



FASHIONABLE FANCY WORK.

Fancy work! At the very words, so elastic in their meaning, innumerable thoughts come in one's mind. What can become of all the fancy work that is done in a single year? "Why, we use some of it in our houses, and give some to our friends," say the indefatigable girls and matrons who ply the needle and thread almost as diligently as those who work for a living. Yes; but one would think that all the houses in Christendom could hardly contain the never-ending supply that is always forthcoming. If a cloth table cover is embroidered handsomely, why, it lasts in perfect condition for a few seasons, though there are people who would vote it oldfashioned after a month's wear. Then the army of chair-backs, which is being recruited every day and all the days, not only by amateur workers, but by manufacturers' hands, where can they all go to? Do the dustmen's wives decorate their horsehair parlor chairs with the faded glories which at one time veiled the silken brocade lounges in a duchess' drawing-room? And the cushion covers and the mantel borders, I can understand how the levelling process of time acts in their case. The lady tosses them aside as faded, the domestic lays hands on them, and passes them on as presents to a married sister, who keeps a small greengrocer's shop near by; then when the little home is broken up they are flung into the broker's cart with the rubbish of the sale, and quickly get turned into shoddy. But it seems hardly possible to account for all the fancy work that is done in that way. Visions come, too, of the indispensable class of workers, the designers of patterns, those who commence the embroidery, and others too numerous to mention; and we feel that even those ladies who spend overmuch time on fancy work are, unconsciously it may be, but surely accomplishing some sort of a mission by giving employment to men and women whose livelihood depends largely on the ephemeral nature of fashions.

In a search after news for fancy-work lovers, I saw some lovely strips for curtains of Flemish linen, worked in exquisite shades of colored cotton. They were set patterns closely worked in satin stitch, but could be quickly accomplished since the stitches were long; and each one was self-colored, either a soft green or a delicate carnation tint. The cushion covers were just the thing to suit the Oriental style of decoration that is so much in vogue; the colors of the sateen grounds would tone splendidly with Eastern rugs and carpets and Benares ware ornaments. The sateens might almost be taken for silk handkerchiefs that had been laid by for years, so time-worn in their coloring they look; and

the Moravian cottons for working out the patterns are of charming tints. Red and blue are used on a dark red ground for the Turkish stitch, which is, in fact, the old English herring-bone.

Decorations done in Hambro wool are handsome, and can be finished off very rapidly, as the thickness of the wool does not allow of fine stitches. A delightfully simple chair-back was of white sateen cloth; one end was ornamented with lattice-work, over which trailed leaves in shades of brown and green Hambro' thrown up with filoselle; a light bordering edged the other three sides. It would make a very pretty present, and could be executed in no time, comparatively speaking. Cloth tablecovers are pinked out at the edge now, for ladies, it is said, do not like the expense of fringing them. This laudable economic idea is certainly an improvement, as it is much lighter, and does not detract from the work, as many of the fringes do, by the coloring being too bright. One tablecover was of dark greenish felt, worked in broad outline with shades of apricot, and had plush medallions at the corners. Another, of terracotta diagonal-cloth, was beautifully worked with French knots, basket and satin stitches, and couching, all done in shades of electric blue. A canvas and honeycomb cloth makes a pleasing ground; the squares, which are of canvas pattern, but not open threads, are worked in cross-stitch, and the alternate honeycomb squares are darned. It is suitable for five o'clock tea and sideboard cloths.

The new Smyrna work is done with a needle, with wool chenille on canvas; it is very soft and pretty. On coarse wool canvas wool is drawn through, then knotted and the ends left to fall loosely in resemblance of tassels. It answers well for brackets and mantel-borders, but not so well for cushions. The rough felt used for table covers had an appliqué of tapestry cretonne, which was worked over with tinsel and silks. A table slip was composed of golden-brown plush enriched with a pattern in shades of gold. An Empress cosy of crimson satin had a macramé bordering. The macramé was laid on, as it were, upside down, the heading of the border being at the bottom of the cosy, and the vandyked edge standing up like a crown with the fringe ends caught to the top and knotted.

One advantage of the Russian work is that it can be done in strips, which is always convenient; another, that the materials are stamped, so that no counting of stitches is requisite for carrying out the patterns. Furniture upholstered in dark colored material, worked with cross-stitch, looks extremely well. Ladies might more often furnish a bedroom in this style; it would be to many a novelty, and it makes an agreeable change from cretonnes.

Some people, the writer amongst them, delight in "tossing up" brocades, velvets, laces and ribbons, into stylish bags, dainty caps, fichus, neckties, and such-like. Fancy work proper is rather too slow a process to please them. Now with a piece of old French brocade, or some squares of Eastern embroidery, with a length of soft corded silk or plush, and a few yards of ribbon and beautiful old lace, what charming confections can be made in an hour or two. The very writing of the words calls up memories of delicious bits of coloring,

coquettish articles fit for a princess to don, and quaint knickknacks bewitching enough to satisfy a squeamish lover's taste as offerings to "the dearest girl in the world." There is as much art in such "tossing up" as there is in draping, and a good deal more than in carrying out elaborate pieces of fancy work that are already commenced, and, in some cases, almost completed before the ladies put their needles into the materials. "Tossing up" must be done lightly, gracefully, and with spirit. The combination of colors must be harmonious, whilst form must be fairly considered. Indeed; the best confections are pictures in stuffs, and "tossing up" is nearer akin to artist's work than some of us think for. Here is a charming little bag for ladies to carry their needlework or handkerchief and scent bottle in. A piece of brocade, in which coral-pink and golden tints predominate on a white ground, forms the front and back, with a frilling of golden-brown satin standing up at the top. At the sides are inserted puffings of coral-pink satin, at the left the puffing is almost entirely hidden with loops upon loops of golden-brown ribbon, by which it is also slung on the arm. It hangs by three or four ribbons, which are tied in a bow that rests on the arm when the bag is carried. It never does to stint oneself with ribbon if looped bows are to be made.

Gloves and handkerchief sachets are in the form of a music roll, only much larger round; they are of brocaded silk, or any other fancy material, and are edged and tied with cord. The cord is plaited to make a strap handle, and this is finished off by twisting the ends into round medallions, which are firmly fixed to the sachet. Other sachets are made in the shape of nightdress bags, but more oblong, and the flap is ornamented with a band of Eastern embroidery, or gold painted canvas. Gentlemen's sachets look best when treated as plainly as possible; navy-blue silk with white lozenges or horseshoes is suitable; it is simply edged with cord.

As for the pretty frivolities that can be "tossed up" out of silk and Eastern materials, they are literally endless. The folding fan is now used as a wall bracket. It is opened, and across one end is arranged a soft silk pocket. A rather fussy chair back that lately came out is worth noticing. Over the stuffed back of an occasional chair is thrown a slip of velveteen, embroidered in one corner with a group of flowers; a silk scarf falls down on one side, whilst another scarf is knotted up and jauntily placed on the top above the flowers. Baskets are with a few stitches by the help of the silk squares, made into lovely little wall ornaments, the coloring in unison with the wall decorations. Boxes of all shapes and sizes, when covered with Eastern embroidery, are fit for any drawing-room or toilet table.

Those ladies who prefer using a brush to a needle may like to hear of a somewhat new style of varnish painting. All the colors are mixed with varnish, and the method of laying them is rather different to that employed in ordinary oil painting. When finished the colors are very smooth and brilliant, and the decorative effect is excellent. The panels are of wood or lacquer, the former need sizing. There is some knack required for getting the coats of paints perfectly level, and a few lessons might possibly be found necessary.