

FASHION ADOPTS the art PATCH WORK QUILT

IF YOUR GREAT-GRANDMOTHER
DIDN'T BEQUEATH YOU ONE,
YOU MAY MAKE ONE
FOR YOURSELF



UNDER GRANDMA'S
DIRECTION

By Sarah Williamson

PATCHWORK quilts are in again, along with spinning wheels, grandfathers' clocks, rag carpets and other things we thought were outgrown since our tastes became cultured and refined. You must drag the quilt from the old chest in the attic, or—more likely in the city—the trunk in the basement. Use it for a couch cover or a portiere if you wish, but use it in some way. For patchwork quilts are the vogue. If you know how to make them you can patch up an imitation antique which will serve you fairly well. If you know any little girls who attend the sewing classes of the public schools you can get them to assist you, for they had patchwork as one of their alphabetical studies along with herring-bone and other fancy stitches.

To be learned in quilts you must have the patter of the patterns at your tongues' end. The language of quilts requires closer study than the language of flowers. Our great-grandmother in her maiden days used to sew quilts by the dozen to add to her household equipments in the event of her marriage. She sewed the patches herself, and when a sufficient number had been gathered and pieced together she sent invitations to her friends to attend the quilting. The girls came in the afternoon, just as they do to the modern "sinen shower," and in the evening the young men dropped in for a cup of tea and the dance that always ended the festivity. Grandmother called this a quilting bee. Now that quilts are again in fashion perhaps the quilting bee will become a social function.

Weaving Memories

The old-fashioned quilt has historic value. In it are woven beautiful memories for the quilter; bits of the gown she wore when she met HIM for the first time; her first ball gown; her wedding dress; bits of the silk that formed "his" wedding tie; a piece of the baby's first frock; a ribbon that the little daughter wore in her hair; little Jack's first necktie, and so on, every bit of silk or cloth having its story attached.

In Kate Douglas Wiggin's "Rebecca" she tells how Hannah Randall was working a white quilt, with the central design surrounded by borders of rings, the outside marked with a teacup or tumbler, and the others, each smaller until the last, which was the size of her thumb. Sometimes families continued the making of one quilt through the mother's lifetime, each adding a piece until a most elaborate affair was produced.

The patchwork quilt may be a monstrosity or a work of art. The average is the monstrosity. It is the most hideous combination of inharmonious colors that could possibly be imagined out of hobgoblin land. Greens and blues and purples and yellows and reds are all mixed up without any regard to color schemes, while in the dainty quilt, pink and white or blue and pink are gracefully interwoven in diamonds or squares. In the log cabin pattern is made possible the most jarring inharmonious of colors, the rainbow gone mad. Yet I have seen some log cabin quilts that pleased the eye in spite of being built contrary to all rules of art. I should like to see a quilt that one of the ancient Japanese artists might have pieced.

Many Old Patterns

Among the designs in which the patchwork pieces were placed in the quilt were rising sun, goose chase, three-pleated rhomboid, honeycombed hexagons, Star of Bethlehem, diamond and cube, winding blade, trap and nine patch, Philadelphia pavement, oakleaf and orange, flower vase, willow chair, cravat, basket of fruit, plain basket, swallow at the window, nine patch, ocean wave, whig rose, king's diamond, six-pointed star, double swallow, evening star, daisy bird-trap (usually with log cabin alternate patches), sunlight and shadow, friendship center, devil's wall, star and circle, star and compass and Roman stripe.

The "crazy" patchwork came a good many years later, rather in our own time, and one still finds women devoted to this form of piecing silks and satins. The willow chair, log cabin and Roman stripe, also the rhomboids, were generally made of woolen and silk pieces, and were only lined and bound, not quilted. The others, those patched of small pieces, were quilted in diagonal lines crossing at right angles or in waves, but the showy patterns like the Star of Bethlehem, star and compass, rising sun basket (sometimes with fruit in it, sometimes not), had very elaborate patterns worked in the white spaces between. Some of the gay blocks like the stars were put together with white. They used concentric circles, orange, clover leaves and conventional designs. Another popular patch was a square of silk with side-pieces of velvet worked over the seams in cat stitch. The Roman stripe had three strips of silk or cloth, about four inches wide. This pattern, with black satin of the same width between the stripes, makes a pretty sofa pillow.

In Canada I saw more patchwork quilts than I had ever beheld in my life before, and at a village fair in Ontario

I saw an immense quilt on exhibition for a prize. Prizes are still offered at some country fairs in the United States for the best patchwork quilts. In Connecticut, among the old families, I saw many collections of quilts, handed down from the great-grandmothers' time. The craze for antiques probably brought the patchwork quilt again into favor. There are a few families in San Francisco in whose houses I have seen patchwork quilts—evidences of the possession of a great-grandmother. The majority that owned them, however, regarded them as they do country cousins, not for exhibition to their smart friends. Their resurrection as "objets de vertu" will doubtless cause a change of sentiment.

"In the skies the bright stars glittered,
On the grass the moonlight shone,
And 'twas from Aunt Dinah's quilting party
I was seeing Nellie home.
I was seeing Nellie ho-o-me,
I was seeing Nellie home.
It was from Aunt Dinah's quilting party
I was seeing Nellie home."

We still sing the old song, and if the quilting party catches on as a society function the song should take on new significance.

