

MEDIÆVAL EMBROIDERY IN EAST  
LANGDON CHURCH.

THE little church of East Langdon, three miles and a half from Dover, contains one of the few relics of mediæval church embroidery now remaining in England. Canterbury Cathedral possesses the embroidered velvet surcoat of the Black Prince, who died in 1376, but it is probable that the only example of mediæval ecclesiastical embroidery, remaining in a Kentish church,\* is that represented in the accompanying plate. The uses, to which this velvet has been converted, illustrate the purposes for which similar vestments were sometimes retained in churches during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth. Latterly this beautiful work of art was used as the pulpit cloth in East Langdon church; but it had been, earlier, employed as a covering for the Communion Table. To fit it for these uses a fringe of silk was sewn around its edges. Before the Reformation, this artistic example of the mediæval embroiderer's skill had been worn as a cope, by the Rector of East Langdon.†

\* The velvet coverings for Communion Table and Pulpit at Hollingbourne were embroidered between 1650 and 1660 by the Ladies Culpepper. They are not mediæval.

† Our thanks are due to the present Rector, the Rev. W. D. Astley, for his kindness in facilitating our desire to obtain pictures of this embroidery, and also to Mr. Lambert Weston, of Dover, for generously photographing the cope for us.



*One breadth of real size.*

MEDIEVAL EMBROIDERY IN EAST LANGDON CHURCH.

The Rev. Isaac Taylor,  
F. R. S., and Miss G. M. G. G. G.



Orate specialit' p' Aia Dne Xpme dudu vxoris Mathei Pheip Cuius  
 et Aurifabri ac quonda Maioris Ciuitatis London que Migravit ab hac valle  
 Miserie xxv' die Maii A' dni Millmo CCCC lxx' Cuius Aie ppiciet' de' Ame.

MONUMENTAL BRASS OF CRISTINA PHELIP, FROM HERNE CHURCH.

When considering this richly-ornamented velvet as an illustration of mediæval art and manufacture, it becomes necessary to ascertain its date, to examine its materials, and to scrutinize its design and construction.

As the principal ornament of the cope was a picture of the Annunciation, we have, in the figures of the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel, details of costume which enable us approximately to fix the date of that portion of the work. The dress and the attitude, of the Virgin, so closely resemble those depicted upon a monumental brass in Herne church that we have caused the effigies upon that brass to be engraved, for comparison with our plate representing the embroidery. This Kentish brass commemorates Dame Christiana Phelip, who died in the year 1470. Not only is her long, outer, sleeveless gown, fastened with the same peculiar arrangement of very long cord, huge bead, and enormous tassels, but her hands are represented in the same peculiar attitude that we notice in the embroidered figure of the Virgin. We know no earlier representation of a female with her hands thus placed; but there are several instances of later date. We may then, I think, fairly assign the embroidered figures on the old cope, to the second half of the fifteenth century. The date of the nineteen devices, which surround the embroidered picture, it is not so easy to ascertain. There seems to be no reason for restricting their manufacture to the fifteenth century. So far as we can tell they may have been wrought, fully a century, before the figures in the scene of the Annunciation. The capital letters, employed in that admirable monogram of the Virgin, which gracefully condenses the name **MARIA** into the

smallest possible space, may have been wrought in the reign of Edward III. The figures and the devices were all made separately and completely, each in a (*tambour*) frame, before they were sewn on (*appliqué*) to the velvet. There is evidence, at the base of the central picture, to shew that it was added after the devices were sewn on. This fact suggests that the cope and the devices may have been of earlier date than the figures. There are stalks, of two thistle-like devices, peeping from beneath the base of the central picture, which over-lies them. We have here, then, certainly a work of art of the second half of the fifteenth century, and perhaps some work also of the fourteenth.

The materials must next engage our attention. The velvet, of which the cope is made, was of a very rich crimson colour, and from 21 to 22 inches wide. The central breadth of the cope shews, between the seams, exactly 21 inches, but to that breadth we must add something for edges turned in. The velvet (without any fringe) is 64 inches long at its greatest actual length, but at the bottom its convex outline measures 70 inches. At the top its concave outline measures 44 inches. The greatest depth of the velvet is  $39\frac{1}{2}$  inches, but as a piece has been inserted in the centre (where the cope had been sloped out to fit the neck) its central depth originally did not exceed 3 feet. The sloped sides measure 41 inches each. The foundation, upon which the embroidery was wrought, is formed of two layers of white linen; the lower layer is of coarse canvas, and the upper layer, which would by us be called coarse linen, was, no doubt, the fine linen of the middle ages. The gold thread is of two sizes, but each contains a core of silk, around which are rolled thin strips of silver-gilt foil; this foil is one

thirty-second part of an inch in width. Silver thread, not gilt, is likewise used. The spangles are circular pieces of silver gilt, one-eighth of an inch in diameter, having in the centre a circular perforation, through which pass the three silk stitches whereby each is affixed to the velvet. These spangles have convex surfaces and are not flat. Silk and crewel and thread, together with white cords, are the other materials employed. Each device, when completed and cut out, was applied to the velvet by sewing around its edges with stout black crewel.

The scene of the Annunciation, represented in the central picture, occupies a space 26 inches wide, and 20 inches high. Its central object, the lily, standing between the Archangel and the Virgin, rises to a height of 15 inches, from the base of its vase to the tip of its tallest stamen; while its flowers extend over a width of 8 inches. The graceful two-handled vase, 6 inches high, is ornamented with three broad bands of gold embroidery. Over the rest of its surface, the upper layer of fine linen foundation, which now appears to be bare, was originally wrought with white, or pale coloured silk, of which traces still remain. The handles are wrought in gold thread, over thick cord, between two broad edges of black crewel. The lily flowers are of silver thread, the edges and curves of their petals being defined by white cord, laid on in double rows, over which the silver thread was wrought. They are shewn in every stage of development, from the small bud to the fully-expanded flower, with its long stamens, each formed of four parallel rows of thick gold thread. The leaves and stems are wrought in dark yellow silk, amongst which there were originally some green lines. Possibly all

the dark yellow silk may have been green originally, but this is mere conjecture and nothing more.

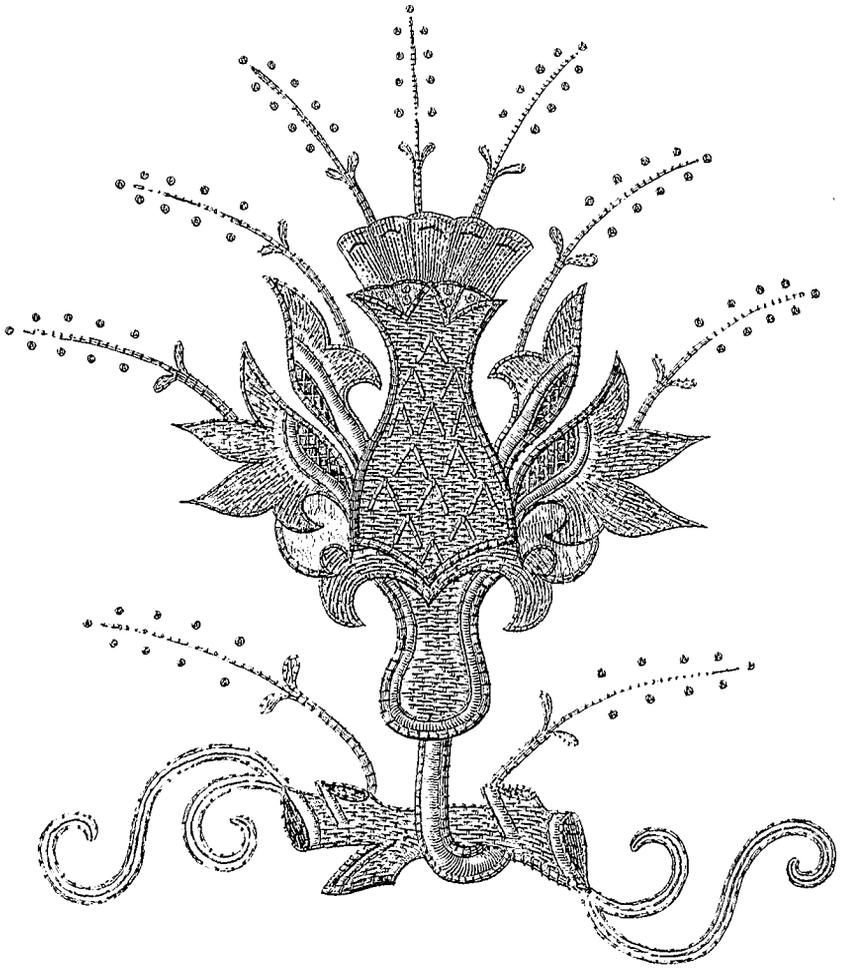
The Virgin is represented as kneeling at a *prie-dieu*, with a book of devotion open before her. Her figure, without the nimbus, is 13 inches high. Her hands are upheld, in a position which denotes surprise and awe, each palm appearing open, in front of, and above the corresponding shoulder, while the elbows are held close to her waist. Her outer robe, a long sleeveless gown, wrought in gold and lined with ermine, is fastened over her chest by a long cord. This cord, threading two jewelled eyelet-holes in the robe, falls in two lines until they reach a large gold bead, through which they pass, and finally terminate far below it in two huge and heavy tassels of bullion, one of which is hidden by the *prie-dieu*. The sleeveless gown is very long, and falls in heavy folds upon the ground; its folds are admirably defined, by means of cord sewn on before the gold thread was applied. The ermine lining was simply depicted, by powdering the bare white linen with occasional stitches of black crewel. Beneath this graceful robe the Virgin wears a tightly-fitting gown, with neither plaits, gathers, nor join at the waist. It is wrought in yellow silk, crossed by diagonal lines one quarter of an inch apart, formed by long stitches of double gold thread. Upon her hands there would seem to be some kind of covering, gloves or mittens, but the sleeves of the close gown terminate at the wrist, and there are no gauntlets to the gloves.

To indicate her face and neck, the white linen is wrought with a few stitches of black and pale brown crewel, or thread, defining the eyes, mouth, nose and ear. Her long golden hair (wrought in silk) is bound

by a narrow black fillet, upon which there is a central jewel. Her front locks are turned gracefully back over this fillet, and mingle with the mass which flows down her back to the waist, as indicated upon each side of the sleeveless robe. The large *nimbus* around her head has its outer portion wrought thickly with gold thread, but coloured silk or crewel was mingled with the gold as the nimbus approached the head, thus producing a rainbow-like effect. The silk or crewel has been worn away. At its highest point the nimbus rises  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch above the crown of the head; its greatest width is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches from side to side, and it comes down to the level of the Virgin's mouth,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches below its own highest point. From her mouth issues a scroll, inscribed with her reply to Gabriel's salutation: "*Ecce ancilla domini fiat michi secundum . . . . .*" The *prie-dieu*,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches high, supports a cushion which has small bullion tassels at each corner, and on the cushion is an open book. On the front of the *prie-dieu* there is a low shelf, whereon stand two clasped books bound in cloth of gold. The whole of the carpet or lawn, beneath the figures of the picture, is wrought in yellow silk, but it is crossed by horizontal lines of gold thread one quarter of an inch apart. This carpet or lawn is studded with growing roots of the Marguerite or daisy, of which twenty distinct plants are indicated. Their recumbent leaves are defined by edges of gold thread and black crewel; their slender flower stalks are formed of gold thread and green crewel; and on each plant are buds in various stages of development; only two plants, however, shew completely expanded flowers with their golden eyes. One eye is formed of a gold spangle, the other by stitches of gold thread.

The Archangel Gabriel holds in his left hand a jewelled staff, which terminates in what seems to be a five-tongued flame. With his right hand he points to a scroll which winds around, and also floats above the staff. This scroll is one inch wide, and is inscribed with the words of salutation—“*Ave gracia plena dominus tecum.*” The Archangel’s wings are very prominent objects. From his right wing’s curved apex to the point of its longest pinion feather, the length is 11 inches. In its half-expanded state the right wing, which is nearest to us, occupies a width of four inches. Of the left wing we see only the top of the outer side, and the extremity of its four longest pinion feathers; but of the right wing the downy inner side is shewn. To produce this downy effect, the linen foundation has been simply powdered with a few stitches of black and buff crewel. The outer side of each wing is entirely wrought with gold thread, the surface of the linen foundation having been previously divided into feather-like compartments, by cords sewn in diamond shapes. The effect is further assisted by the method in which the gold thread is fastened down: those stitches, of yellow silk, which secure the gold thread, form large diamond devices outside the lines of the previously underlaid cords.

The Archangel’s golden hair (wrought in silk) flows in luxuriant curls down his back, skilfully hiding the junction between it and the wings. Upon his head he wears an open narrow circlet of gold, which in front rises into the shape of a tall cross. His face is as simply wrought as that of the Virgin. He wears a cope wrought entirely of gold thread, but its lining is wrought in pale buff or drab silk. Beneath the cope is a garment reaching to his feet; it has rather wide



*Half real size.*

sleeves, with ornamental cuffs wrought in gold thread. The garment is wrought in yellow silk, crossed by diagonal lines of gold thread one quarter of an inch apart. An alb, or white garment with narrow sleeves, appears at the wrists beneath this silken robe. One foot of the Archangel is shewn. It is encased in a white shoe, unwrought. The body of Gabriel is 13 inches high, but his wings are higher, and tower far above his head.

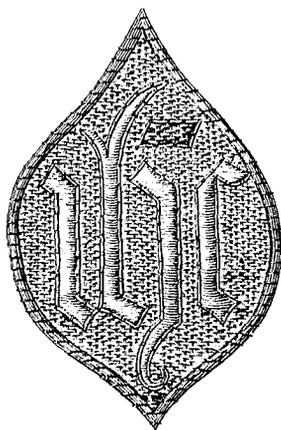
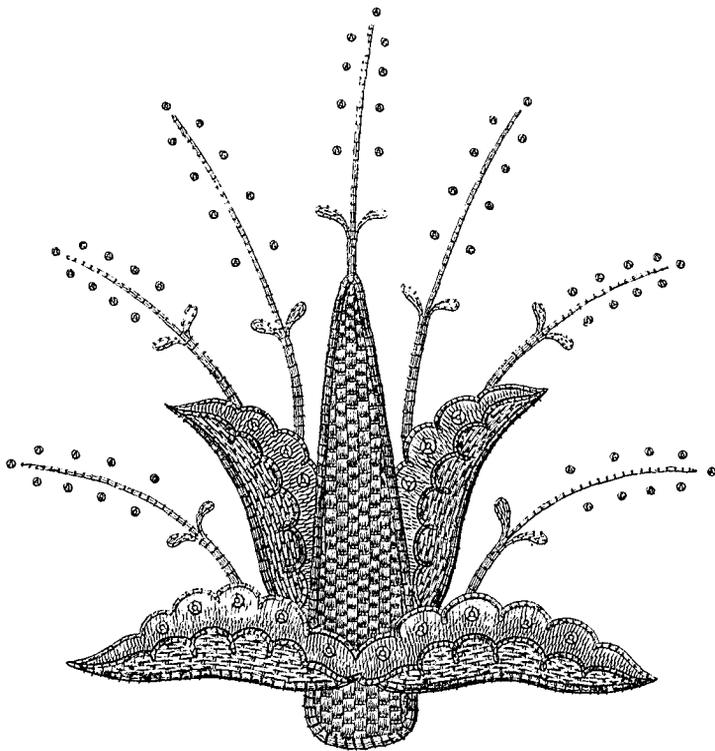
Below the central picture there has been an inscription, commemorative of the benefactor who gave this cope to East Langdon Church. The letters are wrought in black thread upon white sarcenet, which covered the linen foundation. The capital letters were of red thread, but they are much obliterated. We cannot read the donor's surname, which seems to have been formed of six or seven letters. The inscription was "*Orate pro anima . . . . Johis . . . . dd.*"

The floral devices upon the cope are of three patterns, which are repeated again and again. No verbal description could give an adequate idea of their details, but the accompanying plates accurately represent them, at one-half the size of the originals. The outlines of these devices were engraved, very inaccurately and on a very small scale, in the first volume of the *Archæological Journal*, pages 330-331, as illustrations of the Rev. C. H. Hartshorne's "Treatise on English Mediæval Embroidery," which was afterwards published as a separate work.

The acanthaceous, or thistle flower device, represented on Plate II, occurs four times near the bottom of the cope, and twice upon the shoulders. The flower, with its case of overlapping triangular leaflets, is four inches long; its outer sheathing sepal is one

inch and a quarter long, and its stem one inch and three quarters. The whole device (without its nine surrounding sprigs and the two tendrils at its base) is thus seven inches high; its greatest breadth (across the flanking leaves) is five inches. The stem is represented as springing, in a graceful curve, from a portion of the branch or stalk on which it grew. This piece of stalk lies horizontally, and, at both its ends, the clean-cut sections of the stem are wrought with a few stitches of black crewel; similar black stitches shew where three spurs, or spines, or branches have been cut off. The flower and its pinnatifid leaves are mainly wrought in gold thread, but one small part of each leaf's under side is worked with yellow silk, while the bundles of shorter outer florets are wrought in white silk, and have gold spangles upon them. The stiff triangular leaflets, which form a sheath for the florets, are well defined; the gold thread being sewn over little triangular bunches of white cord; while, above the gold thread, several long stitches of yellow silk or crewel, form an irregular series of inverted V's. Above each of the two large flanking leaves, there is a piece of reticulated work, in yellow crewel on a black ground. It is just possible that this thistle-like device may have been intended to recall some idea of the crown of thorns. A device somewhat similar to this, is engraved in *Archæological Journal*, vol. iv. 298, from a pulpit cloth at Forest Hill, Oxon.

On Plate III is represented (at half the original size) a very singular device, which recurs four times at the bottom of the cope. It may perhaps be derived from the fruit of some large species of Passion Flower. Such fruit is cone-like, and has four sheathing leaves; but I cannot pretend to identify with any certainty



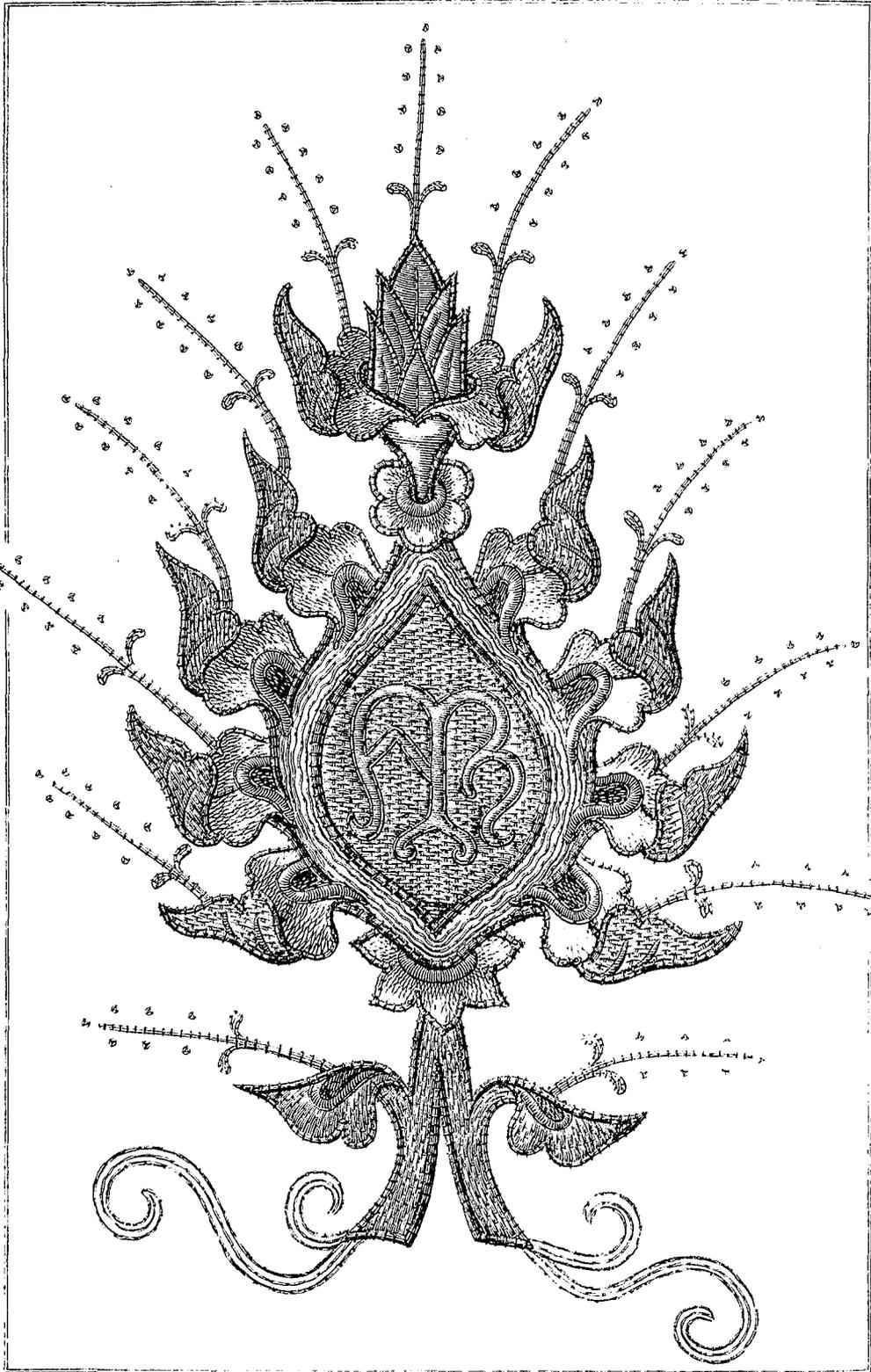
*Half real size.*

the origin of this device, which Mr. Hartshorne says occurs upon another ancient cope, now used as a pulpit-cloth at Hullavington in Gloucestershire. The tapering cone or seed-pod, six inches long, is wrought in a manner peculiar to itself. Upon the linen foundation were laid forty-one horizontal rows of white cord, one above the other, each upper row being shorter than that below it. Of these cords, thirty-five are above the two front lower leaves, and the six longest cords are below those leaves. Over these horizontal cords gold thread was laid on vertically, and secured in a peculiar fashion. Taking, for the purpose of examination, any pair of adjacent horizontal cords, we find that six vertical threads of gold have been sewn across them, by means of three horizontal stitches above the upper cord, and the same number beneath the lower cord. Then, looking either right or left of these six threads of gold, we see that they are flanked on each side by other six, which are secured differently; the three horizontal stitches, which sew them down, being inserted *between* the pair of cords in question. The effect is extremely good, and resembles fancy basket-work. Of the four sheathing leaves, two stand up beside and behind the cone, while the lower two lie almost at right angles to the cone and in front of it. The cone itself protrudes for three quarters of an inch below the leaves. The leaves have scalloped edges, and while the upper surface of each is wrought in green and yellow silk, overlaid with a spangle in each scallop, the undersides of the leaves are of gold thread stitched on with yellow silk. Seven spangled sprigs of gold thread, each from two to three inches in length, spring from and surround the upper portion of this device. These spangled sprigs, throughout the entire

cope, are invariably wrought upon the velvet itself, after the devices have been sewn on; they are not *appliqués*.

The sacred monogram "i h c" upon Plate III, belongs to the large floral device which appears upon Plate IV. That device bears sometimes this sacred monogram, and sometimes that of the Virgin, the one alternating with the other. The sacred monogram on Plate III is wrought entirely of gold thread, stitched over letters, previously formed, of white cord. The edge of the oval device is of black crewel. The method in which the gold thread is stitched, upon the groundwork of the monogram, is well shewn on this plate. Horizontal lines, each consisting of two gold threads, are fastened down by vertical stitches of yellow silk. The silk, after confining one pair of threads, passes beneath the next horizontal pair, and reappears below them, to fasten the following pair, which lies third from the top, with a second stitch vertically below the first, and so on to the bottom. On each side of this first vertical line of silk stitches, we see another line parallel to it, and at the distance of one-twelfth or one-sixteenth of an inch from it, which fastens down such alternate lines of gold thread as have been left unconfined by the first line of stitches. The effect produced, by these exactly vertical lines of silk stitches, crossing the horizontal lines of double gold thread, is that of very fine basket work. This method of applying the gold thread is employed throughout the greatest portion of the embroidery on this cope. It will be observed that thus, unlike silk or crewel, the gold thread is kept always on the surface of the material, and never passes through it in the form of a stitch.

The handsome device in Plate IV, which bears



DESIGN FROM MEDIÆVAL EMBROIDERY IN EAST LANGDON CHURCH.  
(REDUCED ONE HALF, IN SIZE.)

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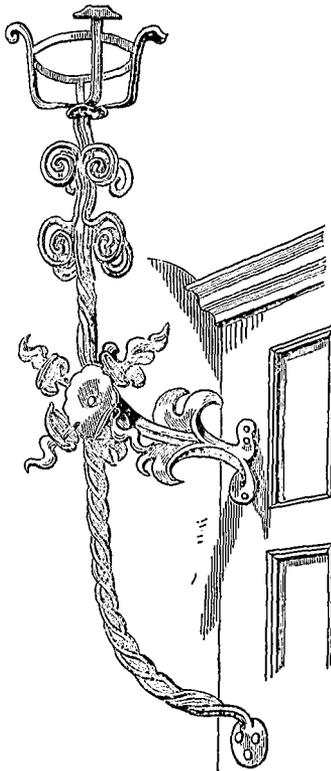
the monogram of Our Blessed Lord or of the Virgin Mary, is repeated nine times; five with the monogram "MARIA," and four with "i h c." Without its two curled tendrils at base, and its thirteen straight and spangled sprigs, each about 3 inches long, this device is 23 inches in height, and at its greatest width measures 7 inches. It has two stems, which, passing through the centre of a passion flower, spread into an oval form, and again narrowing to a point, pass through the centre of a small flower of six round-edged petals, probably a Marguerite or daisy, and terminate in a cone-like fruit, which is seated upon, or issues from, two large curled leaves. The two stems may refer to the two flowers. The connection of the stems throughout the device is well defined by their broad edges of black crewel, and by the manner in which the gold thread is laid on. The general direction of the threads of gold is vertical; but it follows the curved upward course of the outline, and is sewn down with silk stitches at right angles to its direction. The central portion, of oval form, which is thus framed by the stems, contains the monogram.

The passion flower is admirably depicted. Its pointed petals are edged with two parallel rows of the larger gold thread, sewn on with yellow silk; but the petals themselves are worked with crewel, or silk, of pale blue and white. The central ring of the flower is formed of gold thread, laid over white cord. The colour blue is used in this device only, and appears both in the passion flower and in the upper small flower at the apex, above the monogram. The materials, colour, and method, used in the small flower are exactly similar to those employed in forming the passion flower. The eight large curling leaves,

which surround the monogram, are entirely formed of gold thread stitched on with yellow silk; cords, previously sewn upon the linen foundation, produce the effect of veins and stems. No two of the eight leaves are exactly alike; each is curled in a different way, shewing more or less of its upper and its under surfaces. The two fruit leaves, above the upper flower and below the cone-like fruit, have their upper sides wrought with yellow silk, which in one instance shades off into green; the under sides alone being of gold thread. Upon all the leaves, one edge (generally the under one) is formed of six parallel threads of black crewel stitched tightly on with similar material, while the other edge is formed either of similar rows of white crewel, or of two twisted threads of gold or silk. The cone-like fruit, at the apex, is formed of gold thread sewn down in a peculiar way. Single threads, of yellow crewel, are laid upon the surface of the gold and fastened by a few slight stitches, in such lines as serve to define the somewhat triangular shape of the leaflets, or sections, of the fruit. From the centre of each triangle's base, ascend two or three long stitches of silk, which produce the effect of veins.

East Langdon Church is a small building, with a Norman chancel arch. The south arcade of the nave was also Norman, but it has been altered in modern times. Upon the pulpit there is a good example of an iron stand for the hour-glass, of which we give an engraving. The custom of placing an hour-glass upon the pulpit seems to have come in with the Reformation. In the Bishops' Bible, printed by John Day in 1569, Archbishop Parker is seen, in the frontispiece, with an hour-glass at his right hand. At Leigh parish church, in Kent, the iron stand bore the date 15.7,

but as the third figure was long ago broken off, we cannot tell its exact date; it could not be later than 1597. At Strood, the churchwardens purchased an hour-glass in 1592; and in 1612 they paid 8d. for a "new running glass." In 1620-1 the churchwardens of Godmersham paid 12d. for an hour-glass, and in 1675 a glass for Hawkhurst church cost 7d. The frame or stand for the hour-glass at Stockton in Norfolk cost 2s. 2d. in 1635, and 3d. more was paid for colouring it; but at Mellis in Suffolk, the hour-glass, in 1629, cost 9d., while its frame cost no more than 8d. In 1655, at Ash next Sandwich, the frame for the hour-glass cost one shilling.



HOURLASS STAND IN EAST LANGDON CHURCH, KENT.