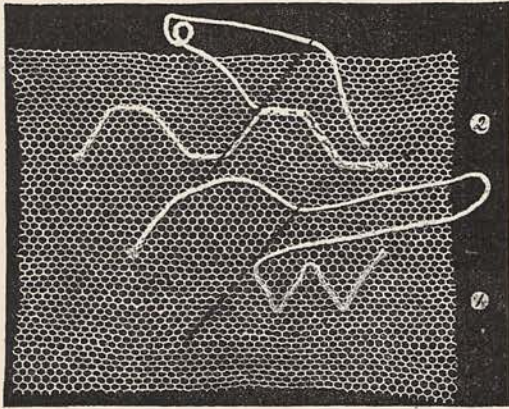


DARNING UPON NET.

THOSE whose business it is to introduce novelties in fancy needlework must indeed be hard up for originality, if all they can produce is the darning upon net that was so popular amongst patient workers some fifty years ago or more. Certainly few who excelled in the art in those days can execute it now, so it is, no doubt, supposed that it will come before the younger generation with all the savour of true novelty. There are many advantages to be claimed for the work. In the first place, it is easy of execution, and not so trying to the eyesight, after a little practice, as might be expected. In the second place, with average care, the embroidery is very durable, and it may be also recommended as lending itself to much variety in colour and design, the simplest pattern being often quite as effective as the most elaborate.

The materials most commonly used as a foundation for the darning are Brussels net, black or white, which



FIGS. 1 AND 2.—SINGLE AND DOUBLE DARNING.

is very wide, and costs about 1s. 6d. a yard; silk net, seventy-two inches wide, and from 2s. to 3s. 6d. a yard; mosquito net, ninety, or a hundred and eight inches wide, and 1s. 3d. and 2s. a yard; and, lastly, square netting. This fabric, however, brings the work under the head of Guipure d'Art, and so will not be considered at present.

Flax thread of various sizes is used, or coloured silks, such as filo-floss, or filoselle. Upon very coarse-grained net, fine cords or braids are often worked in to mark the main portions of the design. Many people complain that flax threads are very disagreeable to work with, that they fray, draw up, and do not slip through the material so freely as most other kinds. This is the general opinion, the truth being that, as with everything else, there is a right and a wrong way of using them. If, when the worker cuts a skein, she takes one strand and draws it through her finger and thumb, she will find that, when

it is passing through in one direction, it feels smooth and silky; in the other, rough and hairy. She should thread her needle so that, when working, the thread comes through smoothly and, as it were, with the "grain," then there will be no fear that the flax will not keep its gloss to the last. It is easy to mark that end of the cut skein which is to be passed through the eye of the needle when the strands are in use, by tying a piece



FIG. 3.—BORDER IN DARNED NET.

of cotton round it. The designs may vary greatly as to style; they may be floral, conventional, or geometric, according to the purpose for which the work is intended. The first class of pattern necessarily involves the exercise of far more skill than is likely to be obtained during the early stages of the popularity of the work, so I should advise a learner to confine her attention solely to such as can be best described as geometric. The counting of the meshes involved in working these will be found by no means irksome, as, after this has been done once or twice, it will be seen at a glance how the next few stitches are to be laid. Any cross-stitch pattern can be applied to darning on net, also any of the designs prepared for executing in the canvas embroidery just now so popular.

The basis of all the stitches is ordinary darning, which consists in taking the needle alternately over and under every mesh, just as in other materials. Besides this, running is occasionally used, principally for thickening such outlines as have to be afterwards covered with button-hole or overcast stitches. Running differs from darning inasmuch as in true darning the number of the meshes picked up and left may vary according to the necessities of the pattern. In running, one mesh is taken and one left throughout. Overcast stitch is useful for finishing off edges that have to be cut out, and for working open spots or eyelet-holes from which the centres have to be removed. Satin stitch is occasionally used instead of darning, but is never taken over more than three or four meshes, as it would set too loosely upon the surface of the net.

All simple and geometric designs may be embroidered directly upon the net without a traced pattern of any kind. When, however, the design consists of a floral spray, or something similar, it must be correctly drawn with pen and ink upon a piece of pink or white glazed calico. The lines must be marked so clearly as to be distinctly visible

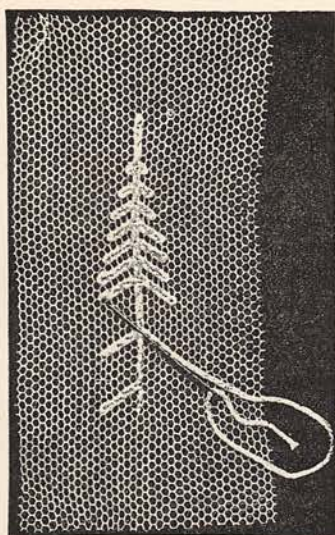


FIG. 4.—SPRAY IN DOUBLE DARNING.

through the meshes of the net when this is tacked into place over the calico. In doing this, the worker must be careful to see that she arranges the net quite straight with the lines of the design, or, when the work is done and the net taken off the pattern, she will be disappointed to find her embroidery all askant, and indeed useless, for this fault is absolutely irremediable. In

Fig. 9 will be seen

a simple lace pattern with the net tacked over it. Another important thing to be remembered by a novice is, that the right side of the embroidery is that which lies against the face of the calico, so all loose ends and threads must be left on the side upon which the work is being executed. Also, that no stitch must be taken through the glazed calico upon which the design is drawn. It is often advisable, for this reason, to make the pattern stiff by pasting stout brown or cartridge paper at the back of the calico. The tyro is then less likely to forget that the needle must not pass

through the pattern. When the whole of a traced design has been worked, the tacking threads must be removed, and, in the case of a strip, the pattern slipped under the net, and tacked down again where the next part is to be embroidered. It is well, if possible, to allow a small portion of the embroidered net to overlap the pattern in its proper place, so as to insure this being continued exactly in the right position. Nothing is more likely than for a beginner to get her embroidery crooked by not attending to this apparently small detail.

The most convenient needles to use are long-eyed embroidery needles, but many workers prefer a very fine tapestry needle, which has an eye of the desired shape, and a slightly blunt point. When very long lines of darning are to be worked, an ordinary fine darning-needle is useful, as with it a good length of the ground can be covered at once.

The darning may be described as "single" and "double," shown in Figs. 1 and 2 respectively. In the lower part of the illustration, a simple vandyke is in process of working, and the needle has picked up four meshes of the net, one thread being missed between each. After the needle has been drawn through these, it will be turned in an upward direction, and three meshes taken up to complete the point. This is single darning. In double darning, as shown in the upper part of the illustration, a series of scallops is worked first in single darning; when sufficient has been done, the needle is turned and brought back, following the first row exactly, and picking up those meshes that were passed over at first. This, of course, gives a thicker and bolder effect. Sometimes a good result is obtained by combining single and double darning in the same pattern. Thus, suppose that a row of simple zigzags has been worked in the single stitch. If one set of honeycombs is then missed, and a row of double darning worked exactly following the first stitches, the work will be far handsomer. By alternating the rows in this way, the pattern may be made one, two, or three inches wide, and thus is formed a good beginning for a border or stripe similar to that in Fig. 3, which is, however, entirely executed in single darning. This

border is a very effective one, and may be used for many purposes—such, for instance, as the ornamentation of the edges of a bridal veil, a border to an antimacassar, or a summer bed-spread. For the latter,

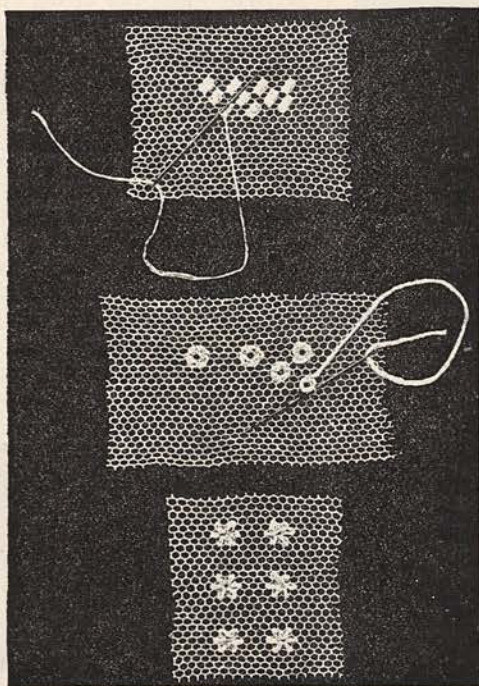


FIG. 5.—THREE WAYS OF WORKING SPOTS.

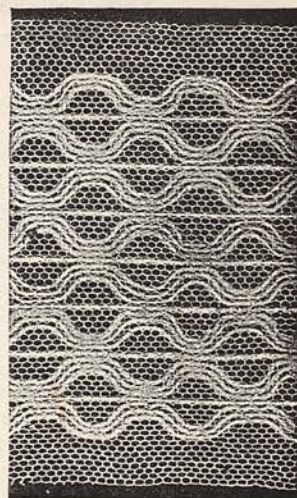


FIG. 6.—ALL-OVER DESIGN FOR BACKGROUND.



FIG. 7.—HANDKERCHIEF TRIMMED WITH DARNED LACE IN TWO COLOURS.

the net requires making up over a lining of coloured silk or sateen.

Fig. 4 shows how a spray may be worked by the use of double darning only. The work is begun at the bottom of the stem, two meshes are picked up, then the needle is turned in a slanting direction across the net and three meshes are taken up, the needle is turned, and the alternate meshes are taken, so as to bring it back to the central stem; three meshes are picked up here, and another leaflet is made in the same way. After the next three stitches have been placed up the stem, one mesh only is taken up between each one, and the side branches gradually decrease in length till the tip of the spray is reached. The work is then repeated on the opposite side of the centre stem in exactly the same way. If it should be necessary to make a number of such sprays all springing from the same base-line, the needle is now run along horizontally until the place is reached for the next spray, which is made to correspond with the first. A good bold pattern is made by combining two rows of these sprays, the sprays in each being opposite, but turning different ways. By working a spray at the

beginning and end of the centre lines also, a finished pattern may be made for the end of a chair-back, or some similar article.

It is probably needless to remind the worker that she must not use any sort of a knot at the end of her thread in beginning a fresh needleful. The best way of commencing is to make the first two or three stitches in the reverse direction to that in which the rest are to run, and then to turn the needle and continue. Short ends of the thread may be left hanging till a good start has been made, when they should be cut off. In finishing a needleful the cotton must be run in and out among the stitches already made, so that it is visible only on the wrong side.

It is often necessary in the case of large patterns to have a sort of secondary design that will partially cover the ground-work of the net between the more scattered patterns. In the case of fine work, spots are very frequently used for this purpose, and three ways of making them are given in Fig. 5. At the top, the oblong dots are made in simple darning, the stitches being taken only over two of the open honeycombs of the net. In working these, it is advisable to notice the number of times the needle is passed across and across the meshes, in order that all the spots may be of precisely the same size. It is easy to finish off these dots by slipping the needle through the stitches of the darning and cutting the thread off close to the work. The open, round dots in the middle of the illustration are also worked in darning stitch, one honeycomb of the net being taken as a centre, and the meshes which border it being alternately picked up and passed over. In making these also, care must be taken to get them all exactly the same size and shape. The latter is arranged by drawing the stitches up equally in each one. The third way of making spots calls satin stitch into requisition. Each stitch is carried over one honeycomb and is returned through one single centre hole. Here again

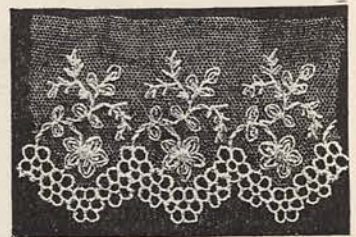


FIG. 8.—DARNED LACE WITH EYELET-HOLE EDGING.

the stitches must be kept regular, and if the hole in the middle has become filled in with the cotton, it must be opened by drawing a large needle through it two or three times after the spot is finished. Fig. 6 shows another way of forming a background for a bold, decided design. The pattern of this is composed alternately of wavy and run lines, and is one which is well adapted to the use of two colours, the wavy lines being put in with a different tint from the straight ones. A good effect may be gained here by using a darker shade for one set of waves than for the other.

In Fig. 9 is given a scallop of lace showing how the net is tacked over the pen and ink pattern, and how the small leaves are filled and stems put in with double darning, the flowers being worked in single stitches. The scallops of a lace edging such as this must be followed first with a run line over which can be worked button-hole stitches. The net left below the scallops is then carefully cut away with a sharp pair of scissors. The scallops given in this particular pattern are rather large, but they are more delicate if two small ones are used in the space occupied here by one large one. Another way of finishing them is by running a line of darning stitches along the outlines, and covering this with overcast stitch. Or, procure some yards of purl edging, such as was once used for point lace making, and run this along below the overcasting, then cut away the net as above described. If the worker is skilful in this sort of fine embroidery, she may finish the scallop with button-holing, and may make the purls herself as she goes along, but I fear few women are sufficiently interested in their work now-a-days to take all this trouble, especially as the purl edging may be bought ready-made for the low sum of 6d. per dozen yards.

Another way of finishing off the edges of lace is shown in Fig. 8. Here a series of eyelet-holes, arranged so as to form a design like a number of small flowers, is worked along the lower edge. These are very easily executed, the shape of each being traced out first with a running, which makes a firm basis for the overcasting. The inside of the eyelet-holes is of course cut away when they are finished. It is better to leave this nearly to the last, or at least only to open them after a number has been done, for it is likely to interfere with the strength of the net, and so to render the remainder of the holes rather troublesome to make.

Enough explanation has now been given to show the intending worker how she may form her pattern, and she should now be able to set to work and try her skill, gradually passing on from the very simple designs to those which combine other and more elaborate stitches.

As regards the uses to be made of the work, it may truly be said that they are as varied as those of any other class of embroidery, and are only limited by the fact that such a transparent fabric as net is not appropriate to all purposes. In Fig. 7 can be seen the

effect of the lace when used to trim a handkerchief; and all sorts of bows, fichus, vests, and such fanciful articles of wearing apparel, to say nothing of lampshades and the smaller pieces of house-linen, may

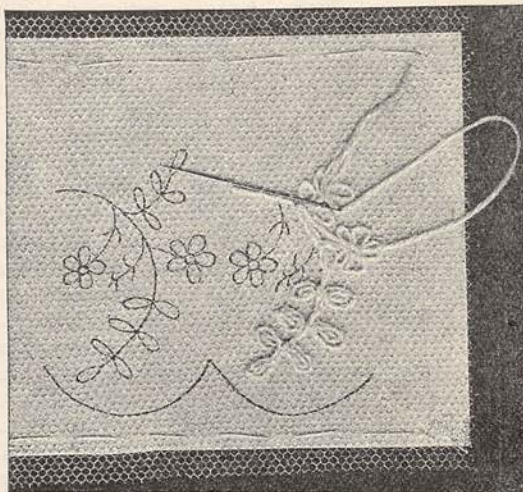


FIG. 9.—LACE IN PROCESS OF WORKING.

be trimmed with it. Antimacassars now scarcely survive except in the form of a drapery of muslin or lace, so the darning will be the very thing for them, and pretty effects may be gained by using coloured threads instead of white for the embroidery. Now, too, that gold thread is warranted to stand washing, a vast improvement may be made in the work by outlining the pattern with it. Upon black or white net, gold thread alone may be used, and an elegant trimming is thus made for evening dresses. By using silks of well-chosen colours, fronts for dinner-gowns can be inexpensively worked, the colours, of course, matching or harmonising with those of the train or the rest of the skirt. White net embroidered with black silk is by no means to be despised, and indeed, so simple an arrangement is often far more effective than are the more commonplace dresses to be seen in a large assembly.

When finished, the work should be laid on a flat ironing blanket, between two damp (not wet) cloths. A dry sheet should be placed over these, and the work pressed carefully with a moderately hot flat-iron, until the cloths are dry. It is then ready to be made up. When gold thread has been used for the embroidery it is better to use the cloths dry instead of moist, as the steam may spoil the brightness of the gold.

The worker should notice that, in the diagrams given here, the coarsest net and cotton and large needles have been used, in order that additional clearness may be gained; but she should, in the real work, employ something much finer.

ELLEN T. MASTERS.