

INSTRUCTIONS IN EMBROIDERY.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

UNDOUBTEDLY the most artistic style of needle-work is that termed Embroidery; not canvass embroidery, but the yet higher kind of needle-work painting, which aims at producing really pictorial effect, without the mechanical assistance which canvass gives in counting stitches and determining shades.

In embroidery much is left to the eye, and still more to the taste. A few words, therefore, on the subject of selecting colors and harmonizing tints, as well as on the mere stitches employed, will probably be acceptable.

TO MARK PATTERNS.—Designs are invariably marked on satin, cloth, or velvet, by means of what are termed *pounced patterns*. These are prepared in the following manner:—The design is carefully traced on rather thick writing paper; then, with a fine stiletto it is marked in holes, distant from each other not more than the eighth of an inch: from the pattern thus prepared, any number almost may be marked. The material to be embroidered is then laid on the table, and the pattern placed in the proper position over it, and kept there by means of leaden weights. A little pounce, or powdered flake white must then be rubbed over the paper, with a large and flat stump, and, on the paper being raised, the design appears accurately marked on the cloth. It requires to be afterward re-marked with a fine sable brush, dipped in a mixture of flake white and milk, or an artist's color, contrasting with the material, mixed up with a few drops of spirits of turpentine

White satin, or any very light color on which white would not show, may be pounced with very finely powdered charcoal, and then marked with a solution of Indian ink.

For drawing a pattern on any washing material, a still simpler plan may be adopted. Scrape some red or blue chalk; brush it lightly over a sheet of thin tissue paper, shake off the loose grains, lay the chalked side of the paper on the muslin, and over it the pattern, which you will trace with a hard, sharp-pointed pencil, and the design will be clearly marked, and require no further trouble.

When any parts of a pattern are repeated—as the quarters of a cushion or a handkerchief, or the scallops of a flounce—have only the

pounced pattern of one quarter or section, and mark all from that one. It will be found a much more accurate mode than that of making the whole paper pattern perfect.

The next step is to put the material in a frame, two or three inches wider than the work it is to receive. The needles used are technically called *short-long eyes* and *strands*. The latter are like common needles, but unusually long. It injures the work to use too fine a needle, as the small eye frays the silk; on the other hand, a needle that is too large makes holes in the cloth.

The materials chiefly used for embroidery are wools, chenille and silks: there are great varieties of the last mentioned article, the principal being Mitorse, Dacca, Berlin, fine and coarse flax, crochet, and netting silks. Of the netting silks there are many sizes, which may be used according to the delicacy of the work.

Initials intended to be in gold, for sachets, &c., are almost as effective if rich gold-colored twisted silk be used instead; and the silk will wear forever, whilst it is almost impossible to obtain gold thread which will not tarnish in a few months.

STITCHES.—The common stitch used in embroidery is termed *long-stitch*. It closely resembles the Irish stitch of canvass work, only without its regularity. The stitches are taken closely together, and of uneven lengths; the second shade is blended with the first by filling up the vacant spaces of the short stitch; the next shade, in the same way, unless with that one, and so on in an irregular form, the outline only presenting a regular line of stitches, exactly within the limits of the marked pattern. The shading must, of course, be done with artistic accuracy.

The veinings of leaves are worked in silk rather coarser than that used for the rest of the work. Sometimes this silk is considerably thicker; it is then laid on, and sewed over with very fine silk of the same shade, the ends being drawn through the material. Leaves are frequently veined with gold thread in a similar manner.

Large leaves should be worked from the points to the veins; small ones seldom require to be veined at all. Like stems, they are formed of a

succession of slanting stitches, very evenly laid on, forming curves and lines of the width and dimensions of the patterns, and forming accurate outlines.

When gold bullion is employed in embroidery, it is cut into short lengths, which are then laid on with fine silk of the same hue. Gold thread is sewed over, and the ends brought through the cloth, and so passed from one part to another.

The Chinese employ, in their most elaborate embroidery, a very pretty stitch termed, by us, the French Knot. It is made thus:—Bring the needleful of silk to the right side of the work, in the exact spot where the stitch is to be. Hold the needle in the right hand, and with the left take up the silk, at an inch or two from the cloth. Twist the needle twice round the silk, insert it in the same spot you drew it through before, and, with the right hand, draw the needle to the under side, gradually tightening the silk with the left hand. When quite drawn through the knot is formed. The great art in this work is to make the stitches all lie perfectly even. We seldom use the French knot for anything but the seeds, stamen, or pistils of flowers: but the Chinese execute whole pieces in this stitch, shading them most exquisitely, and only using a coarse white silk or gold thread, as an outline to the whole. In bead embroidery, every stitch is generally put on separately, and in its own place: but a very beautiful effect may be obtained in pearl beads imitating grapes, by stringing them with white silk, and letting them cross each other in various directions, still preserving the outline of the cluster.

A very pretty and effective style of embroidery is that done with gold braid and wool on canvass. It is very suitable for slippers, cushions, the bands of smoking-caps, blotting cases, and many other things. An outline design in arabesque, or anything else that may appear suitable for *two colors*, should be drawn on paper of the proper dimensions, and then marked on the canvass. The gold braid must be cut into pieces of the proper lengths, and laid on piece by piece, the spaces between the patterns being filled with wool of some well-contrasting color—as bright blue, green, or claret—so that the pattern appears in gold, on a ground of wool. When leaves are so worked, a rich silk, of a deeper gold color than the braid, should be used afterward to vein it.

Having spoken of cushions, it may be well to tell my fair readers how to make them up most comfortably:—Cut some good strong calico *bias* of the proper size; line it with two or three thicknesses of good wadding, well fastened to it

in every direction; and stuff the bag thus made with down: the pillow to be afterward covered in any manner that may be desired. Pillows made in this way are not only much softer than others, but they also keep their shape much better, and are not liable to sink after a little wear.

Waistcoats and other articles are now much embroidered in *soie ombre*, that is, silk shaded in varieties of one color. I cannot say I think it so pretty as the variety of natural colors, or even a single self-shade. It is, however, fashionable.

THE CHOICE OF COLORS.—I will conclude my instructions for embroidery with a few hints on the choice of suitable colors; as Dogberry observes, that “reading and writing come by nature,” so I may be excused for asserting that the axiom is (in part at least) correct, as regards the power of discriminating colors. In a great measure it is a natural gift; still it may be cultivated, nay, almost created.

Selecting the necessary wools, silks, &c., is technically called, *sorting a pattern*. To sort a pattern well, it is requisite to consider the capabilities of the various materials. Wools and silks, silks in floss, and twisted—though dipped in the same vat, would be found to vary materially in the shade of color when dyed. Hence it is important to select such materials as will blend well together, and also wear well when worked.

The following colors may be said to harmonize perfectly:—

Blue works well with the warmer tints of drab, stone, and fawn.

Yellow with the richest and darkest shades of drab.

Pink with soft stone, fawn, and grey.

Lilac with the cold green tints of the same colors.

Lilac with some greens.

Maize and salmon with green

Scarlet with a slate tint.

Blue with rich dark claret brown.

Maize with blue.

White with olive green.

Green and blue do not harmonize, whatever the votaries of the present fashion may declare to the contrary. Even green leaves do not look well in the vicinity of blue flowers, unless they partake of the rich autumn tints of olive, yellow, and brown. Then the primitive colors, scarlet and yellow, kill each other; they give color, but not coloring; and yellow and green, scarlet and brown, or scarlet and lilac, are all equally injurious.

It must be remembered that strong contrasts

do not of themselves produce beauty; it is rather the delicate adjustment of the different shades. There are numberless varieties of every leading color—greens, whites, and reds especially. The following list may be serviceable:—

WHITE FLOWERS.—These may be shaded in any of the following colors: green, pure white, grey or slate. The choice depends on the color to be worked, the *Fleur de lis* requiring, for instance, to be shaded into green. In all the shades, however, the greatest softness is imperative. All sudden contrasts must be avoided.

Damask roses are worked in at least six shades; from black to a pure rose pink; the gradations include deep claret, lighter ditto, scarlet, and a medium shade between the last.

Ordinary roses are shaded from deep scarlet to bright ponceau, and various shades of pink.

The shades of greens, for leaves, are quite innumerable.

It is never in good taste to have a group of flowers on a light ground, without some one in the group to correspond with it. Not that it should be a prominent object but that it softens the whole.

Finally, I may be permitted to observe that, as "good wine needs no bush," so good needlework requires not very gaudy or striking mountings. A well designed *portfeuille* or cushion does not look at all better for being so extravagantly finished off, that the eye rests on the fittings rather than the work. Let cords, tassels, linings, &c., be as good as possible; let them also be *as plain as possible*. These are but the frame, the work is the picture; and the valuable part should be also the most attractive.

THE TIME TO MARRY.

BY J. BENNOCH.

The would-be wise this counsel give—

“Let love’s fond passion cool!

The man who early weds, will live

To think himself a fool.

The galling chain that frets his limbs,

Wears deeper day by day;

Experience little teaches him

Who gives the heart its way;

He wisely weds who weddeth late

A thrifty unimpassioned mate.”

When wrinkled oaks shall twining cling,

With tendrils like the vine;

When ravens like the linnet, sing

With melody divine;

When honey drops from wither’d leaves,

And not from Summer flowers;

When Winter brings us golden sheaves,

And snow-drift, sunny hours;

When truth abused makes falsehood right,

Go withering wed and find delight.

The trembling notes young birds awake

Rise sweetly into tune,

As April buds expanding make

The flowery wreath of June;

So love begun in life’s young day

Matures with manhood’s prime,

Defies the canker of decay,

And stronger grows with time;

Oh, early quaff love’s nuptial wine,

And all that’s best in life is thine.

MY EARLY FRIENDS.

BY LOTTIE LINWOOD.

My early friends! I have not one

With whom I played in childhood’s hour,

That speaks to me in friendship’s tone—

That twines for me affection’s flowers.

There are but few, a very few

But what have laid them down to rest;

And hands I long to clasp again,

Lie folded on a pulseless breast.

And when I think of early loves,

Those childish loves I prize and keep,

I am a child at heart once more—

I hide my face and wildly weep.

And were I but a child again,

I’d garner up each sinless love,

And bind them in a golden chain,

To draw me to the world above.

For ah, those childish loves were true;

And purer than in after years,

Which only light the lamp of Hope,

To dim it with eternal tears!