



A REVIVAL OF FEMININE HANDICRAFTS.

BY MINNIE J. REYNOLDS.



AN AGED BASKET-MAKER

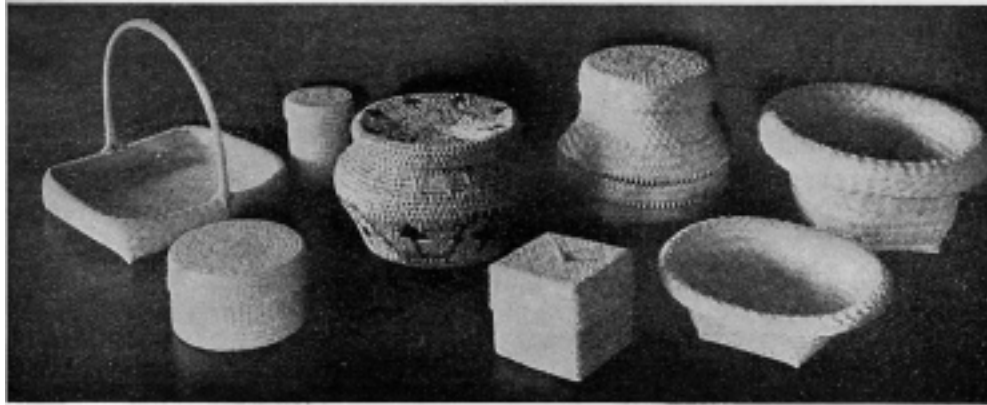
IT is evident to the close observer that a revival of handicrafts, mainly in textiles, and therefore mainly feminine, is in progress in the United States.

It began in Deerfield, that historic Massachusetts town, so incontinent an Indian

fighter in its strenuous youth, and in its venerable and beautiful old age the centre of a revival of colonial industries. The "Blue and White Needlework" was the first product of this renaissance. Deerfield has an old academy, a very famous institution in early days,—but that's

another story. In it is housed a collection of relics of pioneer days in the Pocotuck valley, and among them certain old pieces of embroidery, done by the skilful needles of Colonial women. In spite of glass coverings and almost reverential care, stout homespun foundation and imperishable indigo dye, these rare bits of needlework were fading and falling to dust. It was a feeling of patriotic affection that first led Miss Margaret Whiting and Miss Ellen Miller to copy them, so that the work of the Deerfield foremothers should not perish from the earth. The admiration aroused by these copies resulted in the formation of the "Society of Blue and White Needlework," whose little "D," inside its spinning wheel, has within six years become known in every State in the Union.

Miss Whiting and Miss Miller have always furnished the designs, copied or adapted from the old embroideries, which bore an individuality as truly characteristic of the race that produced them, as the potteries of the



DEERFIELD REED AND PALM BASKETS.

Southwest do of the woman of the Pueblo. Colonial rooms in country mansions receive their finishing touch from the Blue and White Needlework. Tables of millionaires are furnished with it. Four-post Colonial beds are again dressed in curtains and bedspreads like those which "the Puritan maiden, Priscilla," loved to see in their blue and white immaculateness. Once more the home-made indigo dye, one of the most imperishable of all dye-stuffs, was produced in Deerfield. Pinks and greens, also, the Deerfield women use, but the distinctively Colonial blue and white has remained the favorite.

The business side of the enterprise is not

less interesting than the artistic. There is no "employer," no "commission." Three-tenths of the actual selling price of the article must be kept out to pay the current expenses of the business: postage, express, laundrying and the like. Two-tenths go to the designer, and five-tenths to the needlewoman. These Deerfield women have put in practice one of the finest little coöperative schemes known, and the volume of business transacted by its simple machinery is surprising.

Another group of women workers in Deerfield is making baskets, and still another rag-rugs, woven on a hand-loom. Inspired by the success of the women, some of the



A GROUP OF DEERFIELD BASKET-MAKERS.

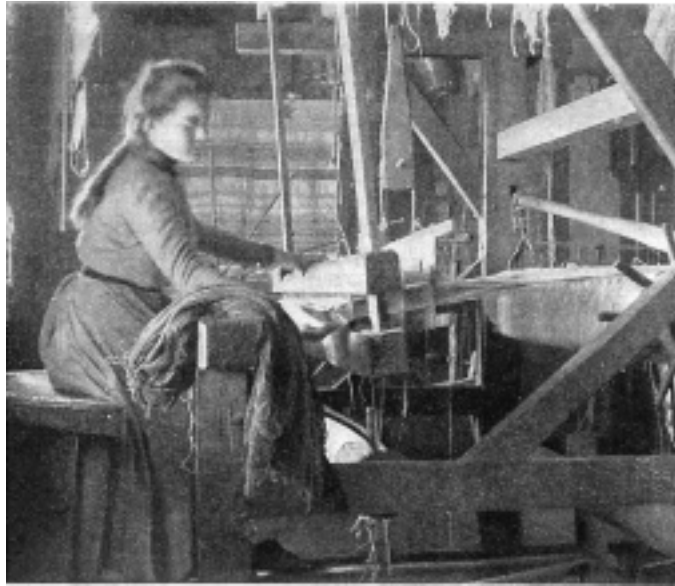
men of Deerfield are now producing some excellent hand-work in wood and brass. There is a "Village Room" in Deerfield, a club room established in memory of a much loved Deerfield woman, Martha Gould Pratt; and here the Deerfield handicraftsmen hold an exhibit each Summer which is attended by lovers of the arts and crafts from far and near.

The most recent of all developments of the handicraft movement is the Cranberry Rug Industry. Southwest of Mt. Desert lie two rocky little islets, the Cranberry Islands. Some New York women, spending last summer in that vicinity, took note of the "hooked rugs," made by the women of the little fishing villages there. An association was formed, of which Mrs. Seth Low is treasurer, to promote the "Cranberry Rug Industry." Miss Amy Hicks, a New

being firm and close enough without. The design is painted on the foundation with bluing or dyestuff, and the surface of the completed rug clipped with shears. Dyeing of the rags with vegetable dyes is an important part of the work, as in all handicrafts. Miss Hicks has in mind certain conventionalized designs adapted from the natural scenery of the region—waves, pine-trees, and rocky shores—which will give the work individuality.

In the Cranberry Industry, one-third of the selling price goes to the designer, one-third to the craftsman, and one-third to the expense account. The Cranberry rug sells for forty cents a square foot. It is quite similar to the now famous Abnakee rug, which Mrs. Helen R. Albee developed in the same way,—by the supplying of artistic models and the securing of a market—out of the old-fashioned "Pulled Rug" of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire coast.

Up in Centre Lovell, Maine, Mr. Douglas Volk, the New York artist, and his family have discovered a mine of interest in the development of the native handicrafts which they found surviving in the region round about their country home. The development of the Sabatos rug, from one made in the neighborhood, has been the particular work and pride of Mrs. Volk. It is a pulled rug, but made of yarn, not rags. The yarn is pulled through a firm foundation woven by the women, and then knotted, like Oriental rugs. Indigo blue and dull madders are



WEAVING A SABATOS RUG FOUNDATION.

York artist, and a most clever craftsman, was engaged to supervise and direct the work, and the village women are now making rugs from her designs. Some of the rugs displayed at the recent exhibit of the Arts and Crafts guild in New York were most interesting. The worker takes burlap for her foundation; cuts her rags—which are new—into tiny strips, one-fourth of an inch wide, and pulls them through the mesh with her hook. No knot is used, the rug

favorite colors for the body of the rugs, with the designs worked in fawn or dove shades. The Sabatos resembles a Kurdish rug, and, to the eye of the layman, seems as beautiful in coloring, texture and workmanship, as the Oriental product. Mr. Volk has been supplying the designs, mainly conventionalized Indian motives. A Sabatos rug, three by five feet, will sell for \$25, and more orders are now going into the little Maine village than can be filled. Centre

Lovell women are also weaving and selling woollen and linen fabrics, suitable for curtains, portieres, draperies, coverings for couches, tables, and the like; and they are experimenting now on a woollen dress material which will cost \$1.50 or \$2.00 a yard. Their decorative materials cost \$2.50 a yard, making the selling price of portieres \$15 a pair. These fabrics attract artists, a number of whom have ordered them for house and studio furnishings; and as they are particularly suitable for Summer cottages, many wealthy people have bought them for that purpose. The people who are engaged in this work are an intelligent and well-to-do farming class, and the women are using yarn made from the wool raised on their own farms.

Besides this textile work, two men are making attractive baskets; another carves paper knives from apple wood most cleverly; and a farmer blacksmith is turning out ornamental brass hinges and the like at his forge. The little exhibit held by the Centre Lovell craftsmen last August, although their first attempt, was attended by about three hundred people from various points, interested in arts and crafts; and an annual exhibit and a crafts house are in contemplation.

Mr. Volk insists that, quality for quality, goods can be produced more cheaply by hand than by machine, provided you deal with the workman direct, eliminating the profits of several middlemen.

A "Tapestry Settlement" is one of the interesting developments of the near future



WARPIING THE WEB FOR A SABATOS RUG BEFORE HARNESSING IT TO THE LOOM.

in the American handicrafts movement. It will be organized by a firm which has recently opened a store on Fortieth Street, in New York, in which they carry only hand-made goods. For the location, they desire a place where wool is raised, and where there are women who still spin and weave. Such a place they can find in both Ohio and West Virginia, and they will locate during the coming Summer in one of those States. They will offer a price for certain fabrics, woven according to their requirements, which will make a better market for the wool than the farmers are now obtaining. Then they will send an instructor among the weavers, to furnish designs and improve methods. This instructor they have already secured, in the person of a woman who has made a study of tapestry in Europe. They will seek to produce all kinds of textiles but the crown of the industry will be the tapestry, for the promoters hope to establish here an industry in which American craftswomen shall rival in time the products of Gobelin, Beauvais and Abusson. The



SABATOS RUGS, DESIGNED AND MADE IN CENTRE LOVELL, MAINE.

same methods, of course, will be followed, as there is but one way of making tapestry. No European designs will be followed; American life, scenery and history will be used.

To produce the quality in a hand-made thing which makes it different from anything a machine can produce,—the quality which appeals to the cultivated and wealthy patron,—a different kind of workman is required. The machine worker is part of the machine, spending his life in the fearful monotony of making one small portion of an article. The craftsman makes the entire thing, and in so doing has a conception of it as a whole, and embodies in it something of his own individuality. When he is an

art craftsman, you get those marvels of wood carving and pottery, textiles and embroideries, which take their place as veritable works of art.

The machine must, of course, always supply the masses with the thousands of things in daily use. But side by side with the machine, there seems to exist a rich market for the artistic hand-made thing; in the making of which women, so largely the craftsmen of the primitive world, may find a necessary increase of income without resigning that home life which is so fearfully sacrificed by the woman in the business world, and without adding further to the millions who flock to the cities.