

HOW TO DECORATE YOUR OWN HOME



HELEN M. DAGGETT
R. AVERILL SMITH

KESSINGER LEGACY REPRINTS

HOW TO DECORATE YOUR OWN HOME



Helen M. Daggott

with additional photographs and text by

R. Averill Smith



REPUBLIC PUBLISHING COMPANY - New York

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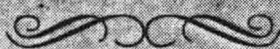
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R. Averill Smith



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INTERIOR DECORATING

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HELEN M. DAGGETT

Revised Edition

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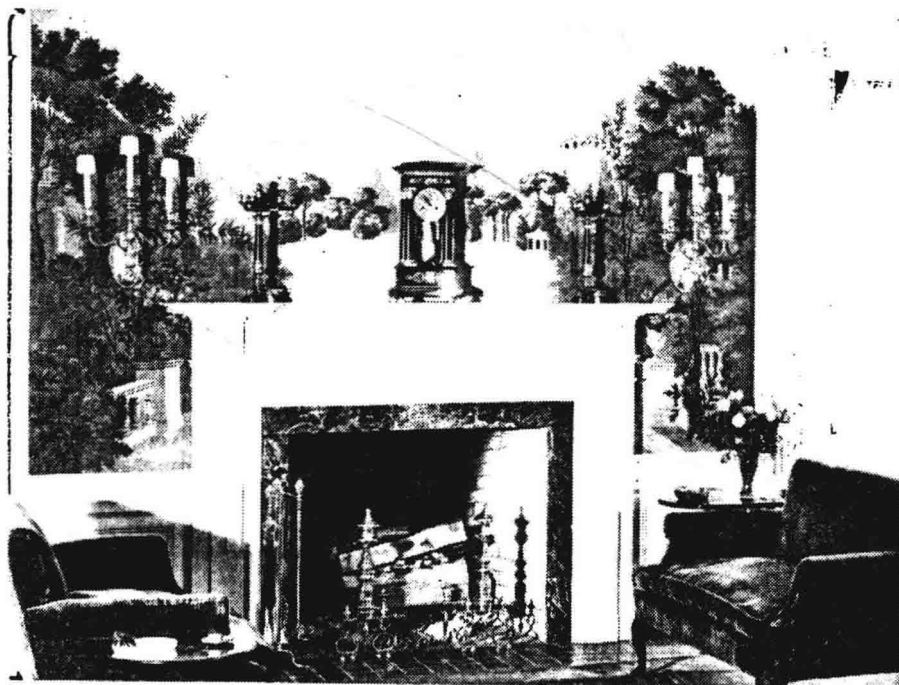
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Thought comes before Action

Train Yourself to Formulate a Plan First—Then Take the Necessary Steps to Fulfill it.

THE subject of interior decorating is a fascinating one to almost every woman. She feels instinctively that because she is a woman she is, automatically, an interior decorator. Of course it has been an undisputed fact for ages, we might say, that woman has been the acknowledged home-maker, for she it was who had to think, plan, and often actually do whatever interior decorating was done in the home. She has, supposedly, been taught what her mother knew about the subject, just as she was taught to cook and sew. But to this day, I venture to say, the numbers of women who know how to cook or sew well outnumber by a perfectly enormous majority those who know how to decorate their homes artistically. Why is this so? Possibly because the opportunities for practicing cooking (three times a day—year in and year out) and sewing (styles and fabrics in clothes are always changing) have so far outnumbered the opportunities of practicing new ways of interior decorating. We are more alert to the meanings and adaptations of the terminology or language regarding cooking and sewing than we are to that of interior decorating. Excursions along decorating lines and the buying of new furnish-

A magnificent grouping. Here, the whole panel immediately surrounding the fireplace has been covered with a colorful scenic wallpaper which creates a unique effect and makes unnecessary the hanging of any overmantel picture. Particularly effective with white woodwork.



ings happen far less frequently than learning to cook some new dish or to understand some new fashion. We all need actual personal experience, as a rule, to help us really to understand a subject.

A lay person may read about airplanes, even become familiar with some of the technical terms such as "blind flying," "airpockets," etc., and yet have no real understanding of what is meant in an article which describes how a certain flight was made. Because of the lack of personal experience he has not learned how to "interpret" the terminology or language into its proper relations and values. It seems hard to realize sometimes, but it is a fact that we must either practice in our minds what is presented on a subject or, if we do not know how to do that, we must actually experience it, if we wish to make it ours.

Every month in the year there are the most helpful articles imaginable about interior decorating in all its phases, in excellently edited magazines. There are many very fine books written on this subject, as well as the most comprehensive and attractive displays shown in stores and museums throughout the country. Still one will hear a woman who is well informed on other subjects ask, "How will I go about redecorating my home artistically?" The fact of the matter is that in all probability she has not had sufficient personal experience or practice along these lines to know how to apply to her problem the ideas, suggestions, and new methods written about, illustrated, and displayed for her benefit.

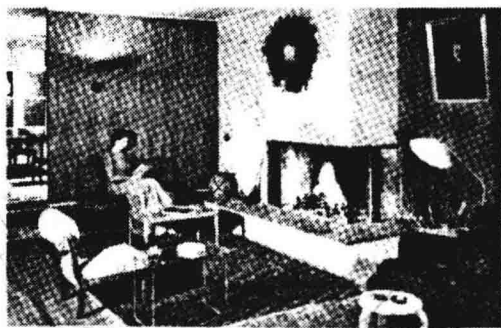
Every problem in decorating is a new one presented seemingly from a new angle and a different point of view. To know how to take advantage of the helpful ideas constantly being presented one must know how to adapt these ideas to the problem at hand. None of these ideas can be taken absolutely literally, word for word, as your problem may have definite angles peculiar only to itself. Your room may have three windows whereas the one illustrated has only two. Your room may have no mantle at all while the room in the display has, or your room may be longer or narrower than the one you like somewhere else. It is the ability to pick out what is adaptable to your problem and interpret it into your scheme of things which is essential. You may like the room described in an article or pictured in some magazine showing beautiful antique furniture, panelled walls, crewel needlework, chenille rugs and rare books. It may seem to typify just what you would like in a room, but your budget boundaries may make it impossible for you to have it. Analyze that room. Remember that it is not always the things which make for charm and inviting, hospitable hominess. It is the atmosphere of cultured understanding—the appreciation of color values, restraint, simplicity of line, and of the essential comforts of those who will use the room—which creates a room of dis-

tingtion. These qualities may be expressed in your room as well as in the one referred to, and it is possible for you to have a room which has as much distinction as this expensive one if you know how to interpret for yourself just what is necessary to achieve it. It is not the cost of the things which make the charm, but the way in which they are used.

To know how to have one's home artistically decorated and furnished means that one can always keep it so. For the foundational scheme is based upon certain principles of action, and once these are understood (and they are not difficult to understand) it is a joy to see what else can be done to express one's very own individuality. A real home-maker knows better than anyone else what an attractive home will mean to her family. She knows that it will help to make her husband more successful in business; her children will entertain their friends at home; and she herself will be relieved of the drudgery of housekeeping because every detail of work will have greater interest than ever before. In other words, living will be easier and happier for everyone in the house.

What does interior decorating mean? It really means creating an atmosphere of charm and harmony in the home. We hear a great deal today about "atmosphere," "creating an atmosphere." What does it mean? To create an atmosphere of charm and harmony it is necessary only to coordinate the furnishings of a room with its use, keeping it in harmony as to color and design. Webster says that co-ordination means "to bring into common action; to regulate and combine in harmonious action." We might say that to "combine in harmonious action" means to observe the fitness of things. One would not, for example, use very delicate fabrics in a room where everything would have extremely hard wear; nor would one have everything in a room of exactly the same color. The color and the furnishings should be

A California living room paneled in Oak Weldwood. Oak is a hardwood which can be stained or merely waxed with beautiful results. Fred L. R. Confer, architect.



COURTESY OF UNITED STATES PLYWOOD CORP., NEW YORK 18, N. Y.



*Richard Averill Smith, Photographer
Ethel A. Reece, Decorator*

How to emphasize a hobby collector's interests. Library or living room could gracefully accept a collection of ship models. Here, the two flanking bookshelves have been advantageously adapted to the purpose — the books being moved to other shelves at the side of the room.

appropriate for the use of the room, and pleasing in design. The furnishings and decorations should be in keeping with the manner of living of the owners. That is what atmosphere means: the atmosphere of charm, good taste, and fitness.

For years we have heard about "fashion," and heretofore it always meant fashion in dress, etc. Today the word "fashion" is also used when referring to the decorations of one's home. To be in fashion we must have our homes as up-to-date as our general appearance, and the simplest of homes may be made as much in fashion as the more elaborate one.

To have one's home up-to-date does not mean

necessarily that all present furnishings must be discarded. To be "in fashion" as to home furnishings means simply decorating in accordance with the dictates of good taste. "Oh," you may say, "does that mean that everything 'in fashion' means in good taste?" Not always, to be sure, but speaking generally, that which is in good taste is always "in fashion."

The small house should be treated in a very individual way, because there must be no suggestion of overcrowding or stuffiness. A feeling of spaciousness is most important, and to achieve that it is necessary to keep in mind color, design or pattern, proportions and balance.

These points must be remembered in furnishing the small house: avoid crowding; do not have too many pictures on the wall; do not have too many objects on the mantle shelf or tables; do not have too much curtain material at the windows; do not have too many chairs and small tables, etc.; and make certain that what you do have is in scale for the room.

The person who is compelled to watch her budget closely has a very decided advantage over her sister who may be able immediately to purchase everything that she thinks she needs for the home. The budget buyer makes a plan and then proceeds to select the necessary things first. She will look over the things she has on hand, separate the good pieces from the others, decide what should be done to make them really suitable in the "new" scheme, and then gradually add the other things listed in her plan. It often happens that there must be a delay in the purchasing, to keep within the budget, and it has been the experience of many a budget buyer that she has discovered, during this delay, that her house was taking on charm and beauty long before the plan was completed. The delay, in fact, helped her to maintain the needed balanced restraint in buying and she achieved a most artistic effect which the addition of the really unnecessary luxuries, so enthusiastically listed in the plan, would have spoiled. Another advantage which the

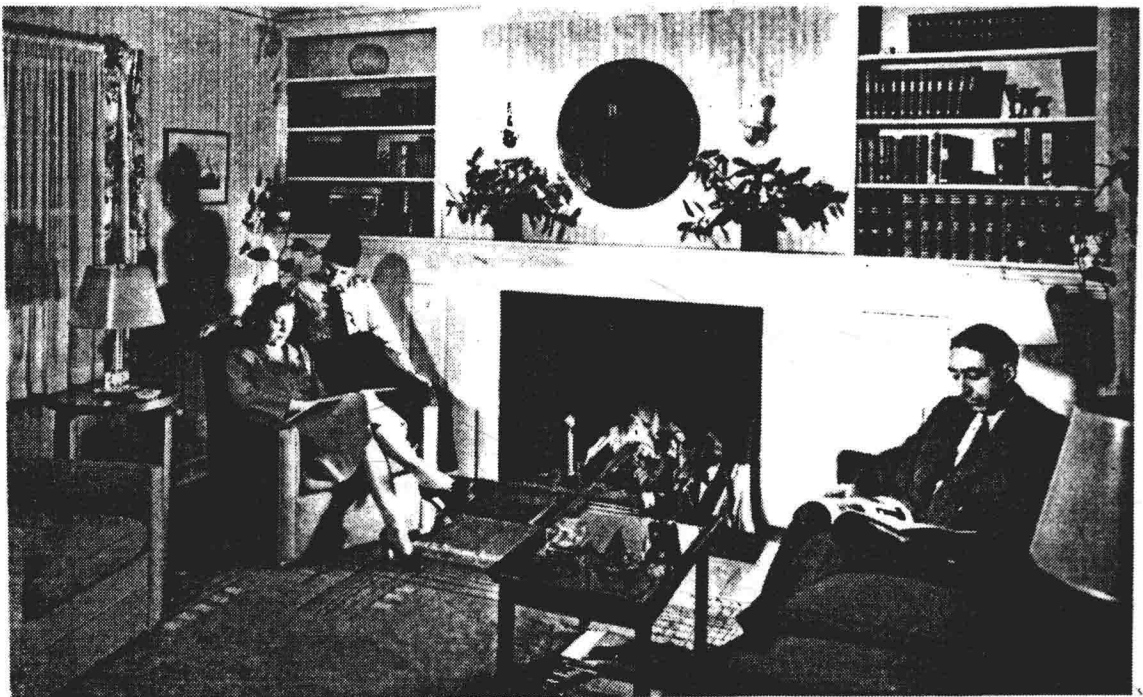
budget buyer has is the increasing joy of discovering for herself the artistic charm of restraint. A house may have the latest fandangle of fashion, be filled with antiques and have all the conveniences of modern ingenuity, and still not be artistic nor have charm. Good taste implies thoughtful restraint.

Why is a plan so necessary? Why is a recipe necessary for cooking? The answer to one answers the other. You may put many different ingredients together and cook them and the result may be eatable, but for it to be tasty and really wholesome certain recipes have been found to be indispensable. In like manner to put all kinds of colors, furniture, textiles and accessories together in a hit-or-miss fashion may or may not result in a harmonious whole. To make certain that the result is harmonious some sort of recipe or plan is needed.

Suppose you decide that you would like your house brought up to date, and you look it over to sum up just what should be done. One of the best ways to start is to write out a list of the things which, you feel, actually need to be done, and another list beside it of those things which might be done on the present budget. Then proceed to take care of the absolutely essential things first (following the plan carefully) and, as you are able to afford them, add the necessary new things.

A pleasing and very comfortable living room arrangement. Notice the adequate lighting provision - every seat can be used for comfortable reading. Incidentally, most fireplaces extend a few inches

into the room - carry that line straight across to produce bookshelves and cupboards.



The following is given merely as a suggestion of what might be done, but as you study it you will readily see wherein you can make your own plan according to your actual needs. You will find, as many others have, that once you start you will be having a lovely room almost before you know it. We shall assume that the style is that of no particular period.

NEW THINGS NEEDED

Wall paper on the wall
New table and mirror
New ceiling fixture
New floor covering, linoleum or carpet

Walls need "doing over"
Room seems cluttered, needs comfortable chairs
Other chairs need new upholstery
Lamp not large enough
More color needed in furniture
Draperies too skimpy; not pretty in color or new in design
New rug needed

WHAT CAN BE DONE ON PRESENT BUDGET

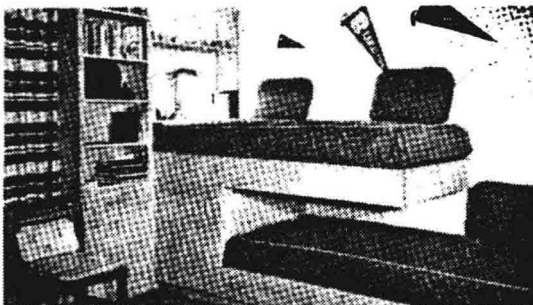
Hall

New paper too expensive? Perhaps paint could be used, gray-green.
Paint old table and mirror frame vermilion and then "antique" them.
Paint floors a dark color.

Living Room

Consult painter about painting over present paper.
Arrange furniture in groups for easy conversation—one group near davenport, another around fireplace, another where it is easy to pull up an extra chair.
Place small tables and reading lamps conveniently near groups.
Get one new chair—a comfortable one!
Have slip-covers made for others.
Present lamp large enough for main table; get new ones, with colorful shades, for small tables.
New carpet wall-to-wall, only large expenditure at this time.

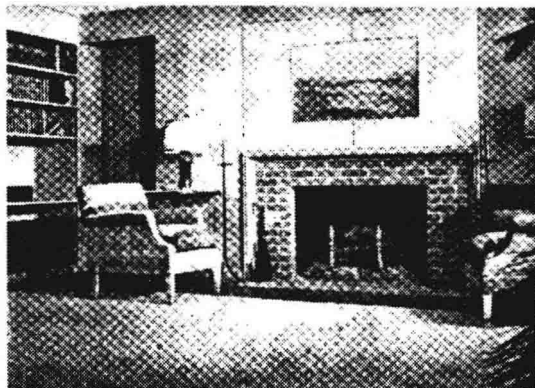
Make a plan in the same way for each room.



COURTESY OF UNITED STATES PLYWOOD CORP., NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

Boys love bunks and "almost secret" cupboards. Here are perfect space-saving specimens of both in Oak Weldwood. Oscar Fisher, architect.

Wood paneled rooms present a luxurious appearance. Here's a room of no particular period but spacious, dramatic and comfortable.



COURTESY OF UNITED STATES PLYWOOD CORP., NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

Walnut Weldwood is chosen for his own Connecticut home by Seth Talcott, architect.



COURTESY OF UNITED STATES PLYWOOD CORP., NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

Super self-service features this convenient kitchen-and-dining combination separated only by a counter. Done in Weldflex-striated Weldwood.

COURTESY OF UNITED STATES PLYWOOD CORP., NEW YORK 18, N. Y.





Study the Trends and the Markets

FOR the sake of quicker adaptation of the idea, let's think in terms of the cook book which we all know so well, and chart out in the simplest terms we can think of the necessary steps to take, just as they would naturally come: one, two, and three, etc. Does it sound terribly elementary? What if it does! The basic principle of everything we do is really elementary. A cook-book recipe says: "Basic ingredients—additional ingredients" and then gives the method of putting them together. The method wouldn't mean much to us if we stopped there, as it might say: "Sift flour and baking powder," and if we did not know how much of both to use we would be at a loss to begin.

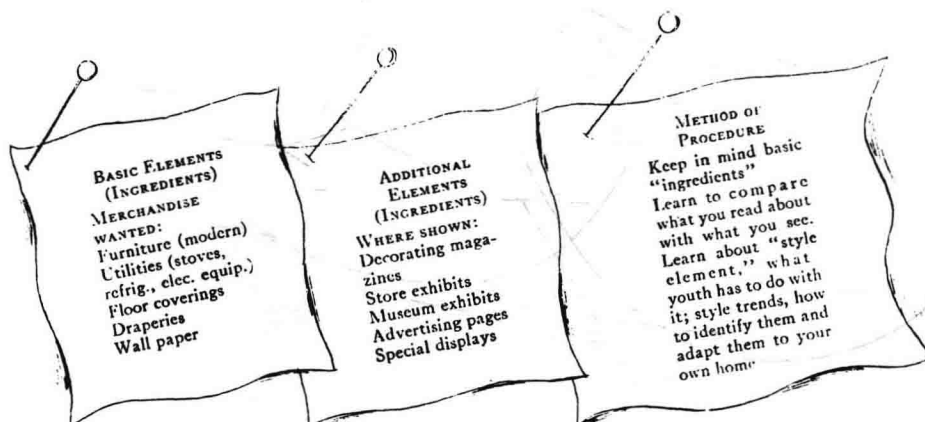
We may have made out a plan of the things we think we need, but we must know what kinds of things to buy, and how to determine what they should be. We must be informed of what the "trends" are, how they are being interpreted, and who is sponsoring them.

Suppose we follow this "recipe" or chart, which will keep us from straying away from the essential things:

First Steps toward Fulfilling the Plan

Before an interior decorator can do anything about a particular decorating problem she must have had her mind so trained to think in the terms of decoration that she is able to interpret correctly the need of the home, the type of merchandise manufactured and the available sources through which to purchase it. Manufacturers have done excellent work in anticipating these requirements sufficiently in advance of the demand, and have made quantities of beautifully designed furnishings. Stores have purchased and most attractively displayed this merchandise, offering it to the consumer at as low a price as possible. And lastly, magazines interested in keeping their readers informed of the latest things are constantly doing their part in giving wide publicity to these furnishings, explaining and illustrating how very attractively they can be used in the American home.

But with all this supply at hand it is necessary that the woman interested in redecorating her home know how to interpret these ideas in the terms of her own problem. She must learn how to visualize her need and then see what to do about it. She is able to do this



with hats, for example. She has been buying hats every season for years and years, and she recognizes value and smartness in the newest modes. She is informed on the subject and can visualize her need. She must learn to do the very same thing with home furnishings. It is to help her to do this that this little book is presented—to enable her to see how the home decorator starts. Then when she studies the more technical, the more explanatory books and current articles on interior decorating she will be more receptive to their message; she will understand them and be able to visualize quickly how they will help her work out her decorating problem, whatever it may be. She will be more in the spirit of the thing to be done and will recognize adaptable ideas everywhere.

There are modes and fashions in interior decorating just as there are in clothes and hats. One sees constantly new ways of designing a hat, even though it must be remembered that a hat is to be worn on a head—a seemingly limited scope for new designs. And there are countless new ways of designing a room, even though it must be remembered that a room is to be lived in.

New generations are always introducing new ideas—new interpretations of the same old thing, be it a hat or interior decorations. So we must all be constantly alert to the signs of the times and ready to separate the good from the bad, to use that which can be advantageously applied to our present problem and store away the rest for future use.

Now, to be intelligently informed of what these new generations are planning to do we must understand, at least in a measure, the “youth point of view.” By “youth” we do not mean the number of years of age, but youth as it applies to the freshness of inspiration, the readiness to try new ways of doing things, the daring to be different, the spontaneity and courage of honest convictions, and vital interests of the day as well. It can be readily seen that the inspiration for many new styles has sprung from the special demand actually sponsored by the young people of the day. These young people do much toward molding the trends; their constant demand for “new” things must be satisfied. Youth is always conscious of style—in fact, creates its own style. To understand and keep up with this “style consciousness” of youth one must keep in close touch with the interests of youth. What are the colors, the books, the magazines, the exhibits, the stores, the fashions, about which these young people are so keen? You may study these trends today and feel that you really understand them; but remember that you must do this year after year in the same way. New youth is always coming forward and sponsoring ever new trends and styles. A successful decorator must always be aware of these changes and what they mean. “Awareness” is a most desirable quality of thought to cultivate in this connection.



Richard Averill Smith, Photographer

From a problem wall that just seemed to be blah and lacking in interest, this picturesque result was achieved by the mere addition of decorative trivia. To set off the lovely rose and blue paper and frame the window, ordinary blinds were attached and painted a soft gray blue. A piece of the wallpaper was posted on the window shade up to its normal raised position. Plain white curtains provide just the right amount of relief from the continuous flower pattern.

A wide, built-in desk dominates this comfortable, dual-duty room, for with its sleeping bunk, it may be used for that unexpected guest. Another tier of bookshelves could go to the right of the window.

Richard Averill Smith, Photographer

Albert Grueter, Architect



Exhibits are planned and held in most of the large cities throughout the country and written about in the current magazines. Strange as it may seem, these often express an undercurrent of interests which are actually influencing modes and fashions. These exhibits may be of paintings, of industrial designs, of photography, of books, or of some special manufactured articles. Special exhibits are very often sponsored by a local department store, which makes it possible for almost every woman easily to follow the mode and trend of the times. These exhibits in the stores may perhaps be of modern styles in furnishings, actually showing room arrangements; they may be special features in the drapery departments; they may be in the utility sections where stoves and refrigerators are shown; or they may be exhibits of special interest on floor coverings, etc.

At these exhibits you will see new and different trends of interest. Watching them closely you can soon learn to determine for yourself what the trend really is. You will notice, too, that advertising and magazine articles are bringing out similar ideas. Many of the magazines actually build rooms and furnish them, (listing the names of manufacturers who make the

furnishings) for no other reason than to make their illustrations and articles more practical to the reader, to show her what is available, how to use it, and to create in her confidence that she can do the very same thing!

An exhibit of modern furniture.—Suppose, for example, the exhibit in the store is one showing modern furniture. Ask the salesman to explain to you why good furniture has charm. He may help you to see that the style which is becoming known as truly "modern" is really very simple and beautiful. It is essentially useful in construction and designed for the greatest ease of upkeep. In its simplified expression, along the classic lines, it is very adaptable for use in the modern American home. Make a mental note of what the woods used in this furniture look like—take special note of the "textured" quality in the draperies and carpets shown with it; what the accessories are, etc. This is the way to study the "trends" and to be able to judge their values correctly.

Utility displays (the kitchen).—Let's go to the utility department in the store and see that exhibit. There too we will find many examples of good modern designs. The simple, useful lines of construction of the refrig-

In this bedroom, the windows have been given special treatment. A full length mirror has been placed between the two windows. The valance runs across entire length. The twin beds placed together are also interesting.



ators, stoves, washing machines, and the electric utilities are examples of practical and artistic designing. They are charming because of their very simplicity. Note how they are shown in their "natural settings," just as they would look when used in a kitchen. The modern kitchen, by the way, is a model of beauty because the fundamental charm of the main objects in the room lends itself so naturally to the softer touches of color in the floors, curtains, furniture, pots and pans, etc. Note the trend shown in these exhibits for different wall treatments for kitchens, new designs and colors and materials, new linoleums, lighting, ventilation, etc. The decorator is interested in all of these details, and always will be, not because of the details themselves, but because of the attractive whole, the *ensemble*, the complete scheme of the room. In the kitchen there is little demand for "antiques"; the old-fashioned inheritances are easily dropped for the latest and newest inventions designed for comfort and efficiency.

Floor covering exhibits.—Now, suppose we go to the exhibitions of floor coverings. Perhaps there is a special "week" of displays. In this department you will notice that they are illustrating the trends popular in different weaves, designs, and colorings in carpets and rugs; the practical uses of linoleums and cork flooring; the methods of taking care of hardwood or rubber-tile floors, etc. Note the things being explained about each one of these different floor coverings. Why, for example, linoleum is so serviceable and artistic; what designs are most popular, and why, and where it is being used; what the most popular rug designs are, whether Oriental, Chinese, or strictly period; and whether it is better to have carpet on the floor from wall to wall or to have room-sized rugs in certain rooms. You will notice that there are very definite style trends influencing every one of these products.

Exhibits in the drapery departments.—What is being shown in the drapery departments? How are the curtains being made? What materials are being used?

Are glass curtains popular? What rooms should have venetian blinds? Is there a certain "period type" of curtain being shown to harmonize with a certain period of furniture which is popular at the time? (For example, you will probably see very new fabrics designed for use with modern furniture.) Ask the salesmen about these things. They are there to answer your questions.

CHECK THINGS SEEN IN STORES WITH THOSE SHOWN IN MAGAZINES

After leaving the store exhibits, read the articles and carefully study the pictures and illustrations in the decorating magazines. Note also the illustrations in the advertising pages of these magazines. You will find that they all emphasize the very same trends which you saw in the different exhibits.

STUDY YOUR OWN HOME AGAIN

Now go back and study your own home again. What is necessary to bring it up to date? Look over your plan and compare notes with what you have seen and what you have available. Then decide what can be done at the least expense to make the *ensemble* more attractive. You may find it possible to achieve this effect and have an entirely "new" room by very few changes and at little expense; by changing only the wall treatment, perhaps, and making slip-covers for the furniture. You may find that by having the furniture placed more attractively in the room it will do much toward making the room more pleasant. In fact, you will find that your study of "style trends" will have awakened your interest in many things about the house which before were quite unnoticed. You are more aware of values. These are the things which have a definite bearing on the appreciation of the modern point of view and the necessary mental training to decorate a home successfully.

With these principles in mind, we can now proceed to a room-by-room analysis.

The kitchen, with its charming breakfast nook, has been carefully laid-out to facilitate housekeeping. Convenient placement of stove and refrigerator, in relation to sink and workshelves, saves endless footsteps, while ample cupboards, above and below, and an extra protruding handy counter makes mealtime something less of a drudgery.

