

# Personalized Linens

by BETA IVEY

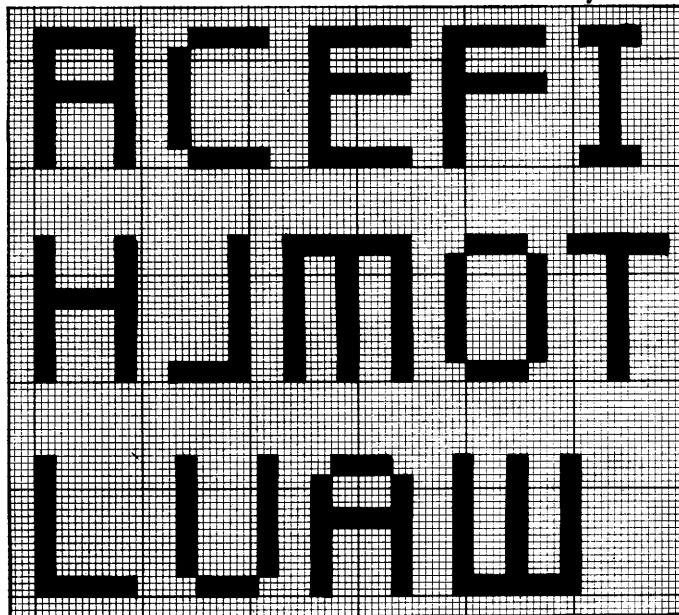


FIGURE 1

From time immemorial proud owners have marked their belongings with their own marks, crests, or names. Our great-grandmothers, after weaving linens, neatly cross-stitched their initials (and sometimes the date) before folding them carefully away in their dowry chests. We today embroider our initials or monograms on towels and napery. Woven-in initials are even more personal than embroidered ones, for they prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the article not only belongs to, but was planned for its proud possessor.

There is nothing new about "Bronson" weave, but the use of it to form initials was a thrilling discovery to me. I believe a similar effect has been produced by the use of sticks, but I have not found drafts or directions for initials. Doubtless other weavers have thought of it, but for one reason or another have not worked out the system. As Chaucer remarked so long ago, "Life is so short, the craft so long to learn." The Swedes use this weave for curtains, though their draft differs in appearance from ours. Their name for it, "Myggtjall" is translated "mosquito net" and suggests its probable origin.

The sampler of letters shown in Illustration I was done in Bronson Weave on an eight inch Structo Loom. There are no warp threads cut to allow for rethreading in the entire length; and of course there has been rethreading.

Those weavers who use string heddles will know the trick, for it sometimes happens that a heddle-eye or heddle will break and a new one must be tied in. Metal heddles are not likely to break or wear, but if a mistake in threading has been made, rather than rethread several inches, haven't we all tied in a string heddle? And that is the whole trick of

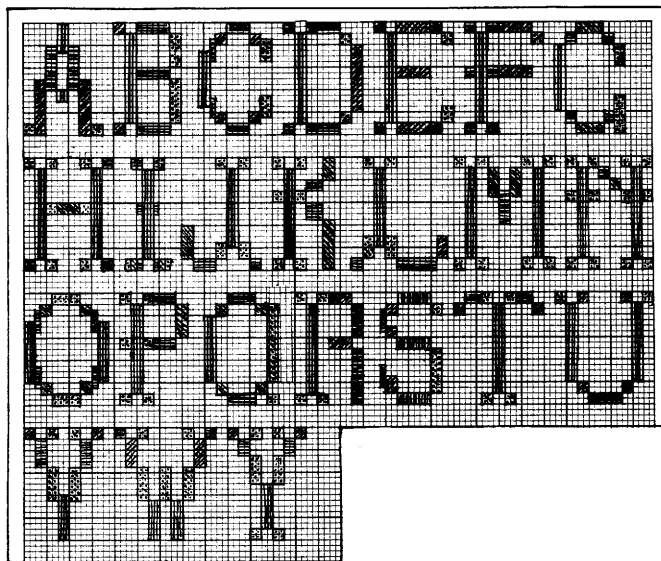


FIGURE 2

Bronson Initials—string heddles that may be cut out entirely, and new ones tied in around the warp threads on different heddle bars. Temporary string heddles may be tied onto frames, even though metal heddles are the permanent ones.

On the sampler, I found that it took from twenty to forty minutes to change the threading for the different patterns, depending on the number of warp threads to be changed. This figured an average of three minutes to remove the entire heddle from one heddle bar, and to tie a new heddle around the warp thread, but onto a different bar. And this on the tiny Structo where there is very little room in which to work.

It is axiomatic that lace Bronson weave requires two harnesses plus one harness for each block of the pattern; therefore on a four harness loom, initials may be woven which can be reduced to two blocks. Three block letters can be woven on a five harness loom, four block letters on a six harness loom, etc. Fig. 1 shows those letters which can best be drawn in two block style. In this diagram, two ways of weaving the letter A are shown, the first one where both blocks are combined in the cross bar and at the top, and on the bottom row, the blocks are combined for the cross bar only. The U is shown in the diagram with blocks woven separately, but on the sampler is woven with blocks combined.

In Fig. 2 the letters are drawn diagrammatically to show the separate blocks. Block A is represented by vertical lines and block B by horizontal lines. At the first diagram (in Fig. 2), it will easily be seen how treading of the blocks A and B separately or in combination, will form the letters

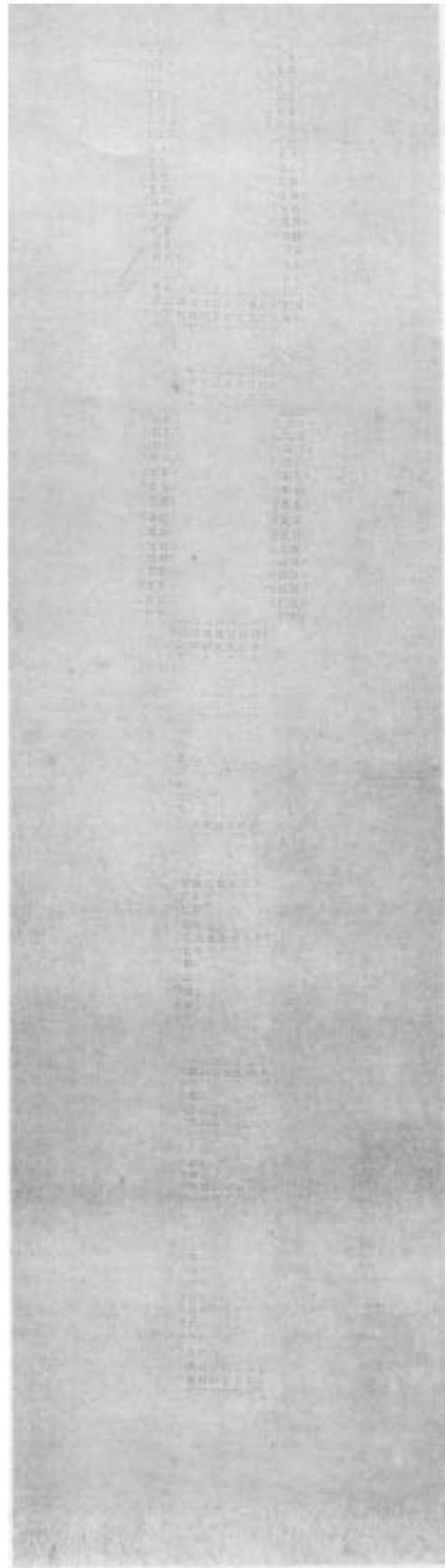
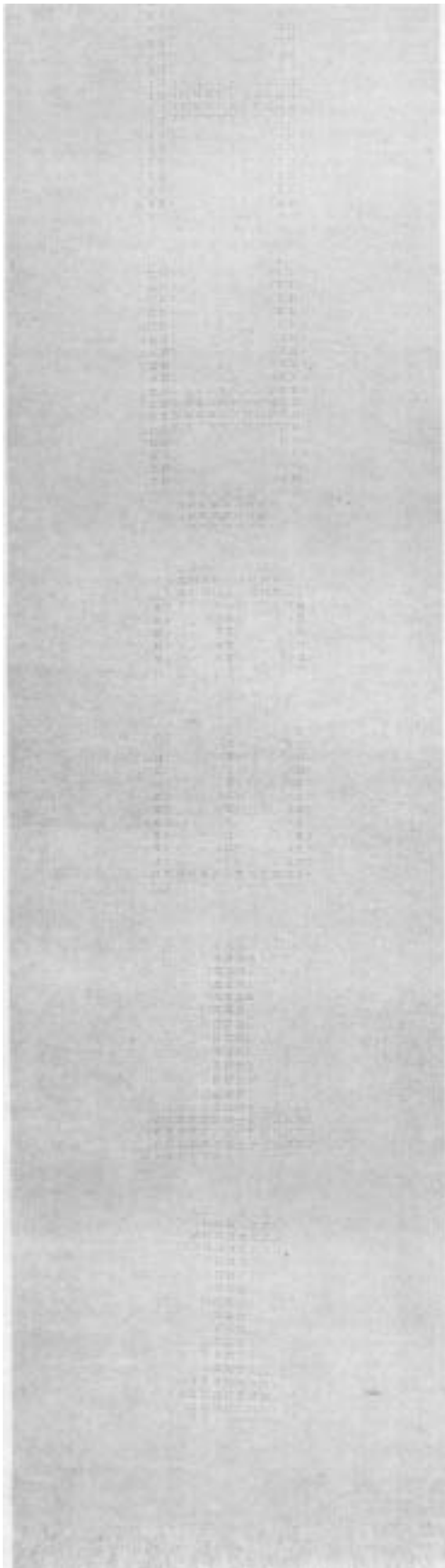


ILLUSTRATION No. 1

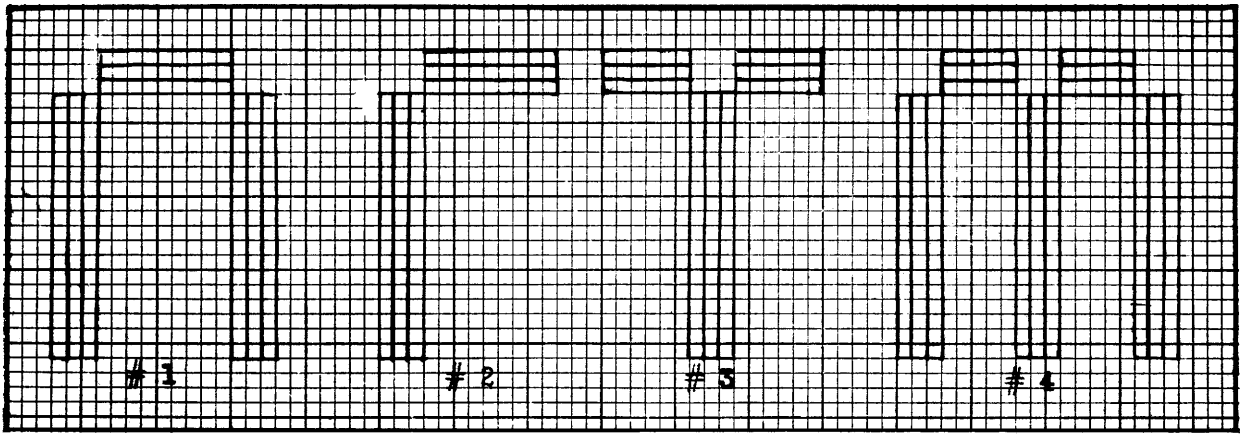


FIGURE 2

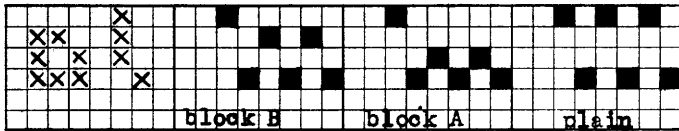


FIGURE 3

A, H, O, U. Similarly, the second grouping will weave C, E, F, L; third one will weave T and by shortening the cross bar it becomes I. Number 4 in Fig. 2 becomes M or W depending upon whether the cross bar is at the top or at the bottom. J may be formed by reversing the relative positions of blocks A and B; that is, the vertical on the right rather than on the left of the horizontal.

With the letters broken up into their component parts, writing the drafts for them is a simple matter. In Bronson weaves, alternate threads are on the No. 1 harness (some weavers use No. 4, but this is immaterial). Another harness, usually No. 4 is reserved for the tie threads of the warp. These are the warp threads which form the single vertical bars of the "windows" and help to give Bronson its characteristic appearance. Heddles on the No. 2 harness carry the warp threads for block A of the pattern, and the heddles on No. 3 carry warp threads for block B. Draft for the plain weave or background of the pattern is written: 1,4,1,4,1,4 and repeated as desired. Draft for block A is written: 1,2,1,2,1,4, and repeated; block B is written: 1,3,1,3,1,4 and repeated. See Fig. 3.

Since the draft shows alternate threads on No. 1 harness, it follows that No. 1 is tied to one treadle, or is used alone for one of the tabby shots. It takes all three remaining harnesses to give alternating threads, so the combination of 2, 3, and 4 constitutes the second or B tabby. Harnesses No. 1 and No. 2 give one block of the pattern so they are tied to the first pattern treadle; No. 1 and No. 3 for the B block are tied to second pattern treadle; and for the combination of both blocks, No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 are tied to the third pattern treadle. Five treadles only are used in this weave.

Bronson is a single shuttle weave—tabby in this case refers to treadles or to combinations of harnesses used, and not to a second shuttle of weft thread. It is really a rather

speedy weave, and if one forms the habit of entering the shuttle from the right on the A tabby (No. 1 harness) and from the left on the B tabby (No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 harnesses) shots, there need never be any confusion. Pattern shots enter from the right so an invariable rule may be set:—Shuttle on the left means, always and forever, three harnesses or the B tabby.

Treading for initials is the same as for any Bronson weave. Alternate A and B tabby treadles give plain or tabby weave. Here it might be wise to say a word about looms. Bronson is an ideal weave for table looms and for those foot looms where the harnesses work independently. On the usual four-harness loom where two harnesses balance against each

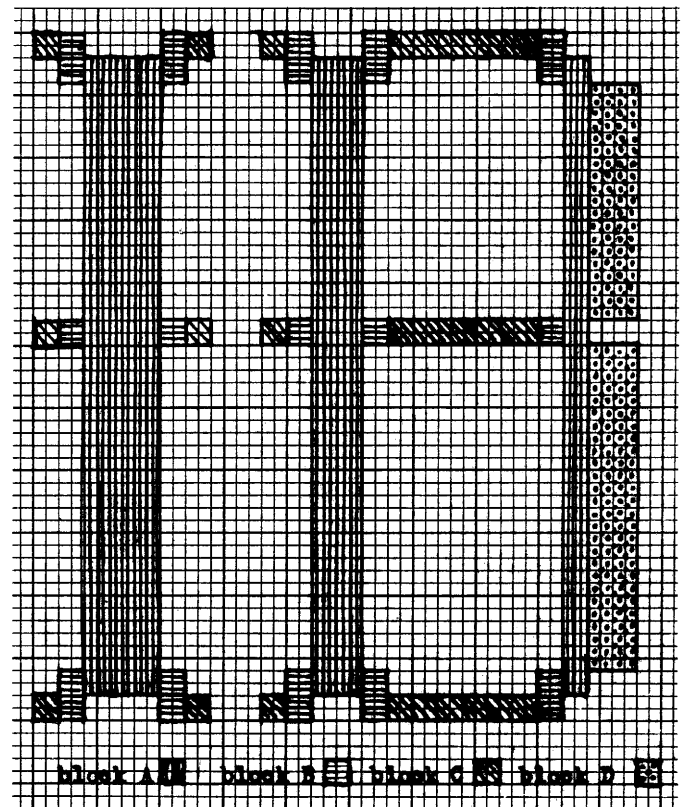


FIGURE 5

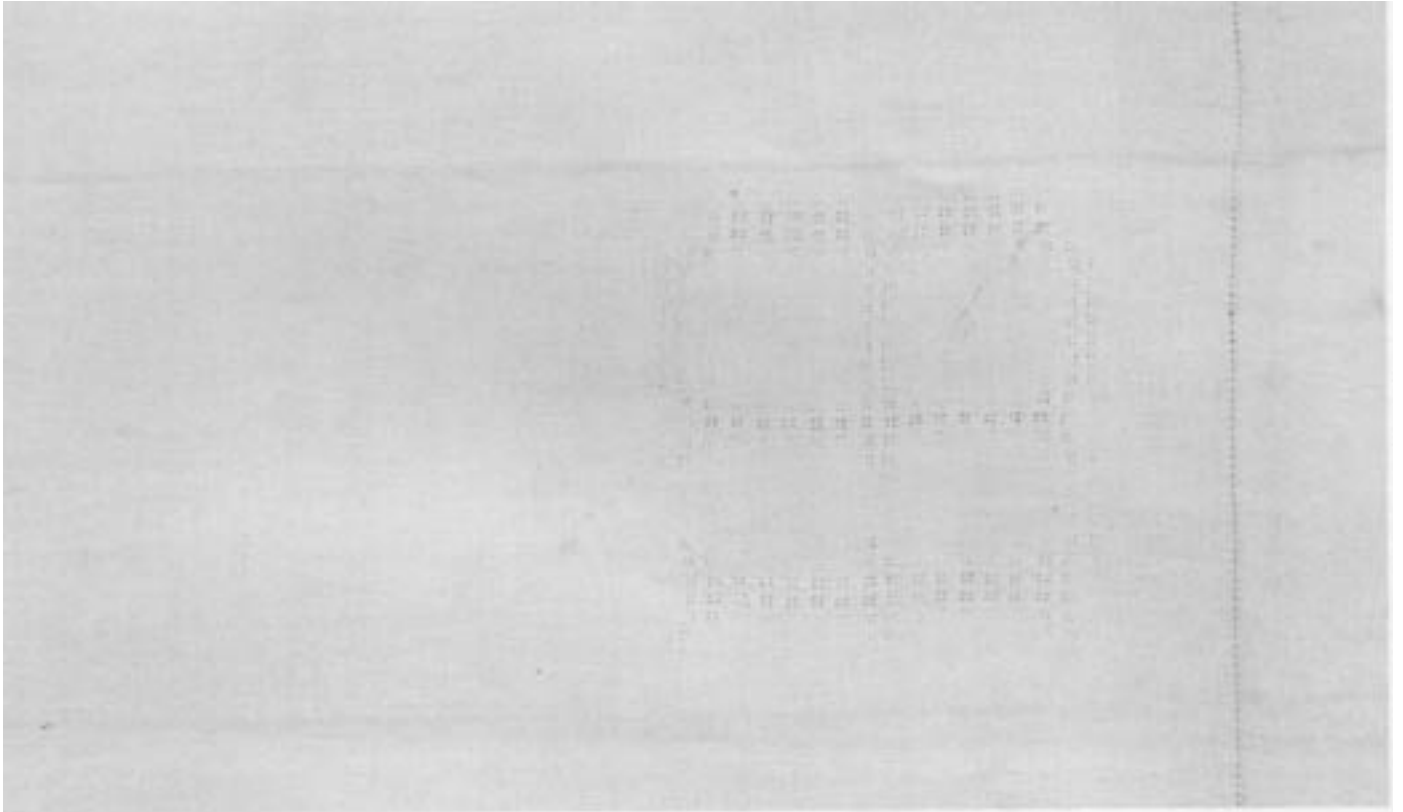


ILLUSTRATION No. 2—*Woven by Isobel Brazelton*

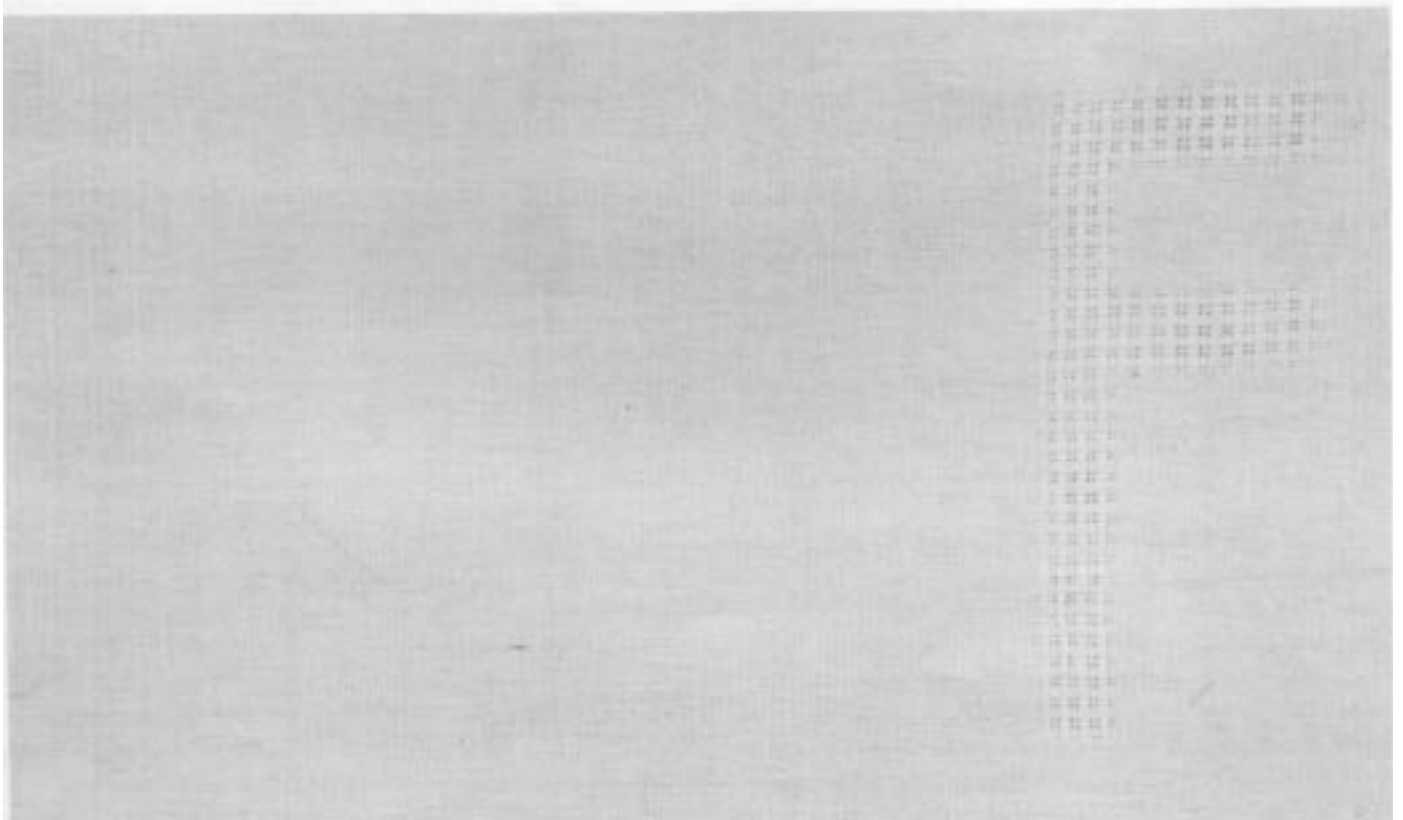


ILLUSTRATION No. 3

other on horses or pulleys, naturally a three and one balance does not give so good a shed as a two and two balance does. Work may be slower but the results can be as perfect.

Block A is treadled:

Harnesses 1 & 2 (pattern treadle No. 1)  
Harnesses 2, 3, 4 (tabby treadle B)  
Harnesses 1 & 2 (pattern treadle No. 1)  
Harnesses 2, 3, 4 (tabby treadle B)  
Harness 1 (tabby treadle A)  
Harnesses 2, 3, 4 (tabby treadle B)

These six shots are repeated as often as is called for by the design. Similarly, block B is treadled:

pattern treadle No. 2  
tabby treadle B  
pattern treadle No. 2  
tabby treadle B  
tabby treadle A  
tabby treadle B.

It takes six weft threads, just as it takes six warp threads to make a single unit of any given block. The single A tabby shot at the end of each group of six shots makes the single cross shot in the open "windows". It serves the same purpose in the weft that the No. 4 harness thread serves in the warp.

There is a difference of opinion among weavers as to which is the right and which is the wrong side of Bronson weaves. It seems really to be a matter of choice. In the IB towel (illustration II) the warp overshoots are on the right side; in the sampler, the weft overshoots are on the right side. The towel was woven on a six harness "jack" loom with a rising shed. The directions given in this article will give a weft overshoot on the right side if a *falling* shed is used. For the sampler, where the Structo gives a rising shed, the treadling was transposed. For some initials it does not matter—A, M, O etc. being bilateral designs; but C, E, F, and L have a decided right and wrong. When putting these last named four letters in the loom, this must be considered.

Articles should be well and thoroughly planned in advance. Since these initials are more than decoration, and are an integral part of the whole, the importance of good proportion cannot be ignored. Make a diagram to scale; use cross-section paper, letting each square represent  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  or even one inch. Small squares representing one quarter inch will allow for more accuracy. The towel in Illustration II measures 14x27 inches. It is woven of 40/2 linen in both warp and weft (Bronson is usually more attractive where warp and weft are identical) sleyed at 30 threads to the inch. This same thread at 24 to the inch gives a softer and more lace like effect that is good for table linens, but not substantial enough for towels. Fig. 4 shows a diagram of half of the towel. Dotted lines represent the folds (which really constitute the outlines of the finished towel) and the hem. At Fig. 5 is the diagram in blocks of the IB monogram. Unfortunately, all letters, even in four blocks will not combine so nicely as these two.

In the sampler, the I and T are heavy sturdy letters of medium size; they are woven on a four unit scale. M and W were woven on a two unit scale, as were C, F, E, and L. The M is higher than these last named four, and the W is decidedly shorter. Note also that the W is not merely M turned up side down as in the diagram of Fig. 1. A, E, U, and O are woven in the three scale unit as given in Fig 1. Though larger than I and T, they are in themselves a daintier type of letter. The sampler is sleyed at 30 threads to the inch and the four small letters measure approximately  $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$  inches. The letters of the A group measure approximately  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Fig. 6 gives the drafts for the letters as given in Fig. 1.

In the IB towel the letters were set in the loom side by side and woven simultaneously; in the sampler the letters were set in the loom singly and woven in succession. In both cases the letters were woven vertically or standing up as they are read. There is no reason why, if properly planned, they may not be woven cross wise of the letters, in which case an entirely different grouping is possible. Fig. 7 shows what might be a place mat twelve inches wide by eighteen inches long. Borders of colors or contrasting textured threads could be woven at each end. M and T would weave on the same set-up if turned crosswise. Or if one is ambitious enough to change the heddles so often, letters of different groups could be used. Supposing that the letters do not work on the same set-up, such as H and F. By weaving mats from alternate ends, each set-up would serve for two letters. For instance, weave the first mat: border, space, F, H, border; and the next mat: border, H, F, space, border. Lucky the person whose initials belong in the same group. Towels might be woven with dropped monograms, or a single large letter as the main decoration. The possibilities are many.

A definite plan, well designed and in good proportion is the first requisite. Figure the inches needed for the plain weave, then the inches for the letters, and lastly for the second space of plain weaving. Multiply the number of threads per inch by the number of inches allotted to the letters. Since it takes six threads per unit, divide the total number of threads in the letters by six to obtain the number of units. Then plan the letter, or letters, accordingly to get the best proportions. The heddles must be rearranged on the harnesses. One-half of all heddles will be on harness No. 1. Most of the remaining ones will be on No. 4 and only the few necessary ones on No. 2 and No. 3. If the loom is to be set up for a single initial, it is safe to use all metal heddles, but if rethreading is to be done, tie in the string heddles where needed before beginning. It is sometimes hard to cut the metal ones, and too, with many changes and much cutting, so many heddles would be destroyed that it might work a hardship on future patterns. The heddles on No. 1 harness are never changed, even in the initial space, and it is safe to use the regular heddles—whether string or metal. The 4's will not be changed unless the size of the letter is changed,

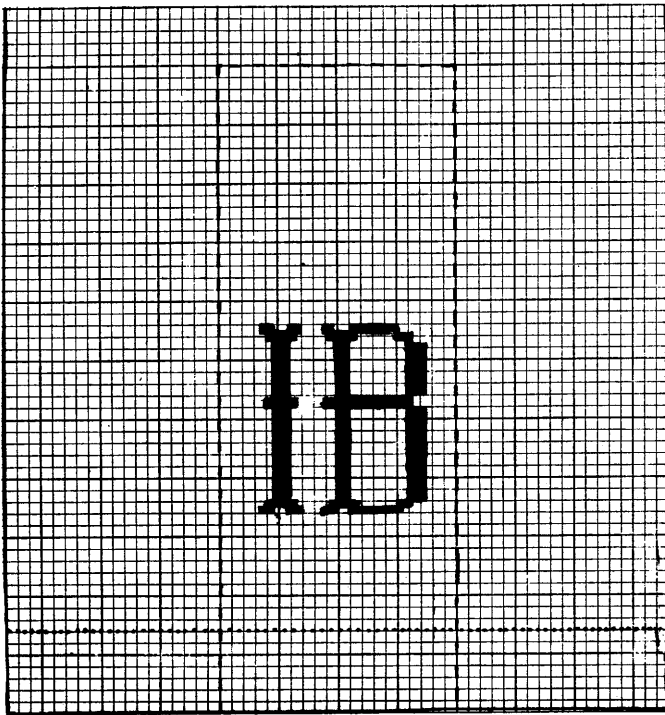


FIGURE 4

so they too may be considered permanent.

Four block letters are easier to design than two block ones, but these call for a six harness loom (one harness for each block plus two foundation harnesses). I have often won-

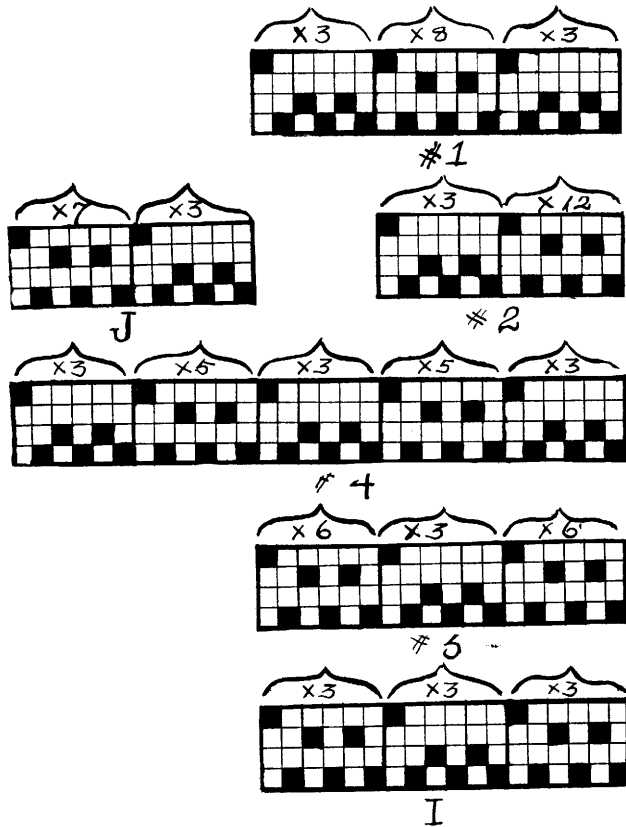


FIGURE 6

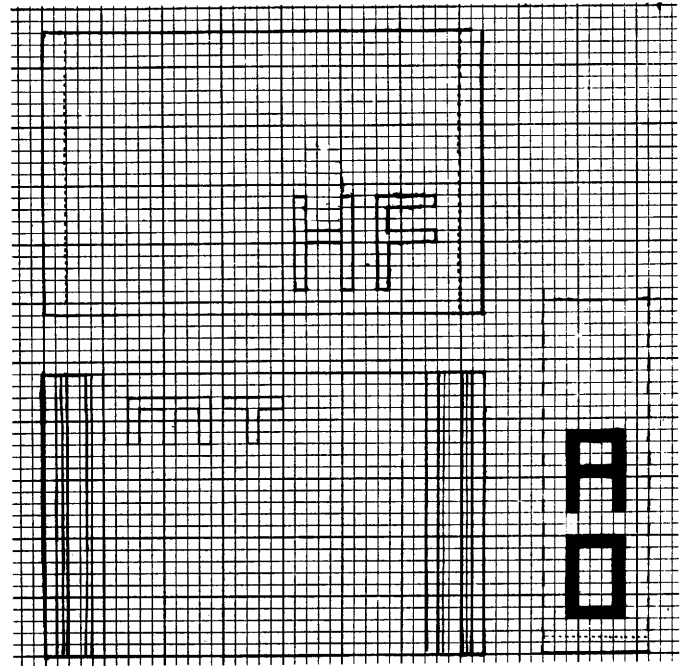


FIGURE 7

dered if, by setting up a twelve or sixteen harness loom, and making each block only one unit in size, would it not be possible to weave all letters merely by changing the tie-up to use different combinations of units? It is a good problem in design, at any rate. A four block alphabet is shown at Fig. 8.

A word to those who have never done a piece of Bronson: don't be discouraged if your weaving fails to show a definite pattern on the loom and is generally displeasing. Bronson is never attractive on the loom; it needs at least one trip to the tub and ironing board to settle the threads in their proper groups.