

Then comes in the episode of the Moravian school at Bethlehem, which brought into practice something which was not like the crewel work,—an inherited art, going down from English mother to Puritan daughter,—but an imported or transplanted method brought over by women trained in the schools and religious foundations of Germany.

This transplantation was the result of a missionary offshoot from the original congregation of Herrnhut, Germany, which formed a colony in Pennsylvania in 1728, called Bethlehem. The colony consisted of three hundred souls, including thirty-six single brothers and thirty-five single sisters.

Among other good deeds they founded in 1748, a boarding school for boys, and a corresponding one for girls, which seems to have become a favorite one for the daughters of the colonists. It was in the latter that one of the most elaborate methods of embroidery then practiced in the world was taught.

"Tambour and fine needlework" were among the extras of the school, and were charged for at the rate of "seventeen shillings and six pence, Pennsylvania currency." But it was not alone "Tambour and fine needlework," as we shall see later, that was taught by the Moravian sisters, but "ribbon work," "crape work," and a method of picture production upon satin which must have been derived from certain forms of ecclesiastical work. Probably the Protestant influence of the period discouraging the devotional use of this embroidery, it was turned into the channel of portraiture and pictorial history.

Whatever its origin, this work was evidently most popular. It was generally wrought upon the thickest of white satin, and sometimes supplemented with water-color painting in the hands and faces of the figure subjects, although these were often most skillfully worked. Nothing finer or more exquisite in detail or finish has ever been produced in the history of the art of the needle than these embroidered pictures.

The subjects were very varied,—“mourning pieces,” consisting of a woman's figure weeping beside a marble tomb, shaded by a sympathetic weeping willow, were the most common. Scripture subjects were not however neglected, and family happenings were often permanently and quaintly recorded in this domestic method of Art.

In a collection of early needlework in a New York exhibition was a most interesting series of these embroidered pictures, belonging in an old Long Island family. It was the history of an elopement which took place in the family, and the different persons or participators in the performance were most carefully drawn and excellently well embroidered.

These pictures, however important as performances, were not the most common form of needlework taught by the sisters. The visitors, brought by the several attractions of situation,—remoteness from warlike and political disturbances, and the relationship of so many young girl lives, as well as by the interest attaching to the school and community,—made a constant demand for souvenirs in the shape of small articles of use or luxury, decorated with the skillful needlework characteristic of the school. Many of these were pocket books, pincushions, bags, etc., most of them having a bunch, or wreath, or cluster, of flowers on one side wonderfully wrought in silken