

WE Dennis on Flourishing Swans

The swan used to be considered by old-timer's as one of the most difficult things to flourish, and no doubt it does require about as much practice as any small design.

It is necessary to have great freedom of movement in order to make it look graceful. Here is a fine opportunity for a free swing of the arm and graceful movements. Nothing seems to possess more real ease and grace than the beautiful pose of the swan, whether in nature or in art. Study the graceful movements of a real swan-a live one, swimming on the lake, and there you have a whole kaleidoscope of easy and graceful motions, all different, yet beautiful.

Now, in flourishing this beautiful bird, strive to get some life and expression in it.

Flourishing that is mechanical has not much beauty. It can be done in such a way as to appear as if arranged with a pair of dividers, but it is too suggestive of music that goes by machinery; the one great charm, expression, is missing. Therefore, in this little art of flourishing do not aim so much for rigidly exact curve, as ease, grace and naturalness. Everything should appear to have been done without effort. Rapidity in working is one of the things necessary to produce this effect.

The time spent in making the one given herewith was probably not over five minutes, yet it took years of practice to learn to make it.

The starting point is under the bill, then follow continuous lines and curves without raising the pen, all with the whole-arm movement. Then in a slower and more careful manner the head, bill and eye are drawn.

Don't be discouraged if you make a hundred and then fail to get it to suit, for nobody ever learned to make it well without trying probably thousands of times. But then the skill acquired in all this practice will stand by you in making other designs, so it is not labor lost or devoted to acquiring proficiency in just one thing.

Unless you are left handed, the swan looking to the right must be made with the paper reversed. Some parts of it in this position are far more difficult than when made in the regular way, but it affords excellent practice for the whole arm movement and the student who is trying to master flourishing will find it an advantage to practice the swan both ways. The regular way first however as it is much easier.