

TAPESTRY IN ENGLAND OF THE PAST AND OF TO-DAY.



IN a former paper the origin of tapestry on the Continent of Europe and the revival it found in 1876 were discussed, but English tapestry was not touched upon nor mentioned. In truth it occupied too wide a field, for since the Royal School of Art Needlework was founded we have had certain forms of tapestry in use, and if we include

Miss Linwood among our tapestry-workers, and the wonderful old crewel-work of the last century, we have never been without representatives of the art.

There seems no doubt that the decorative arts had attained great perfection in England in the thirteenth century, but we have no absolute record of any looms before the sixteenth. In 1344, Edward IV. passed a law for the regulation of the tapestry manufacture, which shows conclusively that it was an important industry; and in 1392 the Earl of Arundel disposed by will of the tapestry hangings in his castle, which he states had been recently made for him in London. They were of blue tapestry and red flowers. In 1595 the monks of Canterbury manufactured a hanging in tapestry for the walls of the cathedral choir; which hangings are now at Aix in Provence. The earliest recorded manufactory was established in 1509, in the reign of Henry VIII., by William Sheldon, with the assistance of the master tapestry-maker, Robert

Hicks. This was at Barcheston, in Warwickshire, but it does not appear to have executed any works of importance, with the exception of three maps of English counties on a large scale, which are now the property of the Philosophical Society of York.

In the reign of James I., a manufactory was established at Mortlake, in Surrey, by a skilful artist, Francis Crane. James himself gave £2,000 to assist in the expenses, and King Charles I., in addition to giving orders, allowed the founder £100 per annum. During the first year of his reign the king was indebted £6,000 to the establishment for three suits of gold tapestry; and Windsor Castle, Hampton Court, Whitehall, St. James's, Nonsuch, Greenwich, and other royal seats were successively enriched and adorned by its productions. Great success attended it, and it drew a great number of workmen from Oudenarde. Charles I. commissioned it to reproduce the beautiful compositions by Italian artists which decorated his fine collection, and principally those magnificent cartoons of Raphael representing the acts of Our Lord and His disciples. The originals were bought by the king from the manufactory in Brussels, where they had long lain forgotten, by the advice of Rubens. This great painter sketched a set of eight pieces, representing the history of Achilles, which were woven at Mortlake for one of the royal palaces. In fact there is incidental mention made of a long list of tapestries woven there for the king, as well as different members of the nobility, for which large



ORIGINAL DESIGN FOR TAPESTRY WORK.

prices were paid, which shows that the taste exercised in England and the encouragement given to the art was as great as that in France.

The civil war in England put an end to the artistic productions of Mortlake, for the Parliament seized it as the property of the Crown. After the Restoration, Charles II. endeavoured to revive it, and sent Verrio to sketch the designs; and the looms continued in active operation until, in 1703, the death of Sir Francis Crane—whose life was prolonged to a great age—brought about the closing of the manufactory, which has never since been re-opened. There was a small *atelier* in existence in Soho, which attempted to carry on the glories of Mortlake, and a few examples made

for £30,000. Not content with this, the populace denuded the churches of the treasures they contained, which were beyond all money value, and sent them to the Continent to be sold, besides which we have it on record that they burnt great heaps of pictures, statues, and tapestries in the public streets. Letters continually appear at present in the various public prints describing how some wandering English antiquary, or archæologist, has found one or more of these poor banished relics of an artistic day in some foreign church or museum, where they had found protection and refuge. Hampton Court Palace, Windsor Castle, and the South Kensington Museum now contain the chief remains of English tapestry, but there is no



SPECIMEN OF PAINTED TAPESTRY WORK.

there are extant, bearing the date of 1758. There was also one at Fulham, where tapestry for furniture was manufactured. This was finally closed in 1755. Nor must we forget an *atelier* at Exeter, which owed its origin to a French refugee, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The tale of the dispersion of the art treasures of the English nation must be told, in order that my readers may understand how we come to be without the tapestry which we know to have been manufactured by ourselves. One of the first acts of the Protectorate, after the death of the king, was to dispose of the pictures, statues, tapestry hangings, and all the splendid ornaments of the royal palaces. Cardinal Mazarin bought many of these treasures, and so did the Archduke Leopold of Austria. The arras and tapestry hangings of St. James's Palace, Hampton Court, and the other royal seats were purchased by Cromwell

doubt that plenty exists in private hands, especially in the North of England; and perhaps at some future day the attention of the owners may be called to its value, and they may be induced to make their treasures known.

But we are not without a manufactory of our own in England at the present hour, for about three years ago, under the patronage of Her Majesty, and aided by the advice and direct assistance of H.R.H. Prince Leopold, and the Princess Louise, a manufactory was established at Old Windsor by Mr. Henry. At this *atelier* three kinds of designs in tapestry have been produced, and specimens of all have been brought to perfection. They are the Beauvais, which is simply ornamental, and best suited for furniture; the Flemish, or flat pictorial decoration, for walls; and the round or Gobelin style of tapestry. In this, the chief figures of the compositions are so rounded and brought out

by the shading, as to have the effect of painted pictures, and the colours used are deeper and fuller in tone than the Flemish specimens. This manufactory has already produced several fine works, amongst which may be mentioned the series of subjects from the "Merrie Wives of Windsor," from the designs of T. W. Hay, which formed the chief decorations of the Prince of Wales' Pavilion in Paris last year. They were in the flat or Flemish style, and were six in number, each piece of tapestry being twelve feet in length. A series of hunting scenes have also been made in the Gobelin method, and a set of furniture coverings for Her Majesty, after the style of Beauvais.

The workers in this *atelier* were, of course, all French until English hands could be taught, but Mr. Henry is anxious to secure young English people to train, so that the work may be conducted entirely by English aid. It is also considered, I believe, that ladies themselves could work small three-foot looms at home, in which they could weave their own designs into sofa or chair coverings, or medallions. Naturally, the work is one which requires great experience and technical knowledge. It is worked on the wrong side, so that the tapisier does not see the effect until he turns it over. The experience is, of course, needful to pass the right shades of wool straight to their proper position, to know the exact number of threads to interlace, and especially when delicate gradations of shades are required, as in faces and flesh tints.

To those who have been fortunate enough to visit Paris and the original Gobelin manufactory there, this small English *atelier* will not be interesting; but if any of my readers desire further information, and an examination for themselves into one of the oldest industries in the world, they cannot do better than to visit Old Windsor and its new tapestry manufactory.

The revival of the modern representative of hand-made tapestry may be traced back to the first Great Exhibition of 1851, to Mr. Welby Pugin, and to Dr. Bock, whose curious and valuable collection of textiles and needlework has found a home at South Kensington. This collection has had a very great influence in the formation of the Royal School of Art Needlework, and has restored to its place amongst us the crewel and silk embroidery, and the cutwork, or *appliqué*, of our remote ancestors. The wall hangings, from designs of Mr. Walter Crane and Mr. William Morris, representing needlework figures outlined upon linen with crewels or silk, are a nineteenth century revival of the Bayeux tapestry of 1068, and very successful they are. Although the commoner kinds of crewel-work may be considered to have had their day, the higher and more artistic forms exemplified by these charming figures will always remain in fashion; nor do I think we shall ever return to inartistic and gaudy embroidery, nor Berlin work. Of course, a trained hand and eye are requisite, as well as some skill in designing; if our work is to benefit either ourselves or others; but then we must take lessons in, and make a study of, all things in which we wish to excel, and this art above all others needs exquisite tidiness, cleanliness, and habits of order.

As a recent example of cutwork or *appliqué* tapestry for wall hangings, those done by the Princess Louise's Work Society, in Sloane Street, for the decoration of the Prince of Wales' Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition, may be cited. They were intended for frieze panels, and represented the Elements, with sporting scenes—fishing, hunting, and shooting on land and water. The ground was of gold sheeting, the materials used for the *appliqué* being cloth, silk, satin, leather, fur, feathers, tinsel, and paper, the whole connected by silk and crewel embroidery. The series of Chinese hunting scenes were really wonderful in regard to their accuracy of costume and colour, the Chinese ladies being habited so truly in the national textiles as to cause much inquiry where the ladies had managed to procure them. In many cases the workers had dyed their crewels and silks, as well as the materials with which they were working, as the proper colours could not be obtained. This is another description of artistic work which "will not willingly be let die." It affords a delightful opening for originality of ideas, and is executed with perhaps less labour than any of the art needlework of the day.

"The further we go back into antiquity," says that eminent authority Viollet le Duc, "the more intimate do we find the alliance between Architecture and Painting. All the buildings of India, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Greece were covered with painting within and without." Now, this quotation forms an introduction to my mention of "the very last fashion" in the way of tapestry, which is a revival from the sixteenth century, when there appeared in England a sort of hanging which partook both of painting on the wall and of tapestry, and seems to have been a formidable rival to the latter. In Shakespeare we may find constant allusions to these "painted cloths." For instance, when Falstaff persuades Hostess Quickly not only to withdraw her arrest, but to make him a further loan, she says—

"By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining chambers!"

And Falstaff answers—

"Glasses, glasses is the only drinking, and for thy walls a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal Son, or a German Hunting in waterwork, is worth a thousand of these fly-bitten tapestries."

This "German Hunting in waterwork" has especial reference to these "painted cloths," which were done in liquid colour.

In another part of the same play he describes his troops to be "as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth." "The Triumphs of Julius Cæsar," by Andrea Mantegna, which were at Hampton Court, in eight large hangings, were of this description. They were valued at £1,000 in the time of Charles I. It is not improbable that this style of hanging had its origin in the patterns and designs which were prepared for the weavers of high-warp looms to copy, and they were so much more moderate in price that as the world grew larger, before the days of wall-papers, they soon grew into favour.

In these days, when nearly every one paints a little, it is pleasant to find a method of turning one's rough attempts to account, as the process is simple and easily acquired by any one with a slight previous knowledge of painting in colours. This tapestry may be either hung against the wall on hooks with rings, in the manner of ancient tapestry, or stretched on wood frames. The canvas in use has a ribbed surface, to represent the face of real tapestry, and is made in various sizes of rib; but, of course, it may also be plain with no surface pattern. The favourite designs to use are landscapes, and the method of working them out is to endeavour to make them resemble the woven tapestry as nearly as possible. The lights are broad

and well marked. The designs are traced on the canvas by pouncing through tracing paper, which is a business with which all embroiderers in silk and crewel are familiar. In France this new-fashioned painted tapestry has taken immensely, and the French architects and decorators are making great use of it for interiors. The use of canvas painted ceilings is not new; indeed at the Exhibition of 1861 mention was made of the immense widths to be obtained in the canvas of French manufacture; and since then it has been rapidly taking the place of direct wall-painting, which is not, as a rule, sufficiently lasting for the purposes of good decorative work, where the hand of a master has been engaged.

DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



WHAT TO WEAR.

CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS. BY OUR PARIS CORRESPONDENT.



FRENCH fashions and those adopted by the general run of English people differ so much that, go where you will in Paris, you can almost at a glance pick out our countrywomen. In the matter of hair-dressing the distinction is very marked. Frenchwomen, just now, pre-

serve the shape of the head studiously. The front hair does not curl loosely over the forehead, but forms a compact, close-frizzed front, exactly as you might imagine the coiffure of a negress. It reaches to about the middle of the head, where you catch a glimpse of the top of an ornamental comb. The coil of hair is replaced by a torsade or loose twist, combed upwards and very slightly pinned; and then any available ends of hair are formed into small flat curls—not so much *marteaux* as rings which lie flat to the head—about and round the comb.

Large poke bonnets are only at the present moment worn by Englishwomen in Paris. The square hard crown of that class of bonnet is very general, but the brim rests on the front hair, and does not project beyond it. In the shops, gendarme blue and deep claret

seem the favourite colours for bonnets made of satin and velvet blended, and with at least three ostrich feathers turning upwards in front.

The Capote is another well-worn shape, and generally becoming. It was adopted in England a few years ago, as a sort of half-bonnet, reaching to the back hair when dressed high, and is fastened with strings either tied beneath the chin, or pinned with fancy pins so as to form a sort of jabot; for strings and their arrangement are a study now. Some pass under the bonnet, and not under the chin, being fastened in the centre of the bodice with a pin. Wide strings are *de rigueur*, from three to five inches; they often cross the top of the bonnet, and so form the trimming in great measure. Shot silks have not been a success as yet, but shot ribbons have; and these appear as strings to many bonnets, joined in the centre with a three-inch-wide cashmere ribbon, and have lace frills plaited at the edge.

Hats are either very large or small, and exceedingly *bizarre*. Shaggy felts and beavers are pinched into all forms, as are straws; and there is certainly much truth in an American caricature I saw the other day, entitled, "A Hint to Economical Ladies." First there was last season's hat; in the next picture it is being violently twisted; then powerfully smashed; then squeezed; and finally comes out the "dearest, neatest, sweetest thing imaginable, the very latest fashion," the brim being fluted, which I have seen much worn of late—out of a caricature. A list only of the names of the several styles of hats now in vogue would fill more space than I have to spare: Charles I., Rubens, Diana Vernon, Alsatian—many displaying kingfishers, humming-birds, parakeets, or huge feathers, plush bows, and pompons, to say nothing of pins mounted