



## ROMANTIC CROSS-STITCH

*By Gertrude W. Howells*

IN THE high mountains of central Italy, far removed from outside influences, are many little villages each with its own costume and customs. Their origin is lost in oblivion. Until comparatively lately no roads connected them with the outside world, except rough, dangerous mule paths, and the women seldom left their villages.

The men are shepherds by tradition, who lead their flocks south for the winter, and bring them back to the mountains again in the summer — long hard journeys, lasting a month or more. Only the more venturesome leave their wild mountain homes to seek their fortunes in America, or elsewhere, coming back every few years to visit their families and to find their brides, for there is a saying in Italy that "wives and oxen must be sought in one's native country."

The women carried on the activities of the village, the older ones doing the spinning, weaving and dyeing, and the younger ones reaping and threshing the grain, gathering fire-wood, and tending the

animals, and the old crones cared for the children — often ten or twenty at a time.

In the village, where I spent many summers, the girls often wore white, cotton kerchiefs when at work in the fields, and these were greatly treasured. One of the first gifts a youth gives to his sweetheart is a square of cotton cloth, and in the long winter days she embroiders it in cross-stitch using the thread of the material for her guide, and so perfectly does she work the back is almost as clear as the right side.

She turns up a half inch hem on the right side, imitating machine stitch as part of the decoration, and then she follows her fancy in the designs and mottoes she works for a border. It is usually a love-sonnet, with designs separating the words, and filling the empty spaces.

They are usually symbolic of love or religion or often a graceful geometric design, according to the caprice of the girl, and are copied from the kerchief of a friend or from some sampler.

*(Continued on page 30)*

together, complete the basting of the edges together, and stitch both edges on the machine, slipping the strip along through the slots in the handles as may be necessary to do the stitching. Interline the bag with unbleached cotton, fold selvages together and stitch up the sides. Make a lining of gold silk, having a small inner pocket carefully stitched. Place the lining in the bag and finish nicely with a row of machine stitching close to top edge.

Place center of top to center of the pattern and sew to bag with double strand of black Laurel yarn. Fold in sides of bag, forming pleats about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches deep, and press carefully. This bag may be made in any color combination. Black or navy with gold are very good, while white and gold makes an unusually rich and handsome bag.

Illustration No. 3 also shows a bag made of white Weaving Special and Art Silk. Owing to lack of contrast the pattern does not show up well, but it is a simple design worked out on Rosengang threading and looks well in the bag. It is lined with white silk and has a Repousé pewter top with straps of moire ribbon run through slots and fastened to inside of bag. A cord may be used in the same manner as the straps in the "Queen's Delight" bag, if desired.

The third bag in this illustration is made of Bouclette in two shades of brown, with Perle No. 20 for warp. The cord in the handle is made of Bouclette over four strands of No. 3 Perle. This bag also has a narrow wood top.

The bag in illustration No. 4 is suggestive of some brought back from Scandinavia by tourists. We are giving suggestions for two-color combinations. The warp, which is carpet warp, sleyed 30 threads to the inch, consists of 270 threads divided as follows: red 131, green 45, tan 74, purple 20. The colors are arranged as follows: red 27 threads, green 18, red and tan alternating 40 (20 of each color), purple 20, red 27, tan 20, red 30, green 27, tan 8, red and tan alternating, 53. Use tan carpet warp for the filler. Allow 34 inches of warp for each bag and add enough for tie-ups. Weave  $24\frac{1}{2}$  inches for each bag, also four strips  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide for the handles.

If a number of bags are to be woven we find it better to weave two at a time. Double the number of warp threads and add 8 in the center of white. Place red at each selvage as these make the tops of the bags, the bottom coming at the center on the added white threads. On removal from the loom stitch two rows of machine stitching through the center on the white strips. Before cutting the bags apart, cut off the strips for handles as these will be the correct length. If only one bag is woven at a time two strips must be sewed together to make the required length for each handle. Bind the seams of the bag with sateen or other suitable material, fold

in edges of strips for handles and stitch, attaching them to the bag also by stitching. Make a tassel of the various colors of warp and attach to bottom of bag.

The second bag is green, tan, orange and brown. The same idea may be carried out in Perle No. 20, using 60 threads to the inch and carpet warp for filler.

This is a roomy bag, smart in appearance, packs well, holds its shape, is easily and quickly woven and made, and the cost of material is small. The pattern for cutting is given.

The majority of bags described in this article may be woven on a two-harness loom if desired. As suggested, the bag and scarf in Illustration No. 1 may be woven with stripes instead of a pattern.

### *Romantic Cross-stitch*

*(Continued from page 21)*

These samplers are very old and very precious to the owners, who lend them sparingly to be copied. They are on coarse hand-woven linen, and worked in red marking cotton. A border including many patterns goes all around the edge, and inside of this, in the upper left-hand corner, one always finds a cross, hence the sampler is always called a "Santa Croce". Then follow four or five alphabets and numbers, below which are symbols and figures characteristic of early fifteenth century work.

From these samplers some 200 designs were collected, and grouped together on sheets, one of which accompanies this article.

The emblems of love are many. Hearts flaming, pierced, crowned or unlocked; the arrow not yet at its quarry; the key or the crown still waiting to be set in place, the heart still untouched.

Often a bird or a dog, or two together bear a basket with a love token or a letter. Two flowers may grow from a single vase, or two birds in a tree. There are many wreaths with the initials of the lovers interlaced or the wreath upheld by angels.

Some of the quaintest designs show the lovers holding the wreath, or heart, or crown between them.

Religious emblems are many and unique. The Crucifixion, including the garment, sponge, ladder, nails and hammer, dice, cock, and the Saviour on the Cross. Many lovely crosses, the monstrance and the chalice. I.H.S. in many forms, and the monogram of Maria, a funeral bier, a lecturn. Birds or deer eating from the trees in the garden of Paradise.

A less sentimental lass may work a little animal, or a bird; or a girl offering a chair, signifying hospitality; or a well, or gateway; or a woman carrying a jug of water on her head.