

The background of the image is a highly detailed and ornate piece of needlework, likely a tapestry or embroidery. It features a central shield with a dark blue field containing three gold fleur-de-lis. The shield is surrounded by intricate gold and red floral and scrollwork patterns. Above the shield, there are more decorative elements, including what appears to be a crown or a similar ornate structure. The overall style is reminiscent of 19th-century decorative arts.

***SUTHERLAND
ACTIVE 1840-
1883 MENZIES***

***THE ART
OF NEEDLE-
WORK, FROM
THE EARLIEST
AGES, 3RD ED***

Sutherland active 1840-1883 Menzies

The Art of Needle-work, from the Earliest Ages, 3rd ed

**Including Some Notices of the Ancient Historical
Tapestries**

EAN 8596547327004

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PREFACE.

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If there be one mechanical art of more universal application than all others, and therefore of more universal interest, it is that which is practised with the NEEDLE. From the stateliest denizen of the proudest palace, to the humblest dweller in the poorest cottage, all more or less ply the busy needle; from the crying infant of a span long and an hour's life, to the silent tenant of "the narrow house," all need its practical services.

Yet have the NEEDLE and its beautiful and useful creations hitherto remained without their due meed of praise and record, either in sober prose or sounding rhyme,—while their glittering antithesis, the scathing and destroying sword, has been the theme of admiring and exulting record, without limit and without end!

The progress of real civilization is rapidly putting an end to this false *prestige* in favour of the "Destructive" weapon, and as rapidly raising the "Conservative" one in public estimation; and the time seems at length arrived when that triumph of female ingenuity and industry, "THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK" may be treated as a fitting subject of historical and social record—fitting at least for a female hand.

The chief aim of this volume is that of affording a comprehensive record of the most noticeable facts, and an entertaining and instructive gathering together of the most curious and pleasing associations, connected with "THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK," from the earliest ages to the present day; avoiding entirely the dry technicalities of the art, yet

furnishing an acceptable accessory to every work-table—a fitting tenant of every boudoir.

The Authoress thinks thus much necessary in explanation of the objects of a work on what may be called a maiden topic, and she trusts that that leniency in criticism which is usually accorded to the adventurer on an unexplored track will not be withheld from her.

THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK.

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INTRODUCTION.

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“Le donne son venute in eccellenza
Di ciascun’arte, ove hanno posto cura;
E qualunque all’istorie abbia avvertenza,
Ne sente ancor la fama non oscura.

* * *

E forse ascosi han lor debiti onori
L’invidia, o il non saper degli scrittori.”

ARIOSTO.

In all ages woman may lament the ungallant silence of the historian. His pen is the record of sterner actions than are usually the vocation of the gentler sex, and it is only when fair individuals have been by extraneous circumstances thrown out, as it were, on the canvas of human affairs—when they have been forced into a publicity little consistent with their natural sphere—that they have become his theme. Consequently those domestic virtues which are woman’s greatest pride, those retiring characteristics which are her most becoming ornament, those gentle occupations which are her best employment, find no record on pages whose chief aim and end is the blazoning of manly heroism, of royal disputations, or of trumpet-stirring records. And if this is the case even with historians of enlightened times, who have the gallantry to allow woman to be a component part of creation, we can hardly wonder that in darker days she should be utterly and entirely overlooked.

Mohammed asserted that women had no souls; and moreover, that, setting aside the “diviner part,” there had only existed *four* of whom the mundane qualifications entitled them to any degree of approbation. Before him, Aristotle had asserted that Nature only formed women when and because she found that the imperfection of matter did not permit her to carry on the world without them.

This complimentary doctrine has not wanted supporters. “Des hommes très sages ont écrit que la Nature, dont l’intention et le dessein est toujours de tendre à la perfection, ne produirait s’il était possible, jamais que des hommes, et que quand il naît une femme c’est un monstre dans l’ordre de ses productions, né expressément contre sa volonté: ils ajoutent, que, comme on voit naître un homme aveugle, boiteux, ou avec quelqu’autre défaut nature; et comme on voit à certains arbres des fruits qui ne mûrissent jamais; ainsi l’on peut dire que la femme est un animal produit par accident et par le hasard.”[\[1\]](#)

Without touching upon this extreme assertion that woman is but “un monstre,” an animal produced by chance, we may observe briefly, that women have ever, with some few exceptions,[\[2\]](#) been considered as a degraded and humiliated race, until the promulgation of the Christian religion elevated them in society: and that this distinction still exists is evident from the difference at this moment exhibited between the countries professing Mohammedanism and those professing Christianity.

Still, though in our happy country it is now pretty generally allowed that women are “des créatures humaines,” it is no new remark that they are comparatively

lightly thought of by the “nobler” gender. This is absolutely the case even in those countries where civilization and refinement have elevated the sex to a higher grade in society than they ever before reached. Women are courted, flattered, caressed, extolled; but still the difference is there, and the “lords of the creation” take care that it shall be understood. Their own pursuits—public, are the theme of the historian—private, of the biographer; nay, the every-day circumstances of life—their dinners—their speeches—their toasts—and their *post cœnam* eloquence, are noted down for immortality: whilst a woman with as much sense, with more eloquence, with lofty principles, enthusiastic feelings, and pure conduct—with sterling virtue to command respect, and the self-denying conduct of a martyr—steals noiselessly through her appointed path in life; and if she excite a passing comment during her pilgrimage, is quickly lost in oblivion when that pilgrimage hath reached its appointed goal.

And this is but as it should be. Woe to that nation whose women, as a habit, as a custom, as a matter of course, seek to intrude on the attributes of the other sex, and in a vain, a foolish, and surely a most unsuccessful pursuit of publicity, or power, or fame, forget the distinguishing, the high, the noble, the lofty, the pure and *unearthly* vocation of their sex. Every earthly charity, every unearthly virtue, are the legitimate object of woman’s pursuit. It is hers to soothe pain, to alleviate suffering, to soften discord, to solace the time-worn spirit on earth, to train the youthful one for heaven. Such is woman’s magnificent vocation; and in the peaceful discharge of such duties as these she may be

content to steal noiselessly on to her appointed bourne, “the world forgetting, by the world forgot.”

But these splendid results are not the effect of great exertions—of sudden, and uncertain, and enthusiastic efforts. They are the effect of a course, of a system of minor actions and of occupations, *individually* insignificant in their appearance, and noiseless in their approach. They are like “the gentle dew from heaven” in their silent unnoted progress, and, like that, are known only by their blessed results.

They involve a routine of minor duties which often appear, at first view, little if at all connected with such mighty ends. But such an inference would lead to a false conclusion. It is entirely of insignificant details that the sum of human life is made up; and any one of those details, how insignificant soever *apparently* in itself, as a link in the chain of human life is of *definite* relative value. The preparing of a spoonful of gruel may seem a very insignificant matter; yet who that stands by the sick-bed of one near and dear to him, and sees the fevered palate relieved, the exhausted frame refreshed by it, but will bless the hand that made it? It is not the independent intrinsic worth of each isolated action of woman which stamps its value—it is their bearing and effect on the mass. It is the daily and hourly accumulation of minute particles which form the vast amount.

And if we look for that feminine employment which adds most absolutely to the comforts and the elegancies of life, to what other shall we refer than to NEEDLEWORK? The hemming of a pocket-handkerchief is a trivial thing in itself,

yet it is a branch of an art which furnishes a useful, a graceful, and an agreeable occupation to one-half of the human race, and adds very materially to the comforts of the other half.

How sings our own especial Bard?—

“So long as garments shall be made or worne;
So long as hemp, or flax, or sheep shall bear
Their linnen wollen fleeces yeare by yeare;
So long as silkwormes, with exhausted spoile
Of their own entrailles, for mans gaine shall
toyle:
Yea, till the world be quite dissolv'd and past,
So long, at least, the NEEDLE'S use shall last.”

'Tis true, indeed, that as far as *necessity*, rigidly speaking, is concerned, a very small portion of needlework would suffice; but it is also true that the very signification of the word necessity is lost, buried amidst the accumulations of ages. We talk habitually of *mere necessities*, but the fact is, that we have hardly an idea of what merely necessities are.

St. Paul, the hermit, when abiding in the wilderness, might be reduced to necessities; and in that noble and exalted instance of high principle referred to by Mr. Wesley, [3] where a person unknown to others, seeking no praise, and looking to no reward but the applaudings of his own conscience, bought a pennyworth of parsnips weekly, and on them, and them alone, with the water in which they were boiled, lived, that he might save money to pay his debts.— Surely a man of such incorruptible integrity as this would

spend nothing intentionally in superfluties of dress—and yet, mark how many he would have. His shirt would be “curiously wrought,” his neckcloth neatly hemmed; his coat and waistcoat and trousers would have undergone the usual mysteries of shaping and seaming; his hat would be neatly bound round the edge; his stockings woven or knitted; his shoes soled and stitched and tied; neither must we debar him a pocket-handkerchief and a pair of gloves. And see what this man—as great, nay, a greater anchorite in his way than St. Paul, for he had the world and its temptations all around, while the saint had fled from both—yet see what *he* thought absolutely requisite in lieu of the sheepskin which was St. Paul’s wardrobe. See what was required “to cover and keep warm” in the eighteenth century,—nay, not even to “keep warm,” for we did not allow either great-coat or comforter. See then what was required merely to “cover,” and then say whether the art of needlework is a trivial one.

Could we, as in days of yore, when sylphs and fairies deigned to mingle with mortals, and shed their gracious influence on the scenes and actions of every-day life—could we, by some potent spell or by some fitting oblation, propitiate the Genius of Needlework, induce her to descend from her hidden shrine, and indulge her votaries with a glimpse of her radiant SELF—what a host of varied reminiscences would that glimpse conjure up in our minds, as—

“—guided by historic truth,
We *trod* the long extent of backward time!”

SHE was twin born with necessity, the first necessity the world had ever known, but she quickly left this stern and unattractive companion, and followed many leaders in her wide and varied range. She became the handmaiden of Fancy; she adorned the train of Magnificence; she waited upon Pomp; she decorated Religion; she obeyed Charity; she served Utility; she aided Pleasure; she pranked out Fun; and she mingled with all and every circumstance of life.

Many changes and chances has it been her lot to behold. At one time honoured and courted, she was the acknowledged and cherished guest of the royal and noble. Then in gorgeous drapery, begemmed with brilliants, bedropped with gold, she reigned supreme in hall and palace; or in silken tissue girt she adorned the high-born maiden's bower what time the "deeds of knighthood" were "in solemn canto" told. In still more rich array, in kingly purple, in regal tissue, in royal magnificence, she stood within the altar's sacred pale; and her robes, rich in Tyrian dye, and glittering with Ophir's gold, swept the hallowed pavement. When battle aroused the land she inspirited the host. When the banner was unfurled she pointed to the device which sent its message home to every heart; she displayed the cipher on the hero's pennon which nerved him sooner to relinquish life than it; she entwined those initials in the scarf, the sight of which struck fresh ardour into his breast.

But she fell into disrepute, and was rejected from the halls of the noble. Still was she ever busy, ever occupied, and not only were her services freely given to all who required them, but given with such winning grace that she

required but to be once known to be ever loved—so exquisitely did she adapt herself to the peculiarities of all.

With flowing ringlets and silken robe, carolling gaily as she worked, you would see her pinking the ruffles of the Cavalier, and ever and anon adding to their piquancy by some new and dainty device: then you would behold her with smoothly plaited hair, and sad-coloured garment of serge, and looks like a November day, hemming the bands of a Roundhead, and withal adding numerous layers of starch. With grave and sedate aspect she would shape and sew the uncomely raiment of a Genevan divine; with neat-handed alacrity she would prepare the grave and becoming garments of the Anglican Church, though perhaps a gentle sigh would escape, a sigh of regret for the stately and glowing vestments of old: for they did honour to the house of God, not because they were stately and glowing, but because they were offerings of *our best*.

In all the sweet charities of domestic life she has ever been a participant. Often and again has she fled the splendid court, the glittering ball-room, and taken her station at the quiet hearth of the gentle and home-loving matron. She has lightened the weariness of many a solitary vigil, and she has heightened the enjoyment of many a social gossip.

Nor even while courted and caressed in courts and palaces did Needlework absent herself from the habitations of the poor. Oh no, she was their familiar friend, the daily and hourly companion of their firesides. And when she experienced, as all do experience, the fickleness of court favour, she was cherished and sheltered there. And there

she remained, happy in her utility, till again summoned by royal mandate to resume her station near the throne. The illustrious and excellent lady who lately filled the British throne, and who reigned still more surely in the hearts of Englishwomen, and who has most graciously permitted us to place her honoured name on these pages, allured Needlework from her long seclusion, and reinstated her in her once familiar place among the great and noble.

Fair reader! you see that this gentle dame NEEDLEWORK is of ancient lineage, of high descent, of courtly habits: will you not permit me to make you somewhat better acquainted? Pray travel onward with me to her shrine. The way is not toilsome, nor is the track rugged; but,

“Where the silver fountains wander,
Where the golden streams meander,”

amid the sunny meads and flower-bestrewn paths of fancy and taste—there will she beguile us. Do not then, pray do not, forsake me.

Footnote

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[1] On aurait de la peine à se persuader qu’une pareille opinion eût été mise gravement en question dans un concile, et qu’on n’eût décidé en faveur des femmes qu’après un assez long examen. Cependant le fait est très véritable, et ce fut dans le Concile de Macon.

Problème sur les Femmes, où l’on essaye de prouver que les femmes ne sont point des créatures humaines.—*Amsterdam, 1744.*

[2] As, for instance, the ancient Germans, and their offshoots, the Saxons, &c.

[3] Southey's Life; vol. ii.



CHAPTER II.

EARLY NEEDLEWORK.

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“The use of sewing is exceeding old,
As in the sacred text it is enrold:
Our parents first in Paradise began.”

JOHN TAYLOR.

“The rose was in rich bloom on Sharon’s plain,
When a young mother, with her first-born,
thence

Went up to Sion; for the boy was vow’d
Unto the Temple service. By the hand
She led him; and her silent soul the while,
Oft as the dewy laughter of his eye
Met her sweet serious glance, rejoic’d to think
That aught so pure, so beautiful, was hers,
To bring before her God.”

HEMANS.

In speaking of the origin of needlework it will be necessary to define accurately what we mean by the term “needlework;” or else, when we assert that Eve was the first sempstress, we may be taken to task by some critical antiquarian, because we may not be able precisely to prove that the frail and beautiful mother of mankind made use of a little weapon of polished steel, finely pointed at one end and bored at the other, and “warranted not to cut in the

eye.” Assuredly we do not mean to assert that she did use such an instrument; most probably—we would *almost* venture to say most *certainly*—she did not. But then again the cynical critic would attack us:—“You say that Eve was the first professor of *needlework*, and yet you disclaim the use of a needle for her.”

No, good sir, we do not. Like other profound investigators and original commentators, we do not annihilate one hypothesis ere we are prepared with another, “ready cut and dried,” to rise, like any fabled phoenix, on the ashes of its predecessor. It is not long since we were edified by a conversation which we heard, or rather overheard, between two sexagenarians—both well versed in antiquarian lore, and neither of them deficient in antiquarian tenacity of opinion—respecting some theory which one of them wanted to establish about some aborigines. The concluding remark of the conversation—and we opined that it might as well have formed the commencement—was—

“If you want to lay down *facts*, you must follow history; if you want to establish a system, it is quite easy to place the people where you like.”

So, if I wished to “establish a system,” I could easily make Eve work with a “superfine drill-eyed needle:” but this is not my object.

It seems most probable that Eve’s first needle was a thorn:

“Before man’s fall the rose was born,
St. Ambrose sayes, without the thorn;
But, for man’s fault, then was the thorn,
Without the fragrant rosebud, born.”

Why thorns should spring up at the precise moment of the fall is difficult to account for in a world where everything has its use, except we suppose that they were meant for needles: and general analogy leads us to this conclusion; for in almost all existing records of people in what we are pleased to call a “savage” state, we find that women make use of this primitive instrument, or a fish-bone. “Avant l’invention des aiguilles d’acier, on a dû se servir, à leur défaut, d’épines, ou d’arêtes de poissons, ou d’os d’animaux.” And as Eve’s first specimen of needlework was certainly completed before the sacrifice of any living thing, we may safely infer that the latter implements were not familiar to her. The Cimbrian inhabitants of Britain passed their time in weaving baskets, or in sewing together for garments the skins of animals taken in the chase, while they used as needles for uniting these simple habiliments small bones of fish or animals rudely sharpened at one end; and needles just of the same sort were used by the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands, when the celebrated Captain Cook first visited them.

Proceed we to the material of the first needlework.

“They sewed themselves fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

Thus the earliest historical record; and thus the most esteemed poetical commentator.

“Those leaves
They gather’d, broad as Amazonian targe,
And, with what skill they had, together sew’d,
To gird their waist.”

It is supposed that the leaves alluded to here were those of the banian-tree, of which the leaves, says Sir James Forbes, are large, soft, and of a lively green; the fruit a small bright scarlet fig. The Hindoos are peculiarly fond of this tree; they consider its long duration, its outstretching arms, and overshadowing beneficence, as emblems of the Deity, and almost pay it divine honours. The Brahmins, who thus “find a fane in every sacred grove,” spend much of their time in religious solitude, under the shade of the banian-tree; they plant it near the dewals, or Hindoo temples; and in those villages where there is no structure for public worship, they place an image under one of these trees, and there perform morning and evening sacrifice. The size of some of these trees is stupendous. Sir James Forbes mentions one which has three hundred and fifty *large* trunks, the smaller ones exceeding three thousand; and another, whereunder the chief of the neighbourhood used to encamp in magnificent style; having a saloon, dining room, drawing-room, bedchambers, bath, kitchen, and every other accommodation, all in separate tents; yet did this noble tree cover the whole, together with his carriages, horses, camels, guards, and attendants; while its spreading branches afforded shady spots for the tents of his friends, with their servants and cattle. And in the march of an army it has been known to shelter seven thousand men.

Such is the banian-tree, the pride of Hindûstan: which Milton refers to as the one which served “our general mother” for her first essay in the art of needlework.

“Both together went
Into the thickest wood; there soon they chose

The fig-tree; not that tree for fruit renown'd,
But such as at this day, to Indians known,
In Malabar or Deccan spreads her arms,
Branching so broad and long, that in the
ground
The bended twigs take root, and daughters
grow
About the mother tree, a pillar'd shade
High overarch'd, and echoing walks between:
There oft the Indian herdsman, shunning heat,
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
At loopholes cut through thickest shade: Those
leaves
They gather'd, broad as Amazonian targe;
And, with what skill they had, together sew'd,
To gird their waist."

Some of the most interesting incidents in Holy Writ turn on the occupation of needlework; slight sketches, nay, hardly so much, but mere touches which engage all the gentler, and purer, and holier emotions of our nature. For instance: the beloved child of the beautiful mother of Israel, for whom Jacob toiled fourteen years, which were but as one day for the love he bare her—this child, so eagerly coveted by his mother, so devotedly loved by his father, and who was destined hereafter to wield the destinies of such a mighty empire—had a token, a peculiar token, bestowed on him of his father's overwhelming love and affection. And what was it? "A coat of many colours;" probably including some not in general use, and obtained by an elaborate process. Entering himself into the minutiae of a concern,

which, however insignificant in itself, was valuable in his eyes as giving pleasure to his boy, the fond father selects pieces of various-coloured cloth, and sets female hands, the most expert of his household, to join them together in the form of a coat.

But, alas! to whom should he intrust the task? She whose fingers would have revelled in it, Rachel the mother, was no more; her warm heart was cold, her busy fingers rested in the tomb. Would his sister, would Dinah execute the work? No; it was but too probable that she shared in the jealousy of her brothers. No matter. The father apportions the task to his handmaidens, and himself superintends the performance. With pleased eye he watches its progress, and with benignant smile he invests the happy and gratified child with the glowing raiment.

This elaborate piece of work, the offering of paternal affection to please a darling child, was probably the simple and somewhat clumsy original of those which were afterwards embroidered and subsequently woven in various colours, and which came to be regarded as garments of dignity and appropriated to royalty; as it is said of Tamar that "she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled." It is even now customary in India to dress a favourite or beautiful child in a coat of various colours tastefully *sewed together*; and it may not perhaps be very absurd to refer even to so ancient an origin as Joseph's coat of many colours the superstition now prevalent in some countries, which teaches that a child clothed in a garment of

many colours is safe from the blasting of malicious tongues or the machinations of evil spirits.

In the Book of Samuel we read, "And Hannah his mother, made him a little coat." This seems a trivial incident enough, yet how interesting is the scene which this simple mention conjures up! With all the earnest fervour of that separated race who hoped each one to be the honoured instrument of bringing a Saviour into the world, Hannah, then childless, prayed that this reproach might be taken from her. Her prayer was heard, her son was born; and in holy gratitude she reared him, not for wealth, for fame, for worldly honour, or even for her own domestic comfort,—but, from his birth, and before his birth she devoted him as the servant of the Most High. She indulged herself with his presence only till her maternal cares had fitted him for duty; and then, with a tearful eye it might be, and a faltering footstep, but an unflinching resolution, she devoted him to the altar of her God.

But never did his image leave her mind: never amid the fair scions which sprang up and bloomed around her hearth did her thoughts forsake her first-born; and yearly, when she went up to the Tabernacle with Elkanah her husband, did she take him "a little coat" which she had made. We may fancy her quiet happy thoughts when at this employment; we may fancy the eager earnest questionings of the little group by whom she was surrounded; the wondering about their absent brother; the anxious catechisings respecting his whereabouts; and, above all, the admiration of the new garment itself, and the earnest criticisms on it; especially if in form and fashion it should

somewhat differ from their own. And then arrives the moment when the garment is committed to its envelope; and the mother, weeping to part from her little ones, yet longing to see her absent boy, receives their adieux and their thousand reminiscences, and sets forth on her journey.

Again she treads the hallowed courts, again she meekly renews her vows, and again a mother's longings, a mother's hopes are quenched in the full enjoyment of a mother's love. Beautiful and good, the blessing of Heaven attending him, and throwing a beam of light on his fair brow, the pure and holy child appears like a seraph administering at that altar to which he had been consecrated a babe, and at which his ministry was sanctioned even by the voice of the Most High himself, when in the solemn stillness of midnight he breathed his wishes into the heart of the child, and made him, infant as he was, the medium of his communications to one grown hoary in the service of the altar.

The solemn duties ended, Hannah invests her hopeful boy with the little coat, whilst her willing fingers lingeringly perform their office, as if loth to quit a task in which they so much delight. And then with meek step and grateful heart she wends her homeward way, and meditates tranquilly on the past interview, till the return of another year finds her again on her pilgrimage of love—the joyful bearer of another “little coat.”

And a high tribute is paid to needlework in the history of Dorcas, who was restored to life by the apostle St. Peter, by whom “all the widows stood weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.”

“In these were read
The monuments of Dorcas dead:
These were thy acts, and thou shalt have
These hung as honours o’er thy grave:
And after us, distressed,
Should fame be dumb,
Thy very tomb
Would cry out, Thou art blessed!”

But it is not merely as an object of private and domestic utility that needlework is referred to in the Bible. It was applied early to the service of the Tabernacle, and the directions concerning it are very clear and specific; but before this time, and most probably as early as the time of Abraham, rich and valuable raiment of needlework was accounted of as part of the *bonâ fide* property of a wealthy man. When the patriarch’s steward sought Rebekah for the wife of Isaac, he “brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and *raiment.*” This “raiment” consisted, in all likelihood, of garments embroidered with gold, the handiwork, it may be, of the female slaves of the patriarch; such garments being in very great esteem from the earliest ages, and being then, as now, a component portion of those presents or offerings without which one personage hardly thought of approaching another.

Fashion in those days was not quite the chameleon-hued creature that she is at present; nor were the fabrics on which her fancy was displayed quite so light and airy: their gold *was* gold—not silk covered with gilded silver; and consequently the raiment of those days, inwrought with slips of gold beaten thin and cut into spangles or strips, and

sewed on in various patterns, sometimes intermingled with precious stones, would carry its own intrinsic value with it.

This “raiment” descended from father to son, as a chased goblet and a massy wrought urn does now; and was naturally and necessarily inventoried as a portion of the property. The practice of making presents of garments is still quite usual amongst the eastern nations; and to such an excess was it carried with regard to those who, from their calling or any other circumstance, were in public favour, that, so late as the ninth century, Bokteri, an illustrious poet of Cufah, had so many presents made him, that at his death he was found possessed of a hundred complete suits of clothes, two hundred shirts, and five hundred turbans.

Horace, speaking of Lucullus (who had pillaged Asia, and first introduced Asiatic^[4] refinements among the Romans), says that, some persons having waited on him to request the loan of a hundred suits out of his wardrobe for the Roman stage, he exclaimed—“A hundred suits! how is it possible for me to furnish such a number? However, I will look over them and send you what I have.”—After some time he writes a note and tells them he had *five thousand*, to the whole or part of which they were welcome.

In all the eastern world formerly, and to a great extent now, the arraying a person in a rich dress is considered a very high compliment, and it was one of the ancient modes of investing with the highest degree of subordinate power. Thus was Joseph arrayed by Pharaoh, and Mordecai by Ahasueras.

We all remember what important effects are produced by splendid robes in “The Tale of the Wonderful Lamp,” and in

many other of those fascinating tales (which are allowed to be rigidly correct in the delineations of eastern life). They were doubtless esteemed the richest part of the spoil after a battle, as we find the mother of Sisera apportioning them as his share, and reiterating her delighted anticipations of the “raiment of needlework” which should be his: “a prey of divers colours, of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil.”

Job has many allusions to raiment as an essential part of “treasures” in the East; and our Saviour refers to the same when he desires his hearers not to lay up for themselves “treasures” on earth, where *moth* and rust corrupt. St. James even more explicitly: “Go to now, ye rich men; weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and your GARMENTS are moth-eaten.”

The first notice we have of gold-wire or thread being used in embroidery is in Exodus, in the directions given for the embroidery of the priests’ garments: from this it appears that the metal was still used alone, being beaten fine and then rounded. This art the Hebrews probably learnt from the Egyptians, by whom it was carried to such an astonishing degree of nicety, that they could either weave it in or work it on their finest linen. And doubtless the productions of the Hebrews now must have equalled the most costly and intricate of those of Egypt. This the adornments of the Tabernacle testify.

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[4] Persia had great wardrobes, where there were always many hundred habits, sorted, ready for presents, and the intendant of the wardrobe sent them to those persons for whom they were designed by the sovereign; more than forty tailors were always employed in this service. In Turkey they do not attend so much to the richness as to the number of the dresses, giving more or fewer according to the dignity of the persons to whom they are presented, or the marks of favour the prince would confer on his guests.



CHAPTER III.

NEEDLEWORK OF THE TABERNACLE.

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“The cedars wave on Lebanon,
But Judah’s statelier maids are gone.”

BYRON.

Gorgeous and magnificent must have been the spectacle presented by that ancient multitude of Israel, as they tabernacled in the wilderness of Sinai. These steril solitudes are now seldom trodden by the foot of man, and the adventurous traveller who toils up their rugged steeps can scarce picture to himself a host sojourning there, so wild, so barren is the place, so fearful are the precipices, so dismal the ravines. On the spot where “Moses talked with God” the grey and mouldering remnants of a convent attest the religious veneration and zeal of some of whom these ruins are the only memorial; and near them is a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, while religious hands have crowned even the summit of the steep ascent by “a house of prayer;” and at the foot of the sister peak, Horeb, is an ancient Greek convent, founded by the Emperor Justinian 1400 years ago, which is occupied still by some harmless recluses, the monotony of whose lives is only broken by the few and far between visits of the adventurous traveller, or the more frequent and startling interruptions of the wild Arabs on their predatory expeditions.

But neither church nor temple of any sort, nor inquiring traveller, nor prowling Arab, varied the tremendous grandeur of the scene, when the Israelitish host encamped there. Weary and toilsome had been the pilgrimage from the base of the mountain where the desolation was unrelieved by a trace of vegetation, to the upper country or wilderness, called more particularly, "the Desert of Sinai," where narrow intersecting valleys, not destitute of verdure, cherished perhaps the lofty and refreshing palm. Here in the ravines, in the valleys, and amid the clefts of the rocks, clustered the hosts of Israel, while around them on every side arose lofty summits and towering precipices, where the eye that sought to scan their fearful heights was lost in the far-off dimness. Far, far around, spread this savage wilderness, so frowning, and dreary, and desolate, that any curious explorer beyond the precincts of the camp would quickly return to the *home* which its vicinity afforded even there.

Clustered closely as bees in a hive were the tents of the wandering race, yet with an order and a uniformity which even the unpropitious nature of the locality was not permitted to break; for, separated into tribes, each one, though sufficiently connected for any object of kindness or brotherhood, for public worship, or social intercourse, was inalienably distinct.

And in the midst, extending from east to west, a length of fifty-five feet, was reared the splendid Tabernacle. For God had said, "Let them make me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them;" and behold, "they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of