

THE ART OF
HAIR WORK
HAIR BRAIDING AND JEWELRY OF SENTIMENT
with Catalog of Hair Jewelry

BY MARK CAMPBELL

as supplemented with excerpts from
Godey's Lady's Magazine

edited by
JULES & KAETHE KLIOT

Note: The portion of Mark Campbell's work on *Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, and Braids*, originally incorporated with this present work, has been republished and expanded in a separate title,

THE TECHNIQUES OF LADIES' HAIRDRESSING OF THE 19TH CENTURY
A COMPILATION OF ORIGINAL 19TH CENTURY SOURCES

by Mark Campbell and Mons. A. Mallemon

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Mark Campbell

NEW EDITION.

SELF-INSTRUCTOR

IN THE

ART OF HAIR WORK

DRESSING HAIR,

Making Curls, Switches, Braids,

AND

HAIR JEWELRY OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.

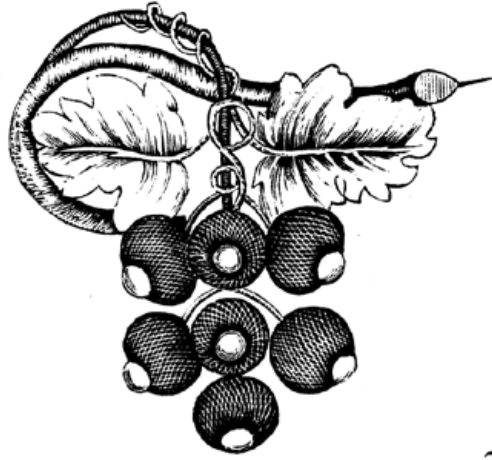
Compiled from Original Designs and the Latest Parisian Patterns

BY

MARK CAMPBELL.

NEW YORK AND CHICAGO.

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INTRODUCTION

The fascination of hair as a decorative and ornamental substance can be documented as early as the Egyptian era, where the immortality of human hair gave credence to finding the immortality of the body itself.

The Victorian era, with its roots in sentimentality, inspired new heights in the development of hair as an ornamental and coveted substance. As mementos of deceased as well as symbols of love and friendship, hair was placed in lockets, made into floral forms and braided for keepsakes of both the living

and dead. Elaborate wreaths were formed from these forms and set in deep frames as remembrances.

The height of sophistication of hair work, however occurred mid 19th c. when elaborate hair jewelry or “jewelry of sentiment” as it was referred to, combined complex braids and gold findings to create decorative pins, rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings and other items valued far more than if of pure gold work. It was a period of romanticizing, and the hair of a loved one was the perfect vehicle to express this bond of love.

While hair could be purchased, the import of such reaching hundreds of tons per year by mid 19th c., it was the personal association with the hair employed that had the most significance. Selected hair would be sent to the hair braiders and returned in the appropriately selected configuration.

While the specific techniques have been credited to European origins, they were to become a drawing-room occupation in Victorian America by the 1850's when the leading women's magazines, viz. *Lady Godey's* and *Petersons*, promoted the hair work crafts through many articles and patterns. The first book describing the techniques was not to come about till 1875 when Mark Campbell, revealed the secrets of over 100 designs in his book titled **THE ART OF HAIR WORK.**

Virtually identical in technique to the ancient Japanese braiding form known as *Kumi Himo*, which has been documented as early as the 9th c., no evidence has been found to connect 19th c. Victorian hair braiding with that of the Japanese which used silk as the working material. The Victorian technique seems to have developed independently of this Oriental influence, its origins in central Europe.

Most of the hair designs are unique, with methods unheard of in the *Kumi Himo* forms. The hair work patterns were of pure textural design, using openwork, shape and texture as the design elements. *Kumi Himo*, on the other hand relies primarily on texture and color, with the braids worked tight and dense. The hair working tools were of entirely different form and design, and in many ways far less elaborated than the *Kumi Himo* stands and looms.

The commercial making of hair jewelry survived well into the 20th c. with known locations in both in the US and Sweden as late as the 1960's when ads could still be found promoting hair jewelry as “a personal keepsake.” To our knowledge there are no commercial makers of hair jewelry today, although with the resurgence of interest in *kumi himo* as well as interest and revival in Victorian Crafts, these elaborate braids and the working with hair would again seem to be timely.

The source for this edition of the *ART OF HAIR WORK* is the

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COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL DESIGNS
AND THE LATEST PARISIAN PATTERNS
by Mark Campbell,

published by the author in 1875. All references to hair braiding and jewelry have been retained, with the references to dressing hair omitted. This work is supplemented by material from the monthly **GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK AND MAGAZINE** as published between the years 1850 and 1859, the period when hair work was promoted as the ladies drawing room pastime.

In addition to basic instructions and patterns an extensive catalog of hair jewelry and findings is presented with original prices as an excellent reference for the collector and historian. Unfortunately such findings are no longer available although the designs are clear enough for reproduction by a competent goldsmith.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

MATERIALS

HAIR

The unique qualities of hair, particularly its wiry nature and ability to be set, make it the most desirable material for many of the patterns. Human or horse hair is still commercially available and should be experimented with. Horse hair was some times combined with human hair to give the finished work support. As a general rule, a finished piece of hair work will be about half the length of the starting strand. If hair strands are long enough, a double strand is preferable, i.e. long enough for two strands. In this case a bobbin would be attached to each end.

OTHER MATERIALS

As many of the hair designs rely on the unique characteristics of hair, substitute materials of similar qualities should be considered. Fine wire in copper, gold and silver can work in many of the patterns. Monofilament nylon, which can be dyed is available in a variety of weights can also be experimented with. When using wire, use several strands of the finest gauge

as you would with hair. Do not wind the wire on the bobbins but use in manner and lengths as described for hair.

TOOLS

For tools, reference should be made to that available for working Kūmi-Himo, which has gained much popularity in the last several years.

The essential tools are the *BOBBINS* which hold the working strands in tension, a *STAND* to support the work and maintain the position of the working strands, *MOLDS* to control the shape of the hollow braids and a *COUNTERBALANCE* to keep the work in position.

BOBBINS

Bobbins as used for lace making and tapestry weaving can be used for hair braiding techniques providing they are properly weighted. The weight of the bobbins will have a significant effect on the finished result and experimentation should be made with the different patterns and materials used.

A suggested bobbin is the *English Style* lace bobbin, These are slender and have a hole drilled near the bottom for attaching weights (beads) by means of a wire loop. This gives you the flexibility of adjusting the weight as best suited for the material/design being worked. The weights can be small lead fishing weights, curtain weights, washers or decorative beads. If other style bobbin are being used, holes can be drilled near the base to similarly hold weights. A good starting weight would be 1/2 to 3/4 oz per bobbin.

COUNTERBALANCE

The center or *COUNTERBALANCE* weight can be a simple muslin bag filled with sand or lead weights, again adjusted to the piece being worked. The weight of the counter balance should be approximately half the weight of all the bobbins.

THREAD

A starting or binding thread is required which is attached to the ends of the bundled strand of hairs. Linen is recommended in a size 60/2 for its strength and fineness.

STAND

The simplest form of stand can be a round cylindrical box such as a hat box or commercial ice-cream container. The top of the stand particularly the edge should be smooth. A small hole in the center must be made through which the working braid will pass. The edge should be sanded and sealed to insure