

## Bead Technique

BY MARJORIE M. FLASHMAN

IT is but a step from the actual manufacture of beads to a consideration of their structural use in fabric and their decorative application to the surface of material. In reviewing the historic processes of ornamental beadwork it would again appear that "there is nothing new under the sun!" For, as before stated at the beginning of this paper, the ancient Egyptians appear not only to have sewn beads upon their clothes but also to have used them structurally to make netted overtunics of gorgeous blue and green

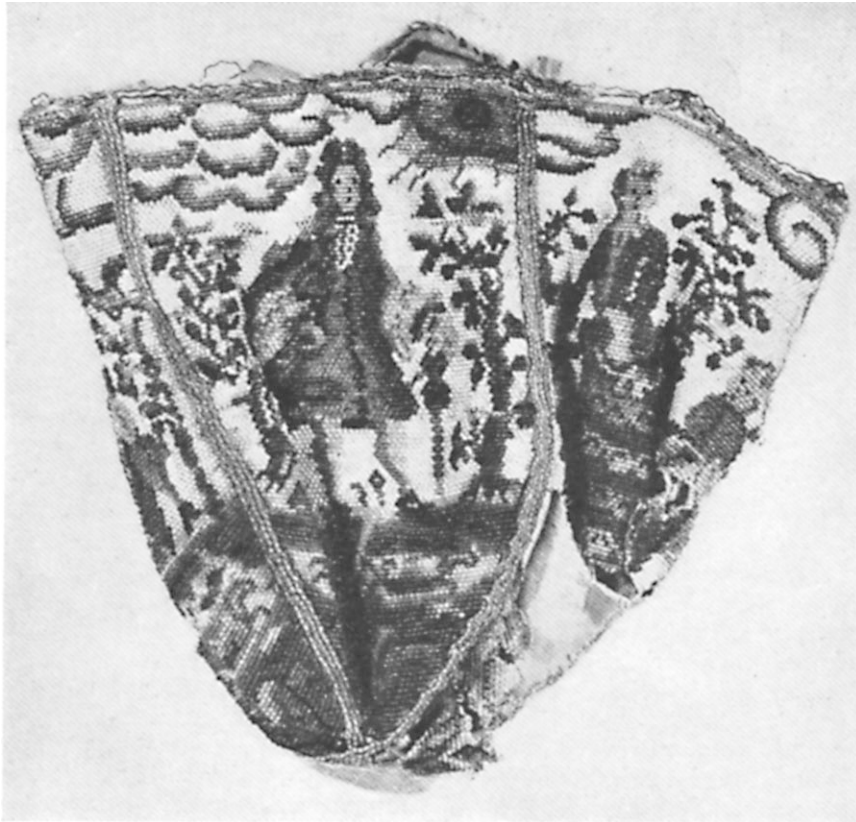
faïence beads, to enhance their white robes and to embellish their coffins in death. Ladies of the Italian Renaissance beaded their netted caps and yokes with the same technique in similar diamond-mesh pattern.

To return to an earlier style again, it is evident from the mosaic wall decorations, such as the procession of female saints pictured at S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, that in the late Eastern-Roman (Byzantine) period real stones or beads were sewn to the garments in ornamental border patterns. These were no doubt inspired by the mosaic patterns and by the *Champlevé* and *Cloisonné*

enamels which echoed the same splendor of color used in the architectural ornament as well as in personal jewels. An example of such use of stones or beads is shown in the beautiful robes upon

the figure of Saint Agnes which decorates the apse of the church of her name outside the walls of Rome.

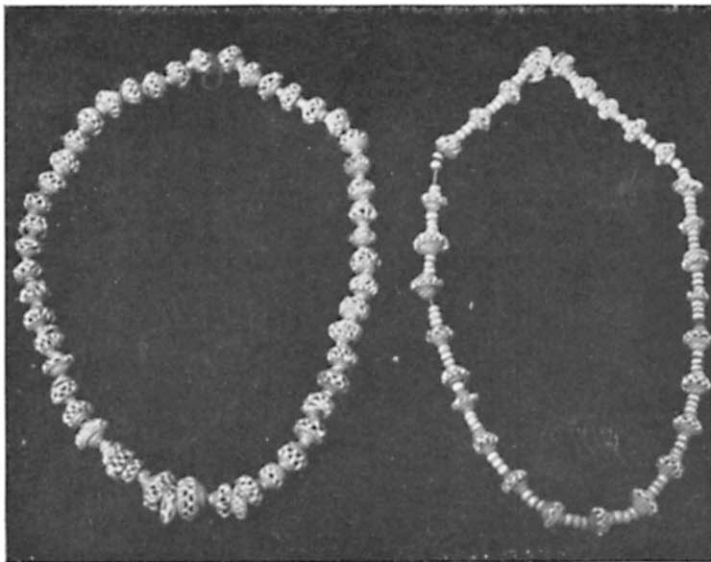
The beauty and richness of this Byzantine color flowers again in the jewels and is reflected in the sewed-on ornaments of the centuries of the renaissance in Italy, France and England. A fifteenth-century portrait



*Beaded Workbasket, Beginning of 18th Century. Munich Museum*

by Piero della Francesco shows an exquisite cap patterned with sewed-on seed pearls, from which depends a charming veil edged with clusters of beads in trefoil points.

English custom of the Tudor and Elizabethan period employed quantities of jewels, such as amethysts, sapphires, pearls, diamonds, rubies and semi-precious bead ornaments, and sewed them to every part of the costume, at the neck line, the belt line, on the sleeves, at the wrist, down the front of the skirt, and even on the hats of the men. Such abundant bead decoration points to their obvious manufacture in and importation



*From Pazaurek — Glasperlin- und Perlen-Arbeiten*

*Necklace of Carved Beads, Renaissance. Vienna Museum*

from the ancient bead centers of Southern Europe, notably Rome, Constantinople and finally Venice. Where, at Murano, flourishing glass factories were established and produced these beads which came to be so plentifully sprinkled over the garments of milord and lady, replacing the real jewels used earlier.

Until the Stuart period in England no extensive use of tiny beads occurs. This type of beadwork is contemporary with the curious stump-work embroidery of the same period, and was sometimes combined with it to introduce small details. They were also used to embellish embroidered panels, caskets, and mirror frames. Bead baskets were made by stringing beads on wire and then twisting these wires around vertical ones that had been fastened in a base at regular intervals. The shape of the basket depended upon the shape of the vase and the number of beads between the vertical wires.<sup>1</sup>

Purses were knitted from silk on which the beads had been strung to form a pattern. White satin purses patterned with beads were very much the vogue. These designs were sometimes padded to raise the beads. In the sewn bags the beads were put on one by one with a half cross-stitch, or were laid on

<sup>1</sup>Lourdain, "English Embroidery."

four and five at a time and caught down. This was apt to give a ribbed effect and looked not unlike couching.

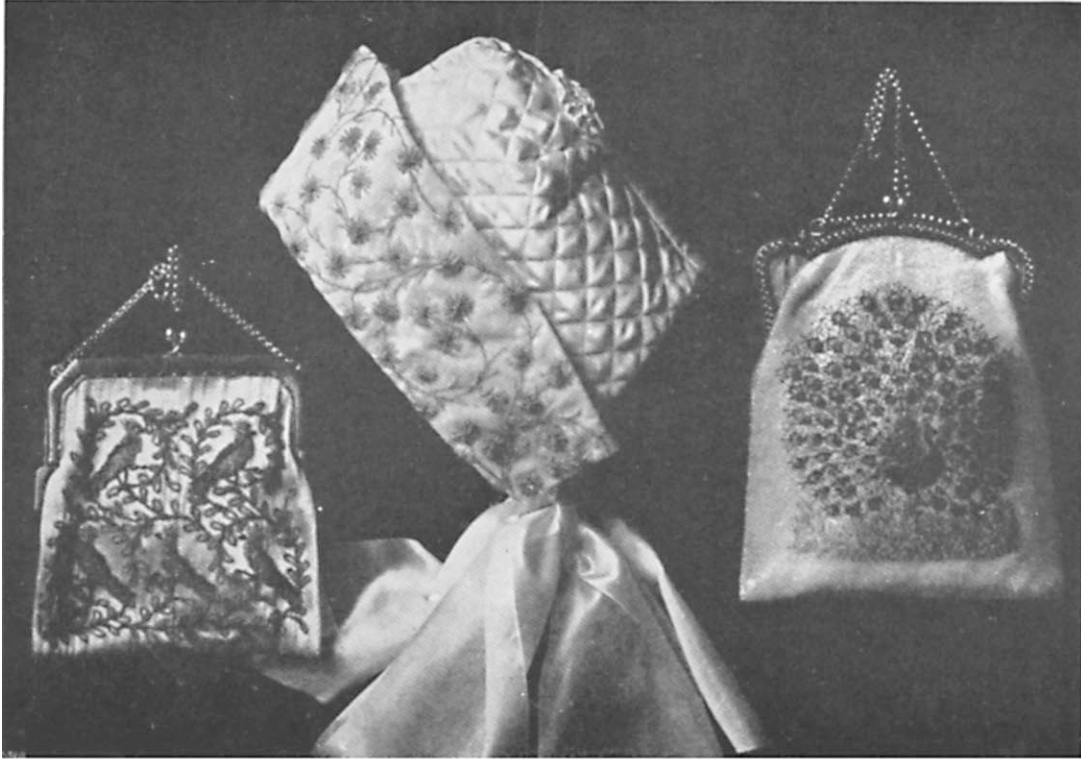
Beads were little used in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century. In the latter part, however, of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century we find knitted, crocheted, and sewn bags very much the mode. Patterns were jealously guarded particularly in the American Colonies. If a lady had an exceptionally fine bag pattern she shared it with her very best friend only.

An extremely amusing incident of this kind is told of Matilda Emerson and Ann Green, both very fine needlewomen, also rival candidates for the affections of the minister of the town in which they lived. Matilda had a very beautiful bag pattern which consisted of a funeral willow tree with an urn beneath it, near a grass-grown grave. This was to be worked in grays, purples and white on a black ground. Matilda, in order to have a "friend at court," gave this very appropriate pattern to the minister's sister, who kept house for him. She began to work the bag and presently found that the beads, strung according to the directions, did not give the desired effect although she had followed Matilda's directions with care. She was naturally quite put out and so provoked that she told her brother of the incident, which inevitably prejudiced him against Matilda. Ann, the other fine needlewoman, did not prosper from



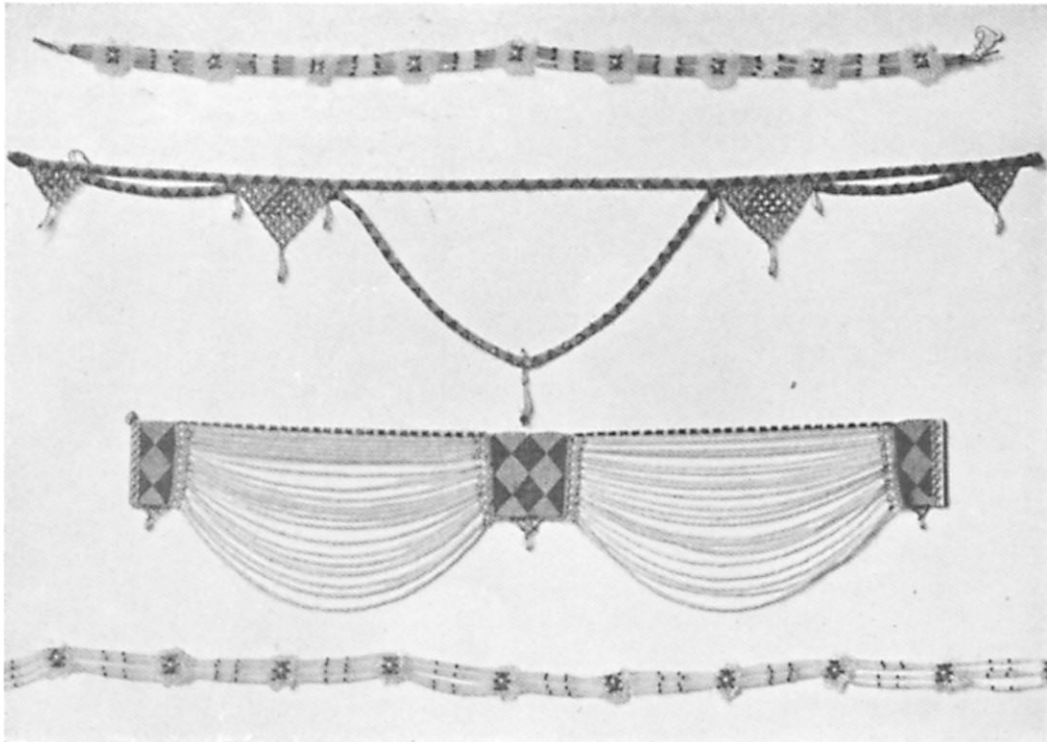
*From Pazaurek — Glasperlin- und Perlen-Arbeiten*

*Tray in Beadwork, about 1750. Stuttgart Museum*



*From Pazaurek — Glasperlin- und Perlen-Arbeiten*

*Cap and Two Bags — Modern German Work*



*From Pazaurek — Glasperlin- und Perlen-Arbeiten*

*Bead Necklaces — Modern German Work*

this as might have been expected. She, being a good New Englander with the proverbial New England conscience, finally confessed to the minister that she had mixed Matilda's directions for the bag, so that the lack of pattern would reflect discredit upon Matilda's skill and spoil her chance of winning his affections. The minister being a canny parson scorned both for stooping to such unworthy ruses and selected another girl for his wife.<sup>1</sup>

Many bags of this period are quite beautiful, although the majority are inclined to be realistic in their design. Two of the bag designs to come are from this period (pages 25 and 28). These are good examples of the two principle techniques — knitting and crocheting—employed at this time.

Most of the modern commercial bead bags are made in France and Germany. The French bags are woven by hand on a loom the size of the bag, and the German ones are made by crocheting the beads onto a net foundation on which a pattern is drawn. These bags are very fragile. The German ones rip very easily, and the warp threads of the French ones break from the weight of the beads. The most satisfactory ones are those knitted or crocheted by hand, as our grandmothers made them.

#### CROSS-STITCH ON CANVAS

Five methods of making bead bags are in use at the present time. No matter what the weak point is in each of these techniques, the designs to be shown in later articles can be executed in all of the following ways.

The first method consists in sewing beads onto a piece of cloth or canvas upon which a pattern has been drawn. This method does not require any particular skill, and is by far the simplest of all, each bead being sewn on individually to the cloth with a very fine needle, No. 11 or 12 preferably. Buttonhole or lampshade twist is the best thread

<sup>1</sup> Earle, Alice Morse, "Two Centuries of Costume in America."

to use. Ordinary sewing silk is too weak and purse silk is too heavy to give a nice effect. Knotting of the thread is to be avoided, as it tends to pull through the cloth and spoil the design. Each bead is sewn on with what is known as the tent-stitch or half of a cross-stitch. (See plate No. 3.) Care must be taken to keep the rows straight if an all-over pattern is being done on cloth. If working on cross-stitch canvas, its mesh will keep the work in

even rows. On this canvas a bead is sewn over each group of four threads that form a small square. (See plate No. 3.) The canvas should count from eight to ten meshes to the inch; of course, the size of the bead governs the size of the canvas used. If the beads are large the canvas mesh must be correspondingly large. Sometimes backgrounds are not filled in one bead at a time, but with two to six beads strung on the needle and fastened down at one time. This does not give as smooth and even a background as when they are sewn down one by one. Any of the patterns can be carried out in this way by using a canvas ground and counting the squares in the pattern, each square standing for a bead and a corresponding mesh of the canvas.

The next method explained is in use in most of the commercial bags as well as for the bead passementerie that comes by the yard. In this method the pattern is printed on the fabric to be beaded. Most of the bags are made on black net if the general effect of color is to be dark, and on white net if it is to be light. The design is not limited by the angular form of material which was true of canvas. This permits freer the rendering of forms in outline. Stems, for example, may meander spirally throughout the design without regard to the horizontal and vertical character of the background.

#### CHAIN-STITCH ON A NET FOUNDATION

The net is stretched in a small frame a little larger than the bag and fastened securely to the



From Pazaurek — *Glasperlin- und Perlen-Arbeiten*  
*Writing Portfolio, about 1800. Private Collection*

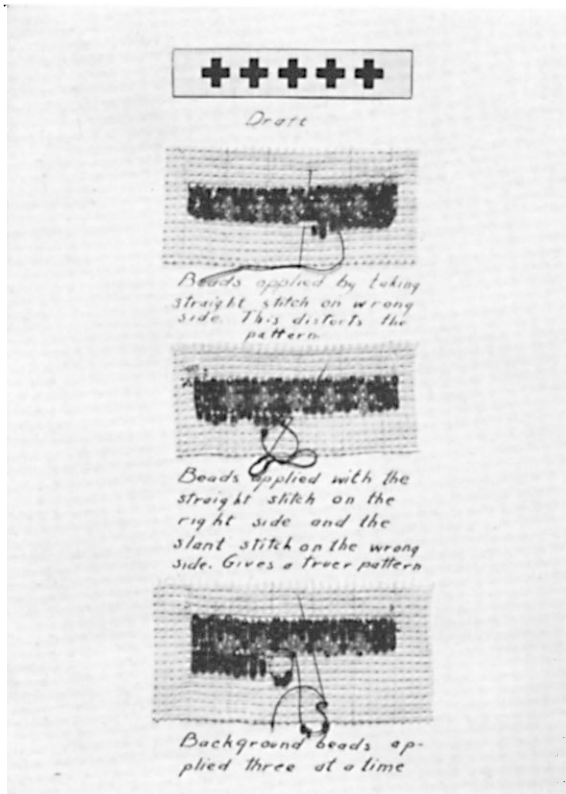


Plate 3

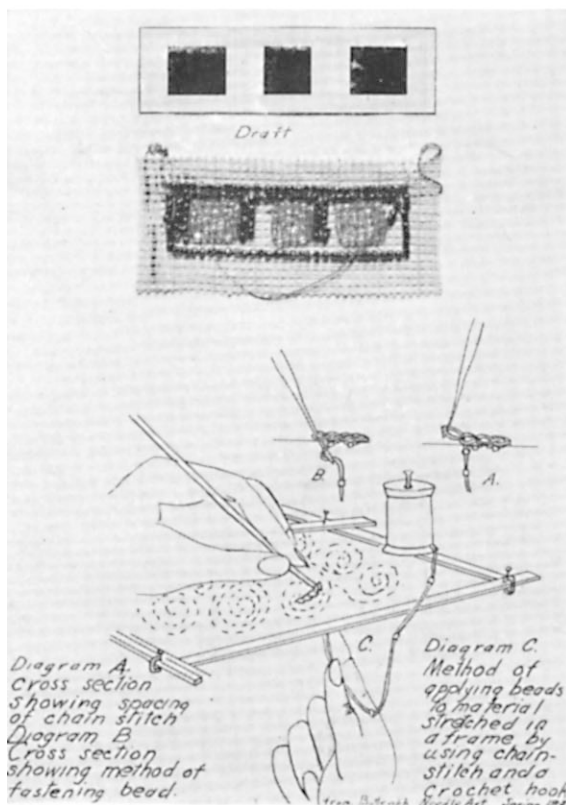


Plate 4

edge. Then the beads that have been strung on linen thread and wound around a spool are ready to be applied, each color to be used in the bag being strung separately. The beads are held in the left hand underneath the frame, always working from the wrong side. Select the spot that is to be filled in with a certain color bead and push a crochet hook (No. 11) through the material on the edge of the spot of color and catch the thread that the beads are strung on with the crochet hook, pull it through the cloth and fasten it securely. A bead is now held up close to the cloth and the hook is again pushed through it a bead length from the end, a loop of the thread being then pulled up through the cloth. Keep the loop on the needle; again holding a bead close to the fabric, push the hook through the cloth, pick up the thread, pulling it through both the material and the loop which is on the needle. This operation is continued until the design is completely outlined. Then the center is filled in — the beads may follow the outline until the whole space is filled, or they may cross the space in straight rows. The first method is the best it be followed. After all the spots of color are in place, the background may be filled in in any way the worker desires. (See plate No. 4.)

In beading a simple running pattern the line of beads follows the outline of the pattern, filling in the background with beads in rows after the pattern beads are in place. In the case of a design where two or more colors are used, the thread is fastened securely at the beginning and end of each color. One of the disadvantages of this method is that the work must be done from the wrong side and without seeing what is being done. Then, too, the beads are apt to rip off easily if one thread is broken, since this stitch is nothing more nor less than the old-fashioned chain-stitch worked through the cloth instead of into a long string. The following patterns can be executed in this manner by transferring them from the paper to the cloth. This can be done by placing an ordinary transfer carbon paper under the pattern, between it and the material and tracing over the pattern with a sharp pointed stick or pencil. The transfer carbon paper comes in several different colors, green, blue, red, yellow or white, and may be purchased at a good stationery store.

#### METHOD BY SINGLE CROCHET

The third method of making bead bags is by crocheting without any foundation material. For a simple plain bag with no pattern in it, the beads should be strung on purse silk that matches them. Sometimes an interesting variation can be secured by stringing a dark bead on a light thread or a light bead on a dark thread. The color of the thread sparkles through in quite a delightful manner.

TO STRING THE BEADS

More than two bunches of beads should not be strung at one time, as they are very awkward to handle in any larger quantity. The stringing of these beads need not be a laborious task. They can be done very easily and simply in the following way: Remove the end of one strand of beads from a bunch, hold the strand in the left hand; take the end of the purse silk in the right hand and tie the two ends together so that the purse silk makes a loop over the end of the thread that the beads are strung on. (See plate No. 5A.) Then slide the beads down over this very simple knot onto the purse silk. If a bead is reached that will not slip over the knot, break the thread, discard the bead, and tie another knot. Any bead that will not go over this knot cannot be strung with a needle.

TO BEGIN THE BAG

When the beads are strung, the bag is started. Next crochet a chain, any number from 50 to 75, depending on the size of bag that you wish. This chain will be the actual width of the bag when finished, forming the central rib of the bottom of the bag from which the work is to be done continuously in one direction, round and round this central rib, growing from the bottom up the sides in tubular form without seams. Use a No. 9 steel crochet hook, keeping the chain very loose. The average beginner crochets too tightly, and may have to rip out the work several times before it is loose enough. So bear in mind that all work is to be loose and pliable. Now for the first row of beads, chain one, insert the hook into the last stitch from the hook, pull through a loop, then push down a bead close to it, throw the thread over the hook and pull it through the two loops that are on it. (See plate No. 6.) This stitch is commonly known as single crochet or half stitch. This operation is continued into the next stitch, pulling up a loop through the chain, pushing down a bead, then pulling a loop through the two stitches that are on the hook. Repeat this the full length of the chain. Put three stitches, with a bead in each stitch, into the last stitch of the chain, then turn the work so that the beads are away from you, and continue down the other side of the chain. (See plates Nos. 5B and 6.)

THE SECOND ROW

Continue the work in the top of the last row of single crochet and beads, picking up only one side if one is broken. Continue around and around the bag in this way until the desired depth is reached. Fasten the thread by weaving it back and forth into the fabric. (See plate No. 6.)

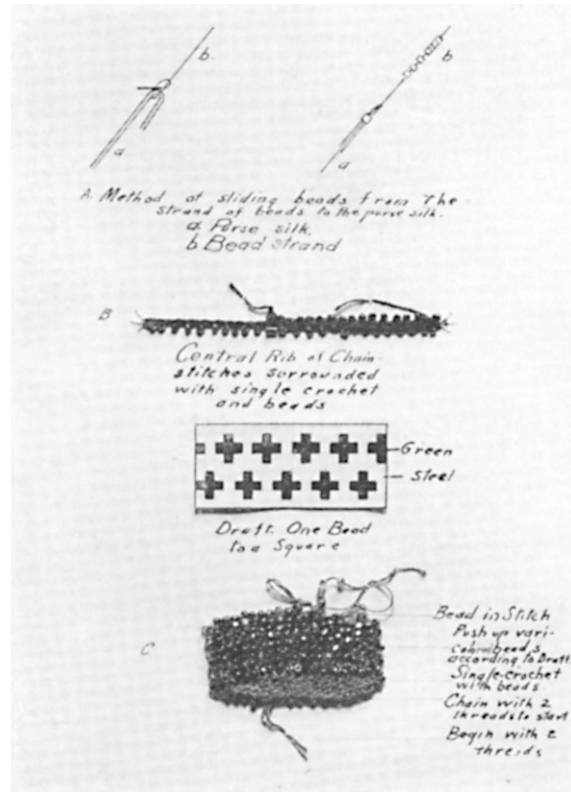


Plate 5

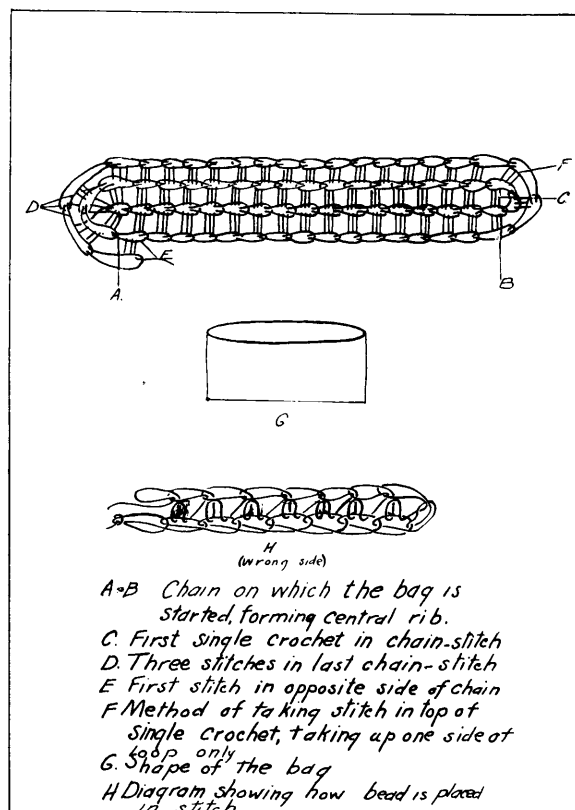


Plate 6



Plate 7

## TO STRING MORE BEADS

This bag will undoubtedly require more than two bunches of beads, so when the end of the beads already strung is reached, break the thread and add more. Join the ends with a hard knot close to the hook and work them in under the next stitches. Never trim them close, as that weakens the fabric of the bag, since silk knots slip loose easily if cut too short. These plain-colored crochet bags can be varied in texture and pattern by omitting beads to form checks or stripes if desired.

## TO SLIT THE BAG FOR A MOUNTING

If the bag is to be mounted with a metal top that opens from a hinge, a different procedure must be followed. The bag is started and worked, as stated before, up to the bottom of the hinge of the bag top. The problem is now to form openings at the sides into which the hinge will fit as into finished sockets. (See plates Nos. 7 and 8.) Without discontinuing the crocheting round and round, which keeps the beads on one side of the bag (the inside so far), turn the bag right side out; locate the two ends of the original central rib chain, and from these end beads follow up every row till the top is reached. This should divide the bag into two equal parts. Mark these points with a contrasting colored thread. Start from one thread; work across in the same way, placing one bead in every stitch

until the thread is reached that marks the halfway point. Chain 20 stitches loosely, very loosely. Now take the next stitch in the same way as before, a single crochet with a bead in the stitch. This forms a long loop of chain stitches between two stitches at one edge of the bag. Continue across the other side of the bag until the other marker is reached, and chain 20 in the same way as was done at the opposite edge between the two stitches. Work across the next side with single crochet and beads until the stitch before the chain is reached. Put one single crochet in this stitch with a bead, and another single crochet in the same stitch without a bead. This will form an edge to which you can sew the top when your bag is finished. (See plate No. 8.) Now chain 20 after this stitch. Skip the chain of the row below entirely. Nothing is to be done with any of the chains that occur in each row until the bag is entirely finished. Put one single crochet without a bead into the next stitch at the end of the chain of the row below. Into the same stitch put another single crochet with a bead, and continue across the side with a bead in each single crochet. Repeat this at the other edge. These two chains are made in every row until the depth of the slit is equal to the depth of the top. Finish off with a row of single crochet and fasten the thread. To open up the side

(Continued on page 44)

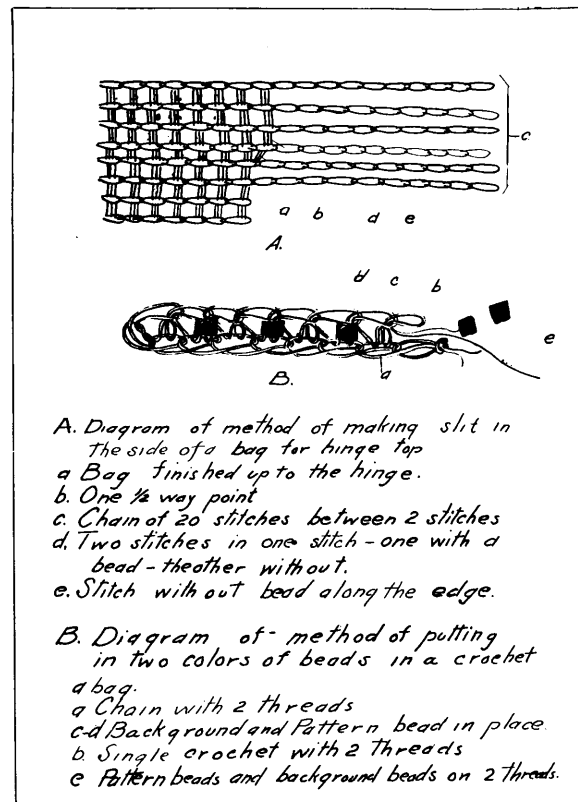


Plate 8

## The SNOW LOOMS

### School of Weaving and Crafts

EDITH HUNTINGTON SNOW, *Director*

LAURA L. PEASLEY

#### WRITE FOR OUR LIST OF LOOMS AND EQUIPMENT

We use many differing looms, from those of cardboard, or small table looms, to our handsome and craftsmanlike eight-harness loom.

We offer a lesson book of simple and explicit instructions for the beginning weaver, at home, in schools, camps, and hospitals. \$6.00.

Courses in our studio include weaving in interesting variations.

We also teach Jewelry, Leather Work, Basketry, Block Printing, Clay Modeling, Rug Hooking.

**48 East 49th Street, New York**

## The CRAFTSMEN'S GUILD

15 Fayette Street

BOSTON - MASSACHUSETTS



¶ A Studio-Shop, devoted to the exhibition and sale of handicrafts. Embroideries, weavings, leather, pottery, enamels, block-printing etchings. ¶ Special orders promptly attended to. Designs for needlework, started pieces with materials, also lessons by appointment. Ensemble bags and scarfs a studio specialty.

### GAUZE WEAVING

(Continued from page 30)

left of the standard heddles and others through to the right, giving strips with a right and left twist. Another suggestion is: 20 ends drawn plain 2-4; 2-4; 20 ends of gauze; 20 ends 2-4; 2-4, combining a plain weave stripe with a gauze stripe. This drawing in, when woven, as suggested for horizontal stripes, results in a checked pattern. Thus one variation suggests another, giving numerous pleasing weaving effects, not to mention those that may be obtained by varying material and color combination.

There is one point the weaver must be careful about in planning the various projects, particularly in this weave, and that is the choice of materials to be used for warps. It is necessary to use a ply yarn with a good twist; cotton linen or silk may be used but the matting propensities of wool render it unsuitable for use as a warp. It can be used as a filler as can almost any kind of yarn when one has a good warp on the loom.

After the finished cloth is cut from the loom, it can be used for the foundation for rugs and chair seats in the Persian knot or French stitch, table scarfs, pillows, upholstery materials, etc., in cross or double cross stitch, in all-over designs, or, if the material has been dyed, or is woven in colors, small designs or border can be used for decorating the various articles as they are made up.

NOTE. — The tieup above is for a loom equipped with jacks.

The tieup for a loom equipped with rollers should be: Treadle No. 1, harnesses 2 and 3; treadle No. 2, harnesses 3 and 4. The slackener should still be tied to treadle No. 1.

All weavings and embroideries illustrated are products of the Occupational Therapy Department at Kings Park State Hospital.



### BEAD TECHNIQUE

(Continued from page 26)

so that the top can be sewn, cut each chain of 20 in the center and ravel back to the bag, releasing sufficient length of silk to be woven back into the fabric of the bag to form a firm-finished edge, to which the hinge may be attached. Follow this process with all the chains on both sides of the bag. One side will ravel easily, and care must be taken not to ravel it too far. (See plate No. 7.)

#### FITTING THE BAG TOP TO THE BAG

Now the bag is ready to sew to the top selected. The top chosen should be from one-half inch to one inch smaller than the bag. A bag that is gathered to a top is always much better looking than when it is stretched to fit the top. If a bag is to be fitted to a top already chosen, be sure that the chain at the beginning is long enough to give this fullness. In sewing the bag to the top, use the



same purse silk that the bag is made of and fasten it securely.

#### LINING OF THE BAG

A word of caution about the lining of the bag may be helpful. It should always be a little smaller than the bag, so that the things carried in it will not stretch it out of shape. Never sew the lining to the bag before it is mounted. The lining always wears out before the bag, and should be so put in as to be easily replaced. If sewed to the bag it will have to be ripped off to replace the lining. Line the bag after it has been mounted so it can be replaced easily.



#### BOOK REVIEWS

(Continued from page 41)

quilting, the materials used, the dyeing, and supplements the illustrations in its directions for the quilter.

Miss Finley knows her subject, and from her research and experience has evolved theories on the basic characteristics of the patterns used, the possible scope of design and the nature underlying their structure and color.

No matter how remote one's interest in patchwork quilts has been, no reader can quite escape the fascination of that old time art as depicted in Miss Finley's book.

PEASANT ART IN ROUMANIA by *George Oprea*  
(Albert & Charles Boni, Inc.). Price \$3.00 paper bound.

SOME books seem to clamor to be owned — to be left where they can be picked up at leisure, to be studied carefully or admired superficially according to one's mood — books with such wealth of material and beauty of illustration that they are forever new. Such a book is "Peasant Art in Roumania." Included in the "Creative Art Supplement," this book is attractively arranged, and replete with illustrations. The art student will find the text interesting, for the author is thoroughly cognizant of his subject and presents adequate historical and descriptive material.

For the craftsman the book affords a golconda of design. The hundreds of plates, scattered through it, illustrate all types of peasant design and creation. The Roumanians are of various racial strains and have been caught in a maelstrom of divers cultural movements. Their language is of Latin derivation, and their design shows traces of the Byzantine. Countering these are the outpourings of the Slavic and Oriental strains that have permeated it. From this mixture have evolved peasant arts, attractive and living.

Any one of us would enjoy the raciness of the



### The Shuttle-Craft Guild of Hand-Weavers

ANYONE wishing to weave may become a member of the Shuttle-Craft Guild which has now spread throughout the United States and into many distant countries. No previous experience is required. Some members weave purely for pleasure others chiefly for profit. Membership includes a complete one-year course in hand-weaving; payment is scheduled over eight months. Membership also includes Guild Bulletins, special instruction by letter, criticism of work, and answers to questions. Send for our booklet describing our looms as well as our Shuttle-Craft Course in Hand-Weaving.

#### THE SHUTTLE-CRAFT GUILD

30 Brattle Street

Cambridge, Mass.



A GOOD SIGN  
helps your  
business

This one in colors, is lighted from leafy branch at top.

We design and make them to your own ideas, of the best materials and in colored lacquers or any finish you desire.

We also make special handmade and other metal goods such as: Lanterns, Hinges, Grills, Advertising novelties, Bookends, Fireplace sets, Weather vanes, Curtain hold backs, Wall lighting and Window display fixtures, Monograms, etc.

#### MODERN METAL WORKS

LANDOVER, MARYLAND