

A fine early-18th century European embroidered personal note-book cover

Sold



Description

Made from dark green velvet worked in gold thread with birds, a quiver of arrows and flowers. Probably French, circa 1720.

Provenance: The Kelekian Collection

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The discovery of printing made books significantly cheaper, which led to a corresponding increase in supply, and created a cultural revolution since books were no longer in the sole possession of the wealthy. The decoration of the covers which hitherto had been carried-out by monastic hands was now performed in many private homes and the finest needlework was lavished on the binding and the case.

The technique of English needlework bindings is of the highest standard, although French examples are equally perfect in finish and superior in some qualities of design. They have the disjointed character of English examples, but the treatment is more refined. However many of these precious relics vanished in the destruction of the Revolution.

Amongst the most beautiful in style are the books designed with an oval portrait, a figure or flowers, surrounded by floral sprigs, birds, or insects. The oval is sometimes slightly raised, with the leaves and flowers also in relief to balance. The backs are usually divided into four or five sections each containing a little flower, insect or animal, otherwise the design is a curved stem with flowers in each curve.

Beside the Bible and prayer-book, the personal note-book was also bound with embroidered covers. The interior contained three or four leaves of ivory or gessoed vellum and sometimes a pocket. It was fitted with a silver style or pencil which closed the book by passing it through two rings at the top and bottom, or it was slipped into the back and the fastening was done by the usual charming clasp of the period.