

Postage-Stamp Pictures.



LET me hasten to assure readers at the outset that the subject of this article is not such that will interest philatelists only, but also those who have never taken more than a "licking interest" in stamps in their lives, and regard with contempt what they term the collecting craze. The uses for old stamps of no value in bulk beyond £3 or £4 a million are numerous, but the most popular use to which they have hitherto been put is the decoration of such articles as ash-trays and cigarette-cases, plaques for the wall, drinking-glasses, and the like; and there is in existence more than one suite of furniture thus elaborated, and more than one room in the world plastered over and hung about with festoons and ropes of used and valueless postage-stamps.

Plates and other articles thus adorned make by no means disfiguring ornaments for wall and shelf, but there is a higher art in the manipulation of these multi-coloured scraps of paper than consists in merely pasting them down with studied negligence over a plate or glass. Up to the present, however, it is but little known, for

it has not been noised abroad to the millions who might be inclined to attempt to make a hobby for pleasure or profit or both; indeed, until recently it was quite a one-man art, no one than its initiator understanding it. This was undoubtedly because M. Desseignes, the gentleman in question, an ardent collector of postage-stamps, had not disclosed in their entirety the facts as to how it was done. He took old stamps of no value, cut them into various shapes of different sizes, and with these composed floral designs and coats-of-arms on porcelain plaques. These, he showed to M. Maury, the well-known Marchand des Timbres-postes, of the Boulevard Montmartre, Paris, and M. Maury, introducing them to his

philatelic customers, found for these unique, artistic, and beautiful creations a ready sale.

Parquetry work with stamps is nothing new, but never until M. Desseignes took a hand in it had there been produced anything so delicate and well executed; while the idea of turning stamps into flowers and the like was quite new and novel. M. Maury, who is, of course, an authority on everything in which postage-stamps play a part, explained that the success of M. Desseignes was due to the fact that he possessed a true artist's instinct of colours and knew how to handle them to get the very best effects. Indeed, in the production of first-class work of this description everything depends upon the possession of this instinct, which, according to M. Maury, so few, unfortunately, can claim. As it is necessary to the painter in oil and water-colours so it is necessary to the artist in postage-stamps, which are to the latter what the paint-box is to the former.

The nature of the work produced by M. Desseignes can be readily seen from the photographs illustrating this article, though, no doubt, many will find it hard to believe that the beautiful floral sprays, the mar-



A SPECIMEN OF M. DESSEIGNES' LETTER-WORK IN STAMPS.
From a Photograph.

vellous life-like butterflies, and the wonderful lattice design shown on one of the plaques have been obtained with nothing else than postage-stamps. Such, however, is the truth, but to appreciate the designs as they should be appreciated one must see the plaques themselves, for our photographic reproductions do not convey the beautiful colours in the originals, the blending of which is more than half their charm. They look like nothing so much as plates hand-painted in oils, and it is only when one examines the work closely that the real character of it becomes apparent and increases one's admiration.

There are many stamp collectors who in the pursuit of their hobby have no doubt accumulated a lot of stamps of little value with which they are at a loss to know what to

do. To give them away to others or to burn them has been the only means of getting rid of them, taking it for granted that the philatelists have a sufficiency of articles decorated with them; now they have open a new course, if they care to follow it—as may anyone who cares to purchase for next to nothing a quantity of variously coloured stamps which have done their duty so far as the postal authorities are concerned. No artistic temperament is required to make the designs to be placed on plaque or palette, for these can be copied, and though it cannot be promised that beginners will immediately achieve great things, patient practice cannot fail to end in success more or less pronounced, though those who possess the colour instinct will always produce the best results.



Stamps and plaques in hand, the necessary tools must be obtained. First and foremost are required several small cardboard boxes, into which the stamps must be sorted according to their colours. A small pair of scissors with long fine blades and a double-edged blade or lancet will be wanted for cutting the stamps into pieces; while the object of a good sticking-gum and varnish is too obvious to need explaining. In addition, tracing and carbon papers are essential, for, of course, beginners will find it easier to trace existing designs from other pieces of china and the like than to commence with originals.

M. Desseignes advises the copying of the simplest design to begin with, and recommends flowers, because one can get from the natural blossoms an idea of the



required colours. It is not necessary to choose large designs, small ones give better results; and the decorations on Strassbourg, Rouen, and Mousten china-ware are admirably adapted to copying, as the numbers of colours are comparatively few.

The stamps to be used must first be cleaned of any paper adhering to them. This is easily done by soaking them in water. Afterwards, they are dried between clean cloth and sheets of blotting paper, and then left in a press or beneath

some heavy weight, so that they become perfectly flat whilst getting quite dry at the same time. It is

a simple matter to take a tracing of the flower to be reproduced, and its outline and other guiding lines are transferred from one tracing paper through one carbon paper on to the plate to be worked on.

To cut the stamps into shapes to fit the design and build up the flower becomes a simple matter with practice. Imagining that the bloom in question is a red rose, a stamp of suitable tint is taken and placed beneath the tracing paper, and the desired shape is traced on to it, but it is better to make the impression on the back of the stamp rather than on its

face. Thus, bit by bit, the flower is traced in stamps of different shades and tints, the stamps are cut as traced, and then carefully

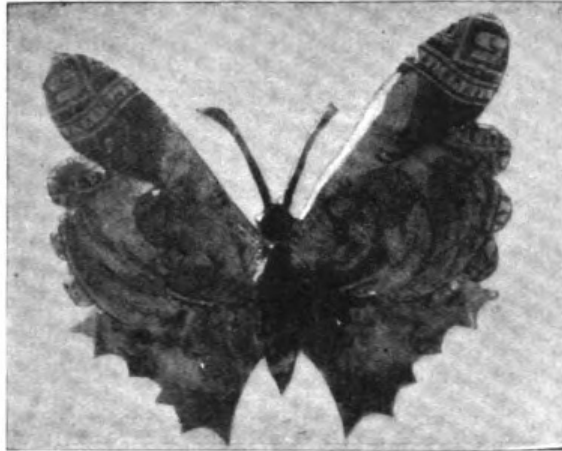
the pieces are pasted down on the plate. Although these instructions sound so extremely simple that a child could not fail to follow them, to carry them out correctly is no easy matter, and a steady hand and a sure eye are necessary to excellent execution of the work. Many of the pieces will be found to be so small that the artist will do well to supply himself

with a tiny pair of pincers; indeed, unless his fingers are naturally small and delicate a

pair of these will be absolutely indispensable.

Before again touching the plate the gum must be allowed to dry. Then any raggedness in the design can be cut away with a lancet, and the undesirable morsels will disappear with a little gentle persuasion, when the next operation of washing the plaque with tepid water and a sponge will clean off any superfluous gum on the face and round the edges of the postage-stamp flower.

The sponge must be slightly damped and drawn lightly over the design in one direction only; a too liberal use of water and a heavy hand



From a] A POSTAGE-STAMP BUTTERFLY. [Photograph.



A LANDSCAPE MADE ENTIRELY FROM POSTAGE-STAMPS—THE MOST WONDERFUL PIECE OF WORK OF ITS KIND EVER EXECUTED.

From a Photograph.

Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



From a]

PART OF THE PRECEDING LANDSCAPE SHOWING THE ACTUAL SIZE.

[Photograph.

travelling about in all directions tend to wrinkle up the edges and make a lot of extra work, if it does not entirely ruin what has been done. With a soft, clean piece of linen the plate must be dried; gentle dabbing will have the desired result.

Now the artist will, for the first time, be able to gather some idea of the result of his labours. It may not be so satisfactory as he had hoped, but patience and practice will secure better things. It will probably happen that the design has the appearance of discontinuity—that is, being made up of separate pieces—but this is only to be expected. In a perfect design this would not be the case, the aim of the maker being to give the idea that the flower is all in one piece. Gaps can, however, be filled up with the tiniest morsels of stamps.

It only remains now to varnish the design, but before this can be done the plate must be put away out of the dust for a day, to ensure that it shall be perfectly dry. The varnish is not smothered all over the surface of the plate, only the design itself is glazed with it, and this naturally is an operation requiring a very steady hand. The application of this liquid gives the work the appearance of a painting on porcelain, and at even a short distance one would need to have a sharp eye to tell the differ-

ence. The drying of the varnish is an important matter, and while this is in progress the plaque must again be placed out of the reach of dust and dirt. It may be that this decoration of plaques, as described, sounds too trivial for some persons to undertake, while the nature of the work does not appeal to others; but there is still hope for them if they would become artists in postage-stamps—using the word artist in the full sense of the word, *i.e.*, a painter of pictures and not merely of floral design. Set them at the photograph reproduced on the preceding page. They will see at once that it is, indeed, a perfect picture of a pool, wherein a couple of deer are assuaging their thirst beneath the shade of tall trees. It is to be regretted that it is not possible to present this picture in all its beautiful colours, for at first glance it looks as though they had been transferred by an artist's brush. It is a large picture—some 2½ ft. in depth by 1½ ft. in width, and every scrap of it is postage-stamp.

If a reader feels inclined to doubt it he will gather conviction from the last photograph, which shows just a small portion of the bottom of the same picture. In this the stamps show up plainly.

How many hundreds of stamps, cut into how many shapes, how many colours are here represented, it is quite impossible to say.