

How to Use Beautifully

BY KATE GREENLEAF LOCKE



THIS department, under the able editorship of Kate Greenleaf Locke, will be found of interest and benefit to all classes. Whether rich or poor, there is no reason why your home should not be made beautiful by artistic arrangement and the proper outlay of time and energy more than by the expenditure of money. Correspondence is invited. Just address your letters to Kate Greenleaf Locke, Sunday Call, and these questions on making the home artistic will be answered at length in subsequent columns of this department.

In offering to the people suggestions on artistic home furnishing I would remind them that the day for the idealization of the home and its belongings has passed away. We are living in a material and practical age. Objects of household use are no longer called beautiful because of affectionate associations; to be admired, to afford us pleasure, they must now be beautiful in themselves, and so recognized by all the canons of art. The wave of artistic feeling for architecture (which is the outside) and house decoration (which is the inside) of our homes is sweeping over the country. When it has passed, many beautiful but homely objects will undoubtedly have disappeared and a new feeling for the harmonious blending of rich, soft colors and the effective arrangement of furniture will have arisen.

A realization that it is not the amount of money expended which secures a beautiful result, but the taste and discretion with which it is spent, is being forced upon us. There is no valid reason why the mechanic's and the workman's cottage should not give pleasure to the most refined tastes and yet, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the interior of the millionaire's mansion often induces a confused sense of failure. It must, therefore, be admitted that the correct and effective arrangement of one's household belongings will have to be with many an education, a lesson which those who need suggestions this correspondence is to be conducted, and I will gladly answer any clearly written questions addressed to me in care of The Call on this subject.

To those who build mansions and to those who have to content themselves with a cottage home there is much to be said, and it will be the object of this department in the future to give practical help to those whose ambition it is to make their homes beautiful in the artistic sense. And when I speak of a harmonious effect I mean that product of the artist which shows a discreet perception of the fitness of associations in certain things, of the feeling for color which throws the proper shades of the right colors into conjunction, which courageously eliminates all discord and completes its gracious work by setting each thing in precisely its proper place. There are individuals who are born with this faculty. Such a one can literally cause the desert to blossom as the rose, for she can create a charming home in the midst of barren surroundings, and others can make themselves, by careful thought and a study of the subject, fit for this work of home making. A great deal is said in these days about environment, and it is conceded that the elevating influence of a refined and beautiful home cannot be overrated.

There are many desirable things in life of which a woman of narrow means has to deny herself. The slender purse renders them impossible to her, but an attractive and charming home lies within the possibilities for every woman who earnestly studies the subject. Human life demands beauty in its every little way which upon careful thought suggests itself.

The Unlovely Conventions.

There may be in it objects which for years have caught and held her eye with a sense of repulsion. She has looked at them unthinkingly, but she has never put them out of sight. She should, therefore, begin her work by making a clean sweep of all unlovely objects. There are many articles, as we all know, which are necessary, but far from beautiful, that we are compelled to have constantly and completely, so disposed of by an intelligent and determined woman that if not altogether hidden they cease at any rate to force themselves upon the attention. Then the first step toward making a beautiful home with slender means is to bring all that is beautiful to the front and relegate the homely things to the background. The difference between the feeling of pride with which one exhibits a home which is comfortable, beautifully adorned and attractive, and the shame with which she allows others to perceive that life in her home is short of both comfort and beauty is just the difference between happiness and misery. A lack of means no longer furnishes sufficient excuse for a failure to accomplish this. The materials which are now at hand are often of so inexpensive a description that they fall within easy reach of the smallest purse. The great point is to select the right thing. Things have to be bought, and homes have to be fitted up. Human life demands certain accessories, and I think that our study should be to buy these necessities with discretion and always with an eye to the beautiful.

It is an established fact that beautiful colors, graceful lines, and harmonious effects have actually an exhilarating influence on human beings. Naturally then, our lives are constantly brightened and lifted out of the common place by beauty in our homes.



To look at a beautiful object, to listen to an exquisite strain of music, we all admit, gives us—for a moment at least—a thrill of enjoyment. Every such thrill that we experience sends us along the road of life with a fresh impulse of strength and vitality—thus, it is worth while to bend energies that are often wasted in other directions toward the higher one of filling our lives—as far as circumstances will allow—with beauty.

Art in the Home.

This means in a broad sense—to my understanding—the introduction into our daily lives of a feeling for the truly beautiful in line and color, and a correct appreciation of harmony in combinations. In order to work up to real judgment and discretion we must first rid ourselves of all fondness for tawdry cheap looking effects however glittering they may be. There are certain lines to be laid down and adhered to in a deliberate cultivation of taste; and having made a study of it for many years, I feel that I may safely offer a few helpful suggestions to those who are just beginning to study it. We will take, for example, a room

which by reason of inclination or limited means, is to be dealt with in extreme simplicity. Perhaps we have a few pretty trifles that we wish to bring to the front in this room. We will prepare to give them prominence by arranging for them a soft, harmonious background in agreeable, clear colors. We have for draperies, furniture covering—and even sometimes floor covering—denims—in dark blue, reds, rich or dull, or our taste may call for, warm browns, soft yellows and fresh greens. This material wears like cheap or tawdy, and in the darker shades does not soil or fade. Perhaps a qualification which recommends it most highly to us is that it is also quite inexpensive.

What more could we ask for our background than this? Now take for instance a small pine table and paint it some dark color, preferably black, cover it smoothly with dark blue denim brightened at the edges with brass tacks.

When you lay a book on this table it becomes decorative at once. You have by this simple device struck a note of taste in your room. See how the shining on the cover and the decorative design

stand out to recommend themselves to your notice and admiration. This is because you have given the book a proper background. If you had laid it on a table cover of mixed or jarring colors it would have remained merely a book and not a decoration.

This is one of the secrets of simple and good effects. You need not study your backgrounds as artists do in the composition of their pictures, unless you wish to make a specialty of decorative work. But it is necessary to give some thought to this subject of keeping your background clear and simple in treatment—or much of the money you may spend for decorative articles is wasted. To return to our blue denim—place on it a glass bowl of yellow roses—you will find their delicate outlines and coloring, their green leaves and stems showing through the crystal of the bowl take an added beauty from the background of this table. They stand clearly out against the light with no confusing shadows and colors such as would be thrown around them by a cheap flowered or figured material.

A glass of purple violets, a vase of white roses—in fact, almost any color of

flowers that you might use would show in the same charming and effective way. A clear wash in water color—in other words, calcimining—for rough plastered walls is an inexpensive finish and a good background. There are also many cheap papers with delicate wall-toned figures on them which are charming when the floor has a plain matting or carpet on it and the curtains are in plain colors. It seems to me, with this much that is good, with sheer muslin or soft white ches cloth curtains at the windows, it is an easy matter to render a room attractive and pretty.

The Importance of Color.

In making up an interior effect the most important thing to be considered is color. Imagine an apartment furnished in the simplest style, but in which the colors are as carefully selected as they would be upon the canvas of a charming picture—softly brilliant they meet into one another, or, cool and quiet, they give distinction to the light and airy furniture of the room. Contrast with this a room in which the handsomest pieces of furniture are thrown thoughtlessly together. Another point of value to remember is that a room which conveys an idea in its decoration gives a more subtle pleasure to all who enter it than one which is merely pretty.

If, for instance, one has means to build a charming cottage home, complete in all of its appointments, comfortable and finished in its details, appropriate in its decorations, he will undoubtedly make a terrible mistake if he devotes this money to the building of a large unfinished house. If the style of the house assumes a certain luxury of accessories and surroundings and these are lacking, the whole thing is a failure. And if you live in a cottage, by all means keep it a cottage; study cottage effects and work them out thoughtfully and with taste and you will yourself be charmed with the result. Unless you have previously studied the subject, you will be surprised to find how artistic and even luxurious a cottage may become.

The cottage idea does not exclude a library, for one may have a long, low room lined with books in a cottage. French windows may open from this room on a terrace bright with flowers, and deep-embossed casement windows may have cushioned seats where one may read as much at her ease and in as deep seclusion as she would find in the most imposing mansions.

The cottage idea does not exclude oil paintings and exquisite water colors, Copy prints and etchings, nor good plaster casts of world-famous pieces of sculpture, nor rarely beautiful Chinese jars, vases, growing plants in them. All of these beautiful things may be used in a cottage and yet the house will not lose its characteristics. The point I wish to make is this: It is much better to build a wide, spreading, roomy cottage or bungalow than to furnish it with light and inexpensive furniture, curtain it scatterbrained with white muslin and pretty figured cottons, and the whole room throughout articles of real artistic value—pictures that delight a connoisseur, curios that would be of interest to your most cultured and intelligent guests, rugs from Oriental looms—than to build a more pretentious house and be unable to carry to a satisfactory finish all of its elaborate suggestions. As a woman aptly said the other day in referring to her expenditure, "Everything depends upon the scale you start in; if you go on an expensive scale there is no telling where you will end." And I say to you, if you start in on a lower plane, realizing all the time your limitations, you may be able to mold everything to such completeness that in the end you will attain the more artistic effect.

The Consideration of the Hall.

There may be halls presenting problems to their owners in the way of being too narrow, bare looking, inappropriately furnished, dark or glaringly light, that I

may help to solve. If the dissatisfied one will write me, stating the case exactly and giving the dimensions, general shape and the color of walls, together with present furnishings, I will gladly help out of the difficulties through these columns.

There was a time, which we have left not far behind us, when in the modern conventional house the hall was often considered solely as an entrance way to the rooms which opened out of it. In this case it was narrow and also frequently bare and ugly. I have seen many comfortable homes which boasted well furnished, cheerful rooms, and which yet repelled intensely at first glimpse by ushering you through a scantily furnished, unembellished, narrow hall—a mere passageway, in fact, for these pleasant apartments.

Since architects, householders and decorators have unanimously recognized recently the necessity of an ethical and artistic consideration of the home, these indications of crudity are passing away. Now often we see the hall space widened into a broad, open room. Sometimes, where space is a consideration and the hall can be scarcely more than an enlarged vestibule, it is richly and cozily furnished as a reception room; again it spreads out into a great airy living room. Its central and get-at-able position in the house peculiarly fits it for this adaptation.

Again, when a house has stately proportions and an imposing effect is the aim, it remains simply a hallway, but is so clothed and embellished and dealt with as to impress the beholder with the dignity of its mission. It is the pride of a house to present itself to a guest. It leads to the inner, more private portions of this temple of domestic life. It must therefore put its best foot foremost, as its expression will be considered a sure indication of what is to come after.

To the critical visitor it is pretty sure to strike the note either of harmony or discord, which will appear upon further exploration. The importance of the treatment of this portion of a dwelling with careful thought is palpable to all thinking people.

Concerning Oriental Rugs.

There is in many places a mistaken idea prevalent that the Turkish rug is a luxury which is beyond the means of the ordinary purchaser. Also, that to set the pace with a Turkish rug means that one must be led into all sorts of extravagance and that it looks well only with the richest accessories. Both of these ideas are mistaken ones, and it would be greatly to the advantage of many people to card them. First, as to price: Brussels or Moquet rug, an American "Smyrna" will often exceed in price a rare, soft-toned, everlasting and always beautiful Oriental one. Of course, there are rugs and rugs, even when genuinely Oriental. Sometimes, but rarely, they are really ugly; but if one will, in selecting, choose one in which her favorite colors predominate, if she will assure herself that these colors are softened so that they tone readily into one another (and this toning is only accomplished by age) that, in other words, there are no colors which are crude and staring, she will be sure to buy a good one and will never regret the purchase. Whether the weave be that of an Anatolian, with its silky sheen; a Kazake, velvety and deep in tone, or a cashmere, with its heavy fringe and its Indian designs, she will extract a thrill of pleasure from it every time her eyes encounters its soft beauty. A word as to the purchase of a cashmere. I would advise the avoidance of those which have a strong yellow in them. Many very handsome pieces present a strong yellow against a dark background and running as a border into the fringe. If this light tinge is white instead of yellow and the fringe is strong, pure white, you have a much more valuable rug and one which will look well wherever you place it.