



WEAVER'S COTTAGE IN THE
SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS

LOOM WORK IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS

BY MABEL H. KERRISON

SIXTEEN miles from a railroad, over roads which even the jaded globe-trotter might turn from as impassable, over dry and rocky river-beds, with here and there a shallow stream to ford, we come upon a quaint mountain settlement. Picture to yourself a tiny cottage of only one floor. On the small front porch is a spinning-wheel on which wool, shorn from sheep raised on neighboring pastureland, is spun into yarn. Within there are two looms, one or other of which is almost perpetually at work from early morning until dark. The girl at the loom is not a human clod, as too often the collective imagination of the City pictures the backwoods maiden. Rather is she, if measured by the work her hands can do, more versatile than her city cousin. For she knows how to card the wool with her own hands and, having spun it into yarn, she can stain it in very beautiful hues with dyes of her own making. And as the movements of her hands are ordered by her brain, who may say what fancies, poetic or otherwise, may flit through that brain as the

shuttle flies? As to her dyes, they are made from the vegetable products of the district,—walnut, hickory, sassafras, etc. As to the product of her looms, they supply most of the textiles of her home,—rugs for the floor, curtains and upholstery for windows and furniture, spreads for the bed. Of special interest are the bed-spreads, for they are woven in many instances from old Colonial drafts in patterns bearing such quaint names as “Sun, Moon and Stars,” “Cat Tracks and Snail Trails,” etc. Nor are such names whimsical conceits of modern coinage, but have been handed down from a day long past, yet conveying a definite picture to the minds of the initiated.

Other products of the loom are fabrics for men’s and women’s clothing. Have you seen somewhere a “sport shirt” of particularly attractive fabric, —*i.e.*, of texture and design which piqued your fancy and curiosity? It may of course have come from Northern looms:—but if it is like one I have in mind, it was surely made of the linsey-woolsey which is a distinctive product of the Southern Mountain Weaver.

Another interesting but less known product of these busy workers is the hand-made netted lace, which is made in patterns to serve different purposes,—*e.g.*, from lace fringes to bags, or all-over lace for waists. All of these, also, are of designs which date back many years.

Have I overdrawn the picture? it may be asked. Are the maiden and her activities described in over-flattering terms? Well, if I presented her as the average mountain type, yes. But this particular cottage I have entered and this particular maiden I have seen and talked with, and my meagre sketch is in no way exaggerated. And what she is, others may be, —provided that, like her, they are given the advantage of being trained in the wonderful settlement school founded some twenty years ago by Miss Stone and Miss Pettit at Hindman, Knott County, Kentucky.