

Till a very late date we have ample record of the esteem in which this art was held.

In the days of the Commonwealth, Mrs. Walker is described to have been as well-skilled in needlework "as if she had been brought up in a convent." She kept, however, a gentlewoman for teaching her daughters.

Evelyn, again, praises the talent of his daughter, Mrs. Draper. "She had," writes he, "an extraordinary genius for whatever hand can do with a needle."

The gay queen of Charles I., followed by the consorts of the younger Stuarts, wrought a change in the simple habits of their royal predecessors, for when Queen Mary, in her Dutch simplicity, sat for hours knotting fringe, her favourite employment, Bishop Burnet, her biographer, adds: "It was a strange thing to see a queen work so many hours of the day;" and her homely habits formed a never ending subject of ridicule for the wit of Sir Charles Sedley.⁴⁰

From the middle of the last century, or, rather, from the French Revolution, the more artistic style of needlework and embroidery fell into decadence. The simplicity of male costume rendered it a less necessary adjunct to female or, indeed, male education; for, strange to say, two of the greatest generals of the Republic, Hoche and Moreau, added to their pay by embroidering satin waistcoats long after they had entered the military service.

The needle now became replaced by trumpery fancy works, which the better taste of the last few years has happily exploded.

We may look on the art as almost at an end. The sewing-machine has added to the exigences of the distressed needlewoman, and those who could once gain a fair livelihood now fear starvation. On the other hand, locomotion and cheap travelling have rendered the life of our countrywomen so much less stay-at-home; they have little time for the homely employment of their ancestors. We may verily say, with the prophet Daniel, of the present generation, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

⁴⁰ See his epigram, "The Royal Knotter," about "the Queen:"—

"Who, when she rides in coach abroad,
Is always knotting threads."

Describing her daily drive with Louis

XIV., a contemporary writer states of Madame de Maintenon that, "à peine installée dans la voiture, avant que le cocher eût fouetté les chevaux, la dame mit ses lunettes et tira de l'ouvrage qu'elle avait dans son sac."