

MOTIVES FROM OLD JAPANESE EMBROIDERIES FOR ENGLISH NEEDLEWORKERS.

By GLEESON WHITE.



FIG. 1.

THE true lover of Japanese art is in no way depressed by the mournful plaint of the dealers in cheap bric-a-brac, when they assure him that the Japanese style is going out of fashion. They certainly choose a curiously inapt moment for their prediction. For just recently it would seem as if English *cognoscenti* were at last beginning to awake to the real masterpieces of the art of Japan. The gallery at the British Museum, recently filled with a superb array of hanging pictures (*Kakemonos*); the printed books on view in the King's Library of the same building; the magnificent loan collection of lacquer and pottery now displayed at South Kensington Museum, and the various exhibitions in different Bond Street galleries, devoted to *kakemonos*, *surimono*s, *netsukés*, sabre-guards, and fine lacquer, hardly indicate declining interest in Japanese art.

What may possibly be true is, that the inferior rubbish produced in Japan for a special class of buyers,

the fine art (?) displayed with the other odds and ends at a cheap drapery store, and the libellous imitations of the true decoration upon English-made articles, are at last beginning to pall upon the taste (?) of the general public.

The thought that this view may indeed be true is entirely pleasant. For when the fickle goddess of fashion patronises an art, it is usually a deadly influence against its well-being. The people whose tastes are guided by mere fashion rarely attempt to think for themselves, and welcome either a disrespectful parody or a cheap and brutal imitation of the genuine stuff with equal

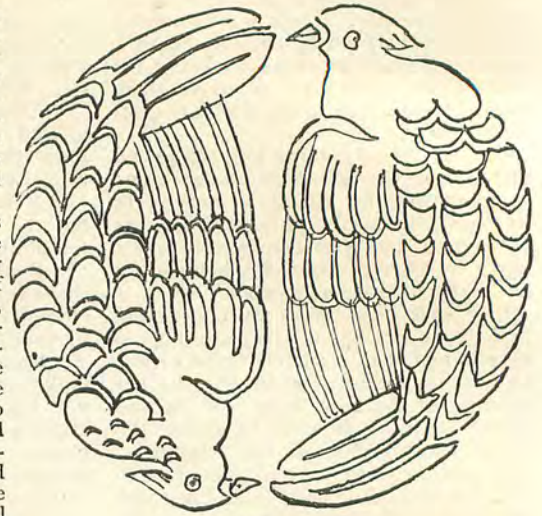


FIG. 4.



FIG. 3.

a populace with the instinct for beauty, the outcome of the hereditary legend of centuries, can be losing that innate feeling for colour and design which has hitherto betrayed itself in all they touched, from the least to the greatest; yet it is too true that the sudden invasion of Western ideas has evidently disorganised their taste, and left them, for a time at least, in a mood to produce degraded work that would have been simply impossible some few years ago.

Again, it is a matter for regret that the Japanese marvels, in all the plenitude of their beauty, reached our shores too late in this century to secure the sympathy of the author of "Modern Painters." It is an acquired taste for the English public to believe in an art critic at all, but when they do their unanimity is wonderful; and had Mr. Ruskin, in the days when his pen was always ready to champion a new crusade for beauty, chanced to hap upon some of the treasures of old Japan, there can be little doubt but that the master would have exploited its beauties, and that the mass of English people to-day would have had, if not very knowledge, at least some adequate regard for Japanese



FIG. 2.

avidity, not concerning themselves at all whether it be a real work of art or a ghastly caricature of the same, so long as it be "the mode" to possess examples.

During the Japanese craze that has found so many followers, it is sad to observe how few, comparatively speaking, cared in the slightest degree for the art so freely lavished by that most artistic of all people—the quick-brained and deft-fingered Japs. For if any land ever had a population of artists, in the true sense, it is surely Japan. Whether, alas! owing to Western immigration one ought not to use the past tense in speaking of this, is indeed doubtful, for while it is impossible to believe that



FIG. 5.



FIG. 6.

art—some recognition that a great and living school of artists imparted dignity to the things they are apt to regard merely as interesting curios and bric-a-brac. As it is, it is depressing to see cultured people, who would turn in disgust from a cheap oleograph after a great master's work, and disdain a clumsy forgery of a piece of *Capo di Monti* ware, quietly accept the most evident burlesque of Oriental art, if it be but labelled Japanese. For a vast amount of the lacquer and pottery now sold—whether made in Japan itself or not, matters little—is unmitigated rubbish, produced for the lowest class of fancy goods dealers in the European market, and, as art, barely up to the level of the legion of worthless trifles that flood the commonest of our London bazaars. This plentiful supply of inferior stuff has confused the popular appreciation. At a show at the Fine Art Society's rooms one saw magnificent pieces of old lacquer passed, with the comment, "How odd they should show these glove boxes, just like one gets in the shops!" Yet the people who uttered such banal criticism would have been shocked to pass the Blenheim Raphael with the remark that it was a copy

of a Christmas card they had already seen, or to sneer at a Greek marble because itinerant Italians had hawked about bad plaster casts from it.

But more than all the factors that have helped to degrade Japanese art in the estimation of many, is beyond doubt the atrocious burlesque of its design, scattered broadcast as "Anglo-Japanese." To many worthy people any ornament placed in a lop-sided, diagonal fashion becomes at once "Japanese." If its details are apparently of chopped patchwork, arranged by a lunatic, with a casual stork here and there, and a few English bulrushes, nobody could persuade them to doubt its authenticity. The terrible eccentricities of American type-founders, whereby concert programmes, tradesmen's cards, and dozens of otherwise respectable placards have an eruption of nasty little bits of ornament (a fan, a stork, or a vase placed on a flight of stairs, that are governed

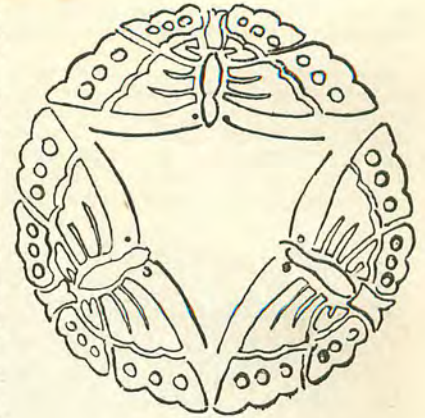


FIG. 8.

by neither rhyme nor reason) are still more serious offences in the same direction.

Yet it is true enough that design in the West is a dead language, its best utterances but scholarly and refined echoes from schools once living, but now sleeping or dead. Whether Classic or Romantic art inspire the decorator to-day, his works as a rule are based upon styles that grew and ripened to maturity long years ago. But the art of design in Japan is, or was but yesterday, in full vigour of life, producing beautiful patterns and lovely ornaments inspired only by nature, and speaking as a vital sentient art that, if it never reached the supreme dignity of the frieze of the Parthenon, or found a great architectural expression like the Mediaeval cathedrals of Europe, is yet in its own way as noble a style as any the world has seen.

But excepting a very small section of artists and a smaller proportion of the public, it would seem that Design is an art that fails to interest them. Of course they like "pretty" patterns, but, as a rule, they admire them for their pictorial effect, not for their harmony of colour and composition of lines, which are the main features of design. So now that Japanese ideas have lost their novelty, they have thereby lost their one saving virtue to a modern, and

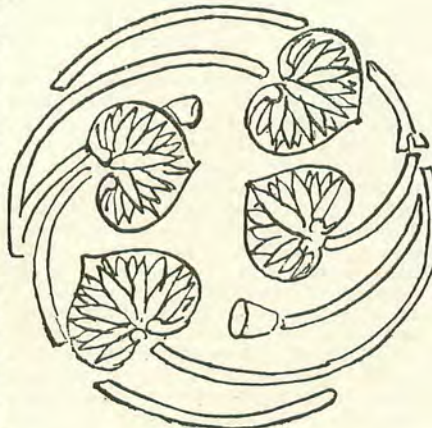


FIG. 7.



FIG. 9.

may pass unregretted to the dustheap of oblivion, for all their once passionate devotees care.

That popular admiration of Japanese trifles has had nothing to do with a liking for their intrinsic beauty is easily proved. Take, for example, the average treatment of a palm-leaf fan. This pretty screen, sold for one or two pence, is, in its natural state, a thing of great beauty, exquisite in colour, in lines, and in

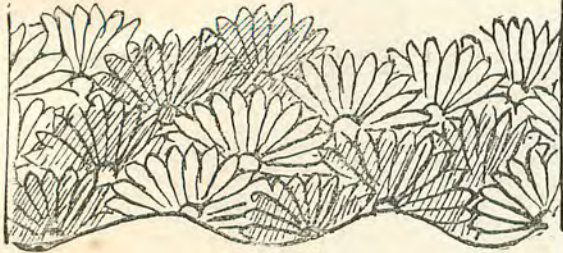


FIG. 10.

texture—as lovely in its own way as a piece of carved stone ornament with the Greek honeysuckle wrought thereon at the best period of Classic art; but to this simple thing, entirely exquisite in its untouched state, they bring some Aspinall's enamel (also an excellent thing in its right place), some ribbons, some plush and fringe, and even, perhaps, some gruesome artificial flowers. Then they bedaub the fan with colour, crumple it into a hideous shape, and "drape" it with hideous millinery, until the result—"a wall-pocket tidy"—is a sheer horror to anyone with a grain of feeling for beauty, and an insult to anyone with the least smattering of knowledge in the arts. No savage tribe could parallel the ghastly thing that began life so sweetly as a thing of beauty, and ends it as a vile dust-collector.

This is an extreme case, but a very common one. The monstrosities of bamboo tripods and brackets, wherein are set panels of cheap lacquer; the vulgar china, made after the taste of decadent French Third Empire, and gilded in a way no true Japanese would dream of enriching his work, show that, at the fountain-head, vulgar people are sully the clear stream of the arts of Japan.

The windows of the crockery shops show dozens of ghastly examples of ill-digested study of Japanese art. For absolute unloveliness, a commonplace tea or dinner service with a printed design, in what everybody (not a native of Japan) agrees to call the Japanese style, may be set against the worst examples of any former period, and yet keep its place as distinctly inferior to any.

In spite of the Schools of Design, or of the really fine work shown at the Art and Craft

and arrogates to itself all sorts of spurious dignity and sham culture.

It may be, of course, that the transition period has arrived, and that the frantic efforts to be artistic will in time secure the result they profess to attempt; but this can only be when the simple laws of good ornament are generally recognised—not as admirable maxims for text-books, but as real motives for everyday application. When we read a Bradshaw we obey its direct teaching, and do not insist upon a modified form of a train table for our own purpose. Yet, for the sake of symmetry, to alter all the dates of the starting of its trains, so that they read as pretty arithmetical patterns, would hardly more fully destroy the use of that unpoetic daily manual, than taking a useful article and crowding it with false ornament destroys its fitness for use. In neither case would

an attempt to improve succeed, for whether it be a thing for a cottage or a castle—a milk-stool for use by a dairy-maid, or a casket to hold a queen's diadem—directly the so-called ornament hinders the common use of the thing decorated, or adds a spurious prettiness to the original by such entirely needless adornment, the milk-stool or casket becomes less, not more, beautiful by the false decoration.

In considering any branch of Japanese art, to fully appreciate its plethora of beauty, it is as well to touch upon the vital principles of decoration—those underlying qualities that are equally observed in good examples of the Classic or Romantic schools alike, and equally ignored and contradicted by bad ornament of any style or period. To regard the naturalistic art of the Japanese as merely another pretty method of decorating trifles is to do it a gross injustice. For the Japanese craftsman, never in the past—and even at the present far more rarely than his Western brother workers—forgets the true canons of decoration.

It is curious to note how completely the convention of modern civilisation crushes out the natural instinct for the right use of ornament. From the basket-work, the carving of weapons, or the war canoes of savage tribes, to the gorgeous complexity of the Alhambra, or the elaborate detail of the Taj Mahal, we find ornament applied logically and well. But with our modern refinement so-called, we apparently aim solely at vulgar display. The masses appear to have lost all sense of the gulf that yawns between the treatment of a picture and an ornamented surface, and to think that all decoration should be pictorial imitation. They confuse entirely the true

Now pictures, however good, simply stuck on to the work, be it the most simple thing or a vast and ornate structure, are in no sense decoration. If good, they have all their interest in themselves, and owing nothing to the object to which they are applied, neither do they help really to beautify it. If bad in themselves, and as pictures it is hardly likely that really fine art will be lavished upon the decoration of any object, they are still more evidently misapplied skill.

The sprays of Fig. 1 show how easily the designer has followed the natural appearance of the form, and yet with very little conventional treatment has brought them easily and with naïve simplicity to fill the prescribed place. In Fig. 2 three leaves (of the maiden-hair spleenwort, apparently, or a plant of kindred growth) are set like the three legs on a Manx coin, and yet yield a fresh idea of great beauty and immense value as ornament. Fig. 3 is the most typically Japanese design I have dared to quote; the fine flower forms, irregularly dispersed with the conventional waves, according to their usual symbol when employed by this people, give a motive of great charm. Simple as it is, it would take a great master of decoration to beat it, in its own way; the effect of a few such groups dotted over a piece of satin or other material would be at once reticent and splendid.

The refined accomplishment of the Eastern artist shows strongly in this design. Fig. 4, well adapted for use on a large scale for coarse appliqué work, is more humorous than any yet chosen. In spite of their essentials being simplified, their bird forms are truer to nature than many a more finished attempt. The grouping, obvious though it is, leaves the round they create capable for use in any position, and in the whole effect of a curtain (for example) powdered with these, would seem only a series of circular ornaments with no effusive demonstration of their subject, which reveals itself only upon more detailed inspection. The flower, Fig. 5, is valuable as an example of the way leaves and flowers can be treated for appliqué or embroidery. A skilful worker could design miles of pattern from this one motive, and proves (when you are shown the way, whether to make an egg stand by a Columbus, or to invent a new decoration by a Japanese) how easily any flower could be made decorative and conventional in similar fashion. Fig. 6 is another version of the motive that inspired No. 4, but in this the birds are still more simplified, to become almost an unmeaning mass of dots and lines, and yet by a happy touch are not untrue to nature. Fig. 7 is a charming arrangement of leaves and seed-vessels. Fig. 8 will be found useful either as a circular ornament, or with its three component parts used separately or rearranged in other ways.

The wisteria in Fig. 9 is treated in its natural colours in the print from which it was traced; but a not dissimilar one reproduced in *Artistic Japan* had its pendulous clusters of bloom in different colours. The form is so akin to the laburnum, that with no special incongruity it might be coloured after the scheme of that flower, if preferred; or even, if used for a long border, made up of both the lilac and the yellow blossoms varied at the will of the worker.

In Fig. 10 a motive, ordinary although it be, is made fresh by its treatment; the flowers are in white and a golden yellow (the shaded ones), and arranged in diagonal lines to form a border. The charm of this dainty pattern is lost in the black and white, but on a soft French grey ground its beauties are not easy to over-estimate. Figs. 11a, 11b, and 12 all show various treatments of the circle, and are (I believe) crests of the *Daimios*, from the Japanese equivalent to Burke's "Peirage."

(To be continued.)



FIG. 11A.



FIG. 11B.



FIG. 12.

Exhibitions; in spite of the good taught by William Morris, Walter Crane, and dozens of others, the popular taste for ornament to-day is hardly better than five-and-twenty years since, for then it was generally at its worst, but innocently vulgar and unpretentious in its triviality. Now, while too often no whit better in its design, and neither fit nor sufficient in the object it professes to beautify—the crude and vulgar ornament labels itself "Art,"

nature of ornament. As a popular lecturer has put it, it should express the joy of the workman in his work. Having laboured to the extent of his ability to make his work neat, strong, and admirably fit for its future purpose, he is loth to let the object of so much care go from his hands, until with a few scrolls here, a bit of carving on this feature, or a painted decoration on that surface, he has made his finished work beautiful beyond its actual need.

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PART II.

THE old advice to ornament your construction, not construct your ornamentation, is good. To design a house it is a foolish, if not an uncommon, policy, to draw a "pretty" façade and then make the internal arrangements fit it by hook or by crook, or to embroider lavishly a piece of silk, and then make it into a cushion or antimacassar solely to display the decoration it carries.

The amount of ornament to be employed is another matter entirely. A bowl of rough pottery adorned with a few incised lines may be as thoroughly decorated thereby as a bowl of jewelled Satsuma ware, a miracle of labour, involving the highest skill, and employing years to produce; either may be equally perfect of its sort. But to take the rough pottery bowl, and paint, more or less badly, a poppy, a wheat-ear, and a corn-cockle, all growing from one stem, and treated as a picture with cast shadows, is to ruin the original beauty of the rough pottery—to ruin the effect of the painting if it be good; and to merely destroy the effect of both the object it professes to adorn, and the applied decoration itself.

A picture on a coalscuttle may be—it is not likely, but it is safe to grant it as possible, for the sake of argument—a good picture in every respect, but if good as a picture, it is out of place helping to adorn a coalscuttle. A painted conventional ornament would serve the purpose of adornment far better, and the panel itself simply moulded, and well worked in its mechanical details, be probably far more beautiful without any extraneous ornament, since the rough purpose implied in such a thing makes it absurd when adorned with the delicacy of ornament that would be entirely suitable to a fan, or a piece of pottery intended chiefly for display.

There can be no question that conventional treatment of natural forms is the basis of all good ornament, and that any attempt to produce realistic imitations of flowers or landscape is almost certain to destroy the fitness of the decoration. Even in styles where the details are perilously near the limit that separates ornamental adjuncts from sculpture and painting, as, for example, in Raphael's decorations of the loggia of the Vatican, the whole arrangement of the details is purely conventional and arbitrary; and while a master may once and again employ realistic detail with success, nothing short of absolute genius prevents the effect being unsatisfactory. Imagine the beautiful carvings of the crowning period of English Gothic, the choir of Lincoln Cathedral, coloured to imitate veritable flowers and foliage!

For, in spite of modern practice to the contrary, the history of the arts shows clearly that good decoration must needs be a conventional, not an imitative, study of Nature. This broad rule cannot be insisted upon too strongly; but to say that if the ornament is conventional therefore it is good, is a

reductio ad absurdum. It has been said by a cynical wit that the first requisite of a successful designer was to learn how not to draw. And this epigram, if but a joke, shows clearly the effect of conventional ornament that is in itself bad upon an outsider. But other things being equal, for surface ornamentation it is absolutely necessary to forego some of the requirements of a picture; and the decoration that has voluntarily abandoned all pictorial aim will be found the best.

The skill of the Japanese in carrying a naturalistic treatment of ornament close to the limits where it becomes pictorial, and yet just escaping that crowning sin against the proprieties of decoration, can hardly be overpraised; but this triumph is achieved in a way that, easy as it looks, is full of pitfalls to their would-be imitator. To take a single instance—the Western idea of perspective cannot give those subtle hints of landscape and distance, and yet preserve the flatness that is all-important in ornamental design.

This objection to implied relief is specially to be insisted on in connection with embroidery. If you study the best work of any school, you will find that beyond the faintest indication of shading to emphasise a form, no effort has been made to secure the effect of the round;

for a pattern that apes high relief is as objectionable as a portrait that is apparently one flat plane. It may be taken as a safe general rule that surface ornament should never destroy the plane of the object it adorns. On a wall or a carpet we do not require the apparent distance that is the property of a picture, but prefer the feeling of the surface itself to any suggestion of space or distance beyond it.

And the rules that govern decoration generally, apply with added force to embroidery, for while the larger palette of a painter, and the possibility of blending colour by imperceptible degrees, gives him the power to achieve absolute success, the limited colour, and still more the mosaic surface whereby each colour can only touch, not melt into another, at once renders ideal treatment an impossi-

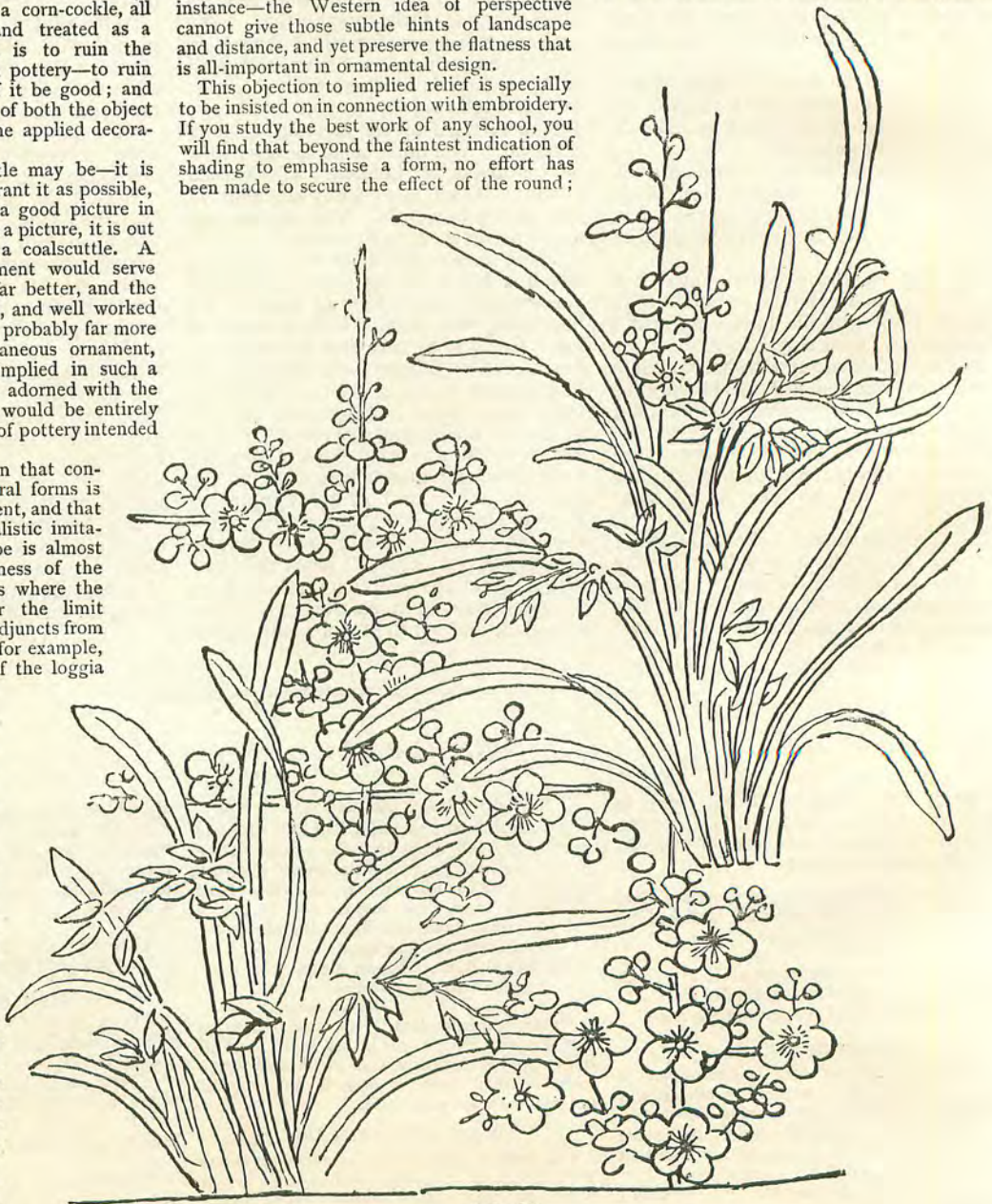


FIG. 13.

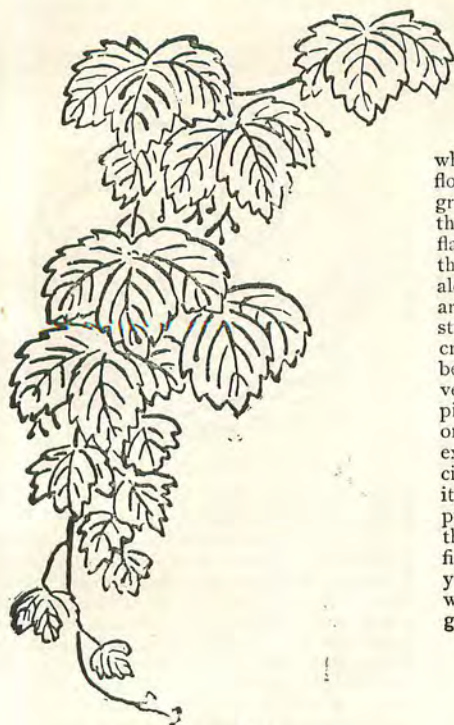


FIG. 14.

bility. As the painter is stayed by his impotence to reproduce actual light, so the failure to blend shades of colour must stay the artist in needlework.

This teaching, if true, is trite enough to-day; every manual insists upon it, every theorist proclaims it, but judging by results, not one in a thousand attempts to carry the excellent theory into practice. True the influence of the Aesthetic movement brought people to realise the charm of conventional art, but the followers imitated only the actual examples, and did their best to introduce as much realistic detail as possible, so that the design which in the hands of its creator was consistent and of one school, became a feeble compromise in the hands of its imitators.

A sunflower was well adapted for conventional treatment, consequently a sunflower was supposed to be a magic symbol; and whether treated with all the attempted naturalism of the old school or not, concerned them little; if it was a sunflower, it was correct, and that sufficed.

In needlework, advanced people shudder at the monstrosities of the old Berlin wool-work;



FIG. 15.

and the pictorially treated groups of flowers were certainly bad enough. But crewels to-day are capable of crimes quite as deadly. Under the imprimatur of a society with "Royal" and "Art" in its title, one has seen a spray bent in a meaningless curve, from whose stem grew a red poppy, a blue cornflower, and a yellow wheat-ear, with emerald green leaves, in shape a happy combination of the foliage of the three. Three daisy blooms flattened out with five flat green leaves, like the fingers on an open hand, dotted at intervals along a border, is certainly a shade nearer good art than the cabbage roses shaded in square stitches of the Berlin wool régime, but only a crude recognition of the fact that flower forms being inimitable in needlework, were best conventionalised. To explain exactly wherein a pictorial representation and a conventional one differ, the sun may be chosen as a typical example. Everyone who sees a plain outline circle with radiating lines is prepared to accept it as a symbol of the lord of the day; yet as a picture of the sun it is hardly nearer its model than is the infantile drawing of the human figure on a school slate. When, however, a yellow disc of embroidery or metal is used with wavy tongues radiating therefrom, we do get a faint approach to the sun itself, and also



FIG. 16.

a piece of ornament pure and simple that has decorative value of its own.

In the rare occasions when needlework is applied to a tightly-strained surface, as a piano back or a panel of a screen, it might be possible to waive the vexed question, and allow a picture to be worked instead of painted; but even then it must be done in the archaic style of the old tapestries to be bearable. But for all ordinary purpose, whether on the undulating surface of a sofa-cushion, the folds of a curtain, or the hanging border of a shelf, you cannot break the surface of the material with an appearance of relief or perspective without completely marring its decorative value.

Again, it is well to insist upon simplicity in the ornament, however rich the whole effect may be, and on reticence in its use. A diaper of simple flower forms repeated, symmetrically or not, according to the style chosen, over a given surface of the stuff, will frequently yield a far richer effect than an elaborate pattern with ten times the amount of work covering the space, but failing to decorate it.

For all decoration of the household is primarily intended to take its place in the whole mass of objects seen at one time, and to give its value in helping to adorn the whole apartment. If you take a sofa-cushion, and embroider a posy of flowers with the utmost skill upon its centre, yet when treated as a natural



FIG. 17.

bouquet, from a distance, they represent a mere shapeless dab of colour. If, however, the same labour were expended upon a symmetrical pattern—whether with the formal symmetry of Western art, or the less conscious but only more subtle (not less symmetrical) arrangement the Japanese affect, then the thing decorated has a two-fold value, and fulfils its purpose both near and at a distance.

Could you reproduce the finest water-colour by Turner in exact facsimile upon a panel of white satin, and on another embroider one or two of the simple forms, as in figs. 11 or 12, and then survey them from the length of the room, the one would appear but a discoloured piece of material—the other a decorated panel with a quality of its own.

To attempt to make a piece of embroidery a picture, is only one degree less absurd than



FIG. 18.

painting a picture to imitate stitches. The needle can never compete with the brush or pencil; but the needle can give certain richness of effect that no clever painting can



FIG. 19.

equal. To each the very obstacles to successful imitation of the other are vital points towards success in their own department; the quality of the stitches that give texture to the embroidery being, when rightly used, as valuable for decoration as the power of blending one colour into another that painting alone can accomplish fully. The tapestries after Raphael's cartoons could hardly be deemed good art, in spite of the mastery of the designs. The so-called pre-Raphaelite movement was one brave attempt to bring the public to appreciate the simple laws of design and painting; the Æsthetic movement was another, with similar purpose; but while each left its mark, the mass of people are still contentedly ignorant.

It has been well said that the joy of the political economist—division of labour—is fatal to the production of a work of art. Whether it be a penwiper or a monumental group in bronze, one mind should invent the idea and carry it through. This does not necessarily imply that one person must perform every atom of the mechanical detail. The sculptor may have his marble roughed to shape; the needleworker need not spin her own flax or weave her own fabric, but the individual expression of the artist should control the whole work. If a pattern is drawn by one—who is perhaps unfamiliar with the process that actually carries out the design, and could not execute his own idea, though his life depended on it—coloured by a second, traced or engraved by a third, and worked by a fourth, it must needs become more or less mechanical, and lack that curious interest



FIG. 20.

which makes the very shortcomings of handicraft far more delightful than the geometrical exactness of machine-made design. Of course this is a waste of time, and modern commerce,

based always upon profit, condemns such foolish methods. But it usually happens that a work of art (?) produced in a hurry (which is entirely different from rapid work) finds its fame proportionately brief. The ancient saw that says "A thing worth doing is worth doing well," is as true as the day it first found shape.

A natural objection to the advice that every worker should carry out the whole scheme, from design to finish, would at once crop up. Many people with every wish to do so are entirely destitute of the power of inventing a design. For such it is obviously better to copy a good design, or adapt a pattern of undoubted value, than to hash up an awkward jumble of motives from other sources, and call the whole original. Rules for design in pattern are of much the same value as rules for composition in music or poetry. If faithfully obeyed, they will preserve the student from serious blunders, but are entirely powerless to help him to create a new melody, or infuse his rhymes with the spirit of poetry.

But if the would-be creator of fine needlework lacks the gift of design, it is more than



FIG. 22.

ever necessary to caution her against an indiscriminate choice from the patterns sold ready for tracing on to the stuff that is to be embellished. One in a hundred may indeed be excellent, but those who design for unknown buyers, find that the least labour for the greatest effect is the popular demand, and so comply with it only too readily. The least labour possible is a legitimate thing to ask, provided the effect is not cramped thereby; but to sacrifice all the essentials of good work for this one end, is better pushed to its logical



FIG. 23.

extreme, and sacrifice at once all labour—that is, leave the thing undecorated. One inch of good ornament well wrought is better than a square yard of commonplace pattern. A single motive, such as our illustrations supply, will add more beauty to, say the cover of a blotting-case, for example, than a crude piece of pattern sprawling over its whole surface, done hurriedly and with scamped work. The scale of the design is a very important matter, that the ready-made patterns cannot be trusted to decide. A border that would not disgrace a palace if applied to huge curtains, might be coarse for a mantel-border, and positively vulgar on a book cover. So many points have to be considered in regard to the absolutely right decoration for even the simplest object, that all advice given generally must needs be more or less vague. To those who live near any of our national collections, half an hour spent in intelligent study of old needlework will yield more valuable result than any text-book. But old needlework is not always right; bad taste is not entirely a thing of to-day, although the chances are in favour of the old work being good and the modern bad. Excepting always a certain group of workers

to-day, whose labours, shown at various exhibitions and illustrated frequently in the current periodicals, betray a renaissance of the long dominant feeling for decoration that



FIG. 21.

made the England of half a century ago a realm of contented ugliness in home life.

The Japanese embroideries, and most of the Indian and Persian work, until vitiated by European taste, are as a rule entirely good. True, many of their ideas are Oriental in their colour and thought, and can no more be translated into English idiom by an ordinary being, than their ancient manuscripts could be easily paraphrased into colloquial cockneyisms. But in all Oriental art there is much that appeals to the cultured taste of the West. With a growing appreciation for art, we may look to see the splendid heritage of the Indian Empire treasured as tenderly as our own cathedrals. When one reflects on the pillously minute knowledge of Oriental art possessed even by the better informed Briton, we cease to wonder at the vulgarity and monstrosity of the decoration that still floods our markets, in spite of the new crusade for beauty in the house.

Many of these patterns are peculiarly suited for appliqué work; that is, for work wherein patches of other stuff, cut to the desired shape, take the place of stitches all over the ground enclosed by the outline of the ornament. If bold in scale and of coarser texture, such work may be done in the hand, but more delicate treatment requires the support of a frame during its manipulation. The designs here reproduced are clearly on too small a scale to be copied exactly for most purposes. Having enlarged the design, as explained later on, it should be traced with great care on to the material to be applied; if this is of plush or velvet, it will, of course, be needful to reverse the pattern, and trace it on the back



FIG. 24.

of the stuff. Having transferred the design, it is to be cut exactly to the outline with sharp scissors, and laid in its proper place on the panel to be decorated, which should have

a tracing of the whole design (supposing, as it most probably will be, that it is formed of several features). Each piece of stuff to be applied should be touched with very thick

taste may decide. The veins of leaves and small details of bird forms or conventional devices are expressed by stitches of the colour chosen for the outline. Petals of flowers, feathers of birds, and such lines as are absolutely necessary must be sewn as in ordinary embroidery. The value of these added lines is great, and where possible it would be advisable to indicate their position in the first tracing, unless the skill of the artist can place them right by the guidance of the eye alone. In all embroidery it is best to avoid tracing, and put in the "drawing" of the design with no mechanical aid, if the eyes and hands of the worker can be trusted to do so.

Fig. 13 is a design covering the front of a robe. The clever way by which each group breaks, as it were, out of the stuff, the value given to the subtle curves of the plants by the juxtaposition of the straight branches of the plum blossoms (miscalled hawthorn, which, on very high authority, I am told is unknown in Japan, despite our nomenclature "Hawthorn Blue" of its dainty china). The colour scheme of the original has the favourite French grey ground, with long leaves in bright greens, and branches of dead leaves in russets and orange yellows across them. The plum blossoms are white, with traces of pink in the buds, the stems of the branches black, or a rather dark brown. This group might easily be repeated to cover a much larger space, but is intended for working to large scale, as the tracing includes the whole design on the front of the robe it embellished.

The spray of fig. 14 is a charmingly-drawn branch of a vine-like creeper, but calls for no special remark. The Japanese Pegasus (fig. 15) is so adapted for the decoration of book covers to MSS. that it needs no apology for its insertion; worked in appliqué, it would be a noble symbol for guarding the emanations of our young poets. Fig. 16 is a corner spray of small beauty, but yet probably a useful motive for workers. Fig. 17 is a very clever arrangement of two sprays of foliage, capable of indefinite repetition, either by the diamond

shape it fills, set side by side, or arranged to have an undecorated space between each in chequer fashion. Fig. 18 may serve a kindred purpose; while fig. 19, although Japanese, is so fatally commonplace that only failure to discover any other device of the right size to fill up the page can explain its presence, for it is as banal as the worst European art.

The grotesque birds, figs. 20 and 21, are deliciously comical, and yet admirable spots for decoration; the quaint way the bird character is represented by the simplest arrangement of lines is worth study; the self-satisfied delight of "21," and the half-frightened air of "20" are naively expressed. The border No. 22 is a curious example of a serious attempt to use figures for decoration that is rare in Japanese art; to be sure these are as conventional as the



FIG. 25.

gum, to keep it in its desired place, care being taken that only just enough is used to cause it to stick, otherwise it will soak through the material and be unsightly. Each piece must be quite flat and uncreased, and not stretched out of its proper shape. The edge is then outlined with a cord of the same colour, or of silver or gold twist, sewn neatly on, or the edges are sewn over with button-hole stitch worked in the colour of the piece itself, or in a lighter or darker shade, as personal



FIG. 26.

infantile drawings upon a slate; but they fulfil their purpose. Fig. 23 is also an extremely simple suggestion of flower growth that has yet a touch of realism in its mere symbolism.

The device of No. 24 is again a purely Japanese notion, and one of great beauty. No pattern given is more likely to be useful than this; with the cloud forms worked in gold, and the flowers of varying colours, it might be repeated over the surface of a sofa-cushion or a tea-cosy, and make it sumptuous. No. 25 is probably a useful shape for application, and needs no special comment. The squirrel of No. 26 is from a genuine old example, and has some amount of charm in its grouping.

(To be concluded.)

LIFE.

We sat in the garden. Merry strife
Of tongues, with laughter and jesting was rife,
When a grave voice questioned, "But what is Life?"

A father, whose face was lined with care,
Said, "Life is a burden that we must bear
With courage and love, and in steadfast prayer."

A mother whispered, "Life is a sea,
And the boats that I love have sailed from me:
May they sail to the Land where all would be."

A boy said, "Life is a glorious game,
Where men are striving for wealth or for fame,
And I? I shall strive for a noble name."

A girl, with her girlhood's sunny air,
Said, smilingly, "Life is a garden fair,
And the flowers are springing everywhere."

But one in glorious manhood strong
Said, "Life is a stream that bears us along
To the rushing time of its own great song."

A grave-eyed woman said, "And to me
It seems that this Life is a school where we
Are trained for the Life that is yet to be."

A voice spoke, softly, from far away,
"Our Life is a gift from God. Let us pray
To use it for Him every single day."

VERA.

MOTIVES FROM OLD JAPANESE EMBROIDERIES FOR ENGLISH NEEDLEWORKERS.

BY GLEESON WHITE.



FIG. 27.—JAPANESE ROBE.

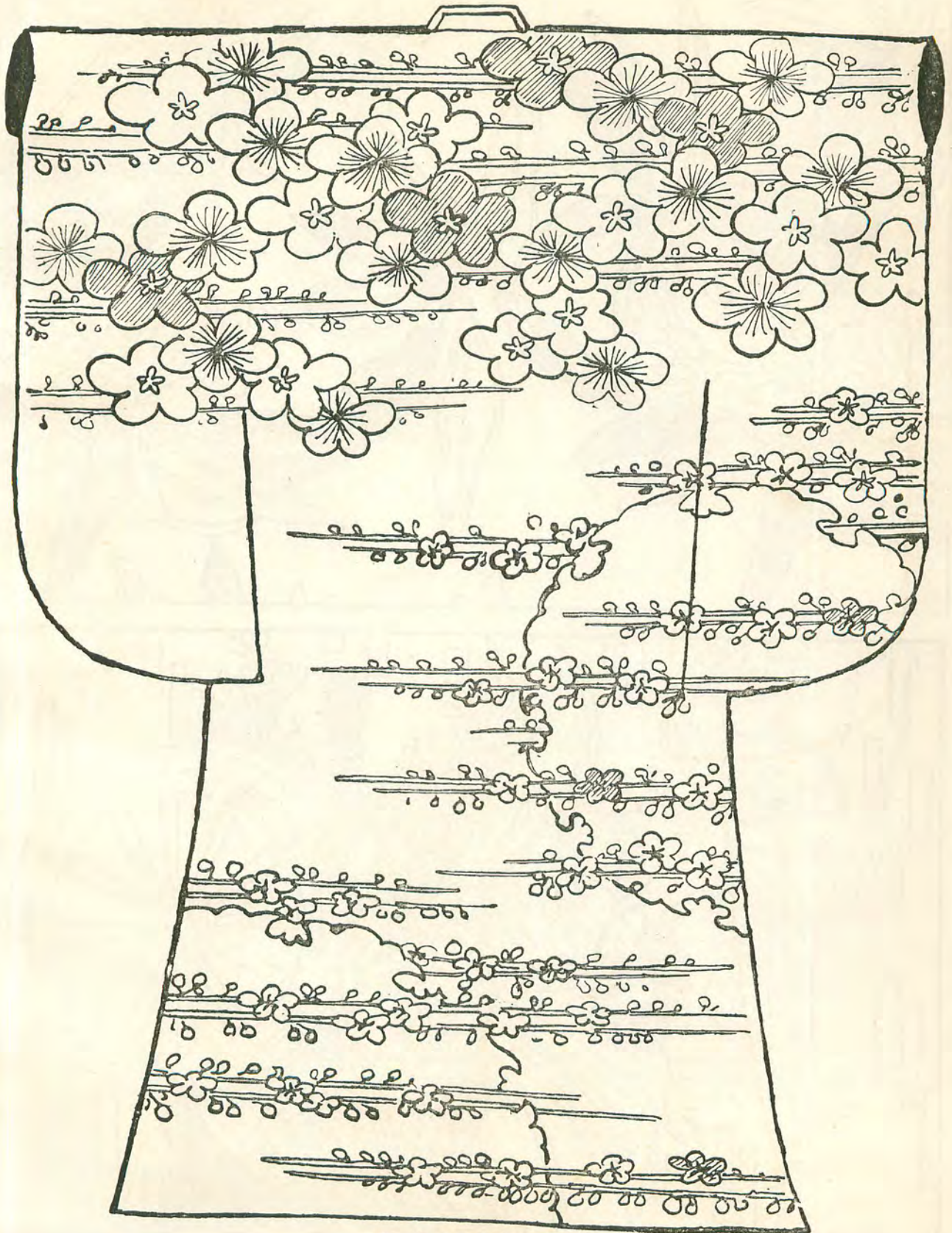


FIG. 28.—JAPANESE ROBE.



FIG. 30.



FIG. 20.



FIG. 31.

PART III.

APPLIQUÉ embroidery is obviously somewhat a makeshift for the real thing, but for bold work it is telling; and owing to the increased richness possible when velvets, plushes, and cloths of gold are applied in this way, many effects quite legitimate may be obtained by this method, at far less labour than by the needle alone; but at its best it cannot compare with the patient stitching that creates the whole pattern with no adventitious help.

If it be desired to reproduce a Japanese design in a Japanese way, it is almost impossible, without the study of an actual example, to describe the method of the native worker. In one part, minutely-elaborated detail is expressed with a prodigal amount of stitching; in another, a few long stitches suggest the sprays of fir trees against the sky, or the movement of cloud forms, the dashing of spray, or the delicate stems of grasses, in a way that betrays the artist, and can no more be imparted by dull words, than the masterly strokes of a Rembrandt etching or the bold splashes of a clever water-colour sketch. In

all manifestations of art, it is just what is unteachable, that quality that comes from within, that betrays the artist. You may acquire critical knowledge, geometrical precision, and become learned upon styles, to avoid anachronisms or blunders; but the finest touch that is 'Art' is often an unknown quality to those who employ it. Why he did so and so—that apparently spontaneous line or blot of colour—why his design took this form or left out that one—the inventor himself knows not; he felt it was right and did it, is all he knows and all we know; but the guiding influence that makes for art, is and must always be a dead secret. For art, in its very essence, is inimitable, and entirely a personal expression of the worker's mood. No matter if it is in embroidery for a d'oyley, or a fresco for a Campo Santo, the wilful egotism of the craftsman who trusted entirely to his own feeling, and did what, so far as he knew, nobody had done before, is usually the genesis of art. Yet a fine frenzy is not necessary, nor is the magic success always a spontaneous easy effort. The happy moment when the

right way became the only possible one to follow may happen at the first touch, or may be after a heart-breaking series of failures; but the critical verdict of the worker—the other attribute of art—knew in the first case that the first thought was *best*, and knew in the latter that not the second nor the third, nor, may be, the seventy-time-seventh, was the one he waited for, but when it came he knew it, and forbore further quest.

From my own collection of Japanese books, embracing several hundred volumes and many thousand designs, I have selected a few that seemed best suited for modern needlework. These were chosen, not because they were the best art, still less because they were the most original and un-English, but for practical reasons. Yet to make any selection is almost a hopeless task, for only those who appreciate originality in design, and can realise the supreme difficulty of gaining effects that are totally new from ordinary details that are the commonplace material of every designer, can fully understand the prodigal abundance of Japanese motives for decoration. The native artist seems to find any object, natural or artificial, capable of use, and from the meanest motives works out unexpected yet delightful patterns.

To study even a single text-book of ornament in these volumes leaves one aghast at the fertility of invention and construction displayed by its artist, and when after becoming familiar with hundreds of their books, a new one turns up, it is as spontaneous and fresh as though it were a first harvest from virgin soil. When one recalls the limited motives that are the stock-in-trade of many styles, the endless arabesques of one school, and the comparatively limited ideas of even the German Renaissance, which is perhaps the most abundant of any Western school, and compares it with the literally inexhaustible riches of Japan, only a fellow-enthusiast could tolerate the exuberant and unmeasured praise such beauty richly deserves.

For the mass of this wonderful decoration is no mere shifting of a few motives into new patterns, as a kaleidoscope will transform a few broken pieces of glass to an infinitude of different forms. The likeness in such variation is as strong as the difference; but in the Japanese mind a fresh treatment accompanies every fresh idea, and since under their magical touch any motive can be treated in a thousand different ways, the possibilities of their art are even less limited than Nature herself.

The mistaken view that Japanese design is chiefly noticeable for its lack of symmetry and sheer eccentricity of purpose, gains small support from a study of these books. Now and again, it is true, some proofs of "the glorious gospel of haphazard" may be found; but the great majority of these patterns conform to laws of symmetry in their planning in a way hardly apparent without careful study. As, in the hands of a great master, the dull forms of a fugue are clothed so skilfully that it interests a non-musical person by its splendour of sound, and conceals science by lovely harmony, so the artists of these patterns take the dry skeleton of a geometrical pattern and clothe it with living beauty, that tires as little as Nature tires. But mere rhapsody is worthless; those who do not know the subject distrust it, and those who know prefer their own rhapsodies to those of other people.

The designs that are more or less based upon filling a circle are especially beautiful in this school of ornament, and seem singularly well adapted for practical application. Elsewhere stress has been laid on the decorative value of the whole design as well as of its parts; or, to put it as an instance, a surface decorated with several of these medallions will have a double value, for the detail of

their decoration is delightful upon close inspection, and the round spots they appear to be from a distance are yet decorative in a way no spray of flowers or all-over chintz-like ornament can possibly be.

The two designs 27 and 28 are tracings of two embroidered robes from a collection of patterns that fill six volumes. In 27 the imperial device of the horse-chestnut is introduced, the darker leaves being a rich dull blue, the lighter ones a paler shade; their foliage is in dull green, and the berries a bright yellow, the ground being a dull neutral colour. Fig. 28 has a quiet grey background, with the flowers worked in white with yellow petals, those shaded in the drawing being of a pale brownish yellow; the tiny spots of red in some of the buds have much to do with the scheme of colour; the two discs crossed by the branches are of exquisitely pale blue. The motive of this design is incomparably fine, and as an example of the splendid end brought by such simple means merits careful study.

The pattern No. 29 is from an old example

figured three or four times in the books of this collection alone. It is on a white ground, with positive black for the shaded parts in this sketch—the flowers being in blues and reds of somewhat vivid tone; but it is not possible to convey the colouring in words; the wheel shapes are in solid black, and black outline.

Fig. 30 is an exquisite all-over pattern, probably with delicate pink flowers and sage green leaves; but the design is uncoloured, and, excepting a vague recollection of a piece of real work very similar in style, it is not safe to describe its treatment.

Fig. 31 is more nearly the conventional idea of Japanese art; it is on a primrose ground, with white storks and foliage *au naturel* in green.

To enlarge these designs, a simple way is to procure a sheet of Letts's sectional tracing paper, ruled in tiny squares with red; then, having prepared a sheet with pencil lines crossing each other—at any required scale, but in perfect squares—even a non-artistic person

will have little difficulty in enlarging the design to the required size.

The use of these designs is not limited to mere copying. A study of their method will enable a cunning draughtsman to work up original motives on these lines, and produce work that, if not so fine as the original (and with all deference to unknown readers, I doubt if at present we have any artists to beat the Japanese in this particular branch of art), might certainly be at least individual, and, so far, better than tame copies of even the best.

If these few reproductions send some clever embroidery workers to study the wonderful achievements of old Japan, they will certainly be thrice blessed; for such advice blesses him that gives it and they who take it. To become fascinated with Japanese designs is to acquire a taste that, as far as personal experience of such hobby-riders goes to prove, is a cumulative delight that grows by what it feeds on, and never fails to arouse fresh sensations of delight at the boundless store of the Land of the Rising Sun.



THOUGHTS AT EVENTIDE.

By HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

A CRESCENT moon the dusky sky is climbing,
Belated stock-doves seek the forest shade,
A little stream its vesper hymn is chiming
Across the dewy glade;

Where softly flutes the song-bird in the sedges,
And starry white the virgin lily gleams,
'Neath the dark fringe that laps the river edges,
Where the wild swan dreams.

On the earth the young moon's silver fingers
Like a benediction seem to rest,
While the reflex of the bright day lingers
In the fading west.

Yet, despite the beauty and the sweetness,
Upon our hearts a restless sadness steals,
A yearning, which a sense of incompleteness
Of earthly joy reveals.

God made us for Himself; methinks such yearning
But shadows forth the soul's divine unrest,
Which all unconsciously is inly burning
To be by Him possessed,

Who is the type of loveliness and sweetness,
Who is the one pure source of joy and light,
All that we yearn for in a full completeness,
Too great for mortal sight.

It is His voice divine within us speaking;
Sometimes we hear it through earth's shadows dim,
Yet know not that our vague unrest is making
A dumb response to Him.

We must be patient, till the cloudless dawning,
When He no more His face from us will hide,
When we shall wake in heaven's eternal morning,
And shall be satisfied!



FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

By J. A. OWEN, Author of "Candalaria," "After Shipwreck," etc.

CHAPTER II. LOVE VERSUS DUTY.

"It brings to the soul that its voice hath met,
No rest, that cadence learning;
But a conscious part in the sigh that fret
Its nature for returning."

I DID NOT go out to walk alone in Kensington Gardens again; nor did I go to Mrs. Somerville's on her next "at home" day, when Maurice would expect to meet me. The morning following, the doctor came to South Street, and after his usual talk with my father,

he walked into the sitting-room up to the little work-table where I sat busily stitching, and said—

"My wife missed you yesterday, so did somebody else."

My heart commenced to beat faster, and I felt my cheeks burn; I bent lower over my work.

"Our artist friend is going to Italy soon, he tells me, and he is likely to remain there for some months."

"That will be of great advantage to him," I managed to answer, in a quiet voice.

Dr. Somerville was looking at me critically, I felt. With an effort I raised my eyes firmly to meet his gaze, and said—

"It is wonderful how much better my father has been since he decided to go abroad again, is it not?"

"Yes, it has certainly done him good; the thought of work seems bracing, as well as the idea of a voyage. But how do you like the idea of it, Marjory?" I was always Marjory, never Miss Wilson, to my dear friends in Park Street.

"I must like it, doctor, and I shall need all