

ANTIQUE EMBROIDERIES.

FOR years past all the available hunting-grounds in the Old World have been ransacked to provide art treasures for the markets of London,

figures in it afford a faithful record of the costumes and coiffures of the period.

Turning to the productions of other countries, we have a striking proof of the supereminence of the art of architecture—as the standard and motive principle of all the other arts—that this feature, as in Italian work of the fifteenth century, is the first to exhibit tokens of the Renaissance, before they appear elsewhere, and while as yet in the drawing of figures and details of costume, etc., there is no sign of change. Thus one may notice a curious incongruity in the work of this period. To take a well-known instance, one finds paintings, like that of Crivelli's throned Madonna and Child in the Lateran Gallery at Rome, with faces and hands, and draperies in brocaded folds, recalling the fashion of Van Eyck; while, in place of the Gothic environment which a con-



PORTION OF ALTAR FRONTAL. (SPANISH, SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

temporary Northman would infallibly have given them, the entire architectural surroundings and the swag of fruit that festoons the arch above, proclaim the unmistakable revival of classic taste. What is true of painting is true also of embroidery. In the orphreys of Italian and Spanish copes, for example, Paris, and other principal cities. The store is not yet exhausted, although the agents of the firms which sell such works of art have to go further afield into more out-of-the-way places than heretofore in search of what they require. Messrs. Waring and Co. draw their supplies mainly from Italy and Spain, and it is of such origin, consequently, that the majority of the embroideries in their exhibition bear the mark. Not but what one may find among them occasional specimens of old English work, like that, for instance, which is commonly associated with the Caroline nuns of Little Gidding—stump embroidery, as it is called, from the fact of its being worked over a solid padding. It is rather quaint than artistic, lacking as it does the quality of organic ornament; and, with its butterflies and other insects, whose wings fold up and down, with its snails, caterpillars, and so on, it very often descends to the triviality of a mere toy. It is, however, not without historic interest, and, if nothing else, the

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APPLIQUÉ EMBROIDERY. (SPANISH, SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

the figures of saints retain their Gothic character for awhile, until architecture has gone so far in the opposite direction that they are unable to hold out any longer, and are compelled, so to speak, to take

Christendom, not yet wholly exterminated, lingers yet in unsuspected quarters and manages to impart a certain ancient quality of crispness of draughtsmanship and organic design which are altogether



EMBROIDERED ALTAR-FRONTAL. (ITALIAN)

their cue from the master art and follow in its train. The transitional stage, wherein the two opposing elements of Gothic and Renaissance combine without blending, is of remarkable interest; and even later,

lacking in the work of the fully matured Renaissance.

A further element to be noted in some Italian and even Spanish flat ornament of the sixteenth



PORTION OF ORPHREY. (SPANISH, SIXTEENTH CENTURY)



PORTION OF EMBROIDERED DALMATIĆ. (SPANISH, SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

when Italian influence has overpowered and expelled its rival from the field, it is instructive to observe how the vigorous life of the traditional art of

century is an obvious strain of Orientalism. Thus an altar-frontal at Messrs. Waring's, with panels of cream-coloured satin framed in red, presents a

conventional design in gold, founded, beyond a doubt, upon some Persian model. A dalmatic and foliage, with parrots introduced into the composition. The sweep of the curving sprays and the general



PORTION OF ITALIAN RENAISSANCE BORDER.

tunic—the chasuble, stoles, and maniples belonging to the set are missing—of crimson velvet are diapered all over in a most effective manner with a simple unit formed of an embroidered star of wheeling rays. Other vestments are of cloth of gold damask, parts of the pattern being emphasised in terry of silver thread. Another piece of work, an altar-frontal of cloth of silver, besides having an elaborate centre and four splendid corner ornaments, sprays of roses and other flowers worked alternately in rose-colour and blue, with raised silver edges to the petals, and with birds in the branches, is divided, like the previously mentioned altar covering, with bands of rich embroidery, too close and intricate for reproduction. Yet another frontal, this of the seventeenth century, is a magnificent design of

filling of the ground is admirable, not less for execution than for draughtsmanship. Other embroidery not dissimilar in character from the last-named, is ornamented, moreover, with heraldic escutcheons, and has all kinds of animals, real and fantastic, forming part of the ornament.

As to stitches, a very great variety is to be noticed, from raised gold and couching, in which the pattern is formed by the different colours, the finest silk wound tightly round and round the gold thread, to silk embroidery in feather stitch, chain stitch, tent stitch, and tapestry stitches of many kinds, as well as laid work and appliqué. In short, here is plenty of embroidery to admire and to study, not for the purpose of slavish imitation, but rather for furnishing inspiration



PORTION OF ALTAR-FRONTAL. (SPANISH, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)

for fresh development in the future of the art.