

A LOFTY STUDY

In these days of universal scribbling, when almost everyone writes for fame or money, many people who are not reaping large pecuniary profits from their work do not feel justified in making any outlay to gratify the necessities of their labors in literature.

Everyone engaged in literary work, even if but to a limited extent, feels greatly the need of a quiet nook to write in. Each portion of the home seems to have its clearly defined use, that will prevent their achieving the desired result. A few weeks ago, in the course of my travels, I came across an excellent idea carried into practical operation, that had accomplished the much-desired result of a quiet spot for literary work, without the disarrangement of a single portion of the household economy. In calling at the house of a member of the Society of Friends, I was ushered first into the main library on the first floor. Not finding in it the article sought, the owner invited me to walk upstairs to an upper library. I continued my ascent until we reached the attic. This had been utilized in such a way that it formed a comfortable and acceptable study. I made a mental note of my surroundings. The room was a large sloping attic chamber. It contained two windows, one opening on a roof; another faced the door; a skylight had been cut directly overhead, in the middle of the room. Around the ceiling on the side that was not sloping ran a line of tiny closets with glass doors. Another side had open shelves. On the sloping side, drawers rose from the floor a convenient distance. The remaining corner had a desk built in the wall; it was large and substantial, containing many drawers. Two small portable tables were close at hand near the centre.

An easy chair, an old-fashioned sofa with a large square cushion for a pillow, completed the furniture of this unassuming study. Neatness, order, comfort reigned supreme. Not a sound from the busy street reached us. It was so quiet, so peaceful, the air was so fresh and pure, it seemed like living in a new atmosphere.

I just sat down and wondered why I had never thought of this very

room for a study. Almost every family has an unused attic, dark, sloping, given up to odds and ends. Now let it be papered with a creamy paper, with narrow stripes, giving the impression of height; a crimson velvety border. Paint the woodwork a darker shade of yellow, hang a buff and crimson portière at the door. Put in an open grate; next widen the window-sills, and place on them boxes of flowering plants. Get an easy chair, a desk that suits your height, and place by its side a revolving bookcase, with the books most used in it. Let an adjustable lamp stand by its side, and with a nice old-fashioned sofa, well supplied with cushions, you will have a study that a queen might envy you. Bright, airy, cheerful, and almost noiseless, not easy of access to those who would come only to disturb, and far enough away to be cosy and inviting, conferring a certain privilege on the invited guest.

These suggestions can be improved upon, but the one central idea, a place to one's self without disturbing the household economy, would be gained.

Even when there is a library in the home, it is used by the whole family, and if the husband is literary in his tastes, he often desires to occupy it exclusively at the very time you have leisure, perhaps. Men are so often educated to work alone that even sympathetic companionship annoys. Very selfish, we say, but we often find it so—and therefore the necessity of a study of one's own.

If even this odd room cannot be utilized for your purposes, have at least your own corner in some cheerful room. A friend who edits a special department in a *weekly* has in her own chamber a desk with plenty of drawers and small separate compartments. The desk just fits in an alcove of the room, with a revolving-chair in front. What a satisfaction to put everything in order, turn the key, and feel that all is safe—no busy hands, no stray breeze can carry away or disarrange some choice idea kept for the future delectation of the public! Besides this, one who writes much generally finds that she can write best at some certain spot. Ideas come more rapidly, sentences take more lucid forms. Very often the least change from that position will break up the train of thought.

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. "Words of Fire: an Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought." Amazon, The New Press, 1996, www.amazon.com/Words-Fire-Anthology-African-American-Feminist/dp/1565842561.