



POTTERS IN RHINELAND.

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Illustrated by HARRY FURNISS.



ONNOISSEURS love—and many who have no pretension to that title are familiar with—the quaint drinking mugs and other vessels which are known as *Grès de Flandres*. Scoffers have said that the peculiar stoneware in question has been so named because it was never made in Flemish-land; but, as will presently be seen, the scoffers are wrong. The province of Limburg however, now divided between Germany and Belgium, which was so long one of the principal seats of this manufacture, has always been a frontier state, and had always been up to 1814 subject to the counts and other rulers of Flanders. The ware is in truth essentially German in its history, and in the characteristics of its diversified forms, and artistic embellishments. The precise date and place of its origin remain unknown. A well-authenticated fragment of the brown ware bears the date of 1539; but examples of a rude, unglazed, white ware, and of a coarse, earthen body of dark grey, smeared with a lead glaze, have been found in excavations, and may be supposed to have been the productions of a very remote period. But evidently, by the middle of the sixteenth century the art had attained to something like perfection. For two centuries Germany retained the monopoly, and kept Europe supplied with drinking vessels adapted very much to the tastes, to the measures, and to the usages of different lands. It was towards the end of the eighteenth century when a successful attempt was made by one Dwight of Fulham to produce the like articles in England. This was however a period of remarkable activity among English potters. The picturesque, though rude, puzzle-jugs and tygs had been the product of much ingenuity; but they were disappearing before the beautiful salt-glaze ware, much of which has never been excelled in perfection of form and sharpness of ornament, and which had attained to the highest degree of artistic quality before the advent of Josiah Wedgwood. The story of this rude, though eminently native craft, and of its development, has been charmingly told in his *Art of the Old English Potter*, by M. Louis Solon, to whose antiquarian and artistic researches the writer of this paper offers his very grateful acknowledgments.



THE CONNOISSEUR.

The stoneware however, properly so called, was probably produced in numberless localities all over Germany and the Low Countries, where suitable clay and natural aptitude existed. But there are a few districts to which peculiar interest attaches: these were seats of characteristic and often remarkable original styles. Among the most notable places was Siegburg, situated not far from Bonn, on a tributary of the Rhine. There were produced the tall cylindrical cannettes in what was long known as Cologne ware, and

other articles of a like kind in a white body, often unglazed, but richly embossed with elaborate and finely-chased figures and ornaments in relief. Siegburg suffered severely during the wars of the seventeenth century; and the potters, despairing of being able to carry on their industry in peaceful security, finally emigrated to other lands. All attempts to induce them to return to their ruined abodes and desolated town were unsuccessful; but about fifty years ago an enterprising and ingenious potter undertook to revive on the spot the old manufacture. With the aid of ancient moulds, discovered in the neighbourhood, he reproduced the ware of the old types, following closely the old traditions. These revivals found a ready market, by the agency of unscrupulous dealers, as veritable examples, and long held unchallenged their places in public museums and the cabinets of collectors as genuine examples of the much-prized ware of Siegburg.



THROWERS.

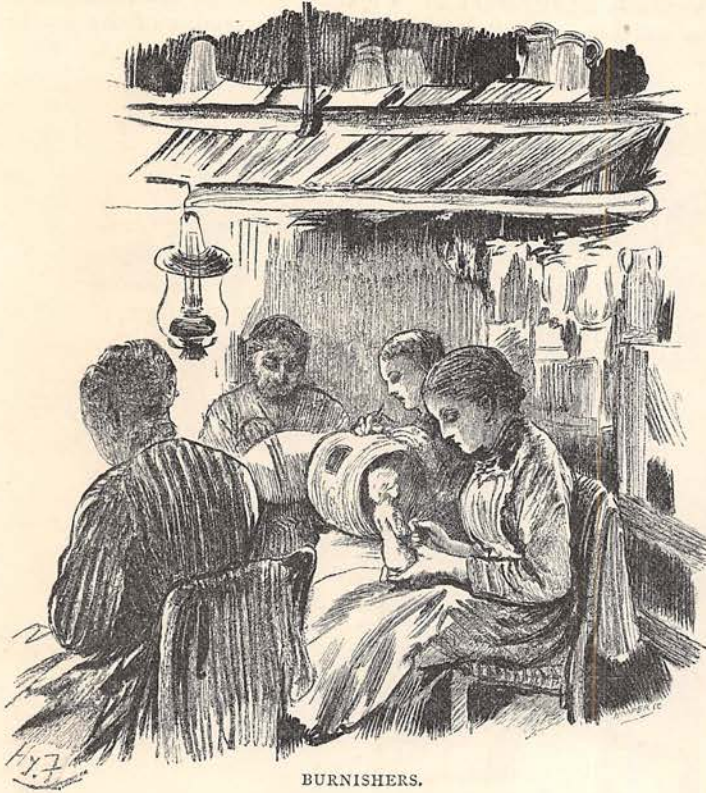
Only second in historic importance, and quite distinct in character, were the productions of Raeren, a town near Aix-la-Chapelle. These latter were generally of a rich bronze-brown, covered with a brilliant salt glaze. Besides the familiar beer pots, ewers and jugs of great artistic pretensions were there produced. The decorative art of Raeren found employment in the production of religious and mythological drinking and dancing scenes, some adapted from the engravings of the time, others undoubtedly the creation of local modellers and displaying great original talent.

Similar in style and colour to the ware of Raeren were the productions of Frechen, among which may be included a well-known jug, the neck of which is adorned with a grotesque long-bearded face, called in England "Grey Beard," or sometimes known as "Bellarmine."

On all these peaceful centres of ingenious and profitable industry grim-visaged war wrought ruthless devastation. In their despair the potters of the Low Countries abandoned the places in which their art was, like themselves, native and to the manner of the country born. Many sought refuge on the other side of the Rhine, and among other places which were to rejoice in the accession of the emigrants was the district lying a little to the east, opposite the confluence of the Moselle with the Rhine. Now forming part of the province of Nassau, this territory was, up to 1803,

under divided jurisdiction : it was part of the electorate of Treves and of the county of Wied. The district had been from time immemorial identified with the production of pottery to such an extent that it had become known as the "Kannenbächerland," or the country of the potters—much as the like region in North Staffordshire is known to all men as The Potteries.

In the year 1614, it appears that the Earl of Isenbourg, with commendable sagacity, made grants of land, and gave exemptions from taxation, with other tempting privileges, to one Bertram Knödten, a potter of Siegburg, by way of inducing him and his fellow-workers to transfer their art from its old home and to settle in this locality.



BURNISHERS.

The men of Siegburg and of Raeren thus encouraged flocked into the new country, and found there the peace and the protection for which in their old homes they had sighed in vain. Their art thus transplanted has survived many vicissitudes, at times has been well-nigh extinguished, but has happily revived, and it flourishes to-day in greater volume than ever, the name of Knödten being still borne by many of those who are associated with its fortunes.

In the earlier days of which we have spoken the stoneware of the Kannenbächerland had no special character of its own, sufficient to make it easily distinguishable from the productions of the Limbourg centre from which it had been imported. As a general

rule it may be said that one seldom finds original figure subjects, or delicate friezes of ornamentation, such as those which are the glories of the treasured examples of old Siegburg and Raeren. When subjects of this kind are found they are generally borrowed from the older types. The relief ornamentation was generally impressed by small metal seals, and these rosettes were then connected by stems and branches incised in the clay. Often enough a medallion portrait or heraldic panel occupies the centre of the piece, but such always has the appearance of being a mere accessory rather than an essential detail in the general and harmonious design. The effect thus obtained was heightened by the employment of bright coloured enamels, in deference to the rather gaudy taste of the age; harmonious blendings of purples and blues are the principal characteristic of the ware.

It is time however that we made the closer acquaintance of the Kannenbächerland. Crossing the bridge of boats at Coblenz, we pass where a pretty road makes its way by easy gradients for some six miles or so to the country of the potters. Descending towards the river is a constant succession of carts, some heavily laden with clay, others carrying grey bottles, blue vases, and the familiar products of the local ceramists: the industrial occupation of the district we are approaching is thus sufficiently indicated.

The Kannenbächerland of to-day comprises nine busy villages, of which the two most populous, Höhr and Grenzhausen, give a common title to the whole district.

Höhr has the air of a small but flourishing town of between 2,000 and 3,000 population. On approaching it by the road from Coblenz, the evidences of its craft obtrude themselves on every hand. The processes of manufacture are often carried on under the public gaze, and in passing along it is easy to see how the productions are diversified: here a factory of sanitary ware presenting itself, there one of terra-cotta for architectural purposes, stone bottles for ink or beer abounding on every hand, while the blue revival of the *Grès de Flandres* is everywhere *en evidence*. There are about fifty ovens in which the ware is fixed, and these belong to almost as many master employers. The factories are therefore small in size, employing often less than a dozen workpeople, but presenting many features which increase the interest of the visitor as he becomes more closely acquainted with their usages.

Grenzhausen, about one-fourth less in population than Höhr, is like unto it in general characteristics. Chemical utensils and drain pipes are among the special goods manufactured; but Grenzhausen is pre-eminently the home of the *Kannenbächer*, the maker of the jugs and mugs which are the joy of the South-German beer-drinker. In appearance however it presents no striking difference to the general features observable at Höhr. The same may be said of Brounbach, of Ronsbach, and of Hilgert, Magendorf, Wirges, Hillscheid and Arzbach, save that in all these last-named the population is chiefly employed in the production of bottles for mineral waters. The demand for these is enormous, the annual sale being counted in millions.



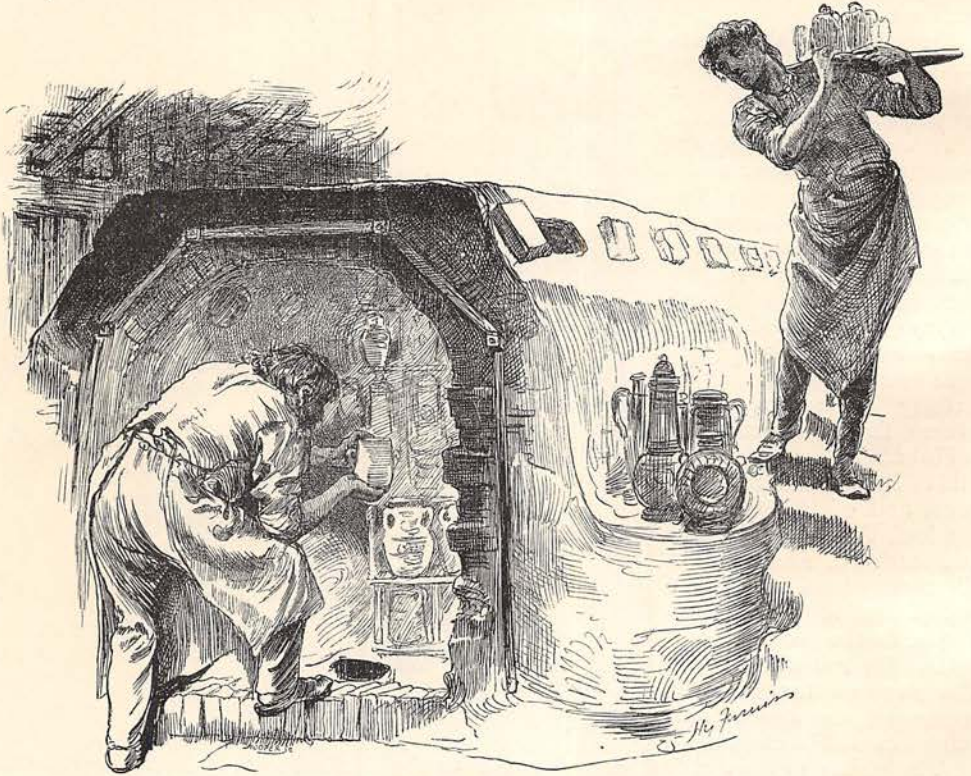
FINISHING TOUCHES.

The visitor to the district known so well as the Staffordshire Potteries learns with invariable surprise that although a primitive art was once active there, dependent simply upon the clay and marls locally found, the development which has been going on during the last century, and which Josiah Wedgwood did so much to advance, has led to the creation of a great industry employing a vast population, the whole or nearly the whole of the material for which is brought from a distance. In an ordinary china teacup, or earthenware dinner-service of Staffordshire manufacture, there is not a particle of local clay. The kaolin, the flint, the Cornish stone, all are sea-borne from the southern coasts; while from the cattle upon South American hills come the bones that after calcining go to give certain special qualities to our English porcelain. Some interesting and successful potteries have been established in proximity to the kaolin fields of Dorset and Devonshire, but they are small and unimportant in comparison with the great enterprises which have behind them the abundant coalfields of North Staffordshire and the skilled industry of the hereditary craftsmen who have so well maintained there the local traditions, while they have been constantly intent upon making further advances in the development of the potter's art.

In the Höhr-Grenzhausen country, on the contrary, the raw material is contiguous and abundant. It is a plastic marl to which a little sand is added to facilitate manipulation and to prevent the cracking of the ware during the periods of drying and con-

traction consequent thereon. This clay besides satisfying the local requirements is exported in considerable quantities to the great potteries of Saarguemines, as well as to remote countries like Holland, Russia, and Sweden, where it is further blended in the preparation of the material from which the distinctive earthenwares of those countries are produced.

In general appearance the factories of Höhr-Grenzhausen suggest a comparison with the small potteries that might have been built in Staffordshire in the far-away pre-Wedgwood days. There is the same absence of architectural design, the same look of hap-hazardness, the familiar maze without the smallest suggestion of a plan. All the world over indeed there is a family likeness between the workshops, wherein the potter's simple craft was pursued until the very modern edifices of the great houses of to-day came to be constructed. It is not impossible that under the influences thus



PACKING THE OVEN.

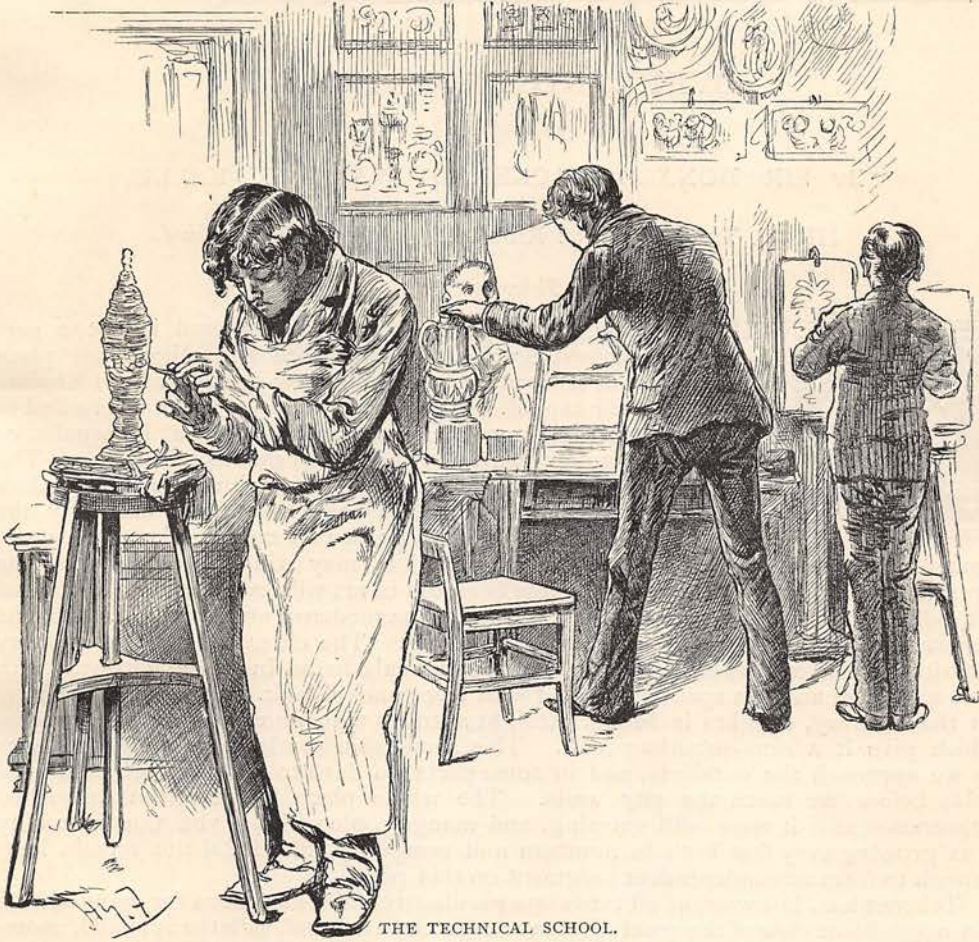
foreshadowed the handicraft may disappear, and with it the imagery that is as true to-day as it was thousands of years ago, of clay in the potter's hands, and of the power which he possessed, of his simple volition, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour!

It is however noticeable that the ancient art of the "thrower"—the potter of antiquity—is largely practised here, though many of the objects are pressed from plaster moulds. Women are employed to attach the handles and spouts and to finish the ware after it has left the thrower. Upon the women too devolves the delicate work of scratching in the clay such patterns of flowers and arabesques as form a rough decoration on the surface. Models or patterns are rarely used. The women trace their design with great freedom of hand. These devices in "scratching" are subsequently relieved by broad touches of colour, the cobalt used being mixed with water and clay, with a further admixture of salt to make the pigment run fluidly under the brush.

The apprentices serve a term of from three to four years, and the workpeople are paid upon a system of piecework called "Tagenwerken," under which a given number of differing articles are adopted as the unit for calculating the work per day. For

example, a man is understood to make in one day 240 mineral-water bottles or 160 mugs of one litre size.

The process of firing differs materially from that commonly pursued in the ordinary manufacture of pottery. There the oven is vertical, enclosed within a bottle-shaped "hovel," which protects it and the fires from the external weather. At Höhr-Grenzhausem the oven is of a long horizontal form, with apertures at intervals along each side of the arched roof, covered by earthenware slabs which are removable at particular stages of the firing. This is for the purpose of throwing in the salt, the fusing of which at the proper heat gives to the ware its glazed surface.



THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

In taking our leave of Höhr-Grenzhausem it only remains to be added that among the numerous institutions which partly under Government patronage and in other cases wholly of voluntary initiative, but which appear to be doing good service in the advancement of their interests, is the Royal Trade School, established and largely sustained by the Prussian Government for the special improvement and development of the local industry. When visited by the writer as a member of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, the school was housed in an old building, but plans had been prepared for the erection of a new and commodious structure. The director, a native of the district, had studied at Frankfort and in the School of Industrial Art at Vienna. In the daytime instruction was given to the sons of manufacturers, who were encouraged, after completing their preliminary courses, to design, model, and complete original works, in the hope of their being of commercial value. It is claimed that some of the most successful patterns of recent times have thus had their origin in the Technical School.