

HARNESSTAPESTRY

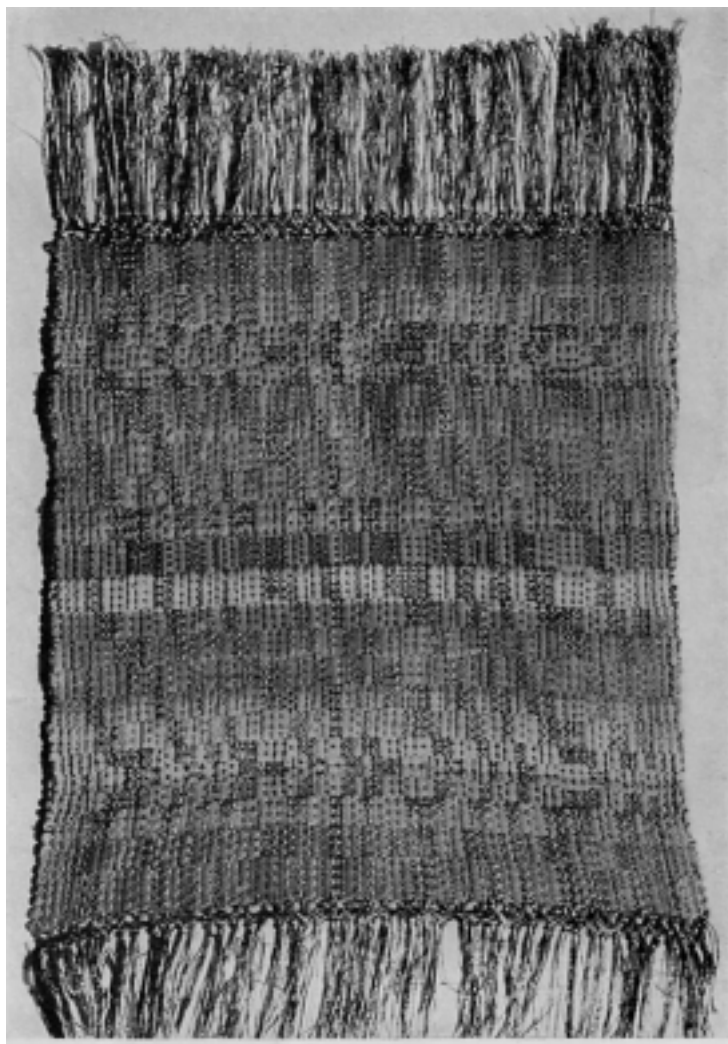
IN THE technical use of the word, tapestry is an ornamental fabric woven with a spindle instead of a shuttle. Such a fabric was once used to cover a council table. Hence comes our phrase, "on the tapis," or up for consideration.

In a looser sense, however, the term means an ornamental hanging. In this day of Modernism, why not a modernistic tapestry?

The accompanying photographs show such hangings woven on a four-harness loom. They have one of the qualities of real tapestries somewhat difficult to achieve with the limitations of harness weaving, that is, variation in color across the web. A shuttle-carried spindle must necessarily go across the whole stretch of the material. This makes it difficult to break up the surface without producing horizontal stripes.

To accomplish this end a threading was used in the technique, called by Mrs. Atwater the crackle weave. This weave is really a twill by blocks, instead of by threads. Its advantage over Colonial overshot weaves is that the blocks may be made as large as desired, as the shuttle is carried always over three threads and under one. With four harnesses to work with, it is thus possible to have four different blocks, three harnesses being depressed and one raised. These blocks overlap each other, just as each shot of twill overlaps the preceding shot.

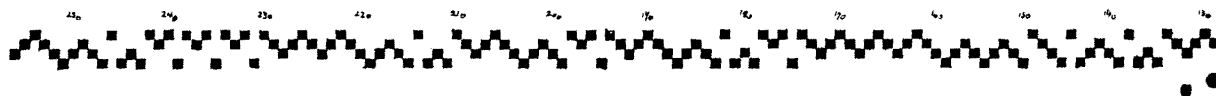
The arrangement here used has no unit of repeat, but varies in size and order of blocks across the entire surface. It is woven, however, in a carefully pre-arranged order, which gives a firm, if not apparent skeleton, upon which to drape its changing colors. The pattern weft used in both these hangings is cut from discarded silk stockings. The shades used were variations from pale tan to deep brown, but no grey. In illustration No. 1 the warp was black silk, about the size of tens twos mercerized,



Tapestry in silk rags and yarn, woven by J. B. Cathcart

set fourteen to the inch. The binder was Bernat's Peasant wool, in jade green and pure orange. Unlike most overshot weaving, the chief interest of the design is in the crossing of warp and binder. The neutral tone of the stocking weft through the pattern sheds becomes the background against which brilliant spots of color stand out.

In illustration No. 2 the warp was made of silk of various colors. Some twenty spools were used as a unit of repeat, and no two alike. Purple, blue, green, gold, brown, maroon, Persian twist, — in short, anything and everything the warp shelves had to offer. The binder was Bernat's silk floss in bitter-



sweet and electric blue, wound double on the shuttle.

The stockings are cut spirally in strips about an inch wide. Cut off the double tops and the feet. Begin at the top and, tapering gradually to the inch width desired, cut round and round. One stocking will make about six yards of weft. A more pleasing gradation of tone is obtained by cutting all the stockings needed and then winding them on the shuttle with reference to tone. Grade the shades, never using two stockings of the same shade in succession. On a hanging twenty inches wide, one stocking will weave about an inch. The tapered ends may be tied together in a square knot. This knot will weave in if a little care is taken to pull the ends out in opposite directions after the weft is laid in the shed.

A word about the management of stocking weft may be helpful. After the shuttle has been passed through the shed, the weft should be stretched slightly against the other hand, which is holding the selvedge threads about which it has just turned, and so held until the shed is closed. The elasticity of the material will then cause the weft to draw in somewhat. It is well to grasp the selvedge just formed and pull it outwards a little, to prevent narrowing the fabric. In weaving, the material should not draw in so that it is more than a few dents less in width than the width in the reed, or selvedge threads will break. Very sheer stockings should not be pulled as tight as heavier ones, or the finished hanging will be narrower at that spot. Frequent measuring of width is desirable to keep the size uniform.

The material is easier to handle if cut, graded, tied together and wound as tightly as possible into hard balls a few days before use. The tension causes the raw edges to curl inside, completely out of sight.

When off the loom, the hanging will be found to have narrowed from twenty inches in the reed to seventeen inches.

To finish, cover with a wet cloth and press.

The texture could be made heavy enough for a rug by using a heavy warp and a heavier binder and cutting the stockings two or two and a half inches wide. In planning color combinations, remember the beauty of the tapestry is in the arrangement

of the color spots where the warp and binder cross.

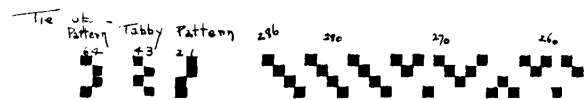
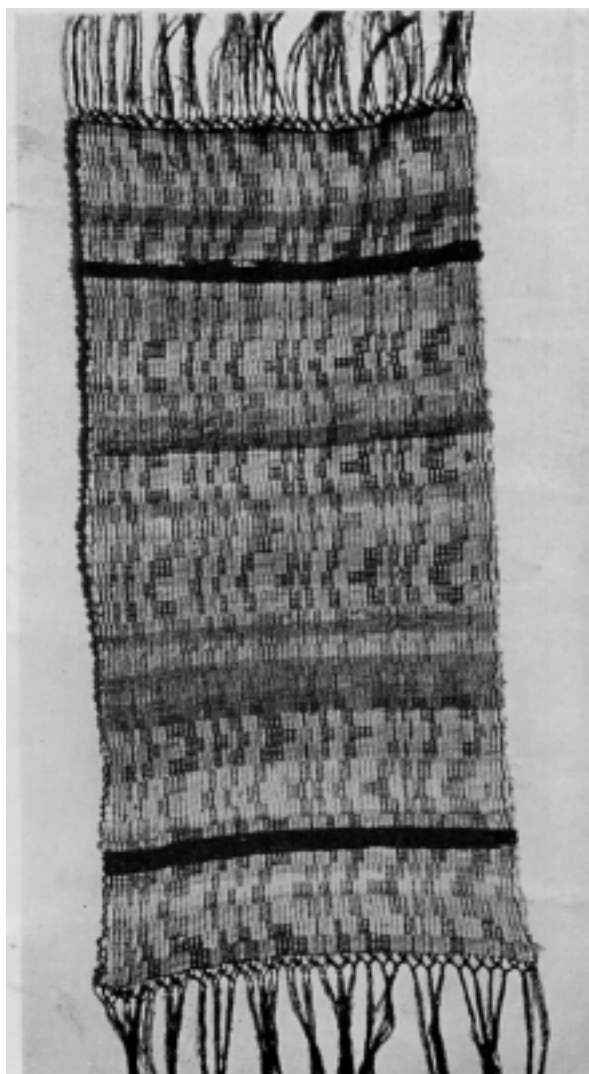
The order of treadling follows:

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

No. of Picks		No. of Picks	
Treadle	Pattern	Treadle	Pattern
5	6	6	6
1	6	2	6
5	6	5	6
2	4	1	6
6	4	6	6
2	4	2	6

(Continued on page 30)

Tapestry in silk rags and yarn, woven by J. B. Cathcart



which there is a magnificent collection in the monastery of Guadalupe.

Queen Isabella, much as she hated the Moors and whose banishment from Spain she accomplished, had the same love of embroidery as her foes. Her recreation from the hardships of camp and heavy governmental duties was embroidery, enriched with gold and silver thread, for the altars of the cathedrals. But the decorative arts were not Isabella's only preoccupation. She made her husband's shirts, of which we have lists telling that they were worked in the "Spanish stitch" in black and gold, or even in black alone.

The daughters of Isabella were accomplished needlewomen. Catherine of Aragon introduced the "Spanish stitch" to the English Court, and in the difficult years with Henry VIII found solace for her lonely hours in embroidery. Mary was taught this needlecraft, and during her reign she preserved the traditions of her mother and grandmother. In the Victoria and Albert Museum is a jacket-tunic said to have belonged to Queen Elizabeth. It is of linen worked entirely with black silk with the characteristic floral designs of the period.



Figure 8

Within recent years lovers of these passing arts and crafts have established the Museo de Artes Industriales in Madrid where they are rescuing these works from destruction. The copying of the motifs is encouraged. One of the recently revived designs is shown in Figure 8, the double-headed eagle of Charles V. And so this ancient art of needlework is being preserved in various ways.

Harness Tapestry

(Continued from page 13)

5	6	Orange	5	4	Green
1	6	Orange	1	4	Green
6	6	Orange	5	4	Green
2	6	Orange			
			2	6	Orange
5	6	Green	6	6	Orange
1	6	Green	2	6	Orange

ILLUSTRATION No. 2

No. of Treadle	Picks	Pattern	Weft	Binder	No. of Treadle	Picks	Pattern	Weft	Binder
5	6			Bitter-sweet	2	6			Electric blue
1	6			Bitter-sweet	6	6			Electric blue
5	6			Bitter-sweet	2	6			Electric blue

Repeat in the same order, ending with the bitter-sweet.

Let's Design Some New Patterns

(Continued from page 19)

"rose" fashion, except the last, which was woven "star" fashion. These results are shown in Figure 2.

Again the cloth was cut from the loom and, using a new warp, I drew in an enlarged version of the last experiment, which is shown in Figure 3.

In Figure 4 we have a similar design, except that now the bold diagonal line of blocks of the figure in the center of the cloth has been further enlarged, so

that now there are six blocks in line, and the center also has been changed. Yet I was not satisfied, because the four small diamonds in the central position were not connected on all sides as I wished them to be. However this same design woven "star" fashion, as shown in the lower part of Figure 4, is more pleasing than when woven "rose" fashion.

Figure 5 shows the design still further enlarged. With seven blocks on the outer diagonal, the design has now grown smaller wings inside the large wings. They also resemble "eyes" on the wings of the wild silk moths. The four diamonds in the center are now connected on all four sides. We now have a pattern suitable for coverlets, but probably for little else unless woven in fine silks. If you turn the page around so that you look at the picture from the corner, the design seems to be entirely different, a somewhat elaborated maltese cross.

Figure 6 shows another alteration of this family of designs, and this is woven "star" fashion. Here the double diamond design between the larger central figures has been reduced and reversed. Also, a small block or "table" figure has been inserted between the two parts of the design. We now have a large composite figure, made up of three distinct elements, or three smaller patterns. Many of the old Colonial drafts were composite designs, and I believe that it was in this way that many of the old weavers composed their own patterns.

For many people, these old Colonial drafts will never cease to be fascinating; but with all our improvements on the heavy, clumsy looms of Colonial