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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 30, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "IMPROVING INTERIOR FINISH." Information from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Bulletin available, 1749-F, "Modernizing Farmhouses."

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How many of you listeners, I wonder, would join in a complaint I've received recently from a discouraged listener? This woman writes: "When you began talking about modernizing houses I was very much interested. My house is badly in need of improvements inside. But I haven't much money to spend. The first thing I heard was how we could add on rooms or move the stairway somewhere else or build another chimney or cut in a window for more light. Now, I haven't the cash to spare for such changes. And as I'm a widow with two girls and no boys to do the carpentry work, I'd have to hire it done. Can't you tell us some things three women can do to make our house look more cheerful and clean for very little expenditure?"

Well, I certainly wanted to help this listener. So I went to various specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and asked for suggestions. They told me this letter-writer was one of many who feel the need of improving the interior finish of their houses,- the walls, ceilings, floors, and wood trim. It seems that in the housing survey made by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1934, about 146,000 home owners said the first thing they would like to do if they could get the money would be to fix up or renew their walls, ceilings and floors.

The general opinion was that the easiest way to go about the task is to take one room at a time, if it can be spared, and strip it. Move everything out. Then see the real condition of the walls and ceiling, the wall-paper or paint on them, and the floor boards can be seen.

Paint and varnish are probably the easiest and cheapest fresheners to use.

The first thing to do is to go over the entire interior surface of the room and make any repairs needed. When only a small area of plastered wall or ceiling needs repair, a woman could do the work herself with ready-mixed plaster and a smoothing tool. If there's very much plastering to be done, it is better to employ a skilled workman for the job. Or one could have the wall covered with a new surface, such as one of the wall-boards.

Many people like painted walls because they make a good background for pictures and figured draperies. The color can be readily changed to go with different furnishings. In the kitchen especially, a light washable painted surface is easy to clean and makes the room light and cheerful. Dead white is rather glaring, but cream, ivory, buff, light yellow and light green are good kitchen colors.

The ceiling should be as light as or even lighter than the walls, to reflect plenty of light all over the room. In a papered room, a white or cream ceiling paper with a small all-over design is a good choice. The apparent height of rooms



With very high ceilings can be lowered by using a molding about two feet from the top of the wall and papering or painting the part above it to match the ceiling, while the lower wall is a few shades darker.

Look next at the wood trim- that is, the window frames and sills, sashes, door frames, doors and baseboards. Window sashes are usually painted to harmonize with the room, and a little touching up is doubtless needed. Broken lights are not difficult to replace. Measure for them all the way back of the putty or molding that holds them in.

If the wood used for the frames and sills and also the doors in the room is beautiful in itself, all it needs is probably a good rubbing with furniture polish or wax, or one or two coats of clear varnish. If it is very ugly in color or marred in any way, perhaps the best thing to do would be to paint it white or ivory. There's something very attractive about white woodwork, whether the walls are painted or papered. It is appropriate in any room,- even a living-room or dining-room. Paint the radiator to match either the walls or the woodwork, making it as inconspicuous as possible.

The hardware, such as catches, hinges, and handles on windows, doors, closets, switch plates and light fixtures, may need a little attention. Brass hardware often yields surprisingly to a good cleaning fluid and a little elbow grease. It may pay to freshen a room by buying a few new fixtures. Or, if the woodwork is painted white, shabby hardware may be painted too.

When it comes to floors, what can be done depends entirely on their condition. Smooth, tight, well-finished floors may need only waxing or oiling. Floors streaked with splinters or deep grooves should be sanded smooth. Where old carpets have been taken up, tacks must be painstakingly pulled out, cracks filled, the floor leveled by using a plane, and the wood then scrubbed clean with hot soapsuds. Stains may often be bleached out with oxalic acid. (This acid is a poison. Use it carefully and keep it away from children.)

When the floor is thoroughly dry you can stain or varnish it, or oil it, or paint it like a new floor. After the first coat of finish has been applied and allowed to dry is the time to fill up the cracks and holes with filler colored to match the floor. A good filler consists of genuine whiting and linseed oil putty containing about 10 percent of dry white lead, and coloring matter to match the floor.

A slightly worn varnished floor can be rubbed with a cloth dampened with linseed oil, or the old finish may be removed entirely and the floor revarnished.

Paint does not wear as well as other floor finishes, but it is easy to clean or repaint. I know a woman who brightened up the bed-rooms in an old cottage by painting all the floors to go with the draperies and bedspreads. One room was yellow, another amethyst, another deep rose, and the fourth, jade green. With home-made rag rugs and simple furnishings the effect was delightful.

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