Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation - Grace Nicholson: Notes and Photos, 1903-1968

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ought to have." To this he adds a love and understanding of the American boy that Mark Twain, one of his favorite writers, shared.

If there is anything striking about this guiet work he has done, it is the fact that he has done it for the sons of working men, for boys like himself. It is as if he paid back, vicariously, the little fatherless boy he used to be, who read and studied nights until dawn because he so much wanted the education he could not get in the daytime. When Frank Deems was in Spain, he saw, as a railroad man, the problem of transportation. But when he spoke of it, he spoke through the memories of a small boy who loved the little mule he used to drive in the mines——"I want to register my high regard for the poor little ill-treated, sad-eyed, patient, plodding donkey who is everywhere present and who represents seventy per cent. of the transportation in Spain. A monument to his honor would be much more to the credit of the country than many of those standing in honor or bull-fighters, butchers, and blood-suckers."

FRANK DEEMS has made education in the biggest outside interest in his life because his mother so loved books and so much wished him to know them. He has made the working man the biggest interest in his career because he knew and honored a fine man and an honorable worker, a mechanic. He has spent thousands of dollars on the education of poor boys, and has given them a share in his very home because all through his boyhood he felt there could have been nothing more precious to him than his own father.

The story of this man is typical of an American that is passing, of the oldtime working man, of the self-made builder of industry. It is the idealized story of the American railroad man.

A Champion Basket-Maker of the West [Continued from page 142]

of slender willow shoots. The Pomos call these willow sticks barn and from them a number of their baskets are named as bam-tush, which means evenly woven, and bam-shibu, three bams. The thread is obtained from the bark of shrubs and trees and the roots of trees and grasses. A sedge with the long running roots of trees and grasses. A sedge with long running roots which grows in most of the Pomo Country is the commonest source of fiber. Mary splits the roots with her teeth, coils them in bundles and drys them, ready for use. Various other plants are used.

The favorite feathers were from the red head and yellow throat of the woodpecker and from the green head of the mallard duck. Plumes of the male valley quail were much esteemed and any sort of bright feathers were often used with picturesque effect. Using thirty to fifty feathers to the linear inch, the Indian weaver made a soft, smooth surface, like red plush. Two hundred and forty quail plumes provided a finishing touch to one of these feather gift-baskets which was two years in the making. But while interesting as specimens of barbaric achievements, the gaudy feather baskets are less admirable, judged by white standards of beauty, than are the various types in which attention has been centered on excellence of weaving and of form rather than ornamentation. It is in these softly colored, symmetrical bowls with simple, vigorous designs brought out by the red or yellow or brown fibers that Mary has embodied

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A Champion Basket-Maker of the West

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the perfection of artistic basketry. Firm and water-tight, these baskets are a delightful combination of beauty and utility. As well as being perfectly adapted to their various purposes, they have also fascinating decorative qualities, and they are made to wear a hundred years or so.

Among the "root" designs which Mary inherited from her basket-making ancestors is a triangular pattern like a butterfly with folded wings. Another is known as the quail-tuft pattern and another resembles arrowpoints. A pretty design often seen in the coarser weaves is a motif called spotted snake or garter snake. The weaver uses these and other basic figures to form individual designs of her own, appropriate for the particular basket she happens to be making. Her only tools are a sharp knife, an awl, and a dish to hold water in which fiber is kept soaking so as to make it pliable. The weaver has no visible pattern before her but plans the design in her own mind and carries it out as she weaves.

In this day of the machine-made, standardized products so necessary to a smooth functioning of our civilization, it is no light thing that craftswomen like these Indians are doing for us. During the last decade, there had been a noticeable turning to the hand-made products of the American Indian. In many cases it has come just in time to save some hitherto unregarded craft from extinction. Now the blankets and pottery of the Southwestern Indians, the beadwork and leather of the Northern Indians, and the baskets of our Eastern and Western aborigines are really beginning to come into their own. In the development of a distinctive American art it may well be that historians of a future time will give a prominent place to the patient, sincere craftsmanship of such unassuming characters as Mary, the Pomo squaw.
- CRAIG HENDERSON

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