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The Selection of China for the Home

By GAYLE PUGH

MANY years ago there was found in China the wonderful clay, which, when baked in the sun or kiln, formed utensils from which the people might eat, or at least in which to store food. In America, at a later date, we find evidences of the Pueblo Indians having devised the same art. Gradually there was a scientific form of making these dishes. Then motives and designs were introduced, until after prolonged experimentation, the actual use of China came into existence, a step far superior to the earthenware first used. The skill was transferred to Europe after many years, and the Haviland Company at Limoges, France, was the first European factory of this kind. During the years to follow, the various countries adopted the art and interpreted it in its individual manner, until today we can pick up a piece of china and tell whether it is German, Austrian or English.

Some of these older pieces had lovely histories that read like fairy tales. The Willow ware is an English china, the color of the design a dull blue on a white background. The figures represent a story of true lovers fleeing from the irate father. Just as they reach the bridge they are about to cross, they are transformed into doves and fly away. It is rather an unique design and can always be identified. It is of especial interest also because of its historic value.

The question of buying the china for one's home is a comparatively simple one today, as there are so many lovely porcelain and semi-porcelains on the market. Not only are they nice in texture, but the design is pleasing and adds to the general effect.

During the World War there was a tremendous increase in the price of Haviland until at one time it became practically impossible to secure. During this time the Lenox Company in America became very popular until today it is one of the most sought after chinaware on the market. The Lenox is delicate in design, and its texture is almost unsurpassable, but because of its extremely high price the moderately salaried people of our country find it rather uneconomical to buy. A dozen plates vary between $50 and $250. It can well be seen that only the richest of backgrounds is suitable for dishes of this type. Can you imagine a table with a medium quality damask cover in, perhaps, a four room apartment, set with these delicate dishes? A more plausible type of dish to buy is the Syracuse, also an American brand. It is less delicate and would be more appropriate in a larger number of homes in the Middle West. The design is usually pleasing, and the price is much less. One dozen plates can be bought for $15.

There is one thing that should be more often practiced and that is buying of an open stock. People think they want something different from Mrs. Smith, or something individual, and consequently purchase the so-called one hundred piece sets. If they do desire something different, why do they not buy a slightly varied pattern and yet get it from standard stock? It is so much easier to replace broken pieces, and in case you find that two dozen plates are more easy to serve than one dozen, you are not hindered by having a limited set of a closed pattern.

The English semi-porcelain is really very attractive. The Wedgwood is hewn, looking, and of a cream color that lends a charming background for the dinner room. The formal flower design is popular and adds a certain gaiety that gives a pleasing appearance to the table.

The care of the china is equally as important as is the choice. In choosing, do not buy one that is brittle, as they chip and break away very easily. Your set can last you as long as you desire. If you take a little longer time at the washing of your dishes, and are a little more careful, the breakage will be cut down considerably.

Along with the selection of china comes the choice of linen and table decorations. They are all so closely related that the one cannot be separated from the other. If you have a long, rectangular table, a long runner with a peasant border of Ukrainian or Czechoslovakian work is usable. On the whole, the cream colored linens are in better keeping with the outlay of china than any white linens of some generations back. The cream color seems to blend with the walls of the room and the dishes and does not present a glaring spot on which your eyes get fixed upon entering the dining room. For the breakfast table, the colored linens and a good grade of glass may be used advantageously. The linens also need special attention in laundering.

China for the breakfast room may be of a gay and less formal pattern than that of the dinner set. Bright and attractive colors with rather daring patterns often lend an air of gaiety to the breakfast table.

Quaint little silverware with handles of blue, rose and green can be secured to match the equally attractive china.

Outside of the linens and the china, come the table decorations. During the summer months it is both a pleasure to you and also yields a certain satisfaction to know that you have your own garden flowers. A fresh bouquet, attractively arranged, forms a pleasing centerpiece. After the garden flowers have ceased to bloom, the conservatory or hot house flowers are obtainable, but are rather expensive. The use of taper candles and of colored glass has given to us something which we can use to advantage. The varied colors provide an outlet to almost any color scheme one might wish to use.

There is no reason why now in 1927, with a little thought and foresightedness, every home can not have attractive dining ware and be conducive to a pleasant hour's chat around the dinner table. With the cost so low, we can put our efforts forth in having each meal as nice as the ones we spend hours on for the entertainment of outside guests.

Many other schemes might be used in formal luncheons and dinners to bring in spots of interest and color that distinguish the well planned meal from that of the mediocre type. There is no need for expense and a great array of splendor. On the other hand, simplicity of design and arrangement are much more desirable. Anyone who can use colored paper can make attractive place cards from it in "fairy flower" patterns, or a clever verse is always appreciated. In any event, regardless as to what the occasion or color scheme may be, the introduction of color is to be subtle and not in glaring, hilarious riot.