

White wood conventional design of flowers for bed.

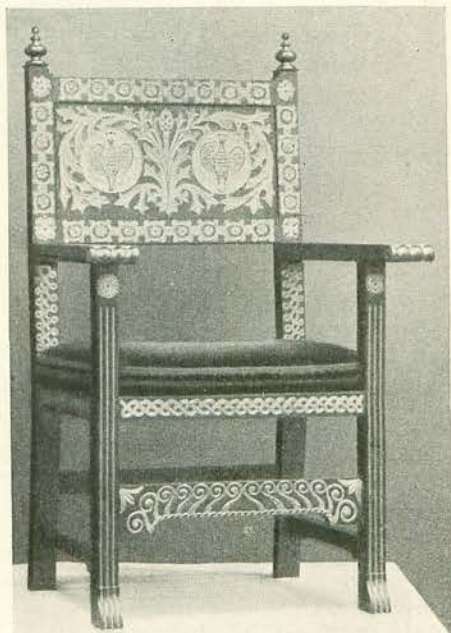
A WOMAN OF INVENTION.

BY SYBIL C. MITFORD.

IN the year of our Lord 1900, when the century is entering into its grave, it is far too late to express any wonder at finding women successful in business careers. It is now quite an established fact that the "ornamental sex," as one writer describes us, can be useful in all departments of life; and many of its individuals have shown again and again that they have the sound judgment, the courage, and perseverance necessary if they are to make their way in what is generally called "business."

Miss Beatrice Cameron, who forms the subject of this article, is an interesting example of such women—particularly interesting because with the practical qualities that have enabled her to make her work a success in the face of many difficulties she also possesses great originality and much artistic feeling. It is interesting, too, in these days, when all the world, whether it knows the subject or no, talks glibly of heredity, to note that Miss Cameron's paternal grandmother showed these qualities in a very strong degree. She was the Mrs. Cameron so justly noted in the early days

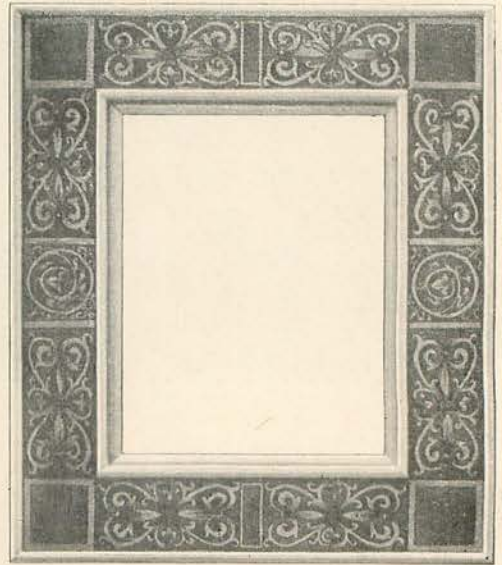
of photography for her great skill in that art. The world at large had been content



CHAIR IN GREEN AND BLUE, WITH RELIEF GESSO-WORK IN GOLD. BYZANTINE DESIGNS.

with the strangely grotesque sun-pictures known as daguerreotypes; but Mrs. Cameron soon felt that many possibilities lay unfolded in this newly discovered power of the "greater light." Recognising this, she worked away with her camera, undaunted

interesting and intellectual people of the time. Herschel and Tennyson were amongst Mrs. Cameron's greatest friends, whilst Longfellow, Carlyle, Watts, and many others would often visit the neighbourhood and join her circle. These great opportunities, a few months'



by many failures, until she at last succeeded in producing photographs that really satisfied her—photographs that won the admiration of the great Watts, who, seeing her illustrations of the "Idylls of the King," remarked he wished he "could do pictures like these."

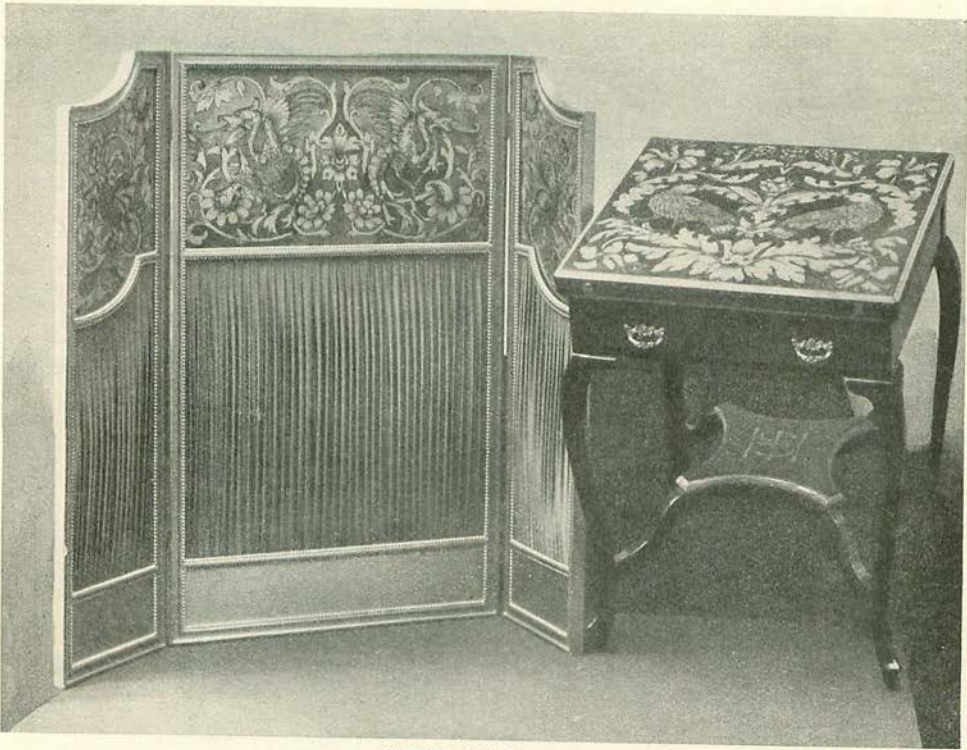
Miss Cameron's father, too (the late Colonel Cameron, R.A.), had the most intense love for all that is beautiful in Nature and Art; so she lived in an atmosphere likely to develop any latent talent that she possessed. From time to time, too, she paid long visits to Mrs. Cameron, at Freshwater, where she was thrown amongst some of the most



SPECIMENS OF MISS CAMERON'S FRAME-WORK.

teaching under Mr. Aldan Heaton, and her own love for the study of pictures were all the training that Miss Cameron had. But, as will be seen, the old axiom that training is necessary for every one who would succeed in a profession does not hold good in her case.

First beginning to do odds and ends of decorative work in the happy-go-lucky way of the amateur, she at last made up her mind to make such work her more serious business. This was just at the time when poker-work was the craze of the moment, when every room was strewn with photograph-frames, match-boxes, and what not, of white wood decorated



SCREEN AND TABLE.

with all sorts of—too often very fearful—designs in never varying shades of golden brown. Miss Cameron also threw all her energies into this art of burning wood. But she was not satisfied with the little originality that contented most of her sisters. She saw that more could be done with the new processes, and after much thought, many experiments, and repeated failures, she succeeded in producing an enamel in many beautiful colours, suitable to form backgrounds for good designs done in poker-work. A round table enamelled in moss green, with a border and centrepiece of the golden brown, is one of many examples of her successful treatment of her own enamels. From this she went on to using the colours for the designs as well as for the backgrounds, copying the most beautiful pieces of Renaissance needlework that she could discover; and these, when done

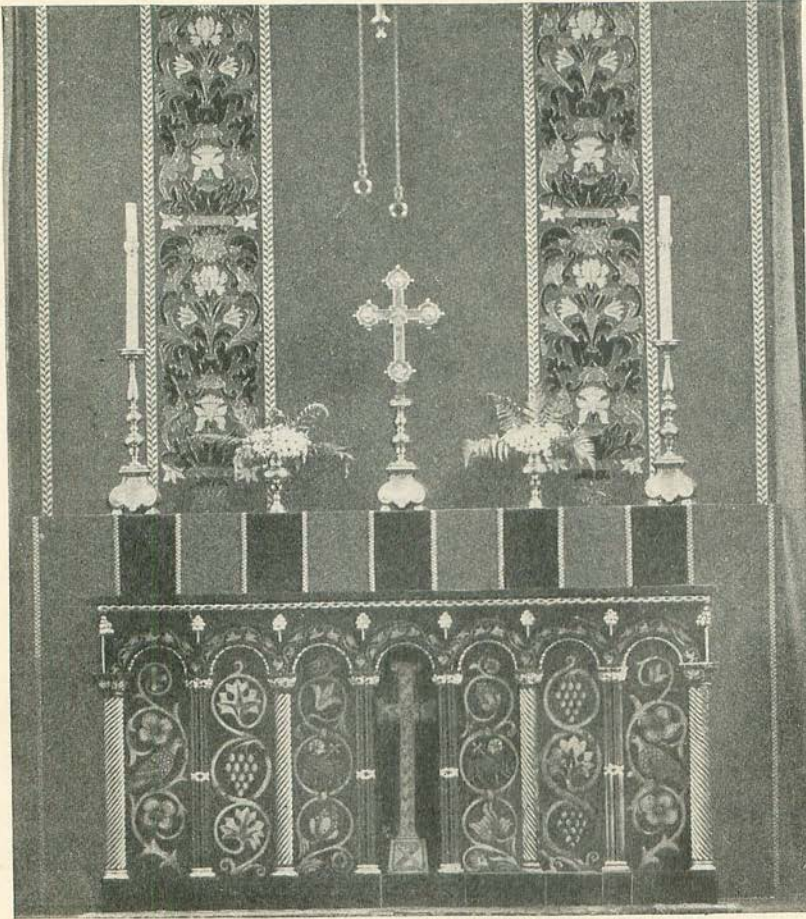


PANEL.

on a pure white background, had as beautiful an effect as if worked in the most delicate shades of silk and threads of gold.

This enamel soon proved a great success, and Miss Cameron used it for all sorts of purposes. Amongst larger pieces of work were panels for the "social halls" of steamships of the West Indian and Pacific Navigation Company, and for those of the P. & O. Some of these panels I have seen. The groundwork is white, and upon it cornflowers and poppies are painted in their natural colours. The effect is very charming, and for such panelling the enamels are particularly attractive, as they can be scrubbed hard enough to please the soul of a ship's captain without suffering any damage.

Another beautiful piece of this work was the bedstead done for Mrs. Hugh Hoare, wife of the late Member of Parliament for West



ALTAR IN THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER'S CHAPEL.

Cambridgeshire, who lives at Hurley, near Marlow. The bedstead was entirely



PANEL.

white, and it was decorated with lilies and poppies—lilies being Mrs. Hoare's name-flower, and poppies emblematic of sleep.

To this enamelling Miss Cameron soon added gesso-work, for which she had an old Italian recipe, the gilded mouldings proving most effective upon a back-

ground of one or other of her brilliant enamels. For this branch of her work she often uses Byzantine designs, which, from their fulness of symbolical meaning, are particularly interesting, besides being very attractive and suitable as frames for sacred pictures, or for altarpieces. Such frames Miss Cameron always designs with the pictures within them, so that the design and colouring may be in keeping with the subject thereof.

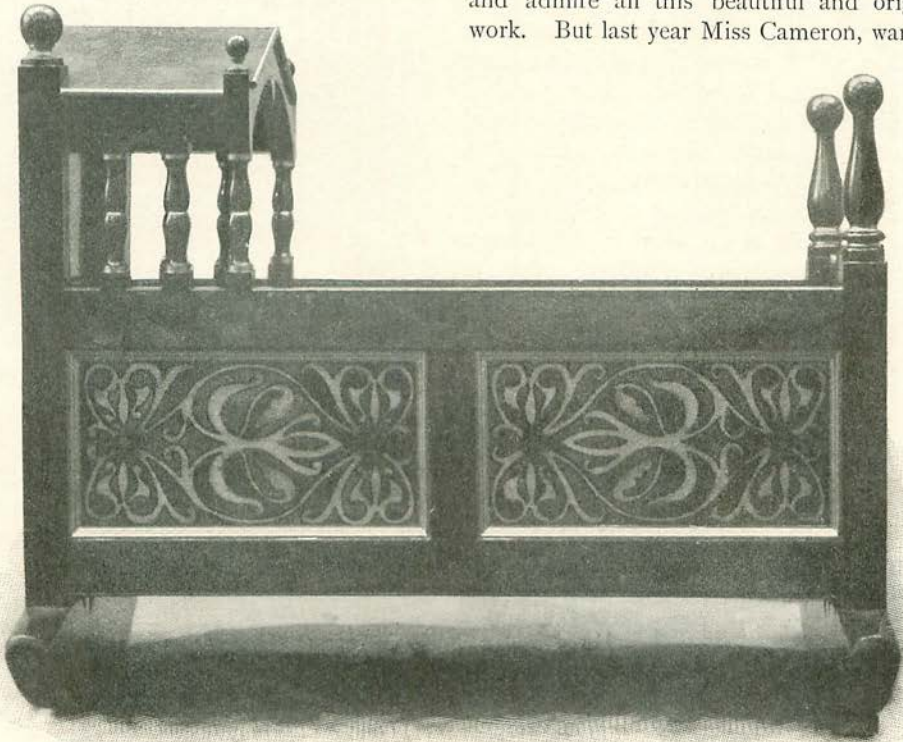
Amongst her well-known works of this description is the altarpiece at the Bishop's House at Kennington, which she did for Bishop Talbot, the design being adapted from a Venetian well-head and from a sarcophagus of the ninth century. When seen in the chapel, it is particularly beautiful with the rich green of its backgrounds and its gold mouldings.

Amongst more secular work many very interesting photographs come into Miss Cameron's hands to be framed. Notably there is a picture of the Queen which Her Majesty gave to Lord Roberts on Jubilee Day. This was framed in a broad band of crimson, upon which were moulded roses, thistles, and shamrocks, surmounted with a crown and V.R.I. Another interesting piece of work was the case to hold the address

given to Miss Burns by members of the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses on the occasion of her marriage with Mr. L. Vernon Harcourt. The idea for this was suggested by an old Italian well-head which was carried out in wood enamelled with green and relieved by gold ornament. The panels for the doors which enclosed the address were filled in with photographs of Watts's well-known pictures "Love and Life" and "Love and Death." This was immensely

Byzantine designs all done in gesso, glimpses of a deep rich blue showing through the trceries.

For three years Miss Cameron had her studio in Mortimer Street, where in a charming old gallery, panelled with oak and made beautiful with finely carved mantelpieces, her picture-frames, chairs, tables, and her hundred and one odds and ends of decorative work were seen to the best advantage. And many were the people who called to see and admire all this beautiful and original work. But last year Miss Cameron, wanting



A BEAUTIFUL CRADLE.

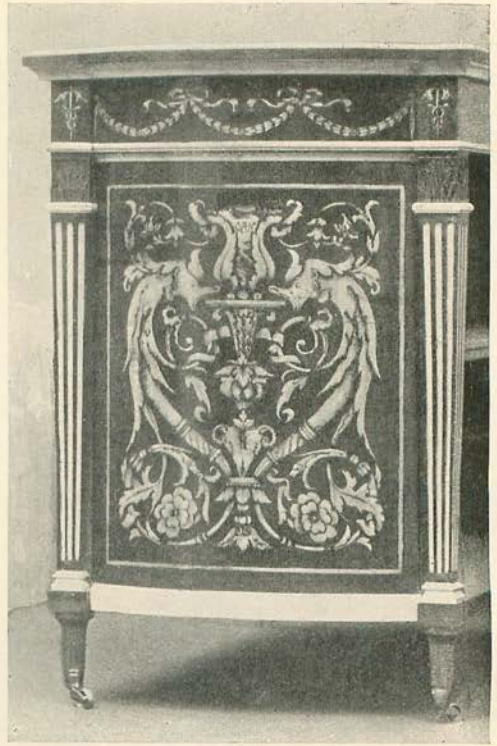
admired, as being particularly suitable to the occasion. Likewise a post-box done for Lord Tennyson with Miss Cameron's own design, the subject being chosen by Lord Tennyson himself from those words of his father's "The dragon of the great Pendragonship," which she forthwith carried out in gold on a ground of sapphire blue. The exact copy of an old Spanish chair bought at Toledo is a fine example of the use of enamel and gesso, the prevailing colour of the chair being green, whilst on the back and round the seat are delicate trceries of

more room, regretfully left this charming old place to take up her quarters in George Street, Hanover Square, where she was quickly installed, and once again busy with the large staff of girls who work under her immediate direction.

Being the daughter of an officer, Miss Cameron first employed none but such ladies as were also connected with the Army. But as time went on and she wanted more help, it was not always easy to get these at a moment's notice, so she no longer limits herself in a choice of assistants by a question

of their birth, but only by their ability and aptitude for training.

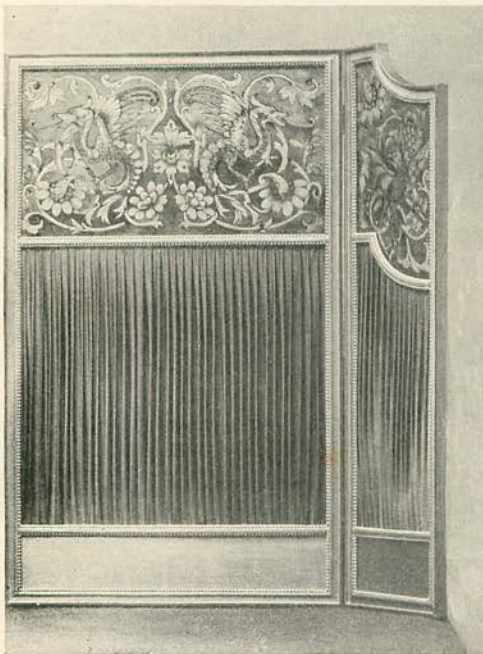
But though all this decorative work was prospering so well, Miss Cameron's mind was still active, and a few months ago she succeeded in producing another very interesting invention. This is *velours Meronac*, by which name it is patented. It is velvet treated in such a manner that all sorts of beautiful shades are brought out in the material. Some people seeing it have spoken of it as a stencilled velvet; but this is quite wrong. There is no stencilling, and the effect produced is far finer than stencilling could ever be. The varieties of light and shade are neverending, and these vary on each different-coloured velvet that is used. Sometimes it is the design that is so treated and the background is left untouched, at others it is the reverse. But in either case this *velours Meronac* is quite exquisite, and I much regret that no photograph can possibly produce the many beautiful effects of the invention. An apple-green velvet especially prepared for a Court train was one of the loveliest examples of the new material that I have seen, whilst in white or rose colour or blue it is also exquisite.



CABINET.

All this work is done by Miss Cameron and her assistants, for every stroke must be done by hand; no machinery could produce such results. And being thus done by hand, Miss Cameron can use any design that is wished on the velvet, so that, for Court trains and other purposes of the same nature, absolute originality can be maintained.

Lately Miss Cameron has had a very interesting journey to Paris, to introduce her invention to that city of luxury and taste. She took with her an introduction to Sarah Bernhardt from Sir Henry Irving. Unfortunately the great actress was in Vienna, but, through other introductions, Miss Cameron was made known to Jan Van Beers and to Mucha, both of whom were enraptured with the velvet, even the rich vocabulary of the enthusiastic French language being too limited for them to express their admiration. Miss Cameron also showed her velvet to Loie Fuller, who pronounced it "just lovely"; whilst Worth and Felix gave her orders for many yards to make opera-cloaks and *sortie de bals*. As a natural consequence



SCREEN.

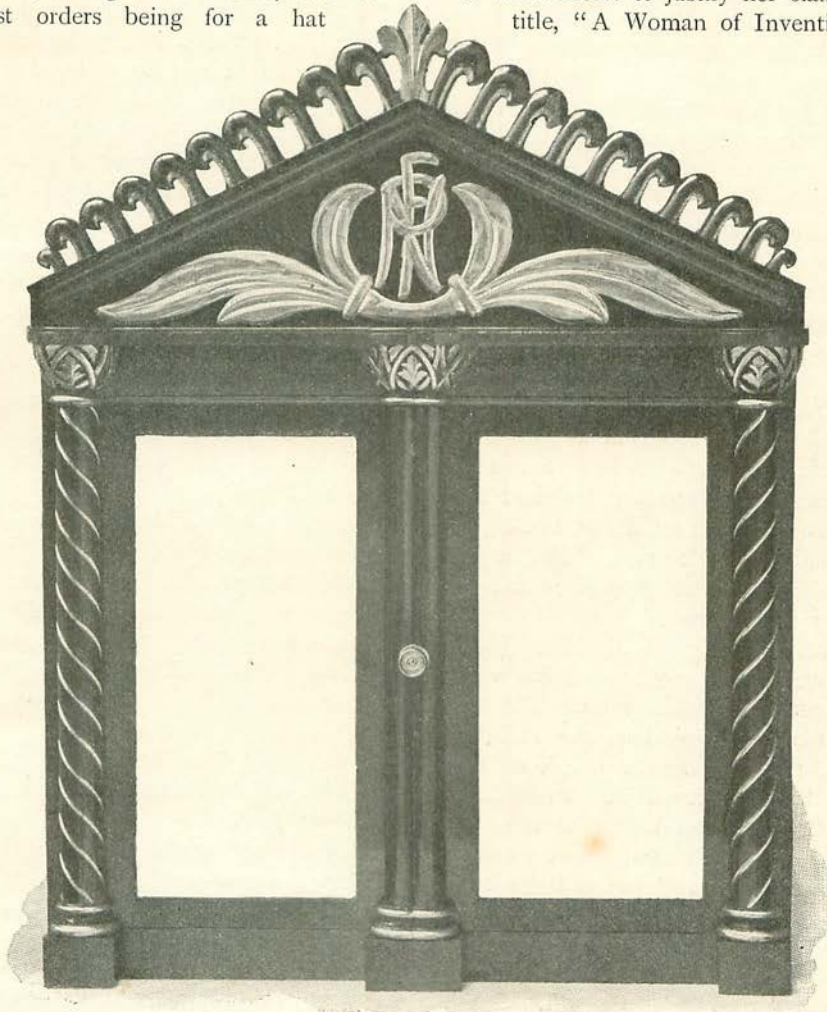


MISS CAMERON.

many London dressmakers and milliners are already using the material, one of the first orders being for a hat

for Lady Westmoreland, made by Gervais, which was strikingly pretty, done in brown and pink, with a design of Virginia-creeper leaves.

Delighted with her success in Paris, Miss Cameron returned home, and at once set to work on dresses for "The Snow Man," the Christmas play at the Lyceum, for which Walter Crane drew the designs, to be in many cases carried out in this beautiful *velours Merona*, which elicited the artist's especial admiration, because the treatment to which the velvet is subjected in no way injures the pile. Such success indeed has Miss Cameron met with in this her latest enterprise that she will only be spurred on to fresh efforts to justify her claim to the title, "A Woman of Invention"



TRIPTYCH TO HOLD ADDRESS.