

Ontario Department of Agriculture

INSTITUTES BRANCH

SEWING, DARNING AND PATCHING

BY MISS DELLA HUGHES.

INTRODUCTION.

When primitive man first wandered to a region where he encountered cold, he realized that he must protect his body with clothing. Of necessity, he made use of what he had at hand, the furs of the animals killed for food. These, for a long time, were the only clothing known.

To follow the gradual change from this rude clothing to the beautiful textiles of our own generation, will make us appreciate the privilege of using such textiles or woven fabrics. Let us consider, briefly, the origin and development of the weaving and spinning industry, as furs became scarcer and more expensive.

While furs were still man's only clothing he discovered the use of fire. In absence of matches, the starting of the fire was a difficult problem, so it fell to a woman's lot to remain at home, to keep a perpetual fire, while man hunted for food.

True to a woman's nature, she made use of her time, trying to keep her surroundings neat and tidy. She discovered that the reeds used for the floor covering stayed in place better if entwined. This was the origin of weaving. Long reeds were placed side by side on the ground corresponding to the warp thread of our modern textiles. In and out these were woven reeds not so strong, corresponding to our woof threads.

Basketry of various kinds developed from this form of weaving, but no great improvements could be made until the advent of other fibres which were the result of the spinning industry.

Spinning probably began by twisting fibres, hairs, grasses and sinews, or by rolling them between the thumb and fingers. Then it was found better to roll them between the palms of the hand, and later between the palms of the hand and the naked thigh. Yet in these rude methods we have the foundation of the spinning wheel and the steam-driven cotton spindle.

When the primitive woman started to use goats' hair or wool, she fastened strands of it to a stone, twirling it around until the yarn was twisted as desired, after which it was wound around the stone and the process repeated. Some time after this the spindle came into use, then the whorl, then the distaff. Thus was the work developed, until in the six-