

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## PAINTING ON CHINA.



**F** asked to mention the most important precaution for the novice in china painting we should reply absolute neatness in the care of palette, brushes and colors; and we are certain that as the beginner progressed in the art the full value of the advice would be understood and appreciated. Colors must be kept separate until the proper time for combining them upon the palette arrives, and this can only be accomplished by having separate receptacles for holding the turpentine used for cleaning brushes and that which is mixed with the paint, and by having at hand rags and alcohol for wiping brushes upon, and for cleaning the palette, etc. This chapter, while illustrated with designs which advanced artists will find adapted to their purpose, is written principally for the help it may be to those who must obtain their knowledge of the art of china painting principally from experience, and who desire to reduce as much as they may the tuition fees which this teacher usually requires. To those who have the courage and the patience to experiment carefully and per-

sistently success is sure to come, because while there are many perplexing details to master, they simplify rapidly if the beginner only takes pains to learn the cause of her failures. The bugbear of amateurs is the revolutionizing process which the firing is supposed to produce. There is no question but that many pieces of china emerge from the kiln defaced in ways that are past accounting for, but the statement sometimes made that the decorator can never tell beforehand what colors her design will appear in after its trial by fire, has no foundation in the experience of artists who work with the best colors and have their firing done by competent persons. Occasionally a doubtful color will emerge more doubtful than it went in, and then the artist is sure to wish she had subjected it to a practical test before deciding to use it in conjunction with other colors.

Even if the expense of an outfit is a problem which must be settled by limiting the outlay to the smallest practical sum, the would-be artist need not be discouraged, as several colors, brushes, oils, a palette knife and a glass palette may be procured for less than four dollars. Dealers in artists' materials

may usually be relied upon to fill an order according to the specifications given them, but if requested to send what *they* consider a necessary outfit will almost invariably advise one costing a sum far in excess of that mentioned. The cost of each item has not been specified in our estimate because it varies in different localities. In this instance we have given the aggregate in figures which would cover the

yellow and mixing yellow; the brown which is catalogued No. 4 or 17; pearl-gray No. 6 and ivory-black. Our expenditure of four dollars includes six camel's-hair brushes, two or three of which may be very fine, one flat black one and two medium sized ones. A bottle of what is technically called fat-oil is also provided for by this sum. The turpentine and alcohol are local commodities for which

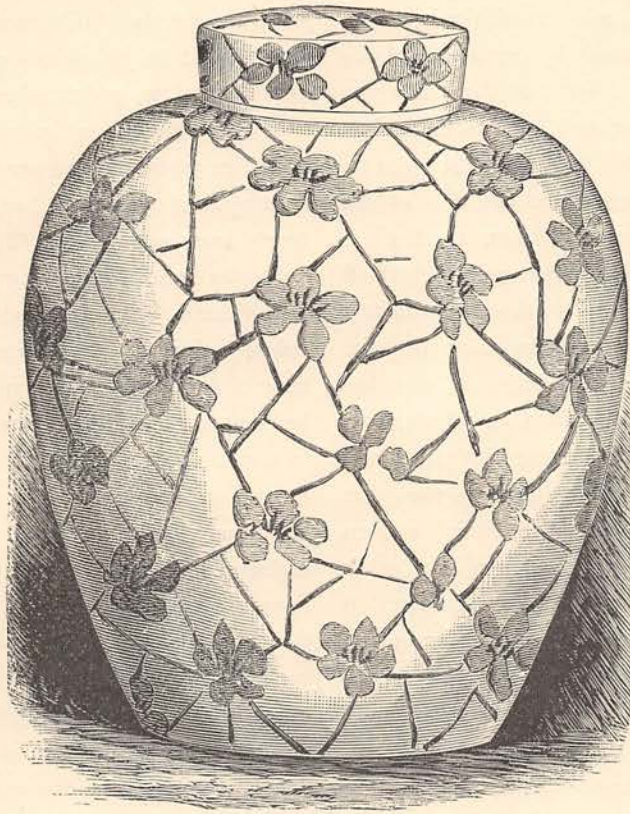


FIGURE NO. 1.—ROSE JAR.

cost in New York and probably in most cities. It includes a dozen colors selected from the list of Delacroix colors, and these will be found sufficient for the requirements of the beginner. They are chrome water-green which is a grounding or tinting color; carnation No. 1 which is one of the most satisfactory and adaptive of the reds, deep red-brown; brown-green, emerald-green and dark-green No. 7; ivory-

no estimate has been made, and it is presumed that the decorator has at hand lead pencils, a pen-knife and a few cheap tiles. It is upon these latter the experiments in colors are to be made. Do not attempt the slightest thing in the way of a design until you have sent a tile covered with specimens of your twelve colors to the kiln and noted the effect of firing upon them. A medium sized brush

will carry all the color needed for experimenting, and of each color only a very little need be laid upon the palette. To smooth each little heap of color as you take it out, dip the palette knife in some turpentine, which you have previously poured into a cup (but do not take up any more of the liquid than adheres), and "grind" or rub the color to a perfectly smooth consistency. Before laying your knife down wipe it clean upon a rag; then dip your brush in turpentine, rub out all the moisture that will come out easily by pressing it gently against *another* rag; dip it in the color you have on your palette and lay this color in a little square upon your tile. Lay the color on so that it will be heavier at one side of the square than the other, and upon another tile having the same dimensions and marked off into twelve squares equal to those of your test tile make another square of the color you have used. To avoid the possibility of mistakes number the top of each tile 1 and the bottom 2. Now clean the brush thoroughly in a cup of turpentine (by no means dip it in the same cup as the knife was moistened in) and go through the same process with all the other colors, being careful not to have them overlap upon the tiles or become mixed upon the palette. When all the colors in your supply are represented by a square of each upon each tile send one tile to a firer and await, with as much patience as your zeal will permit, its return. When it comes back to you study carefully the changes in color which the process of firing has wrought by comparing it with your unfired tile, and keep both by you for future reference. The result cannot be said to be an *absolutely* reliable one, because some of the colors tested would, if fired separately by a person who thoroughly understood the process, be subjected to a greater or less degree of heat than the others, but the test is the most practical one that can be recom-

mended, and the colors on the fired tile usually show but little difference from those that have not been inside the kiln.

The beginner may now essay a simple design; one representing but few colors is best for the untrained decorator, and before attempting it the palette must be thoroughly clean, and the brushes freed from all traces of color. The fat-oil is incorporated with the colors in mixing *after* they have been ground with the palette knife, and it is invaluable, but it must be judiciously used, as must also the turpentine, which is an excellent dryer. The fat-oil should not be mixed with the paint as it lies on the palette because half a drop of it sometimes goes much further than the amateur's knowledge of it. Too much of it prevents the paint from drying and its superfluity is indicated by a permanent gloss upon the colors before they are fired. Colors which show a very high luster when dry should not be sent to the kiln as they never fire satisfactorily. A few drops of fat-oil upon the palette are enough to work with, and the brush may be dipped in it after it has been moistened in clean turpentine and dabbled upon a clean rag to rid it of the excess of moisture which it takes up. Having proceeded according to this method you may find that you have too much turpentine—this being indicated by difficulty in working the color, which, instead of remaining as you laid it with the brush, will run in streaks. If such is the case you may be assured that you have not quite comprehended the method and proceed to gain further knowledge by experimenting.

For some time (until you are prepared to admit that your experience has brought you practical knowledge), confine your efforts to conventional designs and simple flower-subjects, or to designs which embody your special forte in coloring or drawing. If you wish to save expense take your first ten or twelve les-

sons on small tiles ; you can procure them for a trifling sum, and you will feel less regret upon contemplating those which you pronounce failures than if they were vases or plates. Should they turn out satisfactory you have in them the material for a lovely window-box or *jardinière*. We will suppose that you are going to paint a cluster of yellow roses

place it in an oven for a few minutes, but do not begin to work upon it until it has become cool. Draw the outlines of your design and prepare your palette with the first colors, which may be pearl-gray and brown-green. Paint in the whole design with pearl-gray, laying on the darker color where you desire the heaviest shadows. Lay the gray on very thin

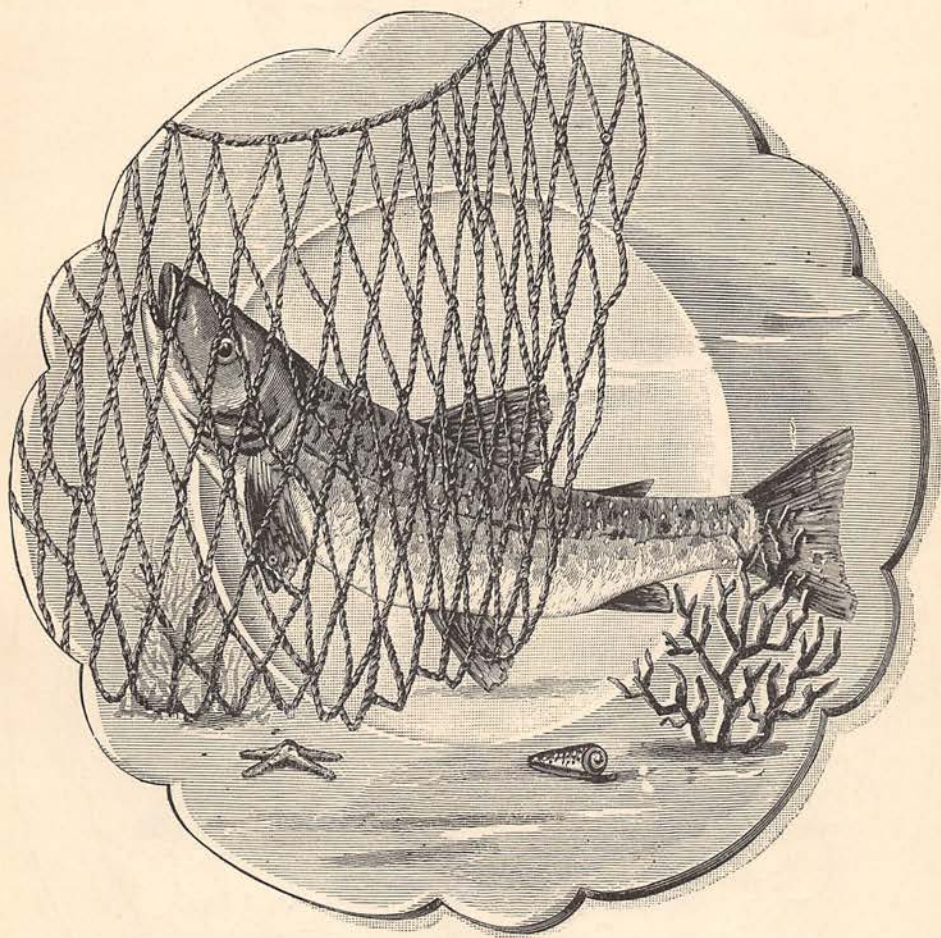
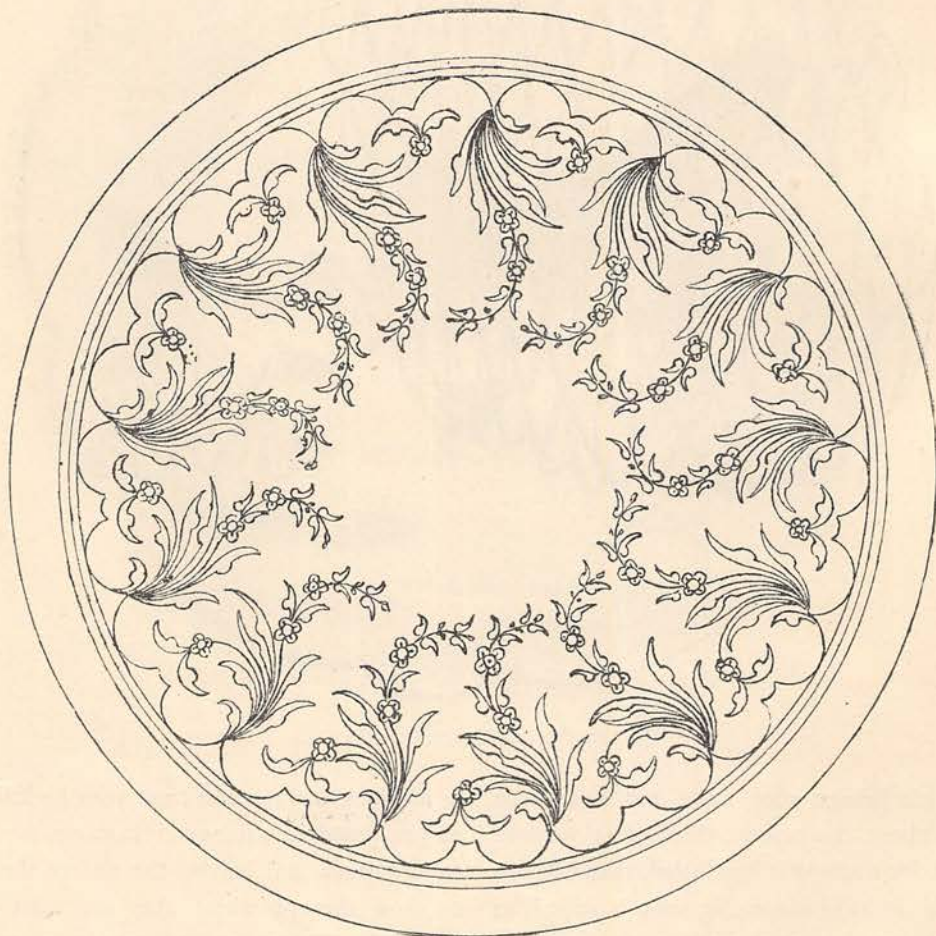
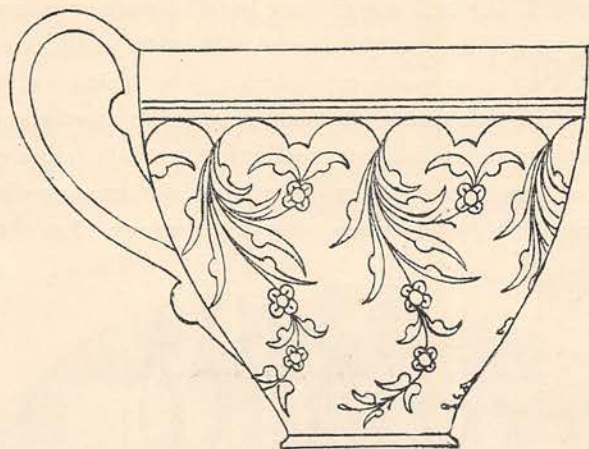


FIGURE NO. 2.—DECORATED PLATE.

and their foliage upon a tile, and you are in doubt about the colors. Well, first prepare the tile by washing it in alcohol, then rub two or three drops of turpentine upon it, wipe it as carefully as if it were a piece of a cut-glass table service, and, if the atmospheric conditions are such that it does not dry perfectly,

in medium shadows and treat your high lights as you would in water-color painting, working toward them and leaving the tint of the tile to show through where they are most pronounced. The piece is now ready for its first firing. When it comes back to you paint in the local color of the roses with mixing-yellow

and ivory-yellow, and strengthen the shadows yellow glow into the reflections. For the



FIGURES NOS. 3 AND 4.—DECORATED CUP AND SAUCER.

with brown-green and gray mixed, throwing a leaves mix emerald and dark green, using also

some of the brown-green. All these colors were included in the outfit suggested. There are others which might be used for this subject, but those recommended are good trial colors.

Perhaps somebody will tell you that your colors will gain in luster if mixed with flux. This is partly true, and as you progress you can safely experiment, though while engaged in acquiring your rudimentary color-knowledge you can dispense with it. Some colors emerge from the kiln with a glaze which requires no added luster, but others are improved by having mixed with them a little flux, which preparation is obtainable from dealers in artists' materials.

Of course the whole art of china-painting cannot be taught in any book, and many hints of value to beginners must be omitted from a chapter limited to the space which can be given it in a book of such varied scope as *NEEDLE AND BRUSH*; but the points elucidated, if carefully studied, will be found very helpful to beginners who are taking their first lessons without the aid of a competent teacher. The rose-jar pictured at Figure No. 1 is not beyond the ability of anybody who has made a test tile and desires to paint a conventional design. It may be painted in yellow, red, brown or blue upon a white or tinted ground with the broken lines in the same or a contrasting color. The Japanesque characteristics of the subject are quite in harmony with the use of gold either alone or in conjunction with some dull color, and the lines are not too intricate for a beginner.

At Figure No. 2 a plate, which, if properly executed, may be fittingly associated with very aristocratic bric-à-brac, is represented. The plaque or plate has a greenish-blue ground tint which is faintest at the lower part and gradually deepened toward the top, the effect being quite aqueous, as is in keeping

with the subject. The coral is in its natural hue, but the shell and star-fish are merely suggestive of grayish light and shade. The large fish is painted a light silvery yellow shading into brown upon the upper part of the body, and the head, fins and tail are darkened with brown. The darkest portions of the body are spotted with yellow and red, and the high lights are very silvery. The net is all gold and should not be too delicately indicated.

The cup and saucer illustrated at Figures Nos. 3 and 4 are of a fashionable style for after-dinner coffee. The ornamentation is in Pompadour-red picked out with gold, and the edges are bordered with bands of red outside narrower bands of gold. Most of the decoration is done in fine pen-strokes, the tiny conventionalized blossoms, however, requiring some brush work.

At Figure No. 5 is illustrated a superb design for decorating in the Royal Worcester style. The entire surface, excepting the handle, the open edges and the border of the medallion may be tinted in matt colors ground in turpentine and then blended with a little copal. The effect is richer when the excepted portions are plain gold. In this instance the decoration is developed in raised gold. The design is traced upon the pitcher, and the tint scraped off inside the lines. The paste, which is sold for raised gold work, is now applied so as to bring out the design of the bird and grasses in high and medium relief, the heads of grass which recede into the shadows being almost flat. The pitcher is now ready for firing, provided all the portions which are to be done in plain gold are uniformly covered. The retouching of such portions should not be left till after the first firing, which must always be done before the paste is ready to receive the raised gold. Both green, red and light gold may be used in such work, and when very fine tracerics are

to be executed Cooley's gold will be found a free worker. The surface of the paste should be smooth when the gold is applied, and the

know this, it is well to send instructions to that effect.

The gold will stand being highly burnished



FIGURE No. 5.—PITCHER IN ROYAL WORCESTER STYLE.

second firing requires only a moderate heat. This is understood by experts, but if such a piece be sent for firing to a kiln where the person in charge cannot be relied upon to

after the second firing, but careful handling is advised, because too strong a heat may have rendered the paste brittle. Dexterity in such details results from a light but secure hold.

