CHAPTER III.

PRIMITIVE AND EGYPTIAN COSTUMES

"For the whole value of the time is in knowing what to do with it." —Emerson.

To study Art, Music or Literature with intelligence one must be familiar with the creations of each age in the past so that one may choose the best rather than accept without discrimination anything that is presented. It is the knowledge of the past that fits one to be a better judge of the present and a more proficient worker in the future. No man, however original he may be, can make other than a development or a retrogression from what has been done before. The modern student cannot, if he will, shake off the influence of the past, and the future generations will feel the influence of the work of today.

Politics and war, religion and superstition, as well as climate, occupation, and environment have greatly influenced the costumes of all ages, therefore one must study all of these subjects with a sympathetic heart and mind, if he would understand the costumes that have been given to us by time. He must be able to imagine that for the time being, he is one of that age, with the advantages or disadvantages and beliefs of that people.

No art can be entirely separated from other activities in life. Whether this book be used for the purpose of informing those who wish to copy garments for historical plays or pageants, or of aiding those who are designing new garments of modern type; or whether it be read merely to supply the imagination with pictures of the past, it should always be borne in mind that the garments of a man are not only a covering for his body but are an expression of his mind, unless purposely designed for the mask.

In every country at different stages of the world's civilization there is to be considered the primitive man, or one who came before the records of history were kept. By the term "primitive man" is meant a stage of thought, not a period of time.

Primitive costume. Nature, with only a little aid from the human hand, provided the costumes for the race. Man clothed himself and his family with skins of animals, or with cloth made of wood fibre. If the climate was warm, the garb was scant and the children were not clad at all; if the weather was cold larger skins and a greater number of them were used. When these covered the head and upper part of the body, the fur was most often left on; but such a garment seemed awkward for the limbs below the knees and for the feet, so the fur was removed and the skin or leather alone was used. A rough dress, if such a covering may be called a dress, was made of leather or fibre-cloth. This consisted of a short slip which hung from the shoulders. It was sometimes left loose at the waist but often was belted in with a leather thong.

Little is known of the fibre made garments and since they had no great influence upon the more civilized dress of later periods, their history is not of importance. It is interesting to know however, that they preceded the garment of woven and dyed cloth.

The fibre of the bark of trees was carefully wet and pressed with a heavy weight but was neither woven nor dyed. Later the Egyptians made a similar cloth from the papyrus plant but this cloth has never been so well known as the paper which was made in a similar fashion. It was made by placing the centers of the stalks side by side with a second layer horizontally across the first, then by thoroughly wetting and pressing, the finest papyrus paper of the ancients was made.

The records of the oldest weaving are not found in cloth since fabric of any kind is fragile and perishable and time lays a destructive hand upon it. Nevertheless, history has recorded a very exact reproduction of the most primitive weaving. This is found on some of the old pieces of pottery. Following is the story of the origin of designs made by ancient weaving. — It was a primitive people that

noticed that the clay would harden where man had left his foot print and that the indentation would hold water, and they modeled small vessels of clay or mud the shape of the indentation made by the heel, put them in the sun to dry and when properly hardened used them as we use the bowls of today.

Ancient woven designs. They made rough kinds of baskets out of grasses and reeds that they might carry more material at one time. These answered the purpose very well when the contents were large, but smaller articles slipped through the crevices and the most natural thing for them to do, after they knew that the earth when hardened would hold together and make a solid wall, was to line their baskets with clay.

One day when the oldest baskets were in use, the reeds snapped and the basket came apart but the clay held together. To their surprise they saw that the vessel was decorated. The woven reeds had pressed a pattern in the clay and around the top was a heavy line where the grasses that had been tied together to make the basket stronger had left their print; the lower part was like a piece of cross-barred cloth. Though the woven reeds have rotted and most of the first pieces of woven cloth has disappeared, we still have recorded on the old clay jugs the origin of weaving.

See illustration No. 6—Sketches of Pottery showing basketry designs (Originals in Metropolitan Museum, New York City.)

No. 1—Hemispherical Bowl. This shows elaborate incised ornament derived from basketry. It is polished red ware and dates back to the Bronze Age.

No. 2—Two Handled Vase. This shows elaborate ornament in relief Bronze Age.

No. 3—White Painted Ware. Many pieces of pottery were painted to represent the basketry patterns. No. 3 shows a flask characteristic of the Egyptian forms and painted with ornament representing a woven design. Bronze Age.

No. 4—Plate Painted. This flat plate is decorated on the under side with elaborate geometrical ornament. Early Iron Age.

Having sketched the primitive man in his garments of skins or fibre and seen him surprised at his own inventions of weaving and decorating, we come to a more civilized individual who understood how to make use of what material he had. This is the Egyptian.

NO. 6. ANTIQUE POTTERY

1. Hemi-spherical Bowl
2. Two Handled Vase
3. White Painted Ware
4. Painted Plate

As the Egyptians were the first to leave records in a form that could not be easily destroyed, history begins with the records of the Egyptians. The temples of Egypt, the colored hieroglyphics, the mummy cases and tombs, and the statues and designs in relief have given to the world valuable information about the personal appearance, costumes and ornamentation from 4400 B. C. to 340 B. C. Egyptian art is similar in character to the race that created it. There is a certain heaviness to it all that lacks the grace and ease seen in the Greek. The type of face and the pose of the figure, as well as the costume of different periods vary, and there are times when it is hard to realize that the anatomy of the human form remains the same, that the folds and lines of a garment are not always made by the tailor but are changed by Nature's constructive work.

The Egyptian had a deep swarthy complexion with very dark hair, a head somewhat flattened, the jaw and chin very prominent, the nose slightly depressed, cheek bones high. The spreading toes, the bow shins, high calves, long swinging arms, flat square hands and the flat foot void of a graceful arch are characteristic of the race.

Egyptian costume. The best known reproduction of the Egyptian head and headdress is the Sphinx.

The headdress was the most important part of the costume as the sun was extremely hot and man scarcely ventured from his door without some covering for his head.

The inferior classes seem to have gone nearly nude and all the different orders of the community seem alike to have worn scant and thin clothing. In many representations of both sexes, the whole upper part of the body appears entirely bare or only adorned with a profusion of necklaces, belts, armlets and bracelets. The complete tunic, seems to have been reserved for the higher orders and even then was so scant and drawn so tightly about the body that the whole natural form showed through it most distinctly. Illustration 7 shows the most important styles of male costume. From the costume of the fan bearers, which was a very common style for the most of the classes of the Egyptians, grew all the other garments.

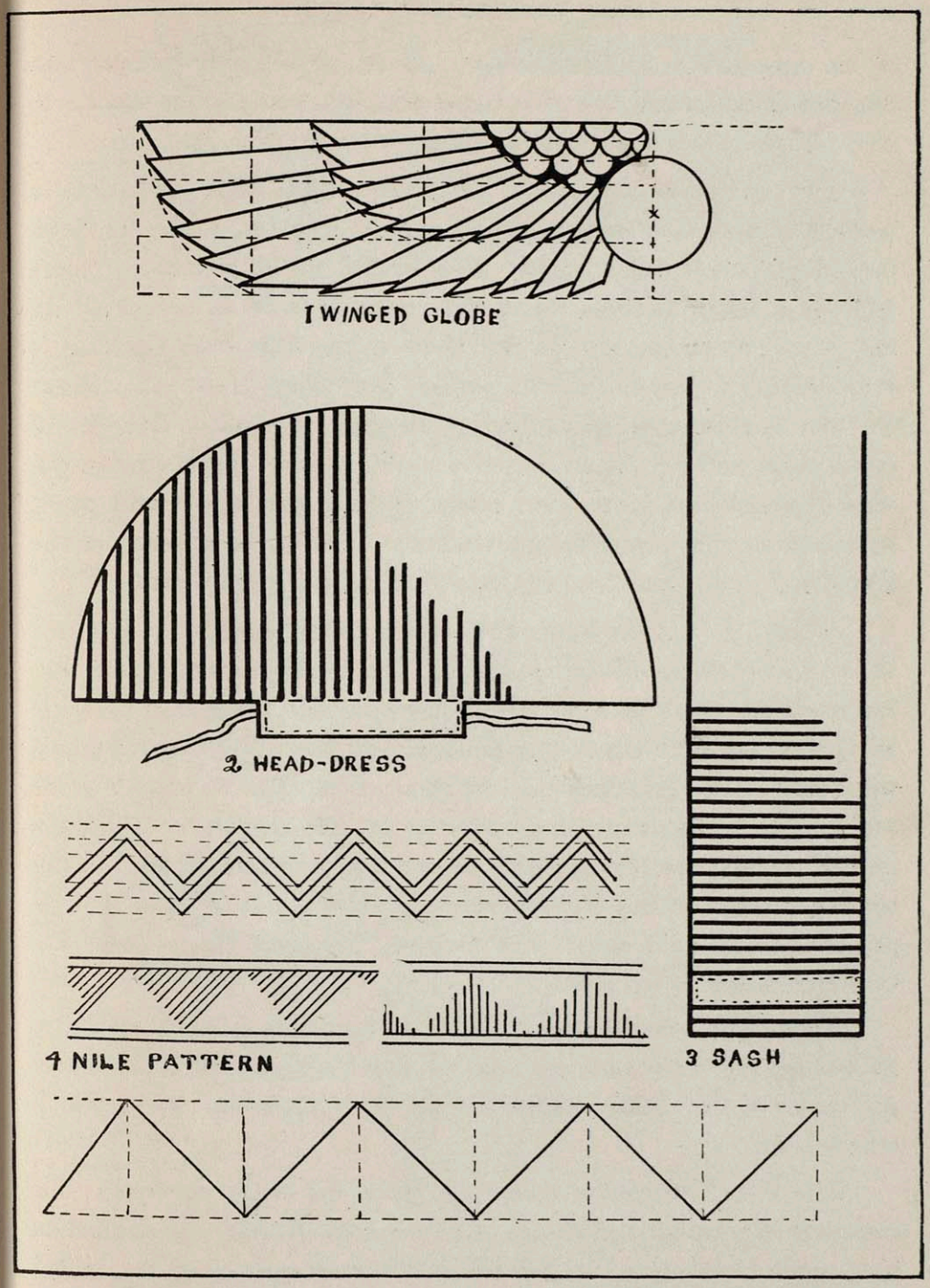
The headdress was made of one piece of striped cloth cut in a semicircular shape with a slight band for the head. This form was used for both men and women, rich and poor. The wealthier people, of course, wore more elaborately decorated garments. The material was usually of linen and striped patterns were the most popular. The linens woven for the nobility were almost as fine and soft as silk. Cotton was rarely used and it is thought that silk was not used until after the Roman conquest. (Illustration 8—No. 2. Illustration 9—Nos. 3 and 4.)

The skirt part of the costume consisted of one wide piece of cloth draped about the thighs and tied in front. The more elaborate costumes were similar but were wider and consequently showed more folds and hung down more over the limbs. The ornament was hung over the folds in such a manner as to make the cloth appear to have been cut in some special form but in reality only the ends of the cloth hung from the waist. (Illustration 9—No. 2.)

The woman's costume was formed on the same idea as the man's but with a plain skirt of one piece of material and a jeweled belt and a collar connected by straps. No other covering was used for the upper part of the body except that sometimes a straight piece of cloth was thrown over the shoulders and fastened on either side of the front to the collar. A belt was often used, encircling the body just under the breasts as well as confining the small of the waist. These as well as the straps which crossed the shoulders, and met or supported these bands, were elaborately decorated and jeweled. Numerous rows of rich beads were worn around the neck by both sexes, and bracelets and bands for the ankles were common.

Meaning of Egyptian designs. As the style of raiment was so very simple, its ornamentation is of equal or greater value to one interested in costumes. Every color and every design had some serious meaning to the peoples of ancient times and though the patterns and colors are still used, few know or think of their real significance. How many think of the hand that first drew the design

NO. 7. EGYPTIAN FAN BEARERS



NO. 8. EGYPTIAN COSTUME AND ORNAMENT

1. Winged Globe
2. Head-dress
3. Sash
4. Nile Pattern

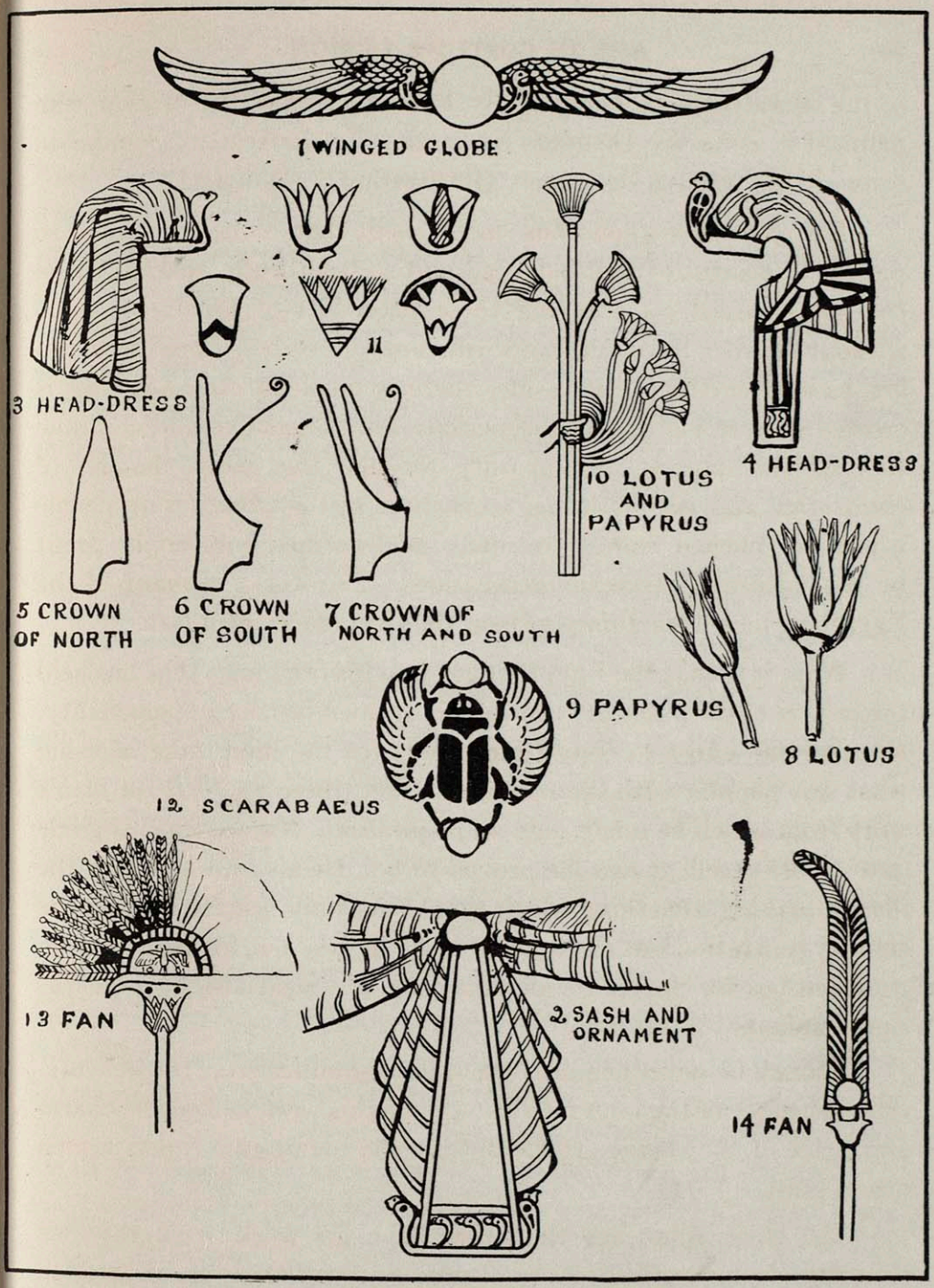
of the scarabaeus as being really human, or that the person who planned it as having thoughts concerning its construction similar to those of the modern designer? (Illustration 9—No. 12.)

For centuries thousands have used that same ornament so perfect in design, so well balanced and so beautifully spaced; from the ideas gained by studying these little bits of ornament, units without number have been and will continue to be so produced. In art, as in everything else in life, there is much in each age that is created only to last for a brief period; few things live and continue to hold the interest of humanity through the many changes of civilization and yet, in an age so early in history, there were people who accomplished more than many modern men who might profit by the culture of preceding generations. The works of many of the Egyptians have something in them that has made them last.

What is it that the Egyptian put into his ornament that has held the respect of the public for centuries? It must be his real personality. He made no effort to copy from others for the mere sake of using what was popular with the masses; in fact, there was little of man's work from which he might gain an inspiration. Nature was his guide and a most excellent one she proved to be. He also worked with the idea of making something which should not only last for his and the coming generation but for time eternal. It was not for man that he provided but for the spirits and the gods, the great idea of preservation dominated in his mind.

Though he never acquired the skill to produce art of the delicate, refined beauty of the later periods; though his work lacked the charm and grace of the classic art, he did lay the foundation upon which others built.

The close adherence to nature gave his work strength; his sincerity of purpose and desire of preserving all that was dearest to him, made his every color and design the very symbol of durability; the lack of influence from preceding generations and the scarcity of working material made his results the very essence of simplicity.



NO. 9. EGYPTIAN DESIGNS

1. Winged Globe
2. Sash and Ornament
3-4. Head-dress
5. Crown of North
6. Crown of South
7. Crown of North and South
8. Natural Form of Lotus
9. Natural Form of Papyrus
10-11. Conventionalized Lotus and Papyrus
12. Scarabaeus
13-14. Fan

The slaves and lower classes seldom wore garments with any ornamentation; their raiment was very plain.

The ruling families dressed in a fashion similar to the Pharaoh and his family without using such rich material or showing such a profusion of jewels. The higher the rank, the more gold and precious stones were worn. As the Pharaoh was of the highest rank he had the first right to wear the symbols of the deities. But as most of the designs were symbols of the gods who ruled over all, the people as well as the ruler were allowed to use them and there were but few patterns that did not appear on the garments of the rich as well as on the garments of the ruler.

See illustration No. 8—A detail drawing of the winged globe and nile patterns. Notice the proportions of the winged globe. The top horizontal line is divided into nine parts. the three sections of the wing starting at the third, sixth and ninth points of division. A vertical line is dropped from the fourth and seventh points to the lower line. This shows the end of the lower curve fo the wing. The circle for the globe or sun is two-thirds of the height of the design and is placed in the center of the design so that one-sixth of the vertical space is left above and below the circle.

The Winged Globe and Cobra. The "Winged Globe," one of the best known forms of Egyptian ornament, was the emblem of the great sun god, "Ra," who was first king of Egypt, chief of all deities, and the ancestor of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was the living god who had power over earth and could communicate with the gods in the heavens, while "Ra" was the "Departed God" or the one that ruled the heavens. (Illustration 9—No. 1. Illustration 8—No. 1.)

Most nations speak of the physical and of the spiritual body but with the Egyptians, man and his "double" were mentioned. Pharaoh communicated with his subjects and his "double" communicated with his ancestors and with the gods.

"As Ra the Sun God and his descendants are rulers of Earth and Heaven, all must be submissive to the great rising sun or there will be no peace on earth or in the hereafter."

This hymn written to the rulers was preserved on an old piece of parchment and it gives a very clear idea of the importance of the ruler and of the way in which his subjects worshipped him. The people sang in a chorus while the harpist played:

"Turn thy face to me, Oh Rising Sun, which lightens the world with thy beauty; disk sparkling amongst men that drivest away the darkness of Egypt,

"Thou resemblest thy father when he rises in the heavens and thy rays penetrate into all lands.

"There is no place deprived of thy beauty for thy words rule the destinies of all lands.

"When thou art resting in thy palace thou hearest all that is said in every country for thou hast millions of ears.

"Thine eye is more brilliant than any star of heaven, and sees better than the sun.

"If any speak, even if the mouth that speakest be within the walls of a house, its words reach thine ear.

"Oh King, gracious Lord, who gives to all the breath of life."

The sun was the emblem of all that was good and noble, of power and strength, of eternity. When the sun rises in the morning it seems to be born on wings, hence, we have the Winged Globe. As the Egyptian sun is most often red, the globe of the design is red and that color as well as the design became a symbol of good and of life eternal. As the sun god was supposed to protect his people in life or death, the design, made in many different forms but always known as the winged globe, was usually seen on some part of the garments of the living and the dead. It is found adorning the front of the head-dress on parts of the jewelry, on fans or on the girdle or skirt. It ornaments the ruler's throne and his chariot. A body was never placed in a mummy case that did not have a winged globe as part of the decoration.

The Egyptian was very fond of thinking of material subjects in the same way he did of the human being, thus, if a man were really two men, physical man and his double, then the world could be regarded as two earths divided by the course of the sun into two parts—Northern earth which is night, Southern, day. The cobra with head erect, ringed neck and swelling throat was the protecting goddess of the South and was the generative power of the sun and on

either side of the sun on the winged globe the conventional form of the cobra is often found.

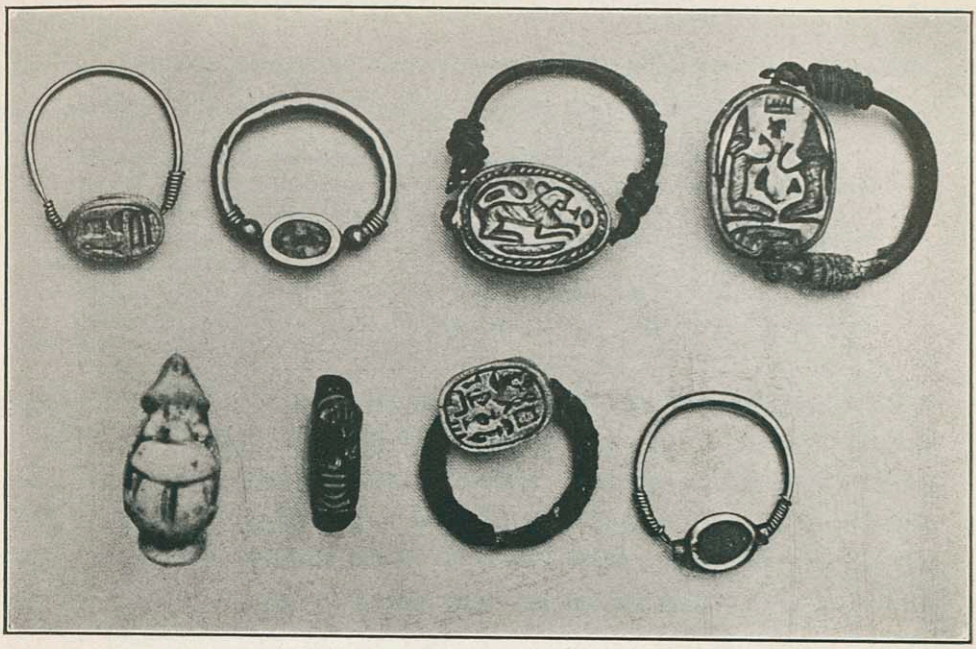
The Vulture. Osiris was the god of night and ruled the dark world below as well as the living world during the darkness. The protecting deity of the North was the vulture with outspread wings. White was the color for the north also for mourning and to denote reverence.

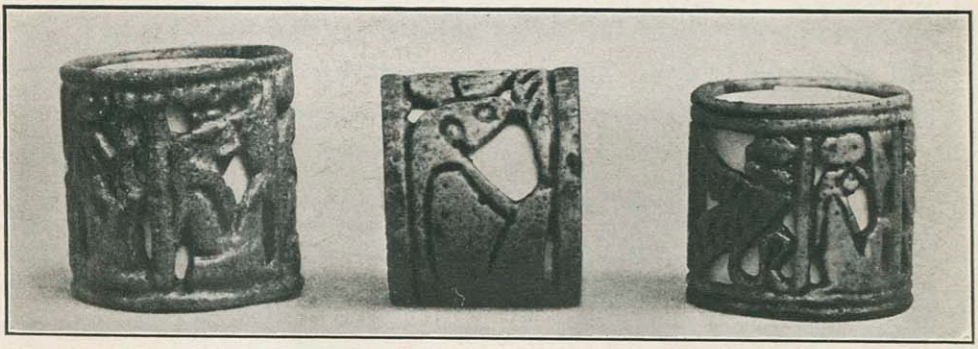
The Asp. The asp with head erect, and a short thick body was a sign of royalty, divine goodness and immortality and in the front of the royal head dress in the center, was found the head of the asp made of gold and often set with beautiful gems. It was said that the asp would vomit flames and in battle, destroy anyone who dared attack the king.

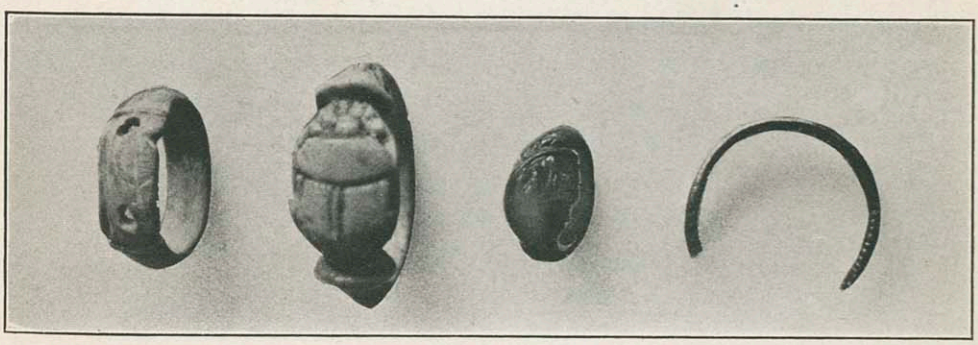
The Crown. The living Pharaoh, ruler of all Egypt, wore a double crown or a combination of two crowns, the white cone shaped crown of upper or northern Egypt, and the red peaked band of lower or Southern Egypt. (Illustration 9—Nos. 5, 6 and 7.)

In many services the ruler appeared wearing only the crown of the South and when the services were completed this crown was removed and replaced by that of the North. In many other services however, he wore both crowns. Since the ruler was the ruler of both the day and the night, he used the symbols of both kingdoms and red, white and yellow became the royal colors. Because gold was used chiefly by the nobility and to glorify the Gods, the yellows in the costumes became symbolic of high rank and luxury. The Pharaoh's garments were made of the finest white materials and were ornamented in red and gold.

The Seal Ring. The cornelian, a red stone easily polished, was the stone most often used as the set in the Pharaoh's ring and with the scarabaeus carved in the stone was used by him as his official seal. This seal was of the greatest importance for keys were seldom, if ever used to fasten a lock. Those who had something of value secured the doors of their treasure house by wooden bolts set in mud and stamped with a seal. To break a seal, especially a royal one, was a







NO. 10. EGYPTIAN RINGS

1. Ring of Superintendent of the Palace
2. Ring of Nefert-Iti, Wife of Akhenaten
3. Ring of Rameses VI

crime so severely punished that few cared to attempt it. The seal ring was thus the same as the key to the royal treasure house.

See illustration No. 10—Signet rings with royal and private names.

Ring of the Superintendent of the place: Light green and gold. The scarab and seal are made to turn. Dated about 17000 B. C.

Ring of Nefert — Iti, wife of Akhenaten: Shows sacred hawk and key cut from a green stone. Dated about 13700 B. C.

Ring of Rameses VI—Dated about 1150 B. C. Made of dark metal.

Ring of Lotus design—Ring of solid blue-green stone. Design of the Scarabaeus is found in the center, lotus design at either side.

Colors. The colors most extensively used for fabrics and for jewelry and garment design were green, yellow, red, light blue, tan and black. Egypt is noted for the wonderful dyes by which these colors were produced. Cakes of color have been found in some of the tombs which prove that mineral dyes first and later vegetable dyes were used. Of the latter indigo is the best known no doubt but this blue is not so characteristic of the time as the more brilliant and lighter blue that was composed of an ash with wonderful power of resisting chemical agents and neither turning green nor black on exposure to the air. (For further information concerning color composition see "A History of Art in Ancient Egypt" by George Perrot and Charles Chipiez. Vol. 2. pages 334,6,7.)

The Lotus and the Papyrus. The more delicate patterns were made from floral motives, from the papyrus, the symbolic plant of the North and from the lotus, the symbolic plant of the South. These flower forms were conventionalized in numerous ways, all good examples of radiation, proportion and balance. As the God of the Nile united the two kingdoms, the design is found of the lotus blossoms of the south and the papyrus of the north held together by the hand of the Nile God. (Illustration 9—No. 10.)

"In that dusk land of mystic dream
Where dark Osiris sprung,
It bloomed beside his sacred stream
While yet the world was young.
And every secret Nature told,
Of golden wisdom's power,
Is nestled still in every fold,
Within the Lotus flower." — *Wm. Winter*

The Nile Pattern. The Nile by its annual inundation fertilized the land and, giving life to the various crops, was worshipped with great reverence and on almost every costume this simple design, symbolic of the life renewing stream was used. (Illustration 8—No. 4.)

It was not known who the first woman was who thought of embroidering this design on her linen but it must have been a young girl in her teens. The small children wore only a bit of jewelry and no clothing, so clothing was evidently new and a decoration to her, but her feelings were much the same as those of the modern girl who longs for something different and more elaborate than that of her parent's. On a very hot day she probably carried her work with her to the bank of the Nile where she watched the waves as they one after another rolled off into the distance, then selecting from her colored threads a few strands which seemed the most appropriate she set out to embroider the name of the great water god whom she had been taught to worship. Having no alphabet at her command to spell his name, she wove in and out a line which represented to her the waves of the water. Finishing with one thread and surveying it with a critical eye and deciding it a success she wove another and yet another by the side of the first until she made what is now known as the Nile Pattern and the soft green she used is known as nile green.

The Collar of Golden Rings. In early Egyptian times money was not used in trade nor, did the Pharaoh reward his subjects for service done him in coined money but used golden rings instead. Gold rings were also used by the nobility. In the markets goods were exchanged by the poorer people but the wealthier people purchased what they desired by the use of pieces of gold and by bits of precious stones. The golden rings were fastened together in chains which varied in length and thickness according to the amount to be paid.

To have a golden collar placed around one's neck by the sovereign while kneeling before him was a great honor and distinction and thus the giving of such an ornament became a symbol of affection and respect just as the finger ring did in later years. Many stories have

been told in connection with these collars some of which were set with emeralds, jasper, garnets, rubies, carnelians and other precious stones.

The Scarabaeus and the Pectoral. The sacred beetle or scarabaeus was the emblem of transmigration and immortality and of the god who assisted man through the gates of heaven. The design showing the conventionalized form of this little creature was often used on the garments of the living but perhaps the best forms have been found in the jewelry made for the dead. (Illustration 9—No. 12.)

The ancient Egyptian lived that he might die. Death was a privilege and the best linen was woven for the covering of the mummies, a prayer of special meaning of application to the deceased being said as each fold of the mummy covering was wound on the body and as the people thought, was held in by the covering. The best of the jewelry of the time was made to adorn the bodies of the royal family after being embalmed and made ready for the mummy case.

Furniture was made for the tomb that the occupant might enjoy in the future life all the comforts he had possessed in the past.

The interior of the tombs bore decorations showing the chief incidents in the life of the occupant. It was believed that the occupant's double roamed at will in the tomb and that when he looked at the picture of the table set for a feast, it became real to him and his hunger was satisfied. The doubles were never seen by the living except, when on roaming about after dark, some of the night shadows were seen. The appearance of these shadows or ghosts greatly alarmed the living for it was believed that the doubles would never leave their tombs unless some grave or terrible calamity was about to befall the people.

When an Egyptian died, his body was taken from his home for burial preparation, the vital organs being removed and the body being virtually pickled for many days before it was returned to the house for the burial ceremonies. There the master of ceremonies fastened at the dead man's throat a scarabaeus of green jasper bearing

an inscription which forbade his heart, "the heart which came to him from his mother, the heart which accompanied him on earth," to rise up and witness against him before the tribunal of Osiris. Often the beetle was shown wearing wings and holding balls of fire or the sun between its feet.

For those of royal birth a jeweled case, known as the pectoral because it covered the breast or pectoral muscles, was made for the scarabaeus.

One of the finest specimens of Egyptian jewelry is the pectoral found in the tomb of the son of Rameses II. It is a splendid gold and jeweled ornament in the form of a naos or shrine on which there is a vulture, with wings boldly spread in wide curves, and a sacred serpent side by side, while directly above these floats a hawk on extended wings with seals, emblems of eternity, in his claws and above the head of the hawk is an oval containing the name, without the title of Rameses III.

The Fan. Of all the toilet requisites, the fan is undoubtedly the most interesting to those studying or planning costumes for it has such a close relation to the styles of the garments. It alone would almost suffice to furnish a historical picture of the artistic and technical development of industrial art through all periods for its history can be traced back for three thousand years. The Egyptian fan is the origin of the other styles, which styles existed but did not enjoy the same popularity in every period. The Egyptian fan was not carried by the user but by a special attendant provided for this purpose. The handles of the Egyptian fans were usually flexible and the fan bearer held the fan to one side to shield the owner from the rays of the sun or waved it back and forth to direct a current of cooler air toward the face, or to keep flies and insects away from his master. Some were given the name of "fly flappers." (Illustration 9—Nos. 13 and 14.)

Many of the costume designs were repeated in the decorations of the fans. The fan proper was usually made of leaves or of feathers

cleverly dyed and so arranged to make effective patterns. The support was decorated with jewels or else artfully painted. In most cases the fan bearer was a slave but the Pharaoh's fan bearer was one who through some service to the country or who through ability to take charge of some exceptionally difficult task, won this position of especial favor and honor.

LESSON III.

Make a sheet of sketches showing an Egyptian costume and two or more Egyptian designs. Color at least one design. Notice the proportion and rhythm in the design.

Make an original design for a winter waist using an Egyptian design for the ornament. (A & B)

Embroider or work out in beads an Egyptian design. (A)

Make an Egyptian costume out of paper or cloth. Make the ornament out of painted brass and beads. (C)

Arrange on a sheet, bits of modern trimmings, cloth or pictures of costumes which resemble the Egyptian.