

Chain or Crochet Weaving

BY JOSEPHINE WEAL RYAN

IN BEGINNING this article, I feel as if I should offer, if not an apology, at least a short explanation to the experienced Handicraft weaver, as it marks such a departure from the recognized forms of weaving. I know some will insist that it is crochet work, others that it is some form of embroidery, but they will be mistaken. Chain weaving is unquestionably a form of hand weaving. Chained warp and weft threads are substituted for unchained threads to give pliability to the woven fabric and to allow a satisfactory material to be woven with a minimum number of warp threads to the inch. The embroidery stitches used serve the practical purpose of rendering the material more durable, but through the possibility of extra color variation, they can also enrich the result.

To the inexperienced weaver, I hope this simple form of weaving will prove a great pleasure and lead many who have never known the joy which can be obtained through interweaving threads into a useful as well as a beautiful fabric, to a knowledge of the happiness and self expression which a knowledge of hand weaving offers to all who succumb to its spell.

In order not to frighten the beginner, models have been chosen which require no knowledge of weaving, yet can be varied infinitely and which can be made into many practical articles. No model requires more than 5 warp chains to the inch and one requires only 2 chains to the inch. A narrow frame or loom can be used and the strips sewed together with wool, or one of sufficient width to make the material for the article in one piece can be used. The result is satisfactory in either case.

The equipment required consists of a bone crochet hook—I used a No. 8 for the models described; a strip of stiff cardboard, punched with the correct number of holes to the inch (the holes can be made either with a ticket puncher or nail) the cardboard need be only 2 inches wide, but must be the length required for the entire number of warp chains; one smooth stick, about 1½ inches wide, rounded at one end and as long as the width of the loom; a strong frame or a simple loom consisting of two rollers, only; some embroidery needles, both blunt and sharp pointed, suitable for wool and several cardboard or wooden shuttles, to wind weft on.

With this simple equipment it is surprising how easily and quickly attractive results can be woven, combining the advantage of crochet and weaving. If desired the work can easily be shaped in weaving, which eliminates wool wastage. It will not unravel but the ends must be unchained and fastened by darning in with a needle. If the finished material should be too short or narrow, additional strips can be woven separately and joined without being noticed. The neck and armholes for a sweater can be shaped as follows. A chain is run through the work to outline the required shape. Then the woven material is cut to this shape ½ inch beyond, and the unravelled chains darned in under the outlining chain.

To do chain weaving, proceed as follows:

For those who are beginners it is only necessary to state that weaving in its simplest form is darning. Threads must be taut to darn in comfort, for which reason, in weaving, a frame or loom is used.

With a crochet hook, crochet the required number of chains to make the warp (the threads which are stretched on the frame) through which the others will be worked. Cut them the proper length for the article to be woven, adding onto this length enough extra length to allow the chain warp to be fastened onto the loom or frame. Bear in mind that one can not weave every inch of warp chain placed on the loom and that the finished material will shrink, when steam pressed, when finished. Allow at least 18 inches for wastage. On a frame, the chains (after each one is passed through a hole in the punched cardboard, taking care that they do not cross) are tied together underneath it. Try to have the chains at an even tension.

On a loom, the chains are first fastened to the back roller, passed through the holes in the cardboard, one by one. Then they are rolled onto the back roller until only enough length is left to fasten the ends to the front roller. Fasten the ends to the front roller, taking care that each warp chain is opposite the correct hole in the cardboard. Both rollers must be equipped with some means of keeping the rollers from revolving during the weaving.

It is advisable to have all warp chains at an even tension, although this is not as vital as in other weaving.

You are now ready to begin weaving.

The scarf, with the shaped ends, which the little girl is showing to my oldest daughter in Illustration No. 1 is easily made. If the shaped ends seem too difficult, begin to weave the entire width of the scarf at once. The scarf should be 6 inches wide and 36 inches long, finished.

For warp: Use either Bernat Heather Yarn, 2 threads wound together and chained with a No. 8 crochet hook, or some very soft wool such as is used for baby garments. Bernat Glow Crinkle yarn, single thread, chained, can also be used if preferred.

Chain 36 chains, each 58 inches long. This allows for 18 inch wastage. 18 chains should be of Chamois, 18 of Mayan Pink Heather yarn. Thread 2 Mayan Pink and 2 Chamois through holes in cardboard, until all are threaded. Use cardboard, punched 5 holes to the inch.

Note: The chain for both warp and weft should be done with a crochet hook of sufficient size so that the wool remains fluffy, unstretched, is smooth, without large holes. It does not, however, have to be crocheted very evenly.

I find it prettier not to crochet too perfectly. If the crocheted chain is too tight, the result is stiff; when too loose, flimsy. A little practice will soon show how to get the best results. It may be necessary to use a larger crochet hook if one crochets very tightly. Do not roll the crocheted chain into tight balls.

For weft, the threads which are darned over and under,



Illustration No. 1. Articles of chain weaving made by Mrs. Ryan

use same yarn, chained as for warp. Chain one long chain of each color and wind on separate shuttles. Also thread 2 embroidery needles, one with each color.

To weave: This scarf has shaped ends, so at first only 4 warp chains are woven. The others are left unwoven until the finished work is taken off the loom. Then the unwoven chain ends are ravelled and darned in to give the woven shape.

To begin, take the smooth stick and darn over and under 4 center warp chains. Turn on end. Through this opening, pass the shuttle with Chamois colored yarn on it. Remove stick. Fasten end of weft chain at beginning, by darning. Before weaving second row of chain, take the sharp pointed embroidery needle with Chamois yarn threaded through it and, after fastening it at beginning, run it lightly through the first row of weft chain. Take care that all the warp chains are caught in place by it as it runs through. This will keep the warp and weft in place no matter how far apart they are.

Note: The cardboard is for the purpose of keeping the warp threads evenly spaced and should be kept near the work as it progresses. Next pass the smooth stick through the alternate set of warp chains, using 6 in all this time. Put weft through as for first row. Cut a gauge $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide and using this as a guide, place the second row $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the first row and hold it in place by running the extra thread through as before. Do not pull either the weft chain or extra thread too tightly into place and try to keep the work the same width.

Now continue weaving, increasing each row by two warp chains, until all the warp chains are to be woven. This completes the border, which is, of course, repeated at other end of scarf. Finish off both the Chamois weft chain and

the Chamois extra thread. Replace it with Mayan pink chain and thread or continue to use the Chamois thread instead, for color contrast. The effect of this type of weaving is very pretty. It is easily made into sweaters, baby blankets, berets and even curtains.

The scarf which my oldest daughter is wearing in the same illustration is even more easily made, but is much heavier and is only suitable for winter use. It is effective done with a variegated warp chain or in solid colors.

SCARF B: 6 inches wide, 36 inches long

For Warp: Chain 36 chains 58 inches long. Use Bernat's Spanish Stocking Worsted, single thread only for chain. Same size crochet hook.

For weft: Use a chain of Spanish Stocking Worsted or Lady Helen Worsted. The scarf was woven with a deep border of one color and the center of another color.

To weave: Instead of darning over one and under one as in the first model, the alternate rows were woven as follows:

Row 1: Darn over one and under one warp chain from edge to edge.

Row 2: Darn under one, (a) over two, under two, repeat from (a) to end of row. Alternate these two rows.

No extra thread is used to catch the weft chain in this model. Each row is placed above the preceding close enough so that the fabric is "squared" 5 warp and weft chains to the inch. Do not beat closer. The steam pressing after finishing will lock the threads.

The child's bed jacket, which is shown in Illustration No. 2, illustrates three other possible variations in the use of Chain Weaving. The sleeveless jacket was made in three separate strips and then sewed together. The armholes and neck were shaped after weaving, according to the directions already given. A straight piece of material, wide enough for the back of the jacket and long enough for both front and back was woven. After sufficient length for the back had been woven in one strip, the warp chains were divided in half and woven into two separate strips for the front of jacket. The sleeve bands and the band edging the



Illustration No. 2. Child's Bed Jacket

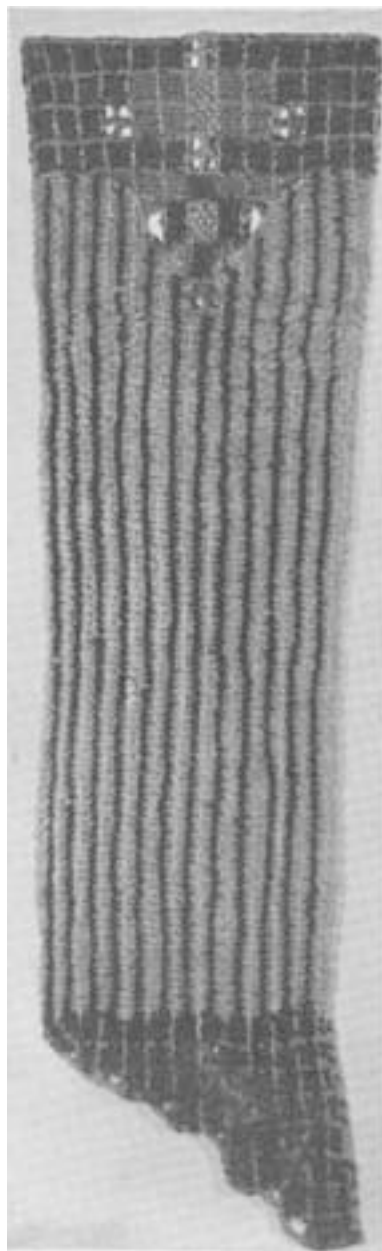
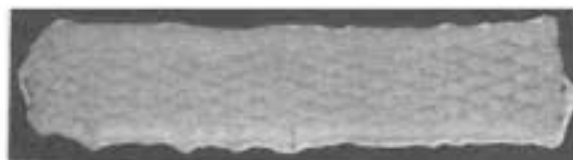


Illustration No. 3 (left). Filled Crochet Weaving

Illustration No. 4 (right). Chamois and Mayan Pink Scarf

Illustrations No. 5 and 6 (above and below). Samples showing use of different Wools and Weaves as described in model scarf No. 2 or B



neck and front were woven separately and joined to the jacket after the material was taken off loom.

Owing to lack of space, it will be impossible to describe the variations used for the border or body of the jacket. A very pretty effect, however, can be obtained by weaving the material for the jacket in the same method as was used in the Chamois and Mayan pink scarf. The bands which trim the jacket are very easily made, and are very effective, I think.

Directions for Bands: For warp and weft chains, use chains made of one thread of Bernat's Spanish Worsted, chained lightly with No. 8 hook. Punch a cardboard so that 3 chains, placed at equal distances, will measure 2 inches. Thread correct length 3 warp chains through the holes, one to each hole. After warp chains are fastened in place as usual, take a weft chain with one end threaded through a blunt, long eyed needle. Fasten other end to right edge of right warp chain. Next run the weft chain straight across the warp chains, passing through a loop in each chain. Do not pull tightly and use a gauge 2 inches

wide to keep the band correct width. A $\frac{3}{4}$ inch gauge must also be cut. This is used for the design.

Now place the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch gauge on center warp chain above the straight row of chain which had been woven, and slip the weft chain through the warp chain at center $\frac{3}{4}$ inches above first row. Bring weft chain back to right warp chain at beginning of first row, and slip weft chain through at this point. Measure $\frac{3}{4}$ inches up on right warp chain and slip weft chain through again. This forms a loop on outside, then weft chain is carried down to center warp chain at center of first row and slipped through warp chain at this point. Bring weft chain next through left edge warp chain $\frac{3}{4}$ inch above first row. Then run weft chain through the warp chain from left to right, to form a straight line. This completes one unit of the pattern. Now beginning at right, measure $\frac{3}{4}$ inches along center warp chain and weave design as before. Working according to this process will cause the outside loop to come alternately at each edge. Do not pull chain tightly at any time. A sufficient number of repeats and bands would make a pretty sweater.