

### XIII

#### HOW TO IDENTIFY LACE

Style—Historical data—Réseaux.

THE great difficulty in attempting to identify any specimen of lace is that from time to time each country experimented in the manners and styles of other lace-making nations. The early Reticella workers copied what is known as the "Greek laces," which were found in the islands of the Grecian Archipelago. Specimens of these laces found in the excavations of the last thirty years show practically no difference in method and style. France copied the Venetian laces, and at one period it is impossible to say whether a given specimen was made at Alençon or Venice. Italy, in turn, imitated the Flemish laces—to such an extent that even the authorities at South Kensington Museum, with all their leisure and opportunities for study and the magnificent specimens at hand for identification, admit that certain laces are either "Italian or Flemish." Valenciennes was once a Flemish town, and though now French, preserves the Flemish

character of lace, some specimens of Mechlin being so like Valenciennes as to baffle certainty.

Later, Brussels borrowed the hand-made grounds of France and Venice, and still later England copied Brussels, the guipures of Flanders, and the ground and style of Lille! All this makes the initial stages of the study of lace almost a hopeless quest. The various expensive volumes on lace, although splendidly written and gorgeously illustrated, leave the student with little more than an interesting and historical knowledge on which to base the actual study of lace. Here I may refer my readers to the one and only public collection of lace, I believe, in England—that of the South Kensington Museum, where specimens of lace from all countries and of all periods are shown, and where many magnificent bequests, that of Mrs. Bolckow especially, make the actual study of lace a possibility.

It is to be hoped that the governing body of the museum will, in its own good time, make this a pleasure instead of a pain. The specimens, the *most important to the student*, are placed in a low, dark corridor. Not a glimmer of light can be obtained on some of the cases, which also are upright, and placed so closely together that on attempting to see the topmost specimen on one side the unfortunate student literally bangs her head into the glass of the next one. A gentle complaint at the Directors' office concerning the difficulty brought forth the astonishing information that there was no room at their disposal, but that in good time better light might be found. As these cases have



POINT D'ANGLETERRE.

Style Louis XV. Eighteenth Century

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

been in identically the same place for the past fifteen years, one hopes that the "good time" may come before one becomes a "spectacled pantaloons" with no desire to see the wonders of that Palace of Art.

This little protest is made in the hope that the "Lords of the Committee" may possibly have their attention drawn to what amongst the lace-lovers and students in this country is a "standing grievance."

It is almost impossible, even from the best of photographic illustrations, to learn all the intricacies of identification. The photographs clearly show style, but it needs specimens of the actual lace to show method of working. From the illustrations in this book, specially selected from the South Kensington Collection, and from specimens in my own collection, every variety of style may be easily understood, as they have been particularly selected to show each point of difference. Commencing with the earliest form of lacework—*i.e.*, "cutworke"—nothing will better show this than the "Sampler" specimen, which, half way down, shows two rows entirely typical of this kind of early lace-making—for such it is. A little lower, examples of drawn threadwork are seen, while the upper portion illustrates satin stitch patterns, which more properly belong to embroidery.

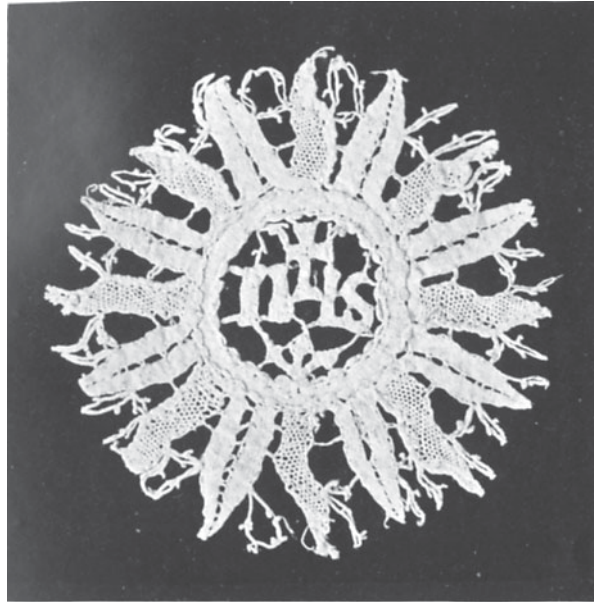
The ancient collar from the South Kensington Collection, page 149, shows some of the finest developments of cutwork, when the foundation of linen was entirely dispensed with. The work is exceedingly fine, the threads being no coarser, indeed in many cases less so, than the fine linen it adorns.

This is known as Reticella, or "punto in aria." The last name is applicable to all the laces of Venice which succeeded Reticella, and means lace literally made out of nothing or without any building foundation.

The specimen is still of the same class, but where before the design was simple geometric square and pointed as in all the early lace, it now takes on the lovely flowing scroll of the Renaissance that marks the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The same grand styles may be noted all through the great period of Italian Needlepoint lace. It will be seen in a lesser degree in the Guipure laces of Milan and Genoa, but here the cramping influence of the Flemish school shows itself distinctly.

The same bold lines may be noted in the early Needlepoint lace of France, which had not then become sufficiently sure of her capacity to develop a style of her own, and all show the Renaissance spirit. Afterwards when the superb Point de France was at its height of manufacture along with grand outline and exquisite handicraft, the influence of the mighty monarch Louis XIV. asserted itself and although the lace itself commands unbounded admiration, fantastic little notions, symbolical and naturalistic, showed itself—as an illustration page 75: little figures representing "the Indian," "canopied crown over a seated lady," trees growing all manner of bizarre fruit and flowers, all symbolical of Louis the Magnificent's unbounded power and sway. In the South Kensington Museum there is a still



ITALIAN ECCLESIASTICAL LACE.



FLEMISH OR GENOESE ECCLESIASTICAL LACE.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

finer specimen, which has not yet been photographed, I believe—a magnificent flounce, about eighteen inches wide (really two boot top pieces joined), of what is known as pseudo-Oriental character, which shows amongst the usual exquisite scrolling no less than seven different figures on each piece—viz., an Indian, a violinist in dress of Louis XIV. period, a lady riding on a bird, two other ladies, one with a pet dog and the other a parrot, a lady violinist, and another lady seated before a toilet-table. These little figures are not more than three-quarters of an inch high, but are worked with such minuteness that even the tiny features are shown. This fantastic adoption of the human figure was copied in Italy and Flanders. The finest specimens of Point d'Angleterre (Brussels) show the same designs; and it may broadly be stated that all lace with figures is of the Louis XIV. period, and over two hundred years old.

Succeeding this period came the dainty elegance of the French laces, when the workers of Alençon and Argentan had developed a purely French style. Note the Point d'Alençon, illustration, page 83, where the characteristics of the period are fully shown. The illustration shows a mixed lace, which only recently has been acknowledged by the South Kensington people as Point d'Argentan. Along with the typical Argentan ground of the upper portion is the fine Alençon mesh and varied jours of the border. This also is Louis XIV. style. The lappet shown next is exceedingly instructive, as till quite lately the people who professed to understand lace agreed to call this Genoese, although it was quite unlike anything

else made there. This lappet was so labelled at South Kensington, but now is admittedly Argentella (or little Argentan). It is remarkably like Alençon, being of same period, the only points of difference being that the design is not outlined with a raised Cordonnet (though in different places of the design a raised and puled Cordonnet is often stitched on it) and the special ground (partridge eye) which is agreed to denote "Argentella" lace—page 83. It is sometimes called the may-flower ground, but this is somewhat misleading as that design occurs in other laces. The only other great style is that of Flanders, which at its earliest period had received no influence from the Renaissance that had seized the southern countries of Europe and was still in the grip of mediæval art. It was not until Italian influence permeated France that Flemish lace perceptibly altered in character.

These are to all intents and purposes the three great styles of lace. England had no style: she copied Flemish, Brussels, and Mechlin laces. Ireland, on the contrary, copied Italian in her Irish crotchet and Carrick-ma-cross (in style only, but not workmanship), and adapted Lille and Mechlin and Brussels and Buckingham in her Limerick lace.

The student must next make herself familiar with the methods pursued by the old lace-workers, and here the difficulty commences. All lace is either Needlepoint, pillow-made, or machine-made. *Needlepoint* explains itself. Every thread of it is made with a needle on a parchment pattern, and only two





BRUSSELS LACE PET.

Nineteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

stitches are used, buttonhole and a double-loop which is really a buttonhole stitch.

This can be clearly understood by referring to Charts Nos. I. and II., where the *two Brussels grounds* are shown. The Needlepoint ground, No. I., is formed by a buttonhole stitch, which loops over again before taking the next. The pillow-made ground, No. II., shows the threads plaited or twisted together to form a hexagonal or a diamond-shaped network. This is all the difference between needle-made and pillow-made lace, and in itself helps to identify in many instances its country and period when it was produced. All the early Italian laces were Needlepoint, and all the early French laces were the same. All the Flemish laces (including Brussels) were pillow-made, and mixed laces in any of these countries are of later make. Italy adapted the Flemish pillow-lace, and produced Genoese and Milanese guipures, in addition to the coarse imitation of Reticella which she now made by plaiting threads on the pillow. Brussels adopted the needle-made motifs and grounds of Italy, and produced perhaps her finest lace, weaving her beautiful designs and outlines on the pillow, and afterwards filling the spaces with needle-made jours and brides, as in Point d'Angleterre.

A study of Chart II. will show the different style of grounds or réseaux of both Needlepoint and pillow-made lace, the buttonhole grounds being either of "brides" with or without picots, or buttonhole loops, as in Brussels, and Alençon (with a straight thread whipping across to strengthen the ground),

loops buttonholed over all as in Argentan, or made of tiny worked hexagons with separate buttonholed threads around them as in Argentella. The pillow-made grounds are made of two plaited or twisted threads, except in the case of Valenciennes, when it is made of four threads throughout (hence its durability). In Brussels, it will be noted, the threads are twisted twice to commence the mesh. These meet other two threads, and are plaited four times, dividing into two again, and performing the same twist, the whole making a hexagon rather longer than round. Mechlin has precisely the same ground, only that the threads are plaited *twice* instead of four times, as in Brussels, making the hexagon roundish instead of long.

The ground of Lille lace is of exactly the same shape as Valenciennes, but is composed of two threads twisted loosely twice each side of the diamond, and that of Valenciennes being made of four threads plaited.

With the aid of these little charts, a remembrance of the various styles and a few actual specimens of lace, and a *powerful magnifying glass*, it is not beyond the power of any reader of this little book to become expert in the identification of old lace.



REAL "POINT DE GAZE" (NEEDLE-MADE GROUND).  
(*Author's Collection.*)

**XIV**

**SALE  
PRICES**

## XIV

### SALE PRICES

LACE is such an article of luxury, and, as a rule, only belonging to the wealthiest class, that it seldom or ever comes into the open market. In 1907 two collections were dispersed at Christie's—those of Mrs. Massey-Mainwaring and Mrs. Lewis Hill. The latter lady bequeathed some of her finest pieces to the South Kensington Museum, but still a very representative lot came under the hammer. An occasional choice piece of lace follows the sale of a "Casket of Jewels" at Debenham and Storrs, and big prices are obtained for it. In February of this year about twenty lots were sold at Willis's Rooms, King Street, and equally good prices were realised, though the lace was not of fine quality nor in good condition.

The most costly laces are the Venetian Points, some of the fine Rose Points being priceless. It is so fragile that little of it remains, and the smallest piece is eagerly snapped up by collectors.

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In 1904 at Christie's lace sold for the following prices—

	£
A 58-inch length of 24-ins. deep Point de Venise . . . . .	600
A 4-yards length of Rose Point, 11 inches deep	420

The same year—

	£
4 yards of Point d'Argentan, 25 inches deep	460
44 inches Point d'Alençon, 17 inches deep .	43
2½ yards Point d'Alençon, 14 inches deep .	46

In 1907, March 11, *Massey-Mainwaring Sale* at Christie's—

	SOLD FOR		
	£	s.	d.
1½ yards Venetian Gros Point, 8 inches deep . . . . .	16	16	0
5 yards length of Reticella, 7½ inches deep . . . . .	33	12	0
4 short lengths . . . . .	42	0	0
3 yards Old Italian guipure, 25 inches deep . . . . .	17	17	0
4 yards Old Flemish guipure, 11 inches deep . . . . .	17	17	0
4 yards Old Flemish pillow lace, 12 inches deep . . . . .	42	0	0
3 yards Old Genoese, 1 yard deep . . . . .	35	0	0
A Point d'Alençon tablier . . . . .	29	8	0
7 pieces of Point d'Alençon . . . . .	21	0	0
4 yards narrow Point d'Argentan . . . . .	15	15	0
3 pairs Point d'Argentan lappets . . . . .	15	15	0
30 yards narrow Mechlin in odd lengths	21	0	0

SALE PRICES

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April 15th, the *Lewis-Hill Sale* at Christie's :—

	SOLD FOR		
	£	s.	d.
4 yards Venetian Point, 15½ inches deep	68	5	0
4 " " " 8½ " "	52	10	0
3 yards Spanish Point, 6½ inches deep	73	10	0
A Flemish flounce, 4 yards × 15 inches deep . . . . .	31	10	0
A Flemish flounce, 3 yards × 22 inches deep . . . . .	33	0	0
An Old Italian lace fichu . . . . .	28	7	0
4 yards Old Genoese lace, 16 inches deep . . . . .	28	0	0
4 yards Old Genoese lace, 25 inches deep . . . . .	42	0	0
3 yards Point d'Angleterre, 12 inches deep . . . . .	21	0	0
A Point d'Argentan scarf . . . . .	75	12	0
An Old Brussels scarf in two pieces . . . . .	10	10	0
6 yards Brussels applique . . . . .	23	10	0
A Point Gaze parasol-cover . . . . .	6	16	0
A Brussels flounce . . . . .	12	1	6
3 yards Honiton flounce, 17 inches deep . . . . .	69	6	0
Another similar . . . . .	69	6	0
6 yards Honiton lace in three pieces . . . . .	24	3	0
An old lace coverlet . . . . .	25	4	0
Another ditto . . . . .	26	5	0
A lace altar-frontal . . . . .	21	1	0

With the exception of the Honiton flounces, which sold beyond their market value, all the above pieces were bought by London lace dealers !



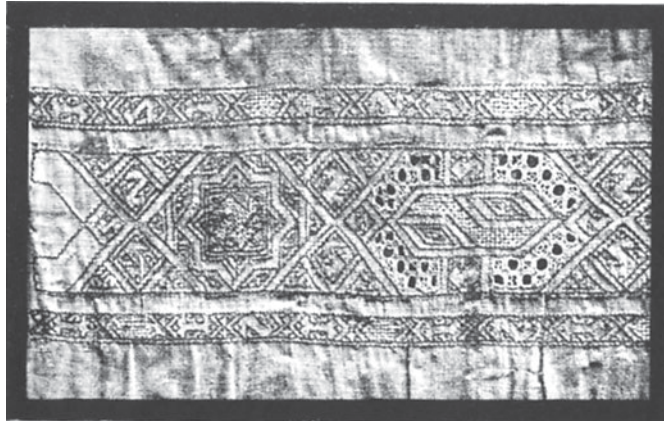
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The following prices have been given by the South Kensington authorities for specimens shown :—

	SOLD FOR		
	£	s.	d.
A Venetian Point altar-frontal, 8 × 3 feet . . . . .	350	0	0
A Venetian chasuble, stole, maniple, and chalice veil . . . . .	200	0	0
A 2 yards × $\frac{5}{8}$ yard Venetian flounce	125	0	0
A Gros Point collar . . . . .	21	0	0
A Brussels lappet . . . . .	23	0	0
A drawn-thread jacket . . . . .	10	10	0
Linen cutwork tunic . . . . .	20	0	0

I

OLD ENGLISH  
EMBROIDERY



EGYPTIAN EMBROIDERY.  
Found in a tomb at Thebes.

# CHATS ON NEEDLEWORK



## I

### OLD ENGLISH EMBROIDERY

Needlework pioneer art—Neolithic remains—Earliest known English specimens—Bayeux tapestry.

WHILE the subject of lace-making has been treated as almost cosmopolitan, that of embroidery, in this volume, must be regarded as purely national! I purposely refrain from introducing the embroideries of other countries, other than mentioning the ancient civilisations which shared the initial attempts to decorate garments, hangings, &c. (of which we really know very little), and shall confine myself to the needlework of this country, more especially as it is the one art and craft of which England may be unfeignedly proud. It is assumed that needlecraft was the pioneer art of the whole world, that the early attempts to decorate textiles by embroideries of coloured silks, and the elaborate use of gold and

silver threadwork, first suggested painting, sculpture, and goldsmith's work. Certainly early Egyptian paintings imitated embroideries, and we have good ground for supposing that stained glass was a direct copy of the old ecclesiastical figures or ancient church vestments. The Neolithic remains found in Britain show that at a very early period the art of making linen-cloth was understood. Fragments of cloth, both of linen and wool, have been discovered in a British barrow in Yorkshire, and early bone needles found at different parts of the country are plentiful in our museums. There is no doubt that we owe much of our civilisation to the visit of the Phœnicians, those strange people, who appear to have carried all the arts and crafts of ancient Babylon and Assyria to the wonder isles of the Greek Archipelago, to Egypt, to Southern Spain, and to Cornwall and Devonshire. These people, dwelling on the maritime border of Palestine, were the great traders of their age, and while coming to this country (then in a state of wildest barbarism) for tin left in exchange a knowledge of the arts and appliances of civilisation hitherto not understood. The Roman Invasion (45 B.C.) brought not only knowledge of craftsmanship but also Christianity. St. Augustine, to whom the conversion of the Britains is credited, carried with him a banner embroidered with the image of Christ. After the Romans had left the country, and it had become invaded by the Celts and the Danes, and had again been taken possession of by the Saxons, a period of not only rest but advancement arrived, and we see early in the seventh century the country prosperous



A LENGTH OF THE FAMOUS BAYEUX TAPESTRY.

and settled. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, wrote a poem in which he speaks of the tapestry-weaving and the embroidery which the women of England occupied their lives.

The earliest specimen of embroidery known to have been executed in England is that of the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert, which is now treasured at Durham Cathedral. These were worked by Aelfled, the Queen of Edward the Elder, Alfred the Great's son. She worked them for Bishop Fridhestan in 905 A.D. Her son Athelstan, after her death, visited the shrine of St. Cuthbert, at Chester-le-street, and in an inventory of the rich gifts which he left there, there is recorded "one stole with a maniple," amongst other articles. These very embroideries were removed from the actual body of St. Cuthbert in 1827. They are described by an eye-witness as being "of woven gold, with spaces left vacant for needlework embroideries." Exquisitely embroidered figures are in niches or clouds. The whole effect is described as being that of a fine illuminated MS. of the ninth century, and indescribably beautiful. Another great prelate, St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, designed embroideries for the execution of pious ladies of his diocese (924 A.D.).

Emma, Queen of Ethelred the Unready, and afterwards of Canute, designed and embroidered many church vestments and altar-cloths, and Editha, wife of Edward the Confessor, embroidered the King's coronation mantle.

The great and monumental Bayeux tapestry—

which is miscalled, as it is *embroidery*—was the work of Queen Matilda, who, like Penelope, wove the mighty deeds of her husband and king in an immense embroidery. This piece of needlecraft comes upon us as a shock, rather than an admiration, after the exquisite embroideries worked by and for the Church. It is interesting, however, as a valuable historic “document,” showing the manners and customs of the time. The canvas is 227 feet long and 20 inches wide, and shows events of English history from the accession of Edward the Confessor to the defeat of Harold, at Hastings. It is extremely crude; no attempt is made at shading, the figures being worked in flat stitch in coloured wools, on linen canvas. Certainly it is one of the quaintest and most primitive attempts of working pictures by needlecraft.

The evidence of the costumes, the armour, &c., are supposed to tell us that this tapestry was worked many years after the Conquest, but it can be traced by documentary evidence as having been seen in Bayeux Cathedral as far back as 1476. In the time of Napoleon I. it was removed from the cathedral and was actually used as a covering for a transport waggon. Finally, however, it was exhibited in the Musée Napoleon, in 1803, and was afterwards returned to Bayeux. In 1840 it was restored and relined, and is now in the Hôtel de Ville at Bayeux!





KING HAROLD.

*(From the Bayeux Tapestry.)*

II

THE GREAT  
PERIOD OF  
EMBROIDERY

## II

### THE GREAT PERIOD OF EMBROIDERY

“Opus Anglicanum”—The Worcester fragments—St. Benedict  
—Legend of Pope Innocent—The “Jesse” cope—The  
“Syon” cope.

THE great period of English embroidery is supposed to have been from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. Very little remains to show this, except a few fragments of vestments from the tombs of the bishops dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and other data obtained from various foreign inventories of later date referring to the use of “Opus Anglicanum.” Some portion of the Worcester fragments may be seen in the South Kensington Museum, and can only be described as being so perfect in workmanship, colour, and style as even at this day to be more like a magnificent piece of goldsmith’s work than that of needlecraft. The background is apparently one mass of thread of fine gold worked in and out of a silken mesh, the embroidery appearing just as clear and neat in manipulation as an illumination. The coloured photographs, which may be seen in the same room,

of the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert are of precisely the same work. Judging from these, and the embroidered orphrey which the authorities bought from the Hockon Collection for £119 1s. 10d. and which is only 4 feet 8 inches long, there is no doubt that this was, *par excellence*, the finest period. The work can only be described as being like an old Italian painting on a golden ground. We see precisely such design and colouring in ancient paintings for altars as in the old Italian Triptychs. This style was carried out as literally as possible. Even the defects, if so they may be called, are there, and a slight topheaviness of the figures serves but to accentuate the likeness.

There is a legend that during the times of the Danish incursions St. Benedict travelled backwards and forwards through France and Italy, and brought with him during his *seven* journeys artificers in *glass* and *stone*, besides costly books and copies of the Scriptures. The chief end and aim of monastic life, both of monk and nun, in those early days was to embroider, paint, and illuminate their sacred books, vestments, and edifices with what was to them a newly-inspired faith.

Dr. Rock, in his "Church of Our Fathers," says that from the twelfth century to the time of Henry VIII. that only the best materials that could be found in our country or that of other lands were employed, and that the art that was used on them was the best that could be learnt or given. The original fabrics often came from Byzantium or were of Saracenic origin.



FROM THE "JESSE" COPE (*South Kensington Museum*).

English, early Fourteenth Century.

## THE GREAT PERIOD OF EMBROIDERY 223

The story of Pope Innocent III., who, seeing certain vestments and orphreys, and being informed that they were English, said, "Surely England must be a garden of delight!" must be quoted to show how English work was appreciated in those early days.

The choicest example in this country of this glorious period of English embroidery is the famous Syon cope, which is supposed to rank as the most magnificent garment belonging to the Church. It may be regarded as a typical example of real English work, the "Opus Anglicanum" or "Anglicum," which, although used for other purposes, such as altar-cloths and altar-frontals, found apparently its fullest scope in these large semicircular mantles.

Amongst the many copes treasured at South Kensington there are none, amidst all their splendour, as fine as this, although the fragment of the "Jesse" cope runs it very closely. There are many copes of this period in different parts of the Continent—the Daroca Cope at Madrid, one at Ascagni, another at Bologna, at St. Bertrand-de-Comminges, at "St. John Lateran" at Rome, at Pienza and Toleda, and a fragment of one with the famous altar-frontal at Steeple Aston. These are all assumed to be of "Opus Anglicanum," and they may be described as being technically perfect, the stitches being of fine small tambour stitch, beautifully even, and the draperies exquisitely shaded.

The illustration showing the Syon Cope requires some little explanation. It is wrought on linen, embroidered all over with gold and silver thread and coloured silk. It is 9 feet 7 inches long, 4 feet 8 inches

wide. The whole of the cope except the border is covered with interlacing quatrefoils outlined in gold. The ground of these quatrefoils is covered with red silk and the spaces between them with green silk. Each quatrefoil is filled with scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin, and figures of St. Michael and of the Apostles. On the green spaces are worked figures of six-winged angels standing on whorls. The chief place on the quatrefoils is given to the crucifixion, where the body of the Saviour is worked in silver and cloth of gold. The Virgin, arrayed in green tunic and golden mantle, is on one side and St. John, in gold, on the other. Above the quatrefoil is another representing the Redeemer seated on a cushioned throne with the Virgin, and below another representing St. Michael overcoming Satan. Other quatrefoils show "Christ appearing to St. Mary Magdalen," "The Burial of the Virgin," "The Coronation of the Virgin," "The Death of the Virgin with the Apostles surrounding her," "The Incredulity of St. Thomas," "St. Simon," "St. Bartholomew," "St. Peter," "St. Paul," "St. Thomas," "St. Andrew," and "St. James." Portions of four other Apostles may be seen, but at some period the cope has been cut down. In its original state the cope showed the twelve Apostles. The lower portion has been cut away and reshaped, and round this is an edging apparently made out of a stole and maniple which point to a later date, as they are worked chiefly in cross-stitch. On the orphrey are emblazoned the arms of Warwick, Castile and Leon, Ferrars, Geneville Everard, the badge of



THE "SYON" COPE.  
(S.K.M. Collection.)



## THE GREAT PERIOD OF EMBROIDERY 227

the Knights Templars, Clifford, Spencer, Lindsay, Le Boteles, Sheldon, Montenev of Essex, Champernoun, Enfaud, Tyddeswall Grandeson, Fitz Alan, Hampden, Percy, Chambowe, Ribbesford, Bygod, Roger de Mortimer, Grove, B. Bassingburn, and many others not recognisable. These coats of arms, it is suggested, belonged to the noble dames who worked the border. The angels which fill the intervening spaces are of the six-winged varieties, each standing on whorls or wheels.

The cope is worked in a fine tambour or chain stitch principally. All the faces, bodies, and draperies are composed of this. A specially noticeable point is that the faces are worked spirally, beginning in the centre of the cheek and being worked round and round, conforming with the muscles of the face. The garments are worked according to the hang of the drapery, very fine effects being obtained. After the work has been completed a hot iron something like a little iron rod with a bulbous end has been pressed into the cheeks, under the throat, and in different parts of the nude body. Occasionally, but seldom, the same device may be seen in the drapery. All the work is exquisitely fine and perfectly even. The groundwork of the quatrefoils is of gold-laid or "couch" work, as is also that of the armorial bearings.

The name "Syon" is somewhat misleading, as the Cope was not made here, but came into the hands of the Bridgettine nuns in 1414, when Henry V. founded the convent of "Syon" at Isleworth. Its origin and date will ever be a matter of conjecture, but Dr. Rock infers that Coventry may have been the

place of its origin. Taking Coventry as a centre with a small radius, several of the great feudal houses the arms of which are on the border of the cope may be found, and Dr. Rock further supposes that Eleanor, widow of Edward the First, may have become a sister of the fraternity unknown, as her arms, Castile and Leon, are on it. "The whole must have taken long in working, and the probability is that it was embroidered by nuns of some convent which stood on or near Coventry." However this may be, it is certain that this splendid piece of English work came into the hands, by some means, of the nuns of Syon, and after remaining with them at Isleworth till Elizabeth's time, it was carried by them through Flanders, France, and Portugal. They remained at the latter place till the same persecution which dispersed the famous Spanish Point lace over the length and breadth of the Continent, and about eighty years ago it was brought back to England, and was given by the remaining members of the Order to the Earl of Shrewsbury. After further vicissitudes of a varied character it was bought by the South Kensington Museum for £110, and now sheds the glory of its golden threads in a dark transept unnoticed except by the student.

**III**

**ECCLESIASTICAL  
EMBROIDERIES  
AND  
VESTMENTS**



HALF OF THE STEEPLE ASTON ALTAR FRONTAL.  
English, Fourteenth Century.

### III

#### ECCLESIASTICAL EMBROIDERIES AND VESTMENTS

The Pierrepont Morgan purchase—The Steeple Aston Altar-frontal—The "Nevil" Altar-frontal at S. K. M.—City palls—Diagram of vestments.

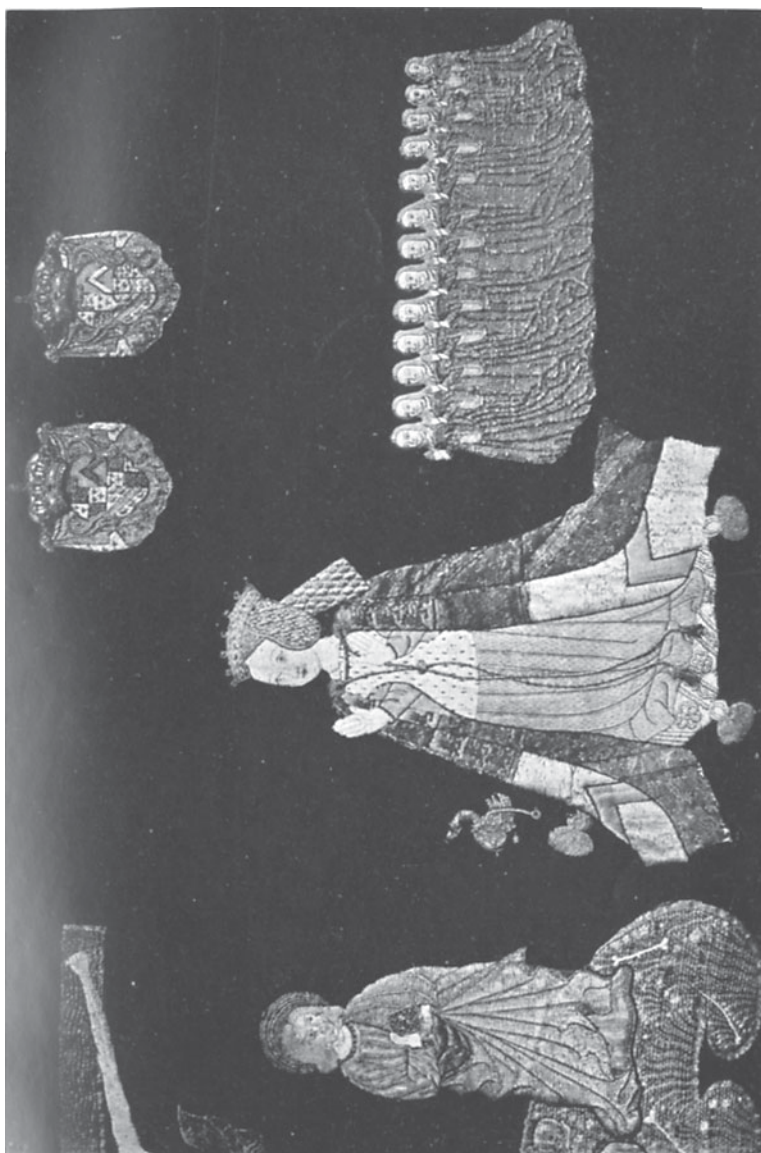
OTHER copes of the same period are in the Madrid Museum, two copes at Bologna, and the "Ascoli" cope recently purchased by Mr. J. Pierrepont Morgan and generously returned by him. Some cushions from Catworth Church, Huntingdon, now at the South Kensington Museum, were probably cut from copes, and bought by permission of the Bishop of Ely for £27. A long band of red velvet at South Kensington Museum embroidered with gold and silver and coloured silk has evidently been made from the "Apparels" of an alb. It is in two pieces, each piece depicting five scenes divided by broad arches. The first five are from the life of the Virgin, and are: "The Angel appearing to Anna," "The Meeting of Anna and Joachim," "Birth of the Virgin," "Presentation of the Virgin," "Education of the Virgin." In the second piece are: "The Annunciation," "The Salutation," "The

Nativity," "The Angel appearing to the Shepherds," and the "Journey of the Magi."

Another piece of similar work is the altar-frontal of Steeple Aston, which was originally a cope, and the cope now at Stonyhurst College, originally belonging to Westminster Cathedral. It is made of one seamless piece of gold tissue.

During this great period of English embroidery certain characteristics along with its superb workmanship must be noticed. The earlier the work the finer the modelling of the figures. In the figures of the St. Cuthbert and the Worcester fragments the proportions of the figures are exquisite; at a later date, while the work is just as excellent, the figures become unnatural, the heads being unduly large, the eyes staring, and the perspective entirely out of drawing. Until the fourteenth century this comes so gradually as to be scarcely noted; but after and through the fifteenth century this becomes so marked as to be almost grotesque, and only the genuine religious fervour with which these poor remnants have been worked prevents many of them being ridiculous. The faces gradually show less careful drawing and working, and the figures become squat and topheavy. The emblems of the saints are often omitted.

This decline in the embroiderer's art is specially noticeable in an extraordinary panel to be seen at South Kensington Museum, where an altar-frontal of stamped crimson velvet is appliqued in groups of figures in gold, silver, and silks. In the middle is



THE "NEVIL" ALTAR FRONTAL.  
(S.K.M. Collection.)

the Crucifixion, with the Virgin and St. John standing on a strip covered with flowers. On the left is Ralph Nevil, fourth Earl of Westmoreland, 1523, kneeling, and behind him his seven sons. On the right is Lady Catherine Stafford, his wife, also kneeling, and behind her kneel her thirteen daughters. The frontal cost the museum £50 and is well worth it as an historical document. Other important embroideries of the period to be found in England are at Cirencester Cathedral, Ely Cathedral, Salisbury and Carlisle Cathedrals, Chipping Norton and Little Dean in Gloucestershire, East Langdon in Kent, Buckland and Stourton in Worcester, Littleworth in Leicestershire, Lynn in Norfolk, and the Parish Church at Warrington.

Many of the palls belonging to the great city companies belong to this date. The Saddlers' Company's pall is of crimson velvet embroidered with angels surrounding "I.H.S.," and arms of the Company. The Fishmongers' Pall, made at the end of the fifteenth century, has at one end the figure of St. Peter (the patron saint of fishermen) enthroned, and angels on either side, and at the other end St. Peter receiving the keys from our Lord. The Vintners' Pall is made of Italian velvet and cloth of gold and embroidered with St. Martin of Tours.

Religious influence characterised the embroideries of England practically from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. Practically all needlework prior to 1600 is entirely ecclesiastical, and from its



limited range in choice of subjects barely does justice to the fine work this period produced.

Dr. Rock says that "few persons of the present day have the faintest idea of the labour, the money, the time, often bestowed on old embroideries which had been designed by the hands of men and women each in their own craft the best and ablest of the day."

We do not know the length of time these ancient vestments occupied in the making, but twenty-six years is stated to be the period of making the vestments for the Church of San Giovanni, in Florence. This is all worked in close stitches similar to our English work.

*Ancient Church Vestments.*

The names of the ecclesiastical vestments are somewhat puzzling to those of us who do not belong to the Romish Church, or even to the English High Church. The vestments described are, we believe, in use in the Romish churches now as in the early times when church embroidery was the pleasure and the labour of all classes of English women. The accompanying diagram will better illustrate the use of these vestments than a page of writing.

The Alb is often trimmed handsomely with lace, the apparels are stitched on to the front. The Stoles ought to have three crosses embroidered on it and be 3 yards long. Over this comes the



ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS.

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Amice.          | 5 and 9. Apparel of Alb. |
| 2. Orphreys.       | 6. Maniple.              |
| 3. Chasuble.       | 7. Stole.                |
| 4. Sleeves of Alb. | 8. Alb.                  |

*From "A Guide to Ecclesiastical Law,"  
by kind permission of Mr. Henry Miller.*

**ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS 241**

Chasuble, which is the last garment the priest puts on before celebrating Mass. The Cope is a huge circular 10 ft. wide cape. The Maniple is a strip of embroidery 3 ft. 4 in. long worn over the left wrist of the priest.



ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS.

English, Fifteenth or early Sixteenth Century.

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*

IV

TUDOR  
EMBROIDERY

## IV

### TUDOR EMBROIDERY

The influences of the Reformation—Queen Catherine of Aragon's needlecraft — The gorgeous clothes of Henry VIII. — Field of the Cloth of Gold — Queen Elizabeth's embroideries.

AFTER the Reformation and the wholesale destruction of the cathedrals, monasteries, and churches, the gentle dames of England found their occupation gone. The priestly vestments, the sumptuous altar-cloths, and gorgeous hangings were now needless. Those which had been the glory of their owners, and the pictorial representations of Biblical life to the uneducated masses of people, had been ruthlessly torn down and destroyed for the sake of the gold to be found on them. As in the time immediately preceding the French Revolution, costly embroideries were unpicked, and the amount of gold and silver obtained from them became a source of income and profit to their destroyers.

Apart from her household, women had no other interests in those days, unless we accept such anomalies as Lady Jane Grey, who was a marvel

of learning and wisdom. All their long leisure hours had been spent, not in improving their minds, but in beautifying the churches with specimens of their skill. Catherine of Aragon, one of the unfortunate queens of Henry VIII., was a notable needlewoman, and spent much of her short, unhappy time as Queen of England in embroidery. The lace-making of Northampton is said to have been commenced by her during her period of retirement after her divorce. The "Spanish stitch," which was known and used in embroidery of that period, was introduced by her from her own country, and many examples of her skill in embroidery are to be seen in the British Museum and the various homes belonging to our old nobility.

During the reign of Henry VIII. dress became very sumptuous, as the contemporary pictures of the times show. Indeed, all the fervour and feeling which ladies had worked in religious vestments now seemed to find refuge in the over-elaboration of personal wear. Very little lace was used, and that of only a primitive description, so that effect was produced by embroidery in gold and silver threads and the use of pearls and precious stones. The dress of the nobles in the time of Henry VIII. was especially gorgeous, the coats being thickly padded and quilted with gold bullion thread, costly jewels afterwards being sewn in the lozenges. It is related that after his successful divorce King Henry gave a banquet to celebrate his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and wore a coat covered with the jewelled letters "H," and in the height of his satisfaction

allowed the ladies to cut or tear away the jewels as souvenirs of his triumph over Wolsey and Catherine. It is said that he was left in his underwear, so great was the competition for these favours! Robes made of gold tissue, then called Cloth of Gold, were used, and in Henry's meeting with Francis I. the English and French armies vied with each other as to which should present a greater magnificence. The name "the Field of the Cloth of Gold" remains as a guarantee of its splendour.

Under the more austere and religious rule of Queen Mary we might suppose that ecclesiastical embroidery would have somewhat regained a foothold. But the landmarks had been entirely swept away, and we have little to record of the reign, except that Mary herself was a clever needlewoman and worked much of her heartache, at the neglect of her Spanish husband, into her needlework. Her jealousy of her sister Elizabeth caused the latter to spend her life away from the pomps and ceremonies of the Court, and she has left many records of her handiwork, some well authenticated, as, for example, the two exquisite book-covers in the British Museum. Queen Elizabeth cannot, however, be said to have been in any way a patroness of the art of needlecraft. Her talent seems rather to have been devoted to affairs of State—and her wardrobe! On her death, at seventy years of age, she left over one thousand dresses, most of which must have been a cruel weight, so overburdened were they with stiff bullion and trimmed with large pearls and jewels. Her dresses were literally diapered with gold and silver "gimps"



inset with heavier stones, but little real embroidery is shown.

Mary Queen of Scots, on the contrary, was a born needlewoman. During her married life in France she learned the gentle arts of embroidery and lace-making, accomplishments which, as in many humbler women's lives, have served their owners in good stead in times of loneliness and trouble. The Duke of Devonshire possesses specimens of Queen Mary's skill, worked during the long, dreary days of her imprisonment at Fotheringay. It is said that Queen Elizabeth was not above helping herself to the wardrobe and laces that the unfortunate Queen of Scotland brought with her from France.

Much embroidery must have been worked for the adornment of the house after the Reformation, but beyond an occasional old inventory nothing is left to show it. After the Reformation greater luxury in living obtained, and instead of the clean or rush-strewn floors some kind of floor-covering was used. Furniture became much more ornamental, and the use of hangings for domestic purposes was common. Not a thread of these hand-worked hangings remain, but we have the immense and immediate use of tapestry, which first became a manufacture of England in the reign of Henry VIII. It is easy to conceive that English women would readily seize upon the idea supplied in tapestry and adapt its designs to that of embroidery. It is certain that hangings for the old four-post beds were embroidered, as in the inventory of Wolsey's great palace at Hampton Court there is mention of 230 bed-

hangings of English embroidery. Nothing of this remains, so that its style is simply conjectural; and we can only suppose these hangings to have been replicas of the magnificent velvet and satin hangings, covered with laid or couched gold and silver threads, such as Catherine of Aragon would bring with her from Spain. This also would account for their absolute disappearance. The value of the gold and silver in embroidery has always been a fertile source of wealth to the destroyer of ancient fabrics, while many embroideries worked only in silks have escaped this vandalism.

V

EARLY  
NEEDLEWORK  
PICTURES AND  
ACCESSORIES



EARLY "PETIT POINT" PICTURE.  
Late Sixteenth Century.  
(S.A.M. Collection.)

## V

### EARLY NEEDLEWORK PICTURES AND ACCESSORIES

“Petit point”—old list of stitches—Stuart bags—Gloves—  
Shoes—Caps.

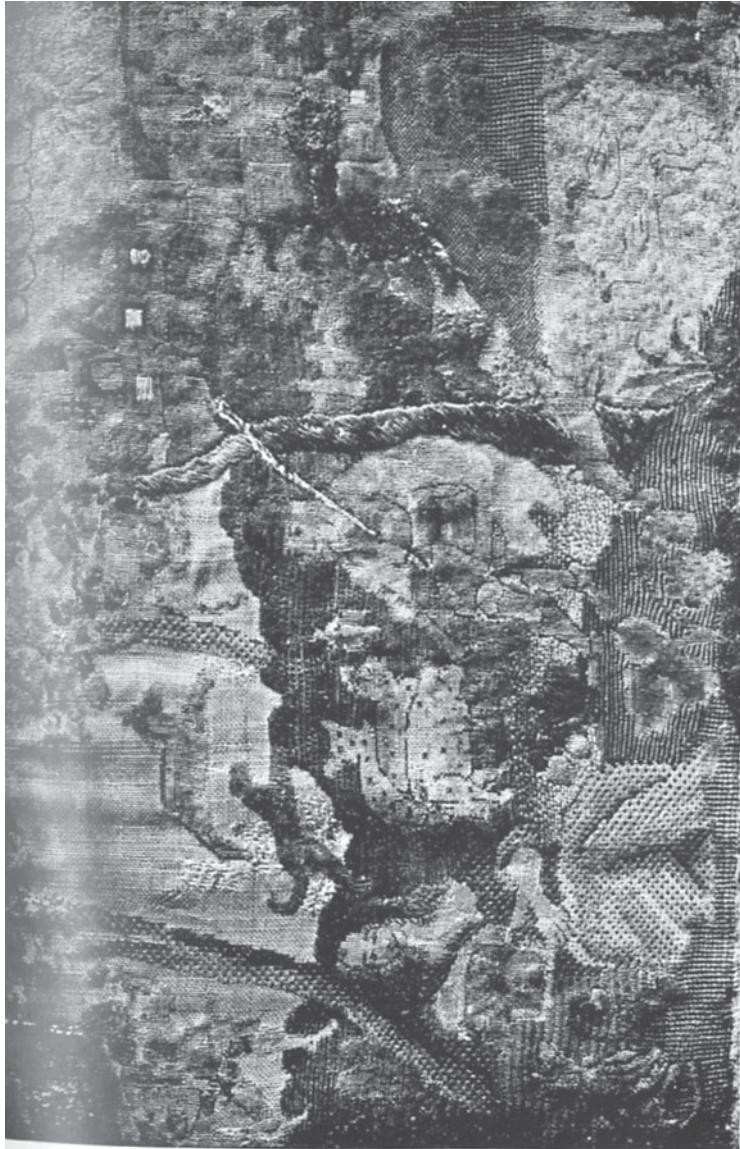
TOWARDS the end of James I.'s reign it is supposed that the earliest needlework pictures appeared. They were obviously literal copies of the tapestries which had now become of general use in the homes of the wealthy, being worked in what is known as “petit point,” or “little stitch.” This stitch was worked on canvas of very close quality, with fine silk thread, one stitch only being taken over the junction of the warp and the weft of the canvas instead of the “cross stitch” of later days. Very few of these specimens are left of an early date. A panel, measuring 30 inches by 16 inches, in perfect condition, and dated 1601, was sold at Christie's Rooms this year for £115. The purchaser, Mr. Stoner, of King Street, sold it next day at a very considerable profit.

At this period the workers of these pictures did not draw upon Biblical subjects for their inspiration

(with great advantage to the picture, it may be stated). The subjects were either fanciful adaptations from real life, with the little people dressed in contemporary costume, or dainty little mythological subjects, such as the "Judgment of Paris," "Corydon wooing Phyllis," with most absurd little castles of Tudor construction in impossible landscapes, where the limpid stream meandered down fairy-like hills into a shining lake, which held dolphins under the water and water-fowl above it. The illustration depicts such a specimen, and shows one of these tiny pictures worked in no less than ten different stitches of lacework, in addition to the usual petit point. The number of these stitches is legion. In the reign of Charles I., John Taylor, the water-poet, wrote in 1640 :

" For tent worke, raised worke, first worke, laid worke, net worke,  
 Most curious purl, or rare Italian cut worke,  
 Fire, ferne stitch, finny stitch, new stitch, chain stitch,  
 Brave bred stitch, fisher stitch, Irish stitch, and Queen stitch,  
 The Spanish stitch, Rosemary stitch, and mowle stitch,  
 The smarting whip stitch, back stitch, and cross stitch ;  
 All these are good, and this we must allow,  
 And they are everywhere in practice now."

These are not *all* the stitches in vogue during the first era of needlework pictures. A single glance at one of the early specimens, though it may not *charm*, fills one with amazement at the amount of toil, ingenuity, patience, and downright *love* for the work the ancient needlewoman must have possessed.



VERY EARLY "PETIT POINT" PICTURE.  
(*Author's Collection.*)

## EARLY NEEDLEWORK PICTURES 261

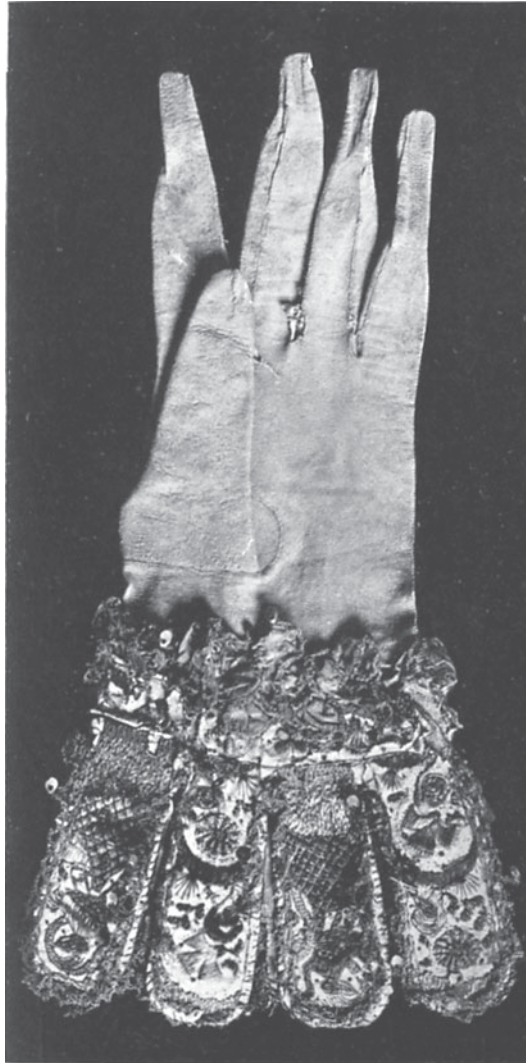
Not only pictures, however, were made in petit point. Many dainty little accessories of the toilet gave scope to the delicate fancy and nimble fingers of the ladies who had found solace from the cessation of their labours for the priesthood in making dainty little handbags and other pretty articles, each a marvel of minute handicraft. One bag in my possession measures only four inches square, and is worked on fine canvas, about forty threads to the square inch, the design being the favourite Tudor rose, each petal worked in lace stitch, and raised from the centre which is made of knots worked with golden hair, flat green leaves exquisitely shaded, and a charming bit of the worker's skill in the shape of a pea's pod, open and raised, showing the tiny little peas in a row. An exquisitely worked butterfly with raised wings in lace stitch is on the other side. The grounding of the whole is run with flat gold thread, making a "cloth of gold" ground, strings made of similarly worked canvas, with gold thread and silk tassels complete a bag fit for the Princess Golden Locks of our fairy tales. This little bag cost the writer 5 guineas, and was cheap at the price. The South Kensington Museum have several specimens, and although many are very exquisite, there is not one quite so perfect in design nor in such condition. Other little trifles made in similar style are the embroidered gauntlets of the buff leather glove worn at the time. These have become rarer than any other embroideries, as they were not merely for ornament but for actual wear. Four or five of these gauntlet gloves are in the South Kensington Collec-



tion, but are of a later date than the "petit point" period.

The use of gloves in England was not very general, we may infer, in the earlier ages of embroidery. There are certain evidences, however, showing that the glove was part of the priestly outfit, remains of gloves having been found on the bones of Thomas à Becket when they were transferred from the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral to the special shrine prepared for them; and a crimson leather pair, bearing the sacred monogram in embroidered gold, are preserved in the New College, Oxford, belonging to the founder, William of Wykeham, who opened the college in 1386.

It was not until the fourteenth century that the wearing of gloves became general, and practically nothing remains to show what manner of hand-covering was worn until the Tudor period. Henry VIII. was exceptionally lavish and extravagant in the use of handsomely embroidered gloves, and few of his portraits show him without a sumptuous glove in one hand. He had gloves for all functions—like a modern fashionable woman. A pair of hawking gloves belonging to him are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and in South Kensington is one of a pair presented by Henry to his friend and Councillor Sir Anthony Denny. It is of buff, thin leather, with a white satin gauntlet, embroidered with blue and red silk in applique work, decorated with seed-pearls and spangles, and trimmed with gold lace. The Tudor rose, the crown, and the lion are worked amidst a splendour of gold and pearls.



A STUART GLOVE.  
(S.K.M. Collection.)

## EARLY NEEDLEWORK PICTURES 265

Queen Elizabeth must have inherited her love for gorgeous apparel along with her strong personality and masterful spirit, as her expenditure for gloves alone was proverbial. The favourite offering to her was a pair of gloves, but she was not above accepting shoes, handkerchiefs, laces, and even gowns from her faithful and admiring subjects. On her visit to Oxford in 1578 she was presented by the Chancellor of the University with a pair of perfumed gloves, embroidered with gold and set with jewels, which cost the University sixty shillings, an immense sum in those days. Other historic gloves are in the various museums of the country, seldom or never coming into the open market. In the Braikenridge Collection sold at Christie's in February of this year I was able to secure one for £2 12s. 6d., immediately afterwards being offered double the price for it.

The gloves belonging to Charles I. and Queen Henrietta Maria were very ornamental, and it is said that even Oliver Cromwell, with all his austerity, was not proof against the fascination of the decorated glove.

With Charles II. the embroidered gloves seem to have vanished along with the stumpwork pictures, of which more anon.

Dainty shoes were embroidered in those old times. These, being articles of wear, like the gloves, are very rare. The same fine petit point work is seen on them; seed-pearls and in-run gold threads adorn them, and frequently the Tudor rose, in raised work, forms the shoe knot. Two pairs in Lady Wolseley's

Collection, sold in 1906, fetched six guineas, and nine and a half guineas. Tiny pocket-books were covered with this pretty work, and charming covers almost as fresh as when they were worked are occasionally unearthed, made to hold the old-fashioned housekeeping and cooking books.

One wonders oftentime how many, and yet, alas! how few, specimens of this old petit point work have been preserved. It is only during recent years that the "cult of the antique" has been fashionable, and is also becoming a source of income and profit to the many who indulge in its quest. Only members of learned antiquarian societies or born reliquaries troubled themselves to acquire ancient articles of historic interest because they were *old*, and served to form the sequence in the fairy tales of Time. Anything "old" was ruthlessly destroyed, as being either past wear, shabby, or old-fashioned, and countless treasures, both in ecclesiastical and secular art, have at all periods been recklessly destroyed for the sake of their intrinsic value in gold or jewels. In the early days of my life I was allowed to pick out the corals and seed-pearls from an old Stuart needle picture "for a doll's necklace!" the picture itself probably going into the "rag-bag" of the mid-Victorian good housekeeper.

VI

STUART  
CASKETS  
AND  
MIRRORS

gage, has reposed safely from the sight of unworthy eyes.

Every square inch of these caskets is covered with embroidery, sometimes in canvas, worked with the usual scriptural or mythological design, and in others with white satin, exquisitely embroidered with figures and floral subjects. Those in best preservation have been covered with mica, which has preserved both the colour and the fabric. The fittings are generally of silver. On the few occasions when these boxes or caskets come into the market high prices are realised. Messrs. Christie last year obtained £40 for a good specimen. I have never seen one sold under £30, and as much as £100 has been given.

Another pretty fancy was to cover small trays, presumably for the work or dressing table, with embroidery. Not many of these remain, the wear of removing them from place to place, having been too much for their staying powers. One in my possession is a small hexagonal tray with raised sides, embroidered in coloured silks in floral design, on what was once white satin. It is by no means a thing of beauty now, but as a specimen it is interesting, and "a poor thing, but mine own," which covers a multitude of shortcomings in these old relics, fortunately.

Far more frequently met with, though quite prohibitive in price, are the Stuart embroidered mirrors, which easily command £80 to £100 in the salerooms. They are generally set in a frame of oak, leaving five or six inches (which would otherwise be covered with carving or veneer) for the



“STUART” MIRROR FRAME.  
(Lady Wolseley's Collection.)

## STUART CASKETS AND MIRRORS 273

embroidery. The mirror itself is comparatively small, being only a secondary consideration, and often little remains of it for its original purpose, as the glass is blurred and the silvering gone. Many of these mirrors have *bevelled* glass, which, of course, is wrong.

The mirror shown in the illustration is one recently belonging to Viscountess Wolseley and sold by her, among other Stuart needlework specimens, at Messrs. Puttick & Simpson's in 1906. This mirror sold for £100. The figures represent Charles I. and Queen Henrietta Maria, one on either side of the mirror. The figure at the top of the frame is difficult to understand; whether she is an angel or a mere Court lady must be left to conjecture. The rolling clouds and the blazing sun are above her head, and a peacock, with tail displayed, is on one side and a happy-looking stag on the other. Two royal residences adorn the topmost panels on either side, with all their bravery of flying flags and smoking chimneys, and the lion and the leopard occupy the lower panels. The latter animal identifies the King and Queen, who might otherwise be Charles II. and his consort, as after Charles I.'s time the leopard gave place to the unicorn for some unexplained reason. Other typical little Stuart animals and birds fill in the extra panels, such as the spotted dog who chases a little hare who is never caught, and the gaily-coloured parroquet and kingfisher, which no respectable Stuart picture would be without. The caterpillar, the ladybird, and the snail are all *en evidence*; and below is a real pond,



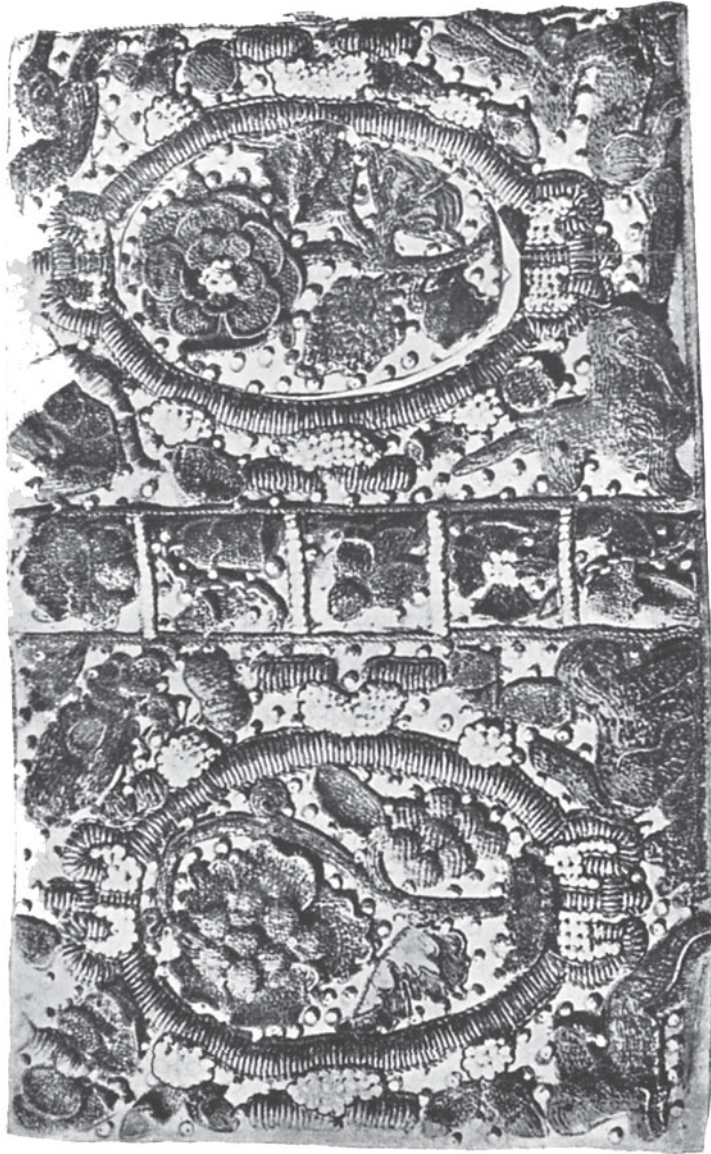
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covered with talc, and containing fish and ducks, the banks being made of tiny branching coral beads and tufted silk and bullion work.

About this time, when Venetian lace came into fashionable use as an adjunct to the exquisite Stuart dress, tiny coloured beads were imported from Venice. The embroiderers at once seized upon them as a new and possibly more lasting means of showing their pretty fancies in design. Many delightful specimens of these beadwork pictures are preserved, the colours, of course, being as fresh as yesterday. The ground was always of white satin, now faded and discoloured with age, and often torn with the heaviness of the beadwork design. They are scarcely so charming as the all needlework pictures, but still are delightful and covetable articles. The exigencies of the beadwork, however, lends a certain stiffness and ungainliness to the figures.

VII

EMBROIDERED  
BOOKS AND  
"BLACK WORK"



(British Museum.)

## VII

### EMBROIDERED BOOKS AND "BLACK WORK"

Style and symbolism—Specimen in British Museum and Bodleian Libraries—"Black work"

AMONG the many dainty examples of Tudor and Stuart needlework are to be found the exquisitely embroidered book-covers which date from Queen Elizabeth's girlhood until the time of Charles II. They were always of diminutive size, and many stitches diversify their covering; oftentimes they were liberally embroidered with seed-pearls, and in these instances most frequently this fashion has been their salvation. A book somehow always seems to be a more sacred thing than a picture, and the costly little volumes which remain to show this dainty handicraft have apparently always been used either for Church or private devotional purposes.

The designs of the book-covers almost always follow certain styles. These are either heraldic, scriptural, symbolical, floral, or arabesque.

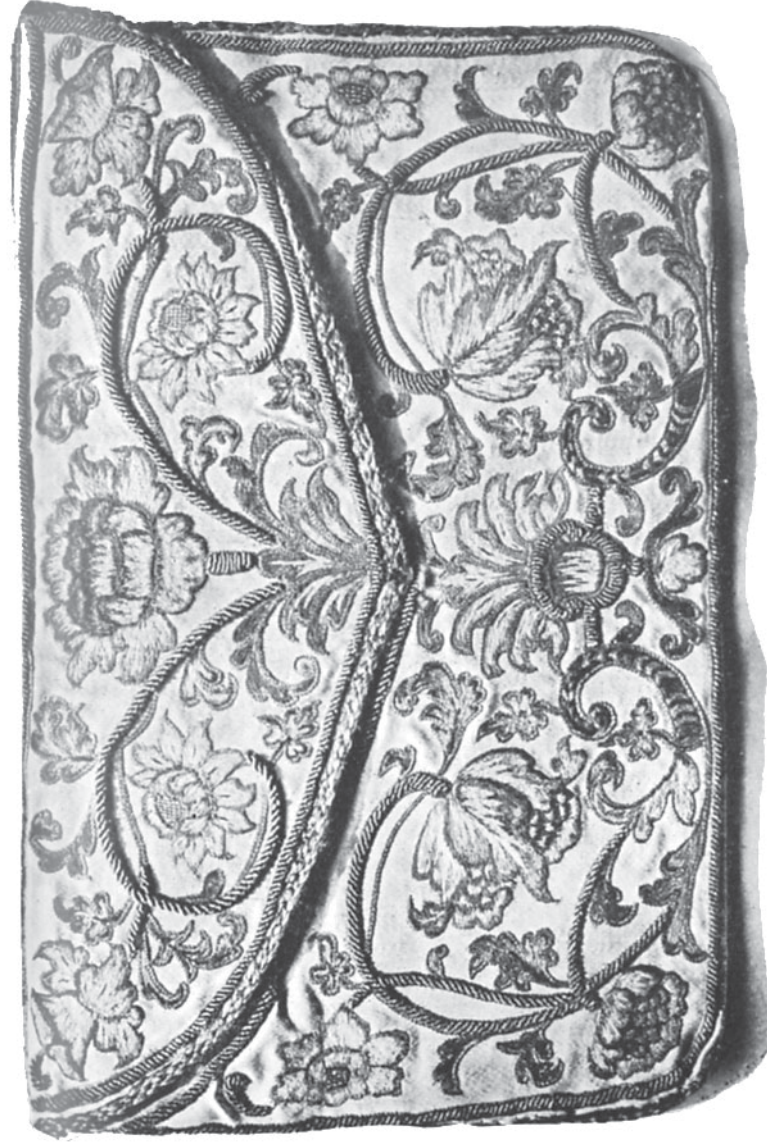
The first-named variety usually belonged to royalty

or one of the many noble houses whose ladies busied themselves with fair needlework. The shield, containing the coat of arms of the family, occupied the centre of the book-cover, being formed in raised gold and silver guipure or cord, and on the reverse the worker's initials frequently appear, with a pretty border in gold and silver, to outline the edges.

The scriptural book-covers are always worked on canvas in fine petit point stitches. One in South Kensington Museum is larger than most of these volumes, and has on one side Solomon in all his glory and on the reverse Jacob and his ladder and King David. These canvas-covered books appear to have suffered most from the wear and tear of time, and very few remain.

The symbolical covers are few, and mostly uninteresting. They are worked as a rule on silk and satin in loose satin stitches, which have suffered much from friction. The sacred monogram is often the centre of the device. A favourite design was adorning the back of the books with portraits of the martyred King Charles I., Queen Henrietta Maria, and the popular Duke of Buckingham.

The stitches used were generally chain-stitch, split-stitch, petit point, and lace-stitch; and the patterns were most frequently outlined with a gimp made of flattened spiral wire, or *purl*, which was a fine copper wire covered with coloured silks and cut in lengths for use. Very often, also, small silver spangles were employed, either stitched down with a piece of purl or a seed-pearl. Frequently the covers



POCKET-BOOK OF SATIN, EMBROIDERED WITH COLOURED SILKS AND SILVER-GILT THREAD.

Said to have been the property of Queen Elizabeth.

(In *Countess Brownlow's Collection.*)

were of velvet with the designs appliquéd down to it, and *laid* or *couch* work outlined the designs. Sometimes flat pieces of metal were cut to shape and stitched down, as in one instance where the corners of the books were trimmed with the rays of the sun cut in gold, and stitched over with a gold thread.

Many of the charming little bags of which mention has already been made are supposed to have been worked to hold the Prayer Book and Book of Psalms, without which no devout lady deemed herself fully equipped.

The most famous book is Queen Elizabeth's Book in the British Museum. The cover is of choice green velvet, the flat of the back has five roses embroidered in lace, raised stitches and gold and pearl. The Royal Arms are on either side of the book in a lozenge of red silk and pearls. The whole design, apart from this, is worked in red and white roses and scrolls of gold and silk. This gorgeous little cover contains "The Mirrour of Glasse of the Synneful Soul," written by Elizabeth herself, and of it she writes that she "translated it out of french ryme into english prose, joyning the sentences together as well as the capacities of my symple witte and small lerning could extende themselves." It is dedicated "To our most noble and virtuous Queen Katherine [Katherine Parr] from Assherige, the last day of the year of our Lord God, 1544."

In the Bodleian Library there is another treasured little book, again worked by Queen Elizabeth. It is only 7 inches by 5 inches, and has the same design on both sides. In this the ground is what is

known as "tapestry stitch," worked in thick, pale-blue silk, and the design is of interlacing gold and silver threads with a Tudor rose in each corner. "K. P." is marked on the cover, and shows that this also was worked for Queen Katherine Parr.

Yet another little book is in the British Museum. It contains a prayer composed by Queen Katherine Parr, and is written on vellum by Queen Elizabeth.

The cover illustrated is a typical example of the class of embroidered works of the period. Later the covers showed less intricate work, and finally developed into mere velvet covers embroidered with silver or gold.

#### BLACK WORK.

A curious phase of Old English embroidery is the well-known "Black Work," which is said to have been introduced by Catherine of Aragon into England, and was also known as "Spanish work." The work itself was a marvel of neatness, precision, and elegant design, but the result cannot be said to have been commensurate with the labour of its production. Most frequently the design was of scroll-work, worked with a fine black silk back-stitching or chain-stitch. Round and round the stitches go, following each other closely. Bunches of grapes are frequently worked solidly, and even the popular peascod is worked in outline stitch, and often the petit point period lace stitches are copied, and roses and birds worked separately and after stitched to the design. There are many examples of this famous "Spanish"





STUART EMBROIDERED CAP. (S.K.M. Collection.)

work in the South Kensington Museum. Quilts, hangings, coats, caps, jackets, smocks are all to be seen, some with a couched thread of gold and silver following the lines of the scrolls. This is said to be the Spanish stitch referred to in the old list of stitches, and very likely may be so, as the style and manner are certainly not English; and we know that Catherine of Aragon brought wonders of Spanish stitchery with her, and she herself was devoted to the use of the needle. The story of how when called before Cardinal Wolsey and Campeggio, to answer to King Henry's accusations she had a skein of embroidery silk round her neck is well known.

The black silk outline stitchery or linen lasted well through the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Very little of it is seen outside the museums, as, not being strikingly beautiful or attractive, it has been destroyed.

Another phase of the same stitchery was working cotton and linen garments, hangings, and quilts in a kind of quilted pattern with yellow silk.

Anything more unlike the quilting of fifty years ago cannot be imagined. The finest materials were used, the padding being placed bit by bit in its place—not in the wholesale fashion of later years, when a sheet or two of wadding was placed between the sheets of cotton or linen, and a coarse back-stitching outlined in great scrawling patterns held the whole together. The old "quilting" work was made in tiny panels, illustrating shields and other heraldic devices, and had a surface as fine as

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carved ivory. When, as in the case of one sample at South Kensington, the quilt is additionally embroidered with beautiful fine floss silk flowers, the effect is very lovely.

VIII

STUART  
PICTURES

## VIII

### STUART PICTURES

“Peitt point”—“Stump work”—Royalistic symbols.

THOUGH these pictures bear the name of Stuart, many of them are undoubtedly Tudor. The earliest (if the evidence of costume is of any value) must have been worked in Elizabeth's time, but as the authenticated specimens date only from the reign of James I. they are known as Stuart. The only pictures worked in the early days of this art were worked in petit-point, the tiny stitch which imitated tapestry, and very quaint are the specimens left to us. The favourite themes were entirely pagan. Gods and goddesses disported themselves among leafy trees. Cupid lightly shot his arrows, the woods were inhabited by an unknown flora and fauna which seem all its own. The very dogs seem to be a different species, having more likeness to the china dogs of the spotted or liver and white variety which the Staffordshire potters made at the beginning of our own century. Innumerable little castles were perched in perfectly inaccessible positions on towering crags,

and the laws of perspective were generally conspicuous by their absence. The sun in those days was a very visible body, and apparently delightful to work, no Stuart picture being without one; the rolling clouds oftentimes are confused with the convoluted body of the caterpillar, little difference being made in the design. The birds were of very brilliant plumage, and the world was evidently a very gay and sportive place when these fair ladies spent their leisure over this embroidery! These early pictures seldom show the religious feeling that afterwards slowly worked its way through the Stuart days (though, perhaps, disguised under royalistic symbolism), until in the reign of Queen Anne it became more or less a fashion, in pictorial needle-craft. It burst out afresh in the early nineteenth century and became an absolute obsession of the early Victorian Berlin-wool workers with most disastrous results to both design and work.

Until the end of Charles I.'s reign needlework pictures must have been scarce, as we find one enumerated in the inventory of his "Closet of Rarities." It is possible that the many pictures which represent Charles I. were worked by loyalist ladies, *after his execution and during the Commonwealth*. In many of these pictures his own hair is said to have been used, thereby becoming relics of him who was known as "the Martyred King." On a very finely worked portrait of Charles I., at South Kensington Museum, King Charles's hair is worked amongst the silken threads.

Throughout this time, no matter what the subjects,



KING CHARLES I., WORKED IN FINE SILK EMBROIDERY.  
(S.K.M. Collection.)

most of which were notably striking scenes from Scripture history, such as "Esther and King Ahasuerus," "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba," "The Judgment of Solomon" (a very favourite subject), and other scenes of Old Testament history, all the kings were Charles I. and all the Queens Henrietta Maria. One and all wore early Stuart costumes. Even Pharaoh's daughter wore the handsome dress of the day, with Point lace falling collar and real pearls round her neck. It is a fashion to jeer at this anachronism ; but may it not perhaps be that we take these pictures too literally, and deny the workers their feelings of passionate devotion to the lost cause. Doubtless they worked their loyalty to their beloved monarch into these pretty and pleasing fancies, just as it is said that the fashion of "finger-bowls" was introduced later so that the loyal gentlemen of the day might drink to the King "*over the water.*" I see no cause to deny intelligence to these dear dead women, who were capable of exquisite needlecraft and fine design, and whose devotion was shown in many instances by giving up jewels, houses, and lands for the King !

The fashion of "stump" or stamp work appears to have been derived from Italy. Italian needlework of this time abounds with it, and, it must be admitted, of a superior design and style to that which was known here as "stump" work. Until the eighteenth century English work was more or less archaic in every branch. Personally, I see no more absurdity in the queer doll-like figures than in contemporary wood-carving. It was a period of tenta-



tive effort, and was, of course, beneath criticism. English Art has ever been an effort until its one bright burst of genius in the eighteenth century, while the continental nations appear to have breathed artistic perception with life itself.

The prototype of our stump work pictures, the Italian raised work, are gracious, graceful figures perfectly proportioned, and set in lovely elegant arabesques, with no exaggeration of style or period. Some specimens of this work must have been brought from Italy, through France, and the English workers quickly adopted and adapted them to their own heavier intelligence. Some of the little figures are certainly very grotesque. Frequently the tiny little hands are larger than the heads, but the *stitchery* is exquisite.

No time seems to have been too long to have been spent in perfecting the petals of a rose, the loose wing of a butterfly, or to make a realistic curtain in fine Point lace stitches to hang from the King's canopy. Some of the King's dresses are said to have been made of tiny treasured pieces of his garments. There is no doubt that much devoted sentiment was worked into these little figures, and these touches of nature add a pathetic interest to them.

In the illustration of "King Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba" from the South Kensington Collection Solomon is obviously King Charles I., while the Queen of Sheba is equally recognisable as Queen Henrietta Maria. The picture is perhaps the finest in the Kensington Collection, the colours being fresh and the work intact. The little faces are worked



SUPERB EXAMPLE OF STUART PICTURE.  
(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

over a padding of soft frayed silk or wool, the features being drawn in fine back-stitch. Natural hair is worked on the King's and Queen's heads, and the crowns are real gold thread set with pearls. The canopy is worked *solidly* in silk and gold thread, and from it hang loose curtains in old brocade, worked over and over with gold and silken thread.

The King's mantle and that of the Lord Chamberlain are worked in Point lace stitches, afterwards applied to the bodies and hanging loosely. The Queen's dress is brocade, worked over with gold and silver, while strings of real pearls decorate the necks and wrists of the ladies, and real white lace of the Venetian variety trims the neck and sleeves of these fairy people. The Stuart castle we see perched up among the trees and touching the sun's beams is more like an English farmhouse than Whitehall. Yet either this or Windsor Castle is always supposed to be represented.

The British lion and the leopard, again, make the identity of these little people more certain. The quaint little trees bear most disproportionate fruits, the acorn and pears being about the same size, but all beautifully worked in Point-lace stitches over wooden moulds. The hound and the hare, the butterfly and the grub, and the strange birds make up one of the most typical Stuart pictures.

The next illustration shows another development of picture-making. Here the grounding is of white satin, as in the previous illustration, but the figures are worked on canvas separately, in fine petit-point

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stitch, afterwards being cut away and placed on the white satin ground with a few silk stitches and the whole outlined with a fine black silk cord. The subject is "The Finding of Moses," and is as full of anachronisms as the last, only that here again Pharaoh's daughter is worked in memory of Queen Henrietta Maria, and the tiny boy in the corner is Charles II., and Moses the infant Duke of York. The four-winged cherubs are the guardian angels who are watching over the lost fortunes of the Stuart family, and rose of England and the lilies of France which form the border are emblematical of the royal lineage of their lost King's family. The hound and hare still chase each other gaily round the border, and in the picture the hare is seen emerging, like the Stuarts, from exile and obscurity.

Sufficient has perhaps been said to cause those who possibly may have misunderstood these pictures to give them another glance, and allow imagination to carry them back to the times of the exiled Royal Family and their brave adherents, whose women allowed not their memories to slumber nor their labours to flag. These pictures must have been made during the Commonwealth and the reign of Charles II. In no case, to my knowledge, has King Charles II. been depicted in stitchery, nor yet Catherine of Braganza. James II. is equally ignored, and with him their mission seemed to have been accomplished. Possibly the people had had by this time sufficient of the Stuarts, and the memory of King Charles the martyr had waxed dim. Certain



STUART PICTURE, SHOWING THE FINDING OF MOSES.

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*

it is that with James II. Stuart needlework pictures suddenly ceased.

*Stump work Symbols.*

The symbolism of the various animals, birds, insects, and flowers which are, apparently without rhyme or reason, placed in one great disarray in the Stuart pictures is said to have been heraldic and symbolic. The sunbeam coming from a cloud, the white falchion, and the chained hart are heraldic devices belonging to Edward III.

The buck and the strawberry, which are so often seen, belong to the Frazer Clan of Scotland, and may have been worked by ladies who were kith and kin of this clan.

The unicorn was the device of James I. and the siren or mermaid of Lady Frazer, who is said to have worked her own golden hair in the heart of a Tudor rose on a book cover for James I.

The hart was also a device of Richard II. and the "broom pod" of the Plantagenets. The caterpillar and butterfly was specially badges of Charles I., while the oak-tree and acorn were invariably worked into every picture in memory of Charles II.'s escape in an oak tree.

**IX**

**SAMPLERS**

## IX

### SAMPLERS

Real art work—Specimens in South Kensington Museum—  
High price now obtained.

A "SAMPLER" is an example or a sample of the worker's skill and cleverness in design and stitching. When they first appeared, as far as we know about the middle of the seventeenth century, they were merely a collection of embroidery, lace, cut and drawn work stitches, and had little affinity to the samplers of a later date, which seemed especially ordained to show various patterns of cross stitches, the alphabet, and the numerals.

The early samplers were real works of art; they were frequently over a yard long, not more than a quarter of a yard wide, and were adorned with as many as thirty different patterns of lace and cut and drawn work. This extreme narrowness was to enable the sampler to be rolled on a little ivory stick, like the Japanese *kakemonas*.

The foundation of all the early samplers was a coarse linen, and to this fact we owe the preservation of many of them. Those made two hundred years

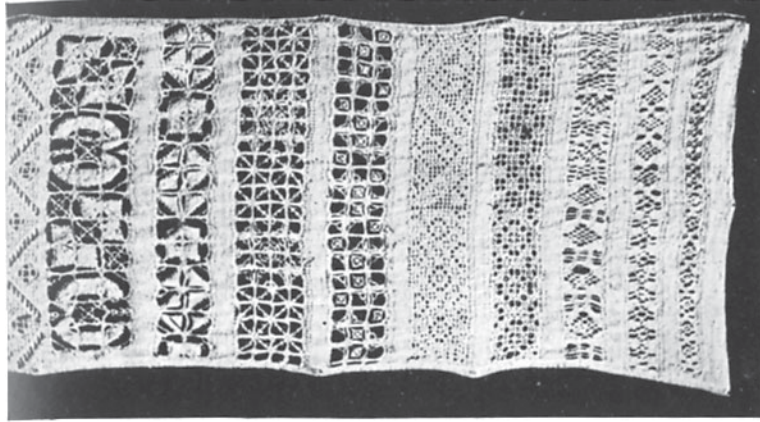


later, on a coarse, loose canvas, even now show signs of decay, while these ancient ones on linen are as perfect as when made, only being gently mellowed by Time to the colour of old ivory.

The earliest sampler known is dated 1643, and was worked by Elizabeth Hinde. It is only 6 inches by  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and is entirely lacework, and apparently has been intended for part of a sampler. The worker perhaps changed her mind and considered rightfully that she had accomplished her *chef d'œuvre*, or as so often explains these unfinished specimens, the Reaper gathered the flower, and only this dainty piece of stitching was left to perpetuate the memory of Elizabeth Hinde.

The sampler in question is just one row of cut and drawn work and another of fine Venetian lacework, worked in "punto in aria." A lady in Court dress holds a rose to shield herself from Cupid, a dear little fellow with wings, who is shooting his dart at her heart. Perhaps poor Elizabeth Hinde died of it and this is her "swan song."

The earliest samplers appeared to have been worked only on white cotton or silk. A favourite design, apart from the lacework samplers, was the "damask pattern" sampler, a specimen of which may be noted, commencing with the fifth row, on the sampler illustrated. Sometimes the sampler was entirely composed of it, and although ineffective, remains as a marvel of skill. It was worked entirely in flat satin stitch and eyelet holes, known as the "bird's eye" pattern. In the illustration four rows of cutwork will be noted, followed by five rows of



A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY "SAMPLER" (ENGLISH), SHOWING CUT AND  
DRAWN WORK.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

drawn threadwork, and above are patterns worked in floral and geometric designs in coloured silks. The alphabet and the date 1643 complete this monument of skill, which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

The succeeding illustration shows a more ambitious attempt, and is considered one of the finest specimens known. It was worked by Elizabeth Mackett, 1696. It is on white linen with ten rows of floral patterns worked with coloured silks in cross, stem, and satin stitches, with some portions worked separately and applied. Five rows of white satin stitch, two rows of alphabet letters in coloured silks, and four rows of exquisite punto in aria lace patterns are followed by the alphabet again in white stitches and the maker's name and date. The sampler is in superb preservation, the colours are particularly rich and well chosen. This sampler is also from the South Kensington Collection. Often the worker's name is followed by a verse or rhyme having a delightfully prosaic tendency. One can imagine the poor girls, in the early days we are writing of, writhing under the infliction of having slowly and painstakingly to work the solemn injunction—

“When this you see remember me  
And keep me in your mind,  
And be not like a weathercock  
That turns at every wind.

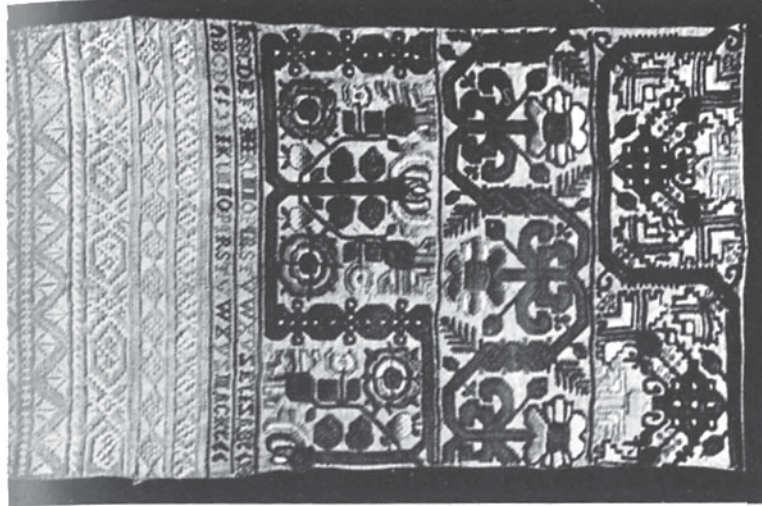
When I am dead and laid in grave,  
And all my bones are rotten,  
By this you may remember me  
When I should be forgotten.”

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And we can appreciate how little Maggie Tulliver ("The Mill on the Floss") must have girded at the philosophy she was compelled to work into her sampler—

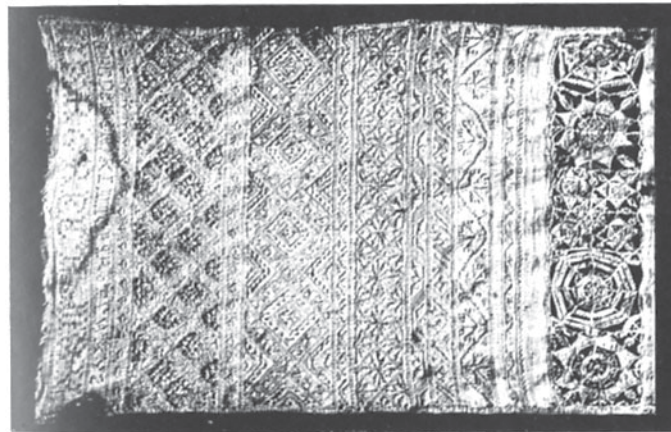
"Look well to what you take in hand,  
For learning is better than house or land;  
When land is gone and money is spent  
Then learning is most excellent."

With the eighteenth century the beauty of the Samplers distinctly declined. They became squarer, and were bordered with a running pattern, and the whole canvas became more or less pictorial. Inevitably the end of this art came. Ugly realistic bowpots with stumpy trees decorated the picture in regular order. The alphabet still appeared, and moral reflection seemed to be the aim of the worker rather than to make the Sampler show beauty of stitchery. Quaint little maps of England are often seen, surrounded with floral borders, but it remained to the early nineteenth century to show how the Sampler became reduced to absurdity. One of the quaintest and most amusing Samplers at South Kensington is a 12-inch by 8-inch example in woollen canvas and embroidered with coloured silk. At the lower end is a soldier, a tiny realistic house, a dovecot, any number of flowering plants, a stag and other animals. Above is a band of worked embroidery enclosing the words, "This is my dear Father." The remaining spaces are filled in with angels blowing trumpets, double-headed eagle, peacocks and other birds, and baskets of fruit. In spite



EARLY ENGLISH "SAMPLER," SHOWING EMBROIDERY IN COLOURED SILK.

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*



EARLY ENGLISH "SAMPLER," SHOWING BIRD'S-EYE EMBROIDERY AND CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*

of its absurdity, this little piece is far more pleasant than the tombstone inscriptions which abound, and is, after all, delightfully suggestive of home and affection.

Another quaint piece at South Kensington is a sampler worked by poor Harriet Taylor, *aged seven!* At the top are four flying angels, two in clouds flanking a crown beneath the letters "G. R." In the middle stands a flower-wreathed arch, with columns holding vases of flowering plants; above are the words, "The Temple of Fancy," and within an enclosed space the following homily:

"Not Land but Learning  
Makes a man complete  
Not Birth but Breeding  
Makes him truly Great  
Not Wealth but Wisdom  
Does adorn the State  
Virtue not Honor  
Makes him Fortunate  
Learning, Breeding, Wisdom  
Get these three  
Then Wealth and Honor  
Will attend on thee."

Then follows a house called "The Queen's Palace," standing in an enclosed flower-garden. This masterpiece of moral philosophy from the hands of a child of seven years is dated 1813.

An exaggerated conception of the value of old Samplers is very widely spread. Only the seventeenth-century Samplers are really of consequence, and these fetch fancy prices. In the sale-rooms a long narrow Samplers of lace stitches and drawn-threadwork would

bring as much as a handsome piece of lace. They are practically unattainable, and in this case the law of supply and demand does not obtain. It is beyond the needlewomen of the present day to imitate these old Samplers. Life is too short, and demands upon time are so many and varied, that a lifetime of work would result in making only one. Therefore, the fortunate owners of these seventeenth-century Samplers may cherish their possessions, and those less lucky possess their souls in patience, and hoard their golden guineas in the hope of securing one. Twenty years ago a few pounds would have been ample to secure a fine specimen, but £30 will now secure only a short fragment.

During the last three years I have not seen a good Sampler at any London Curio or lace shop, and none appear in the sale-rooms. The eighteenth-century Samplers are comparatively common, the map variety especially so, and can be purchased for a pound or so, but these are not desirable to the collector.

X

THE WILLIAM  
AND MARY  
EMBROIDERIES





JACOBEAN WALL-HANGING WORKED IN COLOURED CREWELS ON LINEN GROUND

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*

## X

### THE WILLIAM AND MARY EMBROIDERIES

Queen Mary "a born needlewoman"—The Hampton Court Embroideries — Revival of petit point — Jacobean hangings.

ONE of the most convincing facts in arguments that there *is* a revival in the gentle art of needlecraft is that it has become the fashion to drape our windows, cover our furniture, and panel our walls with printed copies of the Old Jacobean needlework. Many people, knowing nothing whatever about the history of needlework, wonder where the designs for the printed linens which line the windows of Messrs. Liberty, Goodall and Burnett's colossal frontages in Regent Street have been found. In time amazement gives way to admiration for these quaint blues and greens, roses and pale yellows, worked in great scrolls with exotic flowers and still more exotic birds, and the funny little hillocks with delightful little pagoda-like cottages nestling amongst them, and many and various little animals which seem to keep perpetual holiday under the everlasting blooms. The designs

are taken bodily from the historical hangings of the later seventeenth century. After the abdication and flight of James II. to St. Germain, his daughter Mary came over with her Dutch husband, William the Stadtholder—or, rather, William came over and brought his wife, the daughter of the late king, for William had no intention of assuming the style and life of Prince Consort, but came well to the front, and kept there. It was not "VICTORIA and Albert" in those days, but WILLIAM and MARY, who ruled England, and ruled it well. William III. must have been a man of strong personality, and he managed to quell all the rebellions of his reign, and during the time he ruled over us the country settled down to a peaceful state that has remained to the present time.

Queen Mary had quite sufficient employment in settling herself and her household, and generally managing the domestic matters pertaining to the new kingdom she had come into. She apparently had a very free hand in rebuilding Hampton Court, which she particularly made her home, absolutely pulling the interior down, and rebuilding and re-decorating it according to her own taste, which was not that of the Stuart persuasion with its gorgeous magnificence, but the more homely and solid Dutch. Very little of the original Hampton Court *interior*, built and furnished by Cardinal Wolsey, exists. Just here and there we find delightfully dark little dens with the original linen-fold panellings and ceilings that are a ravishment to look upon; but mostly the rooms are high, plain-panelled, and with



ENLARGEMENT OF "JACOBAN" SPRAY.  
(S.K.M. Collection.)

## WILLIAM AND MARY EMBROIDERIES 325

the quaint ingle-nook fireplaces, with shelves above, upon which Mary placed her lovely "blue and white" porcelain which had been brought to her by the Dutch merchants who at that time were the great traders of the sea.

Queen Mary ought to be regarded as the patron saint of English needlewomen. She was happiest when employed furnishing every bed-covering, every chair and stool, and supplying the hangings for her favourite home. It is said that she spent her days over her embroidery frame, knowing full well that affairs of State were in the capable hands of her husband.

There are few relics left of her handiwork outside Hampton Court. She left no dainty little book-covers, bags, or boxes, as her ideas were fixed on larger pieces of embroidery. Had she lived in the Berlin-wool picture days, she would have filled every nook and cranny with these atrocities, as many humbler devotees to the needle have done to our own knowledge. Needlework can become a *passion*, and certainly Queen Mary must have possessed it.

After the complete collapse of the Stuart stump pictures, when every vestige of loyalty seems to have been swept away with the hated James II., the ancient Petit Point pictures came back into fashion. Very clever work was put into them, but, alas! their scope was purely to depict religious scenes of the rigorous kind. No dainty fairy-like little people now ruled in pictured story, but actual representations of Bible history.

The illustration of "The Baptism of the Ethi-

opian Eunuch by St. Philip" is a fair sample of the needlework picture of this time. The picture is a strange mixture of the early Stuart Petit Point, the Jacobean wall-hanging, and the newly revived religious spirit. The duck-pond, the swans and the water-plants might have been copied bodily from James I.'s time. The paroquet and the flying bird, and the immense leaves and blossoms, are direct from the wall-hangings, while the figures only too surely foretell the coming dark days of needlecraft, when a Scripture picture and a coarsely worked sampler were part of every girl's liberal education. The work in this picture is extremely good, and it is excruciatingly funny without intending to be so. The pretty little equipage with its diminutive ponies surely was never intended to carry either St. Philip or the Eunuch! The open book, with Hebraic inscription, is very delightful. It brings to mind the Tables of the Law rather than the light reading that the charming little Cinderella coach should carry.

These pictures are not common, and we scarcely know whether to be thankful for them or not. Unlike the early petit point, they were worked in *worsted*s, whereas the early pictures were wrought in silk. The moth has a natural affinity for wool, as we all know, and his tribe has cleared off many hundreds of examples. Why so many of the old Jacobean hangings remain is that they were worked for *use*, and not ornament, and even after they ceased to be fashionable ornaments for sitting and bed rooms, they were either relegated to the servants' quarters, or given to dependants, who used them



NEEDLEWORK PICTURE OF QUEEN ANNE PERIOD.

*(S.K.M. Collection.)*

## WILLIAM AND MARY EMBROIDERIES 329

constantly, shaking and keeping them in repair, as the eighteenth-century housewives liked to keep their homes swept and garnished.

It is strange to see these old Jacobean hangings (perhaps the drapery of the now tabooed four-post bedstead), which might some thirty years ago have been carried off for the asking, sell at Christie's for £800, as happened in the dispersal of the Massey-Mainwaring sale last year. Even a panel of no use except to frame as a picture, say 4 feet by 3 feet, will fetch £30 and a full-sized bed-cover can only be bought for over £100. The reason is not far to seek. The colouring and the drawing of this fine old Crewel-work are exquisite (even though the design savours of the grotesque), and Time has dealt very leniently with the dyes. I endeavoured to match some of these old worsteds a little time ago, and though able to find the colours, could not get the tone. After much tribulation I was advised to hang the skeins of worsted on the trees in the garden and *forget all about them*, and certainly wind and weather have softened the somewhat garish worsteds to the soft *fade* colours of the old work.

The same class of embroidery was executed during the reign of Queen Anne, though she herself did little of it. Costly silks and brocades and Venetian laces were the dress of the day, and no little dainty accessories appear to have been made.



XI

PICTORIAL  
NEEDLEWORK  
OF THE  
EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY



A FINE "PAINTED FACE" SILK-EMBROIDERED PICTURE.

*(Author's Collection.)*

## XI

### PICTORIAL NEEDLEWORK OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The "painted faces" period—Method of production—Revival of Scriptural "motifs"—Modern fakes—Black silk and hair copies of engravings.

AN immense number of pictures must have been worked during the eighteenth century. Almost, we might say, no English home is without an example. Much of the work is intensely bad, and only that Time has tenderly softened the colours, and the old-time dresses add an element of quaintness to the pictures, can they be tolerated. Works of art they are not, and, indeed, were never intended to occupy the place their owners now proudly claim for them. Just here and there a picture of the painted face type is a masterpiece of stitchery, as in the example illustrated, where every thread has been worked by an *artiste*. Looking at this little gem across a room, the effect is that of a charming old colour print, so tenderly are the lines of shading depicted. This is the only picture of this class that I have seen for years as an absolutely perfect specimen of the

eighteenth-century silk pictures, though doubtless many exist.

The discrepancy which is usually found is that, although the design and outline is perfect, the faces and hands exquisitely painted, the needlework part of the picture has been executed in a foolish, inartistic manner, and no method of light and shade has been observed. Some little time ago I published an article in one of the popular monthly Magazines illustrating this same picture, and was afterwards inundated with letters from correspondents from far and near sending their pictures for valuation and—admiration! Not one of these pictures was good, though there were varying degrees of *badness*. But in no instance was the painted face crudely drawn or badly coloured.

The explanation is that just as the modern needlewoman goes to a Needlework Dépôt and obtains pieces of embroidery already commenced and the design of the whole drawn ready for completion, so these old needle pictures were sold ready for embroidering, the outline of the trees sketched in fine sepia lines, the distant landscape already painted, the faces and hands of the figures charmingly coloured, in many instances by first-class artists. When we remember that the eighteenth century was *par excellence* the great period of English portrait painting and colour printing, we can understand that possibly really fine artists were willing to paint these exquisite faces on fine silk and satin, just as good artists of the present day often paint "pot-boilers" while waiting for fame.



EMBROIDERED SILK PICTURE OF "THE LAST SUPPER,"  
Eighteenth Century.  
(S. A. M. Collection.)

Angelica Kauffmann's style was often copied. Is it too much to believe that some of these charming faces may have been from her hands? We know that she painted furniture and china, therefore why not the faces of the needlework pictures so nearly akin to her own work?

The eighteenth-century costume was particularly adapted to this pretty work. We cannot imagine the voluminous robes of Queen Mary or Queen Anne in needle-stitchery, but the soft, silky lawns of the Georgian periods, the high-waisted bodices, the *bouffant* fichus and the flowing head-dresses, all were specially easy and graceful to work. Many of the pretty children Sir Joshua loved to paint were copied. "Innocence" made a charming picture, and several of the less rustic Morland pictures were copied.

We would imagine that when the beginnings of the picture were so glorious the needlewoman would have made some endeavour to work up to it. But, alas! it was not so. Though often the stitching is neat and small, not an idea of shading seems to have entered the worker's mind, and whole spaces, nay, a complete garment, are often worked solid in one tone of colour! On the whole there is far more artistic sense and feeling in the Stump pictures it is the fashion to deride.

Not always were dainty pastoral and domestic scenes worked. Very ghastly creations are still existent of scriptural subjects. Coarsely worked in wool, instead of silk, or in a mixture of both. The painting is still good, but the work and the

subjects are execrable! "Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac," on the pile of faggots already laid, and Isaac bound on it, with a very woolly lamb standing ready as a substitute, was a favourite subject. "Abraham dismissing Hagar and Ishmael," with a malignant-looking Sarah in the distance, vies with the former in popularity. "The Woman of Samaria," and "The Entombment," are another pair of unpleasant pictures which we are often called upon to admire.

The best of these pictures were worked in fine floss silk, not quite like the floss silk of to-day, as it had more twist and body in it, with just a little fine chenille, and very tiny bits of silver thread to heighten the effect. The worst were worked in *crewel* wools of crude colours. Fortunately, the moth has a special predilection for these pictures, and they are slowly being eaten out of existence, in spite of being cherished as heirlooms and works of art.

Another pretty style which we seldom meet with was some part of the picture covered with the almost obsolete "ærophane," a kind of chiffon or crape which was much in request even up to fifty years ago. A certain part of the draperies was worked on the silk ground, without any attempt at finish. This was covered with ærophane, and outlined so as to attach it to the figure. This again was worked upon with very happy effects, very fine darning stitches making the requisite depth of shading. The illustration shows the use of this, but this cannot be said to be a very good specimen.



“PAINTED FACE” SILK-EMBROIDERED PICTURE.

Eighteenth Century.

(*Author's Collection.*)



These painted face, silk-worked pictures are the only needlework examples the collector *need to beware of*, as they are being reproduced by the score. The method of working in the poorer specimens is very simple, and it pays the "faker" to sell for £2 or £3 what takes, perhaps, only half a day to produce. When a well-executed picture is produced it is worth money, but so far I have seen none, except at the Royal School of Needlework, where the copying of old pictures of the period is exceedingly well done, and not intended to deceive. The prices, however, are almost prohibitive, as no modern needlework picture is worth from £15 to £30. They are, after all, only copies, and in no sense of the word works of art.

During the eighteenth century, also, a fashion set in of adorning engravings with pieces of cloth, silk, and tinsel. At best it was a stupid fancy, and was responsible for the destruction of many fine old mezzotints and coloured prints. The hands, face, and background of an engraving were cut out, and pasted on a sheet of cardboard, pieces of some favourite brocaded gown, perhaps, were attached to the neck and shoulders, tiny lace tuckers were inserted, and gorgeous jewellery was simulated by wretched bits of tinsel trimming. The realism of the Stuart stump picture was never so atrocious as this baleful invention, which was as meretricious as a waxwork show.

Not so popular, but far better, were the pictures worked on white silk with black silk and hair. There were no artistic aspirations about these—they

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were copies in black and white of the engravings of the day, just as a pen-and-ink or pencil copy might be made. Very dainty stitchery was put in them, the stronger parts of the lines being in fine black silk, the finer and more distant being worked in human hair of various shades from black to brown. Occasionally golden and even white hair is used, and the effect is often that of a faded engraving. The silk ground on which these little pictures were worked is, however, often cracked with age, and many pretty specimens are ruined. The illustration shows an example of the type of picture, and depicts "Charlotte weeping over the Tomb of Werther."



BLACK SILK AND HAIR PICTURE.

Imitation of Engraving. Eighteenth Century.

*(Author's Collection.)*

XII

NEEDLEWORK  
PICTURES  
OF THE  
NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

## XII

### NEEDLEWORK PICTURES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Entire decline of needlework as an art—Miss Linwood's invention!—The Berlin-wool pictures—Lack of efficient instruction—Waste of magnificent opportunity at South Kensington Museum.

IT were kindest to ignore 19th century needlework, but in a book treating of English embroidery something must be said to bridge over the time when Needlecraft as an Art was *dead*. During the earlier part of the century taste was bad, during the middle it was beyond criticism, and from then to the time of the "greenery-yallery" æsthetic revival all and everything made by woman's fingers ought to be buried, burnt, or otherwise destroyed. Indeed, if that drastic process could be carried out from the time good Queen Adelaide reigned to the early "eighties" we might not, now and ever, have to bow our heads in utter abjection.

The originator and moving spirit of this bad period was Miss Linwood, who conceived the idea of copying oil paintings in woolwork. She died

in 1845. Would that she had never been born! When we think of the many years which English women have spent over those wickedly hideous Berlin-wool pictures, working their bad drawing and vilely crude colours into those awful canvases, and imagining that they were earning undying fame as notable women for all the succeeding ages, death was too good for Miss Linwood. The usual boiling oil would have been a fitter end! Miss Linwood made a great *furor* at the time of her invention, and held an exhibition in the rooms now occupied by Messrs. Puttick & Simpson, Leicester Square. Can we not imagine the shade of the great Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose home and studio these rooms had been, revisiting the glimpses of the moon, and while wandering up and down that famous old staircase forsaking his home for ever after one horrified glance at Miss Linwood's invention?

Not only Miss Linwood, but Mrs. Delany and Miss Knowles made themselves famous for Berlin-wool pictures. The kindest thing to say is that the specimens which are supposed to have been worked by their own hands are considerably better than those of the half-dozen generations of their followers. During the middle and succeeding twenty years of the nineteenth century the notable housewife of every class amused herself, at the expense of her mind, by working cross-stitch pictures with crudely coloured wools (royal blue and rose-pink, magenta, emerald-green, and deep crimson were supposed to represent the actual colours of Nature), on very coarse canvas. Landseer's paint-

ings were favourite studies, "Bolton Abbey in the Olden Times" lending itself to a choice range of violent colours and striking incidents. Nothing was too sacred for the Berlin-wool worker to lay hands upon. "The Crucifixion," "The Nativity," "The Flight into Egypt," "The Holy Family" were not only supposed to show the skill of the worker, but also the proper frame of mind the embroideress possessed. Pleasing little horrors such as the "Head of the Saviour in His Agony," and that of the Virgin with all her tortured mother love in her eyes were considered fit ornaments for drawing-room, which by the way were also adorned with wool and cotton crochet antimacassars, waxwork flowers under glass, and often astonishingly good specimens of fine Chelsea, Worcester, and Oriental china.

Never was the questions of how "having eyes and yet seeing not" more fully exemplified. The nation abounded in paintings, prints, fine needlework, and the product of our greatest period of porcelain manufacture. Fine examples were at hand everywhere. Exquisite prints belonging to our only good period, the eighteenth century, were common; yet rather than try their skill in copying these, the needlewomen, who possessed undoubted skill, enthusiasm, and infinite patience, preferred to copy realistic paintings of the Landseer school and the highly coloured prints of the Baxter and Le Blond period.

Unfortunately, the craze is by no means buried. Within the last twelve months I was invited to see

the "works" of a wonderful needlewoman in a little Middlesex village. The local clergyman and doctor were sufficiently benighted even in these days of universal culture to admire her work, and her fame had spread. Room after room was filled with 10 by 8-foot canvases; every drawer in the house was crammed with the result of this clever woman's work—for clever she undoubtedly was. After exhausting all the known subjects of Landseer and his school, she had struck out a line for herself, and had copied the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News* Supplements of the stirring scenes from the South African War, such as "The Siege of Ladysmith," "The Death of the Prince Imperial" in all its gruesome local colouring, were worked on gigantic canvases. Her great *chef d'œuvre* was, however, the memorial statue of Queen Victoria, copied from the *Graphic* Supplement *in tones of black, white, and grey*, a most clever piece of work; but—well, she was happy and more than delighted with my perfectly honest remark that I had *never seen anything like it!*

Ah! if only this dear woman and the many others who are wasting their time and eyesight over fashions which perish could only be reached and aroused by the influence of the lovely old English stitchery of our great period! If only the purblind authorities and custodians of our National collections could awaken to the infinite possibilities which they hold, once again "Opus Anglicum" might rule the world, and the labour of even one woman's life might be of lasting value. It is useless to refer to the many



schools of embroidery there are in different parts of the country, where fine work is being done on the best lines. These schools, from the Royal School of Needlework downwards, are "closed corners," and no attempt is made to reach the great public. The Royal School of Needlework is maintained by no subsidy as it ought to be, but by the many ladies of position and taste who liberally support it, both for the instruction and employment of "ladies of reduced circumstances," and for *the disposal of its work at very high prices*. Other schools in town are simply private adventure institutions, run at a considerable profit to the principals.

The superb collection at South Kensington might as well be buried in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral for all the value it is to the general public. There is not the slightest attempt to allow these unique pieces of "Opus Anglicum" to point a moral or adorn a tale. The magnificent copes and vestments, of which there are some score, are merely tabulated, paragraphed, and photographed, and there is an end of them. During my constant visits to these treasures of English Art I have not once discovered another interested visitor amongst these beautiful vestments; and the officials, when interviewed, though perfectly courteous, apparently resent inquiries; and woe betide the unfortunate inquirers who *might* have found the required information from the tiny little printed card hidden either too low or too high in the dark recesses of the corridors, and so spared these *savants* the trouble of an interview!

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Why a continuous course of lectures on this and every kindred Art subject is not made compulsory at the Victoria and Albert Museum is one of the burning questions of the hour among the cultured collectors of the day. The custodians are supposed to be men of special insight in the branches over which they preside, yet for all the advantage to the public they might as well be waxwork dummies. What we want as a nation is "culture while we wait," and writ so large that those who run may read, and until this consummation is attained we shall ever remain in the Slough of Despond, and Art for Art's sake will continue dead.

XIII

EMBROIDERY  
IN "COSTUME"

### XIII

#### EMBROIDERY IN "COSTUME"

Early Greek garments—Biblical references to embroidery—  
Ecclesiastical garments—Eighteenth-century dresses,  
coats, and waistcoats—Muslin embroideries.

THE subject of Costume has been most admirably treated in another volume of this series, but a reference must be made to it as affecting our topic, English Embroidery, as costume has played no little part in its history.

From the earliest ages embroidery has been used to decorate garments. The ancient Greeks embroidered the hems of their graceful draperies in the well-known Greek fret and other designs so invariably seen on the old Greek vases. The legend that Minerva herself taught the Greeks the art of embroidery illustrates how deeply the art was understood; and the pretty story told by an old botanist of how the foxglove came by its name and its curious bell-like flowers is worth repeating. In the old Greek days, when gods and goddesses were regarded as having the attributes of humanity in

addition to those of deities, Juno was one day amusing herself with making tapestry, and, after the manner of the people, put a thimble on her finger. Jupiter, "playing the rogue with her," took her thimble and threw it away, and down it dropped to the earth. The goddess was very wroth, and in order to pacify her Jupiter turned the thimble into a flower, which now is known as *Digitalis*, or finger-stole.

This little fairy tale can scarcely be taken as proof conclusive of the existence of either needle tapestry or thimble use, but its telling may amuse the reader.

In all ancient histories we find continuous references to the embroidered garment worn by its people. It was well recognised that no material was sufficiently beautiful not to be further embellished with rich embroideries. In the Psalms we find that "Pharaoh's daughter shall be brought to the king in a raiment of needlework," and that "her clothing is of wrought gold."

Phrygia was above all the country most noted for embroideries of gold, and for many years the name "Phrygian embroidery" was sufficient to describe any highly decorated specimen. It is said that the name of the vestment or trimming, the "orphry" is derived from the word "Auri-phrygium," meaning "gold of Phrygian embroidery."

The Phrygians are credited with having taught the Egyptians the art, while the Hebrews, while sojourning in the land of Egypt, learned the art from their captors, and carried it with them all

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through their journeys to the Promised Land, and their final settlement in Palestine. The mention of gold and purple embroideries, both as garments and hangings, is conspicuous throughout all Bible history. The Egyptian and Greek arts are in almost all respects concurrent. The Phœnicians carried examples of each country's work from one to another. After the conquest of Greece the Romans absorbed her art, and developed it in their own special style. They in turn carried their arts and crafts to Gaul and Britain, and by degrees needlecraft permeated the whole of Europe.

Dealing with the embroidered costumes of our own country, the ancient records, illuminated Missals, and other contemporary data show that very sumptuous were both the ecclesiastical and lay garments. Heavy gold embroideries were worked on the hems of skirts and mantles. The Kings' coronation robes and mantles were beautiful specimens of handicraft, often after a king's death being given to the churches for vestments. From Anglo-Saxon to Norman times extensive use was made of the work of the needle for clothing, but after the Conquest till quite late in the Tudor period little has been found to throw light upon the use of embroidery for the lay dress of the time. All woman's taste and energy seem to have been devoted to make monumental embroideries for church use.

It was, indeed, not until the gorgeous period of Henry VIII. that embroidery, as distinct from garment-making, appeared; and then everything

became an object worthy of decoration. Much fine stitchery was put into the fine white undergarments of that time, and the overdresses of both men and women became stiff with gold thread and jewels. Much use was made of slashing and quilting, the point of junction being dotted with pearls and precious stones. Noble ladies wore dresses heavily and richly embroidered with gold, and the train was so weighty that train-bearers were pressed into service. In the old paintings the horses belonging to kings and nobles wear trappings of heavily embroidered gold. Even the hounds who are frequently represented with their masters have collars massively decorated with gold bullion.

The skirts of the ladies of this time were thickly encrusted with jewels, folds of silk being crossed in a kind of lattice-work, each crossing being fixed with a pearl or jewel, and a similar precious stone being inserted in the square formed by the trellis. The long stomachers were one gleaming mass of jewelled embroidery, the tiny caps or headdresses being likewise heavily studded with gems.

During the reign of Charles I. a much daintier style of dress appeared. Velvet and silken suits were worn by the men, handsomely but appropriately trimmed with the fine "punto in aria" or Reticella laces of Venice; and in this and the three succeeding reigns dress was of sumptuous velvets, satins, and heavy silks, unembroidered, but trimmed, and in Charles II.'s time *loaded* with costly laces. It will be noted that whenever lace



*Photo by*

*E. Gray, Bayswater.*

MRS. TICKELL AND HER SISTER, MRS. SHERIDAN, BY GAINSBOROUGH, SHOWING  
HOW LACE WAS SUPERSEDED BY FILMY MUSLINS.

*(Dulwich Gallery.)*



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is in the ascendant, embroidery suffers, as is quite natural. Lace itself is sufficient adornment for fine raiment.

As the use of the fine Venetian and Flemish and French laces declined, and tuckers and frillings of Mechlin, Valenciennes, and Point d'Angleterre appeared, the use of embroidery asserted itself, and the pretty satins and daintily coloured silks of William and Mary, Queen Anne, and more specially the earlier Georges, began to be embroidered in a specially delicate fashion. Fine floss silk was used in soft colourings, and whole surfaces were covered with tiny embroidered sprays of natural-coloured flowers. Really exquisite stitchery was put into the graceful honeysuckle, the pansy, carnation, and rose clusters which decorated the dresses. The bodices, sacques, and skirts of the early eighteenth-century ladies were embroidered with real artistic taste and feeling. Some of the old dresses kept at South Kensington show the exquisite specimens of this class of needlework ; while the coats and waistcoats of the sterner sex are not a whit behind the feminine garments in beauty. The long waistcoats were most frequently made of cream, pale blue, or white silk or satin, delightfully embroidered with tiny sprays of blossoms, and fastened with fine old paste buttons ; while the coat, frequently of brocade, was heavily embroidered down the front with three or four inches of solid embroidery of foliage and flowers, oftentimes mixed with gold and silver threads. The tiny cravat of Mechlin, cuff ruffles, knee breeches, silken hose, and buckled shoes, along with the

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powdered hair, complete a costume that has never been equalled, either before or afterwards, in beauty, grace, and elegance. During the William IV. and the long Victorian period, with the exception of a very fine embroidery on muslin, in the earlier part of it, nothing but fine stitchery for the use of underwear was made, if we except the hundreds and thousands of yards of cut and buttonholed linen which seemed to have been the solace and delight of our grandmothers when they allowed themselves to be torn away from their beloved Berlin-wool work. To sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam appears to have been the amusement of the properly constituted women of the early and mid-nineteenth century.

XIV

SALE  
PRICES

## XIV

### SALE PRICES

ANCIENT embroideries so seldom come into the sale-rooms that it is rarely an opportunity occurs for obtaining market prices, therefore Lady Wolseley's sale on July 12, 1906, must be accepted as a standard. Immense prices are asked at the antique shops, the dealers apparently basing their prices on this sale by auction and *doubling* them. I have visited every shop in the trade in search of prices for this book before procuring the auctioneer's catalogue, and was aghast at the terrific sums asked for oftentimes indifferent specimens in comparison to what was paid in the auction-room. During the past year anything from £15 15s. to £40 has been paid at Christie's for specimens of varying degrees of perfection of work and condition. The latter state is even of greater importance than the first, as no matter how good the work originally, if discoloured and frayed, prices go down and down. Nearly all the finest specimens of the Stump-work period are marred by the tarnishing of the gold and silver threads. Instead

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of these being a glory and a great enhancement to the embroidery, they prove a great disfigurement, and thereby cause a considerable reduction in value.

The earlier petit point pictures, having little or no bullion in their execution (and when cared for and not exposed to too much sunlight), have kept their condition very well, and now are quite the favourite kind for collection. It speaks much for the quality of the silks used and the dyes of nearly three hundred years ago that the fugitive greens and blues and delicate roses in these little works of art, as in the superb tapestries of the same date, should be as fine as when made, whereas to-day's colours are as fleeting as the glories of the rainbow.

The following are the principal prices in Lady Wolseley's sale :

	£	s.	d.
A small bag, red and gold brocade . . . . .	2	15	0
A small bag or purse . . . . .	5	0	0
A fine bead book-cover . . . . .	6	0	0
Same, trimmed with silver lace (Harris) . . . . .	6	16	0
A pair of embroidered shoes (Harris) . . . . .	6	0	0
A small pocket-book, silk embroidery on silver ground . . . . .	8	17	6
A pair of Stuart shoes . . . . .	9	19	6
A stumpwork picture, a most curious globe, showing Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, 1648 (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	24	0	0
A double book of Psalms, embroidered binding with Tudor rose . . . . .	23	10	0

SALE PRICES

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	£	s.	d.
A petit point picture, $12\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ . . . . .	11	11	0
A small picture, partly sketched and partly worked . . . . .	4	14	6
A Stuart stump picture, $18 \times 15\frac{1}{2}$ . . . . .	18	18	0
A Stuart stump picture, King under canopy, $17\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ . . . . .	14	14	6
A Stuart bullion picture, vase, in tortoiseshell frame, $23 \times 18$ . . . . .	8	8	0
Same, with Herodias's daughter and John the Baptist . . . . .	5	5	0
A portrait of Henry, Prince of Wales, in flat-stitch on rose satin . . . . .	21	0	0
Another on satin, "Bathsheba," spangled, $17 \times 13$ . . . . .	6	16	0
Another on satin, birds on gold and silver, $13 \times 13$ (Harris) . . . . .	13	13	6
A bead picture, $15 \times 11$ . . . . .	11	11	0
A stump and bead picture, $12 \times 11$ . . . . .	12	1	6
A small book-cover, $14 \times 8$ . . . . .	12	12	0
A Stuart stump picture, figures and silver fountain, tortoiseshell frame, $22 \times 16$ . . . . .	15	15	0
A stump picture, lady with coral necklace, $18 \times 12$ . . . . .	23	10	0
A stump picture, lady under arch with a black swan, $20 \times 16$ (Stoner) . . . . .	34	0	0
A stump picture, King Charles as Ahasuerus with Haman and Mordecai, and pearl-embroidered carpet, $23 \times 17$ . . . . .	28	0	0
A stump picture, lady under a canopy, large pearls, $13 \times 19$ , (Stoner) . . . . .	34	0	0

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	£	s.	d.
A Stuart Petit Point picture, Abraham and Hagar . . . . .	16	16	0
A Stuart petit point picture, "Judgment of Paris," 24 × 17 . . . . .	25	0	0
A Stuart petit point picture, King Solomon and Queen of Sheba . . . . .	18	18	0
A beadwork picture, lady and gentleman, lion and unicorn, 21 × 17 . . . . .	12	12	6
An embroidered picture, "Peter denying Christ," 24 × 17 (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	9	19	6
A petit point picture, lake with boats and figures, 15 × 12 (Harris) . . . . .	14	14	6
A large stump picture, with horse and rider and figures of four seasons . . . . .	30	10	0
A stumpwork picture, four figures, castle and birds and flowers (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	33	0	0
A picture sketched on white satin, not worked . . . . .	4	15	0
A Stuart picture on canvas . . . . .	9	19	6
A fine Stuart jewel-casket, numerous secret drawers, covered in needlework (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	47	5	0
A Stuart box, covered with bullionwork (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	12	12	0
A Stuart box, with embroidery and pearls (Spero) . . . . .	16	16	0
A Stuart box, coloured bullion, 10 × 6 . . . . .	9	9	0
An embroidered box, with portrait on lid (S. G. Fenton) . . . . .	53	11	0

SALE PRICES

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	£	s.	d.
A Stuart mirror, covered with stump embroidery, representing Charles I. and his Queen (illustrated), (Ros-thron) . . . . .	102	18	0
Another mirror, with painted and embroidered figures (Harris) . . .	34	0	0
A Charles I. mirror in old lace and gold frame, with borders in embroidery, with portrait, castle, and floral decoration . . . . .	40	0	0
3 yds. 13 inches long, 12 inches deep, Cornice in Petit Point, Christie's, July, 1908 (Harris) . . . . .	204	15	0



**XV**

**CONCLUSION**

## XV

### CONCLUSION

NEEDLEWORK as a national art is as dead as the proverbial door-nail; whether or not it ever regains its position as a craft is a matter of conjecture. Personally, I incline to the belief that it is absolutely extinct. The death-knell rang for all time when the sewing-machine was invented. The machine has been a very doubtful blessing, as it has allowed even the art of stitchery in ordinary work to slide into the limbo of forgotten things. What woman now knows what it is to "back-stitch" a shirt cuff, for instance, drawing a thread for guidance, and carefully going back two or three threads in order to make a neat, firm line of stitching? The sewing-machine does all this, and *does* it *well*, a clever machinist turning out more work in a week than a seamstress in a year. If this were all, it would be no matter for regret, but with the necessity for needlework has vanished the desire. The lady quoted in Green's History is now non-existent. "She was a pattern of sobriety unto many, very

seldom seen abroad except at church; when others recreated themselves at holidays and other times, she would take her needlework, and say, 'Here is my recreation.'

In spite of the many Schools of Embroidery, with a few notable exceptions, nothing is done to raise the standard of embroidery above making miserable little cushion-covers, table-centres, and suchlike pretty fripperies for the temporary adornment of the house. The women of Germany, Holland, Sweden, Italy, on the contrary, take a great interest in the embroidery of the bed and table linen and the really artistic embroidery of their national costumes. Nothing of this is seen in England. Table linen is bought *ready hemmed* at the shop. Dainty tea-cloths and serviettes are purchased ready embroidered (by machine) and trimmed with machine-made lace. Even *lingerie* of all classes is machine-made and bought by the dozen, instead of being made by the daughters of the house.

The only hope of a revival lies in the various Art schools in the country where designing for fine embroidery and lace is encouraged. Unfortunately, however, equal facilities are offered for designing of machine-made imitations. The Royal School of Needlework, not being a Government institution, offers no encouragement to outsiders. It is in the hands of a number of ladies, who manage it as they will; and although very fine work is accomplished, they trust too much to modern designers and artists who work out their own pet theories and hobbies. If only they would put aside all theories

## CONCLUSION

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and new ideas, and *go back* to the best periods of English art both for their designs and execution, even yet, with the intelligent use of the glorious examples in the adjoining Museum, much might be done to revivify this expiring art.

FINIS

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## INDEX

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