

AN HISTORICAL COLLECTION OF OLD STUFFS.

THE history of ancient stuffs from the point of view of design is a fascinating study when it is systematically undertaken. It reveals so much beauty, ingenuity, technical knowledge, and grasp of design, that few who have not followed up the subject but will be amazed at the richness of the reward awaiting the inquirer. The visitor to the courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum can obtain a fair idea of the historical value of such a study; but it is seldom that the private student attempts a properly classified collection such as may be of real utility. Opportunities are few, the cost is considerable, and means of identification present frequent difficulty.

Madame Isabelle Errera* has

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applied herself successfully to such a study and such a collection; and having brought it together, she has catalogued and illustrated every specimen, and presented the whole to the Musée du Cinquanteenaire of Brussels. The result is extremely curious and interesting, and valuable as well—valuable to designers, to artists, and to those who delight in identifying details in the works of the Old Masters. Beginning at the fourth century, these 400 specimens cover the ground nominally up to the present day; but the most complete and elaborate portion of the book deals with the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries. The volume is, in some sense, a companion

Errera. Catalogue orné de 420 illustrations. (Brussels: Falk fils. 1901. 40 frs.)

FIG. 1.—GOLD CLOTH, DECORATED WITH "LOOPED" RED VELVET AND GOLD. SPANISH OR ITALIAN SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Used by Bronzino in his Portrait of "Eleonora of Toledo," in Hertford House.



FIG. 2.—GOLD CLOTH AND RED VELVET.
ITALIAN. EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY.
Used by Moroni in his "Portrait of a Little Girl," in the Cremona Gallery.



FIG. 3.—SILK AND BLUE THREAD, DECORATED WITH GOLD. FOURTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
Used by Ottaviano Nelli in his Picture, "The Burial of the Virgin," in Foligno.

to Mr. Alan Cole's "Ornament in European Silks," Fischbach's "Geschichte der Textilkunst," and similar works. It is not exactly by an expert; it is the work of an enthusiastic amateur, well-informed, and generous in expenditure in the interests of her pursuit. The result is altogether charming, and the amount of knowledge displayed considerable.

But it is most curious and interesting in the manner in which it establishes the identity of many of these pieces with the textiles painted in celebrated masterpieces by great artists, while showing the period to which the specimens belong.

Thus we have here (Fig. 1) a piece of the sixteenth century Spanish material of gold cloth and red velvet which the Princess Eleonora of Toledo wore when Bronzino painted her (in the pictures in the Uffizi and the Wallace Collection). Again, in the Cremona Gallery is a portrait of a little girl by Moroni, whose dress is of the material here shown (Fig. 2); and the example in silk and blue thread with gold (Fig. 3) was the model for the pall in Ottaviano Nelli's picture of "The Burial of the Virgin," now in the Communal Palace of Foligno (about 1430). The book, admirably produced, is full of interesting suggestions.