

NOTES ON INTERIOR DECORATING

By DOROTHY TRUE BELL

Interior Decoration, as it begins where Architecture leaves off, must necessarily follow closely upon whatever has been interpreted in wood and stone. The homes of our ancestors were simple and spacious, the furnishings fulfilling their uses and expressing the individuality of the owners. We would do well to follow the example of such tradition at once so rational and beautiful. Homes in this country, particularly in the West, have not years of tradition behind them. Since we lack a heritage of old mahogany and silver, we must create a background as best we can.

There is a great aesthetic pleasure in acquiring treasures that indicate a refined and discriminating taste. It takes, however, experience and definite knowledge, which the average person has neither the time nor the patience to acquire. The necessity of employing the services of a trained professional decorator is apparent, if harmonious, pleasing and artistically successful results are to be obtained. An experienced decorator, if possessing originality and imagination, can create an interior which is a faithful and true reflection of the personality of the owner. It can be made to express his tastes, his preferences and even his amiable weaknesses.

In decorating a house, one begins with the treatment of the walls and ceilings. The most successful wall treatment in medium sized houses, bearing in mind that walls are a structural part of the house, is to keep them flat and conventional; in other words, to keep them standing through the solidity and repose of their coverings. My invariable suggestion is to treat the rooms of the main floor in approximately the same manner, whether through the medium of canvas, paper or paint, so that in passing from one room to another, there is no jarring of the eye by sudden changes. In the event of rooms being used together such treatment tends to spaciousness and for those who cannot change their decorations often, there is not the tendency to grow weary of such a background.

The strength and quality of the lighting play a large part in the choice of colors. In selecting a plain or figured wall covering, the furniture and the requirements of the room should be first considered. If the walls are beautiful in themselves and if the lighting fixtures are intelligently placed, it will be found a simple matter to compose the furniture against such a background.

Someone has spoken of color as being the magic wand of the decorator. Nothing more true could be said, for with color one can accomplish much. A room may be made smaller or larger, higher or lower, warmer or cooler by the use of color. A gloomy interior may be brightened beyond recognition, an aid to our happiness, soothing or stimulating us as the case may be.

The making of decorative textiles is an ancient art, as Egyptian tombs will testify. Different nationalities have interpreted textiles according to their lights, so that we have national characteristics of weaving, of design and of color in each country of the world. Weaving was everywhere developed in practically the same way and the primitive looms are still in use in Northern Africa, Central Asia and elsewhere.

The art of ornamentation of fabrics and the printing in color of designs and patterns originated in the Far East. The Chinese used wood blocks centuries before they were used in Europe. Although there are now many mechanical processes of printing, it is the wood block which to this day produces the most artistic form of fabric decoration.

The mission of the professional decorator is to scientifically apply the underlying and fundamental principles of color, harmony and design and to achieve an ensemble of balance and beauty, preserving the owner's comfort and reflecting his personal tastes at the same time.