

The Tenafly Weavers

Under the lee of New York the nucleus of what promises to be a great industry is being brought to its own and is wielding a large influence for good as an economic center.

THE name itself intrigues one. It might be something from those interesting private account books of William Morris, says the wise but uninitiated one, or, if the wise one also knows his geography minutely, the answer would be "something to do with New Jersey." And then he would be right. In fact, the wise one would be correct if he made both answers, for these weavers are in New Jersey and they are looking back to the ways and means of William Morris for their inspiration and their methods.

Some years ago Miss Winifred Mitchell inaugurated this work in what she called a "portable studio" in her own home in New York City with only a teacher and two girls. The usual trials were experienced but soon this able woman interested her friends in the work and it began to grow day by day and soon it was necessary to move the studio to larger quarters. This has gone forward until now when the weavers are finally established as a business enterprise in art, occupying large quarters in the Town Hall at Tenafly, New Jersey, some ten miles from New York.

The Tenafly Weavers wish it understood that while there has been and is some hand weaving done in schools and institutions, this is the first bona fide business enterprise of the kind that has been self sustaining, and Miss Mitchell and her co-adjutors are justly proud of their success. Of course the first output of the little plant was subscribed for by friends, but the work was of such superior quality that a subscription would never be classed as a charity. From the moment of the inception of the idea every library file was searched, the industrial histories of every land were called upon to furnish their valuable quota for designs for the Tenafly Weavers, with the result that not only do they make all those fascinating objects of feminine attire such as handbags, scarfs, negligees, etc., but really splendid materials for hangings, upholstery and table use. To be quite businesslike, the weavers have more orders listed than they can fill, from professional decorators as well as from private individuals.

Having gone into this work with all her faculties awake to the fact that to make a success of it from both the artistic and business standpoints Miss Mitchell realized that hand woven materials must also be hand dyed,

so from the nice selection of yarns, the pattern having already been chosen, this very ticklish task of dyeing is attacked and it must be said that these women have accomplished wonders with their colors.

However it must not be thought that all their work has been easy. On the contrary, their chief difficulty is a very vital question to their success, and it is that workers are very hard to get hold of, notwithstanding the fact that all beginners are paid throughout their student period. This usually lasts not longer than six months when the weaver's salary is not only more than a living wage but as much more as her output and originality permits. It has not been easy to persuade American women

that here is a pleasant, well paying work that will always stand them in good stead, for without doubt it is a matter of short time when weavers at hand looms will be as sought after as for any other business in America, the work itself being of such high character as to assign these industrial artists an enviable place in the social plane.

It is easy work, though it requires some standing, which our women seem physically

unable to do, hence Miss Mitchell pays closest attention to the surroundings of the weavers and encourages strengthening exercises. Yet at its hardest the work is never as trying as most office work and is better paid. All this is retailed at length hoping that those interested in the development of the American industrial arts will direct the attention of young aspirants to this field of endeavor.

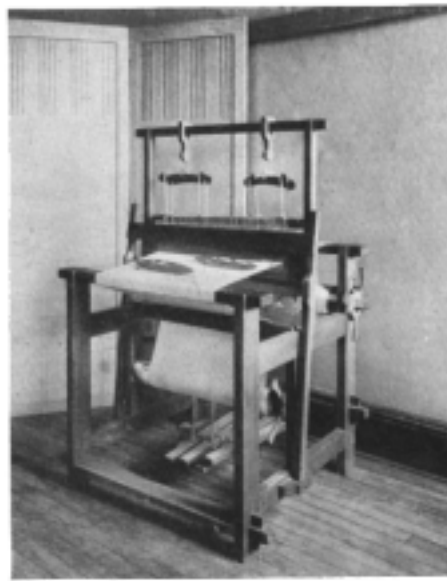
In order to bring to their tasks the widest information Miss Mitchell visited this year the most important looms of England and France and was able to obtain Queen Alexandra's permission to bring from her Sandringham Looms the Misses Wolfe, who will teach their methods to the Tenafly weavers during their year's leave of absence.

This is but the beginning of a plan to install master weavers from as

many foreign lands as possible. It is hoped that India, the far East, Greece and the near East, as well as Mexico, will have representation in the working faculty of teachers. This will enable Tenafly weavers to learn all methods of weaving (Miss Mitchell expects to build looms to suit the foreign weavers), and to profit by actual experience in the various ways of dyeing and designing.



Miss Winifred Mitchell's "portable studio" has carried her into big business.



The pedals separate the threads through which the shuttles are passed.



Good light, good air and attractive surroundings are enjoyed by the weavers.