

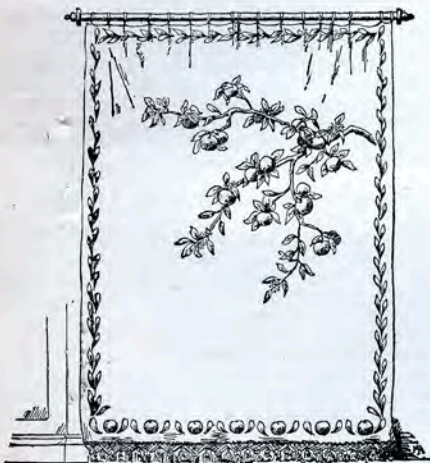
A GROUP OF ARTISTIC PORTIÈRES

By Margaret Sims



GOOD taste and a regard for the true principles of decoration seem to demand a certain simplicity in the treatment of portières and hangings, as a protest against the distorted arrangements of drapery, which, to some extent, found favor a little while ago, gaining, for a short period, a surprising popularity.

A portière, which is in itself a work of art, is



AN ARTISTIC SERGE PORTIÈRE (No. 1)

AN ARTISTIC PORTIÈRE OF SERGE

VERY effective decorations can be rapidly executed in what is named "Old Lady's Work," because it is easy and not trying to the eyes. Fruit subjects are the most suitable, such as the orange design in illustration No. 1. The curtain itself is serge, the oranges are of plush in their natural color, and are slipstitched on invisibly with silk to match, being raised slightly by means of a wadding of cotton wool. The result is that as the plush catches the light the fruit has the effect of being highly shaded. Where one orange overlaps the other, the under one should not be raised, and may be of a darker shade. The leaves are of thin woolen materials in various tints, and can be applied by a couched line or buttonhole-stitch. The best method of getting an assortment of colors is to obtain, if possible, a package of samples from a dry goods store; enough will be found in each piece for several leaves. The stems are worked with a coarse woolen or silken thread, and the blossoms in white silk.

A DELICATE AND HANDSOME HANGING

ILLUSTRATION No. 2 is an example of somewhat more elaborate and difficult work. It is intended for a delicate and handsome hanging. The foundation is of Roman satin or mail cloth, of a light tint; the roses, which are large, bold and simple in outline, are applied in cream-colored silk velvet, and painted with tapestry-dyes, to imitate pale-pinkish roses, the color of the velvet forming the high lights. The leaves and stalks are embroidered in silk; the ribbon is applied where it is indicated in the design, and is shaded also with the dyes. By this means a very decorative effect is obtained with but little labor. Another method, entailing more work, but with perhaps a richer and more truly artistic result, is to solidly embroider the floral part of the design, filling in the ribbon forms with some fancy stitch.

best hung to a pole or rod on rings, that its intrinsic beauty may be fully displayed, while it can yet be pushed to one side at pleasure. In other cases curtains can be held back either high up or low down as may be desired, but always so that the effect is graceful, though not appearing at all strained or forced. Festoons, or a multiplication of loops and curves, should be avoided.

When the housewife desires to decorate her own portières, the methods she may adopt are many and varied. The most popular are, in this busy age, naturally those which give the best and most effective result with the least possible labor. Such are appliqué work, bold designs in outline, and a mixture of needlework and painting, which, when skillfully managed, has unlimited possibilities. The choice of materials is wide, and can be made to suit all purses without the sacrifice of artistic feelings, for nowadays the most beautiful colorings can be obtained in even the cheapest fabrics. Charming and inexpensive curtains can be made by applying a striking design cut out of a French flowered cretonne and applying it by means of a coarse buttonhole-stitch with tapestry wool to a foundation of serge or Bolton sheeting; the effect is further improved by veining the leaves and touching up the flowers with silk.

The pattern may be variously arranged, either as a border or as a frieze and dado, with powdering of forms over the body of the curtain; or, as a matter of fact, in any way that seems best and most effective for the purpose. Designs may also be cut out in velvet or plush to be applied upon woolen goods, with a couched outline of gold cord, or finished off with a buttonhole-stitch of heavy silk, with veins and markings made also of the silk. Be careful in cutting out the forms for use in this fashion, that they are all the same way of the goods, or the different appearance of the pile, as it runs in various directions, will have a very unpleasant effect. Velvet or plush, that is to be applied, should have linen pasted on the back of the goods before the design is cut out. This is in order to prevent the edges raveling when they are sewn down, as the material is, of course, too thick to turn



A DELICATE AND HANDSOME HANGING (No. 2)

any of it under. If possible, stretch the curtain upon which a design is to be applied, in order that it shall be put on as smoothly as possible without puckering the background. For this reason also the whole should be basted before it is fastened down closely,

SOME MORE IDEAS FOR INEXPENSIVE CURTAINS

FOR an inexpensive curtain, blue denim makes an excellent ground. It may be variously decorated. A favorite way is to use white only for the design, which may be either outlined in heavy white cord, or may be of a bold pattern, applied in white and embellished with embroidery in coarse thread or silk. Linen tapestry canvas is comparatively cheap, and comes in different grayish and neutral shades that make an excellent ground for bold designs in coarse embroidery, and lovely effects may be obtained by the use of subdued tones upon them. Very quaint hangings for a library may be made by choosing a mediæval scene, or copying some old tapestry subject, and rendering it in coarse darning. To carry this out well, however, requires artistic skill and a certain amount of imagination.

There need never be any difficulty in procuring pretty and artistic curtains in thin fabrics when required, so cheaply may they be purchased nowadays. A good idea for finishing light muslin hangings is to make a very deep hem, into which is inserted some bright colored sateen or silk, which harmonizes with the decoration of the room. They are then tied back with ribbons to match. Cheese-cloth is still used for hangings, and may be decorated with designs in delicate colors, tinted and outlined in the manner described further on. Rather more expensive, but exquisite in its effect, for some purposes, is bolting-cloth, which comes fifty inches wide. Dainty floral designs embroidered in the palest Dresden-china shades, make pretty curtains and repay the trouble expended on them, being extremely delicate in character.

A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE DESIGN

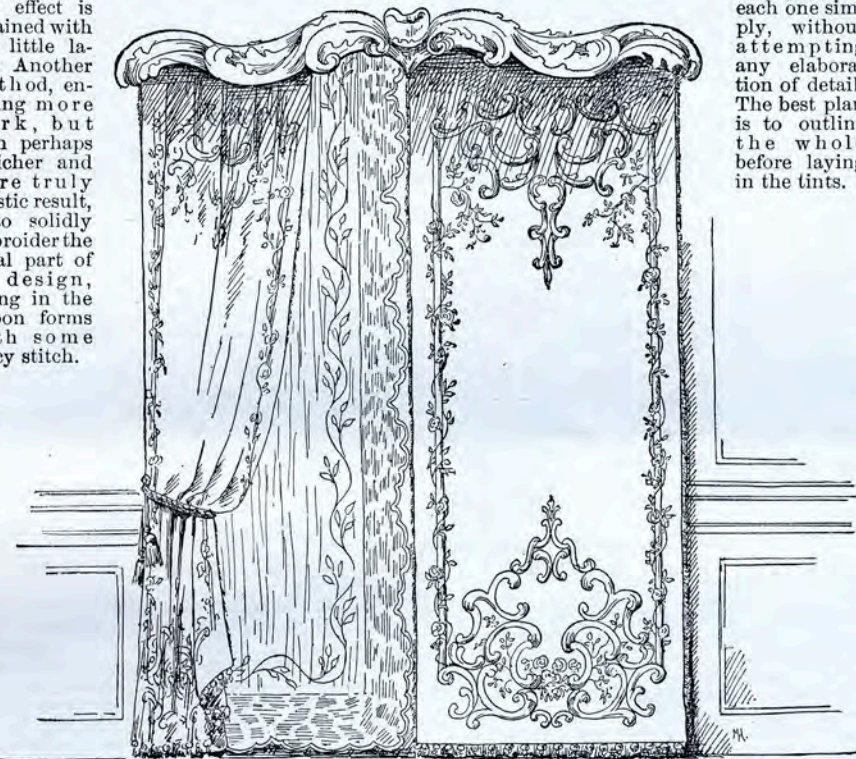
BOLD floral and conventional designs may be tinted on cream or écreu-colored Roman satin and outlined with rope-silk which tones with the washes used. The design in illustration No. 3 could be treated in this way, though it would be also very effective outlined with gold on plush or flax velours, the pressure of the outline causing a good suggestion of light and shade.

The indelible tapestry dyes are the most suitable for the purpose of tinting, but they need careful handling in order to lay them evenly and to avoid their running. The subject must be drawn out first, either being transferred or sketched lightly in charcoal. The material should be firmly stretched and laid flat to receive the washes. Ordinary hog-hair brushes are used. It is best to select the silks first, as the dyes may be readily mixed to tone with any color, and if the opposite course is pursued it may often be difficult to procure the exact shades required. In painting, commence in the center of the leaf or flower, working outward to the edge as the brush becomes almost dry. The design may be slightly shaded with great advantage.

THE LOUIS XVI CURTAINS

THE Louis XVI curtains (Illustration No. 4) may be embroidered, but would be much more rapidly executed on silk tapestry canvas with the Grénié dyes.

In the drawing, one curtain is left without being looped back, in order to show the arrangement of the design. The ornament should be in shades of gold, for which Indian yellow, much diluted, is used for the flat wash; and brown, mixed with the yellow for the half-tones and shadows. The roses and leaves are painted very daintily in their natural colors. A light shade of ponceau, together with a little yellow, is employed for the local tint of the flowers. The leaves should be kept delicate and not worked up too much. Avoid monotony by making them of various shades, but painting each one simply, without attempting any elaboration of detail. The best plan is to outline the whole before laying in the tints.



A PAIR OF LOUIS XVI CURTAINS (No. 4)

AN EMBROIDERED PORTIÈRE

THE portière in illustration No. 5 is intended for embroidery. The material might be of an olive-green color. The design in the panel near the base is outlined with gold, and the background darned with reddish-brown flax thread. The border would look well worked in various shades of yellow, brown and green.

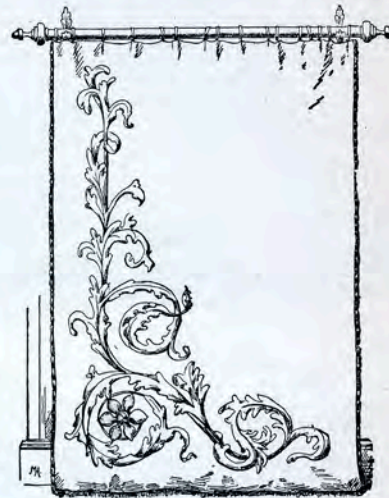
Bands of satin, plush or other rich materials are frequently laid on a curtain of serge or bolton sheeting, a more or less elaborate design having been previously worked upon them.

Some extremely artistic embroidered portières were made some time ago under the direction of a large decorating firm in New York. The ground was handsome plush of a beautiful neutral tone, the design being a hanging orchid arranged across the top, and, coming about one-third down the curtains, a swarm of butterflies were clinging and fluttering around the blossoms and scattered irregularly over almost the whole space. Both drawing and execution were excellent. The design was worked directly upon the material. In many cases solid embroidery, intended to go upon a plush ground, is done upon linen and afterward transferred, often with an outline of Japanese gold thread. Designs are frequently rendered with extremely good effect by working portions of them solidly, the rest being outlined or partially filled in. The Japanese are particularly successful in following this method of decoration, and examples executed by them may be studied with advantage and imitated in style.

Very artistic are simple designs applied in leather on plush or velvet, with a couched outline. They are especially adapted for library, hall or dining-room hangings, and where rich and sombre coloring is desirable.

GENERAL HINTS ABOUT PORTIÈRES

AS to the linings of curtains, much depends on their position and whether the backs of the hangings are visible from a room beyond, in which case care must be taken that the material selected for the lining goes well both with the coloring of the portière and with the general tone of the next apartment. Chosen with taste and judgment, the two sides of a portière should, if necessary, be capable of harmonizing widely different schemes of color,



A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE DESIGN (No. 3)

leading the eye without effort from one to the other. When both sides of the curtain are in this way almost equally important, the lining may be, if desired, of the richest material, handsomely embroidered silk or tapestry hangings being frequently backed with plush or flax velours. This latter is especially popular with decorators, being comparatively inexpensive, while it is manufactured in a great variety of artistic colors. For ordinary linings almost any fabric may be employed; silk and satin of different qualities, and sateen are much used; also in some cases a woolen material, such as merino. Heavy curtains, such as those of plush, are often interlined with Canton-flannel.

Many people who covet for their window or door hangings the handsomely brocaded curtains for which very high prices are asked by interior decorators, do not realize that they might obtain them for a much less sum if they purchased the material and had them made up at home. A woman of great taste who, while living in what is termed good style, had yet not the wealth of a millionaire at her command, recently wished to refurnish her parlor, which was becoming old-fashioned and, perhaps, a little shabby into the bargain. She was her own artist and decorator, superintending the entire remodeling of it in style, while utilizing what was possible of the furniture she already possessed. All the materials used were the handsomest of their kind, and the cost was but a small proportion of what it would have been if given in the hands of a regular decorating house. All her expedients can not be entered into here, but the plan pursued for the curtains may be noted. She visited a store devoted to the sale of theatrical costumes and furnishings, and selected a fine piece of old French brocade in soft shades of blue that harmonized with the scheme of her room; bought some dull old-gold satin for the lining, and gave them to her maid to make up for her. Instead of having lace or muslin curtains with them she had a double row of deep lace sewn on, rather full down the edges, and all her friends were anxious to find out wherever she could have purchased them, so rich and uncommon a set of hangings did they make. Certain it is, that with the expenditure of some trouble, as well as money, it is possible to have a home that is both individual and artistic in character, referring especially to that class of householders who spend really a



AN EMBROIDERED PORTIÈRE (No. 5)

considerable sum on decoration and furniture, but without exercising either taste or judgment in the matter, the reason, probably, that three-fourths of the rooms one enters are so commonplace in appearance.