

# Old Coverlets I Have Known

BY CORNELIA STONE

WITH the hurried closing of a car door, I was on my way to see a dear old lady, who I had been told, owned a hand-woven coverlet. Hopes ran high that it might really be hand-woven and not one of the machine age, as so often they turn out to be.

With charming courtesy, I was received and then ensued an enchanting hour of early Illinois history, for the coverlet proved not only hand-woven, but also to have been woven not far from here, in a loom house that stood on the banks of the Iroquois River. But let Mrs. Cooper tell it in her own way:

"The material of which this coverlid was made was raised, carded, spun and dyed on the farm of Samuel Johnson (my mother's home), situated two and a half miles southwest (as the crow flies) from Aroma, now Aroma Park, Illinois, and was woven about the year 1849 in the home of one George Bass (colored), living about three miles south of our home, in the vicinity of Sugar Island, once supposed to become the 'Hub of the Universe'."

Mrs. Cooper told me that purslane was used to dye the blue yarns, but in her coverlet it had not held its color as well as the red, which is in perfect condition. "Black Bass," as he was called throughout the neighborhood, wove other "coverlids" for Mrs. Cooper's mother, as well as for many other neighbors.

Mrs. Cooper's coverlet, Draft No. 1, a variation of "Queen's Delight" has no border, and the treadling given is just as the coverlet is woven.

<i>Treadle</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Color</i>
1	8	Blue
2	4	Red
1	4	
2	4	Red
1	8	Blue
4	8	Red
3	8	Blue
1	2	Blue
3	8	Blue
4	8	Red
1	8	Blue
3	8	Blue
4	8	Red
2	2	Blue
4	8	Red
3	8	Blue
1	8	Blue
4	8	Red
3	8	Blue
1	2	Blue
3	8	Blue
4	8	Red

Repeat.

If no border is used, thread as follows: selvage 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3 (7 threads), begin with thread 68 to end (125 threads), 5 repeats of the pattern (960 threads) and the first 130 threads, making 1,222 threads set at 30 to the inch.

If in reproducing this coverlet a border is desired, I would suggest the little diamond threading partly on opposites No. 4 as given in "Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-weaving," by Mary Meigs Atwater. This threading as given with Draft No. 1 has been rewritten to make the returns come on 1-2 and 3-4 blocks, as they do in the coverlet.

For a coverlet set 30 threads to the inch, thread as follows: selvage 4 threads, 14 repeats of border (336 threads), 4 repeats of pattern (768 threads), and the first 130 threads of pattern, making 1,238 threads in all.

Treadle border as follows:

<i>Treadle</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Color</i>
2	4	Red
3	4	Blue
2	4	Red
4	4	Red
1	4	Blue
4	4	Red

Repeat 14 times to make square corner. This will make the red predominate in the border as in the coverlet proper. A different color arrangement that might be used would be: Treadle 2-3-2 blue; 4-1-4 red.

Another old overshot coverlet that has come into my possession has been of interest to me because of the use of two old well-known patterns, "Double Bow-knot" and "Chariot Wheel." Often I have wished that I knew who the weaver had been, for the inspiration that caused her to combine these two threadings may in this age inspire some of us to try other combinations with the hopes that our choice may prove as harmonious. Had she been using the small chariot wheel in draperies or rugs, and, wanting a coverlet with greater variety worked out this plan to bring another design into the room and yet tie the coverlet to the other pieces so they would belong to each other? What romances can be woven around these old pieces, with the constant desire for the creating of something different from others seen or heard of, showing up here and there in the most unexpected ways.

This coverlet, Draft No. 2, is woven as drawn in, the wheel and small table on opposites at the center of the bow-knot, being woven in red, while the rest is blue. In writing this draft I have used 5 threads at the center of the bow-knot in order to make the bow-knot the same in the second half as the first. This coverlet, like the first, is woven of hand-spun and home-dyed yarn, so the colors have mellowed down to beautiful shades to delight the eye.

To thread for this pattern with no border, as in the original, selvage 1-2-3-4 twice, 1 once, making 9 threads; begin with the 79th thread to end of pattern (336), 2 repeats of pattern (828), and the first 103 threads, making 1,275 threads in all. Weave a heading wide enough for hem if desired, then treadle as follows:

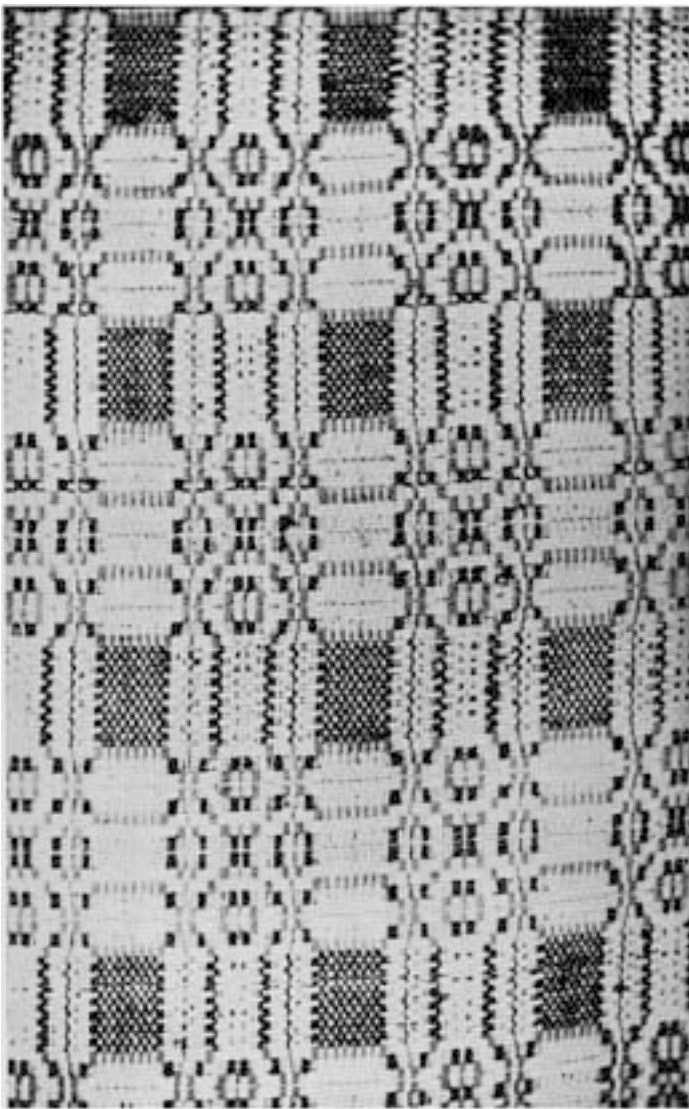


Illustration No. 1

Mrs. Cooper's old coverlet woven in 1849 by George Bass

Treadle	Times	
2	2	Wheel red
3	2	
4	6	
3	6	
4	2	
3	6	
4	6	7 } Table blue
3	2	
2	2	
1	8	
2	2	
1	8	
4	4	
3	4	1st half bow-knot blue
2	4	
1	6	
4	8	
3	10	
2	12	
1	12	
3	10	
2	8	
1	6	
4	6	Center bow-knot red
3	4	
1	4	
3	4	
1	4	
3	4	
1	4	
3	4	

4	6	} 2nd half bow-knot blue
1	6	
2	8	
3	10	
4	12	
1	12	
2	12	
3	10	
4	8	
1	6	
2	4	
3	4	
4	4	

Repeat to desired length, ending with wheel.

If one so desires, a border might be created by the use of the chariot-wheel separated by a small table, threading given. Thread as follows:

Selvage . . . . .	9
5 repeats of border . . . . .	330
Begin with 207th thread to end . . . . .	207
1 repeat of pattern . . . . .	414
First . . . . .	311

1,271

If two colors are used, weave the wheel red and the table blue. Treading for the border would be the same as for

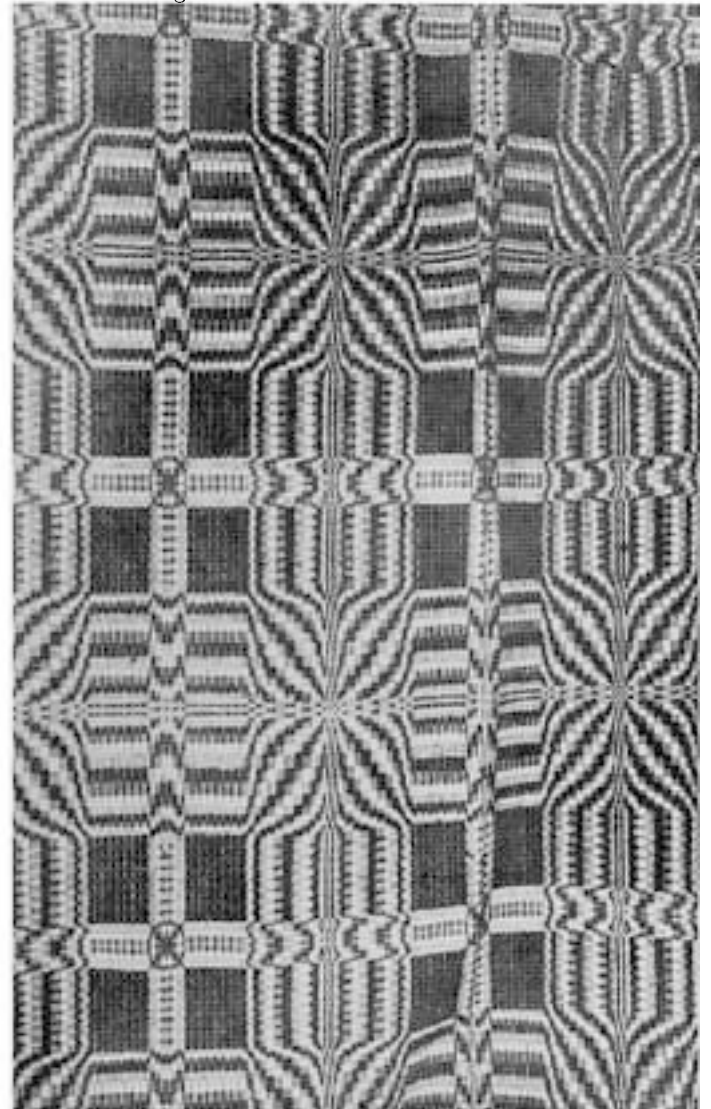


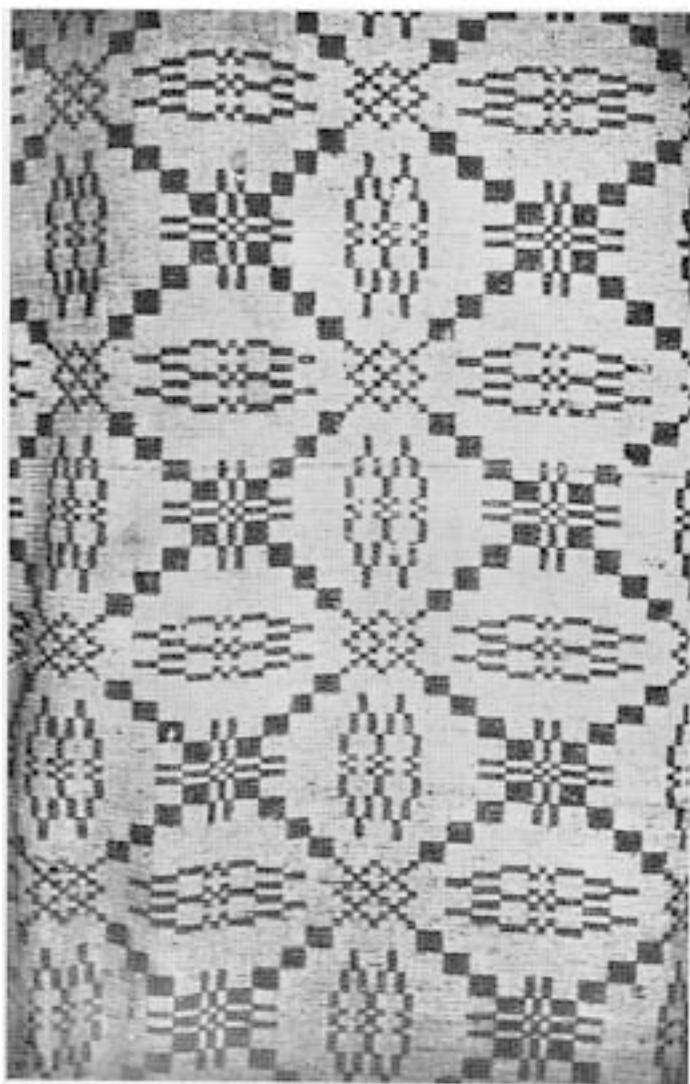
Illustration No. 2

"Bow-Knot and Chariot-Wheel," old coverlet in the possession of M. C. Stone

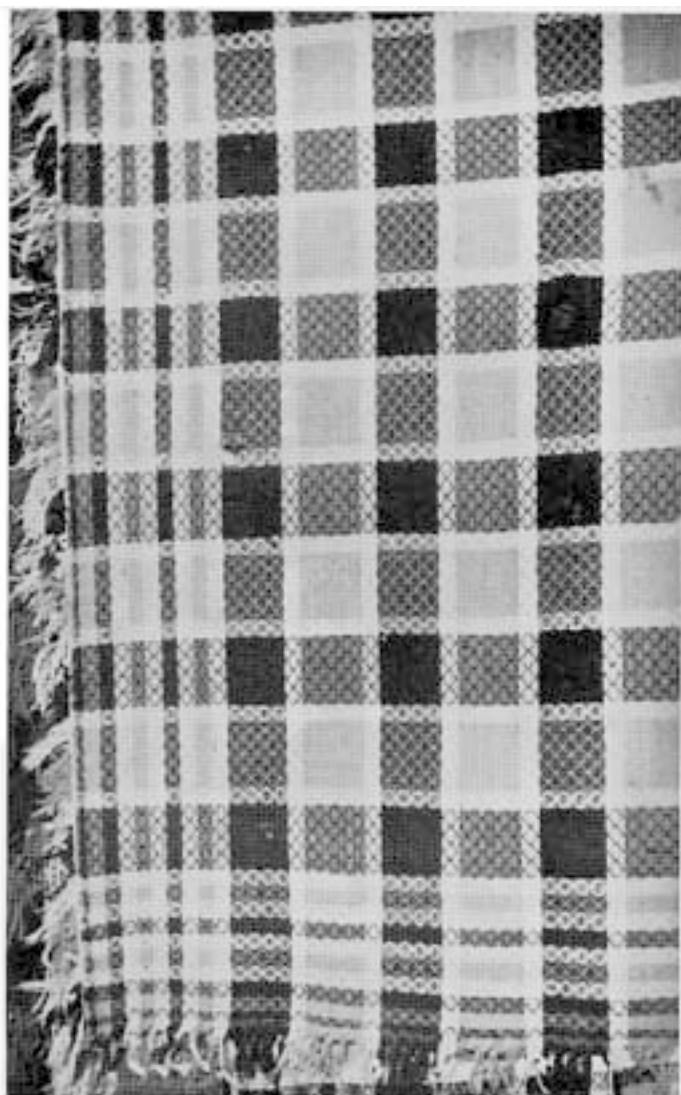
wheel with the table treadled 1-8 times; 2-2; 1-8. The wheel and table being woven 5 times to make a square corner, then begin the body of the coverlet at the beginning of the bow-knot and weave to desired length. The same tie-up is used for both drafts No. 1 and 2.

A friend of mine found at a country auction a quaint old book, and, on examining it, found tucked between its pages a folded heart-shaped piece of paper yellow with age. On it were these words: "Way to Cure Love." "Take of the Spirit of Indifference one ounce, of the powder of disdain twelve grains, of oil of absence and the spice of good advice three ounces; put them all into a large saucepan of Sound Reason with about two quarts of best hearts ease. Stir and boil them together for a considerable time and then strain it through a fine cloth of patience into a vessel of Prudence. Take one half pint of this mixture when going to bed and lay upon you as many coverlids of content as will give you a thorough sweat by closely observing these different times you will certainly be loved.

"The End Amen  
Even So Let It Be  
in the Year 1828."



*Illustration No. 3*  
"Fish in the Pond," old coverlet in Summer and Winter Weave



*Illustration No. 4*  
All-wool Blanket

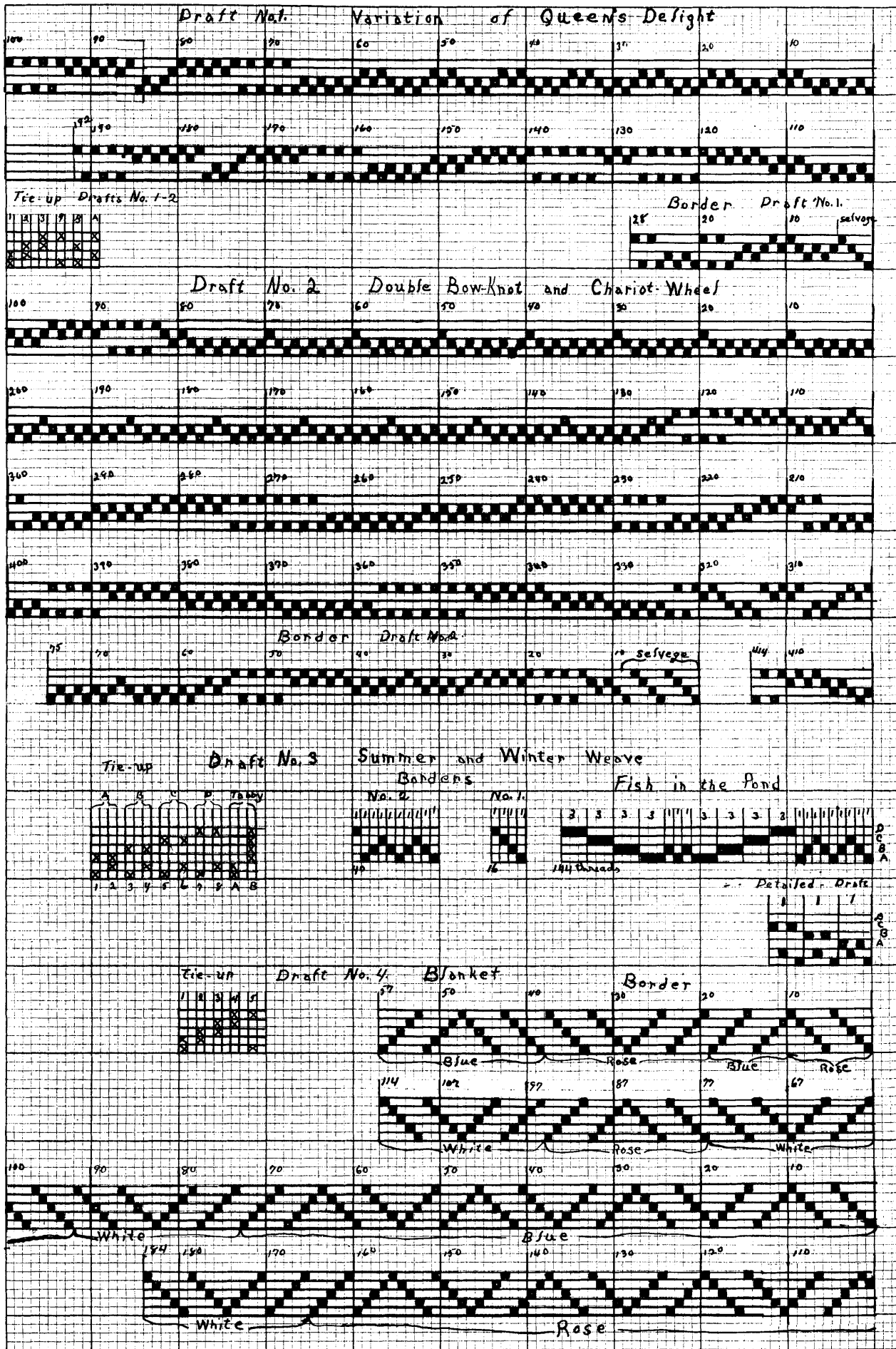
How many ills of mind and spirit the planning and weaving of a perfect coverlet can cure; and what peace and comfort can be brought to body and soul by the finished product.

For a Summer and Winter weave, I have selected a 6-harness threading, "Fish in the Pond" — what an intriguing name. Perhaps the person who created this design was an itinerant weaver and loved to stop by a pond to try the gentle art of angling for a bit of amusement, as well as to eke out his meal when of necessity it was eaten by the roadside. Whatever its origin, it is a delightful pattern. The draft (No. 3) for this pattern is written the short method. Just below it is a detailed draft of the first three units.

This coverlet was lacking in a border also, but I am including two suggestions for borders. First: a twill (short draft). If wishing to use homespun yarn for pattern thread, set 16/3 Egyptian cotton warp at 24 to the inch as follows:

16 repeats of border.....	256
5 repeats of pattern.....	720
First.....	20
	996

and use 24/3 Egyptian cotton for tabby.



The second border is a repetition of the first 10 blocks of the pattern. This will make the most desirable border and, if one wishes to make an extra nice coverlet in this threading, use for warp 24/3 Egyptian cotton at 30 to the inch, Fabri yarn for pattern and No. 20 Mercerized or 20/2 cotton for tabby. Thread as follows:

9 repeats of border . . . . .	360
6 repeats of pattern . . . . .	864
First 5 blocks . . . . .	20

1,244

Each unit is treadled as shown for Block A: Treadle 1, tabby A, treadle 2, tabby B, treadle 2, tabby A, treadle 1, tabby B.

Treadlings for coverlet:

<i>Twill Border</i>		<i>2nd Border</i>		<i>Body of Coverlet</i>
Block A — 1 unit	} 16 times	Block A — 1 unit	} 9 times	A — 1 unit
B — 1 “		B — 1 “		B — 1 “
C — 1 “		C — 1 “		C — 1 “
D — 1 “		B — 1 “		B — 1 “
		A — 1 “		C — 1 “
		B — 1 “		B — 1 “
		A — 1 “		A — 1 “
		B — 1 “		D — 3 units
		A — 1 “		C — 3 “
		B — 1 “	B — 3 “	
		A — 1 “	A — 3 “	
		B — 1 “	B — 1 unit	
		A — 1 “	A — 1 “	
		B — 1 “	B — 1 “	
		A — 1 “	A — 1 “	
		B — 3 units	B — 3 units	
		C — 3 “	C — 3 “	
		D — 3 “	D — 3 “	
		Repeat.	Repeat.	

For further details concerning Summer and Winter weaving I would refer you to Mrs. Atwater's book, spoken of near the beginning of this article.

The fourth coverlet, or, more strictly speaking, a blanket, is one of a number of very lovely ones that I have had the privilege of examining closely. This old blanket is woven in rose, blue and white. The wool is hand-spun and the colors are the lovely soft shades of the old vegetable dyes. The fringe on the sides was made separately and sewed on, but the colors exactly matched the woof threads in the blanket.

This threading, a 5-harness one, is varied slightly for the border, so I am giving both. The border, starting with rose, blue, rose, etc., uses 190 threads; the body of pattern begins with a blue block, followed by small white, large rose, and small white. The seam is in the middle of a blue block. Five repeats and the first 37 threads are required for the body of the blanket, making 1,147 threads in all, which were set 30 to the inch. The fine wool used in this all-wool blanket gives such a beautiful soft texture that it was a delight to handle.

Fabri yarn, or one even finer, would be suitable for this blanket.

Treadle as follows, each treadle once:

<i>Border</i>	<i>Con't</i>	<i>Con't</i>	<i>Con't</i>	<i>Con't</i>	<i>Con't</i>
1		1	5	1	5
2	} Rose	2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		3	2	4	2
5		2	5	1	5
1		1	5	1	5
2		2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		4	2	4	2
5		5	1	5	1
1	} Rose	1	5	1	5
2		2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		2	4	2	4
5		1	5	1	5
1		1	5	1	5
2	} Blue	2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		2	4	2	4
5		1	5	1	5
1		1	5	1	5
2		2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		4	2	4	2
5		5	1	5	1
1	} Blue	1	4	1	4
2		2	3	2	3
3		3	2	3	2
4		2	3	3	2
5		1	4	2	3
1		1	5	1	5
2		2	4	2	4
3		3	3	3	3
4		4	2	4	2
5		5	1	5	1

Body of blanket:

	<i>Con't Blue</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Con't Rose</i>	<i>Con't Rose</i>	<i>Con't White</i>
1	2	5	5	5	2
2	3	4	4	4	3
3	4	3	3	3	4
4	5	2	2	2	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1
1	2	5	2	2	2
2	3	4	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4
4	5	2	5	5	5
5	1	1	1	1	1

Repeat to desired length.

A border woven at each end would add to the beauty of the blanket. If this is desired, have a blue block at end of body of blanket and start treadling border from end (white block).

All of the tie-ups and treadlings are for looms with sinking harnesses.