



HINTS FOR COUNTRY HOMES.

BY COUNTESS ANNIE DE MONTAIGU.

A FEW hints to ambitious home decorators may not prove amiss and demonstrate to them how to attain their end with economy and not too great an expenditure of labor.

During the long summer days, when it is too warm to indulge in out of door recreations and when a woman of active temperament grows weary of poring over the volcanic novels of the period, she can turn for distraction to the embellishing of the spot wherein she has set up her Lares and Penates, even should it be for a brief season.

Perhaps the dwelling is "remote from the busy haunts of men," and even the things she might be able to procure are not within her reach. Perchance she is resting in a quaint old farmhouse embowered in evergreen foliage, or in one of those modern abominations known as "Queen Anne cottages." Both may represent a picturesque enough appearance on the exterior, but how devoid of convenience and beauty is the somber interior. Let us see if we cannot transform one of these primitive dwellings into something which would make an artist pause and wonder how the metamorphosis was accomplished.

If it please you, madame or miss, we will begin with "My lady's chamber." I am sure that ungainly set of stained-wood furniture, with its bare uncanopied bed, has given you the nightmare more than once. A pot of enamel paint, a little industry and a small stock of artistic ideas and all will be changed, as if touched by the enchanter's hand. The transformation is not however so speedily effected for one must study cause and effect and the eternal fitness of things before commencing such work.

If the ugly set of furniture is to be renovated the original paint and varnish must be entirely removed by careful rubbing with coarse sand-paper, all unequalities being smoothed away by a final polish with a paper of a finer grade. When this has been done spread over the entire surface a thin coat of China gloss enamel in white, cream or some delicate tint; the first coat should be permitted to dry thoroughly before applying the second, for if this precaution is not observed the paint will scale off. If the work is carefully executed, the furniture will look as new as an expensive set bought of a dealer. The effect may be heightened by scrolls or narrow lines of gold; this may however be dispensed with, for if the work is not very well done, it is worse than none at all.

A slumber motto, as "Sleep with pleasant dreams," is exceedingly pretty in gilded letters upon the head-board. A spray of flowers such as hedge roses, wisteria or nasturtians may be painted on the available spaces.

Graceful draperies are made by passing lengths of India silk or silkoline through one of the gilded towel-rings which may be purchased for twenty-five cents. As the goods are narrow, from two to three widths must be sewn together to form the requisite fulness; the ends are finished with lace or simply with a briar-stitched hem, and left to hang behind the head-board and over the foot of the bed.

The spread is of myosotis blue India silk or it would be equally artistic if of the humbler silkoline. Pillows and pillow-shams are a thing of the past, as concerns the day dressing of a bed, a round hard bolster being substituted in their stead. To

make this, take a piece of stout embroidered muslin of the requisite size and stuff it with excelsior or even hay; cover with the same material as the spread; it must be gathered at each end, and the joining concealed with great bows of ribbon, rosettes, or cords and tassels.

After the bed the bureau comes next in importance, for it is there the toilette of beauty is performed. It is subjected to the same process as the bed; the unsightly drawer-knobs are removed, and replaced by brass rings which may be procured from the upholsterer at a trifling cost. The mirror is suspended from a ring like that above the bed and with a similar drapery which fall on each side of the mirror and over the sides of the bureau. A spray of flowers may be thrown across the top of the glass and on the drawers; the bureau top may be covered with silk, cloth or any material according to the taste.

Take two good-sized cigar-boxes, leaving the cover on, and nail them to the bureau on each side of the glass. They will be found useful to contain the ornaments, pomades, powders and cosmetics found upon the toilette table of most fashionable women.

The wash-stand should also be refreshed with a dress of fresh paint, and a splasher of cool white linen outlined in wild roses hung above it; on this a shelf with a fancy lambrequin may be nailed, which will be found very useful for holding the articles which too often overcrowd the washstand.

Odd chairs picked up here and there are furnished up and painted, gilded or ebonized. The common wooden kitchen variety becomes a thing of beauty when enameled and provided with a cushioned seat and back and a graceful chair scarf of bolting cloth; crazy patchwork is good for the purpose or perhaps ticking gay with fancy stitching and striped with gold braid.

Wicker rockers which have lost their pristine freshness may be renovated to look as good as new with paint or gilding, cushioned with plush, silk or cretonne and tied with bows of fluttering ribbon.

A low footstool is easily made out of a cheese-box or bushel measure; the top should be of muslin tacked on rather loosely and filled with excelsior; over this the ornamental cover is fastened and around it a corresponding valance.

Three crossed broomsticks and an old box-cover shaped round, oblong or hexagonal, makes a charming gypsy table. The sticks must be of equal length, crossed and nailed securely; on these uprights the top must be laid. The legs and top may be covered with velvet, plush or cretonne, but it is rather prettier to paint them in oil colors and decorate them with a bunch of roses, a spray of wisteria, dog-wood or chrysanthemums; around the edge wind a fringed scarf of thin silk, tying it in a knot at one side. This table may be converted into a workstand by a little ingenuity. Cut three pieces of silk, which should be lined, about three-eighths of a yard in length by the same in width, sew them up half the distance, and turn back the corners to form revers, tacking them down with narrow ribbon bows; gather the ends and finish with tassels. Another pocket may be suspended from the point where the legs intersect, which must be tied to the three sides with ribbons. Buttons, thread, tape, and all the paraphernalia can be dropped into these little receptacles which become at the same time useful and ornamental.

Should a woman possess any literary proclivities, or be fond of inditing epistles to her dear five hundred friends, a writing table will be indispensable. The humble kitchen table can be again called into requisition; cover the broad top with felt or billiard cloth; then cut pieces of felt about a quarter of a yard long by one-eighth wide; shape in vandykes and pink the two sides, gumming in the centre a flower or figure cut from French cretonne, place these points all around the sides and finish with