

**By MARY MEIGS ATWATER**

**THE COMMERCIAL WEAVER VS.  
THE AMATEUR WEAVER**

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There are almost as many reasons for learning to weave as there are weavers, but in a general way most of us have entered the craft either for pleasure or for profit. Of course, one may get both pleasure and profit from the work, but there is a difference in attitude toward the craft and in judgment of the product according as to whether profit or pleasure is the more important consideration. The proof of success in weaving for profit is in the making of money, while the proof of success in weaving for pleasure is first in the artistic excellence of the product itself and secondly in the enrichment of the craftsman's life through the joy of creative work.

The article that sells readily is not always beautiful, alas! — though the efforts should be to make it so if possible — and a truly beautiful thing does not always find a ready purchaser.

I think that in order to work to advantage we must choose between these aims,—either we must be prepared to sacrifice our ideal of beauty—when necessary—to considerations of saleability and profit, or we must be prepared to devote much time and effort to work that may never bring us any return except in the satisfaction of beauty created and a good job done.

What are the dangers to be avoided, and what are the special satisfactions, in weaving purely for pleasure?

The chief danger is the danger of being too easily pleased with one's achievement. A thing one makes for pleasure should be far more beautiful than a thing made for sale—because it is not necessary to count the time and labor expended. As a matter of fact, the reverse is often the case, and this has led to the scorn of the commercial weaver for amateurishness and dilettantism in art.

You can determine very easily whether or not you are an artist or a dilettante: if you ask for criticism and resent anything but unqualified praise, or if you find honest criticism discouraging, or suffer with injured feelings when criticised, then you are a dilettante; but if you thrill to criticism, and can see through the faulty work to something much finer that you are inspired to strive for, then you have the artist's attitude.

The most important thing for the weaver who weaves for pleasure is to cultivate the artist's point of view, and to forswear amateurishness.

There is the opposite danger—the danger of a too relentless search for perfection, that when pushed to extremes makes accomplishment of any kind

impossible—but this is a very rare danger and most of us are not likely to fall into it. We must, however, keep in mind that a woven fabric must be adapted to some human use, or it has failed of its aim. Simply to weave a bit of something, without any idea of future use, can never produce a complete work of art, no matter how charming the thing may be in color and design.

The weaver who weaves for profit must develop a definite product that can be made at the lowest possible in time and materials, and that will sell at a profit. The weaver who weaves for pleasure may ignore practical considerations like this and is free to make experiments, to work and work over a piece till it is as nearly perfect as possible, to go back and start over as often as he chooses, and to discard unsuccessful work without a qualm. This is his great privilege.

I feel that a weaver who weaves for pleasure has a responsibility toward the craft. The craft is in his hands, for him to carry along to new achievement. The standards of workmanship and beauty that he establishes will be followed by those who weave for profit. He is the leader.