

Some Variations of Spanish Weave

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It was in the spring of 1928 while putting on an Exhibit of Handweaving at the Woman's Exposition in Convention Hall here in Detroit, that I first saw what is now generally known as Spanish weave technique. In the booth next to mine was an Exhibit of Roumanian costumes and textiles, and among these I discovered a pair of handspun handwoven linen pillow-cases. On each of these was a wide border of leaves and grape design with the background carried out in the Spanish weave. Then in the May-June 1930 copy of the Handicrafter, appeared an article on this weave by Mrs. Gertrude Howells, of State College, telling how she had discovered the technique on an ancient bit of Weaving in Spain, and of her experience in learning how it was woven. My own students, particularly those who like best to work with linens, have derived much pleasure from the use of this interesting form of weaving. And on account of this, I wrote it up for my monthly leaflet Handweaving News in March 1937, explaining a number of other uses we had made of the original method of working the technique. Several other interesting ways of weaving are also presented here.

At Figure No. 1 is shown a very old silk scarf head-dress. This was of very fine silk and was brocaded with small figures of a heavier silk. The thread with which the Spanish weave border was woven was heavier than that used for the body of the scarf, but the same weight as that used for the figures. The actual width of the Spanish weave border was about an inch. Note especially here how long the slanting stitch is between the groups of warp threads. One fault commonly seen in our way of working the technique is that the warp threads are not pulled close enough together in the working and so this slanting stitch does not show enough to be as decorative as it should be. Of course there are some ways of weaving this stitch so the slanting stitch is not meant to show, and that is all right too, but if the effect is to be a *lacy* one, the weft thread *must* be pulled tight enough in each group of warp threads to pull them close together. I mention this as in the drawing at Figure No. 2 showing the method

of weaving, this is not very clear.

At Figure No. 3 is an illustration of actual weaving

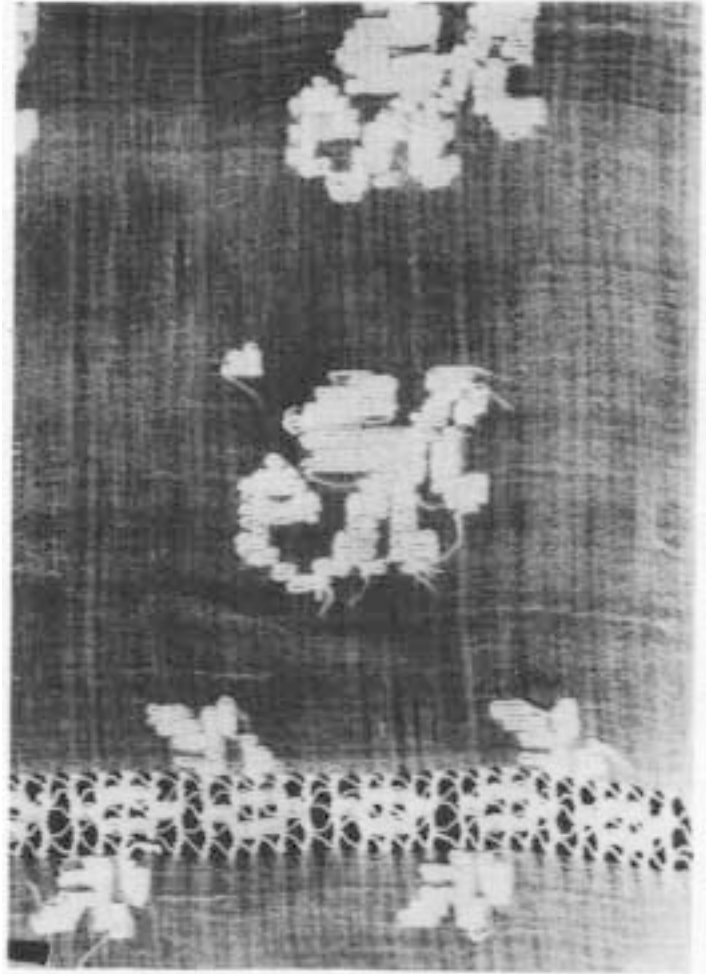


Figure No. 1

Photo of silk head scarf, with border in Spanish weave.

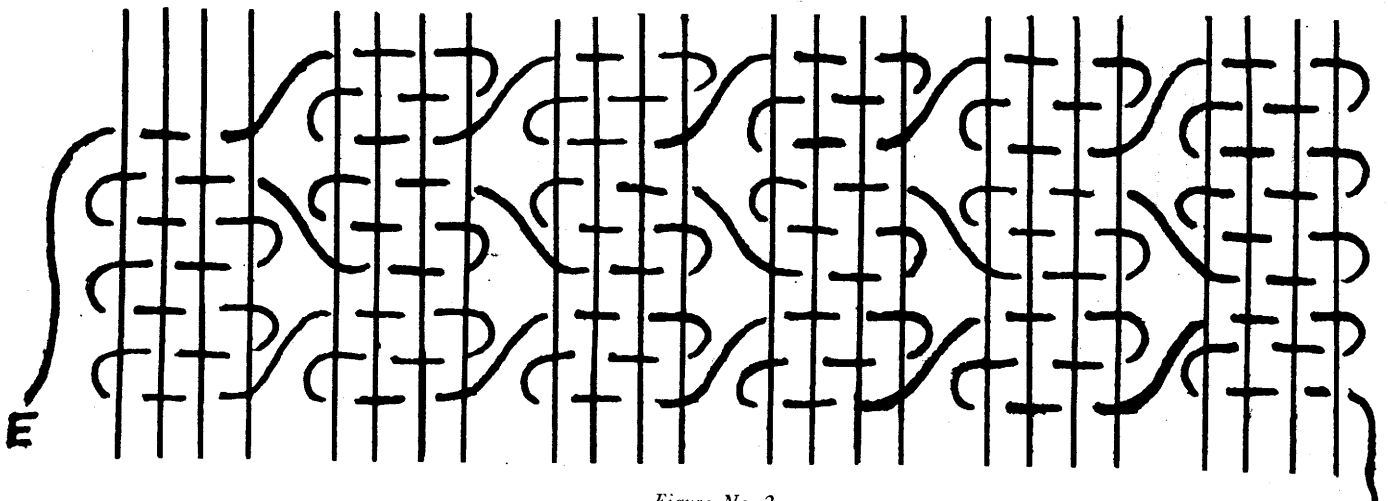


Figure No. 2

Drawing showing the method of weaving Spanish technique.

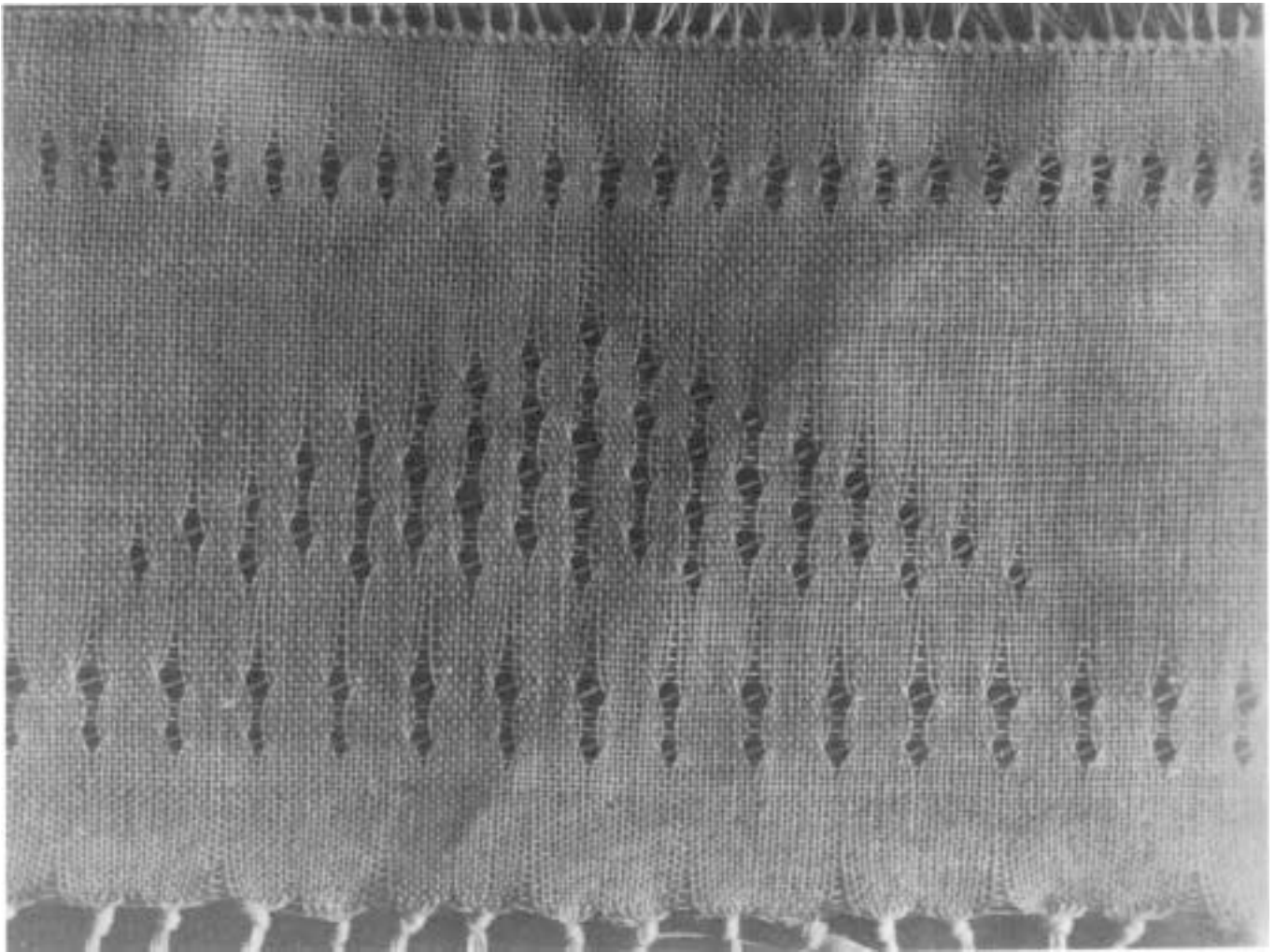


Figure No. 3
*Woven example of method of weaving Spanish
 technique.*

which should make clear the original working of the Spanish weave technique. First weave a plain weave heading. Then starting at the right side with the 'A' tabby or plain weave shed open, with your shuttle pick up four warp threads. Pull shuttle out pushing down the weft thread as you do so, change shed to the 'B' tabby shed, go back to the right edge under four warp threads. As this is done pull the weft slightly to pull in the warp threads a little on the left side. Change to the 'A' tabby shed again, and this time go under eight warp threads, or in other words pick up the first original four warp threads plus four more. Pull shuttle through, beat change shed to the 'B' tabby shed again, go back under four threads. Beat Change to 'A' tabby shed and pick up eight more threads and so on all across the width. If you follow the diagram at Figure No. 2, this should be clear. However please note this difference, that the diagram shows only four threads in each group while the directions just given would have eight threads in each group. It is easy to see that the stitch is made up of three operations. The first joins the last part of the previous stitch with the first part of the next stitch, the second carries the weft thread *back* under just the number of warp threads being used to mark the size of the group, and the third change completes the stitch and also begins a new one.

Be very sure and complete each stitch with all three operations. And do not forget to do the edge group even though it may be of a large number of warp threads. For instance, the first stitch on the bottom row of the pyramid figure on Figure No. 3 should be worked by carrying in the weft thread to the point where the first slanting stitch is to come, no matter how large the number of warp threads picked up, then the weft is carried back to the edge on the second shed, then forward again in the next shed, picking up the number of warp threads required for the next group. In Figure No. 3 the top little border is made up of groups of eight threads each, and there are three rows of the stitch worked across the entire width. One row across, then one row back, and then another row the same as the first row. This shows the little slanting stitches very well. The pyramid figure in the center is worked in groups of sixteen warp threads in each group, then on the next row across, these groups are divided by making the first edge group of the pyramid an eight-thread group and the rest sixteen thread groups. Note also that the weft slanting threads all go the same way. This is accomplished by throwing a single shot of plain weave from the left edge to the right after the first row of the stitch is completed. The bottom row of Figure No. 3 is composed of groups of sixteen threads each

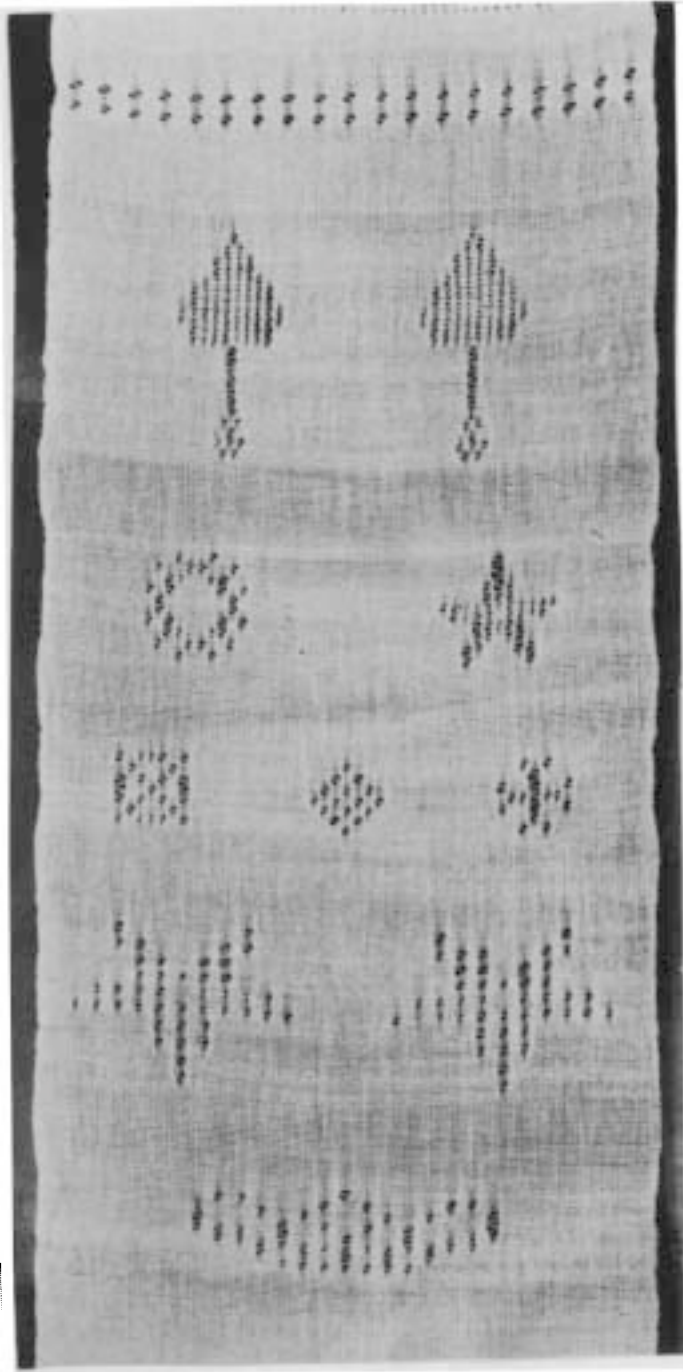


Figure No. 4
Samples of figures in Spanish weave, woven by
Miss Rachel Grieve.

worked from right to left, then five rows of plain weave then another row of the Spanish stitch from right to left. An odd number of rows of plain weave between the rows of Spanish weave will make the slanting stitches all go in the same direction.

Figure No. 4 was a sampler of Spanish weave woven by Miss Rachel Grieve, now a teacher of weaving in Melbourne, Australia. She also made the small piece shown at Figure No. 3. The sampler was woven of 40/2 linen for the warp and weft, with warp set at 30 threads to the

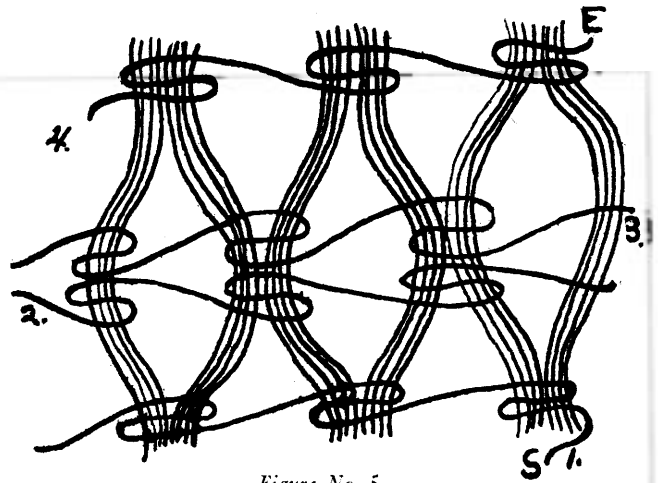


Figure No. 5
Drawing showing method of pulling warp very close together, and leaving spaces between each row of the stitch.

inch. This piece was not only well planned, but also shows some interesting ways in which the stitch can be used for small separate figures.

Figure No. 5 is a slight variation of the original stitch which makes very effective borders. Mrs. Florence Anderson, one of my Wayne University students worked out a number of borders in this technique using colored linen on a 40/2 linen warp, set 30 threads to the inch. Weave a plain tabby heading as desired. Then starting with weft thread No. 1, pick up eight warp threads, go back to the right edge, beat down the weft and pull the weft thread so taut that the warp threads are drawn very tightly together, then pick up the original eight threads again, and go ahead to pick up eight more for the next group. The weft must pull the warp threads very closely



Figure No. 6
Towel woven after method shown in Figure No. 5,
by Florence Anderson.

together each time, so that there is a long slanting stitch between. Continue until the left edge is reached, then as at 2 of Figure No. 5, separate the groups of warp threads in half, and return to the right edge of the border. Note the distance between weft thread No. 1 and No. 2. This can be gauged as wide as desired. The warp threads in the original piece at Figure No. 6, were left free for about a quarter of an inch. By varying the number of warp threads allowed to show, as well as the number picked up on the shuttle, it is possible to obtain many unusual and

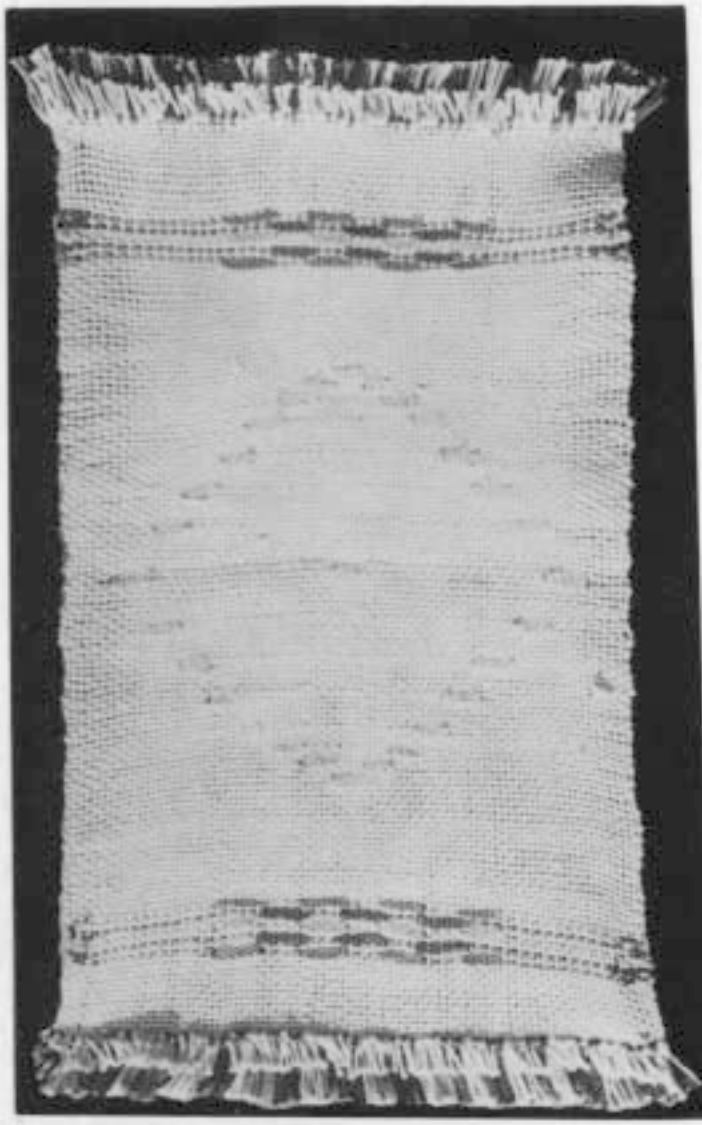


Figure No. 7
Picture Frame Loom Mercerized Cotton Table
Runner in Spanish weave technique.

interesting effects for lacy open work borders.

At Figure No. 7 is shown a small runner woven with Bernat's heavy mercerized cotton in beige, rust, yellow, and brown by a 12 year old girl on a picture frame loom. Directions for the setting up of a loom of this sort were given in Handweaving News for 1936, and will not be repeated here. On this piece the Spanish weave groups

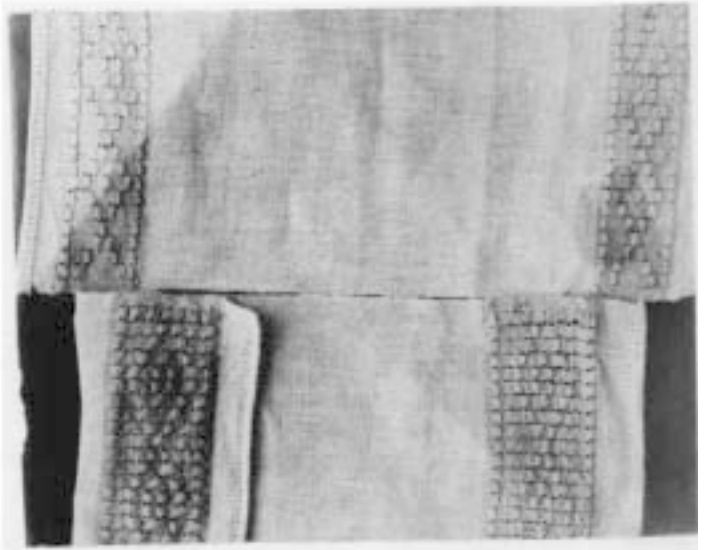


Figure No. 9
Two small linen runners woven by Mrs. Florence
Bratten in an original variation of Spanish Weave.

were made larger by taking up larger groups of the warp threads of various sizes, and passing the weft thread through each of these groups five times instead of only three times as previously explained. Also as the weft finished one group it was carried through the shed for a short distance before beginning a new group. This is clearly shown at Figure No. 8, here the course of the weft is shown but the warp threads are not indicated. In Figure No. 8 there are 80 warp threads in the first group, then the weft passes through the shed to the next group of 48 warp threads, and then on to a group of 80 more warp threads. It is very easy to follow the course of the weft from Figure No. 8.

At Figure No. 9 are two small linen runners woven of 40/2 natural linen for the warp and weft, with the borders in rose colored linen weaver, woven by Mrs. Florence Bratten. These borders show an entirely new type of the Spanish weave technique. The pattern is brought out by making an overlay stitch on top. It is possible to work out many more variations with the use of this simple device. The detail of the method of working this technique was written up in Handweaving News for March of 1938 with Mrs. Bratten's kind permission, and due to lack of space will not be repeated here. Further questions concerning this interesting weave will gladly be answered by the author of this article.

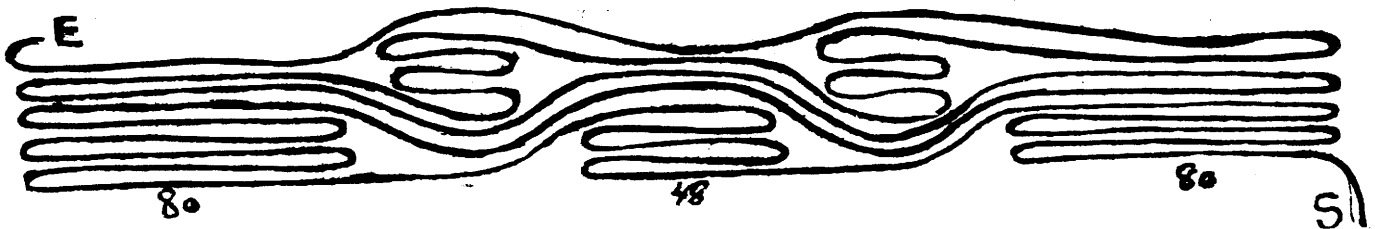


Figure No. 8
Drawing showing large groups separated by two
rows of plain weave.