

BUTTON-HOLE AND SATIN STITCH.



OST of you girls have some knowledge of crewel work, the mania of the day, both from the instructions you have received and from your own practice, but I daresay that very few amongst you have ever tried your skill in the white embroidery, or white work, as it was once called. This

style, however, should be quite familiar to young ladies who have any ambition to wear tidy and dainty linen, and more so now when there is such a return of worked muslin gowns, fichus, and collarettes of all kinds.

I will therefore give you a few hints on this branch of stitchery of modern introduction, specially when compared with the long stitch of almost unknown origin. To confine my remarks to the two fundamental varieties, button-hole and satin-stitch, I must first make you observe the *great contrast* between the formal regularity of their direction and the broken, dove-tailed surface offered by the embroidery stitch. This very uniformity of stitch prevents any shading, and to be set off at its best requires the richness of relief. The swelling or undulating appearance is obtained by padding or stuffing. Taking coarser cotton and needle than those intended for embroidery, you commence by running the outline of the flower, leaf, &c. Do not make the stitches too long, for the nicety of curves and angles—indeed of the entire shape—rests on this careful outlining. Proceed to fill in the vacant space by row after row of long loose running stitches, piercing the needle through the merest trifle of the ground in order to leave nearly all the cotton above the surface. Guided by the shape you increase or decrease the rows at will, in such a way that they merge into one another (fig. 1), and form

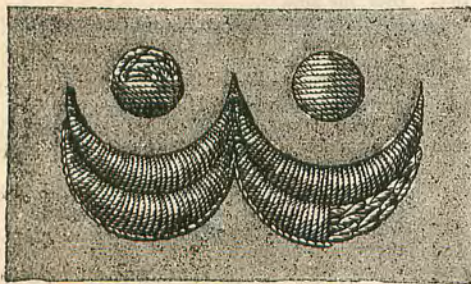


FIG. 1. DOUBLE SCALLOP WITH DOTS.

a soft compact underlay. Quicker modes of padding are resorted to when special rapidity is imperative, but these, like all other makeshifts, require the skill of an adept to manage them satisfactorily. Hence I will simply mention them: stuffing by chain-stitch, herringbone, tacked braid, and loose strands of cotton, guided by the hand whilst working. The chief object of the padding is to give the embroidery a slight convexity or gentle rise to the centre, and as a general rule the stuffing runs in a contrary direction to the

overlying stitches, as will be proved by a glance at our illustrations. So, in fig. 1, the running stitches are horizontal and the *feston* vertical in the spots, the filling is circular, whilst the sewing over crosses it. Again, in the leaf (fig. 7) the padding runs lengthways, and the covering widthways. In the case of delicate scallops the tracing and stuffing reduce themselves to three, two, and even a single line, as seen in fig. 2.

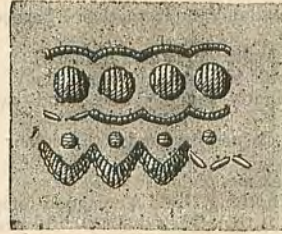


FIG. 2.—VANDYKED BORDER.

These preliminaries well understood and followed, you will have mastered the greatest difficulty and can proceed to the concealment of the underlay either by button-hole or satin stitch. The former is sometimes wrought in a straight line either for ornament or flat seaming so invaluable in patching, in hiding two overlapping edges, or in bringing two edges face to face, thus avoiding ridges or

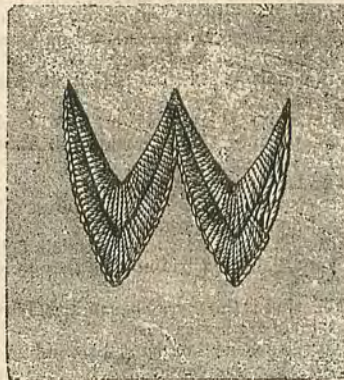


FIG. 3.—WOLF'S TEETH VANDYKE.

imparting a width of a few extra threads. It also shapes entire letters, leaves, and flowers; in the latter case padding is dispensed with. Edging, however, constitutes the real use of the button-hole stitch purposely called in France *feston*, i.e., festoon. The word at once explains itself and brings to your mind scallops, loops, semicircles, &c. The first three illustrations afford good specimens of the diversity in single festoons. Fig. 3, the "wolf's teeth," is decidedly the most difficult of execution on account of its sharp vandyke, which has so much resemblance to the teeth of a wolf.

The crescent-shaped scallop of fig. 1 can easily be drawn out, either with the help of compasses or a coin of the desired size. To make the stitch itself, begin on the left hand at the extreme point, and secure the thread by passing it through the few stitches of the stuffing, for remember no knot is ever allowed in any kind of embroidery, still less in delicate white work. Pass the thread downward and hold it firmly under your left thumb, while you pierce the needle just above the upper outline to slip it underneath, and bring it out just beyond the lower outline, opposite the

thumb, and in the centre of the loop formed by the cotton. With the thumb and forefinger pull the needle straight towards you, gently raise the left-hand thumb and draw the thread to tighten the knot, at the same time inclining it to the left by the little finger. Practice alone will teach you how to turn your work and to regulate the stitches with the perfect evenness indispensable to the task; they must lie against each other, neither too closely nor too far apart, in order not to disclose a single under thread. The outline should be as bold and undeviating as if pencilled by an expert hand. Keep the work well stretched on the fingers of the left hand in such a manner that the embroidery itself rests on the forefinger. When the border is finished, with sharp embroidery scissors shave off the superfluous material, cutting into every crevice yet without snipping any of the stitches. If the work has to go to the wash before being worn I should advise you to leave this cutting out until it has returned from the laundress.

Often very large scallops are prettily pinked out into festoons of all shapes and sizes, some resembling the notches of a cock's comb, others peaked or gradually rounded, like the petals of a rose, &c. In olden times, when *feston* was very much used for the muslin embroidery applied on net, the worker had the trouble of making the picot or purl whilst button-holing; this she did by working round a long horsehair, which served as a mesh. Now industry spares us the most fidgetty details, and ready-made purls are sold by the yard.

I believe these few particulars on the button-hole stitch are all you require, so we will pass at once to the satin stitch, so called from its smooth sheeny surface. The previous remarks on tracing and padding apply equally to this stitch, but here only the darned stuffing, or occasionally the chain-stitched, is admissible. The satin stitch, in its origin, was invariably worked in horizontal lines; later on an exception was made for the petals of the rose, wrought perpendicularly, as shown in fig. 4.

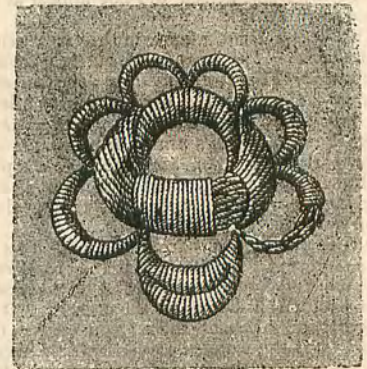


FIG. 4.—VERTICAL SATIN STITCH.

In many cases the two directions are combined, as in fig. 5.

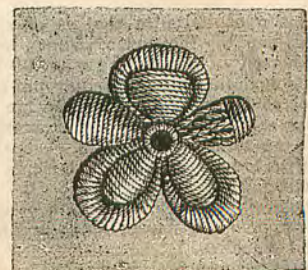


FIG. 5.—STRAIGHT AND HORIZONTAL SATIN STITCH COMBINED.

To execute this flower, pierce the eyelet-hole with a stiletto, and closely overcast it; then darn straight rows of padding and cover them by sewing over, commencing at the widest part and carrying the cotton right round

the two sides of the leaf separately. Outline the veining, pad on each side, and start with the sharp point for a few stitches until you meet the midrib; then cover one side, only working from edge to centre, turn the work and proceed to the opposite side (fig. 9).

in a series of teeth, as exemplified by fig. 11. This jagged edge you have all had the opportunity of noticing in the petals of the blue-bottle and the foliage of the vine, the daisy, and the rose, &c. There is really no rule to give you as to the clear defining of the various dents; your eye will be the best guide for the gradual increase and decrease of the stitch as well as its correct tightness. Here, too, I find the supporting touch of the little finger a great help when drawing out the thread.

To lighten the general effect leaves are often satin-stitched on one side, whilst the other is filled up with straight rows of back-stitch, the notches and midribs having beforehand been outlined by twist stitch (fig. 12).

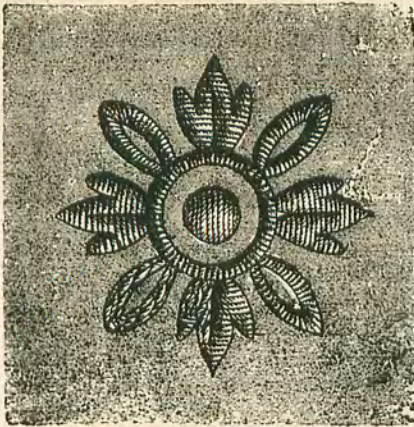


FIG. 6.—EMBROIDERED STAR.

at the back to bring it up again in front. By this means the wrong side will be like the top one, except that the stitches will lie flat. Next shape the oval frames, previously stuffing them in the same way as in fig. 6.

On the underlay I cannot put too much stress, and for this very reason I have taken care that you should have plenty of examples,



FIG. 7.—VEINED LEAF.

which convey more than any descriptions of mine. If nicely done, your embroidery will be softly rounded off, and the leaves, &c., will bear being bent without the stitches showing the least tendency to separate.

The veining of a leaf is generally traced first, but is only marked out by the twist stitch as the finishing touch. See figs. 7 and 8.

In delicate foliage you will find the lightest plan is to merely suggest the midrib by a furrow, produced by working



FIG. 8.—LAUREL LEAF.

proper shaping of the spikes of the leaves; some jut out in triple leaflets as in fig. 6, or

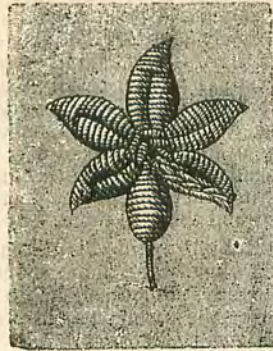


FIG. 9.—SATIN STITCH FLOWER.

It requires some knack to define the centre hollow, which is of frequent occurrence in satin stitch embroidery, not only for veining, but also for vandykes such as figs. 1, 3, 4, and 10.



FIG. 10.—SATIN STITCH TREFOIL.

The stitches must just meet without interfering or encroaching in any way with the opposite one, else the beauty of the line will be spoilt. When scallops are in this way fitted into one another, the outside one is properly padded, while the others, necessarily, are much less so or not at all. Another difficulty of this straight stitch lies in the



FIG. 11.—SATIN STITCH LEAF.



FIG. 12.—SATIN AND BACK STITCH.

But a still lighter and truly artistic ornament would be to cut out this part and fill it up with lace-stitches, a variation which would charmingly enhance the centres of figs. 4, 6, 10, and 13.

Long ago, in my schooldays, crewel stitch was little known, and all the attention was directed to satin stitch, or *plumetis*. My needlework teacher, a dear old maid, would have everything learned systematically, and never swerved from her established rules, which obliged the pupils to conquer each stitch in its own rotation. We first learned the twist or stem-stitch in all its meanderings, then we passed to the straight plain leaves, after this to the spots, next roses and all blossoms, &c., wrought with the perpendicular stitch, and at last the efficient ones were privileged to venture upon the jagged foliage and a few elect pupils on the lace filling. This routine was not completed in one year, I can assure you.

I just perceive that I have spoken very little of the spots. Their direction varies to harmonise with the annexed design.

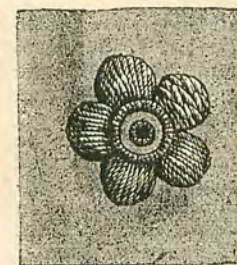


FIG. 13.—EMBOSSED PRIMROSE.

When very small they are termed "beads," or "dots," and need no filling; if very close together you had better not break your cotton at each, but pass from one to the other, not drawing the connecting thread too tight

for fear of puckering the fabric.

Open spots are called eyelets, some being quite round, as I have already mentioned in figs. 5 and 13, and others rather berry-shaped (fig. 14).

These eyelets are button-holed all round, but the wide part alone has any padding, the narrow edge merely being worked over a double outline. To form the hole you slit the material with scissors, four times describing a cross, and with the needle you turn back the

four underpieces, which will eventually disappear beneath the over-sewing. The ribs of the leaves are wrought in satin-stitch, but I will recommend you a much quicker mode, fitly named *point de poste* or railway stitch. For this bring your needle out at the base of the stem, carry it across to the extremity of the rib, slip it underneath, to emerge again at

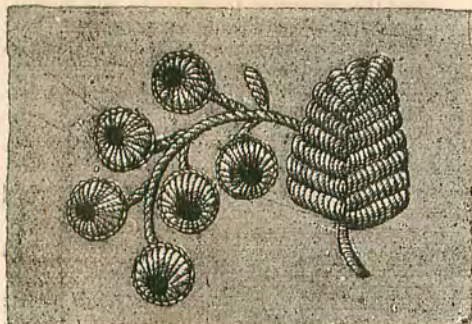


FIG. 14.—EYELETS AND RAILWAY STITCH.

the starting-point, and before you draw it out coil the cotton ten or twelve times round; press the thumb on this, coiling sufficiently to keep it in place, yet not so tightly as to prevent the needle from sliding through; then with thumb and forefinger carefully bring the thread and coil up, along the place of the rib; again prick the needle into the point of this rib, and pull it out a thread above the first starting-point. This time draw needle and thread gently together, and your coil, if well made, will be a very good imitation of the real stitch. The needle is now ready for the second ascending rib.

I hope you will thoroughly practise my instructions, because I intend to give you soon a nice collection of such pretty letters that will at once tempt you to immediately set to work and lavish your elegant stitchery on all your surroundings.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

A STORY OF TWO ENGLISH GIRLS.

By ALICE KING.

CHAPTER VI.

"RUBY, come with me; I want to speak to you," said Mr. Lindhurst to the girl, on the afternoon of that same day in the morning of which she had seen him in the garden.

She was crossing the hall when he spoke to her, on her way out to visit some of her neighbours. It was an unusual thing for him to call her apart in this way, and somehow she could not help, by some quick, sudden instinct, connecting his doing so with what had happened this morning, and as the thought shot across her her cheek flushed and her heart beat with rapid pulses.

The old man, however, did not seem to notice that she was especially disturbed. He was evidently too much occupied with what was going on in his own mind; all the day Ruby, who had silently watched him, had observed that his manner was more absent than usual, and she fancied, too, more gentle. Miss

Nancy, also, would very likely have perceived this, for her keen eyes were always prying into the looks and ways of others, if it had not been that to-day her every faculty had been busy in trying to spy out faults and shortcomings in a new housemaid who had just entered her service. Miss Nancy was always extremely distrustful and suspicious with her servants, and very often, if truth must be told, though she herself would have been very indignant at such an idea, sowed the very seeds of wrong-doing in her dependents by the frequent and open way in which she doubted there being any good thing in them.

"Ruby," said Mr. Lindhurst, when they were alone together in his study, "you often go about among the poor near us, do you not?"

"Yes," she answered, simply, looking up at him with her clear brave eyes, and not quite knowing whether she was going to receive a reprimand or encouragement. It was such a new thing for Mr. Lindhurst to speak to her on such a subject; then, made bolder by a ray of mildness which she thought she saw in his face, she added, "It is what I should like to be able to do a great deal more, and a great deal oftener, but Miss Lindhurst and Ella are so constantly wanting my time for small things in the house, and my time is almost the only thing I have to give."

And she spoke with half a sigh, half a smile.

"My child," he said, and now there was something of diffidence, almost of shyness, in his manner, which, taken in connection with his grey head, had something touching in it for the girl; "my child, would you mind taking help from me to some of those around us who most want it? I have never, hitherto, in my life been what I ought to them, but I should like to begin now."

"Oh! I should be so delighted to have a little money to take them," cried Ruby, her face all one sparkle at such an unexpected proposal.

"Will you?" he said, smiling at her pleasure, a sweeter smile than she had ever thought could dawn on his stern, withered face; "then take this, Ruby, and divide it among those who are worst clothed and most hungry, and when you want more for the same good purpose come to me again."

And he laid some money beside her on the table.

"All that to give away!" she exclaimed, clapping her little hands in the excess of her naive, joyous surprise. "Dear Mr. Lindhurst, what can I say to thank you?"

"Nothing, child, nothing," he answered in a low, rather tremulous tone. "God knows it is late enough in the day to begin well-doing."

"But what will Miss Nancy say?" said Ruby, a sudden cloud coming over both her face and her mind, as a vision of Miss Nancy's cap, with a very wrathful countenance beneath it, rose up before the eyes of her fancy.

"Let Nancy say what she likes, it will make no difference to me," said Mr. Lindhurst, with some return of his usual sternness. Then he added more gently, "Nancy and I have made altogether a great mistake of our whole lives, a great mistake; oh, little Ruby!" and now he laid his hand softly on her shoulder, "and this light, this wakening up, would never have come if you had not entered under our roof; bless you for it, child!"

"But why should my coming here have made such a difference to you?" asked the girl, wondering.

"Child, you must not ask too much," he answered shortly; "perhaps some day you will understand it all." Then he added with a renewed softening of tone, "Ruby, long long ago, when I was very young, I was full of high and generous feelings, and I meant to spend a life of active service towards my Lord above and men below; but there came upon me a sudden, great crushing sorrow, and instead of taking it as a chastening from a Father's hand, I let myself grow hard under it, and wrapped myself round more and more in mere low selfishness. Now, through your being here, I have—" but here he broke off quickly, as if he felt he was saying too much, and only murmured in conclusion, turning away his face from her earnest young eyes, which were fixed upon him with a half-surprised, half-pitying look, "Ruby, I can tell you no more; don't ask it."

"No, I will not," she answered, in her straightforward, girlish way, "and I will never tell Ella or any one a word of what you have now been saying to me; won't that be right?" and she drew closer to him, and her frank eyes looked into his.

"Yes, that is quite right, just what I wish," he answered, in a low tone.

Then he turned away from her again, and went to the window, and fixed his eyes on the far distant hills, as if he were reading there the story of a yet more distant past.

If truth must be told, Ruby's curiosity was a good deal aroused by what he had said. How could her coming to Larcombe Priory possibly have so much affected Mr. Lindhurst, that through it his state of mind and feeling had been changed? What could she have to do with the old man's past life? Like the sensible girl that she was, however, she silenced these questions within her, and picking up the money which still lay on the table, gave her whole thoughts to the delightful employment of settling which of her poor people she should first gladden with a present; it was such a new, sweet luxury for her, the luxury of giving.

"May I go now?" she asked, approaching Matthew a little timidly, for she saw that he was sunk in deep thought, yet with her feet almost dancing to be off on their joyous missions of love and mercy.

The old man started at her voice as though she had called him back from some far-off time and place. Then he said gently,—