

Church Embroidery.

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Chapter 1.—Introduction.

The meaning of the term ecclesiastical or church embroidery is very vague to the majority of people, and even women who use their needle in decorative work to some extent, seem to feel that church embroidery is a very special and different sort of thing from every other kind of embroidery. The fact is that church embroidery is not different from embroidery in general except in degree of elaborateness and in design and especial application.

The application of embroidery in Europe is, and in the centuries of ancient days was, twofold. It was done either under the inspiration and patronage of religious worship or of hero worship. It may be said to have been either religious or regal. It is modern embroidery alone which can be considered truly "domestic needlework," but all these applications are like the saying—relating to another matter, however—in the first place embroidery, in the second place embroidery, and in the third place—*embroidery*.

There is far more distinction between the embroidery of different countries and periods than there is between these three applications. The one is indeed a difference in kind, the other in degree only. Probably all the stitches ever invented have been used in church embroidery, and without doubt may have been invented for church embroidery, and have afterwards been applied on fabrics intended for other use. There is no such thing as an especial church embroidery, except as embroidery is applied to church uses. That which is essentially churchly is the design, and as the church has been the most lavish patron of the art, designs and adaptations of methods have been fully developed and wrought out along this line.

Moreover, the ecclesiastical symbols furnish the widest scope for both designers and needleworkers, and the leisure of the old convent life was most conducive to the work which requires time and patience.

The church, as it has been the most extravagant patron of embroidery is, as would naturally follow, the chief possessor of the glorious achievements of the art. The antique church embroideries are the repositories of the art of needlework, so that if all fabrics wrought for secular purposes were destroyed, nothing of the actual knowledge or practice of embroidery need be considered gone.

Ecclesiastical embroidery may then be said to embrace all embroidery rather than to be a branch of needlework. While this wide view of the subject may be taken on the one hand, on the other the requirements of this work are very exacting and prescribed. The materials must be of the richest sort, and the work most careful and complete. No "half work," or so-called effective embroidery is permissible here. It must be all it seems to be, and must seem to be all it is. One who undertakes embroidery on church pieces should know how

EXPERIENCED EMBROIDERERS USE ONLY B. & A. WASH SILKS.