

A FEW SIMPLE BRAIDS

By MARY M. ATWATER

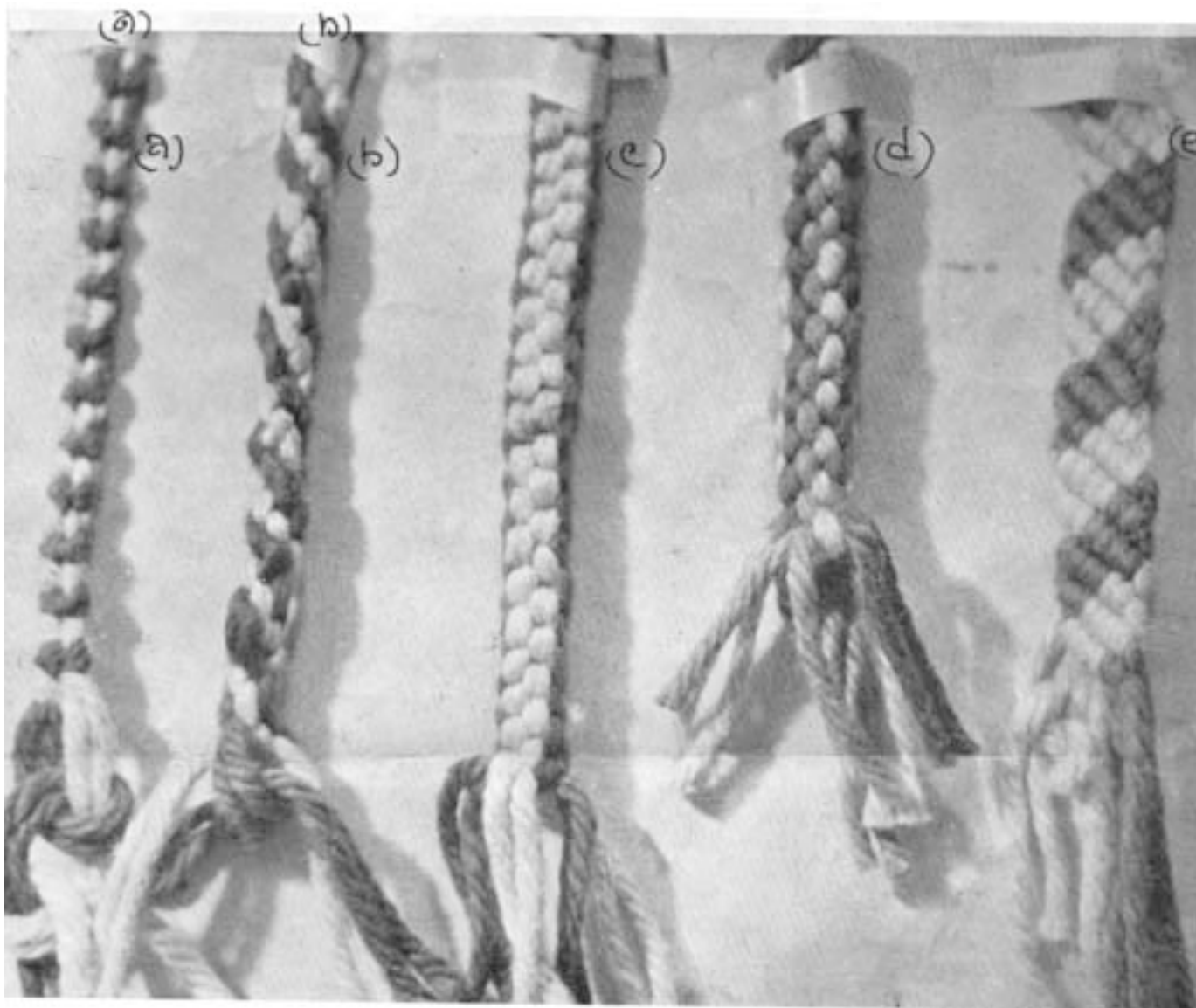


Illustration No. 1

Among the sample books I had with me last summer at the various weaving "institutes" was one devoted to simple braids — useful for the finish of woven articles and for use as bag-handles, fringes for girdles and the like. These samples proved of such general interest to the groups of weavers at these meetings that it seems the subject of braids and braiding should also interest the readers of the *WEAVER*.

Braiding, of course, is a whole craft in itself, with an extensive literature and a whole world of fascinating possibilities. It is quite impossible to give even a sketchy general idea of the entire subject within the limits of a magazine article, so I propose to limit myself to a few of the simple braids most useful to hand-weavers, and shall not make the slightest attempt to treat the subject logically or exhaustively.

Illustration No. One shows a group of "tied" braids. These make firm, strong cords, with a bit of elasticity not found

in woven or plaited braids. Cord (a) is made of two coarse strands, one light and the other dark, tied in a series of half hitches, as shown at the bottom of the illustration and also shown on the diagram. Hold the light strand tight and make a half hitch around it with the dark strand. Now hold the dark strand tight and make a half hitch around it with the light strand. Of course both strands may be of the same color if preferred, but the use of two colors adds interest. All the half hitches should, of course, be taken the same way or the result will be uneven and lumpy.

At (b) is shown a cord tied with four strands, two dark and two light. Make the strands twice the length required and cross them at right angles at the center, with the dark strand on top of the light strand. Now tie the two light colored ends together with a single overhand tie. Next tie the two dark strands across this knot with a single overhand

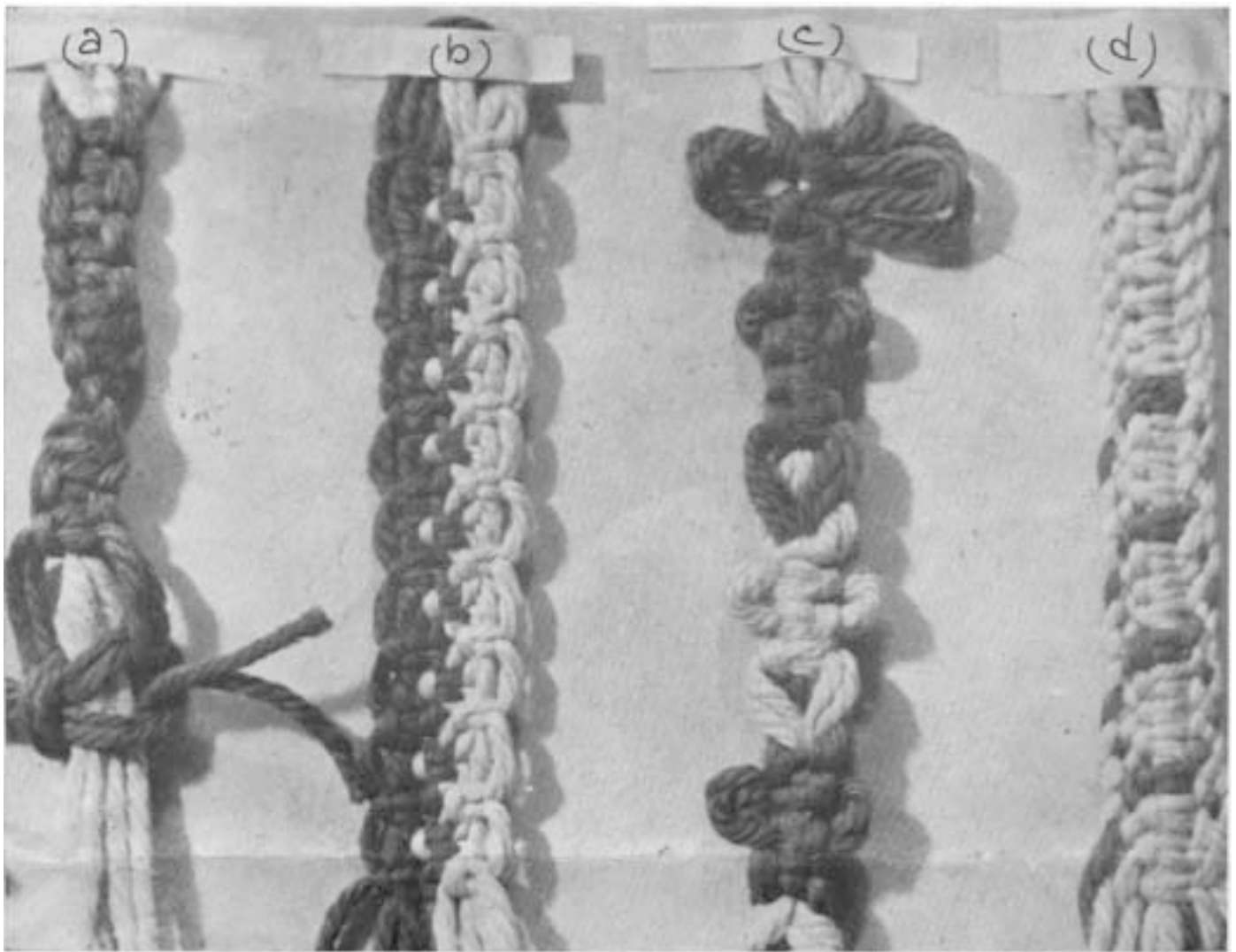


Illustration No. 2

tie, and continue in this manner. Take all the ties in the same direction. This also is illustrated on the diagram.

The square sided cord at (c) is also made with four strands. Sailors call this the "crowning" braid for it is made by tying a succession of crowning knots. Start as for (b) with two double length strands crossing each other at the center. Lay one of the strands across the one to the right, leaving a loop. In the same manner lay the second strand over the third, and the third over the fourth; take the fourth strand down through the loop of the first strand and draw the knot tight. Continue by looping the strands over each other in the same manner but in the opposite direction, as shown on the diagram. And continue in this manner for the desired length. Two of the square faces of the cord will be dark and two faces will be light. I have an old piece of cord made in this manner, of fine silk braid. It was used as a watch-fob in a day long gone.

The crowning braid may be made of any number of strands — three, five, six or more strands. The cord at (d) on the illustration is a crowning braid of six strands in three colors. It is round instead of square and shows the colors in lengthwise stripes.

The cord at (e) is made of eight strands and is tied in

half hitches. To make it, take the strand on the extreme left across the other strands toward the right, and make a half-hitch over this strand with each of the other strands in turn. Repeat as required, working always from the left toward the right.

Half hitch work and the "Solomon knot" are the foundation of highly elaborate macrame belts, bags and so on, such as the knotted belts made by the sailors. But space does not permit going into this fascinating subject. Illustration No. Two, however, shows some simple cords in the Solomon knot, suitable for a number of purposes. This knot, clearly shown at the bottom of the cord at (a), is sometimes called the "square knot" by sailors, but as weavers use this name for what the sailors call a "reef knot" it seems best to call it the Solomon knot, as most non-sailors do.

Four strands are required for the simplest form of the Solomon knot — two foundation strands and two working strands. As shown at (a) of the illustration the strands have been doubled. Stretch the foundation strands between two hooks or other supports and make the knot as follows: lay the left hand working strand across the foundation strands toward the right, leaving a loop. Take the right hand working strand over the end of strand No. 1, under

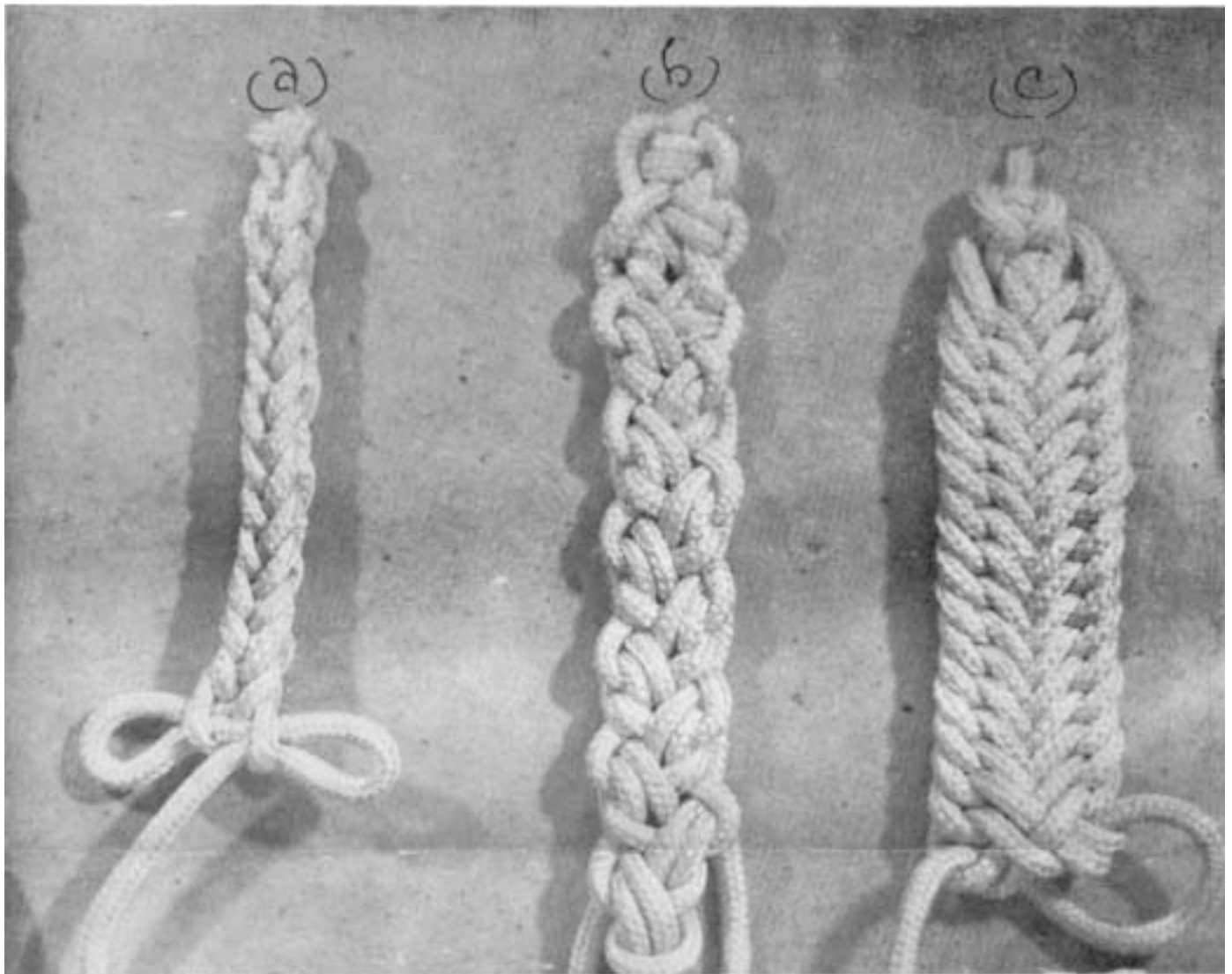


Illustration No. 3

the foundation strands and up through the loop in strand No. 1. Draw the knot tight. Now lay the right hand strand across and make the tie with the left hand strand. This completes the knot. It is possible to tie the knot with a single process, but for most people this is more difficult than the method described and also slower, so it is not explained.

Variations of the simple Solomon knot consist in making all the ties in the same direction, which produces a corkscrew twist as shown at (a), and in the effects shown at (b), (c) and (d). To make the cord shown at (b) use eight single strands, four dark and four light. Make a knot with the four dark strands and then one with the four light strands. Now drop two strands on either side and tie a knot using the four middle strands. Continue in this manner for the length desired. For a wider band, add four more strands and tie first three knots and then two. Many interesting effects can be produced by arranging the colors in different ways.

The cord at (c) was made with eight strands also — four dark and four light. Tie a knot with the dark strands over the light strands. Make another tie in the same manner leaving a space between the first and second knots. Push the second knot up close to the first and the loops will appear.

Tie another knot with the dark strands. Now tie a knot with the light strands over the dark ones in the same manner.

The cord at (d) is a combination of Solomon knot and ordinary braiding. The foundation strands run the length of the cord, each pair of working strands being tied over it in a Solomon knot, and then braided. Several colors may be introduced and the solid foundation at the center makes this a stronger cord than (b) or (c).

An interesting group of braids are those made of loops, or "bights" to use the nautical term. The simplest of these is the chain effect, like a single crochet, commonly known as "Idiot's delight," and used also in chaining a warp. This is so familiar that it seems needless to show it. The square cord shown at (a), Illustration No. Three, is made of a single strand in a somewhat similar manner. The illustration is so clear that a description seems unnecessary.

The cord shown at (b) is somewhat more intricate. It is called the "twin-bight" braid. Begin by making two slip-knots close together at the center of the cord. Put the left-hand bight from front to back through the right-hand one. Now make a loop in the right-hand working end; take this loop up through the right hand side of the original right-hand loop, over the top of this loop and down through the

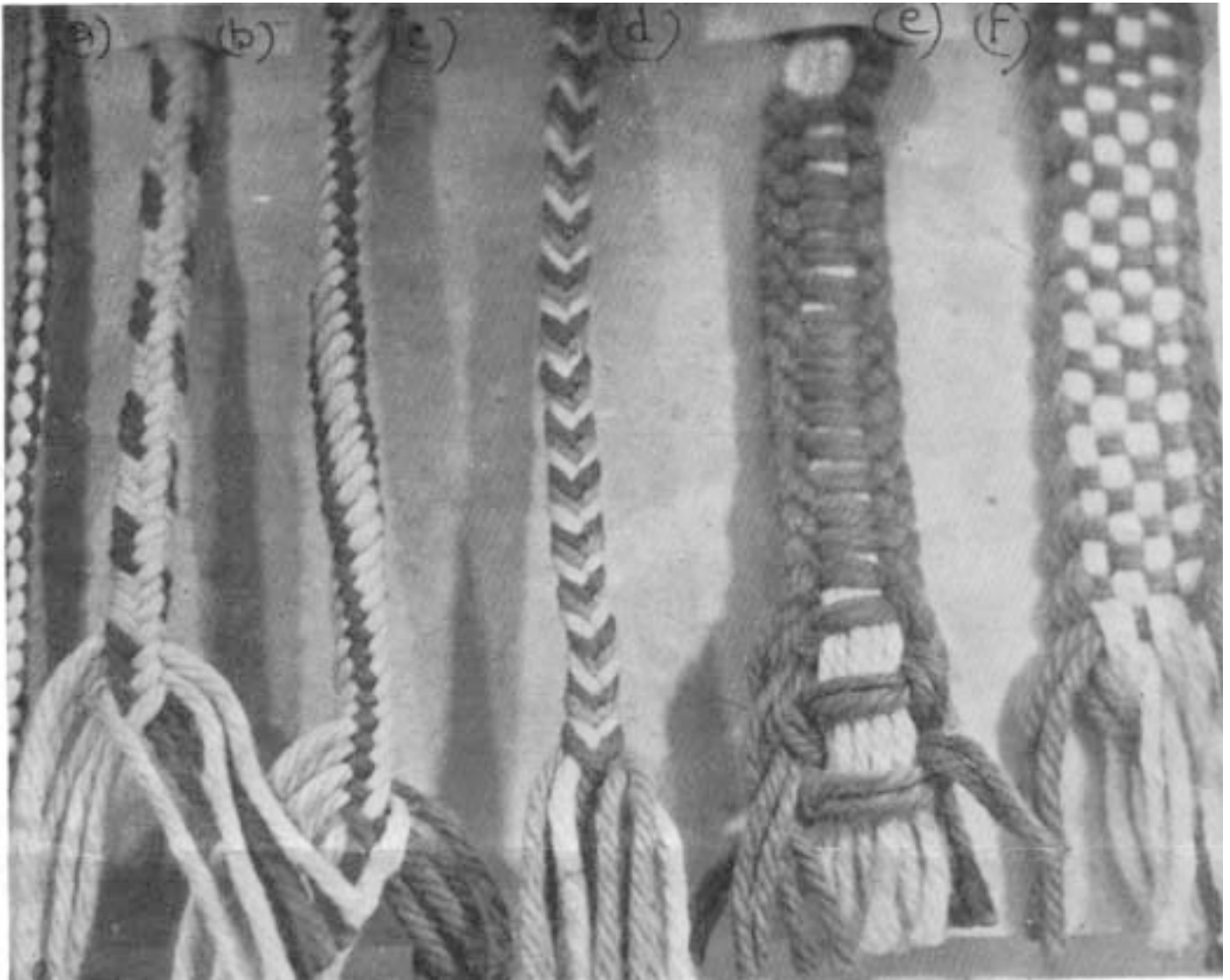


Illustration No. 4

left-hand bight. Now do the same with the left hand working end, and so continue. The process is shown on the diagram for greater clearness.

The cord at (c) is made with a single strand, but is not tied in bights, as the end must be drawn through each time. When done in a coarse woven cord as illustrated it makes a very handsome braid. It's name is the "Antique Sennit braid." To begin, make two round turns at the end of the cord and tie at the center, making the effect of a double bow-knot. Then with the working end make a series of figure-of-eight knots, first to one side and then to the other, taking in each time the last two loops of the braid. This is quite clearly shown on the illustration.

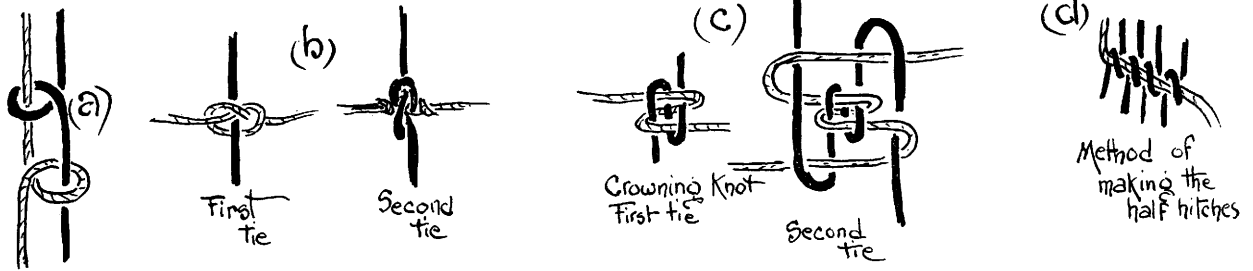
The braids shown on Illustration No. Four are among those that weavers find most useful. The four-strand cord at (a) is known as the "Indian" braid, as it is found so often in the long fringes of Indian belts and girdles. It is made with two strands of one color and two of another shade — for instance, two black and two white strands. Arrange the work with the two dark strands on the right and the two light ones on the left. Take the top dark strand from right to left behind the braid and bring it forward between the two light strands, and back to the right. Take

the top light strand behind the braid and between the two dark strands and back to the left. Continue in this manner.

The same system of braiding can be used for a great variety of braids, done with various numbers of strands and in several colors if desired. When braided with eight strands, four to a side, the braid will be square. The cord at (b) on the diagram was made with twelve strands, — three dark and nine light, six light strands on one side and three dark and three light on the other. Take the top strand behind and up under three and over three back to its own side. This particular braid was taken from the drawcord of a Mexican bag in double weaving.

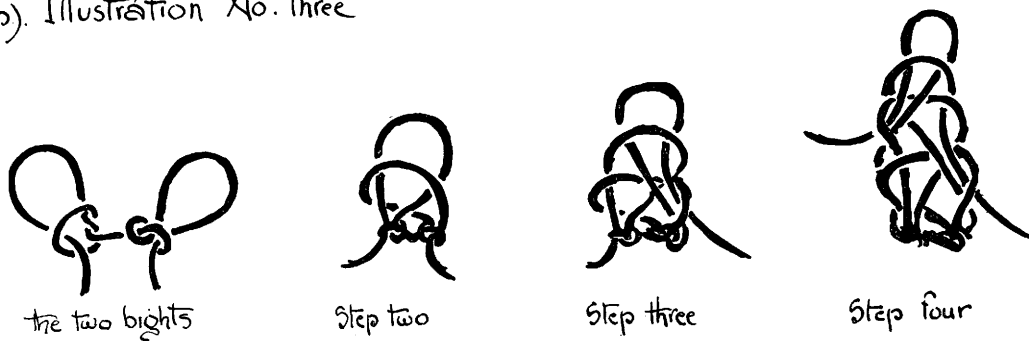
The cord at (c) is of the same order, but instead of braiding the same from both sides, proceed as follows: make the braid of six dark strands and six light, — all the dark strands on one side and all the light strands on the other. Take the top strand from the right behind, under five and over one back to the right. Take the top strand from the left behind, under one and over five back to the left. And continue in this manner. This braid is called the "combing" braid, because it resembles a cord with cox-combing. It can be made with any desired number of strands.

Diagram



Tied Braids. Illustration No. One

Looped Braid (b). Illustration No. three



Manner of making the "Indian" braid. —
(a) Illustration No Four

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The cord at (d) is done in a somewhat different manner. This braid was taken from the fringes of one of the most ancient pieces of textile fabric known — the famous "Girdle of Rameses" preserved in the Liverpool Museum. It is an excellent braid if a number of colors are to be used, as it may be made in any number of colors provided there are four strands of each. The cord illustrated was made of three colors and twelve strands. Suppose the colors to be used are black, red and yellow: Arrange the twelve strands with two of each color on either side, and before beginning arrange the colors in the same order, the two blacks on top, next the two reds, and the yellows next to the center. Begin

by taking one of the black strands from the right across the rest of the right-hand strands to the left hand. Take the other black strand from the right behind and across to the left. Now take the top left-hand black strand across in front to the right, and the second black strand from the left behind and across. Braid the four red strands in the same manner, and then the four yellow strands. This will bring the black strands to the top again. Note that the two strands lie side by side instead of being one over the other. Bring the back strand forward and across, and the front strand back and across. If this detail is not observed you will soon have two separate flat braids instead of one square one.

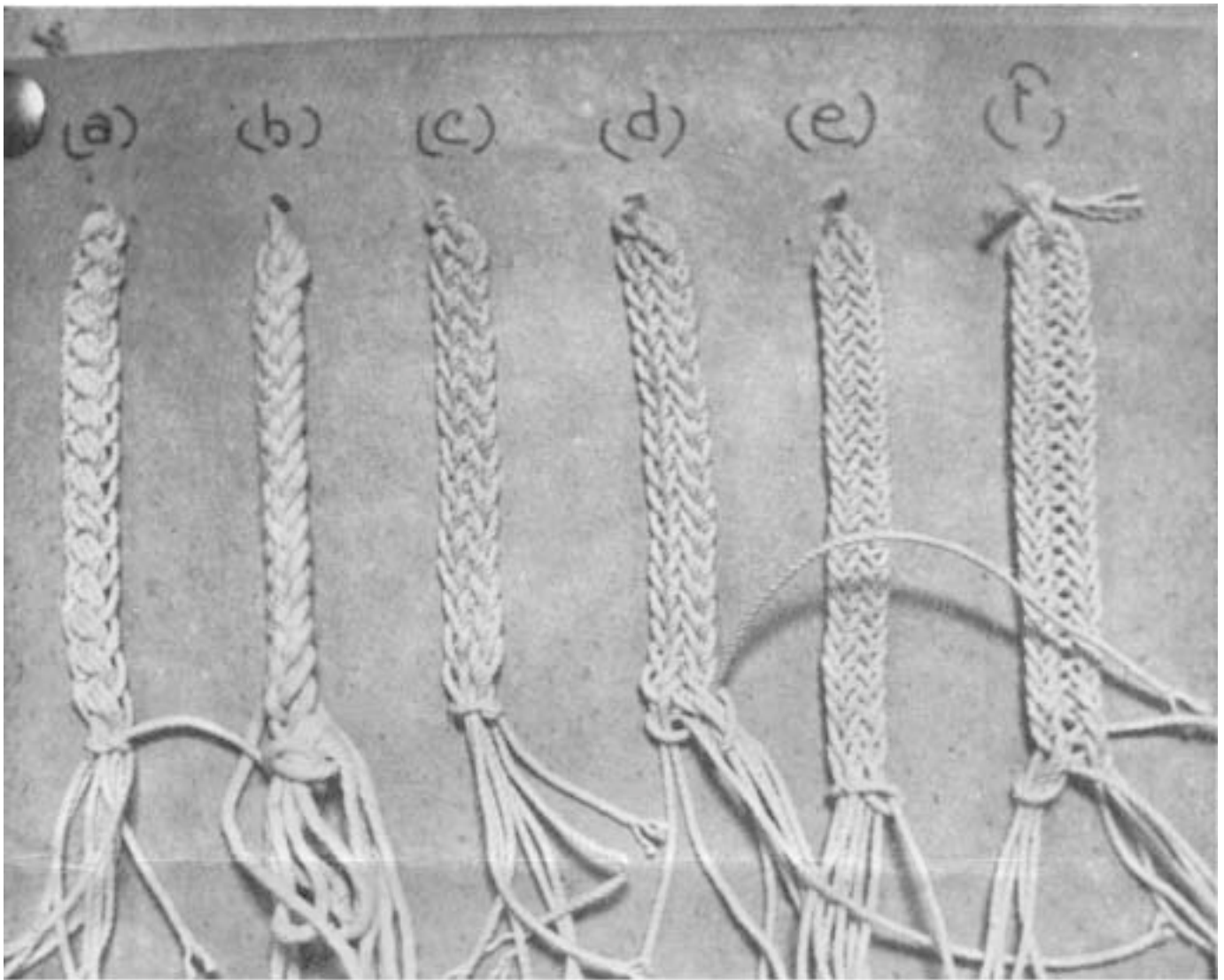


Illustration No. 5

The cord at (e) is shown so plainly on the illustration that directions are hardly necessary. It is made with a heavy foundation strand and five working strands, braided as indicated.

The woven braid at (f) is called the English flat sennit, and as illustrated was made with four light strands, — doubled — which run lengthwise like the warp of a woven fabric, and three doubled dark strands that weave across and interlace along the edges.

Illustration No. Five shows a selection of sailors' "sennit" braids. These are best made with a hard cord and all in one color. (a) is made with eight strands. Braid three strands over one from the right and three strands under one and over three from the left. (b) is a nine-strand "mound" sennit and is braided; three strands over two and under one, first from one side and then from the other. (c) is a seven-strand "French" sennit and is braided: one strand over one and under two, first from one side and then from the other. (d) is a similar braid with nine strands; one strand over one and under three first from one side and then from the other. (e) is also a nine-strand French sennit and is braided: one

strand over two and under two, first from one side and then from the other. (f) is an 11-strand "channel" sennit braided: one strand over two, under two, over one, first from one side and then from the other. Another interesting channel sennit (not illustrated) is made of nine strands braided: one strand over three and under one, first from one side and then from the other.

And here are a few additional sennits, not illustrated, that may be found interesting: an eight-strand — two strands over two and under one, first from one side and then from the other. A ten-strand — two strands over three and under one. The Algerian eleven-strand sennit — one strand over three and under two. A ten-strand mound sennit — two strands over one and under three. A fourteen-strand interlocking sennit — two strands over three, under one, over two. There are hundreds of these fascinating sennit braids, and to those who may wish to pursue the subject further I can recommend a marvelous book: "The Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Rope Work," by Raoul Graumont and John H. Hensel, published by the Cornell Maritime Press of New York, N. Y.