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A Lamp's a Lamp . . .

By Olive Jenson

LAMPS are an important part of the modern home. For centuries they have been the source of light. So popular have they been that at one time the Egyptians celebrated the festival of lamps.

Today the shops contain a vast assortment of lamps. There are so many tempting ones that it is easy for the customer's selection to become sidetracked. Since every lamp differs in composition and use, the one selected should have some definite purpose and place in the home. And it need not be expensive to be beautiful and in good taste.

In choosing a lamp, one must remember that its purpose is to give light and not to be ornamental. That does not imply that a lamp must be drab and uninteresting. It should add interest and at the same time be in the background. There is no need for a lamp, unless it can be of some service, for other things can be used for decoration. But a lamp should be beautiful in color, line and form, as well as suitable and serviceable.

SPECIAL attention must also be given to the shade's purpose. It should throw the light downward to make reading easier. Then, too, a warm, clear light should be given off. This is obtained by selecting warmly colored shades or by using cream or white linings. Because blues, violets and greens give poor light, they should be avoided for shades.

The place in which the lamp is to be used creates a problem. Naturally a light for a nursery would not be the same as one used in a women's lounge. Likewise, in a schoolgirl's room the lamps should be usable and practical like the study room. A good reading light is desired in this case. By no means will the plain desk and chairs adapt themselves to an elaborately designed base and shade. The girl's individuality can be shown by her choice of color and style in her study lamp.

Furthermore, the kind and period of furniture must be considered. Imagine a frilly boudoir lamp on a massive Jacobean bed or a heavy pottery base placed on a delicate Chippendale table! Even the grouping of the furniture is important. Many times the objects are so placed that no lamps are necessary. Other times, a lamp is the essential addition to make the position of a chair and table cozy and restful. The lamp adds beauty in a quiet, unassuming manner.

Proportion is also to be considered in the placing of lamps. For instance, if a floor lamp suits best a certain space, a small table lamp, detracting from the picture, should not be used. Adaptability in surroundings and style is always important.

The use of lamps can easily be overdone. Because they are attractive and useful, they are often applied so numerous that the room is cluttered up. In planning the home, light centers should be determined, the furniture arranged, and lamps purchased for those needs. Employment of lamps should tend toward conservativeness, as do the lamps themselves.

An amusing thing about lamps is their continuous change in style. Several years ago kewpie dolls, light bulbs protruding from their feathery-decked heads, were the rage. Every young girl had one. Now elephants, monkeys and camels with lights strapped on their backs reign on the dresser-top throne. When King Tut was the craze, Egyptians danced around lamp bases and shades. To keep up with all these fads and fancies is an utter impossibility. The fancy lamps are "in" one season and "out" the next.

A good test for a lamp is to determine whether or not it will be just as handsome and stylish in the next ten or twenty years as it is now. For example, estimate how long one would care to look at a waterfall or forest-fire torch. If an object can stand the test of time, it is likely worthwhile.

Here are a few more suggestions as to the lamp itself. Let the lines of the base be simple and graceful. No special rules need be laid down, but it is usually best to avoid the fancy bric-a-brac. The space relation of shade to base should never be a half-and-half division. A proportion of two to three or three to four is much better.

Many things can be used as lamps. Attractive ones can be made at little expense from snuff boxes, bean pots or pickle jars. Frequently pieces of pottery serve excellently as bases. One original Hollywood "star" made a lamp from an old milk can. A thing to remember in transforming odd pieces into lamps is, as one decorator has said, "Let your lamp base be itself."

Then, too, the shade can either "make or break" the lamp. If the base inclines toward decorativeness, the shade should be simple. It is bad taste to accent the design of the base in the shade. Never should the shade be of such heavy material, bad shape or color as to hinder the passage of the rays of light.

The lamp is a part of the room. It can either add to or subtract from its beauty. Surely today any desired lamp can be obtained, and "white elephants" can be discarded.

Well-chosen and Well-placed