

## A UNIQUE TEXTILE EXHIBIT

IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

**B**UT a few short months ago to say, on any educational subject, "Thus they do in Germany," was to gain respectful and interested attention. Nowadays, among a considerable class of excited citizens, the response appears to be, "Then thus we will not do." Our problem is, evidently, to emulate Germany's virtues and avoid her faults—which, after all, is but one variety of a problem universal.

In Germany, in days of peace, they know the one industry exhibit, and they have tested its value. John Cotton Dana, of Newark, N. J., has followed with wise emulation. The Newark Museum, at present ensconced under the Free Public Library tent, and bidding fair like the proverbial camel to crowd the owners out, displayed during February and the first half of March, its second annual, one industry, one state exhibit. Last year it was pottery—"The Clay Products of New Jersey." This year it was fibres and all that is made thereof—"The Textiles of New Jersey." The exhibit of 1915 was most beautiful; the exhibit of 1916 was more beautiful, if a comparative can be built on a surperlative.

Down the middle of the great room, on the fourth floor, built originally for an auditorium, but transferred from the ministry of hearing to that of sight, ran a raised platform, where sat rival spinners and weavers—a Greek woman, spinning as did Penelope's maidens, with crude distaff and spindle, and the modern counter-

part of a Colonial dame with treadle and flyer, an upright and a horizontal loom, with reeds a-clanking as the shuttles flew.

The whole history of fibre preparation was told in four great cases, by picture, diagram, map and specimen. The cotton plant bore bloom and boll at once; the Egyptian camel plowed up the overflow of the Nile; the Southern mammy fetched in baskets the product of her day's picking; the bale was pressed, sliver and rove were carded, and the factory turned out its finished thread for warp, or filling. Next came the story of the flax. Classes of school children from New York or Arlington, the Oranges, or from Newark itself, gazed at the stately seed-crowned plant, timidly felt the rough points of the comb on which it was hackled, compared the blond tresses of some Swedish or Dutch classmate with the hanging flax or tow, and drew their own comparisons between the discipline of the breaking machine and of human life. The wool case showed the steps by which the merino sheep makes his contribution to the comfort of mankind, and the case of cocoons told how the moth yields its life that we may walk in silk attire.

One end of the room was splendid with Jersey-made aniline dyes, and there the visitor learned why Oriental rugs, though old, retain their charm, and why our silk merchants mourn the loss of German trade.

Around the room were shimmering specimens of the best of New Jersey textiles,

but in one case were things from everywhere. For here were shown how few are the elements whose variations produce all textile adornment. There are only three methods of decorating cloth: One can embroider as on these specimens of Turkish and Japanese artists, with the variation of American drawn work between them. One can weave the beauty into the goods in its making. Here, for instance, were handwoven goods in intricate two-color patterns, and the print of Jacquard looms in wonderful variety. One can print—in proof of which were handmade wood-block prints, Japanese stencils, a ribbon printed on the warp and woven plain, and several machine-printed effects in several colors or in tones of one.

At the far end of the hall charts showed why the wool fibre felts and silk weaves smoothly, how miniature joints in the flax fibre and grooves in that of cotton affect the thread. There, too, were samples of the fundamental weaves in silk and cotton, wool and kindergarten paper models, to be studied at leisure. Students from Pratt Institute rubbed elbows with "industrial girls" from the prevocational schools of the city, or the sewing departments of the local Y. W. C. A. who were sketching these.

There was a corridor devoted to Grandmother's counterpanes, woven in patterns with flowery and fanciful names, some single, some double weave. Many of these Grandmothers wove, the grandmothers of denizens of New Jersey, or of granddaughters now living in remote regions who sent these mementos of the days when, sure enough, woman found plenty in the home to keep heart and head and hands employed. But some bore the initials of those famous old-time weavers who went from house to house weaving up the threads that the women had spun.

Along one wall were samplers. There the children congregated to regard with awe the landscape decorations, perhaps a green house with pink smoke pouring forth from its two chimneys, and, with miraculous impartiality, floating off in diametrically opposite directions to make a symmetrical, if impossible, scenic effect. Even the boys were much impressed with the early piety of the youthful craftswomen:

"Jesus, permit thy gracious name to stand  
As the first efforts of an infant's hand,  
And while my fingers o'er the canvas move,  
Engage my heart to seek they love."

says Amelia Wilde, aged eleven, and  
"Mary Percival is my name, and  
With my needle I did the same.  
I did it for to let you see what  
Care my parents took of me,"

confides another in tiny crimson stitches.

On the third floor were hats, felted from the fur of hare, rabbit or coney by the two easily understood processes of blowing and shrinking. The soft fur is blown evenly onto a revolving perforated metal cone, held there in an immense conical mat by gentle suction, dampened by sprinkling, and, when lifted off, shrunken again and again, until it ends a compact, firmly textured cone of proper size to be manipulated and pressed over wooden blocks into a derby hat. Even the most blasé adult stood agape at this transformation. "I've had laundresses capable of miracles in shrinking," said one old gentleman, "but none that could come up to—or down to—that."

In the next booth were goods knit by a machine which does the trick by the use of many latchet needles each of which hooks the thread through a loop, and makes of it a loop through which to hook the continuing thread again. Silken stockings there were all ready to sew up, and knitted sweaters of wool, all the ends scratched up to look fluffy, and silk gloves cut out and prepared for stitching.

Next came the embroideries, showing how the pattern is drawn, and enlarged, and reproduced at diminished size so that the finished article is an exact replica of the original drawing. All this is done by moving, not the needles, but the goods, up and down, right and left, while the needles dart ever only back and forth minded and kept threaded by nimble young girls.

To make a lace, eat out the background of an embroidery. This is easy, if you remember that animal and vegetable fibres differ in their chemical composition. Embroider with cotton on silk, and immerse in a solution that eats away the silk. There were specimens here in several stages of the process.

Here was an experimental shirt knit of

thread made from the fibres of the American ramie, grown and growable in the marshes about Newark, and here, also, a tiny mitten cunningly woven from the fibres of the mineral asbestos.

The usual denizens of the sculpture hall were retired in pale draperies. They huddled in far corners to make way for the modern arts and crafts movement. Miss Hicks, of "handmade rug" fame, showed hooked and woven and braided rugs and wonderful dyed fabrics; Overbrook Hospital for the Insane showed basketry and weaving, by means of which the patients obtain partial support and seek to attain composure and coordinated thought. The Commission for the Blind and the Women's Reformatory also showed work in textiles suited to their special purposes. One seeks thus by the aid of tactual and muscular sensations to win the satisfaction and development which come only through expression and service. The other thus gains contributions towards self-support for the institution and teaches forms of occupation for idle hands which have verified the adage as to Satan's skill.

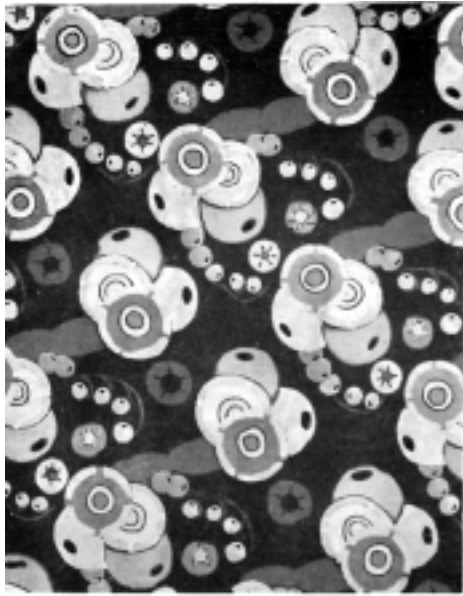
Side by side, at one end of this hall, stood the alpha and the omega of weaving. Mrs. A. N. Shook wove the simplest of art textiles upon the simplest of loom devices, offering for sale the loom, the textiles, and lessons in weaving, and a skilled tapestry weaver surrounded by the specimens of the truly pictorial art that he represents, wove with great dexterity flower and fruit, conventional scroll and human figure, his cartoon under the warp, his skillful fingers lifting the threads and wafting the myriad shuttles to and fro, as the picture grew, wrong side toward him, all his ends in view.

Those children in the Newark schools whose parents come from other lands provided a "Homelands" exhibit of textiles from their respective "Old Countries." Here were shawls from Paisley, skillful darnings from the German *volkschule*, startling counterpanes from Hungary, fairy tales embroidered from Russia, all skillfully done, while just beyond them lay work lent by the Natural History Museum of New York, exemplifying the proficiency in textile making of the Leni Lenape Indians who inhabited the site of Newark before Europeans ventured here.

The school children from all parts of New Jersey contributed such handwork as their curricula contain in weaving, embroidery, designing, tatting, knitting, netting, dyeing, stenciling, blockprinting, and testing goods. The exhibit culminated in a graduating dress costing only 75 cents, embroidered with ornaments designed by its weaver, and setting the pace for simplicity and good taste in such matters. The dress was a sample of those made and worn by the girls of several elementary graduating classes in Newark.

The members of Newark's largest women's club, and belonging to a committee thereof on "The relations of the museum and library to the community" did the decent work for this exhibition. This was no sinecure. Last year 2,000 children came in classes of twenty to get this work at the pottery exhibit, and this year one department store in Newark sent 1,000 employes during business hours.

There can be no doubt that an exhibit exploiting the many sided interests of a single industry has its place in the American Museum, for 30,000 people interested in industry, history, education and art came to the pottery exhibit of 1915, and the same variety of visitors patronized the present textile display.



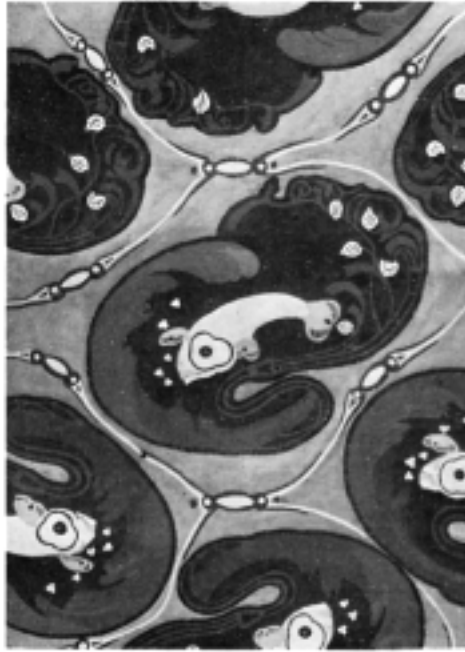
MARTHA BAESSLER



CAROLYN METZGER



RUTH BARKER



YVONNE LAURENT

Four designs for textiles made by the students in the Washington Irving High School, New York City. These girls have had one year of technical art training which included one term of intensive drawing from objects and nature forms and one term of color and design study. These plates were among those submitted by two classes competing for a prize offered by Mrs. Edward Robinson.