

From a survey of fine types of old embroidery, choice of stitches appears

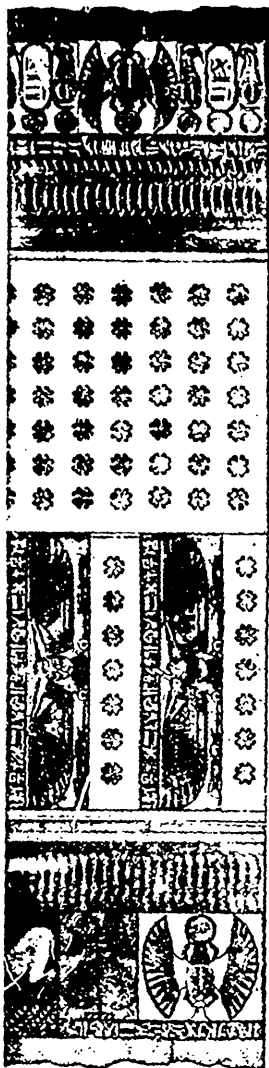


FIG 123. SECTION OF FUNERAL TENT OF AN EGYPTIAN QUEEN, MADE IN A PATCHWORK OF COLORED GOAT SKIN.

have been governed by the design selected for the work and by the peculiar circumstances of its purpose from both the decorative and utilitarian points of view. On the whole, the number of actually different stitches so employed is comparatively few. There are simple parallel running and darning stitches; there are long and short stitches which may be made to flow obliquely, or to radiate or to converge or, in fact, to fall into any direction. There are cross and knit and knotted stitches which are in the nature of spots and dots rather than lines, and there are looped stitches which when used as chain stitch to form a surface of needlework produce a sort of granular texture, and, when used as buttonhole stitches, can be compacted together and formed into strong outlines to mark, as required, salient shapes in a design. Given a needleworker, skillful in these different stitches, and you have a competent person *quâ* technique in respect of almost any kind of embroidery. But technique in stitchery alone is by no means the alpha and omega of embroidery. Embroidery involves taste and knowledge in reproducing forms and harmonizing colors. The ideal embroideress would, like the Arachne of Ovid, draw, paint, and compose the designs for her needlework. Such as one would know and account for the difference between appropriate and inappropriate designs. She might even be genius enough to overstep the usually accepted canons of design and its composition and yet produce something admirable, at least in some respects.

Embroidery I assume is always intended to be decorative; and I think that few will deny that successful decoration is that in which a consonance reigns between the materials expressing it, and the purpose it is to serve. A vogue exists in favor of embroidering flowers, for instance, upon the corners of cloths, handkerchiefs, and so on, depicting such flowers singly or in bunches with as much likeness to the natural things as possible.

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