

Questions And Answers

By MARY M. ATWATER

(1) QUESTION: *Is it possible to make weaving profitable?*

ANSWER: Yes. A good many people are doing it.

(2) QUESTION: *How should one go about weaving in order to make it a business?*

(3) The first thing to do is to learn to weave. This sounds self-evident, but a good many people overlook this very thing.

Next, it is necessary to develop the project along business-like lines. It is possible, of course, to make pin-money by weaving this and that as fancy dictates and depend on chance or one's friends for sales, but it is quite impossible to make a real profit in this way. To make a business of weaving it is necessary to decide on a special product, and to do a lot of experimenting to find out just how to make this thing at the lowest cost in time and material, and how it can be made to be most attractive to purchasers. It is not one's own taste but the taste of the buyer that is of first importance. The thing must be standardized and produced in commercial quantity so that it can be marketed.

But this is only half the problem, and for many people the easiest half. It is not enough to produce an excellent and saleable article at a reasonable price, it is just as important to find or make a market. Some people sell their product to the shops, on a contract for so many yards or so many articles a month. Some people have shops of their own and sell locally or to tourists. Some people sell through agents who tour the country. Which plan to follow depends on many factors — the type of product to be marketed, the chances for local sales, and so on. Each weaver must work this out for himself. But it cannot be left to chance. It must be definitely organized on a business basis.

(4) *What type of weaving is most profitable?*

In my opinion the best line from the point of view of profit and for a full-time business is in the making of upholstery fabrics and drapery. However this requires expert weaving and those who engage in this work should also have skill in design and cleverness with color and textures. It is not a line for a beginner.

Many people do well in the weaving of tweeds and dress-fabrics. This is much simpler weaving than upholstery.

Blankets — baby-blankets, or "Afghans", or automobile blankets also offer good possibilities.

Some people specialize successfully in linens — towels, table sets and so on. Quite a large business has been built up in the southwest on hand-woven neckties.

The lines that appear to offer least in the way of profit are ordinary rugs — high-grade rugs in tufted weaving are a different matter — ; coverlets, and bags. Ordinary rugs are too easy to make and too many cheap ones are on the market; coverlets are too difficult to sell; bags take very skillful work in the finishing and the weaving is the smallest part of the manufacture. It is hard to sell these things at a price that returns a satisfactory profit.

To turn out a standardized product in marketable quantity is a job of work and not simply an interesting pastime. Weaving can hardly be both things, so one must choose.

Of course there are other ways to turn a knowledge of weaving to profit besides the making and selling of hand-woven fabrics. One may teach weaving, or use weaving in occupational therapy, or write books and magazine articles about it.

But for any of these activities the fundamental thing is to know how to weave. Weaving is a technical business and requires technical knowledge. Other necessities are a good loom and good materials. Without these things nobody can weave happily, pleasantly or well. And if not well, why weave at all?

I don't mean to make this sound discouraging — far from it. One does not have to weave for years in order to weave well. There are many simple kinds of weaving that a beginner can manage easily enough, and fortunately instruction is available almost anywhere in these days. There are a number of excellent looms on the market, and a great variety of beautiful yarns is available. But before you take lessons make sure that the teacher knows how to weave; before you buy a loom make certain that it is a good loom, intended for weaving, and not just something somebody wants to sell; and when you buy yarns be careful to get honest yarns, well spun and well dyed. Anybody can do these things and anybody can weave. Anybody can make a profit at weaving, too, by going about it in a businesslike way.