Victorian Creative

Tips & Tools for Victorian-Inspired Arts, Crafts & Decor

Volume I #23 - August 12, 2022

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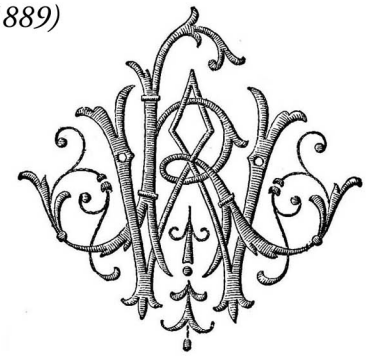

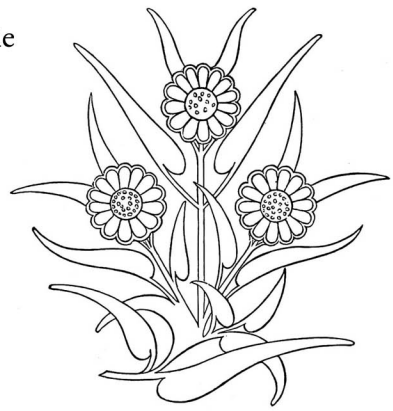

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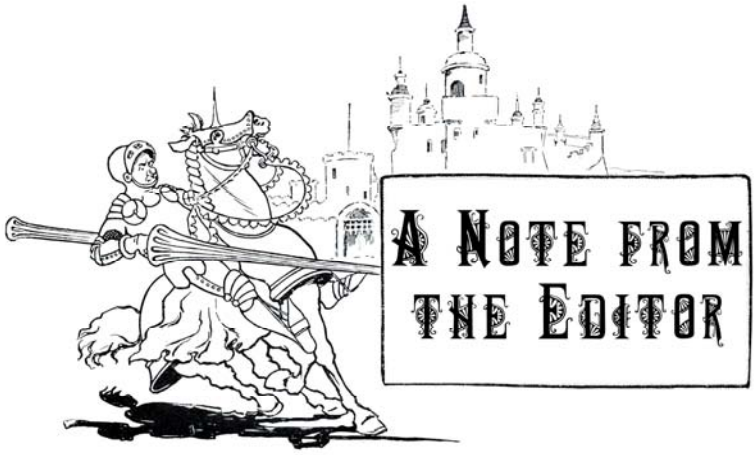
ABOUT OUR COVER: This lovely print from ***The Illustrated London Almanack*** of 1858 represents typical British flowers of July and August. This image is available in our collection of ***Illustrated London Almanack*** prints at https://www.victorianvoices.net/clipart/prints/ILA.shtml



Is Time a Luxury?

Last issue, I asked whether beauty was a luxury, dependent upon social status. That got me wondering about another "luxury" that we so often feel the lack of: *time*. That's particularly relevant in the context of a magazine that talks about all the wonderful things you might be creating—if you only had more time!

Certainly the myriad of arts, crafts and needlework articles that appeared in Victorian magazines were targeted primarily toward the middle class—a class more likely to have more leisure, as well as the funds to purchase project materials. This class also tended to have some "help." So it's easy to suppose that Victorian ladies had "time" to take on all these craft projects because, hey, they had *servants* to handle all the *work* around the house, right?

Today, however, I suspect we have just as many "servants" as a Victorian family might; the primary difference is that they are generally propelled by electricity. We have washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, stoves that don't require wood or coal (or one's constant presence to ensure that they are not only kept fueled but maintained at the correct temperature), etc. We have hot and cold running water, heat that also doesn't require constant refueling, and, today, the ability to have nearly anything we desire delivered to our door. So Victorians didn't really have much "edge" on us, time-wise, when it came to the servant issue.

Instead, imagine a Victorian evening for a moment… Imagine, for starters, no television—no "video" in any form whatsoever. No radio, no iPod, no music at all unless you can make it for yourself. No computer, no Internet, no computer games. No phone, no cell phone, no texting, no ability to chat with friends who aren't actually in the same room with you. I'd go on, but I suspect you get the picture—or the lack thereof!

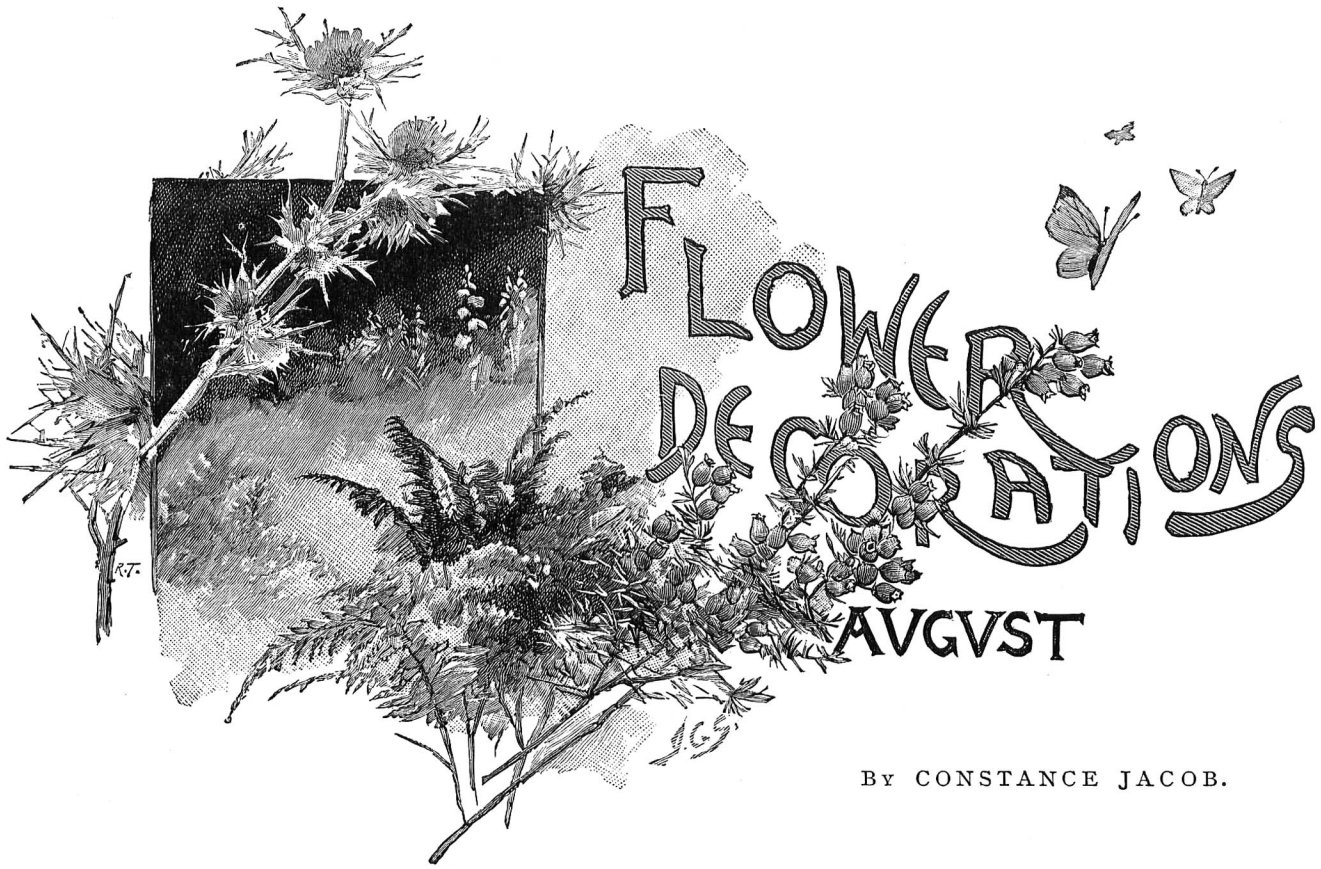
The Victorian era was one in which one literally had to make one's own fun—and one of the best ways to do that is to make some*thing*. It was also an era in which idleness, or the perception of idleness, was frowned upon. A young lady with time on her hands was expected to use that time for something useful, and craft and needlework projects fit that bill perfectly.

This concern about idleness led to quite a bit of criticism of a form of entertainment that, today, we'd do just about anything to get our kids involved in: reading. While the British novel originated, more or less, in the late 18th century, it was the 19th century that brought about mass-produced novels by the hundreds, available to entertain not just a wealthy few but just about everyone. Perhaps some of the reaction to novels was, indeed, a bit of snobbery—books for "everyman" could hardly be as worthwhile as books enjoyed by an elite few!

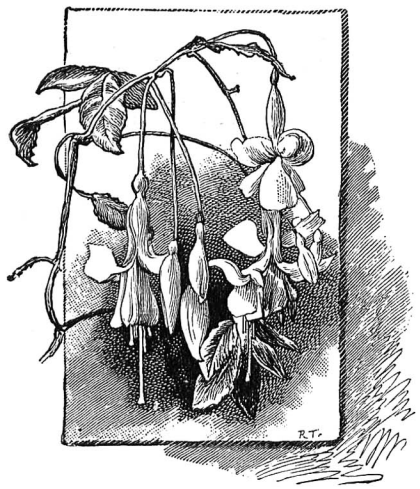
Whatever the reason, many Victorians regarded novels as wasters of time and rotters of intellect. Young women who lounged about reading novels risked frittering away their lives and turning into useless creatures. In fact, the condemnation of novels in the Victorian era sounds very similar to criticisms launched about every form of passive entertainment that has arisen since, including radio, movies, television, and just about anything to do with cell phones. It's a bit ironic that the seeds of such passive entertainment were, in fact, sewn in the Victorian era!

One thing, however, remains the same, then and now: while we can't *create* time, we can *make*, time. And once we do, we can choose what to make *with* that time. Hopefully this magazine offers a few ideas on that score!

—Moira Allen
editors@victorianvoices.net



By CONSTANCE JACOB.



ALTHOUGH, strictly speaking, a summer month, August foreshadows in its characteristics the near approach of autumn. There is still a profusion of bloom; but berries and fruits gradually take its place, while the dark green leaves of the preceding month slowly change into the first tints of their dying splendour.

Most of the July flowers last on in gardens; but the earlier lilies give place to those of the lancifolium species. Roses—especially those grown on bushes—enjoy now a second season of bloom; clematis, jasmine, nasturtiums, marigolds, stocks, fuchsias, geraniums, are at their best; while among the newer arrivals come hollyhocks, asters, the later kinds of gladioli, dahlias, and sunflowers.

In the fields, poppies, lychnis, cornflowers, fool's parsley, and marigolds are plentifully mingled with the ripening corn. The water plants remain much the same as in July. On the hedgerows the roses have mostly disappeared, while the honeysuckle is less often found than clematis and bryony, both of which, however, are approaching the seed-bearing stage. On the moors and commons, heather, bluebells, succory, and the brilliantly-tinted leaves and tiny pink flowers of the crane's-bill, or herb Robert, mix with large fronds of bracken, now changing into gold, or the smaller hard and parsley ferns. In the woods the crimson and white spikes of foxgloves, and large shrub-like plants of hemlock, stand up conspicuously from an undergrowth of many kinds of fern. Everywhere crimson, gold, and purple are the colours naturally predominant.

Comparatively so few people remain in towns during this holiday month that I may as well leave the florists out of the question for awhile, and assume that most ladies will find the materials of decoration for themselves in the gardens of their country quarters, on the Scotch or Yorkshire moors, on the Welsh and Cumbrian mountains, or, what is much more difficult, on the cliffs, or in the lanes near seaside resorts.

The more fashionable of these possess, of course, shops where flowers, particularly those suited for buttonholes, can be bought, more or less expensively; but as the stock of foliage consists chiefly of the ever-popular maiden-hair, people with sharp eyes and ready wit will do much better to trust to them in country walks for beautifying their apartments. My own latest experience of the shops of a healthy but unfashionable watering-place on the south coast was so discouraging that I preferred to glean from the cliff path, which, although wind-swept and barren at a first glance, ultimately yielded sufficient small red poppies and lace-like fool's parsley to keep filled the five small blue-and-white jars which always accompany me to furnished apartments, and which I have so often mentioned. Another day I found a few roots of dandelion and yellow hawk's-weed, which, mingled with the fool's parsley, made groups of such beauty as to surprise some of my visitors, who had hitherto passed these flowers over as vulgar weeds of no decorative value. Yet again I received æsthetic pleasure from the white flowers of the hornbeam, backed by brown shoots of hedge maple. On less frequented coasts one may gather bunches of the sea holly, which can only be placed by itself in glass vases; and wherever the salt air blows over it, the tamarisk, with its light green foliage and coral-red stems, will afford handsome pieces of ornamentation. If one is within reach of a moor, there need never lack variety or brilliancy in one's table decorations. Delicate posies of harebells, oak, beech, lady or parsley ferns, and the pale straw-tinted late woodbine, are thrown into relief by fronds of golden bracken, either laid on the table-cloth or put into larger vases in the centre. The same leaves should always be mixed with heather, although this is less suited for the table than for larger groups, as for the fire-place, hall, etc. However, a glass bowl filled with heather and bracken may well find an occasional place on the dinner-table.

White campions, or bachelors' buttons, look charming standing up from a low carpet of crane's-bill, which can easily be arranged by means of dishes full of moss. The little brown jugs in which some of the most important dairy companies sell their cream, hold such rustic nosegays with peculiar fitness, and contrast well with the white table-linen in farmhouse or cottage rooms—that is to say, they would be quite out of place in a mansion. Usually wild-flower arrangements are spoilt by a want of selection, and an enthusiast in one ramble will often gather enough for two or three days—far too many sorts of flowers, and not sufficient of one. On these occasions it is wiser to note the prettiest flower which grows in abundance; gather enough, and no more, of that; and then to select others which will best agree with it and with each other. Where a medley of a dozen different sorts will be quite meaningless and unpleasing, a

careful choice of two or three will produce a suggestive and poetic picture.

I have dressed a bamboo hanging in the hall of a country house very effectively, beginning at the bottom with harebells, oak ferns, and grass; higher up, harebells, rock rose, and woodbine; still higher, woodbine and brambles; and at the top of the cane a spray of very pale belated wild roses and some long trails of down-hanging clematis, backing each little tier with some pieces of bracken just turning golden, which brought the whole into harmony. But I should never have ventured on putting all these flowers into one or more vases on the same level.

There are numerous hedgerow timbers whose flowers, being small, and of neutral colouring, make them particularly suited to accompany others of more decided appearance; but as these differ in almost every county, it is useless to mention them in detail.

Foxgloves look well with large fern leaves in tall jugs or in jars (especially old ginger jars), and backed by some small branches of trees, by preference fir or larch, letting some of their own velvety leaves hang over the brim.

The blue succory is a quaint-looking flower, which looks well in the little brown jugs in company with moon-daisies, coarse grass, sprigs of woody nightshade, or any bright yellow flowers of light form, such as hawk's-weed.

It is hardly necessary to say that all such arrangements require changing every day, as summer wild-flowers fade more quickly than any.

Lancifolium lilies, like others, look best on their own stems; but the rose-pink ones admit of single blossoms being picked for specimen glasses, with one of their own leaves for each, and a spray of jasmine or white clematis. These two climbers are particularly valuable at this time of year for softening the often crude tones of larger flowers, and few arrangements should be without them. For the centre of a drawing-room table I have laid large elm leaves, just turning yellow, round the edge of a plate, filling up the centre with white jasmine, and the result was excellent.

The large pale clematis of the jackmanni species, single and double, are handsome and graceful flowers for dressing a dinner-table, but they require dark leaves of warm colouring in the background to atone for their somewhat cold greys. For this purpose also a bright piece of embroidery or dark red linen is useful as a table centre, or the flowers are well suited for surrounding plates of plums and other rich-coloured fruit.

Among fuchsias, few are so decorative as the old-fashioned hardy shrub, with its red and purple pendants; but there is a long range of brilliant hues among the species more recently introduced; and all alike may be used in bunches with plenty of stalk and foliage in tall vases, placed where they will be looked at from below; they also make graceful fringes to groups of larger flowers, such as stocks or dahlias, provided that their colours are harmonious.

Sunflowers have apparently quite gone out of fashion, yet they are really beautiful, and one of the large blossoms with two or three fine leaves in a good substantial-looking receptacle (here again the old ginger jar is useful) lights up a dull and uninteresting corner as nothing else can do so well.

The small-flowering kinds are better for mixed groups, and I have seen a few of them

in a nicely-shaped celery glass, with a bunch of yellow broom in the centre, form a very pleasing arrangement in yellow. Single dahlias might take the place of the sunflowers with an equally good effect.

Marigolds, which overrun some gardens to the extent of becoming weeds, look very cheerful in a massive bunch, and, like sunflowers, give light in dark places; but they do not mix well with anything else.

Nasturtiums are profuse bloomers, whose rich colouring and graceful growth make them valuable for table decoration, and yet they are very seldom used for this purpose. They need plenty of their own foliage, but nothing else, except, perhaps, some jasmine; and the velvety dark red are easily mingled with the yellow and pale terra-cotta shades; the scarlet are best only with their own leaves, which are of a peculiarly bluish-green. Placed in a white china basket, which will allow the younger shoots to droop over, they form a very pretty centre ornament.

Single and cactus dahlias have quite superseded the old formal quilled favourites of the florists, and are valuable treasures when other flowers begin to fail. They must be very carefully selected in regard to colour for mixed bunches; but if the artist keeps to one shade, or to two shades of one colour, the chief consideration is the choice of appropriate foliage, which, to my thinking, lies between sprigs of small-leaved trees, such as oak, beech, or hedge maple, and sprays of asparagus, either of the plumosus variety or that of the vegetable garden, by this time going to seed. The leaves of the dahlia are rather unwieldy, so we may be excused for making them an exception to the rule of using flower and foliage from the same plant. As accessories to such large flowers, the small clematis, jasmine, and hardy fuchsia are particularly adapted.

Hollyhock blossoms are rather formal when cut—something like silk rosettes; but many people admire them, and they look quaint in flat dishes on some of their smaller leaves, and veiled by sprays of clematis. For fireplaces the heads are suitable when they are fully in bloom up to the top; so are sunflowers, dahlias, hemlock, teazles, or large dock leaves. These remind me of an artistic arrangement once made by a friend of mine, consisting of a large silvery-blue fan spread before the drawing-room grate, and in front an old "Toby" jug holding about half a dozen large graceful leaves, which, on enquiry, proved to be those of the common horseradish overrunning her back garden. The same lady, having friends arrive unexpectedly to supper one night, decked the table with a strip of crumpled-up pale-blue silk, and strewed on it the flowers and buds of the white cluster rose, *and bunches* of red and white cherries. The effect was charming, but resembled one of those rapid sketches only produced by artists of experience, and is by no means an example to be easily followed.

I adopted an easier plan in laying long trails

of an out-door vine on the table, winding in and out among five glass dishes of fruit, while two tall vases held each a few blossoms of Gloire de Dijon rose.

These roses are the most continuous bloomers of any, and were a conspicuous feature on the refreshment counter and small tables of a wedding reception which took place in August; and as this is rather a favourite time of year for marriages, I may as well describe it here.

The cake, plainly iced, stood on a large silver tray, which had a fringe of very palé roses and sprigs of myrtle in bloom round the edge, kept fresh by a little damp moss in waterproof paper, the latter protecting the cake from any moisture, and of course carefully hidden by the myrtle. Round the upper edge of the cake was a wreath of full-blown roses, white cloves, white jackmanni, and white cactus dahlias, thickly mixed with jasmine and small clematis, the latter hanging downwards, the whole skilfully mounted in moss and waterproof paper, and where the cake was to be cut, tied together with white satin ribbon. Within this stood a glass dish, quite hidden under roses, myrtle, and white sweet peas, while in the centre was a glass vase (silver would have been better), holding two or three white lilies in the midst of a bunch of orange blossoms. A row of specimen glasses at the back of the counter, and one on each of the small tables, contained sprays of one or two of the same flowers carefully suited to each other, and a line of glass troughs of semi-circular form contained roses, carnations, myrtle, and jasmine only. All the flowers on the counter were as nearly white as possible, but on the tables the roses and carnations were pale pinks or yellows, sometimes as deep as the William Allen Richardson. Leaving out the cake, a similar arrangement would be pretty for a garden-party, "at home," or ball supper; and while all but the orange blossoms would be found in many country gardens, they are none of them very expensive to buy at this time of the year, although of course the ultimate cost must depend entirely on the number of tables, and the length of counter to be provided for. A dinner-table for about twelve people could be lavishly dressed with specimen glasses and troughs in the manner suggested for three or four shillings, and if the flowers were all white, a red table-centre would be desirable; but I would rather leave out the jackmanni, let the roses be pink and yellow, and make the foliage droop straight on to the table-cloth.

TAPESTRY PAINTING.

SINCE tapestry painting (the art of painting with liquid dyes upon wool, silk, velvet, or other animal fabric) was introduced into England some years ago, a great advance has been made both in the method of painting and the materials employed. Originally the fabric used was a coarse kind of linen canvas, and the dyes were merely liquid colours which were diluted with water and painted on in thin washes until the requisite depth was obtained. The colours were not in themselves notable, nor had they any special affinity for the canvas, and as there was no means of fixing the colours so as to make them permanent, the paintings soon faded. I was one of the first to try my hand in this new style of painting over here, but I was never satisfied with the results I obtained, nor was the process of painting itself very fascinating, for it was troublesome to make the colour sink into the canvas, and with all one's care many of the threads seemed to remain uncoloured, which greatly militated against richness of effect. The colour never sank thoroughly into the canvas, but only remained upon the surface.

"*Nous avons changé tout cela.*" It is pretty generally known that vegetable fibres, such as flax and cotton, do not take dyes as well as animal fibres, such as wool and silk, and the first step to improve tapestry painting was to change the material from linen to wool. This brought about a change in the colours themselves, for in using wool it was possible to employ colours that had a special affinity for the material. This woollen fabric is woven in the same manner as the Gobelins tapestry, and paintings executed upon it can hardly be told from real Gobelins. The woollen fabric is prepared with what dyers term a "mordant," which has a special affinity for the colours, and tends to fix them upon the material. The mordant generally employed is alum, but the woollen tissue is sold ready prepared, so that my readers need not trouble about preparing the woollen tissue themselves. The dyes sink very readily into the material, and in order to make the painting perfectly indelible it only has to be fixed by steaming, and you have a material decorated according to each one's taste, which will stand washing and cleaning, and will thus last for years. Those who have tried the old process of painting on the linen canvas cannot

realise the difference there is between the two processess and how infinitely superior the latter process is to the former.

The dyes in themselves are brighter and more transparent, and when fixed are wonderfully brilliant without being crude. I have seen some most charming effects produced on the woollen tissue by Walter Crane, Coleman, Rischgitz, and others; and I am certain there is a great future before tapestry painting, as it can be applied to so many useful purposes. Portières, chair backs and seats, sofa coverings, curtains and curtain borders, pianoforte fronts and backs, screens, and hosts of other things can be cheaply and beautifully decorated with these indelible colours. And the painting is not confined to the woollen tissue. Silk and satin look even more beautiful when painted than wool, as the colours come out so much more brilliantly on silk tissue, and paintings executed on silk velvet are yet more beautiful, as the pile produces a delicious softness while retaining the brilliancy of the colours. Dresses can be decorated with these colours, and on one occasion I helped a lady friend to paint a fancy dress with these dyes.

Fans also are more durable painted with these dyes than with water colours, as the dyes sink into the silk and cannot fade or chip off, as is the case with body colour. So you see it opens up a wide field does this indelible tapestry painting for those who cultivate art at home.

There are some twenty-two colours, of which the following are the most useful. They are taken from M. Rischgitz's list:—

Scarlet, pink, purple, Indian red, orange, vermilion, light yellow, yellow ochre, red brown, chrome green, turquoise green, yellow green, deep blue, light sky blue, raw sienna, neutral tint.

There is a medium for mixing with the colours to enable them being manipulated and painted on freely. All the colours mix, but there are some mixtures which give better results than others. Very fine reds are to be obtained by these dyes, and if it can be said that the colours undergo any change in the fixing apart from the depth and brilliancy the fixing imparts to the colours, it is in intensifying the yellows and reds.

Very rich greens can be made with the chrome and turquoise greens in combination with yellow ochre and raw sienna. Fine blue greens and peacock blues can be made with these greens and light sky blue. The blues and greens, it should be noted, are very powerful, and a bottle of each of these colours goes a long way, as they require to be considerably diluted with medium. Browns can be made with neutral tint and sky and deep blue, and Indian red and red brown with blue.

It would be as well at first to obtain a small piece of tissue, and try the various colours, pure and in combination, keeping a key to them for future reference. Have this test palette fixed so that you may note what change the dyes undergo in the fixing.

When beginning your actual painting, the tissue should be tightly strained on a stretcher or board. If you are painting a set of screen panels, you might get the tissue strained by a manufacturer of artists' canvases, as when the painting is finished it can be untacked and sent to be fixed and afterwards re-strained. Those who paint tapestry regularly have two or three stretchers of various sizes, and by sewing on pieces of canvas to the tissue to make it out to the size of the nearest stretcher you have by you, the tissue can be strained ready for work. The tighter the tissue is strained the easier it is to paint. The threads of the tissue, it should be noted, run from right to left, and this is the way it should be painted. The tissue can be had forty-six and fifty-four inches, and wider, and in painting a screen the width of the panels should be such as will enable the tissue to be cut to the greatest advantage. Thus the forty-six inch stuff will cut three panels fifteen inches wide, and the fifty-four inch three panels eighteen inches wide. It is not so easy to paint the tissue if the grain runs from top to bottom.

I find small Liebig pots very useful for mixing tints in, as it is important to mix up enough of each tint at once owing to the difficulty of matching it should you run out of it before the work is finished. The colours want putting on freely, and consequently you want plenty of each tint wherever there is a large surface to cover. In light tints, such as flesh, greys, and skies, the colours will want to be considerably diluted with medium. This is especially the case with the blues and pinks. If you are painting foliage have three or four good tints mixed. Grey-greens are made of the pure greens very diluted, or with sky blue and Italian earth. Rich juicy greens with chrome or turquoise green and the warm yellows. Yellow-greens with yellow, green, and the lighter yellows. Neutral tint, a very intense colour, and deep blue can be added where very dark deep greens are wanted, as they can easily be toned with the warm yellows.

It will be noticed the colours look much darker when wet than when dry, and due allowance must be made for this. Don't be frightened of putting on the colours of sufficient depth at once, providing you are sure that the colour you are using is the right one. It is useless painting three or four times over the same tint to obtain depth when it might have been got in one painting. I believe in finishing off the painting as far as possible in one sitting, as when your first tint is laid and is getting a little dry any colours painted on this sink in very agreeably and give a charmingly soft effect. Not that this

FIG. I.

FIG. 2.

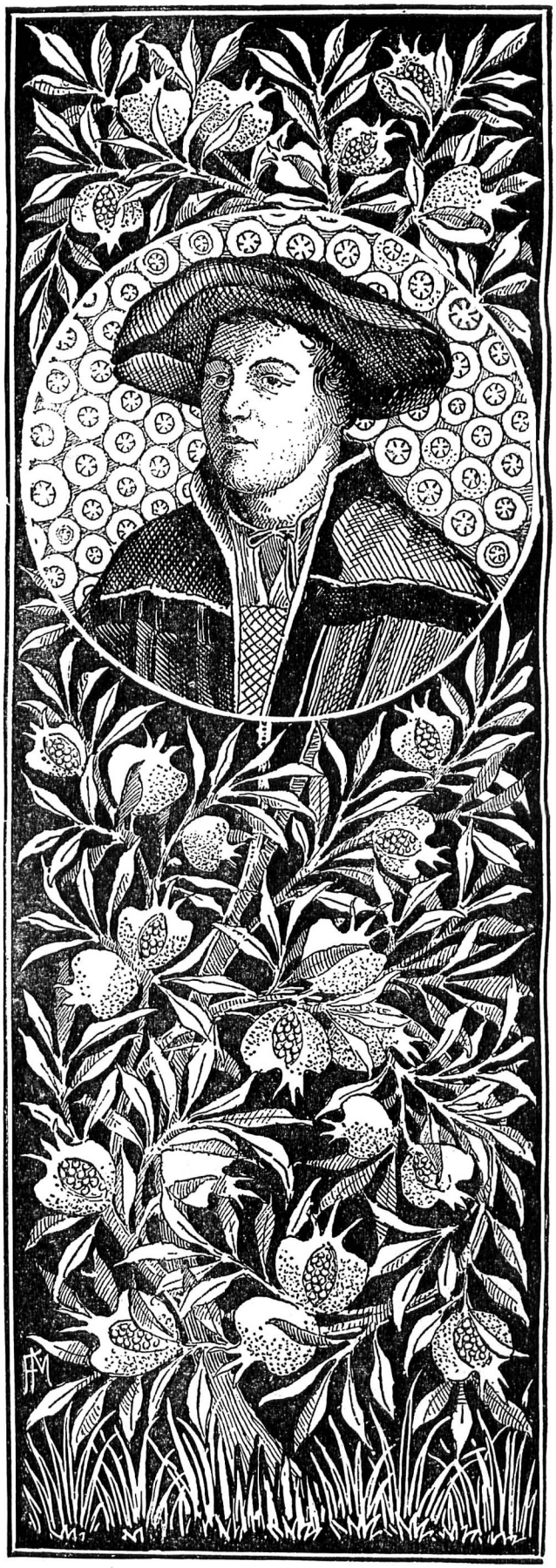


FIG. 3.

softness is always the most desirable quality to get in your work, for a certain vigour and crispness are necessary in order to counteract the softening effect the tissue has upon the colours. Tapestry painting is not a difficult art, for unlike oil and water colour painting, the worker has not to trouble about "texture," that is working his colours until they look finished, this being obtained for him by the tissue itself. All you have to do is to put the right tints on in a liquid manner, so that the whole of that part of the canvas is covered without showing the marks of the brush, and the rest is done for you by the tissue, which, owing to the way it is woven, gives a charming effect to the painting. I have seen copies of some of the pictures in the National Gallery executed on this woollen tissue, and most excellent is the effect, for all the depth of colour and tone of the original can be obtained with a certain softness which only a dyed material has. Mr. Coleman, whose Christmas cards of little semi-nude children are so well known, has painted some tapestry panels, enlargements of some of his Christmas card designs, and very charming they are. He allowed a good deal of the plain tissue to show throughout the painting (the colour of the tissue is a warm cream), and this not only economised his labour, but had a most excellent effect. Much of the effect he obtained with the outline, which was done in a warm brown, and his introduction of turquoise blues and greens (colours he is particularly fond of, as may be seen in his Christmas cards), with warm yellows produced most harmonious and delicate effects

In painting flesh the shadows should first be put in. Neutral tint, sky blue and burnt sienna make a good grey, and the shadows should be put in delicately with this mixture. When quite dry, wash with vermilion largely diluted with medium. It is a good plan before dipping the brush into any of the very powerful colours to previously dip it into pure medium. This prevents the colour staining the hairs of the brush. For second painting use a greyish tint of sky blue; while this is still wet use bright pink thirdly for lips and cheeks. When dry accentuate with Italian earth and pink and Indian red. I don't much believe in these hard and fast rules, but it may be useful to know how a good flesh tint may be obtained, though I would not advise my readers to tie themselves down to this or any other formula.

Don't try too difficult an effect at first. A simple study of foliage and birds, such as shown in Fig. 1, would do as a beginning. The peacock would give scope for rich colour; the background might be left unpainted, or just tinted with blue and grey. The ornamental treatment of sunflowers in Fig. 2, I carried out with a background of rich blues and blue-greens; I varied the colour of the ground considerably, and the effect was not bad. Fig. 3 was taken from a screen I painted. I adhered to the pomegranate, filling in all the panels, but of course had different heads in the circles.

Fig. 4, which I termed "The Parliament of Birds," was carried out as a three-fold screen. The birds were treated somewhat quaintly with an outline, though natural colours were introduced. The birds rendered are the peacock, pelican, hen, cockatoo, owl, adjutant, penguin, cormorant, gull, flamingo, crow, etc., etc.

The whole thing was made highly decorative, and my readers may feel inclined to enlarge the design and carry it out for themselves. See that your tone of colour is harmonious. It is most important to get harmonious colours in tapestry painting (or in any other painting for that matter), for the best design in the world is spoilt by a bad tone of colour. For transferring a design to the tissue I prefer to prick the design and pounce it on, to transferring it by means of black paper. Go over the charcoal lines with some light colour, unless you intend to adopt a decorative style of work, when in that case the outline will assist you, and should be put in strongly.

Tapestry painting can be used in conjunction with embroidery. For a curtain border, for instance, the design can be carried out in the dyes, and when fixed a few stitches of silk can be introduced here and there to brighten up the effect. I have seen some excellent effects obtained in this way, and as the groundwork can be got over much more quickly by painting than with needlework, a combination of tapestry painting and needlework may be a very desirable union.

Borders to dresses might be painted on silk or velvet, if one wished to be unique, and the effect might be even better than embroidery. Fans, too, can be painted with these dyes. The silk and velvet must of course be quite light; white is best, as all the dyes are transparent, and consequently the lights must be

FIG. 4.—THE PARLIAMENT OF BIRDS.

left, for if once destroyed they cannot be restored. The worker must be certain of his touch, and have a clear idea of what has to be done or what he wants to do, for when once a tint is laid upon the tissue it cannot be removed or even lightened. There is no getting the colours out, so the only thing is not to make mistakes. Carefully plan out your and think out your design before commencing work, and then you will have little chance of going wrong. It is because people rush into colour before their plans are matured that they have to rub out and botch and bungle. Every touch should have a meaning, and be put on with intention and precision. Go the readiest way to work, for there is no merit in spending a month over a painting if it could be done equally well in three weeks. A work is finished when the intention of the worker is made clear and intelligible to the seer. Tapestry painting is much more effective when painted crisply and dexterously than when it is laboured and finniking.

FRED MILLER.

HOW TO CONTRIVE AND DECORATE A COFFER OR LINEN PRESS.

IT often happens that one gets an empty case which one feels ought to be turned to account, and yet the thing is to know what to do with it. Here is one suggestion—make it into a linen press. The case for preference should be long rather than square (see the proportions in sketch). You could get a new one made for about 3s. 6d. or 4s.

The panelling is glued and bradded on. The "stiles" (those parts around the panels) should be got out of half-inch white wood and should be planed. So should the portions of the case where the panels are, if you intend to decorate them in any way, but if you get a case made, order it to be planed. Some builder's moulding forms the plinth at bottom of chest, and a narrower moulding should be nailed on to the edges of the lid if you want to get a finished-looking article, but of course all these adornments can be left out, though at a sacrifice to appearance. We can sit on a three-legged stool, but we prefer a chair. Four casters should be screwed to the bottom of the chest so that it can easily be moved about. These can be purchased at any ironmonger's.

The mouldings, stiles, top and sides of chest would look well stained brown. Varnish stain can be purchased, but I found that permanganate of potash (Condy's fluid) put on with a brush stains the wood a nice brown, and it sinks right into it. Buy the potash by the ounce and dissolve it in warm water, and to obtain a deep colour put on a second coat. As it rots the hairs of a brush, use only a cheap one. This when dry can be either varnished with dark oak varnish (buy this by the half-pint at some good oil-shop or decorator's supply stores) or can have beeswax dissolved in warm turpentine rubbed on and polished by friction. This is the old housewives' way of polishing, and those who have seen chairs and tables in some country cottage polished in this way will admit that nothing can exceed the brilliance of the polish thus obtainable, as it improves with time, every rubbing you give it increasing the brilliance. If you use varnish you will probably have to give it two coats, as the first one is likely to sink in. Use a flat brush for putting on the varnish and apply it evenly

As I want to cater for all tastes and pockets, I will give another suggestion which will involve very little outlay, as you can deal with any suitable strong empty case you may have by you. Get some patent size at an oil-shop and melt it to boiling point by putting it in a gallipot and this in boiling water. This saves contaminating the saucepan and keeps the size from burning. Give the case a good coat, and when dry a second one. Now purchase some Japanese gilt leather paper at some good furniture warehouse or decorator's. It is very tough material, and will require some good strong paste. That known as "cobbler's paste" (which you can get at a leather-seller's or of a friendly bootmaker) is the best. It is too thick as it is, but can be thinned with a little boiling water. Put plenty on, as the paper will soak up a good deal, and don't attempt to stick it down on the wood until the paste has been on some twenty minutes or so.

In cutting the paper the right size, allow of it being turned over the top and bottom edges of the case, and should there be battens on the box (strips of wood to strengthen the case), I should not attempt to paste a long piece of paper the length of the case, but first of all cut strips to cover these battens (be careful to get the paper well pressed into the angles), allowing enough to come a little way on to the case itself. You then cut pieces to fit into the spaces, taking the edges close up to the battens. The end pieces should be put on last, and should be cut just to fit the width but turned inside the top of the box and underneath.

It would be a good plan to line the case with good stout brown paper, previously sizing the wood. The sizing, I may tell you, makes the paper stick well.

If you like to put the mouldings at edge of lid and at bottom, you can do so now, previously staining and varnishing them. Screw them on with long fine screws in preference to nailing.

No end of useful articles can be made by covering them with this Japanese gilt paper. It is to be had in many patterns and with colours introduced in some of them.

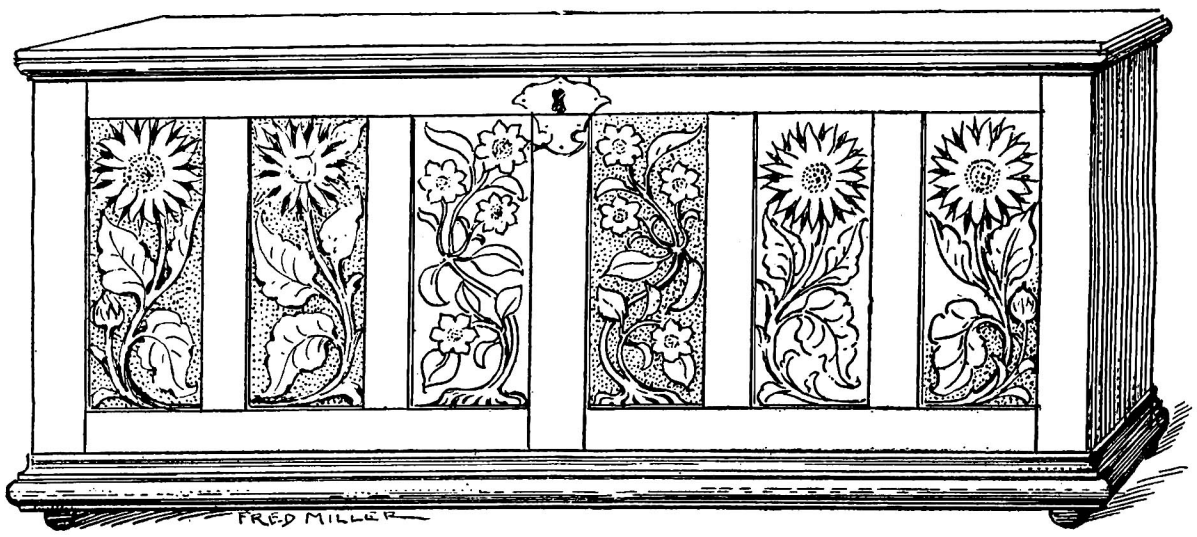
* * * *

A word or two now as to the decorated panels. You will see that they are of an ornamental rather than a natural character, and the designs can be repeated by reversing them, which will save the trouble of drawing fresh ones for each panel. They can be carried out by outlining the design in vandyke brown mixed with a little copal varnish and a little turps to thin the colour, and a background can be floated in transparently, putting more varnish with the colour. The plain wood will then show through the design.

You can of course paint the designs in simple quiet colours, but I think it would look in better taste to treat the panels in one tone of colour. It need not be brown; burnt sienna with a background of raw sienna, Indian red and burnt sienna for background, Prussian blue with a background of that colour and raw sienna to make it green, are some of the combinations that suggest themselves.

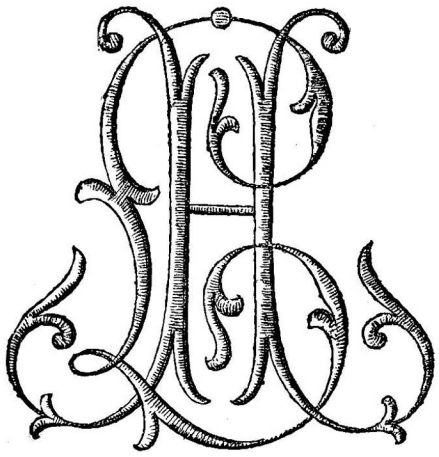
Of course you will understand that you must draw out the designs the size you wish to reproduce them and transfer them to the wood before you start the colouring.

The designs would look well carried out in poker work. By that I mean not an ordinary poker heated in a fire, but one of those "pyrographers" sold expressly for the purpose, in which a platinum point is kept red hot by a spray of some inflammable liquid ejected on to it. These instruments cost about 10s. 6d. each, but the most intricate design can be wrought with them, and most excellent decorative effects produced; but I daresay most of the readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER interested in art work, are quite familiar with pyrography. It is not to be despised as an art, as those who have seen good work can testify.

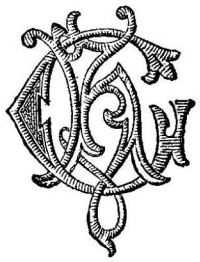


MY WORK BASKET.

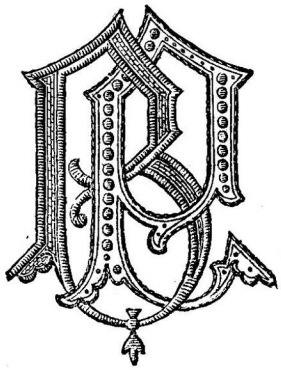
MONOGRAMS.



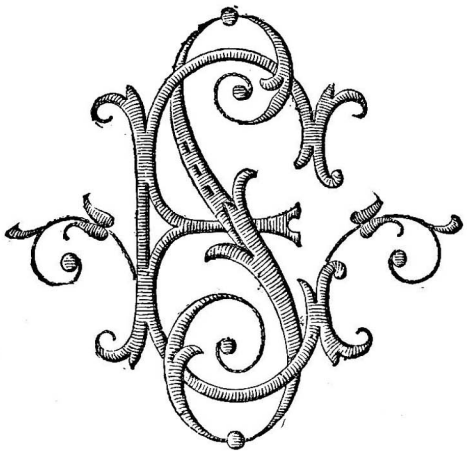
H. L. This monogram is suitable for embroidery in *plumetis*, and can be used for household linen, washstand tidies, or sideboard cloths. The work should be traced, and filled so as to keep the form correct. Either white or coloured embroidery cotton is best for articles constantly requiring washing. The washstand tidies, which are often made of sateen or canvas, are rendered more attractive by using some of the artistic colours in embroidery silks or filoselle, now to be purchased so reasonably, and so pleasant to work with.



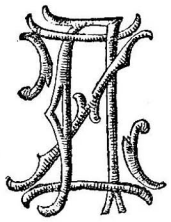
H. G. In good contrasting or harmonising colours, either silks or cottons, with the back of the G filled with fine spots in black. Looks well for any small requirements.



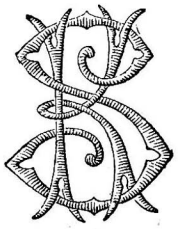
B. P. If worked on velvet, the outlines look well in fine gold or coloured cords, filled in with small crystal beads and flat embroidery in white floss silk.



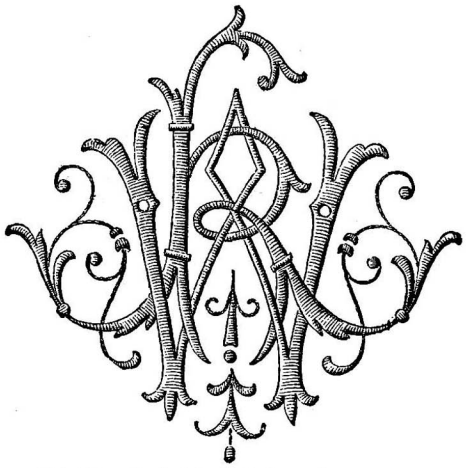
S. E. Is another monogram for household linen, washstand tidies, etc.; but these letters are worked in two colours—the S in dark brown, with spots of gold colour, the E in pale blue, with a soft green for the floral ornaments.



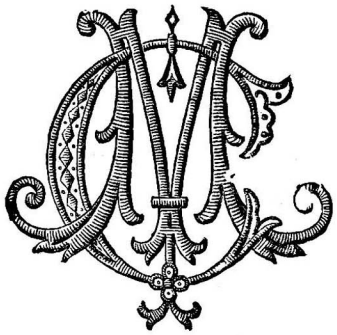
A. Z. A simple monogram for plain embroidery.



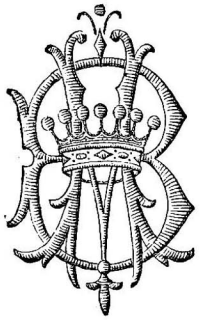
K. S. Monogram for handkerchief.



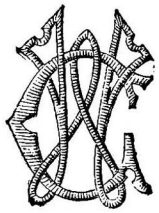
W. K. A bold, well-formed monogram, suitable for large blotting-case or portfolio.



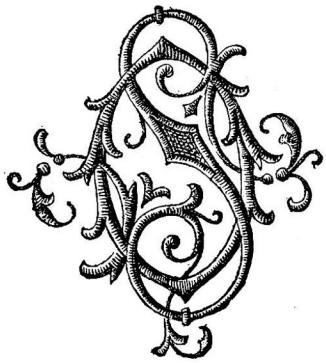
M. C. Elegant monogram, worked in old gold-coloured and dark green or rich red silks. The outline of the C is in close satin stitch, enclosing the fancy stitches of small dots and graduated French spots. The M should be traced, and thickly filled in with fine filoselle the same shade as the silk used for the embroidery.



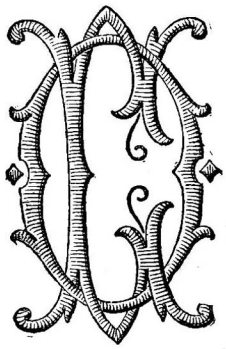
M. B., with coronet, is a monogram suitable for the display of colours. The work is easily done in the usual embroidery stitch, the design being carefully drawn.



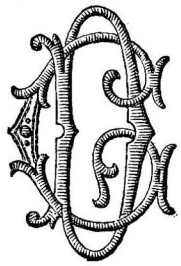
W. G. Small monogram in *plumetis* stitch for gentleman's handkerchief.



O. S. Looks well worked in pale blue and soft pink crewels, on any thick material, such as cloth or furnishing satin.

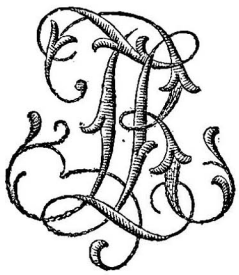


E. O. For crewels or embroidery cotton, in *plumetis* stitch.

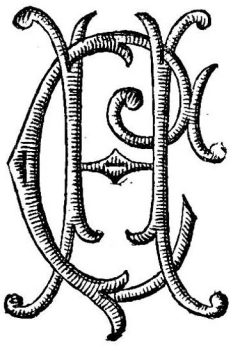


D. G. Another monogram easily worked from the illustration.

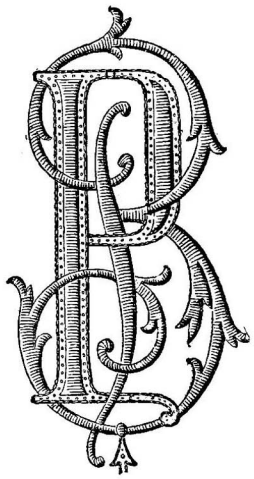
E. B. Quickly worked letters for handkerchiefs.



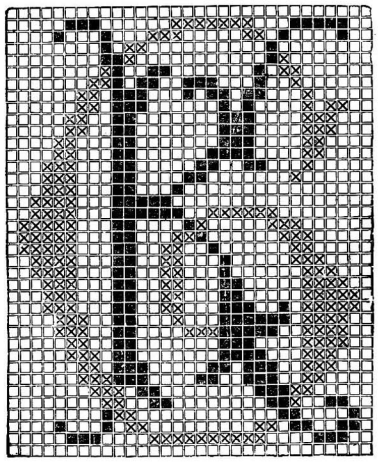
R. Z. Simple embroidery.



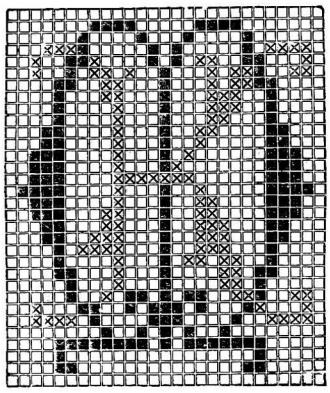
C. H. Good letters for embroidery or painting on leather bags or paper racks.



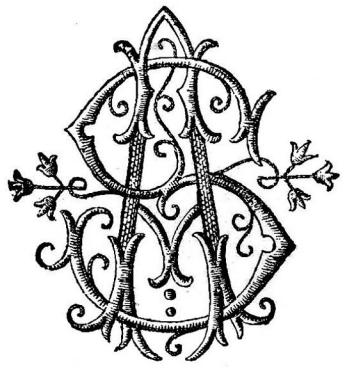
P. B. This is an elegant design for a sachet, and is worked with rich embroidery silk and fine gold cord or small gold or coloured beads. The letter B looks well in shaded pink silks; and the P in chestnut brown. The gold cord is only used as a framing to the letter B, and requires care in sewing it on, so that the edge is kept in form.



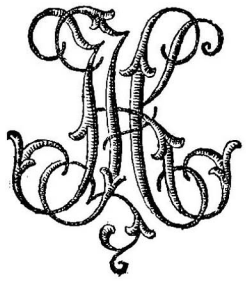
K. G. To be worked on open canvas in cross stitch, with wools or silks.



M. K. Another monogram for cross-stitch or in beads.

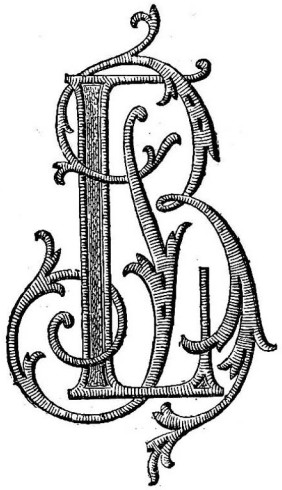


A. S. These letters, worked in fine flourishing cotton, in two colours, are suitable for tablecloths, or ends of chamber towels.



H. K. Worked in plain embroidery stitch, with fine French cotton or good washing silks.

A. W. Good design for working, or pen and ink drawing.



L. B. The letter L is outlined with a thick raised embroidery, the inner part worked in close flat dots. The B should be worked with the most prominent colour.

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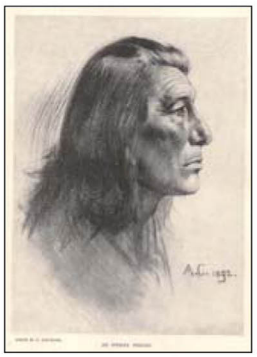
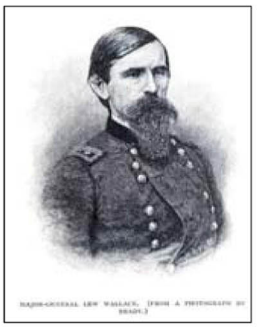
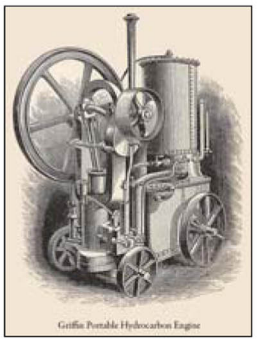


Native Americans

Eminient Victorians



The Civil War



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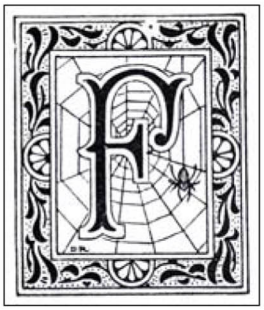

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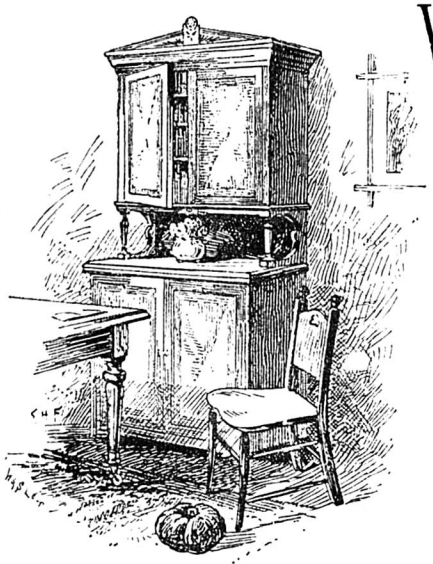
OUR NEW HOUSE AND ITS PLENISHINGS.

THE SCHOOL-ROOM AND BED-ROOMS.



SCHOOL-ROOM CHAIR AND BOOKCASE.

WE have put the curtains that came with the dining-room set in the night nursery, where they are warm and comfortable. They will be replaced in the summer by white dimity. The floor is of polished deal, unstained, and no carpet of any kind is allowed under the beds, though a large Kalmuc rug, six feet by six, is spread in front of the fireplace. The paint and paper are like those of the day nursery, and there is nothing remarkable in the furniture except, perhaps, the jugs and the quilts. I worked the quilts, and made them of Bolton sheeting, two yards and a half wide, at two shillings the yard, the width making the length. I outlined, in tapestry wool, a large pattern of scarlet poppies, with seedpods and leaves, and simply hemmed the edge. For quilts in the other rooms, I bought the new Art Blankets, which are made in nearly every shade of colour, and which are very inexpensive, the smallest size only costing two-and-elevenpence. If chosen to suit the colour of the room, these make very pretty quilts. For one of the rooms I bought a "Battenberg" quilt, in peacock-blue and gold, which was very warm and thick. I put these away in the summer, and use others made of thin cretonne or drawn linen, edged with lace.

Our nursery jugs are of rather a new kind. They have four handles, but nothing jutting out which can be knocked or broken off. They also have four lips, and are very strong. The baby's high chair is lovely; it is made of the white maple of Italy, and cost about eleven francs at the recent Italian Exhibition in London.

Over the mantelpiece hangs a very pretty mirror, made after my own design. The glass is fourteen inches by twelve, and is framed in a wide deal frame stained with oak staining, with a black rim close to the glass. I painted upon it heavy branches of apples in different stages of shades of green and yellow, but not red. I then varnished all the paint, but not the background, as it looks much better dull. These frames are cheap, only costing five shillings each, while the piece of looking-glass costs, if bevelled, from four to six shillings. They can be treated in many ways. Left unstained, a pattern can be painted in sepia, and then French polished, or all the ground can be painted in sepia and the pattern left light and shaded, or they can be enamelled in white with a blue pattern like Indian pottery.

Next to the nursery we find the spare room. All the woodwork has been painted black, as it is a very light room. The wall-paper is pale green on white, and was sevenpence-halfpenny the piece. The boards are stained and polished, and the green felt carpet and rug from the old drawing-room have found a home here, as have also the green serge curtains, which look very nice relieved with inner ones of faint sea-green muslin, made with tiny frills, put on on the cross. Over the mantelpiece is fastened a little shelf of white wood, for books or nic-nacs. Time does not allow me to describe everything in each room, and I should bore my readers if I did so, therefore I will only mention the new things, among which was a home-made hanging cupboard, made to fit a corner. A wood top painted white was made the shape of a large bracket to fit the corner, from which came a thin wooden frame, which was covered with a curtain that hung from the bracket,

BED-ROOM WARDROBE AND WASH-STAND.

and could be drawn back at pleasure. Inside, fastened to the wall, were rows of hooks for dresses. The French bedstead, three feet by six feet six inches, cost two pounds, and we fixed a rod over it, from

NIGHT NURSERY.

which we draped curtains in the French way. We used the old couch, and a lovely little writing-table covered in gold embossed leather, for which we gave one pound fifteen. We bought two folding-chairs with high backs at three-and-sixpence, and stained the wood black and covered the canvas with cretonne. The curtains and covers were all made of a lovely cretonne, faded pink roses and pale green leaves on a grey ground. It was one-and-elevenpence-halfpenny the yard, and was nearly a shilling dearer than that in the drawing-room ; but it made the room exquisite, and was the only expensive thing in it. Beside the bed was a little black table, upon which stood a tray with a white china tea-pot, cream-jug, and cup and saucer, for early morning tea. The bed and window curtains were lined with olive-green cambric.

The dressing-room was papered in the same manner, but I bought all its furniture in a set, and think I was wise in doing so. I found I could have any colour of paint I liked, so I chose a pale green enamel. I sent my money and my order to London, and two days afterwards everything arrived. I got a chest of drawers, a toilet-table, and looking-glass, a marble-topped tiled-backed washing-stand, toilet set, water-bottle and tumbler, towel-horse, chair, iron bedstead, palliasse, mattress, bolster, pillow, a carpet nine feet by six, and a pretty hearth-rug, with a fender and fireirons. This only cost five guineas. I have since bought several more of these sets for the small rooms, as I find that the furniture in them is well-made and durable. Of course I put two more chairs into this room, and a bath. We have a good bath-room in this house, and have had all the lower part of its walls tiled.

The school-room paper was exactly the same pattern as that in the nursery, but it was on thicker paper, and was in two shades of terra-cotta, dark on light. It was one shilling the piece. The woodwork and floor were of unstained oak, so the boards were left bare at the sides, while the centre was covered by the Brussels carpet from the other dining-room. I gave five-and-ninepence for a yarn hearth-rug. The pretty curtains at the window are made of cretonne, at sixpence-three-farthings the yard ; they are lined with the same material, and hang on brass rods. The couch is delightfully soft and "springy." It only cost four pounds, and it and the arm-chair are covered with the new rush mats, made in plain colours. These are in light terra-cotta. The other chairs are made in strong wood, but are extremely pretty. They were four-and-twopence each. A pretty light wood bookshelf is remarkable. It has doors to keep the books from dust, also under-cupboards. Each door is filled with green rushwork, there being only an outside edge of the wood. The two shades of colour look very well together, and the rushwork has the advantage over glass of not breaking. Many of the pictures on the wall are coloured prints taken from the illustrated papers. Instead of going to the expense of framing these in glass, they have been varnished and mounted on thick cardboard or Willesden paper.

My bed-room is a mixture of pale green and yellow. The paper, which was one shilling the piece, is pale green, with field flowers in a darker shade. It is beautifully drawn. The paint is white, and the furniture covers and curtains are made of a reversible cretonne, in two shades of pale yellow. It cost me ninepence-halfpenny a yard. The curtains are not lined, as the cretonne is thick, and is the same pattern both sides. It washes for ever, and does not fade. We bought a lovely set of furniture for this room, enamelled in white. It consists of a wardrobe, with plate-glass door ; a dressing-table, with a chest of drawers

SPARE ROOM TABLE AND CHAIR.

beneath it, and a looking-glass fastened on the top ; a washing-stand with three shelves and a cupboard, a tiled back and a marble top ; a towel-horse, and three chairs. I gave eleven pounds fifteen for these things.

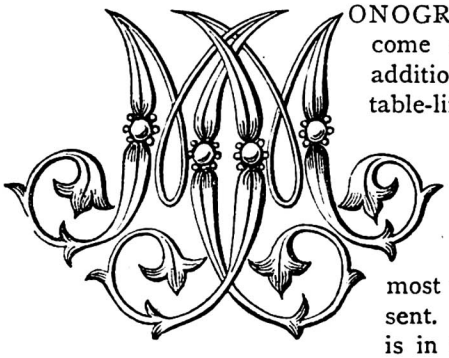
I like the wardrobe especially, because it combines so much; it includes a bookshelf, two drawers, and a shoe cupboard. The floor is covered with Indian matting a yard wide at one-and-twopence, and a Madagascan mat, weighted with shot at each end, is used in front of the fireplace. The grate is a fixture and is made of Doulton pottery to match the dark green tiles of the fireplace. The mantel-covering is made after an old fashion. A plain piece of cretonne is cut to fit the top of the mantelpiece, to the edge of which is sewn a deep frill made with box-pleats. These coverings have the advantage of being washed without being unpicked, and are very neat. In the window stand an Italian maple chair and footstool for which I gave thirteen shillings.

And now I think I have described the greater part of our new furniture, though I am perfectly aware that I have not mentioned many of the necessaries of a household, because space has forbidden a detailed account of each article.

Since I spoke of the library, I have "picked up" some old Chippendale chairs for it, which I have had covered with hog's-skin in the natural colour, nailed with two close rows of silver nails. I hope in time to furnish that room entirely in mahogany. I have also had a wooden fender made to match the mantelpiece, and during this summer I have added a lovely inlaid chair to the drawing-room, of the same style as some I saw at the Italian Exhibition. It was too beautiful to leave! It is inlaid with ivory, while the back and seat are painted after an antique copy of rough leather. The tables of the same work were perfect, but I say my chair furnishes the room!

I must not forget to chronicle a new kind of Brussels carpet, called the "Broché," dark red with a raised pattern in velvet pile. It is very lovely. I have a rug of it in one room in which the floor is covered with red China matting. The only important room that I have not described is my painting-room, and that description must wait for another time. At present the room beats my powers. I can find no words for it! Some day it will settle down and be tidy. Now it is a studio, a play-room, and a workshop combined! I have such good times in that little room; such pleasant hours fly by there! But turpentine, enamel, and copal varnish forbid the introduction of visitors just now.

MORE ABOUT DECORATIVE NEEDLEWORK.



MONOGRAMS have become so essential an addition to house and table-linen, that I give for the initial letter of my second article on the subject one of the style most in vogue at present. The embroidery is in satin-stitch, and may either be coloured or white, the latter being perhaps the most elegant. Coloured ingrain cottons are, however, extensively used, and the choice between the two is a mere matter of opinion, now that fashion has introduced the use of colour in house-linen: a great improvement, there can be no doubt, as we were obliged to resort to coloured glass as a means of supplying the needful relief to the spotless, cold-looking white of the table-cloth. The initial letter of the family name is sometimes doubled, as in the present sketch, to make a pretty monogram. The coronet is one of those fancy coronets frequently seen in France, and used merely as an additional ornament; the dots, both in the coronet and the monogram, may be worked in red, yellow, or blue cotton; a little shading

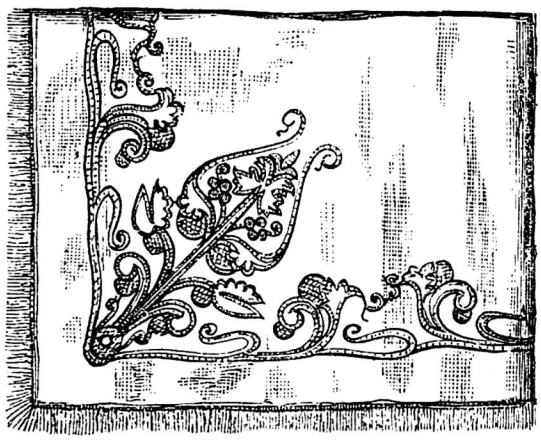


Fig. 1.

of either of the colours chosen may also be put in where marked on the design.

The modern "institution" of afternoon or five o'clock tea has added another item to the list of

house-linen in daily use. But so many are the flights of fancy in this direction, that both space and time forbid me to mention the various styles of decoration applied to the cloths in use at that most pleasant refreshment. Crewel-work in flowers, and other designs, has been long a favourite mode; the most recent application being the outline-stitch, which was illustrated at page 89, in a former article on this subject — "Embroidered House and Table-Linen." Fig. 1 represents a corner of a five o'clock tea cloth, being a charming adaptation of an initial letter from one of the precious MSS. in the British Museum. It is the work of the clever Hon. Sec. of the new School of Dressmaking, who kindly lent me the cloth itself to copy, in order to show the stitch as clearly as possible. The idea of the stitches is taken from the old Anglo-Saxon embroidered work, also executed on linen, some of which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum of Textile Fabrics. The outline-stitch, which I have mentioned, is used to trace the pattern twice in lines about half an inch apart. The flowers are outlined and then worked in the centre with cross-barred lines of crewel, caught down with a stitch at the points where the lines meet, and kept firmly in place to form a little lattice-like pattern. The design on the table-cloth I copy from was in two shades of blue, a dark and a light, like the old blue china of the well-known willow-pattern. The embroidery is done by the ladies in the Art Embroidery Work-room attached to the School of Dressmaking. Small fringed serviettes, generally embroidered with a pattern to match the table-cloth, are used at five o'clock tea. The design is traced in the centre. One of the most recent ideas for these is the figures of rhymed stories, or nursery tales, which are outlined in black.

The School of Art Needlework at South Kensington has been famous for some time past for the outline figures, done mostly on linen, and intended for wall decorations, which have been executed from the designs of Walter Crane, William Morris, and Burne Jones. These figures are life-size, and sometimes larger, the colour of the outlines being one or two shades of brown. In a smaller way, these outlined figures are used for the borders of mantel-pieces, brackets, and cupboard-fronts; the ground being an unbleached linen, of a darkish shade, the outlines done in blue filosele. For these borders,

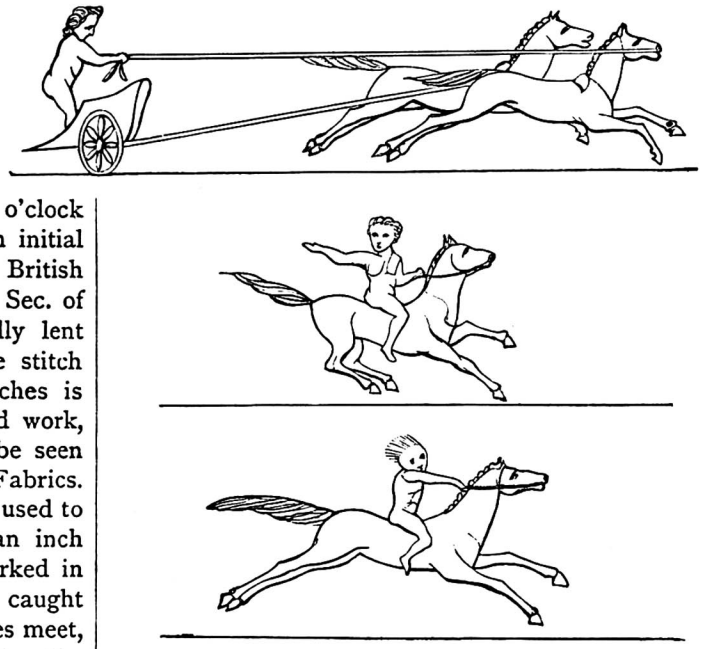


Fig. 2.

Greek, Mediæval, or Anglo-Saxon figures are the favourite designs; a central figure of a monarch, or a Greek temple, with attendants bearing gifts, or worshippers offerings, on either side.

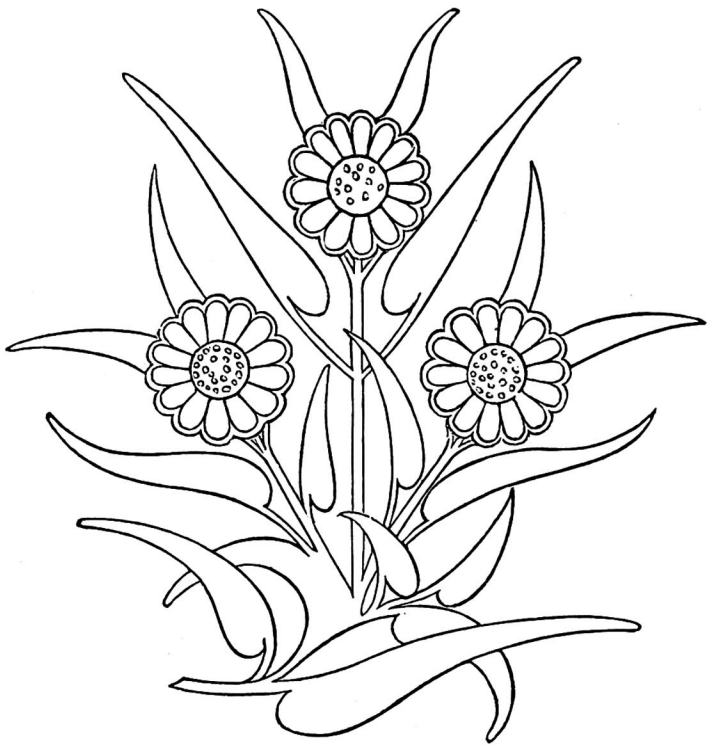


Fig. 3.

The effect is very good, and the outlines easily worked when once traced on the material. A wedding present, recently made for a gentleman of sporting propensities, was a mantel-piece border and fire-place curtains in grey unbleached linen, the outline embroidery executed in two very near shades of blue filosele. They were intended for the decoration of a smoking-room in a country house. The designs, taken from a cornice in the Public Baths of Pompeii, represent a chariot-race of Cupids, and Cupids on horseback. The first is repeated several times on the border, and the two little figures on horseback between, which are likewise used as powderings, and dotted over the curtains at intervals.

Fig. 2 gives the designs, diminished considerably in size, however, to suit the letter-press. This idea shows how easily any one possessing a little taste and skill may adapt drawings and prints in books to needlework decoration. Within the last few months some clever workwoman has embroidered the ordinary inexpensive brown and grey blankets, with designs of sunflowers and other large leaves and flowers in outline, with the idea of using them for portières. (See Fig. 3.) They have been very successful, many ladies having adopted them, especially for bed-room doors, where they add to both the comfort and appearance of the room. Some taste is required in adapting the colours, as if too bright the portière blanket becomes vulgar. The leaves of the sunflower are worked in a kind of satin-stitch, the centre being crossed with threads of crewel held down in the manner I have described in the blue five o'clock tea cloth. Besides these, the white blankets of the best and heaviest manufacture are constantly embroidered in various ways, and a very recent addition to our list of decorated house-linen are the quilts made of coloured Bolton sheeting. These counterpanes are very pretty when embroidered with effective crewel designs, and form a pleasant change from the usual white ones, or the coloured chintz coverings, like the bed furniture, which are surely the very ugliest of ugly things. Fig. 4 is a design for a hanging curtain behind a wash-stand, to prevent the splashing of the wall by the soapy water. The material used is linen, the outlines may be traced in brown or blue crewels, according to fancy; the linen itself is ravelled for the fringe, and a line of fancy coral-stitch may be worked entirely round the curtain. The monogram may be executed either in satin-stitch or in outlines. A small brass or wooden rail is fixed to the wall behind the wash-stand, and rings are sewn to the curtain. It should hang quite straight, without fulness or plaitings. We owe to mediæval taste the present passion for mixing up animals, birds, imps, and monsters in our embroidery with flowers and leaves. Birds, when well drawn and coloured, form very pretty designs for antimacassars, borders, and hangings; but nothing would induce me to think a lion, a tiger, or an elephant a pleasant object on which to pillow one's head.

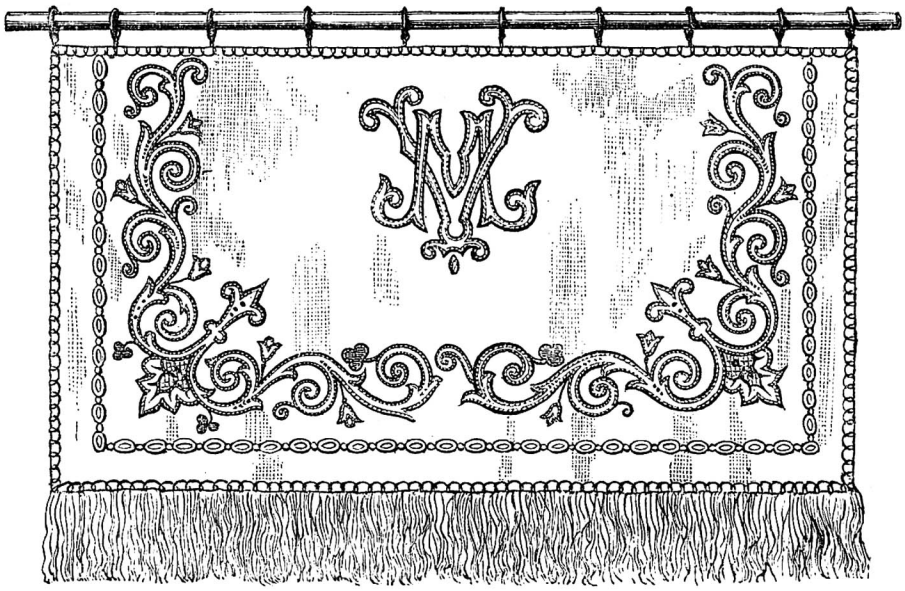


Fig. 4.

Sideboard cloths, of white damask or fine linen, have the ends alone ornamented with embroidery, in colour, in chain or cross-stitch. The ends are fringed-out and divided, and tied at regular intervals, to imitate a regular fringe; a few bands of drawn work or hem-stitching are very pretty also. If the two or three-tiered "dressoir" of the Middle Ages should return to fashion, and be extensively used in place of its modern substitute the sideboard, two or three of these cloths will be required to dress it properly. It certainly seems a pity that there should be no place at present on which to display the store of handsome glass and china which exists in most households, and is never shown, nor used except at large dinner or supper parties. If I remember rightly, the mediæval dressoir was raised on steps, each step denoting an advance in rank. Thus, three steps were allowed to

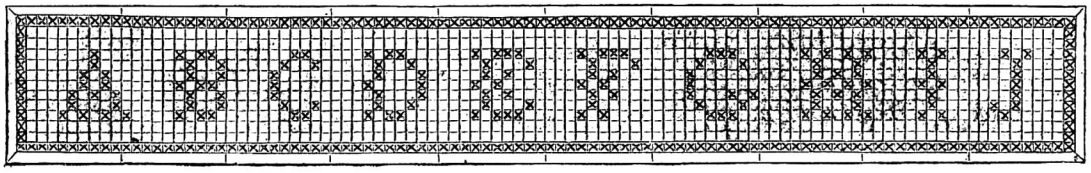


Fig. 5.

the royal family, two to the nobility, and one denoted the ordinary gentry. I have recently seen some towels copied from mediæval models, executed for the Imperial Crown Princess of Prussia. They each consisted of a simple length of fine diaper or huckaback, hemmed at each end. A row of a cross-stitch pattern, very similar to the one given at page 90 of this Magazine, was worked in blue ingrain cotton at one end, while at the other, in the right-hand corner, were the initials, the number, and the date in cross-stitch marking, with the same-coloured cotton. The effect was very pretty and quite novel. Now that marking with cotton has been so long out of fashion, I think a few instructions on the art may be requisite to help my readers to do it themselves. Children are best taught to mark on canvas, and should have a sampler, which may be from six to eight inches square. Two threads are generally taken each way, one thread being left between each letter of a large-sized alphabet; and one thread only, with one thread between each letter, for a small one. The canvas used should be fine, not "Penelope canvas" on any account, the division into squares of threads rendering that kind unsuitable. In marking on linen, two or four, or if very fine indeed, eight threads should be left between the letters. The old method of arranging the marks was to place the number of the article at the top, and the initials on the centre line, the date following last, thus:

8.
E. A. B.
1878.

The first initial stood for the gentleman's Christian name, the second for the lady's, the last for the surname of both. Modern taste prescribes the initials of the master of the house only, or the initial letter of the surname alone. DORA DE BLAQUIERE.

ODE TO KITTENHOOD.

KITTEN mine! how full thy face is
Of the most perplexing graces.
Wingless butterfly thou art,
Lightest throb on Nature's heart.
When I o'er thy sweetness rave,
Or of thee affection crave,
Thou dost give a toss of scorn,
Followed by a—rosy yawn!
I could censure if I would
Such coy pranks of kittenhood!

Life is a chromatic scale
Of scampers after mouse and tail.
And thy gladness never wavers,
Breaking out in sharps and quavers.
For thy days together flow
One perpetual Allegro!
Oh! that Music's measure could
But describe thy kittenhood!

Then that sidelong pirouette,
Dancer never rivalled yet!
And my poet's tongue must fail
To convey that witching tail.
Now a note of exclamation!
Now a curved interrogation.
Point, to indicate each mood
Of a changeful kittenhood.

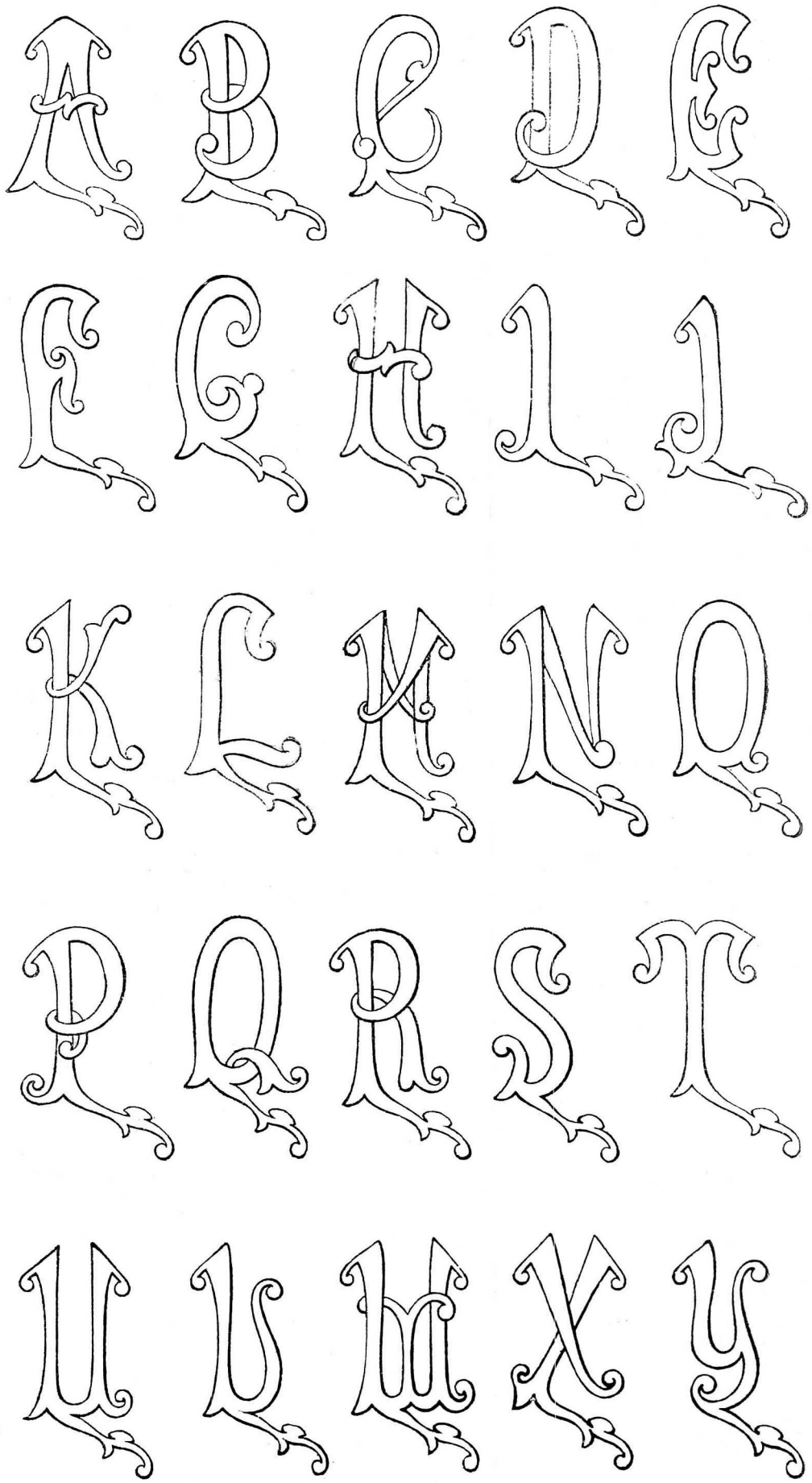
What a serpentine emotion
Thrills thee at some novel notion;
Head to tail there runs that shiver
In an undulating quiver.

Then to roll—a ball of fur
With a liquid, crooning purr.
Life to thee is all so good,
Optimist of kittenhood!

Thou art but a Merry Thought,
Luring pleasures out of nought.
Shivering shadows thou dost woo,
And the dancing sunbeam too;
For all shadows are to thee
Potent deep reality!
And all the trees in every wood
Just made for blithest kittenhood!

Was thy little silken gown
Spun from floating thistle-down,
With its rings of light and dark,
Each a tiny water-mark?
Wavelet thou from Fairy ocean,
Ever in a bright commotion.
Thou, for wonder, daily food,
In thy dainty kittenhood.

What a spell of witchery lies
In those wide-orbed saucy eyes!
Magic little mirrors blue
That the sky has looked into.
Art thou fay or prison'd Peri,
Thou that never seemest weary?
Not yet art thou understood
Through each maze of kittenhood.
Shadeless glancing kittenhood!
Blue-eyed dancing kittenhood! V. R.



Fancy Alphabet from ***Letters and Monograms for Marking on Silk, Linen and Other Fabrics***, by Mrs. Croly (Jenny June), 1886

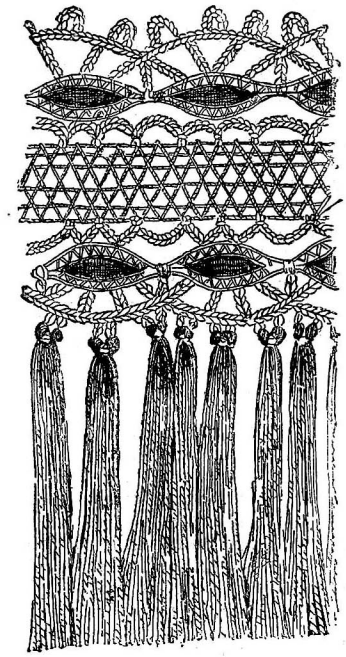
MY WORK BASKET.

ORNAMENTAL WORK FOR CLEVER FINGERS.

Knitted Woollen Respirators.

This respirator is easily made by any of our young friends who are anxious to give a useful present to a poor man, woman, or child, whose lungs need guarding against cold winds and damp air. The size will depend upon the person who is to wear it. The usual size for a grown-up person is six inches in length and two inches and three-quarters in width in the centre. It may be made the same width the whole length, but a better plan is to gradually increase and decrease at the ends. It is made of good Shetland wool, of a dark brown colour. The knitting should be done with fine needles, in close plain knitting.

Cast on eight stitches, and work one row, increasing one stitch at the end of each row, and repeat till you have worked to the three and a quarter inches required for the width. Then work a sufficient number of rows to make the length, allowing for the same number for the decreasing as you have at the commencement of the work. Cast off when you have decreased to eight stitches, and fasten neatly with a wool needle. Sixteen inches of good flat silk elastic, about a quarter of an inch wide, will make the two loops for the ears. The two ends of the elastic should be firmly sewn on at the outer edges of the respirator.



THE COVERLET BANDS DETAILED.

Coverlet for Bed or Couch.

The coverlet is made the size required, of pink, blue, or any coloured sateen, and when finished is lined with muslin or swansdown calico, according to the warmth wished for. The bands are of crochet and Honiton braid, with an insertion of coarse fancy net.

Instructions for Working the Bands.

Cut a strip of the net insertion the width of the coverlet, and work scollops of 10 chains each side, catching the crochet-chain into the centre loops of the Honiton insertion.

2nd Row.—Work * 1 long stitch into a hole on the other side of the Honiton insertion; make 8 chain-stitches, join to the 3rd chain-stitch, forming a loop; work another 3 chain and repeat from *.

There are two bands across the coverlet and another band of the same all round the edge.

The lower edges on each side of the coverlet have tassels of a coarser crochet-cotton tied into each crochet loop.

The number of the crochet-cotton depends on the coarseness of the Honiton insertion.

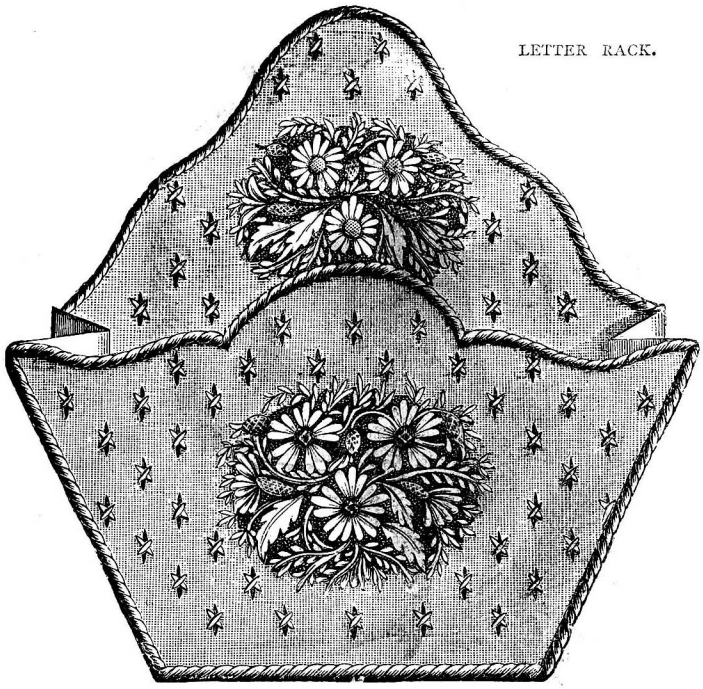
When the bands are worked they should be neatly tacked on the sateen with fine cotton, being careful to keep the edges in shape and in straight lines.

The pillow is of muslin, embroidered in a wreath of satin-stitch, with a frill of embroidery round the edges.

The coverlet may be made of oatmeal-cloth, with bands embroidered with coloured crewels; the tassels of the different colours used in the embroidery.

Hand-Screens composed of Peacock's Feathers.

Cut a piece of Bristol board into the shape you wish the screen to be, but rather smaller, and upon this arrange the feathers according to taste, allowing the first row to project somewhat beyond the cardboard. Sew the feathers at the stems to the cardboard to make them secure. The eye part of the peacock's feathers with a small portion of the stem only should be used; the lighter parts being stripped from the latter, and employed to fill in with. When the pattern is arranged to your satisfaction, and the cardboard covered, cut another piece exactly the size and shape of the first one, cover it with silk of any colour preferred in the same manner as the half of a pincushion, paste it firmly over the back, and finish the screen with a gilt handle. Portions of the very bright metallic green feathers may be introduced with advantage.

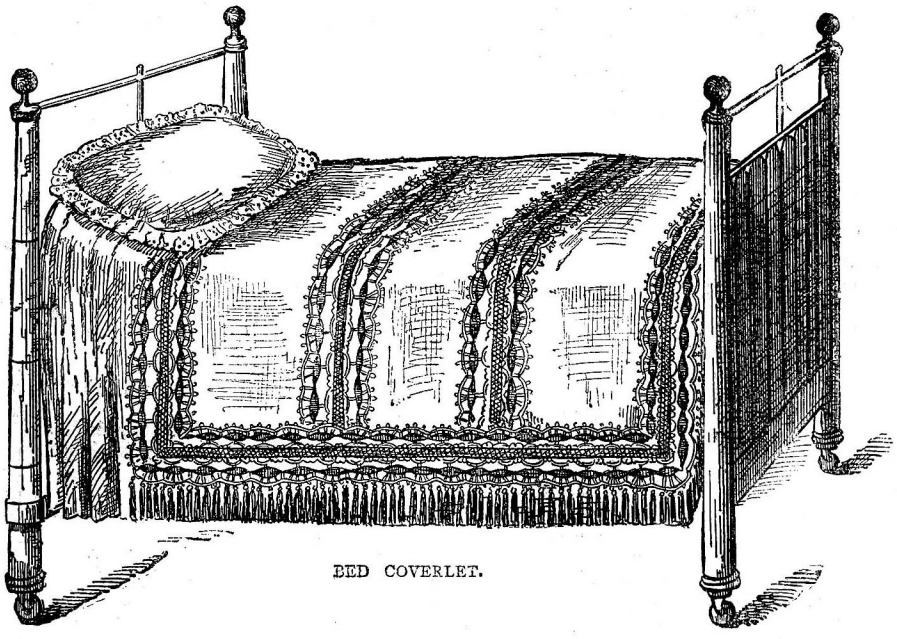


LETTER RACK.

Letter Rack.

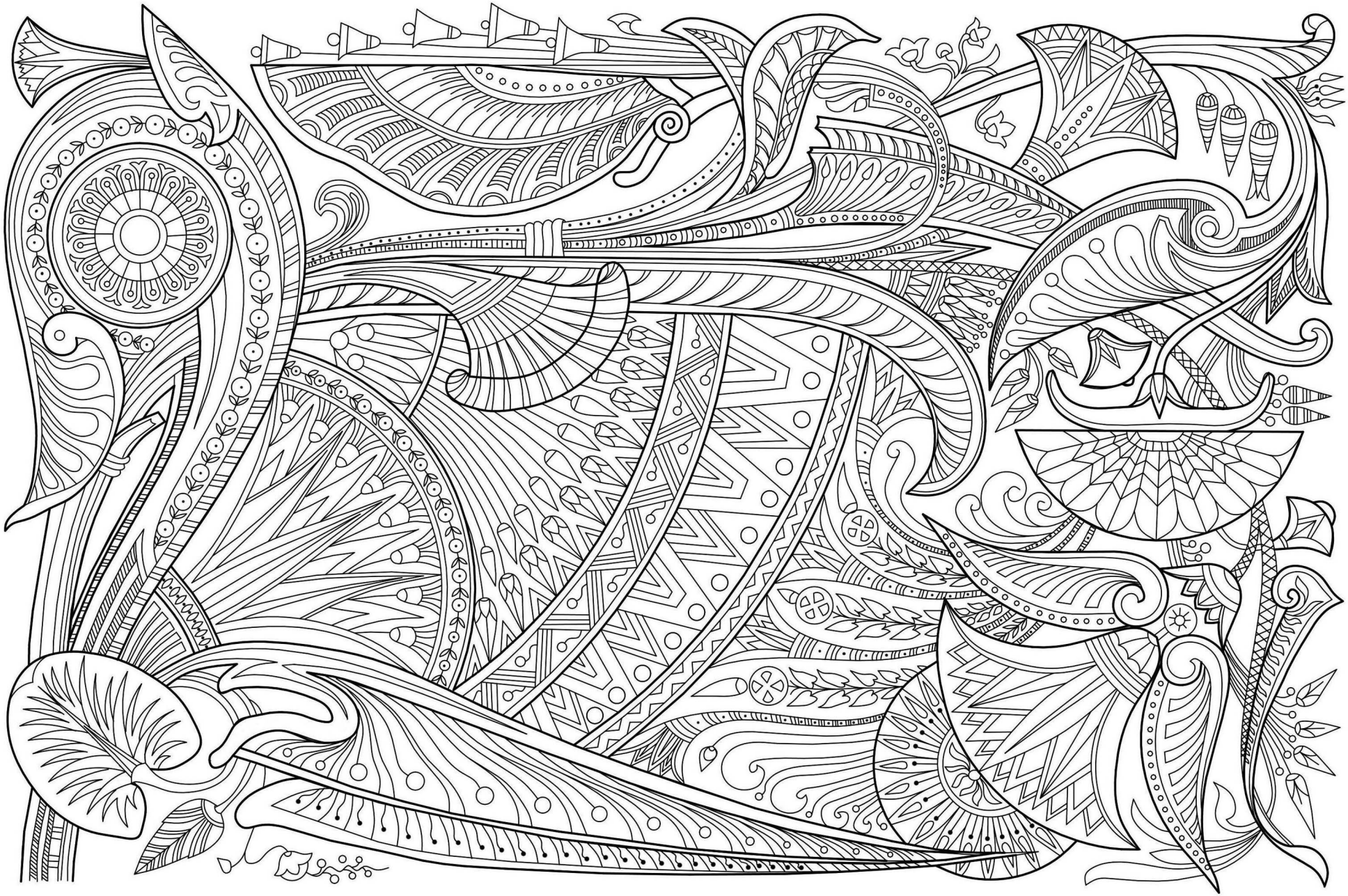
The rack shown above is formed of white canvas lined with satin and edged with a fancy silk cord.

Having cut the front and back pieces the shape and size required, fasten on a medallion of moss-green coloured reps, on which embroider a bunch of flowers in blue silk. The light branches of leaves are worked in long stitch in several shades of green, covering the edge of the reps, and producing an exceedingly pretty effect on the canvas. The rest of the canvas is dotted with stars worked in yellow and blue silk. The sides are formed by a straight piece of canvas lined with satin, folded down the middle, and closely joined together at bottom.



BED COVERLET.

Egyptian art nouveau floral pattern by Paul Ramie, from ***A Victorian Floral Fantasy,*** by Moira Allen



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