



THE APRONS OF TO-DAY.

THE aprons of ten years ago have been greatly changed by a process of embellishment and glorification, and are no longer the same things that they used to be. Those used for special purposes—such as the apron or “overall” of the artist—have been improved and bettered; and even the parlour-maid’s has felt the influence, and has become a handsome and even artistic badge of her employment in domestic service; and, like the cap she wears, the fashions of bygone days have been borrowed from, and the cap and apron of the Puritan, the Huguenot, and the days of early Protestantism, have been adapted to modern household uses. We have followed the same tendency in our clothes; and the Tudor Period is revived in our capes, high sleeves, and high collars, and Venice and old Padua jostle old London at every street corner of the “Modern Babylon.”

The newest shape seems to have a Swiss, or peasant’s belt, added to it, and in some of them this is quite wide at the sides, as well as in front at the points, which may be below only, or both above and below the waist-line. In one of our prettiest examples, *i.e.*, one of silk and lace, the apron is edged with wide lace, and the pointed band is edged too, in imitation of the fashionable manner of trimming bodices.

Another lace-trimmed apron is much draped, having a double box-pleat in front under a pleated point, and the sides are draped to the back, where they are finished with a bow of ribbon and long ends. The draping of the sides in folds is quite like a pannier in style, and makes the apron very graceful. The material may be of silk or zephyr, cambric, soft surah, or pongee silk, or, for harder and rougher wear, of brown holland, sateen, or red Turkey-twill. At the side, the lace is put on in what the French modistes call *flops*, or waterfalls; and the front and back of the bodice portion may be made exactly in the same manner with a folded piece of the material, the top and shoulder-braces being ornamented with lace. If preferred, this may terminate at the shoulder tips, the back being only *bretelles* of ribbon.

Another lace-trimmed apron is of one of the new floral silks, which may be copied in delaine or flowered sateen. The skirt part of the apron is plain, and a little longer than square. The lace is turned up at the bottom upon the apron.



The bib portion is a very simple arrangement of ribbon-velvet edged with lace, passing round the neck, and, crossing in the front, ending on each hip. A bow of ribbon finishes the back.

Another "work apron," as it may be called, is of spotted material edged with lace, and has a wide pocket across the front, which is intended to hold whatsoever work the wearer may be engaged upon. A double gathering, with a heading, finishes the pocket, and a rosette at the side of the waist. The bib in front consists of a three-cornered piece of the material, fastened on each shoulder and ornamented there by a rosette similar to that at the waist.

After the lace-trimmed aprons come those in black silk or sateen, embroidered in black or colours, and more or less ornamented at the edges with battlemented spaces or with *passementerie* and bows of ribbon in various places.

The aprons in which Dame Fashion really has taken a stride in advance are, as I said at first, the large ones adapted for useful purposes. And these become more and more needful every day, as our women and girls take to gardening in all its forms, cooking, photography, type-writing, painting, or any other of the modern methods of earning a living. For games, such as lawn-tennis, the fashion of wearing aprons seems to have gone out in favour of wearing flannels made on purpose for such games; and a very sensible change it is when one thinks of the over-heating insepar-

able from the great exertion of tennis; and this of itself makes "flannels" (by which a girl means the entire frock; as a man means the suit in which he plays cricket) necessary. They are infinitely more becoming than any apron when a pretty and not too "loud" flannel is chosen (if one may be excused for the term), and when the suit itself is well-made and well-fitted, so far as it can be; and it seems better to have a proper costume than an apron only.

We find numbers of the really useful apron of coloured zephyr, holland, or cotton more or less large, edged with braid, with white embroidery, with fine braiding, or with white cotton *passementerie*. They generally have bibs; and whatever is the fashion, they never disappear, for they are too useful and needful to many industrious people, who wear an apron for its use, and like it to be as pretty and becoming as may be consistently with its usefulness.

Amongst aprons that are distinguished for beauty at the present day may be mentioned those called "Russian," and decorated with Russian cross-stitch designs and the pretty white Russian laces with coloured patterns. The material is a kind of coarse *écru* linen, or crash-towelling. The apron is generally of a long square shape, with a plain or pointed band, and edged at the bottom with lace of red or blue designs to match, which we find a pattern in Russian cross-stitch, worked in red and blue cotton above the lace, while

over this comes a row of lace insertion similar to that at the edge of the apron. The design in cross-stitch can often be had ready traced at the shops in London where Russian lace and embroideries are sold. But it is not difficult to do without the tracing, by adopting the Russian method of *laying a strip of canvas* (not Penelope) over the place where the work is to be done, and tacking it down quite evenly. The canvas must be of the old-fashioned kind, with even threads, without the stitches defined. Then the design selected is executed on this; and after the work is finished, the threads are drawn one by one, and the work appears intact and even. The usual size for one of these aprons is twenty-eight inches long by twenty-six wide.

From America comes to me a lovely apron, the origin of which I can plainly trace to early days of colonial governors in the American colonies, or perhaps "plantations," as they were often called when further south. In England they may be seen sometimes in pictures of the reign of Charles II. and even of Queen Anne; but the material of which they were then made was lace of the finest and rarest kind, and cambric or linen-lawn, which hailed perhaps from Flanders or the Low Countries. Those were the days when the apron was a part of the attire of the greatest ladies, and covered silk or satin, and even added a quaint grace of their very own to them. It was a fit emblem of those days, too, when every lady of high degree





FROM AMERICA.

shared in the work of her household, made cakes with her own hands, prided herself on her confections, and cherished many a recipe of ancient lineage, preserving them a dead secret even from her own daughters.

The American representative of to-day is not made of such lordly materials, but it is charmingly pretty for all that. It has an old-world air likewise about it, and a breath of quaintness and dainty antiquity. The material is a fine linen-cambic, and the ornamentation is of crochet, so fine and web-like that it must have taken ages to work it; and it will outlast and outlive, in its delicate strength, the industrious hands that wove its slender threads. The patterns of the crochet lace and insertion, much enlarged, are given here, and a sketch of the apron. The crochet thread used, and also the needle, are the finest possible, and the depth of the insertion and of the lace are the same—perhaps four or five inches each. These aprons are worn in the afternoons at tea, I hear, and they are much admired, and valued for their old-time appearance and quaint grace.

FIG. 1.—This pattern is worked on the back thread of the stitch.

Make a chain of 41 stitches; turn back.

1st Row—Work 6 long stitches, beginning on the sixth chain stitch. * 5 chain, miss 5; 1 long in the sixth chain; repeat from * 4 times.

2nd Row—5 chain; 1 single crochet in centre of space made by five chain; 1 long on

long stitch, * 3 chain; 1 single crochet into next space; 1 long on next long; repeat from * 3 times. 6 long on six long of last row; 2 chain, miss 2, 1 long into the third chain stitch.

3rd Row—the same as first row; but at the end make 11 chain; turn.

4th Row—1 long in the eighth stitch of 11 chain; 3 chain; 1 long in the last long of former row.

Work now according to the illustration, increasing every other row, as explained in the 4th row, until the 9th row, at the end of which only make 5 chain instead of 11; 1 long stitch on former row. After this, decrease every other row until the scallop is completed.

The picot edge is formed of 4 chain: 1 double in space, 2 picots in the first space, 1 double crochet in second space, 2 picots in third, 1 double in fourth space, 3 picots in fifth space, 1 double in sixth space, 1 double crochet in seventh space, 3 picots in eighth space, 1 double in ninth space, 1 double in tenth space, 3 picots in eleventh space, 1 double in twelfth space, 3 picots in thirteenth space, which is the centre of scallop.

FIG. 2.—CROCHET INSERTION—The insertion to match the above is worked exactly in same manner, and is commenced with sixty chain stitches.

The newest departure in the way of a useful apron is that called the "New Academy," invented and designed by a well-known firm in town for artists, literary ladies, or domestic purposes. It is really an overall with sleeves, and a yoked bodice, covering the dress entirely in the front, and making the wearer look immensely business-like. It is made in silk, zephyr, and holland, and would not only save a good gown, but would confer a still greater favour by completely covering up an extremely ancient one, and thus turning a shabby person into a smart and charmingly arrayed gentlewoman.

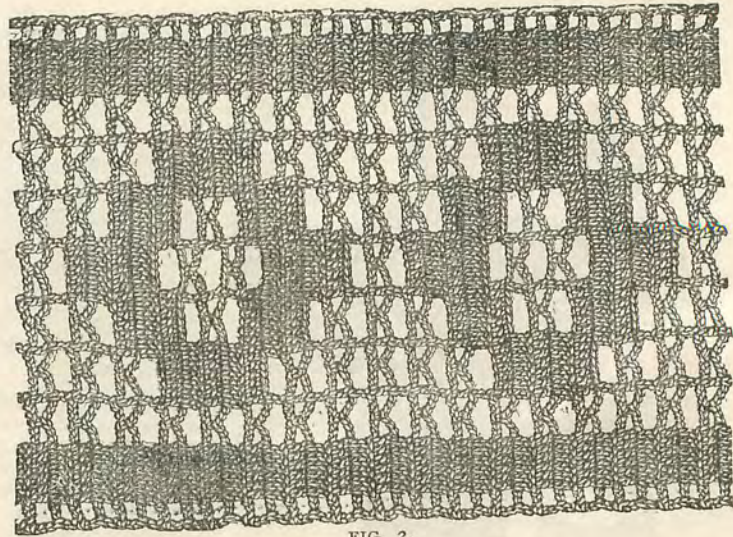


FIG. 2.

VARIETIES.

MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals or forts.
—Browning.

THREE FRIENDS.

A man had three friends—one he loved intensely, the second he loved in a less degree, and the third he scarcely noticed. It came upon him suddenly that he must die and face

the King. He was seized with terror, for he knew he would stand before Him laden with sin. He knew not what to do; some one he must get to plead for him and vindicate him. He thought of the friend he had so loved, and begged him to accompany him and plead for him; but he declined emphatically. He went to the second friend and entreated him earnestly. I cannot, he said, appear before the King without His summons, but I will accompany you to His palace gate. He went to the third and stated his petition. To his astonishment he complied with it, went with him, spoke for him, vindicated him and cleared him. His first and best-loved friend was his

wealth, which could not go with him; the second was his wife and children, who could follow him only to the grave; the third, who went with him and pleaded for him, were the good deeds he had done in his life.

A RIDDLE.

A Scripture character without a name,
Who died a death none ever died before;
Whose body to corruption never came,
Part of whose shroud's in every household store.

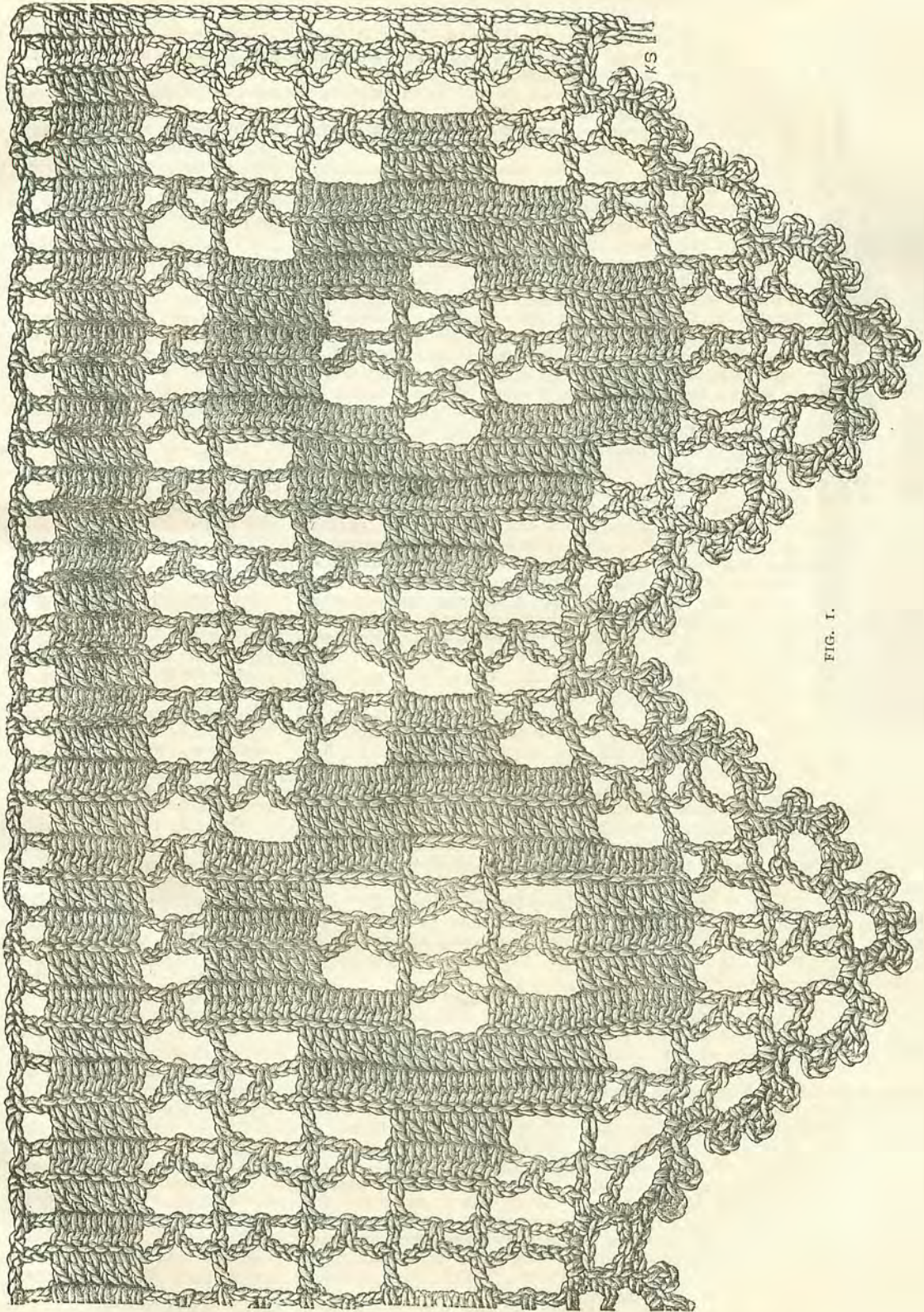


FIG. 1.