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A Home Needs Pictures . . .

By Olive Jenson



The Age of Innocence—Reynolds

WHAT is more interesting in a home than beautiful, well-placed pictures? They add color and life to rooms which would otherwise be dull and lifeless; they provide subjects for innumerable daydreams; they often reflect the personalities of their owners.

I know a lovely home which has a lovely living-room containing just a few well-chosen pictures. In each picture a different subject is displayed which permits one to weave in his mind some alluring tale. It seems the more one looks at each picture the more one discovers. Every one is as fascinating as a story book with its interesting forms and colors.

The most peculiar fact is that no two people see the same thing in an illustration. You may be interested in the colors, your friend in the shapes.

Perhaps the most common and numerous are the pictures that stir up a romantic tingle in one's blood. These pictures include an immense range of subjects. Here are scenes of feudal castles reminding one of gallant knights and their ladies. Just a picture of the lonely castle high up on the hills is all one needs, for the theme is suggestive enough. It makes one recall all the dungeons, court jesters, battles, tournaments and banquets associated with castle life.

OR, THE view might be of the Piccadilly Circus. In this case, a new type of romance would be expressed. The hurry and bustle, countless people, overcrowded streets, dust-filled air, noise and confusion that is Piccadilly come to mind. And a picture of this? Nothing could be more vivid and fascinating to a lonesome person. There are innumerable moonpansions that a painting of this type furnishes.

In some pictures are portrayed the lives of fictitious characters. Among these might be Atlanta running a race or Hercules holding the earth. Then there are

others like the happy, chubby men in Hiroshige's "The Treasure Ship With Seven Gods of Good Fortune." Perhaps the picture is of little Alice in Wonderland walking with the March Hare.

Naturally one is interested in pictures of people. From literature the imagination can create a group of portraits. Certainly Shakespearean heroines have been used as subjects for centuries. Some portraits leave the observer in a silent, peaceful mood; others make him joyful, brave or discontented. A picture of some famous man, such as Lincoln reading by the light from the fireplace, often inspires him to do his best.

Pictures of children are almost universally loved. Who has not woven a story in his mind while studying the mother and children in the picture "Feeding Her Birds"? The innocent expressions on the faces of the children in pictures appeal to most older folk, and they are interesting to the children who see them. "The Age of Innocence" shows a child with a sweet, serious expression on a pretty face. Doesn't the little girl seem real—as if she might stand up or turn and smile at you at any moment?

Weaving back into history, one finds that past events are often retold in pictures. As a matter of fact, a picture can portray several pages of history. For instance, happenings of early American times are frequently illustrated. One is familiar with pictures of Marquette and Joliet sailing down the Mississippi,

Columbus discovering America, and Balboa looking at the new body of water, the Pacific Ocean, which he discovered. Indeed, they are part of one's life. They belong to Americans and help make their knowledge of early discoveries and doings more interesting.

Occasionally a religious painting has the qualities of an illustration. An example of this kind would be Saint Francis of Assisi feeding his birds. It reminds one of similar experiences in his own life. At times, the sense of protection is felt by seeing angels hovering over the earth always ready to save one from possible dangers.

Another group of pictures shows the glory of nature. Perhaps a well known one of this type is "Windmill," by Ruysdael. In it one gets a charming idea of Holland. The picturesque windmill, of course, is the outstanding feature. Near this is the water with a ship slowly sailing along. Overhead the clouds go drifting quietly by.

A typical picture showing the glory of nature is Corot's "The Dance of the Nymphs." The dancing nymphs seem a part of the background of swaying trees and clear sky. To be sure, the presence of nymphs adds interest and sets your imagination to work, but without the dancers the picture would be beautiful. The whole scene is unified.

To study the best illustrations makes one's imagination more alert. So nothing is lost in day-dreaming over pictures. Looking at them broadens a person's culture and is a delightful pastime.



The Dance of the Nymphs—Corot