

ASSISI EMBROIDERIES



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# ASSISI EMBROIDERIES



EDITIONS TH. DE DILLMONT  
MULHOUSE (France)

# INTRODUCTION

Assisi, the place where was born and buried Francis BERNARDONE, St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the monastic order of the Franciscans, now spread throughout the world, celebrated upon October the 4<sup>th</sup> 1926 the seventh centenary of the death of "Poverello", the name by which this great saint is generally known.

The numerous strangers who visit this sacred spot, with its notable churches and the treasures that have been therein accumulated, also admire the beautiful needlework on view in the shops of the town, called "Assisi embroideries", which are worked with unfailing good taste by the women and young girls of the neighbourhood.

The manufacture of these embroideries, which has become a local domestic industry, had its origin at Assisi about the beginning of the century.

It was the old embroidery of the XIII<sup>th</sup> and XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries, one of the precious possessions carefully preserved in the churches of the town, which first gave rise to the idea.

To begin with, people confined themselves to copying the old embroideries with their animal motifs, very simply designed and rather rough in drawing; later, when these embroideries had come into public favour, more varied patterns were sought for. These were found in the decorative carvings of the chests, the stalls and chairs in the church, which form an invaluable source of every kind of animal motif, often of extremely fantastic design.

On account of the great esteem in which the Assisi embroideries are held both in Italy and elsewhere, we have decided to publish a work containing an assortment of motifs of this kind. Our patterns are inspired by the marvellous wood carvings of the dome of San Rufino at Assisi and of the church of San Pietro at Perugia; they are composed with the utmost care and will enable ladies to easily execute pieces of work full of the artistic beauty of the originals.

The first five plates contain detached motifs of various sizes (plates I to III) and narrow borders (plates IV and V), intended to supplement each other, as we indicate further on. (See explanatory text and fig. X.)

The fourteen following plates consist of strips of different widths, to which are added decorative and much varied borders, some of which show how to form the corner.

On the last four plates are found designs of large squares, represented a little more than quarter size; for the complete view we refer readers to figs. VI to IX in the explanatory text.

Most of our models are reproduced upon a reduced scale; however, to give an idea of the appearance presented by the original embroideries, we have grouped upon the first six plates, reproduced in natural size, a series of embroideries worked upon the fine linen locally employed.

The attractive contents of our publication, with its rich choice of artistic and diverse models, will indubitably assure it an important place among the numerous publications which have already appeared in the D·M·C LIBRARY.

# GENERAL DIRECTIONS

## as to the execution and employment of Assisi embroideries

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### How to work the embroideries, figs. I and II.

As regards execution, the Assisi embroideries must be included among those done with counted stitches, the working of which is dependent upon the texture of the linen used for a foundation. Owing to the symmetry of the designs it is, consequently, indispensable that the threads of woof and warp should be of the same thickness and be placed at an equal distance from each other.

The pattern itself being reserved, only the outlines of the different figures are embroidered, the linen inside them remaining untouched, and the foundation between the motifs afterwards covered with stitches.

The fabric generally used is white linen; sometimes a linen slightly cream tinted. As material for the embroidering, a fine cotton thread, loosely twisted, is utilised, such as D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality (Coton à broder, Qualité spéciale), D·M·C Pearl cotton (Coton perlé), also D·M·C Floss flax or flourishing thread (Lin floche). However, D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality (Coton à broder, Qualité spéciale), is most frequently used, in thickness corresponding with that of the linen employed.

According to the coarseness of the linen, the designs worked from our models will be larger or smaller. We draw attention to the fact that the models on our first six plates represent the natural size of patterns embroidered upon a fine linen with D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality (Coton à broder, Qualité spéciale) No. 30.

The originals of our plates VII to XXIV are worked upon a rather coarse linen having 10 threads to the centimetre, with D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality (Coton à broder, Qualité spéciale) No. 16; the stitches are done over 3 threads of the fabric. We indicate at the bottom of each plate how much larger the original of each one is than its reproduction at here shown.

To guide our readers in their choice of a suitable thickness of D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality (Coton à broder, Qualité spéciale), we add the following directions:

For a linen having	8 threads per centimetre	use	No. 12
» » » »	10	» » » »	No. 16
» » » »	12	» » » »	No. 20
» » » »	14	» » » »	No. 25
» » » »	16	» » » »	No. 30

The most approved colors for the Assisi embroideries are the faded sky blue and rust brown tones of the old needlework. A dark blue, a bright red and a bronze yellow, however, are better



suited to modern taste. These shades are used for filling in the background and working the little decorative patterns round the edges. The outlines of the designs are done in a deeper contrasting color, such as black, dark blue or green, or even a vivid red.

The original embroideries reproduced on our plates have been worked out in the following shades : plates I, V, IX, XII, XVIII and XXIII in Indigo blue 322 and Black fast dye 310; plates II, VIII, XI, XV and XXI in Indigo blue 312 and Turkey red 321; plates III, VII, X, XIV and XXII in Turkey red 321 and Black fast dye 310; plates IV, VI, XIII, XX and XXIV in Mahogany brown 400 and Moss green 935; plates XVI and XVII in Mahogany brown 301 and Indigo blue 939 and plate XIX in Hazel-nut brown 421 and Indigo blue 939.

These colors are sufficiently unobtrusive to serve for the decoration of various articles of furniture.

For children's frocks and pinafores, caps, blouses, bags, &c., which are more subject to changes of fashion, preference is given to livelier colorings. For these we can recommend the different tones

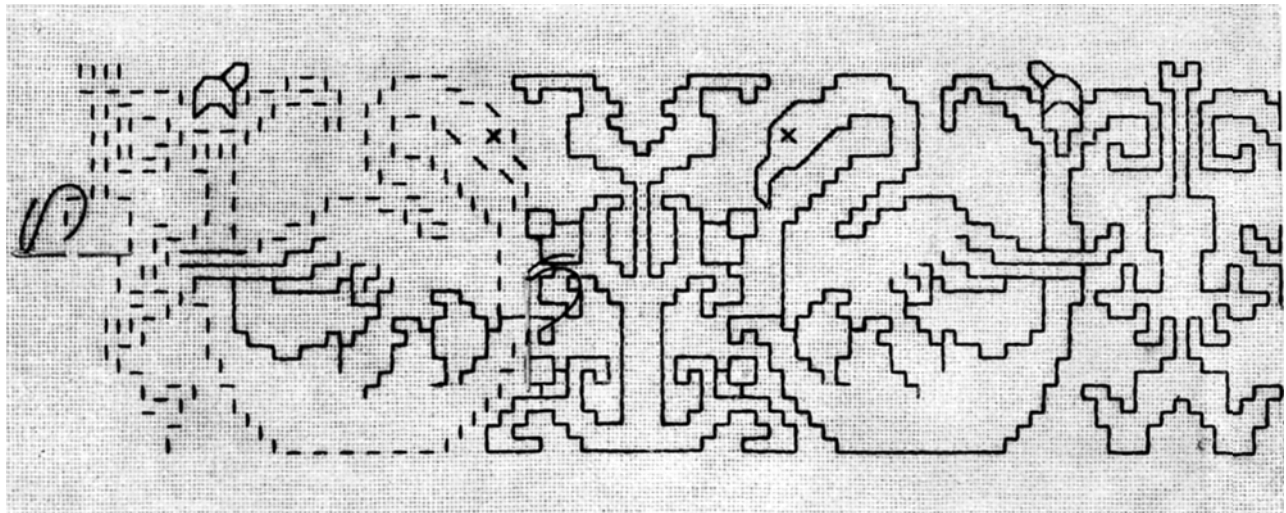


Fig. I. How to trace the outlines.

of red, such as: Geranium red 352, Morocco red 760; Old pink 3352, Tender pink 3326 and Geranium pink 894; the violets: Pansy violet 534, Scabious violet 396, Parma violet 210 and Plum violet 554; the blues: Sèvres blue 799, Forget-me-not blue 813, Peacock blue 807 and Cornflower blue 793; the greens: Paroquet green 906, Beetle green 3348, Moss green 470, Jade green 943 and Pistachio green 320 or the yellows and the brown reds: Saffron yellow 725, Mandarin yellow 743, Fire red 947 and Dawn red 361. As for the outlines, they will always look best done in a very dark shade, more especially in Black fast dye 310.

The execution of Assisi embroideries consists of **tracing the outlines, filling-in the background and working the ornaments round the edges.**

The **outlines** are composed of two rows of running stitches, one row completing the other. Following the contour of the pattern the stitches, done over three threads of the fabric, are worked either horizontally, vertically, or even on the slant. Beginning the work at any point in the design, the outer contour of the motif is followed round to the point of departure. In returning, the stitches are thrown over the threads of material left clear on the right side and

under the finished stitches, so as to obtain a perfect outline. It is advantageous to work the complementary inside lines of the pattern at the same time and in connection with the first row of running stitches.

Fig. I shows how to work the outlines of model 47 on plate VIII. On the right will be seen a portion with completed outline; the swan motif, on the left, gives the first row of running stitches and the complementary lines finished; also the way to bring back the thread in order to work the second row of running stitches. The little intermediate figure exhibits the working of the first row of running stitches.

The **background filling** consists of rows of horizontal cross stitches worked backwards and forwards. Begin on the left, at the bottom, and do a row of half stitches towards the right, which are completed on the return journey by half stitches crossing the previous set. The background between the motifs is also filled-in when returning; for this, the half stitches are worked upwards as high as the last row of the outline, and coming down, the second row of half stitches completing the cross stitches are done. Continue to work over the half stitches of the lower first row as far as the next

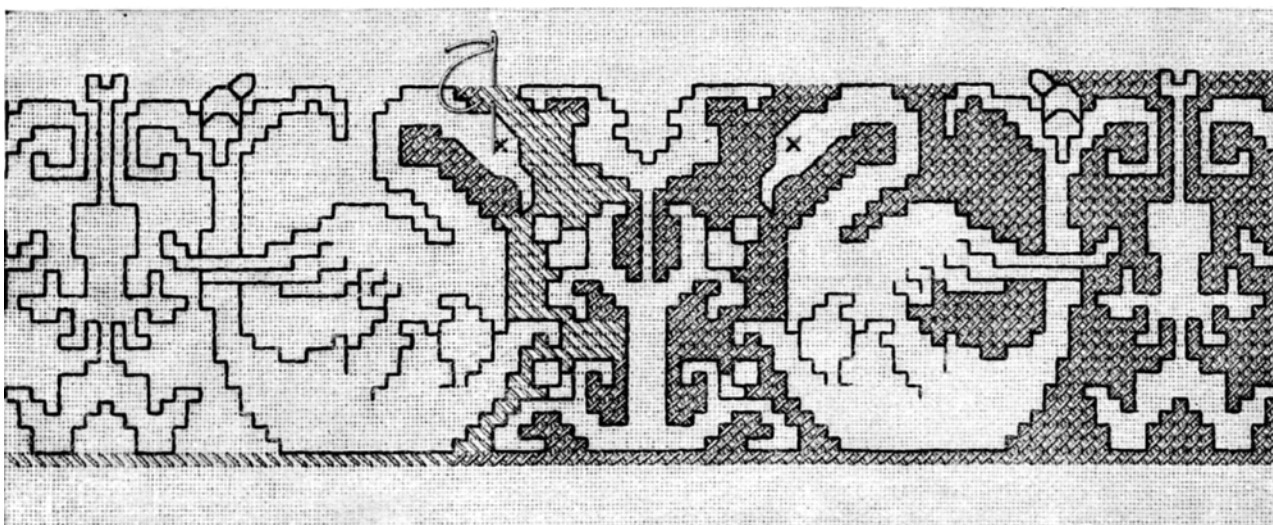


Fig. II. How to fill in the background.

space, there finish off the cross stitch background and go on in the same way to the left hand edge. At the last space, do the upper horizontal row of cross stitches and also the adjoining spaces which have not yet been filled-in. Fig. II displays the filling-in of the background when working model 47 on plate VIII. On the right, the cross stitch foundation is completed so far as the design allows; on the left, where one of the spaces is filled with half stitches, the manner of working the second set of half stitches crossing the first is demonstrated.

If the outlines are formed solely by horizontal and vertical stitches, the filling-in of the background only needs complete cross stitches. Where, however, the contours require slanted running stitches, there necessarily occur little empty triangular spaces between the cross stitches and the outline, thus marring the appearance of the work; this can be remedied by filling them in with little slanting stitches, such as may be seen in the engraving fig. II round the bird's head.

The **little ornamental borders** found in all the designs, are almost entirely executed in running stitch embroidery, sometimes terminated by single cross stitches; they are worked in the same manner as the outlines of the motifs.



## How to make use of the Assisi embroideries, figs. III to X.

Owing to the light tone of the linen used as foundation, and also to the extremely decorative patterns of the Assisi embroideries, they will be found valuable as trimmings for dainty lingerie and very appropriate for ornamenting table linen.

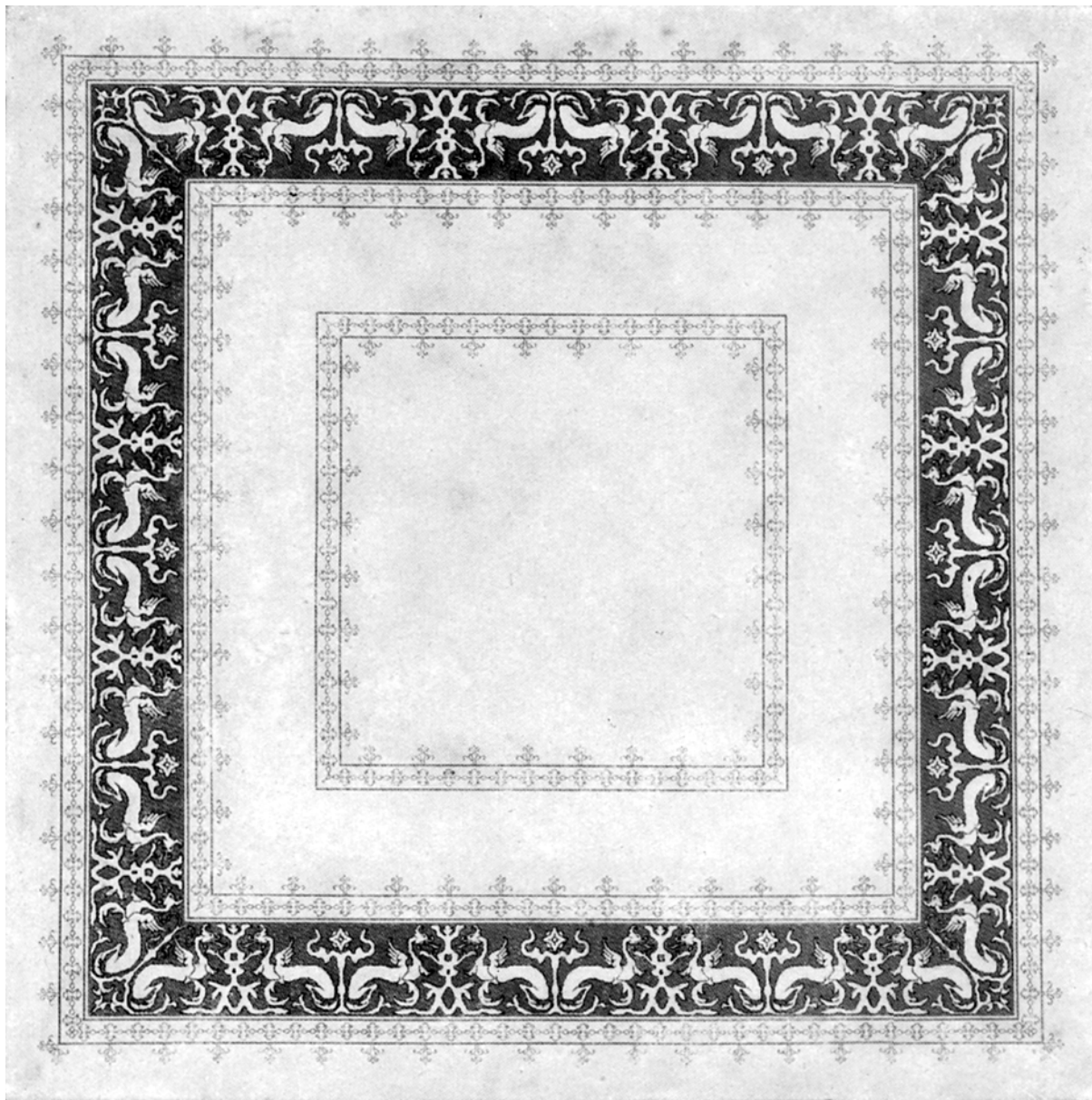


Fig. III. Tea cloth, after model 62.

Materials: D-M-C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, in Indigo blue 322 and Black fast dye 310.

To avoid lengthy instructions on this subject, we give to our readers in figs. III to X representations of different articles which, though considerably reduced in size, still afford a good idea of the general effect of the work.

Fig. III depicts a table cloth about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  yards square, for the embroidering of which fig. 62 on plate XVIII is utilised. The wide border is arranged  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the edge of the material,

then, leaving a plain interval, 5 inches wide, inside it, the narrow flowery embroidered inner border is repeated.

To trim the napkins matching the cloth, use is made of the little centre border with the flowerets turned towards the middle; when employing the pattern without flowerets, one of the little detached motifs found on plates I to III should be placed in one of the corners.

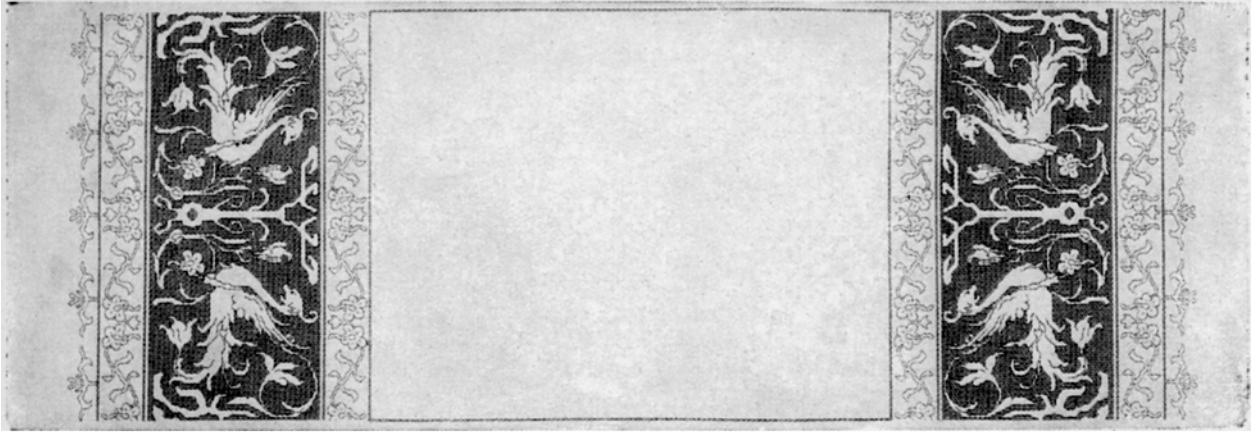


Fig. IV. Table runner, after model 63.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, Hazel-nut brown 421 and Indigo blue 939.

Figs. IV and V represent two table runners, the first of which measures  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards in length and 21 inches in width, the second  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards in length and 24 inches in width. The wide border, model 63 on plate XIX, is used to ornament both ends of the first, whilst the second is surrounded by an embroidered strip taken from model 38 on plate VI. To make this pattern lighter,

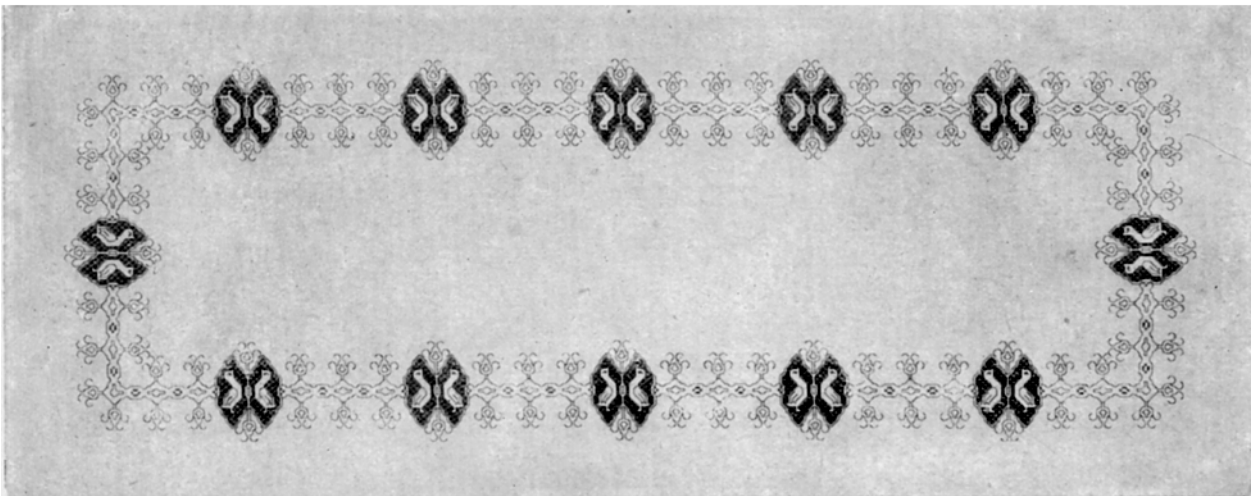


Fig. V. Table runner, after model 38.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, Mahogany brown 400 and Moss green 935.

we have altered the design so that the bird motifs are separated by three intermediate motifs instead of by one only. The formation of the corner, which is not given in the model on the plate, can be followed without difficulty in the reduced sketch (see also fig. 1082, and the text relative to it, of the chapter "Miscellaneous directions" in the *Encyclopedia of Needlework* by TH. DE DILLMONT).

Sideboard cloths usually have a strip embroidered down one long side and across both ends, and sometimes small powderings in the centre; for this purpose we advise the use of medium



width borders with corners, models 53 to 56, and for the powderings figs. 1 to 3, 5 to 7, 17, 18 and 20. For a tray cloth one would choose a wide border to trim the hanging front (see models 47, 49, 50, 51 and 52).

Figs. VI to IX give a complete view of the large square motifs parts only of which are reproduced in the figures on the plates; of models 66 and 67 we have suppressed the corner

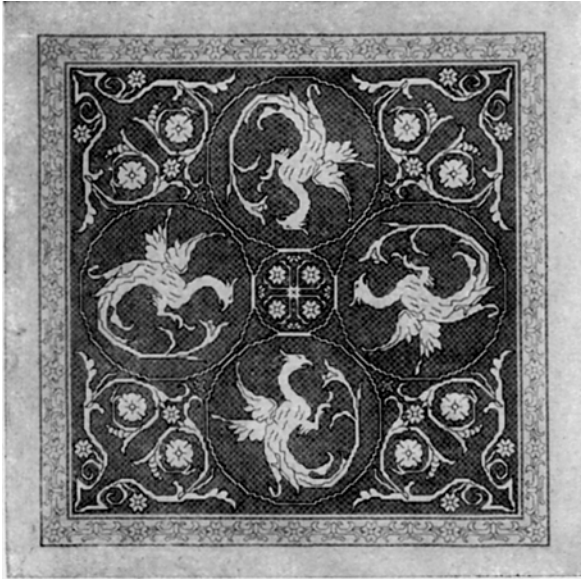


Fig. VI. Cushion square, after model 65.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, in Indigo blue 312 and Turkey red 321.

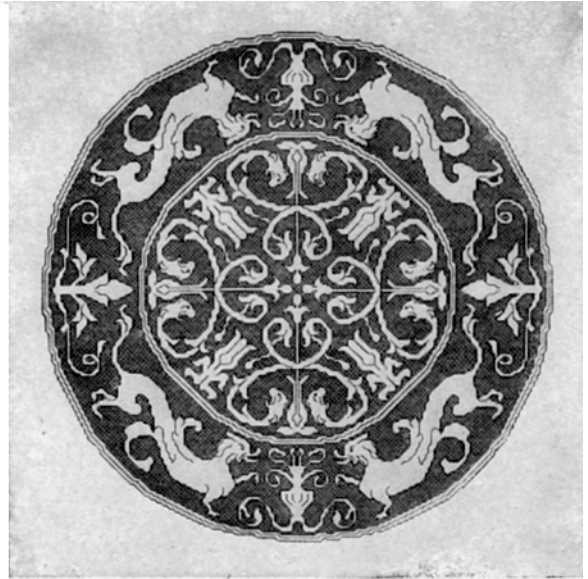


Fig. VII. Cushion round, after model 66.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, in Turkey red 321 and Black fast dye 310.

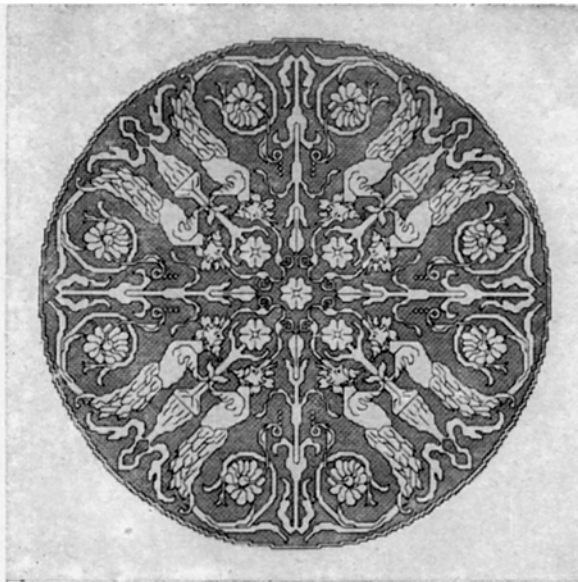


Fig. VIII. Cushion round, after model 67.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, in Indigo blue 322 and Black fast dye 310.



Fig. IX. Cushion square, after model 68.

Materials: D·M·C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16, in Mahogany brown 400 and Moss green 935.

fillings in order to show how one can advantageously employ the central part alone, independently of the other motifs in the pattern.

Models VI and IX, measuring respectively 25 and 24 inches square, and models VII and VIII, 20 and 23 inches in diameter, may equally well be utilised for making small rugs or large cushions.

They can also be employed as centres for a large table cloth edged with one of the broad borders, models 54, 61 or 62.

One of these four motifs, adopted as centre for a bed-spread, should have a very wide border across the top and bottom, such as models 57, 58, 59 and 63. On either side of the principal strip, and not too far from it, should be added a narrow bordering chosen from among models 10, 11, 14, 16, 19 and 21.

Lastly, the small table cloth fig. X, measuring 30 inches square, shows one how to combine in a single article the narrow edgings of plates IV and V with the small motifs on plates I to III. About 3 inches from the edge embroider the border from the middle of model 30 on plate IV, which is repeated 38 stitches further on. In the clear space between these two borders, two bird motifs, taken from model 18 on plate III, are embroidered on each side; it should be noted that every left-hand bird is reversed. After this fashion it is easy to create for oneself a series of very interesting new patterns.

Isolated oval-shaped motifs, like models 4 or 20, will be found most valuable as centres for an oblong cloth, and should be surrounded by one of the little borderings, models 22, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35 or 36. There may also be placed in each corner of the cloth one of the small motifs 1, 3, 5, 6 or 7, or one of the little decorative figures from the borders 19 and 21.

As sofa rug or piano cover, take one of the broad borders, models 63 or 64, which will occupy the whole width of the article; for lounges and chairs the draping should be embroidered with some of the little detached motifs, framed with narrow borderings (see the models on plates I to VII). The borders of medium width, models 51, 52 and 60, will suit for trimming towels, while less filled-in patterns can be chosen for tray cloths and plate doileys (see models 10, 11, 14, 16, 19 and 21).

Motifs 8, 9, 12, 13 or 15, framed by one of the narrow running stitch borderings, of models 40, 42 or 44 to 48, would also make charming plate doileys.

Very pretty draught-board backgrounds for little cushions may be composed by using two different small squares of the same size, such as models 1 and 3 or 5 and 7.

Of course one may utilise the little detached motifs as well as the narrow borders for trimming children's frocks and pinafores, tams, &c.; moreover, we can leave to our readers the tasteful grouping and application of our different patterns of Assisi embroideries for decorating their own various garments.

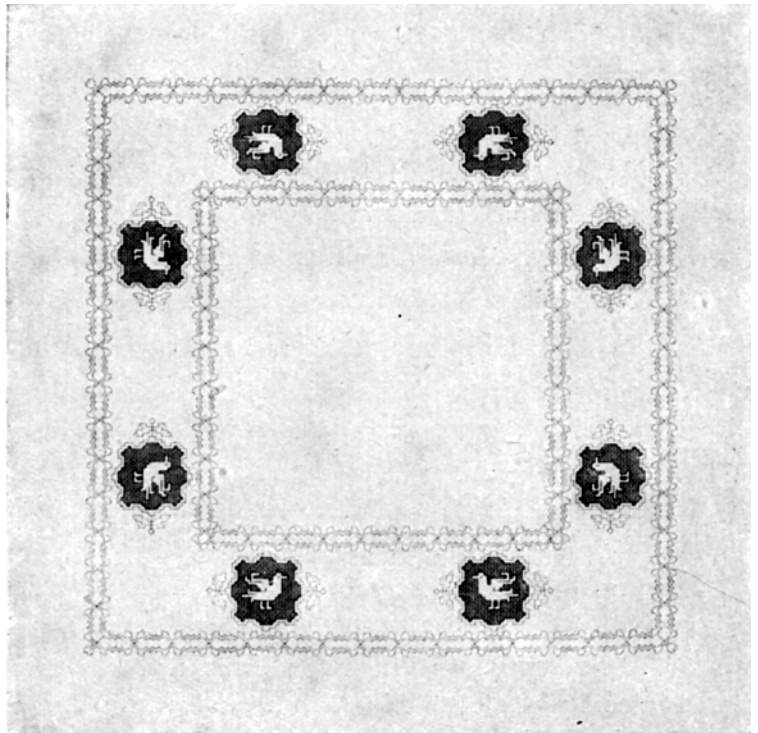


Fig. X. Napkin, after models 18 and 30.  
Materials: D-M-C Embroidery cotton, special quality No. 16,  
in Indigo blue 312 and Turkey red 321.



## Cleaning colored embroideries worked in Cotton, Linen and Rayon threads

At the moment of cleaning a piece of embroidery, it must be remembered that the thread is not indestructible, neither is the material on which it is worked, and that even if the colors are as fast as those of the D·M·C Brand they must, nevertheless, be treated with a certain care.

We set out below the various methods of renovating embroideries, so that the work may be carried out without the risk of spoiling them.

As a general rule, a solution of merely soap or soap flakes and water should be used, and no other means ought to be adopted except in case of absolute necessity (as, for instance, to remove fruit stains, etc.).

In this manner the embroideries will remain in perfectly good condition all the longer.

### *Important recommendations*

*Avoid the use of soda or products of any kind that contain it.*

*Avoid the use of stain removers, such as petrol, benzine and their derivatives.*

*Never wash embroideries at the same time as articles that have been starched.*

*Never allow wet embroideries to remain folded or lie in a heap.*

*A thorough rinsing is necessary before they are put through a wringing machine or the water is squeezed out of them by hand.*

**Simple washing.** — Do this in lukewarm water, with copious suds obtained by the use of a good washing soap or soap flakes containing no soda. Wash the embroidery without rubbing it more than necessary.

**Rinsing.** — Rinse through ample changes of water, first in lukewarm and afterwards in cold water.

**Drying.** — Roll the embroidery in a towel and press it without wringing. Dry quickly, either by exposing to the air or by ironing on the reverse side, with a not too hot iron.

**Color reviving.** — When the brilliancy of a piece of embroidery is impaired, it should be placed in cold water containing half a tumblerful of white vinegar (or a tablespoonful of acetic acid) to each quart of water. Shake for a few minutes and **rinse** thoroughly afterwards.

**Stain removing.** — Dissolve  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of Salts of Lemon (Potassium quadroxalate) in each quart of water. Add to this 1 oz. of Sodium Metabisulphate. Shake well. Pour into a wooden, or enamelled, or earthenware utensil — but do not use an iron one — add the same quantity of boiling water. First wash the embroidery in warm water and then steep it in the solution when the latter is lukewarm. Leave it in for half an hour, but shake occasionally. Follow up by **rinsing**, then **wash** with soap or soap flakes and, afterwards, give a good final **rinsing**.

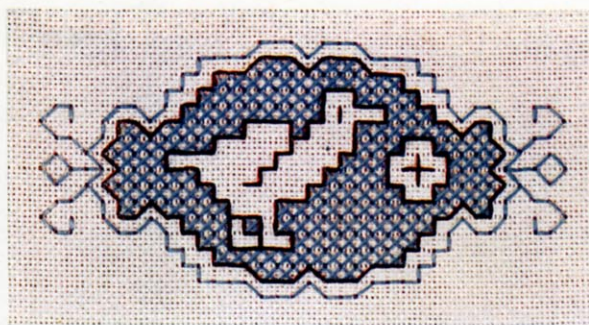
**Boiling.** — If some stains still remain, resort to boiling. Dissolve  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. good washing soap or soap flakes (entirely free from soda) in each quart of water, put in the embroidery without bunching it up and boil from ten minutes to an hour, according to the extent of the stains. **Rinse** very thoroughly and, if necessary, **revive** the colors as explained above.

**Bleaching.** — There is always the risk of chlorides spoiling the material as well as the embroidery threads. However, D·M·C colors withstand the following chloride treatment: Into each quart of water stir a tablespoonful of a bleaching solution specially sold for the linen wash. First wet the embroidery, then put it in the solution for about five minutes. **Rinse** well afterwards and **revive** colors as already explained.

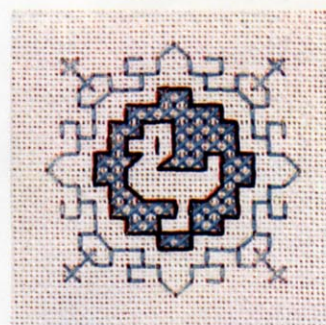




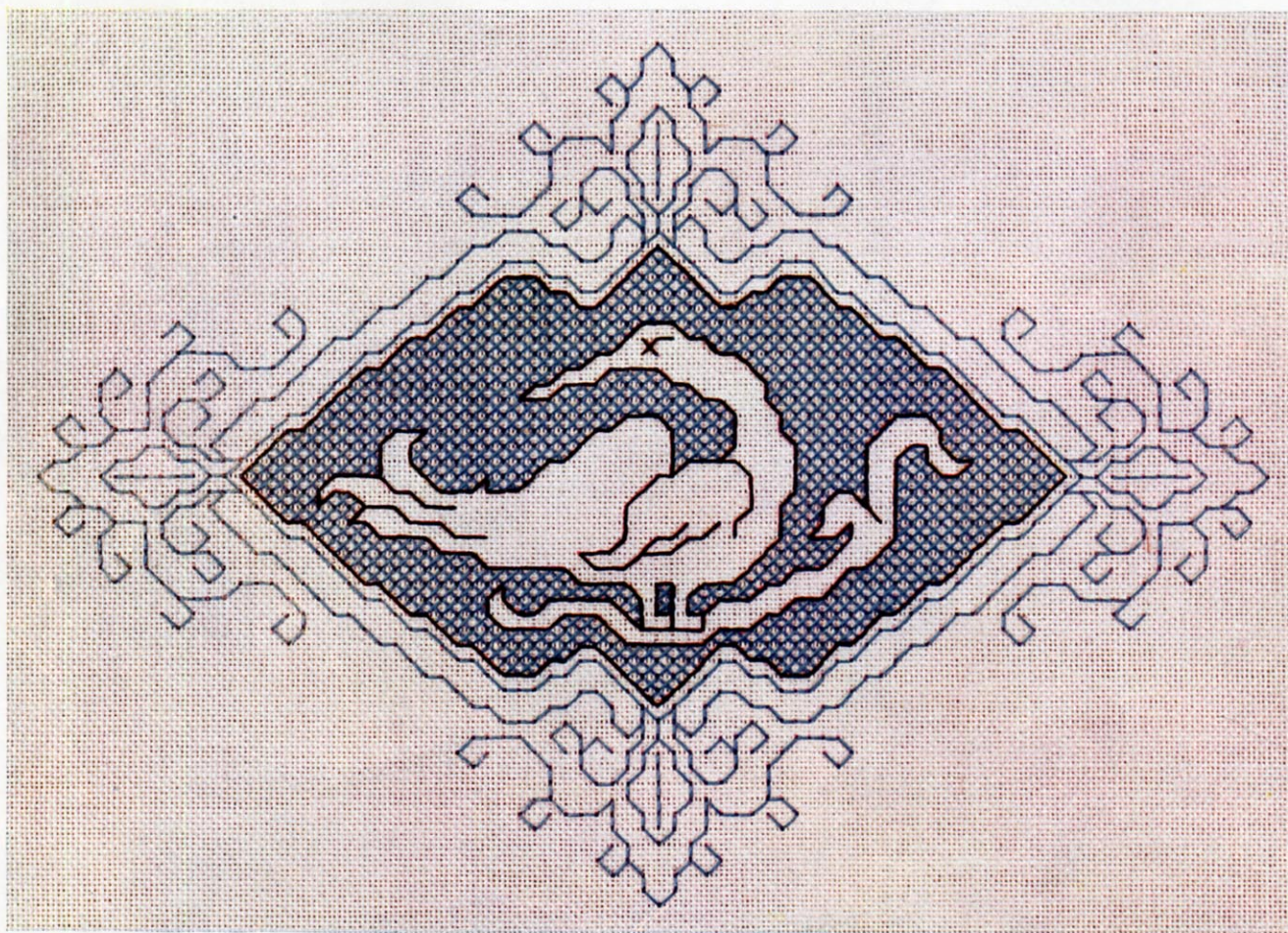
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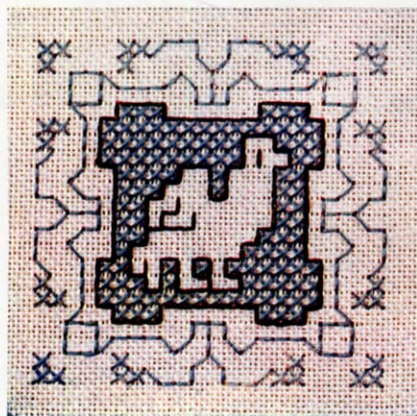
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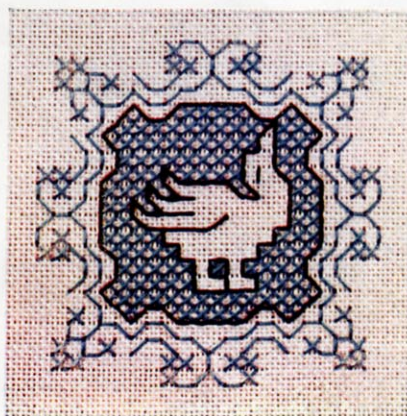
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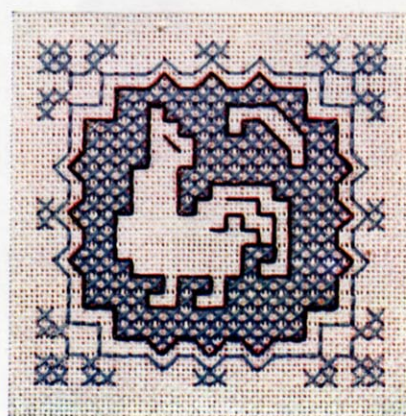
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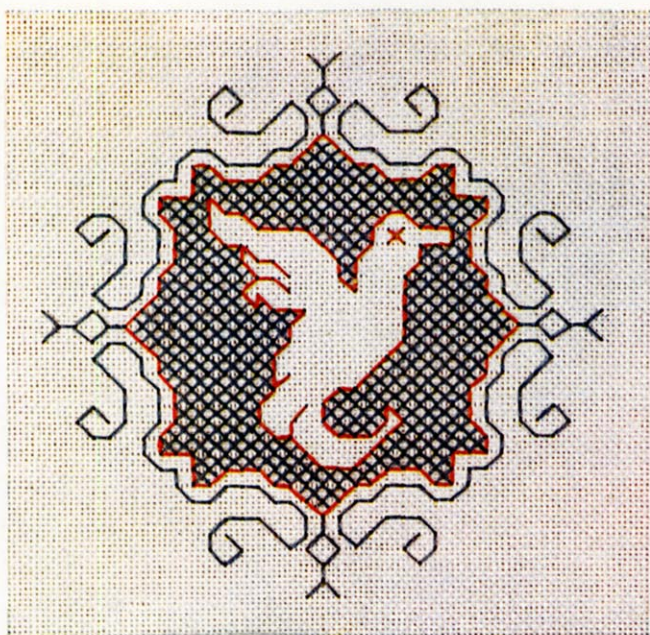


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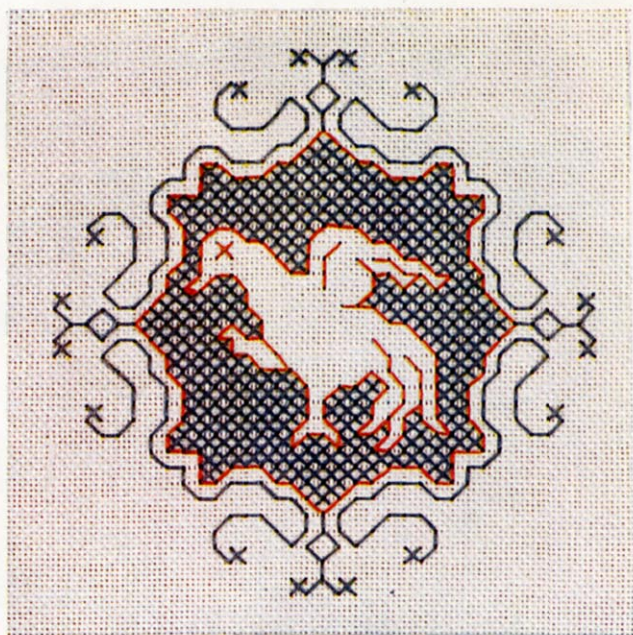
The originals of the models on this plate are reproduced in natural size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads

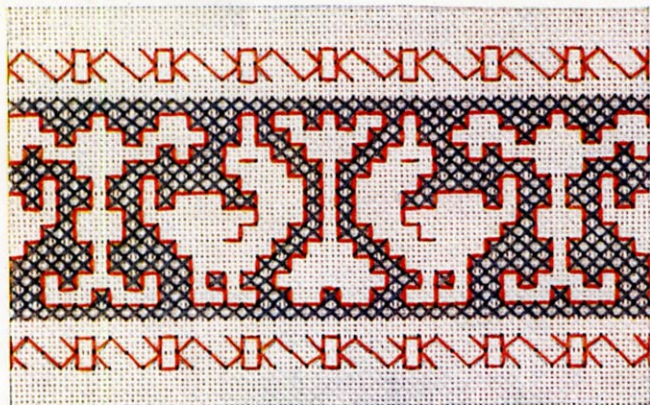




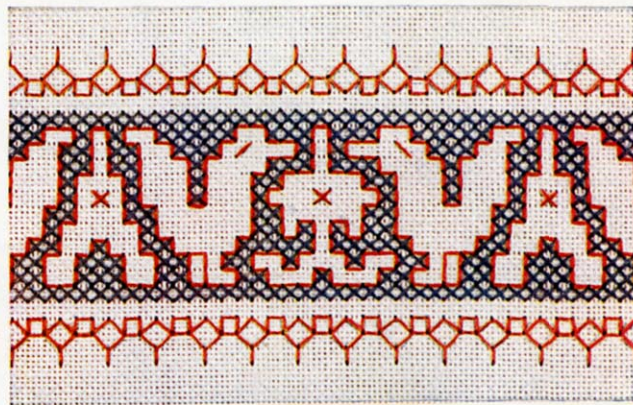
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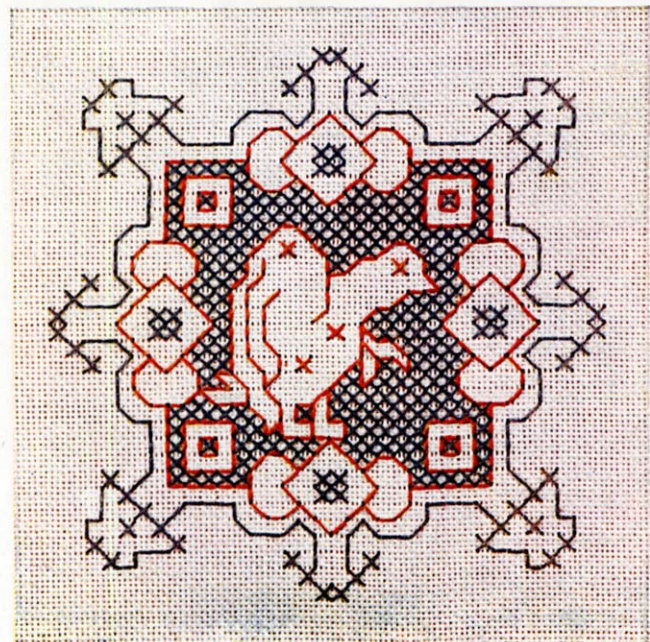
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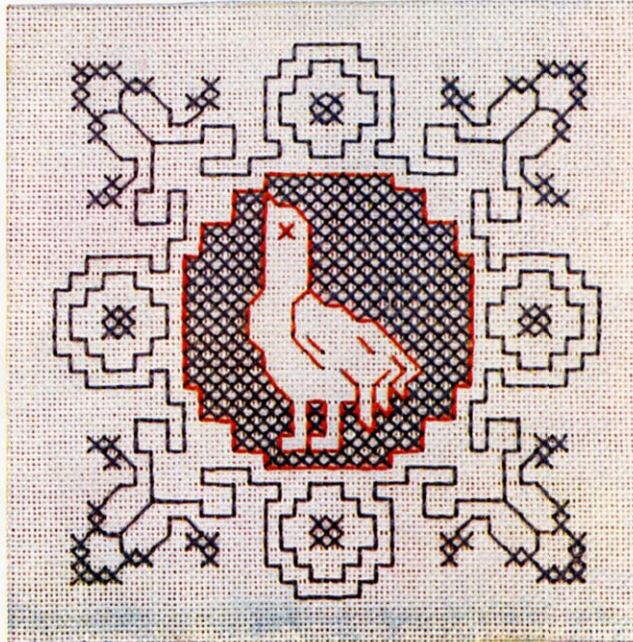
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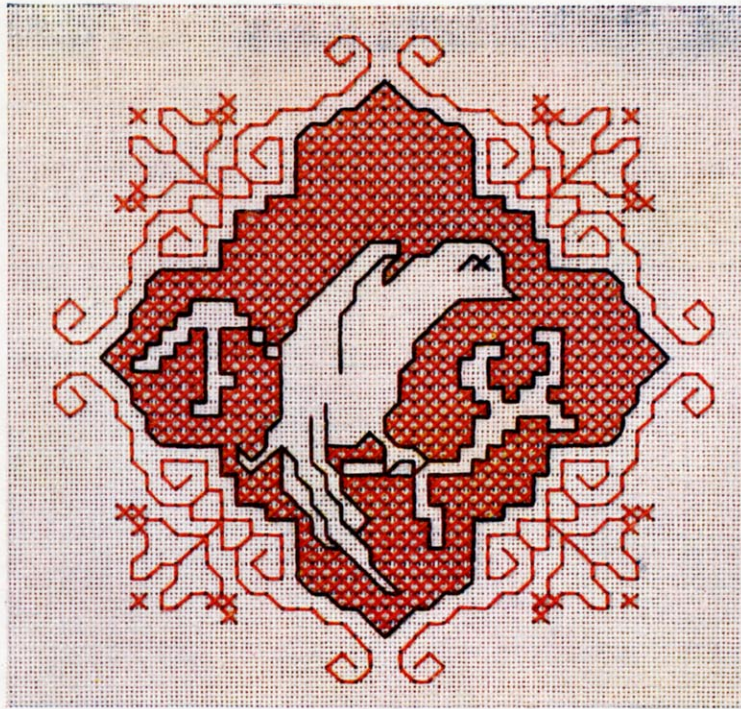
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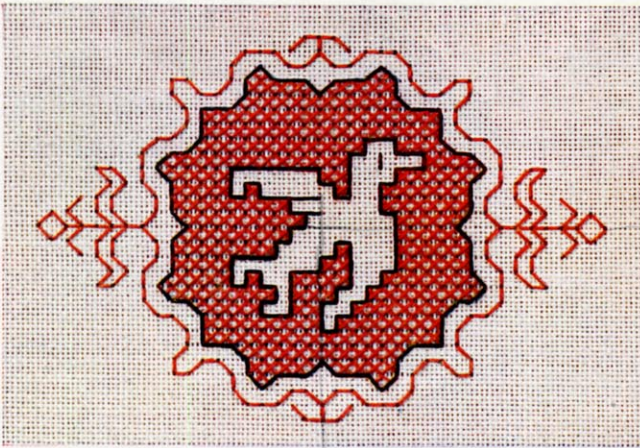
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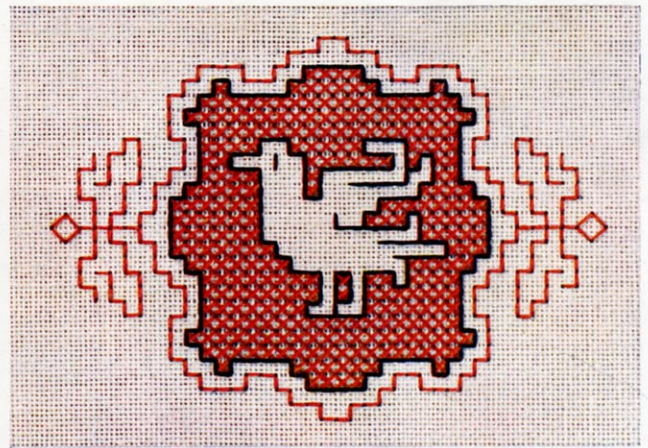
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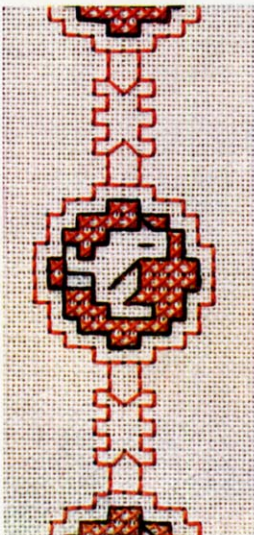
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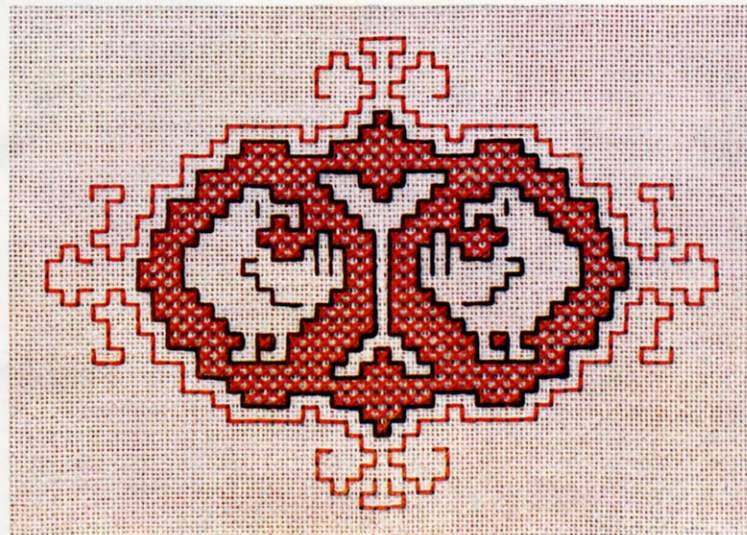
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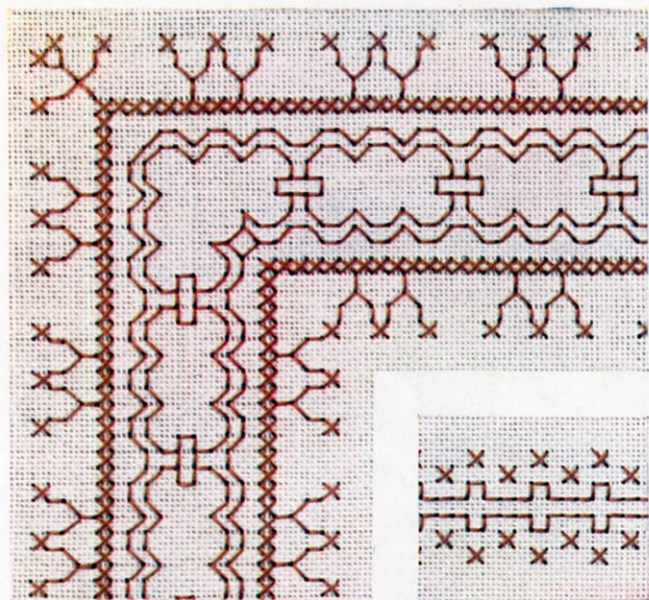


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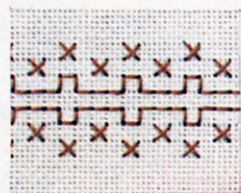
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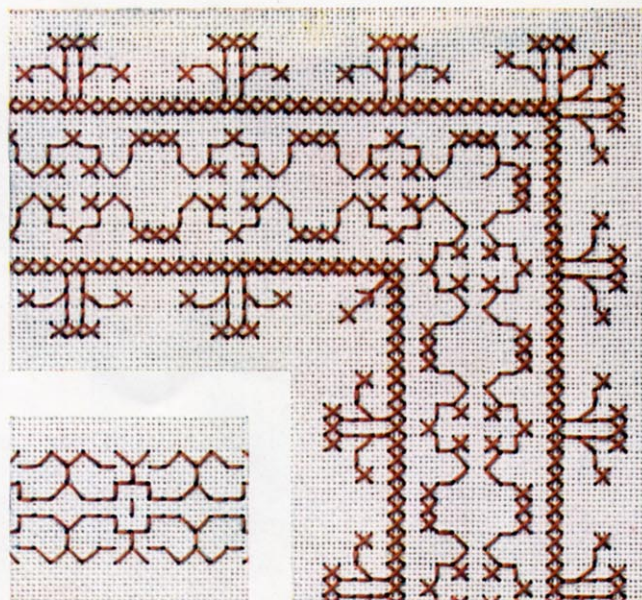




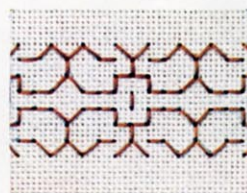
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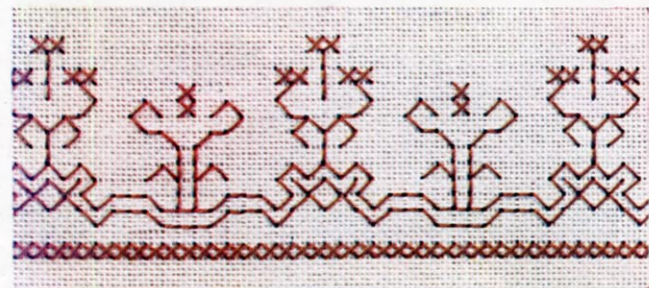
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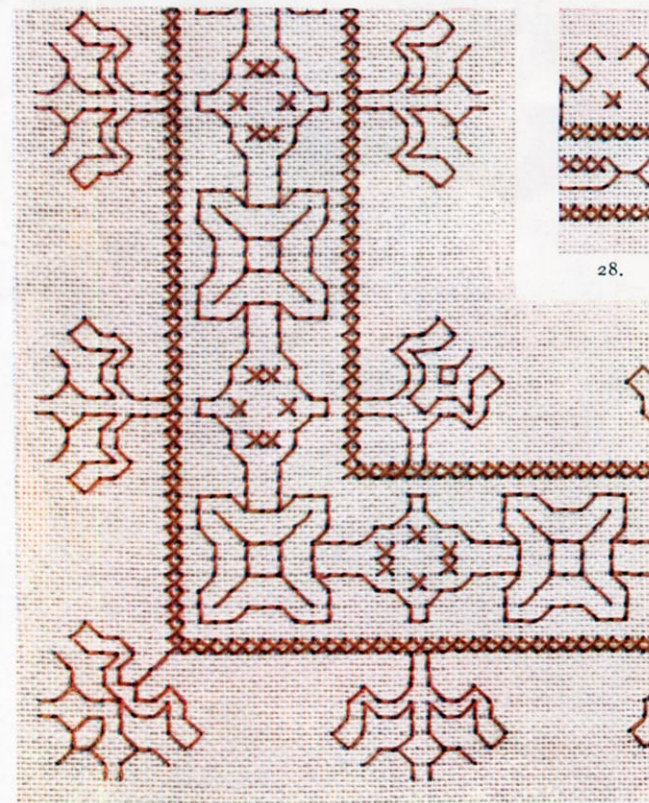
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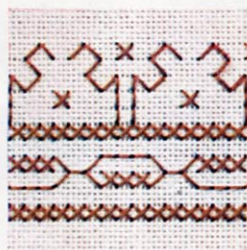
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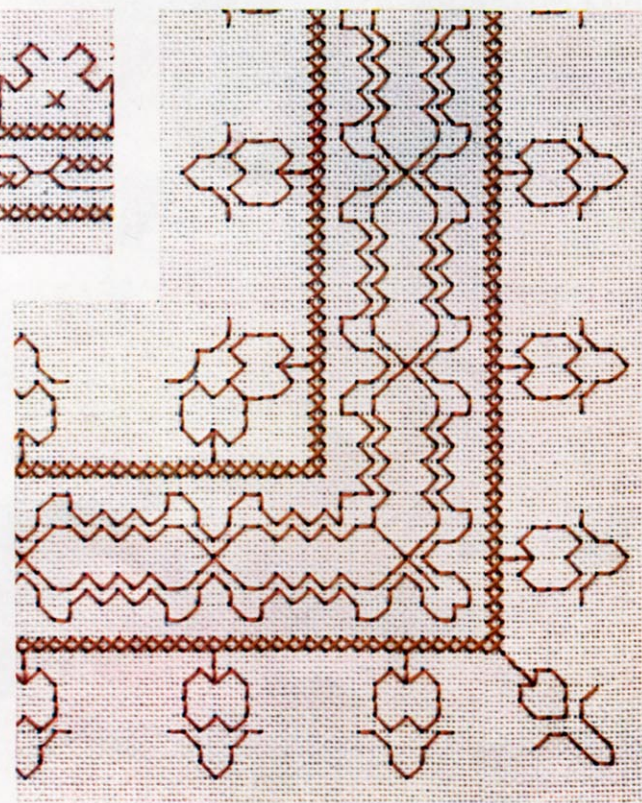
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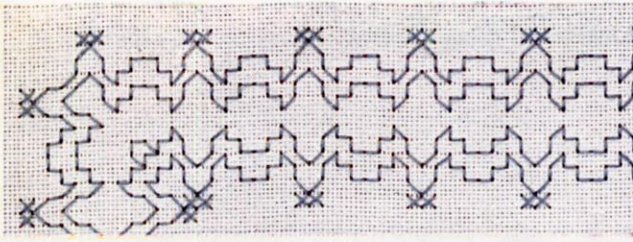


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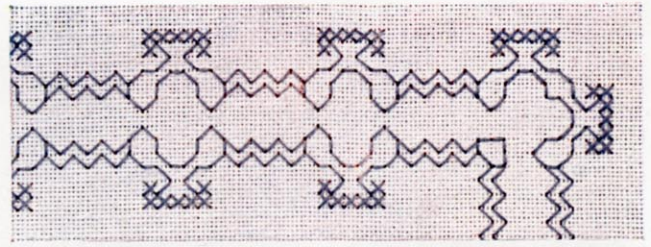
The originals of the models on this plate are reproduced in natural size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads

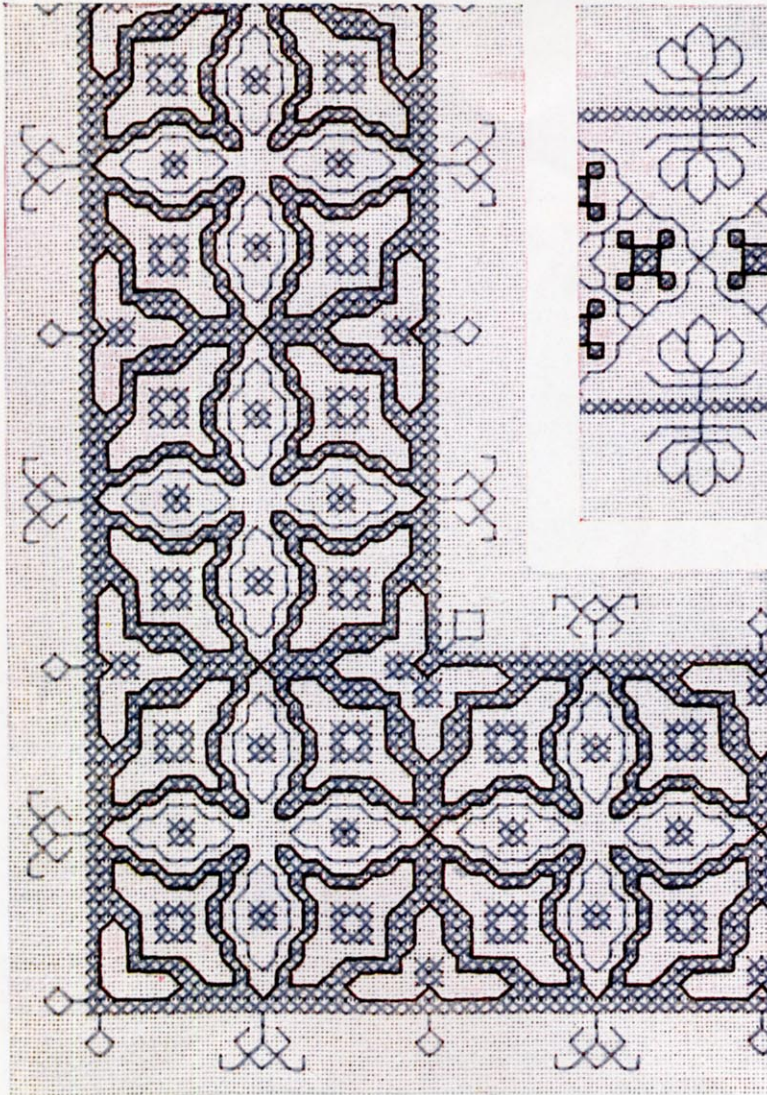




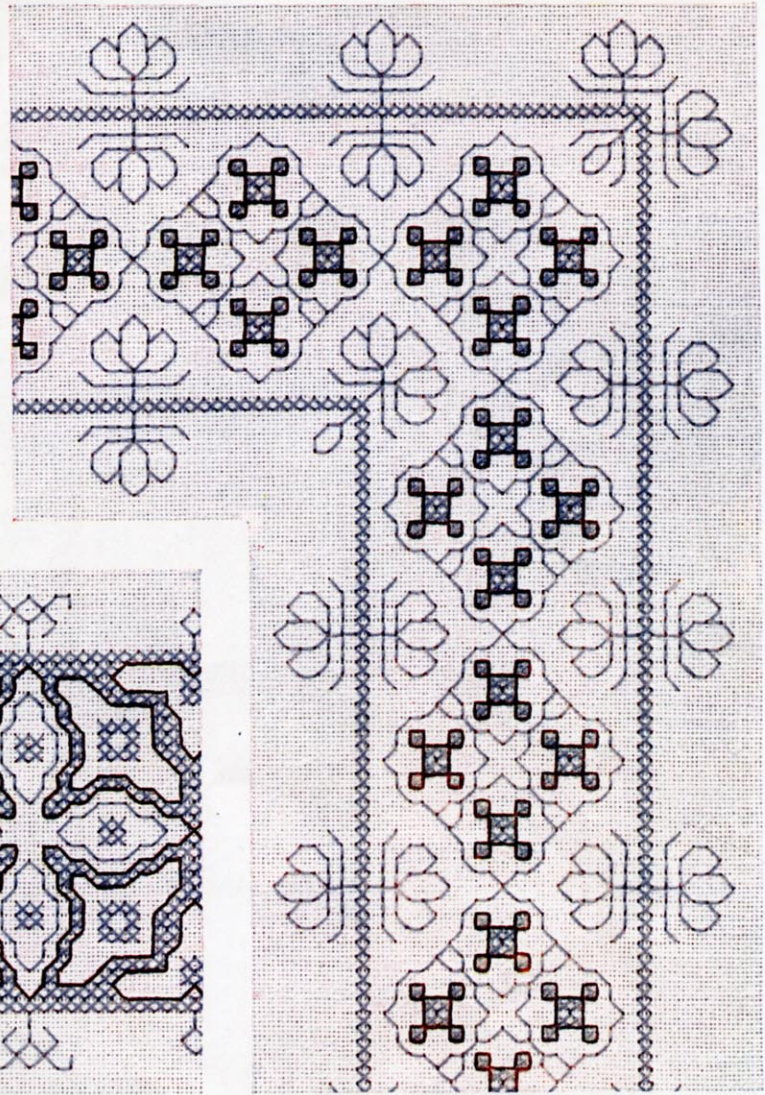
31.



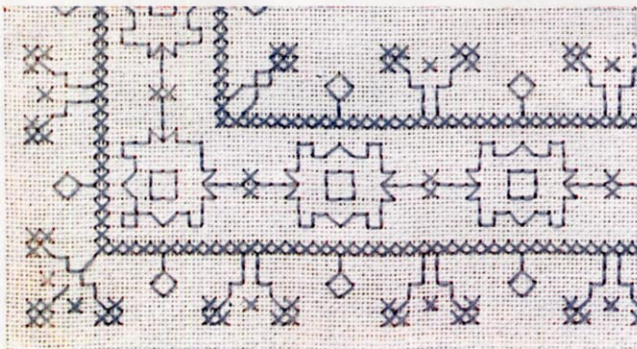
32.



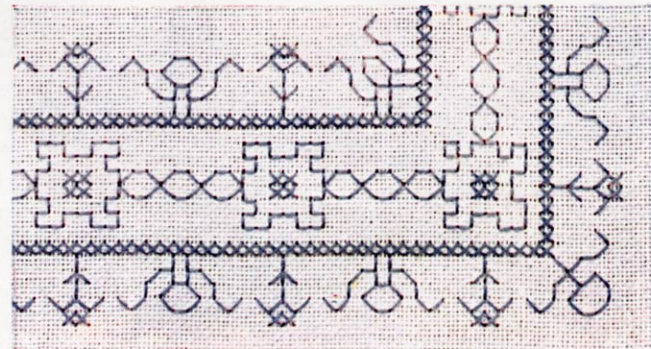
33.



34.



35.

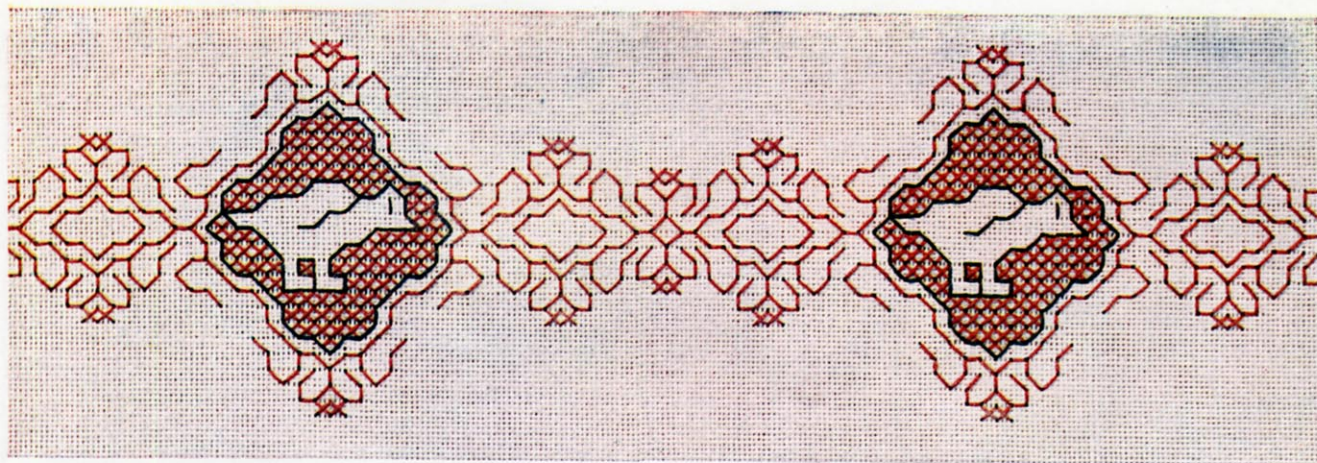


36.

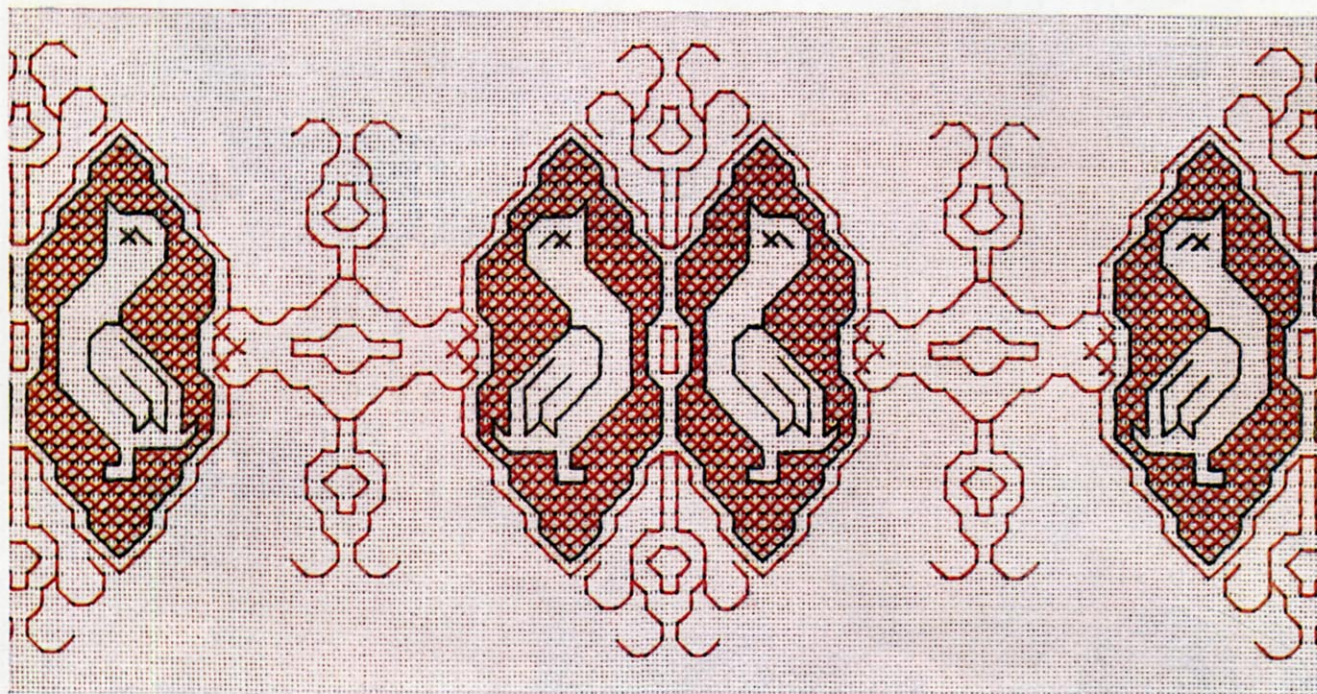
The originals of the models on this plate are reproduced in natural size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads

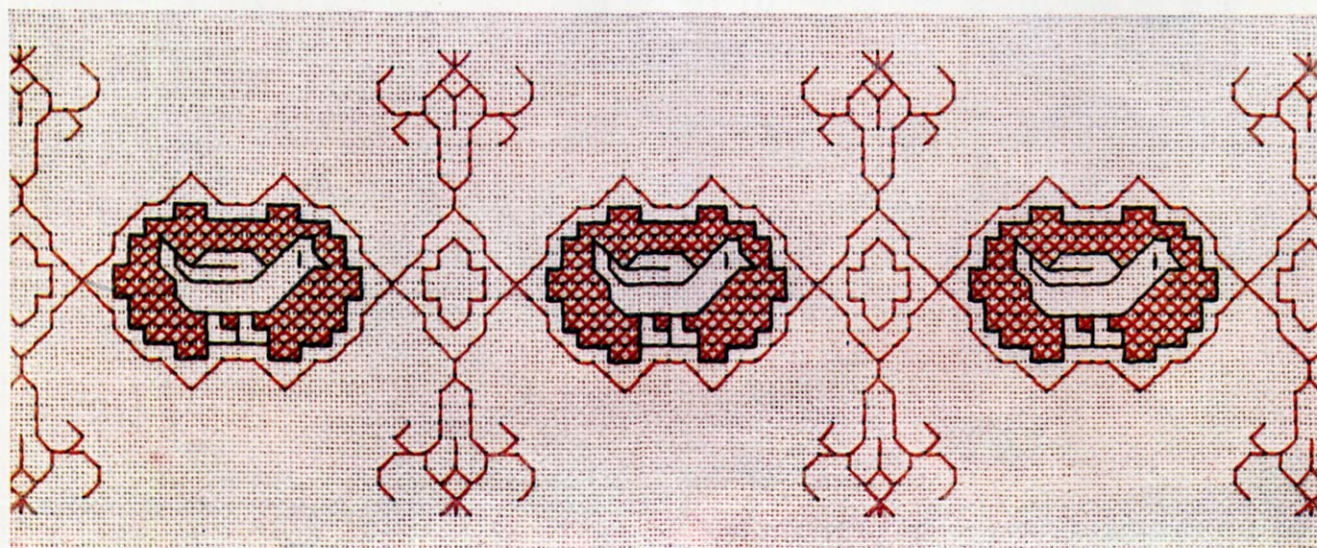




37.



38.



39.

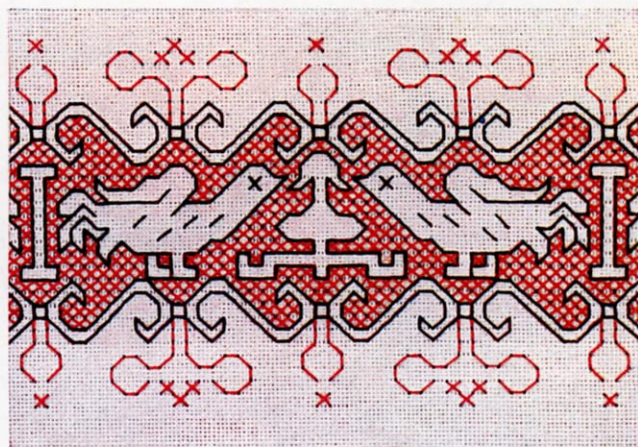
The originals of the models on this plate are reproduced in natural size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads





40. — 48 repeat —



41.



42.



43.



44.



45.

The originals of the models on this plate are  $1 \frac{8}{10}$  larger in size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads

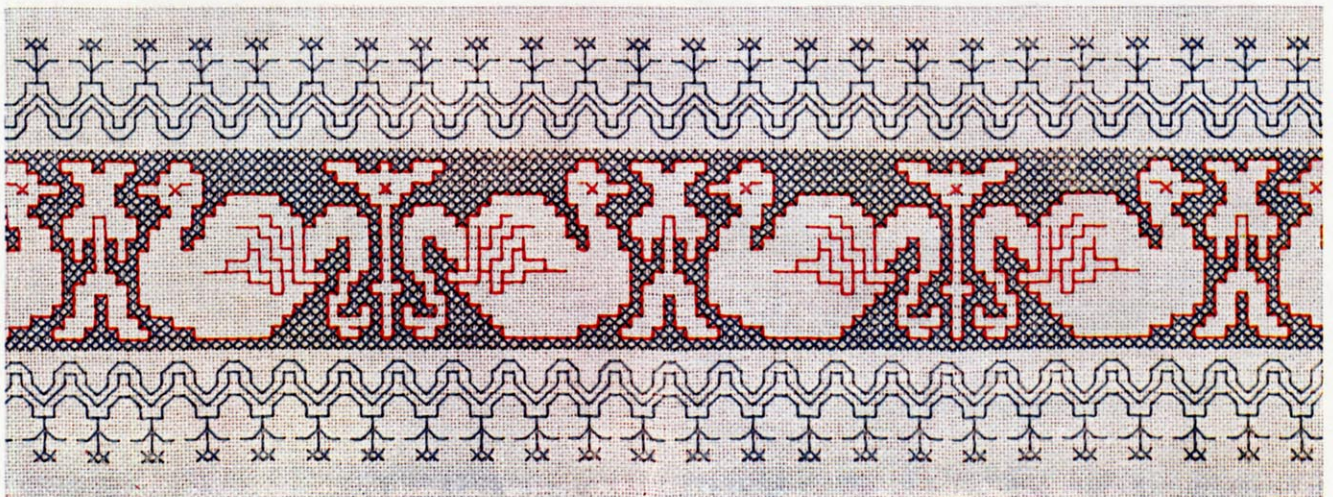




46.



47.

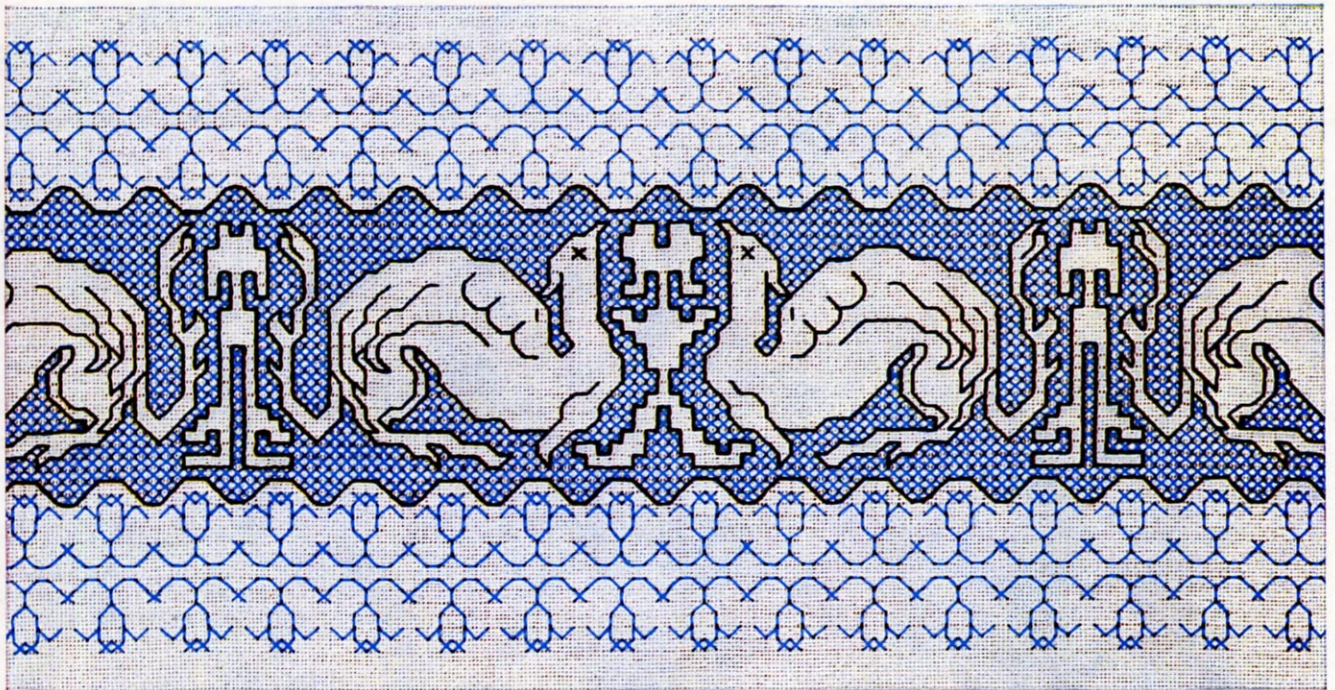


48.

The originals of the models on this plate are twice the size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads





49.



50.

The originals of the models on this plate are twice the size.

For these embroideries, use **D·M·C Cotton** or **Flax** threads