

SCRAP SCREENS.

Well arranged picture or scrap screens are not only very interesting to make, but are very pretty in effect, as each side has all the appearance of a continuous picture illustrative of some subject.

The frame work can be made of the number of panels and size wished for. Three panels, each panel 5 feet 2 inches high and 22 inches wide, is a pretty size for a drawing room; and four panels 6 feet high and 2 feet wide for a dining room or library. The wood must be well seasoned, and each panel must be made of exactly the same size, so that all may be quite even when folded together. It looks best to have the bottom part of the framework made a little deeper than that at the top and the sides. Width of framework at the top and sides about 2 in.; width of frame at the bottom about 2½ in. There should be two bars across about 2 in. wide. Get some unbleached cotton cloth. The width of both will be sufficient, the length required will depend on the height of the panels as well as the number of them, which can be easily calculated. Soak the cloth in hot water to shrink it, and when it is nearly dry nail it with small tin tacks along the top, round the edge of the panel, pulling it very tight all the time, so as to stretch it as much as possible, then fasten it down the sides and the bottom; do the other side of the panel the same. This requires a good deal of pulling, as it must be stretched tightly.

The canvas must be brought round the edge of the panel, so that the nails are on the outside edges and none on the front of the framework. Get some common white size, cut it in small pieces and put it into a white jam jar, with a very little water at the bottom. Put it on a hot hearth to melt, stirring it occasionally with a piece of stick. When quite melted brush it on the canvas thinly, but all over, with a painter's brush; rather a large one is best, as it can be done quicker with it. Work quickly in a warm place, keeping the size hot until both sides of the canvas on each panel are sized. It will soon dry and be ready for papering. If the screen is to be covered with colored pictures all over, which is the most effective, get sheets of large white packing paper. Lay one of the panels on a table or large board, and measure off the length of paper required by laying it on the screen. Each side must be in one piece, as joints would show a crease. Lay one of the strips of paper on a panel, and, with good smooth, common flour and water paste, brush it thickly, but evenly all over, using a similar brush to the one for sizing. It must be thoroughly and smoothly pasted, no spaces left or knots of paste, and can then be turned over so as to lay the side on which the paste is on to the canvas. This is best done by two people, one at the top and the other at the bottom, taking hold of each corner, turning it, and laying it very evenly on to the canvas, arranging it carefully to fit the shape, but not to fold over the edges. This, at first, is a little troublesome, but practice soon makes it very easy. When laid smoothly dab it with a clean cloth, pressing it gently, and rubbing out any creases or air bubbles, and it must be done quickly, before the paste gets dry. Cover both sides of the panel in the same way, and when all parts are dry, size the paper all over, in the same way as the canvas was done, and then it is ready for the pictures.

If the canvas has been well stretched, and the paper properly pasted, the surface of the panel will be quite smooth, and as tight as a drum. Common flour and water paste is used to put on the pictures with, but, before beginning to do so, it is wise to have a tolerable collection to select from. In arranging the pictures on the screen care must be taken to contrast the colors well, and it is a good plan to cover each panel in a different style. The easiest way of doing so is to put on pictures, without cutting them out, in somewhat regular order, and then to cut out flowers and arrange them round each other as if in a frame. Another mode is to cut out most of the pictures and arrange them in a confused way, part of a picture in one place and part elsewhere—any absurdity of composition is effective; flowers may be added occasionally, but not so frequently as in the first style. Another, and the most artistic, but the most difficult to arrange well, is for each panel to depict a distinct subject, such as Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter.

All the subjects must blend well and run into each other, with no distinct outlines, so that they appear as one picture. It would be almost impossible to cut them out exactly to fit, but the overlapping should be as little as possible. To ensure the best arrangement of any of the styles it is a good plan to pin the pictures on to the screen in various ways until the desired effect is arrived at; in pasting them on, be careful to press them well and to leave no air bubbles or raised places. Do not put the pictures anywhere within half an inch of the edge of the panel, as

that margin is required to put any beading or other ornament as a finish to the screen.

When all the pictures are closely pasted on, look over them, and any little deficiencies or defects paint out with a little water-color paint to harmonize with the surrounding parts. It is then ready to be varnished and mounted.

Those who do not care to cover both sides of the screen with pictures, can put them on one side only, with cloth on the other.

Screens can be made with less trouble if the panels be covered with glazed colored paper, blue, red, green, or maroon, with flowers or pictures cut out, leaving no margin, and then pasted on separately or in groups, so as to show a good deal of the colored paper forming the ground.

Natural History.

WOODPECKERS.

The peculiar characteristics of woodpeckers are the construction of the beak, the feet, and tail. The beak is constructed for chipping away the bark and wood, the feet giving them the power to hold fast to the trunk of the tree, and the tail to support them in position, which gives to their strokes the greatest force. Their beaks are long, powerful, straight and pointed; their feet formed for grasping, are set far back upon the body; their tails are short and stiff, and act as props when pressed upon the rough bark. Woodpeckers were for a long time thought to be injurious to trees, but that prejudice naturalists now agree was wholly an error. Often, in walking through the woods or orchards, there will be seen strewn in profusion, at the foot of a tree, flakes of bark and chips of wood, sure signs of the woodpeckers' industry. It looks as though a work of destruction was being carried on, but these flakes, having become separated from the living bark of the tree, were mere excrescences under which insects and their larvæ found shelter, and to obtain them for food the woodpecker removes the dead flakes of bark and wood, so that in reality, instead of being an enemy to the farmer, he is one of his most faithful servants.

The woodpecker makes its nest in a tunnel which it excavates in the unsound timbers. Water when admitted to a tree, causes its centre to decay; but if a perforation is made through the trunk, gallon after gallon of dark brown water will rush out mixed with fragments of decayed wood showing the extent of the damage done. This opens occurs when a branch has been blown off close to the trunk; the woodpecker is quick to discover it, and begins to cut a tunnel.

Wilson and Audubon both state that many of our woodpeckers will excavate tunnels in apparently sound and undecayed wood, boring through several inches, till they reach the decayed portions of the center of the tree.

The burrowing powers of the great giant gray-bellied woodpecker are marvelous, its chisel-like beak having been known to chip splinters from a mahogany table, and to cut a hole fifteen inches in width through a lath-and-plaster partition. Even the small downy woodpecker is able to bore its way through solid wood of a tree, making an ingenious nest, the burrows sloping for some six or eight inches, then being driven perpendicularly down the tree. The tunnel is barely wide enough to admit of the passage of the body of the bird. But the perpendicular hole is roomy, and is fitted up in a style sufficient to dignify it with the name of a chamber. The male and female woodpeckers labor alternately in the burrowing and making of the nest, but they find an implacable enemy in the saucy little wren, who, when the woodpeckers' apartments are ready for occupancy, coolly takes possession, and holds them against the builders and proprietors notwithstanding their vehement and noisy expostulations.

Picus principalis is distinguished by a superb red carmine crest and bill of polished ivory. This is indeed no common bird, but is a king among his kind. No fence rails for him to perch upon, but rather the tops of lofty trees, the giant pines of the cypress swamps where the trumpeting notes and loud strokes awaken and reawaken the echoes. From the base of some of these enormous pine trees cartloads of bark have been removed, and the trees so perforated with holes that it would seem to be impossible that it was the work of birds.

A mammoth tree cut down in Lewis county, Kentucky, recently, and believed to be 300 years old, produced 33,472 feet of lumber and twenty-five cords of fire-wood. It was sixteen feet in diameter and 120 feet high.