

Machinery and Appliances.

[Owing to unavoidable delay in the preparation of drawings, two important articles under this head are held over this week.—Ed. T.M.]

Society of Arts Lectures.

EGYPTIAN TAPESTRY.

By ALAN S. COLE.

(Continued from page 472.)

When, at an earlier part of this lecture, we considered the tunics and their decoration, I referred to the bands of ornament wrought into the cuffs. There is a considerable variety of them. But as they consist almost entirely of waved leafy stems I do not propose to make many remarks upon them in detail. I have selected a few as examples, and will pass them rapidly before you, together with bands of similar patterns, but of rather larger dimensions, which were used on cloths.

Beginning with three of the broader bands for cloths we have patterns such as these. The first is a single continuous waved stem with vine leaves and bunches of grapes, placed between the wavings of the stem. The next to it consists of two waved stems, with vine leaves and tendrils, divided by a straight stem. The third is of a more open-waved stem, with a pair of leaves, perhaps fig leaves, placed in each wave.

In another series, which is of cuff bands, we have bands in pairs. The first is small in pattern and formal in style of ornament. The middle one is made up of a series of repeated single vine leaves on a thick stem with one or two grapes. The last one is of a continuous waved stem of vine leaves. This is bordered on each side with an edging of little stem and ball devices.

The last of the cuff bands contains double bands of continuous and waved ivy stem pattern, which is much in the style of such favourite classic patterns. The second pair of bands is ornamented with a number of *amphora* shaped vases, of a Roman character. The third small band has a single continuous waved stem with alternate trefoils and bunches of berries.

In making up my notes for this lecture I intended to have touched upon the Christian symbols to be seen in some of the Akhmim specimens. But this branch of the subject is a large one, although the specimens themselves may not be very numerous. Of course the vine and grapes might be claimed as Christian emblems. On the other hand, long before Christianity reached Upper Egypt the vine had been cultivated there, and a waved stem, with leaves and fruits springing from it, was a device often used for ornamental bands and borders by Greeks and Romans. So that patterns of like construction with vine leaves are not by any means to be taken as necessarily implying Christian influence in their production. The whole which occurs in Roman-Christian sculptures and wall paintings in connection with Jonah as typifying the Resurrection, was also woven sometimes at Akhmim. But the more distinctly Christian designs from Akhmim are such as contain figures with uplifted hands, which I think must be accepted as *orantes* of Christian meaning. In other pieces we meet with figures of saints which, as I have said, have been identified as St. George, St. Paul of Thebes, St. Christopher, St. Demetrius, and so forth. There seems to be no doubt about these. The rendering, however, of these Christian subjects is, as a rule, barbaric, and cannot compare with that of the Roman designs, or of those which appear to have a Persian or Syrian source. Two of such quaintly barbarous pieces I have selected, and now place before you. The colours of the worsteds are bright; scarlet and crimson predominate in the left-hand specimen. That on the right is rather sombre in tone, although the blues and greens are vivid. Both are parts of tunic bands, comparatively short bands with rounded ends, reaching to about the waist of the dress. This form of band we noted as being apparently of a later date altogether than that of those having Græco-Roman patterns. The principal figure in the band on the left is of a woman with a *nimbus* about her head; she is richly robed, and carries in her right hand a sort of floral staff; or

it may be a *flabellum*. Beneath her left hand, which points upwards, is the rudely-drawn figure of a little child. It is thought that the two represent the Virgin and Child. Above them are two groups of people; the upper one of all may illustrate the miracle of making the blind to see, as one of the figures is raising his hand to the face of the man next him. The lower group is possibly intended for making the dumb to speak or the deaf to hear. Below the Virgin and Child are other figures, the first set of which may be for the making of the lame to walk; one figure gesticulates to another who is leaning on a stick. The



Fig. 15

Band or *clavus* of Coptic design from Akhmim.

lowest group of figures may perhaps be meant for dumb persons who have recovered the use of their tongues, to which two of them seem to be pointing. The only parallel to this style of debased drawing that occurs to me is that of Coptic missal illumination, a small specimen of which is in the South Kensington Museum. The figures in the second band are rather more distinct; the central one is a Christian, in a tunic and cloak, in act of prayer, with both hands uplifted in accordance with the attitude which prevailed with Christians of the 3rd and 5th centuries. Below the praying Christian is a device something like a hive with ears. This I believe to be intended for a temple, for the upper part of it rests upon two pillars. The earlike excrescences from the roof are, it is suggested by a friend, possibly intended for the pointed constructions erected on Egyptian buildings of all periods, to catch the wind and convey it into the interiors. They are called *mulqufs*. In the edgings to both pieces will be seen a succession of petal forms or buds. This is an ornament which occurs in the 6th century wall mosaics at Ravenna and at Rome.

The circular panels which adorned the tunics with short rounded shoulder bands are equally rude in design. Here are two of them. In the left-hand one we find four figures holding scarves above their heads; between them are temples—the construction and details of which are more clearly shown here than in the band in the previous slide. The little device in front of the temple seems to be meant for a tree. The right-hand panel, of which only half remains more or less intact, contains the familiar group of a horseman with his dog and the animal he is hunting. This is repeated in reverse. Ornament of this class is to be seen in silken specimens from Alexandria of the 8th and 9th century. Anastasius Bibliothecarius, the librarian of the Vatican, in the 9th century, and the author of the *Liber Pontificalis*, describes the patterns woven in such silks over and over again. A distinctive feature in them was a series of circles, each one containing either bird or an animal, flowers or trees, men on horseback, swords, &c. For instance, in his "Lives of the Popes," Anastasius writes of stuffs figured with men and horses, "*Hominis et caballus*," and describes a dress with wheels or circular panels and men, "*Vestem cum rotis, et hominibus*," &c. It is probably from such that Akhmim tapestry-weavers at this period took many of their designs.

Examples of these are given in bits of Akhmim weaving done in much larger pieces than those of the Græco-Roman and Persian type. The upper right-hand specimen in this slide gives

us a portion of a large weaving, the pattern of which consisted of a series of large and small circular bands filled in with floral ornament. The employment of repeated circular bands or medallions has been referred to, and this type of pattern was very greatly in vogue for costumes and ornaments classed as Byzantine, from the 8th to the 12th centuries. We have another version of it in the lower long strip, the panels being pairs of mounted archers, a device which carries us back to Persia. On the upper left of the slide we have a sort of trellis pattern, and within the diamonds or squares are medallions and the very favourite quatrefoil and square device of Byzantine ornament; whence, therefore, we may conclude that all these last Akhmim specimens were woven about the 8th to the 10th centuries.

This concludes the series of varied designs which I have selected to bring before you. I feel that I have attempted to crowd too much into this second lecture, and that I have taxed your patience too

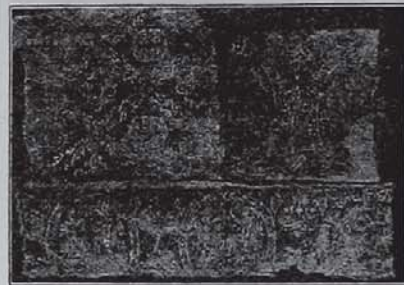


Fig. 16

far. In these circumstances I can hardly venture to encroach further upon your time. Summing up in the fewest words, I may perhaps say that the Akhmim designs seem to be capable of classification into groups which display typical ornaments from the second century A.D. to the 10th century. There may be a few which point to a still earlier date. Looking to the numerous different foreign influences which passed over Akhmim, in common with the whole of Egypt, there appears to be no reason why such should not be the case. The mere process of tapestry or comb-weaving dates, as we have seen, from the 3rd and 4th centuries B.C., and it is principally by that process that most of the specimens were woven.

I may be allowed to draw your attention to the capital coloured fac-similes which have been published by Mr. Griggs for the Department of Science and Art. I hope to continue my inquiries about these most valuable links in the history of ornamental art with which we have been concerned. I shall very greatly value any assistance which may be given to me in this direction, as I feel that at present I have scarcely done more than touch the outskirts of a subject which is intermingled with an enormous number of incidents and conditions connected with a long period of time.

The *Literary World* of yesterday says:—The *Textile Mercury* is a weekly organ for spinners and manufacturers, machinists, bleachers, colourists, and merchants. It has now been six months in existence, and will, we hope, continue to receive the support it richly deserves from all interested in the textile industries.

Some men try advertising as the Indian tried feathers. He took one feather, laid it on a board and slept on it all night. In the morning he grunted out: "White men say feathers heap soft; white man heap fool—humph."—*American*.

GRAIN BAGS.—Mr. Law, the British commercial attaché at St. Petersburg, suggests that indelible marking should be made on grain bags in the process of manufacture, so as to relieve the Russian custom authorities of the necessity of weighing or marking them when brought for shipping purposes to Russian ports. If this arrangement were adopted, smuggling of bags would be an impossibility, as any marked bag found outside a shop or the Custom House precincts could be confiscated.

The cotton-laden steamer, *Amy Dora*, of North Shields, has become a total wreck. The *Amy Dora*, an iron screw steamer of 1,708 tons gross register, went ashore about three weeks ago at Wachaprigue, not far from Norfolk, Virginia. Efforts were made to refloat the vessel, but these were futile. Over a thousand bales of cotton were recovered and taken down to Norfolk. A cablegram said the steamer was sinking in the sand, and that the water was six feet over her decks.