TILE PAINTING AND DESIGNING.

FIG. 1.

FIG. 2.

POTTERY painting has become such a fashionable and, withal, useful occupation among women and girls that we need not preface our remarks upon tile-painting by any reference to the rudiments of pottery, or, as it is called, Ceramic painting, especially as that subject has been treated of in a former number of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER. We shall take it for granted that those who intend to apply this article practically have either a slight knowledge of pottery-painting, or will take the trouble to read the article in No. 22 of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER.

There is perhaps no branch of pottery-painting more useful than the one forming the subject of this article, for tile-painting, whether viewed from an artistic or practical point of view, must commend itself to art students and amateurs. Painted tiles can be put to all kinds of uses, many of which instinctively suggest themselves to the reader's mind. In many modern houses, fireplaces and chimney-pieces are often ornamented with tiles, usually printed ones; and, at a very small outlay of money, a girl with artistic capabilities might add to the interest, originality, and beauty of the room by painting some tiles in lieu of the printed ones, for anything done by hand is, from its very nature, so much more interesting than work turned out mechanically by a machine. In older houses, where no provision is made for tiles, and where the mantel-pieces are not beautiful adjuncts to the room (as they too often are not), accommodation can be made for tiles by having a casing made of deal to fit right over the stone mantel-piece, and fastened to the wall with brass plates and screws. The front of this casing will, of course, consist merely of a frame just wide enough to take the tiles, which can be kept in their place by beads. We have seen mantel-pieces so treated when the rooms have been repainted and done up, as the casing should be the same colour as the rest of the woodwork, and the effect is admirable and well worth the outlay, which is not great. An accessory, such as a tile fireplace, gives an unique appearance to a room, and stamps it with an air of originality; and, considering the facilities for fostering various arts such as the present one, which a generation ago did not exist, no houses where there are girls with a little leisure and talent should be wanting these artistic accessories. Indeed, it has been one of the chief aims of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER to familiarise its readers with some of the useful and beautiful arts, so that they may employ their spare time profitably to themselves by adding to the charms of their homes by their own work. Many people, especially dwellers in towns, have window-boxes to hold flowers and plants, and these are usually fitted with tiles, as earthenware is capable of resisting exposure to the weather better than any other material. It is hardly necessary to add that this affords a splendid opportunity for the display of artistic talent, and one we hope our readers will avail themselves of. The frame is made of iron, wood being clumsy and liable to decay, and there are several places in London where these are made at a moderate cost. Measure the width of the window, and paint your tiles accordingly. If you cannot get an exact number of tiles, you must have one cut. Let the man who makes the frame-work have the tiles when *painted*, and he will fit them in their place. It should be borne in mind that it is

FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

FIG. 5.

better to have the frame made to the tiles, as, if the tiles are painted afterwards, there is more danger of them not fitting. Small boxes for standing in a room or on the table, just large enough to take a flower-pot, also afford opportunities for utilising your work. These, again, can be made after the fashion of the flower-boxes, each side being made to receive a tile. Eight-inch tiles are better for these boxes, six-inch ones being rather small. Wood could be employed in this case for the framework, and girls who have brothers with a turn for carpentering might get them to make them. It is surprising what people can do when they set earnestly to work, and by brothers and sisters joining in a kind of working partnership they would materially help each other to be useful. Many boys are quite expert carpenters, and yet too often spend their time in making useless boxes and rabbit-hutches, when, with a little stimulus and directing advice, they might manufacture some useful and ornamental articles. Teapot stands are things which are not difficult to make, and with a nicely-painted tile in them, form admirable presents. Some black picture moulding does admirably for framing the tile, and with four small nobs at the bottom corners, completes a most useful article for the tea-table.

Wash-stand bricks are often fitted with tiles, and, in fact, we might stay to enumerate their various uses, to the exclusion of more important matters; but we will pass on to other considerations. Having seen some of the uses tiles can be put to, we will just consider what are their advantages from a technichal point of view. To begin with, a tile is the best possible article to attempt when beginning pottery-painting, for this reason, that the surface is flat and the size not too large. Vases and plaques, besides requiring careful designing and arranging, are difficult to paint, owing to the shape of their surfaces, whereas a tile is no more difficult than a piece of paper, and is almost as portable. Then, again, the price is not formidable. Tiles can be purchased at china shops, and also of the tile makers, who have warehouses in London, and are to be had of the following sizes: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 inches, at prizes ranging from 4d. up to 5s., the 12-inch tiles being very expensive in comparison with the smaller sizes. They can also be had buff, cream, and green, as well as pure white. The most useful sizes we may mention are 6 and 8 inches. For panels and large subjects the design is painted on a number of tiles put together; they are then burnt, and are afterwards cemented and the joins coloured over. This is the only way big subjects can be executed, it being impossible to make large slabs of earthenware.

It will be seen that tiles are admirably adapted for learning upon, as, even if a few are spoilt at first, no great loss is entailed, and requiring, as they do, a very simple treatment, are the first steps to more ambitious works.

We now come to the question of the style of design most suitable for tiles, and, in order to better illustrate this part of our subject, we have given several illustrations to elucidate the text: seeing what ought to be done is far better than being told what to do. It will be noticed that in all the designs given none of them are absolutely pictorial, all of them being decorative or conventional. By pictorial is meant a drawing made direct from nature, without any modification whatever, whereas in all the designs given there is a certain amount of *design*—an arrangement and balance of form which would not be the case if the drawing were made straight from nature. In the design of lilies it will be readily seen that a certain selection has been made, so that the flowers shall not all grow on one side, as often happens in nature. In fact, the design shows how a pot of lilies *might* grow under very favourable conditions, and not as they usually bloom. And this selection not only refers to the several parts of one plant—choosing the most suitable specimen and complete of it—but also in selecting plants whose forms are beautiful and whose growth is not too complicated. A daisy would, for these reasons, be far more adapted for a tile than the rarest orchids, for there is a simple beauty and symmetry in the common English flower sadly wanting in the exotic plant.

Draw everything from nature as far as possible, and choose English plants in preference to foreign ones. Our wild flowers alone offer an inexhaustible mine of ideas and suggestions which might well occupy the longest life. Follow nature with a loving carefulness, noting all the marked characteristics of every plant, for the essential qualities of a good design are to give the *chief* facts

FIG. 6.

about the plant you elect to base your design upon. In drawing a lily, for example, let us first note the characteristics of the flower, which we find to be six petals, three large and three small, arranged alternately, so that when looking full at the flower it presents the appearance of two triangles overlapping each other, six stamens and one pistil; and if we impress these simple facts on our mind we shall never fall into the mistake, by no means uncommon, of making a lily with only five petals, such a flower being unknown. In the leaves, again, we notice they are shaped somewhat like a long slender lance-head, and grow around the main stem in a spiral; the veins traverse the length of the leaf, or parallel, as it is termed in botany, and do not branch off to the right and left from the centre vein as in the apple.

We have given these particulars of the lily in order to show how plant-form should be drawn when the drawings are to be used afterwards in designing. It is this quality of careful observation which produces good work, and we should always recommend the student before putting pencil to paper to make, as it were, a mental inventory of the plant to be drawn, to avoid the many mistakes which are inadvertently made while the drawing is in progress, and also to impress the plant on the memory so that on a future occasion the student would be able to know whether the design that was being painted was correct with nature. It is astonishing, if we look at nature *only cursorily, how soon* we forget the broad facts about the commonest flowers, even, say, to the number of petals in a wild rose; whereas if we take the trouble to impress these particulars upon our minds it would make our work much more truthful than it is—a quality Ruskin so much admires.

We now come to consider the plants which are most suitable for tile designs, for, next to drawing accurately from nature, it is necessary to make the most suitable use of our drawings. The plant always ought to bear some relation to the size and shape of the tile to be painted. It would be as absurd to choose a sunflower for a six-inch tile, as to attempt to fill out a twelve-in. with a small flower like the sorrel, or to select a flower like the daisy for the panel of a mantel-piece. As a broad rule it is better to draw tile designs the size of nature rather than enlarge or reduce a flower to the requisite dimensions. Nature has made each flower in proportion, she has given every flower its most appropriate size, and by reducing a large flower we are apt to get a cramped, as in enlarging a small one, a coarse, effect. For a six-inch tile select flowers such as the marsh marigold or dandelion, as in figs. 1 and 2, and for a tall panel such plants as the lily, iris, foxglove, and any other whose growth naturally fills out the space. But as our illustrations will help this part of our subject better than words can, we will append a few notes explanatory of the cuts.

In figs. 1 and 2, drawn from the marsh marigold and dandelion respectively, we have plants which fill out the space without reduction or enlargement, and as there are dozens of other wild and cultivated flowers about the same size as these, we can give endless variety to our tiles. Fig. 1 is helped by a suggestion of water as a background, which might be done in blue to give a quaint effect just as in fig. 2 there is an indication of grass to suggest growth, and give the design a more complete appearance. These designs could be worked with dark backgrounds, but are, perhaps, more effective as they stand.

Figs. 3 and 4 require little comment. Founded on *two well-known* plants, the water buttercups and shortia (a plant used extensively in gardens for borders), they require much the same treatment as our two last designs. Blue-green backgrounds look effective, as both flowers are white with pale yellow centres.

In fig. 5 we have attempted to show how the lily might be treated for a fireplace, and also to show how to combine conventionality and quaintness with natural form. The panel is formed of four 8-inch tiles, and makes an admirable space for the plant, being in good proportion. The background might be a rich blue, with an edging of basket-work also in blue. The leaves should be nice tones of green, inclining to browns and olives towards base, as the lower leaves of the lily are often quite red, even when the plant is flowering. The flowers should be shaded with a greenish grey, and a slight wash of pale yellow obviates the crude appearance the pure white might have.

Fig. 6 illustrates a part of our subject touched on previously, viz., selecting appropriate flowers for the space to be painted. Flowers such as the narcissus, daffodil, jonquil, with their long, straight leaves, form charming panels. We have seen small fire-screens, each leaf containing one of such panels, decorated with tiles, and exceedingly well they look in a room.

(*To be concluded.*)

INFANT CLASS TEACHING.

I HAVE occasionally heard the remark that a lady is not a sufficiently good teacher to be entrusted with an elder class, but that she "will do for the infants."

Poor infants! Of all the classes in the Sunday-school they are the most dependent on the skill of the teacher. As a general rule they cannot read, and therefore all the information they receive is from her lips. Yet frequently a teacher who has neither the knack of gaining their attention, nor the still rarer aptitude of pleasantly imparting information, is allowed to take this important post.

The first requirement is that the teacher should be able to speak simply, use easy words, and be brief. These characteristics are by no means common. It is far easier to get involved in long complicated sentences than it is to use simple pointed language. No one accustomed to speaking will doubt that it is much easier to give a long address than a short one; as a parcel carelessly packed will probably be much larger than one on the packing of which some care has been expended. But however much extra trouble in preparation it involves it is absolutely essential that the lesson should be *short*.

This then is the first requisite—careful arrangement of subject matter, so as to avoid repetition or unnecessary enlargement.

Another essential is variety. A good infant-class teacher will notice it the moment the attention of her scholars begins to flag. This will sometimes happen even though the lesson be both short and interesting. If she is wise she will stop speaking at once, and let the audience do something else for a little while. Standing up while they repeat a single verse of a hymn will often be sufficient, but if they have been sitting still for some time it is better to have a rather longer change. Even the most fidgetty ones can generally be quieted by singing a hymn, marking the time by clapping their hands; they will then go back to the lesson with renewed interest.

In schools where a suitable room can be reserved for the infants it is customary in the middle of the afternoon to let them march round as they sing, either in single file or two or three abreast; but in rooms where this is impracticable they should have as much change of position as possible by standing up to sing or repeat verses, clapping hands or beating time in any other way. Children never sit still many minutes at a time, and cannot be expected to do so at the Sunday-school.

Each teacher generally has a favourite method of her own for teaching texts and hymns. In many classes boxes of letters are provided, with a frame into which the words are fixed; but blackboards interest the children quite as much, if not more. I cannot speak too strongly of the advantage of using the blackboard frequently; it interests the children far more than any pictures and printed texts which they have not seen in the process of making. By attracting the eye the subject is impressed upon the mind more firmly than it would be by hours of talking.

In teaching a text by means of a blackboard the children should be allowed to spell the words, telling the teacher what letter to put next, and occasionally what shape it is, and how to make it, and correcting her when she intentionally puts in a wrong letter. The teacher should be careful that the children thoroughly understand the meaning of the words and the general lesson it conveys. It is better to spend two or three afternoons over one verse than to send them away knowing only the words.

The text is sometimes written on the blackboard somewhat in the form of an acrostic, thus—

Thy is a unto my feet.

Or the principal points of the lesson may be introduced in conjunction with the text.

GOD
is a very present
H earing our
E very cry,
L oving us,
P itying us
in time of trouble.

A new hymn may with advantage be written on the blackboard also; but it is most important to find out, by questioning, how much of it the children understand. It is a good plan to talk to them about the subject before repeating the words, and if possible tell them a story to illustrate it. This part of the teaching is quite as important as the lesson proper, and is much more likely to be remembered, particularly if the hymn is afterwards sung to a lively catching tune; but how *little attention* is paid by many teachers to the understanding of the words is easily seen by listening to the singing of an ordinary infant class; the children will keep more or less to the tune, but the words they sing make utter nonsense, and are often extremely ridiculous. I heard a class of girls the other day singing a Christmas hymn with a refrain, something about the shepherds "watching the sheep," but a girl near whom I was standing persisted in singing all through that the shepherds were "washing the sheets," which, to say the least of it, spoilt the poetic idea.

I must enter a protest, too, against teaching little children hymns describing the deepest

FIG. 5.

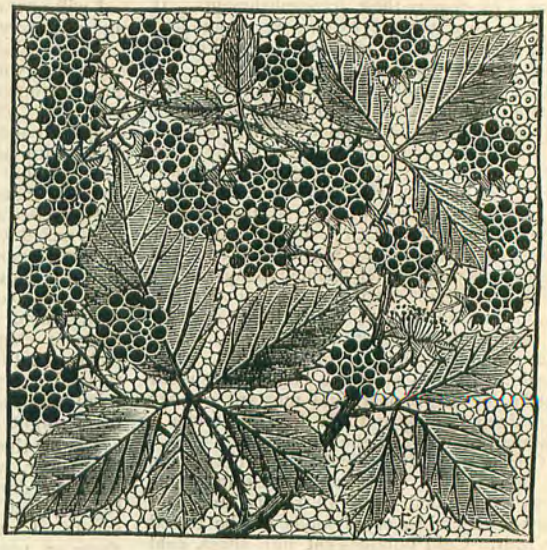

FIG. 6.

FIG. 9.

FIG. 10.

TILE-PAINTING AND DESIGNING.

TAKING into consideration the number of our readers who are learning the art of pottery painting, we think it will be useful to them if we supply a few additional designs to those published on pages 728 and 729 of this magazine.

Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8 are drawn from shrubs instead of flowers, as in the first four illustrations, and are treated rather more conventionally. Figs 5 and 6 are "autumnal" tiles, founded on the maple and the blackberry. The tone of colour should be rich and warm, yellows, reds, and browns predominating. The leaves might be put in in washes of colour, and the veins taken out before dry with the point or brush handle. Figs. 7 and 8 might be painted in blue, single colour tiles looking very well. In fact, blue is essentially a tile colour, for in very old houses the fireplaces were tiled round almost invariably with blue Dutch tiles. A design for blue treatment should be clear, well-defined, and nicely balanced, and should be effective, without elaboration or high finish. Fig. 8, drawn from the traveller's joy, is a plant eminently adapted to this treatment, the curves of the leaves and stems being highly ornamental.

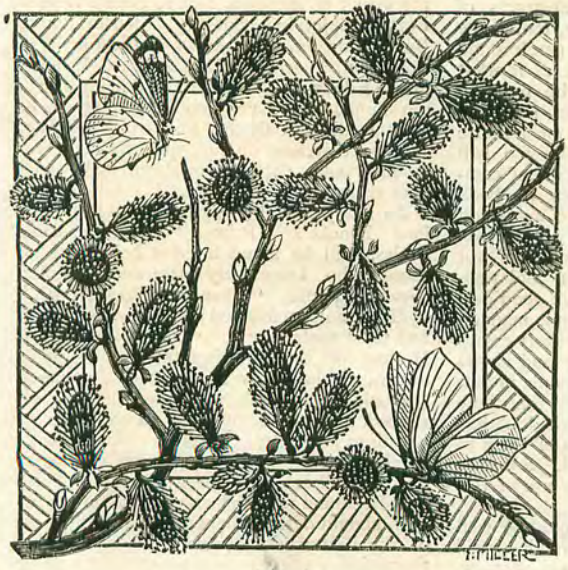

FIG. 7.

Fig. 7 is founded on the palm, and requires no further comment.

In figs. 9 and 10 we have panels formed of two six-inch tiles, such panels being suitable for being worked up with ornamental tiles at top and bottom to form the sides of fireplaces. Fig. 10 is a figure of Autumn drawn in a *tily* manner, and could be worked in blue or colours. Symbolical figures of the seasons, arts, and sciences, &c., are usually chosen for tiles, as it gives a *motif* to decoration.

In fig. 11 we have an oblong tile panel, and it is suggestive of how such spaces can be treated. The wild rose supporting the head in centre is quite ornamental in character, the stems being made to assume a scroll form, and the colouring should, therefore, not be too natural. The head in centre, a portrait of Raphael, might likewise be painted in soft tones of colour. A panel such as this would be suitable for the top of a mantel-piece, and if several panels were required the head might be changed while retaining the same ornament. We may here recommend our readers to study Japanese painted pottery whenever they have an opportunity, as they, of all nations, are the most successful Ceramic artists. While being wonderfully true to nature they infuse a quaintness and variety in all their designs which gives their work that uniqueness which is so desirable in all artistic effort. It is for this reason we have gone to some pains to endeavour, and we trust with success, to show the sort of designs most suitable for tile painting. To place any design on a tile without method or thought cannot be considered art, no matter how well the individual thing may be executed. It is in filling out the tile appropriately, so that the lines shall flow gracefully, and the masses be well balanced, that we produce worthy designs.

FIG. 8.

Of course in a short article like this it is impossible to leave nothing unsaid that may further the subject under consideration, and all we can therefore hope to do is to set the reader thinking, and also direct the thoughts in the proper channel; so that a clear idea may be kept before the mind of what one ought to do, as all after success depends almost wholly on a right beginning.

FRED MILLER.

FIG. 11.