XXXIII

PATTERNS

ANCIENT DESIGNS—CHECKS AND TARTANS—PARTI-COLOURED CLOTHES—EVOLUTION OF ORNAMENTATION

The subject of patterns is a very wide one, and we shall content ourselves with mentioning a few to show how these have survived. When speaking of studs, we had occasion to mention the swastika or fylfot, which is probably the earliest known symbol. It is the forerunner of the cross, and it occurs on ecclesiastical vestments as well as civil clothes, and the well-known key pattern was derived from it. On Plate VII, Figure F, it may be seen on the shoulder of the Romano-Egyptian man, and its use seems to be almost universal. The pine pattern which we see on shawls is of Eastern origin, and it is said that it originally was taken from a map of some rivers in Cashmere.

Checks and plaid are among the commonest of our present-day designs, and the Gauls and those of our forerunners, who flourished at the time of Cæsar, wore breeches of chequered patterns. In fact, the very name of breeches is derived from "breac," which means striped or spotted, and in Gaelic also
signifies the trout, which is speckled. Usually the ancient breeches showed a number of colours, in which, according to Diodorus, red predominated. Queen Boadicea wore a tunic apparently of plaid, the colours of which had a mixture of blue, red, and yellow. The real shepherd's plaid of Scotland is of a plainer character, being merely black and white, but it is in the special tartans of the Scotch clans that we find the system of coloured lines and squares carried to great perfection.

These tartans, as we may judge, date back to times of which we have no record, but they have been used continuously in historic times. In the accounts of King James III of Scotland, in 1471, there are several entries with regard to money spent on tartans. The tartans, of course, were a distinguishing mark of the various Scottish clans, but sometimes, when attempts have been made to identify the patterns, confusion has arisen owing to the fact that many clans had more than one tartan; in fact, there may be the common clan tartan; that which was worn only by the chief and his heir; a dress tartan; a fourth for hunting, and a fifth for mourning. For instance, while the dress tartan of the MacPhersons consists chiefly of black and white, with thin lines of red and yellow, the hunting tartan of the same clan is black and buff, with lines of blue and red. Similarly, in the Royal Stuart tartans, we find that the ordinary Royal Stuart has large red squares, the hunting
tartan is mostly green and blue, while the dress Stuart has a large amount of white in its composition. There was, of course, a wonderful variety in colours, and it is interesting to note that all the dyes required were obtained from common native plants.

In England, after the Norman Conquest, there seems to have been little pattern used up to the time of Henry II, when diaper began to appear. Just as damask takes its name from Damascus, so diaper originally was derived from D’Ypres, meaning "of Ypres," a town which was noted for rich stuffs and fine linen. In Edward II’s time pied cloth and parti-coloured silks came into vogue, while costumes of a parti-coloured character, which developed in the following reign to such an extent, were seen for the first time. Sometimes the whole dress would be symmetrically divided, so that half was of one colour and half of another. Again, the clothes would be striped in various directions, or one would find the right arm and left leg coloured blue, while the other two limbs were red. We get something of the same kind of ornamentation nowadays, as already noticed, in the dress of jockeys and the colours of athletic clubs.

In studying decorative patterns, the way in which some natural object has often become conventionalized is very interesting to trace, and if this is so in the case of art of civilized people, it is still more true of savage decoration. Our object is not, however, to
deal with the evolution of ornamentation pure and simple, though we commend its study to our readers.

Turning to the Jews for a moment, we may recall that part of the adornment of the High Priests consisted of pomegranates and bells. The connection does not seem at all obvious, and Mrs. Finn has suggested that the bells are probably the flowers of the pomegranate which have been conventionalized.