



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## LUSTER PAINTING.



HIS variety of decorative brush-work is especially effective upon curtains, portières, table-covers, etc., and a knowledge of it may be acquired by anybody who will devote to it a little time and study. It may be developed upon felt, satin, plush, thin silk, linen canvas and indeed upon almost any textile fabric. It is done with metallic powders mixed with a medium, which is either light or dark, according to the color of the powder used; bristle or sable brushes, Nos. 3, 5, 8 and 11, and the usual implements in the way of a palette, drawing board, etc. The palette should be one with little cup-like hollows in it, or if such a palette is not available small egg-cups, inverted so as to use their smaller portions for mixing the colors in, will answer the purpose very well. To this list of essentials may be added the dry colors used in tinting wax flowers, because, though luster painting may be done without them, they are indispensable to the production of some of its finest effects.

The dark medium used for mixing is simply

asphaltum varnish, and it may be used for all except the delicate and pale colors. For these a medium composed of spirits of turpentine and white balsam of fir, the proportion being about three parts balsam of fir to two parts spirits of turpentine. The novice need not, however, depend on her own ingenuity in compounding it, as both mediums, ready for use, may be procured, with all the other implements, at the shops of dealers in artists' materials. Other mediums are sometimes used with temporary success, but those mentioned possess the advantage over all others of not cracking. They are rapid dryers but have sufficient elasticity to hold the powders while they are drying. The bronze powders most in demand for luster painting are steel, silver, maroon, violet, mauve, brown, fire, lemon, orange, green in dark and light shades, and in a brilliant and also a faded or antique tint, gold in a pale, a greenish and a rich yellow hue; copper which is a pinkish hue, purple in deep and pale tints, pale blue, dark blue, flesh pink which is a medium tint and carmine. These are all labelled on their bottles so that no doubt as to the exact color purchased need exist. The dry colors which supplement them most effectively are green in

three shades known as dull, dark-dull and light-dull, silver, a dull Indian-red and dull-blue.

Exact rules for combining the metallic powders with the dry colors cannot be laid down, as in all varieties of painting the subject treated should suggest the colors used, but in luster painting the natural hues are rarely ever followed, though the artistic merits of the work are very much enhanced by suggesting them. Sometimes this can be done by

of green may be obtained by experimenting with the various dry powders and metallic paints. For bringing out the high lights in greens the green-gold metallic paint is effective. Any of the metallic paints is intensified by admixture with its corresponding dry color; and frequently shades which cannot be produced by any combination of metallic paints are easily achieved by substituting a dry color for one of the component parts.

What are known as metallic flitters are

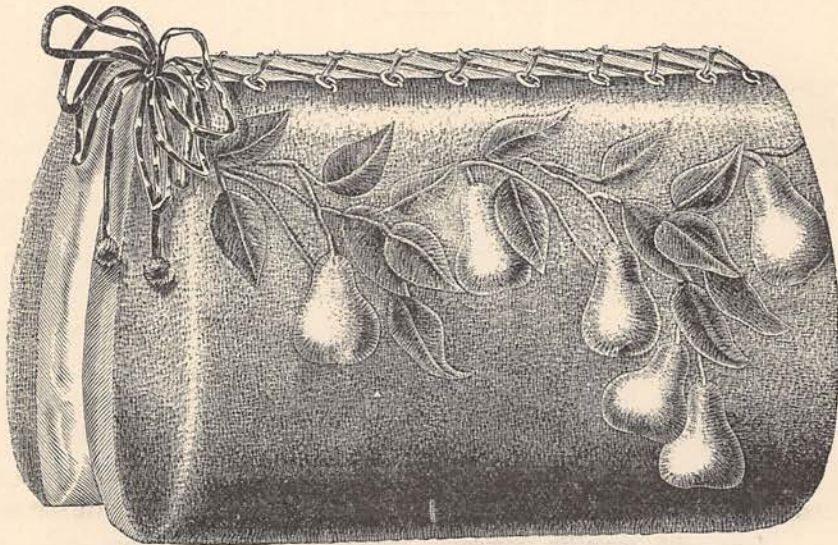


FIGURE NO. 1.—CHAIR CUSHION, ORNAMENTED WITH DESIGN IN LUSTER PAINTING.

combining the metallic powders according to their relation to the color sought, but more frequently it is attained by resorting to the dry colors. For instance, to obtain a deep blue metallic tint add dull blue dry color to the metallic blue. Various shades of red may be produced by experimenting with dull red dry powder and fire metallic powder. The dry color mixed with the medium may be applied alone where very heavy shadows are desired and afterward lightly dusted over with whatever metallic powder is used for the high lights and brilliant effects. Any shade

sometimes used to bring out striking iridescent effects, but their use in connection with luster painting on textile fabrics is scarce as commendable as on pottery painting. If desired they may be purchased in green, purple, gold, orange, silver, blue and red. They are much coarser than the metallic powders, and are dusted on or laid on with a fine brush, before the painting is dry.

In this chapter are illustrated three specimens of luster painting, one of them being a chair cushion in saddle-bag style.

This is illustrated at Figure No. 1, and is

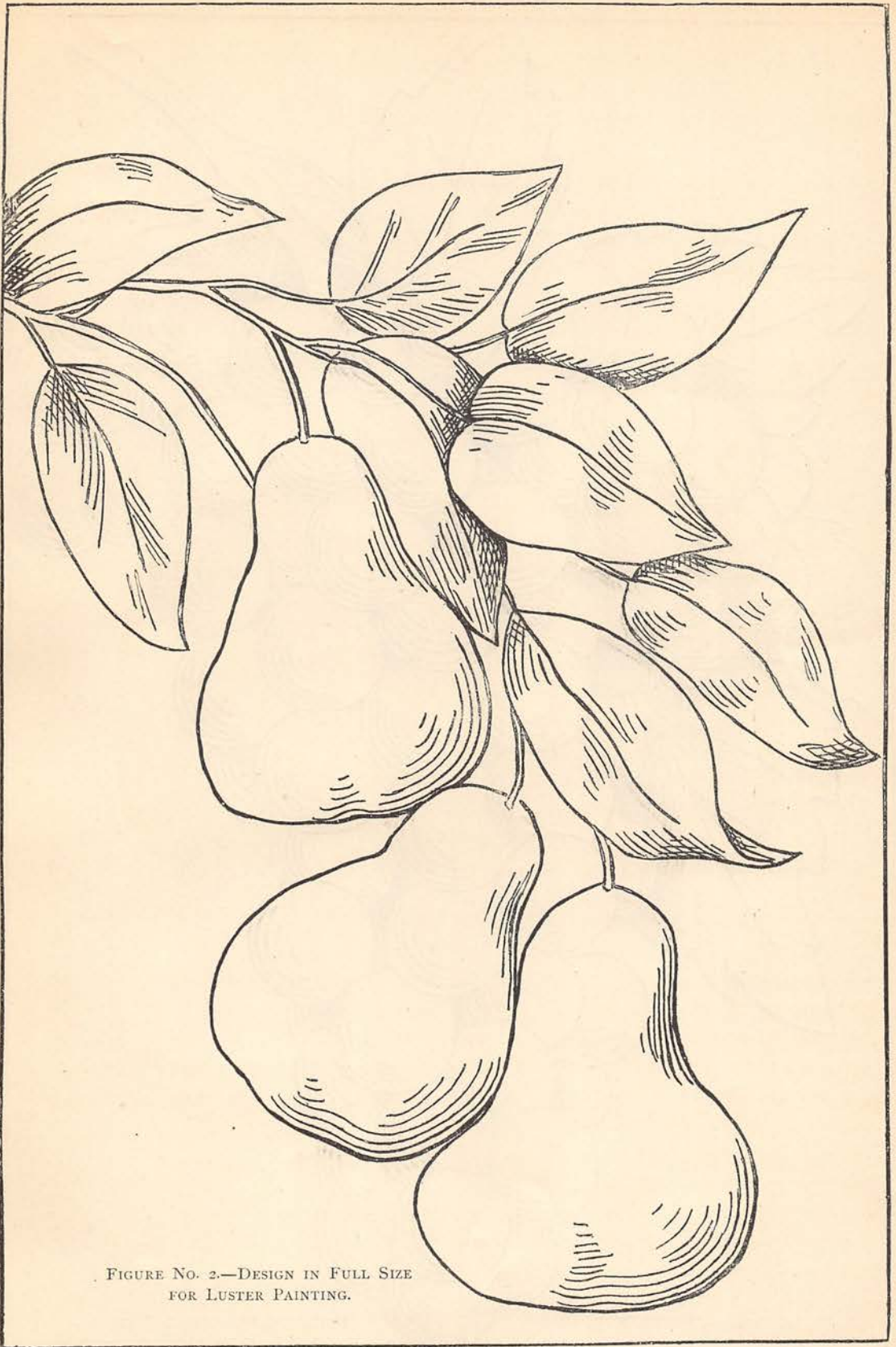


FIGURE NO. 2.—DESIGN IN FULL SIZE  
FOR LUSTER PAINTING.

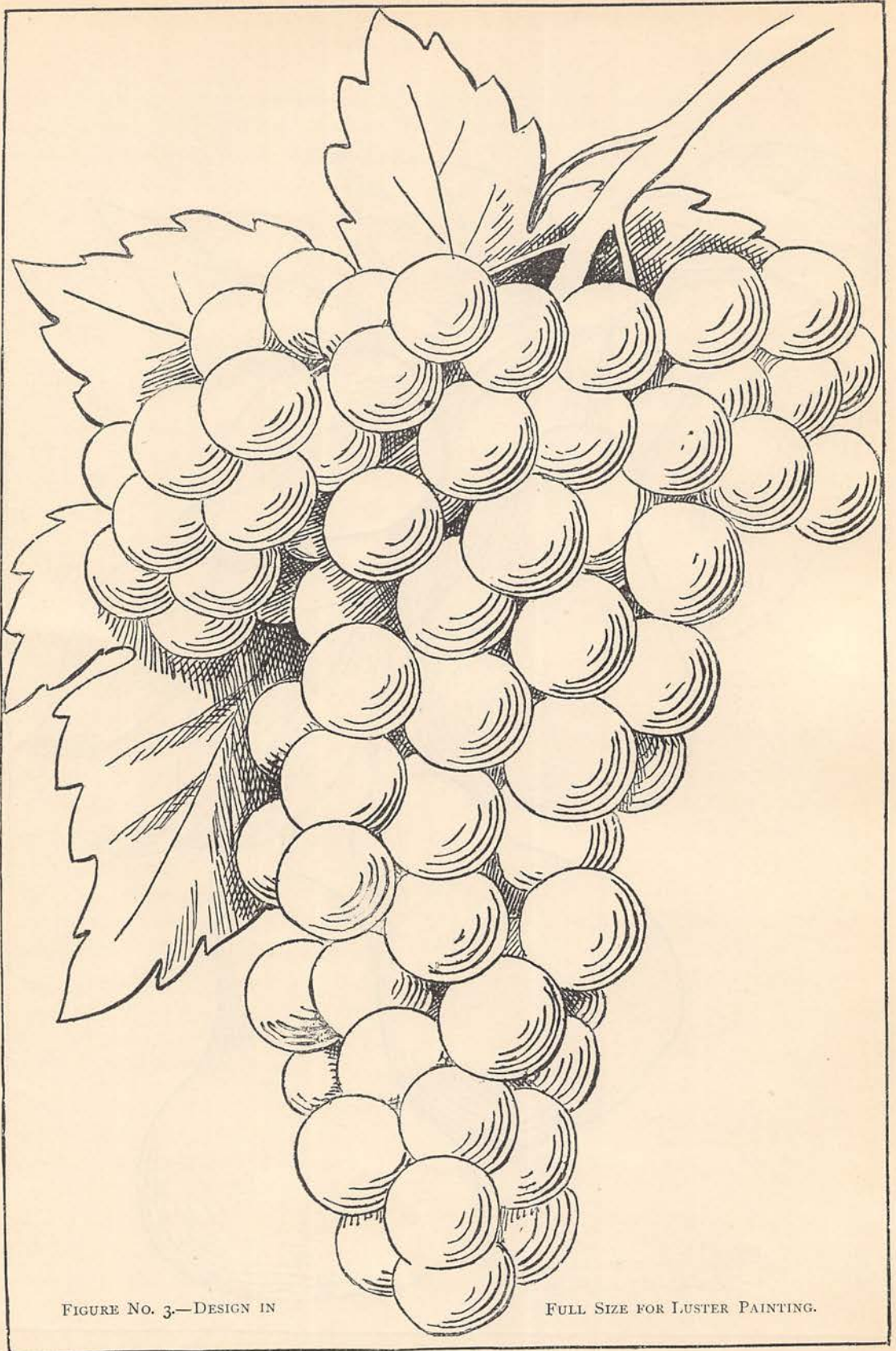


FIGURE No. 3.—DESIGN IN

FULL SIZE FOR LUSTER PAINTING.

made of plush, in a rich golden-brown hue. The lining is of India silk and the two sections forming the cushion are laced together at their tops with ribbon matching the lighter tone of the lining. The ribbon lacings are run through rings covered with a crochet of brown cable-silk, and are bowed at one end of the cushion, their ends being tipped with small pompons. Upon the front section is painted a branch of pears and their foliage, the fruit being done in the greenish tones seen in the growing fruit with a tinge of red upon the high lights. For the leaves darker greenish tones were used, a yellowish tinge suggestive of their autumnal state being given to some of them. The size of the pears and leaves composing the design is given at Figure No. 2, and the method of painting is as follows. The pattern is first stamped or outlined upon the goods and the paints are laid on with a medium large brush, two or three being kept at hand, so as to avoid dipping from one color to another or having to clean too frequently. They are laid on thickly, but lightly, any prolonged effort to spread or drive them in being fatal to a good effect. Only a little paint is taken up on the brush when the more delicate parts are to be done, but in the design under consideration a free and rapid method is permissible. It is consequently an excellent selection for first efforts. It is a matter of choice whether the design be uniformly covered and the high lights and shadings subsequently touched on,

or painted from the margin with the paint gradually becoming thinner toward the shadows, so as to accentuate the latter by partially revealing the background. In conventionalized floral designs the latter method has been found very satisfactory, but for fruit and geometric designs the former is preferred by many, but in painting on velvet or plush the brush strokes should go with the nap—never against it.

At Figure No. 3, a design for a fine cluster of grapes is illustrated. It is an excellent study for luster painting, and may decorate a cushion of the style pictured, or any other article to which such a decoration is adapted. A curtain to a book-case might be handsomely decorated with similar clusters in the corner, and conventionalized grape-vines minus their foliage running down the sides and across the top and bottom.

Luster painting is often associated with flower painting in oils, and when white flowers are chosen as subjects the effect if artistically developed is admirable. A scarf of gobelin-blue plush, ornamented with annunciation lilies in a large conventionalized pattern, has the flowers painted in all white. Upon this body color silver in its white metallic form, and sparkling silver are laid on with the medium, and in the shadows the deeper tones are brought out by the skilful use of metallic steel powder. The work was done by an amateur, who experimented carefully to obtain the desired result.

