

Review of 'Weaving: The Art and Craft of Hand Weaving'

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The Catholic Worker, May 1956, 4.

Summary: Review of a book on hand weaving. Discusses spinning and weaving engaged in by herself, her daughter Tamar and friends. Says using our hands is a way to discover the sacramentality of things. (DDLW #705).

Lili Blumenau is familiar to some of the Catholic Workers since she made a retreat with us some years ago at Easton, Pa. and in the ten years since then has taught three or four of our number the fundamentals of weaving. She has a studio on Tenth Street, off Fourth Avenue, and she is an instructor in weaving at Teachers' College, Columbia University, and the Fashion Institute of Technology. This book she has written tells of the evolution of spinning and weaving from thousands of years before Christ, and there are beautiful illustrations of basket weaving, Egyptian spinning implements, wall paintings of spinners and weavers in Egypt down to present day photographs of girdle looms among the Indians of Guatemala. One illustration is of a Coptic child's tunic of natural linen, plain weave, decorated with tapestry woven motifs in bright colors, which dates from the fifth century. This tunic is in Cooper Union Museum not far from the Catholic Worker and I must certainly go to see it. It is very like the baptismal robes some of our friends are making today. There are not only pictures of every kind of loom and tool but a clear explanation of their uses. There is one section of the book given to design. At the end, a buyers' guide for looms and accessories, yarns and a very good bibliography and index.

Every one who has come to Peter Maurin Farm has been very much interested in our loom and spinning wheels, one from the Hutterites of Montana, one from French Canada and two from India. We are also, Tamar and Susie and I, familiarizing ourselves with the spindle, that small wooden stick with a round wheel which is the earliest of spinning implements and has been made of stone, metal or wood. By twirling this tick Tamar has been able to make very even thread from wool and flax. The children are beginning a scrap book of pictures of sheep, their sheering, the carding, washing, spinning and weaving of wool and it is a fascinating compilation which takes in discussion of village industries in India and Israel, and the latest, today, a picture of a loom clipped from the Catholic Charities Drive folder. You hear a great deal about these crafts in jails and veterans' hospitals and mental hospitals. "After the horse is stolen the barn door is locked." We need to use our hands, to develop skills, to rediscover the sacramentality of things. To whittle, to knit, to crochet, to mould in clay, to weave, to darn or mend also, - - all of these are the quiet occupations which make for Peace. Besides,

as Peter Maurin used to say, men make their millions by the machine and spend them for **hand made** articles, rugs, drapes, tapestries, linens, clothing.

One of our friends who made a retreat with us, who was not at all satisfied with her office and clerical work, began to learn to weave with Lili Blumenau and became so proficient that she was able to design and weave samples for manufacturers (all of which work can be done in the home on a small loom) so that perhaps she will one day attain to rural living and have her own sheep and produce her own wool.

Lauren Ford, the artist, of Sheep Fold, Bethlehem, Connecticut, every year has given us fleeces of wool which we have washed, dyed, teased, carded, spun and woven and sometimes knit into various garments. And we are only beginners, who do this in odd moments with visitors and friends.

Do get the book and start to weave your own drapes, couch covers, towels, scarves and hand bags.