

Adaptation of Dukagang to a Modern Work Bag

by A. B. GARDNER

When I read the article on Dukagang by Elmer Wallace Hickman in Vol. III, No. 1 of *THE WEAVER*, I was immediately possessed with the desire to weave something in that technique and incorporate the lovely octagonal medallion illustrated on page 23. Later, when I saw a beautiful large bowl in transparent emerald glass, I wanted to do something in plastics in the same color. Then came the inspiration! A work bag woven in Dukagang in soft white wool with handles in the emerald plastics and the medallion used as an ornament in the center of one side and three initials of the recipient of the bag in the same color on the opposite side. Unlike most of my wonderful ideas, this one worked.

All of this Scandinavian Art Weaving being a sort of tapestry, Mr. Hickman has specified that it be done wrong side up as all tapestry is and which of course is necessary when using a large number of bobbins for the figures. But I found that in experimenting on my eight inch Structo loom, I could not weave wrong side up and also found that on a regular treadle loom and using only a small number of bobbins (seventeen as the most required at any one time for this bag) it is not necessary. I can make enough mistakes when I can see the work without doing it blind.

The warp was Bernat's 40/2 round linen set at 15:1, twenty inches in the reed. Tabby was some unidentified material that had been on hand for years and looks like about 16/2 white mercerized cotton. Pattern was a fine quality, soft but rather large knitting wool in white. There are two methods of finishing the ends of the work as will be described later but the method to be used must be decided before starting to weave.

"The threading is the usual twill, 4, 3, 2, 1, with the exception that the last thread in the reed should be omitted for this particular weaving. This will make the threading end in No. 2 harness and will give three warp threads for tabby to form a symmetrical selvage on both sides. This selvage forms a support for the loop of pattern yarn when it returns at the end of a shot." The heavy wool is wound on a large rug shuttle and is started through the shed formed by raising No. 1 harness. Here another diversion is made from Mr. Hickman's directions which are correct for some types of weaving but cause an unnecessary amount of work in this case. He specifies that the tabby should be carried out beyond the edges of the pattern shots and this makes it necessary to build up the tabby edges to compensate for the extra grist of the pattern. I found that the pattern can be carried right out to the edges and both threads woven in regular fashion without any building up of tabby.

The plain white wool is carried up four inches, before the medallion is started. The last white shot is made from right to left and the wool is then unwound from the shuttle sufficiently to make the first bobbin for the finger weaving. A number of green bobbins are now made up. To start the medallion, raise No. 1 harness and find the group of three down threads that are in center of reed. As there are seventeen groups of three in the first row of medallion, count off eight groups to the left of center and pass the white wool through the shed up to this point.

Here is where we use the little trick that enables us to

weave right side up. One reason for weaving wrong side up is that when the bobbins hang down they put a tension on the last warp thread that pulls it out of place so an even weave cannot be produced. Another is that if a large number of bobbins are used they will tangle themselves beautifully when beating is done. To overcome both of these, we cut a slat of thin wood ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch three ply veneer is excellent) two inches wide and as long as the cloth beam. We then cut a small block of one inch stuff about an inch wide and two inches long. One end of the slat is nailed square against one edge of the block forming a short ell. The block is then fastened to the ratchet that turns the cloth beam with a ten cent C clamp, with the slat lying upright along the cloth beam. This forms a cute little bin for holding all our bobbins on top the cloth beam where they are entirely out of the way and are really easier to control than when lying on top.

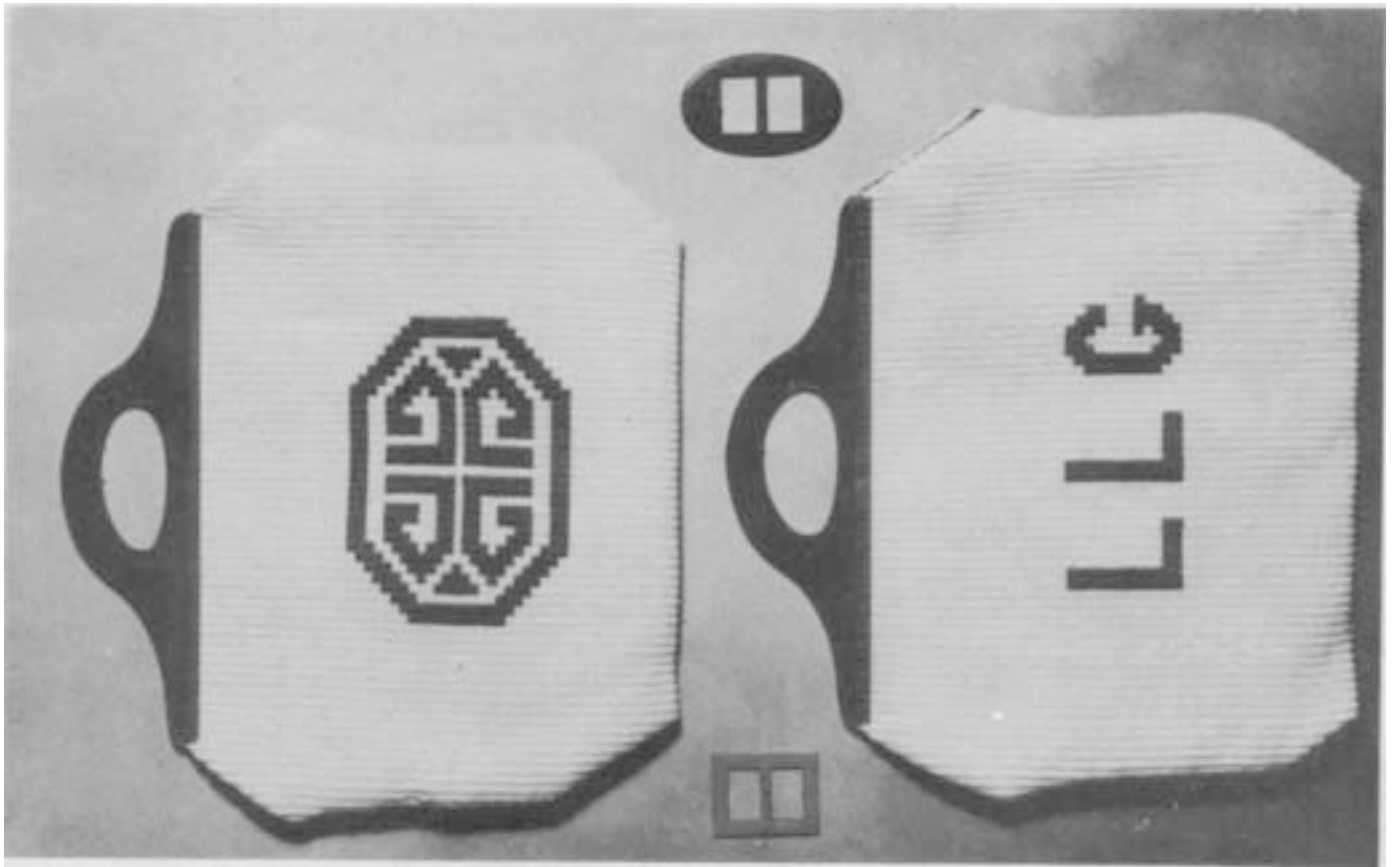
The white wool is now dropped down into the left end of bin and the green wool started and carried across seventeen groups of three and dropped in the same way. Another feature that I found easier than Mr. Hickman's method is in starting and ending the pattern threads. He recommends the usual tapestry knot but I found it difficult to get just the right tension for smooth work when ending a thread and the knot makes a thick spot on the wrong side while smoother work is obtained and I find it easier to simply weave the ends into the work. To do this, pass the end down to the right of the raised warp thread, under the first lower warp thread to the right, over the center warp thread of the group, under the next two down threads, over the center thread of the second group and continue for as many groups as you like. Two or three are enough. These ends are entirely concealed by the pattern. Finish the end in the same way. Sometimes it is necessary for two ends to lie alongside each other but this is immaterial as they are all concealed.

Beating is done in the regular way except that there is no beating, the beater is simply brought up and pressed until the yarn is in place.

The wool that I used was of such grist that four strands formed a square in a group of three so, after the first green is passed through, the white bobbin is started and carried out to the right edge, two tabby shots made and the weaving continued back toward the left for four complete shots. Then the diagonal steps were commenced and eight green shots formed the lower row of the medallion.

Mr. Hickman states that the pattern thread can be carried under one or two groups to avoid starting a new thread for each column but I found this made the work bunched on the back and had much better results by starting a new thread wherever indicated. There are only seventeen bobbins at most and these are not much trouble to handle. But one must use care where only one column is being built up to not make it too tight.

This medallion works about eight inches wide and with my yarn was $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches high which makes a very good proportion. Then plain white was woven for seven and a quarter inches to go around the bottom of the bag and the initials then started. As each unit in the medallion is about a quarter inch square, the initials were laid out



on quarter inch cross ruled paper. This makes it very easy to follow the design when weaving and allows all the mistakes to be made on paper.

The initials worked out $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and the plain white was carried up five and a quarter inches to the top and finish.

Incidentally, it is well on all delicate work of white wool to protect the finished work as it goes along with some kind of cover to avoid soiling, especially where it goes over the breast beam.

Now for the ends. That is one thing they don't tell you in the books. In all my studying over several years, I have never seen any directions for preventing ravelling of the work after it is cut off. In nearly all my work, unless I wanted it to be especially fine (as I did with these bags) I overcast the ends in the following manner. After the warp ends are woven up to where weaving can begin, I open the two four tabby shed and slip in a small lease rod about one eighth inch thick by three eighths inch wide and polished perfectly so it will slip out easily. The first tabby shot is from left to right in the one three shed but enough thread is pulled off the bobbin to go two and a half times across the warp. This long end is left lying on the warp while from seven to eleven tabby shots are made, leaving the shuttle on the right side. The long, loose end is then threaded into a tapestry needle and No. 1 harness raised to form equal spaces in the warp and so make the over cast stitches uniform. When the harness is raised a wide lease rod is slipped in and turned up on edge and clamped to the reed so it will not bother by falling down. The needle is carried under the warp up, over the work, and down in the little opening that is formed by the lease rod. The work goes faster by not turning the

needle end for end but putting the eye up and the point down each time. When the right edge is reached the thread is woven into the work (after lowering No. 1 harness) just like any end and the regular weaving continued.

In the case of these bags, rabbets three eighths inch wide were cut for the cloth ends to lie in and if desired, plain tabby of this width can be woven to sew to these rabbets.

But I wanted ends that were really finished so at the start and finish of the weaving the ends were overcast in a temporary manner as it was to be taken out later. Then the warp was cut about six inches up from the finished work and untied from the cloth apron. Each warp thread was then threaded into a No. 22 tapestry needle and woven back into the tabby on the back side so there was a selvage around all four sides of the work. The weaving back was done by picking up eight of the exposed tabby threads, each warp thread going back alongside itself. These bags were lined with emerald "jockey satin" which combines beauty with durability.

This, of course made some work but it also made beautiful ends and if one desires to make really superior work there is one adage he must always keep in mind—nothing is too much trouble.

The handles were made from a sheet of cast plastics 12 inches wide and worked up in the regular plastics technique but here again the above adage was carried out and adhered to. The plastics used was TRAFFORD, 360 Worthington St., Springfield, Mass. The belt buckles shown on photograph were made from waste after the handles were cut out.

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