

### *The Ornamentation of Textiles*

THE ORNAMENTATION OF TEXTILES. MME. PAUL ERRERA'S COLLECTION AT BRUSSELS. BY OCTAVE MAUS.

In the vast domain of decorative art, the ornamentation of textile fabrics forms a subject of study at once one of the most attractive and one of the most instructive. Therein one may trace stage by stage the successive evolutions of taste from the remotest times; therein are reflected as in a clear mirror all the contributions of the various ages towards the development of what we term "decorative feeling."

The history of textile work is inextricably mingled with that of humanity itself, revealing as it does, here the evidence of religious life, here again exact traces of the civil life of the nations. The mosaic law, as M. Dupont-Auberville reminds us, prescribed the use of embroidered ornaments on the sacred vestments, and many thousands of years before our era, the skilled workers of India and Egypt, Assyria and Phœnicia were producing, with

a deftness worthy of our envy, textiles adorned with designs as beautiful and as delicate as any our finest artists can show to-day. The Egyptians and the Babylonians reserved their cotton for use in the manufacture of sacerdotal robes, mortuary wrappings and other religious purposes, while linen was employed for articles of luxury or every-day wear. They confined themselves to these two branches of the textile industry, for China had long held a monopoly in silk, which, however, introduced into Egypt some two or three centuries before the Christian era, rapidly spread over the entire East.

From Egypt the Greeks brought back with them the art of weaving, and the importance assumed in Rome by the *plumarii*, the *phrygiones* and the *tinctoris* is well known. The industry sought refuge at a later period in the cloister and the convent, to escape the devastating influences of foreign invasion and public tumult. Sumptuous appointments became general in the Church, and this had a decisive influence on the textile industry. Hence arises the introduction of gold and silver threads into the ornamented woof of the priestly



FIG. I. ITALIAN : SILK

XII. CENTURY

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