

EMBROIDERY AND HOW IT IS DONE

A Book of Directions for the Beginner, with Description of Stitches and Notes on Using Transfer Designs

THE ART OF EMBROIDERY



EMBROIDERY is peculiarly the art of the gentlewoman. In the history of every age we read of the needlework with which the clothing of well-to-do people was decorated. The Greek border is still a favorite motif for embroidered or braided bands. Assyrians and Egyptians wore richly-decorated garments, and in the beautiful work of

the Japanese and Chinese today we see the high development of a skill evidently acquired in very early times. Among all primitive people, as among the North American Indians, we find attempts at decoration which show the beginning of the art in the colored designs woven in the grass mats and reed screens for household use and, developing a little later, the beaded leggings and moccasins, or the gay blankets of the Navajo Indians.

From such simple beginnings, doubtless, the art of embroidery has developed among all nations, until it has reached the perfection we see today in decorative designs for dress, household furnishings, and church vestments and altar pieces. Ecclesiastical embroidery is a fascinating branch of the art, and

has a history of its own, which, however, can be no more than referred to here.

Among the Oriental people much of the embroidery is done by men, though their women, too, are skilled with the needle, but in most of the European countries the work is considered as essentially a feminine accomplishment. Indeed, no more delightful occupation for a woman can be found than the development on fine and dainty fabrics in harmonious color, representations of the flowers, foliage, and other beautiful things so lavishly bestowed upon us by Nature. There is in every woman an artistic sense which seeks an outlet in some work of her hands, and the art of embroidery seems with most of them an adequate expression of this longing.

The woman who embroiders has at her command the means to procure dainty lingerie embellished with the exquisite work which commands such fabulous prices in the shops. Every woman loves these pretty things, but they are hopelessly out of reach of all but the deepest purse, unless the skill to make them has been acquired. Then, by the expenditure of a little money for material and transfer pattern, any of these beautiful French garments can be duplicated in one's spare time. This is equally true of outer garments, waists, dresses, coats and

wraps, the value of which is greatly enhanced by the embroidery, both from a monetary point of view and by the personal pleasure derived from the work. The beaded and embroidered waists, for instance, which cost in the shops from fifteen to one hundred and twenty-five dollars, can be exactly reproduced by the home dressmaker for the mere cost of the material—a matter of a few dollars at most—for it is the work, of course, which is paid for in these elaborately decorated affairs.

For gifts to her friends, too, whether Christmas presents or birthday remembrances, the needlewoman has an unfailing source at her command, upon which she can draw at will. A source, moreover, which furnishes things much more highly appreciated by the recipient than the most costly ones bought at a shop with little of that loving care which always touches the heart.

And last, but not least, an important consideration in learning to embroider is that it always furnishes a means of livelihood in case of need. Many women support themselves by doing ecclesiastical embroidery, for instance, and the one who can do really good work can command good prices for making dainty layettes and lingerie for which wealthy women are quite willing to pay full value.