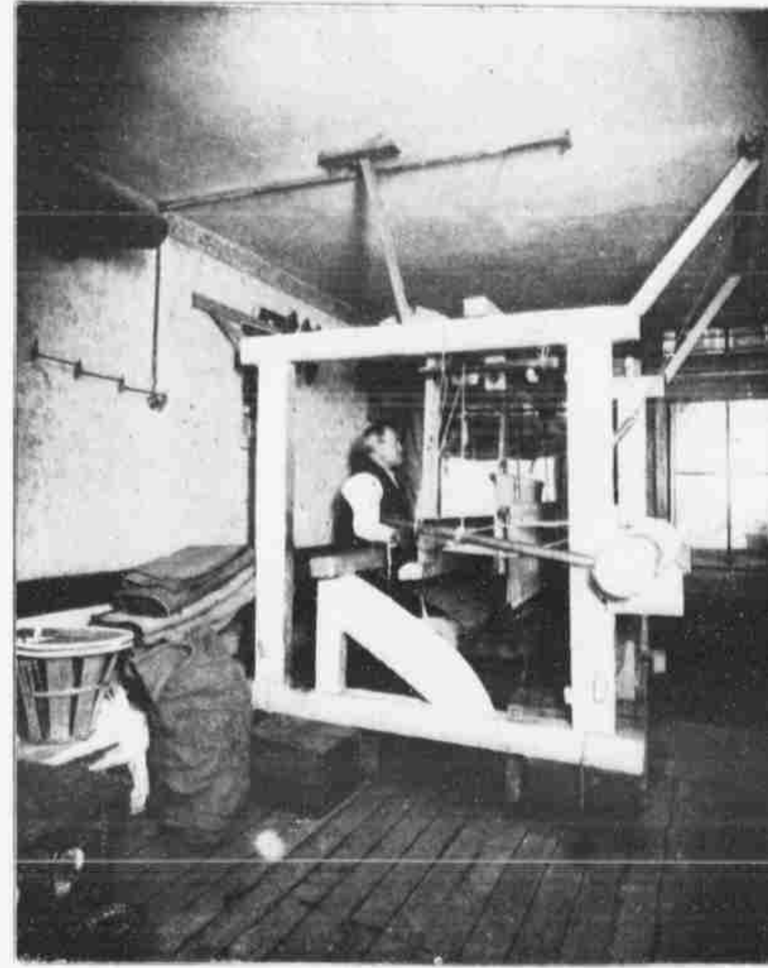
# Renaissance of the Humble Rag Carpet

SPINNING WHEEL OF TODAY.

WEIGHING THE RAGS.



THE DEAN OF THE LOOM.

AFTER years of undervalue in the industrial world, products of the human hand are again to the fore. Handicrafts are springing up on every side. Not in competition with or antagonistic to the machine, which has done so much to bring utility and beauty into lives that might otherwise have never known either, but as a natural expression of individuality, are handicrafts multiplying. Periodicals devoted to hand made arts threaten to become as formidable as trade journals. It is the inevitable result of two growing factors in American life. Educated wealth is spreading, and with it desire to possess exclusive objects of art which bear the impress of individuality and which can not be duplicated, as are machine made things. Educated wealth is learning to recognize and appreciate the intrinsic value of human skill as manifested in the various handicrafts.

Ready to meet this taste and demand upon the part of educated wealth are men and women of ideas who have learned to think and to execute for themselves. Breaking away from the employer and the salary, they have set up their tools under their own roof tree, and from designs of their own fashioning, out of clay, brass, copper, wood, straw, rags, leather and other mediums, they are making for utility and beauty articles that bespeak the thought that is within them.

In out of the way corners of large cities are numbers of little handicraft shops where a single worker creates and stamps his or her hand made work, as did the Benneventu Cellinis of the middle ages, with their personal signature or trade mark.

Knowing no taskmaster but the satisfaction of their individual sense of the true, they withhold their work from the buyer until it realizes as near as possible their ideal. Their own designer, executor, taskmaster, their salary is their profits. These little shops nestle for the most part under sky roofs, or are buried in cellar basements. So rapidly have they increased in number, and of such superior excellence is the work they turn out, that in more than one large city depots have been established for their exhibition, with hope of commanding a larger market than is possible in the secluded shop or studio.

In this refreshing revival looms a long discarded art—the weaving of rag carpets. As the dean of carpet weavers swings his gaily-filled shuttles these days he marvels at the change in the clientele that finds its way to his basement home, where his loom of nearly forty years' service has long been a curiosity to the passerby. In lieu of an occasional housewife or the matron of a charitable institution comes now, to the old man's perplexity, my lady's maid with balls of cut rags, or a monogramed, perfumed note asking him to call at No. S. and So and collect material prepared for the weaving of a carpet, rug or portiere.

"It's the Americans—the rich Americans," chuckles the old weaver, "who have set my loom a singing in its old age."

When the dean came from Bavaria with his good frau less than forty years ago he found in New York more than 1,000 carpet weavers, all doing a thriving business. "I owned four looms," sighed the old man with a blink in his merry brown eye. "All the big stores bought my carpets, and great ladies living in fine houses in Bond street and Lafayette place used to bring me their fine gowns cut up into strips to weave into carpets—not for the kitchen, I would have you know, but for their own beautiful bedrooms."

With the coming of the machine-made carpets, among the first to desert the hand weaver were the foreigners. Today the dean knows of but three hand looms on the East Side of New York and doubts if there are a dozen weavers who make their bread swinging the shuttle.

"The old weavers have nearly all died off, and their children would not learn the trade. It was too slow. They followed the trend of the times and took to the machine or sought work in other fields.

"Ach! 'Tis hard, hard work," said the dean's frau, threading the loom. "All is so big and heavy and clumsy."

"Come, come," laughed the dean, "you would not give up threading this, old lady, and sorting out the bobbins and weaving romances around each pretty bit of silk or velvet for the wealth of the Vanderbilts."

"Wealth is all very good," continued the philosopher, light-hearted as a boy, despite his seventy years, game eye and Avenue A basement home, "but it's not everything. There was a weaver in my town in Bavaria who made soap by day and spun carpet by night. The lilt of the shuttles always set him a singing, and in song he forgot he was poor or tired or lonely. There was a very rich man lived near by who could not sleep at night for the weaver's song. He sent for him one day and asked why he sang all night.

"'Because it makes me happy,' said the weaver.

"'And it makes me unhappy,' said the rich man, 'for it will not let me sleep. I give you $400 if you do not sing at night.'

"'Four hundred dollars,' said the poor weaver, who had scarcely owned as many pennies at one time in his whole life. 'I take your money and I sing no more.'

"When people heard the story they came from all sides to see the weaver. Every one had a new way for him to invest his moneys, until the poor weaver he knew not what to do. Every day he hid his money in a new place. He could not eat nor sleep, thinking some one would find it. He put it inside his shirt and it burned him. Every time he threw the shuttle his throat parched for want of song. The money and the song bursting to be out made him so sad he could no more eat nor drink nor sleep. He was like a ghost, and the carpets he wove lost their color. One day he could stand it no more. He took the money and he went to the rich man's house.

"'I gives you your money,' said the weaver to the rich man. 'I keep my song.'"

"He, he, he," chuckled the frau, weighing great balls of rags sent in by an uptown hospital. "Money cannot buy a light heart."

"But it sends us customers," said the dean; "rich customers, where once we had only the very poor." Turning to the long bin behind his seat at the loom, he tossed up merrily the sorted colors of the bobbins waiting to be woven into a carpet to catch the footprints of children of wealth.

The mainstay of the surviving hand looms are the charitable institutions. To keep inmates or convalescent patients employed cast off garments are given them to cut into stripes and prepare for the weaver, for rag carpet strips are always useful in large institutions. Where formerly tenement denizens found it more profitable to buy machine-made carpets, since old rag brought prices almost equal to that asked for the machine carpet, which suggested luxury, they find today it does not pay to save them for the rag man, so mightily has the price fallen, owing to the substitution of wood for rags in the manufacture of paper.

On the other hand, ready-made garments have been brought to such perfection in the making and at so small a cost to the consumer that once, where wealth found it profitable to dispose of cast off garments to second-hand dealers, they now receive so little that, in lieu of poor relations or sending them to institutions, they are, in compliance with fashion's behest, cutting them up into rag carpets.

Does life offer a more literal way of tramping its vanities under foot!

Much of the durability of a rag carpet depends upon the quality of its warp. Cotton warp wears better and is much firmer than wool or linen. The beauty of a rag carpet lies largely in the quality of the material used and the deftness with which the weaver throws the shuttle. Carpets confined to one material—cotton, wool or silk—are more effective and durable than those of varied stuffs. Silk is the favorite fabric for decorative rugs, always prized by the lover of skilled handicraft. One yard width is the limit of the carpet loom, which is not designed to weave large portieres. They call for a separate apparatus. While the old-fashioned hand loom does not admit of the weaving in of designs after the manner of tapestry, the trained weaver—he of color perception and artistic—can achieve wonders in the blending of the bobbins. Two pounds of rags are allowed to one yard of carpet. Thirty cents a yard is the price of weaving one yard.

From the time the rags, cut and sewed into strips, generally of an inch width and wound into great balls, are brought to the weaver, until he finally rolls it into carpet for delivery to the customer, it has six separate handlings. Consider this labor, and that one yard an hour is the largest output, at 30 cents a yard, and well may it be said that, for the hand loom weaver, Time was made for slaves and Wealth is a chimera.

# Episodes and Incidents in the Lives of Noted People

THE first minister to the United States from the republic of Cuba, Gonzalo de Quesada, is of an old revolutionary family of the island, whose name has been prominent in every effort made for the liberation of Cuba from Spain, by rebellion or filibuster expeditions alike. Mr. Quesada came to the United States as agent of the Cuban republic in 1897, but was of course unrecognized, as his accrediting government had no existence. He is still in the 30s and earned many friends in his previous sojourn in Washington.

In some parts of Germany the inns in small towns are accustomed to substitute chicory for coffee—a practice not altogether unknown to American landlords, it is believed. Bismarck arrived at such a place one day and asked the landlord if he had any chicory. The host answered affirmatively and the chancellor said: "Bring it all to me." The landlord did so and Bismarck said: "Is this all the chicory you have in the house?" "It is, meinherr," was the reply. "Then," said the man of blood and iron, "bring me a cup of coffee."

Lord Lovat, whose scouts were so successful during the war in South Africa, is to receive a Highland welcome on his return to Scotland from the Clan Fraser, of which he is chief. This is not the first time that the head of the Fraser clan has raised men for the British army. A regiment called the Seventy-eighth Fraser Highlanders was raised in 1757 by Simon Lord Lovat as a mark of his gratitude at getting back to his native land after exile. This regiment served in America. Again in 1775 Lord Lovat raised a Fraser regiment—the Seventy-first—which also fought in America and was discharged in 1783.

It is said that only once was Mr. Marshall Field known to lose his nerve. After the great fire of 1871, relates the Saturday Evening Post, a prominent Chicagoan entered the room in which Mr. Field and his partners were taking stock of their misfortunes. The latter were urging the feasibility of continuing the business, but Mr. Field could not share their hopeful outlook.

"What's the matter, Marshall?" inquired the kindly caller.

"I tell them it's no use," responded the young merchant. "We've lost everything and there's no such thing as going on with the business. Why, we couldn't do it with less than a million dollars!"

For a moment the caller was silent; then he quietly remarked: "Well, Marshall, you can have your million—and you'll come out all right, too."

This man was the late Cyrus McCormick, and he kept his word, with the result that Mr. Field is today recognized as one of the foremost merchants of America.

British public opinion is strongly in favor of keeping Lord Kitchener at home instead of sending him to India. His lordship does not stand so well with the aristocracy, to many members of which he has given offense by refusal to meet their wishes. For instance, there is one great nobleman who desired that his favorite son be sent home from South Africa. So he telegraphed to Kitchener: "Please send my son home at once; urgent family affairs." Kitchener replied: "Your son cannot return at all; urgent military affairs."

The street car conductor with a talent for repartee of the neat and polished order is rare, and note should be made of him when found, says the New York Times. A dissatisfied passenger found one out in the neighborhood of Bronx park last week, when two women who had been trying to get to the zoological show complained of the difficulty they had had in eliciting any information about its whereabouts.

"Yes, madam," the dissatisfied man—a stranger to them—chimed in, "I can quite sympathize with you. The fact is, I don't believe these conductors know the difference between botanical gardens and zoological. I doubt if any of them could even tell a monkey from a man."

"Fares, please," said the conductor, interrupting the conversation just at that point. "Fares, please. None of our business what you are so long as you pay your fare. Two, ma'am?"

Kiankia, descendant of a long line of distinguished Indian chiefs, died a few days ago in a little hut in a secluded spot near the shores of the Raritan river, about two miles from Flemington, N. J., and with his passage disappeared the last of the once great and proud tribe of the Delawares. Arthur Tenbroeck of New York City, who has spent many summers in the neighborhood of Flemington, and who made the acquaintance of the aged chief of an extinct tribe about three years ago, superintended his burial and says that his wishes—that he should be laid away under the shadows of an ancient elm, where once his forefathers sat in solemn council—were carried out. Mr. Tenbroeck says that Kiankia informed him some time before his death that he was 95 years old. "It was generally supposed," said Mr. Tenbroeck, in discussing the death of the last of the Delawares, "that old Indian Anne, who died in Mount Holly in 1894, was the last of the famous tribe, but it was not known then that her brother, Kiankia, was still alive."

George S. Boutwell tells in his recently published book of reminiscences that he was present at an interview between General Joe Hooker and Charles Sumner, to whom Hooker applied to assist him in obtaining a Massachusetts regiment on the plea that he was a native of that state. "In the course of the conversation Hooker said that if he could obtain a regiment he would come to the command of the army and take Richmond." This was in May, 1861; Hooker "had then recently arrived from California and his appearance indicated poverty. His dress was worn and his apparel was that of a decayed man of the world."

At the time of King Edward's recent operation the nurse who had been present to assist left the room on his recovering consciousness, but not before the king had caught sight of her face. Directly after he asked one of his physicians who she was, for he had seen her somewhere, and quite lately. The doctor admitted that this was so, for but a short while before his majesty had presented this same nurse a medal for her work in South Africa. The gift has been rendered doubly precious to its recipient, for the king asked for the nurse and shook hands with her, saying at the same time: "I have proved for myself how well you deserved that medal."

Nagiyanpe, a full-blooded Sioux Indian from Fort Shaw, Mont., has just been elected leader of the municipal band of Carlisle, Pa., and thus enjoys the distinction of being the first red man to assume dictatorship of a musical organization composed entirely of whites. Nagiyanpe, who is a modest and unassuming young fellow, has assumed the name of Robert Bruce in his intercourse with the pale face. He is an excellent performer on the trombone and has been a professional musician for some time.

When Dion Boucicault was playing "The Vampire" at the Princess theater in London he gave a great deal of attention to the opening scene, which represented an Alpine landscape with a distant thunderstorm. The thunder was produced as usual, and some remarkable fine moonlight effects were introduced. One night when the season was at its height a tremendous clap of thunder startled the audience and interrupted Mr. Boucicault in the middle of a speech. Lowering his voice so that he could be heard only by the property man, he said:

"Mr. Davies, you are making more mistakes. That thunder came in the wrong place."

Mr. Davies replied in tones which could be plainly heard all over the auditorium:

"No fault of mine, sir, it wasn't my thunder. Thunder's real out of doors; perhaps you can stop it there."