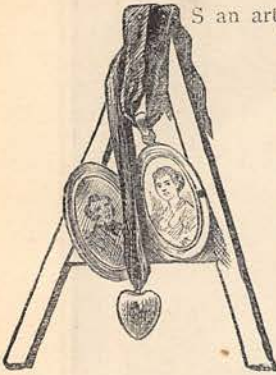


MINIATURE PAINTING FOR AMATEURS.



San art, miniature painting is not thought of much importance in the artistic world, evidently; there are no exhibitions specially for miniatures, and those exhibited at the Royal Academy are, I think, very rarely noticed by the newspaper and magazine critics.

I do not wish here to take up time and space in seeking and describing the reasons for this neg-

lect; my business in these pages is to give some information and encouragement to those amateurs who wish to study the art, and I will do so as clearly as possible.

One of the advantages of a miniature is the power you have of being able to carry it about with you; charming little cases are made for them, of various sizes and materials, with or without covers. An old lady of my acquaintance has a drawer full of miniatures of her relations and ancestors, and she says that it is one of her great amusements to have the drawer out and examine its contents one by one. Through being kept from the light, the colours are fresh and clear, very likely as much so as when they were painted.

The best material on which to paint miniatures is ivory. Painters have used both paper and parchment, but ivory, to my mind, is very superior, for several reasons; the chief being its delicate tone of colour. In all complexions there is yellow, and the colour of ivory being a deep cream-colour, it makes an excellent grounding. Pieces of ivory ready prepared for painting on are sold by artists' colourmen. In choosing your piece, be careful that it is all over of the same thickness, also that there are no stains or scratches; do not choose a large piece, the charm of a miniature being its small portable size; if it is beyond a certain size, you might just as well have an ordinary water-colour or oil painting.

There are several ways of getting the drawing on to the ivory. If you are very expert with your pencil, and quick at taking likenesses, you can at once draw from the life on the ivory; but it is a risky proceeding, as you should never have to "rub out" with bread-crumbs or india-rubber, the surface being apt, when treated thus, to become greasy, and it is then difficult, sometimes impossible, to paint on.

I think the best way is to make a careful drawing on a piece of white paper, exactly the same size that you wish it to be in the miniature; when the drawing is finished and corrected, go over it clearly with pen and ink, or a dark sharply-pointed pencil; then place the piece of ivory over the drawing, and hold them

both firmly against the window; the drawing will show through the ivory; take a fine brush charged with flesh-colour and draw on the ivory. There will be no need then for correction on the ivory, the drawing on it being quite the same as that on the paper.

You can if you like trace on the ivory with a lead-pencil, but it must be a very light one, as the black-lead is apt to mix afterwards with the colours placed over it, and a dirty appearance is thus caused.

I may here remark that work on a miniature must be very clean, the colours very clear, and brushes without any dust in them or hairs liable to get loose. A miniature is not painted for general effect only, to be looked at from a distance; it is meant to be held in the hand and closely examined.

Ivory being semi-transparent, it must be placed on several pieces of white paper, or the board on which it is painted will make it dirty or dingy-looking. The best way of managing this very important part of the work is as follows:—Cut three sheets of note-paper in half, gum them together at the top, place the piece of ivory on the top piece; gum it just at the upper rim, taking care that none flows down, as that will cause a smudgy appearance under the ivory. The ivory may reach to about half an inch of the top of the paper; through this half-inch pierce a drawing-pin, and thus fasten the whole firmly to the board; place a weight above for a few minutes to thoroughly flatten it, and then it will be ready for you to begin to work on. It is as well to have a palette with divisions, and to prepare sufficient colour to last for your morning's or afternoon's work as the case may be. Have by your side a little pot of refined gum, half a dozen brushes, and two pots of water.

Some people's idea about miniature painting is that it is entirely composed of stippling; that is a mistake; the result of beginning to stipple too soon is that the painting looks thin and dotted. As much as possible put on the required colour with small washes; a flat brush is very useful for backgrounds and smooth hair or the folds of drapery. Begin first by washing in the general tones of the skin; for a very fair complexion, pink madder and yellow ochre form a good mixture; for a dark complexion, light red, yellow ochre, and a touch of burnt sienna. Green sparingly used is useful for shadows, but the best ordinary shadow colour is cobalt, light red, and yellow ochre; you can always add to it what colour you find predominating in the parts you wish to paint. Sepia is a good colour to put into very dark shadows, but dark shadows should as far as possible be avoided in miniatures; the sitter should be in as full a light as is becoming.

Very fair hair is composed of yellow ochre, shadows sometimes brown and sometimes inclining to green. Half shut your eyes and, looking thus at your sitter, get the general tone of colour. It is impossible to put in every detail of it on so small a space as a piece of

miniature ivory. If approaching gold, a very slight thin touch of cadmium may be used. I am rather afraid of recommending this colour as it is so very intense, but it is a beautiful tint for golden hair when carefully used. Brown hair may be very well described with vandyke brown and sepia, shadows very often of a purple-brown; red hair, of burnt sienna with a touch of lake or ochre according to its hue, shadows very often purple.

These are for the first washes of the hair; for finishing, no doubt, other tints may be introduced; every person's hair has its individual character.

Some miniature painters often introduce objects into the background; I do not like the plan, as a rule, myself; I like all the interest and work to be centred in the face, and the background to be merely that tone of colour and of that degree of finish which will best throw up the face. For a fair person a greyish-blue background suits very well, for a dark person a greenish-grey one.

I will not hamper my readers with minute directions. They must make experiments for themselves, following as much as possible the broad rules I lay down.

It is difficult to paint the face of an old person. It is not possible to put in all the wrinkles which, of course, help to a great extent to show age. The small size of the miniature would prohibit such detail; you must choose a few of them and be careful not to put them in too strongly. Shadows in an old person's face often incline to purple. Grey hair is very well composed of Payne's grey; and white hair is often streaked with a soft yellowish hue. Hands and arms ought to be paler than the complexion of the face and more inclining to yellow, the nails of a pinky tint.

With a few more remarks I will end my paper, hoping that in a small way I may have helped to hinder the gradual decadence of miniature painting. Always leave the lights in the eyes, and then put a slight touch of Chinese white on the blank spaces left. In choosing the frame for your miniature be careful that the glass is clear and white, without flaw. Do not remove the white paper from the back of the ivory, but cut it with the ivory to the shape and size required, or the back of the frame will show duskily through. A little gum mixed with the dark colours and put in the shadows is a great improvement.

ARTISTIC FURNISHING FOR MODERN HOUSES.

MORE ABOUT THE DRAWING-ROOM.



HERE are still a few points about the drawing-room remaining to be considered, and one of the most important of them is that of lighting by artificial means. Some forty years ago, Edgar Allan Poe wrote a paper on the philosophy of furniture, in which he describes a room furnished in such a manner as to satisfy his ideal of perfection. Making allowance for the absence of mere technical knowledge,

and also for a little exaggeration in the direction of richness and magnificence, natural to his almost Oriental imagination, it is wonderful how he has by the sheer force of his artistic instinct, without (be it remembered) any sort of training in æstheticism, put his finger so unerringly on the principal blots in the style of decoration and furnishing then in vogue in New York, and without much difference on this side of the Atlantic. Thus, speaking of curtains, he says, "An extensive volume of drapery is under any circumstances irreconcilable with good taste;" of carpets, "The abomination of flowers or representations of well-known objects of any kind should not be endured within the limits of Christendom; of hanging pictures, "The tone of each picture is warm but dark. There are no 'brilliant effects.' *Repose* speaks in all. Not one is of small size. Diminutive paintings give that *spotty*

look to a room which is the blemish of so many a fine work of art overtouched." But it is upon the question of lighting the drawing-room that I especially wish to draw the reader's attention to a few sentences of his, which seem to me as applicable now, and to us on this side the Atlantic, as when he addressed them, so long ago, to American readers.

"Glare is a leading error in the philosophy of American household decoration, an error easily recognised as deduced from the perversion of taste just specified. We are violently enamoured of gas and of glass. The former is totally inadmissible within-doors. Its harsh and unsteady light offends; no one having both brains and eyes will use it. A mild or what artists term a cool light, with its consequent warm shadows, will do wonders for even an ill-furnished apartment. Never was a more lovely thought than that of the astral lamp. We mean, of course, the astral lamp proper, the lamp of Argand, with its original plain ground-glass shade, and its tempered and uniform moonlight rays. The cut-glass shade is a weak invention of the enemy. The eagerness with which we have adopted it, partly on account of its *flashiness*, but principally on account of its *greater cost*, is a good commentary on the proposition with which we began. It is not too much to say that the deliberate employer of a cut-glass shade is either radically deficient in taste, or blindly subservient to the caprices of fashion. The light proceeding from one of these gaudy abominations is unequal, broken, and painful. It alone is sufficient to mar a world of good effect in the furniture subject to its influence. Female loveliness, in especial, is more than one half disenchanted beneath its evil eye.

"In the matter of glass generally, we proceed upon false principles. Its leading feature is *glitter*—and in that one word how much of all that is detestable do we express! Flickering, unquiet lights are *sometimes* pleasing—to children and idiots always so—but in the embellishment of a room they should be scrupulously avoided. In truth, even strong *steady* lights are inadmissible. The huge and unmeaning glass chandeliers, prism-cut, gas-lighted, and without shade, which dangle in our most fashionable drawing-rooms, may be cited as the quintessence of all that is false in taste or preposterous in folly."

There can, I think, be little doubt that in homes of modest pretensions a good moderator lamp is the