

Towels

BY ELEANOR ROPES

TOWELS are pleasant, restful things to weave between exciting interludes of gayer things if you are weaving-minded — and many people are these days. Whether they be big, little or medium, of fine or coarse threads, with gay or subdued borders, with one or many colors as one's mood may be or fancy dictates, handwoven towels of fine workmanship and good coloring always are a coveted possession to the discriminating.

If one weaves for profit as well as pleasure, there seems always a market for good towels, so many buy them for a gift to the person "who has everything," feeling that a bit of handwoven linen can hold up its head anywhere and in any company. What could be a more fitting gift to one's weekend hostess than a pair of gay guest towels or a half-dozen little finger tips done in dashing colors? Perhaps for use, more likely to hang on the rack to impress company or to lay away in tissue paper as an heirloom for one's own.

There is something exciting and stimulating about the smell and feel of linen, a pure, wholesome, clean feel and smell that makes one think of green fields with wind and rain and sun, blue flowers of the flax and the dews of heaven.

So, when the loom stands ready, warped and threaded, the shuttles filled waiting to begin, there is much more before one's eyes than the mere machine, its wooden shuttles, and one weaves many things besides the thread.

The first group of towels illustrated is woven from the threading of the Pine Cone, Draft B, Fig. I, by Mr. Heartz in the July-August HANDICRAFTER, 1930.

The beam was warped with a medium fine linen set 30 ends to the inch, 19 inches wide, the weft being a softer linen in white.

Illustration I: The towel at the bottom was worked out in Italian cottons, red and purple in the same intensity of tone, making a very colorful, peasantry sort of border. The hem is 2 inches deep and the towel 36 inches long, finished, 2 extra inches having been allowed for shrinkage.

The towel at the top is a rather gorgeous affair, woven also of Italian threads, in red, purple and blue. The small borders at the top and bottom are purple and red, the rose-shaped figure between being done in red and blue. The towel is 36 inches long and has a 2-inch hem.

Illustration II shows three more towels woven from the

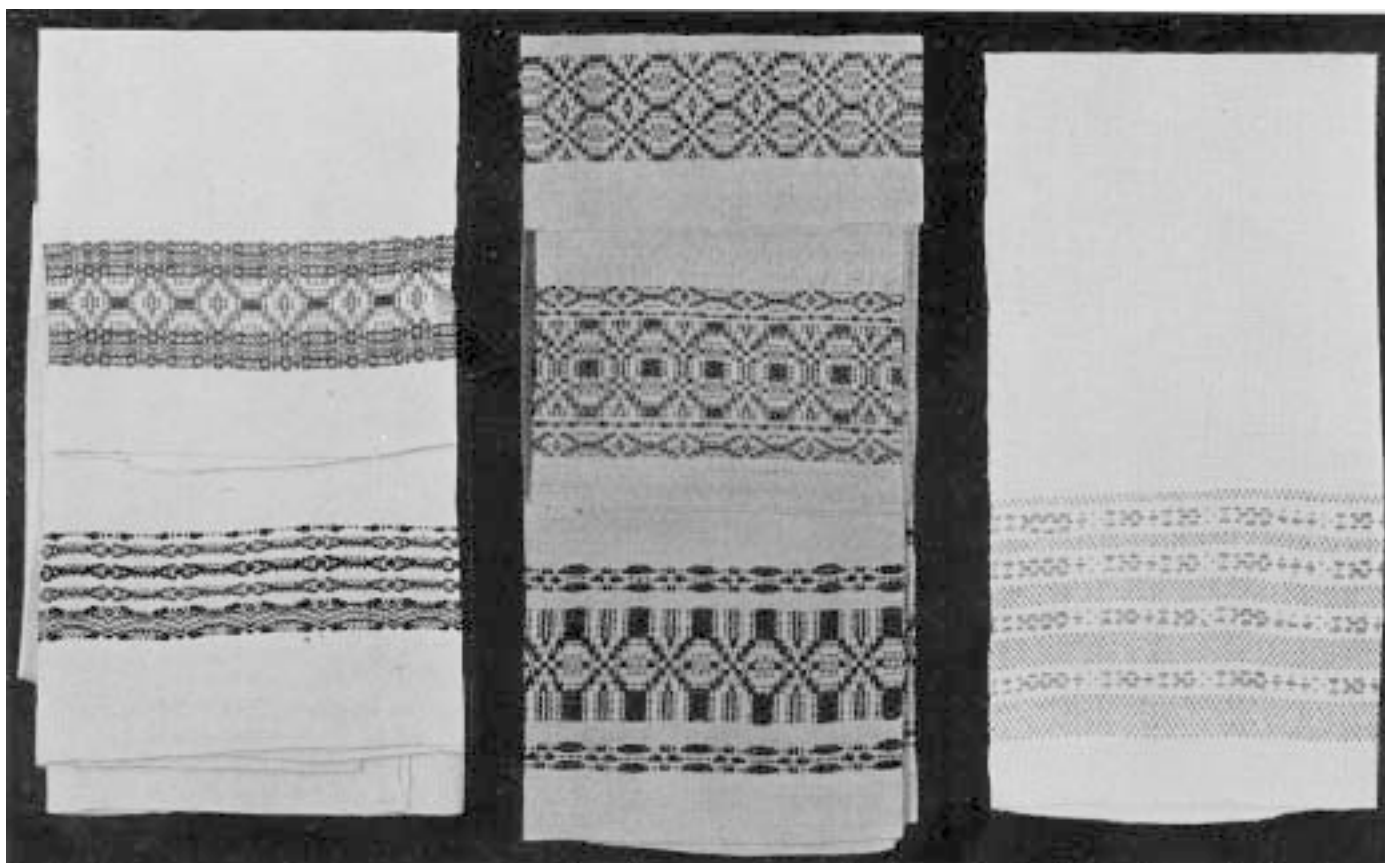


Illustration No. 1

(left) Red and blue Italian Cottons in Pine Cone patterns; (center) Two top pieces in blue cotton perle, bottom piece in blue linen floss in Pine Cone pattern; (right) Blue linen floss

same Pine Cone draft, but with more elaborate treadling. The upper one, which has a border a little over 2 inches wide, is woven in a soft shade of delft blue, using the same thread of which the towel is woven for the tabby. This pattern seems particularly fitted for blues, so I wove the border of the next towel in blue but of a different shade. Between the small borders, top and bottom, is woven one thread of burnt orange; through the center of the large figure are four threads of burnt orange. This makes a rather striking border, the burnt orange livening up the blue, which is rather dull.

The border of the lower — last — towel of this group is woven of heavy Gobelin Art thread in a bright blue and is very handsome, the border being much coarser than the body of the towel proper, which makes the star-like figures quite bold and distinctive.

The towels in the following groups are woven in a heavy coarse linen corresponding to Barbour's No. 18 Art needlework thread. The pattern is Mrs. Atwater's "Drifting Shadows" published in a recent Bulletin, also in the Weaving Supplement of *THE HANDICRAFTER*.

This pattern has unlimited possibilities for borders as well as in other articles, and is equally adapted to fine or coarse threads. The setting is 15 threads to the inch, 19 inches wide, with warp and woof the same.

The border of the first piece is a beautiful contrast to the oyster white of the towel it adorns, being in color a brick

red of heavy linen thread, with tabby of finer linen. No heddlings is given, as the illustrations are plain.

The second towel is woven of the same heavy thread in a soft yellow. The border is put in with 6-strand cotton in a delicate salmon pink, the whole 6-strand being used, the color blending graciously with the yellows of the towel body.

The hems of both these towels are 2 inches and the towels are 36 inches, finished, 2 inches having been allowed for shrinkage.

The third towel of this group also is woven of yellow linen, the border being a golden brown floss, giving a very pleasing effect. Another border was worked out using robin's egg blue with a touch of brown, which was good.

The first towel of the second group, in coarse linen, is oyster white with a wide hem of 3 inches. The border, starting at the top, is worked out in a strong yellow, a bright green and a brown in Perle cotton No. 3. It sounds fantastic but is very effective.

The second towel is woven in two shades of rust, in heavy linen thread which makes an attractive border.

Some object to fringe, nevertheless it makes a lovely, old-timey finish, and rests one from a multiplicity of hems of various widths and, if cared for properly, lasts as long as a hem. The fringe on the towel shown is hand-knotted and the border is woven with a heavy linen floss, in a strong blue. The other towel is woven with a blue floss in graduated

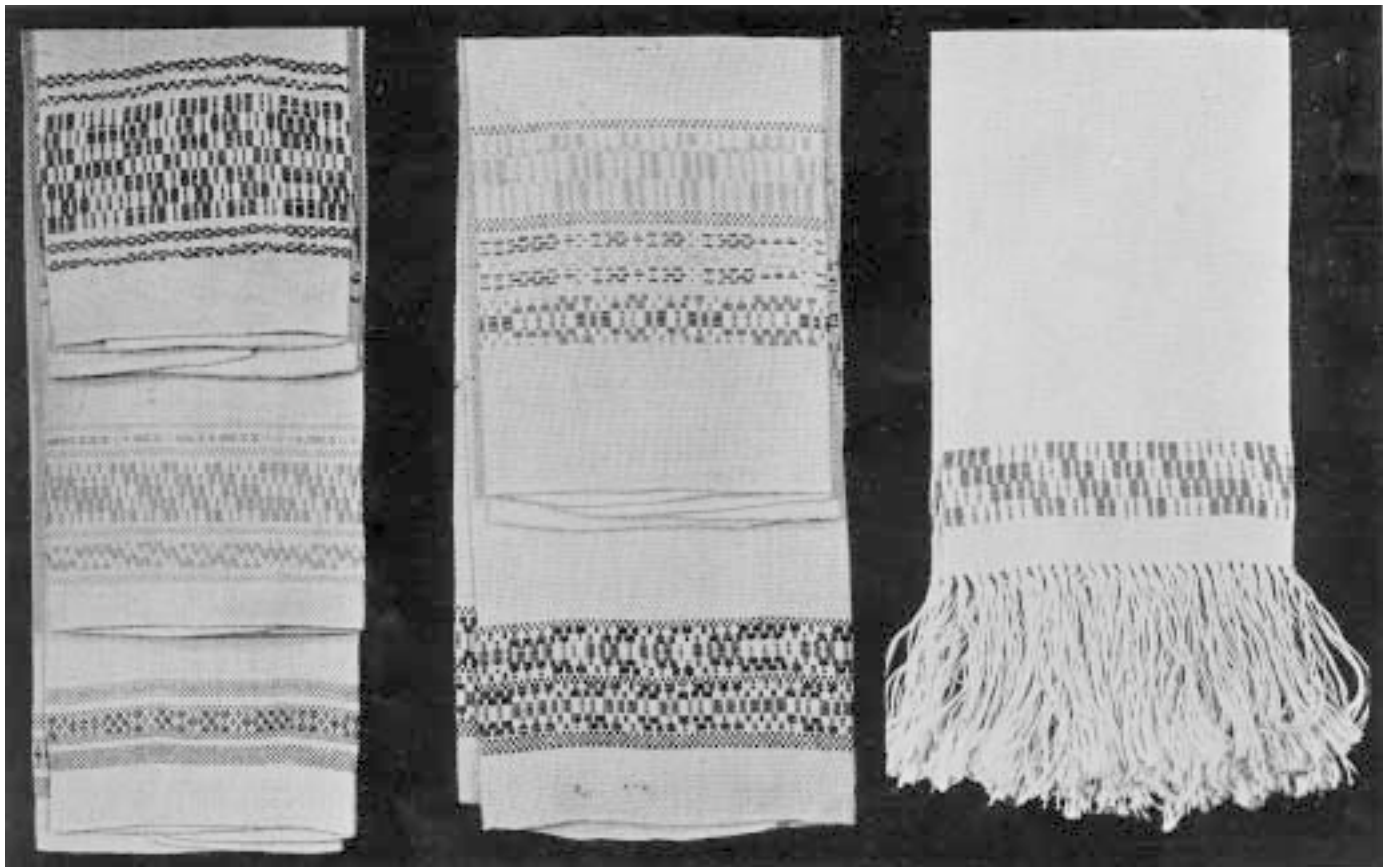


Illustration No. 2

(left) Top in brick red, center in henna, bottom in yellow, brown; (center) Top in yellow, green and brown, bottom in 2 shades rust; (right) Blue linen floss

stripes with a pattern in the same floss between, using the coarse, white linen thread as a tabby.

These striped towels are good worked up in almost any color combination and have the added merit of being very quickly done, if time happens to be a consideration.

There are many ways of making attractive towels, variety being the spice of life. Do not model them all after the same general pattern. Sometime try weaving guest towels with colored hems — say an old rose — and every 3 inches weave in a tiny pattern of 3 or 5 threads the same color as the hem. They are quaint and different, and very attractive. Hemstitch hems once in a while, or roll them.

Try weaving finger tips by the half dozen, all in different shades, leave a 1-inch fringe and hemstitch it; they are dainty. Unbleached linen makes marvelously attractive towels, especially if the borders are done in peasant colors, reds, blues and purples in many shades. With washing they take on a silvery sheen most pleasing to the eye and a feel alluring to the touch.

I call to mind two ancient Turkish towels found in the rag box at a church rummage sale. Realizing that they were handmade, but not then recognizing them for what they were, I took them home. Months after I ran across a description, with illustrations, in a magazine article, one of which might have been my own towel so very like was it — Old Turkish Towels they were called. They lie before me now.

The silvery gray is 62 inches long, with a tiny, rolled hem whipped over and over. Above this is a half inch of weaving, an inch of open space and another half inch of weaving, made up of 6 threads, unbleached, 4 threads of much heavier white. Then is woven 8½ inches of gray upon which three large fruit-like figures with leaves are embroidered by hand. The body of the towel is woven in stripes, gray, 1 inch wide alternating with a stripe 1¾ inches wide made up of 4 coarse, white threads, 6 gray, 2 white, 6 gray, 2 white, 6 gray, 4 white. This gives a very uniform and beautiful piece of weaving. I intend to make one as nearly like it as I can.

The other towel is of a much finer, harder twisted linen,

old ivory now, whatever it was originally. This, also, is embroidered but with pots of curious flowers. The ends are finished with a 2-inch fringe, 6 threads being twisted together in a hard, little cord. The body of the towel is woven in stripes of ½ inch, 3 heavy threads of the same color being used to divide them. The whole is so old, so mellow with age — like a precious jewel. I often wonder how they came to this far-away place, and who had so little appreciation as to throw them away, but always am glad that they fell into my hands, to cherish.

The pattern for Mrs. Atwater's "Drifting Shadows" may be treadled as drawn in.

Treadling for the first towel at top, Group IV:

1 and 2, once; 2 and 3 once; 1 and 2 once

Weave 3 plain tabby threads in white, repeat small border; repeat tabby.

The large border, weave with tabby:

1 and 2, 5 times	1 and 4, 5 times
2 and 3, 5 "	3 and 4, 5 "
3 and 4, 5 "	2 and 3, 5 "

Repeat plain tabby and small border.

The large towels take approximately 7½ ounces each of coarse linen thread.

The following is a copy of Mr. Heartz's draft of the "Pine Cone":

A to B is one repeat of the border, B to C, one repeat of the pattern. Repeat B to C several times for the central motif. Draw D to A in the reverse order for the opposite border.

Treadling for the towel at the bottom of Group II follows:

1 and 4, twice

3 and 4, "

1 and 4, " with tabby between. Weave 7 threads of tabby, then weave large border with tabby between pattern shots as follows:

1 and 4, 10 times	1 and 2, twice
3 and 4, twice	2 and 3, "
2 and 3, "	3 and 4, 10 times

Repeat 7 threads plain weaving and the small border.

