

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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The Esthetics of House-Furnishing.

The last of the series of lectures by Donald G. Mitchell before the Yale Art School on "Esthetics of Every-day Life" was delivered on the 25th ult. The speaker said:

To speak understandingly of the adornment of interiors, we must have a well-defined idea of the disposition and collection of rooms. In this matter convenience is the first law. Whatever arrangement sacrifices this, no matter for what effect, is bad. Instead of a stark, narrow hall, with only a hat-stand to welcome the visitor, should be a good breadth of hallway, which always carries with it a welcome. The space so used will be far more effective than when put into a little-used parlor. It permits also a partial equipment with such fixtures as books, pictures, etc., as shall tell at the outset something of the taste of the occupants. Stairs: play an important part in our domestic economy, and are not to be slighted. They should give a free and easy passage to whatever may be above. It is amazing what inconvenience has for year after year been imposed by only four or five feet of needless curtaining of space and the failure to throw off an inch or two from the rise of home stairs. It is a barbarism which women, had they been architects, would have remedied long ago. The space needed—and this would make all the difference between an easy, inviting stairway which gives dignity to a hall, and a pinched, niggardly one—is so small that it could, in the great majority of cases, be secured without interference with other wants.

In regard to the general arrangement of rooms, in view of the limitless variety of the demands which different conditions impose, little can be definitely said. But certain large rulings, which can be borne out by good sense and good taste, may be made. First, we should order our divisions and partitions for the comfort of our own family, not for the benefit of outsiders. Individuality may express itself as charmingly and piquantly in the distribution of parts as in the exterior or furnishing. If condition of life and tastes invite to the bestowment of large hospitalities, or if we love domestic quietude and modest hospitalities, these should be respectively provided for. The friends whom we invite will have a stronger relish for those appointments which are most characteristic of our own taste. Outside architecture should be declarative of purpose, while the inside admits of pleasant and grateful surprises, and should not be so arranged as to be read from the outside. Finally, with respect to interior division, the mistress of the house, in nine cases out of ten, is the best judge, and to her should be given the judgeship, if, indeed, she does not of her own accord take it. The best planned of all houses are those which have grown up under the suggestion and supervision of a good, resolute materfamilias.

The speaker here began to consider the arrangements of a house in detail, starting with the vestibule. Passing from this he took up the matter of floors, and said: Floor surfaces we find covered with woolen carpeting of every tint and figure. This is agreeable to the foot, however galling it may be to the eye. But it is a reservoir of dirt and dust, no matter how vigorous and aggressive the housewifery, and is wisely giving way to such use of it as only necessity demands. In the proper flooring of halls no soft wood should be used. Georgia pine is excellent, and so are black oak and ash, though the latter may be disposed to silver. No light wood should have a place in any floor. Tints may be varied and made fast by a wash of solution of asphaltum. There should be a distinct border with mitered angles having tints of their own. A diagonal arrangement is effective. Extreme polish and shining surface in a floor are to be avoided. Naturally, parlors, reception-rooms, chambers, and even bed-rooms will demand their modicum, if no more, of carpeting in our winters. But a border of flooring, darkly tinted, with its mitered angles, will make the happiest possible setting,

and do away with that periodic moving of heavy furniture, which is a haunting nightmare to housewives. Respecting carpet materials, taste long ago declared against those flamboyancies of figure which our grandmothers loved so well. While a gala-day chamber may be strewn with daisies for the welcome of our friends, in rooms subject to much use, simplest geometric or flowery arabesques, which merely hint at floral growth, will be more fitting; or, perhaps, better still, such a fine, confused mingling of tints as shall suggest nothing but soft dalliance with the foot.

The subject of ceilings and walls was now taken up. There does not seem to be any well-devised method of evading the usual plaster treatment. Plaster ornamentation in heavy coriaces and stupendous central rosettes is happily going out of favor. Color decorating is much better, as it is simpler, cleaner, and permits of renewal and reposition. Ambitious engarlanding of walls in fresco may be well done, but there is danger that it will kill all the home embroidery which we love. The same rules apply to ambitious paper-hangings of whatever sort; there exists the additional objection that it brings to surfaces new mechanical colors, with their stock of adhesive mixtures. Managers of our metropolitan hotels run to garish ornamentation of their walls, thereby feeding the appetites of those who measure elegance solely by its cost, instead of cultivating the more subdued styles which would revive the old notion of home feeling in connection with our public hostilities. But from all we fall back upon simple tinting of plain mortar (not plaster) surfaces in kalsomine, as securing at least cost and least hazard of cleanliness the best range of effect. The artistic effect of an interior will depend largely upon wood fixtures—doors, wainscots, etc. Much better than paint is the plan of showing the natural graining of various woods. While this treatment is called "hard-wood finish," hard wood is by no means essential, nor are costs necessarily greater. Butternut and chestnut are not more expensive to work than pine. And, fortunately, our pine—the strobos of the botanists—has lost, by reason of its very commonness and tint, that appreciation for interior finish for which it is worthy. The natural grain and tints of all woods are much fuller and richer than all the dead, dull paint, with its tawny yellow of oils, of the decorators. As to the extent of wood in wainscots, every man's home and wants must make the law. Conventionalities and unyielding edicts of carpenters and architects are to be distrusted. The wainscot is a charming way to protect walls. If the house be such in its proportions that we desire to emphasize height, the wainscot should be made low; if the contrary, it should be high. There should be nothing startling in the tints. They may be varied almost indefinitely. The lecturer had used, with pleasing effect, successive strips of walnut, butternut, chestnut, ash, and yellow pine, repeated in companies, and tied to their place by a longitudinal fillet of the dentilated Venetian molding. Naturally, the fireplace and mantel will next demand attention. Fire-places are great promoters of health, as they secure great ventilation. Of the different varieties, the French pattern, uncertain of draft and starveling of heat, and the British style, well adapted to bituminous coal, are excelled by the old New England fireplace, which is broader and wider, and well adapted to generous wood fires. The equipment of the mantel is a matter of first importance in giving expression to a room, and is deserving of careful study.

Finally, the general assemblage or arrangement depends on this: The ordinariness of too much rigidity, and that home taste should everywhere find expression in a thousand delightful ways. The central and best adornment of the winter home is the blaze from the fireplace. The decorators, with all their arts and all their vermilion and gilt, can not match it. We might well spare our spendings in other directions for the sake of keeping alive the flame, so full of traditional character, so full of joyousness and cheer. It is the wisest, fullest, fittest, and richest of all the decorative adjuncts of a home room. It redeems poverty of equipment. It sheds cheerful illumination over the scantiest of floors. The lecturer closed with these words: In the little I have said, I

have tried not so much to follow out the line of progress laid down by recent art writers on the subject, as to stimulate a thinking for oneself. Indeed, I have run counter to a great many views which have strong support. But I believe honesty and simplicity and strength and straightforwardness and naturalness lie at the bottom of all healthy art movement in this direction; and I think that with these held courageously by in our work, though we may do no fine thing, we shall do no bad thing. And when once we have learned to avoid the doing of bad things, in what concerns the esthetics of every-day life, we shall have made a long stride forward.

A Singular Dream.

About a year or more ago he lost his wife by death, and was therefore left a widower. Time wore on, and grief at the loss wore off; but one night his former wife appeared to him in the form of an angel. The once beloved introduced to the solitary man a woman whom she whispered to be his second wife. The face and form were strange, but the tone and features were much impressed on the mind of the man. Several weeks passed on, but he failed to find a woman's face corresponding with the likeness he carried in his heart, until one day a fair face passed him on the street. The mystery was solved, the dream had come true; but the woman was a stranger! Time, however, worked out such matters, and a few weeks after the twain met at a party, became acquainted, and the sequel was that the dream was fully realized. The couple are now living together in happiness. The N. J. Messenger (Swedenborgian), in speaking of premonitions, says: "They are caused by spirits who are always present with man, and are constantly exerting an influence upon him. This influence is generally inappreciable. It does not take away man's freedom. It is not a casual and special instance of Providential care, as the Bible abundantly testifies. If we were more susceptible to their influence, they would keep us from natural and moral danger much more frequently than they do now. The aversions and attractions, and the unaccountable misgivings or confidence which we sometimes experience are due to their influence. We are subject to both good and evil influences from this source; and we come more fully under the good or evil according to our character. As we shun evil and live according to the commandments, we come more fully under the power of the angels, who can protect us from dangers and lead us to good. Some persons are more easily impressed by their influence than others, and there may be times when we come more fully under their power than at others. But the angels and good spirits always do the best they can for us. We are always in their presence, and as men advance in spiritual life, they will be lead more entirely by the Lord by means of His word and the messengers He sends to us."—*Ottawa (Can.) Press.*

"My dearest Fiducia," he said, as they stood beneath a tree in a flood of moonlight, "I have longed—oh so longed!—for this blissful opportunity; and even now I hardly dare to speak the swelling thoughts that struggle up for utterance. Not in the blistering glare of the noonday sun would I whisper to thee of the sweet love that has tinged my whole being with a celestial brightness, but in this soft silvery sheen of the constant moon would I syllable forth the ecstatic song of Eros. Oh, canst thou realize how like the radiance of heaven thy beauty beams upon me? And shall not the blessed boon be always mine? Wilt thou not henceforth, for all coming time, give me the right to shield thee from the rough contact and chilling blasts of an unfeeling world? Oh! if thy smiles could be mine while life should last they would shed—they would shed—a—a—Ab, dearest, they would shed—" While he hesitated and stumbled for a word, Fiducia eagerly whispered, "Never mind the wood-shed, Augustus, but go right on with your pretty talk."

—By the explosion of a saw-mill boiler at Rockford, Ind., Geo. Roush, one of the proprietors, was instantly killed; Adalaska Morgan, aged 15, fatally injured; and Robert Pyle, another of the proprietors, severely injured.

Do Snakes Catch Fish?

A. W. Chase, of the United States Coast Survey, describes, in a note to the editor of the *Popular Science Monthly*, a contest which he and a brother-officer witnessed in 1867 on the Purissima, a small trout stream about 24 miles south of San Francisco:

We had been fishing on the stream, and came to a high bank which overlooked a transparent pool of water about ten feet in diameter and four feet in depth. This pool was fringed with willows, and had on one side a small gravel bank. The trout at first sight was lying in mid-water, heading up stream. It was, as afterward ascertained, fully nine inches in length—a very desirable prize for an angler. While studying how to cast our flies to secure him, a novel fisherman appeared, and so quick were his actions that we suspended our own to witness them. This new enemy of the trout was a large water-snake of the common variety, striped black and yellow. He swam up the pool on the surface until over the trout, when he made a dive, and by a dexterous movement seized the trout in such a fashion that the jaws of the snake closed its mouth. The fight then commenced. The trout had the use of its tail and fins, and could drag the snake from the surface; when near the bottom, however, the snake made use of its tail by winding it around every stone or root that it could reach. After securing this tail hold it could drag the trout toward the bank, but, on letting go, the trout would have a new advantage. This battle was continued for full 20 minutes, when the snake managed to get its tail out of the water and clasped around the root of one of the willows mentioned as overhanging the pool. The battle was then up, for the snake gradually put coil after coil around the root, with each one dragging the fish toward the land. When half its body was coiled it unloosened its first hold and stretched the end of its tail out in every direction, and, finding another root, made fast, and now, using both, dragged the trout out on the gravel bank. It now had it under control, and, uncoiling, the snake dragged the fish fully ten feet up on the bank, and I suppose would have gorged him. We killed the snake and replaced the trout in the water, as we thought that he deserved liberty. He was apparently unharmed, and in a few moments darted off. That the water-snake of our California brooks will prey upon the young of the trout, and also smaller and less active fishes, I have noticed, but never have seen an attack on a fish so large or one more hotly contested.

Patent Rubber Worm—A New Fish-Bait.

Those small boys who are in the habit of converting their mouths into bait boxes, when they go fishing, will be gratified to learn that, through the genius of a recent inventor, they may continue to use that convenient receptacle for a new bait which is free from the disadvantages peculiar to the angle worm. Any boy who has meditated over the shortcomings of that slimy invertebrate knows that it squirms disagreeably, especially when accidentally bitten, that it has an affinity for dirt, which is annoying when swallowed; that, even when on the hook, it has a way of dissolving off in the most unaccountable and exasperating manner; and that it perversely permits itself to be carried off piecemeal by suckers and minnows, in total disregard of its legitimate purpose. There can be no doubt that the day of the angle worm has passed, and that against the improved flexible rubber worm of Mr. W. H. Gregg (patented January 2, 1877) he can no longer hope to compete. Serving as bait, and at the same time as chewing gum, it must be evident to the least thoughtful that the rubber worm has an incontestable advantage.—*Scientific American.*

—Moody to the Bostonians: "Talk about America and England being Christian nations; there is not a Christian nation that would make room for Christ if he should come. Not a city on the face of the earth would invite Him to come if it was put to a popular vote. There is no room for Him. The world doesn't want Him. Not only that, but how many churches there are that would not have Him."