

A Paper of Pins.

ALTHOUGH the use of pins for the toilet may be said to have been coexistent with that of dress, it is nevertheless a fact that for many centuries, among all but the most highly-civilized people, only such simple substitutes as Nature afforded were used. The thorn of several tropical plants furnished, for want of a better, a very convenient pin; in the tombs of Mexico those of the agave have been found; and it is probable that in that first attempt at dressmaking in the Garden of Eden we might read "pinned" for "sewed." So recently as the sixteenth century the ladies of England, except the very richest, were content to use skewers of wood. But the ancients had pins of gold, silver, and bronze, none of which, however, were much short of six inches in length, while the average length was about eight inches. Doubtless the loose, flowing costume of the time demanded a larger implement than our modern dress; and then it must be remembered that these pins were generally displayed as ornaments, having large heads oftentimes studded with jewels. The Romans used pins of various shapes, with large fancy heads, and made entirely of ivory, bronze, bone, and wood. In the Abbot Collection in New York are a number of pins from some Egyptian tombs at Thebes. They vary in length up to seven or eight inches, and some, those with very large heads, were probably used for the hair.

It was not till the end of the fifteenth century that the manufacture of pins was commenced in England. Previous to that time dependence was placed upon various parts of the continent for an adequate supply, but the importation was stopped in 1483 by a prohibitory law, with a view to encourage the home manufacture. But even then, and for many years thereafter, only the rich could afford their purchase, and the sale was hampered by some foolish restrictions. For instance, only once a year could the pins be sold, namely, at certain fairs. Consequently, at those stated times the ladies of the vicinity would go to the place designated, there to lay in a stock of pins for the ensuing year, the money for which was given them by their husbands; and in this way arose the term "pin-money" as applied to that furnished a woman for her toilet expenses. Of course the absurd restriction did not exist very long, and as pins rapidly became cheaper, the remainder of the money was diverted to other purposes of dress, although the name remains.

In 1543 the manufacture was again regulated by an act of parliament, which provided penalties against those who should place improperly made pins in the market, but in three years after the manufacture had so greatly improved that the statute was needless. In 1626 the industry gave employment to 1,500 persons in the town of Gloucester, and in 1636 London and Birmingham became centers of the trade.

In 1812 the scarcity of pins in the United States, owing to the importation having been interrupted by the war, was so great that an attempt was made by some Englishmen to establish the manufacture in America. The experiment was made in the state prison at Greenwich village, now a part of New York City. Such was the dearth that a paper of pins that can now be bought for five cents readily fetched a dollar then, and of a far inferior quality at that. The enterprise was abandoned, however; was tried again in 1820, and again proved a failure; and it was not till 1836 that the industry may be said to have become established at Birmingham, Conn., which, in common with its namesake in England, has become one of the centers of the manufacture.

By the old system of hand manufacture no less

than fourteen distinct processes were required to make a perfect pin. And in addition there was the process of sticking the pins in the paper, which was usually distributed among the women and children at their homes in the vicinity, but which involved great waste and loss of time. The improved machines now in use at Birmingham, Poughkeepsie, and Waterbury, conduct all the processes with scarcely any attention; the wire goes in at one end, and comes out a finished pin at the other. The same with the machine for filling the papers; all that is necessary is to keep it supplied with paper and pins. Black pins are simply the ordinary brass ones japanned.

"World of Science."

THE PETRIFIED FERN.

In a valley, centuries ago,
Grew a little fern leaf, green and slender,
Veining delicate and fibers tender;
Waving when the wind crept down so low;
Rushes tall, and moss, and grass, grew round it,
Drops of dew stole in by night, and crowned it,
But no foot of man e'er trod that way;
Earth was young and keeping holiday.

Monster fishes swam the silent main,
Stately forests waved their giant branches,
Mountains hurled their snowy avalanches,
Mammoth creatures stalked across the plain;
But the little fern was none of these,
Did not number with the hills and trees,
Only grew and waved its sweet wild way,
None came to note it day by day.

Earth, one time, put on a frolic mood,
Heaved the rocks and changed the mighty motion
Of the deep, strong currents of the ocean.
Moved the plain and shook the haughty wood,
Crushed the little fern in soft, moist clay,
Covered it, and hid it safe away.
Oh! the long, long centuries since that day!
Oh! the agony, oh! life's bitter cost,
Since that useless little fern was lost!

Useless! Lost! There came a thoughtful man
Searching Nature's secrets far and deep;
From a fissure in a rocky steep
He withdrew a stone, o'er which there ran
Fairy pencilings, a quaint design,
Veinings, leafage, fibers clear and fine!
And the fern's life lay in every line!
So, I think, God hides some souls away,
Sweetly to surprise us, the last day.

PRESSED FERNS FOR TABLE ORNAMENT.—The use of ferns for table ornamentation, both pressed and fresh, is more than ever a *mode* in fashionable houses. The fresh are cut to a certain length, placed upon a table in a circle with the points out, then a glass dish filled with moss and shells is set down upon the circle thus formed. This ornament may be called a mat of ferns, and is considered to be equally pretty with those which are pressed. Little wheel-barrows of white wood carved in open patterns are filled with ferns and moss, and set upon a fern mat as above. Small wooden pails are covered with fir cones of two sizes, laid over with gilding, and these are filled with ferns and smilax, and set upon the table. Sometimes an entire growing fern is taken from its woodland home, and with the earth about it

placed in the beautiful shells now so much used in household ornament. The plants thus arranged are set upon the buffet. Oil-skin floor cloth mats are placed beneath, concealed by pressed ferns. In a word, there is no way in which to display the fern that is not resorted to.

THE WEDGWOOD PORTLAND VASE.—The well-known Gorham Company of Providence, R. I., has added to its art collection a *fac-simile*, by Wedgwood, of the famous Barberini or Portland Vase. The Gorham Collection is a superb one, and is kept up to serve as models for such artists as make designs in silverware. It comprises reproductions of those art-specimens of the South Kensington Museum, which are most celebrated, and many rare *chef-d'œuvres* in ceramic art as well.

The Portland Vase has a remarkable history. Of all sepulchral vases it is the most famous, and is the identical one in which lay the ashes of the Roman Emperor Alexander Severus, and his mother. Deposited in the earth in the year 235 A. D., it remained undisturbed and sacred for fourteen entire centuries. Through the efforts of Urban VIII. (Barberini), it was recovered about two hundred and fifty years ago. A century later the Duchess of Portland succeeded in outbidding for it at auction, Wedgwood, the great potter, who had an immense reputation. The scene of the rival bidding is said to have been a memorable one, ending in a compromise, whereby the Duchess at last became possessor of the vase, for one thousand eight-hundred guineas, after agreeing to allow Wedgwood to reproduce it if possible. His success in so doing was marvelous, and is said to have been the triumph of his life. It created a great stir among amateurs of art and ceramics in London. The copy, on being taken to London, was exhibited to the Queen. All the nobility and aristocracy rushed to see it. It created the same stir in all foreign capitals. No art-crazed or ceramic frenzy can be compared to that it created.

The sons of Wedgwood have preserved the original molds. The copy owned by the Gorham Company was made by them, and will remain in America. It is nine inches and three quarters high, and twenty-one and three quarter inches in circumference at its widest part. A snowy white band with exquisite figures in bas-relief passes around the body of the vase, of which the color emulates a beautiful blue jasper. The ornamentation has the appearance of being cut from the solid surface, the same as an antique onyx cameo.

"CHAIR SCARFS" AND HOW TO MAKE THEM.—Among the new "parlor draperies," and classed with them by dealers in objects for household ornament in its elegant branches, are what are called "chair scarfs," and these supersede the now abandoned tidy. Many of the materials used, however, for the obsolete tidy come into use for the chair scarf, and the softest reps, momic cloth, etc., are used. The strip must be a yard and a quarter in length, and at least two thirds of a yard in width. The ends are heavily fringed. Upon the center is embroidered a group of ferns, a couple of brilliant birds, a bird's nest with butterflies floating above it, a rich cluster of grapes with leaves and tendrils, or, if preferred, a "gonfalon" design in old time colors and outlined with gold "rough." The narrow border is also embroidered and outlined in arabesque. A heavy top is formed by doubling the material over for the depth of a couple of inches, and the scarf is then laid over the back of a chair, with the colors of which it must either harmonize or skillfully contrast. Several different chair scarfs are to be found in many parlors but it will be found with people of taste that all harmonize in design and color both with each other and with the *ensemble* of drapery in the apartment.