

FIG. 2

ALTERNATIVE PATTERN-DRAFTS FOR THE FABRIC ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 5, TOGETHER WITH A DRAFT IN A LATER HAND.

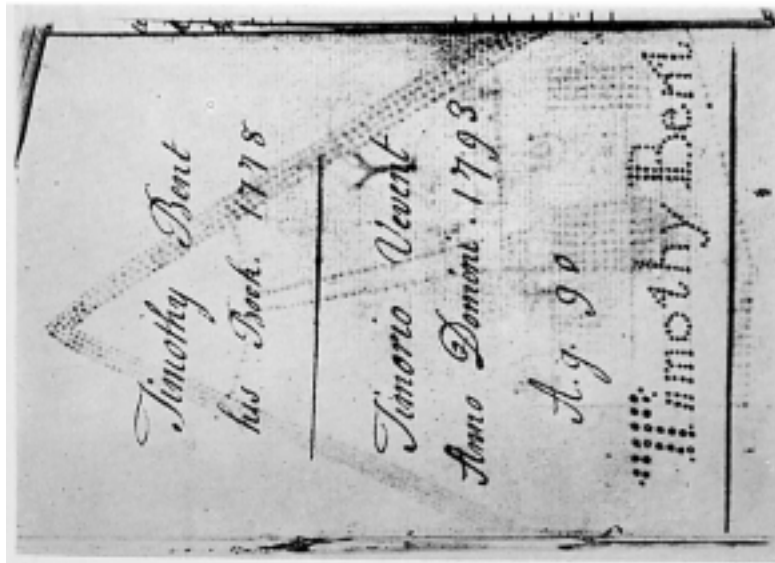


FIG. 1

FRONT PAGE OF TIMOTHY BENT'S PATTERN-BOOK.

## AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WEAVER'S PATTERN-BOOK

*by*

R. J. CHARLESTON

**T**HE Blaise Castle House Museum at Henbury, near Bristol, is fortunate enough to reckon amongst its treasures a considerable rarity in the form of an eighteenth-century weaver's pattern-book. The book is a small vellum-bound volume with a pocket in the cover, and a flap of vellum tying with a string over the fore-edge for protection. It is eminently practical in format, easily slipped into the wide pockets of a contemporary coat. It is, moreover, not merely a pattern-book reflecting the purely professional interests of its owner, but something also of a commonplace book, from the pages of which we may gather some idea of an interesting personality. There is little strictly autobiographical in it, unless it be the doggerel verse on p. 181 —

“When out of my Prenticeship came  
Then nothing at all I had found.  
When I to forty Years came,  
My som it was one hundred pound

Timothy Bent. 1792”

The earliest date in the book is 1778, inscribed on the first page in the spirit of a diary begun in a fine January optimism — “Timothy Bent his Book. 1778” (Fig. 1). If the rhyme already recorded does indeed enshrine a biographical fact, the book was begun in the twenty-sixth year of its writer's life. The latest certain date is 1795.

Timothy Bent, if not a scholar precisely, had more than a smattering of education. His writing is clear and true, and his long and frequently involved calculations of money or time are invariably accurate, the answer being reached with a minimum of crossings-out. If it be objected that these are but the professional skills of a craft which demands much calculation

of quantities, there is other evidence of a curious and even cultivated mind. His Latin may be garbled —

“Olympias in cruce pendentis Pausaniae.

Capit coronam auream imposuit”

he writes in a quotation which is apparently a favourite, for it appears further on in the book with quite different spelling: but it is not the trick of a man commonplace in language to twist his name from “Timothy Bent” to “Timorio Vevent” as this weaver does on the front page of his book (Fig. 1). Some of the riddles which he records may have no more mystery than is usual with country adages which have undergone strange twists and ellipses in the age-old traffic of tradition, but some of the entries in this book give sudden glimpses of queer character and dark thoughts which read strangely in the prosaic light of a twentieth-century English day.

“I am often read and often White.

I am often Licker good.

I am often eat and often drank.

I am shure to kool the Blood.

Some times I stand by myself alone.

Free from all care and strife

And som times spread up to the Bour.

And fast'ned there for Life.”

Such innocent, though not necessarily simple, riddles are a commonplace of primitive cultures, and in England have their prototypes in Anglo-Saxon. More personal, and indicative of an enquiring and not unsophisticated mind, are such entries as — “God don it in secret, he being impenitent Caus'd him to swing. Capable of wickedness, but to govern him its Impossible. 1794”; or — “A advertisement. A dead body was taken out of the Water, his belly was burst and his Kell hanging out, when his body Was opened it was ful of Ittuals Which I think was the cause of its Death ————”. The book records a number of recipes, which may be homely, as — “To keep Ink From freezing. Put a Little Brandy in or the Like” — or somewhat sinister, as — “Black Despair. Take the Viper or White Snake Cut of its head and take out his intrels wash it Clean and Lap it in a cloath and boil it Then drink it Lu warm fasting.” The writer himself was uneasy about this remedy and apparently disliked the thought of anyone seeing it recorded in his hand, for the first three lines of it were obscured in the book by the pasting over them of strips of innocent printed paper.

Such riddles and rhymes, chance observations and reflections, however, are only interlarded in a book the substance of which is devoted to the serious business of its owner's craft, for, as he himself says —

“Who by Mechanick Arts does hope to thrive.  
Must be a Bee, and make his Shop his Hive.”

The book contains upwards of sixty pattern-drafts, carefully drawn out and frequently annotated with instructions for weaving (Figs. 2, 3, 4). In a number of instances the draft has been illustrated by the attachment of a tiny specimen cut from a finished cloth. Thus the pin in Fig. 2 originally secured the little fragment of lozenge-patterned blue-and-white material shown in Fig. 5 (top, right).

It is a curious fact, however, that on analysis these samples, in every instance, show small deviations from the patterns as drafted. Thus the larger fragment illustrated in Fig. 6 is substantially of the same pattern as that produced by its draft (Fig. 3), but shows one slight variation which, as it produces a symmetry not in the draft, seems to indicate that an erroneous draft was corrected in the preparation of the loom. It seems clear that constant practice in the application of the relatively simple principles involved in the apparent complexity of these weaves enabled the weaver to rectify mistakes in the drafts, or to make variations which produced in essence the effects intended. These remarks apply to all the samples illustrated here (Figs. 5 and 6). The analyses of these specimens are shown on Fig. 7, with, in each case, the weave produced from the corresponding draft shown on the right. The exception to this arrangement, however, is the stuff illustrated in Fig. 5 and referred to above.

The very names of the stuffs have a delightful ring. “The Rose and Crown,” “The Rich Mans Fancy,” “The Trewlovers Not,” “Strawbery” and “The Hawthorn Leaf” breathe a rural simplicity and romanticism. Some of the names are easily explained, as “Harts and Diaments or Delight” (Fig. 5, bottom left) and “Basket Work” (Fig. 5, top left, and Fig. 6, bottom) or “Bird's Eye” — that almost worldwide appellation of a twilled diaper-pattern having a spot in the center of a lozenge. Other names of materials are less easily explained, and remind one of *The Tailor of Gloucester* — “. . . Satin and pompadour, and lutestring; stuffs had strange names and were very expensive in the days of the Tailor of Gloucester.” “Satinet” and “Huckaback,” albeit archaic-sounding, may perhaps mean something to the woman of today, but how many know what “Calomanco” is, or “Satin L——o”? “Lutestring” itself appears on page 9, in the form “Ludstring,” and is a reminder of how many of these

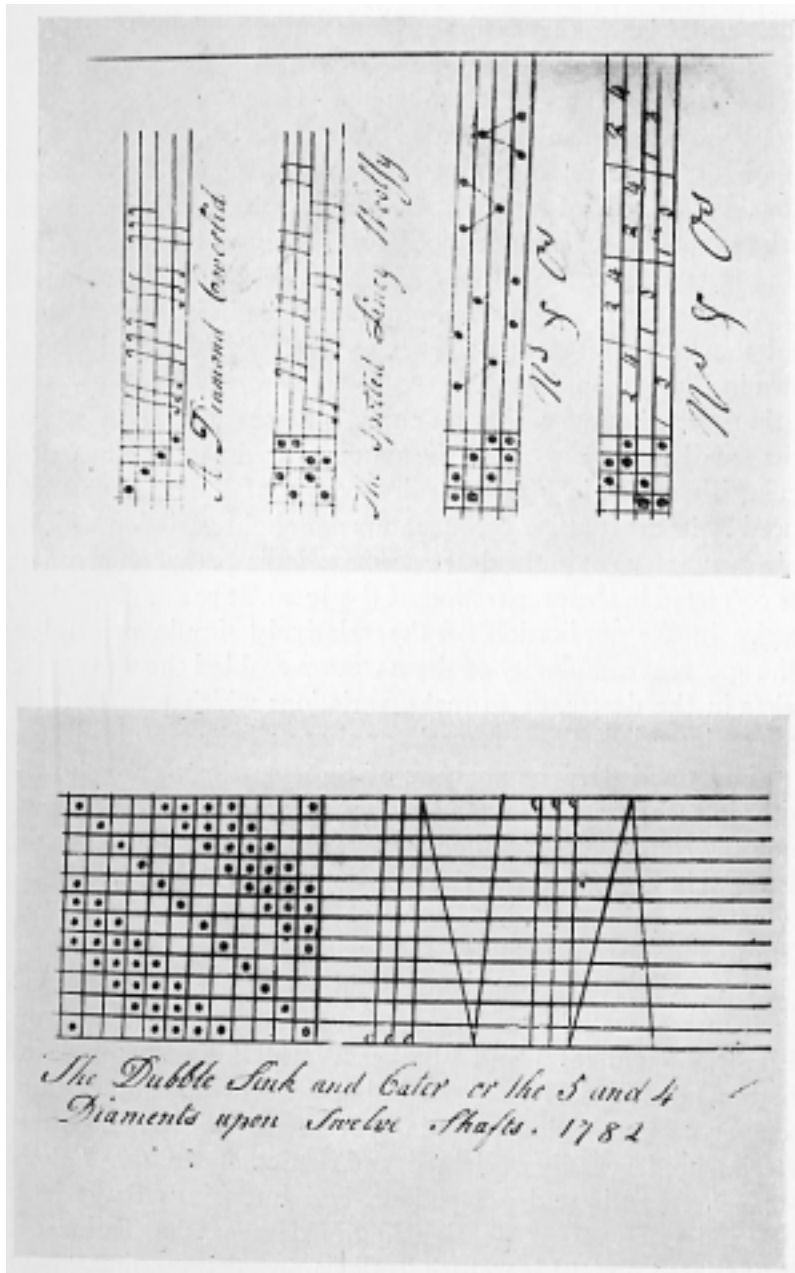


FIG. 3  
 PATTERN-DRAFT FOR "THE DUBBLE SINK AND CATER" (SEE FIG. 6).

FIG. 4  
 PATTERN-DRAFTS FOR "A DIAMOND COVERLID," "THE SPOTTED LINCY WOOLLY," AND TWO ALTERNATIVE DRAFTS FOR "NS AND OS."

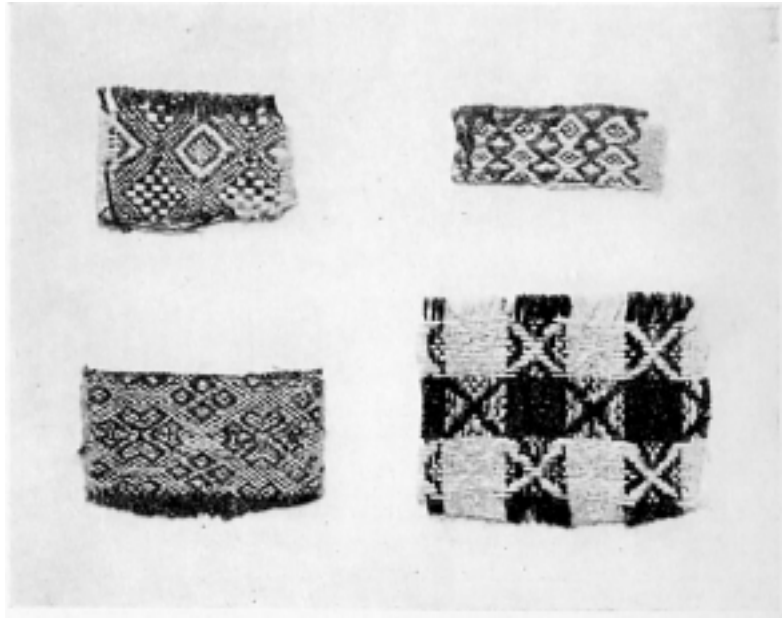


FIG. 5

SAMPLES OF BLUE-AND-WHITE FIGURED LINENS: TOP LEFT, "BASKET WORK"; TOP RIGHT, "HANG BY THE WHITES" (SEE FIG. 2); BOTTOM LEFT, "HARTS AND DIAMENTS OR DELIGHT"; BOTTOM RIGHT, "SLIPD CHECKD FIGURD PATTERN."

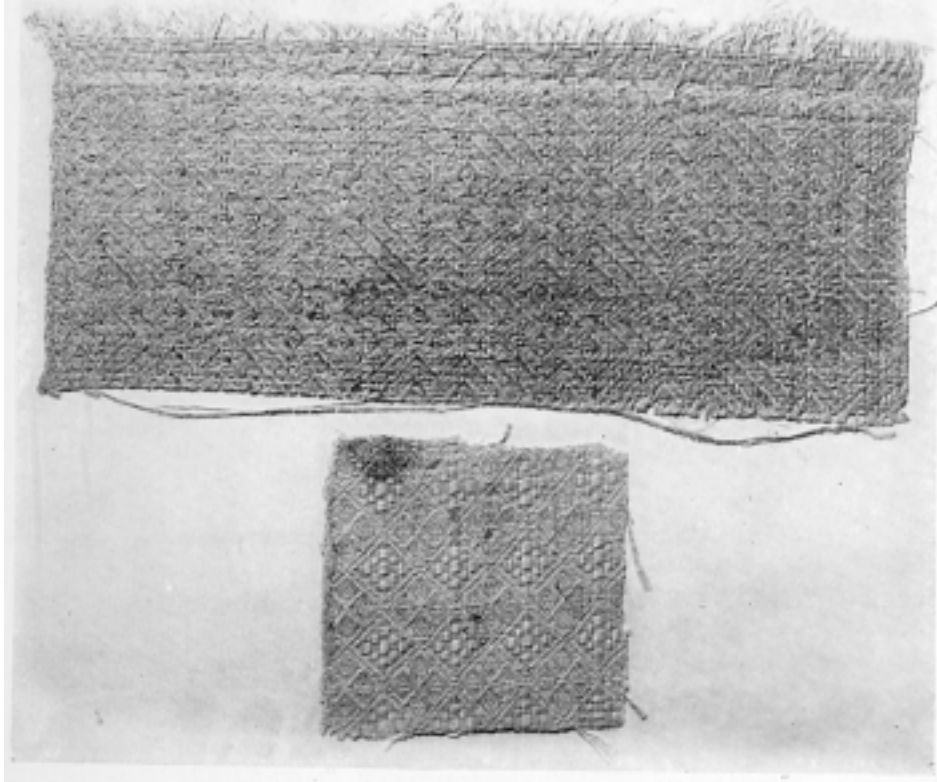


FIG. 6

SAMPLES OF SELF-COLOURED FIGURED LINENS: TOP, "THE DUBBLE SINK AND CATER"  
(COMPARE FIG. 3); BOTTOM, "BASKET WORK."

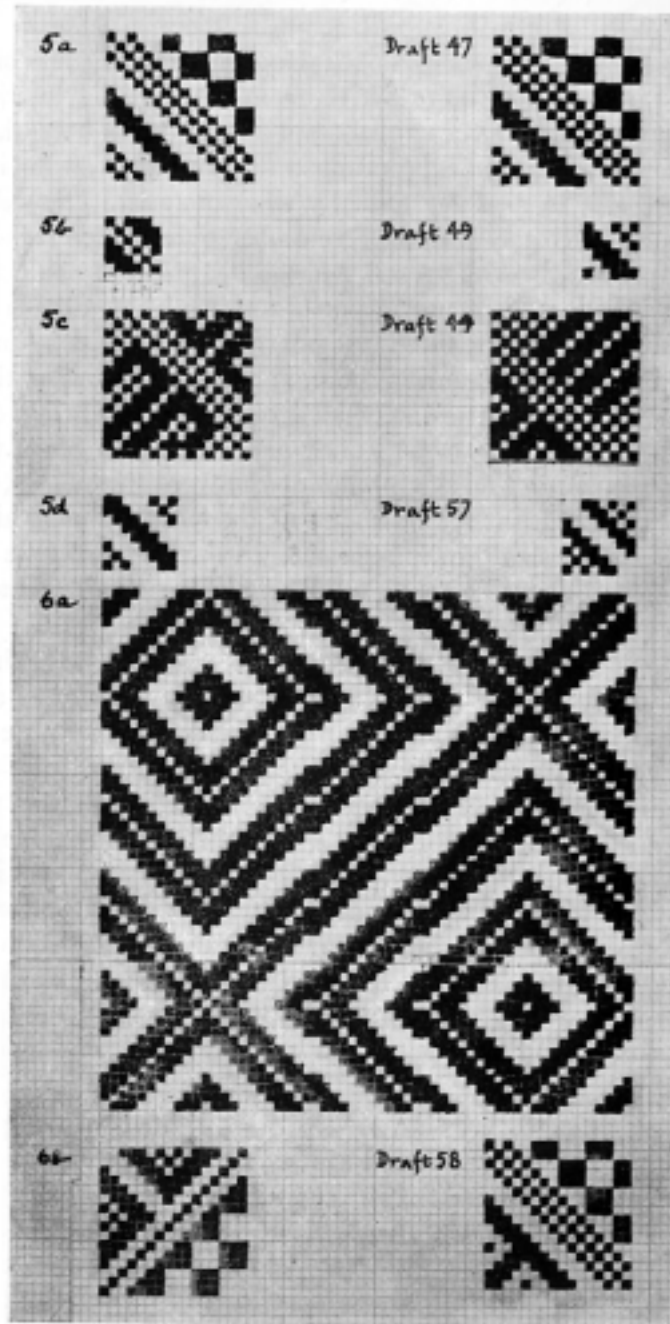


FIG. 7

ON THE LEFT, ANALYSES OF THE PATTERN-UNITS IN THE FABRICS ILLUSTRATED IN FIGS. 5 AND 6; ON THE RIGHT THESE PATTERNS AS DRAFTED.



patterns, seemingly indigenous to the English countryside, come from Italy and France. It appears to derive from the French “lustrine” and, after receiving a characteristic anglicisation during the eighteenth century, it once more achieved a rational spelling in the nineteenth, when it appears as “lustring,” that is, a glossy (usually silk) material. The debt to the Continent may be clearly traced in a number of other pattern-names — “The Italean Stich,” “The french Marigold,” “The Dubble Sink and Cater or the 5 and 4 Diaments” (Fig. 6, top) or “The French Looking Glass.” No doubt many of these designs were introduced by immigrant French Protestant weavers during the religious persecutions of the seventeenth century. One draft is accompanied by the following enigmatic caption — “This Requireth to be Fulish Slaid it Taketh Shoot.worked a peice. October. 1782.” The significance of the word “foolish” (or “full-ish”?) is not clear, but the second clause is no doubt a punning allusion to weaving-processes, “slaid” meaning “entered in the slay” (the weaver’s reed used for beating up the cloth to a dense consistency) and a “shoot” being the insertion of one weft.

Although in the latter days of Gloucestershire weaving, the fabrics woven seem to have been limited to cheese-cloths, huckabacks and some table-linens, it is clear that in Timothy Bent’s day many needs were catered for by the local industry. Thus on page 21 of his book there is a draft entitled “Enclosure of Diaments . . . for pett . . . g” (i.e., petticoating), while farther on is another pattern described as “Diamond Coverlid” (Fig. 4). The title “Spotted Lincy Woolsey” (Fig. 4) is an indication that this material of mixed fibers (linen and wool) was woven for clothing at the time, and entries in a later hand (compare Fig. 2) show that the manufacture continued long after Timothy Bent’s book had passed into other hands — “How to Make a peice of Grey Linsey Check 36 yards Wool yarn with the Oil in 19 pound Brown linen yarn 14 skeins Irish reel yard 3 nails wide 1841.”

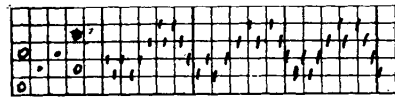
By this date, however, the Gloucestershire linen-weaving industry was at the beginning of its decline. In the eighteenth century at least three families are known who directed weaving-establishments — the Busbys at Morton-in-Marsh, whose business dated back to at least 1742, and two branches of the Gray family — one at Pebworth, and the other at, successively, Pebworth, Broad Marston, Moreton-in-Marsh, and Cow Honeybourne. Among the looms at Honeybourne was one dated 1717, and from here two shuttles with eighteenth century dates came to the Blaise Castle House Museum. In 1837 this concern had employed seven-

teen looms, much additional work being given out amongst the local cottagers. The main divisions of the manufacture appear to have been cheese-cloths ("strainering") for the dairy industry, huckabacks, and table-linens. The narrow-width cheese-cloths were woven by women, but those wider than four quarters (one yard), together with linen canvas, huckabacks, and table-linens, by men. The winding of spools was done by the children. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the industry declined under a number of adverse influences. The most important of these was the gradual decline in the cheese-making industry in the West country. Then in the 1870's labourers' wages rose, at a time when the linen-masters could not afford to increase the weavers' wages to a level which would offer an effective counter-attraction. At the same time, the successive Education Acts from 1870 onwards cut off the supply both of winders and of apprentices to the loom (for it was considered essential that to become a master of his craft a boy should begin weaving before he was fourteen). The final blow came when about 1885 the suppliers of yarn to the Honeybourne looms — Messrs. Richards, of Aberdeen — ceased to manufacture wet-spun yarns. The weavers could not work with dry-spun, and the industry therefore came to a standstill, the last piece of hand-woven linen to be made in Gloucestershire being probably taken from the loom of Edwin White, a table-linen weaver, about 1890.<sup>1</sup> The thrums threaded through twelve heddles and reed, and a narrow piece of damask cloth, all now in the Blaise Castle House Museum, are probably the melancholy relics of this obituary act.

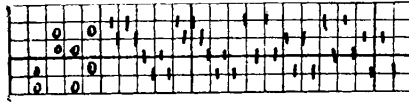
The writer wishes to express his indebtedness to the authorities of the City Museum, Bristol (of which the Folk Museum at Blaise Castle House is a branch), for kind permission to reproduce the photographs illustrating this article.

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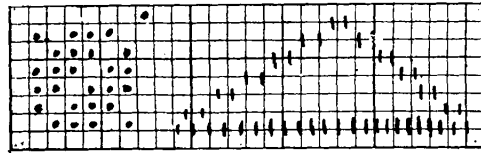
1. See R. Austin, "Linen-Weaving in North Gloucestershire." Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, XXXVIII (1915) pp. 204-8.



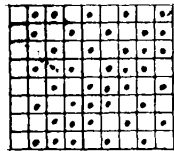
1. HUCKABACK.



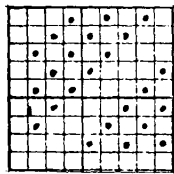
2. M.O.



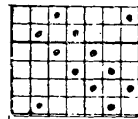
3. THE ITALEAN STICH OR TO STICH  
DIOPUR UPON SEVEN SHAFTS.



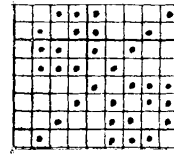
4. THE CRUCKED SATINET.



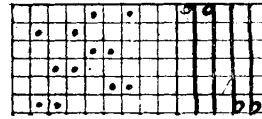
5. T C S. (AUTHOR'S NOTE —  
"THE CRUCKED SATINET")



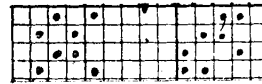
6. T C S. (AUTHOR'S NOTE —  
"THE CRUCKED SATINET")



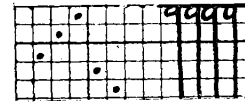
7. TRENCHER WORK.



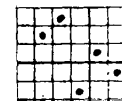
8. THE SATEN STRIPE.



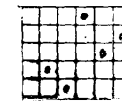
9. LUDSTRING.



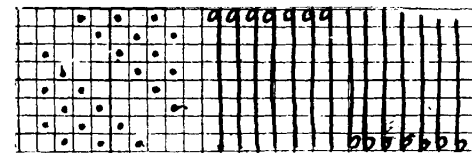
10. SATIN L—O.



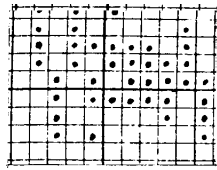
11. MENS WARTH.



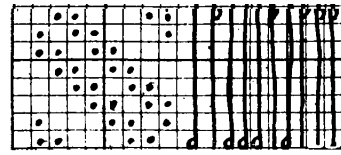
12. WOMANS CALOMANCO.



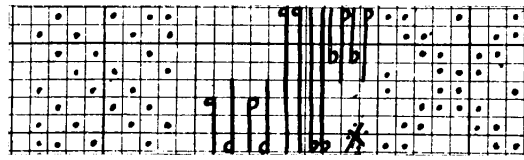
13. ENCLOSURE OF DIAMENTS.



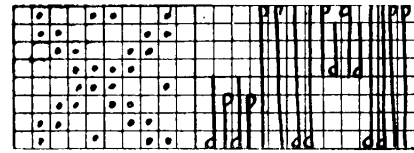
14. (UNNAMED.)



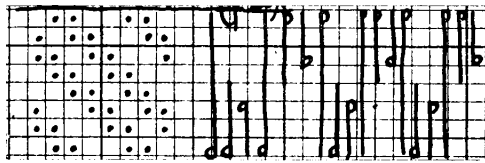
19. (UNNAMED.)



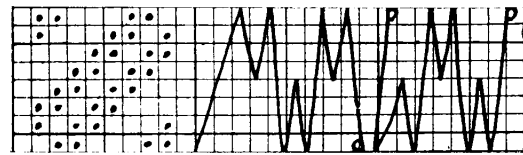
15. (UNNAMED.) THE WORD "HALL" (?) WRITTEN IN HERE.



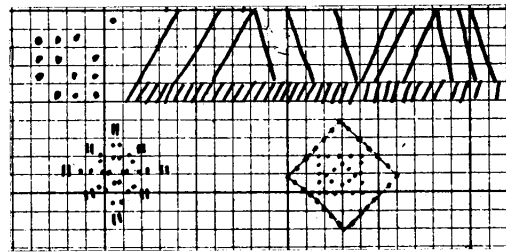
20. (UNNAMED.)



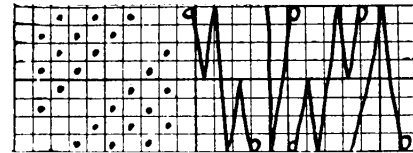
16. THE ROSE AND CROWN.



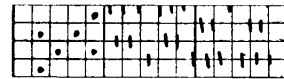
21. THE ROSE & DIAMENTS.



17. TO STICH DIOPOUR UPON FIVE SHAFTS.



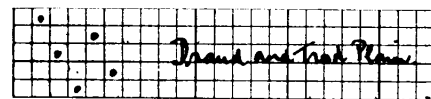
22. CROCKED DIAMENT.



23. A ROMAN H. OR A.



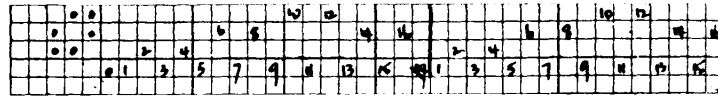
18. HUCKABACK.



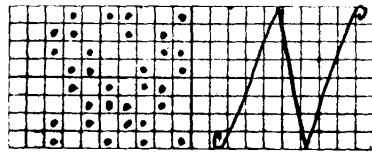
24. CALOMANCO.



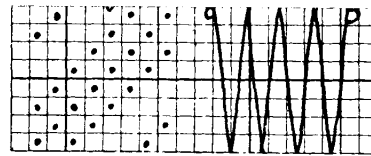
25. ENS AND DIAMENTS.



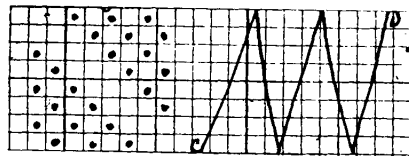
26. A DIAMENT HUCKABACK WITHOUT A SPOT IN THE MIDDLE.



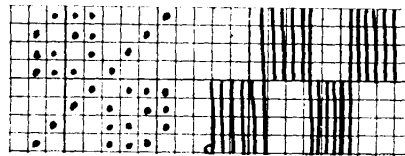
27. THE FRENCH MARIGOLD.



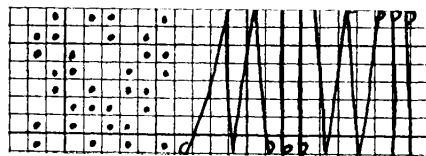
30. BIRD'S EYE.



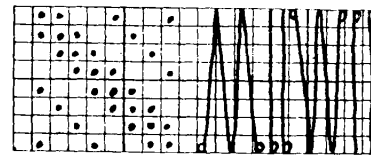
28. THE SINGLE DIAMENT.



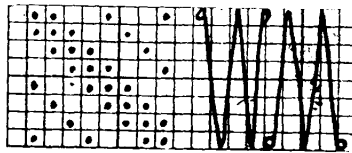
31. TRENCHER WORK.



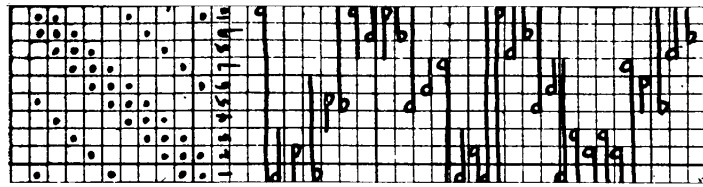
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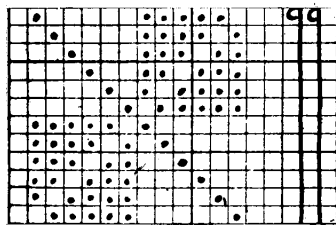
32. 5 AND 4 DIAMENTS.



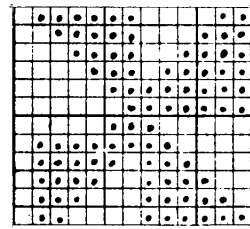
33. (UNNAMED.)



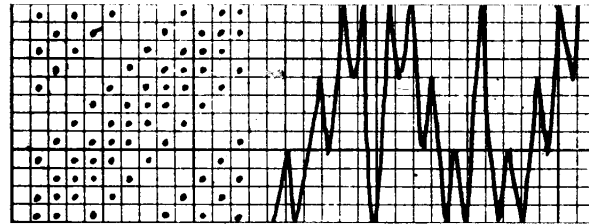
34. (UNNAMED.)



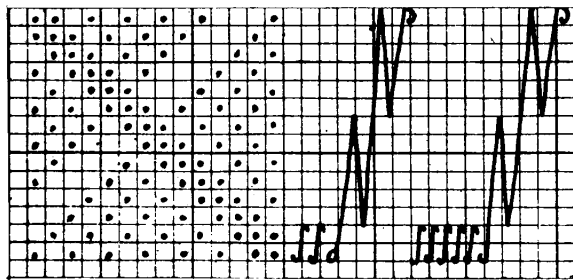
35. PACH WORK.



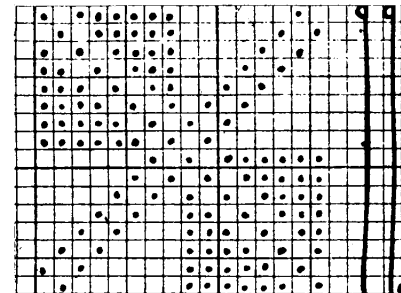
36. (UNNAMED.)



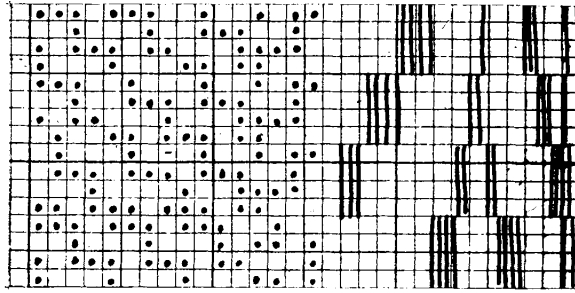
37. THE RICH MANS FANCY.



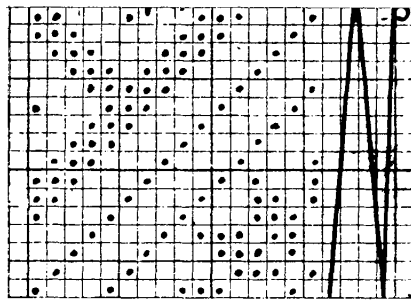
38. THE TREWLOVERS NOT.



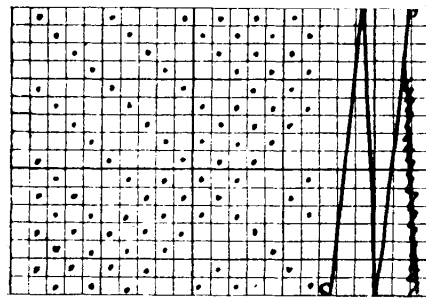
39. THE QUARTER DIAMANT.



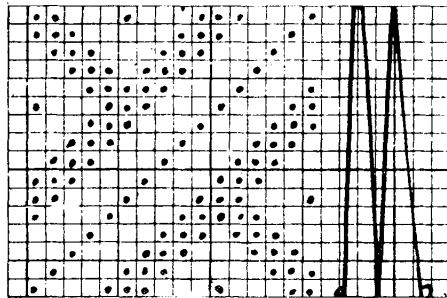
40. (UNNAMED.)



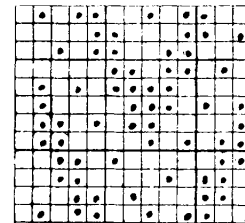
41. STRAWBERRY.



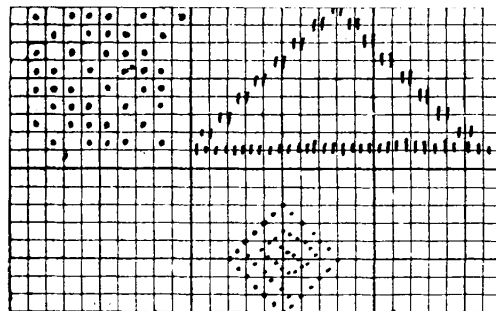
44. HARTS AND DIAMENTS OR DELIGHT.



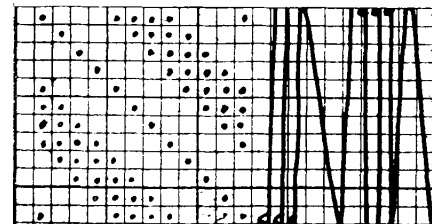
42. (UNNAMED.)



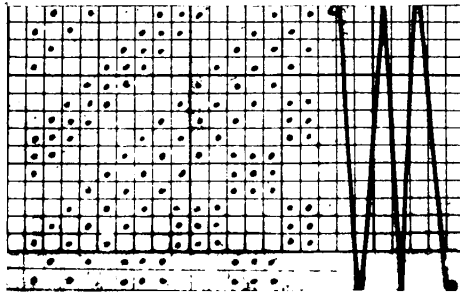
45. THIS REQUIRETH TO BE FULISH.



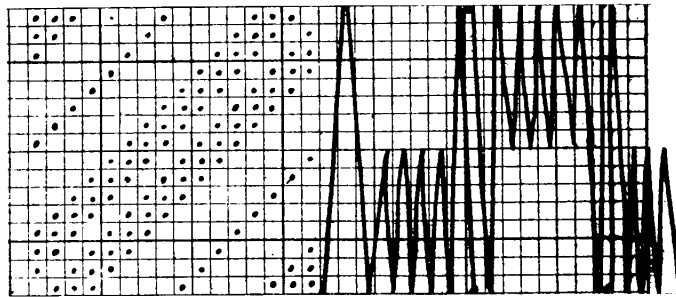
43. THE UNION HUCKABACK OR TO  
STICH HUCKABACK UPON 9 SHAFTS.



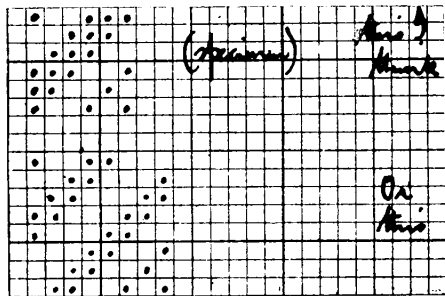
46. THE DUBBLE SINK AND CATER.



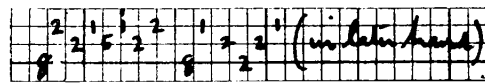
47. BASKET WORK.



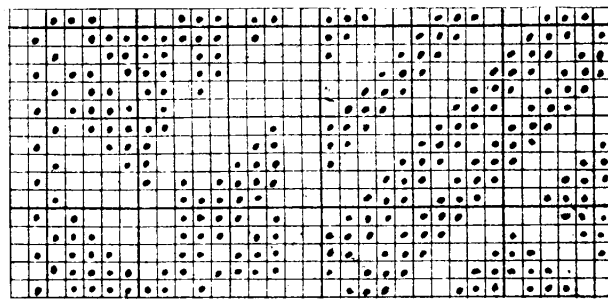
48. THE FRENCH LOOKING GLASS.



49. HANG BY THE WHITES.

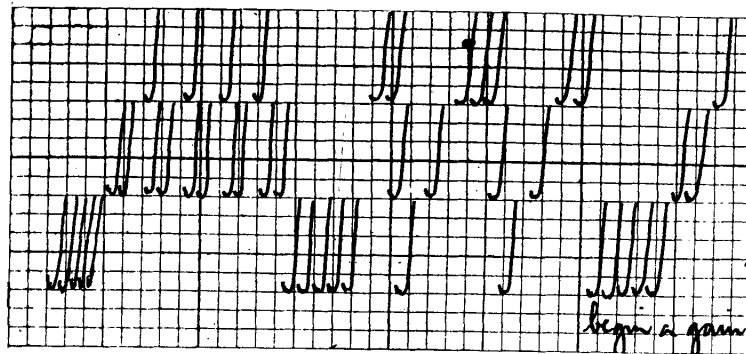


SPOT WORK (LATER HAND).

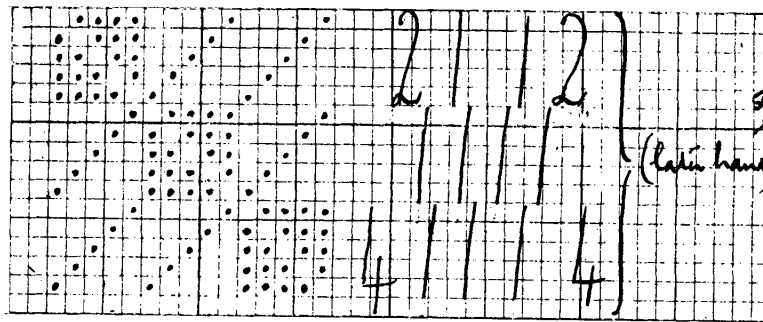


50. THE HAWTHORN LEAF.





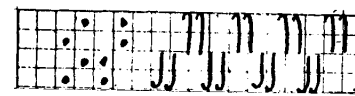
51. THIS THE DRAWING A GOOD FIGURE.



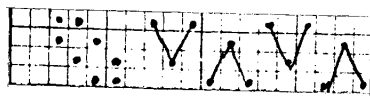
52. A GENERAL HANGING FOR SPOT WORK.



53. A DIAMOND COVERLID.



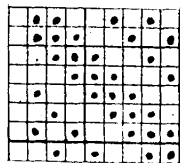
54. THE SPOTTED LINCY WOOLSY.



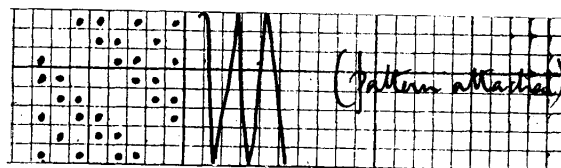
55. N<sup>s</sup> & O<sup>s</sup>.



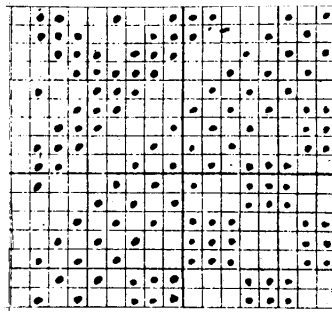
56. N<sup>s</sup> & O<sup>s</sup>.



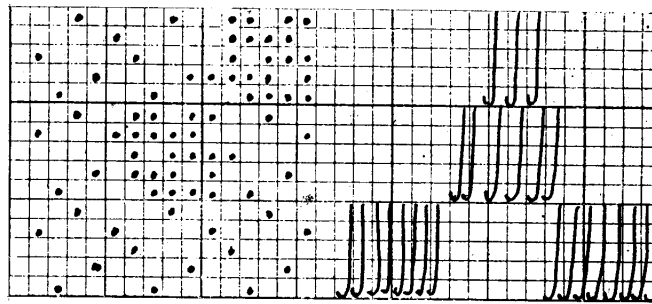
57. (UNNAMED.)



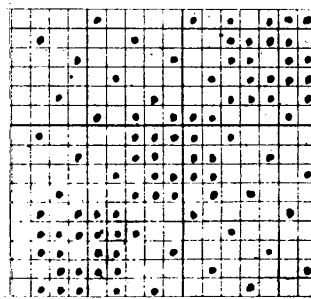
58. THIS WORKS THE SLIPD CHECK FIGURD PATTERN.



59. BASKET WORK. THIS THROWS A WHALE.



60. THIS IS WORK WITH A CALOMANCO WHALE.



61. SATTIN TIE ON 15.