

'Round the World with a Needle'—the International Quilt (1938)

The International Quilt was announced on 6 January 1938, and 25 scenes were published weekly, at a time in Europe when the international unity the *Chronicle* believed its quilt espoused was in delicate if not precarious political imbalance.

My 'menfolk tell me I couldn't possibly win a prize,' wrote 'Territory Tilly' from Tennant Creek, who was about the 'world's worst needle woman'. But, as she had a lot of skeins of coloured stranded cotton and a few yards of fine white linen, she was undaunted that trouser and shirt buttons were her limit, and took the opportunity to make a start on the International Quilt, and possibly improve by the 25th square! But she dearly wished for someone near to show her the correct stitches to use.⁵⁶ A writer to Eleanor Barbour's *Chronicle* exchange letter column asked, 'Would any reader like the quilt patterns? I will save them and exchange for stamps. There isn't much time for fancywork when one has four little ones to sew for.'⁵⁷

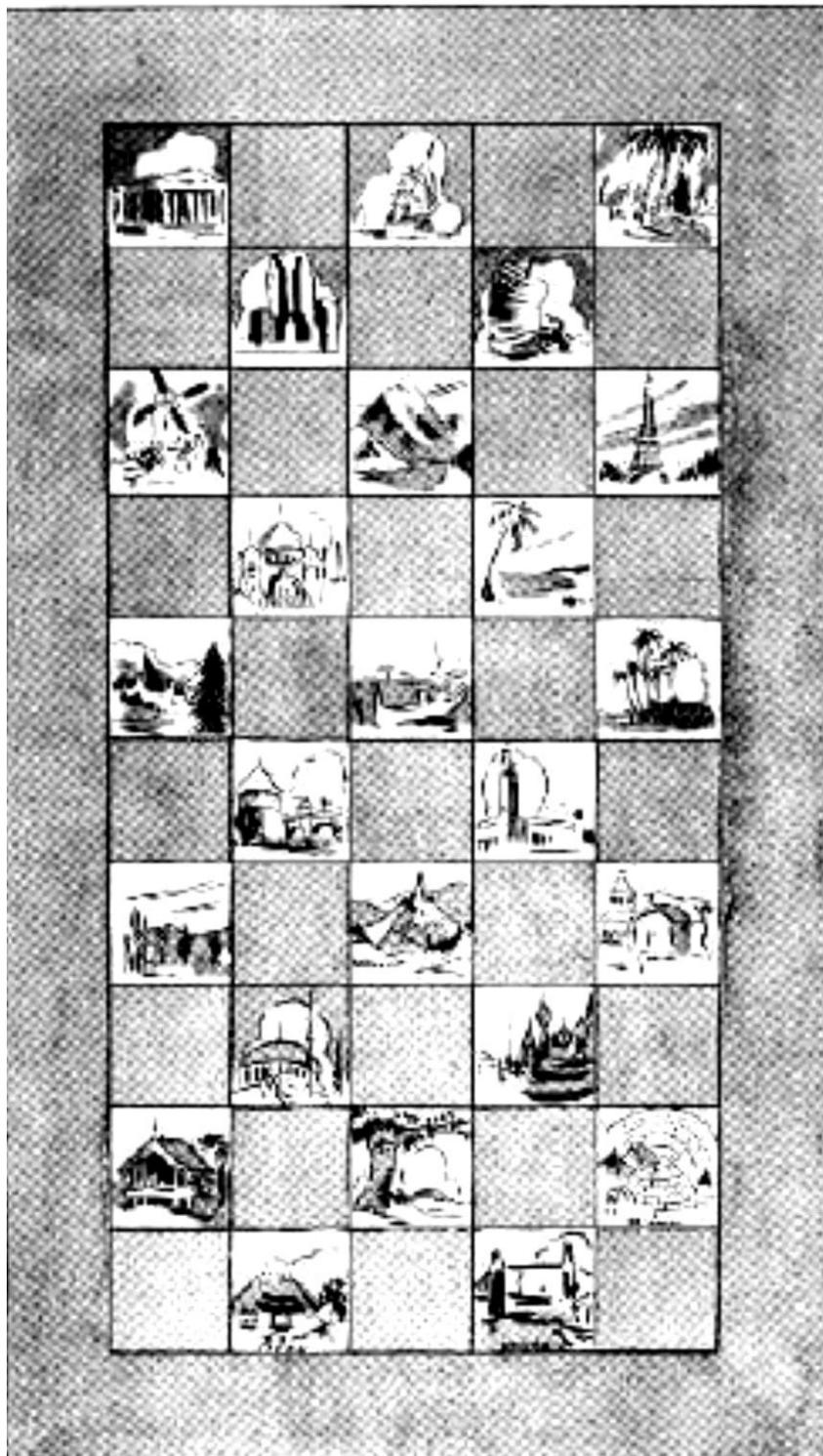
The 'world in pictures' was worked by women as far apart as the River Darling, Eyre Peninsula, the South-east and the Far North. One Port Augusta quilter was visited by the State Governor, Sir Winston Dugan. Her family of eight children, one under two months, lived on the 'lonely road to the race-course' in a one-room house of iron and flattened petrol drums and three tents made of wheat bags and with wheat-bag bedding. She showed the Governor some of the International Quilt patterns. He requested that her house be lined with asbestos at his expense.⁵⁸ While fingers and imaginations ventured thousands of kilometres away, one woman with young children, who lived a stone's throw from the Alice Springs railway siding, was unable to 'journey 10 miles to listen-in to the Test'.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ 'Housekeeping in Northern Territory', *Chronicle*, 24 March 1938, p.57.

⁵⁷ 'Lantana', *Chronicle*, 10 February 1938, p.53.

⁵⁸ 'S.A.' Governor Sympathetic', *Barrier Miner*, 7 July 1938, p.6.

⁵⁹ *Chronicle*, 8 Sep 1938, p.57. The winning quilt is illustrated here, but not well.



The first pattern of twenty-five was published on 20 January. Cottons, silks of strong weave, Fuji silk (with a matte surface), or spun silk were suggested materials. The conventional square was to be outlined or quilted in a self-colour. There were to be £12 in prizes: three awards and four merit prizes.

The quilt could be worked in mercerised cotton as well as more traditional threads.

A suggestion for the International Quilt (*Chronicle* 11 August 1938, p.57).

The first prize of £5 was awarded to Mrs B. McKay of Glanville Blocks (Woodville district), for outstanding needlecraft. 'The pictures were worked on pale blue ... the conventional design was outlined in pale blue on a beige background', and the filling stitches were such as to give a realism to certain of the more difficult subjects, e.g., the Taj Mahal. Miss M. Newell of Goolwa won the £3 second prize; and Miss N. Huppatz of Eurelia, the third. The ten shilling

merit prizes were awarded to Mrs C. Clark of Orroroo, Mrs R. Owen of Lock, Eyre Peninsula, Miss R. McCarthy of Millicent, and Miss A. Higgins of Louth Bay, Eyre Peninsula. The judges were Mrs Park and Misses C. Clayton and D. Lewis.⁶⁰ They were the judges for all the works in the Women's Industries Section.

Mrs McKay decided only in March to enter the International Quilt competition. She had experience working in watercolour and oil paint, although without formal training, and possibly her expert effects in embroidered reflections and shadows were gained partly from this.⁶¹

Working Men's Blocks of the Homestead League for Land Settlement

The South Australian Homestead League system of land leasing that originated in the 1880s so influenced land policy that it was the beginning in Australia of the closer settlement movement.⁶² George W. Cotton (1821-1892) introduced The Working Men's Holding Bill to parliament on 15 October 1884, the year of receipt of a petition to government for land blocks for working men, particularly farm labourers. The Bill was enacted the following year. The scheme shared with the Province's settlement philosophy the belief that a labourer could take opportunities to work to become an independent land-holder. The Homestead League proposed the individual's leasehold of a maximum 20 acres (not considered to be a small farm); the need for employment outside the block (but support from it if employment failed); and development of the holding when seasonal employment stopped. Eligible blockers were to be at least 18 years of age and already to have employment outside their holding.

The Homestead League's rallying-cry was 'One family, one homestead'. The League's objective for the settler was 'a home of his own ... a stake in the welfare of the country' and 'healthy and robust' children. The other side to this coin was the ideological belief (and objective for closer settlement) that 'once a tenant or an owner a man was upon the side of law and order': the blocker should be the 'poorest member of our community', and be considered first before the State used land competitively to supply the markets of the world.⁶³ The League's period of greatest success with this project for social amelioration was from 1886 to 1902.⁶⁴

Glanville Blocks, that became a light-industrial region, was land later leased under the Homestead League initiative. Military Road ran through the area bound on one side by the river swamps.

Eleanor Barbour, the pen-name of Mrs C.E. Dolling, with some forty years' Country Women's' Association (CWA) experience, who succeeded Elizabeth George in 1937 when she went to Western Australia, congratulated all the entrants, saying how proud she was of

⁶⁰ 'Awards for "The Chronicle" International Quilt Contest', *Advertiser*, 6 September 1938, p.8. (A detail of Mrs McKay's first prize quilt is illustrated).

⁶¹ Eleanor Barbour, 'Of Interest to Women From City to Country', *Chronicle*, Sep 1938, p.68.

⁶² Julie-Ann Ellis, *Public Land and the Public Mind: origins of public land policy in South Australia 1834-1929*, PhD thesis, School of Social Sciences, Flinders University, May 1995.

⁶³ Eusebius Wilson, *SA Parliamentary Papers*, no.107, 1896.

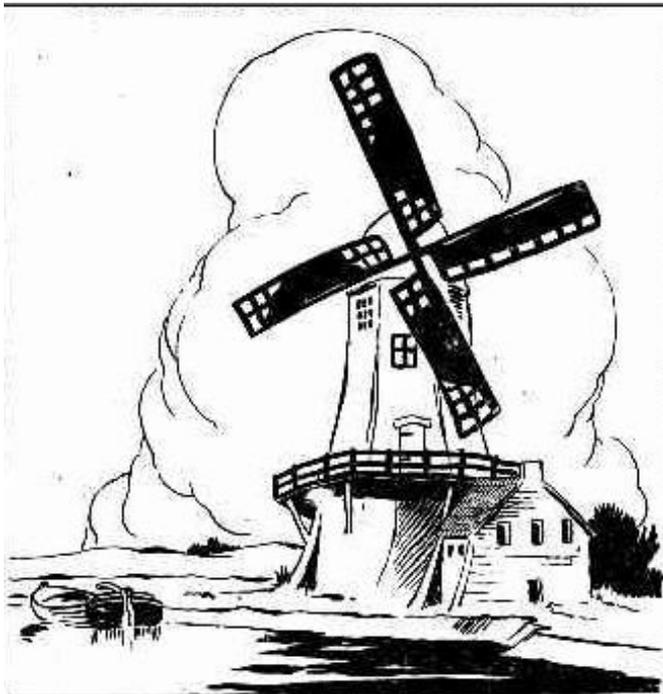
⁶⁴ John B. Hirst, *G.W. Cotton and the workingmen's blocks*, thesis, 1963, p.55.

the Show display, and no doubt increased the embroiderers' pleasure by mentioning that the artist wondered how such 'beautiful results could have been gained from his outlines' and colour suggestions.⁶⁵

Award points were based on 'neatness of stitchery, and of finish, blending of color, and general effect.' Squares could be joined together as quilters wished, machine or hand sewn, and could have a herring-bone or similar type of stitch over the seams, or even be joined by crocheting between each two squares—which, the *Chronicle* warned, would take more time. If quilts were lined, 24 inches was to be left open at one end, preferably the bottom so it can more easily be pinned afterwards, for inspection of the back.

The quilt was to have a nine-inch border; and by late April, it became mandatory to attach rings to the top of the quilt for its hanging.

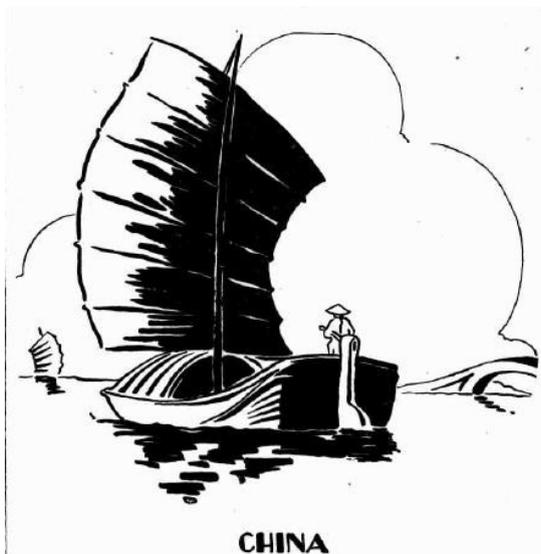
Colour suggestions were not fauvist or expressionist but from a realism imbued with the good taste of current interior furnishings, yet highly individual choices were encouraged.



No. 1. Holland. 'Land of windmills first picture in International Quilt' (*Chronicle*, 20 January 1938, p.53).

Colour suggestions: clouds, outlined in pale blue, water, light blue, reflections on water, dark blue, sails and railing of windmill, light brown, house, buff, boat, dark brown on sides, yellow rudder and red stern.

⁶⁵ Eleanor Barbour, 'Of Interest to Women From City to Country', *Chronicle*, Sep 1938, p.68.



No. 2. China (27 January 1938 p.53).

The sketches are sufficiently bold in line to make use of the short and long filling stitch, which can be combined with satin stitch and ordinary outline stitch. The colour scheme suggested was of light and dark blue water, clouds, bridge and far away junk; the nearer junk's sail red, brown and buff, its mast and rudder bright yellow and its cabin green; and the 'Chinaman' in a bright blue coat, yellow hat, and black pigtailed.

SKYSCRAPERS THIRD PICTURE IN
INTERNATIONAL QUILT

Cash Prizes For Needleworkers

PATTERN No. 3



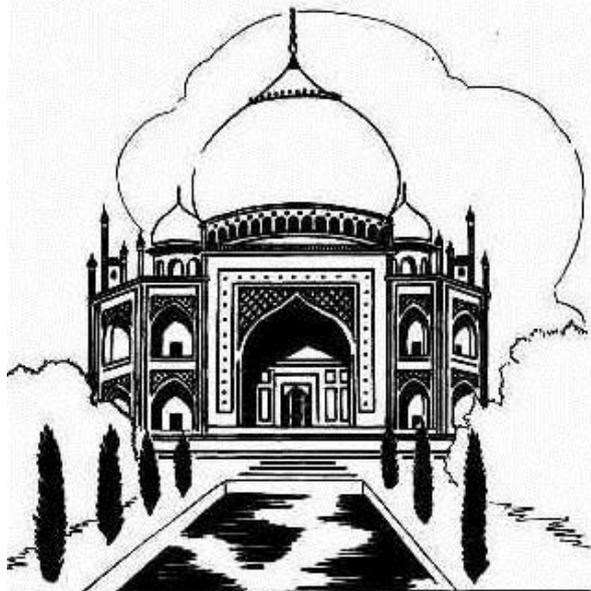
No. 3. USA (*Chronicle*, 3 February 1938, p.53).

The windows in dark blue, buildings in vermilion, gradually fading to yellow at the top, clouds outlined in light blue, and dark blue for the line along the bottom of the picture.

**TAJ MAHAL REPRESENTS INDIA IN
INTERNATIONAL QUILT**

**Free Patterns And Cash Prizes
For Needleworkers**

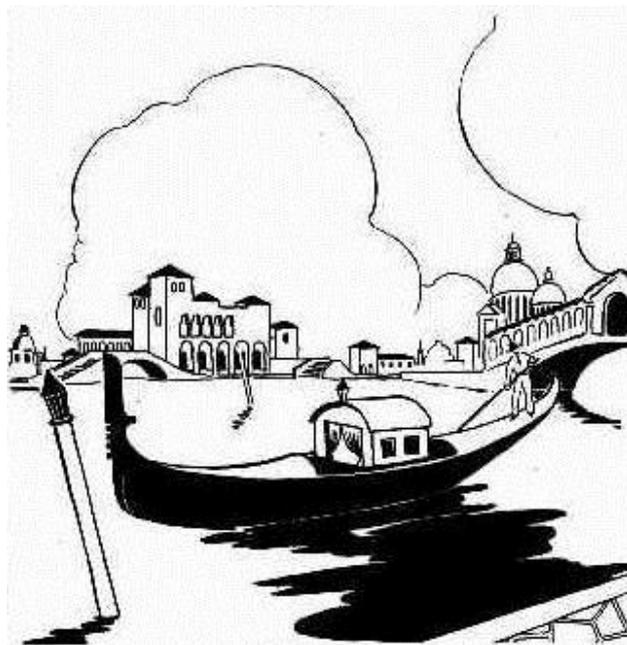
PATTERN No. 4



No. 4. India.

The front view of the Taj Mahal, Agra, was a contrast of roundness to the skyscraper pattern of the week before.

Building outlined in gold, small spires bright red, the building's lattice work and decorations in bright varied colours.

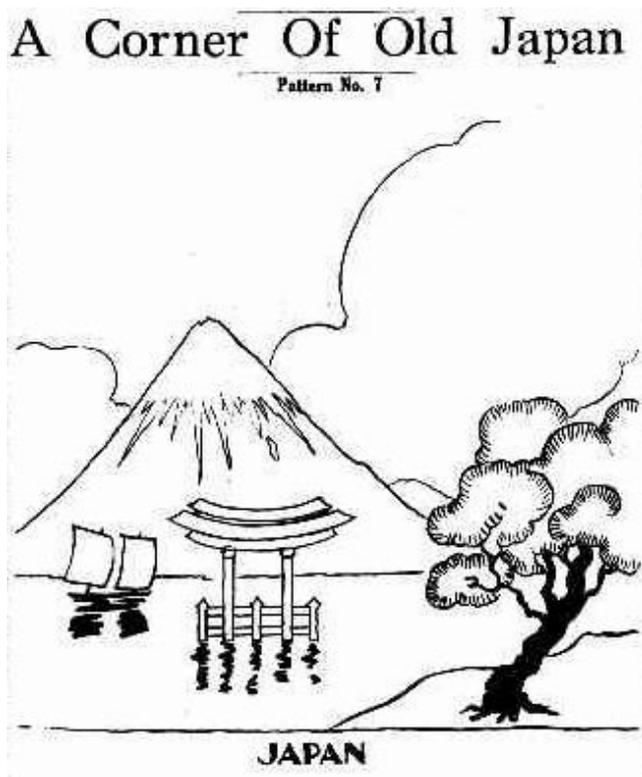


**No. 5. Italy (Venice) (17 Feb
1938, p.53).**

Bright yellow, light blue, salmon pink, red, deep blue, and the gondolier in bright green with a bright red hat and his pole in black.



No. 6. Canada. A mountain forest that could be worked in greens, browns, mauve, buff, and red brown (24 Feb 1938, p.57).



No. 7. Japan (3 Mar 1938, p.57). Mount Fujiyama is in the centre; the foliage could be in green and gold.

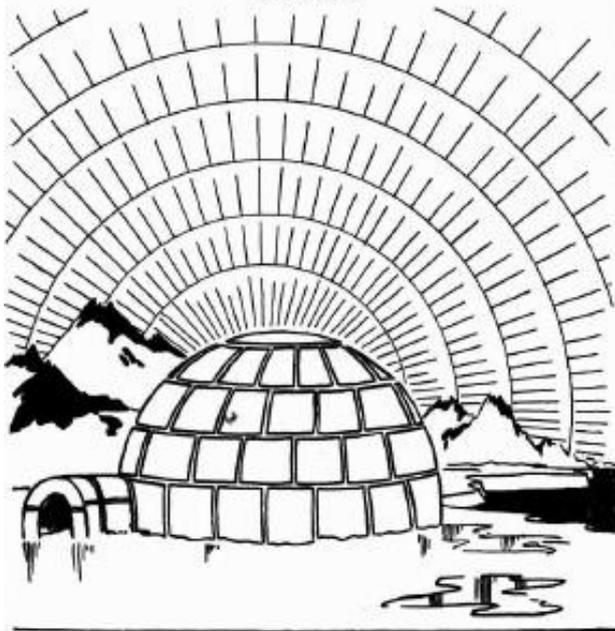
Quilters were advised that placement of the squares was another aspect of the needle-worker's artistry. Work could be in one or several stitches, and that if partial filling with

embroidery or outline only was considered by the quilter as effective, that choice could be made.

**GREENLAND'S ICY MOUNTAINS IN
INTERNATIONAL QUILT PATTERN**

Free Patterns And Cash Prizes

Pattern No. 8



GREENLAND

No. 8. Greenland (10 March 1938, p.57).

The first sun rays after a sunless winter are appearing.

Colour instructions: from the inside of the bow of light just above the igloo, the colours are in order, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. The reflections in the pools will also show patches of these colours; ice blue, mauve, and light and dark blue.



No. 9. Australia (17 Mar 1938, p.57).

“There is a land where summer skies—.” This week we have a country known to all of us in our international quilt pattern. Whether it is the country of our birth or that of our adoption, to all of us it is our own country, Australia. It would not have been complete without its gum tree, and the view of the wheat field in the foreground, and the background of undulating hills is typically that seen by many of you from the windows of your home.

Perhaps it may seem superfluous to suggest colors for a scene with which you are so familiar, but some of you may be glad to have the artist's guide.

Black foliage—light green.

White foliage—dark green.

Black on tree trunk—dark brown.



HAWAII

Lines on tree trunk—light red brown.

White on tree trunk—buff.

Black on hills—Mauve.

White on hills—buff.

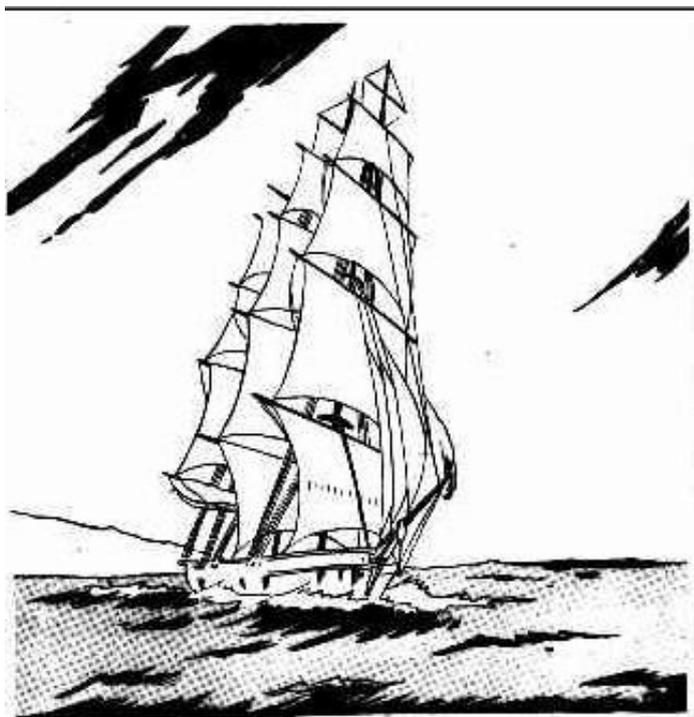
Shade on hills—medium green

Shadow at base of tree—dark blue.

Rest of foreground—light green.

Stooks and wheat field—golden yellow.

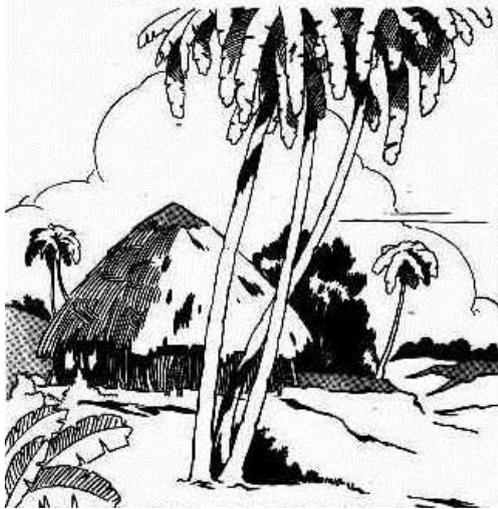
No. 10. Hawaii (24 March 1938, p.57).



FINLAND

No. 11. Finland (31 March 1938, p.57).

SCENE FROM NATIVE LIFE OF AFRICA FOR
INTERNATIONAL QUILT
Readers May Win Handsome Cash Prizes
Pattern No. 12

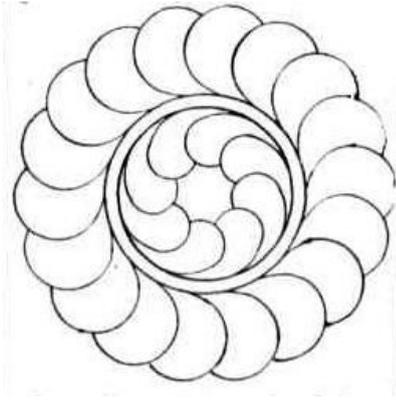


No. 12. Africa (7 April 1938, p.58).
A kraal. The colour suggestion was of dark and light green with touches of yellow, light brown and straw colour, and leaves light green in shade and buff in sunlight. Stippled portions of the drawing could be dark green, mauve, and sand colour.



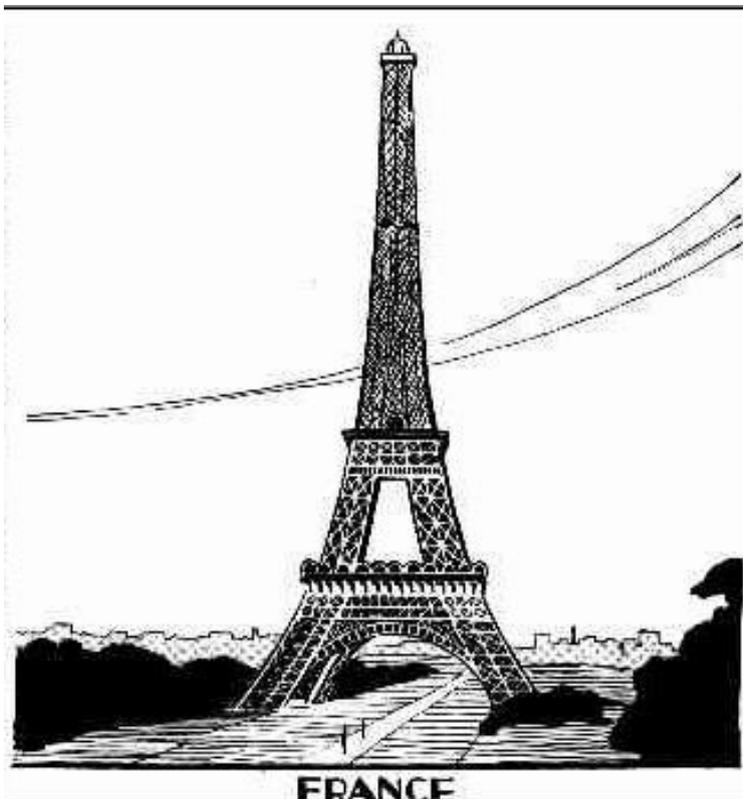
No. 13. England (14 April 1938, p.60).
Tower Bridge and Thames River
shipping, barges and tramp steamer.

As 'you stitch the Tower Bridge, you must let your imagination conjure up the ghosts of kings and knights crossing the bridge, often on their way to imprisonment and execution. For the colors, the artist suggests the following:—The bridge : — White portions light grey, and black portions, dark grey. Water: — White portion light blue, black portion dark blue, stipple portion, grey. The stipple portion in background should be mauve, and the small tug under bridge light red. Barges: — No. 1, hull, dark green; deck, buff, hatchway shadows, dark blue. No. 2, back of rudder, buff; side of rudder, light red ; deck, buff ; back of boat, light green; side of boat, dark green. No. 3, side, light red; deck, buff, hole in deck, dark blue. No. 4, same as No. 3. Ship, stipple, grey; funnel, top portion, yellow; stipple, black; masts and rigging, light red; bridge, light blue; You may please yourself whether you include all the barges in you pattern; some may prefer to leave out either the first or the second boat, and the resultant extra expanse of water could be merged, similarly, to the other portions of the river.'



Conventional pattern (21 April 1938, p.57).

The design was used in some of the 'exquisite' quilting samples in the exhibit of the country women of Warwickshire which was shown in Adelaide at the CWA Centenary Handicraft Exhibition in 1936. Quilters were advised that the conventional square, however, did not need to be worked in English quilting, but could be outlined in 'one of the many simple effective stitches, back stitch, chain stitch, stem stitch or a fine herring-bone stitch,' and indeed, quilted as desired.



No. 14. France (28 Apr 1938, p.57).

THE ALPS OF SWITZERLAND IN THE
INTERNATIONAL QUILT
Cash Prizes For Seven Best Handicraft Workers

Pattern No. 15



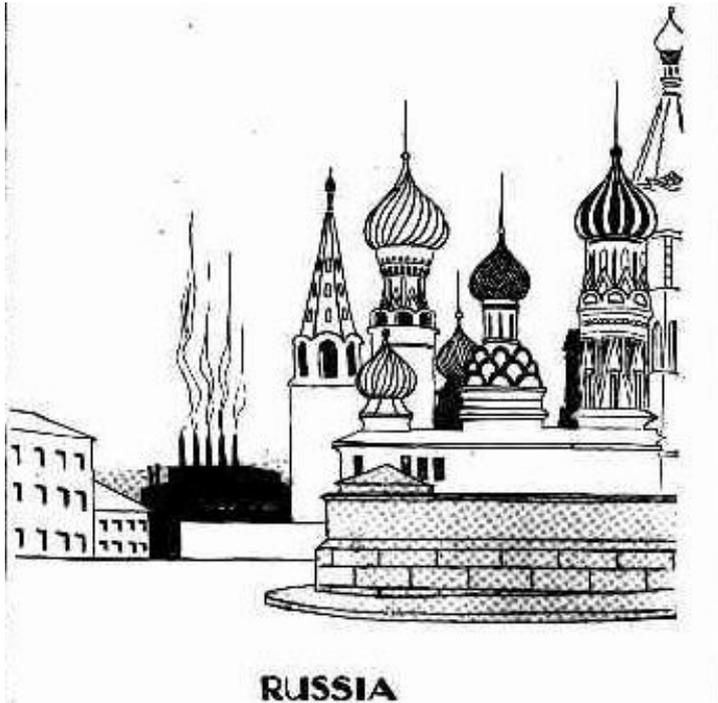
No. 15. Switzerland (5 May 1938, p.57).

Colour suggestions: darkest part of mountains in light blue, lighter parts in mauve. Whites in white. A: light brown, B: medium green, C: sand colour. Shaded areas in dark green. Lake light and dark blue. House in dark brown with a red roof and dark blue windows. The pathway in light brown.



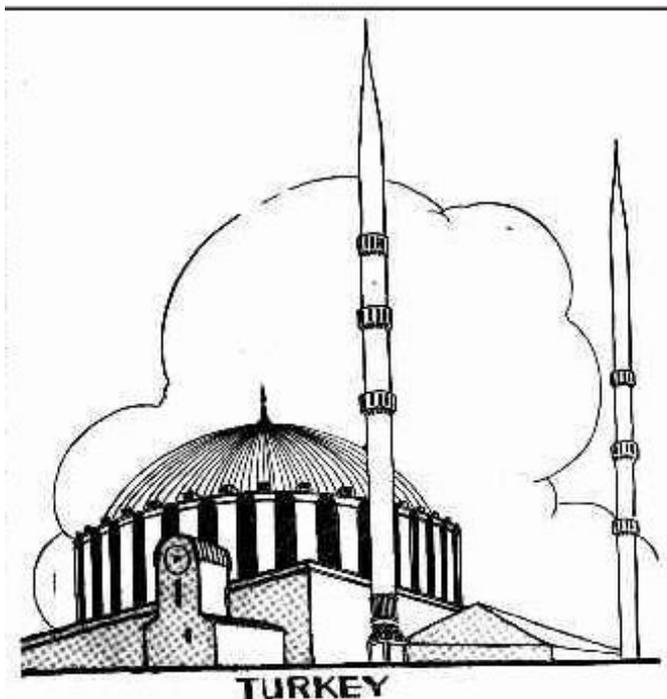
No. 16. New Zealand (12 May 1938, p.57).

A Whare (a Maori dwelling hut; the *whareniui*, the 'meeting house' or 'carved house')



No. 17. Russia (19 May 1938, p.57).

The 16th-century St Basil's Cathedral in Red Square, Moscow, with contrasting industrial smokestacks in the background.



For a color scheme the artist suggests.—

Spire on dome, gold.
Dome, light red.

Shadows and lattice work, dark blue.

Outline of cloud, light blue.

Minarets, buff.

Designs on minarets, dark blue.

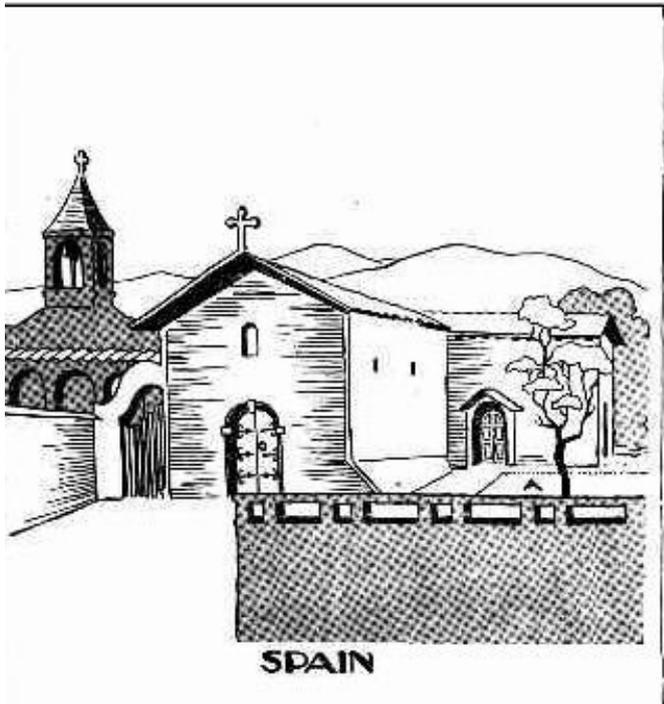
Roof of building in foreground, light red.

Walls, buff (stipple portion in slightly darker buff).

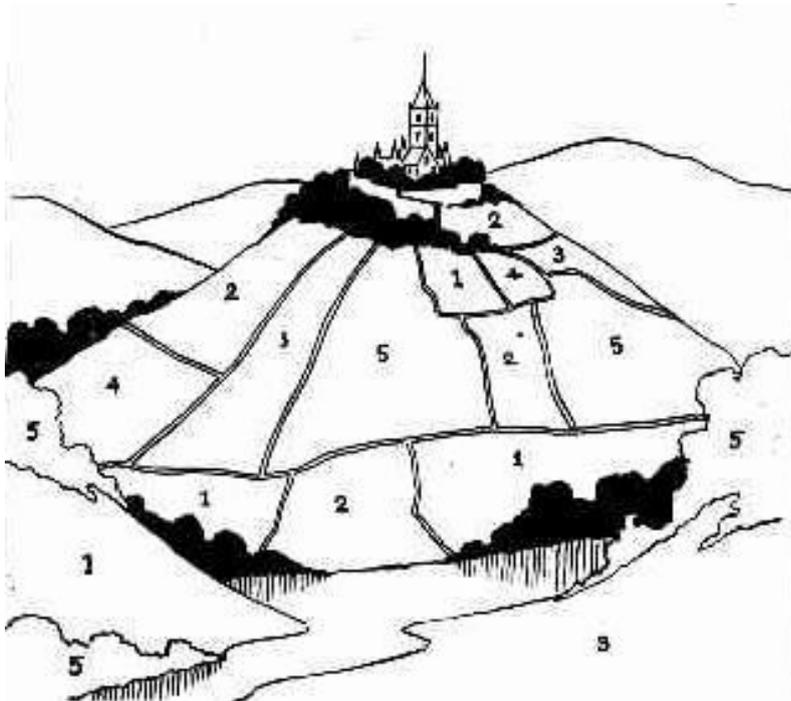
Windows and designs, dark blue.

Building on lower right: roof, light red (stipple portion in grey); walls, buff (stipple portion in slightly darker buff).

No. 18. Turkey

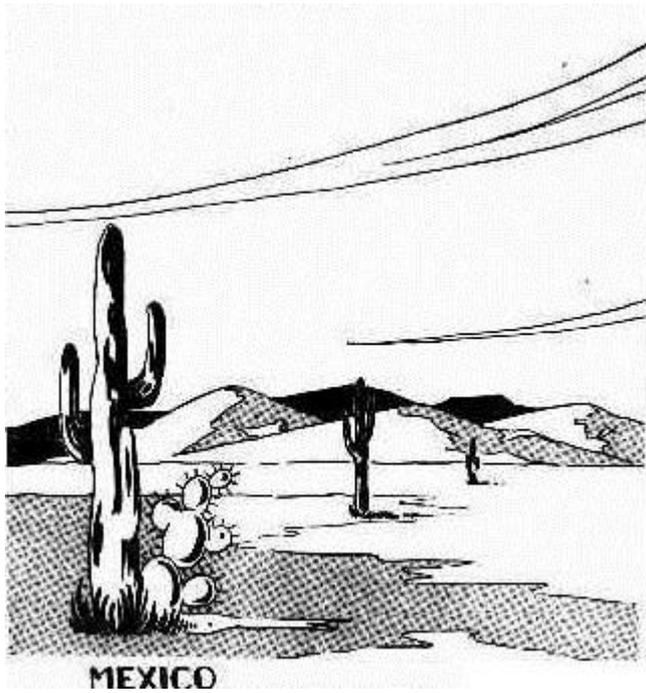


No. 19. Spain (2 June 1938, p.57).



No. 20. Germany (9 June 1938, p.57). Castle and agricultural fields

The numbered fields of fallow, grass, crop, and vineyard were to guide those who wished to embroider the whole hillside; otherwise, the dividing walls could be outlined in brown.



No. 21. Mexico (16 June 1938, p.57).

Spiked cactus, light green, and dark green where filled in. Spikes brown.

Tall cactus, mid-green, with light green patches; black where filled in. Foliage at base of cactus, light brown.

Cacti in distance, light green, with yellow patches; black where filled in.

Shaded foreground, buff.

Rest of foreground, sand color.

Hills, black to be filled in in mauve; other hills, buff with light brown shading.

Strips across sky, light blue.

This is the 21st pattern for the international quilt. Twenty-five

GRECIAN COLUMNS IN THE INTERNATIONAL QUILT

Only Three More Patterns Still To Be Published

Pattern No. 22



GREECE

No. 22. Greece (23 Jun 1938, p.57). The Parthenon

'The artist's choice for the colourings are:-

Outline of cloud. Light blue.
Black shadows. Dark blue.
Column flutings. Buff in the front, and dark blue in the shadow.

Stippled areas on building.

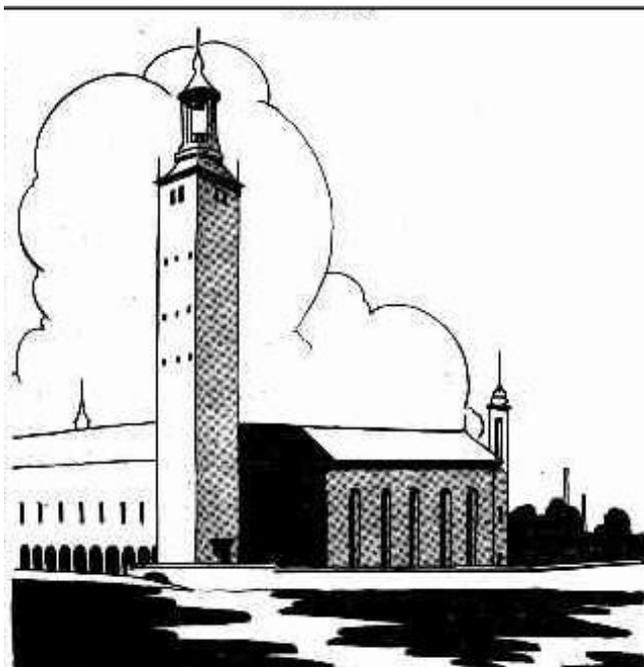
Salmon pink.

Stippled area in left foreground.

Light brown.

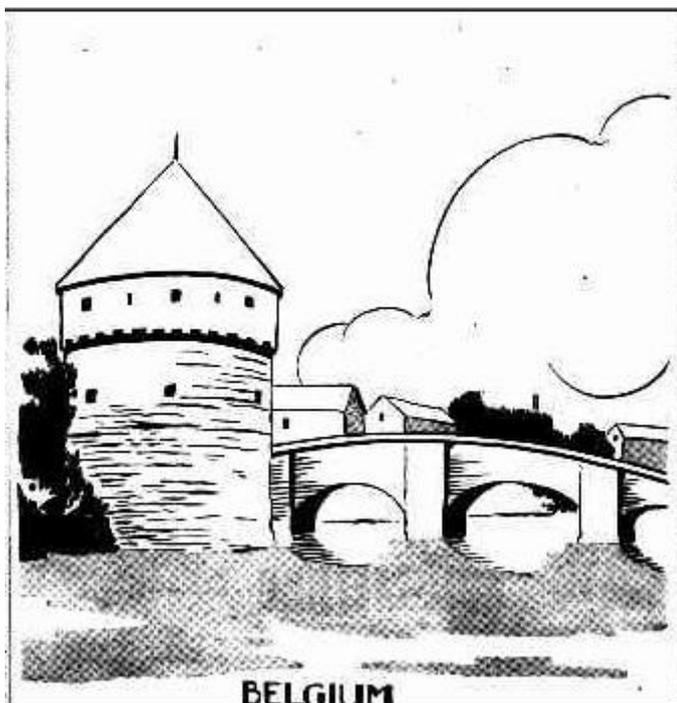
Area marker "A", and broken stone-work in foreground. Light red.

Hill marked "B." Mauve.'



SWEDEN

No. 23. Sweden (30 June 1938, p.57). The architect Ragnar Östberg's Stockholm Town Hall, built 1911-1923, the venue of the Nobel banquets, by the waterside.



No. 24. Belgium (7 July 1938, p.57).



No. 25. Arabia

This, the last of the patterns, was very linear; it was suggested that the tent by a desert oasis have bright red and black stripes, and the shadows at the bottom corner of the tent be dark blue.



Minetta Huppatz. International Quilt. 1938. 243cm x 144cm. Cotton; predominantly satin and stem stitch. The name of the country is embroidered in black thread below each scene. The alternate squares have a pattern of feathered circle and this is back stitched in beige

embroidery thread. The backing is turquoise cotton blend attached to the quilt with pale blue herringbone stitch. The quilt is padded. (Nettie McColive Collection. National Museum of Australia: object no. 2000.0009.0004).

The Port Augusta mother of eight children who had been visited by the Governor, Sir Winston Dugan, was too ill to attend the Royal Show. Self-effacingly, the mother had told Sir Winston that 'with only one room to look after, she had plenty of time to do needlework, and she intended' entering her quilt in the competition.⁶⁶ She had completed her quilt in just over seven months.

In response to Eleanor Barbour asking for suggestions for the following year's competition, one writer said 'the old patch work quilt is quite a revival ... I do admire the hooked rag rugs [on hessian] and I think a competition of that kind would meet the approval of many country women ... one must keep their hands very nice and smooth to be able to do the fine stitchery, and that is hard when there are cows to milk and 101 other jobs on a farm that make the hands rough.' She finished with, 'I don't think there will be any wheat here this year. All we get are duststorms and grasshoppers.'⁶⁷

