

The Business of Weaving

BY KATE VAN CLEVE

WITH the increasing popularity of handwork of all kinds, loom weaving offers one of the most interesting as well as lucrative hobbies. The opportunity for combining colors is a never-ending source of pleasure, and the various textures which may be woven give a wide scope to even the simplest form of weaving. Whether one makes weaving a vocation or an avocation, the joy of producing lovely fabrics for coats and skirts, or even suits that the most fastidious man would be proud to wear, is enough to make one feel that the time has been well spent.

For the woman who revels in fine household linens, hand weaving makes it possible to have just the right color to give harmony to her china and lamps, and the odd size table may have a cover to fit. Chairs and sofas take on an added charm and dignity when covered with hand-woven fabrics. The weaving of upholstery is one of the most interesting types for the weaver who has imagination and likes to experiment. Beautiful coverings may be made on two- or four-harness looms and, of course, the very ambitious person may use the more complicated eight- and twelve-harness looms. Warps may be of wool, cotton, linen or silk, and wefts of wool preferably, although linen or cotton can be used. Simple one-color weaving may be used with good effect, or a combination of contrasting colors. The durability of hand-woven upholstery cannot be too much stressed, and gives pleasing results. If it is firmly woven, it will last a lifetime and always look well.

As to the selection of materials, the wise weaver will use only the best in her work. Fast colors are essential — colors both fast to sun and washing. Warps must be strong, whether fine or heavy. Broken warp threads will ruin the best piece of weaving as well as try your patience. Be sure your materials are wisely chosen for the work to be done. Linen warps give a much handsomer effect than cotton, but are more expensive and harder to weave. If you do not want to go to the expense and trouble of using linen, a good 20/2 cotton, either mercerized or dull finish, or Egyptian cotton may be used. These combined with linen wefts make a finished piece that launders well and wears well. The Egyptian warps are longer wearing, but do not combine as nicely with fine linen wefts. Either a No. 14 linen or No. 10 Perle cotton make a satisfactory weft for the usual work, but one may use silk or fine wool with any of these warps.

The selection of a suitable pattern is very necessary — woolen fabrics for wearing apparel and chair coverings should have short overshoots that will not catch and pull. Large patterns with bold effects should be used only for coverlets and the covering of large pieces of furniture. Choose the scale of the design in relation to the size of the room in which it is to be used.

The dream of every commercially-minded weaver is, of course, a shop of her own. Here she comes in contact with the customer, makes her sales and takes orders. For her a well-chosen stock is the first consideration. This should be varied enough to attract the attention of many people and be

changed often enough to keep their interest. The successful shopkeeper knows that she must follow the trend of fashion. Imagination and originality are most desirable, but saleable weavings must harmonize with their surroundings. Trade magazines are helpful, and a visit to the better shops will give many suggestions.

Special orders present quite a different aspect. The customers' ideas must be carried out, and often tact and judgment are necessary in making these workable.

The necessity of keeping an accurate record of all articles woven cannot be stressed too strongly, for one never knows when a customer may call for a duplicate of an article woven perhaps months, or even years, before. A record should also be kept of the amounts of materials necessary for the warp and weft of various articles, and the amount of shrinkage to be allowed for in each case. The latter may be estimated by weaving eighteen inches, measure it carefully in both length and width, then leave it slack on the loom over night and measure it again before tightening it in the morning. Beware of inaccurate tape measures, as the best of them will stretch, so use a yardstick, or better still, a steel tape measure. There will also be a certain amount of shrinkage to be allowed for in laundering in the case of cotton and linen fabrics and the finishing of wool suitings and dress materials.

The teaching of weaving is a constant joy if one enjoys watching the growth and pleasure another derives from a creative craft, and the development of the capacity to do things. It is one of the oldest of the crafts and probably started with the earliest races, as they wove grasses and reeds through twigs for shelter, then clothing.

The study of color must go into any weaving course and progress at much the same rate as the technical side of weaving. Beginning with very simple border of stripes in complementary or analogous color harmony with plain weaving (or tabby) on either a two- or four-harness loom.

Our next step in weaving would be a four-harness all-over pattern in one color and binder or tabby of a second, to be followed with a sampler showing variation of this pattern in borders that may be later used on towels, luncheon sets and bureau scarves. The color study may be brought in again by showing how the pattern is changed by the use and the variation of colors.

After a few pieces of weaving have been completed, it is time to teach warping and threading of the loom and drafting. There will always be some in every group who will not want to study this part, and a side line may be developed by the teacher, herself, in warping and threading looms.

To obtain the interest of your community in weaving, a loaned exhibition of all the choice pieces of hand weaving may be arranged. Have a loom and show how these cherished heirlooms were made, and a speaker if possible.

For equipment for large groups, table looms with one or two treadle looms work out nicely. There are always a few who will be willing to buy and use their own looms. Advantage of the table loom is that it may be carried home to complete projects between lessons. This speeds up the work of the whole class, and really practical articles may be made on it.

A most interesting texture may be obtained on the two-harness loom using two colors, one for warp and one for weft, in plain weaving. Then the warp may be neutral color with two finer threads of harmonizing tones used together for weft.

Homespun may be lightened up by an occasional mercerized thread in the warp. Rayon and wool may be used together in either plaids or stripes with a most happy result. For example, use eight threads of rayon and twenty-four threads of wool in the warp.

Here again one must consider the trend of fashion, whether smooth or nubby fabrics are most in vogue, and choose our materials accordingly.

If one wishes to try the more complicated weaves, the family of twills offers great possibilities.

Raw silk is a dull thread of rather rough appearance and

may be used with the many new novelty yarns that have come on the market year by year for the knitter.

With the popularity of the knitted jumpers, a skirt may be woven to match in one of the many twills. The broken twill makes an uneven pattern that is very attractive and is the best for a beginner to try first, as a little unevenness in beat is not noticeable.

After all is said and done, it cannot be emphasized too much or too often, if you use a good quality of yarn both as to the wool, silk, cotton or linen and colors of fast dyes, your work is bound to be interesting.

Questions and Answers

Address your questions to Mrs. Mary M. Atwater, Basin, Montana

Question: What is the difference between a "hand-woven" fabric and a "hand-loomed" fabric?

Answer: Properly speaking, there should be no difference in meaning between the two terms, — though the word "hand-loomed" is hardly a correctly constructed word for any meaning. A fabric is not "loomed," of course; it is "woven." Recently, however, the name "hand-loomed" appears to have been adopted by certain manufacturers as a trade-name for fabrics woven by machinery in imitation of hand-woven fabrics. If this meaning is clear to the purchaser there is no deception, but if the purchaser is led to believe that the fabric is hand-woven the use of this trade-name is clearly dishonest. The present vogue for hand-woven fabrics has, of course, stimulated imitators. For the protection of the craft hand-weavers should take note of fabrics labeled "hand-loomed" and offered for sale in shops and should make inquiry, and suitable protest if the case requires.

Question: How does one produce a fabric in which the warp is completely covered? A fabric in which the weft is completely covered?

Answer: This question has come up before, but it is asked so often that it may be useful to answer it again. For a weft-face fabric in which the warp is completely covered, use a coarse warp widely spaced in the reed, and a comparatively fine weft-material. For a warp-face fabric in which the weft is completely covered by the warp, set the warp very close and use a comparatively coarse weft.

Spacing the warp very far apart weakens it, of course, and a good rule is to use the same weight of warp required for an ordinary fabric. For instance, for a weft-face rug, set the warp at 12 ends to the inch and thread it double, or use a warp twice as heavy as ordinary carpet warp and set it at 6 ends to the inch. As weft for this setting use a heavy knitting yarn. If a coarser weft-yarn is used, set the warp farther apart or thread triple instead of double.

In threading double it is advisable to use a separate heddle for each thread, as: 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, and so on, rather than to draw two threads through the same heddle. This applies to threading triple, also — 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, and so on rather than three threads through the same

heddle. Some weaves, such as summer-and-winter weave done on "opposites," and the Indian saddle-blanket weaves, do not require quite so wide a spacing of the warp as plain weave.

No general rule can be given, applicable to all combinations of material. A bit of experiment may be required. If the warp does not cover, even when heavily beaten, either sley the warp further apart or use a fine weft.

For a warp-face fabric in which the weft is covered, set the warp extremely close. The number of warp-ends required can be determined roughly by laying strands of warp side by side on a board and counting the number of threads to cover one inch. Double this number will, naturally, be required in the setting, as the weft should be covered on both sides. A warp set close enough to cover the weft often sticks badly in the reed, so that the sheds will not open properly. It is practical to dispense with the reed and to govern the width by the weft-thread. A template may be used if necessary.

Either of these weaves produces a much thicker, heavier fabric than plain tabby in the same materials.

THE OVERSHOT WEAVE ON SIX HARNESSES

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stripes are introduced into the warp at regular intervals, and the horizontal pattern stripes are put in at the same intervals, making a large check. Any two-harness figure in overshot weaving can be used in this manner, and the pattern stripes may be made as wide as desired. The effect might be useful for window curtains when worked out in suitable materials.

There are many other interesting six-harness pattern weaves — the six-harness patterns in "Summer and Winter" weave, for instance, and the six-harness forms of the "Bronson" or "Spot" weave with the allied openwork or "mock Leno" weave. These will be discussed in a later article.

(NOTE.—The tie-up drafts as given on the diagrams are for looms that operate with a rising shed, like the Bernat loom. The "o" indicates the harness tied to rise. On a loom operated by a double tie-up the rising ties should be made as indicated and the blank spaces of the draft indicate harnesses tied to sink.)