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The Decoration of Houses

Edith Wharton, Ogden Jr. Codman

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Individuality in house-furnishing has seldom been more harped upon than at the present time. The cheap originality which finds expression in putting things to uses for which they were not intended is often confounded with individuality; whereas the latter consists not in an attempt to be different from other people at the cost of comfort, but in the desire to be comfortable in one's own way, even though it be the way of a monotonously large majority. It seems easier to most people to arrange a room like some one else's than to analyze and express their own needs. -from Chapter II: "Rooms in General" This classic 1898 manual of interior design is considered a standard reference of the art, and perfectly useful more than a century later. Here, renowned American architect OGDEN CODMAN, JR. (1863-1951) is joined by American author EDITH WHARTON (1862-1937), whose novels, including The House of Mirth (1905) and the Pulitzer Prize-winning The Age of Innocence (1920), took us into the wealthy-and tasteful-New York society she hailed from. Together, they offer timeless advice on such matters as: • the importance of balance and symmetry • how to avoid the superficial application of ornament • the necessity of adhering to proportion • the proper material for fireplace andirons • the usages of cornices • the decoration of windows • and much, much more.

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