, and look at me. Can you guess what I have to say?"

The sherry, sweet eyes did not meet his own; the little hands still trembled amid the white blossoms.

"I am jealous of those flowers," said Claude impatiently, as he removed them. "I want all your attention for once, and for a few minutes. Hilda, do you remember that May morning in Brynmar woods?"

"I remember it well," replied a faint, half-frightened voice.

"Do you know," said Claude eagerly, "I love you then! It was the fairest, sweetest picture my eyes ever fell upon, as you stood in the woods, with the blue-bells in your hair, could hardly tear myself away."

"I feel and offer you. I do now, my life will be yours. I have never thought of anything or any one since I saw you. Until I found you again my life was one long dream of misery, Hilda. There never was a love so strong, so deep, so true as mine. Is there any hope for me?"

There were a few minutes of unbroken silence, then a gentle, half-and voice replied, "How could you care for me when you were pledged to marry Miss Earle?"

"I told her the whole story, how from childhood they had been trained to understand that as some future time they were to be married, he would always like Barbara in a calm, kind way, and when his mother suggested the time for the marriage had arrived, he had said—"

"I had not seen you then, Hilda," he continued. "When I did so, my heart awoke suddenly. I was like a man who had been buried in a deep sleep. I awoke to find myself passionately loving you, yet pledged to marry Barbara Earle. I had had for some time, but I had no idea of freeing myself. I thought I must marry, as I was bound to do, but I had no other choice. I thought of her life, but there was another almost as great—that was love for her only son. He was perhaps the only human being that she ever loved with thorough, self-sacrificing devotion. True, she was fond of Barbara; but had Barbara been penniless, instead of a wealthy heiress, the countess would never have planned that marriage for her son."

"I thought of the morning following that the young earl sought his mother. After a night of sleepless and anxious deliberation he resolved upon making an appeal to her affection; that, he thought, she could never withhold; and he was right in his conjecture. He appealed to his mother's love, and won from her a most reluctant consent to his marriage with Hilda, my dear, and beautiful."

"How nobly Barbara has behaved!" she said with a deep sigh, "she would have made a fitting mistress of Bayneham; and I judged her so cruelly—I thought she had played you false Claude."

"No one living is, or can be, more true than Barbara," said Lord Bayneham; "but there is a far finer, fairer, and better than that May morning in Brynmar woods."

Then, in his own simple and truthful way, Claude told Lady Bayneham the whole history of his love; his first meeting with Hilda, his struggle to forget her, and his intense happiness at finding himself free to visit her; and Lady Bayneham was touched in spite of herself.

"She is beautiful," she said, "but Claude, there is one thing—I am content with certain conditions. Remember Hilda is not Lady Hutton's daughter, she is only her ward. I am saying nothing against her; I suppose her to be a distant relative of Lady Hutton's, adopted by her because she is childless; but I must insist upon every particular of her birth and parentage being laid before me. It is thinking of the Baynehams of Bayneham never married beneath them."

"Of course you are right, mother," said the young earl. "Lady Hutton will give us every information, I know. I have heard that Hilda was the daughter of her dearest friend, but I shall see her this morning, and shall be able to tell you all particulars for you."

"I suppose she will inherit all Lady Hutton's fortune," said the countess.

"I have never thought about it," replied her son indifferently; "she is peerless herself; but I have no doubt she will."

"It will not be so bad after all," said her ladyship complacently, "if her pedigree is all right."

Lord Bayneham laughed, and elated with the concession he had won from his proud mother, went to seek Lady Hutton.

There seemed to be a strange calm in the house when he reached it. The windows were all closed, and the servant who opened the door looked unusually grave and serious.

"The lady is unwell," said Claude; "is she engaged to Lady Hutton?" asked Claude; "is her ladyship seriously ill, my lord," was the man's reply; "she was seized with a fit last evening and has not been conscious since."

"Is Miss Hutton with her?" he inquired indignantly shocked at the news.

"Miss Hutton has never left her side since she was seized with the fit," said the man; "I hope to hear her news this evening," said Lord Bayneham as he turned away.

He felt like one in a dream; the sun was shining brightly, the streets were crowded with gayly-dressed people; life, gayety and happiness seemed to thrill through the summer air, yet over the house he had left hung the shadow of death. He went to his club, and there wrote his first love letter, telling Hilda her sorrow was his, and asking her to share it. "Let me see you this evening," he said, "just to give you some little consolation."

When the letter was gone, Lord Bayneham felt more at ease. To do his mother justice, she was shocked and shocked to hear of Lady Hutton's illness.

"It would be most awkward if anything happened just now," said, "I trust, at least, that she will recover consciousness."

The day passed slowly. Claude longed for the evening, when he could see Hilda and share her sorrow.

A dark cloud hung over Lady Hutton's magnificent life. The servants moved noiselessly and spoke in hushed voices. Grave physicians met and consulted how best to do battle with the grim king of terrors.

In a luxurious chamber lay the lady so suddenly and awfully stricken. The summer sun tried to pierce the rich hangings, and succeeded in throwing a glow, but golden light over the room. The velvet curtains, with their deep fringe, were thrown aside; there pale, serene and calm, no longer conscious of earthly things, lay Lady Hutton. Her pale lips were parted, and a faint, feeble breath passed them. She lay there, and life was ended for her, its hopes and sorrows all over. It mattered but little now that she had loved and let, that she had been rich, coveted and flattered, that men had been before her and paid homage to her rank and wealth; all that was over. Before the sunset she would be where virtue and goodness, not money and position, take the first place and wear the golden crown. Only one thing mattered now, and that was if the life ebbing so rapidly away had loved and learned men had stood by that quiet bed-side, fighting hand-to-hand with all-conquering Death. They were failed; at last, art, science and wisdom had done their utmost, and all they could do had not even caused the closed eyes to open, or given strength to the white lips for one word. All might had been tried, but the life of Lady Hutton ceased, and she lay dead and fast with water on her lips, and her hand fast with water on her lips, calling her by every endearing name, weeping and calling all in vain. Lady Hutton was never more to hear the sound of the voice she loved best.

"Must she die?" cried the poor child, in the

"has Barbara dismissed you? or have you ceased to love her?"

"She has dismissed me," he replied with a strange smile.

"Then she is a false, faithless girl, and must be brought to reason," said the countess indignantly.

"Hush, mother!" said the earl. "She is the noblest and truest of women. She dismissed me because she saw that I had learned to love her truly and dearly. She would not stand between me and happiness. I should never have named my love; I should have married Barbara and endured my life as I could. But she saw it, and set me free."

"It is just as I expected," was her ladyship's indignant comment—"a set of ridiculous, sentimental ideas. So you, my lord, have broken your faith, if not your word, with the 'noblest of women!' You fly in the very face of society; you set the world and all its laws at defiance; and for what?—for the love of some fair, foolish face, or perhaps worse, I cannot tell."

"Be just, mother," said Lord Bayneham. "I have done all you say for love of the world's sweetest, loveliest and purest girl the world ever saw."

"I favor me with the name of your new love," said the Countess contemptuously. "I have no wish to hear any absurd rhapsodies."

"The girl I love and have asked to be my wife is Hilda Hutton, Lady Hutton's ward," he replied. "I beg you, mother, to say what you will of me, but spare her. I love her, and she will love me."

"Never with my consent," exclaimed the countess. "I forbid any such folly. I insist upon your returning to your allegiance—to Barbara, and forgetting this fair, foolish—"

"Hush," said Lord Bayneham, his face growing dark and stern; "no one would argue with me. There are limits to a man's patience, mother."

"I refuse to hear one word more. If I could believe you serious, Claude, my sorrow would be so great it would nearly kill me. When you have thought better of it, come to me again."

With a haughty gesture the countess thus dismissed her son.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Countess of Bayneham was always considered as one of the proudest women in England. Her pride had hitherto known no fail. This broken engagement of her son's, his anticipated alliance with one whose claim to high or noble lineage she was wholly ignorant of, humbled her pride, and she doubted the wisdom of her life; but there was another almost as great—that was love for her only son. He was perhaps the only human being that she ever loved with thorough, self-sacrificing devotion. True, she was fond of Barbara; but had Barbara been penniless, instead of a wealthy heiress, the countess would never have planned that marriage for her son.

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extremity of her terror; "can nothing be done to save her?"

"Those she asked turned from her with a sorrowing face; they knew when Lady Hutton was gone the young girl would be alone in the world."

Through the long bright hours of that sunny day, when the gay sun shone and the distant roll of carriages told of life and gaiety, Hilda knelt by the sick bed; she was half crazed with the sudden sorrow. Last evening hope and love had charmed her; only last evening a golden light that came straight, it seemed, from Heaven, had fallen over her. At the very moment her lover left her, and thinking only of sharing her new-found happiness with her adopted mother, she heard a bell ring, then a startled cry, a rush of servants, and following them she saw Lady Hutton lying white and still upon the ground.

Doctors were summoned in haste; every resource of science had been tried; but all in vain. Since she had been carried into her room, Lady Hutton had been lost to all earthly things.

It was the night watch by her still, silent figure that changed Hilda from a child to a woman.

"You had better rest," said one of the doctors, moved by her face so full of anguish.

"I cannot leave her," said Hilda quietly.

"Do you know," continued the doctor, "if Lady Hutton has any friends who ought to be summoned?"

"I have never heard of any," she replied. "Lady Hutton always spoke of herself as being without relatives."

"Has she any worldly affairs that require settling?" asked Dr. Wells again.

"I do not know," said poor Hilda. "The agent from Brynmar is still here, and the lawyer who manages all mamma's affairs. They would not leave the house while she was so ill."

When Dr. Wells repeated his question to Mr. Abelson, the lawyer, that gentleman told him Lady Hutton's will had been made sixteen years ago, and he believed all her affairs were in perfect order; so there was nothing left for the lady, who lay so still and white, to do. The doctor agreed that in all probability she would be recovered conscious just before death; and while the sun poured the full force of its golden beams through the half-drawn curtains into the cheerful room, they watched for that minute; but hour after hour passed and it did not come. The face could grow no whiter, but the faint, low breath became more feeble.

When evening came and Lord Bayneham called again, he was told by Lady Hutton's maid, and he never remembered how he reached home.

"Mother," he said to Lady Bayneham, "you must come with me. Lady Hutton is dying. Hilda has no one near her, and I must go to comfort her. Do not refuse. I ask you as I would ask you for my life."