



CHAPTER XXX.

PAINTING ON PLAQUES.

IF all the numerous varieties of decorative art, none is more popular or pleasing than that of plaque painting. The plaques are obtainable in wood, porcelain, china, *papier mâché*, metal, etc., and are found in the ordinary plaque or plate form, oval, square and oblong; the square and oblong often being bent or cut away at the corners to form picturesque lines. They are decorated in floral and other designs, as the taste of the artist may suggest.

Many of the wood plaques are decorated upon their surface, leaving the grain of the wood to furnish the background, and when selected in bird's-eye maple and other handsome grainings, the effect is charming. The metallic plaques are equally attractive, and those made of *papier mâché*, which may be bought bronzed in gold, silver, copper and other colors, have many admirers. If one desires a shaded or different colored background from those obtainable ready for use at the shops, the desired colors may be easily applied in free and heavy strokes with a brush and the shading may be done in any artistic way.

The subject for decorating the plaque hav-

ing been chosen, the outline should be delicately indicated, after which the background is applied before beginning to paint the flowers or other designs. This enables the artist to retain the outline of the subject in relief from the background, which, if it were applied after the finishing up of the subject, would be likely to interfere with the lines of the decoration. If the method suggested be followed, the flowers will stand out in much stronger relief than if otherwise treated.

Mistakes are often made by amateurs in selecting too massive and confused a subject. It is better to make such choice as will give value to each identical leaf and blossom, at the same time avoiding all that will have ungraceful lines. Pretty subjects for beginners are the dewberry or running blackberry vine, with the colors seen in early autumn, when one not infrequently finds the rich ripe berry with the green and red in different stages of maturity, growing upon the same branch with brightly tinted foliage. The sumach, with the bunches of deep red berries and the brightest possible colored leaves. The wild asters and field daisies, the eglantine and dogwood, are all good selections.

Autumn leaves are also effective, and can be sketched from the branch, when the stems of the leaves are soft and supple. If the artist is not ready at the time to finish up the subject, the leaves may be pressed and used as suggested for the distribution of color when opportunity affords. When subjects

skillfully worked. In several of the chapters of "Needle and Brush" will be found outlines of grapes, and sprays of flowers and foliage, sections of which can be easily taken for plaque decoration. We would suggest that, unless the imitation of some piece of china or a conventional design be selected,



FIGURE NO. 1.—PLAQUE, MOUNTED ON AN EASEL.

consisting of fruit, grain, or heavy clusters of flowers are to be worked up, it is unwise to give too much detail to the heavier portion of the subject. The sprays in the foreground, may, however, be worked up in strong relief.

Both oil and water colors are used, and each produces equally gratifying effects if

the effect is much more artistic if the sprays come from the edge near the side, inclining to the center and outer edges, rather than with their stems beginning exactly at the bottom. If, however, bunches of violets or anemone, etc., be chosen, they may be arranged in one, two or more groups of different

sizes, showing the tuft of foliage at the bottom, with the blossoms extending in a natural way, as they are often taken from the soil. Birds, butterflies, bees and different insects are always in order, and in the country one is never at a loss for natural subjects. The

duced by the introduction of powdered glass, or, diamond dust as it is called; this is distributed as a frosting upon the surface of the picture.

Bunches of pears, a branch of brilliantly colored crab-apple, or of deep rich purple

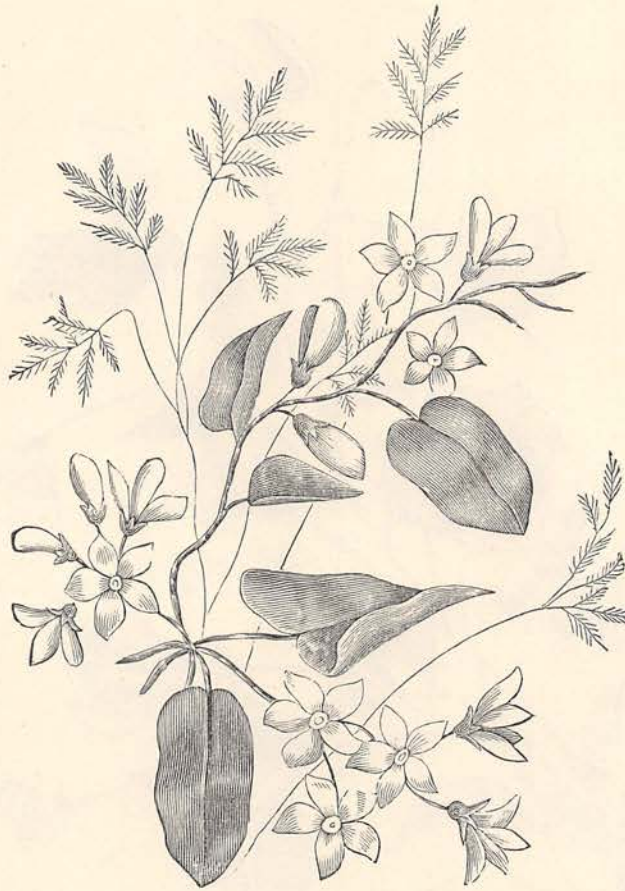


FIGURE NO. 2.—TRAILING-ARBUTUS DESIGN FOR A PLAQUE.

owl, which seems to be an undying popular subject, can be easily traced from the outline illustrated on another page of "Needle and Brush."

Heads, landscapes, snow scenes, etc., are pretty subjects for plaques, and permit of strong and artistic effects. When winter views are chosen, a frosty effect may be pro-

duced by the introduction of powdered glass, or, diamond dust as it is called; this is distributed as a frosting upon the surface of the picture.

plums, form pretty fruit subjects, while the nodding heads of the finer grain, such as oats, barley and wheat, and ears of corn in their many colors of red, yellow and brown, thrown into relief against the husk, with its delicate manilla colors, form pretty subjects for dining-room plaques, while for the library or living-room, the head of the faithful dog, or pussy

asleep upon the rug, a singing canary or other household pets are suitable.

A great variety of frames may be made at home with happy results to serve as a border for the plaques that are made to hang. These, however, are by no means essential, as nearly

sesses advantages over most other branches of decorative art in the inexpensive nature of its requirements. A small wire, wood, or plush-covered easel is a suitable rest for a plaque that is not to be hung upon the wall, and a pretty disposal is therefore practicable



FIGURE NO. 3.—SWEET-PEA DESIGN FOR A PLAQUE.

all plaques are provided with a ring by which to hang them.

Plaque-painting is in itself a fascinating employment, and any one possessing even a modicum of artistic ability may develop it into a most pleasing accomplishment. It pos-

sesses advantages over most other branches of decorative art in the inexpensive nature of its requirements. A small wire, wood, or plush-covered easel is a suitable rest for a plaque that is not to be hung upon the wall, and a pretty disposal is therefore practicable

in any part of a room where a bit of color or ornamentation is desired. Sable and camel's-hair brushes are best for painting plaques and in the application of colors, etc., the same rules which govern their use in other branches of decorative art hold good.

NEEDLE AND BRUSH.

The four studies which illustrate this chapter suggest an agreeable variety in the range of subjects from which selections may be made. Figure No. 1 is a landscape painted on a concave round plaque and mounted on an easel, which is draped with a silk scarf. Marine views are favorite subjects with those

artistic device and it is also a good subject for a student, as in a single specimen a wide range of shades varying from a deep rose-pink to a pale white are often observable, while the foliage in most instances presents a rusty contrast enlivened only by a few polished green leaves.



FIGURE NO. 4.—THISTLE DESIGN FOR OBLONG PLAQUE.

who are skilful in counterfeiting the various hues which water assumes; but the amateur will do well to avoid choosing too ambitious or elaborate subjects in either line.

At Figure No. 2 a spray of trailing-arbutus and a few grasses which might have been pulled with it from its hiding-place are shown. The flower is one that is very effective in any

The sweet-pea blossoms pictured at Figure No. 3 are among Nature's most beautiful ornaments, and they are especially suitable for plaque decoration, because they permit of almost any method of posing.

At Figure No. 4 a design in wayside thistles is illustrated. These may be painted in the purple and red shades in which they are often-

est seen, with green in two or three shades tending from dark toward a light yellowish tint for the calyx of each. The light fluffy effect, characteristic of the ball or blossom should be carefully preserved as well as the prickly aspect of the stalk and the horny

appearance of the leaves. Very light touches are essential in all the details. Mauve-lake used as it comes from the tubes, intensified with rose-madder and paled with white is a good color for the blossoms, the added tints giving a satisfactory range of shades.



Autumn Leaves as Decorations.

THE beauty of autumn foliage as a decoration is best developed by breaking the leaves in small boughs and twigs instead of singly from the tree. Press them between old newspapers under heavy weights, changing the papers every day for three days and then on alternate days until there is no evidence of moisture from the leaves. Nature's tinting and grouping cannot be surpassed, and when the boughs are fastened about an arch, above pictures, or any place where such a decoration is suggested by the available space, you will be glad that you did not pick the leaves off, one by one. Ferns, grasses, cat-tails, oats, wheat or any kind of flora gathered with a

view to its use as a decoration should be dried in a dark place. Mosses, lichens, etc., may not show any difference in color, but they are less liable to fall apart. A pretty decoration for a hall comprises a small wooden box covered with mosses and lichens gathered from stone walls, rail fences, rocks and meadows. The box is filled with bracken and bitter-sweet and is placed on a bracket underneath a mirror. Above the latter are boughs of autumn leaves forming a graceful semi-circle. The effect of the entire arrangement is an artistic tribute to the taste that designed it, and very beautifying to the place in which it stands.

