

## *A School of Tapestry Weaving in New York*

THE founding of a school of tapestry in New York is a very fortunate and desirable thing for Americans, as it will aid in a national expression in handicraft.

The school being one which teaches all the age-old techniques of tapestry and applies them to modern artistic expression is particularly suited to this "new" country and this new age. Americans are not bound to past traditions and have new things to say in art, to preserve in tapestry.

The director of the school, Geza G. Foldes is a Hungarian artist weaver who founded the Royal Vienna Tapestry Factory and who has restored Gobelins in museums and palaces of central Europe.

Mr. Foldes founded his first school in 1918 at Ujpest in his native Hungary. When it was well established and running smoothly, he was called to Bratislavia by the new Czecho-Slovakian government to create and carry out an enduring symbol of the economic freedom of the new state. The tapestry was completed in five months and now hangs in ministry of industry in Bratislavia. This was in 1920. From there his reputation spread to Vienna where he was invited to take part in a state-sponsored competition. He was fortunate enough to be responsible for the winning tapestry, and so was commissioned to found the Royal Vienna Tapestry Factory in the royal palace. There he trained fifty craftsmen in the various tapestry techniques.

After firmly establishing and directing the institution, above mentioned, Mr. Foldes then turned his energies to a private atelier in Vienna which he

conducted until 1926. He left Vienna to work for the museums and palaces throughout Germany.

After completing this task in Germany, he worked in Paris and Madrid during 1930. Then he came to the United States where he founded his school of tapestry weaving, the first of its kind in

this country, in the Greenwich House which is affiliated with Columbia University in New York, during the summer of 1931. His sincere desire to initiate a movement which would lead to a worth-while native expression led him to introduce and teach this authentic and noble craft to a class of fifty-five students without tuition. The success of this class encouraged him to pursue this course further in new quarters at the Grand Central Palace, New York, where he has established his present school.

In Europe the study of tapestry comprises twelve different techniques. All of these are interesting and valuable to acquire and are part of the education of every weaver of tapestry. For the training of adults in America who look forward to being professional tapestry weavers

or teachers as well as amateurs in the art, Mr. Foldes has prepared an intensive course of the four most important techniques. These are taught in graded sequence. In some respects they include features of other techniques not included in the course whenever they serve as a better preparation for the technique which follows.

The first technique presented to the novice is the oldest, the most primitive. It is Greek Sumak. It is carried out on a simple wooden frame which the student threads with a coarse warp of cotton



*Fragment of a cartoon for a tapestry five and a half feet high by eight feet wide. Subject: Modern Music. Mr. Geza Gilbert Foldes, director of the school of Art Weaving in Grand Central Palace, is seen discussing details of the execution with his assistant*

or wool a given number to the inch. The design is drawn on squared paper and mounted on cardboard. This the weaver follows line for line, counting the number of squares for each change of color. This is a very simple technique to acquire and is suitable for the carrying out of designs of large and smaller areas more abstract in character.

The Swedish technique is the next to be taken up. It is worked on a similar frame but with a finer warp. It produces a very sturdy and yet fine-looking ribbed textile. The design is traced on the warp and each motive is worked separately on the wrong side. Any form can be brought out except the fine detail and shading of figure work.

The Khilim technique is the next to be studied. The one which Mr. Foldes teaches in this course is modified to embody features which provide the best practice and preparation for the French which follows. In this modified Khilim a device is used for changing the shed. Interlocking is still adhered to.

In the French, the final technique, the goal of the weaver, there is no interlocking. By this time the work is perfectly even, and where the openings occur they are sewn up by hand afterwards. The design is traced on the warp and is carried out on the wrong side. This technique is the quintessence of the weaver's art. The finest pictures and shadings of the portraits of the old school may be executed

to the last detail with great freedom in this technique.

Tapestry weaving has always been an art of expression and pictorial depiction, reaching an acme of development in many parts of the world. All of us are familiar with European tapestry, but few of us realize that variations of the tapestry weave were used in countries like Peru, Greece, and China for their grandest artistic expression in the field of textiles. The art of tapestry towers above other branches of the textile art, as it allows for untram-

meled design play with the simplest of equipment. Also its technique is so flexible that any type of design is adaptable to it, whether it be the simple geometrics as found in Pre-Inca Peruvian dress bands or the gorgeous figure panoply of a Gothic religious hanging. Now that a modern style is in emergence, the art of tapestry weaving will play an important rôle.



*A section of a class at work on tapestries in the School of Art Weaving at the Grand Central Palace, New York. The director, Mr. Geza Gilbert Foldes, is seen helping a student select the wools. On the wall a fragment of a large cartoon for a tapestry for a modern music room is visible*

To develop tapestry weaving in this country, teachers are needed, and Mr. Foldes has unusual talents for pioneering in this field. His thorough training in various branches of tapestry and design enables him to give the student training from the ground up. In conducting the school, Mr. Foldes has in mind to train teachers who can convey the art to others as well as instill the groundings of tapestry weaving in students who will weave for themselves or for the art market.

## Book Reviews

HOMESPUN HANDICRAFTS — *Ella Shannon Bowles.*

(Published by Lippincott Company.) Price, \$3.00.

THOSE who have enjoyed Mrs. Bowles's "About Antiques" will hail with delight her latest book, "Homespun Handicrafts." She has undoubtedly won a considerable number of converts to a love and appreciation of the days and ways of our ancestors. Through her eyes these by-gone years come again

to life and we are given a glimpse of the beauty, not alone of the crafts of times past, but of the necessity and the means by which such beauty was accomplished. "Homespun Handicrafts" deals with the pioneer crafts. Readers of the HANDICRAFTER who have taken pleasure in Mrs. Bowles's articles on Basket Making and Home Rug Making, will be glad to find these articles with others in book form.