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was so cleverly simulated as to look almost detachable. Of course such pictures were the result of individual experiment on the part of some very able and ambitious needlewoman.

One can imagine that the effect of them in social life was to add greatly to the vogue of the art of needlework. The most numerous of these relics were called "mourning pieces"—bits of memorial embroidery—the subject of the picture being generally a monument surmounted by an urn, overhung with the sweeping branches of a willow, while standing beside the monument is a weeping female figure, the face discreetly hidden in a pocket handkerchief. The inscriptions, "Sacred to the memory," etc., were written or printed upon the satin in India ink, and often the letters of the name were worked with the hair of the subject of the memorial.

In these pieces it is rather noticeable that the mourning figure is always draped in white, which leads to the conclusion that it is a purely emblematic figure of an emotion, rather than a real mourner. The shading of the monument was generally done in India ink, so that the actual embroidery was confined to the trunk and long

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branches of weeping willow, and the dress of the figure, and the ground upon which willow and monument and figure stand. The faces being always hidden by the handkerchief, and a tinted satin serving for the sky, the execution of these memorial pictures was comparatively simple. They certainly bear an undue proportion to those happy family portraits where mother and children, or husband and wife, sit in love and simplicity before the pillared magnificence of the family mansion.

Perhaps the greater simplicity and ease of execution of the mourning pieces had something to do with their greater number. They may have been the first spelling of the difficult art of pictorial embroidery. The best of these picture embroideries were certainly wonderful creations as far as the use of the needle was concerned, and I fancy were done in the large leisure of some colonial home where early distinction in the art of needlework must have gone hand in hand with the skill of the traveling portrait painter. These dainty productions, with their delicately painted faces and hands, are far more often found than those with embroidered flesh. In some of these,



Courtesy Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

Left — FIRE SCREEN embroidered in cross-stitch worsted. *From the McMullan family of Salem.*



Courtesy Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

Right — FIRE SCREEN, design, "The Scottish Chieftain," embroidered in cross-stitch by Mrs. Mary H. Cleveland Allen.



FIRE SCREEN worked about 1850 by Miss C. A. Granger, of Canandaigua, N. Y.

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faces painted with real miniature skill upon bits of parchment have been inserted or superimposed upon the satin, the edges, as I have said, carefully covered by embroidery, done with single hair threaded into the needle instead of silk. In one case which I remember, the yellow hair of a child was knotted into a bunch of solid looking curls covering the head of a small figure, while the face of the mother was surmounted by bands of a reddish brown. This little touch of realism gave a curious note of pathos to the picture of a life separated from the present by time and out-grown habits, but linked to it by this one tangible proof of actual existence.

The drawing or plan of these pictures was evidently done directly upon the satin ground, as one often finds the outlines showing at the edge of the stitches; but in the few specimens I have found where they were worked upon linen it had been covered with a tracing on strong thin paper, and the entire design worked through and over both paper and canvas. Those which were done upon linen seemed to belong to an earlier period than those worked on satin, which was perhaps an American adaptation of the

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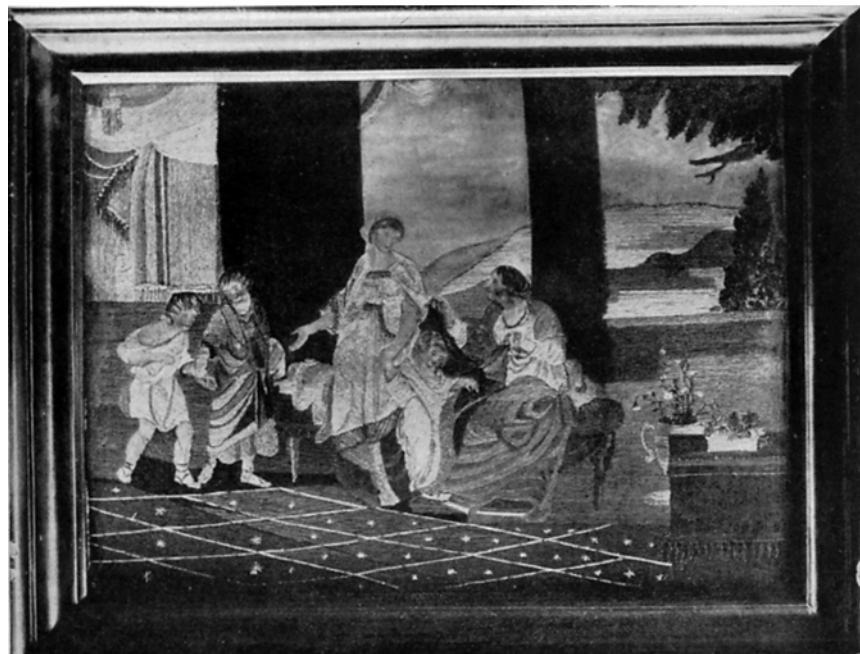
earlier method. Certainly the soft thick India satin, which was the ground of so many of them, made a delightful surface for embroidery, and blended with its colors into a silvery mass where work and background were equally effective. Two of these have survived the century or more of careful seclusion which followed the proud éclat of their production. One of the fortunate heirs to many of these exhibited treasures told me of a package or book containing heads in water color, evidently to be used as copies for the faces which might be found necessary for efforts in embroidery. The painting of these was perhaps a part of the education or accomplishment considered necessary to girls of prominent and successful families of the day.

Under favorable circumstances, such as a convenient relation between artist and needlework, this art would have developed into needlework tapestry. The groups would have outgrown their frames, and left their picture spaces on the walls, and, stretching into life-size figures, have become hangings of silken broidery, such as we find in Spain and Italy, from the hands of nuns or noble ladies.



Courtesy of Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

EMBROIDERED PICTURE in silks, with a painted sky.



Courtesy of Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

CORNELIA AND THE GRACCHI. Embroidered picture in silks, with velvet inlaid, worked by Mrs. Lydia Very of Salem at the age of sixteen while at Mrs. Peabody's school.

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The influence of the Bethlehem teaching lasted long enough to build up a very fine and critical standard of embroidery in America. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the influence of this school of embroidery upon the needlework practice of a growing country. Its qualities of sincerity, earnestness, and respect for the art of needlework gave importance to the work of hands other than that of necessary labor, and these qualities influenced all the various forms of work which followed it. The first divergence from the original work was in its application, rather than its method, for instead of having a strictly decorative purpose its application became almost exclusively personal. Flower embroidery of surpassing excellence was its general feature. The materials for the development of this form of art were usually satin, or the flexible undressed India silk which lent itself so perfectly to ornamentation. Breadths of cream-white satin, of a thickness and softness almost unknown in the present day, were stretched in Chippendale embroidery frames, and loops and garlands of flowers of every shape and hue were embroidered upon them. They were often done for skirts and sleeves

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of gowns of ceremony, giving a distinction even beyond the flowered brocades so much coveted by colonial belles.

This beautiful flower embroidery was, like its predecessor, the rare picture embroidery, too exacting in its character to be universal. It needed money without stint for its materials, and luxurious surroundings for its practice. Some of the beautiful old gowns wrought in that day are still to be seen in colonial exhibitions, and are even occasionally worn by great-great-granddaughters at important mimic colonial functions.

Floss embroidery upon silk and satin was not entirely confined to apparel, for we find an occasional piece as the front panel of one of the large, carved fire screens, which at that date were universally used in drawing-rooms as a shelter from the glare and heat of the great open fires which were the only method of heating. As the back of the screen was turned to the fire and the embroidered face to the room, its decoration was shown to admirable advantage, and one can hardly account for the rarity of the specimens of these antique screens, except upon the supposition that the roses, carnations, and forget-me-nots

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were still more effective when wrought upon the scant skirt of a colonial gown, instead of being shrouded in their careful coverings in the deserted drawing-room, and my lady of the embroidery might more effectively exhibit them in the lights of a ballroom. In recording the changes in the style and purposes of embroidery, from the days of homespun and home-dyed crewel to the almost living flowers wrought with lustrous flosses upon breadths of satin which were the best of the world's manufacture, one unconsciously traverses the ground of domestic and political history, from the days of the Pilgrims to the pomp of colonial courts.

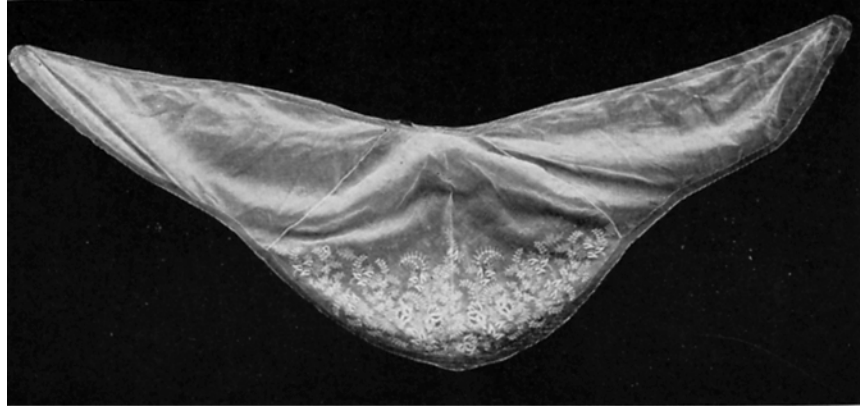
French Embroidery

The character and purposes of the art varied with every political and national change. In the middle of the eighteenth century, a demand had gone out from the new and growing America, and wandering over the seas had asked for something fine and airy with which to occupy delicate hands, unoccupied with household toil. The carefully acquired skill of the earlier periods of our history became in succeeding generations

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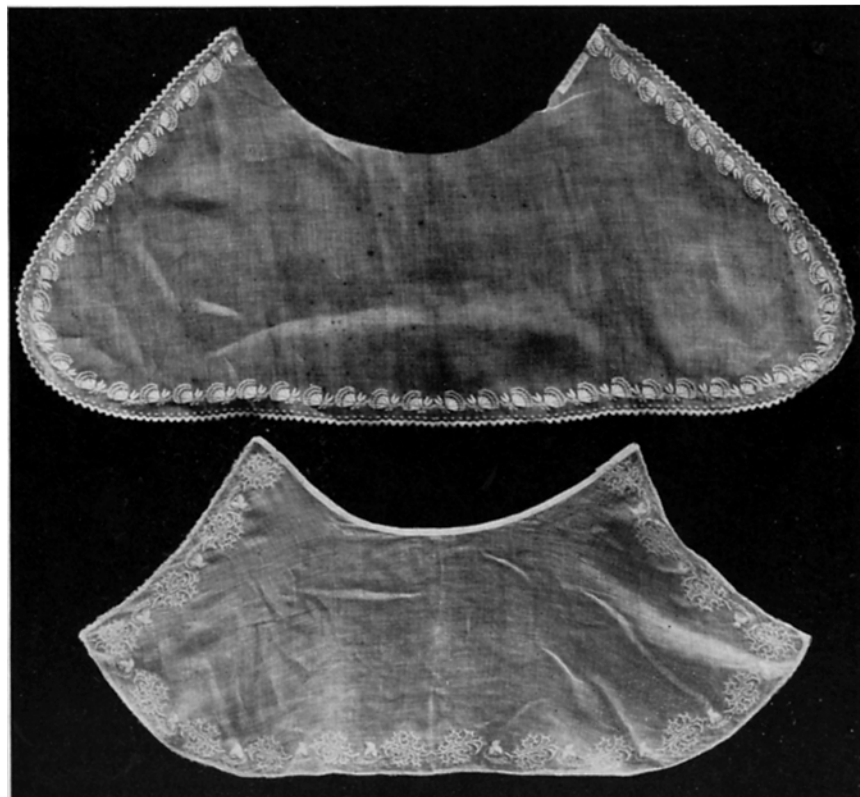
almost an inheritance of facility, and easily merged into the elaborate stitchery called French embroidery. I can find no trace of its having been *taught*, but plenty of proofs of its existence are to be seen on the needlework pictures under glass still hanging in many an old-fashioned parlor, or relegated to the curiosity corner of modern drawing-rooms. It is possible that the close intimacy existing between France and England at that period may have influenced this art. Many French families of high degree were seeking safety or profit in this country, and the convent-bred ladies of such families would naturally have shared their acquirements with those whose favor and interest were important to them as strangers. There was another form of this French embroidery, the materials used being cambrics, linens, and muslins of all kinds, the most precious of which were the linen-cambrics and India mulls. The use of the former still survives in the finest of French embroidered pocket handkerchiefs, but the latter is seldom seen except in the veils and vests of Oriental women, or in the studio draperies of all countries.

The threads used were flosses of linen or cotton,



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

CAPE of white lawn embroidered. Nineteenth century American.



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

COLLARS of white muslin embroidered. Nineteenth century American.

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preferably the latter, which were almost entirely imported. With these restricted materials, wonders of ornamentation were performed. The stitch, quite different from that of crewelwork or picture embroidery of the preceding period, was the simple over and over stitch we find in French embroidery of the present day. The leaves of the design or pattern were frequently brought into relief by a stuffing of under threads.

Everything was embroidered; gowns, from the belt to lower hem, finished with scalloped and sprigged ruffles in the same delicate workmanship, were everyday summer wear. Slips and sacques, which were not quite as much of an undertaking as an entire gown, were bordered and ruffled with the same embroidery. The amount and beauty of specimens which still exist after the lapse of nearly a century is quite wonderful. Small articles, like collars, capes and pelerines, were almost entirely covered with the most exquisite tracery of leaf and flower, a perfect frostwork of delicate stitchery, with patches of lacework introduced in spaces of the design.

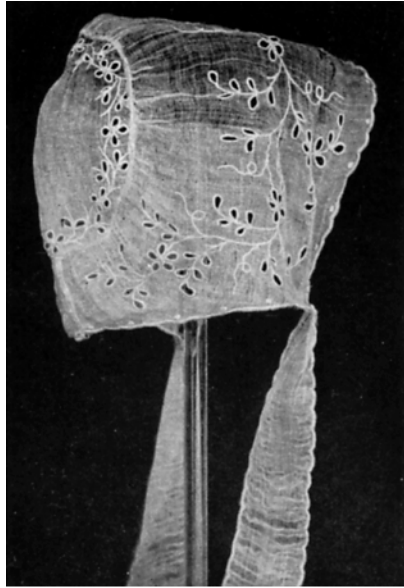
The designs were seldom, almost never, original, being nearly always copied directly from what

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was called "boughten work," to distinguish it from that which was produced at home.

Many beautiful and skillful stitches were used in this form of work. Lace stitches, made with bodkins or "piercers," or darning needles of sufficient size to make perforations, were skillfully rimmed and joined together in patterns by finer stitches, and open borders, and hemstitching, and dainty inventions of all kinds, for the embellishment of the fabrics upon which they were wrought.

With these materials and these methods most of the women of the different sections of the country busied themselves from a period beginning probably about 1710 and extending to 1840, and it is safe to say, notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of life between those dates, that at no period in the history of woman was as much time and consummate skill bestowed upon wearing apparel. Many a young girl of the day embroidered her own wedding dress, and during the months or years of its preparation suffered and enjoyed the same ambition which goes on in the present, to the acquirement of some wonder of French composition, or costly ornament of point lace and pearls.



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

Left — BABY'S CAP White mull, with eyelet embroidery. Nineteenth century American.



Courtesy Mrs. Isaac Pierson, Canandaigua, N. Y.

Right — BABY'S CAP Embroidered mull. 1825.



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

COLLAR of white embroidered muslin. Nineteenth century American.

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Everything was embroidered. The tender, downy head of the newly born baby was covered with a cap of delicatest material incrustated to hardness with needlework. The baby's caps of the period are a perfect chapter of human emotions; mother-love, emulation, pride, and declaration of family or personal position are skillfully expressed in a multiplicity of decorative stitches. A six-foot length of baptismal robe carried for half its length the same elaborate stitchery. Long delicate ruffles were edged with double rows of scallops. Double and triple collars and "pelerines" of muslin were to be found in the hands of all women of high or low degree. Articles of wearing apparel were done upon a soft fine muslin called mull, breadths of which were embroidered for skirts, lengths of it were scalloped and embroidered for flounces, and hand-lengths of it were done for the short waists and sleeves of the pretty Colonial gowns worn by our delicate ancestresses. One of these gowns, stretched to its widest, would hardly cover a front breadth of the habit of one of our well-nurtured athletic girls of the present, and the athletic girl can show no such handiwork as this.

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Beautiful embroidery it was that was lavished upon muslin gowns, baby's caps and long, long robes, and upon aprons, pelerines and capes. Over stitch instead of tent stitch was the order of the day. "Tent stitch and the use of the globes" was no longer advertised as a part of school routine. Instead of this, there were the most delicate overstitches and multitudinous lace-stitches which we nowhere else find, unless in the finest of Asian embroidery.

A large part of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of remarkable skill in all kinds of stitchery. It was not confined to embroidery, but was also applied to all varieties of domestic needlework. Hem-stitched ruffles were a part of masculine as well as feminine wear, and finely stitched and ruffled shirts for the head of the household were quite as necessary to the family dignity as embroidered gowns and caps for its feminine members.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the uses to which the national perfection of needle dexterity was put. It was, indeed, a national dexterity, for although its application was widely different in the eastern and southern states, the two schools of



Courtesy of Bergen County Historical Society, Hackensack, N. J.
EMBROIDERED SILK WEDDING WAISTCOAT, 1829. From the Westervelt collection.



Courtesy of Bergen County Historical Society, Hackensack, N. J.
EMBROIDERED WAIST OF A BABY DRESS, 1850. From the collection
of Mrs. George Coe.

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needlework, as we may term them, met and mingled to a common practice of both methods in the middle states.

Perhaps one may account for the prevalence of this kind of work, as it existed at a period of very limited education or literary pursuits among women. Domestic life was woman's kingdom, and needlework was one of its chief conditions. But whatever cause or causes stimulated the vogue of this variety of embroidery, we find it was universal among rich and poor, in city and country, for nearly three-quarters of a century. The narrow roll of muslin, for scalloped flounces and ruffling, and the skeins of French cotton went everywhere with girls and women, except to church and to ceremonious functions where men were included. Needlework was far more than an interest, it was an occupation.

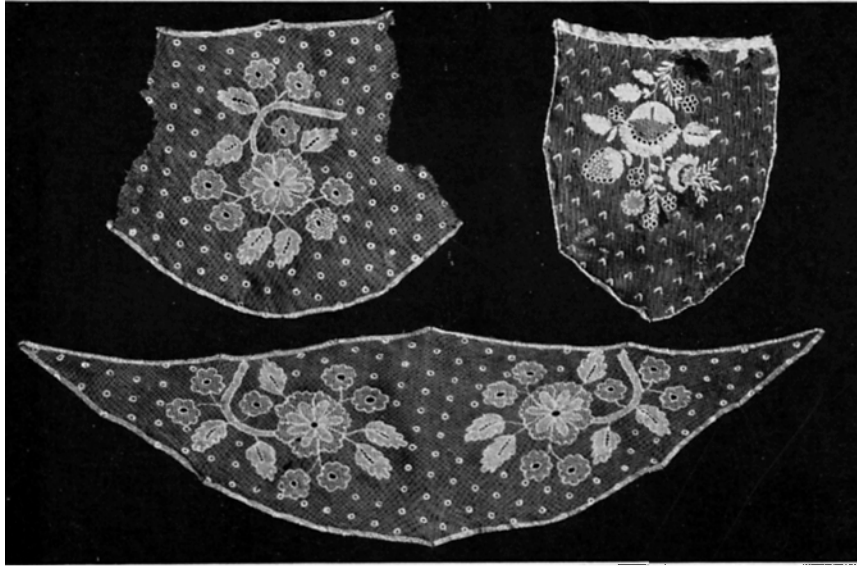
The varieties of tambour work and open stitchery of various ornamental kinds were possible for all capacities. It was a general form of fine needlework, happily available to women of the farmhouse, as well as of the mansion, and its exceeding precision and beauty gave a character to the purely utilitarian stitchery of the day

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which has made a high standard for succeeding generations. The hemstitched ruffles of shirts, the stitched plaits of simpler ones, the button-holed triangles at the intersection of seams—all these practically unknown to modern construction—were probably the result of the skillful and careful needlework ornamentation of simple fabrics.

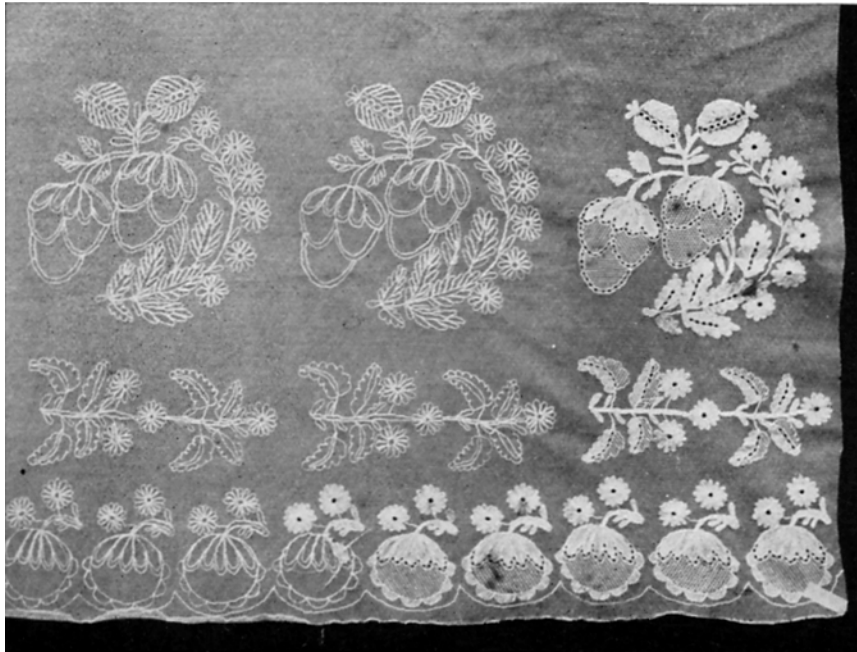
As an occupation, French embroidery practically displaced the making of cabinet pictures of graceful ladies in scant satin gowns which had occupied the embroidery frame, or decorated drawing-room walls. Flowers ceased to blossom upon pincushions, and the engrossing and prevalent occupation of needlework was entirely devoted to personal wear.

At this period, however, ships were coming into Boston and other eastern ports almost daily or weekly, instead of at intervals of weary months. Ships were going to and returning from China and the Indies and the islands of the sea, laden on their return voyages not only with spices and liquors and sweets of the southern world, but with satins and velvets and silks and prints, and delicately printed muslins and cambrics; and the



Courtesy of Mrs. A. S. Hewitt

EMBROIDERY ON NET. Border for the front of a cap made about 1820.



Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

VEIL (unfinished) hand run on machine-made net. American nineteenth century.

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fair linen and cotton flosses disappeared from the hands of needlewomen. Manufacturers had brought their looms to weave designs into the fabrics they produced and to simulate the work of the needle in a way which made one feel that the very spindles thought and wrought with conscious love of beauty.

The larger demands of luxurious living increased also the necessary work of the needle, and while the looms of France and Switzerland were busy weaving brodered stuffs, the needles of sewing women were kept at work fashioning the necessary garments of the millions of playing and working human beings. It was the era which gave birth to the "Song of the Shirt," a day of personal and exacting practice.

Lacework

The disappearance of the practice of French embroidery was as sudden as the dropping of a theater curtain, but a coexistent art called Spanish lacework lingered long after muslin embroidery had ceased to be. It was chiefly used in the elaboration of shawls, and large lace veils, which were a very graceful addition to Colonial

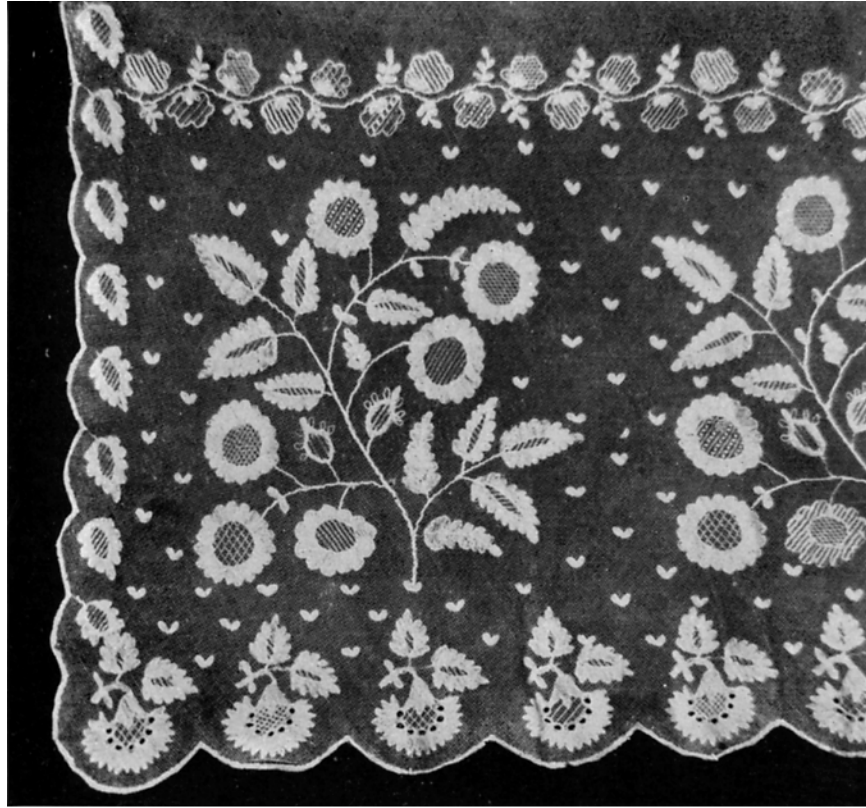
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and early American costume. There is no difficulty in tracing this kind of decorative needlework. It came from Mexico into New Orleans, and from there, by various secrets of locomotion, spread along the southern states.

The veils were yard squares of delicate white or black lace, heavily bordered and lightly spotted with flowers, while the shawls were sometimes nearly double that size, and of much heavier lace, as they had need to be, to carry the wealth of decorative darning lavished upon them.

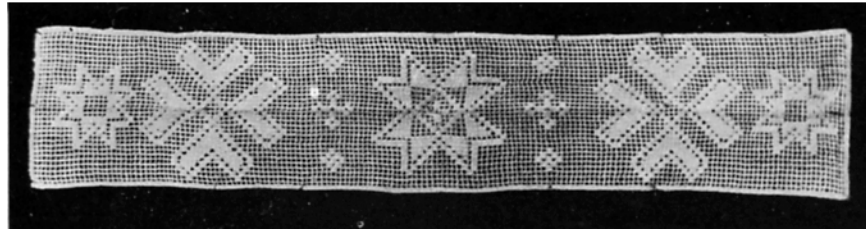
The design was always a foliated one, generally proceeding from a common center, representing a basket or a knot of ribbon, which confined the branching forms to the point of departure. The edges were heavily scalloped, with an extension of the ornamentation which included a rose or leaf for the filling of every scallop. The centers of flowers, and even of leaves, were often filled with beautiful variations of lace stitches worked into the meshes of the ground, and were very curious and interesting.

Darning with flosses upon both white and black bobbinet, or silk net, was a very common



Courtesy of Bergen County Historical Society, Hackensack, N. J.

LACE WEDDING VEIL, 36 x 40 inches, used in 1806. From the collection of Mrs. Charles H. Lozier.



Courtesy of Bergen County Historical Society, Hackensack, N. J.

HOMESPUN LINEN NEEDLEWORK called "Benewacka" by the Dutch. The threads were drawn and then whipped into a net on which the design was darned with linen. Made about 1800 and used in the end of linen pillow cases.

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form of the art, and veils of white with seed or all-over designs darned in white silk floss, may be called the "personal needlework" of the period, and some of the shawls were superb stretches of design and stitching. This art, although so beautiful in effect, demanded very little of the skill necessary to the preceding methods of embroidery. The lace was simply stretched or basted over paper or white cloth, upon which the design was heavily traced in ink; the spaces which were to be solidly filled were sometimes covered with a shading of red chalk, and when this was done, it was a matter of simple running over and under the meshes of the net, in directions indicated by the shape of the leaf or flower. The work could be heavier or lighter, according to the design and size or weight of the flosses used. I have seen a wedding veil worked upon a beautiful white silk net, carrying a sprinkling of orange flowers, darned with white silk flosses, and a heavy wreath around the border. Certainly no veil of priceless point lace could be so ethereally beautiful as was this relic of the past, and certainly no commercial product, however costly, could carry in its transparent folds the sentiment of

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such a bridal veil, wrought in love by the bride who was to wear it.

I have seen one beautiful shawl, where the entire design was done in shining silver-white flosses, upon a ground of black net, with the effect of a disappearance of the background, the wreaths and groups of flowers seeming to float around the figure of the wearer.

In one or two instances, also, I have seen shawls in varicolored flosses producing a silvery mass of ornamentation which was most effective, but they were experiments which evidently did not commend themselves to North American taste.

The same method of darning was used upon what was then called, "bobbinet footing," narrow lengths of bobbinet lace which were extensively used as ruffles for caps and trimming and garniture of capes and various articles of personal wear.

Cap bodies were also worked in this method; in fact, the decorative treatment of caps must have been a trying question. The dignity of the married woman depended somewhat upon the size of the cap she wore, and it was as necessary to convention that the crow-black locks of the

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matron of twenty-five should be hidden, as that the scant locks of sixty should be decently shrouded.

Insertings of darned footing, alternating with bands of muslin, were largely used in the construction of gowns, and, in short, this style of needlework, while not as universal or absorbing as French embroidery, continued longer in vogue and perhaps amused or solaced some who had little skill or time for the more exacting methods of embroidery.

CHAPTER V BERLIN WOOL- WORK

IT surprises us in these latter days of demand for the best conditions in the prosecution of decorative work, that it should have lived at all through the days of existence in one-roomed log cabins of early settlers and the conflicting demands of pioneer life. It survived them all, and the little, fast-arriving Puritan children were taught their stitches as religiously as their commandments; and so American embroidery grew to be an art which has enriched the past and future of its executants.

After the two periods of French and Spanish needlework passed by, there appeared what was known as Berlin woolwork. Those who in earlier times were devoted to fine embroidery solaced their idleness with this new work—certainly a poor substitute for the beautiful embroidery of the preceding generation, but answering the purpose of traditional employment for the leisure class. This came into vogue and was rather extensively used for coverings of screens, chairs, sofas, footstools and the various specimens of household

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furniture made by workmen who had served with Adam, Chippendale and Sheraton, and who had brought books of patterns with them to the prosperous, growing market of the New World. Berlin woolwork was a method of cross-stitch upon canvas in colored wools or silks—in fact, an extension of sampler methods into pictures and screens, or the more utilitarian chair and sofa covers. It was sometimes varied by using broadcloth or velvet as a foundation, the canvas threads being drawn out after the picture was complete. We occasionally find entire sets of beautiful old mahogany chairs, with cushions of cross-stitch embroidery, the subjects ranging over everything in the animal or vegetable world, so that one might sit in turn upon horses, bead-eyed and curled lap dogs, or wreaths of lilies and roses.

Occasionally, also, a glassed and framed picture of elaborate design and beautiful workmanship is seen, but as a rule it must be confessed that in America this method of embroidery, as an art, failed to achieve dignity. This was not in the least owing to the actual technique of the process, since beautiful tapestries have been accomplished,

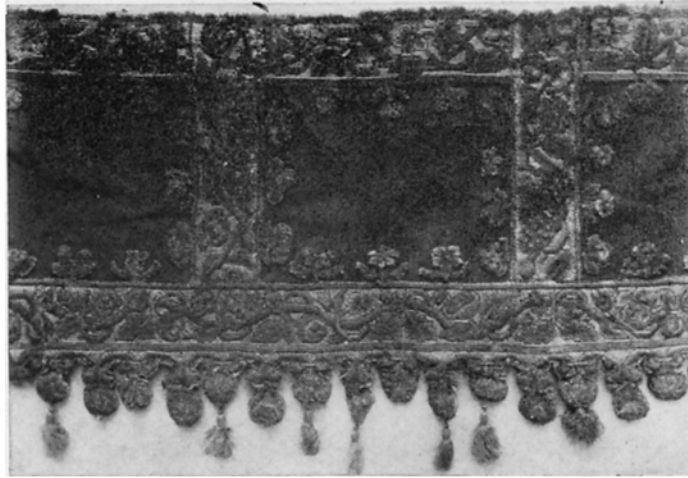
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taking canvas as a medium and foundation for a dexterous use of design and color.

The square blocks of the canvas stitch are no more objectionable in an art process than the block of enamel of which priceless mosaics are made, but one can easily see that if every design for mosaic work could be indefinitely reproduced and sold by the thousands, with numbered and colored blocks of glass, something—we hardly know what—would be lost in even the most exact reproductions.

Original design, however simple, is the expression of a thought, and passes directly from the mind of the originator to the material upon which it is expressed; but when the design becomes an article of commercial supply it loses in interest, and if the process of production is simple, requiring little thought and skill, the work also fails to call out in us the reverence we willingly accord to skillful and painstaking embroidery.

Yet we must acknowledge there are many examples of Berlin woolwork which possess the merits of beautiful color and exact and even workmanship. Some of them are done upon the finest of canvas with silks of exquisite shadings, and where figures are represented the faces are



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum

BED HANGING of polychrome cross-stitch applied on blue woolen ground.



Courtesy of the Edgewater Tapestry Looms

NEEDLEPOINT SCREEN made in fine and coarse point. Single cross-stitch.

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worked with silk in "single stitch," which means one crossing of the canvas instead of two, as in ordinary cross-stitch. The latter was of course better suited for furniture coverings, both in strength and quality of surface, while the method of single stitch succeeded in presenting a smooth and well-shaded surface, sufficiently like a painted one to stand for a picture. Indeed, veritable pictures were produced in this method and were effective and interesting. In these specimens the faces and hands, while worked in the same cross-stitch, were varied by being done on a single crossing of the canvas with one stitch, while the costumes and accessories of the picture were done over the larger square of two threads of the canvas, with the double crossing of the stitch.

The faces were, in some cases, still further differentiated by being wrought in silk instead of wool threads.

The embroidered chair and sofa covers had quite the effect of tapestries, and were far better than a not uncommon variation of the same needlework, where the broadcloth or velvet background held the embroidery.

The designs were copied from patterns printed

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in color upon cross-ruled paper, and consisted of bunches of flowers of various sorts, or pictures of dogs, and horses, and birds. A white lap dog worked upon a dark background was the favorite design for a footstool, and this small object tapered out the existence of decorative cross-stitch, until it grew to be in use only as a decoration for toilet slippers. The final end of this style of work was long deferred on account of the fact that a pair of cloth slippers, embroidered by the hands of some affectionate girl or doting woman, was a token which was not too unusual to carry inconvenient significance. It might mean much or little, much tenderness or affection, or a work of idleness tinged with sentiment.

The mechanical and commercial effect of this stitchery discouraged its use; its printed patterns and the regularity of its counted stitches giving neither provocation nor scope to originality of thought or design. This was not the fault of the stitch itself, since "cross-stitch" was the first form of needle decoration. It is, in fact, the A B C of all decorative stitchery, the method evolved by all primitive races except the American Indian. It followed, more or less closely, the



Courtesy of the Edgewater Tapestry Looms

Left — HAND-WOVEN TAPESTRY of fine and coarse needlepoint.

Right — TAPESTRY woven on a hand loom. The design worked in fine point and the background coarse point. A new effect in hand weave originated at the Edgewater Tapestry Looms.



Courtesy of the Edgewater Tapestry Looms

A new effect in hand weave

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development of the art of weaving. When this had passed from the weaving together of osiers into mats or baskets, and had reached the stage of the weaving of hair and vegetable fiber into cloth, the decoration of such cloth with independent colored fiber was the next step in the creation of values, and, naturally, the form of decorative stitches followed the lines of weaving. Simple as was its evolution, and its preliminary use, cross-stitch has a past which entitles it to reverence. With many races it has remained a habitual form of expression, and, as in Moorish and Algerian work, is carried to a refinement of beauty which would seem beyond so simple a method. It has given form to a lasting style of design, to geometrical borders, which have survived races and periods of history, and still remain an underlying part of the world of decorative linens.

It is interesting to note that it had no place in aboriginal embroidery, and marks its creation as following the art of weaving. It is a long step from this traditional past of its origin to the short past of the stitchery of America, where the little fingers of small Puritan maids followed the lines evolved by the generations of the earlier world.

CHAPTER VI REVIVAL OF EMBROIDERY, AND THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIETY OF DECORATIVE ART

WHEN French needlework had had its day, and the evanescent life of Berlin woolwork had passed, for a period of half a century needlework ceased to flourish in America. Indeed, the art seemed to have died out root and branch, and only necessary and utilitarian needlework was practiced. It seems strange, after all the wonderful triumphs of the needle in earlier years, that for the succeeding half or three-quarters of a century needlework as an art should actually have ceased to be. It had died, branch and stem and root, vanished as if it had never been. During at least half a century we were a people without decorative needlework art in any form. The eyes and thoughts of women were turned in other directions.

Of course there is always a reason for a change in public taste, something in the development of the time leads and governs every trend of

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popular thought. It may be the attraction of new inventions, or the perfection of new processes, or even, and this is not uncommon, the charm and fascination of some rare personality, whose ruling is absolute in its own immediate vicinity, and whose example spreads like circles in water far and far beyond the immediate personal influence. We cannot trace this apparent dearth of the art to one particular cause, we only know that in America the practice and study of music succeeded to its place in almost every household. The needle, that honored implement of woman, bade fair to be a thing almost of tradition, something which would be in time relegated to museums and collections, to be studied historically, as we study the implements of the Stone Age, and other pre-historic periods.

I remember an amusing story told by a Baltimore friend, not given to the manufacture of instances, that during those years of dearth soon after the Civil War she was visiting a lovely southern family who had lived through the days of privation. One day there arose a great cry and disturbance in the house, which turned out to be a quest for *the* needle, where was *the* needle.

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Nobody could find it, although it could be proved that at a certain date it had been quilted into its accustomed place on the edge of the drawing-room curtain of the east window. Finally it was found on the wrong curtain, minus the point, and this disability gave rise to a discussion. Should it be taken to town, and have the point renewed by the watchmaker? This decision was discouraged by the daughter of the house, who related that the last time she had taken it for the same purpose, the watchmaker had said to her, "Miss Cassy, I have put a point on that needle three times, and I would seriously advise you to buy a new one."

It was only in America that the needle had ceased to be an active implement. In England it had never been so constantly or feverishly employed. For the second time in its long history, its work became purely personal. The same necessity which impressed itself upon the poor little mother of mankind, when she sought among the fig leaves for wherewithal to clothe herself, was upon the domestic woman, who sewed cloth into skirts instead of vegetable fiber into aprons.

It is curious to contrast the effect of this loss of



Left — EMBROIDERED MITS



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

Right — WHITE COTTON VEST embroidered in colors. Eighteenth-nineteenth century American.



Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

WHITE MULL embroidered in colors. Eighteenth-nineteenth century American.



EMBROIDERED VALANCE, part of set and spread for high-post bedstead, 1788. Worked in crewels on India cotton, by Mrs. Gideon Granger, Canandaigua, New York.

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embroidery in the two countries, England and America. Doubtless there were other reasons than the lost popularity of needlework as an art, that in England it should have resulted in the life or death practice of necessary needlework, and in America, that the facile fingers of woman simply turned to the ivory keys of the piano for occupation. But the fact remains that starvation threatened the woman of one country, while in the other they were practicing scales. In England it was a period of stress and strain, of veritable "work for a living," the period of "The Song of the Shirt." Happily, in this blessed land, where hunger was unknown, we were not conscious of its terrors, and perhaps hardly knew why the "cambric needle" and the darning needle were the only ones in the market. Embroidery needles had "gone out." Then came the relief of the sewing machine, born in America, where it was scarcely needed, but speedily flying across the ocean to its life-saving work in England, where the tragedy of the poor seamstress was on the stage of life. Like many another form of relief, it was not entirely adequate to the situation. Its first effect was to create a need of remunerative

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work. The sewing machine took upon itself the toil of the seamstress, but it left the seamstress idle and hungry. This was a new and even darker situation than the last, but Englishwomen came to the rescue with a resuscitated form of needlework, and embroidery tiptoed upon the empty stage, new garments covering her ancient form, and was welcomed with universal acclaim.

Most cultivated and fortunate Englishwomen had a certain knowledge of art and were eager to put all of their uncoined effort at the service of that body of unhappy women, who, without money, had the culture which goes with the use and possession of money. These unfortunate sisters, who were rather malodorously called decayed gentlewomen, became eager and petted pupils of a new and popular organization called the South Kensington School. Its peculiar claims upon English society gave it from the first the help of the most advanced and intelligent artistic assistance. The result of this was not only a resuscitation of old methods of embroidery, but the great gain to the school, or society, of design and criticism of such men as Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, and William Morris.

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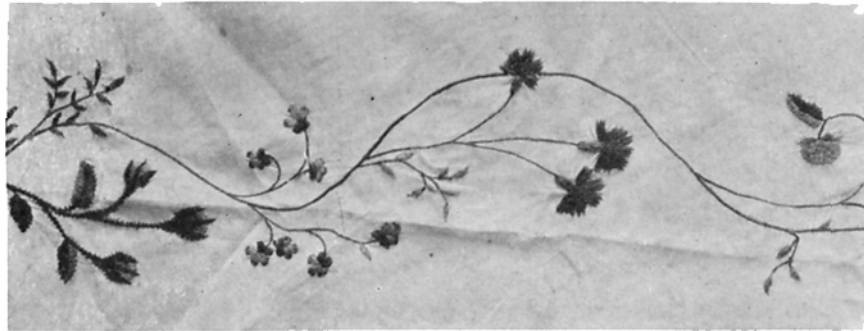
It was with this vogue that it appeared in America, and attracted the attention of those who were afterward to be interested in the formation of a society which was founded for almost identical purposes. Not indeed to prevent starvation of body, but to comfort the souls of women who pined for independence, who did not care to indulge in luxuries which fathers and brothers and husbands found it hard to supply. So, from what was perhaps a social and mental, rather than a physical, want, grew the great remedy of a resuscitation of one of the valuable arts of the world, a woman's art, hers by right of inheritance as well as peculiar fitness.

With true business enterprise, the new English Society prepared an important exhibit for our memorial fair, the Centennial, held in Philadelphia to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of national independence. This exhibit of Kensington Embroidery all unwittingly sowed the seed not only of great results, but in decorative art worked in many other directions. The exhibits of art needlework from the New Kensington School of Art in London, their beauty, novelty and easy adaptiveness, exactly fitted it to experiment by all

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the dreaming forces of the American woman. They were good needlewomen by inheritance and sensitive to art influences by nature, and the initiative capacity which belongs to power and feeling enabled them at once to seize upon this mode of expression and make it their own. It was the means of inaugurating another era of true decorative needlework, perfectly adapted to the capacity of all women, and destined to be developed on lines peculiarly national in character. The effect of this exhibit was not exactly what was expected in the sale of its works, and long afterward, when discussing this apparent failure, in the face of an immediate adoption in America of the Society's methods and productions, I explained it to myself and an English friend, by the national difference in the race feeling for art, and especially for color.

It seems to me, after the observation and intimacy of years with the growing art of decoration in this country, that the color gift is a race gift with us. English art-work is nearly always characterized by subdued and modified harmony, while that of America has vivid and striking notes which play upon a higher key,



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum

DETAIL of linen coverlet worked in colored wool.



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum

LINEN COVERLET embroidered in Kensington stitch with colored wool.

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and still melt as softly into each other as the perfect modulations of the best English art. I was very conscious of this during the year of my directorship of the Woman's Building and exhibits in the World's Columbian Fair at Chicago, that place of wonderful comparisons of the art-work of the world. I could nearly always recognize work of American origin by its singing color-quality, as different from the sharp semibarbaric notes of Oriental art as from the minor cadences of English decorative work. But to return to the effect of the English exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial: it was followed by the immediate formation of the Society of Decorative Art in New York City, which became the parent of like societies in every considerable city or town in the United States. By its good fortune in having a president who belonged by right of birth, and certainly of ability and achievement, to the best of New York society, the movement enlisted the sympathy and interest of the influential class of New York women, while there was waiting in the shadow a troop of able women who were shut out from the costly gayeties of society by comparative poverty, but connected

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with it by friendships and associations, often, indeed, by ties of blood.

Embroidery became once more the most facile and successful of pursuits. Graduates from the Kensington School were employed as teachers in nearly all of the different societies, and in this way every city became the center of this new-old form of embroidery, for what is called "Kensington Embroidery" is in fact a far-away repetition of old triumphs of the British needle. I use the word "British" advisedly, for it was when England was known as Britain among the nations that her embroidery was a thing of almost priceless value. In modern English embroidery, the days of Queen Anne have been the limit of backward imitation; and, in fact, ancient English embroidery was a process of long and assiduous labor, as well as of knowledge and inspiration. Our hurried modern conditions would not encourage the repetition of the hand-breadth pictures in embroidery of the earliest specimens, where countless numbers of stitches were lavished upon a single production. The embroidered picture of The Garden of Eden described in chapter four is a specimen of the minute representation. These specimens are, to

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the art of needlework, what the Dutch school of painting is to the great mural canvases of the present day.

The development of the nineteenth century in America was only at first an exact reflection of English methods. The first thing which marked the influence of national character and taste was, that English models and designs almost immediately disappeared, only a few such, consisting of those which had been given to the art by masters of design like Morris and Marcus Ward, were retained, and American needlewomen boldly took to the representation of vivid and graceful groups of natural flowers, following the lead of Moravian practice and of flower painting, rather than that of decorative design.

As a natural result, crewels were soon discarded in favor of silks, and natural extravagance, or national influence, led to the use of costly materials instead of the linens of English choice and preference. So the old flower embroidery of Bethlehem had a second birth. American girl art-students soon found their opportunity in the creation of applied design, and before embroidery had ceased to be a matter of representation of

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flowers in colored silks, the flowers grew into restrained and appropriate borders, or proper and correct space decoration, and the day of women designers for manufacturers had come.

The circulars of the first Society of Decorative Art were not only comprehensive, but were ambitious. Its objects were set forth as follows:

1. To encourage profitable industries among women who possess artistic talent, and to furnish a standard of excellence and a market for their work.
2. To accumulate and distribute information concerning the various art industries which have been found remunerative in other countries, and to form classes in Art Needlework.
3. To establish rooms for the exhibition and sale of Sculptures, Paintings, Wood Carvings, Paintings upon Slate, Porcelain and Pottery, Lacework, Art and Ecclesiastical Needlework, Tapestries and Hangings, and, in short, decorative work of any description, done by women, and of sufficient excellence to meet the recently stimulated demand for such work.
4. To form Auxiliary Committees in other cities and towns of the United States, which committees shall receive and pronounce upon work produced in, or in the vicinity of, such places, and which, if approved by them, may be consigned to the salesrooms in New York.
5. To make connections with potteries, by which desirable forms for decoration, or original designs for special

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orders, may be procured, and with manufacturers and importers of the various materials used in art work, by which artists may profit.

6. To endeavor to obtain orders from dealers in China, Cabinet Work, or articles belonging to Household Art throughout the United States.
7. To induce each worker thoroughly to master the details of one variety of decoration, and endeavor to make for her work a reputation of commercial value.

The Society meets an actual want in the community by furnishing a place where orders can be given directly to the artist for any kind of art or decorative work on exhibition.

It is believed that, by the encouragement of this Society, the large amount of work done by those who do not make it a profession will be brought to the notice of buyers outside a limited circle of friends. The aggregate of this work is large, and when directed into remunerative channels will prove a very important department of industry.

The necessary expenses of the Society for the first, and possibly the second, year will be defrayed by a membership fee of Five Dollars, as well as by donations; but after that time it is expected that all expenses will be met by commissions upon the sale of articles consigned to it.

The contributions of all women artists of acknowledged ability are earnestly requested. By their co-operation it is intended that a high standard of excellence shall be established in what is offered to the public, and, by seeing truly artistic decorative work, it is hoped many women

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who have found the painting of pictures unremunerative may turn their efforts in more practical directions.

All work approved by the Committee of Examination will be attractively exhibited without expense to the artist, but in case of sale a commission of 10 per cent will be charged upon the price received.

There was good teaching from the first, but very independent judgment, and it was not long before the more liberal and less chastened American mind followed national impulses. Why, said the practical American, shall we spend time and effort in doing things which are not adequate in final effect to the labor and cost we bestow upon them, and which do not really accord with costly surroundings, and, in addition to these detriments, can and probably will be eaten by moths when all is done? The result of this interrogative reasoning was an immediate resort to satins and silks and flosses, wherewith larger and more important things than tidies were created—lambrequins, hangings, bedspreads, screens, and many other furnishings, all wrought in exquisite flosses, and more or less beautiful in color.

The institution of this Society of Decorative Art was in every respect a timely and popular

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movement. It followed the example of the English Society in making needlework the chief object of instruction. Our artists became interested in the matter of design, as the English artists had been, and under their influence the scope of embroidery was much enlarged. I remember the first contribution which indicated original talent was a piece of needlework by Mrs. W. S. Hoyt of Pelham, which was peculiarly ingenious, making a curious link between the cross-stitch tapestries of the German school and the woven tapestries of France. This needlework was done upon a fabric which imitated the corded texture of tapestries, and was stamped in a design which carried the color and idea of a tapestry background. Upon this surface Mrs. Hoyt had drawn a group of figures in mediæval costumes, afterward working them in single cross-stitch over the ribs produced by the filling threads of the fabric. The figures and costumes were done in faded tints which harmonized with the background, the stitches keeping the general effect of surface in the fabric. It will be seen that the result was extremely like that of a tapestry of the fifteenth century. This was

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followed by an exhibit of various landscape pictures of Mrs. Holmes of Boston, a daughter-in-law of the poet and writer. Mrs. Holmes had chosen silks and bits of weavings for her medium, using them as a painter uses colors upon his palette. A stretch of pale blue silk, with outlined hills lying against it, made for her a sky and background, while a middle distance of flossy white stitches, advancing into well-defined daisies, brought the foreground to one's very feet. Flower-laden apple branches against the sky were lightly sketched in embroidery stitches, like the daisies. It was a delicious bit of color and so well managed as to be as efficient a wall decoration as a water color picture.

In what may be called pictorial art in textiles Mrs. Holmes was not alone, although her work probably incited to the same sort of experiment. Miss Weld of Boston sent a picture made up in the same way, of a background of material which lent itself to the representation of a field of swampy ground where the spotted leaves of the adder's tongue, the yellow water-lily, with its compact balls, and the flaming cardinal flower are growing, while swamp grasses are nodding

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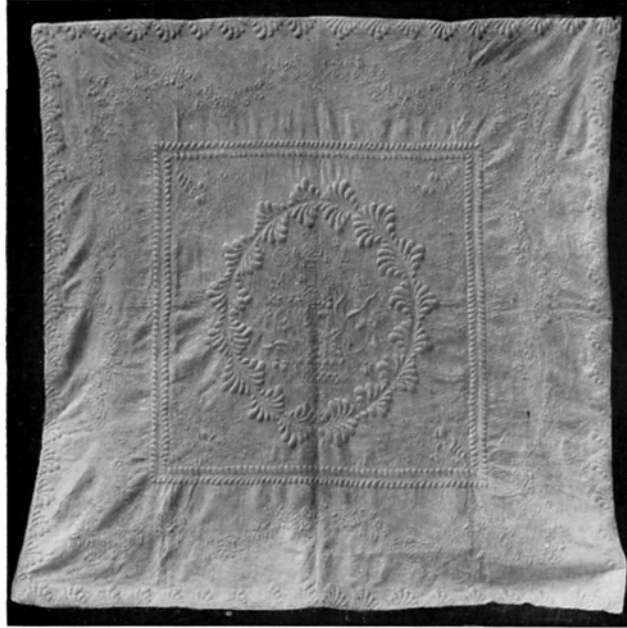
above. This was as good in its way as any sketch of them could be, and affected one with the *sentiment* of the scene, as it is the mission of art to do. Miss Weld, Miss Carolina Townshend of Albany, Mrs. William Hoyt of Pelham and Mrs. Dewey of New York, each contributed very largely to the formation of characteristic and progressive needlework art in America. There were other individuals whose work was inciting many, who have also, perhaps unknown to themselves, helped in this progress. Indeed, I remember many pieces of embroidery, loaned for the Bartholdi Exhibition of 1883, which would have done credit to any period of the art, and each piece undoubtedly had its influence.

The work of schools or societies had been much less marked by original development. During the ten years of their existence the four largest societies, those of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, have been under the direction of English teachers, and have followed more or less closely the excellencies of the English School. Even in Boston, where, owing to the decided cultivation of art and the early introduction of drawing in the public schools, one would have

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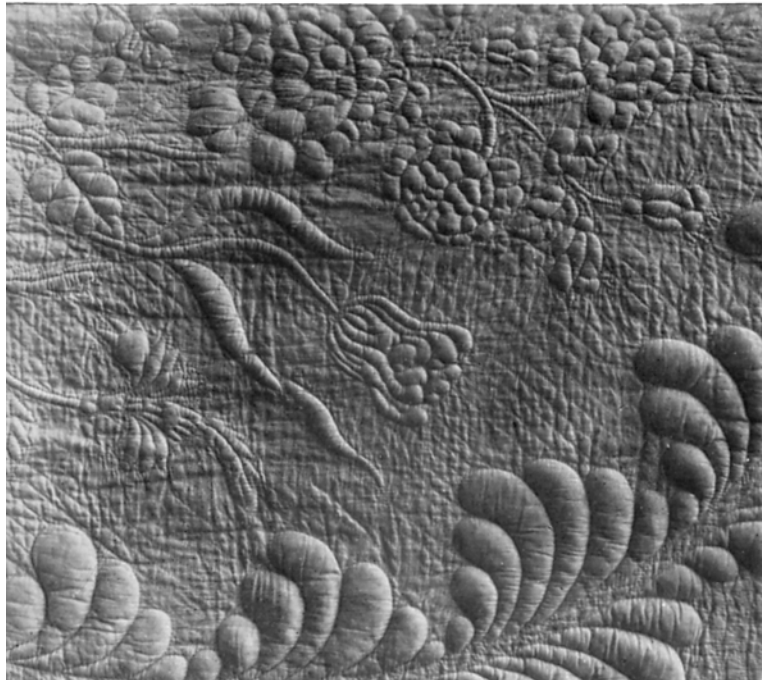
looked for a rather characteristic development, English designs and English methods have been somewhat closely followed.

In attempting to account for this fact one must remember that it is against the nature of associated authority to follow individual or original suggestions. There must be a broad and well-trodden path for committees to walk together in, and the track of the Kensington School is broad and authoritative enough for such following. The example and incitement of the various societies were the seed of much good and progressive art in America. In saying this I do not by any means confine the credit of the growth or development of needlework to this society alone, for there have been other influences at work. What I mean to say is this, that the other kindred societies, like the Woman's Exchange, the Needlework Societies, the Household Art Societies, and the Blue-and-White Industries started from this one root, and are as much indebted to the original society as things must always be to the central thought which inspired them. Compared with English work of the same period, they were distinguished by a certain spontaneity of motive



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum

QUILTED COVERLET worked entirely by hand.



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum

DETAIL of above coverlet.

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and a luxuriance of effect, which has made these specimens more valuable to present possessors, and will make them far more precious as heirlooms. This sudden efflorescence of the art was, however, almost in the hands of amateurs, except for the occasional effort by some of the advanced contributors of the New York and Boston societies.

The commercial development of embroidery in this country has been in the direction of embroidery upon linen, and in this line each and every society of decorative art has been a center of valuable teaching. At the Columbian Exposition, to which all prominent societies contributed, the perfection of design, color and method, the general level of excellence, was on the highest possible plane. In its line nothing could be better, and it was encouraging to see that it was *not* amateur work, *not* a thing to be taken up and laid down according to moods and circumstances, but an educated profession or occupation for women, the acquirement of a knowledge which might develop indefinitely.

Of course the trend of the decorative needlework was almost entirely in the direction of stitchery pure and simple, devoted to table

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linen and luxurious household uses, and this grew to a point of absolute perfection. Table-centers and doilies embroidered in colors on pure white linen reached a point of beauty which was amazing. When I saw, at the World's Columbian Exposition, the napery of the world, wrought by all races of women, I was delighted to see that the line of linen embroidery which was the direction of the common effort did not in the least surpass the work sent by the Decorative Art societies of most of our American cities.

CHAPTER VII AMERICAN TAPESTRY

THE Society of Decorative Art, has proved itself a means for the accomplishment of the two ends for which it was founded—namely, the fostering and incitement of good taste in needlework and artistic production, and the encouragement of talent in women, as well as providing a means of remunerative employment for their gifts in this direction.

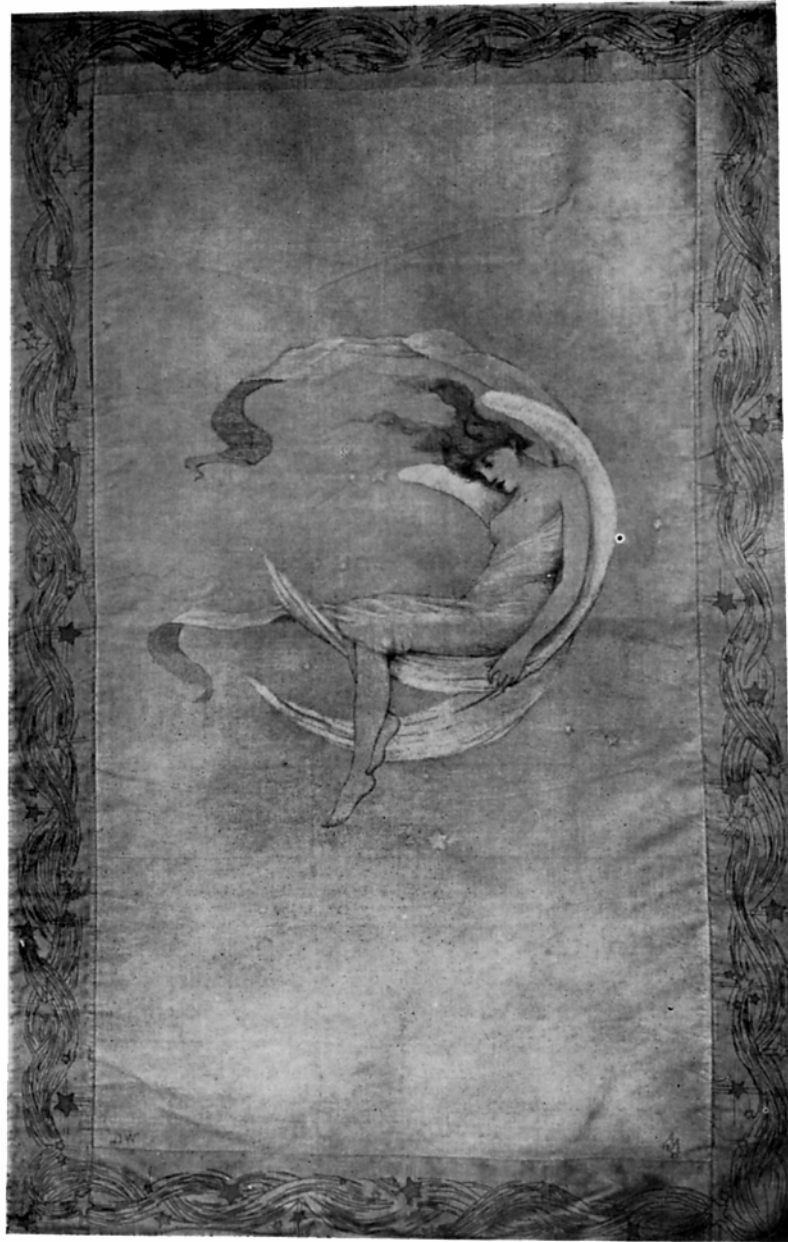
While the success of this Society was a source of great satisfaction to me, I had in my mind larger ambitions, which, by its very philanthropic purposes, could not be satisfied, ambitions toward a truly great American effort in a lasting direction.

I therefore allied myself with a newly formed group of men, all well-known in their own lines of art, Louis Tiffany, famed for his Stained Glass, Mr. Coleman for color decoration and the use of textiles, and Mr. De Forest for carved and ornamental woodwork. My interests lay in the direction and execution of embroideries. I can speak authoritatively as to the effect upon it of the other arts, and I can hardly imagine better

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conditions for its development. The kindred arts of weaving and embroidery were carried on with those of stained glass, mural painting, illustration, and the other expressions of art peculiar to the different members. The association of different forms of art stimulated and developed and was the means of producing very important examples both in embroidery, needle-woven tapestries and loom weaving.

As I was the woman member of this association of artists, it rested with me to adapt the feminine art, which was a part of its activities, to the requirements of the association. This was no small task. It meant the fitting of any and every textile used in the furnishing of a house to its use and place, whether it might be curtains, portieres, or wall coverings. I drew designs which would give my draperies a framing which carried out the woodwork, and served as backgrounds for the desired wreaths and garlands of embroidered flowers. I learned many valuable lessons of adaptation for the beautiful embroideries we produced. The net holding roses was a triumph of picturesque stitchery, and most acceptable as placed in the house of the man whose fortunes



THE WINGED MOON

Designed by Dora Wheeler and executed in needle-woven tapestry by
The Associated Artists, 1883.

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depended upon fish, and many another of like character.

Then one day appeared Mrs. Langtry in her then radiance of beauty, insisting upon a conference with me upon the production of a set of bed-hangings which were intended for the astonishment of the London world and to overshadow all the modest and schooled productions of the Kensington, when she herself should be the proud exhibitor. She looked at all the beautiful things we had done and were doing, and admired and approved, but still she wanted "something different, something unusual." I suggested a canopy of our strong, gauze-like, creamy silk bolting-cloth, the tissue used in flour mills for sifting the superfine flour. I explained that the canopy could be crosses on the under side with loops of full-blown, sunset-colored roses, and the hanging border heaped with them. That there might be a coverlet of bolting-cloth lined with the delicatest shade of rose-pink satin, sprinkled plentifully with rose petals fallen from the wreaths above. This idea satisfied the pretty lady, who seemed to find great pleasure in the range of our exhibits, our designs and our workrooms, and when

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her order was completed, she was triumphantly satisfied with its beauty and unusualness. The scattered petals were true portraits done from nature, and looked as though they could be shaken off at any minute. I came to see much of this beautiful specimen of womanhood, who played her part in the eyes of the world; and of things of more lasting importance than her somewhat ephemeral career, I should be tempted to tell amusing conclusions. She was an Oriental butterfly, which flitted along our sober, serious by-path of business and labor, looking for honey of any sort to be gathered on its sober track.

When Mr. Tiffany came to me with an order for the drop-curtain of a theater, I did not trouble myself about a scheme for it, knowing that it had probably taken exact and interesting form in his own mind. It was a beautiful lesson to me, this largeness of purpose in needlework. The design for this curtain turned out to be a very realistic view of a vista in the woods, which gave opportunity for wonderful studies of color, from clear sun-lit foregrounds to tangles of misty green, melting into blue perspectives of distance. It was really a daring experiment in methods of

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appliqué, for no stitchery pure and simple was in place in the wide reaches of the picture. So we went on painting a woods interior in materials of all sorts, from tenuous crêpes to solid velvets and plushes. It was one of Mrs. Holmes' silk pictures on a large scale, and was perhaps more than reasonably successful. I remember the great delight in marking the difference between oak and birch trees and fitting each with its appropriate effect of color and texture of leaf; and the building of a tall gray-green yucca, with its thick satin leaves and tall white pyramidal groups of velvet blossoms, standing in the very foreground, was as exciting as if it were standing posed for its portrait, and being painted in oils.

The variety of our work was a good influence for progress. We were constantly reaching out to fill the various demands, and, beyond them, to materialize our ideals. As far as art was concerned in our work, what we tried to do was not to repeat the triumphs of past needlework, but to see how far the best which had been done was applicable to the present.

If tapestries had been the highest mark of the past, to see whether and how their use could be

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fitted to the circumstances of today, and, if we found a fit place for them in modern decoration, to see that their production took account of the methods and materials which belonged to present periods, and adapted the production to modern demands.

We soon came to the ideal of tapestries which loomed above and beyond us and had been reached by every nation in turn which had applied art to textiles, but in all except very early work the accomplishment had been more of the loom than of hand work. My dream was of American Tapestries, made by embroidery alone, carrying personal thought into method. We decided that there was no reason for the limitation of the beautiful art of needlework to personal use, or even to its numerous domestic purposes. This most intimate of the arts of decoration has been in the form of wall hangings for the bare wall spaces of architecture from the time when dwellings passed their first limited use of protection and defense. After this first use of houses came the instinct and longing for beauty, and the feeling which prompts us in these wider days of achievement to cover our wall spaces with



Courtesy of the Edgewater Tapestry Looms

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DESIGN TAPESTRY PANEL

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pictures, moved our far-off forefathers and mothers to offer their skill in spinning, and weaving, and picturing with the needle hangings to cover the bareness of the home. This impulse grew with the centuries, until tapestries were a natural art expression of different races of men, so that we have Italian, Spanish, French, Dutch and English tapestries, each with national tastes and characteristics of production. As time went on, inevitable machinery undertook the task of making wall hangings, with the whole-hearted help of all who had given their lives to art, and tapestries had become a part of the riches of the world. When the greater part of the world's wealth was in the possession of Popes and Princes, it was usual to expend a goodly portion of it in works of art. Pictures and tapestries and exquisitely wrought metal work, weavings and embroideries, made priceless by costly materials and the thoughts and labor of artists, were reckoned not as a sign of wealth but as actual wealth. They were really riches, as much as stocks and bonds are riches today. Such things were accumulated as anxiously and persistently as one accumulates land or houses, or railroad bonds or stocks, and

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the buyer was not poorer; but in fact he was richer for money expended in this fashion. This everyday financial fact lay underneath and supported the beautiful pageant of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gilding them with a radiance which has attracted the admiration and excited the wonder of all succeeding years.

That flower and culmination of labor which we call art was the capital of those early centuries, and took the place of the Bank, the Bourse, and the Exchange which later financial ideas have created.

It is in a great measure to this fact, as well as to the intense love for, and appreciation of, art which distinguished this period, that we owe the wonderful treasures which have enriched the later world. They belong no longer to princes and prelates, but to governments and museums, and are object lessons to the student and the artisan, and an inheritance for both rich and poor of all mankind.

Except in the light of these treasures of art, it would be difficult to understand how far-reaching and comprehensive was the greed of beauty which possessed and distinguished the

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centers of tapestry production. The museums of the world are made up of what remains of them. The pictures and tapestries, the weavings and embroideries, the carvings and metal work which the world is studying, belonged to the daily life of those past centuries. The stamp of thought and the seal of art were set upon the simplest conveniences of life. The very keys of the locks and hinges of the doors were designed, not by mere workers in metal, but by sculptors and artists who were pre-eminent for genius. It was in the spirit of this period that Benvenuto Cellini modeled saltcellars as well as statues, and his compeers designed carvings and gildings for state carriages, and painted pictures upon the panels. Painters of divine pictures designed cartoons and borders for tapestries, and wreaths and garlands for ceiling pilasters.

Among the names of painters who designed cartoons for tapestries, we find those of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, Guido and Giulio Romano, Albert Dürer, Rubens and Van Dyck. Indeed, there is hardly a great name among the painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which has not contributed to the value of the

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tapestries dating from those times. Among them all none have a greater share of glory than the series known as "The Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for Pope Leo X, in the year 1515. The history of these cartoons is full of interest. After the weaving of the first set of these tapestries, which was hung in the Sistine Chapel and regarded as among the greatest treasures of the world, the cartoons remained for more than a hundred years in the manufactory at Brussels. During this period one or more sets must have been woven from them, but in 1630 seven were transferred to the Mortlake Tapestry works near London, having been purchased by Charles I, who was advised of their existence by Rubens. The Mortlake tapestry had been established by James I, who was greatly aided by the interest of the then Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Buckingham. It is charming to think of "Baby Charles" and "Steenie" busying themselves with the encouragement of art in the way of the production of tapestry pictures, and after the accession of the Prince, to follow the progress of this taste in the purchase of the famous cartoons, and the employment of no less a genius than



THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

Arranged (from photographs made in London of the original cartoon by Raphael, in the Kensington Museum) by Candace Wheeler and executed in needle-woven tapestry by the Associated Artists.

AMERICAN TAPESTRY

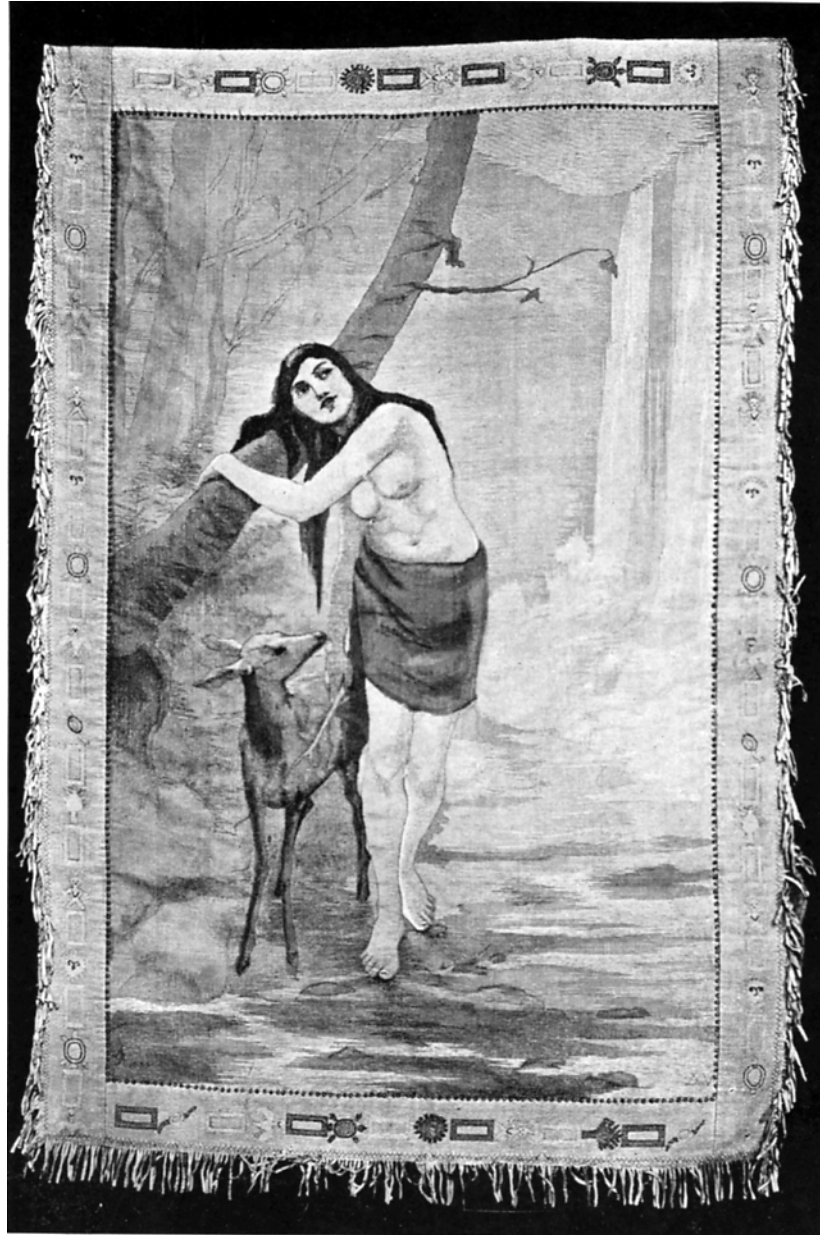
Van Dyck in the composition of new and more elaborate borders for them. It was probably during the reign of Charles that these glorious compositions went into use as illustrations of Biblical text, for we find "Paul preaching at Athens," "Peter and Paul at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple," and "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" figuring as full-page frontispieces to many old copies of King James' Bible. After the tragic close of the reign of King Charles, the treasures of tapestries he had accumulated were dispersed and sold by order of Cromwell; but the cartoons remained the property of the nation and, though lost to sight for another hundred years or so, finally reappeared from their obscurity, at Hampton Court, and in these later years, at the Kensington Museum, have again taken their place as one of the most valuable lessons of earlier centuries. It was probably the story of these cartoons which inspired the determination which had taken possession of us, to do a real tapestry, something greatly worthy of accomplishment.

When we came to the decision to create tapestries, the actual substance of them, as well as

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the art, was a thing to be considered. The wool fiber upon which they were usually based was a prey to many enemies. Dust may corrupt and moths utterly destroy fiber of wool, but dust does not accumulate on threads of silk, neither are they quite acceptable to the appetite of moths. Therefore, we reasoned, if we did work which was worthy of comparative immortality, it must be done with comparatively imperishable material. Fiber of flax and fiber of silk shared this advantage, and the silk was tenacious of color, which was not the case with flax; therefore we chose silk and went bravely to our task of creating American tapestries.

Having decided upon our material, we consulted with our friendly and interested manufacturers, and finally ordered a broad, heavily marked, loosely woven fabric which would hold our precious stitches safely and show them to advantage. The woof of the canvas upon which we were to experiment was also of silk, not fine and twisted like the warp, but soft and full enough to hold silk stitchery. In this way the face of the canvas, or ground, could be quite covered by a full thread of embroidery silk passed



MINNEHAHA LISTENING TO THE WATERFALL
Drawn by Dora Wheeler and executed in needle-woven tapestry by
The Associated Artists, 1884.

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under the slender warp and actually sewn into the woof.

Being thus fully equipped for the production of real tapestries, well adapted to the processes of what I called "needle weaving," since the needle was really used as a shuttle to carry threads over and under the already fixed warp, the next decision rested upon the subject of this new application of the art and the knowledge we had gained by study and practice and love of textile art. With a courage which we now wonder at, we selected perhaps the most difficult, as it certainly is the most beautiful, of surviving tapestries, "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes," the cartoon of which, designed by Raphael, is at present to be seen and studied at the Kensington Museum in London. The decision to copy this was perhaps influenced by the fact that it was the only original cartoon of which I had knowledge, and my summer holiday in London was spent in its study, and schemes for its exact reproduction. As it was spread upon a wall in museum fashion, a drawing could not be actually verified by measurements, but an expedient came to me which proved to be satisfactory. I had

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two photographs, as large as possible, made from the cartoon, and one of them, being very faintly printed, copied exactly in color; the other was ruled and cut into squares, and was again photographed and enlarged to a size which would bring them, when joined, to the same measurements as the original cartoon. These, very carefully put together, made a working drawing for my tapestry copy, and the lighter photograph, which had been most carefully water-colored, gave the color guide for the copy.

It was interesting to find the perforations along the lines of the composition still showing in the photographed cartoon, and we made use of them by going over them with pin pricks, fastening the cartoon over the sheet of silk canvas woven for the background, so that there was no possibility of shifting. Prepared powder was sifted through the lines of perforation and fixed by the application of heat, and we then had the entire composition exactly outlined upon the ground. After that the work of superimposing color and shading by needle weaving was a labor of love and diligent fingers during many months. Every inch of stitchery was carefully criticized



APHRODITE

Designed by Dora Wheeler for needle-woven tapestry worked by
The Associated Artists, 1883.

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and constantly compared with the colored copy, and at last it was a finished tapestry and was hung in a north light on one of the great spaces of the studio, where it was an object of expert examination and general admiration.

It is by far the most important work accomplished by needle weaving which has ever been made in America, and is as veritable a copy of the original as if it were painted with brush and pigment, instead of being woven with threads of silk. The low lights of the evening sky, the reflections of the boats, and the stooping figures of the fishermen, the perspective of the distant shore, and the wonderful grouping in the foreground, keep their charm in the tapestry as they do in the picture. Even the mystery of the twilight is rendered, with the subtle effect we feel, but can scarcely define, in the original drawing.

It has been a curiously direct process from the hand of the great master, to this new reproduction, although it stands so far from his time and life. His very thought was painted by his very hand upon the paper of the cartoon, and this painted thought has been photographed upon

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another paper which has served as a guide to the copy.

It makes us sharers in the art riches of Raphael's own time, to see a new embodiment of his thought appearing as a part of the nineteenth century's accomplishments and possessions.

After this achievement we naturally began to look for appropriate use for the small tapestries, but here came our stumbling block. The breed of princes, who had been the former patrons of such works of art, were all asleep in their graves, and knew not America, or its ambitions, and our native breed was not an hereditary one, building galleries in palaces, and collecting there the largest of precious accomplishments in artistic skill in order to perpetuate their own memories, as well as to enrich their descendants. Our princes were perhaps as rich as they, and possibly as powerful, but their ambitions did not usually extend to a line of posterity. Their palaces were contracted to a "three score and ten" size; for each of them, no matter how wide his capability of enjoyment, knew that it was personal and ended when his little spark of life should be extinguished. I gladly record, however, that in

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these later days some of them have made the American world their heirs, and are building and enriching museums and colleges, making them palaces of growth and enlightenment, and so giving to the many what an older race of princes built and enriched and guarded for the few.

But in the meantime what were we to do about our tapestries? They were costly, very costly to produce, and although we took account of the delight of their creation and put it on the credit side of our books, along with the fact that the weekly pay roll of the tapestry room went for the comfort and maintenance of the students whom we loved and cherished, I soon realized the fact that a commercial firm could not be burdened with the fads of any one member. Before I had carried this conclusion to its logical end, we had opportunities of using our skill worthily in several of the new great houses of the time. When the Cornelius Vanderbilt house was erected on Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Seventh Street we received an order for a set of tapestries for the drawing-room walls. These were executed from ideal subjects and of single figures. I remember the "Winged Moon" among them, which was an ideal figure

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of the new moon lying in a cradle of her own wings. This was but one of the set, one or two of which we afterward made in replica for an exhibit in London. There was no lack of subjects in our background of American history. The legends and beliefs of our North American Indians were full of them, and one of the first we selected was the lovely story of "Minnehaha, Laughing Water," from Longfellow's "Hiawatha." The sketch had been sent to us by Miss Dora Wheeler, as the prize composition of the Saturday Composition Class at Julien's Studio in Paris.

The literary past of the country furnished subjects enough and to spare, and if we wished to walk into the shadowy realms of legend and fiction, there were the picturesque legends of the American Indian from which to choose. Our subjects were often one-figure designs, as such pieces were suitable in size to wall spaces and door openings. Of course commercial considerations could not be lost sight of in our enthusiasm for progress in textile art. Potter Palmer, the multimillionaire of Chicago, was building at the time a palace home on the Lake Shore, and one auspicious day Mrs. Palmer bestowed her beauti-

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ful presence upon us, and was mightily taken with our tapestries. Her clever mind was attracted by the "bookishness" of some of the panels of incidents from American literature, and several of them went to beautify the great house on the Lake Shore, in the form of several panels of portraits. Mrs. Palmer was a delightful patron, her own enjoyment of art, in any of its forms, amounted to enthusiasm, and her great physical beauty, to a beauty lover, made every visit from her an epoch. I have never seen the face of an adult woman who has had the experience of wifehood and motherhood which retained so perfectly the flawless beauty of childhood. I have often gazed at the angelic face of some child, and wondered why each year of life should wipe out some exquisite line of drawing, or absorb the entrancing shadows which rest upon the face of childhood. It was a great satisfaction to personally assist in the furnishing of the home of this beautiful aristocrat, whose own law allowed of no infringement by our mighty three, having been shaped in a mind enriched by much classical study and constant acquaintance with the beautiful.

When our embroideries and needlework had

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taken their place in this country, we were asked to make part of an Exhibition of American Art in London. This we were very glad to do, for the artistic gratification of being able to measure what we were doing with the best art of the kind abroad. It was also pleasant to be considered worthy company with the best in our own land, to rub shoulders with our best painters, our great makers of stained glass, leaders who take genuine pleasure in ideal work. Of course this applies to amateur work only, as professional decoration must accord with the general plan which has been selected.

I had reason to think that the Exhibition made by the Associated Artists at Chicago was of lasting use to all lovers of needlework, the world over, since so many other races came there to get their world lessons. I learned much that was of value to me from familiar study of the exhibits from different countries, from their excellencies and differences and the reasons why such wide divergences existed, and from observation of the people themselves who produced them—for many of the exhibits were in charge of practical needleworkers who knew the history of their art from



FIGHTING DRAGONS

Drawn by Candace Wheeler and embroidered by
The Associated Artists, 1885.

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its very beginning. I found more of interest in Oriental art from seeing that it was not merely a perfunctory repetition of stitches and patterns, but that there was a stanch, almost a religious, integrity in doing the thing exactly as it had been done by generations of forefathers, and that the silks and tissues and flosses and threads of gold were the best the world produced. In the presence of such fidelity, what mattered it that the borders and blocks were formed of angles, or zigzags, or squares, or any other fixed and mechanical shapes? The spirit of it was true to its race and traditions. In the face of it, all our beautiful copies of flowers, and growths, and gracious forms of nature seemed almost experimental—the art of growing and changing nations.

But as we do not make the early art of long existent races models upon which to shape our search for the most beautiful, the persistence of Eastern form in embroidery need not prevent our progress in design. I made an interesting note of this persistence of Eastern design, when, many years ago, I had an opportunity of examining some mummy wrappings from a burial ground at

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Lima, Peru. They were wonderful weavings of aboriginal cloth, bordered with embroidery done in dyed or colored threads of flax, in designs as purely Eastern as can be found in any ancient or modern Eastern embroidery. How could it happen that the ornamental designs of the Far East and the Far West should touch each other? Was it similarity of thought knowledge, the kinship of the human mind, or some long-forgotten means of transmission of the material and actual, of which we all-knowing moderns do not even dream? This wonderful South American embroidery of past ages antedated many antique remains of the art of stitchery which we treasure with as wide a margin of time as lies between their day and ours.

Embroidery has become a dependence and a business for thousands of women, and it is this which secures its permanence. We may trust skillful executants who live by its practice to keep ahead of the changing fancies of society and invent for it new wants and new fashions. And this, because their chance of living depends upon it, and it promises to be a permanent and growing art. It may, and will, undoubtedly, take

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on new directions, but it is no longer a lost art. On the contrary, it is one where practice has attained such perfection that it is fully equal to any new demands and quite competent to answer any of the higher calls of art.

CHAPTER VIII ❁ THE BAYEUX TAPESTRIES

WHILE a description of this most important work of women's hands may seem somewhat irrelevant in a book devoted to the development of the art of embroidery in America, it is so important a link in the subject of stitchery, executed as it was in the eleventh century, that a short chapter on this most interesting and vital subject may not come amiss.

Among all our present possessions of early skill, perhaps nothing is more widely known than what is called the Bayeux Tapestry. This much venerated work is not tapestry at all, but a pictorial record in outline, done with a needle, as simply as though written in ink, at least according to our present understanding of what is known as tapestry.

We read of the subject, and the name of William the Conqueror looms large in the imagination. We think of the tapestry as a great illustrated page of history, large in proportion not alone to the deeds it chronicles, but to their

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importance in the story of one of the greatest, perhaps, of the modern races; and across this illustrated page we fancy the prancing of war horses and the prowess of the knight, the passing of seas and the march of armies, with all the attendant tragedy of circumstance.

But this is only in one's mind. The reality is a more or less tattered strip of grayish-white linen, two feet in width and two hundred and thirty feet long, and along this frail bridge between the past and present march the actors in the great conquest. It seems but an inadequate pathway, but it has borne its phalanxes of men, its two hundred horses, its five hundred and fifty-five dogs and other animals, its forty-one ships, its numberless castles and trees, its roads and farms safely through all the intervening years from 1066 to 1919, and it still holds them.

In truth, we wonder much over this production of the past, and not alone over the heroes who career so mildly in their armor of colored crewels on the linen background. We wonder, in the first place, how a continuous web of over two hundred feet in length could have been woven. Then, we know that lengths of woven stuffs are

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limited only by the requirements of commerce, and that Matilda was of Flanders, and her father had learned the princely trick of loving and encouraging manufactures, and had, indeed, taught it to his daughter, and that Flanders was a noted center of manufacture. Then we decide that if Matilda had called for a strip of linen two thousand feet long, whereon to write the warlike history of a spouse who began his gentle part toward her (for so history avers) by pulling her from her horse and rolling her in the mud because she refused to marry him, it would have been forthcoming as easily as two hundred. Should the Queen of England require a stretch of linen as long as from England to America, whereon to record the successes of her reign, who doubts that it would be supplied her?

So, when the question of this web is disposed of, we wonder who drew all these figures of men and horses, for Queen Matilda and her ladies to overlay with stitchery, and why his name has not come down to us. We decide within our minds, for it never occurs to us to impute such ability in drawing to the Queen or her ladies, that it was the work of some monkish brother who



THREE SCENES FROM THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

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varied his illuminating labor upon missals and copies of the Scripture by doing these worldly and interesting things.

We think of the never to be forgotten Gerard in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and wonder if it was some monastery-trained youth like him who rested from the creation of saints and angels upon vellum, to draw fighting knights upon linen, and whether, perchance, his hushed heart burned within him at the stir and valor of the deeds he portrayed. And then some one, better informed than we, points out the figure of a dwarf, nicely labeled as Turoid—for many of the actors in this embroidered story are labeled in delicate stitches—and tells us that his was the hand that set the copy for all the happy and beloved maids of the Queen, and the hapless and perhaps equally beloved Saxon maids. We wonder, again, how these skillful and noble Saxons like to find themselves thus writing their own infelicities and humiliations for all the world to see, and then—for so does the human mind go groping into motives and springs of action—we wonder if their famous skill in needlework, of which the wide-awake Matilda must surely have known, put it

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into her head to make this curious life-record of her great lord, and we reflect that if it were so, it would only be another facet of her many-sided ability.

But that was underneath the surface. Outside was the queenly magnificence and wifely glorification of her lot, a smooth current of irresistible prosperity. Underneath was the whirling and buzzing of the wheels of thought, the springs of motion which governed the great current.

In truth, two such clever thought centers as William of Normandy and Matilda of Flanders seldom in the world have made a conjunction, or we would have had more great conquests to record. We may fancy what we will in the far background which this slender length of linen reaches, all the byplay which accompanied the guarded life of the castle, the religious life of the cathedral and monastery, the colored and bannered pomp of duke and noble.

It was all mightily picturesque, with its contrasts of gorgeousness and privation, but probably Matilda the dexterous thought that times were good enough when she could sit in safety, surrounded by her maids and priests, and write her

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royal journal as she pleased, with a threaded stylus; and well for us that she elected to do this, although her records are written in so quaint a fashion that amusement and interest are twin spectators of the result.

Two borders, upper and lower, remind one irresistibly of a child's processional picture on a slate. The figures are done in outline only, colors corresponding to those used in the body of the work. Each border is some six inches wide, and has the air of a little running commentary or enlargement of the main story. There are variations and incidents which could not perhaps be put down in the main body, where all the figures are worked solidly in the stitch which has been rechristened "Kensington stitch." The horses are worked in red-brown and gray crewels, some of them duly spotted and dappled, the banners and gonfalons carefully wrought in the colors and devices belonging to them. The whole work follows scrupulously the scenes of the Conquest, giving the lives of the actors both in Normandy and England, as well as the transit from one country to the other.

The first scene evidently represents Edward the

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Confessor giving audience to Harold, the last of the Saxon kings. The next gives the embarkation of Harold, and the third his capture in France.

Then comes the death of Edward, and the tapestry story struggles ineffectually with the incidents of his death and funeral; and the election of Harold as King of England, showing him seated crowned and in royal robes under a very primitive canopy. After this, the scene shifts again to France, and portrays the preparations for invasion made by the Duke of Normandy, who was called by the people of the country he invaded "William the Conqueror," and who have continued to know him only by that name through all succeeding centuries, the shame and sorrow of vanquishment quite buried under the glory of the performance, Saxon and Norman uniting in esteem of the successful result.

All this history is duly set forth in archaic simplicity by the stitches of Queen Matilda, who, in preserving the record of the deeds of her doughty lord, has set down also a record of herself as the ideal wife, who glorifies her husband, and merges all she is of woman into that condition—and still it is only a strip of linen worked in

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crewels. All the triumphs of the great Conqueror are written upon it, but none of the disappointments. The needlework story does not relate (how could it when Matilda's active, trained and industrious fingers had been stilled by death?) the sorrows which overcame even her fortunate hero—that his body was robbed of its clothing, and lay naked and dishonored beside a disputed grave, where even the solemn claim of death to burial was resisted until an old wrong “done in the body” was righted. And though his son reigned after him, and he founded a royal line, perhaps one of the greatest enjoyments of his successful life consisted in watching the fingers of his well-beloved Matilda as they worked this linen record.

Of course it is the great events it portrays and the human interest it holds which make this tapestry exceedingly valuable, for, artistically, it is of no more value than a child's sampler. But, simple as it is, volumes have been written about it. Scholars and historians have pored over its pictured history, money without stint has been spent in paper reproductions of it, and, finally, the whole important embroidery so-

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ciety of Leeds, England, spent two industrious years in copying it, and earned fame and envy thereby.

The wonderful remains of the work of skilled fingers serve to dignify the art of which it is capable, and to sing a varied song in the ears of the modern embroiderer, who follows her own will in spite of time-hallowed examples. The women of today, 1920, have been called to work that is widely different from that of the ages when embroidery was a natural recourse and almost universal practice, but it is an art which has done too much for the progress of the world, in all its different phases, to die, or to cease to progress. There will always be quiet souls, whose lives have been made so by circumstances, who will find solace in the practice of needlework, so we may safely leave with them an art which has done so much for mankind.

THE END