



# The Home Department

Conducted by Helen Watts McKee

## The Comfort of the Stars

When I am overmatched by petty cares,  
And things of earth loom large, and look to be

Of moment, how it soothes and comforts me  
To step into the night and feel the airs  
Of heaven fan my cheek; and, best of all,

Gaze up into those all-uncharted seas  
Where swim the stately planets;  
such as these  
Make mortal frets seem slight and temporal.

I muse on what of Life may stir among  
Those spaces knowing naught of  
metes nor bars;  
Undreamed-of dramas played in out-  
most stars,

And lyrics by archangels grandly sung.  
I grow familiar with the solar runes,  
And comprehend of worlds the mystic birth—

Ringed Saturn, Mars, whose fashion  
apes the earth,  
And Jupiter, the giant, with his moons.

Then, dizzy with the unspeakable  
sights above,  
Rebuked by Vast on Vast, my puny heart

Is greated for its transitory part,  
My trouble merged in wonder and in love.

—Richard Burton, in Congregationalist.

## Errata

In the article on paperhanging, in our issue of March 24, a mistake in the method for measurement crept in; it was a mistake of the finger-tips and the typewriter, overlooked by the writer. The matter is given correctly in our article on the same subject, today.

## Home Chats

We are so busy "doing things" this week, that we can not give much time to talk. So many have asked for detailed instruction for papering and painting that I am giving it, this week, to the exclusion of other matter. Of course, the professional, or the skillful amateur, will have to skip it, but I hope those interested in it will save the paper, or clipping, as it can not be given again. The instructions have all been edited and O. K'd by a first-class decorator, so I feel perfectly safe in submitting them. I am glad to know that our friends are interested in the Home work, even to pointing out errors, and suggesting improvements.

## House Renovating

It is not the cost of the material which makes house renovating expensive, but the addition to this of the wages of the paperhanger, painter and glazier (and I might add to this, the waste of the same parties). If members of the family can do it, it is saving in more ways than one, and it can be done as, and at the time, it is wanted. As to the labor, any woman who has the strength to scrub and scour will find herself fully able to handle the paint brush, and, as to the paperhanging, after once you "know how," it is no harder than many things a woman is obliged to do, week after week, in looking after her household, and nothing gives a home such a fresh, clean look as fresh paint and paper. The painting should be done before the papering, as an amateur is apt to smear the walls or spatter the paint.

For the paint, procure a color card of ready-mixed paints, and be sure to get a good brand of paint. These paints come in quart, half-gallon and gallon cans, and the quantity needed can be learned from your dealer. Buy a few sheets of medium fine sand paper, a small quantity of putty, a large brush for the doors and casings, and a small one for the window sash.

All cracks, crevices and nail holes in the woodwork must be smoothly filled with the putty, after which the woodwork must be smoothed down with a strip of sandpaper tacked around a block of wood, rubbing it over all rough places or blistered paint. A poor paint brush is a dear investment, and no one can do a good job of work with one. It pays to get a good one. On opening your can of paint, stir the contents well with a brush in it—not too deeply—and, on withdrawing it, scrape off a portion on the edge of the can so the brush will not be too full and dripping. Apply to the woodwork with smooth, even strokes, going the way of the grain of the wood, finishing a panel or other part before going to another, making a few "laps" of the brush as possible, and smoothing these so they will not show. Do not "daub"—having the paint thick in some places and thin in others, but distribute evenly, remembering that the paint should not be worked after it has begun to "set"; otherwise, it will show streaks or brush marks. There is a knack in holding a paint brush that can only be acquired by practice, and must be, before one can work easily and well; but merely "telling one how" will not help you. The motion is principally from the wrist.

Go over all the woodwork in this manner, leaving the sash for the last, the cross bars of which and the woodwork next the glass must be done with the small brush, and care must be taken not to streak or splash the glass; any paint which happens to get on the glass must be carefully removed before it hardens. If the work is done on a dry, sunny day, and you have a reliable brand of paint, it should dry rapidly, and by the second day at farthest should be ready for a second coat, which it will pay you to lay on, as the second coat has a nice gloss, which will be greatly enhanced if a small quantity of varnish be added to the paint. A third coat, followed by one or two coats of varnish, is greatly to be desired. Varnish may be applied as soon as the paint is dry. Graining is not hard work, or difficult to learn, but requires some taste, a knowledge of the appearance of different woods and some special tools. Skill and experience are necessary before one can do really excellent graining. But a woman never knows what she can do until she tries.

## Getting Your Paper

The color of your paper should harmonize with that of your paint, and both should agree with the color tone of the furnishings of the room. Choose a pattern that will not "kill" any picture you may wish to hang on your wall, or quarrel with your draperies. Consideration must be given to the purpose for which the room is to be used, and also to its situation as regards light and sunshine. A shaded or north-room should not have cold colors, and a sunny or southern room should not have warm colors. The designs for a room with a low ceiling

should be distinctively perpendicular, to add to its apparent height, while for a room with a high ceiling, the figures should be less distinctively perpendicular, in order that the apparent size may be increased. Paper for walls and ceilings come in "double" rolls, while bordering comes with one or more strip to the width and sells by the foot or yard. A single roll (half a double one) contains thirty-five square feet of paper. To find the number of rolls necessary for papering a room, find the dimensions of the room in square feet. This is done by multiplying the sum of the lengths of both sides and ends by the height, thus: for a room 16x12 with a height of nine feet, the sum would be fifty-six, and, multiplied by the height, nine, would give the number of square feet, and this divided by thirty-five, the number of square feet of paper in a single roll, would give the number of single rolls necessary. Allowance might be made for the openings—windows and doors, but experience has taught me that it is better to have a little paper left than to "get left" yourself, by not being able to match what you have in case you had miscalculated. The surplus may always be returned if there is a full roll, and in any case, it is better to have a little left over for possible repairs. Often, turnings and twistings in the shape of a room are overlooked, and more paper is needed than was apparent at first thought. The waste in matching the design is often considerable, and must be allowed for. It is best to have enough.

## Preparing the Walls

All old paper must be stripped from the walls, the cracks and breaks in the plastering must be mended with a stiff paste of plaster of Paris and water, applying the same with a small trowel or ordinary knife blade. Large breaks or holes should be mended with a stiff paste made of cement one part, clear sand two parts, and water to mix, applying at once and the wall smoothed down with a trowel, as the cement hardens or "sets" immediately and dries rapidly. If the walls or ceilings have been whitewashed or cal-somined, this must be either washed off with hot water and vinegar (equal parts), changing the water often, or it may be scraped off with a trowel or old knife blade. To insure the paper sticking well, the surface must be gone over with a "sizing" prepared as follows: For a room fourteen feet square, take one pound of ordinary glue, soak overnight in water enough to cover; in morning, set the vessel containing the glue in another vessel containing boiling water and boil until the glue is melted; then add to the glue a quart of good flour paste, stirring, and stir this mixture into enough water so it will spread readily with a brush, using a whitewash or a cal-somining brush. Be sure to wet every corner and turning. Let dry, and it is ready for the papering.

## Tools for Papering

The professional paper-hanger, or "interior decorator" as he likes to be called, has quite a lot of tools, and they are all very handy to have, but the home-keeper will do with less. You will need a step-ladder, a home-made one is better than none, and you would best have two. This for the walls; for the ceiling, you must have a platform. A strong, broad board, or two narrow ones hinged together, a little wider than the width of the wall paper, and long enough to hold a

length of the paper cut ready for the wall, and this should be supported by trestles a little lower than a table, and a little higher than a chair; this is the "pasting board," and should be cared for. A whitewash brush (if you can not have a regular paperhanger's brush), or, better, a cal-somining brush for spreading the paste; a clean, new whisk broom for smoothing the paper on the wall; a large pair of shears, a strip of thin, light board with a straight edge, for marking your paper by when fitting around openings; a little roller knife, for cutting the paper at the baseboard and around openings; and a little wheel (a sharp-edged bed-caster will answer) for smoothing down seams or laps. A fine thing for "cutting" your strips of paper from the roll, and which will insure them being cut straight, is a carpenter's steel square. This can be laid on the paper, and the paper torn quickly and smoothly along its edge. The hands must be kept clean, by frequent washings and dryings.

## Paste for Paper Hanging

For paste, mix three and one-half pounds of good flour, one-fourth pound of powdered alum, and a little tepid water until the mixture is perfectly smooth and free from lumps. The alum improves the paste, it is claimed, and adds to its strength, making it work easier. Into this mixture, pour boiling (not merely hot) water, stirring rapidly and thoroughly, until it "clears," or loses its milky color, just as you would for laundry starch. It should be pretty thick, and may be thinned as needed, and when thinned, should be strained, either through a fine sieve or through a coarse-meshed muslin bag. Lumpy paste is not to be borne with. The paste should be quite cool when worked with, as warm paste soaks into the paper and makes it tear easily. Some family flours do not make good paste, losing its adhesive qualities, and "separating" soon after being made. If one can not weigh the flour, a good rule to follow is to make your paste as you would for your laundry work, in quantity you think sufficient; it requires but little work to make more, if you have not enough. It should be used quite like a jelly, in thickness.

## Pasting and Hanging the Paper

Have your pasting board in position on the trestles; measure the height of your wall, reaching from the top of the baseboard to within a distance of the ceiling a little less than the width of your border, if bordering is to be used. Many of the new papers do not use bordering, but let the wallpaper lap up on the ceiling a few inches, cutting the ceiling paper off neatly in the angle. In this case, the ceiling paper is put on last; where bordering is used, the ceiling paper is generally put on first, lapping down on the sides, and covered by the border. If no bordering is used, the strip must be cut longer. Having obtained the desired length, measure and cut your paper from the roll, matching the design or figure of the right side of the strip to that on the left side. This must be carefully done. Lay your first strip on the board, face upward, and matching as you go, measure as many strips as the bolt will make; two or three, or even more bolts may be cut up at once; the ends of the bolts are to be laid aside to use for "short lengths" about the openings; some paperhangers cut all the long lengths needed for the whole room before commencing to paper.

Pile these lengths of paper on the pasting board, face down, and put the left edge of the paper next to the side you work on, and about two inches

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