Embroidered and Painted Book Covers.

Mrs. Conyers Morrell recently contributed an interesting article to our excellently conducted contemporary, *The Lady's Pictorial*, and we may at once express our obligation to the editor of that journal, for the use of the full-page illustration facing this page. Mrs. Morrell's contribution was one of a series upon "Original Fancy Work"; but the article referred to dealt exclusively with Embroidered and Painted Book Covers. The author opens by remarking that bookbinding is a handicraft which few amateurs master, or even attempt, but she is confident that it is one which might be most advantageously practised by ladies, either for pleasure or profit. Although venturing to disagree with this conclusion, we are in full accord with the succeeding remarks, viz.: "the decoration of the covers offer almost unlimited scope for the exercise of individual talent and ingenuity... and that needlework and painting might be far more frequently applied to them than they at present are... There are favourite authors and treasured volumes in almost every home for which no cover would, in the eyes of the owners, be considered too good."

Mrs. Morrell then proceeds to give us the following interesting information: "At the Royal School of Needlework, a very praiseworthy attempt has been made to introduce handsomely embellished book-coverings into more general use, and not only have many handsome covers been executed by the needle; but a speciality has of late been made by the school, of painted vellum bindings, which are extremely attractive in appearance. The more elaborate of these covers have representations of saints, or other figure subjects portrayed on them, worked up in the style of ancient missal paintings, with, in some cases, highly raised and gilded backgrounds; others, for more ordinary purposes, are tastefully adorned by some semi-conventional designs of flowers or fruit, others have appropriate mottoes or lettering introduced into the designs upon the covers, and all are certainly novel and attractive in appearance, and a satisfactory proof of what can be done in this style of decorative binding, orders for which are promptly executed by the artists working in connection with the Royal School." The writer then gives an account of the works of art to be found in the British Museum, and incidentally refers to the work of the nuns of Little Gidding.

In the course of her practical instructions, Mrs. Morrell says: "Bullion, pearls, coral, spangles, beads, gold twist and thread, as well as silks of divers hues, may all be pressed into the service of book cover decoration; crystals and gems may also appropriately be introduced, but these should be genuine stones, such as amethysts, topaz and crystals, and they should be smoothly polished, not cut up into facets."

Concerning the accompanying design, it is explained: "The design upon this page is capable of being carried out in a great variety of ways. It would be very pretty painted in colours and gold on white vellum; or it might be enlarged and worked in bullion and gold thread on velvet; or in silks, on a foundation of satin or fine cloth. Enlarged sufficiently to become suitable for a portfolio cover, this design might well be worked in fine crewels, or washing silks, on linen; in the latter case, the cover should be a removable one, so that it may be readily cleaned. Old books with shabby bindings may have their appearance mightily improved by a cover neatly stitched over them; and for this purpose a good quality of satin merveilleux answers particularly well, since it combines good wearing qualities with a slender substance, and hence does not thicken the volume in the same way that a thicker material is liable to do unless very carefully laid on."