



"THE ASCENSION." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.

NOTES ON SOME FOURTEENTH CENTURY EMBROID-
ERIES IN JUDGE UNTERMYER'S COLLECTION

by MARIAN HAGUE

A set of four small embroidered panels, measuring about eight by ten inches, Italian, of the 14th century, is shown here. Three belong to Judge Irwin Untermyer's collection and one to the writer.

In conjunction with these are shown some details from the large altar frontal signed by Geri Lapi, Embroiderer, of Florence, which belongs to the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria de la Seo in Manresa near Barcelona, Spain.

The resemblances both in design and technique are so strong that some direct comparisons seem of interest. The composition of the panels such as the Adoration (shown in juxtaposition on pp. 40, 41, 42 and 43) have strong similarities, even taking into consideration a likeness that might be due to customary usage of contemporary workers in the same locality.

The figures are of the same scale in the compositions and their drawing is of the Giottesque simplicity that gives a monumental quality of seriousness and intensity to even small panels.

The panels under consideration are worked on a heavy linen sufficiently closely woven to take very fine stitching, as in the faces, and thick and supple enough to take the solid work without pulling or shrinking. The backgrounds have been entirely covered with metal thread, probably silver gilt and now almost gone, which was couched over a prepared design of padding with linen floss in scroll patterns, so that the finished work should resemble the carved and gilded gesso backgrounds of the paintings of that period. The figures are worked in split stitch except where a garment is of metal thread which is simply couched. The faces are in very minutely fine split stitch, almost worn off now, but showing that the direction of the stitches was in circular lines, sometimes like spirals following the contours, much like the method used in *opus Anglicanum* of the same century without the slight grotesqueness of drawing of the English work.

Where split stitch is used on the tree trunks and the ground on which the figures stand it is less fine than that used in the garments.

The trees in the Untermyer panels are exactly similar in treatment to those in the Manresa embroidery. The sprays of the trees are worked very



"THE ADORATION." EMBROIDERED PANEL. ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.



"THE ADORATION." EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN. AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE FIGURES OF THE TWO KINGS IN THE PANEL WILL BE FOUND ON PAGE 42.



DETAIL FROM "THE ADORATION" PANEL SIGNED BY GERI LAPI.



"THE ADORATION," EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. PHILIP LEHMAN, NEW YORK.



"CHRIST APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALEN IN THE GARDEN." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, BELONGING TO MISS MARIAN HAGUE.



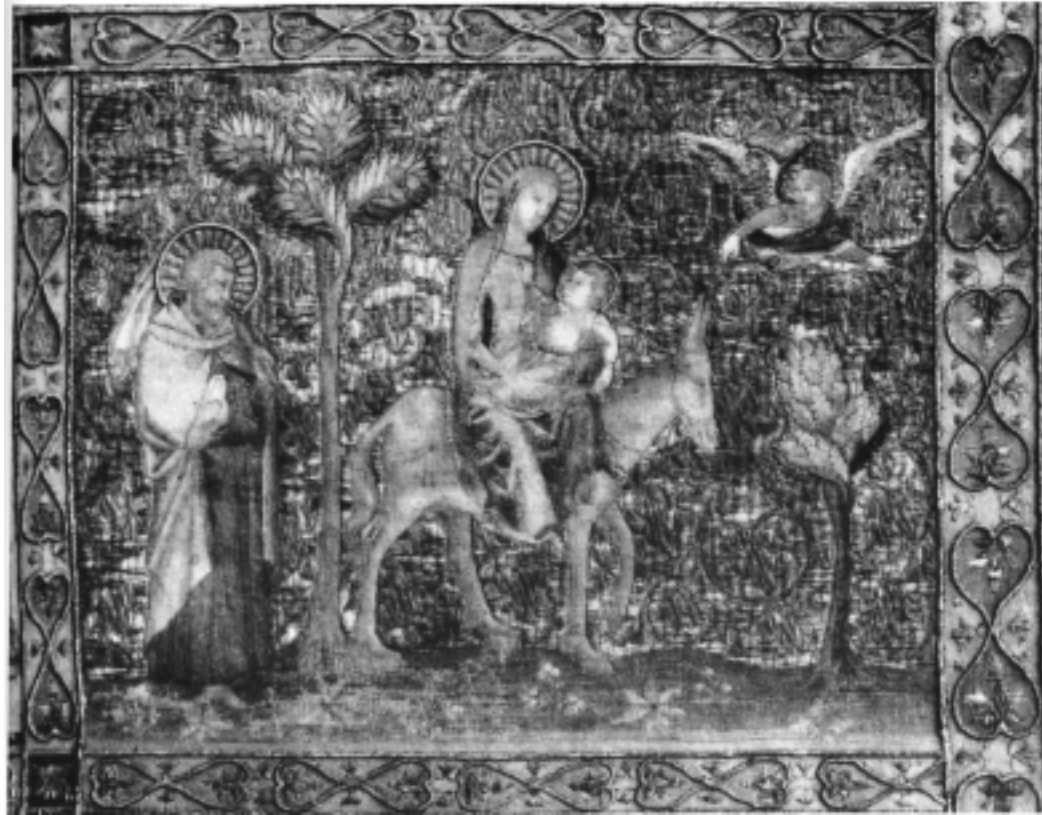
DETAIL OF "CHRIST APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALEN IN THE GARDEN." EMBROIDERED
PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY, BELONGING TO MISS MARIAN HAGUE.



“CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.” EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN.

simply in what we call satin stitch. The tiny round fruits which are so often repeated on the sprays, both in the Manresa embroidery and in the Untermyer scenes, show remains of having been worked with metal thread which is applied in plain couching stitch such as we would use nowadays; not the “*point couché rentré*” of the 13th century English work.

These embroidered pictures must have been much more brilliant when first made than in their rather gray and drab present condition. The Christ in the *Noli me tangere* panel, for instance (page 44), wears a garment under His mantle, worked in metal thread. It is now dark gray, and couched with tiny stitches which hardly show on the right side. Upon examination of the wrong side of the fabric the couching thread is a warm ruby red. The greens and yellows have kept their color remarkably well.



"THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT." EMBROIDERED PANEL FROM THE ALTAR FRONTAL, SIGNED BY GERI LAPI OF FLORENCE, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANRESA, NEAR BARCELONA, SPAIN.

Where the embroidered surface is worn off, showing the linen ground, one sees marks as though the design had been drawn on the linen with a pen or perhaps a brush in neutral tones. On the face of Christ, however, the lines for the nose and brows appear to be worked with very delicate stitches of dark brownish silk. A strong magnifying glass is necessary to discern this.

An article on the subject of six embroidered panels formerly in the Iklé Collection, written by Dr. Betty Kurth in the periodical *Pantheon* (volume 8, 1931), calls attention to the resemblance between those panels and the Manresa altarpiece. We reproduce here a panel from that set, now in the private collection of Mrs. Philip Lehman, which represents the Adoration. In comparing this with the other two panels of the Adoration,



"THE THREE MARYS AT THE SEPULCHRE." EMBROIDERED PANEL, ITALIAN, 14TH CENTURY,
FROM THE COLLECTION OF JUDGE IRWIN UNTERMYER.

the little kneeling king with his crown lying in front of him on the ground is found in all three. The two standing kings (page 42) also show similarities in form. The stitches used are the same: split stitch, occasionally satin stitch and metal couching. The small bit of background that is visible shows the same scroll work.

The Cleveland Museum is now the owner of another panel from the same set (formerly Iklé collection). In writing of it in their Bulletin in October, 1930, Miss Gertrude Underhill speaks of the points of resemblance between their piece and the signed altarpiece at Manresa, but thinks that their panel is of somewhat later workmanship, and although "almost surely from a workshop of Italy," she considers the designer and provenance at present unknown.

On page 88 of de Farcy's "La Broderie" is shown a beautiful Crucifixion which was formerly in The Hochon Collection. It is also illustrated by G. Migeon in "Les Tissus," p. 145. Judging by these two reproductions it seems fully worthy to compare with Lapi's signed work.

It would be of the utmost interest to know more of Geri Lapi's workshop. Was it of many years' duration or widespread fame? How many embroideries showing his influence are still in existence?



"THE RESURRECTION." EMBROIDERED PANEL IN THE STYLE OF THE MANRESA ALTAR FRONTAL. ITALIAN, XIV CENTURY. IN THE COLLECTION OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART.