

MASTER WEAVER

BI-MONTHLY BULLETIN
FOR HANDWEAVERS



Z-HANDICRAFTS
FULFORD, QUE., CANADA

loimi- ja kudel-
valtaista pomsia
jalustet 2x.

5k-8
5p-8
5t-8

Thread from A to B
Thread from B to C
Thread from C to D
Thread from D to E
Thread from E to F

Threads 380
Inches Wide In Reed 12.5
72D

Oikeampuoleisen
rakente.

vasempuoleisen
rakente.

3-752 K

-26-

3457

12/11/10/9/8/7/6/5/4/3/2/1

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Z-HANDICRAFTS - FULFORD - P.Q. - CANADA

May, 1958

No. 7

SHORTCUTS

HOW TO WEAVE EASIER AND FASTER

It is not for the first time that we approach this subject. In the early days we had a long article about the skill in handweaving. Then from time to time we wrote about this and that - selvages, shuttles, lease rods, looms, etc. In our "Modern Weaver" we have published several basic lessons of practical weaving. All this had in view to make weaving easier - for that matter as easy as professional handweaving of the 18-th century.

We are sorry to say it, but our "modern" methods of weaving are extremely difficult from the practical point of view. Weavers use too much time and too much energy to perform the simplest operations. How true is this statement proves the following story:

Some time ago, advertising our weaving courses, we have asked our readers a few simple questions:

1. Do you want to make a long warp and beam it in less than one hour?
2. Do you want to thread a loom without making mistakes?
3. Do you want to weave a running yard of cloth in 30 minutes?

We have received hundreds of enquiries. But it turned out that most of the readers understood that these courses of lessons are given by correspondence, in case one cannot attend them personally. This made us think.

Is it really possible to teach practical weaving by correspondence? To find the answer we can only try.

Incidentally we have also received one or two abusing letters, which implied that we are trying to get customers by false pretense.

These letters were significant. They mean that there are weavers who so completely lost touch with real weaving that they cannot believe any more that it still exists.

We have seen all a weaver who grasps the shuttle from above, opens the shed with the greatest effort, tries to approach it cautiously; then stops two inches from it as if he had changed his mind, finally closes his eyes and throws the shuttle. He pulls the beater forward slowly as if afraid that it will break, and holds it tight, changes the shed by gripping with his left foot in the dark and hoping for the best. Then releases the beater and beats once more for good luck,

Whose fault is this? Surely not the weaver's, who can hardly enjoy this sort of torture.

First of poor equipment, but often also of poor instruction.

We have warned our readers many times that the question of selecting a loom is of the greatest importance, and that it can decide about the whole weaving career of a beginner. Nevertheless human nature being what it is we are always inclined to defend our particular loom worthless as it is, rather than to confess that we made a mistake. We must absolutely get rid of this habit if we are to get anywhere with our weaving. This is the first condition of success.

Then many weavers follow completely wrong or obsolete methods simply because they have learned them from somebody who went for a trip to Sweden, or because they were described in a very good book.

What we must remember is that conditions change, and that a method which was perfect in other times and other countries is often of no value to us. For instance in countries where labour is very cheap it does not matter that a warp is prepared during "several days by several persons" (quotation from a well known book). But where on earth are we going to find several helpers and keep them at home several days every time we make a new warp?

Even in the otherwise excellent book of U.Cyrus we have a picture of warping in which at least four weavers are engaged, and two of them serve as dead weight apparently sliding on the floor.

Let's not always look up to the "traditional" weaving countries. Their equipment was expensive but the labour cheap, when here it is just the opposite. For instance the vertical warping reels used nearly

everywhere in central Europe are an insult to the human intelligence, nevertheless they are made and sold simply because they "must" be good if they are of Scandinavian origin. Well, they are not!

On the other hand if we look back to the times and countries where handweaving was done on an industrial scale, we shall find solutions to nearly all our problems. Because even cheap labour had to be used without waste in a competitive society.

A professional weaver of the 18-th century could weave for hours with a speed of some 50 picks per minute on a full size warp. This means from one to two yards per hour. On a narrower warp the speed could be much greater - perhaps 3 yds per hour. Those who do not believe can figure it out. If the weaver prepares a large number of bobbins or quills, and does not need to get up from the loom every 5 minutes, he can make on a warp of 15 inches 80 picks per minute, which means 4,800 picks per hour. If the fabric is coarse (10/2) cotton with 24 picks per inch, he made 200 inches or more than 5 yards in one hour!

Granted that a speed of 80 picks per minute requires a long training, But anybody can do half as much if everything works well, if the bobbins are properly made, the warp does not break, etc. It means that in our times when 24 picks per inch are considered normal, anybody can weave 2½ yds per hour. Thus our claim, if anything, was on the conservative side.

One may object that such fast weaving is exhausting. Nothing of the sort. Weaving at top speed may be exhausting, but normal speed is less tiring than slower work. Always provided that the equipment is adequate.

Some of our weavers may have another objection: Yes, but these old timers were using flying shuttle. - Not necessarily, and even if they did, flying shuttle was invented primarily for wide fabrics, and not for speed. When we weave cloth 56" wide the difference in speed between a hand shuttle and a flying one is remarkable, but on a narrow fabric there is none.

In all we have simply no excuse for our slow and laborious weaving. And this is why we publish this new series of articles about "shortcuts". In the next issue we shall start with the loom.

3. Use two yarns in warp: texture yarn on frames 2, 3, and 4; fine and strong yarn on frame 1. The same in weft: texture or 3D on treadles 1, 2, 4; fine binder on 3. Both sides will be alike.

4. Plain warp set as for tabby. Two wefts: one a little heavier than the warp and of a different colour; the second finer than warp and of the same colour. Use first weft on treadles 1, 2, 4; and the second on 3. The pattern in colour will be on one side.

5. Two yarns in warp: one heavy and stronger in colour on frames 2, 3, 4; the second, finer, of a neutral colour on frame 1. Two yarns in weft of the same count and colour as in warp. Heavier yarn on treadles 1, 2, 4; finer on 3.

We have made the draft in fig.2 in the "classical" form to demonstrate its resemblance to Bronson. But for practical purposes, if the project is of any size, it will be more convenient in treadling, if we change the tie-up so that we can alternate the feet when weaving. For instance: treadle 1 - 1,4; treadle 2 - 1,3; treadle 3 - 1; treadle 4 - 2,3,4. Then of course the treadling given above must be changed accordingly.

There is only one objection to the above method of weaving S-&-W. It is this: if we have good 50:50 tabby, the pattern shots in S-&-W are too far apart. This is obvious from the draw-down in fig.2. On the other hand if we have good S-&-W with heavy weft for pattern, and fine for binder - then the tabby will be somewhat distorted, and in many cases will produce small stripes, like in Log-Cabin.

Can we do anything about it? Yes, but at a certain price, as we shall see later. Let us examine the draft on fig.3.

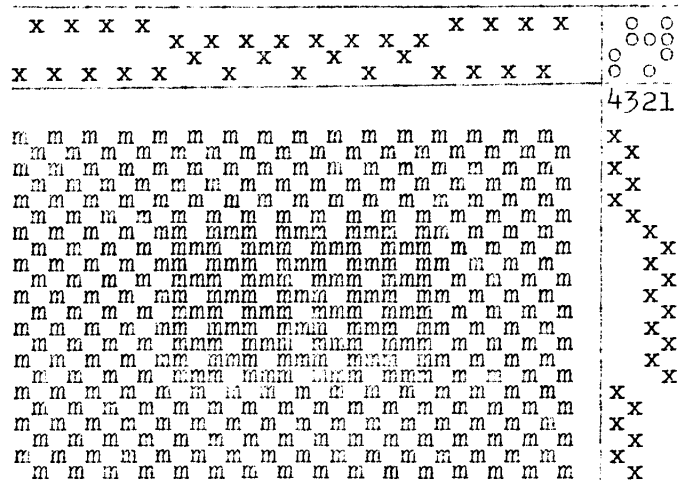


Fig.3

First of all the draft looks much more like S-&-W than the other one. The central part of the threading draft is the traditional S-&-W. The tie-up is very much like the original one, except for one tie on treadle No.1 (frame 4). We could say that so far we have a draft for one block of conventional S-&-W. The tabby part is threaded in the

same way as tabby in huckaback, or huck-lace, or Swedish Lace. So far everything locks perfectly simple.

But... One may ask: Where is the binder? Obviously we can not weave the S-&-W part without a binder; otherwise we shall have long floats in warp at the back of the fabric. The answer is rather unexpected: we must use the binder all the time even in tabby part of the project. The binder must be much finer than the pattern weft. For instance pattern weft: 10/2, binder 40/2; pattern 6/2, binder 25/2, etc.

The complete treading for fig 3 will be then (h - heavy, f - fine weft):

4h,4f,3h,3f - 3 times; 2h,4f,1h,3f - 5 times; 4h,4f,3h,3f - 3 times.

No attempts should be made to keep the two wefts parallel in one shed. Let them twist around each other as much as they like in the tabby part. What is more we can speed up the weaving by using a separate shuttle for the tabby part with both wefts wound together.

This method gives a good fabric both in tabby and in S-&-W. The binder is so fine that it will not distort the tabby.

We have now a choice between the draft in fig.2, and the draft in fig.3. The first gives more possibilities, and if so desired can be woven with one shuttle. The second gives better texture, a more balanced tie-up, but it must be woven with 2 or 3 shuttles.

PRACTICAL PROJECT for 4 frames.

Place mats in linen and cotton. Pattern as in fig.4.

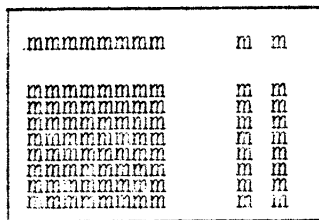


Fig.4

Size finished 12x 18.

Warp: single 14, or 25/2 bleached linen.

Weft: 1½ natural for pattern.

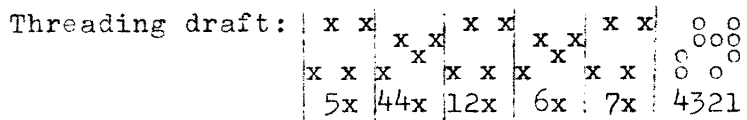
20/2 dull metallic cotton for binder.

Sett of warp: 24 ends per inch.

Reed No.12.

Sleying: 2 ends per dent.

No. of ends: 296.



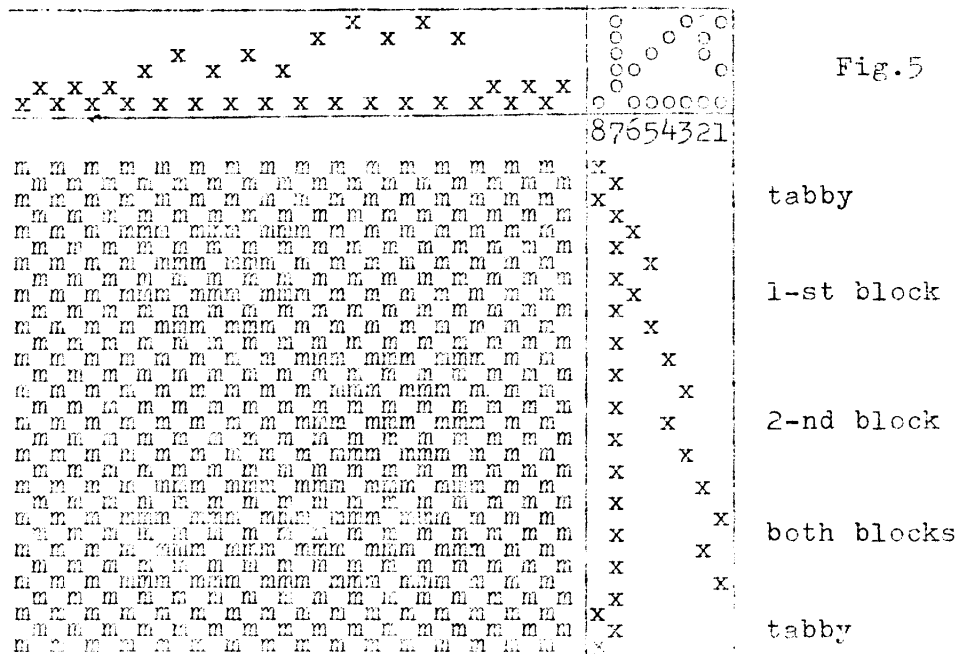
Treading: 1" for the fringe; 4h,4f,3h,3f - 4 times; 2h,4f,1h,3 - to make 9 inches; 4h,4f,3h,3f - 4 inches; 2h,4f,1h,3f - one inch; 4h,4f,3h,3f, - one inch; 2h,4f,1h,3f - one inch; 4h,4f,3h,3f - 2 inches one inch for the fringe.

The following part of this article is only for multi-frame looms, but the first part is necessary to understand the second.

S-&-W on Tabby ground for 8 frames.

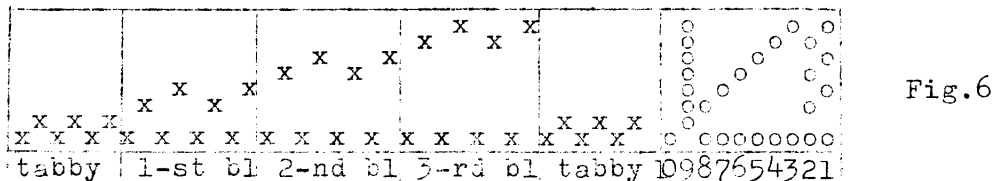
All we have said about this weave in the first part applies here. And the "multi-harness" weavers will have no difficulty other than the drafting. Therefore here we shall concentrate on the drafts. We shall see how the drafts for 4 frames can be developed to suit any number of frames up to eight.

Let us take first the draft in fig.2. Two frames (3 and 4) were needed for one block of the pattern. Therefore we may expect that two more will produce another block, as in fig.5.



Here we have first tabby, then one block of pattern, then the second block, then the two blocks combined, and finally tabby again.

Eight frames will give 3 blocks of pattern combined at will, that is if we have enough treadles. Since most 8-frame looms have 10 treadles, and we shall need 8 for tabby and 3 separate blocks, this leaves only one pair of treadles for combined blocks (fig.6) unless we use compound treadingling.



Here single blocks can be woven in the usual way. Also when we want all three blocks together we can use treadles 1 and 2. But for pairs of blocks we must use two treadles at a time:

block 1 & 2 - 6+8, 5+7; 1 & 3 - 4+8, 3+7; 2 & 3 - 4+6, 3+5.

EXHIBITIONS

If we write about exhibitions, it is to point out what in our opinion is wrong with them. In general exhibitions, competitions, and all other activities of this kind are most desirable, and it should be each craftsman's moral duty to take part in them, exactly as it is a duty of every citizen of a truly democratic country to vote. Exhibitions, when properly organised, not only encourage craftsmen, not only teach them, but also establish and clarify the line of development of each craft.

A good exhibition is not the one where I got the first prize. Far from it. I remember a national affair of this kind when out of 6 articles sent I have got 5 prizes, and still I consider it poorly organised. In another case out of 4 I have sent, 3 were rejected, but it was a good one, and the accepted entry eventually went to Brussel.

A poor exhibition is one where we know what to submit to get a prize, although we may not like what we send. A good one is when it keeps you guessing, so that finally we do our utmost on the principle that if this is not accepted, we are at least satisfied with our effort, and then have some right to blame the jury. The first kind makes us cynical, the second - creative.

What are then the prerequisites of a good exhibition?

1. Classification of entries. The greatest possible freedom should be left to the craftsman, so that any woven article could be entered (with limitation as to the size). The division of exhibits into classes is seldom justified. In practice it looks like this: No.342 - linen place-mats; No.343 - cotton place-mats etc. But if the weaver has mixed cotton and linen, even in a border, he is disqualified in advance. This is silly. Or he might have woven a head square, or a bridge table cover, but there is no such "class" and no way of showing it.

2. Prizes. Many exhibitions offer money, but very few think about printing really good looking diplomas, or certificates or what not. Most craftsmen enjoy more the recognition than the few dollars which are rather incidental and seldom cover the expenses.

3. Jury. In no case the jury may remain anonymous. Craftsmen should refuse to take part in exhibitions with "underground" judges.

It just may happen that the "jury" is always one, and always the same person.

The members of the jury should be always chosen among outstanding craftsmen and artists. Nobody else should be ever admitted. If the exhibition is of crafts in general, there should be at least one juror expert representing each craft. In judging each particular craft, the expert for this craft should have a right to veto any article which in his opinion is not technically sound. Thus we would eliminate all the burlap and cobwebs which seem to attract so much the non weavers in the juries.

If the exhibition is for weavers only, then the jury must have at least as many weavers as non weavers. Fashionable and glamorous designers should be avoided at all cost. They are too contemporary, their interest is often limited to the coming year, and they can not understand that handweaving reaches far both in the past and in the future. Too often also they unconsciously think in terms of "what sells best", instead of "what is best". By their very profession they are accustomed to cater to the lowest taste of the masses, whereas a real craftsman, and a real artist are leaders and teachers of the multitude.

4. Motivation. Each entry whether accepted or rejected should be sent back with a slip explaining the decision of the jury. To the best of our knowledge this is done as a matter of fact only in the Canadian National Exhibition. Please correct us.

5. Entries. They should be anonymous at least to the jury. This seems so obvious that it should be hardly worth mentioning. And yet how many exhibitions observe it? This requirement is important, not because jurors could be suspected of dishonesty, but because they are human beings, and can not fail to be impressed by a well known name. Also it protects the jury from any kind of suspicion which could be entertained by unsuccessful contestants.

6. Decisions. The verdict of the jury must be absolutely final. No presidents of Guilds, chairmen of committees, etc., should have any influence on the decision, before or after it is taken. Unfortunately this is not always the case.

So far we have been dealing with the organisers of exhibitions. But what about ourselves, the craftsmen, who after all have as much to do with success or failure of an exhibition, as the jury, and the

committee. What can we do? Plenty:

1. Never take part in any exhibition which is not run according to the rules outlined above.

2. Never think about winning when preparing your entries. Try to satisfy yourself, not the jury.

3. Do not send old pieces of weaving, even if they are our best. In many competitions it is specified that the articles submitted must be woven during the last year or so, but even if there is no such condition we should submit our recent efforts at a risk, rather than to live on a dividend. Supposing there is a weaver who some 20 years ago made a really good piece of damask, and keeps sending it ^{to} exhibitions even now, and gets prizes. If every weaver followed this immoral habit, there would be simply no place for newcomers.

4. For the same reason, if one is outstanding in one particular line of weaving to the point that he is absolutely sure of a prize, one should refrain from competing with others less fortunate. He can always try something new.

5. Finally, the weaving sent to an exhibition should be our own. Not just designed by us and executed or finished by somebody else. We know that infractions of this rule are extremely rare, but they happen. In a recent contest which could lead to an international exhibition there was such an entry. Fortunately it was not accepted.

This is about all.

It is our task to keep the field of exhibitions clean, and we can do it with a little effort.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE "MASTER WEAVER" WILL BE PRINTED AS USUAL
IN JULY, BUT NOT MAILED UNTIL SEPTEMBER EXCEPT UPON REQUEST.
THIS WE DO TO AVOID LOSS OF COPIES DURING SUMMER VACATIONS.

