

# NEW CURTAINS FOR SPRING

by MARY M. ATWATER

New curtains for spring! What an exciting and interesting problem! And not too easy, either. For nothing makes as great a difference in the effect of a room as the draperies. With drapery we can give charm to a bare room, give an accent of interest to a rather dull and commonplace room, harmonize a room full of warring colors and decorative details — we can even change the apparent proportions of a room by making it seem wider than it is, or higher than it is. But we can't do these things without careful planning. And this is all the more important because much time and material goes into the making of a set of draperies, and once made and put in place they will be there — a pleasure or an annoyance — for a long time to come.

Draperies should always be planned for the place they are to occupy, for what might be beautiful in one setting might easily be atrocious in another. So the problem is always a special and particular problem and cannot be solved in general terms.

Here are the things we must consider in making a plan: the size and shape of the room and the amount of drapery to be used. It is obvious that if the room is large with many curtains it would be unwise to use too large and insistent a pattern as the effect would be tiresome. A monotony of violent pattern is far more distressing than a monotony of blankness, though neither is desirable.

Next we must consider the character and use of the room — whether a formal reception room, a bright sun-room, a young girl's bedroom, or the "old man's" den, for instance.

Next, the style of the room — whether classic Colonial, Spanish, modern, etc. As a rule we have the problem of planning draperies for a room already in use and definitely established in general style and color-scheme, and unless we are able to change all the details of the room we must keep to the already existing style or we shall create a bad dis-harmony.

We may also need to consider what about the room needs improvement and how to accomplish it with the drapery — whether, for instance, we need an accent of bright color and design or whether we need to tone down a "fussy" effect.

Having taken all these things into account we can proceed to choose the weave and pattern, the colors and material for the proposed draperies.

From the point of view of design we might separate drapery effects into three general classes: those in which there is a definite pattern or decorative figure; those woven to produce effects of perpendicular or crosswise stripes; and small all-over effects sometimes called "texture" weaves.

Pattern, when correctly used, gives the most decorative effects, of course. People sometimes hesitate to use a large pattern for fear that it will be "wrong" in some way, as they would hesitate in choosing a large and imposing pattern figure for a dress-fabric. And it is true that a pattern poorly chosen for its surroundings may be extremely painful. How-

ever, when well used, pattern is one of the pleasures of life. To hang just strips of "fabric" in a rather bare and uninteresting room would add little to the comfort of those who use the room, no matter how beautiful the fabric might be in itself. We do not look at draperies from close at hand, as a rule. They are seen at a distance, as part of the general surroundings, and should be planned with that fact always in mind.

Drapery fabrics woven to give striped effects are often very effective; and the stripes may be used, as suggested above, in giving a room greater apparent width or height. Horizontal striping is particularly popular — perhaps because it is so easy to weave crosswise bands, and also perhaps for a psychological reason we may not realize. A bold stripe of color across a doorway has the sometimes agreeable effect of a barrier, giving a feeling of "withinness" to a room, a feeling of protection against the outside world. Lengthwise striping adds to the effect of drapery as drapery — as something hung up — which is very desirable, but if stressed too much may have the unpleasant connotation of bars, and should therefore be used with caution.

The "texture" weaves may of course be used in producing the striped effects. Otherwise they are valuable chiefly in toning down a decorative effect. They add richness to a fabric and when beautiful in color and material may lend just the restful note desired, but they may also look merely timid and uninteresting when viewed from a distance. That would be an unhappy result for hours and hours at the loom.

But no matter whether we choose a pattern, stripes or a "texture," from the point of view of design the most important thing is to have the drapery look like drapery, and like nothing else. For a Colonial room, for instance, it is not enough to select a beautiful old pattern and weave it long enough and wide enough for the door-way or window opening. When hung in place such a drapery might have the unpleasant effect of grandmother's bed-spread doing emergency duty to keep out the wind.

There can be no rule as to the choice of color as this depends so entirely on the color-scheme of the room in which the drapery is to hang. For strictly Colonial effects in an "early American" room, only the traditional Colonial colors are suitable, of course. For Spanish hangings rich, warm and rather violent color-combinations are required, with a great deal of red and black. The modern style lends itself to sophisticated color-combinations and to extremely bland effects done in tans, taupe shades and off-white shades. Very beautiful to my way of thinking.

The choice of material, again, depends on the general character of the room. A formal room may demand silk or fine wool, while a bedroom seems happier dressed in cotton or linen. The choice of material should also be made in combination with the choice of weave, as some weaves are suited only to certain materials.

To take a concrete problem: suppose we want to weave draperies for an informal room, more or less modern in general effect, but not violently "modernistic." The room, we will suppose, has plain — not patterned — walls, and bare floors with a few rugs, and pieces of furniture with plain lines and flat surfaces. It seems obvious that we need a pattern in the drapery to lend liveliness to the general effect.

The specially designed pattern used to illustrate this article, which I am calling "Rain on the River" to give it a handle, seems to me attractive for the purpose. It lends itself easily to a number of variations, as I shall explain, it is easy to weave, has an interesting texture, and a modern though not "ultra" movement.

This matter of movement is important in modern design. Most of the Colonial patterns are definitely static, composed symmetrically between two centers and revolving about those. Modern patterns have a balance, too, but a much more subtle one, and usually give an effect of going all one way. They are plainer in effect than the sometimes rather "fussy" old-style patterns, being made up for the most part of large simple masses, contrasted with fine lines. The present pattern, it will be noted, is built on the lines of a double twill — the large blocks stepping up in one direction and the fine lines twilling the opposite way.

As the overshot weave is unsuited to patterns of the modern type I have used crackle weave for this pattern. It might also be woven in summer and winter weave — on six harnesses.

This type of pattern may be woven in several different methods, which produce a variety of textures. Several of these are illustrated by the woven samples. For all these samples I used an Egyptian cotton 24/3 for warp, at a setting of 22 ends to the inch. Settings of 20 to the inch and 24 to the inch might also be used if more convenient, without greatly changing the effect.

The simplest manner of weaving is illustrated by sample No. 1, in which white tufting cotton was used for the pattern shots and a rough natural colored linen for tabby. The pattern blocks were woven in regular twill succession with the same number of shots over each: treadle 1, 13 shots; treadle 2, 13 shots; treadle 3, 13 shots; treadle 4, 13 shots and repeat.

(On a loom equipped with only four treadles: weave treadles 1 and 2; treadles 2 and 3; treadles 3 and 4; treadles 4 and 1. On a table loom with the hand-lift, weave: levers 3 and 4; levers 1 and 4; levers 1 and 2; levers 2 and 3.)

A shaded effect in colored tabby is very attractive with the pattern done in white or cream. I wove a piece this way: two blocks with tabby in deep wine-color; two blocks with the tabby alternately wine and henna; two blocks with tabby in henna; two blocks with tabby alternately henna and burnt orange; two blocks, tabby burnt orange; two blocks, tabby burnt orange and orange; two blocks, tabby orange; two blocks, tabby orange and gold; two blocks, tabby gold; two blocks, tabby gold and a greenish yellow; two blocks, tabby greenish yellow; two blocks, tabby greenish yellow and light yellowish green; two blocks, tabby yellowish green; two blocks, tabby light green and medium green; two blocks, tabby medium green; two blocks, tabby medium green and blue-green; two blocks tabby blue-green; two

blocks tabby blue-green and dark green; two blocks tabby dark green; two blocks tabby dark green and dark greenish blue, and so into the blues and through the purples back to the reds. This really gives a charming effect. Use "Perugian" cotton or "Perleen" for tabby.

Sample No. 2 was woven in tufting cotton in two shades of brown, with a tabby like the warp, and was treadled as for summer and winter weave. This way:

First block: 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, dark brown; two tabby shots between pattern shots.

Second block: 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, dark brown; tabby as above.

Third block: 3, 4, 3, 4, 3, dark brown; tabby as above.

Fourth block: 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, dark brown; tabby as above.

The large blocks were woven in the same manner, with more shots over each block and with alternate shots of dark and medium brown. The upper row of small blocks was woven like the first four, but all shots in medium brown. This method of weaving is effective when woven with a very coarse pattern weft as described but would not be interesting if woven in fine material.

Sample No. 3 was woven in the Italian manner, without a tabby. This seems to me a particularly attractive method of treadling for a drapery fabric, as it produces an interesting and unusual texture and permits a fine play of color. The technique has been explained before, but the treadling is repeated here for convenience. Two colors may be used — a pattern color and a background color — but a more exciting effect results from using three colors — a pattern color and two background colors. Four color-shades result due to the manner of overlapping of the colors.

First block:

treadle 1, pattern color  
treadle 2, background color (a) — the darker of the shades  
treadle 1, pattern  
treadle 4, background (b)  
Repeat as required for size of block

end:

treadle 1, pattern

Second block:

treadle 2, pattern  
treadle 3, background (a)  
treadle 2, pattern  
treadle 1, background (b)  
Repeat

end:

treadle 2, pattern

Third block:

treadle 3, pattern  
treadle 4, background (a)  
treadle 3, pattern  
treadle 2, background (b)  
Repeat

end:

treadle 3, pattern

Fourth Block:

treadle 4, pattern  
treadle 1, background (a)  
treadle 4, pattern  
treadle 3, background (b)  
Repeat

end:

treadle 4, pattern

This technique may be used with any pattern in crackle weave and also with overshot patterns, provided there are no very long skips. The material used for the background shots may be the same material as that used for the pattern shots, and should not be much finer in any case.

It will be noted that this sample is shaded from darker at the bottom to lighter at the top, the shading being in the background. For a long curtain, very dark colors should be used for the bottom part. This was not done on the sample as it would not show well enough in a photograph.

You might weave the bottom flight of four blocks with black for pattern, background (a) in dark plum-color and background (b) in dark brown; the second flight with (a) still in plum-color and (b) alternately dark brown and medium brown; the third flight with background (a) in alternate shots of plum and henna; background (b) in medium brown, and proceed in this manner shading (a) through burnt orange, orange, peach, old rose to rose-taupe; and (b) through the brown, tan, taupe and ecru shades.

Of course any other set of colors might be used in the same manner — shades of blue and green, for instance, instead of the warm colors suggested.

This method of shading produces a very subtle effect, with the feeling of weight at the bottom and a sense of light at the top, with more contrast in the pattern at the top than at the bottom. Perhaps this can be sufficiently seen in the photograph.

In all three samples the blocks were woven in regular order, but of course they may be woven in any order desired.

For instance: first block, second, third, fourth, first, fourth; third; second, and repeat. This gives a zig-zag effect as sketched at (b) on the diagram.

The draft may also be varied in a number of ways. As designed it consists of five large blocks with the intervening twills, and borders on each side, covering 596 warp-ends. At a setting of 22 to the inch this gives a width of 27" which is wide enough for most window-drapery. For a wider piece, increase the number of repeats under each of the five large blocks or use two repeats of the figure by threading: A to C, B to D. The sketch at (c) on the diagram shows a wide piece threaded in this manner and woven entirely on blocks 2 and 3, the weaving being done in the technique of sample No. 2.

Another interesting effect is to make the five blocks different in size by graduating the number of repeats for each. When woven with the same number of weft-shots, the blocks being woven in regular order, one produces an interesting sweeping movement of pattern illustrated at (a) on the diagram.

Materials suitable for use with this pattern include coarse unmercerized cottons, strand cottons, coarse perle cotton, etc. Coarse silk is excellent also, and rayon might be used. One might, of course, weave it in wool, though it was designed for weaving in cotton and does not suggest wool to me.

Consideration of other types of drapery fabric will have to go over to another time.





