

ART NEEDLEWORK.



HERE are various forms in which gold and silver are prepared for the purposes of needlework, and also different colours, obtained by different degrees of oxidisation. Modern alloys are more successful than those used in the last century, which, being made of inferior metals, tarnished after very short wear, and soon threw this description of embroidery into discredit. What is called "passing" is generally composed of a

thread of silk, round which an extremely fine flattened wire of gold or silver is spun. The needle may be threaded with it in the usual way, and it can be used in the same manner as silk for flat embroidery; and also for knitting, netting, and crochet. It is made of two or three different sizes, and is distinguished from gold cord by its being formed of only one thread. For embroidery with "passing" the needle must be round, very large in the eye, and sufficiently large to prevent the fraying of the gold as it is passed backwards and forwards through the work. Gold and silver braid is a plait of three or more threads, and can be purchased of various widths and qualities; the copper-gilt being the least expensive, but also the most to be avoided, from its tarnishing so soon. Braid can be used either for the pattern or for the ground, wool or silk being used for the other part. Gold and silver cord is a twist of two, or indeed any number of threads, but for the purposes of needlework it is seldom used of a larger size than four threads. It may be employed for edging braided work, and all flat embroidery patterns; and may also be formed into designs by itself. It is sewn on the work with a fine needle, and silk of the same colour; and it is needful to use much care that the point of the needle does not penetrate the metallic surface of the cord, and show the silk, which is its foundation. The needle is held very horizontally, in order to catch the cord where it touches the surface of the work; and fasten both together by as few threads as will possibly hold them firmly. Gold cord is much used as an edging for appliqué embroidery, on velvet, cloth, or silk; and forms a most effective finish when employed for the veining of leaves and stems. Bullion is composed of fine wire twisted. There are three kinds—the smooth, the rough, and the checked; and they are sometimes used together in the same piece of embroidery in order to produce a richer appearance.

The stems of flowers are also worked in bullion in some pieces of antique work; it is cut into the

requisite lengths with the scissors, but the proper method of embroidering with it will require both experience and attention in its achievement.

Spangles are small pieces of metal, punched in various shapes, from a thin sheet. A hole is pierced in the centre, through which the silk is passed to fasten them to the work. Tinsel may be bought in still thinner sheets, and is cut in strips or shapes as needed. Both spangles and tinsel are mostly used for velvet, cloth, crêpe, and net embroidery.

It seems hardly necessary to mention beads, as they are so well known in knitting, netting, and crochet-work.

If properly protected and used, both gold and silver may be preserved for any number of years. Fine gold, which is really silver-gilt, is less likely to become oxidised than merely gilt imitations grounded on the baser metals. A current of damp air, wet, noxious gases, and some perfumes will invariably tarnish and discolour every article exposed to them.

Armorial bearings and their accessories are almost a distinct branch of the art. The designs must be correct according to the laws of the Heralds' College, both as to their colour and form. The figures are raised by means of wool or cotton, in order to give them a rounded appearance. Coats-of-arms which have supporters are singularly effective when worked; and on ordinary ones the disposition of the mantling will require the utmost skill and taste of the designer to render it graceful and pretty.



Fig. 1.

The different kinds of silks used in all ancient and modern work are called floss, crochet-twist, purse-silk,

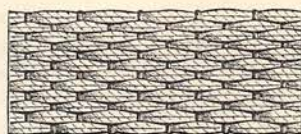


Fig. 2.

Dacca, Berlin, three-cord, and sewings. Floss appears to have been the silk usually employed in the antique work; it was laid in long or short

perpendicular lines of various shades of colour, and kept down by rows of fine gold thread arranged in lines or patterns upon it. An example of this is seen in Fig. 1, which was crimsom floss with lines of gold. It could be thus made to represent the draperies of figures, pavements



Fig. 3.

in squares of marble, or the canopy of some sacred subject. If split very fine, floss was used both for the flesh and hair of figures. Crochet-twist is a silk

of three plies; it can be used in the manner described above for floss, and the perpendicular lines held down with fine sewing-silk. The name for this among embroiderers is "couching." Figs. 2 and 3 represent what is called "broad couching," the lines being either of gold-twist or purse-silk. They can be also laid diagonally, which forms an effective background for a

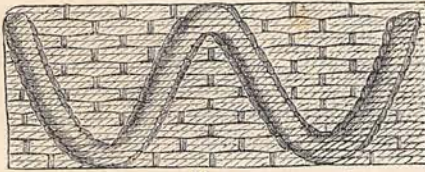


Fig. 4.

large design. Purse-silks, having an extremely regular twist, are much used by modern embroiderers for such designs as are used on alms-bags, sermon-cases, and book-markers for large and heavy volumes.

Fig. 4 shows a method of sewing the whip-cord in a pattern under the couching. This and kindred designs were much affected by the workers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a background: and were most effective in rendering effects of light and shade, especially in gold and silver embroidery.

In working the basket which was illustrated in our last Number, a medium-sized purse-silk should always be employed, as the pulling necessary to hold the silk down tightly between the rows of twine demands a strong and tenacious material. Dacca silk is so called from the native capital of the Province of Bengal, where it was originally manufactured. It is so made that, like floss, it can be split into two threads, each of which can again be subdivided into hair-like filaments, suitable for the finest stitches of any design, such as the delicate features of the human face. Dacca is dyed in nearer and more numerous shades than floss, and is altogether much superior to it in its capabilities for splitting with smoothness and ease. Berlin silk is a smooth, loose twist, used for leaves and scrolls, and is now employed in preference to the old-fashioned kind called "mitorse," being much

superior in its softness. Three-cord is a very closely twisted silk of three strands, which is used as an imitation of gold bullion at times, for large monograms. The last on the list, sewing-silk, is one of the most important items, however, to the perfection of the whole in use. First-class sewings, of the very best description procurable, can alone be used in bullion embroidery. Silk sold on reels—and, indeed, all drapers' sewing-silk—is carefully to be eschewed, and

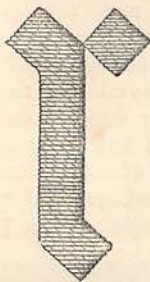


Fig. 5.

only that used which is procured from the regular shops for the supply of needlework materials.

The letter "r," at Fig. 5, is an illustration of modern embroidery over card. There is very little to say about it, except that it requires greater regularity in laying the stitches with precision and evenness than in any other kind of work with silk or gold twist. Even as

regards the twist of the silk or gold, great care must be used; for one stitch in which the twist was looser or tighter than its neighbour would ruin the appearance of the letter or monogram. Rather short needlefuls of silk should be taken, as on the least roughness they must be changed, and a large-eyed needle will also be found a great economy.

The stitch represented at Fig. 6 is a flat example of the simple long stitch in which all floss embroidery is wrought, and is a sample of the way it should appear when finished. Fig. 7 is an endeavour to enlarge and magnify the same, so as to



Fig. 6.

bring it within the comprehension of the reader. It shows the method of working a leaf with the lightest shade, commencing from the outer edge, and working downwards into the darker, on the

inside. The outline of this leaf is laid in crochet-silk, sewn down with fine sewing-silk.

Fig. 8 is a stem, worked in satin stitch embroidery.

The French Knot is a stitch much used in silk and wool embroidery. It is very easy to make, but will need some practice. The



Fig. 8.

needle must be first brought up through the work at the exact spot where the knot is to be; then the thread is taken by the left hand, and held midway between the work and the needle, and the right hand twists the needle round it. Slide this loop down to the point of the needle, and pass the needle again through the stuff, holding the knot firmly with the left hand, while the right draws the needle through underneath; and if held properly, after a little practice the loop will settle into a knot on the top. It may be increased in size by the number of times the silk is twisted round the needle. These knots are most effective for the centres of flowers, and the Chinese sometimes execute large designs of needlework entirely in them; though I cannot say I admire the work of this description which I have seen.

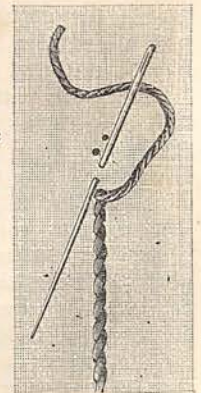


Fig. 9.

Fig. 9 represents the outline stitch of crewel embroidery. It is, in reality, the stitch in which the crewel work is done also, the same idea being carried out with rather longer stitches on the surface, the criterion of good work being the small amount of wool shown on the wrong side. The old-fashioned manner of working was different, and con-

sisted in making both sides equally presentable to view—in fact, I have frequently been shown specimens of

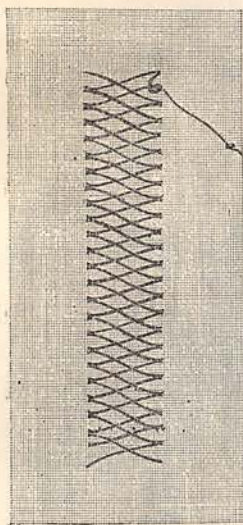


Fig. 10.

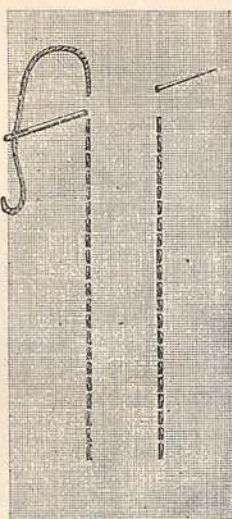


Fig. 11.

which it was difficult to tell the right or wrong side. From one of these I copied the stitch shown in Figs. 10 and 11. It is intended for a border, and was worked as an edging to some handsome old curtains, embroi-

dered in a design of purple grapes and green leaves. The stitch in question was done in purple crewels within an inch or so of the selvage. Fig. 10 shows the right side: it is, however, worked on the wrong, as shown in Fig. 11. Scrolls are frequently used in silk embroidery. They may be formed with gold or silk twist, enriched with gold passing, sewn on at each side. Fig. 12 shows a knotted stitch for scroll work which is fully explained by the engraving, and will be found effective when worked.



Fig. 12.

Having finished my instructions, I can only hope that my patient readers will find them of use in prosecuting this rich and most interesting field of labour. I know full well how necessary lessons are to the perfect understanding of the subject, as well as the study of good ancient and modern examples of work; but I have found an earnest desire for any information on the question among all skilled embroiderers, who know well that there is always something to be learnt, to the end of time, in every profession.

D. DE B.

WHAT HE LOST BY IT.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.



HE evening was warm and still, and all the doors and windows in George Street were set open, and everybody who could escape from indoor occupation was out for a stroll. The people living here were decent hard-working men and women, earning enough to keep their families in com-

fort, and taking an honest pride in themselves and their dwellings. Most of the windows could boast of clean muslin curtains, and the doorsteps were as white as hard scouring could make them. There was one house, however, whose doorstep could ill bear a comparison with its neighbours; and as to its curtains, they were drab and dingy, and had been up all the winter.

"Miss Kennaway don't regard appearances; that's certain," said one matron to another, as they took their evening walk together. "If I were her I should be sick of the sight of those frightful drab curtains. And she with a smart young beau coming often to the house!"

"Poor thing!" sighed the other woman, a good-natured soul, always ready to find excuses for those

the world was hard upon—"Poor thing! she can't have a minute to call her own. What with her dressmaking and her mother's long illness, she must be pretty nearly at her wits' end."

"Well, if young Parr don't mind the curtains, and that disgraceful doorstep of hers, I'm sure I don't," responded the first speaker sharply. "And here he comes, looking as natty as you please, and walking as if the very ground wasn't good enough for his feet!"

William Parr, the promised husband of Fanny Kennaway, was one of those men who are said to be above their station, and are sometimes so very much above it that there is no keeping them in it. William, however, was industrious enough to find favour with the merchant who employed him. Out of the counting-house, he held his head high, and looked down upon his fellow-clerks, who never ceased to wonder why such a lofty fellow should have courted a humble little dressmaker in George Street. But very few men of taste would have been surprised at Parr's choice, if they had seen Fanny Kennaway in her seat by the window that evening.

After a long day's work, she was resting eyes and hands for a few minutes, and watching for William's coming. Hers was a delicate, clearly-cut face, pale as a lily, and serious almost to sadness—a face that seemed to have little in common with the needles and pins and gay stuffs around her. And yet, in a