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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, July 21, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Frocks for Furniture." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Slip Covers."

--ooOoo--

The news today is that there is a brand new leaflet just off the press and ready to be mailed to you as soon as you send in your address. The leaflet has a simple name, easy to remember. It is called "Slip Covers." And its author is Miss Bess Viemont of the Bureau of Home Economics who prepared also the curtain bulletin you found so helpful this spring when you made the dining room curtains.

As soon as I saw the pile of new leaflets, I took three copies to send to three friends of mine who have been needing just the information contained in its eight helpful pages.

The first of these friends is Marian Lee. She gets a copy because just the other day she was sighing over the appearance of her living room.

"If only my furnishings looked cooler somehow," she told me, "I'd like to give a summer afternoon tea. But these deep reds and browns seem so stuffy and hot in this weather. That thick covering on the couch, for example, looks delightfully cozy in winter, but on a day like this--whew! How I would like to dress that couch up in a cool-looking frock instead of letting it sit there all summer in its winter woolens."

So a copy of the new leaflet goes to Marian Lee. She'll find plenty of suggestions in it for dressing the furniture to suit the seasons.

A second copy goes to a homemaker up in Pennsylvania who told me not long ago that she had the hardest house-furnishing problem of any woman she had ever heard of. Fifteen years ago she was given for a wedding present a living room suite--two chairs and a davenport. And she has had to live with those pieces of furniture ever since. The sad part of it is that she has never been happy with them around, not a minute. It is just like having unpleasant relatives always sitting in the living room, she says. You see, all three of them are covered with a fabric in an unpleasant red and green color which jars with everything around. No matter how you try to furnish the room, these three horrid pieces spoil the effect.

The leaflet ought to do that housekeeper a good turn. It is too bad that she couldn't have had it earlier in her married life. All she has to do to remedy matters with her despised chairs and ugly davenport is to make some good-

looking slip covers of a pleasant material and fit them on. The leaflet will tell her how. And, in a short time, I shall be expecting to hear that she is a fast and fond friend to that furniture.

A third housekeeper has the problem of a favorite family chair which has become old and worn. The chair is so comfortable that it has been used to death. It now looks dreadfully faded, soiled and shabby. Shall this good old chair be banished to the attic? No, indeed. Instead, make an attractive cover for it. I'm sending one leaflet especially for that chair.

If you'll think back to your grandmother's time, you will remember that slip covers in those days meant white, loose bags that were put over furniture to protect it in summer or when the house was shut up. Today these covers have taken to good looks and are an accepted part of home furnishing used at any season of year in almost any room in the house. Slip covers for summer use may be made of blues, greens and violets--all colors that give a restful, cool look in summer. While for next winter the warm reds and yellows will give a cozy, cheerful appearance to the room. One slip cover, however, may be used for all seasons if the design in the material combines both warm and cool colors.

But don't get the idea from all I've been saying about attractiveness and good looks that these covers are for decorative purposes only. They have practical uses, too. Simple washable covers in homes where there are small children save the best chair and keep it from being scratched, torn, spotted and stained by soiled hands, playthings, and playclothes. A cover protects both the upholstery and the wood finish, especially of the finer furniture that should not be subjected to hard usage.

Suppose now that Marian Lee decides to make some slip covers and goes shopping for materials. What are some of the things she should consider?

Materials, colors, and designs. She will want to be sure that the covers are going to harmonize with the other furnishings in the room. Frequently a fabric looks different on the counter from the way it does when fitted on the chair. And almost any material looks very different in a tiny scrap of a sample than it does in a large piece. If possible take a big section of the fabric home and try it on the chair before you buy it. Be sure to notice how it looks with your walls, rugs and curtains.

What materials to choose for different rooms? Miss Viemont suggests chintz in small patterns for a bedroom; for the living room, conventional designs in cretonne and hand-blocked linen; for the dining room and breakfast nook, water-proof gingham and percale; and for the sun parlor or the porch, material with bold stripes.

Usually it is most economical to buy the best material that you can afford. Very inexpensive cloth is likely to be faded by the light and by laundering. Also it is likely to be filled with dressing which will come out in the wash and leave a coarse, flimsy, loosely woven cloth. Better colors and designs come in higher quality fabrics and, although the initial cost is greater, they are attractive as long as they last.

There's one question that I expect someone to ask me any minute now, so I might as well ask it myself and answer it, too. Why do some slip covers wrinkle and how can you prevent it? The answer: Because these covers cannot be as tightly stretched and securely fastened to the furniture as upholstery is, they have a tendency to slip around and crease in a different place each time anyone sits on the chair. But you can remedy this a great deal by purchasing the right kind of material. The heavier and more firmly woven fabrics like denim, galatea, rep, and upholsterer's sateen will wrinkle less than thinner fabrics. Cretonne, crash, and hand-blocked linen and cotton damask will retain their newness longer than gingham, percale or chintz. Sizing or dressing in the goods affects the wrinkle situation also. Goods that are filled with starch muss easily, but those with very little dressing look well for a long time. If the materials are washable, much of their original freshness can be restored.

Another question before we close shop for today. Should figured or plain material be used for slip covers? The answer to that is:- Either, depending on where you are going to use it. The other furnishings in the room determine the selection. Just as in choosing curtains, a good safe rule is the rule of opposites; so it is in furniture coverings. When the walls are figures, the furniture coverings must be plain or so finely patterned that the design gives the impression of texture. A very fine, inconspicuous stripe or check is permissible in rooms where definite designs would be entirely out of the question. In rooms with plain walls and floor coverings, figured materials are the proper choice and offer unlimited possibilities for individuality. Plain fabrics would be monotonous here, but patterned ones will give character.

There is also proportion to think about. Large rooms and large pieces of furniture need materials that are sturdy in construction and design and rich in color. Small rooms, on the other hand, and small pieces of furniture require fabrics of smaller designs, lighter in texture and color.

As for making the slip cover, I'm going to leave it to the leaflet to give you the details of that. There are plenty of helpful illustrations to show you just how to proceed.

Tomorrow: "Summertime Play."

