USEFUL HINTS.

SALAD DRESSING.—A useful and valuable help to one's table is a good salad dressing, and when well made will be found to keep good for some weeks. Take two eggs, thoroughly boil them until quite hard, put them into cold water and when quite cold take the yolks only and pound finely in a mortar; add to this a tablespoonful of sugar, ditto of mustard, and desiccated onion, mix this thoroughly with a little cream; when quite smooth add the remainder of the cream, in one pint, and add to this one pint of vinegar. It will require shaking before using; it is very good for lobster salad. This recipe we have always found most useful and appreciated by the superior members of our family circle—the men folk, I mean—so therefore hope it may prove of use to others, and especially so to those dear girls who try in every way to brighten and lighten the greater trials of life. I fear there are many dear husbands, fathers, and brothers who often return home to very badly cooked dishes, and not much better arranged tables, all of which might be different if our women folk studied more the comfort and taste of those to whom we owe, perhaps, everything. Only when the earthy ties are severed may we look down on the many things that might have been done.

TO MAKE A SATIN POCKET.—Buy an ordinary stuff and plain plain leaf, ten inches wide and ten deep without measuring the number of yards of two-inch wide reversible satin ribbon for handle, three yards of narrow ribbon the same colour, half a yard of black velvet in the piece, a quarter of a yard of satin in the piece, twelve inches of whalebone, a quarter of a yard of Victoria lawn, and a bunch of velveteen panes. Take the maize satin, lay it on the front of the fan and shape it, cutting it out larger than the fan, and curving it inward in the centre so as to leave exposed the fibres of the palm-leaf as they near the handle. Put a piece of wadding under the silk, and quilt it either in a succession of circles or in a diamond pattern, then stitch it on to the fan round its edge, leaving the edge neat, but not turning in any satin. Take the narrow ribbon, box-pleat it at one edge, and stitch it round and over the satin so that it comes half an inch below the fan. Take the velvet or black satin, cut it in a length of twelve inches one way and three-quarters of a yard the other, and line it with fine Victoria lawn, turning its upper edge down for two inches. Gather the upper edge with two rivets, put in the first an inch from the edge, the second three-quarters of an inch below the first. Draw the gathered part until it is twelve inches long, but leave the middle of the rest and tie it twice round the fold of the pocket stand out well from the inside. Finish the pocket by fastening one side the bunched of panes and then ornament the handle. Cut off half a yard of the ribbon, find the middle of the rest and tie it twice round the very bottom of the handle, then bring both ends to the centre of the handle and secure them to that height by tying the half yard of ribbon cut off at first round them there as a loop and as a pretty bow; tack on both ribbons for seven inches, and then tie them together with another pretty bow. This last loop and knot is used to suspend the fan from the wall. The creme de satin is made like the satin one, either with one or two coloured satin or crape, but instead of the edge of fine worked ribbon the second part of the pocket is sewn over the first, and is then trimmed with peacock feathers. Thirteen peacock feathers are required round the fan, a split feather to edge the inside of the pocket where it joins the palm-leaf, and four or five to make a side ornament, to which a bow with ends is also added. The back of both the pockets should be made tidy by being plainly covered with material.

DESIGNING FOR EMBROIDERY.

By FRED MILLER.

In my former article I confined my remarks mainly to giving some practical hints in connection with embroidery for curtains, and it is my purpose now to study the subject of embroidery from another point of view, viz., the principles of design as applied to work wrought with the needle. Designing for embroidery is as important to the worker as knowing all about the stitches and wool and silks, for good needlework is the result of excellence, unless designed, unless understood theoretically and studied as a distinct subject, is not to be so acquired. The need of good designs is much more frequent want than a knowledge of how to do the work, as I constantly hear it said by skilled workers in wool and silk that their chief difficulty is how and where to get good designs. My object in this is, emphatically, to make them for yourself. “But I can’t.” Then learn to do so, for, believe me, your work will never be as interesting, as it will be as good, until you are your own designer. The few hints I am about to give, and which have aided me in designing for myself and many have welcomed to my readers. They may be the result of my own experience, extending over some few years, and are of value in proportion as they are the embodiment of my own practical acquaintance with the subject under consideration.

It is as well in all art crafts to see what has been done before our own time, and by various peoples in the special craft we are engaged in, in order that we may note their successes and failures for that matter, as it must not be supposed that because a work is old or foreign it is necessarily good—and learn by them what to strive for and what to avoid. And in this craft of needlework we happen to have countless examples, which are very easily approached, produced in a country which has never been excelled for its embroidery; and that country is Japan. Japanese work has become too common for us duly to appreciate the marvellous skill of workmanship and knowledge of the principles of decorative art, which are to be seen even in the simplest productions of that artistic country. And we shall note in Japanese work that they never seem to make any mistake about what they ought to do, and never falter or hesitate in carrying out what their unerring instinct dictates. It is now acknowledged by designers that the Japanese, and in a lesser degree the Chinese, are the best masters of decorative design, as applied to textiles, pottery, painting,
embroidery, and other kindred crafts. And the secret of this success is that they know all about the material for which they design, what can best be done, and what should never be attempted. And this knowledge of your material is at the root of all good designing. All the arts have their limitation, particularly the decorative arts; and to realise this limitation is the first step to success in decorative design. There are certain effects which can be wrought with the needle, which cannot as well be produced by any other means, and if we are to do the best with our material, we must direct our efforts to bringing out its particular and individual qualities, and not be continually striving to do what cannot well be done, such as trying to produce the effect of painting by the needle. More failure has resulted from this attempt to imitate one art by the means of another than any other cause, therefore let us be sure in our own work we are not striving after a vain shadow, a will-o’-the-wisp that leads nowhere. Whether it be pottery painting, glass painting, embroidery, wood-carving, or whatever craft we work in, be sure that you are doing the best for your craft, by bringing into as strong relief as possible the special qualities possessed by it, and what is more, not possessed in anything like the same degree by any other.

The effects which are suitable in one picture cannot be reproduced by the needle, though many have endeavoured to copy the effect of an oil painting in wools and silks. And the reason for this is pretty obvious. Colours are much more readily blended and spread over a surface than wools or silks, which have to be applied stitch by stitch with a needle; and, therefore, what is by no means difficult to obtain in colour, a great diversity of tint and subtle gradation is next to impossible in embroidery, be the worker never so skillful. Bearing
this in mind, therefore, the effects obtainable in colour are a
to be thought of in needlework, and yet in all probability if a
painter who had never studied the craft, were asked to design
for embroidery, he would draw something that would be spoilt
in its translation by the needle, as he would think too much
about his own art, and not realise the great difference between
painting and needlework. His idea might be a good one, but
it would have to be translated into the language of the art it is
to be reproduced by, and to translate this requires a knowledge
of the grammar and vocabulary of the language of the craft;
each craft having its own special language.

I will even incur the charge of being prosy rather than not
defending myself understood in this, therefore I will just
enlarge on a notion. Many of my readers have doubtless visited
the Royal School of Art Needlework at South Kensington.
There are to be seen panels designed by Selwyn Pinage,
representing figures from classic story, such as Juno and the
peacock, executed in outline embroidery in just one colour.
Now, the artist has drawn these figures expressly to be repro-
duced by the needle, and consequently they are a great
success; but suppose he had painted figures such as he would
put into a picture, and the needlewomen had endeavoured to
reproduce the pictorial effect, I am thinking the result would
have been anything but successful.

The motifs most frequently seen in embroidery are derived
directly or indirectly from plant forms, and as the majority of
my readers adopt a more or less floral style of design, I shall
direct my concluding remarks mainly to this branch of the
craft. First comes the question of the plant you select as your
motif, and your decision should to a certain extent depend
upon the nature of your work. If you were going to design a
running border, you should try to choose a plant whose growth
seems to suggest a prolongation of form. For this reason the
honeysuckle would be more suitable than the daisy, as without
even departing from nature you would have no difficulty in adapt-
ing the former flower to your purpose, whereas the latter would
be at best disjointed and broken.

Or, again, if you wanted to fill the panels of a screen, it
would seem better to employ such plants as the lily, iris,
erysimum, foxglove and sunflower, than plants suggestive
of an all-over treatment, such as the blackberry, jasmine, or
rose; though I am aware that the Japanese often choose a
plant like the rose, and make it run through all the panels
of a screen; but then they are always careful to suggest this
kind of growth, and frequently emphasise it by putting a few
small plants at the bottom, or indications of water and water
plants.

Having selected your plant, make, if possible, a few drawings
of it in various positions, for nothing makes one understand
a plant so thoroughly as drawing it. One often does not grasp
the characteristics until one has drawn the plant again and
again, and one cannot employ it to the best advantage until the
plant's characteristics are thoroughly learnt and felt. I prefer
to design from drawings made from nature, than even from
nature itself, and for this reason—that one is apt to be bothered
by the peculiarities and accidents of the specimen before you,
instead of being occupied only with the characteristics of the
growth generally. In a blackberry, for instance, there is such
infinite variety of small differences, that the main features are
apt to be lost sight of; whereas by drawing various distinct
pieces of bramble from different plants, you gain in time a know-
ledge of the principles of its growth; and in conventionalising
it for the purposes of embroidery, we may say that you give a
general rendering of the blackberry, suggestive of its natural
growth in all main particulars, and yet made so simple that
one at once sees and lays hold of its salient points.

Let your design fill out, or seem to fit, the space it occupies.
In borders, don't clip off the leaves and flowers because they
seem to come in the way, as if you exercise a little skill and
ingenuity you ought to be able to make each part of the plant
fit in, though it were made for that space, and that alone.
The notion that the design is too large for the space, or the
wrong shape, mars any work. You must adopt one of two
methods in designing for almost any kind of work—either to
entirely fill or cover the space with the design, or else to occupy
the surface decorated without in any way filling it. The
Japanese are very skillful in this latter style of design, often
apparently filling a space with just a branch thrown across the
panel. Great skill is required to produce this effect, as
work having to occupy a comparatively large surface, must be
put on exactly in the right place; and it will be generally found
in the best Japanese work that you cannot take away a single
form or add any further detail without damaging the whole
design. Their embroidery is almost always designed on this
plan, as they are enabled to make a little work go a very long
way, a great consideration at all times, and especially the case
in needlework. As an example of the filled or covered work,
may be mentioned a good deal of Indian and Persian silk embroidery. Great richness is produced by this covered work, but the enormous time necessary to cover a large surface with needlework is in these days the chief obstacle to this class of design. The effect of an all-over pattern is much more pleasing in such articles as chair-covers, coverlets, hangings, and other textiles which are intended to hang in folds, and where part of the pattern is consequently frequently hidden. Here you must exercise your skill, and endeavour to produce the effect of a covered design, without really covering the surface. You will find that outline embroidery can be introduced with good results among filled-in work. For instance, where one leaf comes at the back of another, you can get much more relief by just outlining the back leaf and wholly covering the front leaf, than filling both in with stitches.

In designing from plant forms it will be necessary to materially simplify the plant for the purposes of the needle. The plant naturally has perhaps a confused growth of leaves all in one place, and may be bare in another. This is probably the result of accident, the pressure of some other plant, loss of light or sun, or other cause; but whether caused by accident or not, you must adapt the natural form to the exigencies of your work; for if you attempted to produce the exact effect of the natural plant you would simply achieve a meaningless jumble. It is not departing from nature to simplify her—indeed, it shows much more appreciation and love of nature to evince in your work that you have mastered the peculiarities of growth and characteristics of the plant you choose for your motif, than to attempt to copy some isolated bit of plant form thrown on without thought, and reproduced without discrimination. What you ought to carefully avoid is introducing wrong growths into your work—putting a big, but false, bone into a leaf, or having the edges of the leaves when they ought to be smooth. There is nothing gained by such departures from nature; they only show carelessness or indifference.

The further you simplify nature the more ornamental your work becomes, and some of the cleverest designs are those which suggest nature without reproducing any particular plant form. The Greek acanthus and honeysuckle patterns are instances of where nature has been shorn of all its individualities, and only its most rudimentary points emphasized. The ornamental treatment of plants might almost be said to be the rendering of the most simple structural divisions—the skeleton, so to speak; and even the source from whence the design is drawn may be hidden, and only the two simplest facts about flowering plants—the flower and its leaf—insisted upon. The more you eliminate the distinguishing characteristics of plants, the nearer you approach pure ornament, until at last you merely have left the geometric basis upon which they are built.

In Fig. 5 the two lowest facts relating to the sunflower only are insisted upon—the flower and growth of leaf. Such a design would naturally suggest either outline embroidery or applique, for to fill in the whole of the leaves and flowers would be a work of immense labour, and would not improve the effect of the pattern.

In Fig. 2 we have a much fuller rendering of nature, many more of the characteristics of the plant being introduced, and yet a certain formality of growth and regular disposition of masses gives the design a certain special character, making one feel, in fact, that it is a design, and not merely a sprig of vine thrown on anyhow. Further, it fills its space exactly, showing that it was drawn to cover the place it is meant to occupy, and would not do as well for any other purpose.

Fig. 3 is a much more elaborate rendering of nature, a great deal of detail being insisted upon. The poppy is a most decorative plant, its leaves being especially beautiful, and hence a great deal of attention has been bestowed on them. The design is intended as a repeating border, and the artist has thought fit to form it on a geometric plan, so has just put each flower separately. Many might object to this want of continuity, and would prefer to see a much more ornamental rendering of the plant than this, only insisting on the peculiarities of the flower and leaf, but making the growth arbitrary; that is, follow some set plan, such as a wavy line or scroll. Here, again, the design would be more effective in outline embroidery, or even in applique than in filled-in work.

Fig. 4 is perhaps too literally a transcript from nature to be termed a design, the only departure taken being to arrange the flowers in twos, and slight modifications of this kind. My readers might practise themselves in altering the accidents of growth, such as the excessive twisting of the petals, and making the whole thing simpler. Those who wish to exercise their skill with their needle might reproduce Fig. 4, much as it is, for many things are taken as a tour de force which would not be legitimate in any other way.

In Fig. 5 we have a combination of ornament with a more natural growth. The basis is ornamental, the more natural portion of the design being supported, as it were, by a scroll, which was applied while the rest was worked. A large number of designs are wrought on this plan by having an arbitrary foundation, upon or around which is worked the more natural forms. Much of the Renaissance work has a geometrical or ornamental basis, and in a very large number of designs the skeleton of the work is of an ornamental character. Indeed, it is absolutely necessary to start with some structure lines where the design has to be repeated a number of times, as in borders; repeating designs requiring to be of an ornamental rather than a natural character. It is no mere figure of speech to speak of the structural lines as being the skeleton, for just as the human form is the result of the bones and flesh covering the bones, so the details of the design are added to and built up around these main lines. As an instance, the structural lines in Fig. 2 are—1st, the main stem in center; and 2nd, the stem which twines around the main stem—all the rest of the work built upon this skeleton.