

was done with pure thread or narrow strips of beaten gold, for embroideries worthy of historical mention must have been of the costliest description. It is fortunate for our study of the early history of embroidery, that it has always been one of the valued arts of the world, and that in the days when banks and stocks and bonds were unknown, and riches or wealth in the concrete confined to the treasure chest, rare and fine specimens of needlework represented riches and were cherished accordingly. They belonged to royal treasuries and were kept as a part of the nation's wealth.

As time went on they passed into private collections and public museums, and so it has come to pass that we of to-day study them at our leisure. We can see in them not only the methods of the past, but can read in their fashions and designs the very history of those who wrought them.

All along the ages, even down to the days of our own lives, the histories of peoples have been written in their needlework. How they lived, what they liked, what they possessed, what they could do,—we may know it all if we study the needlework of the different periods of the world, and divine its uses or adaptations.

The history of the conquest of England, told in crewels upon linen by the wife of William the Conqueror, was a conscious effort of record, but it is no more simple in its reading than the far more beautiful pieces which have wrapped the bodies of far more ancient kings and have been recovered from tombs which were old when the Norman and the Saxon warred together for the possession of England.

As we follow down the ages we shall see that embroidery was always a royal art among royal arts; and if in these later years it has been disrowned and like many a human royal family come to live quietly among the less distinguished arts of the present, it still retains a power to charm and tranquilize, and remains a gift of expression to many otherwise silent souls.

A careful history of the progress and accomplishments of the art could hardly be given within the compass of a few pages, but a short retrospective view invests it with a certain rightful dignity, as it stands upon the threshold of our modern days and descends to our modern uses.

As I have said, each country and each period writes its history in the handwork of its time. Even in this latest and newest of nations of which we are a part, we find in the samplers and early crewel work of New England an unconscious but veritable record of their first years of effort and existence. The Puritan faith and Puritan character are set forth in the texts and precepts worked by Puritan babes of six years old and under, on the lines of their samplers. The home-production and isolation of the early years of the colonies are told in hangings which their descendants still cherish, worked upon their own homespun linent with woolen yarns spun and dyed from the wool of their own sheep.

The story of growing commerce is told in the Eastern crewels with which the Puritan matrons later on copied designs from Eastern chintzes brought to Boston by India merchantmen. Later still came the India "sprigged muslins" and embroidered caps and capes which the wife of the prosperous colonist embroidered with cotton flosses upon linen cambric for herself and her babies.