

still made of the old chapel is the storage of the assay plates or standards for testing the weight and fineness of the gold and silver coinage. These are in the custody of the Board of Trade, and are produced by Mr. Chaney, Director of the Standards Department, when required annually, for what is known as "the trial of the Pyx."

It may here be explained that the Pyx is a box in which a certain number of coins of every denomination are placed by the Master of the Mint, as specified in the Coinage Act of 1870. When moved in due course to hold a trial, the Treasury, in accordance with time-honoured custom, instructs the Goldsmiths' Company to appoint for the purpose an expert and competent jury. The standard plates are then taken from the Pyx Chapel to the Goldsmiths' Hall. The first business of the jury is to count all the coins submitted to them in the Pyx, to see that their numbers tally

with the Mint accounts. They then have to weigh the coins in bulk and several individually, and to apply various assaying tests by fire and acids to coins both of gold and silver. An especially severe chemical examination is made as to purity of ingots made from certain coins of either metal. All their findings in these operations have to be embodied in a verdict, which is afterwards published in the *London Gazette*. After the trial, the assay plates are carefully returned to the Pyx Chapel, where they have always been kept since the Norman period. Although forming part—and the oldest part—of the fabric of Westminster Abbey, that chamber never passed under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authority, but has always remained in the possession of the State. Overshadowed but not absorbed by the ecclesiastical influences around, it testifies at once to the sacredness and to the independence of the Crown.

TWO POPULAR STYLES OF ART-NEEDLEWORK.



RICH Oriental effects, sparkle and glitter, bright pure colours, gleam of gold and silver—these are the characteristics of many of the embroideries and fabrics in use for houses at the present time. Though there is said to be some slight diminution in the amount of gold thread now employed, it is amply made amends for by the purl, the bullion, the gold gimp and cord. One of the favourite colours of the season is bright primrose, for brilliance almost equalling buttercup yellow, but differing in tint. The sparkle and glitter are given by the cut jewels of many hues. To the list of showy requisites for modern embroideries we might add gold and silver spangles, as well as tinsels, with red, blue, green, or yellow silk interwoven.

The jewels are made of various shapes and sizes. The round ones are useful for centres of flowers and for filling in between scroll outlines. Oval stones come in well for centres of petals, for stars, and for narrow borderings. Some are uncut, but these are not so generally liked, for they are not as effective as the cut ones. A thin leaf of metal is laid on at the back to increase the sparkle, and they are pierced for sewing on to the materials. Rubies and emeralds, as a matter of course, are imitated in these cut-glass "jewels," but, for our part, we admire most the pieces of work which are studded only with the palest coloured gems, such as delicate pink and yellow topazes, the lightest aqua marines thrown up with a few diamonds. Sapphires and opals have not been forgotten, so there is no lack of choice.

Gilt-mounted jewels are most attractive for certain kinds of work. They are set singly in the nearest approach to gold claw setting, taking into account the metal and the price. These, it goes without saying,

are more expensive than unset stones, but then only a few are needed in comparison. Later on we will show how these can be appropriately introduced by workers.

Now, as to the materials, we give the palm to plush. Velvet follows next, then silk, and lastly satin. Crêpe and chiffon are permissible, but rather difficult to manage. If either of these thin materials is chosen three layers must be tacked on to a foundation of slightly stiff muslin, and the embroidery worked, and jewels sewn on right through the foundation; this is, if we want our work to last, and not "drag." For draperies of dresses the crêpe is left clear, but for articles for the home it is best to back the fragile fabric as we have suggested. Fine French cloth is a favourite material with many embroiderers: it is durable, and the colours it is now dyed must please the most fastidious taste. Whether jewel embroidery is suitable for washing fabrics will probably remain a vexed question. If a thing looks pretty only a minority are inclined to cavil at its want of merit from an artistic point of view, and to make any objection to it on account of incongruity between material and decoration. Anyhow, both linen and sateen are ornamented with the imitation jewels and find admirers.

We place plush first, as the depth of shade and the reflections of light materially assist in throwing up the jewels. Velvet is rather harder looking, more uncompromising, especially the velveteen which so many substitute for silk velvet. Still we would not hinder our readers from selecting it if they feel so inclined, for the latest fashion is to cover cushions with velvet. It has always been the one stuff chosen by jewellers to show off precious stones—at least as long as our memory serves; but lately we notice some are using plush in its place. Probably this is a revival, as most fashions are if we did but know it.

If we describe a cushion we have before us, while

writing, it may help some workers, who have never had an opportunity of seeing jewel embroidery, to set a piece going without any fear of failure. The ground is olive-green plush—one of the most useful colours, for it wears well, and is not quarrelsome. The cushion is square and measures nearly twenty-one inches. The corners are covered with a rather lighter shade of olive-green satin; this is put on in plaits to give a great quantity of fulness, but they scarcely show, for the satin is caught down carelessly here and there to form puffs; the more irregular the better, apparently. The back is lined with silk twill—a light shade to correspond with the satin—and the cushion is edged with olive-green silk cord, with three large loops at each of the four sides as well as at the corners.

But the embroidery is the part that must be most accurately described: workers can then get hints for all kinds of articles. A spray of conventional flowers is thrown across from the left-hand lower corner to the upper right-hand one, but it spreads with light sprays to the other corners also. Very simple stitches are used; in fact, none but the stem stitch and satin stitch. Some of the stems of the flowers are done in golden brown and some in gold filosomes; others are done with gold twist sewn down with silk to match in colour. First come two leaves; one turned so as only to show half. The centre of the leaf is worked with three long stitches across, and just a feather stitch on each side where they commence. This is studded with four light yellow topazes and outlined with gold twist. The points round it are veined with yellow filosome, and in the middle of each a very pale aqua marine is sewn on over the veinings. Then come two large leaves treated like the first, but pink topazes take the place of the yellow. The centre of the large flower is worked with radiating stitches of yellow filosome starting from a deep yellow topaz, and each ending with a light yellow topaz; a circle of gold twist for outline. The petals are partially filled in with filosome, but plenty of the plush is left uncovered round the jewels to throw them up. Above the centre is an oval surrounding a star; this oval band is studded with diamonds. The commencement

of the stem is rather heavily worked with satin stitch. Springing out from behind the large flower, right and left, are light outlined sprays of conventionalised heartsease and leaves; the centres are formed of the various jewels used in the heavier spray. All the design is outlined with gold twist except the heartsease blossoms and the stems. All jewels are sewn on with silk to match.

With such a detailed notice of this cushion it will be unnecessary to describe any other piece of work fully. Many variations of the same idea can be produced by our readers. On small articles tiny sprays are tipped with spangles, while the rest of the design is carried out in coloured silks, gold cord, and jewels. Occasionally star flowers are tipped with French knots if the material has a flat surface. Stems



CUSHION.

(From a design by Mr. Vicars, 104, Newgate Street, E.C.)

are sometimes done with gold thread; two rows are sewn down with red, or any other coloured silk to suit the ground colour. Now and then we see stars made only of jewels, but those look best introduced amongst others of silk and jewels.

The still popular bolster cushions can be ornamented with bands of jewel embroidery. Antimacassars should have one or both ends decorated with it; the centre left plain. These are thrown straight over the backs of chairs, as in the old days before the craze of "knotting up" came in. Brocade photo frames have become so common that a novelty would be refreshing. Suppose some of our readers cover any old one they have by them in this way. Take off the brocade, embroider three-fold gauze (tacked on muslin foundation) with silk, jewels, and spangles; choose a light design, and use small jewels of the best quality. The latter may be of bright, strong colours, as in a small article, such as this, a rich Oriental effect is telling. Fasten on the gauze, then line the back neatly with silk. Very dainty sachets for wedding presents could be made of gauze, or crêpe with frill of same; the frill should not be jewelled, but be done with silk and a few spangles, whilst the sachet itself is jewelled and spangled. The unset jewels are quite inexpensive, and, indeed, this kind of embroidery costs but little, for only a trifling quantity of silk is used in comparison with that

used for other sorts of work. The quality of the gems, however, varies, and therefore the price.*

Mounted jewels are suited for velvet and silk book-bindings, for blotter covers, and caskets. The designs in which these are used should be thoroughly conventional. Arabesques or set patterns are charming; these may be wrought in satin stitch or laid work with a large oval jewel in the centre, and four smaller ones at the corners.

We have not entered on the subject of jewelled fabrics and trimmings for dress, as it would take up too much space, but we may pause a moment to say that gold and coloured silk braids are used as foundations of some of the prettiest jewelled trimmings; whilst cream, white, and black nets are the most fashionable for jewelled draperies, and silk and satin for jewelled fabrics. Gold beads and pearls are often employed simultaneously with jewels. Turquoises and gold beads are lovely on black net, and round coral intermixes admirably with faceted jet.

Now we will turn to the consideration of the second



SPRAY FOR LID OF CASKET.

(From a design by Mr. Vicars, 104, Newgate Street, E.C.)

* They are sold by the dozen, either mixed or of one colour, and the lowest price is 3d. per dozen. It is worth while to buy "jewels" of good quality, as much depends on the clearness of the glass and on the cutting. The best sorts are only kept at first-rate emporiums for embroideries, but the commoner ones can be bought at all fancy workshops.

of the fashionable styles of art work: this is known as coral embroidery. It is a revival, but under modern modes is certainly attractive. The very finest, smallest pieces of coral it is possible to get make the daintiest decorations, though not the most showy for the amount of work put into them. Coral is sold by the string, and the more irregular the shape of the pieces the better the work looks when finished. The pieces are sewn on with coral silk and are generally used on velvet, silk, or satin, but sometimes on thin fabrics.* There are two ways of working. In one, coral and gold thread are used alone; in the other, they are combined with silk embroidery. We much prefer the latter: the result is richer. The embroidery takes off the hard effect that is always more or less in evidence when coral and gold only work out the pattern. The gold thread is sewn down with yellow or coral silk. Twist is preferable to plain thread for this embroidery.

To show how the work is done, we will describe a fancy casket suited for drawing table or toilet table. Perhaps the most uncommon shape is oblong with Gothic lid. This is the shape that many of the caskets of olden days were made, and we often see copies of them now, as far as the casket itself is concerned, in our first-class art schools and societies' depôts, but never, or but seldom elsewhere. As for the embroideries of figures, animals, trees, fruit, flowers, and castles, life is too short for these to be reproduced except on rare occasions. The casket is covered with heliotrope satin, and lined with a lighter shade of moiré. Sprays of flowers ornament the lid and front, back and sides. The stems are put in with double gold twist; the petals of flowers with rows of twist and silk embroidery, and down the centre of each are sewn pieces of coral. The leaves are composed of silk embroidery and outlined with gold twist; pieces of coral are sewn along the middle, but not so closely together as to look heavy. All the embroidery is done with shades of coral coloured silk. If a still richer effect is desired, the ground can be worked over with delicate tendrils in gold thread and powdered with tiny coral beads. The silks used should be graduated from the deepest red coral to the palest pink. An arabesque design has a geometrical figure in the centre, and flowers, leaves, and tendrils radiating towards the edges of another square casket intended to hold jewels or small curios. The centre of the geometrical figure is filled in sparsely with coral beads. Flowers and leaves show a little satin stitch, but gold twist predominates. Single beads and clusters of three are sprinkled about between the outlines of the design. Pearls, steel, or jet may be satisfactorily combined with coral. Opera bags of velvet, covers for carriage clocks, sachets, photo screens, and dress trimmings are amongst some of the articles that can be executed with coral embroidery.

* Beads only are sometimes employed; at others both beads and pieces are introduced into the embroideries. The latter are to be had at 1s. a string; the former are rather more expensive. They are obtainable at art-needlework depôts, and jewellers who deal in silver, jet and steel ornaments, also supply them.