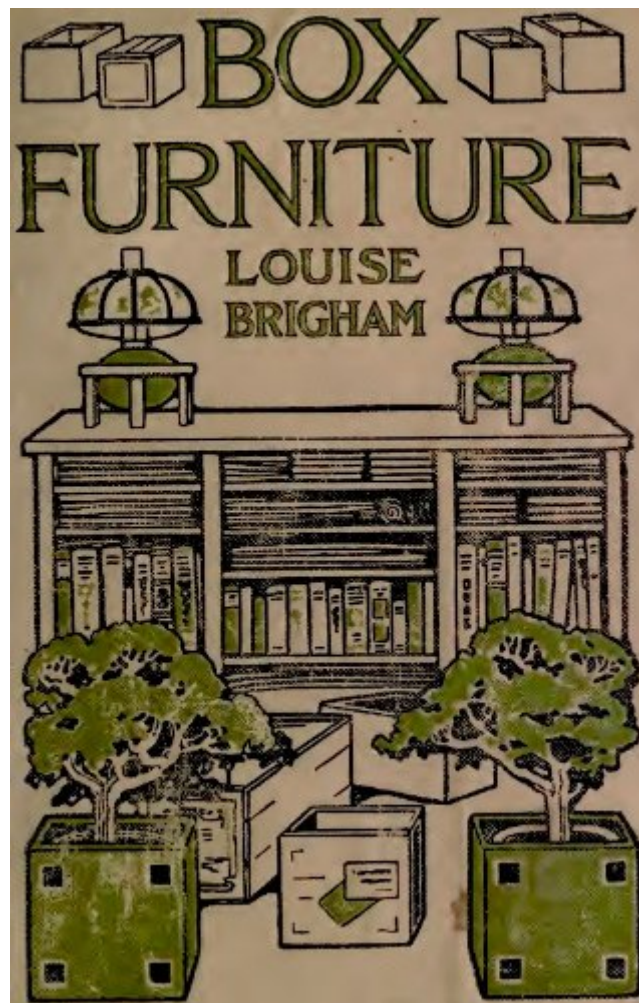




The book was found

Box Furniture: How To Make A Hundred Useful Articles For The Home (Illustrated)



Synopsis

Two summers on the island of Spitzbergen taught me, more than all previous experiments, the latent possibilities of a box. Our camp was located seven hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle in Hammerfest, Norway, 535 miles to the southeast was the nearest point from which supplies could be obtained. Ice and snow cut off the settlement from the outside world for eight months of the year. The provisions and other equipment necessary for the camp of eighty miners and workmen had to be carried in boxes on the ships that came from the mainland during the four summer months. When the portable house which was to be the home of the manager, his wife, and myself as their guest, had been put up and the supplies unpacked, the boxes began to accumulate. Here was an opportunity for putting to a practical test previous experiments in the making of "box furniture". I asked my host to give me the privilege of showing how these "odds and ends" usually considered worthless, could be utilized in making attractive furnishings for a comfortable home. No lumber was available in Spitzbergen, for, though we found during the short summer a beautiful arctic flora and "famine bread" (the edible moss often used by explorers), the "polar willow" growing but two inches in height, was our only tree. Cut off from other materials, the possibilities of the box seemed greater than ever, and the work, which daily grew in interest, was commenced. As I worked in that far-off marvelous land of continuous day, surrounded by mountains and glaciers, I felt anew the truth, so familiar to all, that work to be of real value must be honest, useful, and beautiful, and Ruskin and Morris spoke as clearly in the arctic regions as in the settlements or studio in New York. A pleasing incident of that summer occurred when we welcomed some members of the Walter Wellman exploring expedition who came to pay us a visit. One of the explorers, noting our comfortable little cottage with its attractive box furniture, turned to my hostess and said: "You have the northernmost civilized home in the world, for though our camp is one hundred miles nearer the pole, we have no woman there to grace it, and without her there can be no home." In many other homes the box has been found most useful, and its great value as an educational force I wish here to note. The Prince of Monaco, who visited our arctic home, seemed as much pleased as the Danish peasant who watched by the workbench. Among the most enthusiastic admirers to be found of "the possibilities of a box" are the bishop, the mayor, the bank president, the capitalist, and the professor, while the elevator boy, the scrubwoman, and the working man have shown equal enthusiasm. One feature that gave constant stimulus to the work was the friendly interest shown by people of different conditions and nationalities. In the teaching of manual training the carefully prepared material given to the children often has a tendency to make them rely too much on externals. If the pupils could be encouraged to supplement their school work with materials found in the home, they would find near

at hand a practical opportunity for creative activity and the working out of educational principles. What better opportunity for such uses can be furnished than by the box as found in or near every household? Here is an often neglected opportunity for the transformation of humble and despised material into objects of beauty and usefulness for the home. Besides the educational and artistic values found in such work, there is also a wide economic significance in the use of the box. It is said that an American household throws away after one meal sufficient food to provide three meals for a starving family. Boxes cost almost nothing, and so serve a valuable end as illustrative material for school and other experiments.

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