

'House Decoration,' Chicago Record, September 16, 1899.

"There is one thing I have had in mind ever since I arrived here, and that is the necessity of some attempt at decoration in this house," said the American missionary, speaking to Mrs. Kakyak. "This habitation of yours is little better than four walls."

"What changes would you suggest?" asked Mrs. Kakyak.

"I would suggest that you add many of the beautifying effects such as we have in America. In the first place I think you ought to build two or three bay windows on the outside and put on as many jig-saw scallops as you can find room for. That is what we usually do in America. As for the interior of your house, I am pained to observe that you have very few of the articles which are regarded as essential in my own country."

"We have everything that we really need," said Mrs. Kakyak. "Why should we clutter up the interior with a lot of decorative material? We are never in the house when it is possible to remain out of doors."

"We need many articles that do not cater directly to our physical wants or contribute to our comfort," said Mr. Conner. "Take a marble-top table with gilded legs, for instance. We cannot eat a marble-top table. We cannot recline upon it. We cannot put any heavy articles on top of it for fear of bending the legs. Yet a marble-top table is an essential in the average American household. Why? because it is a direct appeal to the aesthetic sense. The same may be said of the crayon portrait, such as you will find in nine-tenths of all the front rooms in America. A savage or a half-civilized person, such as you' would look at a crayon portrait and ask, 'Of what use is it?' The drawing, for instance, may not resemble the person who was supposed to be the subject, but the true aesthete does not care for any such mean detail as accuracy. If the frame is ornate and the whole effect of white and gilt and black drawing produces a soothing effect on the nervous system, then the crayon portrait has accomplished its full purpose. It has helped to make some one happier. Therefore I urge you to hang some crayon portraits at the earliest opportunity. You Tagalos are dreadfully behind the age in the matter of house decoration. I don't remember to have seen a crayon portrait since I landed on this island of Luzon."

"No, we haven't got that far along," said Mrs. Kakyak, • dolefully. "I suppose you have a great many things in your country that we have never heard of."

"Undoubtedly," said Conner. "Now, if you will step into the front room with me I will give you some idea of the changes that ought to be made in order that you may approximate the American standard of artistic taste."

She followed him into the second apartment of the bamboo house, which was cool and empty, save for a grass hammock swung diagonally from corner to corner.

"In the first place, you ought to have a Brussels carpet on the floor," said Conner, pausing in the center of the room and surveying its bareness with a frown of displeasure. "A few, a very few, people in America now prefer hard, polished floors, half-covered with rugs. But the vast majority hold that a parlor should be carpeted with Brussels, bearing a design of green vine-leaves and orange flowers. Then you ought to have some plush furniture."

Blue is a good color--a sofa and several chairs. In the center of the room here, under a brass chandelier, would be the marble-top table with the curved legs of which I have already spoken. As it is a fragile piece of furniture it would be better to put nothing on top of it except a photograph album and a vase filled with artificial flowers. Over at that side of the room (indicating) there should be a piano. If not a piano, than a cottage organ, and if not a cottage organ, a what-not bearing mineral specimens, sea-shells, birds' eggs, with the original contents blown out, and any other articles such as delight the eye. I forget to tell you that the plush furniture should be liberally decorated with tidies."

"What are those?" asked Mrs. Kakyak.

"A tidy is something like a towel, except that it is smaller, has perforations in it, and you are not supposed to dry yourself with it. Tidies should be pinned on plush chairs or balanced on top of them."

"I should think they would get twisted around or else be pulling off all the time."

"They are something of a nuisance, but we must be prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of Art. Did I speak to you about the wall paper?"

"Not yet."

"Well, you should have wall paper on the walls, and in addition to the crayon portraits I have suggested you ought to hang a few oil paintings. They can be bought at any furniture store in America. By way of variety, you might put a few Posters on the wall. I brought several posters with me, just to give you some idea of our standard of taste in the graphic arts,"

So saying, he went to the adjoining room and brought out a roll of heavy prints, from which he peeled a glaring representation of a long female thrown into an attitude of convulsion.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Kakyak.

"It is a high art woman," replied the missionary. "You will begin to like this after you have mastered the crayon portrait and the low-priced oil painting."

"It doesn't resemble a woman or anything else that I can see," remarked Mrs. Kakyak.

"I have only to repeat that it will require time to educate you up to an appreciation of this sort of thing."

There was brief pause.

"If we were to go ahead and put all this decorative material into the front room I don't suppose we would use the apartment any oftener than we do now," said Mrs. Kakyak.

"Certainly not," said Conner. "In the ordinary American home the front room is a darkened sanctuary which no one must enter unless he has arrayed himself in his Sunday

clothes. It is a holy of holies reserved for the sacred rites of funeral, marriage or the church sociable."

"What a strange people you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Kakyak. "I am sure that we shall never be able to copy all of your peculiarities."

"At least you can try," said the missionary. "I want you to promise me that at the very first opportunity you will have one of Mr. Kakyak's tintypes enlarged into a crayon portrait."

