

Made in America



REPRODUCTION OF MODEL BELOW

MADE IN AMER-
ICA
BY H. S. GIL-
LESPIE

At a time when the phrase "Made in America" is one to conjure with, it is interesting to note that the Cincinnati Museum is exhibiting as an important part of its textile display a collection of silks from the Cheney looms—pure American-made fabrics so marvellously wrought from ancient examples as to make it difficult for the connoisseur to distinguish between them and say which is the hand-woven web from some mediæval monas-



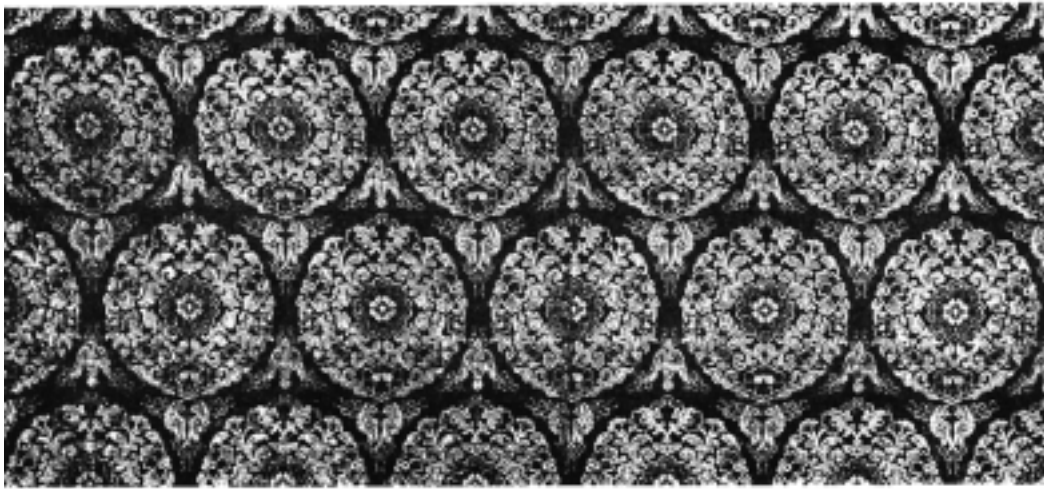
FRAGMENT OF FRENCH BROCADE
FROM LE PETIT TRIANON

tery and which the modern production, the fruit of the Jacquard loom.

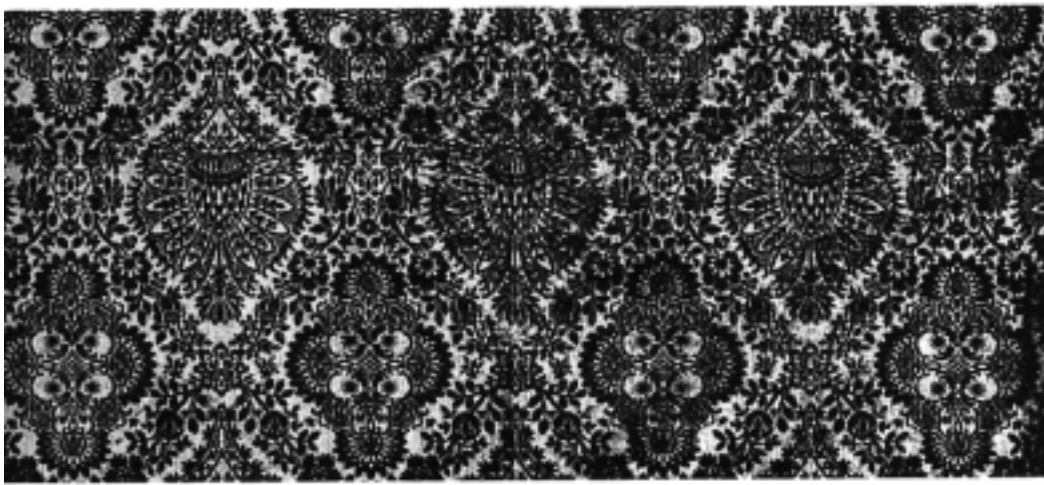
This gorgeous array of sumptuous stuffs consorting so harmoniously with the Old World textiles, in examples of which the Cincinnati Museum is so richly endowed, is intended to supplement the art and industrial education of its patrons. The Museum has emphasised this department also as an aid to those interested, not only in the purely mechanical processes of weaving but chiefly to show that character and design are of prime importance. Since, as it says, "one-half the world is occupied either in



REPRODUCTION OF A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN BROCADE. ORIGINAL IN A GALLERY AT FLORENCE



REPRODUCTION OF CHINESE BROCADE, PERIOD OF CH' IEN LUNG (ABOUT 1740). ORIGINAL IN METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



REPRODUCTION OF ANTIQUE CUT VELVET. ORIGINAL IN CHICAGO ART INSTITUTE. PROBABLY FROM AVIGNON, SIXTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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weaving and its allied trades or in the distribution of the finished materials," the subject looms large as a matter of universal training.

The collection of American silks has attracted wide-spread attention, for, wearing the same gorgeous livery of the historic fragments from which their inspiration was drawn, they demonstrate in a peculiarly pointed fashion the remarkable strides that have been made in the past few years by the Jacquard looms, and their presence in the Museum collection constitutes a distinct triumph for the American manufacturers to whose skill and painstaking zeal their success is due.

To try and visualise the rare beauty of these exquisite woven fabrics is difficult, for certain examples—an old Viennese velvet, for instance—baffle description. The original fragment from which it was copied was once the vestment of a mediæval ecclesiastic, and presents that rare shade of red that is neither a rose nor yet a cherry, but rather a glorified combination of the two, such as is only seen in a cope or chasuble, or mayhap in the time-worn upholstery of a chair from the Doge's Palace, such as has been handed down in a private collection.

The romance of silk gilds the history of the world, for it is a maker of history. Wherever the rich product of the loom appears both romance and history follow, and many of the brocades or other designs had their origin in events which shaped the lives of nations. China contributed such a wealth of tradition and fancy to the manufacture of silks that the elaborate brocade of the Chien Lung period shown among the American fabrics in the Museum holds especial interest. It depicts the symbolic "cycle of the lotus" design with the imperial phoenix, conventionalised, and other symbols of good omen mentioned in Buddhistical writings.

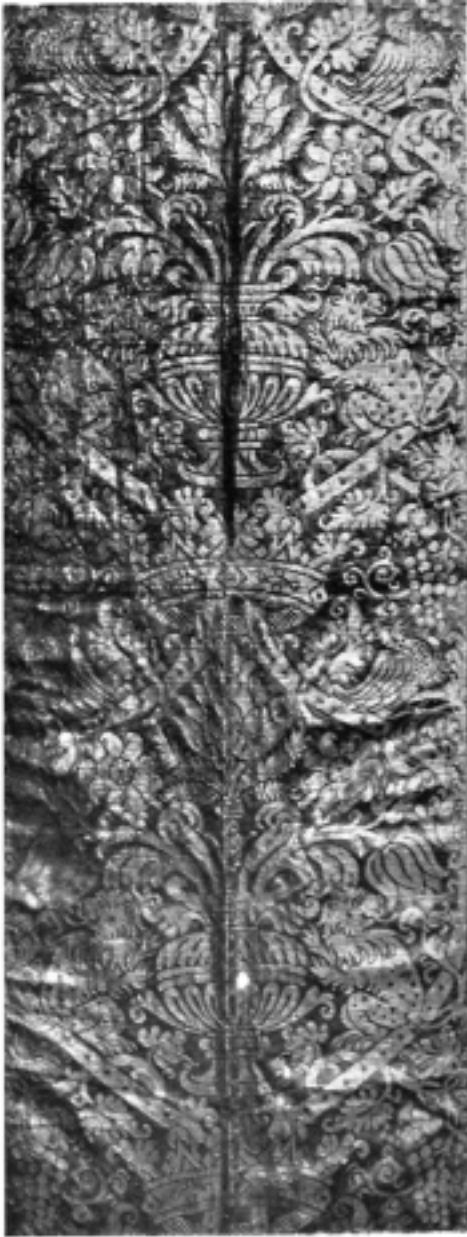
There is something very alluring as well as sad in the brocade copied from that in the boudoir of the ill-fated Marie Antoinette in the Petit Trianon. It has a soft pink background with scrolls and musical instruments in an equally delicate yellow. A delightful material for a similar wall-hanging shows a French design of the time of Louis XVI in old pink and white with a ribbon that catches up a bouquet of flowers in the symmetrical and gentle style of the period.

From Persia came the swan motif on a plum ground with silver cupids and a gold thread running through. One style was copied from the

robe of a Spanish grandee suggestive of castles in Spain and all the attendant romance. Another, an Italian brocade of the sixteenth century, probably of Milanese origin, shows the typical vase and flowers suggestive of the Italian Renaissance influence. An uncut velvet from Avignon is full of rich beauty.

Then there are reproductions of famous Sicilian silks with their wealth of symbolic meaning from Byzantine as well as Saracen sources in which the jacinth, tulip, eglantine, pink and peach, the favourite flowers of the Mohammedan Persian patterns, figure so conspicuously. And lastly, there is a marvellous new creation of the Cheney looms in which the pineapple design figures prominently. The inspiration for the design came from a fragment of brocade brought "from an ancient château in sunny Provence," for although, as the manufacturers state, the pineapple design is Italian and some of the elaborations Hispano-Moresque, the combination is French and points directly to Provence.

In bringing back to life the many beautiful historical designs which have for the most part been preserved in Museum collections, the Cheney Brothers are not only exhibiting a fine patriotism in increasing American prestige in industrial fields, but they are conferring a benefit on the world as well in perpetuating the wealth of historic design to such a great extent lying fallow in our museums and private collections. The Cincinnati Museum itself is also deserving of the highest praise in the development of their textile department, and in their evident desire to give American products the benefit that they so richly deserve.



ANTIQUÉ ITALIAN BROCADE
SERVING AS MODEL



REPRODUCTION OF ANTIQUÉ ITALIAN BROCADE
OPPOSITE