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# THE BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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PLATE I

TWILL WEAVE SILK. 26 X 35 C/M, BYZANTINE 9TH CENTURY, INSIDE LINING OF UPPER OR FRONT COVER OF THE MS. "THE FOUR GOSPELS," VARIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE LINDAU OR ASHBURNHAM GOSPELS, IN THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY.

TWO MEDIÆVAL WOVEN SILK FABRICS IN THE  
BINDING OF THE 9TH CENTURY MS. "THE FOUR  
GOSPELS" IN THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY,  
NEW YORK CITY

*by*

H. A. ELSBERG

The writer is under great obligation to Miss Belle daCosta Greene, the Director of the Morgan Library, for the photographs used for the illustrations in this article and for her kindness in placing all the information regarding the bindings at his disposal, as well as for her helpfulness in the examination of the textiles therein.

A NUMBER of interesting early woven fabrics, which otherwise would have been lost to posterity, have been preserved in the bindings of mediæval manuscripts or between their pages, where they were placed to protect the illuminations.<sup>1</sup>

To such a fortunate circumstance we owe the preservation of the two woven silk fabrics illustrated and described in this article. Both are rich silk stuffs with designs of animals and birds. Anastasius, the Librarian,<sup>2</sup> in his lives of the Popes, from Adrian I (772-795) to Adrian II (867-872), written during the 9th century, speaks of rich all-silk stuffs (*holosericum cum historiis bestiarium*) used for religious purposes. Perhaps the use of silks with animal and bird designs for such purposes found its justification in the Book of Psalms,<sup>3</sup> in which all living nature is called upon to praise God.

The two silks are part of the binding of the 9th century manuscript "The Four Gospels," in the Pierpont Morgan Library, written and illuminated in the Monastery of St. Gall, Switzerland, and variously known as the Lindau or Ashburnham Gospels.

What is now the lower cover, sheathed on the outside with beaten gold

<sup>1</sup> The most notable of the latter are the 53 pieces still attached to the pages of the MS. of Theodulf, Bishop of Orleans (+821), formerly preserved at Le Puy en Velay, France. Michel, "Recherches sur les Étoffes de Soie, d'Or," etc. Vol. I. pp. 68-70.

<sup>2</sup> Anastasius, the Librarian, is quoted in this respect by Dr. Bock, Michel, and others.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 148.



PLATE II

TWILL WEAVE SILK, 27 X 35 C/M, HITHER ASIA, FIRST HALF OF THE 9TH CENTURY, OR EARLIER, LINING OF PRESENT LOWER OR BACK COVER.



PLATE III

EDGES OF MANUSCRIPT AND BINDING, 10 X 35 C/M, WITH THE TEXTILES SHOWING UNDER THE ENGRAVED AND JEWELLED BANDS.

ornamented with enameled plaques (pl. V) and edged with plain gold bands inscribed with sentences from the Gospel of St. John, was probably made in St. Gall between 825 and 850. It has as its inside lining a heavy all-silk fabric in a weft twill weave (pl. II). This silk, by its position in the cover,<sup>4</sup> and under the engraved gold bands (pl. III) edging the cover, appears to be part of the original binding of 825-850, and if so, must have been woven during the first half of the 9th century, or somewhat earlier.

This dating seems to be confirmed by the design, as well as by the technique employed in its weaving. The main warp is of heavy lightly twisted yellow silk threads, covered entirely by the weft. Supplemental warps of lighter weight and consequently thinner silk threads, yellow and grey-blue, tie in the grey-blue, rose, and yellow weft threads, which make both the twill weave and the design. These silk weft threads apparently lying on top of each other are brought to the surface as each color is wanted.<sup>5</sup> The color combination is rather unusual and can be clearly recognized in plate II: the dark color of the ground and certain details in the design representing the grey-blue; grey, the rose; and white, the yellow.

The design is geometrically well balanced on vertical axial lines, thus facilitating the weaving and the repeat of the motives in the width of the fabric. The pattern is arranged in horizontal rows of eight-pointed stars, filled with eight heart-shaped leaves or petals arranged around a circular centre. The rows of eight-pointed stars alternate with rows of paired griffons<sup>6</sup> confronting a conventionalized tree of life form. The interspaces are wider between the stars than between the paired griffons, whose tails touch a double circular rosette. This rosette contains a form possibly derived from the fire-altar of the Zoroastrians, shaded by split palmettes, the whole surrounded by Sassanian disks or beads between the circles.

<sup>4</sup> This was probably the upper cover of the original binding; the silk lining it is upside down and has not been pasted on the wood part of the cover, to the outside of which the beaten gold and enameled plaques and the gold bands are attached.

<sup>5</sup> As the back of the silk cannot be examined, this appears to be so from the use made of the colors on the face of the fabric; some of the yellow binding threads float loosely over a number of weft threads.

<sup>6</sup> Balanced pairs of animal figures are a very ancient form of art. They can be dated back to Sumerian Art more than 5000 years ago.

Breasted, "The Conquest of Civilization." p. 135.

From the top of the rosette mounts another form of tree<sup>7</sup> rising to the space between the stars, pairs of birds sit under the tree and on its topmost branches. It is probable that this piece was woven somewhere in Hither Asia, in the first half of the 9th century or earlier. The designer, inheriting the Persian tradition, had no doubt come under Saracenic influences. In the late 8th and during the 9th centuries these combined influences are found in the then beginning to widely spread Baghdad school of design.<sup>8</sup>

The present upper jewelled cover (pl. IV) is said to have been the work of the monkish goldsmiths of the Abbey of St. Denis, France, late in the 9th century. Its inside lining is also a heavy all-silk fabric in a weft twill weave (pl. I) which appears to have been placed in the cover when the cover was made, as there are fragments of it under the jewelled bands edging the latter. Evidently the sharp edges of these bands cut the silk, and some time late in the 18th or early in the 19th century it was pasted on a marbled end-paper of the period, as can be seen in the lower left corner of the illustration (pl. I), and replaced in the cover.

In technique with slight variations the weave of this piece of silk is similar to that of the other. The main warp is of heavy red silk threads, irregular in thickness,<sup>9</sup> with three supplemental warps of lighter weight red and green silk tying in the red, light green, darker green, and white silk weft threads which make the twill weave as well as the design. The variations in the twill weave outline the design and the warps are used somewhat differently as one of the supplemental binding warps lies between the threads of the main warp, and the others above.

On a ground of satiny twill<sup>10</sup> horizontal rows of paired falcon- or eagle-like birds, holding in their curved beaks rings from which hang jewelled

<sup>7</sup> In this form said to represent a conception of the date palm, which seems from great antiquity on, to have had a religious meaning.

Goblet d'Alviella, "La Migration des Symboles."

<sup>8</sup> The designers of Baghdad did not strictly observe the regulation of the Prophet Mohammed forbidding the portrayal of living beings, human or animal. A notable example of this can be found in the wall decorations or rather mural paintings discovered at Samarra, some of which are reproductions of textiles.

E. Herzfeld, "Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra." Vols. I-II-III.  
Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra, etc.

<sup>9</sup> This shows plainly in Plate I.

<sup>10</sup> Satin twill (serge satiné) is made by the loosely twisted weft threads crossing more of the warp threads, i.e., the float is longer than in other twills.



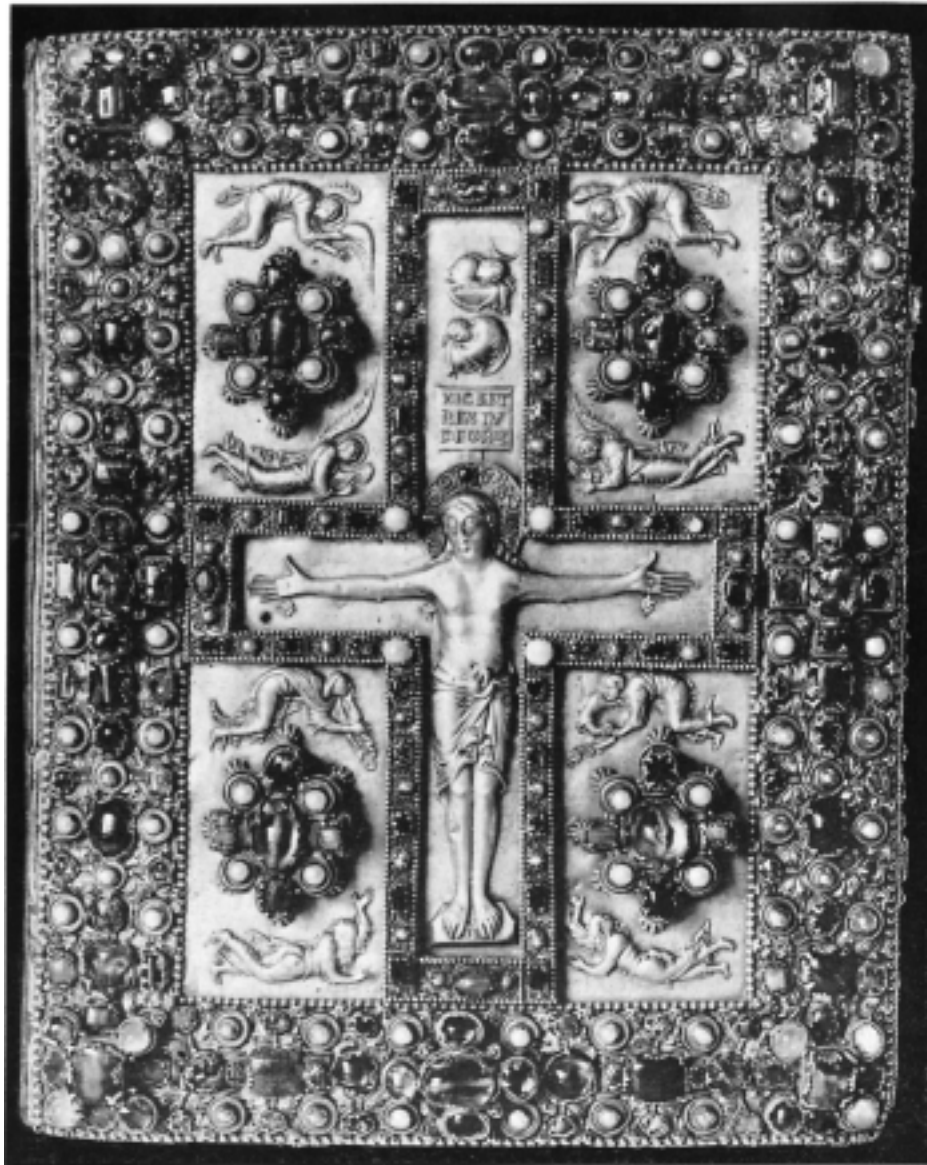


PLATE IV  
UPPER OR FRONT JEWELLED COVER, 27 X 35 C/M. PLATE I ILLUSTRATES ITS WOVEN  
SILK LINING.



PLATE V

LOWER OR BACK COVER, 26 X 35 C/M. PROBABLY ORIGINALLY THE UPPER OR FRONT COVER. PLATE II ILLUSTRATES ITS WOVEN SILK LINING.

squares, stand out in two shades of green. Around their necks are collars of white beads from which float waving ribbons or scarves,<sup>11</sup> their square feet are white with claws in red, and between each pair of birds a floral rosette is outlined as if engraved, by a slight variation in the binding of the weft threads. In the red ground between the horizontal rows of birds horizontal rows of alternately floral rosettes and vase forms, the latter ornamented with two crosses, appear as if engraved on or rather sunken into the fabric. There seems to be no doubt that the design of this silk is a Byzantine variation of Persian motives and that it was probably woven in the 9th century.

Twill weave silks, with double or triple warps and multiple wefts, appear to have been woven in all of the weaving centres in the Near East from the 5th to the 10th century. Whether this weave is a discovery resulting from the attempt to cover all the warp threads (as in tapestry), so as to have all possible of the lustrous silk show on the surface of the fabric, we do not know. This seems likely, as satin-faced silks are nothing but a broken and irregularly woven twill. By the slight variations in their weaving technique, but more by their designs, an attempt has been made to fix the period in which and the place where such twill weave silks were woven; unfortunately there are no records preserved, or none at least have been discovered, that can be of aid in a definite solution of these questions.

The dating of the first silk described is partly confirmed by the plan of the design, but more so by the weaving technique employed and the evidence that it was part of the original binding. One with a similarly planned design but different in pattern and in technique was found in the tomb of Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle, by Cahier and Martin when the tomb was opened for them in 1843.<sup>12</sup> A fragment is now in the Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin, and is illustrated by Lessing and mentioned by Von Falke.<sup>13</sup>

For the second the dating as well as the provenance are confirmed not

<sup>11</sup> Both the disks or beads and the waving or fluttering ribbons are of Persian origin. The latter, according to Herzfeld, were adopted by the Sassanian artists from parts of Parthian costumes.

Herzfeld, "Am Tor von Asien." p. 55.

Kendrick, "Catalogue of Early Medieval Woven Fabrics." p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> "Mélanges d'Archéologie." Vol. III. pl. XVI. p. 143. Cahier and Martin believed that the condition of the silk proved that it had been buried with the Emperor Charlemagne in 814.

<sup>13</sup> Lessing, pl. 45b. Von Falke, Vol. I. p. 125. Both consider this silk to be Sicilian 12th century.

alone by the design and the evidence that it was placed in the cover late in the 9th century, but also by the manner in which the twill is woven. The design is similar to others with paired birds<sup>14</sup> and animals with certain Persian characteristics, for which proof has been found that they were woven in Asia Minor or other parts of the Byzantine Empire. A satiny twill weave with part of the design of the same color as the ground made by a variation in the twill, by which the outlines<sup>15</sup> appear on the surface of the fabric as if engraved, has been decided to be a purely Byzantine manner of weaving. It is found, by the end of the 9th and during the 10th centuries, in Byzantine plain colored silk fabrics often called satins.<sup>16</sup>

The history of these two all-silk woven fabrics shows once more what priceless treasures have been preserved to us by the piety that fought for the protection of religious objects confided to its care. The manuscript which contains them was one of the treasures of the celebrated Abbey and Chapter of the Noble Canonesses of Lindau on Lake Constance, and is said to have been given to them by the Abbey's reputed founder, Louis le Débonnaire, son of the Emperor Charlemagne. The Abbesses had the rank of Princesses of the Empire, and tradition says this volume was carried before them in processions of state.<sup>17</sup> The abbey was dissolved in 1803, and the MS. of "The Four Gospels" became the property of the last Abbess, the Baroness Antoinette von Enzburg. On her death it passed to Baron Joseph de Lassberg, and was by him sold to Bertram, 4th Earl of Ashburnham (1797-1878). At some period after the sale of parts of the latter's library in London in 1883-1884 it was acquired by the late Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan.

<sup>14</sup> Birds similar in drawing with floating or fluttering ribbons or scarves are found in pieces that have been identified as woven in Asia Minor in the 9th century. There is one piece preserved in the 9th century Wolfenbüttel Codex in which it was placed between two illuminated pages for their protection.

<sup>15</sup> Made by the crossing of one warp thread by the weft.

<sup>16</sup> Lessing calls them damasks, while Von Falke describes them as more like satins, though not true satins. Both declare them Byzantine, as do Fischbach and others. For the weave see note 10. A later example is the chasuble of St. Willigis, Bishop of Mayence, † 1011, preserved in St. Stephens' Church in that City.

Lessing pl. 58. Von Falke, Vol. II. Ills. 231-232. p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Eighth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Appendix part III. London 1881.

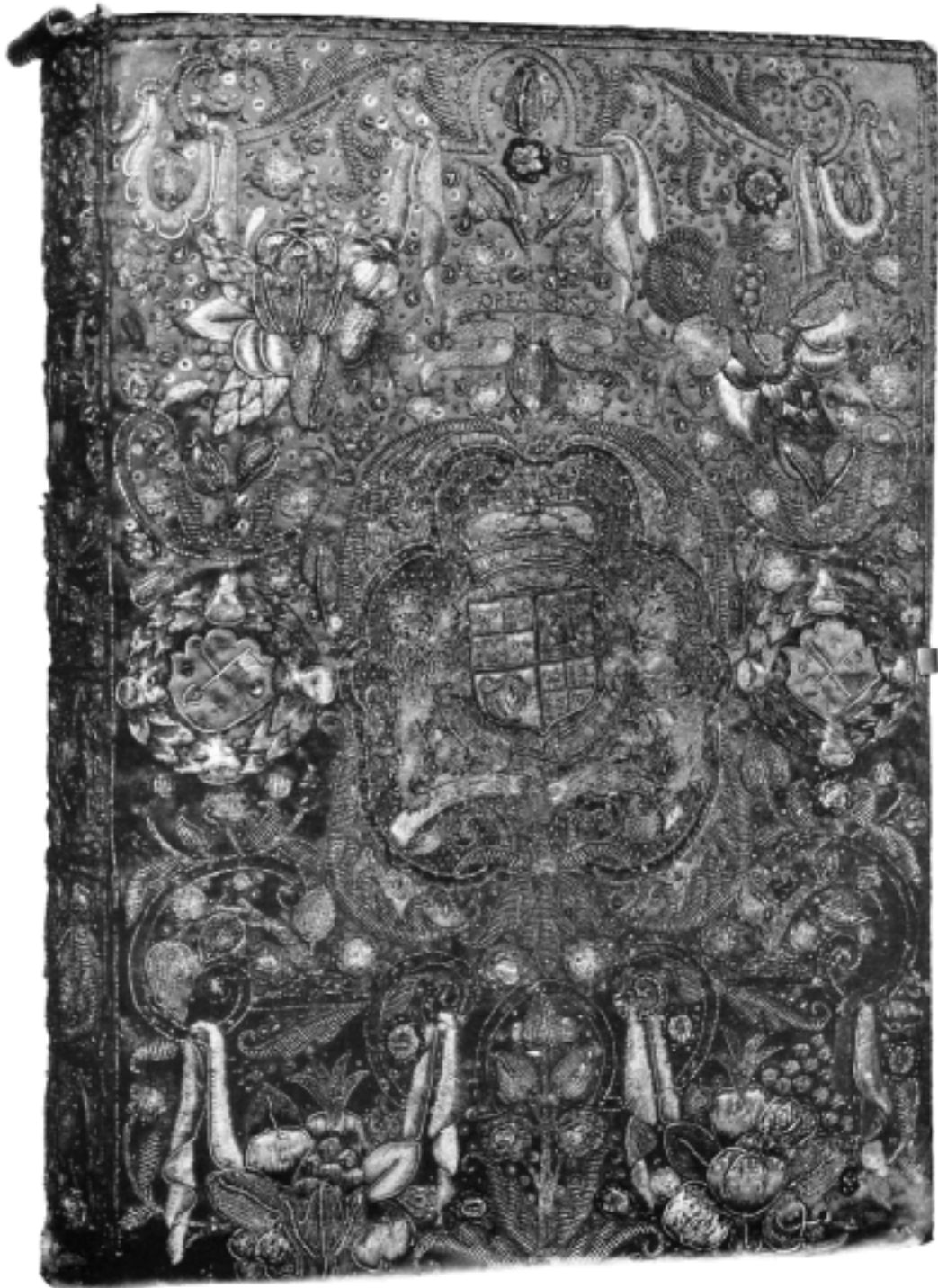


FIG. 1

BIBLE IN NEEDLEWORK BINDING, "IMPRINTED AT LONDON BY ROBERT BARKER," 1602. FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.

ENGLISH DOMESTIC EMBROIDERY,  
ELIZABETH TO ANNE

by

A. J. B. WACE

This is the substance of a lecture given to the Needle and Bobbin Club in New York. Judge Untermyer was then present and has since invited the members of the Club to visit his collection, which is one of the best, especially for English embroideries, in the United States. He has now generously allowed several of the important pieces in his possession to be photographed to illustrate this article and to enable members of the Club to re-experience some of the delight which they felt when they enjoyed the privilege of visiting his collection. To him and to the Officers of the Club my warmest thanks are due for all their help and courtesy.—A. J. B. WACE

THE GREAT tradition of English ecclesiastical embroidery came to an end at the Reformation, and with the growth under the Tudor dynasty of a new nobility enriched with the spoils of the monasteries and by the profits of ventures overseas a demand for fine needlework arose for secular purposes.

It must not, however, be assumed too hastily that domestic embroidery was unknown in England before the 16th century. There is evidence that embroidery in black silk was made in England before the close of the 15th century and it thus antedates the arrival of Catherine of Aragon, who by a late and mistaken tradition, unknown to John Taylor who wrote a sonnet on her virtues as a needlewoman in 1640, was credited with the introduction of black work into England. Shirts embroidered in black were worn by Henry VIII and his son, Edward VI, and nobles like the Earl of Surrey, and the portraits of contemporary kings and nobles in France show that a similar fashion prevailed there. Black work, therefore, was not peculiar to Spain. Another sign that domestic embroidery was being practised early in the 16th century can be found in the mentions of samplers. It is recorded that one was bought for Queen Elizabeth of York (d. 1503) and Edward VI even had twelve samplers, worked in black and green. Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, who died in 1537, made a special bequest of her twelve samplers<sup>1</sup> and so did Margaret Tomson

<sup>1</sup> To her two sisters, "evinlye to be devided betwene them," *Essex Arch. Society, Transactions*, xx, p. 12.

of hers in 1546. The young Princess Elizabeth in 1544 made an embroidered binding for a book, "The Mirror or Glasse of the Synneful Soul," which she had translated as a gift for Queen Catherine Parr. This binding is one of the earliest examples of English secular needlework still in existence and in its pattern of strapwork and of flowers shows that the fashion for these forms of design which were so prominent when the same Princess was Queen regnant had a long tradition behind it.

There are a few pieces of needlework which can be attributed to the end of the reign of Henry VIII or to that of Mary, but the age of Elizabeth is the first period of English domestic embroidery which is amply represented by examples which have survived. All that was made was intended for household use or decoration in some form or other and none was made as art needlework. The earlier work seems generally to have been done in monochrome black (Fig. 2) though this was at times relieved by the addition of gold and silver thread. Soon, however, with the increase in wealth and with the introduction of a higher standard of living, needlework in bright polychrome silk, coupled often with a free use of gold and silver, became fashionable. It should not be imagined, however, that black work immediately ceased to be popular. It is more likely that the decline of black work and the rise of bright polychrome work were both gradual and that the latter became more and more popular as the former fell more and more into disuse. Black work was still in use up to the end of the 16th century. The Queen herself in her portraits is often seen wearing a bodice embroidered in black, though it must be admitted that the black is, as is natural for a Queen, usually enriched with gold. Sir Thomas Lee, in his portrait dated 1594, is seen wearing a shirt embroidered all over in black with a design of flowering scrolls of the type so characteristic of the period. Black work, if it survived into the 17th century, soon ceased under the Stuart kings.

The first large class of embroidery then made is that which can be grouped under the name title of costume. This includes tunics and bodices, headdresses for women and caps for men, gloves and other accessories. The patterns used for these usually consisted of floral scrolls, a form of ornament the history of which can be traced to the borders of illuminated manuscripts of the fifteenth century or even earlier. Among these flowers and their scrolling stems, birds, beasts, and insects of all kinds were introduced and the fancy displayed in these and in the cut of the dresses themselves was among the abuses denounced by Stubbes. A choice ex-



FIG. 2  
WOMAN'S HEADRESS OR CAUL WORKED IN BLACK SILK ON LINEN. ENGLISH, LATE  
16TH CENTURY.



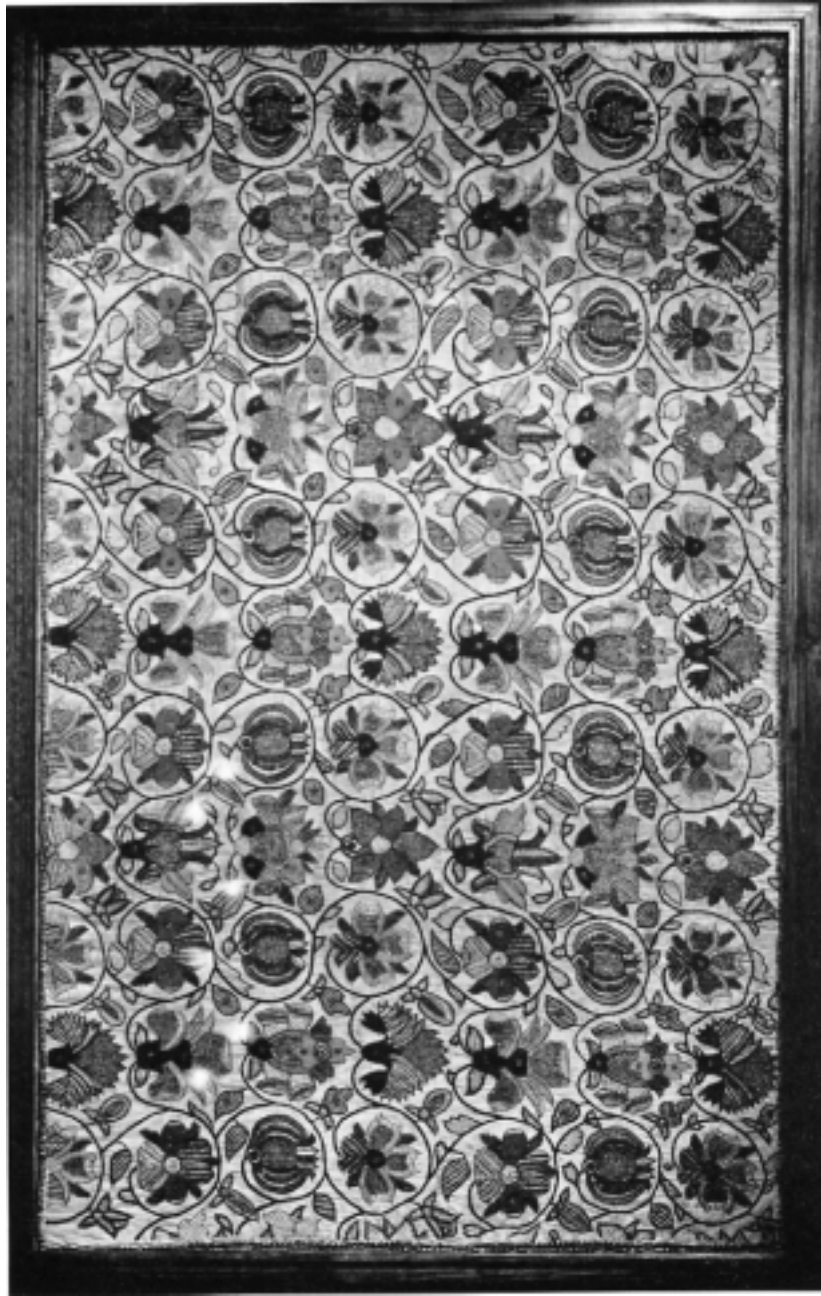


FIG. 3  
LONG PILLOW WORKED IN POLYCHROME SILKS. ENGLISH, EARLY 17TH CENTURY.

ample of the application of such needlework to dress is the woman's headdress or caul seen in Fig. 2 with its accompanying triangular piece, the exact use of which is still unknown. This shows a good example of the floral scroll design, and as the embroidery dates before 1603 the thistle pattern can hardly have any connection with Scotland.

The second class includes pillows and cushions of all kinds. For use on beds, especially state beds, pillow beers of linen embroidered either in the black or in the polychrome style were made. These are usually of the shape known as "long" pillows and are about 36 inches long by about 20 inches wide, which was the customary loom width of linen at that time. The example seen in Fig. 3, formerly in the Abingdon Collection, is one of a set of four in brilliant polychrome silks and gold. It again admirably illustrates the floral scroll design and the conventionalization of the pattern is characteristic of the early 17th century into which the Elizabethan style continued. For use in window seats, on oak chairs and benches and for general household purposes two kinds of cushions were made, "long" of the size just mentioned and "short" about 20 inches square. These were usually worked in petit point and the designs covered a wide range which the famous collection at Hardwick (all called *quitions* in the inventory made in 1601 for the will of Lady Shrewsbury) illustrates excellently. The subjects there include: classical, such as the Rape of Europa, or Phaëthon; Biblical, such as the Sacrifice of Isaac; armorial, with the arms of Lady Shrewsbury surrounded by flowers; pictorial, such as a picture of Chatsworth House; or purely floral, powdered with flowers which resemble those that appear in the illuminated borders of the charters granted by Queen Elizabeth; in herbals, and other contemporary designs. The bed furniture included curtains and spreads represented by a few examples, mostly incomplete. These were of linen or more rarely silk and powdered with embroidery in the same manner as the tunics or bodices. Sometimes for state beds furnishings of velvet were made, to which were applied a series of separate devices, beasts, birds, flowers, plants, etc., usually worked in petit point. The most famous example of this is the fine bed-spread at Oxburgh associated with Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>2</sup> Chairs also were upholstered with velvet and applied work in the same manner *en suite* with a state bed.

The cushions for household use were accompanied by large table cov-

<sup>2</sup> F. de Zulueta, *Embroideries by Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor at Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk*, Pl. A

ers worked on canvas or open-meshed linen with silk or wool in a canvas stitch, petit point or cross stitch. A good example of these, which, unfortunately, has been remade, is at Hatfield and there are three complete examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum. These were made to fit the long narrow oak tables then in use and often had the coat of arms of the head of the family in the centre, set so that it would face towards his place in the centre of the upper long side of the high table.

The last group of embroidery, characteristic of this age, consists of the valances made for the four-posted tester beds of oak then fashionable. Valances of this type were made on the Continent as well as in England, so that it is not always possible to decide whether or no any particular example is English, especially since for various reasons there has been a tendency to claim almost every valance of this type as English. The question is the more difficult because the pictorial designs which were almost invariably used for such valances, whether English or Continental, were based on drawings or engravings of Flemish style. There are, however, some sets which have good reason to be accepted as English. They are worked in silk and wool, usually in petit point and in sets of three, two long valances for the sides of the bed and one short one for the foot of the bed. The head of the bed being against the wall did not need a valance. They are decorated with pictorial subjects telling stories, Biblical, such as the Story of Rehoboam, or classical, like the Story of Cyrus, by the method of continuous representation against rich landscape backgrounds. The characters are dressed either in contemporary or in conventional costume. An excellent example is provided by the two valances illustrating part of the story of Philomela (Fig. 4). There was presumably a third valance giving the conclusion of the tale. In one valance Tereus is seen in the act of cutting out Philomela's tongue. In the other Philomela is represented at work embroidering her story on a piece of linen and this shows how Elizabethan women worked their embroidery on a frame of the usual type held in the lap.

A new style of embroidery did not at once make its appearance in England on the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of the Stuart dynasty. There was of course a change, but it was gradual and it is clear from the evidence of portraits that the embroidered dress of Elizabethan times survived well into the reign of James I. By degrees, however, embroidery for dress gave way to rich figured silks.

Needlework still continued in use for accessories of dress such as the



FIG. 4  
PAIR OF VALANCES WORKED IN *PETIT POINT*. "THE STORY OF PHILOMELA." ENGLISH, LATE 16TH CENTURY.



FIG. 5

GLOVE WITH EMBROIDERED GAUNTLET EDGED WITH SILK AND METAL BOBBIN LACE. ENGLISH, 17TH CENTURY FIRST HALF.



FIG. 6  
PURSE WORKED IN *PETIT POINT* WITH STEMS IN METAL THREAD. ENGLISH, 17TH CENTURY,  
FIRST HALF.

gauntlets or gloves (Fig. 5), purses (Fig. 6), knife cases, pincushions, and the like. These latter are usually exquisitely worked in silk, gold and silver with geometric patterns sometimes combined with flowers.

Embroidery also was employed for the bindings of valued books, especially Bibles, prayer books, and the like. An example of this is given in Fig. 7, a work dated 1616. Here the design follows the floral scroll tradition of the Elizabethan period and shows how the one period gradually developed into the other.

For bed furnishing complete sets of curtains and valances were made for the four-poster oak beds with testers and these are the most characteristic form of Stuart embroidery. They began during the first half of the seventeenth century and after its close evolved into the bed curtains of the eighteenth century. A complete set consists of four curtains, two wide and two narrow, and six valances, two long and one short for the edges of the tester, and three more similar for the lower part of the bed. The narrow curtains consist, as a rule, of two widths of stuff and measure from 36 to 40 inches in width. The wide curtains contain four widths and are thus twice as wide as the narrow curtains. The embroidery is worked in wool (crewel) on a twill woven with a linen warp and a cotton weft. The earlier patterns are medallions or flowery scrolls resembling those of the 16th century, but rendered in a 17th century manner, and the colours used are either monochrome or else confined to a succession of shades of one colour, green for instance. In the later curtains the patterns are of an acanthus type or, especially at the close of the century, of oriental trees and exotic foliage among which Indian or Chinese motives, birds, beasts, human figures, etc., are freely introduced. The colours are brilliant and varied, as befits the patterns, imitating those of printed, embroidered, or painted Indian and Chinese stuffs, whence they drew their inspiration. These Stuart curtains (which are sometimes misleadingly called Tudor and sometimes Jacobean) are common and many fine specimens exist, though complete sets in untouched condition are rare. One such complete set may be seen hung on a bed of the period in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Bed-spreads similar in style and colour to the bed curtains are occasionally found, but they are rare and many of those now called bed-spreads have been made up from curtains. Work bags similar, both in materials and in style, to the bed curtains, are also known though they are not often found.

To most collectors and students the Stuart period is best known by the



FIG. 7

"THE BOOKE OF COMMON PRAYER WITH THE PSALTER OR PSALMES OF DAVID. IMPRINTED AT LONDON BY ROBERT BARKER, PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTIE." DATED 1616. NEEDLEWORK BINDING IN *PETIT POINT*. HEIGHT, 13 INCHES; WIDTH, 9 INCHES; THICKNESS,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  INCHES.



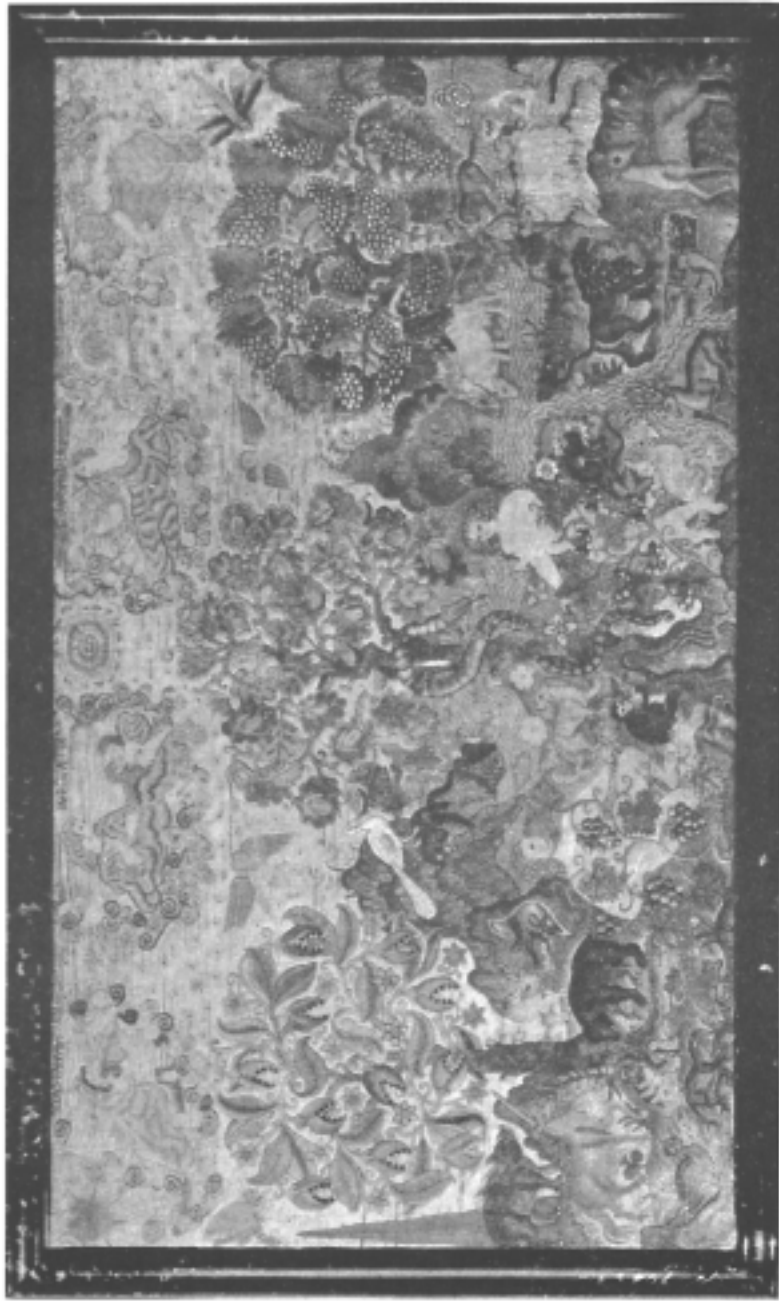


FIG. 8  
NEEDLEWORK PICTURE, "ADAM AND EVE." ENGLISH, EARLY 17TH CENTURY.

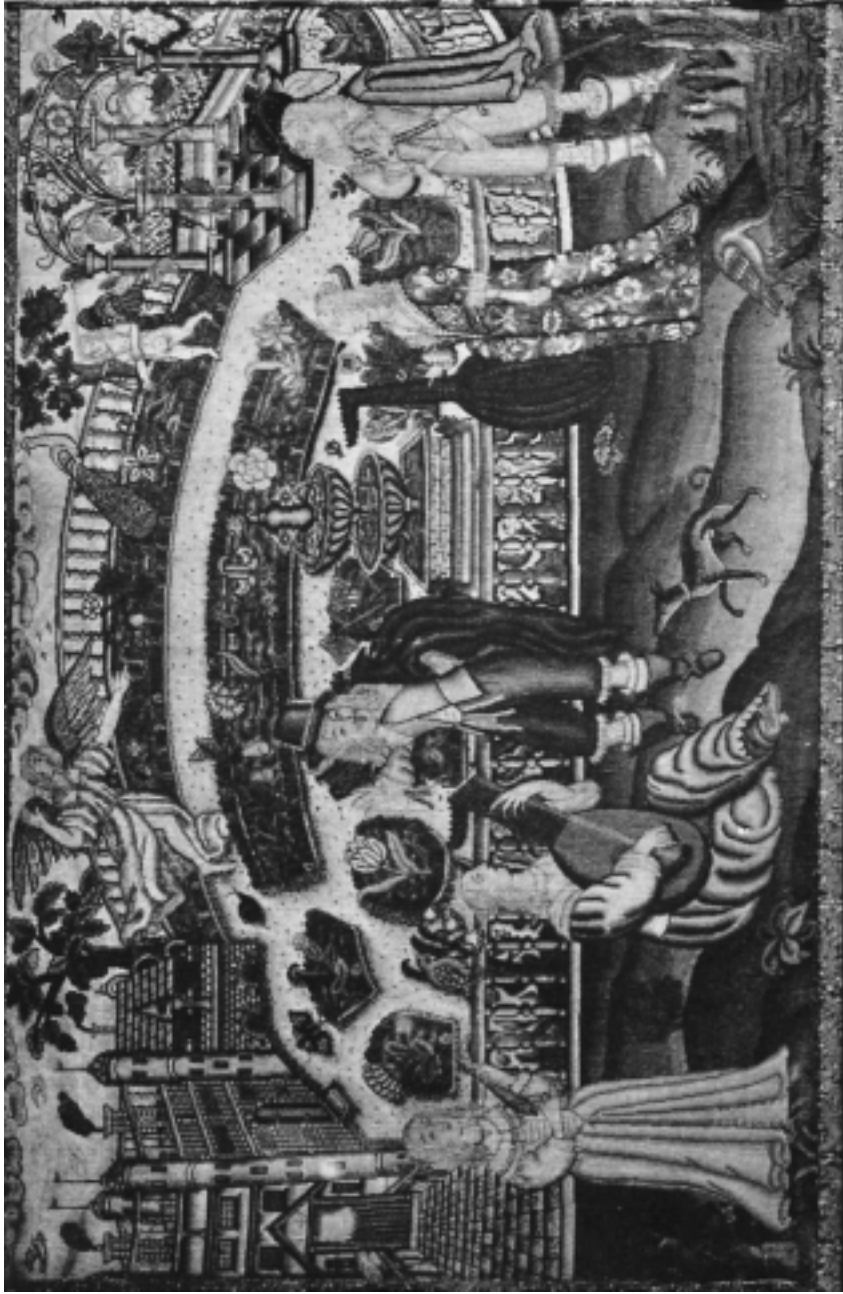


FIG. 9  
NEEDLEWORK PICTURE, "A MUSICAL PARTY," ENGLISH, PERIOD OF CHARLES I, 1625-1649.

needlework pictures, which with their almost infinite variety of stitch and subject, are certainly most attractive. Some of them, especially the earlier examples, usually worked in petit point in silk and wool, were used to cover small cushions or sometimes apparently work-bags. The later pictures, especially those in stump work, were presumably made as pictures alone. The subjects are as a rule Biblical, mostly from the Old Testament. The embroidered picture, once in Mr. Percival Griffiths' possession, seen in Fig. 8, illustrating the story of Adam and Eve, splendidly exemplifies the style of the early 17th century. The rendering of the trees and animals in the Garden of Eden is especially good and the addition of allegorical figures of Constancy, Innocence, Concord, and Peace in the sky, makes it quite exceptional. Classical subjects occur and personifications of the Seasons, the Continents, the Elements, and the Virtues were also popular. Sometimes historical events such as the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot were drawn upon and in one case on a casket, the engraved frontispiece to the *Reliquiae Sacrae Carolinae* has been copied. The designs, like those of flowers and birds and beasts and insects, were taken either from the pattern books such as those issued by Shorleyker or John Taylor, or else from the printed sheets of patterns, both plain and coloured, issued by publishers like Peter Stent, several of whose advertisements have been preserved. Many of the pictures are dated and many also bear the initials or names of their makers. One of the best needlework pictures of the period of Charles I is reproduced in Fig. 9. This, which was once in Mr. W. J. Holt's collection, is remarkable for the exquisite fineness of the embroidery and for the charming rendering of the romantic subject, a musical party in a terraced garden. Another characteristic piece of the same period is the Bible cushion cover in Fig. 10. Embroidery for ecclesiastical use of this date is not often seen and this excellent piece of *petit point* work must, from the sacred monogram, have been specially made for the church. The birds and the sprigs of flowers which compose its decoration are probably worked after designs in the pattern books or on the pattern sheets then current.

With the pictures go the caskets which vary in shape and size according to the taste and ambition of the maker, but conform generally to two or three standard types. These were covered with embroidered panels worked in the same manner as the pictures illustrating either one story or subject in a series of scenes or else displaying a varied set of pictures. Judge Untermeyer possesses such a casket which illustrates the story of

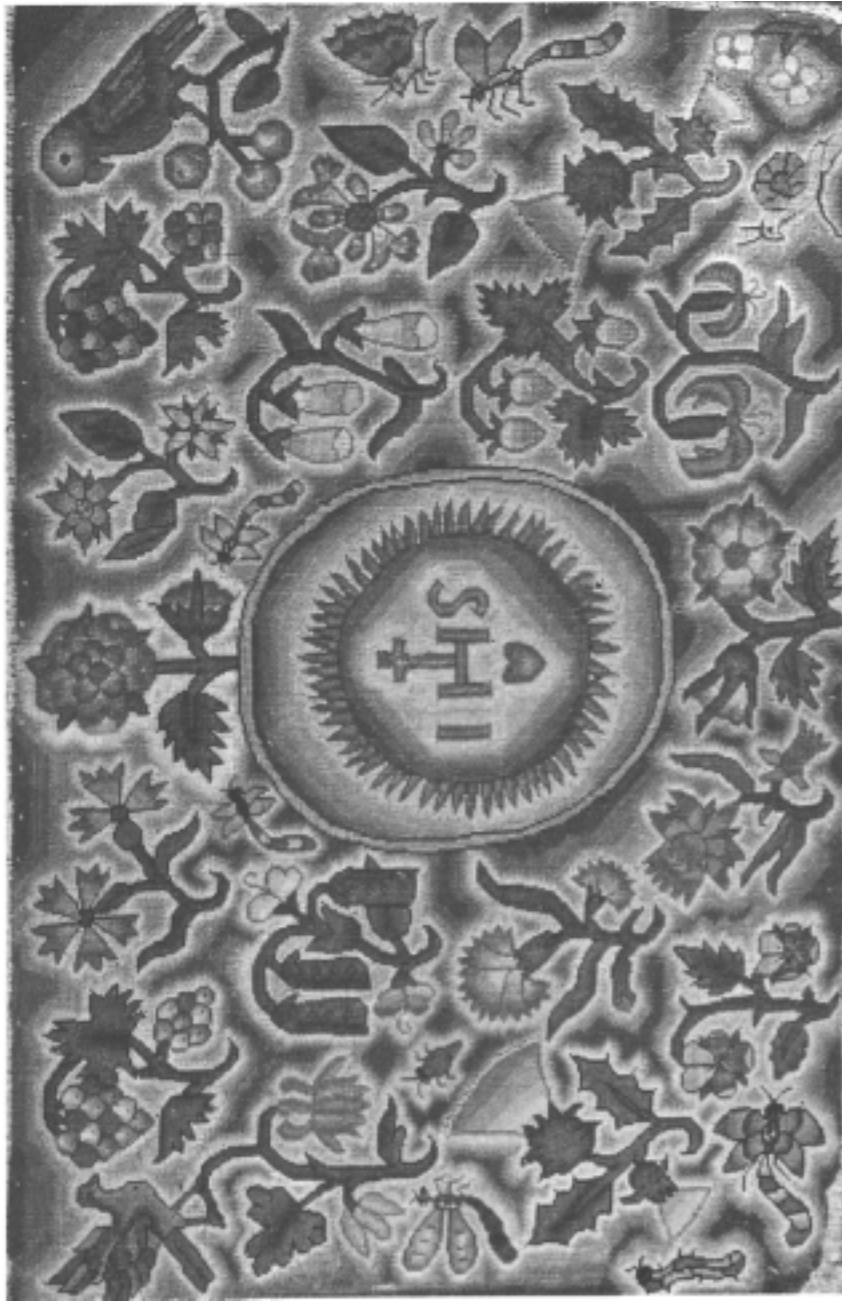


FIG. 10  
BIBLE CUSHION COVER WORKED IN *PETIT POINT* ENGLISH, PERIOD OF CHARLES I, 1625-1649.



FIG. 11  
EMBROIDERED CASKET. "THE STORY OF ESTHER," IN STUMP WORK AND *PETIT POINT*.  
ENGLISH, 17TH CENTURY, THIRD QUARTER.

Esther and Ahasuerus, Fig. 11. This is in superb condition and is one of the best specimens in any collection, public or private. The embroidery, the colour of which is most brilliant, follows the traditional designs in depicting the various scenes, but the individual details are most exquisitely worked and perfectly delightful in themselves. These caskets were used by the girls who made them as work boxes, jewel and trinket cases, writing cases, and almost always contain one or more secret drawers for treasures such as jewelery, keepsakes, or perhaps love letters. Most caskets have a movable tray, often adorned with a coloured print of the period ingeniously set reversed so as to be seen best in the looking glass sides of the tray. Two caskets have gardens in their trays and in one case the lid of the casket bears an Arcadian scene of a shepherdess and her sheep in a wooded glade. With the caskets were made pin and needle cushions, pen-holders, souvenirs, and various toys or trinkets in needlework. The girls seem to have made these caskets for themselves as part of their regular training in embroidery and about the same time as they made their samplers, which then became common. With these can also be grouped the mirror frames which are embroidered in a similar manner, and with similar subjects, though there is of course less space for scenes with several figures. The drawing of the designs on some unfinished mirror frames is exquisite.

Of the Elizabethan age there is one sampler known, if we do not count the lace sampler with the Queen's arms and monogram in the London Museum. Of the early 17th century many samplers are known. These are about 20 inches long, being cut across the width of the linen, and are about 8 to 11½ inches wide. They sometimes bear the initials, not the name, of the worker, and only one has a date, 1630. In them the designs fall into two classes: sprays of fruit and flowers with beasts, birds and insects; and geometrical patterns suitable for covering a ground. The latter are sometimes combined with a floral spray as pattern ready both in shape and size to be transferred to a purse. A typical sampler of the style and dating probably from the reign of Charles I (1625-1649) is given in Fig. 12. Here again the floral sprays and the geometrical designs show the influence of the pattern books. Sometimes heraldic-like devices are introduced and from some of these giving either the monogram or the royal emblems of James I date the samplers on which they appear between 1603 and 1625. In these early samplers designs are not arranged in any set order or according to any definite plan. They are scattered about the



FIG. 12  
SAMPLER. ENGLISH, PERIOD OF CHARLES I, 1625-1649.

field as the fancy or convenience of the worker dictated. The earliest dated sampler bears the date 1629, and it and another early example, dated to 1633, both show the later style of sampler which seems to have begun about 1625 and then become increasingly popular as the century progressed so that it ousted the earlier type and developed considerably itself. These later samplers bear a series of patterns worked in horizontal rows right across the sampler and among these pattern bands, alphabets, inscriptions and the like are introduced, especially later in the century. Many are dated and many, too, bear the name and age of the worker, and sometimes the name of her teacher too. At first these samplers, though narrower, are the same length as the earlier ones, but as fashion advanced they grew longer and longer while remaining the same width. One, for instance, is 42 inches long and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. Thus the early samplers are broad in proportion to their length and the later very narrow. It seems that when a girl began to work, probably about the age of nine, she was set to make two samplers both of the later type, a coloured one and a white one which included also needlepoint and drawnwork. Sometimes, especially at first, the two samplers were made separately. Later it became the custom to make the two samplers as one with the upper half coloured and the lower half white. From the making of samplers the girls seem to have progressed to casket making, bead work, and other embroidery so far as one can judge from the dates on the pieces bearing the name or initials of Martha Edlin.<sup>1</sup>

The needlework pictures were at first in petit point or some flat stitch, to which in some of the earliest examples raised work is added. By the middle of the century raised work had died out and its place was taken by stump work, in which the figures, birds, beasts, fruit, trees, and architecture even, were padded out and worked in separate pieces so that they resemble dolls and doll's furniture applied to a ground. Stump work flourished between 1660 and 1690 and then mercifully its eccentricities fell into disfavour. Raised work or bullion work as it is called when carried out in gold and silver was often employed for the bindings of treasured volumes and many like that in Fig. 1, p. 12, which bears the Royal Arms, were made for royal or noble persons. The embroidery covers a Bible "imprinted at London by Robert Barker, printer to the Queen's most excellent Majestie Anno 1602" and is certainly contemporary work.

<sup>1</sup> *Connoisseur*, LXXXI, p. 215 ff.



The reign of Queen Anne closes the Stuart period and appropriately forms the transition from the later style of the 17th century to the elegances of the Georgian fashions of the 18th century. The Indian and Chinese influences continued to grow in favour through the last half of the 17th century, but declined with the death of William III. Even before his death another innovation had begun. As already mentioned, the 17th century bed furnishings were of linen and cotton twill worked in wool, but not long before 1700 silk came into use for the embroidery, which sometimes was also worked on silk. The curtains themselves seem to have continued to be in wool on the cotton and linen twill, but the bedspreads were made in the new method. Quilting, too, came into vogue and a set of bed furniture consisted of a set of pillows of varying sizes and a bed-spread quilted with geometric or floral designs in white or pale yellow. Sometimes the quilting was enriched with embroidery and both silk and linen were used as the material to work upon. Apart from these technical changes there is a difference in the choice of patterns, most noticeable in the curtains and the spreads. The florid and bright exotic colouring of the Chinoiserie crewel work bed curtains dies away and instead the curtains are powdered with a series of floral sprays arranged in alternating rows. The thick jungle-like foliage is thinned out to simpler, more graceful and less oriental flowering stems. The spreads bear a central device round which are set a series of smaller devices in a floral or in a Chinoiserie style according to taste. Chinoiserie still survives indeed, but in a less extravagant form, and the designs are smaller and quieter. About the same date began the fashion of making embroidered panels usually in petit point for screens, and these take the place of the embroidered pictures of the 17th century, which now practically disappear. They bear Arcadian subjects in a Watteau-like style and are the first sign of a fashion that lasted till the middle of the 18th century at least. The screen panel in Fig. 13 bears the date 1730 and so emphasizes this point, that work of the Queen Anne style still flourished under George II. This panel is typical of its age for the fine workmanship and colour as well as for its subject which shows a hunt dashing along a river valley below a farm set on a wooded hill. Occasionally screen panels are found worked on silk in a Chinoiserie manner and these sometimes bear representations of blue and white china, either Chinese or Delft imitations of Chinese. Most of the screen panels and the aprons and other needlework which are usually called Queen Anne really belong, like so much



FIG. 13  
SCREEN PANEL, WORKED IN *PETIT POINT*. ENGLISH, DATED 1730.



FIG. 14  
ARM CHAIR, UPHOLSTERED WITH EMBROIDERY, WORKED IN *GROS* AND *PETIT POINT*.  
ABOUT 1725, ENGLISH.

else, to the reigns of her successors, the first two Georges. They should, therefore, not come within our scope here, but, since the evolution of style and design was continuous, it is not easy to draw a hard and fast line and early Georgian work has also to be considered. One other use of needlework at this time which begins just before the close of the 17th century must, however, be noticed: its employment for upholstering chairs. For this purpose the work is usually carried out in wool and silk or wool alone in petit point or cross stitch on canvas point. The patterns are at first floral and to some extent somewhat resemble the florid designs on the curtains. Later taste favoured designs in the form of bunches, baskets, or wreaths of flowers.

The wing arm-chair, Fig. 14, which is dated about 1725, is upholstered with its original embroidery which is in brilliant condition and masterly in execution. The whole effect is magnificent and represents a most happy combination of needlework and cabinet making. A popular pattern is the Italian flame work, which first appears in England on samplers of the early 17th century, but is excessively rare in actual embroidery of that date. It reappears on samplers about 1710 and about this time, too, it occurs on furniture, for which it remained a fashionable decoration into which flowers were occasionally introduced, almost till the middle of the eighteenth century. Needlework was also used to decorate many small objects of daily use such as hand screens, needle-cases, pocket-books, purses, and the like. The purse here illustrated (Fig. 15) probably dates from the second decade of the 18th century, and is a fine and typical example of the dainty things the embroiderers worked for their own personal use.

Since other embroideries changed, it is not surprising to find that samplers changed too. The long, narrow samplers of the later seventeenth century were given up by degrees and the sampler became shorter and wider so that it was almost of the proportions of the samplers of the beginning of the 17th century. In the samplers of the early 18th century the patterns are still arranged in a series of narrow horizontal bands and usually contain one or more sets of letters or figures differing in style and stitch. The patterns employed are thinner, more graceful, and more delicate in colour than those of the late 17th century samplers and the lettering is often extremely good.

The history of English embroidery can be carried on to the third of the three Queens regnant who have given their names to great periods in the

general development of life, letters and art in England, but as the industrialisation of the country grew, so the domestic arts, and above all needlework, languished, and the period which runs from Elizabeth to Anne, from Drake to Marlborough, can claim most of what is good in English domestic embroidery.



FIG. 15

PURSE. ENGLISH, DATED 1710-1720.



EMBROIDERED HANGING IN *PETIT POINT*. ENGLISH, PERIOD OF JAMES I (1603-1625). IN THE COLLECTION OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART.



"THE ASCENSION." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.

NOTES ON SOME FOURTEENTH CENTURY EMBROIDERIES IN JUDGE UNTERMYER'S COLLECTION

by MARIAN HAGUE

A set of four small embroidered panels, measuring about eight by ten inches, Italian, of the 14th century, is shown here. Three belong to Judge Irwin Untermyer's collection and one to the writer.

In conjunction with these are shown some details from the large altar frontal signed by Geri Lapi, Embroiderer, of Florence, which belongs to the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria de la Seo in Manresa near Barcelona, Spain.

The resemblances both in design and technique are so strong that some direct comparisons seem of interest. The composition of the panels such as the Adoration (shown in juxtaposition on pp. 40, 41, 42 and 43) have strong similarities, even taking into consideration a likeness that might be due to customary usage of contemporary workers in the same locality.

The figures are of the same scale in the compositions and their drawing is of the Giottesque simplicity that gives a monumental quality of seriousness and intensity to even small panels.

The panels under consideration are worked on a heavy linen sufficiently closely woven to take very fine stitching, as in the faces, and thick and supple enough to take the solid work without pulling or shrinking. The backgrounds have been entirely covered with metal thread, probably silver gilt and now almost gone, which was couched over a prepared design of padding with linen floss in scroll patterns, so that the finished work should resemble the carved and gilded gesso backgrounds of the paintings of that period. The figures are worked in split stitch except where a garment is of metal thread which is simply couched. The faces are in very minutely fine split stitch, almost worn off now, but showing that the direction of the stitches was in circular lines, sometimes like spirals following the contours, much like the method used in *opus Anglicanum* of the same century without the slight grotesqueness of drawing of the English work.

Where split stitch is used on the tree trunks and the ground on which the figures stand it is less fine than that used in the garments.

The trees in the Untermyer panels are exactly similar in treatment to those in the Manresa embroidery. The sprays of the trees are worked very





"THE ADORATION." EMBROIDERED PANEL. ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.



**"THE ADORATION." EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN. AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE FIGURES OF THE TWO KINGS IN THE PANEL WILL BE FOUND ON PAGE 42.**



DETAIL FROM "THE ADORATION" PANEL SIGNED BY GERI LAPI.



"THE ADORATION," EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. PHILIP LEHMAN, NEW YORK.



"CHRIST APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALEN IN THE GARDEN." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, BELONGING TO MISS MARIAN HAGUE.



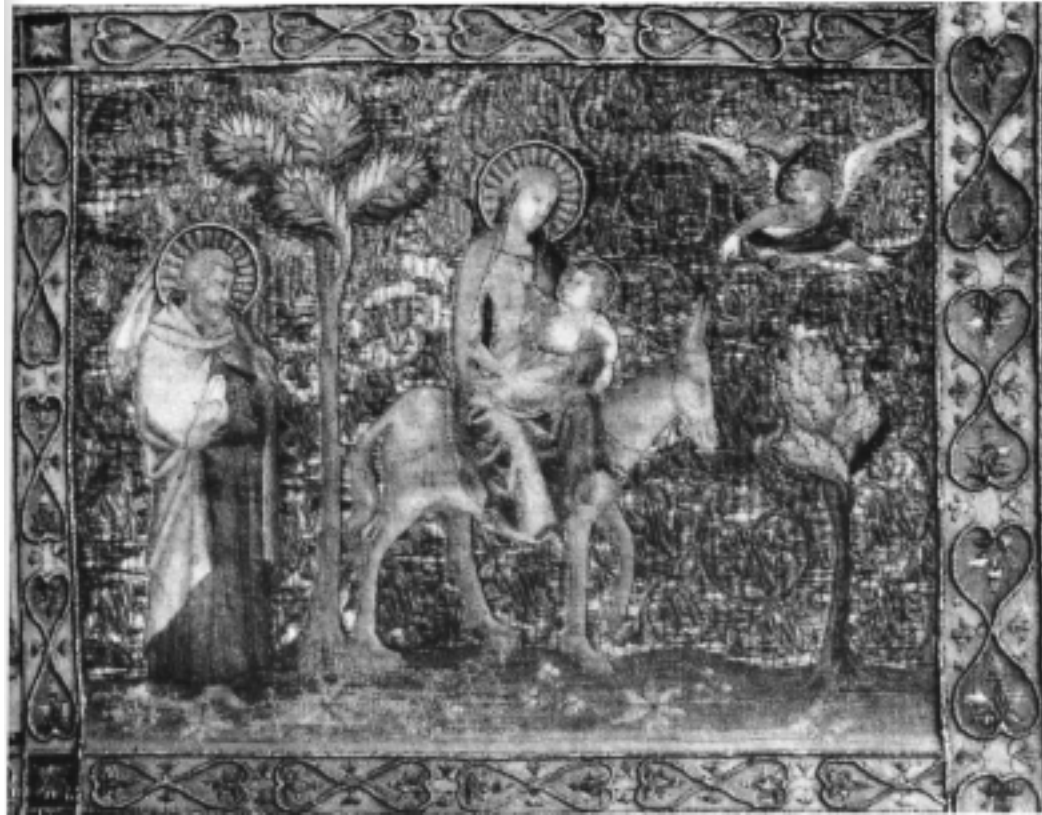
DETAIL OF "CHRIST APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALEN IN THE GARDEN." EMBROIDERED  
PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, BELONGING TO MISS MARIAN HAGUE.



“CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.” EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN.

simply in what we call satin stitch. The tiny round fruits which are so often repeated on the sprays, both in the Manresa embroidery and in the Untermyer scenes, show remains of having been worked with metal thread which is applied in plain couching stitch such as we would use nowadays; not the “*point couché rentré*” of the 13th century English work.

These embroidered pictures must have been much more brilliant when first made than in their rather gray and drab present condition. The Christ in the *Noli me tangere* panel, for instance (page 44), wears a garment under His mantle, worked in metal thread. It is now dark gray, and couched with tiny stitches which hardly show on the right side. Upon examination of the wrong side of the fabric the couching thread is a warm ruby red. The greens and yellows have kept their color remarkably well.



"THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT." EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN.

Where the embroidered surface is worn off, showing the linen ground, one sees marks as though the design had been drawn on the linen with a pen or perhaps a brush in neutral tones. On the face of Christ, however, the lines for the nose and brows appear to be worked with very delicate stitches of dark brownish silk. A strong magnifying glass is necessary to discern this.

An article on the subject of six embroidered panels formerly in the Iklé Collection, written by Dr. Betty Kurth in the periodical *Pantheon* (volume 8, 1931), calls attention to the resemblance between those panels and the Manresa altarpiece. We reproduce here a panel from that set, now in the private collection of Mrs. Philip Lehman, which represents the Adoration. In comparing this with the other two panels of the Adoration,





"THE THREE MARYS AT THE SEPULCHRE." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY,  
FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.

the little kneeling king with his crown lying in front of him on the ground is found in all three. The two standing kings (page 42) also show similarities in form. The stitches used are the same: split stitch, occasionally satin stitch and metal couching. The small bit of background that is visible shows the same scroll work.

The Cleveland Museum is now the owner of another panel from the same set (formerly Iklé collection). In writing of it in their Bulletin in October, 1930, Miss Gertrude Underhill speaks of the points of resemblance between their piece and the signed altarpiece at Manresa, but thinks that their panel is of somewhat later workmanship, and although "almost surely from a workshop of Italy," she considers the designer and provenance at present unknown.

On page 88 of de Farcy's "La Broderie" is shown a beautiful Crucifixion which was formerly in The Hochon Collection. It is also illustrated by G. Migeon in "Les Tissus," p. 145. Judging by these two reproductions it seems fully worthy to compare with Lapi's signed work.

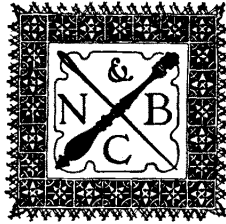
It would be of the utmost interest to know more of Geri Lapi's workshop. Was it of many years' duration or widespread fame? How many embroideries showing his influence are still in existence?



"THE RESURRECTION." EMBROIDERED PANEL IN THE STYLE OF THE MANRESA ALTAR FRONTAL. ITALIAN, XIV CENTURY. IN THE COLLECTION OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART.



BALINESE DANCER WEARING A SKIRT OF BROWN AND WHITE JAVANESE BATIK. THE GIRDLER IS USUALLY A BRILLIANT GREEN OR PURPLE. THE HEADDRESS OF WHITE AND BRILLIANT TINSEL IS EDGED WITH SMALL WHITE FLOWERS. THE EARRINGS, WORN ONLY BY UNMARRIED WOMEN, ARE TUBES OF BAMBOO.



## CLUB NOTES, 1933

*The Seventeenth Annual Meeting* of the Needle and Bobbin Club was held at the house of Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley on the afternoon of February twenty-eighth.

Following the meeting the Club members heard Dr. Rudolf M. Riefstahl, Ph.D., speak on Ancient Trade Routes of the Old World. Dr. Riefstahl described by means of excellent maps, prepared by himself, the ancient importance of the Phœnicians as sea traders, and especially he made clear the development of the sea routes from India to the Gulf of Persia and hence to the Mediterranean, and the several caravan routes from China through and north of Eastern Turkestan to Persia or to the Black Sea. Silk and spices were brought from the East to the West and due to the fact that the West had few commodities with which to maintain the balance of trade, western gold gradually flowed to the East. The position of the West in this regard was saved eventually by superior armaments and the gradual development of machine industry.

After the lecture Mrs. Bulkley entertained the Club members and their friends at tea.

*Club Luncheon.* The Club luncheons held during the past few years early in the spring have proved so popular that the directors decided to hold another this year on March 17th in the Assembly Room of the new Cosmopolitan Club at 122 East 66th Street. Following the usual custom an exhibition of members' work was arranged and among the pieces displayed were several pillows, a number of chairs and a bench upholstered in petit point worked by members who were also members of the Cosmopolitan Club and interested in the furnishings of its new quarters. There was also a special exhibition of East Indian materials: batiks from Java, ikat weaves from Bali, embroideries from Sumatra and interesting fabrics from some of the smaller and more remote islands. This exhibition served



STRIPED SATIN LANCE WEAVE HISPANO MORESQUE, WOVEN AT GRANADA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 14TH CENTURY. FROM THE COLLECTION OF MR. H. A. ELSBERG.

as a background to a series of moving pictures showing the native life and industries of Java and also a number of the classical dances peculiar to the Dutch East Indies described by Miss Morris, who assembled the films while in the Orient. The Assembly Room with its tables decorated with spring flowers offered a charming setting for this annual Club festivity.

*Exhibition of Mediæval Fabrics.* On March twenty-fifth Mr. H. A. Elsberg invited the members of the Club to see his collection of rare mediæval textiles, an exhibition that included only pieces of exceptional quality and rare beauty. One of the historic pieces is that shown in the accompanying illustration, a fabric that originally formed part of an Arabic battle flag said to have been taken at the Battle of Salado in 1340 by Alphonso XI of Castile, and given by him to a cathedral in Castile. The piece, measuring 44 inches high by 29½ in width, is a striped satin lance weave, Hispano Moresque, woven at Granada in the first half of the fourteenth century. Mr. Elsberg found his guests so appreciative of his hospitality that he very kindly showed a second group of fabrics on the following Saturday, April first, which exhibition was equally well attended.

*Lectures by Dr. Riefstahl.* Members of the Club were so interested in Dr. Riefstahl's lecture on Ancient Trade Routes of the Old World, given at the Annual Meeting in February, that it was decided to have two additional lectures in continuation of the subject. The first of these was held on the afternoon of March thirtieth at the residence of Mrs. Morris Hawkes. The subject discussed was "Relations between Far Eastern and Western Art during the Middle Ages." The second of the series, held on Thursday afternoon, April thirteenth, at the residence of Miss Wetmore, dealt with "Chinoiserie in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" and this subject was continued in a third lecture held at the Cosmopolitan Club on April twenty-seventh. The first lecture, "Relations between Far Eastern and Western Art," will be published in a forthcoming number of the Bulletin.



DETAIL OF EMBROIDERED COVER SHOWING CHINOISERIE MOTIFS. FRENCH OR ITALIAN, EARLY 18TH CENTURY. FROM THE COLLECTION OF MISS SUSAN DWIGHT BLISS.

## MAGAZINE NOTES

**E**INE ITALIENISCHE DALMATIK VOM ENDE DES XIII JAHRHUNDERTS IN LÜBECK. Hans Arnold Gräbke—Pantheon Volume XI, Page 96.

In the 1929 Stockholm Exhibition of Swedish textiles there was a dalmatic in the group of Italian embroideries which was once owned by Lübeck Cathedral but is now in the possession of the St. Anne Museum. It is made of yellow brocade(?) (*i.e.*, doppelter Kette gewebten Seidenkörper) with broad bands of embroidery at the hem and also at the edges of the sleeves. This embroidery is done in gold and silver, and in colored silk on a red silk background.

Mr. Gräbke points out that this dalmatic was imported into Sweden at a time when there were no native manufactures. The embroidery shows both Gothic and Byzantine influence and though it is hard to classify it, there being few contemporary pieces to judge it by, it probably belongs to the "Opus Romanum."

A "FLEMISH PROVERB" TAPESTRY IN BOSTON—Ella S. Siple, Burlington Magazine, Number CCCLXIV, Volume LXIII, July, 1933.

Miss Siple has discovered the meaning of the figures in a late 15th century tapestry in the Gardner Museum in Boston which seemed utterly senseless until she compared the tapestry with two paintings by Peter Bruegel the Elder illustrating various proverbs. One of these pictures is in the Musée van der Bergh in Antwerp and has couplets of the proverbs attached; the other is in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. With the aid of these she found the meaning of six of the nine figures, or groups of figures, in the tapestry: falling between two stools, belling the cat, blowing hot and cold, a cuckold, a hypocrite, and a double dealer. A seventh group of figures evidently represents Avarice, leaving but two unidentified. The tapestry is the earliest known example of the proverb theme.



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