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## That Finishing Touch for Flaws or Floors

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# That Finishing Touch for Flaws or Floors

By RUTH KNUTSEN



**T**HAT fever for refinishing, either house or furniture, attacks the average housewife annually with the coming of the first spring breeze. Even the wisest of the wise can offer no theory in explanation of the fact, but fact it is, so let's cope with it as such and hope that amateur artists may find answers to perplexing problems which arise in wielding the paint brush.

That must be given in choosing the finish. Much depends upon the room; is the finish you have chosen practical for a kitchen, dining room, living room or any other room in the home which you may be contemplating doing over? Is it durable? Is it easily kept clean? How much labor is involved in the process of application? These are questions to ask yourself.

The first problem confronting the "refinisher" is the removal of old paint and varnish from the floors. Sometimes this is done by scraping with a knife blade, a piece of glass, steel, or sandpaper. If the varnish is old and dry this method proves quite satisfactory and the process of removal is quite rapid. However care must be taken not to mar the wood or veneered or delicate surfaces, and in cracks and crevices. There is a commercial paint remover on the market which is very good for this purpose, also, but an equally good paint and varnish remover can be made at home with very little expense. Use a pound of soda to five or six quarts of boiling water, and if a bleaching agent is desired add one pound of quick lime. Lye may also be used, a preparation of one teaspoon of lye to two quarts of water being very effective. These preparations are added to the floor freely and allowed to stand until the varnish is softened enough to take up with cloths. Always have a bowl of water at hand in which to wring out cloths containing the removed varnish. Sometimes several applications of the varnish remover is necessary. In cracks and around the corners it may be necessary to remove the excess paint or varnish with a blunt instrument such as a putty knife. Care must be taken that every particle of the original finish is removed or the final result will not be satisfactory. The floor should be washed and dried thoroughly before the next step.

It may be necessary to use a filler to close up cracks in the floor. Very good commercial preparations for this purpose are also on the market but often it is just as satisfactory to make it at home. It can be made of one pint of linseed oil, one and a half quarts of turpentine, and one pint of Whiting of cornstarch. Whiting can be bought at any drug store and is exceedingly useful in cleaning many metals as well as for the filler. The above recipe makes a white filler. To

darken, for oak, add one teaspoon of raw umber; for walnut, add one teaspoon Venetian red, one-half teaspoon of yellow ochre; for mahogany add one-fourth teaspoon yellow ochre, one-half teaspoon Bismark brown, and a teaspoon of burnt seinna. Always test color before adding it to the filler.

The kitchen floor has the hardest wear of any in the house, but very often the kitchen has the poorest floors in the house. This is particularly true in old houses. If the floors are in poor condition in the kitchen, linoleum covering is probably the most satisfactory covering. A good quality inlaid linoleum, varnished, has many points in its favor, as a kitchen floor covering. It is durable, easily cleaned, is easy to walk on and to stand on and it does not absorb grease. An expert should be employed to lay linoleum however, as a poorly laid linoleum is apt to buckle and crack. When cleaning linoleum use as little water as possible and never leave puddles or wet spots, because it quickly becomes water soaked and this causes it to bulge. Clean with a mild soap and water, using a soft cloth to prevent scratching the surface.

Smooth, hard gray paint, or water-proof varnish, waxed, may be used on the floor, but these need frequent renewal. A wooden floor even if not in very good condition can be oiled, and this makes a good surface. The floor should be perfectly clean and dry, and all cracks filled before starting. Then add an oil such



Since the kitchen floor has the hardest wear of any floor in the house, linoleum is one of the most satisfactory of coverings.

as paraffin, lemon, or boiled linseed oil, warmed over hot water. The oil should be applied with a white wash brush, rubbing in circles with the grain until it is worked in well. After several hours wipe off surplus oil rubbing with the grain to polish. The number of applications is dependent entirely upon the floor.

The floor should not be used for at least twenty-four hours after oiling. A light paraffin oil should be used on hardwood floors, applying a thin coat and wiping off any surplus oil before dust can settle on it. This oil treatment insures against stains and dust. A floor treated in this way is easily wiped off but should never be scrubbed with strong alkalis. The paraffin and lemon oils are good for new, light and unsoiled floors. The boiled linseed gives a darker finish, and becomes more dark with each additional application. Oiled floors are considered more satisfactory in the kitchen than varnished, shellacked or painted ones. These are only surface finishes and wear off where main paths of travel are, while the rest is still in good condition. A painted floor should be cleaned with clear water and a neutral soap.

Waxed floors are attractive, give a soft pleasing luster and are easily renewed altho they need this frequently. Before waxing remove all dust, then apply a thin coating of a good prepared wax and rub in circles. An excellent paste wax can be made at home in the following manner. Melt one-fourth pound of beeswax over water. When melted remove from fire and slowly stir in one pint of turpentine, stirring until the mixture is a thick batter. Store in a jar. A waxed floor may be dusted with a soft cloth on a broom, or by using a long handled soft hair brush.

Sometimes a different color is desired on a floor. In this case a prepared stain may be put on just before the wax or varnish, giving the desired color. A commercial stain can be lightened in color by adding turpentine. A stain can be prepared at home by adding one-fourth pound potassium permanganate crystals to four quarts of water.

If using shellac or varnish, be sure to get good quality materials. Have them thin enough—not sticky—and apply with a clean, soft brush in straight lines, using as long strokes as possible. Varnish, when scratched, cannot be easily patched, the whole surface must be done over, and it is unattractive unless done well.

The floor finishes in a house should be as nearly uniform as possible. There are many advantages in this, it is not only more attractive but it simplifies the cleaning problem. Not nearly so much different cleaning equipment will be needed. It also lessens work, and makes for quicker work in taking care of floors.

We sometimes wonder at the self satisfied expression on the face of an amateur decorator as he views the finished product, his own handiwork. But when we stop to consider, it is not nearly so surprising.

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# Refilling the Household Linen Chest

By OPAL MILLIGAN

WITH the new year, still young, comes the annual inventory of the household linens. By the inventory method a housewife knows exactly what she has on hand, the condition they are in, when they were purchased and the amount that is needed. It is always a good plan to mark the date purchased on each new piece of linen. This will help the housewife in telling the age of her linens, and it is also a valuable aid in telling what linens to use for the family and what to use for the guests.

The first few months of the year, the housewife has a remarkable opportunity to replenish her depleted chest. Most stores are also taking an inventory and at the same time are having their big "white" sales. The well informed woman

will take advantage of these sales, and restore her supply, at a reasonable cost.

If the housewife will buy her sheeting and pillow tubing by the yard and hem them herself she can save a nice sum of money. The same is true with hand toweling and tea towels.

Fine table linens, the cherished luxury of every home, will always cost, but one can save a few dollars, even on these items if they are purchased at the time of these sales.

It is well to have a "linen budget" so when restocking time comes the housewife will know how much money she can spend.

The housewife's inventory sheet might be arranged in the following manner:

Article	No on Hand	Condition	No. Needed
Table Cloths	5	Good	None
Table Napkins	7 doz.	Good	None
Lunch Cloths	2	Good	None
Lunch Napkins	2 doz.	Good	None
Hand Towels	1 1-2 doz.	Fair	2 doz.
Bath Towels	1 doz.	Fair	1 doz.
Wash Cloths	2 doz.	Fair	1-2 doz.
Tea Towels	1 doz.	Fair	1 doz.
Sheets	1 doz.	Good	1-2 doz.
Pillow Cases	1 doz.	Good	1-2 doz.
Mattress Pads	4	Fair	2
Bed Spreads (heavy)	4		
Bed Spreads (summer)	4	Good	None
		Good	2

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prising, for who is there who will not admit the joy of seeing a transformation such as takes place in a case of this kind? A transformation brought about with one's own hands should surely be excuse enough for a considerable amount of pride.

Styles have changed in floor finishes as well as in other things. Think back to our grandmother's day, when unfinished floors, scrubbed until they fairly shone, were in vogue. But think also of our grandmothers wearing themselves out to keep those floors in that spotless condition. Compare that state of affairs with conditions today. Think of our floors, finished beautifully, with a polish which would have made our grandmothers open their eyes in amazement. Then compare the difference in the labor spent on these two floors and draw your own conclusions. Who says this world is not making rapid progress?

Frances Gates, '20, and her husband, Victor Williams, are living at Postville, Iowa. Since October first they have been enjoying their little son, Gates.

Rhea B. Wahle is working for a master's degree in physical education at the University of Wisconsin this year. She graduated in 1920 and taught home economics and physical education near Dav- enport for two years.



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