Intérieur

The Connoisseur 2/7/'22

The couch and the cushion of a big stuffed chair needed attention - the springs were on the floor; and so we called up the upholsterer recommended by a knowing friend.

A short, stout, rosy-cheeked Englishman of 45 or thereabouts appeared. He thumped the cushions, gave a swift appraising look at top and bottom, and said, without hesitation, "That will cost you $9 - just possibly $9.50. You see, that was all sewed by hand - the stitches have to be taken out carefully - the velvet is old. It will all have to be re-sewed by hand - by hands that know how to do it, and do it carefully, since it is old. It will not be over $9.50. We have to estimate to the ten minutes for we are paying $10 a day for eight hours' work. The other is easy to tell - $12."

Off went the cushions. I supposed I had been dealing with the head of the house, so prompt and authoritative had been the appraisement. But the same man brought them back - along with the bill.

"You are Mr Z?" I said.

"Oh, no," he laughed. "I am his driver - been his driver for 20 years - wouldn't work for anybody else."

"But how can it be," I said, "that you, the driver, could so quickly put a price on this work, which I know to be skilled?"

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"That's all right. I just know. I can tell right off how much time it's going to take. Never make a mistake. The boss knows that. I don't know why it is, but I can do it. But I couldn't do the work. It's funny the things you know. I could not do the work, because I haven't the feel in my fingers. I have the feel in my head. I said $9. possibly $9.50, didn't I,

for that cushion? Well, it was $9. I got it to the minute. Queer about what some of us knows and cannot do, and what others of us can do and don't know. There's a carpenter near us. He would come into this room and if you wanted to replace your woodwork, he could tell you within a dollar how much the whole thing would cost. It wouldn't take him ten minutes, and he would be right. Everybody in our part of town knows him. But he couldn't put on that woodwork exactly like it ought to be done. He has got it in his head, but he hasn't got it in his fingers.

"I have sometimes thought it was a great pity that I didn't start in early to train my fingers. Still, I don't know if I could have learned it. There's them that can't. But I know, know to a minute the time it takes, and know to a stitch if the thing is done right. That cushion of yours is right."

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