WEAVING ON OLD-TIME LOOMS: BY MERTICE BUCK

(Continued from November Number.)

PUTTING ON THE WARP.

The principle of the crossed threads must be observed in making the warp. The crossing in making the warp is generally kept by cords, and a ready made warp comes from the factory with these cords firmly tied in place. These must be removed before the warp can be spread out on the yarn beam, and this is where amateurs frequently come to grief, by taking out the cords before putting in lease sticks to hold the cross. A very simple method of procedure is to insert long, heavy cords to hold the crossing threads. The warp must be fastened securely to the beam at the end from which the chain unlaces (there is sometimes a cross at both ends). Some yarn beams are made with a long stick sunk in a groove, in which case the stick may be slipped through all the loops at the end of the warp, and put back in the groove. It is tied in place in the groove after the warp is spread out to the desired width. The lease sticks may then be easily put in place, one at a time. They should be tied together, or held with large rubber bands to prevent their slipping.

A very useful device to keep the warp threads from tangling and make them wind smoothly on the yarn beam is a long wooden comb as wide as the loom, called the raddle. With it is sometimes used an upper piece which prevents the threads from slipping over the top of the raddle teeth. The raddle is fastened securely across the loom in a vertical position. A very good plan is to fasten it to the upright sides of the batten. A small portion of warp is then unwound from the beam, and the threads are distributed between the teeth of the batten, care being taken to keep them straight from the beam to a corresponding position in the raddle.

In order to wind the warp smoothly without leaving loose threads, it is necessary to get a very even tension. The best way to do this is by winding the chain of warp on a drum, but this is often impracticable for an amateur, and the chain can be held firmly enough in the hands of one worker while another turns the beam of the loom, and winds on as far as the warp threads are straight. The lease sticks which have been wound with the warp must then be worked back toward the raddle, care being taken to undo gently any little caught places so as not to break the threads. This plan of having the raddle stationary and the lease sticks movable, gives an opportunity to wind on about a yard at a time. The warp on the beam should be kept from settling in by occasionally laying a long stick—a curtain stick answers the purpose—along the beam under the warp which is about to be wound on. There should be one of these sticks to every six or seven yards of warp. The greatest difficulty which amateurs are likely to encounter is that occasioned by the chain coming undone so that the threads loosen and tangle. Care
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BLUE AND WHITE COVERED WOVEN ON A HAND LOOM. should be taken not to loosen the chain for more than a yard or two at a time. A cord tied around the bunch of warp will prevent tangling. If a thread breaks the ends must be tied at once with a weaver's knot.

Putting on, or beaming the warp, is sometimes also called warping the beam. When the warp has been put on smoothly for its entire length with but few knotted threads, it may be said that the multiplication table of home weaving is mastered.

ADJUSTMENT OF HARNES FOR RUG WEAVERING.

For plain weaving two heddles are used. The wire ones set in frames are the easiest for amateurs to manage, but string heddles with copper mail eyes work very well. The number of heddles is usually rather greater than that of the warp threads or ends; half should be on each frame. The heddle frames are suspended from a horizontal beam crossing the top of the loom; usually there is a cord arrangement sliding on a pulley at each end of this beam, which allows one heddle to go up while the other goes down. In threading the heddle eyes it is necessary to know the number of eyes in each frame, and find the middle eye of each frame. The warp must also be counted and the threading must begin from the center thread. A small hook, called a warp hook, is inserted through the center eye in the front frame and the middle thread caught on it and pulled through. The next thread to the right is then threaded through the eye next to the right in the back frame—and this process is continued across the loom, taking each thread in succession. The work should be watched closely, as it is very easy to take two front or two back heddles in succession. The ends should be tied in small bunches in front of the heddles to avoid pulling backwards and unthreading. The last eight or ten ends may be threaded two together to form a selvage. The left side should then be threaded, starting from the middle. The mistake to be avoided is that of threads crossing in the heddles. These may be discovered by pushing down the front frame and looking through the shed, then pushing down the back frame. There should be a clear opening across the loom, but if there is a thread in this space a cross is indicated, and the heddles must be rethreaded to correct it; sometimes two threads only require rethreading. Before the ends are threaded through the reed it is well to examine the heddles straight across the loom to see if there are any errors. It is often necessary for a beginner to do considerable rethreading, or pulling in.

The batten is in front of the heddle and is a swinging frame containing the reed. The ends of the warp must be threaded from the middle hole or dent of the reed and go straight from the center of the heddles to the center of the reed. The threading should be done with the warp hook.

When the reed is threaded, and the ends tied to prevent their coming out, the harness must be carefully adjusted so that the threads will run horizontally from the back.
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beam through the heddles and reed to the front beam. The heddle frames are attached to the treadles in a way to give a perfect balance, as shown in the photographs. The batten must swing freely, without striking the heddles or the front beam. This takes some care.

Generally on the front beam there is a series of cords to which the ends of the warp are to be tied, with the knot shown in the sketch, or there may be a piece of strong drilling to which the ends are tied called an apron. Before describing the actual process of weaving it may be stated that after the loom is once threaded it is not necessary to rethread the harness for every new length of warp. When the warp is woven nearly to the end, instead of pulling out the threads it is better to tie them securely in small bunches in front of the reed and behind the heddles, so they cannot slip through. After the new chain of warp is put on, the new ends may be tied one by one with a weaver’s knot to the old ends.

Weaving.

It will be found that the harness needs considerable adjusting before it works perfectly. The heddle must be hung so as to allow a wide shed. Sometimes threads have to be retied, as one loose thread destroys the perfection of the web. The shed is formed by pressing the foot on one treadle, and in order to keep the weaving even, a long lease stick is slid in the space across the loom. The shed is then changed by pressing down the other treadle. (The treadles must be carefully adjusted so as not to strike the floor.)

It is well to begin the weaving with a heading of cord. The shuttle may be filled with twine or warp thread. This allows any defects in the threading of the loom to become very apparent.

When the shuttle is filled a shed is formed by pressing the foot on the right hand treadle, and the batten is pushed back toward the heddles with the left hand. The shuttle is thrown through with the right hand as near as possible to the reed. The thread should not be pulled tight at the selvage. The row of weaving is then beat up toward the front of the loom by swinging the batten forward. The shed is then changed by pressing down the other treadle, and the shuttle is thrown through from the left hand side. After about an inch of heading is completed it is easy to see if there are any threads to be corrected in the warp, and this may be done. If not, the weaving may be continued with whatever filling is desired.

Many weavers nowadays use only new materials, long strips of denim, of figured chintz or outing flannel, producing fabrics of great beauty. But for those who prefer the method of the olden time it may not be amiss to give a description of how to use old materials. The great point is to have the rags cut evenly and to make them of a width to “beat up” to the same thickness in weaving—that is, a strip of muslin should be cut much wider than a strip of calico. Hit and miss rugs in soft colors are always useful in a bathroom. And if the filling material is old it will not fade any more.

The weight of the rug must be sufficient to hold it straight on the floor; two and one-half pounds of rags to the square yard is a good proportion—that is, five or six yards of denim or outing flannel. The rags should be well sewed flat. The weaver becomes expert when the ends may be overlapped without sewing if desired. The rug may be varied by introducing bands of color or by using two shuttles alternately, letting several colors run “hit-and-miss.”

The beginner will have difficulty in taking out the work and it is much better to weave
a series of pieces one after the other, leaving six inches of warp between, and weaving a cord heading at each end of each piece. The pieces when taken out should be finished with fringe made by tying the ends of warp.

The question of coloring materials often comes up. It is very easy to wind the balls of rags in skeins and dip the skeins in a dye both green, blue or brown. If the balls are of hit and miss this will give a shaded effect which is very good, and this method allows rugs to be woven to match the color scheme of certain rooms.

**Pattern Weaving.**

After the amateur weaver has become proficient in making rag rugs and portieres it is interesting to try something more elaborate. For pattern weaving harness may be increased by the addition of one, two or three heddles. A very simple design used by our grandmothers is illustrated in detail. The four heddles used carry each a certain series of threads, arranged so as, viewed from above, to form groups of threes. In weaving the foot is placed on two heddles at a time; the cut shows the arrangement. In weaving this piece ordinary carpet warp may be used with mercerized cotton in blue for the filling, or both warp and woof may be of coarse white linen. The ends may be of plain weaving. The weaving of coverlids is an intricate process, but it can be successfully mastered by an amateur.

Eliza Calvert Hall’s Coverlid Book shows many lovely designs with their quaint names, “Governor’s Garden,” “Lee’s Surrender,” “Bachelor’s Fancy,” etc. It is interesting to note that when such weaving was in vogue it was taught to the prisoners in the State Prison of Auburn, N. Y., with great success, and many “prison coverlids” are still in use in northern New York.

The interest in hand weaving seems steadily on the increase. The desire for its beauty in our homes and the value of it in educational institutions seems to have brought about a revival of this most significant craft. It has been found that little children, the crippled and the infirm take eagerly to this method of earning their living. It has proven valuable in asylums for the deaf and dumb. And quite apart from the use of it in institutions, it is finding place again in remote country districts, in the mountains of the South and in New England. Women find that spare hours, even though few, can be profitably employed for their own homes and for financial return by a knowledge of hand weaving. It is an outlet for the artistic sense that is latent and undeveloped in so much of isolated humanity, and it is astonishing how much in the way of artistic development can come to children through the right use of the hand loom. They can be taught interesting color schemes and beauty of textures, the value of time and the great importance of patience. In other words, the hand loom can be made quite a small college education.

**Would You Give Yourself a Job? By J. R. Worden**

If you applied to yourself for a job—would you get it?

Think it over.

Just be “boss” for a few minutes—then check up your record for the past month as an employee.

Remember now, it’s your money meeting the payroll.

Have you, as an employee, filled your hours with productive conscientious labor, or have you been too busy watching the clock?

Have you produced enough in that month to make you a profitable investment?

Have you put your shoulder to the wheel—forgotten petty differences and difficulties—or have you put sand in the bearings?

Have you asked questions and improved—or have you been too wise to learn?

Have you analyzed what you are doing, and why, or used instinct instead of reason, and got an indifferent and methodless result?

Have you allowed your mind to become poisoned with anger, worry or envy, and by so doing contaminated and reduced the efficiency of others?

Have you gone through the month, a vision of pay day the oasis in your desert of work? And have you let this vision shut out from view all else in the day’s work that would build you to a size where you would give yourself a job?

Or have you been heart and soul in the work—on the job every minute with a breadth of vision that made of the desert of work an oasis of opportunity?

Check up. Be truthful. Would you give yourself a job? From The Artisan.