

EMBROIDERY

AND

LACE:

THEIR MANUFACTURE AND HISTORY FROM
THE REMOTEST ANTIQUITY TO THE
PRESENT DAY.

A HANDBOOK FOR
AMATEURS, COLLECTORS, AND GENERAL READERS.

BY

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Catalogues of the Lace, Tapestry, and Embroidery Collections
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WITH ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIX WOODCUTS.

LONDON:

H. GREVEL AND CO.,
33, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1888.

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

P R E F A C E .

THIS book has been compiled with the view of supplying a link which has been missing in the history of embroidery, no serious work on this fascinating subject having been hitherto published. This may appear strange when one reflects that few arts have been more universally practised. True, several books have been written about various classes and aspects of embroidery. Amongst others, there are Lady Marian Alford's *Needlework as Art*, Miss Dolby's *Church Embroidery*, Miss Higgins' *Handbook of Embroidery*, Dr. Rock's *Textile Fabrics*, and the Countess of Wilton's *Art of Needlework*. Some of these are rather out of date; none can be held to fulfil the same purpose as Monsieur Lefébure's book in dealing with the technical character of embroidery, and in presenting a succinct and comprehensive sketch of its history, to instruct needlewomen and to

serve as a guide to amateurs interested in the subject.

Lace-making is more fortunate than embroidery in having been historically discussed by many authors, to whom we are indebted for the principal facts which appear in the chapters devoted to this industry ; their names are so frequently cited in the course of our remarks, that it seems unnecessary to mention them here. We are none the less indebted to them for assistance in the second part of this work.

We have adopted the classification of needlepoint laces, and those made on the pillow with bobbins ; a classification which is of primary importance, and has not been effectually established by writers who have preceded us. This will help readers to detect different makes of laces most diverse in appearance, and it will guard them from confusing one class with the other. Lace is the most poetic of all textile tissues, and has been sung in verse. So far from veiling beauty, it surrounds it with a filmy aureole or environment of such appropriateness as to have inspired many poets. The historian's duty,

however, is to take account of precise facts; we have therefore borrowed but little from the legends and verses concerning lace-making.

Our aim, moreover, is not only to give instruction by a record of facts, but, above all, to centre interest upon the *rôle* which woman's labour plays in the artistic productions of the world. And the temptation presents itself of inquiring whether it is not rather by the needle and the bobbin than by the brush, the graver, or the chisel, etc., that the influence of woman should assert itself in the arts. She is sovereign in the domain of art needlework; few men would care to dispute with her the right of using those delicate implements, so intimately associated with the dexterity of her nimble and slender fingers. But do intelligent women sufficiently encourage the results of this association? Could they not give more attention, study, and effort, to stimulate a fuller development of artistic work produced by the needle and the bobbin?

To bring such questions home to impressionable natures of generous aspirations, is, we hope, to instigate in many directions a progress of knowledge and opinion through

which it may be recognized that the productions of embroidery and lace-making are worthy of standing upon the same level with those of painting, engraving, and sculpture, and of being represented in our public museums.

The satisfaction that we have rendered some service in writing the following pages, will confer upon us the best recompense for a work to which we have striven to bring all our ability, coupled with the affection in which we hold our industry.

We should mention that this translation contains a number of additional notes, and modifications of certain statements. This is the case, for instance, in respect of Egyptian work referred to on p. 24, and of Greek embroidery (p. 46), where a new illustration is given. Again, the description of Irish laces has been enlarged, and six new engravings have been inserted (pp. 249—254).



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EMBROIDERY AND LACE.

PART I.—EMBROIDERY.

CHAPTER I.

DEFINITIONS.

Distinction between an Embroidery and a Lace—Embroidery—
Needlepoint Lace—Pillow-made or Bobbin Lace.

THE distinction between embroidery and lace as well as that between embroidery and other ornamental textiles is not popularly appreciated. At the outset therefore of a work like the present, intended for those who wish to study such matters, it will be well to describe briefly the distinctive features of the different methods or processes by which ornamental tissues are produced.

Definitions.—There are three methods or processes for producing ornamental tissues :—

(1) By hand-painting or printing in colours ; (2) By weaving ; (3) By needlework (embroidery).

1. Hand-painting in colours to decorate a textile is

employed particularly for fans, and for certain imitations of tapestry hangings. Printing in colours by means of engraved blocks or cylinders is, however, more common. These processes, while lacking neither charm nor brightness in their effects, are nevertheless distinctively of a superficial character.

2. Weaving consists in so disposing the threads with which an ornamental textile is to be made, that certain selected ones are, from time to time, visible on its surface, and effects of pattern and colour are thus obtained, possessing more substantial definition than results from either painting or printing.

Methods of ornamental weaving have been known from the earliest times, and may be broadly classed under two sections : firstly, figured loom-weaving, which was brought to so high a perfection by Jacquard's invention of his apparatus at the commencement of this century ; secondly, tapestry-weaving in high and low warp frames, in the manners to be seen respectively at the Gobelins and Beauvais factories.

3. Lastly, the third method of ornamenting a textile is that with which we are specially to concern ourselves in the first part of our book, namely ornamental needle-work, or embroidery.

Embroidery.—Embroidery sometimes allies itself with the two first named processes in accentuating, by means either of stitches wrought over, or by skilfully outlining, certain portions of the pattern in a printed or woven textile to which it is desired to

* See *A Short History of Tapestry*, by Eugène Müntz (Cassell & Co., Limited).

give prominence. But embroidery is more frequently used by itself for decorating a plain stuff; and since the practice of this handicraft is freer and more independent than that of printing or weaving, it is capable of more easily producing really artistic effects.

√ *The Needle.*—

The embroiderer's work-tool is the needle, which may be regarded as little more than a stiff and pointed continuation of the flexible thread. Primitively the needle was a thorn or fish-bone; subsequently it was made in wood, bone, and ivory before it assumed



Fig. 1.—A lady embroidering (after Abraham Bosse).

shape in metal. In the hands of an able worker it is one of the most precious implements that may be used in the service of art.

Unfettered by any scientific contrivances, which fix limits to the possibilities of a machine, the needle, moving according to the caprice and ingenuity of the

fingers guiding it, sweeps with perfect freedom along the surface or through the thickness of a stuff. Like pen or pencil, it can be made to trace forms of any complexity, and, in two words, it writes and draws. Used with a variety of coloured threads, its function resembles that of a brush in depicting tones and shades. Indeed, in a sense, a superiority to the brush may be claimed for it, since it can be made to produce work in relief, an element in decoration which can be successfully resorted to and preserved from abuse, and is certainly outside the powers of painting.

The Crochet Needle.—But besides pointed straightness, the needle has other forms, of which note must be taken in a discussion upon embroidery. At times the needle's point has been converted into a hook, with its opposite and lower extremity sufficiently sharpened to easily pierce a stuff. Thus changed in form, the needle is called a crochet needle, with which a chain stitch is usually worked. The thread, caught by the hook, is carried through the stuff and brought back looped. Thus a peculiar class of stitch frequently employed in embroidery is the result. A distinguishing feature of the crochet as compared with other needles is the absence of a threading eye.

The appliances for doing embroidery are obviously of little bulk, and can be so conveniently carried that a work-woman can put them into her pocket, handy for use on a journey or in her spare moments. The stuff to be embroidered is held in the left hand, whilst the needle is plied with the right (fig. 1).

Frames for Embroidery.—But if the stuff to be embroidered is too large to be carried in the hand,

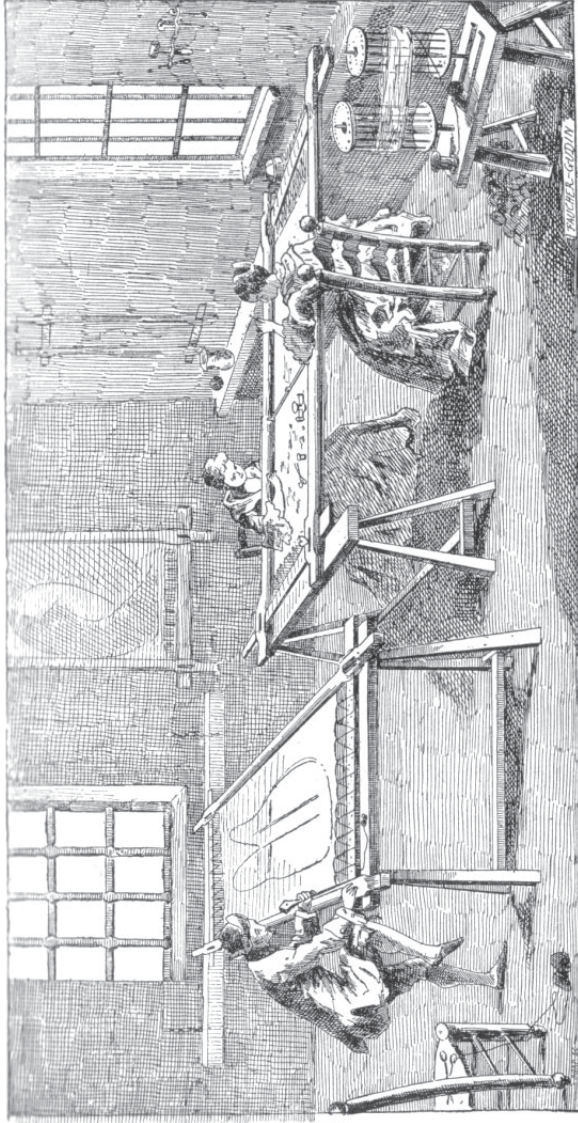


Fig. 2.—Engraving taken from *L'Encyclopedie*: The art of the embroiderer, by St. Aubin.

or if the embroidery to be done upon it is of such a nature that both hands must be engaged in working the needle, different sorts of frames, in which the stuff can be tautly stretched, become necessary. For big pieces, an adjustable frame with movable battens, resting upon trestles, as shown in fig. 2, is required. Embroidery frames of smaller dimensions consist of parallel bars, kept apart by long wooden screws. These can be twisted to increase or diminish the distance between the two bars, upon which the two opposite sides of the stuff have been first fixed, and so adjust the frame to the size of the stuff, stretching it out firmly (fig. 3). Other frames, again, especially those for crochet embroidery, are similar to the circular band of a sieve. It is said that we are indebted to China for this class of frame. Upon it the stuff to be embroidered is stretched like the sheepskin of a drum, whence the expression *tambour* embroidery. In the last century this was fancifully termed *broderie au boisseau* (bushel embroidery) (figs. 4 and 5).

Designing for Embroidery.—The employment of skill in using embroidery materials is governed, from the artistic point of view, by the design which may have been selected, and by its careful transfer on to the stuff upon which it is to be wrought. It is evident that mere needlework, however dexterous, cannot redeem bad taste in design. To weigh well the nature and character of the object to be decorated, to employ suitable threads, colours and materials which shall harmonize with the foundation on which the intended embroidery is to be produced, to follow sound principles in composing the pattern without thereby fetter-

ing artistic initiative, are rules as eternally true in respect of embroidery as in other arts. Unfortunately much embroidery, often perfect in its needlework, errs in quality of design and in the use of colours and tones which create discordant effects when brought into close juxtaposition. A suitable design having been chosen, its transfer on to material has then



Fig. 3.—Mademoiselle Dugrenot's embroidery frame.

to be managed in such a way that the designer's intention may be faithfully carried out by the skilful needle-worker. Methods of transferring designs are various; the best is for the designer himself to draw the pattern with pencil or chalk upon the material; for important pieces this is an operation not to be delegated to any other hand. In less important cases, the lines of the designer's drawing upon paper may be pricked with needle

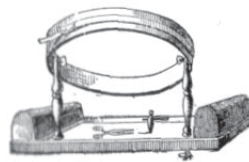


Fig. 4.—Tambour embroidery frame (St. Aubin).

holes, through which coloured resinous powder can be rubbed or shaken on to the stuff beneath; to this when warmed the powdered reproduction of the pattern

adheres. Books on ladies' fancy work generally contain descriptions of methods more or less ingenious for effecting pattern transfers. When canvas or textile fabrics with equally distinct reticulations are to be embroidered, the transfer of a pattern can be managed if the designer carefully marks his pattern with reticulations numbered to correspond with those of the material; in this case the work is called *à points comptés* (stitching by counting).



Fig. 5.—Tambour embroidery frame (St. Aubin).

One or other of the foregoing methods of transferring the pattern and fixing the stuff in a frame having been carried out, the work of embroidery then commences.

Methods of Working.—To embroider the material mounted in a rectangular or circular frame, the needle-worker places one hand beneath, and the other above, the stuff, and makes the stitches by passing the needle through it from one hand to the other.

This operation is to be noted, for to some extent stitches in a sewing machine are made similarly. The machines specially adapted to embroider are fitted with ingenious contrivances, whereby such an operation is simulated. But we shall return to this point further on, when discussing modern embroideries.

Now, whether the stuff being embroidered be held in the hand or the frame, the fact is patent that embroidery is an ornamental needlework done upon a stuff of some

sort. Embroidery postulates a material foundation. And the character of this foundation has to be duly appreciated in the course of scheming a design which shall be appropriately worked on to it. Notwithstanding that certain classes of embroidery are worked in such a way as to cover and conceal the ground, as, for instance, when canvas or other plain textiles are used, the margin which may ultimately be placed about such embroideries exacts a harmony between it and them. So that even these embroideries are not exempt from the fulfilment of those general conditions already laid down, neither are they examples of departure from the definition that embroidery is an ornamental needlework wrought upon a texture of some sort.

These remarks have been necessary in order that the distinguishing difference between embroidery and lace may be well established. We therefore proceed to describe lace.

Lace.—First let us clearly state that lace-making is not a process involving the use of some already existing fabric. Lace itself is a textile fabric, of which both ground and pattern are entirely produced by the lace-maker. It is a member of the same family as knitted and netted work and twisted and knotted thread trimmings (*passementerie*). Lace-making is of two distinctly different methods. One method calls the needle into operation, the other a series of bobbins. Hence the two marked categories, needlepoint lace and bobbin, or, as it is usually called, pillow lace.

Needlepoint lace is made by first stitching thread along the outlines of a pattern drawn or transferred upon paper or parchment, by which means a skeleton thread

pattern is produced (see the outline sprigs and spray in fig. 6). This skeleton thread work serves as the scaffolding, as one might call it, upon and between which the stitches, for the shapes and ground connecting them together, are cast, and so wrought into needlepoint lace. Whilst the taking of these stitches bears close



Fig. 6.—Parchment and pattern showing the skeleton thread pattern and needlepoint lace in progress.

analogy to those in embroidery, it will have been perceived that the work thus produced is altogether different from embroidery, since it has started from no previously provided textile fabric.

Design for a Needlepoint Lace.—A design for a needlepoint lace should evince the designer's sense of this

last-mentioned characteristic; and it naturally follows that the same pattern cannot be indiscriminately employed for an embroidery and a lace. The designer of a pattern to be embroidered is compelled to consider his textile as the foundation from which he starts, whereas the designer

for lace has first to acquaint himself with the dimensions of the proposed work. To aim at harmonious unity,

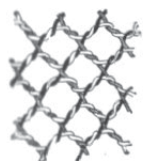


Fig. 7.—Specimen of a pillow lace ground of meshes.



Fig. 8.—Specimen of close and open thread work in pillow lace.

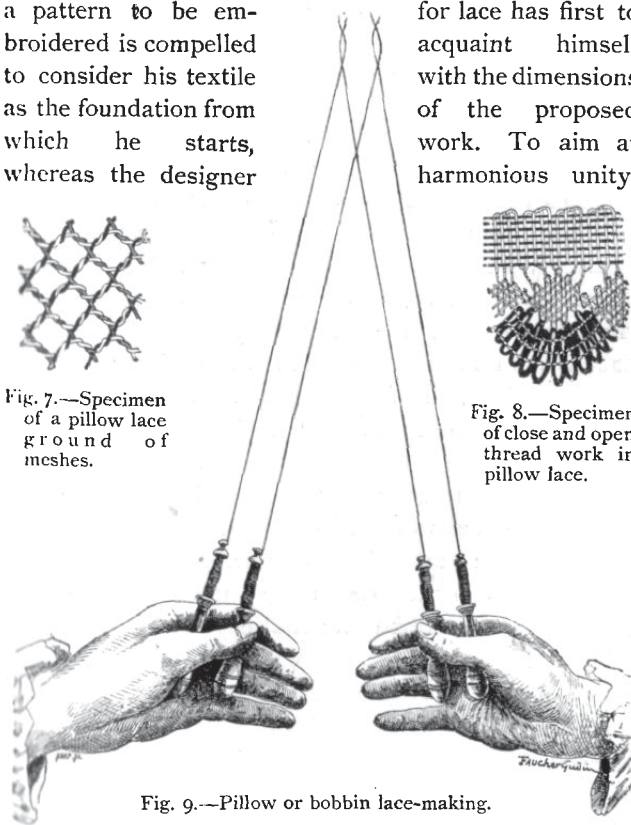


Fig. 9.—Pillow or bobbin lace-making.

balance of, and contrast between, the open and close portions of the filmy fabric, graceful and continuous curves or indentations along the borders, and to infuse

an influence of lace-like lightness and suppleness into his pattern, are briefly and broadly stated principles which should guide a designer for lace.

Method of Work.—The preparations for making lace with the needle are extremely simple. The pattern, having been decided upon, is carefully drawn with ink in fine, firm outline upon pieces of stiff paper, fine oil-cloth, parchment, or vellum. Each such piece containing a portion of the pattern should be of a size to be easily handled by the lace-worker, and special care must be taken that the boundary lines of these separate portions of the pattern may follow edges of blossoms, stems, or ornamental shapes, in order that when the various portions are joined together the junctures between them shall be invisible in the completed lace. Holes pricked along the lines of the pattern help the lace-maker in accurately laying threads and stitching them down upon the lines. The paper or parchment pattern has then to be backed with a piece of linen or similar material, which answers two purposes: the one to prevent the pattern from being torn during the construction upon its surface of the thread skeleton pattern; the second to facilitate the detachment of the completed lace from its pattern, by simply cutting, between the paper and the linen, the threads stitched through both at the time the thread skeleton pattern was fastened on to the surface of the paper or parchment (fig. 6). As soon as the several portions into which the whole pattern has been cut are finished, they are detached from their respective papers or parchments, brought together, and united by needle stitches, the junctures being as effectually con-

created as possible. The piece of needlepoint lace is thus completed.

Bobbin or Pillow Lace.—The make of a bobbin or pillow lace has considerably less analogy with an embroidery than that existing between this latter and a needlepoint lace. Bobbin or pillow lace-making more nearly resembles weaving. The threads for making a bobbin or pillow lace are fixed upon a circular or square cushion or pillow, placed variously to suit the methods

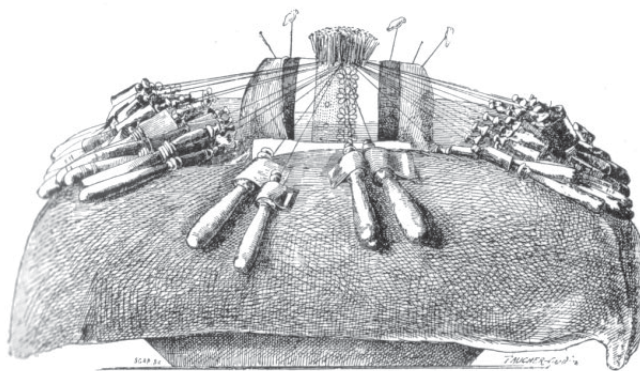


Fig. 10.—Cushion and bobbins for pillow lace-making.

of manufacture in vogue in different countries. One end of each thread is fastened on to the cushion with a pin, the main supply of thread being twined round a small bobbin of wood, bone or ivory. The threads are twisted and plaited together by the lace-maker's throwing her bobbins over and under one another. This operation is fairly simple, since children of eight or nine years of age can be successfully trained to it. It nevertheless demands considerable dexterity with the

fingers. However numerous the bobbins may be, they are generally worked by groups of four (see fig. 7). By crossing, plaiting, and twisting her threads the lace-maker forms the close and open parts of the work, which grows into the fabric known as pillow lace (see fig. 8).

Design for Bobbin or Pillow Lace.—The design for bobbin or pillow lace must of course be adapted to the technical requirements of the process, and cannot therefore be the same as one for needlepoint lace. Needlepoint lace undoubtedly has an appearance of greater strength and nobility than pillow lace, and for this reason it was in former times generally preferred for occasions of state by wearers who had reached a certain time of life. On the other hand, bobbin or pillow lace has the quality of charming suppleness; and for use in mantillas, veils, and *fichus* it is better than needlepoint lace, lending itself with delicate softness and graceful flexibility as a covering to the head and shoulders of a woman. Designs then for such a fabric should reflect their author's perception of these subtle qualities—a statement confirming the truism in regard to decorative arts that a sense of the peculiar and most appropriate employment of any art furnishes a key-note to the artist who conscientiously seeks to inform his compositions with a perfect harmony.

Method of Working.—In twisting and plaiting the threads, the lace-maker requires certain fixed points in the pattern, by which she may avoid entanglements (see figs. 10 and 11). This she secures by sticking pins into the pattern over which she is working upon the completion of each open stitch. The precise position for the pinholes must be carefully determined

and indicated upon the pattern before the lace is begun. The cutting up of a pillow lace pattern into convenient portions differs in some cases from the corresponding operation for needlepoint laces. Excepting in certain styles of Flemish pillow lace, where the separation of the pattern into portions is similar to that for needlepoint lace, the majority of pillow lace patterns can be cut into strips or bands, the laces made from which are subsequently united together by a stitch called the *point de racroc*.

Point de Racroc (uniting stitch).—This is said to have been invented at Bayeux in the last century by a workwoman named Cahanet. It opened the way to the manufacture of pieces of pillow lace much larger than those made before its invention. It consists in finishing off

the two outer parallel edges of a strip of pillow lace with a series of half, instead of whole, meshes. To unite two separate strips it is necessary to bring the edge of one close to the edge of the other, and then with a needle to complete the intermediate meshes. By this means, when very carefully done, several strips are joined to one another in a way that

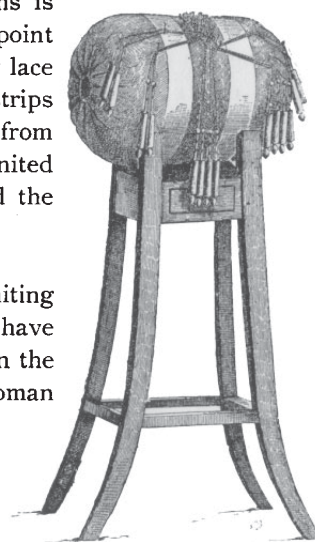


Fig. 11.—Another class of cushion and its support for pillow lace-making (taken from the *Traité de la Dentelle*, by Louise d'Alq).

defies detection even when the junctures occur in simple meshed grounds.

Summary.—It will have been seen from the foregoing that embroidery is perfectly distinct from lace-making, and that needlepoint and pillow laces are produced by such totally different methods as to prevent their being confused one with the other.

Being thus clearly enlightened and protected from future errors in distinguishing embroidery from lace, we will merely add that embroidery certainly preceded the invention of lace. Later on we shall see that it is very doubtful if the making of lace, properly so called, was known to the ancients, although it is absolutely proved that embroidery has been practised from the earliest of times. Accordingly we will now deal with the history of embroidery, after which we shall turn our attention to laces.

CHAPTER II.

THE EMBROIDERY OF ANTIQUITY.

Threads.—The needle was obviously invented in the first place for simply sewing stuffs together ; it was soon afterwards put to the more intricate work of ornamenting them. Thus arose the art of embroidery. Threads similar to such as were primarily spun for weaving purposes were pressed into the service of the newly found art. Those of weak tension were twisted together to form single threads of the necessary strength. In this way threads of different dimensions were spun, and the embroiderers were furnished with a means of giving a variety of effects to their work.

Successive discoveries in connection with dyeing processes provided embroiderers, in a corresponding manner, with a complete scale or series of colours. The earlier threads were of wool, flax, and cotton. Of later date were silken threads.

Wool.—From flocks of goats and sheep such as were tended by shepherd patriarchs, men derived meat for sustenance and wools for clothing. It is fair to assume perhaps that primeval threads were of wool.

But we must not here forget that, in the early centuries of antiquity, Egypt, mistress of an advanced civilization which was conspicuous for its highly

developed industries, was noted, as it is nowadays, for plants like hemp and flax, the fibrous bark of which yielded filaments for the manufacture of thread, etc. From hemp, strands of ropes and strings of fishing nets were made.

Flax.—Tradition assigns the invention of flax to Isis. It is used for weaving the compact and pliant textile called linen, and bleaches rapidly. Linen was held to be the particular textile suited to religious usages, and became the emblem of purity. Sacrificial priests were robed in it; altar, ceremonial, and funeral cloths were made of it; and their borders were embroidered to mark the sacred services to which they were appropriated. According to the precepts contained in Exodus chap. xxxi., the vestments of the high-priest Aaron and his sons were of linen. The ephod of the high-priest was a sort of linen vest, ornamented with colours of the jacinth, and in purple and crimson; upon the pectoral, or breastplate, twelve precious stones were set, bearing the names of the twelve sons of Jacob.*

Cotton.—During this period, too, cotton, which naturally grows there, was used in India, whence, from the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, merchants' caravans conveyed it to the peoples of Northern Asia and of Egypt. But the Greeks seem to have remained unacquainted with it until B.C. 333, when, in the course of their conquering progress under Alexander the Great, they noticed (according to Strabo)† that the clothes of their vanquished opponents were made of "tree wool,"

* *History of the People of Israel*, by Ledrain, t. i., p. 140.

† Strabo, Book XV., chap. i.

or of "wool growing out of nuts," both of which descriptions, however scientifically deficient, clearly apply to cotton.

Silk.—As to silk, although it has the reputation of having been known to the Chinese B.C. 1200, and of being styled by them the "Divine thread," it was virtually a new and rare material in the West at the time of Julius Cæsar. Aristotle, some four hundred years earlier, mentions the *Bόμβυξ* as a large worm, subject to three metamorphoses,* and says that, in the Isle of Cos, Pamphile, daughter of Plates, unwound the first silk cocoon there, and with the fibre wove a tissue. But such references are isolated. Persia, India, and perhaps Egypt began to weave with silk not sooner than a few years before Christ; and it was from these countries that Rome first began to import silks about the time of Julius Cæsar. Virgil, in his Second Georgic, is one of the first of the Roman authors to write about silk. During the reign of the Emperor Tiberius the price of silk was enormous; it was worth its weight in gold. "*Libra enim auri libra serici fuit*"—a pound of gold for a pound of silk.

Gold Threads.—But long anterior to the employment of silk in embroideries they had been rendered sumptuous with gold and silver threads.

The idea of beating out gold and silver into thin leaves or sheets, cutting them up into little ribbons, and intermixing them with threads for weaving purposes, is to be traced back almost to the first of historic periods.

* Aristotle, *Ancient History*, Book XIX.

Pliny attributes its conception to Attalus, King of Asia.* He writes that, in Asia, Attalus discovered a method of using gold threads in embroidery, and that the stuffs so embellished were termed Attalic. David† in his Psalms sings the glories of the golden apparel in which the king's daughter was arrayed; whilst Dionysius of Halicarnassus assures us that Tarquinius Priscus was the first to appear in Rome wearing a gold-embroidered robe.

These various references surely establish the fact that from the very commencement of the art the needle, together with threads of different sizes, colours, and values, has been the embroiderer's indispensable implement, the essential characteristic of which has scarcely altered during the lapse of many centuries.

Proofs of the Antiquity of Embroidery.—As the investigation of our subject is made more and more searching, so abundant proofs are brought to light that embroidery is one of the most ancient of the arts. The want of badges or emblems to mark social distinctions led to the ornamentation of garments as soon almost as they came into use. The simple and ready execution of embroidery, which, as we have shown, required but a needle and thread, yielded obvious means for gratifying a craving for marks distinctive of a chief's costume, for the enrichment of accessories to religious rituals, or for the satisfaction of that innate desire on the part of women to please by ingeniously adorning their natural beauty.

* Pliny, *Natural History*, Book VIII.

† Holy Bible, Psalm xlv.

Savage Tribes.—Certain usages amongst primitive tribes of Africa give grounds for the theory that, under certain conditions, the practice of embroidery may actually have preceded that of weaving. An instance in point is cited concerning negro girls, whose costume consisted of either a necklace or belt of leathers. When of

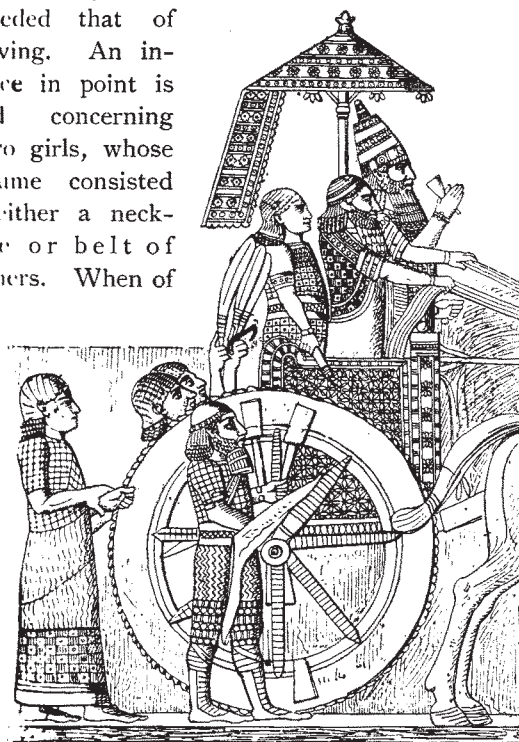


Fig. 12. —King Assurnazirpal (from the Nimroud alabaster bas-relief).

a marriageable age, these girls embroidered their skins with figures of flowers and animals in vivid colours.

The Assyrians.—Without stretch of imagination, we

are led to the conclusion that much of the ornament upon the costumes of figures represented in very early Assyrian monuments was of embroidery. The Nimroud bas-reliefs sculptured in alabaster are mentioned by Messrs. Perrot and Chipiez, who direct attention to the embroidered vestments of King Assurnazirpal thereon depicted (fig. 12).

The Jews.—The Bible is replete with descriptions of embroideries, frequently referring with minuteness to their details. But, above all, it surprises one to find that embroiderers at those remote times had brought their art to so high a standard of execution as to be able to render the most elaborate of subjects. In Exodus, for instance, we read how Moses caused a veil or curtain of fine twined linen to be cunningly embroidered with cherubim of blue and purple and scarlet, for the holy of holies. It was bordered with loops, and made fast by fifty gold rings to gilt-wood pillars.

Solomon, whose splendours are proverbial, ordered a curtain to be made for the Temple of azure-coloured material, upon which purple and scarlet cherubim were embroidered. On other hangings he directed that all sorts of flowers and fruits of the earth should be embroidered. Everything, in fact, suited to ornamental treatment, excepting representations of animal life, was used.

Ezekiel in his lamentation for Tyrus—"situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles"—exclaims, "The merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad were thy merchants. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in

blue clothes and broidered works, and in chests of rich apparel," etc. Another part of the same chapter (xxvii.) speaks of the "fine linen with broidered work from Egypt," which "was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail"* (see fig. 13).

Finally, Josephus, in his *Wars of the Jews*, relates that the veil presented by Herod (B.C. 19) to the

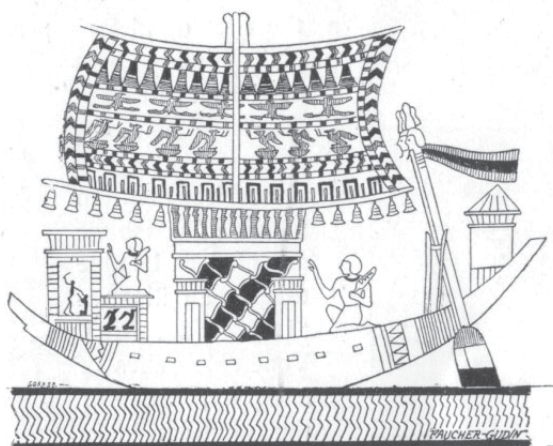


Fig. 13.—Egyptian sailing boat (Gardner Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. ii., p. 167).

Temple was a Babylonian curtain, fifty cubits high, sixteen broad, embroidered in blue and red, and of marvellous texture. In a variety of colours the universe, the stars, and elements were represented.

These few, of numerous similar references, prove that with the Jews the art of embroidery reached to a great pitch of perfection during those now distant epochs.

* Holy Bible, Ezek. xxvii.



Fig. 14.—Band from an Egyptian shroud in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs.

The Egyptians.— But it should be observed that the Egyptians cultivated the art of embroidery earlier than the Jews. These latter, indeed, were initiated into the craft by the former.* Upon mummy cloths dating from the first of historic periods, plain stitching was used as a rule ; but we have also examples of the embroideries then in vogue, of which we are glad to be able to give an illustration (fig. 14). Venerable relics of antiquity, except for the extraordinary care with which the piety of the Egyptians has preserved you, you would have crumbled into dust, like other tissues made during the first ten thousand years of human life on this world ! †



Fig. 15.

* *Egyptian Archaeology*, by Maspero (English translation published by H. Grevel).

† The specimen engraved in fig. 14 is part of a band, or *clavus*,

Many of the paintings upon Egyptian wooden sarcophagi clearly reveal the embroideries of clothing worn by important personages (fig. 15). The walls of the Necropolis at Thebes, with their painted portraits of Rameses III. (fig. 16), of Pharaoh Mienptah-Hotephimak, and of Queen Taia (fig. 17), consort of Amenhophis III.,* convey undeniable proofs that the robes of such sovereigns, at least, were embroidered.

The Greeks.—The Greeks attributed to Minerva great skill in weaving and needlework. The story of Arachne, who was changed into a spider for having dared to compete with the goddess, as told in all its details by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, has been quoted by all writers upon ancient woven fabrics.

worked with coloured worsteds and flax, in the tapestry-weaving method, into a tunic rather than a band from a burial cloth. A considerable number of such specimens have been exhumed from burial-places along the banks of the Nile, especially from Akhmim, in Upper Egypt. It was clearly the custom to bury the dead robed in ornamented tunics. A very considerable collection of such ornamental textiles is preserved in the Boulak Museum. Both the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum contain collections of them. For particulars of those at South Kensington see the recently issued *Descriptive Catalogue of Tapestry and Embroidery* (1888), pp. 1—86. The specimen fig. 14 is presumably of Christian Coptic work, and dates from the sixth century. At the same time, it seems not unlikely that work of similar technical character was produced during the Ptolemaic period in Egypt, and that the famous corslets described by Herodotus, Book II., chap. clxxxii., and Book II., chap. xlvi., were of such a character. In corroboration of this suggestion, we have specimens of Greek workmanship of the fourth century before Christ from Kouban (see note on p. 47), in which bands of leaf ornament and a cloth powdered with ducks are worked in what may be called the tapestry-weaving (Gobelins) process.

* See the work by Prisse d'Avennes.

Homer says that Paris brought clever Sidonian



Fig. 16.—Rameses (Necropolis of Thebes)

embroideresses to Troy. Tyre and Sidon were then at the height of their reputation for ornamental textiles. Again, in the third canto of the *Iliad*, we have a picture of Helen "in her palace embroidering a large cloth, white as alabaster, with the story of the combats in which Trojans skilled in taming steeds and Greeks clad in brazen cuirasses contended for love of her." Then Andromache (canto xxii.) "lines a resplendent robe with a tissue which she embellishes with embroidery of many colours."*

In the *Odyssey* Homer shows us

* Homer's *Iliad*, cantos xix. and xxii.

“Divine Ulysses wearing an ample purple mantle of fine, soft linen, fastened by a brilliant clasp of gold. The front of the mantle was decorated with rich embroidery, representing a bloodhound who fiercely pins a dappled fawn and casts hungry looks upon the quivering quarry. The spectators were filled with admiration for these marvellous garments, the women fixing their gaze upon the animals wrought in gold, and to all appearance instinct with life.”

Fights and scenes of the chase have for many centuries been favourite subjects with embroiderers, and in Homeric times seem to have been rendered with great dexterity. Indians especially never tire of using their needles to depict “animal hunts.”*



Fig. 17.—Queen Taia (Necropolis of Thebes).

A description in the *Orestes* of Æschylus is given of how Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, recoiled from placing his feet upon the rich stuffs laid in his way by Clytemnestra. He exclaims, “A mortal to walk upon purple richly embroidered and tissues purchased at great price! No; I dare not do so!”

* *Voyage of Marco Polo to the Indies*, written in 1328.

According to Virgil's *Æneid*, the son of Anchises gave valorous Cleanthes, victor in a fight, a splendid robe described as "a chlamys of golden web, bordered with double meanders in purple. Upon the web was embroidered the son of Tros in a forest, javelin in hand, chasing a fleet hart. He burns with ardour and pants for breath, when suddenly Jove's bird, swooping from the summit of Mount Ida, seizes him in its claws and bears him away to the heavens."

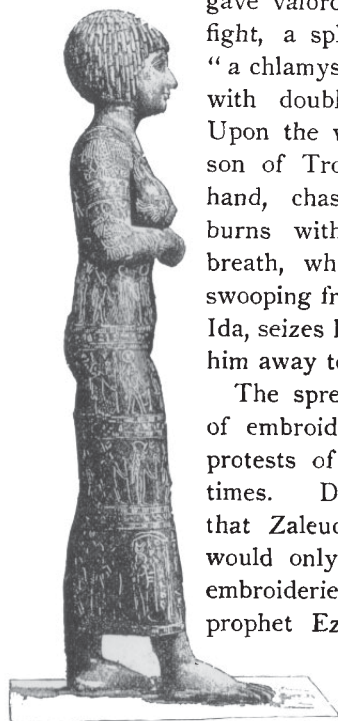


Fig. 18.—Egyptian bronze statue in the museum at Athens.

The spreading and luxurious use of embroideries did not escape the protests of the moralists in ancient times. Diodorus Siculus records that Zaleucus, a Locrian legislator, would only sanction the wearing of embroideries by courtesans. The prophet Ezekiel reproached women with overburdening their dresses with embroidery.

The Babylonians.—Still the riches of Persia, India, Egypt, Chaldæa, Assyria, Babylon, and Phœnicia diffused themselves more and more. Babylon particularly was a centre for the production of most sumptuous embroideries. We have noticed that the veil of the Temple was a Babylonian curtain (*πέπλος Βαβυλώνιος*), an expression which constantly appears in the writings of ancient authors.

Aristobulus, when describing the tomb of Cyrus, speaks of the great king's body in a golden coffin, which was placed upon a bed of gold curiously wrought, the coverlet whereof was of magnificent Babylonian fabric, gorgeously embroidered.

At Athens the statue of Pallas Athenæ, sculptured by Phidias for the Parthenon, stood in front of an embroidered drapery, hung between the columns at the back.* Every four years it was renewed, and at the Panathenaic festival the peplos of the goddess was carried in procession. This peplos consisted of a large square of crocus-coloured worsted, upon which embroideries were done by Arrephorian virgins,† representing the works of the goddess‡ (fig. 23).



Fig. 19. — Fragment of a Greek statue with embroideries on the drapery.

* See M. de Ronchaud's remarks on the Peplos of Minerva, and his book on *Tapisserie dans l'Antiquité*.

† According to some, the *Arrephori* were four girls of between seven and eleven years of age, two of whom superintended the weaving of the sacred peplos of Athenè. Other authorities say that there is no evidence that the *Arrephori* took part in the Panathenaic festival (see p. 71 of the *British Museum Guide to the Sculptures of the Parthenon*), and it is more generally supposed that the peplos was embroidered by skilful and high-born Athenian ladies.

‡ It should be noted, moreover, that the sacred peplos, borne on

Our museums contain many sculptures and Greek and Etruscan vases on which are figured persons wearing embroideries (see figs. 19, 20, 22, and 23).

A fine stone at the British Museum is engraved with a Babylonian king, Merodach-Idin-Akhy, in embroidered robes, which speak of the art as practised eleven hundred years before Christ (fig. 21).

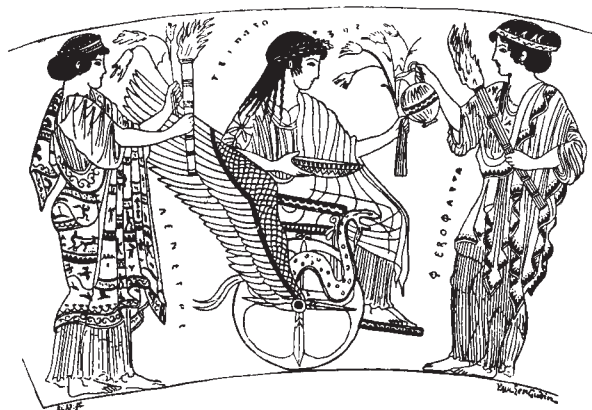


Fig. 20.—Painting on a Greek vase.

the mast of a ship rolled on wheels in the Panathenaic festival, was destined for the sacred wooden idol, Athenè Polias, which stood in the Erechtheus. This peplos "was a woven mantle renewed every five years. On the ground, which is described as dark violet, and also as saffron-coloured, was inwoven the battle of the gods and the giants" (see p. 47 of *British Museum Guide to the Sculptures of the Parthenon*). The central pendent orphrey of the peplos in fig. 19 displays a series of panels containing such subjects. The inweaving of such ornament was possibly, if not probably, done in a method similar to that of Gobelins tapestry-weaving, a method which is distinctly shown in some of the Greek ornamental textiles of the fourth century, discovered in the Tomb of the Seven Brothers, near Temriouk, in the province of Koudan (see *Compte Rendu de la Commission Imperiale Archeologique*, 1878—1879; see also p. 25 ante).

Strabo,* in his account of Alexander's campaigns against the Persians, tells us of the astonishment displayed by the Greeks at Megasthenes upon seeing costumes embroidered with gold and jewels, as well as garments of fine gauzy material, like muslin, embroidered with flowers.

From the point of view of their subsequent effect upon industries, these Grecian expeditions of old time into Asia must certainly be held to correspond with the Crusades of much later date. Through contact with Eastern nations, those of the West acquired a taste for articles of beauty and a perception of the manufacturing processes employed in producing them. But a cloudless, sunny sky and a fertile soil remarkable for fauna and flora of incomparable brilliancy in colouring must have been primary sources of inspiration to the Asiatic peoples in respect of the rich and beautiful effects they imparted to their embroideries.



Fig. 21. — Merodach-Idin-Akhy (from an engraved stone in the British Museum).

In the course of his successes, Alexander gained possession of the famous and richly ornamented tent of Darius, an object which excited the admiration and wonder of its captor, who soon afterwards set skilful Cypriotes to work in making for him a magnificent mantle or cloak.

* Strabo, Book XV., chap. i.

*Delicate Textiles, Gauze and Muslin.**—The development of appreciation for the charm and glitter of certain classes of embroidery was accompanied with a cultivation of talent to produce equally beautiful articles for



Fig. 22.—Hera, goddess of matrimony (from a Greek vase).

other and new purposes; and Strabo, from whose writings we have already quoted, speaks of the impression made upon the Greeks under Alexander by the sight of golden and jewelled robes, as well as by that of filmy muslin costumes delicately embroidered with floral devices, from which it may be gathered that an equal standard of performance ruled in the dexterous ornamentation of fabrics of aerial lightness, as in the more substantial decoration wrought upon heavier woven materials.

India was, as she remains, long celebrated for the manufacture of transparent muslins, known by poetic appellations, such as *abrawan* (running water), *bafthowa* (woven air), *shubanam* (evening dew), and other similarly expressive

* The names "gauze" and "muslin" are said to be derived from those of the towns Gaza and Mosul.

names.* During the times of which we have been writing, a vast commerce in elegant luxuries, like these gauzy textiles, had evidently been pursued. Ancient sculptures represent dancers draped in tissues of this character, the folds and embroideries of which are so subtly indicated in the sculptures by very light touches that at first sight one concludes that the figures represented are almost absolutely nude. Lucan mentions these gauzes in his descriptions of the festivals provided by Cleopatra at her Alexandrine palace in honour of Cæsar, and particularly of his rival Antony. † Light gauzes were also used for veils. With Oriental gauzes opulent dames of Rome wreathed their heads upon going to the temple, and named such drapery *flammeum*. The *flammeum* was even used by



Fig. 23.—Pallas Athenæ (from a Greek vase in the Louvre).

* Sir George Birdwood's *The Industrial Arts of India*, vol. ii., p. 93.

† Lucan, Book X.

early Christians, for one of their first authors, in the reign of Tiberius, criticises the coquetry of women when they attended public worship in wearing these head veils, "perfectly transparent and slightly ornamented with embroidery." These veils were the prototypes of the mantillas at present worn by women in southern countries of Europe.



Fig. 24.—Figure from an Etruscan tomb at Vulci.

Phrygia.—From the shores of Phrygia, Asiatic and Babylonian embroideries were shipped for Greece and Italy. The Romans denominated such embroideries *phrygionæ*, and the embroiderer *phrygio*. Stuffs woven with gold were called *chrysoclavum*,* or *auroclavum*,† but golden embroideries were specified as *auriphrygium*. This word is the root of the French word *orfroi*, a title commonly applied to the golden bands which adorn copes, chasubles, and other ecclesiastical vestments.

The greater number of the early embroideries used in Greece and at Rome came, as a rule, from Asia; the patterns on them were Oriental in character. When a conqueror

* From the Greek χρυσός, gold.

† The *clavus* was, according to the majority of authorities who have written about it, a band of ornamental weaving or embroidery to embellish the tunic. There was a broad band, the *latus clavus*, and a narrow one, the *angustus clavus*. The term *chrysoclavus* might apply to either, and would merely imply a golden band. It is not therefore a term peculiarly descriptive of woven stuffs.

returned with the honours of his victories thick upon him, he was invested with a *toga palmata*, or robe embroidered by Phrygians with palm devices, probably similar in form to those frequently used on Cashmere shawls, and not to be mistaken for an ornament of classic style peculiar to Rome or Athens. The Oriental origin of such embroidered robes appears to be undisputed. Whenever some distinguishing mark was required for a vestment, embroidery was called upon to supply it.

The mother of the Maccabees wishing to arouse her sons' courage upon their departure for battle, gave them white linen robes, and on taking leave of them said, "These maternal fingers spun this thread, with which they likewise wove and embroidered these garments; may they become either your standards should you vanquish the foes of your God and country, or your shrouds should you fall victims to the steel of the faithless!"

Like other arts, that of the needle has often given form to the sentiments of the human heart, and its progress has kept pace with that of architecture, painting, and sculpture. Its expressions, like theirs, occur throughout all phases in the history of civilization.

Summary.—Thus we have found that embroidery has held sway during ancient times. Egyptians and Asiatic nations, from Babylonians, Hebrews, Phrygians, to Indians and Chinese, have displayed high skill in its practice. Greeks and Romans who rank foremost in the ancient history of Europe adopted various processes for embroidery from Orientals, remaining nevertheless their inferiors in skill, as is more or less shown by the importations from Asia of the more sumptuous and

golden embroideries which alone were deemed worthy for occasions of stately triumphs.

As regards the kinds of threads successively employed for embroidery, it will be remembered that silk was the latest to become known in Europe. At the period of Christ's dispensation, with which this chapter closes, embroideries had been made chiefly with woollen, cotton, and flaxen threads, though often intermixed with strands of gold and silver, China at this period being almost the only country enjoying free use of silk.

The patterns rendered in ancient embroideries were based upon flowers, trees, and animals, the latter sometimes in processional series. In more important embroideries hunting scenes and combats were displayed, whilst others were depicted, with forms of divinities, typical of stars, natural forces, and elements. To the Greeks the gods were omnipresent; but to the Hebrews such familiar emblems of the divinity were unknown, and they used nought but cherubim. Ornamental devices were simple in character, and derived largely from architectural enrichments. From the point of view of ordinary usage, it would seem that at the periods we cursorily allude to, embroideries were rarities, highly esteemed, and employed exclusively in the adornment of the temple or the palace, of priests or persons of high degree.

Unfortunately at the present day we possess no specimens with which we might verify the descriptions of them put forward in the works of noted Greek and Roman writers. Nothing exists of the peplos of Minerva of Athens, of a Phrygian chlamys worn by some Roman noble, of those famous embroideries tell-

ing of the exploits of Greeks and Trojans, or of the celebrated veils and hangings of the Temple.

In fact, beyond fragments of mummy cloths from Egyptian tombs, we scarcely possess any relics of textile fabrics produced prior to the Christian era.*

* The excavations of burial grounds at Akhmim in Upper Egypt have brought to light various pieces of embroidery of the Roman period, from the first to fourth centuries A.D. M. Maspero considers that the textiles discovered at Akhmim are nearly all of the Coptic period. Some, however, are earlier. Among such may be instanced an extremely fine specimen of flax cloth embroidered with brilliant coloured worsteds in a sort of darning stitch so as to make the embroidery on the front of the flax consist of large loops. This piece has been presented by the Rev. Greville Chester to the British Museum. The design is Roman, and represents a boat in which are a Cupid and Venus (?). The border is of rich flower and leafy garlands. Other pieces of Roman embroidery of the same date, but done in crewel and chain stitch, are in the South Kensington Museum.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE CRUSADES.

At the commencement of our era the boundaries of the Roman empire extended over all then known countries; and civilisation, commerce, and knowledge of industrial processes with which the barbarians had hitherto been unacquainted, gradually developed in them.

So far as embroidery is concerned we have to bear in mind two distinct movements. On the one hand, wealth and luxury centred themselves first in Rome under the Cæsars and Antonines, and later in Byzantium, when Constantine made it his metropolis in the fourth century. On the other hand, an active commerce was established by the East with those Western nations which were governed originally by Roman proconsuls, and subsequently by their first kings, who gradually freed their kingdoms from Roman domination.

Once instructed by Oriental importations, handicraftsmen of France, Spain, England, and Germany, set themselves to produce embroidery, which for a considerable period, however, bore strong traces of Oriental influence. At length native artificers ventured to draw inspiration for their ornaments from things amongst which they dwelt, and thus, in the art of embroidery, as with their architecture, they created locally distinctive styles.

And now, recurring to the history of embroidery as it opens with the Christian era, we may briefly mention the tradition that the Virgin Mary, when told by the angel Gabriel of her Divine conception, embroidered a veil, such probably as she herself might wear on going to the Temple.

But the early Christians, almost always subject to persecution, were little addicted to the vanities of embroidery. Perret, in his work on the *Catacombs of Rome*, calls attention to several paintings of costume ornamented with *callicules*, or bits of brightly coloured stuffs cut into circles or squares which were sewn (*appliqués*) on to the breast or skirt of the tunic (fig. 25). Such pieces of *appliqué* work were used for a long time as the only ornaments of priests' albs. Comparatively insignificant as they



Fig. 25.—Engraving taken from the *Catacombes de Rome*.

appear from the catacomb paintings to have been, it is important to refer to them, since from them indirectly were developed the gorgeous orphreys with panels of broidery which we shall often be called upon to consider in our investigations of embroidered ecclesiastical vestments.

The court of Roman emperors must have constantly furnished costly commissions to be executed by those who devoted themselves to the art of the needle. It

was often a season of pompous and unstinted extravagance one indeed when representations of all sorts and public games were leading factors in the government of a people : *Panem et circenses*.

The Emperor Augustus, rivalling the splendours of Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt, imported, for his festivals and triumphs in Rome, enormous quantities of embroidered stuffs from Persia, and probably too from China.

Metellus Scipio purchased during his consulate (B.C. 52—46), at the price of eight hundred thousand sesterces (about £6,700), marvellous covers for couches of Babylonian embroidery, *triclinaria Babylonica*, which, a hundred years later, the Emperor Nero acquired at the enormous price of four millions of sesterces (£160,000).

Was the immense velarium stretched by Nero across the Colosseum at Rome worked in embroidery, or was it of tapestry-weaving as Mr. Eugène Müntz suggests ? Upon it were represented the starry firmament and Apollo driving a chariot drawn by steeds. All seems to point to the conclusion that, in view of the considerable time which the tapestry-weaving of such an enormous hanging would have required, it is more likely that embroidery, as a far readier and speedier process, was called into operation.

Lampridius describes the exquisite table napkins embroidered for the Emperor Heliogabalus, successor to Caligula in A.D. 217 ; upon them were displayed all the dainties and viands that could be wanted for a feast. However easily embroidered, the effect of such things can scarcely have been artistic. It responded, however,

to Roman taste, for, as M. Müntz says, the tendency of Roman art was more towards rich and gaudy display than elegance and beauty. Such an influence also discernible in costumes is an evidence of that degenerate taste which potently manifested itself after the reign of the Antonines.

For many centuries senators had worn a white toga bordered with two purple bands (*clavi*); but under the empire as many as seven bands would be worked on the toga, and in time came to be made of gold thread only, consequently they were termed *auri clavi*.

Until the middle of the third century the emperors disdained effeminate ornaments, and were content with a simple purple toga. But Aurelian (270—275) adopted for his toga a style of splendour worthy of an Oriental monarch; rich stuffs, with gold and pearls, were used by this fierce warrior.

Diocletian (284—305) even surpassed such pomp of display which thenceforth became a leading attribute of the imperial dignity. The term of each emperor's reign became shortened; the enjoyments accompanying it were of brief duration; and rapidly executed processes such as embroidery were necessary to meet the pressing and changeful demands of the times, which under calmer circumstances might have been met by weaving. Under such pressure embroidery is more readily produced than weavings, and so the shuttle was, in these circumstances, completely superseded by the needle. Embroidery could be used not only for ornamenting costumes to which it is so appropriate, but it would also supplant monumental tapestry-weaving.

The great wealth of embroidery used at Rome

during imperial times was outshone by that in Byzantium, when Constantine settled his seat of government there. Contiguous, so to speak, with Asiatic opulence, the courts of Byzantine emperors knew no limits for their extravagances. In Charles Bayet's *Byzantine Art*, says Francisque Michel,* one may read descriptions of stuffs produced in imitation of those imported from Asia. Amongst them would be seen "griffins, basilisks, unicorns, lions, tigers, elephants, eagles, peacocks, and other birds, intermingled with large and small circular bands or medallion shapes, golden apples, palms, shrubs, and flowers." Byzantine records, constantly, give such titles as the following, which recur again and again during the Middle Ages: *Pallia cum rotæ*, stuffs decorated with wheels or circular bands; *stuculata*, with lozenge diapering; *quadrupula*, *exapula*, *octapula*, with panels four-sided, hexagonal, octagonal, etc.; *virgata*, with stripes; *cum bestiis et avibus*, with beasts and birds; as well as *cum historia*, representations of Biblical and mythological subjects.

Embroidery used in working the fabrics storied with incidents from the New Testament, presented all that the ingenious imagination of Byzantine artists pictured, in order to pictorially elucidate the Gospels which at that time were fascinating and influencing human thought. Subjects such as these were worked into the great draperies then in common use, for hanging between colonnades and porches of palaces and churches. The heavy stuffs of which these were made were more suited to the weight

* Francisque Michel, *Recherches sur les Étoffes de Soie*.

of Byzantine embroidery than were articles of clothing.

Nothing, however, if we may rely upon contemporary accounts, contributed as much to most artfully wrought embroidery as the devotion in making altar and liturgical cloths; Paul the Silentiary* describes one which was used on the altar in the church of St. Sophia; it was "embroidered in the centre with the figure of Christ robed in a purple tunic and golden mantle of dazzling effulgence; in His left hand He held the book of the Gospels, His right hand being stretched forth. On either side, clad in white, were St. Peter, with the Book of Holy Writ, and St. Paul, with a gold staff surmounted by a cross. Along the borders were representations of miracles and diverse incidents of sacred history, amongst which the flattering artist had depicted the Emperor Justinian and his wife distributing alms to the churches."

Such subjects admirably beseeemed their sacred service. But this was no longer the case when scenes from the New Testament were used in the decoration of secular costume. A mosaic in the church of St. Vitale, at Ravenna, displays the Empress Theodora † wearing a cloak embroidered with the adoration of the Magi. Following the fashion of the court, rich persons adopted sacred subjects for the embroidery on their costumes; one senator boasts six hundred figures upon his robes of state! Abuses of this class lead us to a just sense of that righteous indignation fulminated

* Paul the Silentiary, *Description of St. Sophia*, verse 755 *et seq.*

† See Reproductions of Mosaics in South Kensington Museum; also in M. Gerspach's work on *Mosaics*, p. 63.

by Asterius, Bishop of Amasus, in Pontus, against the vainglorious "who wore the Gospels upon their backs instead of in their hearts. Every one," he says, "is eager to clothe himself, his wife, and his children with stuffs ornamented with flowers and numberless figures, and to such an extent is this done, that when the wealthy classes show themselves in public, little children gather round in crowds and point their fingers at them, making merry at their expense. On such raiments are to be seen lions, panthers, bears, bulls, dogs, forests, rocks, hunters, all, in fact, that painters can copy from nature. It is not sufficient to adorn walls in this manner, for tunics and mantles are also covered with similar decorations. The more religious of the wealthy classes require artists to supply them with subjects taken at their suggestion from the New Testament, Jesus Christ and His disciples, or else His many miracles," etc.

This language marks the important, though often undoubtedly exaggerated, consideration bestowed upon embroidery during the Byzantine empire. A favourite scheme of arrangement in Byzantine patterns was that in which occurred pairs of animals or birds, confronted and separated by the *hom*, the sacred tree of the Persians, a sort of palm adopted as a symbol in the religion of Zoroaster, who called it the tree of life. Constantly recurrent in the Middle Ages this *motif* is to be found in woven textiles and designs for embroidery which will be hereafter described.

Silk now became an article of regular trade in the Western markets. The Chinese were always ready to deliver any quantities of woven silks, but they jealously

protected any western importation of silkworms, in the rearing of which they virtually enjoyed a monopoly. The Emperor Justinian accordingly devised a stratagem to counteract this, by securing the services of two Persian monks, long resident in the far East, who visited Byzantium and undertook to bring thither silkworms from China. One of the grounds which recommended their scheme to the emperor was that by it "the Romans would no longer be under the necessity of importing silk from their enemies the Persians, or from any other nation." These itinerant monks forthwith returned to "Serinda" (possibly China), and having procured a store of silkworm eggs, they concealed them in the hollow of their bamboo staves, to evade the jealous vigilance of the Chinese, and so returned with them to Byzantium.* The rearing of the worms was undertaken forthwith in Asia Minor and Greece, and later in Central Europe.

The costliness of the materials, the complication of the designs, and the strivings after effects of solid reliefs, frequently led Byzantine embroiderers far away from canons of good taste. Costumes loaded with embroideries of this nature lost suppleness, and hung in rigid, straight folds, surrounding the wearers of them with sumptuous encumbrances.† At the same time it must not be overlooked that the Byzantines embroidered

* See Yates' *Textrinum Antiquorum*, p. 231, where a quotation from Procopius' *De Bello Gothico*, iv., 17, is given. Lady Marian Alford, in her valuable book *Needlework as Art*, names Cosmas Indicopleutes, the Indian navigator and monk, who wrote an account of his journeys as one of the two Persian monks. But neither Gibbon, vol. vii., p. 97, *et seq.*, nor Yates so speak of him.

† Eug. Müntz, *History of Tapestry*.

figure subjects in a most remarkable manner; and these very properly received the highest admiration when they passed into the hands of other peoples.

Apparently there are no remains extant of Byzantine embroideries produced before the seventh century. We must, nevertheless, not omit to mention certain textile specimens preserved in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, one of which is described as a purple worsted stuff embroidered with green and yellow palmates, and exhumed from a tomb of the third century A.D.*

Amongst other articles made at Byzantium were state trappings and gala harness for horses, to which the heavy relief embroideries were well adapted. St. Chrysostom speaks of wealthy persons who provided their horses "with trimmings of sparkling gold work suited for women's wear;" and Oriental courts of the present day have scarcely modified such splendour in the paraphernalia of their horses and elephants. Gold is used for them, not only in threads and fringes, but also as plates or plaques, fitted into the leather or other material; intermixed are spangles, jewels, glass trinkets, of all colours and sizes. The fringes are similarly treated, and glitter and sparkle to the pawing of the bedizened steeds. All this clinquant finery glistens in the public places beneath the rays of the Oriental sun, producing the effect of boundless affluence so consonant with the majesty of a sovereign.

* In the *Compte Rendu de la Commission Imperiale Archéologique* (1878-9), facsimile illustrations of these precious examples are given; and full descriptions of them by Stephani are contained in the accompanying text. They were taken in the course of excavations in 1875-6 from the tomb of the "Seven Brothers" near Temriouk in the Province of Koudan, which includes the south-east corner of the Sea of

In the seventh century the rise of Mohammedan power began to impair the mightiness of the Byzantine court. But the triumph of the Mussulman, far from

Azof. From various data Stephani convincingly fixes their date at the fourth and third centuries B.C., not A.D. as Mons. Lefebure appears

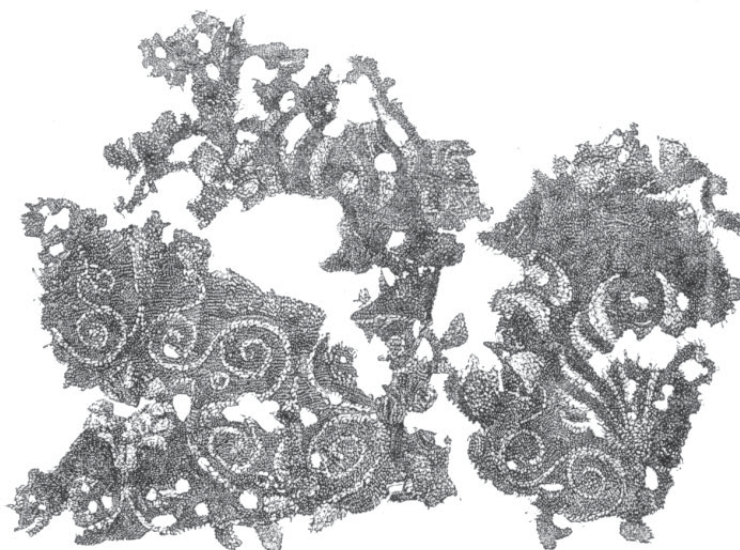


Fig. 25A.—Chain stitch embroidery with yellow flax upon mulberry-coloured worsted material. Greek. Fourth century B.C. From tomb of the Seven Brothers, near Temriouk, in the province of Kouban.

to think. The specimen here engraved is worked apparently with a silky-looking flax thread, yellow in colour, in chain stitch on a blue-red worsted material. In other relics of this important find we have thin golden plates shaped like leaves stitched to worsted stuff; and the patterns of others are worked in short stitches. The embroidery displays clear evidence of a complete knowledge, in the fourth century B.C., on the part of the Greeks, of these stitches, which, as might be expected, were evidently wrought with a comparatively cumbrous needle.

injuring textile arts, so intimately wedded with Oriental fashions, infused into them the spirit of a new departure.

The costumes of the Caliphs become dreamlike wonders to all who attempt to describe them. All sorts of leather articles were embroidered, not only saddles and harness, but also red morocco leather boots, scabbards of swords and daggers, are often exquisite works of the embroiderer's art.

But what shall be said of the carpets and hangings? Whether they were woven or embroidered, our admiring astonishment has been won for centuries by their colouring, which has never been excelled.

Leading a nomad life, the Arab frequently embroidered the tent of his chieftain. When the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid sent presents to Charlemagne in 802, amongst them were magnificent and precious textiles, and a chief's tent superbly embroidered.

As in previous times, the Kaaba at Mecca was always hung with the richest of tissues; and whosoever of the faithful could offer the finer and rarer pieces was accorded the privilege of decorating the tomb of the Prophet Mahomet. In 776 the mere weight of these offerings hanging upon the supports of the temple threatened its stability. The columns were hidden beneath the masses of them. The greater number of these hangings had wide borderings of flowers and sprays interlacing themselves with the noble and picturesque lettering of the prayers of Islam, embroidered upon the green ground sacred to the prophet.

Such customs survive to the present day, and the sanctuary is always covered with a huge scroll on

which are embroidered verses from the Koran. Each year, on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Mecca, the curtain in use is replaced by a new one brought from Egypt upon the back of a camel dedicated to the service. The pilgrims rend the old curtain into pieces and preserve them as holy relics.

It must not be supposed that embroidery became extinct with the decay of the Byzantine empire; the Greeks maintained the best traditions of the art.

The difficulty of determining whether the different specimens described by Byzantine authors were of tapestry weaving or of needlework, is freely acknowledged in his *History of Tapestry Making*, by M. Müntz. He adds, however, with good reason, that "amongst the different textile processes in use, one only was universally known and employed from one end to the other of Europe, and that was embroidery. And Byzantium held for many centuries the foremost place as the producer of the richest and most perfected examples of the art."

The contentions of the Iconoclasts drove many Byzantine artists into Italy. The *Liber Pontificalis*, or Chronicle of the Popes, written in 687 by Athanasius the librarian, contains mention of an influx into Rome of gorgeous embroideries, the work of men who had arrived from Greece and Constantinople.

The Treasury at Ratisbon in Bavaria includes a Byzantine embroidery, which probably is a work of this period, and is certainly very remarkable. It was found in the tomb of Gunther, who died, Bishop of Bamberg, in 1062 (fig. 26). Upon it is depicted the Emperor Constantine as master of the world, riding on a white

palfrey and receiving homage from the East and West, personified as the two Romes under the guise of two queens, wearing mural crowns, and humbly offering to the monarch a warrior's helmet on the one hand and a

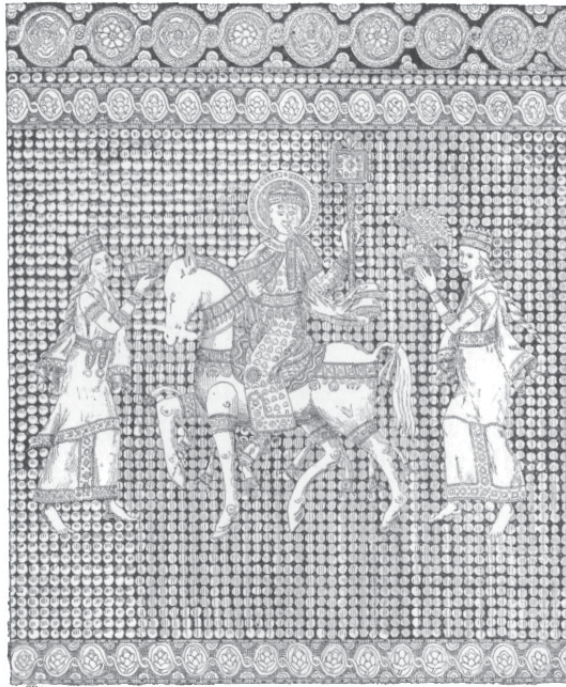


Fig. 26.--Byzantine embroidery from the tomb of Gunther, Bishop of Bamberg, preserved at Ratisbon.

crown of peace on the other. In all respects this specimen is noteworthy for the dignified pose of the figures and the distinctness of definition imparted to them by careful and precise execution. It possesses as much

style in the higher sense of the word as the finest of Byzantine mosaics.

Leaving Byzantium and her magnificence we now turn our attention to examples of simpler and more artless work, notable for a certain purity of sentiment, and made by Western countries.

With our Gallic forefathers embroidery was an old established art. Pliny affirms that they were skilful "in embroidering carpets, in making felt with wool, and in using the waste to make mattresses, the invention of which is due to them."

Under Roman government the Gauls may be said to have first enjoyed the advantages of civilization and the pleasures of its attendant arts, which were developed under the Merovingian and Carlovingian kings, by the latter of whom abbeys were built all over the country. These establishments infused new life into a practice of the arts generally, including, of course, embroidery.

The Romans were conquerors ; fortifying towns, and carrying on great public works, but paying scant heed to commerce. The later Greeks, on the contrary, were merchants and navigators, closely following the heels of their soldiery, and making use of the resources opened to them ; they monopolized trade between the East and those countries through which the conquering Romans had constructed great highways, as through the forests of Gaul and Germany. Lading their vessels at Phrygian ports, notably at Gaza, with merchandize brought by caravans from Southern Palestine, the land of Media, and the kingdom of the Sabæans of Yemen, they transported it to the Island of Delos, where, according to Festus and Strabo, they founded the most

flourishing market in the world. On the backs of men or mules the goods were further distributed to populous centres.

Pilgrimages to the tombs of saints gave rise to the periodical holding of large fairs; under the reign of Dagobert, Greek merchants came to France to dispose of their goods at the fairs established at the instance of his minister, St. Eloi, in the plain du Landit; close to the abbey in course of erection over the shrine of St. Denis.

Not only commerce, but industry as well, focussed itself about the monasteries. As Mignet cogently remarks in his *Historical Studies*:—"Monasteries were the workshops in which the traditions of ancient arts were maintained and perpetuated."

The art of writing manuscripts, and of sumptuously illuminating them, was specially nurtured in the cloisters; and the drawing, colouring, and gilding of these splendid productions provided embroiderers with seductive patterns for their needles. The famous monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland contained important workrooms for weavers and embroiderers. Bishops and abbots stimulated the fabrication of ornamental tissues to enhance the resplendency of ecclesiastical ritual. Gregory of Tours, in his *History of the Franks*, which covers a period from 417 to 591, frequently mentions kindred fabrics, used as hangings for the church walls. St. Yriex in his will speaks of them as *Velola per ipsius oratorii parietes*, curtains for the walls of the chapel.

Funerals also were occasions for great displays: richly embroidered coverings, or palls, were placed over

the dead when exposed for the veneration of crowds. The mortuary cloth of King Childeric was embroidered with three hundred golden bees.

The religious episodes of the Old Testament more frequently reproduced were Samson slaying the lion, and Daniel in the lions' den ; these having been adopted by the primitive Church to symbolize the fights and persecutions of which the martyrs had been forced to pay the penalty ; * whilst the Trinity, the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Magi were selected from the New Testament for similar purposes.

These embroideries were usually worked on linen ground, with either worsteds or silks ; for superior qualities, gold threads were sparingly used. The stitches employed were satin stitch, the simplest of all ; feather stitch (long and short stitch) ; and couching : † the ground upon which these were worked showed itself between the various forms of the pattern.

Authors often write of cloths "*acu pictæ*," painted with the needle, a capital expression to define the characteristic *rôle* which embroidery played in those times.

Patterns of crosses surrounded by circles were often embroidered on stuffs, and were termed "*stauracis*" from the Greek *σταυρός*, a cross ; mention of these devices occurs in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and in a letter

* These broideries were called *leonata*, ornamental lion-subjects.

† Couching is laying threads upon a material, and then stitching them down to it by small stitches. There are varieties of couching, but the more elaborate of them are those in which gold threads are stitched down in such a way as to produce an effect like delicate golden wicker plaiting, or one of diaper patterns upon a golden ground.

from Pope Paul I. to Pepin the Short A.D. 757 (fig. 32).

The wealth of sacerdotal ornaments, made in monasteries, throws a light upon the power and authority enjoyed by the bishops. As popular protectors of all subject to despotic acts of lords and kings, as mitigators of harsh justice meted out by princes, the bishops wielded the highest moral power. Richer and richer as ornament was bestowed upon their vestments, so was respect increased for the solemn and important rites of which they were the ministrants. Embroidery was the fostering auxiliary of outward impressiveness in the ceremonials of the Church, and was lavished upon copes, chasubles, and dalmatics.

The peculiar use of these ornate accessories was determined by councils. The cope was the vestment worn in public processions, and to it was attached a hood, known originally as the *pluvial*, because it protected its wearer from the rain.

At the office of the Mass the officiating priest wore a chasuble, "*casula*," and the deacon a dalmatic.

A mitre is worn by a bishop; the band along its lower edge was termed the "*circulus*," and encircled the head. Another band placed vertically in the centre of the front of the mitre was called the "*titulus*," both would be of rich embroidery, studded with precious stones.

At his consecration, a bishop is invested with a pair of gloves on which religious emblems are worked in colours or gold.

The episcopal shoes of the prelate are always embroidered, and early specimens of these are preserved

amongst the relics of clerical apparel in many sacristies of old cathedrals.

From this period onwards we have a much more exact knowledge of the embroideries then made, and we are not, as in respect of those of very ancient times, thrown back upon the writings only of authors. Museums, church treasuries, and private collections supply us with authentic objects, from the study of which we can trace the various stages in the artistic development of embroidery.

The museum of tapestries at Florence claims to own "*Vela di pieta*" which belonged to Dagobert in the seventh century, as well as embroidered Auxerre cloths of the year 840.

Excavations of tombs of saints and bishops of this period have brought to light fragments of embroidery, and amongst them that very precious piece of work now deposited in the treasury at Tongres. Another found at Troyes is figured with serpents and birds enriched with little plaques of gold.

A cope of red silk presented by Charlemagne is to be seen in the cathedral of Metz. Upon it, wrought in yellow, blue, and green threads, are great eagles with outstretched wings and claws being gnawed by monsters, depicted in a fine style.

A thorough study of costume at the time of Charlemagne (767—814) may be made from the life of this great emperor written by a contemporary monk of St. Gall, Eginhard,* of which Guizot has given us a new edition. The following extract tells us "that on solemn occasions of pomp Charlemagne wore a close-fitting

* Eginhard, *Vita Karolis imperatoris*.

vest or jacket of gold embroidery, sandals, or, more properly speaking, slippers set with precious stones, a cloak or mantle fastened by a golden brooch or *fibula*, and a diadem of gold glistening with gems ; on other occasions his costume differed little from that of ordinary mortals."*

This great monarch gave all encouragement to the



Fig. 27.—Embroidered Slippers that belonged to Charlemagne ; in the Treasury at St. Denis, Paris.

arts ; and the princesses of his court, from his mother Bertha of the large feet to his daughters, were sedulous in becoming proficient in the art of embroidery. A chronicler writes,—

*Ses filles fist bien doctriener
Et apprendre keudre et filer.†*

St. Giselle, Bertha's sister, founded many convents

* At Aix-la-Chapelle and Nuremberg there are vestments said to have been worn by Charlemagne.

† *Chronique Rimée* by Philippe Mouskés.

in Aquitaine and Provence, and taught their inmates all sorts of needlework.

Eagles were the most frequently used ornamental motives in the embroideries of Charlemagne's reign, which were hence called "*aquilata*." Eagles thus became the insignia of the Western empire. From the royal capital of Aix-la-Chapelle they disseminated themselves throughout Germany, and were adopted as heraldic bearings by the various royal houses.

Several princesses subsequently to the Carolingian period distinguished themselves as adepts in the art of embroidery. Judith, mother of Charles the Bald, and godmother to Harold, King of Denmark, who, with his family came to Ingelheim in 826 to be there baptised, embroidered and bejewelled a mantle for His Majesty's use on this occasion.

Adélaïs, consort of Hugh Capet (987—996), presented the church of St. Martin at Tours with a cope, on the back of which she had embroidered the Deity, surrounded by seraphim and cherubim, the front being adorned with an Adoration of the Lamb of God.

But the name which dominates above all others is that of Queen Mathilda. Of her many embroideries it is true that one only, a cloth of the class "*acu pictæ*," survives to the present day, its importance having arrested the attention of all historians.

This famous needlework is now preserved in the Bayeux (Calvados) Museum. Tradition, apparently well supported, attributes its production to Queen Mathilda, wife of William the Conqueror, who died in 1087. Certain critics have held that this work was done by his grand-daughter, the Empress Mathilda, widow in

1125 of Henry V., Emperor of Germany, and wife, by her second marriage, of Geoffroy, Count of Anjou. In any case, the embroidery clearly manifests the influence of those who were fully cognisant with, if they did not actually take part in, the incidents displayed throughout a narrow linen band over two hundred feet long. The work must have been in hand some years before it was completed.

It is, according to the old chroniclers, "*Une tente très longue et étroite de telle à broderies de ymages et escriptaux faisant représentation du Conquest de l'Angleterre.*" Its exact dimensions are 70·34 metres long by 0·50 metre wide.

The material is of stout linen, upon which appear persons, horses, ships, etc., in all one thousand two hundred and fifty-five figures, worked in worsted threads, laid upon the surface of the linen, and held to it by means of cross stitches taken over them into the ground. The colours of the worsteds, although fantastically matched, sufficiently express the desired effects. The interpolated inscriptions explain different episodes connected with the Conquest of England by the Normans. They commence with Harold leaving the Court of Edward the Confessor, and finish with the Battle of Hastings. The whole work, in fact, is a sort of needle-wrought epic. The drawing of the figures is perhaps infantile, but the work has the charm of frankness and irrefragable authenticity.*

It has been misnamed a tapestry, since it is entirely

* See *The Bayeux Tapestry*, by Frank Rede Fowke, published 1875. (Arundel Society.)

an embroidery done with the needle by means of couched worsteds on linen (fig. 28).

After the Battle of Hastings William the Conqueror is said to have held a meeting with the nobles of his new kingdom, presenting himself before them in a mantle covered with Anglo-Saxon embroideries. Is it probable that this robe is the same as that mentioned in the inventory of the Bayeux Cathedral, A.D. 1476, after the entry relating to the *broderie à telle* repre-



Fig. 28.—Piece of the Bayeux embroidery.

senting the Conquest of England? Two mantles are there described, one of King William, "all of gold, powdered with crosses and blossoms of gold, and edged along the lower border with an orphrey of figures; and a mantle said to have been worn by the duchess, all powdered with little figures, and trimmed in front with orphreys."

These robes have usually been thought to be of English work, and it is certain that, at the time, England was noted for her embroideries.

In the seventh century St. Etheldreda, first Abbess

of the Monastery at Ely, made an offering to St. Cuthbert of a sacred ornament she had worked with gold thread and precious stones.* At Durham are preserved the cope and maniple belonging to St. Cuthbert and found in his tomb; they are considered to be specimens of *opus Anglicum*.

Mrs. Bury Palliser writes, that in the year 800 Denibart, Bishop of Durham, allotted the income from a farm of two hundred acres, for life, to an embroideress named Eanswitha, in consideration of her looking after, mending, and, when necessary, renewing the vestments of the clergy in his diocese.

The battle-standard of King Alfred (871—900), is reputed to have been embroidered with the figure of a splendid crow by Danish princesses. Edgitha, wife of Edward the Confessor (1041—1066), was noted for her skilful needlework: whilst the Anglo-Saxon Gudric, sometime Sheriff of Buckingham, gave Alcuin a piece of land on condition that she instructed his daughter in embroidery.

Facts like these explain the reason for such punctilious records of old embroideries as that of a tunic embroidered at Winchester by the wife of one Alderet, which Queen Mathilda bequeathed to the abbey of the Holy Trinity at Caen. This queen also gave to the abbey a golden cloak to be made up into a cope, as well as her waistband of gold, ornamented with emblems, which should be used for suspending the lantern before the high altar.

Harold's gift to the monastery of Croyland, of a

* *St. Cuthbert: An Account of the State in which his Remains were Found*, by Rev. J. Raine (Durham: 1828).

parchment worked in gold, with a representation of the siege of Troy, possibly indicates the king's literary and artistic taste. M. de Ronchaud remarks how closely the tradition of Helen's embroideries during the siege of Troy find an analogy with that of the great epic embroidered by Mathilda in respect of the Conquest of England.*

But it may be asked, What is the *opus Anglicum* above mentioned? Mrs. Bury Palliser furnishes an answer.† "Happily," she writes, "we possess in the cope of the monastery of Syon, now pre-



z. 29.—The Syon cope (in the South

Kensington Museum).

* *La Tapisserie dans l'Antiquité*, by Ronchaud.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Edinburgh: 1878), vol. viii., p. 162. See also *Textile Fabrics*, by Canon Rock (1870), Introduction, p. 98; *Cantor Lectures*, by Alan S. Cole (1886), p. 31.

served in the South Kensington Museum, an invaluable specimen of this *opus Anglicum*, or English embroidery of the thirteenth century. The greater portion of its design is worked in a chain stitch (tambour or crochet), especially in the faces of the figures where the stitch begins in the centre say of a cheek, and is then worked in a spiral, thus forming a series of circular lines. The texture so obtained is then, by means of a hot, small, and round-knobbed iron, pressed into indentations at the centre of each spiral, and an effect of relief imparted to it."* Following Canon Rock, she concludes that this is the distinctive feature of *opus Anglicum*. But the conclusion is arrived at apparently without sufficient data; chain stitch may perhaps have been invented by some ingenious Anglo-Saxon embroideress who used a hooked instead of the ordinary needle. It is more probable, however, that English needlewomen did not restrict their embroidery to chain-stitch work only: they were likely to have been acquainted with all the stitches commonly in use at the time, and they certainly produced many embroideries with pearls and with beads such as were then made in Scotland. Indeed, Mrs. Palliser hardly seems quite assured that *opus Anglicum* meant chain-stitch work only, for she terminates her remarks by saying that *opus Plumarium*, or feather (long and short) stitch, was also frequently used.

However this may be, the Syon Cope is a specimen

* It may be here noted that work done in chain stitch in spirals (and this arrangement of stitches is frequent in certain Persian embroideries from Resht, etc.) assumes an undulating surface without the application of any such tooling as that imagined by Canon Rock and Mrs. Palliser.

of the very highest interest. The illustration we give shows the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John at the foot of the Cross in the centre. Above is the Redeemer uprisen, crowned as a king, and seated on a cushioned throne with the Virgin Mary. Below we find the Archangel Michael slaying the dragon, whilst on the right and left of these are incidents from the history



Fig. 30.—Chasuble of St. Thomas of Canterbury at Sens.

of the death and burial of the Virgin, the Resurrection, and various Apostles. Each subject is set in quatrefoils, between which are cherubim or angels standing on wheels.

It is evident that the cope has been cut from a large embroidery. The outer borders to it (which we have omitted) are of slightly later date, and are wrought with armorial bearings, with coloured silks, and gold

and silver threads in small cross stitches.* The whole, however, is undoubtedly the finest specimen extant of *opus Anglicum* in its wider sense.

St. Dunstan, the artistic English monk of the twelfth century, has been cited as a designer for embroideries. Anglo-Saxon calligraphists are usually considered to be the originators of those sumptuously illuminated letters, in which a profusion of dragon-headed scrolls and interlacing twists is seen. There was therefore no lack in the eighth to twelfth centuries of clever designers and skilful workwomen, who might well found the reputation of an *opus Anglicum*.



Fig. 31.—Details from the stole of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

In M. de Caumont's and M. Gausen's books illustrations are given of a fine chasuble (fig. 30) and stole (fig. 31), and a mitre worn by St. Thomas à Becket, who was martyred at Canter-

bury on the 29th December, 1170. The originals are preserved in the cathedral of Sens. The pattern about the neck and shoulders is to some extent based upon the interlaced scroll forms used by Anglo-Saxon MS. illuminators.

In the treasury of the cathedral at Namur is the mitre worn by Bishop Jacques de Vitry, who died in

* This description of the Syon Cope is adapted from that given in the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Collections of Tapestry and Embroidery in the South Kensington Museum*, 1887.

1244.* It is a mass of embroideries in gold and silver threads, with a figure of St. Lawrence on the front, and one of St. Thomas of Canterbury on the back. A very similar mitre is in the museum at Munich.

According to the Rev. J. Raine, chasubles of red silk (taffetas), thickly embroidered and enriched with gold leaves, bezants, and pearls, were found at the death of Hugh Pudsey, Bishop of Durham, in 1194.

The splendid vestments and ornaments worn by the English clergy who visited Rome in 1246 were so highly admired by Pope Innocent IV. that he ordered similar articles from Cistercian monasteries in England. Amongst them, perhaps, were two copes now in the Vatican, which bear a close resemblance to the Syon Cope.

St. Henry (Emperor of Germany from 973 to 1024) presented an embroidery to the cathedral at Ratisbon, which the learned archæologists, Cahier and Martin, have classed as *opus Anglicum*. His Imperial Majesty's taste for fine embroideries led him to give a magnificent piece of work to St. Peter's at Rome.

St. Etienne, King of Hungary, also admired embroidery. His wife, Gisela, organized weaving and embroidery workrooms near the palace, whence originated the celebrated *point de Hongrie* (Hungary stitch), a name which to this day is applied to embroideries with a ground of zigzag lines. This queen is held to have made the ecclesiastical vestment which was preserved in the abbey of St. Arnold near Metz. It was given by Pope Leo IX. when he officiated at the consecration (5th October, 1049) of the church, newly

* Didron, *Annales archéologiques*.

erected by the monks of St. Arnold. It is described as a chasuble of crimson satin, shot with blue like the breast of a wood-pigeon. On its lower portion was embroidered a shrub, with branches evenly displayed, and surmounted by two birds confronted; this group shaped itself into a lozenge or diamond, and similar groups were worked about it. The chasuble was circular, with an opening for the head in the centre. From this opening a purple band, .80 metre wide, descended down the front and back; on the front was wrought in gold a figure of Christ, blessing with His right hand and holding the Gospels in His left, with St. Peter above Him and St. Paul below, a design which corresponds with that previously mentioned, as worked upon the altar cloth of St. Sophia at Constantinople.* The Apostles were similarly figured on the vertical band, in the centre of the back of the vestment. On this side, too, in its upper portion, worked in letters of gold and silk, was the inscription:—

✱ S. HUNGARORUM R. ET GILSA
DILECTA SIBI CONJUX
MITTUNT HÆC MUNERA DNO
APOSTOLICO IOHANNE.

“Etienne, King of Hungary, and Gisela, his dear wife, sent this present to the Apostolic Lord John.”

The only Pope of the name of John, who was a contemporary of Etienne, was John XVIII., Pope from 1003 to 1009; this vestment, therefore, dates from the beginning of the eleventh century.

Of this period, possibly, is a Greek embroidery

* See p. 43.

preserved in the treasury of St. Peter's at Rome, and considered by connoisseurs of the present time as the most superb embroidery in the world. It is the



Fig. 32.—The Imperial Dalmatic, preserved in St. Peter's in Rome, side with the Representation of the Last Judgment.

celebrated imperial dalmatic (fig. 32). The following description of it is quoted chiefly from M. Ed. Didron's *Report upon the Decorative Arts* (1878).

The foundation of the dalmatic is of blue silk,

scattered over which are small crosses of gold and silver within circles of gold (*stauracis*). Upon the back, front, and shoulders are figured various subjects which, considered together, intensify the unity of the idea thereon expressed, viz., the glory of Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven. The Transfiguration and the Last Judgment are depicted in two large central roundels on the back and front respectively. On the shoulders are the sacraments of bread and wine. Lady Marian Alford gives a description of the embroidery thus: "It is done chiefly in gold, the draperies in basket and laid stitches; the faces in white silk split stitch, flat, with finely drawn outlines in black silk. The hair, the shadowy part of the draperies, and the clouds are worked in fine gold and silver thread, with dark outlines." To continue M. Didron's description: On the Mount of the Transfiguration (indicated by the Greek word *Metamorphose*) are green branches bearing flowers and fruit (treated in an Oriental manner), a small bird just below the figure of Christ is diapered in gold and green. The other side is, if anything, more remarkable on account of the great number of figures* defiling before Christ the Saviour and Judge, sitting in heaven with angels and saints on His right and left.

Greek inscriptions upon the dalmatic leave little room for doubting its Greek origin; it is called "imperial" because Charlemagne is said to have worn it "when," says Canon Rock, "he sang the Gospel at High Mass at the altar, vested as a deacon, the day

* The dresses, especially of the crowned personages, have a close resemblance to those of Justinian and the Empress Theodora, in the Ravenna Mosaics of the sixth century.

he was crowned emperor in St. Peter's, by Pope Leo III." The accuracy of this tradition, however, is much questioned. We fancy the dalmatic belongs to a less ancient period than the year 800. On examining it, we favour the opinion that it was more probably made in the eleventh or twelfth centuries for some other potentate who, according to custom, officiated as a deacon at the Mass; in any case this magnificent vestment is not of later workmanship than that of the twelfth century.* Since that time it has been used by the deacon charged with the chanting of the Gospel in Greek at solemn festivals. The embroidery on this precious robe is a marvel of skill, such as has not been since surpassed nor probably previously equalled.

The two sides of the imperial dalmatic have been engraved and described in the *Annales archéologiques* by Didron, and in the splendid volume published by imperial authority at Vienna, entitled *Die Kleinodien des Heil.-Römischen Reiches Deutscher nation*.

Summary.—On the whole then, the antiquity of embroidery is lost in a sort of fabulous epoch, and little more than records are to be found of it. The

* Signor Galletti, Professor of Embroidery to the Pope, says "it is undoubtedly of the eighth century" (see *Needlework as Art*, p. 319). In this connection, too, we may revert to the mention in the *Liber Pontificalis* by Athanasius, the librarian, of the influx towards the end of the seventh century, into Rome, of Greek embroiderers, who had fled from Constantinople. It is interesting, moreover, to compare details in this dalmatic, such as the crosses (*stauracin*), especially those along the skirts, with crosses in ivory diptychs of the sixth to eighth centuries. Similar comparisons might be instituted in respect of other details too numerous to specify here.

period from Jesus Christ to the twelfth century may perhaps be regarded as its heroic epoch. Christians in the catacombs, Roman emperors of the world, Byzantines impregnated with an Oriental sense of splendour, bishops and abbots in their immense monasteries, queens and princesses in their castles and strongholds, all seem to have been equally attracted towards the art of embroidery during the first twelve hundred years of our era. Their works possess a sort of mystical solemnity of distinction. Their materials are somewhat coarse in texture, the threads rather large, and the stitches of little variety; drawing is facile in defining contours; colours are flat in tint. The simplicity of execution, marking even the most sumptuous of the embroideries then made, is a characteristic of the style of this period, which presents an unmistakable contrast with that of later centuries.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE CRUSADES TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

THE great events, with the effect of which Europe throbbed for more than a century, exercised a potential influence over the sumptuary arts ; we allude to the Crusades.

Little by little it became a custom with the Western devotees to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land ; until, in 1095, the Council of Clermont initiated a crusading movement towards the East, thus stirring European forces into an activity which for over two hundred years was ceaselessly fomented. Great bands of nobles, all clad in armour,—*fervestus*, as it was then said,—departed for Palestine ; and on their return they were garbed with rich stuffs of the East, and fully impressed with the remembrance of Oriental splendours at Constantinople and towns in Asia Minor. The costumes, pouches, and caparisons which they brought back were rich in embroideries, and were beheld with admiration by the needle-workers of the West.

Pisans, Genoese, and Venetians furnished ships and armies for these distant campaigns, receiving in exchange the spoils of the vanquished Saracens.

The fourth crusade begun in 1202 under the command of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, had for its allies,

Venetians under Doge Dandolo, and seized Constantinople. The crusaders plundered the capital of its accumulations of wealth. The fêtes which followed the capture of the town completely dazzled the crusaders, and of this Robert de Clari, a companion of Villehardouin, has given an account, from which we make an extract. At the coronation of Baldwin, of which he was a witness, he says, "After the count had been accoutred in a splendid panoply,* a sumptuously embroidered mantle, jewelled with precious stones, was thrown over him; the eagles embroidered on its outside flashed so brilliantly in the sunlight that it seemed as if the mantle was a-blaze."

Mathew Paris says that at the sacking of Antioch in 1098, gold, silver, and priceless costumes were so equally distributed amongst the crusaders, that many who the night before were famishing and imploring for relief, suddenly found themselves overwhelmed with wealth.

Ancient stuffs and Byzantine embroideries, which have been there since 1204, are still to be seen in the treasury of Halberstadt, in Westphalia. They most probably came from Constantinople, which was spoiled in that year.

The thirteenth century is certainly conspicuous for an increased demand in the West for embroideries. Many crusaders made offerings to churches of plunder from Palestine. St. Louis, on his return from the first crusade, offered thanks at St. Denis to God for mercies bestowed on him during his six years' absence and

* See *L'Ornement dans les Tissus*, by Dupont-Auberville and V. Gay, p. 20.

travel, and presented some richly embroidered stuffs to be used on great occasions as coverings to the reliquaries containing the relics of holy martyrs.

At this time stuffs and embroideries were used for decorating everything almost. Not only were walls hung with them, and priests clad in them, but statues of saints were also bedecked with them, and altars were inclosed within hangings, like curtains which could be drawn and thrown back at will. These altar hangings were generally embroidered with the figures of the saints to whom the altars were dedicated. Further than this, wardrobes and cupboards were adorned with stuffs on which heraldic bearings were blazoned with the utmost art of the needle-worker.

Under Louis the Young, and since 1147, the heraldic shield of France had been powdered with *fleurs de lys*. Charles V., however, reduced the number of these emblems to three, in honour of the Holy Trinity. Following royal example, every knight displayed his own particular colours at tournaments, and on military service; and the right of appropriating to itself a distinctive blazon or coat of arms was granted to every noble family.

These heraldic badges, as a rule, were of complicated forms, and exacted a high degree of skill from the embroideresses who had to work them. Fresh varieties of stitch consequently were invented. *Opus plumarium*, or feather stitch, and *opus pulvinarium*, a term somewhat loosely applied to embroidering, diaperings, or powderings of small devices, whence *sablé*, scatterings like gravel, *damier* or chequers, *ondé* or waved, *damassé* or damasked, were extensively used in embroideries on

chests. Besides these, there was the *opus consutum*, or work made with bits of stuff, either sewn together as in patchwork, or sewn one on to the other as in *appliqué* embroidery. The separate bits were often embroidered by themselves; they were then placed upon the material selected and edged round with gold cord. The applications (*appliqués*) were as a rule sewn, though sometimes it was thought sufficient to stick them merely to their foundation grounds. Thus in the inventory of Philip the Good we find the entry of a cope of white damask cloth, powdered over with angels in gold embroidery, fixed with glue only upon the aforesaid cope.



Fig. 33.—Italian embroidery of the thirteenth century. From this time forward *appliqué* embroideries (*i.e.*, composed of pieces separately worked and then fastened to a foundation, thereby giving a character of slight relief to the complete work) have played an important part. Figures were frequently embroidered upon the fabric of the ground, such as velvet or cloth of gold;

but the heads to them would be wrought separately, and upon a stuff of different texture, such as satin. To the present day this class of embroidery is successfully produced.

Now, without desiring to depreciate the unquestionable merit belonging to many specimens of this *appliqué* class, we cannot withhold the expression of an opinion that it has an inherent defect in detracting from unity of work. The quality of unity in works of art, which gives the impression not only of the influence of a single source of inspiration and sentiment, directing the dexterity of the hand in wielding brush, graver, or needle—this quality is too precious to be subjected to risks to which simplifications, for the sake of rapidity in execution, are almost certain to expose it. Whenever as good effects as are obtainable in *appliqué* embroidery can be secured without having recourse to this particular method, it is preferable not to use it; the chances of diminishing the suppleness of an embroidery are thereby avoided, and rigid forms, with a tendency to incongruous exaggeration in relief effects, are far less likely to manifest themselves. Faults like these are too frequently met with in *appliqués* embroideries.

Arms on banners, and oriflammes fluttering in the wind, had to be seen on both sides of the material into which they were embroidered. A sense of this condition led to the adoption of a method of needlework which, according to the apt expression of the times "*à deux endroits*," was equally well carried out on the back and front of a stuff.

The use of Arabic inscriptions upon phylacteries and cognate decorative bands for costumes arose in embroi-

deries of the Crusading periods ; and was substituted for that of Roman characters upon scrolls and labels such as are to be seen wrought in Middle Age tapestries to explain the names and actions of the figures thereon depicted.

Towards the end of St. Louis' reign (1270) textile stuffs were employed for book covers.* Silks, velvets, satins, and damasks, covered with little flowers embroidered in gold and with pearls, were so used. The library of Jean Duc de Berry, which has been described by Douet d'Arcq, contained books of Hours, Bibles, and Psalters, bound in ruby coloured or purple velvets, tawny satins, fair blue silks or cloths of gold "wrought with *fleurs de lys*, birds, and images." Leaves, flowers, and figures of men and animals were traced in threads of gold or silver upon a great variety of tissues. Pearls and coral even, introduced into them, enriched the effect of these patiently produced works.

The book of crafts by Etienne Boileau, provost of the merchants in 1258 to 1268, contains a curious enumeration of the different craft guilds of Paris.

Amongst those allied with our subject we find—

"Spinners of silk using large and small spindles."

"Makers of thread and silk fringes for the coifs of ladies, pillow cases, and the hangings (or baldachinos) over altars, which were made with the needle or in frames."

"Makers of Paris cloth of silk, velvets, and *bourserie en lac*."

"The tapicers, or makers of the *tapis sarrasinois* (or Saracen cloths), who say that their craft is for the

* *Les Manuscrits*, by De Lecoy de la Marche, p. 344.

service only of churches, or great men like kings and counts."

And finally, "embroiderers and embroideresses": many of these embroideresses were skilful in draughtsmanship; as, for instance, Dame Margot and Dame Aalès, of whom the additional record states that both were "illuminators." A member of the guild was prohibited from using gold of less value than "eight sous, (about 6s.) the skein; he was bound to use the best silk, and never to mix thread with silk because that made the work false and bad." This guild of embroideresses was incorporated under the title of "St. Clare." Up to the last century its two sections were respectively named "freed workers" and "frogs," the latter quaint denomination applying to the less skilful workers who could never aspire to be "free," and who it was said never drank anything but water. The test or trial piece, prescribed for a worker who was the son of a master embroiderer, was "a single figure, a sixth of natural size, to be shaded in gold." Whilst one, not the son of a master embroiderer, would be required to produce "a complete incident with many figures." The book of crafts also classes "cutters-out and stencillers" amongst workmen employed in the industry of embroidery, as well as "chasuble-makers, and makers of Saracenic alms-bags (*aumônières sarrasinoises*).

The wearing of these pouches or purses, pendent from girdles or belts, came into fashion during the Crusades. Money, papers, prayer-books, and gloves were carried in them. They were almost always beautifully embroidered, generally with coats of arms.

“Margaret the emblazoner” is specified in the list of freed workers and makers of pouches.

One of the finest pouches known is that containing the treasures of the cathedral of Troyes; it is said to have belonged to the Count of Champagne, Thibaut IV., called the Singer (1201—1233). Upon it is figured a youthful Saracen draped in a white mantle which covers his head and shoulders, and falls over a close-fitting under-jacket, below which in ample flowing folds is a petticoat. Lower down he is represented as slaying a lion at the feet of Eleanor of Aquitain. The figures, arabesques, and leaves are embroidered with silks on linen, cut out and then applied (*appliqué*) to a crimson velvet ground.

An illustration of another and traditionally earlier pouch is given in Arnaud's book on the province of Champagne, and is reputed to have belonged to Henry the Generous, who lived from 1152 to 1181.

Upon opening the tomb of Pierre Mauclerc, Duke of Brittany (1212—1250), in the abbey of St. Yved de Braine, a very remarkable pouch was discovered, which has been drawn by Gaignères, and published by Montfaucon. The groundwork of gold tissue is ornamented with trellis or lozenge shapes, within which are twenty-nine different blazons, that of Brittany occupying the centre. Is it possible that these give us, as it were, a list of the knights who accompanied the Duke of Brittany on his crusade to Palestine?

In the Delaherche collection are two notable alms-bags or pouches for ladies, ornamented in a most characteristic manner with embroideries of the thirteenth century. In the cut we give of one (fig. 34) a seated

an angel with extended wings is worked on the flap or upper portion of the bag ; below are curious types of



Fig. 34.—Pouch of the thirteenth century (Delaherche collection).

the centaur species, emblems of pride and gallantry. Such figures are often depicted in the illuminations of thirteenth century MSS. as symbols of the debasement

of man to the level of brute beasts. The embroidery upon the alms-bag under notice is done with silk and Cyprus gold thread, and must have been highly remarkable in its pristine state; the ground of green velvet, backed with linen, is unfortunately much worn. The opposite side is of green flowered Lucca damask, patterned with birds. In former times this pouch belonged to the Chatelaines of the Duchy of Bar.

Such pouches were always trimmed either with little knobs and tassels made of thread or metal; some were hung with small bells, mentioned by the chronicler as "*Ung bourselot cloqueté d'argent*" (a pouch with silver bells).

Leather was also used for pouches, in which the baldrick for a sword, or the harness for a horse, could be carried.

Fashion in these things survived the times of the Crusades, after which the warlike character of them became modified. A pouch in the Bonnaffé collection is of fourteenth century embroidery, decorated with the figures from the *Romance of the Rose*, and is a very interesting specimen. It recalls a phrase used in respect of a band described in the inventory of Charles V. as being decked "with trees and ladies" (fig. 35).

From the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries the city of Caen was noted for its embroidered bags and purses, which had the local name of "tasques,"* whence the street inhabited by the embroiderers was called the Rue Tasquière. They were sold all over Europe. Jacques de Cahaignes sent one as a gift of great value to Joseph Scaliger when he became rector of the

* From the Italian *tasca*, purse.

university of Leyden. From a book published in 1588, entitled *Recherches et Antiquités sur la ville de Caen*, by Charles de Bourgueville, Sieur de Bras, we



Fig. 35.—Pouch of French fourteenth-century work (in the Bonnaffé collection).

learn that “as for Caen pouches, none made in other towns can compare with them for choiceness, character, and exquisite materials, such as velvets of all colours,

gold, silver, and other threads, or in suitability for the use of nobles, justices, ladies, and maidens, so that it is a common proverb to speak of 'Caen pouches above all others.'

Charles of Neufchatel in 1481 gave the cathedral of Besançon a mitre which had been embroidered in Caen; * the stones which enriched it have all disappeared, but the mitre still exists.

The subjects in designs at this period, especially those for orphreys and ecclesiastical ornaments, are



Fig. 36.—Embroidery of the fifteenth century (in the Cluny Museum).

generally panelled within quatre-foils (fig. 36), and similar shapes, which occur also in contemporary painted glass windows. The scenes from the life of our Saviour, embroidered on the cope of St. Maximin (Var), are framed or panelled in this manner.

Similar treatment is observable in the pourpoint of Charles of Blois, killed at the battle of Auray (1364); it is of silk embroidered with octagonal compartments alternately filled with a lion and an eagle.

The altar-frontal in St. Martin's at Liège is perhaps one of the more beautiful of religious fourteenth-century embroideries. It measures 3 metres in length by 1·8 metre wide. Different episodes, from the life

* *Sigillographie de Normandy*, by de Farcy.

of the canonized bishop of Tours, patron saint of the church, are represented in a long series; each episode being separated from its neighbour by trees or some architectural *motif*.

It is no doubt a work by one of the celebrated artists of Tours, who, like those in England of the eleventh century, were notable equally as designers or MS. illuminators and embroiderers. Indeed, whenever the brush and the needle are thus interchangeable implements, a remarkable epoch in the art of embroidery reveals itself.

An origin under such conditions may be fairly claimed for a magnificently embroidered orphrey in the Spitzer collection (fig. 37), on which we have a Jesse tree. The treatment of this, and the character of



Fig. 37.—Part of an orphrey embroidered with a Jesse tree (fourteenth century).

the figures and ornamentation, are distinctly analogous to those seen in fine stained glass and illuminated MSS. of the fourteenth century. The tree in full leaf rises from



Fig 38.—Tau-shaped orphrey of Greek embroidery, thirteenth century (in the Hochon collection).

Abraham, an old man asleep below; between the interlacements of its leading branches are King David, Solomon, and the Virgin Mary; surmounting all is the

Crucifixion. The frequent appearance of this tree of the sacred genealogy of Jesus Christ is noticeable in embroideries, stained glass windows, wall paintings, etc., of the period, and is a religious phase of that fashion for genealogical trees to which the adoption of family coats of arms gave rise. The embroidery of the Spitzer orphrey is in silk upon satin. The satin is left for the parts which show as skin in the figures; features, eyes, hair, and beards on it being embroidered with black silk in so closely pulled stitches as to be mistaken for pen and ink lines. The background is of gold thread worked in Hungary point (*point de Hongrie*).

Italy and Spain at this time were at a height of prosperity in the manufacture of beautiful stuffs and rich embroideries. The Saracens had already introduced into Sicily the art of weaving silken and golden fabrics, an industry subsequently encouraged by King Roger II. On his return from an expedition to Greece (1145) he brought with him the most skilful weavers and embroiderers whom he had taken captive at Corinth and Argos, and established them in workshops at Palermo (fig. 38). The Sicilian brocade weavers became renowned; they also produced marvellous embroideries for door hangings and floor coverings, by using two stuffs of different colours, cutting patterns out of the one and stitching them on to the other, over-stitching the junctures with variegated threads. These were called "*draps entaillés sarracinois*" (Saracenic cut cloths).

From Sicily the manufacture of fine stuffs spread to the north of Italy, and, becoming localized, the special productions of towns like Genoa, Florence, Lucca, Milan, and Venice acquired a high reputation.

A cognate movement occurred in Spain under the influence of the Saracens and Moors. It is on record that they brought over workmen from Persia who were engaged upon the monuments erected by them in Toledo and other towns of their conquest. It is not astonishing, therefore, that at the same time Persian embroidery should penetrate as far as Andalusia. Almeria, like



Fig. 39.—Embroidery of the fourteenth century (in the Hochon collection).

Palermo, had its *Hotel des Tiraz*, which rivalled the *Hotel des Tiraz* at Bagdad. The term *tiraz* was for a long time in use in the Spanish language, and was the generic name for ornamental tissues and costumes made with them.

The Spaniards excelled in stuffs of velvet raised on satin, inwoven with strands of gold and silver. Their designs have all the boldness and Oriental character which one also finds in Cordovan decorative leathers. The colours in both are the same; and gold is cunningly used in conjunction with sombre tones, enhancing their effects with the utmost felicity.

Sometimes, however, beaten gold, when introduced in these textiles, was made to assume the shape of small plaques or thin plates of gold, upon which would be

mounted several rows of pearls. But this evident abuse of the metal in its relation with a textile could not last long; and these inappropriate golden plaques were speedily modified into spangles, those pretty little discs of gold, silver, or polished steel used in certain classes of embroidery for dainty glinting effects. The Saracens are credited with the invention of spangles; and, following their example, the Spaniards made free use of them in much of their ornamental needlework. One extremely remarkable specimen of



Fig. 40.—Embroidery designed by Lucas van Leyden, taken from his portrait of Maximilian I. (sixteenth century), belonging to M. Dutuit.

this spangled work is the chasuble embroidered by Isabella la Catolica, and carried by King Ferdinand to the cathedral of Granada after the taking of that town from the Moors in 1492; all the flowers upon this sumptuous vestment are worked with gold and silver spangles of different sizes indented at their centres (fig. 40).

A slightly later Spanish cope of the same characteristic work has recently been added to the Spitzer collection. Standing figures of saints under architectural canopies are embroidered upon its red velvet orphreys. The figures are in high relief of quite unusual character, and although resplendent by reason of an infinity of little golden rings instead of spangles stitched over

them, their general effect is heavy. The main ground of the chasuble is of cloth of gold; scattered in a sort of diapering pattern all over it are escutcheons bearing the Spanish arms.

The use of spangles in the French court is recorded in the royal accounts for the year 1389, where we have an entry of "iij marcs xvij^s esterlins of fine gold at xxij carats, delivered to Estienne d'Epéron, gold beater, to be flattened and shaped into broom blossoms (*fleurs de genestes*), for stitching on to the two embroidered doublets of the king." *

In 1411 a pair of cuffs or sleeves made for the Duke of Burgundy were covered over with "seven thousand five hundred little twists of silver, and alternated with two thousand little scrolls of gold, the whole of them weighing twelve marcs."

At this period pearls were even more fashionable than spangles. A single instance, to show this, is worth quoting. In 1414 Charles of Orleans spent two hundred and seventy-six livres (about £40) for nine hundred and sixty pearls, which were to be used in ornamenting a great coat, on the sleeves of which were embroidered the verses of a song beginning with "Madame, I am all joyous." . . . The musical accompaniment of the words was also embroidered, the staves being worked in gold thread, and each note (of square shapes in those days) formed with four pearls.† The motive of this pattern was clearly more

* F. Michel, *Recherches sur les Étoffes de Soie*. According to Doursther a *marc* = 8 ounces = 64 *gros* = 160 *esterlins* = 320 *mailles* = 640 *felins*. The *marc* of Paris and Lyons = 3,777.5 English grains, or 244.75 French *grammes*.

† Quicherat, *Histoire du Costume*, p. 254.

whimsical and extravagant than likely to lead to good artistic result.

In the time of Philippe le Bel embroideries superseded furs, which, for longer than the previous century, had been the fashionable trimmings for court costumes. Philippe, who had a mania for attempting to regulate and control everything, issued in 1294 an ordinance that sanctioned the wearing of embroideries by princes of the blood royal only; but this law soon came to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance, as all who could afford it followed the fashion of the princes.

Besides for costume, embroidery was used for articles of furniture. Ornamental textiles generally were then more widely employed than nowadays.

The interior of great castles in the Middle Ages were far less divided up by such partitions as are so freely used in modern dwellings; the halls and saloons were vast, almost without decoration, and they were made habitable for the great and luxurious by hanging stuffs upon the walls, and stretching them across cords, arranged so as to subdivide the halls into compartments, bays, and recesses. Kings and princes made use of various draperies and hangings suitable to the season of the year. The chambers of the king would be called the Easter, the All Saints, or the Christmas rooms. Or, again, they would be designated after the ornament or pattern of the hangings; thus, there would be the room of the Crosses, of the Lions, etc. The stuffs for a room were of two classes—tapestry-hangings and furniture-coverings. The coverings (*courte pointeries*) included draperies for the bed. The

couches or feather beds, the mattresses, and other articles were almost always bedecked with embroidered counterpanes, bed canopies, and curtains, and covers for head boards. Against one of the walls of the chamber the bed would be set, covered over with a quilt, and backed by a head board, from which was an overhanging tester with three curtains. Close at hand was a smaller overhanging canopy with draperies, behind which the king dressed.* All the hangings were embroidered with heraldic devices.

In King Charles V.'s inventory, quoted by Labarthe and given also in the *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de France*, we find many descriptions of fittings, etc., similar to those just named. As, for instance, "a chamber hung with cloth of gold, on which is a bright red velvet cross embroidered with coats of arms." "Item: a chamber hung with cloth of silver ornamented with five compass devices embroidered with the arms of France and the Dauphin; also a canopy or tester hanging, draperies for head board, and counterpane or coverlet, and three curtains of Indian cendal.

"Item: a tent of French embroidery in which are depicted the four evangelists, in a framework of arch shapes, with curtains striped in green and purple, and rayed with gold."

Kings' journeys then were not as simply conducted as now; their luggage always included a large quantity of furniture, etc., without which they would have been unable to live in the castles where they happened to stop. It was not a question of taking clothing only, beds, linen, and draperies had to go as well. The preparations for Phillippe le Long's coronation in 1317

* *Le Meuble*, by de Champeaux, p. 75.

involved the provision of numberless chests and coffers, one of which, a large one, was for "the robes of our sire the King,"* and four others "for the bed and commodities of the King." Queen Joan of Burgundy had twelve great trunks, two for her bed, six for her wardrobe, two for her ladies-in-waiting, etc. The room prepared for her majesty's use in the palace at Rheims, during her sojourn for the coronation festivities, was embroidered with "thirteen hundred and twenty-one *papegauts* (parrots) made in broidery, and blazoned with the King's arms and five hundred and sixty-one butterflies, whose wings were similarly ornamented with the Queen's arms, the whole worked in fine gold."

England whose brilliant reputation for embroideries has been already mentioned, possesses an authentic work of the fourteenth century of the highest interest, proving that she had in no way declined in the art.† This is a pall or mortuary cloth which belongs to the Fishmongers' Company, and is traditionally said to have been used at the funeral of Sir William Walworth during the reign of Richard II., 1381. It is of long rectangular shape, with two long and two short pendent

* *Le Meuble*, by de Champeaux, p. 66.

† This fine embroidery is described at p. 262 of the Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Works of Art, South Kensington Museum, 1862. Monsieur Biais, whose description of it Monsieur Lefebure has adopted, appears to have been misled, for the arms worked on this pall are those of the Stock-fishmongers and Salt-fishmongers united into one shield, having as supporters a merman clad in golden armour, and a mermaid with a jewel hanging from her neck, and in her hand a looking-glass. The two companies were united in 1536. The embroidery is therefore of the time of Henry VIII. Thus it supports Monsieur Lefebure's assertion in favour of England's celebrity for embroidery, and extends its application to a period a hundred and fifty years longer than he contemplates.

panels which form its border. The main ground of the pall is of fine Flemish red gold brocade. The two short pendant panels are ornamented with English embroideries of St. Peter robed and seated as a pope holding the keys of Paradise* (fig. 41). Each of the two long pendant panels has in its centre Christ entrusting the keys to St. Peter, flanked by the arms and supporters of the Stock and Salt-Fishmongers' Companies united. The figures are worked in silk and gold thread couchings. The whole is remarkable for masterly design and admirable execution.

Flanders was equally celebrated for embroideries made from the drawings of artists. Many Flemish orphreys closely resemble the painted wooden triptychs of the Gothic period, which abound in the churches and museums of Belgium. Others again have all the character of old ecclesiastical stained glass windows.

The finest set of sacerdotal robes of this style is to be seen in the Ambras collection at Vienna. It consists of a chasuble, two dalmatics, three copes, and two antependiums. The figures upon them are embroidered in silks of many colours upon cloth of gold, from designs by the brothers Van Eyck or their pupils. Pearls surround the saints, whose crowns and *nimbi* glisten with precious stones. It is said that these magnificent vestments were used at the first chapter of the Golden Fleece held by Philip the Good on the 10th January, 1430.†

The sumptuous embroideries which belonged to Charles the Bold, son of Philip the Good, may no

* M. Biais, *Les Broderies anciennes à l'Exposition de Londres.*

† *Éléments d'Archéologie*, by Reusens, vol. ii., p. 475.



Fig. 41.—English embroidery of the sixteenth century upon the Fishmongers' Mortuary Cloth or Pall.

doubt be attributed to Flemish art. They were taken

by the Swiss on the 3rd March, 1476, at the battle of Gransons, in regard to which Philip de Comines writes, "they seized his camp and cannon, and all the tents and pavilions belonging to him and his retinue which was very numerous, and took possession of all the belongings of the said duke."

Du Sommerard has published the more notable of the stuffs and embroidered standards captured at this victory, and now preserved at Berne; some in the cathedral, others in the museum. Amongst the "four hundred pieces of silk, velvet, and tapestries" is to be found the Duke of Burgundy's yellow velvet hat, with a diamond *porte aigrette*, whence sprang a sheaf of plumes and pearls. The larger of the diamonds was the famous Sancy diamond, "the largest in Christendom," says Comines, and quoted at the present day as one of the most exquisite jewels ever known.

Flanders and Burgundy were for so long united under the same sovereignty that an uncertainty obtains in assigning the precise origin of many stuffs known as Burgundian in which Flemish traits frequently display themselves.

In Germany a class of work had long been produced under the name of *opus Coloniensis* (Cologne work), in which both weaving and embroidery were frequently combined.

Narrow bands and braids were made in small portable low-warp frames.* Broader pieces, and involving more intricate work, as those for orphreys on copes and

* These little weaving frames, adapted to either shuttle-weaving or tapestry-weaving, are often engraved as frontispieces to pattern books which are subsequently mentioned in the section of Laces.

chasubles, would be made in high-warp frames; that is, in frames with vertical ranks of warp as distinct from those with low or horizontal ranks of warp. Between these warps shuttles charged with various coloured threads would be thrown by the worker, who would vary the use of the shuttle with that of the needle as occasion might arise for giving increased solidity to certain details in the fabric. This varied method of execution resulted in the production of works having unmistakable characteristics; and although this combined weaving and embroidery was considerably made along the banks of the Rhine during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it has since disappeared. In such small frames as those just alluded to, tapestries were produced of the character described by M. Eugene Muntz, when he writes, "It was in convents, and sometimes in castles, that hangings of small dimensions were woven, a great number of which are to be seen in the museums at Munich and Nuremberg." The South Kensington and the Cluny Museums and many well-known Parisian collections contain similar specimens. A figure, for instance, would be entirely woven; but if it were that of a bishop or king the mitre or the crown would be embroidered, and a happy effect of slight relief would be thereby secured. The engraving (fig. 43) is of a band in the South Kensington Museum. It was probably used for an altar of the Virgin, since the words "Ave Maria" and the figure of the Virgin are conspicuous amongst other figures and inscriptions in it. The heads of the figures and the objects they hold in their hands are of embroidery, the remaining parts being woven.

The design on a chasuble cross in the Hochon collection (fig. 42) is dignified in its simplicity. No useless accessory detracts from the value of the woven

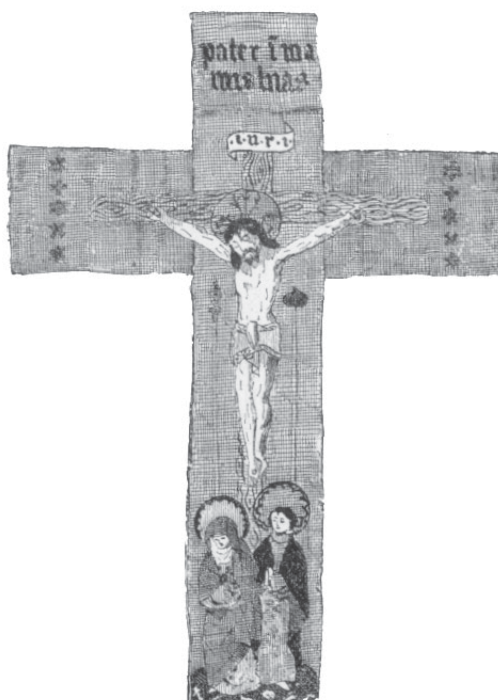


Fig. 42.—German embroidery (? Cologne) of the fifteenth century (in the Hochon collection).

cloth of gold foundation in its relation to the personages and inscriptions wrought upon it. The heads are of *appliqué* work. In the centre is Christ on the cross; the wounds in His body and the drops of blood from them are embroidered in red silk; at His feet is the

sorrowing Virgin supported by St. John. Above them are the spear and the reed with sponge soaked in vinegar. Above the cross is the inscription *Pater in manus tuas*. At the lower extremity of the central limb of the cross (not shown in the cut) is a saint in armour, bearing a standard or pennon and a shield, each of these charged with nine bezants. Below is the name of the donor, Johan van Querroide.

A beautiful orphrey of similar style, belonging to Comte Charles Lair, is dated "Colonia, 1510."

Articles of costume, such as head-dresses, shoes, and



Fig. 43.—Orphrey of embroidered woven work, Cologne work (in the South Kensington Museum).

gloves have frequently been splendidly embroidered. A single chapter would not suffice to do justice to the mitres worn in old times by bishops and abbots of monasteries. Their shape was modified, and became larger from century to century. Up to the twelfth century they were small and low; as they increased in height in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, so the angles in them became more acute. In the fifteenth century were developed the high and curved shapes which mitres retain to the present day.

A fine fifteenth-century mitre, remarkable for the figures embroidered on it, is preserved in St. Gildas de Ruys in Morbihan.* It is .38 metre high and .30 metre wide ; its two lappets are .37 metre long. The ground of this mitre is white silk, with vertical stripes of silver threads. On each of its sides are two figures, wrought on stout linen, and then applied (*appliqués*) to the silk ground. Those on the front are of two abbots, doubtless the founders of the priory ; they are surrounded with stars worked in gold thread. Upon the lappets are *appliqués* figures, one a St. Sebastian pierced with arrows, the other a headless martyr at the burning stake.

The Cluny Museum possesses many remarkable mitres. The Spitzer collection contains one of German fifteenth-century work, notable as much for the fineness of its embroidery as for the goldsmith's work upon it.

And now, cursorily alluding to ecclesiastical gloves and shoes worn by prelates at great Church functions, we may briefly say, that as a rule they are examples of most finished embroidery in the rendering of the emblems and graceful interlacing scrolls which enter into the patterns wrought upon them.

In the inventories of the possessions of the Bayeux Cathedral is an entry of "two woollen mittens (*mytaines*), with embroidery, on the hands, of two figures of St. Veronica surrounded by pearls."

Ladies also wore ornamental gloves made of silken material, and embroidered in gold and silver thread.

* *Abécédaire de Caumont*, p. 729.

Of such character no doubt would be the "glove, which gold and silken broidery bore," filched from and then returned with heart-aching lamentings to his beauteous Laura by Petrarch.*

On the whole then it will have been seen that the employment of embroidery was gradually extended to all parts and articles of costume, so that it is not surprising to find that every household of any position during the fifteenth century retained the services of an embroiderer by the year.†

The preparation of colours, whether for painting or for dyeing threads and textile fabrics, was a matter which received close attention from artists of the Middle Ages. Many undertook long journeys to obtain the more famous recipes,‡ which they filed, subsequently adding to and correcting them as experience dictated. And in this direction little can be more instructive than the inquiry conducted in 1409 and 1410 by a Parisian named Jean le Bègue, clerk to the Mint, who proceeded to Italy to study processes of colour manufacture. At Bologna he happened upon a Flemish embroiderer called Thierry, who had worked for the Duke of Milan, and previously in London. This Thierry taught him many new methods in the manufacture of colours. Le Bègue wrote a full account of all he learned and noted, and his manuscript is preserved to this day.

By such gleanings and interchanges of ideas the number of tones and colours available for the use of

* See *Sonnets*, 166 and 168.

† Quicherat's *Histoire du Costume*, p. 279.

‡ *Les Manuscrits*, by Lecoy de La Marche, p. 306.

the embroiderer was considerably augmented. The celebrated dyer Jean Gobelin lived in the middle of the fifteenth century. His dye works and model work-rooms were erected on the banks of the Bièvre, where his descendants continued the business for two centuries ; but his name is made more famous by reason of its inseparable association with the national manufactory of the Gobelins tapestries, which was in truth a development of Jean Gobelin's original workshops.

In 1462 René d'Anjou, who had been crowned King of Naples and Sicily, presented Angers Cathedral with very gorgeous ornaments at a cost of 40,000 écus. They were the works of one of the famed embroiderers of Avignon, Pierre du Vaillant by name, on whom the title of Painter to the King of Sicily was also conferred. These ornaments, dedicated to "Messire St. Maurice," the patron saint of the cathedral, consisted of a chasuble, a tunic, a dalmatic, a cope, and an altar hanging ; in all, five articles, entered in the inventories of the chapter under the comprehensive title of "the Great Embroidery" (*la Grande Broderie*).* The design, displaying a history of St. Maurice, was executed upon a groundwork, dotted with blossoms. The altar frontal was of velvet "*paramentum de velosio, cum armis Domini Renati Regis Siciliae et defunctae Reginae Ysabellis,*" with the arms of the Sovereign Lord René, King of Sicily, and of the defunct Queen Isabella. Around these escutcheons were panels of cloth of gold "*panno aureo,*" on which were emblems of the Passion, "*ad ymagines Passionis,*" lozenge diaperings, "*alia cum lozangis et corona,*" and crowns, "*seminata stellis,*"

* *Broderies et Tissus de la Cathédrale d'Angers*, by de Farcy.

spotted with stars, "*angelis aureis quorum quidem incensunt,*" with golden angels, some of them swinging censers, "*alii portant cruces et calices,*" others bearing crosses and chalices. This variety of devices conveys an impression of the splendour of this "great embroidery" which evoked great admiration during the three hundred years it was preserved as the most important ornamental work in the cathedral at Angers.

Still to be seen in the church of Naintré near Châtellerault, in Vienne, is a remarkable chasuble of corresponding date. Upon its orphrey is figured St. Thomas holding the New Testament in one hand and a spear in the other; above is an archbishop robed in chasuble, adorned with a cross, and carrying an archiepiscopal processional cross, with one cross bar. Upon the cross, embroidered at the back of the chasuble, is the Virgin seated in majesty, wearing shoes on her feet in accordance with iconographical ruling, and holding the naked infant Jesus on her lap; below are St. James the Greater and St. Barbe, who carries in his hand a tower, representative of that in which his father confined him; the whole work is finely wrought.*

Wherever a royal or princely court attracted stateliness and luxury, its influence gave impulse to the art of embroidery, as we have seen in regard to the rich surroundings of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold in Flanders.

Charles VII., having established his court at Bourges, many embroiderers came to work there, amongst whom we note Colin Jolye as the producer,

* See *Broderies et Tissus*, by M. L. de Farcy.

in 1454, of a splendid cope ordered by the king, and of which a description is given in the *Bulletin Archéologique* (vol. iii., p. 86). Simonne de Gaules was another equally distinguished needle-worker at Bourges.

Louis XI. was deeply interested in the industry of his kingdom. From Orleans he issued, 23rd November, 1466, letters patent to establish a manufacture of silken cloths in the town of Lyons, "in which, it is said, the industry has already been begun." Shortly after, he took up his residence at Tours, and watched with close interest the embroiderers at work, of whom Jehan de Moucy was the best known. His Majesty determined to associate silk-weavers with them, and accordingly had artisans brought over from Italy in 1470, amongst whom were "a silk-trimmer, a dyer, a thread-spinner, and a gold thread-drawer." The chief of this body of artificers was François le Calabrais. Mulberry trees were planted and cultivated, and weaving frames set up; the *Gros de Tours* became celebrated, and in 1546 a Venetian ambassador reports finding eight thousand frames weaving silks in Touraine.

For many years, and after Gregory X. had made it the residence of the popes, and had imported workers from Sicily, Naples, and Lucca (1309—1377), Avignon was noted for its chasuble embroiderers' workrooms. Pierre du Vaillant, the maker of the "great embroideries" for Angers Cathedral, already mentioned, hailed from Avignon.

Nismes adopted the arts of making silk stuffs from Avignon, and has ever since been an important centre for them.

In 1494 King Charles VIII., like René of Anjou,

returned victorious from an expedition into Sicily and the kingdom of Naples, bringing with him great wealth in the shape of objects of art and valuable textiles, and surrounded himself with Italian artists who resided close to his palace, the Chateau d'Amboise, where he and his wife, Anne of Brittany, lived (fig. 44). Philip de Comines mentions "the many workmen excelling in divers crafts," whom the king "brought back from Naples." They were placed under the direction of Panthaléon Conte and his wife, whose wages amounted to twenty Tournese pounds, or nearly £4 a month.*

From this time may be said to have commenced the growth in France of Italian influence, which developed itself throughout the whole of the sixteenth century.

Italy had become the seat of a luxury unknown to any other country, since the splendours of Byzantium seven or eight centuries previously.

The Medici lived in a magnificence and pomp of which we can form some conception from contemporary paintings. Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco in the Riccardi Palace at Florence presents us with a portrait of Lorenzo dei Medici on horseback, in the character of one of the Magian kings bringing gifts, and it is difficult to know which most to admire, the sumptuous and glittering embroideries with which his costume is decorated, or the rich and elegant trappings of his white steed.

With the Medicean period we enter upon an epoch of the Renaissance, the glory of which culminated in the sixteenth century. But before leaving the Middle Ages we must refer to the charm of their art. If less studied in the refinement of its productions than that

* *Archives de l'Art Français*, by A. de Montaiglon.

of a subsequent and dazzling age, it was nevertheless inspired with truer sentiment and purer taste, as may have been inferred from our sketch of embroidery done from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.



Fig. 44.—Coloured embroidery, with the cypher of Anne of Brittany (in the Hochon collection).

Summary.—Stuffs upon which embroidery was worked in the Middle Ages were called by various names, such as linen cloths, cloth of gold and of silver, baudekin, samit, cendal (often mentioned as Indian cendal), velvet, camoca, and tiraz or silk weavings, etc. Many long dissertations have been written by different persons as to the technical nature of the stuffs so named; Francisque Michel, in his *Recherches sur les Étoffes de Soie*, has nearly exhausted the subject,* dealing with it in a masterly manner. Those who desire to identify the various methods of producing textile fabrics will find

in Monsieur Michel's and Dr. Rock's learned books material and guidance for their studies. We of course cannot here propose to do more than discuss ornamental embroidery; and in this respect we may

* See also *Textile Fabrics*, by the Very Rev. Daniel Rock, D.D.

broadly say that the unaffectedness of design which marked the immediately preceding period is less conspicuous in work of the Middle Ages. One perceives that the extension of Oriental and Byzantine influence, aided by the crusades, helped both designer and embroiderer to step as it were on to a new stage.

Hence their work is more varied in execution, stiches are better selected and applied, colouring is richer, and shapes of forms are rendered with less restraint; the whole effect is still characterized by sincerity and frankness in inspiration and execution.



Heraldic and religious subjects Fig. 45.—Italian embroidery, fifteenth century (in the Hechon collection).

almost equally engaged the needle of the embroiderer, a preference being shown for saints with militant attributes. And it seems as though religious art in its expressions in churches and monasteries was imbued with the spirit animating the crusaders on their way to Jerusalem. St. Maurice, centurion of Roman phalanxes; St. Martin, who was a soldier before he was consecrated

bishop ; St. George represented as " a knight on horse-back killing a wild beast " (*ung chevalier à cheval qui occit un beste*), and above all, St. Michael piercing with his lance the devil beneath his feet—the famous saint invoked by pious pilgrims at his shrine on the " mount exposed to the buffetings of the waves,"—all these saints are those whose effigies embroiderers from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries preferred to depict. Saints wearing armour were thus favourite subjects ; and this militaryism is more or less distinctive of embroideries at this period.

When our Saviour was represented it would be as Christ crucified, surrounded by soldiers nailing Him to the cross, or throwing dice for His garments ; or else as Christ issuing from the tomb (*issant d'ung tumbel*), to the amazement of the soldiery set to guard it.

Four ecclesiastical ornaments, sent as a gift to the King of England, his son-in-law, were chosen by Charles VI. for their embroideries of " the Blessed Trinity, the Mount Olivet, St. Michael and St. George."

We have mentioned the importance assigned to the display of heraldic bearings and pennons by knights on going into battle or taking part in tournaments. Princesses presided as umpires over these latter, which were held in the lists ; and when applying themselves to make embroideries for a church of either " our Lady enthroned " or " a coronation of our Lady in the midst of angels," they would introduce their own portraits into them.

Thus, then, religious and heraldic subjects give the peculiar characteristic observable in artistic needle-work of the Middle Ages. It is one which does not

similarly reveal itself in works of a later time when customs more pacific and manners less severe prevailed. At the commencement of the new period there was doubtless a tendency towards refining and perfecting methods of execution, in the results of which, however, we may look in vain for that noble boldness and loyal frankness of style which pervaded the arts of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE DEATH OF LOUIS XIV.

LIKE other arts, embroidery in France and elsewhere during the sixteenth century was dominated by Italian influence.

Italy, of all countries that were engaged in weaving industries, was the most proficient; from Sicily to Genoa, Milan and Venice, every town more or less had its workrooms for weaving flax, cotton, and especially silk.

Genoa and Venice were the principal European ports for trade in silks from the Levant. Both in Sicily and Lombardy silk-worm nurseries (*magnaneries*) were started, and sericulture was successfully pursued. Lucca gold threads rivalled those of Cyprus, whilst Milanese needles were reckoned as good as those from Damascus. Circumstances therefore concurred in making Italy a principal centre for beautiful textiles.

The court of the popes, at the times of such pontiffs as Julius II. de la Rovere, Leo X. dei Medici, and Paul III. dei Farnesi, became the rallying point of the best artists and handicraftsmen. And at the hands of the popes, the Venetian doges, and dukes of Florence,

Milan, and Ferrara, there was no lack of constant orders for important works, which kept the Italian embroiderers unceasingly employed.

The execution was carried to a very high degree of finish. The smallest details were solicitously cared for by the embroiderers, and the perfection of work complied with the exactions of consumers possessing a love for artistic productions. The flat tints of the Middle Ages were wholly inadequate for embroideries, which were required to be as subtle as paintings in delicate tones and imperceptible blendings of colours. Gradation of colours for threads, etc., was carried as far as possible, split stitches of minute size were employed for rendering with artful effect undulating contours and skin textures in figure subjects, and these were carried to exaggeration, when with questionable propriety embroiderers called in the aid of the paint brush to second the work of their needles.

Variety in embroideries was inexhaustible. Venetians, noted for skill in glass-work of all sorts, embroidered with coloured glass beads, much in the manner of the ancient Egyptians.* To some extent these bead embroideries may be likened to mosaics made with little tesserae. At the South Kensington Museum some few remarkable specimens are to be seen† (fig. 46). But they are scarcely commendable from the artistic point of view, notwithstanding a certain gayness of effect in them. A few little beads and pearls can no doubt be happily introduced into certain portions of embroideries, whereas work ex-

* See Egyptian bead work in the Louvre and British Museum.

† These are considered to be of late twelfth-century work.

clusively done with them is usually unworthy of consideration from any high standpoint of criticism.* Their weight loads the stuff on to which they are



Fig. 46.—Venetian bead embroidery of the twelfth century (?) (in the Kensington Museum).

worked, and necessarily gives it a disagreeable rigidity. The least accident almost may break the thread holding them, with the result that they fall off and leave bare spaces in the embroidery. Any analogy this beadwork may have with mosaic inlaying enforces the reservation of anything in the nature of mosaic work to its special purpose in connection with architecture, and demonstrates also that the flexible nature of a textile is incompatible with any modification of a decorative process thoroughly suited to flat, rigid, wall surfaces.

From one end of Europe to the other Italian styles of embroidery were more or less imitated.

In 1551 the Parisian Corporation of Embroiderers issued a notice that, "for the future the colouring in representations of nude figures and faces should be done in three or four gradations

* It certainly recalls the wampum or belts and moccasins of North Americans.

of carnation dyed silk, and not as formerly with white silks." *

Artists of distinction were not above making and supplying designs for embroidery. Vasari relates that Perino del Vaga made drawings of eight subjects from the life of St. Peter for embroideries upon a cope for Pope Paul VIII.

Raphael himself paid some attention to designs for embroidery, and in Paris is a specimen worked from a design which he made in compliance with an order from Francis I. It is an oval medallion preserved in the Cluny Museum (fig. 47). Originally it was part of a set of furniture embroideries done upon a golden ground, which consisted of coverings and hangings for a bed, four arm-chairs, eighteen folding-stools, a table-cover, a fire-screen, and a canopy for "the coronation chamber." This chamber was decorated with forty subjects, representing episodes in the history of the Jews, and set within panels or cartouches, surrounded by many figures. These magnificent embroideries were in later years given to the abbey of St. Denis, where they were kept until the Revolution. Then, alas! they were destroyed, and nought remains of them but the solitary fragment in the Cluny Museum. This measures .80 metre in width and .50 metre in height. Upon it is depicted the scene of the Israelites dancing in a plain round the golden calf, which surmounts a silver column. In the background to the left is Moses receiving the tables of the Law; on the right are the Israelitish tents. The action of the figures

* Victor Gay, *Glossaire Archéologique*, p. 227.

is portrayed with great grace, whilst the whole



Fig. 47.—“Dance round the Golden Calf.” An oval panel of embroidery after a design by Raphael (in the Cluny Museum).

composition reflects a masterly execution. It is much to be regretted that this embroidery of first-

class historical importance is in a bad state of preservation. A book published in Paris in 1775, entitled the *Richesses Tirées du Trésor de l'Abbaye de Saint Denis*, contains a complete description of "the Coronation Chamber," with its forty medallions of embroidery.*

Many French inventories include mentions of "embroidered pictures." In that of Charles V. there is one of "a picture of embroidery, with a portrait of *Monseigneur le Dauphin* mounted on a black horse, driving it with a stick which he holds in his hand."

Margaret of Austria owned several portable embroidered pictures. One of a pair is described as a "broidery, in which are Our Lady, St. Catherine, and St. John the Evangelist, fitted into a scarlet velvet case."

When the Augustinian friars came in 1659 and took up their abode at the convent of Brou, they made an inventory of the things they found there, amongst which were "two pictures of needlework done by the very hand of the foundress, one representing the entombment of our Lord, the other the Presentation in the Temple."

Soon pictures of this class were made of a larger size than previously. Monsieur Léon de Laborde writes: "The art of embroidery then became a serious and esteemed sister of painting; for the needle, in truth a painter's brush, traversed its canvas, leaving behind it a dyed thread as a colour, producing a painting soft in tone, ingenious in touch—a picture without glistening surface, brilliant without harshness."

* Léon de Laborde, *La Renaissance des Arts à la Cour de France*, vol. i., p. 993.

In the Spitzer collection we find one of such pictures, most curious as an historical scene of manners and customs (fig. 49). In the yard of one of his palaces is Henry II., with Diane de Poitiers and numerous courtiers, looking on at a fight between dogs and a bear. The energy of the dogs and the keen interest of the spectators are admirably interpreted. Moved to pity by the sad plight of one of the dogs, which is covered with gore from the savage wounds of the

bear, Diane is directing an attendant to stay the fight.



Fig. 48.—Panel or cartouche of Italian embroidery of the sixteenth century.

All the figures of the persons are excellently rendered, particularly that of the king. The stitches in silks used to depict his face are minute, and so ably disposed as to give a most lifelike appearance to the king's countenance.

The animals are treated with greater breadth of execution, and this is increased to give due imitative effect to the textures of the ground and of the masonry of the castle about it. This is a very fine work of French art.

We can safely say as much of another picture in the same collection, the principal composition in which represents the Entombment of our Lord, and might possibly have belonged formerly to the Augustinians at the Convent of Brou. Beneath this foremost scene

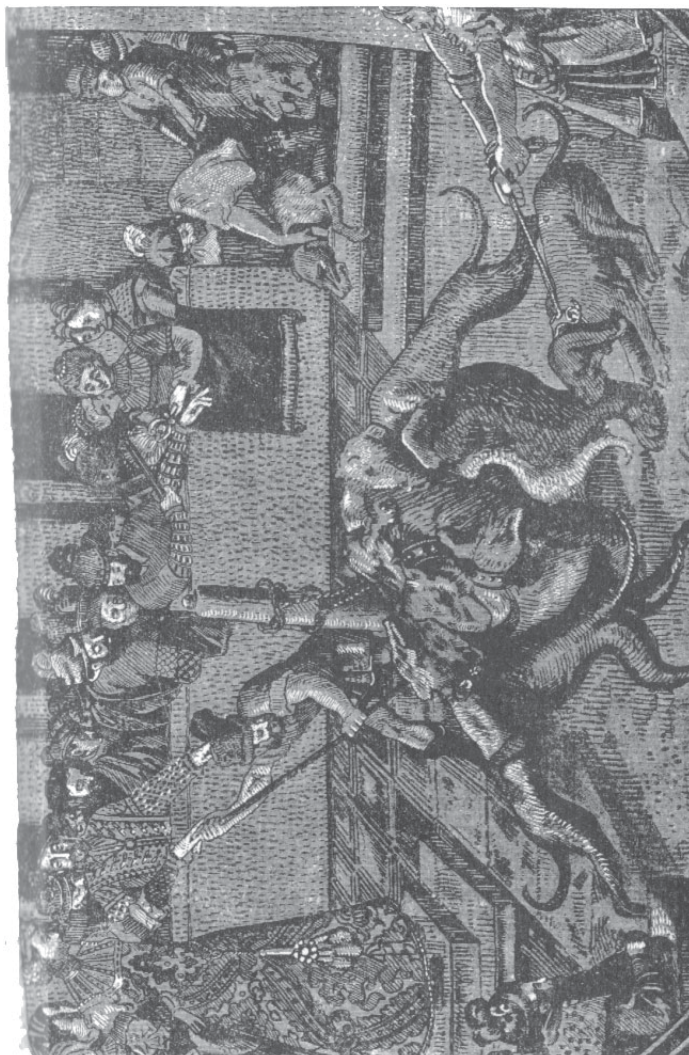


Fig. 49.—Bear fighting with dogs before Henry II. and Diane de Poitiers.¹

are compartments displaying Hell, where Jesus is seeking the prophets and saints of the old dispensation to bring them into the Kingdom of the Elect; all of which is interpreted with a really remarkable purity and vigour of drawing and needlework.

But the needle has even surpassed itself in the marvellous execution of its work for two panels, adapted for a lectern cover. The more interesting



Fig. 50.—Panel, displaying a sacramental procession, of Italian sixteenth-century embroidery.

of these shows a symbolical procession of the Holy Sacrament, in which both Old and New Testaments are typified (fig. 50). At the head of the procession is King David, dancing and singing psalms as he plays his harp. Four monks vested in copes, whose gestures are most naturally given, form the central group, carrying the Holy Sacrament upon a brancard, overshadowed by an elegant, golden, canopied shrine; behind comes, in sixteenth-century costumes, a troop of priests,

nobles, magistrates, and common folk, amongst whom may be descried a negro. A woman wearing a crown is seated at a window, expressing by signs her admiration. The style of the figures, and beautiful drawing of the different facial expressions, together with the masterly treatment of the perspective of the buildings and monuments, recall the manner of Paul Veronese. Carried to such a pitch of perfection, embroidery certainly attains to the charm of distinctive and unapproachable individuality. Executed with a freedom not possible in tapestry-weaving, it has quality of greater brilliancy than painting, and the texture of its silks secures a play of light which cannot be as well obtained by other means. For subjects of small dimensions requiring close inspection, embroidery, when of such perfection as that of this panel, is *sui generis* and absolutely unrivalled.

The Museum of Art and Industry at Lyons contains a picture of great beauty, representing an *Ecce Homo*, of which we give an illustration. It is in the style of Rembrandt's school (fig. 51).

At South Kensington is a picture, or small panel, probably from an orphrey, of a saint seated beneath a circular-headed niche, holding a cross and reading the Gospels, embroidered after a design by the Florentine Raffaellino del Garbo, pupil and friend of Philipppo Lippi.

But besides pictures we find at South Kensington a series of embroidered specimens all worthy of close study. In them, indeed, we have an incomparable collection of works fully setting forth the history of the art of embroidery. Let us now, however,

merely pause to examine a bewitching specimen of sixteenth-century embroidery, the design of which might almost have been inspired by Virgil's *Georgics*. The embroidery covers the outside of a casket, or coffer, fourteen and three-quarter inches long by six and a quarter high, and is evidently of French work under Italian influence. The various subjects, each



Fig. 51.—*Ecce Homo* (an embroidered picture in the Museum of Art and Industry at Lyons).

of which is emblematical of a month, are twelve in number. Four occur on the lid, namely, those applicable to September, October, November, and December. The two long panels, one at each end of the coffer, represent April, in the episode of a noble receiving a flower from a draped maiden, and August

in the harvest scene of a reaper cutting a rich field of golden wheat; the back and front sides of the coffer are each split up into three panels, for the months of January, February, March, and May, June, July. The French inscriptions of these latter months—*Mai, Jun, Julet*—are legible; the other months are identifiable by the zodiacal signs, one in each panel. The embroidery, which is padded, to give relief effects in

various parts, such as the architectural ornaments, is worked with gold threads, whipped round with fine coloured silks; certain forms are defined by gold cords stitched down to outline them; the faces of the figures, and some of the charming glimpses of landscape, are wrought in long and short stitches with coloured silks.*

Spanish embroiderers were almost equally skilful in this class of work, and did not fail to adopt many refinements of the art from the Italians. Although the execution of the Spanish work was less compact than that of the Italian, certain samples of it are hardly of inferior artistic quality; this is specially the case with embroideries which owe both charm and style to having been made from paintings by Murillo, the master above others of the Spanish school. Of such, the Spitzer collection contains a remarkable specimen, an embroidered picture of a holy family seated beneath a spreading tree in the midst of a sunny landscape.

Some of the Spanish embroidered pictures are worked with as sharp and crisp a relief as can be obtained in wood-carving; as, for instance, are Adam and Eve in the Cluny Museum, a monument of deplorable taste which is in no way qualified by the surprising skill in the execution of the reliefs.

Apart from pictures, and of a broader and more decorative class, are certain very striking Spanish altar-cloths of red velvet with arabesques, having the

* See description of this, pp. 285, 286, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Collections of Tapestry and Embroidery in the South Kensington Museum.*

appearance of being cut or chiselled out of solid gold ; one similar to fig. 52, but with heraldic shields, has been frequently engraved, notably in an interesting report by Gaston le Breton upon the exhibition of

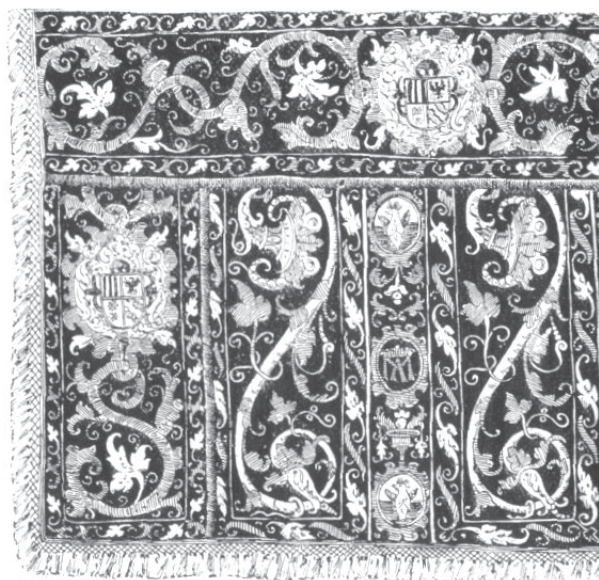


Fig. 52.—Altar frontal of velvet with Spanish embroidery of the sixteenth century.

textiles held under the auspices of the *Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs*.*

One of the finest sets of embroidery exhibited in the Ancient Art Section of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878 consisted of four pieces of Spanish work for

* *Les Arts du Bois, des Tissus et du Papier*, p. 173 (published by Quantin).

funeral ceremonies (figs. 53 and 54). Square panels containing cartouches, in which were skulls, with balanced arrangements of floriated scrolls about them, formed the principal decorative *motifs* of these embroideries. The play of the elegant golden scrolls was in happy contrast with the sombre objects within the cartouches, and is likened by M. Théodore Biaise, in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* for September 1878, to a hymn of hope arising with consoling tones amidst the stern realities of death.

The design (fig. 53) is masterly; the workmanship precise and accurate, without pretentious pettiness of elaboration. The subjects in



Fig. 53.—Dalmatic of Spanish embroidery.

the centre are wrought with gold threads couched in coloured silks, whilst with felicitous counterchange, the cartouches are worked with coloured silks couched in gold thread. The scrolls are of gold thread laid, and their leafy termination and fruits are of coloured silks

overstitched with gold. The whole, from its breadth of style, harmonious relationship of the materials in which it is wrought, completeness of execution, and

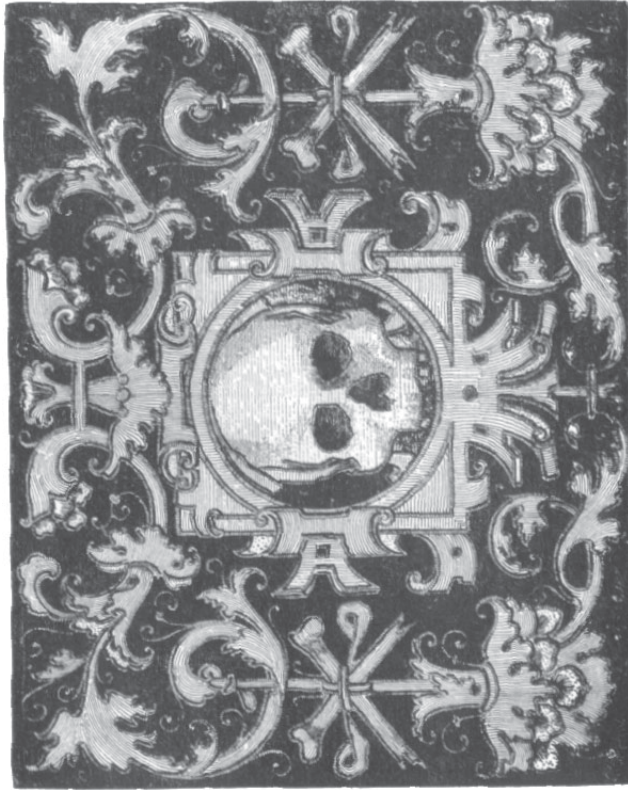


Fig. 54.—Apparel of dalmatic in fig. 53, of Spanish embroidery.

just correlation of details, is one of the best specimens that can be recommended for the study of this sort of embroidery.