

CHINTZ AND CRETONNE

BY VIRGINIA ROBIE



O a room over familiar to us by long acquaintance, few things will add a dash of novelty more effectively than will chintz and cretonne. Like cayenne and tobasco sauce they give life and zest but, like these appetizers, should be used with moderation.

Too much pattern is over stimulating and in the end more fatiguing than the monotony of many plain sur-

faces. The balance between the two extremes is not easy to secure.

While many of the decorative fabrics of this season are bold in design and brilliant in color, they lack that barbaric quality which made the futurist and cubist designs of two years ago appear so startling. Few suggest the work of Poiret, and this is well for conservative people.

War conditions have played havoc with Continental imports, yet here and there we find new French cretonnes. Several English looms are weaving French patterns and these allied products may be purchased in certain shops. As might be expected, they are rather expensive. Black-and-white Austrian linens may be found in sample lengths but few promises are made that orders will be filled. American manufacturers have appreciated these difficulties and it is gratifying to note the many charming patterns of domestic weave. Bird motifs are numerous and there are clever adaptations of Chinese and Japanese schemes.

Many of the most practical patterns for everyday use have neutral backgrounds, which may be chosen to accord exactly



The "Flying Birds" chintz, of semi-Japanese pattern in old blue, mulberry, olive green, and gray on lighter gray background.



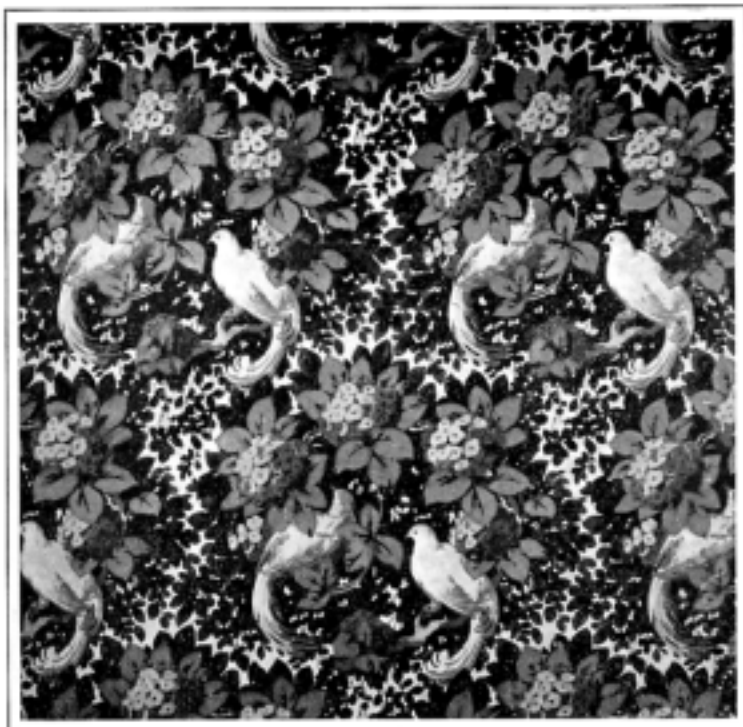
"The Pequin in the Fruit Basket."



Chinese flower baskets.

with the walls of a room. Used for curtains they fit well into the present decorative fancy for quiet walls and figured draperies. These neutral backgrounds include straw, amber, cream, ivory, gray, and putty. Yellow is sometimes seen, particularly in the Mandarin tones, and occasionally black is shown. There are fewer wall-papers and draperies with black grounds this year, although black as an important accessory is conspicuous.

An interesting exception is a printed linen of pronounced Chinese character. Over the black surface are scattered baskets of flowers, fans, butterflies, scrolls, and musical emblems. The lotus, the peony, and the flowering quince in soft pinks, faded yellows, and dull greens are very effectively placed. For a linen, the black has great depth of tone. There is "glow" to the whole



"The Bird and Rhododendron."

design, making it one of the best things in a black fabric which has come to my notice. Worthy of note are the baskets which are entirely different from the colonial style so popular in all forms of decoration.

Another Chinese design has a wealth of color which the black-and-white reproduction does not suggest. On a yellow ground are white bridges and pagodas. Vivid green are the peacocks and rich mauve is the foliage. Huge vases of flowers repeat these colors, adding a dash of old pink. A small Chinaman seated by the banks of a winding river, is at first unnoted. In this very decorative pattern, the values are well handled, otherwise it would be too colorful.

Birds are always fascinating when well executed and the "Pequin in the Fruit Basket" is no exception. That this type of bird never perches on a basket makes no difference to the charm of the design. It is an unusual pequin and a most unusual basket. A quiet gray-green forms the background and this is well for there are scarlet and purple flowers in addition to the brilliancy of the fruit. Each basket is flower decked to give a little more dash. The birds are fairly dull in tone, and the well-placed pine boughs, in very dark green, balance the more brilliant tones.



"The Green Peacock."

A finely balanced cretonne, both in color and drawing is the "Bird and Rhododendron." As a liveable, everyday material it will probably appeal to more people than the "Pequin." It may be found in several different color schemes. One printing carries a good deal of yellow and another substitutes old rose.

Very Japanese is the "Flying Bird" chintz and decidedly colonial the "Dish of Fruit and Flowers." The big birds are grayish blue tipped with black, and the flowers are blue and mulberry, with thickly massed green leaves. As a design it is charming and in just the right place would be extremely interesting. It should not be used near another figured material. Indeed, with all the patterns shown, the more reserved the other surfaces in the room the better.

The colonial chintz is quaint and unusual. A fruit dish, repeated over and over suggests the drawing of a sampler. The dish, with nice old scalloped edges, is on end, against which the roundest peaches wrapped in grape-leaves are placed. From the dish extend branches of flowers and bunches of grapes. The color scheme is a soft blending of faded pinks, mauve, dull yellow, and that queer old green which few modern fabrics ever show. The background is a grayish tone, warmer than putty and most effective with the fruit and flowers. This chintz suggests old maple furniture and things which belong with that wood. It could be used with mahogany but it "looks" more like maple.

The terms chintz and cretonne are often used interchangeably. Chintz is a cotton cloth, printed with flowers and other devices, in a number of different colors, while cretonne is a cotton cloth either plain or printed on one or both sides. Chintz is either glazed or unglazed; cretonne always unglazed. Cretonne was originally a strong white fabric with warp of hemp and woof of flax. It was named from the village of Creton in Normandy.



"The Dish of Fruit and Flowers."