

Hand Weaving for the House

BY FLORENCE G. CROCKER

OF ALL the many ways in which hand-woven materials may be used with success, none is more fitting than for the furnishing of our houses. The fine qualities of hand-made textiles can be less readily duplicated by machine-made fabrics here than in other fields. In curtains, upholstery material, wall hangings, etc., lies a particularly fruitful place for hand-weaving; here are needed those things hardest to find in machine-made goods and that, therefore, repay the knowledge, skill and time that go into the making of a fine hand-done fabric.

Some years ago I had the interesting experience of weaving curtains for the living room of a newly finished house. The walls were a soft golden shade, refined and not obtrusive; the woodwork and beams of the "chapel" ceiling were the natural walnut with a wax finish; the whole a receptive background for the right amount of brilliance. It had not been possible to buy anything that would give the desired effect, as the curtains should harmonize with a beautiful old India shawl.

Matching the color was just a matter of selection from the Bernat crewel color line; a sample made with these crewels in shades of scarlet, prune, bronze green, dull blue and a cool gray, on a gold linen floss warp, could not be distinguished from the shawl the length of the room away. But a threading that would give the harmonious pattern was more difficult to find. I finally worked out an eight-heddle overshot draft that in the weaving gave a rich floral effect which successfully recalled the reverse-curves in the shawl pattern, and the curtains, when hung, took their proper place in the room most satisfactorily.

This experience was an outstanding example of the way in which hand-weaving is able to solve some of the more acute problems of interior decoration. This peculiar usefulness is clearly shown in the furnishings of carefully planned rooms where the architectural lines and structure are so complete that every detail must be in harmony; and not less does hand-weaving serve as nothing else can where pillows or other small articles of just the right color or colors "bring together" the many hues in a room that houses the varied furniture and ornaments accumulated through years of living and necessary for use or sentiment.

These things being so evident, just why hand-weaving is not more considered by interior decorators has puzzled me. Perhaps it is because the selection of textiles is often left with the idea of finding just the right thing at the last moment, too late for the weaver to make the necessary samples, so that the only resource is the variety of fine machine-made materials, regardless of the fact that they are less durable, and often more expensive, than hand-woven fabrics of much more exciting texture and color. Of course the weaver of such textiles must be sensitive about color and design, adaptable in carrying out the decorator's ideas, and equally of course samples are needed, more than the weaver usually has on hand.

With this thought of samples in mind, I have spent some

time recently working out a few pieces for such use. I have been using raw silk for most of them, for warp, and in many cases for weft, too; the material when finished is such a beautiful white and, though heavy, is soft enough to hang in the nicest folds when warp and weft are properly related. As warp this yarn is especially useful; it is quickly and easily handled; does not kink, fray or tangle; stands a lot of tension without breaking and shrinks very little when washed. This washing, by the way, is as necessary as for linen, and the ironing while damp brings out the soft lustre in the same way.

These samples made entirely of the raw silk in various combinations of plain weaves and twills are fabrics that should appeal to interior decorators whose favorite scheme is the all-white rooms now so popular but, believing that this beauty of texture and color could be retained and perhaps enhanced by a "shadow" pattern, a mere outline of color winding its way through the silk, I recalled in searching for the proper threading the eight-heddle draft which I had worked out for the richly colored curtains previously made. I found it had the possibilities I wanted, and I give the draft and a description of the use I have just made of it, in this silk material toned by the color of the pattern, believing that other weavers can make many interesting modifications of it.

The warp was raw silk of the finer "grist," about the equivalent of linen floss, set 20 to the inch and threaded according to diagram No. 1. The pattern weft was Bernat's Fabric spun in a medium mulberry shade, and for tabby I used the raw silk in a much heavier weight than the warp. Tabby of the same weight as the warp, woven once each way between pattern shots, would probably give about the same effect in spreading the pattern. The treadling can probably be followed from the illustration—the center panel of Illustration No. 3—as it is most simple, but I give it below for convenience:

Treadle 1	once	Treadle 1	twice
" 8	twice	" 2	"
" 7	"	" 3	"
" 6	"	" 4	"
" 5	"	" 5	"
" 4	"	" 6	"
" 3	"	" 7	"
" 2	"	" 8	"
" 1	"		
" 8	once		Repeat

If still less pattern is desired, either treadles 1 or 8, repeated for as many inches as required, making long stem-like lines connecting the flower forms—or half-flower figures—should work well.

Illustration No. 1 shows the same threading woven for a heavy border, to be used if and where the shadowy pattern needs some emphasis. This was done with Bernat's peasant wool in a brown that was so toned with blue as to be almost

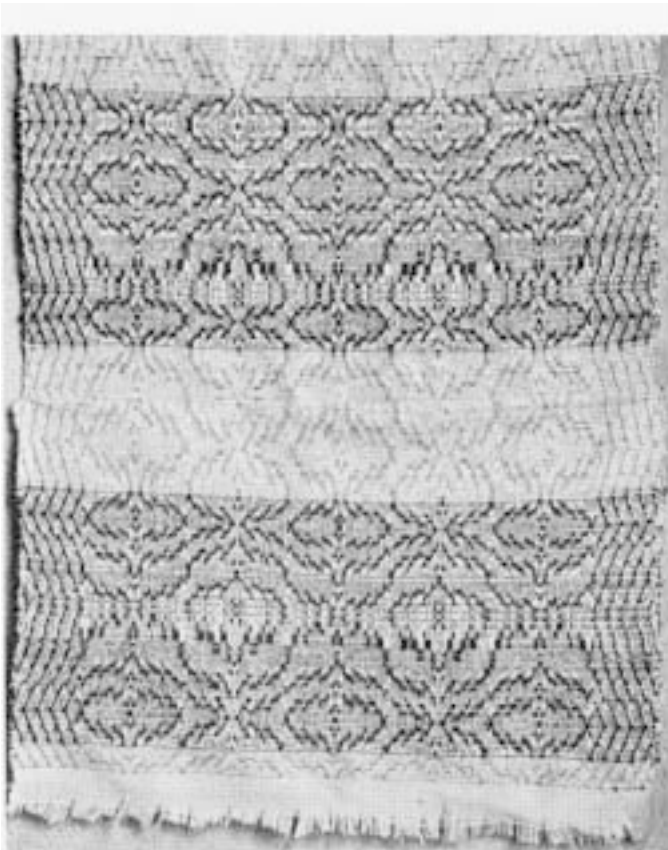


Illustration No. 1

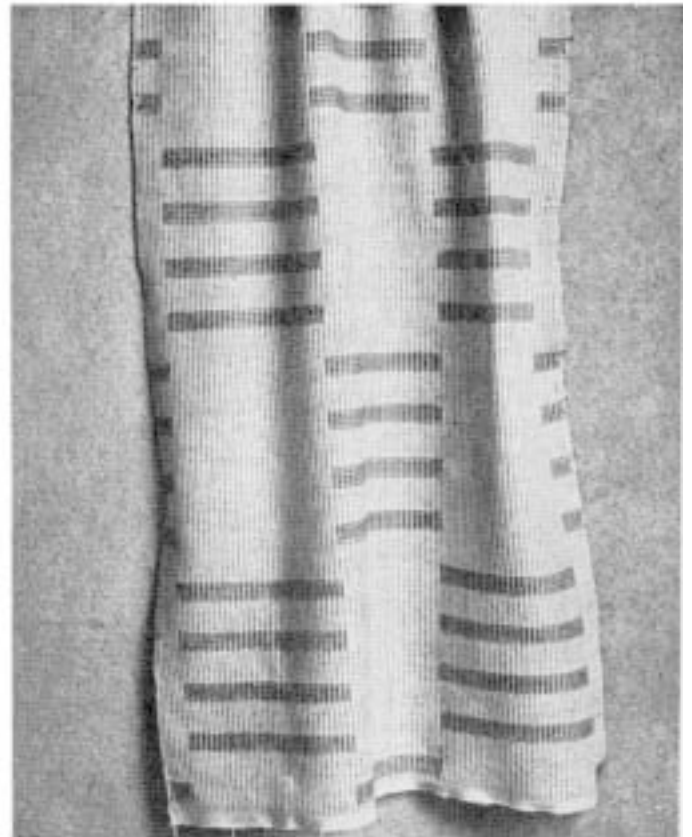
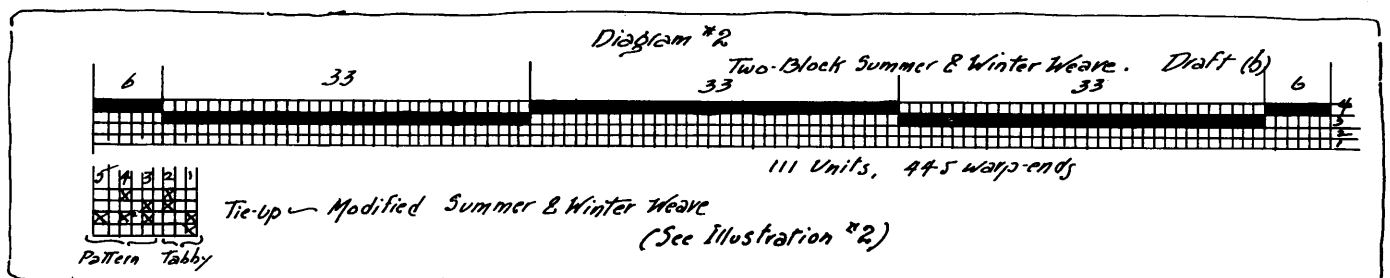
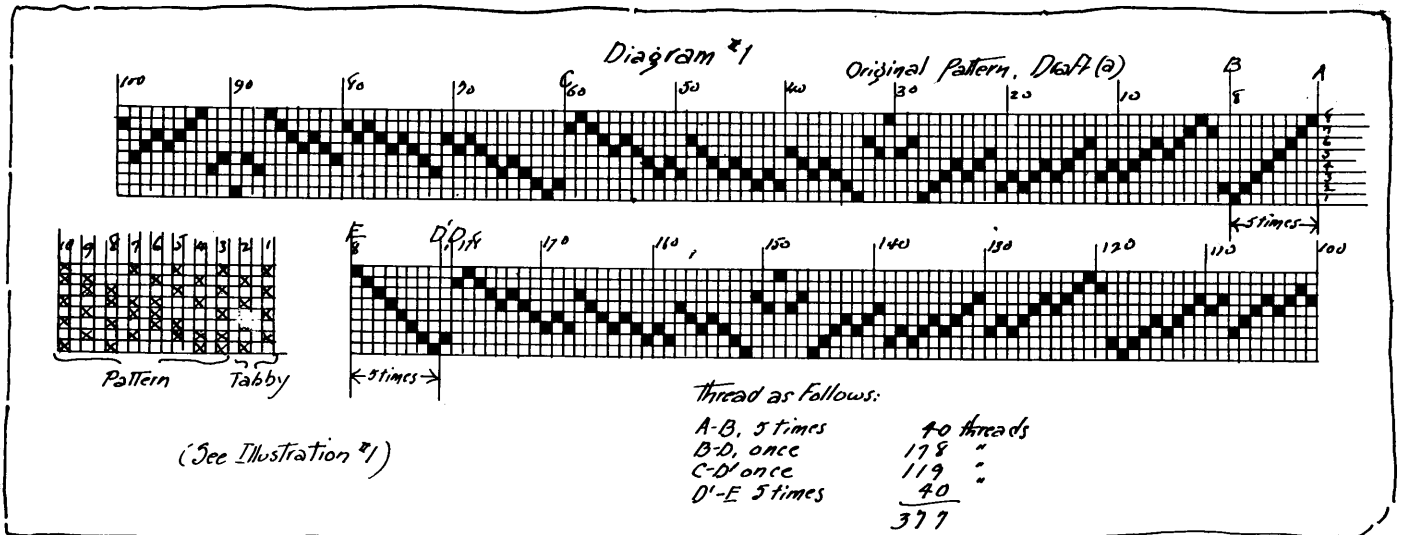


Illustration No. 2



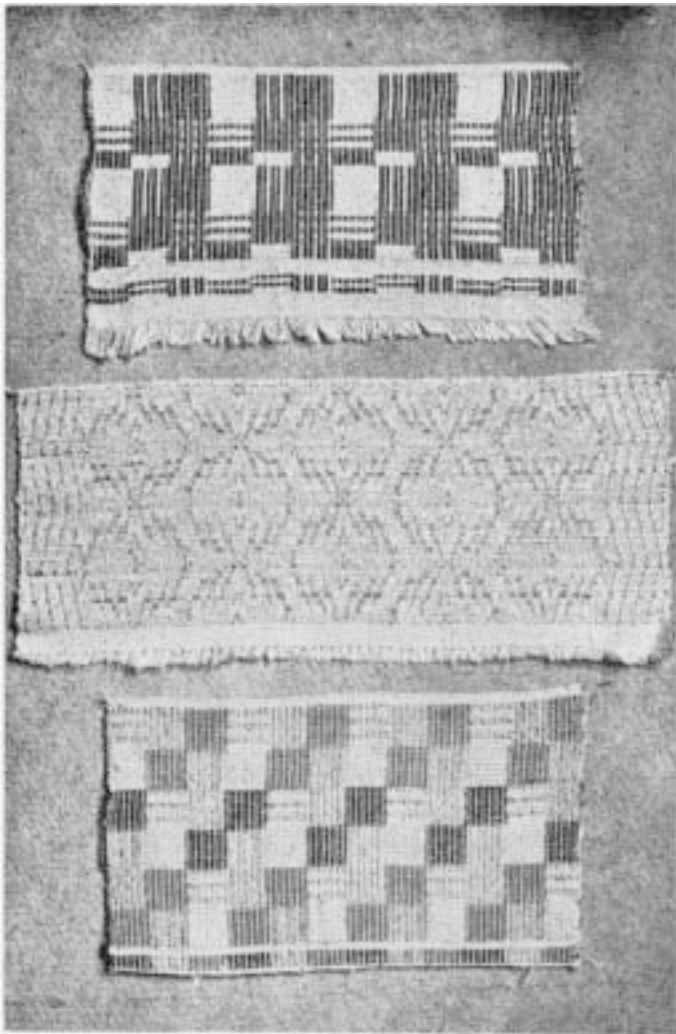
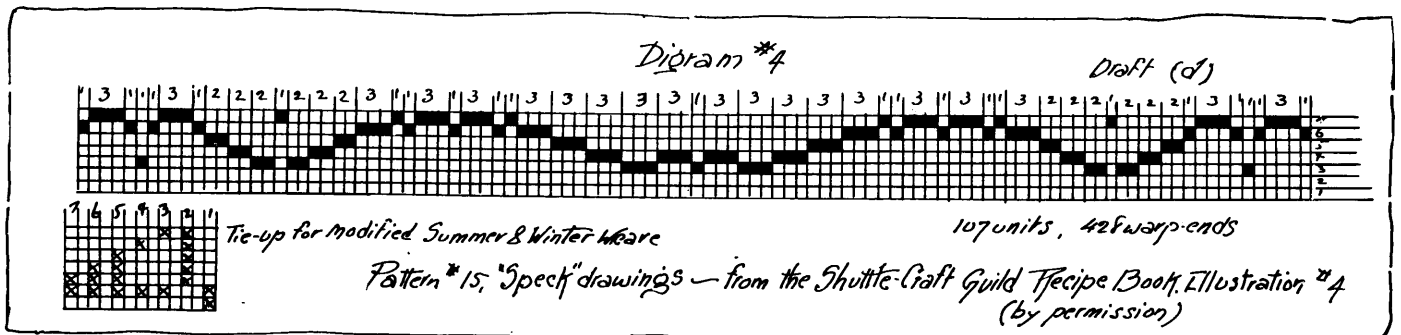
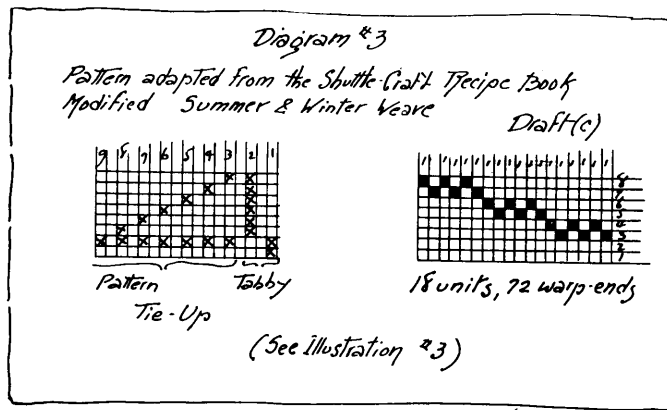


Illustration No. 3



Illustration No. 4



a dark mulberry, and formed a good contrast with the oyster white of the silk.

Done in the fine and coarse spun silk, with a very fine pattern weft (set, of course, much closer in the reed), it would find many uses and, though it is an overshot threading, the "skips" are not prohibitive of its use, even with the heavier warp, for curtains and some upholsterings.

Of course there is a wide range of color possibilities for this and other patterns that could be made to "sprangle" sufficiently—gold, silver, medium blues, greens and oranges with white, or light tones woven on a darker background—and either silk or linen could be used for the pattern weft, provided only that it be fine enough. Such patterns are harmonious with the furniture and architecture of rooms in any of the styles which have been affected by Persian motifs in textiles, *i.e.*, Italian, Spanish, old French or modified Oriental settings.

But hand-weaving is not confined to any one style, and has the versatility to carry out the effects of very different types of architecture and furnishings—its different techniques affording a wide scope. The summer and winter weave—for one—both in its usual and in its modified form, can be wrought into all manner of designs, can be as bold and as modernistic rectangular—or as fine and unobtrusive—as one pleases, making always a firm and durable fabric. And the crackle weave, also, is a dependable weave for upholstery and all kinds of furnishings. The piece illustrated in Illustration No. 2, suitable for davenport covering or rather heavy draperies, could have been done in either of these weaves. I used the modified summer and winter, following the threading in Diagram No. 2.

The warp is the finer raw silk, sleyed double in a nine-dent reed, and it is woven with Bernat crewel in a dull gold, wound double; tabby same as warp. Treading:

Treadle 5	16 ×	}	four times
" 4	8 ×		
Treadle 5	16 ×	}	" "
" 3	8 ×		

The pillow cover shown in Illustration No. 4 was designed in color and weave to accompany the striped sample. The threading is taken from the "Speck Book of Drawings," as given in Mrs. Mary M. Atwater's *The Shuttle-Craft Guild Recipe Book*, Series I, No. 13, Diagram No. 4. Warp same as the foregoing, but the weft colors are lighter and darker shades in the same sequence,—the light one a soft yellow and the dark a cinnamon brown. Tabby used for this piece is Perle cotton No. 20, in a dull gold, about the value of the gold weft in the other piece. The back of the pillow is woven in plain stripes, each stripe matching in width the corresponding pattern stripe on the face of the pillow. These colors sound rather vivid, but, modified by the dull white of the silk and in the proper surroundings, all this yellow, gold and red-brown is not too "hot."

The pattern is such a beautiful one I used it for another sample pillow cover, which is not illustrated, as it would not photograph; it is as silvery as the other is gold. In this one the heavy raw silk is used for the pattern shot, with a cool, bright green silk tabby for the lighter portions of the pattern and a dark blue silk tabby for the dark parts. The effect is frosty, the tabby shots being so modified by the white that they merely bring out the pattern without changing the silveriness of the surface. The pattern weft and the tabby

silks being coarse in proportion to the warp made an interesting change in the texture.

The other pieces illustrated, at top and bottom of Illustration No. 3, are done on a threading given on No. 22, Series III, of Mrs. Atwater's *The Shuttle-Craft Guild Recipe Book*, Diagram No. 3. The warp for these is also fine raw silk sleyed 16 to inch, the upper one woven: widest block in rust color, next in dusky pink and a bright rose for the narrow block, with a binder of Perle cotton No. 20 in silver gray. The lower piece was done in three shades of gray—crewel, wound double, for the middle and darker shades and a heavy silver gray silk for the lighter; tabby for this was also the fine gray mercerized cotton. With the three shuttles used for each pattern shot, the resulting fabric is thick, but it is not stiff nor unwieldy, and would make a most durable covering. A piece done like this gray one, except that the pattern weft, as well as the warp, was the raw silk, with the fine gray tabby, is also effective, the gray tabby toning it to a pale silver on the warp-face blocks.

But one need not have, of necessity, fine and expensive furnishings as a background for hand-woven textiles, nor expensive materials to work with; nothing could be more satisfactory in a simply furnished room than the semi-transparent curtains that can be made with mercerized cotton. We have some woven on the threading given on page 10 of the *HANDICRAFTER* for February, 1928, for which we used just the 14-thread center repeat for the entire width of the curtains, with the exception of plain 2-inch stripes at each edge and at 12 inches inside each edge; these stripes were warped in gold mercerized cotton, No. 5; natural mercerized, of the same size, being used for the balance of the warp. The same natural mercerized was used for weft, except for a band of gold about 14 inches from the top, with another gold band at the window sill, followed by a border in dull blue and a hem in gold. They are most practical and good-looking.

Still less expensive are some porch curtains now in the making. The warp for these is the ordinary cotton and jute mixture used in monk's cloth, threaded 24 to the inch—three to each heddle and dent, using an eight reed—and for weft a cotton filler in white. The threading is the simple twill, 1, 2, 3, 4, and the harnesses are tied one to each treadle, allowing reverse treading on a four-heddle loom.

Treading:			
2 & 3 & 4	once	}	Repeat for 7¼ inches
1 & 3 & 4	"		
1 & 2 & 4	"		
1 & 2 & 3	"		
4	"	}	" " 2½ "
3	"		
2	"		
1	"		

Repeat both blocks for length of curtain.

This reverses the twill both as to direction and as to warp and weft, and we hope the curtains will look as well when hung as they do on the loom. The porch walls are painted ivory, with dark green window trim, a panel above the windows in tile red, with a tile red stain on the window sills. The north windows look out on a very small park, which is mostly tall, old fir trees, and east to a snow-capped mountain, making it necessary that the curtains be quiet in color. In other situations, shots of bright color could be used effectively in the twill, and the material still be very inexpensive and quickly made.