

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—We are glad to be able to state that the competition in knitting has been highly successful, both as regards the number of contributors and the excellence of the work. Indeed there were but few samples which were utterly devoid of good qualities, and accompanying them were a large number of very nice letters concerning the *Advocate*, and our department in particular. Nothing would please us better than to answer each letter individually, but when you hear that we have received over seventy communications this month in our department alone, you will quite understand that it would be impossible; but we here state that we are delighted to know so many nieces appreciate the feeble efforts we have made to have the department interesting to all.

First we will speak of the crochet, as it was impossible to do so last month. Some of the patterns were exceedingly pretty and novel, and the work, with a few exceptions, neat and clean, the greatest fault being that some of the work was not firm enough; either the needle used was too coarse for the thread or the work was too loosely done, and in many cases the directions were anything but clear. Although the prize pattern was not quite as new as some others, it possessed all the other qualities requisite to good work.

In reference to the knitting, we have the same fault to find with much of the work, as to the needles being too coarse for the thread, which gives the work a very loose and untidy appearance. The patterns are various and very pretty, but in judging we take into account the clearness of directions, and the neat, clean and even appearance of the work, as well as the actual beauty of the pattern.

Among the samples were a few original designs which were commendable, but not necessary, as some may have thought. We regret not being able to give more than one prize, as there is so much really excellent work.

The subject of the new prize competition in needlework will be a sampler.

Since sewing machines have come into general use, the art of hand-sewing, for such it surely used to be and can be made, has been almost entirely lost sight of—a most deplorable fact, as few things are of greater advantage to the housewife than to be a good needlewoman. How would those who think so little of the needle and its many uses in the present age, like to go back to the time when sewing machines were unknown, and the possession of one needle was considered quite a household luxury, and cherished accordingly. Doubtless it is hard now to realize such a state of things, but so it was in England in the year 1566. Now do you not think we ought to appreciate that little article more than we do? We want our girls to be proficient in the art of needlework, therefore ask them to send us samplers, showing what they can do, and perhaps we may be able to help those who are deficient to improve. So as



FIG. 1



FIG. 2.

to encourage the younger, for the earlier they learn the better, as well as the older nieces, we will offer two prizes. 1st, a beautifully bound copy of Longfellow's Poems for the best sampler worked by any person over fifteen years of age. 2nd, \$1.00 in cash for best sampler worked by girl under fifteen years of age.

The samplers sent must be done without assistance, and just as they left the workers' hands.

In the large wholesale manufactories of underlinen, the work has to be performed with such delicacy and cleanliness that it passes at once into the hands of the ironers, being then ready for sale. In such condition as this we hope to receive the handiwork of all our girls, if they aspire to winning a prize.

Material of the centre of sampler is fine white cotton or linen, 8 inches long by 6 wide, with a frill of white mull, nainsook, or lawn. The cotton to have a hem one inch and a quarter wide, down the centre of the side hems a row of button holes, three on each side, must be worked, and a row of herring-bone through the centre of the top hem, and feather-stitch through the bottom hem. Then in the centre of sampler the name and age of competitor is to be worked in cross stitch with red marking cotton or silk.

For example:

Mary E. Smith.

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The frill to be two inches wide, is finished at the bottom with a narrow hem, and above that a narrow tuck, very neatly run, the top of the frill to be gathered and sown to the hem of the sampler. The samplers of successful competitors will be returned after the prizes have been awarded, and if any others desire theirs returned they can state it when sending the work; it would enable each girl to see for herself, after reading our list of faults, where she fell short.

The last day for receiving the work will be June 15. We hope to see as great an interest shown in this as in former competitions.

MINNIE MAY.

Note.

Since Minnie May's letter went to press, we find that we omitted to tell the nieces who was the successful competitor in the knitting competition. We have been pleased to award the prize of a "silver bracelet" to Miss Maggie E. Stephen, of Trout River, Que., whose work was beautiful in every way.

FIG. 1—Represents a pretty style of costume for almost any kind of summer material, particularly washing goods; the under skirt could be made of plain, and the waist and draperies of figured goods, or all of the same, if preferred.

FIG. 2—Child's dress; plain and easily made; could be used as an apron.