

TT 751
.W5
Copy 1

Raffia



Embroidery

on

**Art
Burlaps**

and
**How
it
is
Done**



H. B. Wiggin's Sons Co.
Manufacturers of
Fab-Ri-Ko-Na
WOVEN WALL COVERINGS
Bloomfield, N. J.

Copyright 1904



THE RAFFIA PALM

LIBRARY of CONGRESS

Two Copies Received

NOV 2 1904

Copyright Entry

Nov. 1, 1904
CLASS A XXc. No:

100,595
COPY B.

TT751

.W5

The Raffia Palm



MODERN NATIVE HOUSES
ANTANANARIVO

IN FAR-OFF Madagascar, in the lowlands along the sea-coast, where the heat and moisture make vegetation grow in spendthrift luxuriance, one of the most striking and picturesque features of the landscape is a tall palm tree, sturdy of trunk, from the upper third of which huge feather-like leaves are flung in great profusion. This is the Raffia palm, and the raffia now becoming so popular and so variously

useful is the fibre stripped from those long, beautiful leaves.

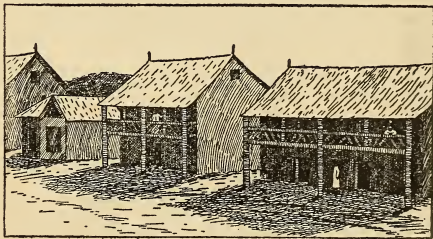
Do you remember how Sinbad the Sailor escaped from a desert island by tying himself fast to the leg of a giant bird known as the Roc? The historian of the Arabian Nights does not tell us what finally became of the Roc, but tradition from another source declares that the Roc, driven from her native haunts by the

encroachments of men, flew away down the coasts of Africa and settled on Madagascar, where her cast-off feathers, taking root in a favorable soil, became the raffia palm, whose leaves, are, indeed, strongly suggestive of gigantic plumage.

The Island of Madagascar, off the southeastern coast of Africa, is nearly 1000 miles long from north to south, and about 350 miles wide at the widest part. Its area is perhaps 230,000 square miles; its population is estimated at over 4,000,000; it is 250 miles from the African mainland, from which it is divided by the Mozambique channel.

For some miles back from the coast the land is low, intersected by arms of the sea, by many lagoons and rivers, but more than half of the interior is a high plateau rich in rice fields. Here the ruling Hova tribe has its home, and on some hills nearly in the centre of this high region is the capital city, Antananarivo, with 100,000 inhabitants. It is 200 miles distant from Tamatave, the great seaport of the eastern coast of the island. For some years the island has been governed by the French, who have done much to civilize the natives, and develop the resources of the land.

The raffia palm is not only a striking and charming feature of the lowland landscape, it is also one of the most important elements in the life of the people. Its large seed-bud resembling that of the cabbage palm supplies a nourishing vegetable food, its wood enters largely into the construc-



A VILLAGE STREET

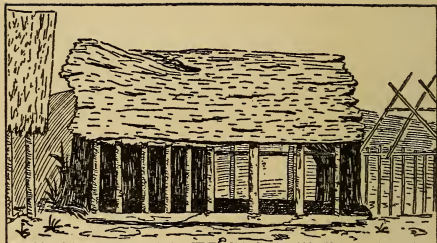
tion of their houses, while from its leaves they secure thatching for walls and roofs, and fibre, which they weave and utilize in almost numberless ways.

This fibre, which is the Raffia now becoming so interesting and important to us,

is the under skin of the Raffia palm-leaf. When the leaves are nearing maturity they are taken from the tree. The native women, who are very skilful in the work, using their knives with great dexterity, cut across the under side of the leaf near the stem, and strip that skin from the upper, just as one may separate the inner from the outer skin of the peapod.

This under skin is laid in the sun until thoroughly dried. Then it is torn into the ribbon or string-like strands that make it look to our eyes so much like a kind of grass. For weaving these strands are tied end to end, as our grandmothers sewed "carpet-rags"; but for export the strands are twisted into ropes, the ropes plaited into rolls two to four inches thick, the whole being so tightly bound with an outer wrapping of fibre that it seems as solid as a stick of wood.

Until recent years little of the raffia fibre was sent out from the island, but it is now fast becoming a valuable export. In the season, schooners of light draught visit the little villages along the coasts, gathering up the crop, which is taken to the great trading-ports and sent to far off lands.

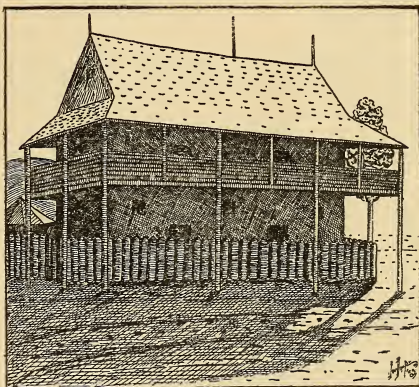


PRIMITIVE NATIVE ARCHITECTURE

The Raffia fibre retains considerable strength even when reduced to a fine thread. Of such threads the natives weave a very good sort of cloth which was once generally used for clothing, and is still so used in parts of the island by certain classes. In those regions that have come closest into touch with civilization, muslins and calicoes have superseded the native cloth. In such regions, however, the fibre is woven into hangings for the house, into mats for various purposes and the coarser weaves form awnings, covers for the ubiquitous umbrellas, and other useful articles.

In the marketplace of a town like Antananarivo one may see a native sitting on a raffia rug under the shelter of a raffia umbrella, attending a booth draped with raffia mats, whereon in baskets of raffia are articles of various kinds which when sold will be wrapped in raffia covers and tied with raffia twine.

Of course the native work in raffia has been somewhat improved under the instruction of white men, but for the most part the weaving is still done on native looms of a primitive type, and in patterns which exhibit the native taste and skill.



IMPROVED NATIVE ARCHITECTURE

Raffia Embroidery

Raffia is now utilized in many ways. The soft, pliable, but very strong strands are easily woven or plaited by the hands of kindergarten children. Makers of fancy boxes, baskets, photograph holders and the like use it quite extensively. It is even shredded very fine and used in crocheting a raffia lace of which exquisite hats are made, or which is employed in delicate applique embroidery.

The most popular use for raffia is, however, in direct embroidery work such as we explain and illustrate in our catalogue, "Home Embroidery on Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Art Pillow Covers" in which we show seven designs for raffia-worked pillow covers, and two table cover designs. In each case the design is simple, and the stitches are easy to understand and execute. The colorplate which we send with each pillow cover gives an excellent idea of the style of stitch used in working out the various parts of the design, but for the benefit of those who have no experience in embroidery work we offer some suggestions which will, we think, enable any intelligent person to do this work without difficulty.

One stumbling-block in the way of its introduction is the uncertainty about the kind of stitches which may be used in working out the designs. The fact is that the stitches used in Raffia embroidery do not differ from those made use of in other embroidery work, and we herewith give drawings showing the most important of these.

Notice, first, that this work is done in free, bold stitches. The effects produced are not dependent on fineness or delicacy of handling, as in the case of embroidery with silk. Both the burlap and the raffia have a certain dignified coarseness, suggestive of

strength, and the stitches used must be consistent with the material.

The stitch most frequently useful is the Outline Stitch (No. 2, page 11). This may be used for all outline work, and is often available for filling in solid parts.

In beginning any of these stitches, instead of making a knot at the end of the raffia strand, run a few stitches (presently to be covered over by the regular stitches) on the right side of this burlap. In finishing, run them at the back of the burlap, or you may use a buttonhole stitch.

Design No. 500—The outline of the basket-work border, outline stitch; the cross stitches in the corner sections are merely long stitches laid across each other and tacked down at the crossing points; the outline stitch is used for the single lines connecting flowers with flowers or wheat-head with wheat-head; the green leaves may be made by putting rows of outline stitches closer together, or any straight stitch can be used for the filling, making the stitches long or short, according to the requirements of the space; the same straight long and short are used in working the flowers, and the wheat grains are also made in the same simple way, with the touch of orange color set in by single straight stitches on top of the grains, which are made by the natural raffia.

Design No. 501—Here the work is equally easy. All the black outlining is done with the outline stitch; the filling of the green leaves is done with simple long and short stitches; the same are used in forming the flower-part of the thistle, and the green bud. Although this design is very handsome when worked out, the stitches are such that a child could make them.

Design No. 502—In working this design the colorplate will be of prime assistance. By it you will see that the border is composed of an outside line of red, made of a single row of outline

stitching, an inside line of black, a line of the natural next inside the black, and then sufficient rows of green to complete the filling from the natural line out to the red. The outlines of the leaves, buds and flowers are simply single rows of black; the stems reaching up to the flowers and buds, single rows of green; while the filling in of leaves, buds and flowers is made with the straight long and short stitches, slanted as indicated on the colorplate. In the centre of the leaves are a few stitches of the natural raffia, with a stitch or two of the same on the buds.

Design No. 503—This peculiar scroll design scarcely needs a word of explanation, as the manner of making is fully shown by the colorplate. The outline stitch may be used exclusively here, excepting where the cross-stitches are used to break up the blank space between the outlines. The colorplate is misleading in one respect—the light red stitches which run with the green stitches and make the outline, should have been yellow instead of red, as they are made with the natural raffia. Red is used only where the bright red stitches are shown.

Design No. 504—This design of Indian bands and scrolls is particularly appropriate to the raffia and the burlap, and, although it looks rather intricate, is far from difficult to execute. The outline of all the scrolls and bands are made with single rows of outline stitch, using the colors of raffia indicated on the colorplate. The filling in is done with single straight stitches. In making these in the scrolls, be careful to let the slant of your stitches correspond to the curve of the scroll, which is done by making the stitches lap a little on the inside edge of the curve. Filling in the figures in the bands is merely a matter of making straight stitches, and laying them side by side with as much neatness and regularity as possible.

Design No. 505—Here is a Persian design which finishes with a peculiar richness. The first glance at the picture in the catalogue gives the impression of elaborateness and difficulty. With the colorplate before you, however, the design is seen to consist of a succession of intelligible and ordinary lines, almost entirely done in the outline stitch. If you first make the general outline of the two plaques, the filling in will be found easy and rapid. There seems to be a good deal of detail involved in the execution of this design, but when you analyze it you find that the number of difficult figures is small, the same figure being frequently repeated. When you have mastered each one of these separate parts, the repetitions present no difficulties.

Design No. 506—This is an Egyptian design, and all the figures inside of the border are full of the symbolism of the land of the Pharaohs. The colorplate shows the color scheme as it is when the design is worked on the crimson burlap. On the extreme outside of the border two lines of black are made with two lines of blue between them. On the inside of the border a black line comes next to the filling, then a yellow line, and then a green line on the extreme inside. Black lines break this border band into large and small sections, the large sections being filled in with the green, the smaller sections with the yellow. In all this work, and in outlining the figures in the centre of the design, the outline may be used with good effect. The filling in of the figures is done with straight stitches inclined at the angles indicated on the colorplate. The circle between the wings, and the head of the asp are filled in with the long and short stitches.

Design No. 550—This Egyptian table cover design is similar in *motif* and execution to pillow cover Design No. 506. Our colorplate shows a quarter of the complete design. The manner of working this design is shown so plainly on the color-

plate that, with the directions given for No. 506, no one should have difficulty in securing the most pleasing results.

Design No. 551—Here is a design which has been a source of gratified pride to each person who has worked it out. It makes a most striking and charming table cover, and is wonderfully easy to make. The outline stitch is again the prominent factor in the work. The filling of the sunflowers is merely the straight long and short stitch, and the heavy, vine-like stems are but successive rows of outline stitching. The filling of the leaves is made by stretching long stitches across the width of the leaf, and catching them with the under and over stitches as shown on the colorplate.

Various expedients are used to hem these table covers, the simplest way being to catch the hem with a chain stitch (page 12), or the feather stitch (page 14). Another way is to catch the edges with an open buttonhole stitch, putting a row of outline stitching back of the inside ends of the buttonhole stitches. A pretty effect is gained by running strands of suitable colored raffia along the edge of the goods, and catching the strands under the buttonholing.



Crewel Stitch (No. 1). Having made a start in the usual way keep your thread downwards under your left



thumb and below your needle—that is, to the right; then take up with the needle, say $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch of the burlap, and bring it out through the hole made in starting the

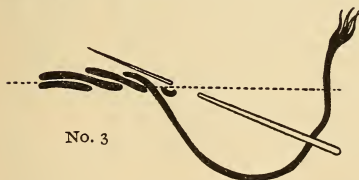
stitch, taking care not to pierce the strand. This gives the first half stitch. If you proceed in the same way your next stitch will be full length.

Outline Stitch (No. 2). This differs from the Crewel Stitch only in that the thread

is always kept upwards above the needle—that is, to the left. The stitch is useful for single lines and for outlining solid work.



Stem Stitch (No. 3). Begin with the usual half stitch; then, holding the thread downwards instead of proceeding as in Crewel

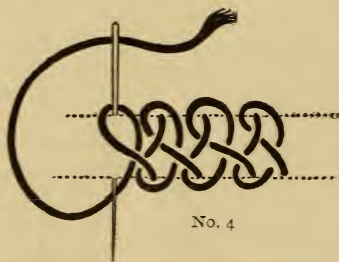


Stitch you slant your needle so as to bring it out a little higher up than the half-stitch, but precisely above it. You next put the needle in $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in advance of the last

stitch, and, as before, bring it out again in a slanting direction a little higher up.

Chain Stitch (Nos. 4 and 5). The simpler forms of chain stitch are so familiar that we illustrate only the two more intricate forms. These stitches are unlikely to be frequently used in Raffia work.

No. 4 is worked horizontally from right to left. Bring your needle out at a point which is to be the lower edge of your work, throw your strand around to the left, and, keeping it all the time loosely around your thumb, put your needle under the thread and twist it once around to the right. Then, at the upper edge of your work, put in the needle and slide the thread towards the right towards the needle out exactly below



No. 4

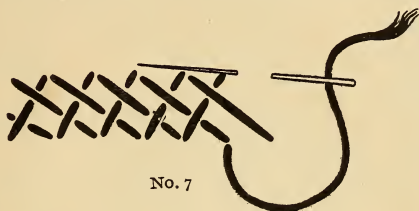
where you put it in, carry your thread under the needle towards the left, draw the thread tight, and the first stitch is done.

No. 5 is a variation on No. 4, and is worked vertically, downwards. Having, as before, put your needle under the thread and twisted it once around, put it in at a point which is to be the left edge of your work, and, instead of bringing it immediately below that point, slant it to the right, bringing it out on that edge of the work, and finish as No. 4.

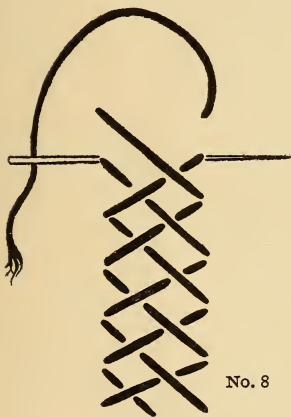


No. 5

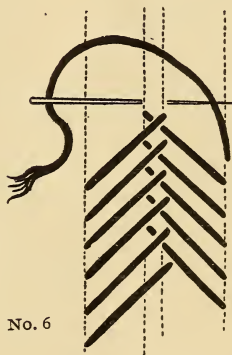
Herringbone Stitch (Nos. 6, 7, 8.) The ordinary zigzag Herringbone Stitch does not need illustration but we give three of the more involved forms. All of the Herring-Bone Stitches are



No. 7

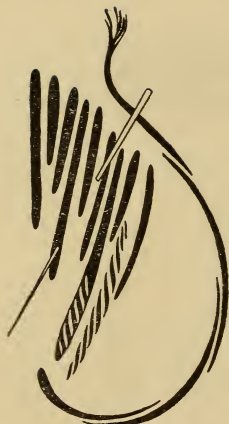


No. 8



No. 6

adapted to Raffia work. The illustrations (Nos. 6, 7, 8,) show so plainly how these stitches are made that it is not necessary to give detailed instructions also.



No. 9

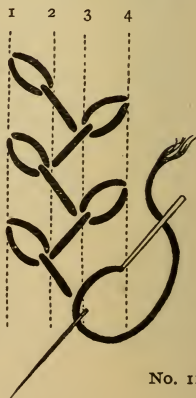
Plumage Stitch (No. 9). The Plumage Stitch, also sometimes called the "Embroidery Stitch" or "Dovetail Stitch" is used in shaded leaves of flowers or foliage. It is sometimes very serviceable in raffia embroidery.

Buttonhole Stitch (No. 10). Leaving the common forms of the Buttonhole Stitch, we give (No. 10) one illustration of a very effective stitch of this class, sometimes used for border-work.



No. 10

Feather Stitch (No. 11). The Feather Stitch has several variations. We illustrate one which is very effective, and not difficult. Either mark or imagine four guiding lines, 1, 2, 3, 4, from left to right. Bring your needle out at the top of line 1. Make a chain stitch slanting downwards from line 1 to line 2. Put your needle into line 3, a little lower down, and, slanting it upwards, bring it out on line 4, level with the point where you last brought it out. Make a chain-stitch slanting downwards this time from right to left, and bring your needle out on line 3. Lastly, put your needle into line 2, a trifle below the last stitch, and, slanting it upwards, bring it out on line 1.



No. 11



No. 12

manner of making these stitches, except that in this case the middle part is slanting.

Oriental Stitch (Nos. 12 and 13). This is akin to the Feather Stitch. It is sometimes made with the middle part straight and narrow, sometimes with it straight and broad, and sometimes with it slanting as in the two illustrations given, (Nos. 12 and 13). The two drawings give a perfectly clear idea of the



No. 13

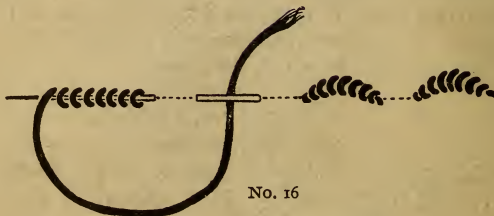
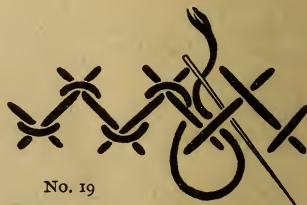
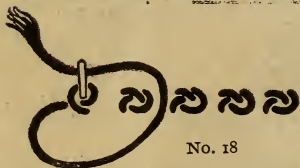
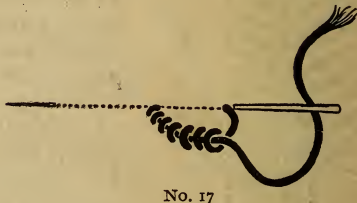
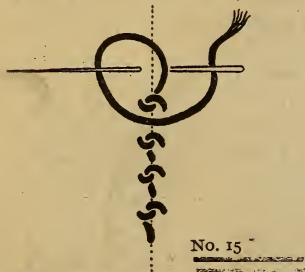
Rope and Knot Stitches (Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). We introduce here a number of Rope and Knot Stitches which are of interest to the embroiderer, but are seldom used in Raffia work. No. 14 is a rope stitch in which the stitches are made to overlap, producing a rope-like effect.



No. 14

No. 15 is sometimes known as the German-Knot-Stitch, and is used to make knotted lines. Nos. 16 and 17 illustrate the making of the Bullion or Roll Stitch, suitable for small forms of flower-petal or even leaf. No. 18 shows the French knot.

No. 19 is an example of an interlacing stitch, of which an endless variety may be made by combining two or more stitches.



In this case the background is the common zigzag herring-bone stitch, with the upper strand curved around at the cross-points of the under stitch.



Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5