

STRIPES: THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

by NATALIE T. CORBETT

A walk through any museum where textiles are exhibited reveals a galaxy of stripes. Those early and prized examples of primitive weaving safeguarded for the ages behind glass are invariably striped fabrics. Because early looms were narrow, strips in the warp were necessarily narrow; when that narrowness palled and restricted even primitive imaginations, strips were sewn together to make an interesting series of longitudinal stripes of varied width and color. We moderns, with our wider looms get the same effect by making the stripes with the weft. We need not resort to sewn widths, except in the case of coverlets.

When figures or geometric designs were used by primitive weavers, the figures were often arranged, not in an all-over pattern, but in an orderly regimentation of stripes. Many times these strips of laid-in figures and bands of solid color were sewn together to make a wide robe or throw. We, likewise, can obtain a similar effect if the harnesses have been threaded with a pattern. Then, we can make our stripes of either tabby weaving or pattern weaving, or a combination of both. Stripes, also, may be symmetrical or asymmetrical in arrangement. If the arrangement of stripes within any unit is asymmetrical, the repeats of the larger unit should conform to a symmetrical balance. A plan of some sort should always exist.

Moreover, the fascination and interest of stripes depend not only upon a pre-determined plan, but also upon variety. Our possibilities for variation, even with one threading, are limitless in that we can vary the stripes by using different colors, widths, treadlings, and kinds of yarns. The plan and taste of the designer, as well as the proposed environment of the fabric, determine which of these factors to vary, and which to keep constant in any one piece of weaving. Thus it might be said that every handwoven textile is influenced both by heredity — its weaver — and environment — its eventual setting. To achieve a restful, orderly effect, this variety must be regimental; to attain interest, the regimentation must be varied. If both regimentation and variety are maintained, striped textiles will have simplicity and style — and will survive. They will become treasured heirlooms, if not in a museum, at least in the homes of our children and our children's children.

Why have the stories and pictures of "The Three Bears" and "The Three Little Pigs" enthralled children from generation to generation? It is because of the ordered variety in the size of the three bears and their possessions; the Big, the Middle-sized, and the Little Bears, their chairs, their porridge bowls, and their beds! The Three Little Pigs, so far as we know, were of the same size; some versions, however, make them of three different colors, brown, black, and white. And you remember their houses? The crux of the whole story lies in the fact that the three houses built by Brownie, Blackie, and Whitey were not exactly the same, but were varied by being made of three different

kinds of material — straw, wood, and brick. The child does not reason why those two stories are his favorites, but his unerring, unguided feeling pronounces them perfect. Any story-telling grandmother, mother, or aunt will tell you that! Three bears of the same size, three pigs of the same color, three houses of the same material would have been in the discard after a few story hours. Unimaginative similarity cannot stand repetition — whether in story-telling or in handweaving.

Thus folk lore and folk art contain truths of simplicity and variety that please forever, and that can be carried over into the field of handwoven textiles. Furthermore, stripes belong to no one generation or setting. They may be kept primitively simple; or elaborated exotically to suit the most sophisticated modern.

Yet, remember, that just as the child unquestioningly delights in the two stories of triple interest, so the adult, without stopping to reason, accepts as pleasing a series of stripes of different widths, colors, treadlings, shades of color, weaves, or kinds of yarns varied according to some plan. This variety, regulated by a scheme known to the "designing" weaver, will be felt, consciously or unconsciously, by the observer. When no plan guides the weaving, the effect may be dizzy, or at least, unpleasant. The dizzy effect of a complete lack of symmetry of any kind can be used successfully only for small areas, and is permissible, at times, only when a bizarre, unusual effect is deliberately aimed for by the weaver.

To illustrate how stripes may be used and varied with the harnesses threaded with the same pattern, examples are given in the following schedules of weaving. In each instance, the threading is the familiar and comparatively simple Rose Path pattern. Most of the units are narrow, because these particular fabrics have been used for small costume bags, foot-stool covers, and end-table runners. The same arrangement of stripes may be used in other color combinations, of course, to suit other settings. These examples may also be varied, when larger bags, runners or chair covers are desired, by changing the width of each stripe, but keeping the same relative proportion of the stripes. They may be further varied by repeating any unit or units before weaving the center stripe. Keeping a pleasing proportion is largely a matter of mathematics. If the different units are multiples of each other, a satisfying effect will result. For interest, however, vary the number and order of the multiple. All this figuring can be done with pencil and ruler, cross section paper, or folded paper before ever a shuttle is thrown.

Do we know our stripes? Their simplicity and style have brought them down to us through the centuries — old, yet ever new. They have survived, and always will so long as we use our ingenuity in adapting them to modern color and settings. They are not "spinach", say the stylists.

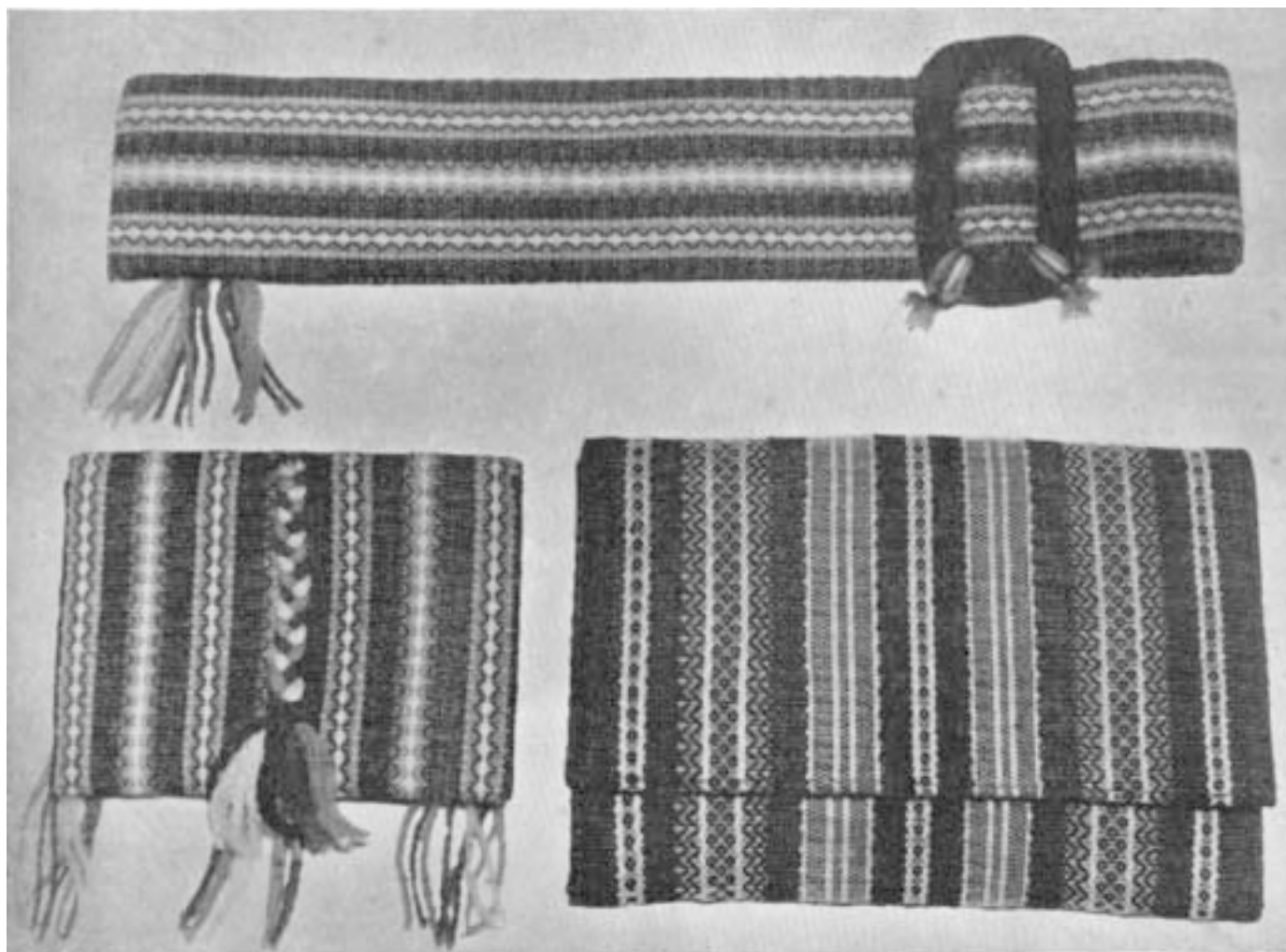


ILLUSTRATION I.

"Peasant Festival"—Skiing Belt and Bag

Bernat's Shetland Floss: Red 1152; blue 1160; yellow 1150; black.

TREADLING SCHEDULE

- (1) Red, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Blue, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Yellow, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Blue, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Red, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
- (2) Black, 14 picks
- (3) Blue, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Red, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Yellow, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Red, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Blue, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
- (4) Black, 14 picks
 Repeat this schedule until the desired width is woven.

"The Matinee"—Costume Envelope Purse

Bernat's Weaving Special: Black 807
 Raytone: Black A231
 Silver Tinsel

TREADLING SCHEDULE

- (1) Black wool, 1-4; 2-3, 20 picks

- (2) Silver tinsel, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Black Raytone, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Silver tinsel, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
- (3) Black wool, 1-4; 2-3, 16 picks
- (4) Black Raytone, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, twice
 Silver tinsel, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Black Raytone, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 2-3; 1-2; 2-3, once
 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Silver tinsel, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Black Raytone, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, twice
- (5) Black wool, 1-4; 2-3, 16 picks
- (6) Silver tinsel, 1-3; 2-4, once
 Black Raytone, 1-3; 2-4, twice
 Silver tinsel, 1-3; 2-4, once
 Black Raytone, 1-3; 2-4, once
 Silver tinsel, 1-3; 2-4, once
 Black Raytone, 1-3; 2-4, twice
 Silver tinsel, 1-3; 2-4, once
- (7) Black wool, 1-4; 2-3, 16 picks
- (8) *CENTER STRIPE*
 Silver tinsel, 3-4; 1-4; 1-2; 2-3, once
 Black Raytone, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
 Silver tinsel, 2-3; 1-2; 1-4; 3-4, once
- (9) Reverse schedules 1-7

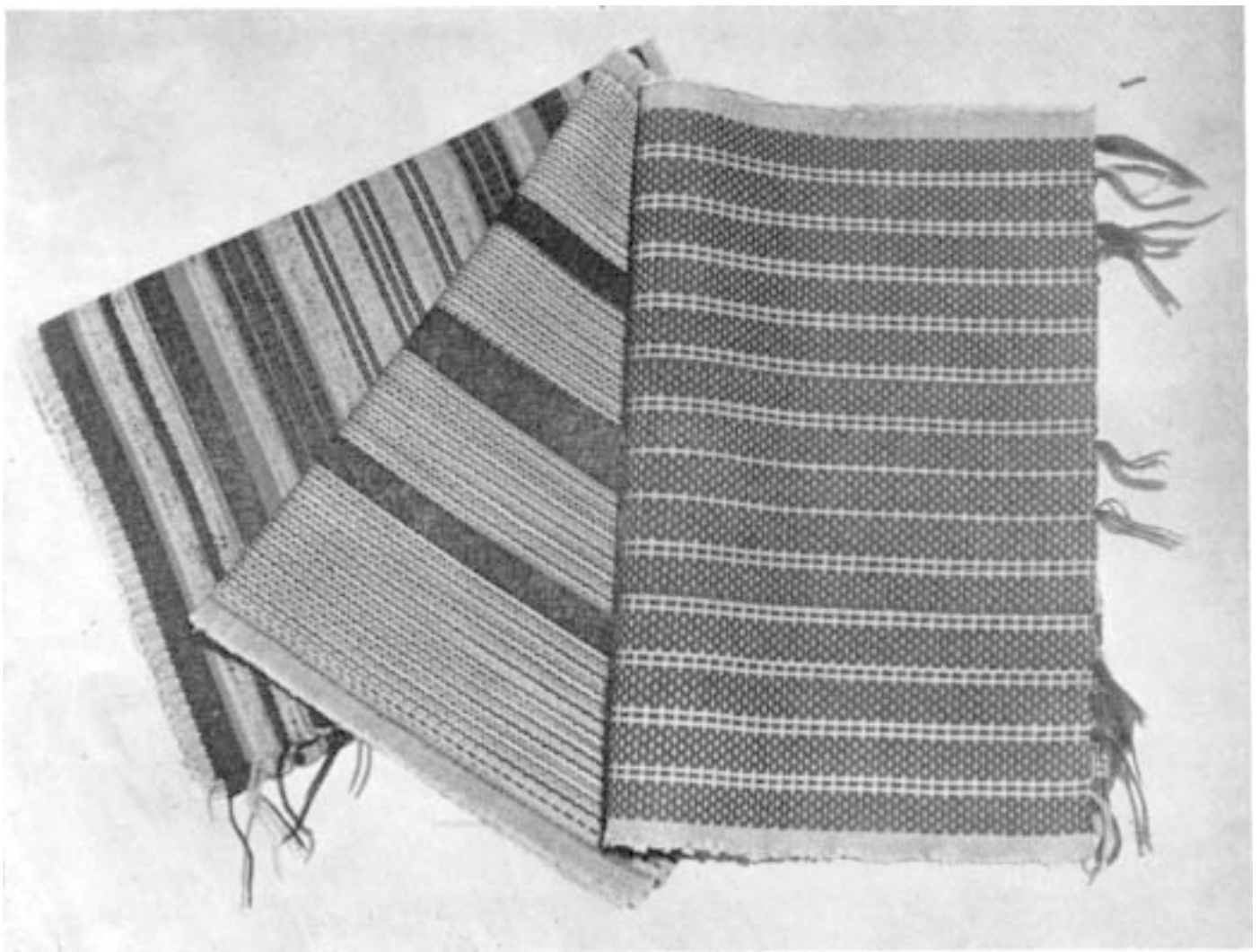


ILLUSTRATION II.

Three materials

No. 1 "The Bedouin"—for bags, chair seats, or foot-stool covers

Bernat's Weaving Special:

- Tartan Blue
- Green 616
- Taupe 622 (or one of the homespun knitting yarns flecked with blue and green has been used effectively here)
- Old Gold 111

TREADLING SCHEDULE: 1-4; 2-3, throughout

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| (1) Blue, 24 picks | (8) Green, 16 picks |
| (2) Green, 6 picks | Old gold, 4 picks |
| Old gold, 4 picks | (9) Taupe, 12 picks |
| (3) Taupe, 12 picks | (10) Green, 4 picks |
| (4) Green, 2 picks | Blue, 8 picks |
| Blue, 8 picks | Green, 2 picks |
| (5) Taupe, 12 picks | Blue, 12 picks |
| (6) Old gold, 2 picks | Green, 2 picks |
| Green, 4 picks | Blue, 8 picks |
| Old gold, 2 picks | Green, 4 picks |
| (7) Blue, 24 picks | |

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| (11) Taupe, 24 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| (12) Old Gold, 4 picks | Green, 1 pick |
| Blue, 2 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| Green, 1 pick | Old gold, 4 picks |
| Blue, 2 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| Old gold, 4 picks | Green, 1 pick |
| (13) Blue, 2 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| Green, 1 pick | Old Gold, 4 picks |
| Blue, 2 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| (14) Old gold, 4 picks | Green, 1 pick |
| (15) Taupe, 12 picks | Blue, 2 picks |
| (16) <i>CENTER UNIT</i> | Old gold, 4 picks |
| Old gold, 4 picks | Reverse schedule 1-15. |

Notice that the apparent chaotic medley of colors is brought into unity and stabilized, as it were, by the wider stripes of solid color woven in multiples of 12, or 3 x 4. The stripes of mixed colors have proportion within the unit by being multiples of 4 or 2.

No. 2 "Jazz Blues"—for sport bag

Bernat's Weaving Special: Blue 797 and a blue ombre knitting yarn were used. As the weights are different, instead of the number of picks in each stripe, the number of inches is indicated.

TREADLING SCHEDULE: 1-4; 2-3, throughout

- (1) Ombre, $2\frac{3}{4}$ "
- (2) Blue, $\frac{3}{4}$ "
- (3) Ombre, 2"
- (4) *CENTER STRIPE*
Blue, 1"

Reverse schedule 1-3

No. 3 "Sun in the Forest"—for bag, chair seat, or footstool cover

Bernat's Weaving Special; greens 616 and 612

TREADLING SCHEDULE

- (1) Dark green, 2-3; 1-2; 2-3 alternating with 3-4; 1-4; 3-4 until 7 units have been completed
 - (2) Light green, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
Dark green, 2-3; 1-2; 2-3, once
Light green, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4
- Six sets of 1 and 2 are on either side of the center unit.
- (3) *CENTER UNIT*
Dark Green, 3 sets, each treadled 2-3; 1-2; 2-3 alternating with 3-4; 1-4; 3-4 until 7 units have been completed
Light green, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once, separating each set of dark green

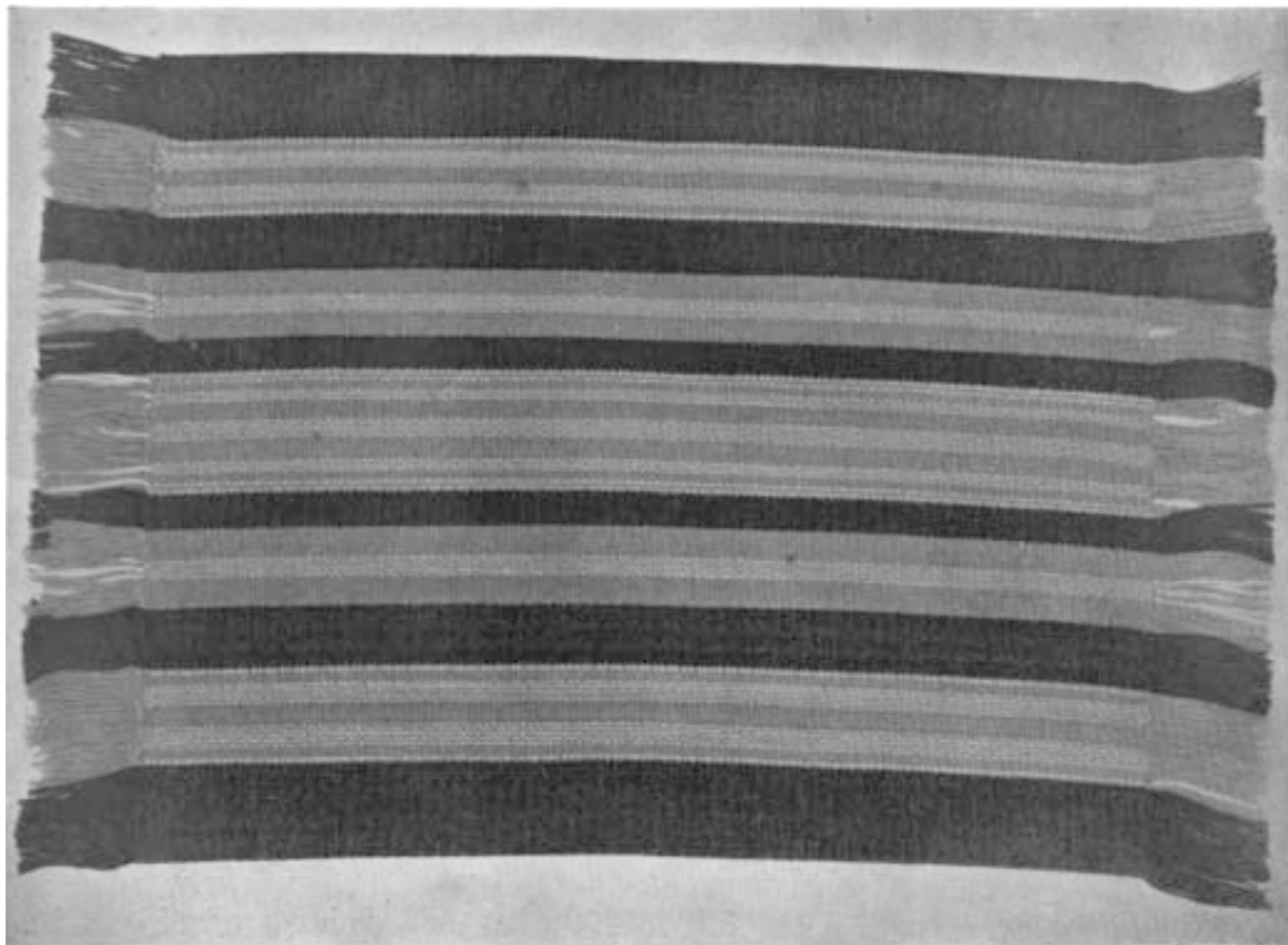


ILLUSTRATION III.

"Cleopatra"—End-table Oblong

Bernat's Shetland Floss: Black 1196

Yellow 1177

Rose 1185

Green 1171

TREADLING SCHEDULE: 1-4; 2-3 alternating throughout

Alternate two picks of green (1-2; 3-4) with one pick of rose or yellow to make the required width of the stripe. The gray tone in the illustration is composed of the green and the rose; the white and gray are yellow and green. Since this is a long schedule to write out and follow, the treadling is given, as a suggestion, only for the first colored stripe.

- (1) Black, $1\frac{1}{2}$ "
- (2) Green, yellow, and rose, $1\frac{7}{8}$ "
- (3) Black, 1"
- (4) Green, yellow, and rose, $1\frac{1}{4}$ "
- (5) Black, $\frac{1}{2}$ "
- (6) Green, yellow, and rose, 2"—*CENTER UNIT*
- (7) Repeat in reverse, 1-5

TREADLING FOR (2):

- (a) Green, 1-2; 3-4, once
Yellow, 1-2
Green, 3-4; 1-2, once
Rose, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4

- (b) Yellow, 1-2
Green, 3-4; 1-2
Yellow, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4
Yellow, 1-2
Green, 3-4; 1-2
Yellow, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4
Yellow, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4
Yellow, 3-4
(c) Green, 1-2; 3-4
- Rose, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4
Rose, 1-2
Green, 3-4; 1-2
Rose, 3-4
Green, 1-2; 3-4
Rose, 1-2
Green, 3-4; 1-2
- (d) Repeat b
(e) Repeat a

STILL IT'S STRIPES (not illustrated)

"SPRING TIME"

Bernat's Weaving Special: Blue 818*
Tartan Yellow

Treadling Schedule

- (1) Blue, 1-4; 2-3, for 1"
- (2) Blue, 1-4; yellow, 2-3; alternate, 8 picks each
Yellow, 1-4; 2-3, twice
Blue, 1-4; yellow, 2-3; alternate, 5 picks each
- (3) Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
Yellow, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
Yellow, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
- (4) Blue, 1-4; yellow, 2-3; alternate, 10 picks each
- (5) *CENTER UNIT*
Yellow, 1-4; 2-3, 4 picks
Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 2 picks
Yellow, 1-4; 2-3, 4 picks
- (6) Repeat in reverse, 1-4

"AUTUMN DAYS"

Bernat's Weaving Special; Brown *527
Blue 818*

Treadling Schedule

- (1) Brown, 1-4; 2-3, 80 picks
 - (2) Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 8 picks
Brown, 1-4; 2-3, 8 picks
Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 8 picks
 - (3) Brown, 1-4; 2-3, 16 picks
Blue, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
Brown, 1-4; 2-3, 16 picks
 - (4) Blue, 1-4; 2-3, 6 picks
- (5) *CENTER UNIT*
Brown, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
Blue, 2-3; 1-2; 2-3, once
Brown, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
Blue, 2-3; 1-2; 2-3, once
Brown, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
(6) Repeat in reverse, 1-4

"SPRING GRAY AND CHERRY RED"

Bernat's Weaving Special: Gray, 724
Red, 766

Treadling Schedule: Treadle as for "Autumn", or as "Spring Time"

"EYES OF BLUE"

Bernat's Weaving Special: Blues, *799 and *795

Treadling Schedule

- (1) Dark blue, 1-4; 2-3, for 1¼"
- (2) Light blue (1-4) and dark blue (2-3), alternating for ½"
Light blue, 1-4; 2-3, for ¼"
- (4) Light blue (1-4) and dark blue (2-3), alternating for ½"
- (5) *CENTER STRIPE*
Light blue, 1-4; 2-3, for ½"
- (6) Repeat in reverse, 1-4

"LILAC TIME"

Bernat's Weaving Special: Lavenders 717 and 713*
Tartan Yellow

Treadling Schedule

- (1) Dark lavender, 1-4; 2-3, 30 picks
- (2) Light lavender, 2-3; dark lavender, 1-4
Alternating, 9 picks each
- (3) Dark lavender, 1-4; 2-3, 12 picks
- (4) Light lavender, 2-3; dark lavender, 1-4
Alternating 6 picks each
- (5) Dark lavender, 1-4; 2-3, 12 picks
- (6) Yellow, 3-4, 1-4; 3-4, once
Dark lavender, 2-3; 1-4, once
Light lavender, 2-3; 1-4, once
Dark lavender, 1-4; 2-3, once
- (7) *CENTER STRIPE*
Yellow, 3-4; 1-4; 3-4, once
- (8) Repeat in reverse, 1-6

"SUMMER SHADE"

Bernat's Linen Weaver:
Green L256
White L235

Treadling Schedule

Alternate green and white, tabby weave, in stripes of equal width.

"BLUE SURF"

Bernat's Linen Weaver:
Blue L206
White L235

Treadling Schedule: the same as for "Summer Shade"

Coolness and restfulness, suitable for summer bags, are obtained by the simplicity of the tabby weave, and the regularity of the stripes of identical width.

"OLD MEXICO"

Bernat's Weaving Special:
White 801*
Black 807
Rust 15*
Green 616
Blue 795*

Treadling Schedule: 1-4; 2-3, throughout

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| (1) White, 14 picks | (7) Black, 2 picks |
| (2) Black, 4 picks | (8) Rust, 10 picks |
| Rust, 4 picks | (9) Black, 2 picks |
| Green, 4 picks | Blue, 6 picks |
| Black, 4 picks | Black, 2 picks |
| (3) Blue, 4 picks | (10) Green, 8 picks |
| Rust, 6 picks | (11) Black, 2 picks |
| Blue, 4 picks | Rust, 6 picks |
| (4) Green, 4 picks | Blue, 4 picks |
| Rust, 4 picks | Rust, 2 picks |
| (5) Black, 2 picks | (12) Blue, 4 picks |
| White, 6 picks | (13) Black, 2 picks |
| Black, 4 picks | Green, 4 picks |
| White, 10 picks | Black, 2 picks |
| (6) Black, 2 picks | (14) White, 14 picks |
| Green, 4 picks | |

This asymmetrical array of stripes has been very popular for small bags; for larger ones, this design can be made symmetrical by increasing the width of the last white stripe, (13), making it the center stripe, and then repeating the schedule, 1-12, in reverse.