

Though cutwork is mentioned in Hardyng's Chronicle,² when, describing the luxury in King Richard II.'s reign, he says—

“Cut werke was greate both in court and townes,
Both in menes hoddis and also in their gownes,”

yet this oft quoted passage, no more than that of Chaucer, in which he accuses the priests of wearing gowns of scarlet and green colours ornamented with cutwork, cannot be received as evidence of this mode of decoration being in general use. It refers rather to the fashion of cutting out³ pieces of velvet or other materials, and sewing them down to the garment with a braid, the applied or “appliqué” work of later times.

That linen was then adorned with the needle, we have evidence in the work of his consort, Queen Anne of Bohemia. In the cathedral at Prague is preserved a priest's robe, executed by her hand, a curious piece of mediæval embroidery and cutwork, yellow with age, but in perfect condition.

Coeval with these styles of decoration was drawn-work, in which the weft and woof threads of the tissue were drawn, retaining the design and forming the threads into a square network, rendered firm by a stitch at each intersection. The design was then embroidered, often in colours.⁴

The linen shirt or smock was the special object of adornment, and on the decoration of the collar and sleeves much time and ingenuity were expended.

In the ancient ballad of “Lord Thomas,”⁵ the fair Annette cries:—

“My maids, gae to my dressing-room,
And dress me in my smock;
The one half is o' the Holland fine,
The other o' needlework.”

Chaucer, too, does not disdain to describe the embroidery of a lady's smock:—

“White was her smocke, embrouded all before
And eke behynde, on her colar aboute,
Of cole blacke sylke, within and eke without.”

² “Chronicle of John Hardyng,” circ. 1470.

³ Temp. Rich. II. In their garments “so much pouncing of chesell to make holes, so much dragging (zigzagging) of sheers,” &c.—*Good Parson, Chaucer.*

⁴ Drawn-work continued to a late period in Russia, and is still to be found in the productions of Brazil, Chili, and

the Philippine Islands. It was revived in Europe during the last century, and specimens were executed closely resembling lace, under the various appellations of drawn-work (Fig. 28), Indian work (see “Denmark”), Dresden point (see “Germany”), Hamburg point, &c.

⁵ Percy, “Reliques of Ancient Poetry,” vol. iii.