

depicted on Assyrian and Egyptian sculptures, probably ages before she began her rather protracted task of weaving a shroud for her father-in-law.

But, briefly, the periods of the craft which have most interest for us, date from the time when the Phrygians worked gorgeous vestments for the Romans; from them all embroidery was called Phrygium, and an embroiderer, Phrygis; when the work was in gold, it was called "Auri-phrygium," hence our word "orphreys."

From Italy the art spread all over Europe, reaching its best in England in the 15th century. The *Opus Anglicanum* became very famous, and much of it is now to be found all over the continent of Europe, partly from much of it having been sent over for safety at the Reformation; so that, alas! very few specimens are now to be found in its ancient home. The finest and almost perfect piece known is the Syon Cope, now in the South Kensington Museum.

The beautiful Dunstable Pall, and that one belonging to the Fishmongers' Company, are grand examples of what is called the *Opus Plumarium*, or feather stitch; a stitch so old that it is thought that it was used in the hangings of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

After this period, the decline was very rapid, degenerating about the reign of James I., into that style of which so many specimens are to be met with in old collections; chiefly caskets and boxes, adorned with ambitious subjects, scriptural and historical—the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, perhaps—the figures stuffed into high relief, with wool or cotton, dressed scrupulously in the costume of the existing period, with wigs worked in silver purl, or a wonderful knotted stitch—infinite trouble and ingenuity wasted on the exquisite lace stitches on their ruffles, on all the minutiae of the foregrounds the whole effect

childish and grotesque beyond words. If this had happened at the beginning of English art, instead of at the end, it would have been amusing to look at now; but as it is, one finds it rather depressing, as no continental art has ever sunk so low.

Then followed tambour work, in imitation of Indian chintzes; and then we lost a glorious opportunity of reviving and bringing a fresh element into our art. The East Indian Company was just formed, the Indian trade was all our own, and we might have brought over skilled embroiderers from India, and founded an Indo-English school of decoration, which might have surpassed anything ever known. But a cruel and mistaken policy, instigated chiefly, it is thought, by the jealousy of the Broderers' Company, not only forbade this, but shut out from England all embroidered stuffs from India, of any kind whatever. Acting on a very different policy, the Portuguese used to send out their own silks and satins, to be embroidered at Goa; hence the treasures of oriental needle-work now to be found in Spain and Portugal. By this action on the part of the British Government the death blow seemed to be given to our art in England, and the final downfall was soon followed by the advent of the Berlin wool pattern, which, as we know, had pretty much, though not altogether, its own way for the best part of a century. During that time, efforts were made at intervals in a higher direction, with only limited success. Early in the reign of George III., a school was started at Aylesbury, by a Mrs. Pawsey, for teaching ladies to embroider in crewels and silk, and very beautiful work was done, rather in the French style. Groups of the school, and baskets of flowers, most artistic in design and execution, in crewels touched up with silk, are to be found in many country houses. A magnificent purple satin bed, embroidered for Queen Charlotte, by Mrs. Paw-