GLOVES AND MITTENS

ORIGIN OF THE BABY’S GLOVE—FOURCHETTES—THE “POINTS” ON THE BACKS OF GLOVES

GLOVES play a considerable part in our everyday life, and now exercise a kind of mild tyranny over us. It is perhaps not to be wondered at, seeing the importance which has been attached to these protectors of the hand in the past.

Records show that in the earliest gloves there were no divisions between the fingers, and only the thumbs had a separate covering. This is what one might have expected to be the case, and if we look at the gloves which tiny babies wear (see Figure 90), we shall find a similar state of affairs, so that here we have a direct survival from very early times.

Such a case is on all fours with that of young animals which belong to species that originally were spotted like the leopard, but which in the course of their evolution have changed their spots, and are now, like the lion, self-coloured. Among other animals which are spotted when immature may be mentioned the wild boar and the tapir (see Frontispiece). While these young ones are protected by their parents,
their primitive colouring is no detriment to them, but when they go out into the world for themselves it would be disadvantageous under existing conditions for them to retain their aboriginal markings. In a similar way the baby wears the primitive glove, which its ancestors made shift to use for purposes of warmth or protection, and the child continues to do so until

![Fig. 90.—A baby's glove without separate fingers.](image)

it is necessary or convenient for it to use its fingers to help itself without removing its gloves.

There is little doubt but that gloves are the products of a cold climate, and it is interesting to note that in Iceland, where in order that gloves may be put on quickly and easily they are made without fingers; and what is more, so that no time shall be wasted in choosing right or left-hand gloves, they are provided with two thumbs, one of which is in use while the other remains idle.

Of vestiges, gloves offer a very curious instance.
There are on the backs of most of them, at the present day, three lines of raised embroidery or fancy stitching, which run almost parallel with one another, though they converge slightly as they approach the wrist. When these are worked in black on the back of a white woollen glove, for instance, they are very conspicuous, and to explain their origin may well seem puzzling. (See Figure 91.)

![Fig. 91.—The back of a woollen glove showing the three vestiges known as "points."](image)

Inquiry into the history of these most persistent ornaments is apt to produce a fine crop of speculations. One explanation that may be offered is that the lines are vestiges that date from the time when gloves were so ill-fitting that they had to be laced up the back with the help of a string which was passed through eyelet holes. On hearing this one might be tempted to ask why there should be three ornaments and not one. Another guess which can be more easily shown to be wrong is that we are dealing with the remains of ventilation holes. We say "more
easily” because an examination of the facts will show that openings through which air was intended to enter were made in the palm of the glove.

A third suggestion which may occur, is that the ornamentation is a survival from the time when great men, particularly prelates, had various devices and even jewels fixed to the back of their gloves. Once more, however, we meet with the difficulty in the

![Figure 92](image1.png) ![Figure 93](image2.png)

**Fig. 92.**—A modern kid glove showing the fourchettes or pieces between the fingers, which form three pointed V's.

**Fig. 93.**—Queen Elizabeth's coronation glove showing the stitching carried down on to the back. (From a photograph by the courtesy of Messrs. Fownes Brothers and Co.)

shape of the point that there are always three of the marks.

In making a careful investigation into the true origin of the vestiges we can, on the one side, endeavour to see whether there is anything in the form of the hand which can have given rise to the number
three, that is so constant; and on the other, whether the glove-makers have any particular name for the marks which may throw some light upon them. In connection with the first line of research, it will be seen on spreading out the fingers that there are, if we ignore the thumb which has its insertion lower down in the hand, three "V"-shaped openings between them, and we find on taking up our second clue that the ornaments are called "points." Now there is a point at the bottom of a "V," and this is well seen in looking at a glove where the pieces or fourchettes which form the insides of the fingers meet (see Figure 92); but if this is evident in a modern glove, it is very much more so in old gloves. (See Figure 93.)

A result of this fact was that the stitching which made the fingers was carried down for some distance on to the back of the glove, as seen in Queen Elizabeth's coronation glove. (See Figure 93.)

This stitching was and is often somewhat elaborate, and in some cases a line of embroidery covered it. This is well seen in the glove of Anne, the Queen Consort of James I (see Figure 94); and here it is noticeable that the two lines of embroidery at the points of the three "V's" run parallel and touching each other, so that we get a beginning of the three "points" as we know them. With improvements in the making of the fourchettes, the stitching terminated more abruptly, and the embroidery was allowed to
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remain on the back of the glove, where it is still to be seen.

Some mention should perhaps be made of mittens. When they are used for the purpose of keeping the hands warm, they are usually on the principle of a baby’s glove, but with the end of the thumb and part of the bag for the fingers cut off. Otherwise, when

![Image of a glove with embroidery on the fingers](image)

FIG. 94.—The glove of Anne, Queen Consort of James I, showing the embroidery on the fingers, which is the ancestor of modern "points.” (From a photograph, by the courtesy of Messrs. Fownes Brothers and Co.)

these articles are used merely to cover part of the hands, or for ornament, they are more elaborate, and divisions are introduced for some distance between the fingers. In the construction of these, as in that of stockings and other garments, we meet with the modern tendency towards transparency. Often also the patterns are dependent upon the skin showing through, and we are once more reminded of tattooing.