

EGYPTIAN EMBROIDERY DESIGNS

By Helen Mar Adams

DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

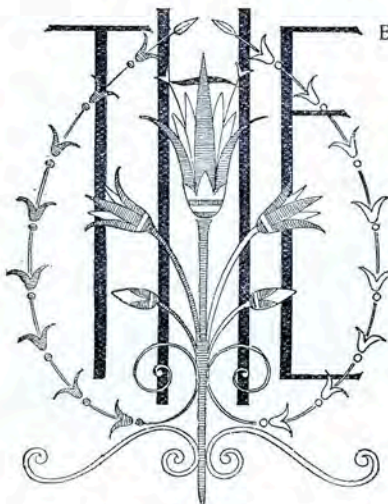


ILLUSTRATION No. 6

EGYPTIAN is the most ancient of the many classic styles that furnish us with such an abundance of ideas for attractive embroidery designs. There can be no doubt about its age, as many of the features illustrated in these designs were found on tombs and monuments that are known to have been erected at least two thousand years before the Christian era. The beauty of this style is in its severe simplicity. For their models the early Egyptians

looked to Nature—a fact clearly shown at a glance, as the lotus and papyrus, that grew on the banks of the Nile, the feathers of birds, the palm branch, and the cobra are the leading features in the detail of this style. It is so easy for any one to readily adapt such a primitive style to almost anything that its use for embroidery work is at once established, and after a little practice it will become a simple matter to convert almost any of these designs into any piece of fancy-work desired.

Illustration No. 1 is the design for a round centre-piece. It is made up of some simple ornaments arranged in good line to work out a pleasing combination. Like other centre-pieces it can be buttonholed around the edge and left plain, or it may be buttonholed and fringed, as shown in the drawing. The size may vary from fifteen to thirty inches, as a matter of choice, but a good size for it—and one that, perhaps, will be the most serviceable—is eighteen inches in diameter to outside of buttonholing. The inner circle, in that case, should be six inches in diameter, and the length of each surrounding ornament that butts against it will be about three inches long, while the small ornaments at the outer edge will measure one inch and half an inch, respectively.

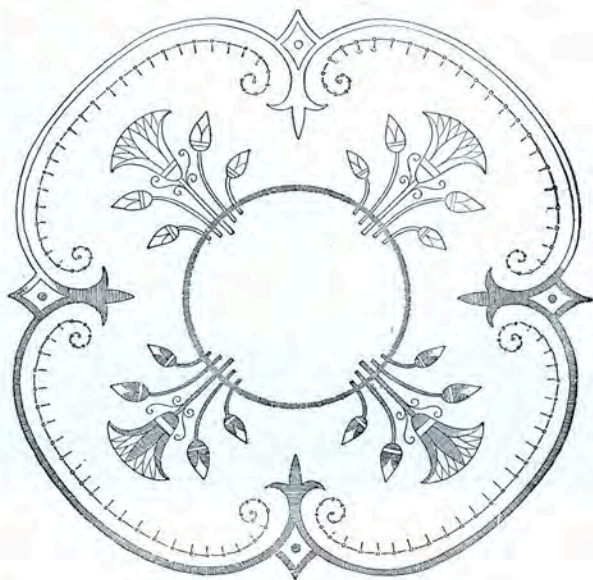


ILLUSTRATION No. 2

Fringing to a width of three inches will not be out of place on a centre-piece of this size, but for all ordinary purposes fringe two inches long is quite wide enough, as it is liable to become very much tangled in laundering if wider. A superior quality of round-thread butcher's linen is, of course, the best material for centre-pieces that require frequent washing, but for those that do not there are many other materials that are quite as desirable. For large centre-pieces denim is a very good material, and the design worked in white on a soft colored ground produces a very attractive and effective result.

A lobed centre-piece is shown in Illustration No. 2. It can be made in the same sizes that were suggested for Illustration No. 1. As the edge is serrated at four points it will, of course, be impossible to make a fringe, but, instead, it should be buttonholed as shown in the drawing, and the surplus outer edge of linen trimmed away afterward. The drawing also shows two ways of working this design: one half is the outline, while the other suggests a half solid treatment, that is, having a part of each flower in outline, and working that part solid that seems to be the sheath. The stems, also, are worked solid, and where they cross the central ring stop the stitches and continue inside the ring, to give them the appearance of lying under it. This is not an intricate design to work out, and, if treated right, a very attractive and classic centre-piece will be the result.

The colorings used by the early Egyptians were primitive, like their designs, and the primary colors figured largely in decoration. Reds, yellows, blues, browns, black and white were the principal ones, and by combining yellow and blue the various greens were obtained. For embroidery work these colors may be used, but, at the discretion of the worker, the colors can be modified to meet the requirements. Vivid colors are not well adapted to handsome designs, but, instead, they should be worked out in the medium

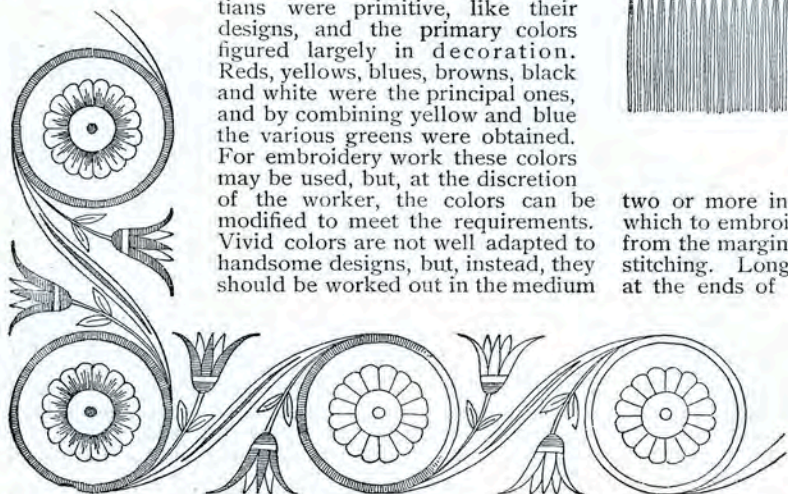


ILLUSTRATION No. 3

colors that are to be found in so many different shades, both in silk and linen.

Suggestions for running borders and corners are shown in Illustrations Nos. 3 and 4, and they may be used on lambrequins, table-covers, scarfs or lunch-cloths. No. 3 is a sort of wheel pattern, and ornamented with lotus flowers. From two to four inches would be a good width for this design, and for No. 4 those sizes are about right also. Illustration No. 4 could be carried out on a larger scale if desired for the edge of a table-cover or other large piece, but it would not improve No. 3 to enlarge it more than four inches wide, as the design is too open and it would then look coarse, unless an exceedingly heavy effect is desired.

For the end of a dresser or table scarf a design is shown in Illustration No. 5, and while it may seem rather complicated it is, in reality, quite simple. To do it justice the scarf should be at least eighteen inches wide, and if wider the pattern can be carried out with equally good results. About an inch and a half from the edges threads should be drawn and a line of hemstitching worked; on the border strip the vine and leaf pattern can be embroidered, and at the ends, and below the hemstitching and margin,

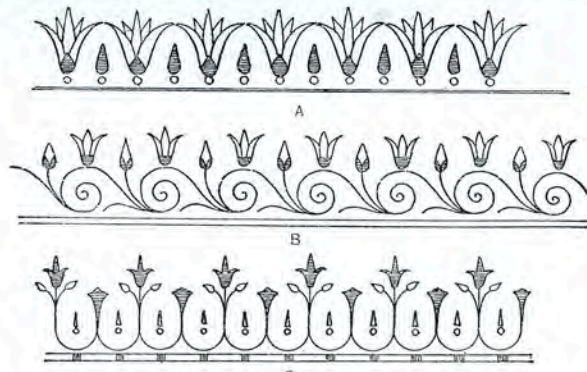


ILLUSTRATION No. 8

tion to the width of the material. In the illustration both the outline and solid treatment are shown. In the combination of colors a very pleasing result can be obtained in this design, or it will be very effective if worked with white on an unbleached linen. If it is not desirable, however, to use the unbleached, the white linen can be treated to a coffee bath that will give it an antique appearance, the darker shades being obtained by the strength of the coffee solution. The vine and leaf pattern is to extend around the entire outside of the scarf, but, instead of the leaves continuing to point in the same direction the total length of the piece, they should stop at the middle, and point at each other in a similar manner that they point away from each other at the centre of the width, or just under the central shaft of the design where the small rosette is drawn. When working a design of this description it is possible to use many different fancy stitches, but in justice to the style and its antiquity the least elaborate ones should be employed. The outline and solid treatment are sufficient to produce any result in this Egyptian method, although if strict conformity to the style is not to be respected the worker may use judgment in the treatment of the various parts with stitches that are best adapted to the requirement.

Illustration No. 6 is the design for a centre, and may be used on pillow-shams, bed and table linen, corners of table-covers, single ornaments on portières, or on wherever else it may be desired to place it. For pillow-shams it should not be more than seven inches across at the widest part, but for corners and table-covers four inches will be sufficiently large.

This design will appear to best advantage if carried out in the solid treatment, and whether in colors or in white it will add to the appearance if parts of the design are filled before being worked with the silk or linen floss, as it rounds the stems nicely and lends a fullness to the petals.

An odd design for a corner is depicted in Illustration No. 7. While it is particularly adapted to a table-cover, a lunch-cloth or a lambrequin, it may be used with equally good results on pillow-shams, table-linen, centre-pieces and others where the centres are in use and the corners are not. The solid treatment is best for this design, as it will emphasize the lines and lend a solidity to the flowers and a thickness to the stems

that cannot be obtained in any other manner. A definite size cannot be specified for this pattern as it can be adapted to so many pieces of various sizes, but for a lunch-cloth a yard square the lotus stem can be seven inches in length, and for napkins four inches will be quite long enough. For very large pieces, such as table-covers or bedspreads, the main stem with flowers can be twelve inches long, or even fourteen, but it should not be enlarged more than fifteen, as it would become too open and lose its character. When a design of this kind is drawn to such large proportions there will be plenty of space for more detail, and this may be done in most cases by the worker who can find it advantageous to add a leaf here and there or a scroll in a similar manner.

Figures A, B and C in Illustration No. 8 are suggestions for small running borders. They may be used from one to two inches in width, and are adapted to small pieces, such as napkins, doilies, small centre-pieces, etc. Parts of the ornament may be worked solid to lend a contrast, and when it is desirable the entire ornament may be carried out in the solid treatment.

It will be an easy matter to arrange corners for these three running patterns, especially figures A and C, as parts of the ornament in the running design can be adapted in such a manner as to work in the corners to advantage.

Figure B is a pattern that can be drawn right and left, or it may continue in the same direction around the edge of a cloth. It will look very attractive, however, if carried in opposite directions—that is, on a square of linen start the design in opposite directions from the centre of each side. This will match the design at the centres and corners, and the union at both places can be made by drawing in small parts of the ornament in a satisfactory manner to harmonize with the running design.



ILLUSTRATION No. 5

two or more inches of plain material should be left, on which to embroider the lotus flower stems and buds, and from the margin this may be separated by a line of fagot stitching. Long fringe can be formed at the ends of the scarf by raveling out the desired number of threads, and a pretty appearance may be given it by knotting it fairly close to the solid material. The main design must be drawn in propor-



ILLUSTRATION No. 4

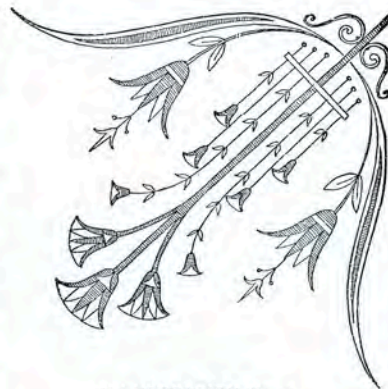


ILLUSTRATION No. 7