

**Evolution of Fabrics.**

Dr. J. B. Leasing, of the Berlin art commercial museum, writes: The land that first offers to our notice any important textile fabrics is Egypt. Stuffs have come down to us from the ages of the Pharaohs that are actually worn by the Arabs of the present day, the wrappings of mummies. The material of which these are composed is in every instance linen. The use of wool for wearing apparel was forbidden in ancient Egypt, linen only being considered neat and clean. The specimens in the Berlin museum show that this linen attained a high degree of fineness, and even of transparency. The means employed in the designing of them was a sort of network with glass beads, which were partly round and partly oblong.

Wool of various colors were also woven according to the representations on the monuments, but the stuffs produced were not used for clothes, but for furniture and other purposes. Chairs were upholstered in check patterns. There are also extant a large number of patterns in Egyptian wall paintings. These were originally weavers' patterns—the patterns of the loom pasted on to the walls.

In later times, especially in the period of the Ptolemies and Alexander the Great, very valuable articles were produced in this department. Nothing has been preserved, but the reference in ancient literature warrant us in saying that there were products of embroidery and half embroidery.

The rich finds in upper Egypt belong to the late Egyptian period, mainly to the period from the fourth to the seventh century, A. D., at the time the corpses of the rich were dressed in the robes which they had worn during life, and as much as possible was put into the graves with them. Much of this buried stuff has come down to our day in a good state of preservation. In these fabrics we find but very faint echoes of the old representations of the pyramid period—for instance, the lotus flower, etc. Greek rule and Roman rule had passed over Egypt, but the culture had remained Greek, and its chief center was Alexandria. In the seventh century Greek culture ceases: Islam presses in, also the Copts, who leave traces of their culture in the Sassanide, etc.

The funds referred to have great technical interest. What was possible there must have been possible in other places. Another question, "was more possible?" can not be so positively answered. We have no definite proofs which warrant an affirmative. Much must undoubtedly be regarded as provincial which is yet of considerable importance. Particularly interesting in a technical aspect are linen garments, with designs in wool and provided with borders. Their trimming goes above the sleeve at the opening of the neck, in the lower part not quite round, and rises up on two stripes; on the shoulders two round pieces are attached. Another kind is as follows: The sleeves, the lower part, the breast and shoulder pieces trimmed; in the center where the girdle went round, no garment.

The production of these borders was attained with considerable technical difficulty, and it is interesting to see how it was overcome. The material is first woven through, then designed, and the border part unwoven; on this portion the warp threads, therefore, continue to stand without the shoot going through them. The pattern is wrought on these threads, which are not bound by shoots, but by a process which is really embroidery, as these threads cannot be penetrated with a shuttle, but only with a needle.

We have, also, a whole series of the fabrics woven with naps. We have, further, the technical peculiarity that the coarse woollen threads are inserted with the needle; short, we have a whole series of interesting details, and the designing, which is weighty and important, reminding us in part of Mosaic patterns. They consist principally of Roman and Greek inscriptions. Particularly interesting are a series of floral patterns, which indicate really earnest observation of nature. A series of semi-natural leaf patterns is produced as follows: A large field is formed of dark purple material in a round or pointed oval shape, and on it the threads are put in in white-leaved patterns of extraordinary fineness and excellent taste. These borders are not worked in, but for the sake of convenience are prepared one by one, and sewed on. This is applique work.

About Judea and the Bible gives us many items of valuable information, although in a rather disconcerted way. Much light has been cast upon the subject, we may even say that deep insight has been given us into the textile art of antiquity, by the great dis-

coveries which have been made in Assyria in the course of the present century. Slabs of alabaster were found among the remains of the royal palace of Nineveh, in a good state of preservation, which exhibit in low relief series of figures representing various incidents in ancient life, showing us, for example, this king at court, in battle, hunting, drinking, etc. All these reliefs depict the costumes of the person represented down to the smallest detail.

We see long, close fitting garments of heavy materials with few or no folds, which must have been thick woollen fabrics, embroidered with gold. These garments are covered with circular patterns, stars and in general with plain figures and are provided with borders of the breadth of a hand. The principal part of the garment is completely covered with this border and is quite in the style of the dress now worn on state occasions by the servants of princes. The border is put on either straight or in curves, and has remained so distinct in the sculptures because it has been engraved on the stone with a sharp chisel.

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The experiment may be varied in the following manner. Tie four ends of the thread to the four corners of a square piece of muslin, thus forming a hammock. Dip the whole in strong salt water, then dry it, repeating the operation three or four times. As soon as the muslin and threads are well saturated with the solution and thoroughly dry, place an empty egg in the suspended hammock. Set fire to the hammock, which with the threads will burn, and if this experiment be well prepared, the egg will remain suspended, to the great astonishment of the audience.

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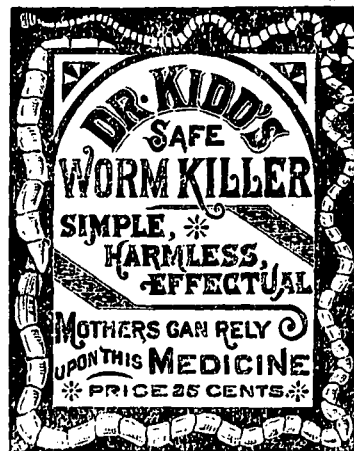
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