

## APOTHEOSIS OF THE POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



QUEEN ELIZABETH'S LACED HANDKERCHIEF.

If you did not understand the meaning of the word apotheosis, I hope, my dear reader, that you looked for it in the nearest dictionary, and having found it, no doubt you will wonder what in the world it has to do with a pocket-handkerchief. This is only natural, if you know nothing of the early days of the handkerchief; of its degradation before the 15th century, its rise to grandeur and dignity, to the most gossamer of cambric, and the most costly of lace; when it became an article of fashion, an ornament to be worn, and carried in the hand and used on state occasions.

The first word that we find used in English for handkerchief was "muckinder," which was also written "muckiter," and "mockadour." This word has its origin, probably, in the Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, old German, or some of those early tongues; but it exists in Spanish as *mocador*, in Provençal as *moucadou*, in French as *mouchoir*, and in Latin as *muccinium*. So this word, though not at all an elegant one, was probably the word applied to the handkerchief, as used in daily life, from a very early date.

We find this word "muckinder" applied, in its last days, to the handkerchief worn by children and hung to the side. It was generally attached by a tape, so that it might not be lost. This name is found during the 17th century up to the end, when it was superseded by the word "kerchief." When handkerchief was introduced, and that monstrosity, "pocket-handkerchief" came in, I cannot tell. The latter was perhaps inspired by the French *mouchoir de pêche*, but it is quite a needless addition. A recent writer says that this word pocket-handkerchief is one of the most curious compounds in the language. The first form of the word being kerchief, from the word *couvrechef*, a covering for the head, then we prefixed the word hand, and got handkerchief, a covering for the head held in the hand, but when we use the term pocket-handkerchief we speak of a covering for the head, which is held in the hand, and is kept in the pocket. The words handkerchief, and still worse, pocket-handkerchief, are, says the same

writer, verbal monstrosities. So I hope my readers will begin to use the old word kerchief or at least handkerchief at once.

The word kerchief or chef comes from old English coverchief, and the French *couvrechef*, from *couvrir* to cover, and chef, the head. In Scotland a curch is a covering for the head. The word cur, for *couvrir*, is found in curfew, also in curtain, where it still retains the sense of covering. The vulgarism "handkercher" which is still used amongst us, is found in Chapman in the year 1654, when apparently it was not a vulgarism, but in ordinary use. However, that was a time when many things were in vogue which we should deem worse than vulgar now.

It does not seem improbable that the idea of much decorated and embroidered handkerchiefs came to Europe from Eastern lands, where they have been employed for ceremonial uses from a great antiquity. When presents are given, they must be enveloped in one of these much ornamented handkerchiefs, and they are used at all ceremonials. At what time they were introduced it would be impossible to say, but in the year 1498 the Portuguese began to trade with a part of India, and there was always a certain amount of intercourse with other countries in the East.

We find an allusion to this habit of wrapping valuables in napkins or kerchiefs in our Lord's Parable of the Talents, St. Luke xix. 20.

The earliest historical notice of handkerchiefs is, perhaps, the mention in the Acts of the Apostles xix. 11, of the handkerchiefs which had touched the body of the apostle Paul, being carried to the sick, for their healing and relief from evil spirits. And at an earlier date than this we find the traditional story of the handkerchief of Veronica. Dr. Brewer gives it as follows, "It is said that a maiden handed her handkerchief to our Lord on His way to Calvary. He wiped the sweat from His brow, returned the handkerchief to the owner, and then passed on. The handkerchief was found to bear a perfect likeness of the Saviour, and was called *Vera-Iconica* (true likeness), and the maiden was ever afterwards called St. Veronica. One of



MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S HANDKERCHIEF, 1800.



THE HANDKERCHIEF AND BOUQUET IN 1837.

these handkerchiefs is preserved at St. Peter's at Rome, another in Milan Cathedral."

In the first volume of Chambers' *Book of Days* you will find a representation of this handkerchief, and all that is known of its history. Also, in Mr. Heaphy's valuable book on the true likenesses of our Lord, you will find a notice of it. It is of great antiquity, there is no doubt; and in this way is valuable, as showing the continuance of the traditional type of our Lord's countenance, the hair parted in the centre, and the long and sorrowful face.

The description of it is, that it is a painted cloth, the material being coarse linen. And the illustration shows that it has the scenes of the Crucifixion painted as a border all round it.

The various methods in which the handkerchief has been used would form a chapter to themselves. From those early days in the 16th and 17th centuries, when it first emerged from being a "muckinder," till it was carried in the hand in Elizabeth's reign, we have several mentions of it in old comedies and plays. In Greene's *Tu Quoque*, 1614, "a wench with a basket of linen" enters in the first scene with various articles for sale; she cries, "Buy some quoifs, handkerchiefs, or very good bone-lace, mistress." Then addressing Spendall, one of the characters, she asks, "Will you buy any handkerchiefs, sir?" to which he answers, "Yes, have you any fine ones?" She replies, "Yes, I'll show you choice, please you look, sir."

At the same date, we find "Silk handkerchiefs" named, "laced round with gold;" and in *Friar Bacon's Prophecie*, 1604, we read,

"Handkerchiefs were wrought  
With names, and true love's knots."

Nearly of this period there is another mention and by a more illustrious playwright—Shakespeare—of the handkerchief which performed a fatal part in the tragedy of *Othello*, and that mentioned by the hapless boy, Prince Arthur. In pleading with Hubert to spare his eyes, he asks—

"Have you the heart? When your head did but ache,  
I knit my handkerchief about your brows,  
(The best I had, a princess wrought it me)  
And I did never ask it you again."

A description of the former is worth reading. It was given, said Othello, to his mother by an Egyptian, or what in these days we should call a gipsy; but later on he says it was "an antique token my father gave my mother."

It was evidently of silk, and was embroidered, and must have been rather large, for it is called "a napkin," a well as a handkerchief. Those were the days when people believed in charms, spells, and incantations, to ensure and to preserve love; and so Othello says this handkerchief had been specially prepared by the gipsy, and would guarantee the continuance of affection, if carefully cherished. We know better in these days, and have learnt that the true charms lie in the beauty and sweetness of character, manners and temper.

The kerchiefs of Plesance belong to the days of chivalry and romance. They were of silk, embroidered, and presented by a lady to her chosen knight, to wear for her sake. He was bound to place it on his helmet, and to defend its possession against every enemy. So in like manner we read of scarves and gloves being placed on the helmet; the first-named being, perhaps, more generally bound round the arm.

No notice of handkerchiefs would be complete without mention of the Bandana—that importation from the East, which was thought absolutely needful to elderly gentlemen; especially to those who took snuff. Plenty of them are still sold, for there exist people who prefer them to anything else, but fashion has long passed them by. The origin of the name seems rather doubtful; but without question the Indian word is the true source of it, as it shows the peculiar method of their making. This word is *Bandhna*, and it is Hindu, and means a special method of dyeing. The Spanish word *Bandana* is generally quoted as the original term, and this is in its turn taken from the word *Ban-da-la*, which means bast; and the early Bandanas were made, it is said, of bast, which is the inner bark of the lime or linden tree, from which matting and cordage are made. These handkerchiefs have been long made in Europe. The original ones came from India, and were of silk, having white or coloured spots, or diamonds, on a red, blue, or other dark ground. The process of making them seems to have been first practised in India, where the Hindus have understood it from time immemorial. The method adopted was that of binding up with thread the parts of the handkerchief that were to be uncoloured, and then exposing the whole to the action of the dye. The process for making the European ones was invented by M. Koechlin of Mulhausen in the year 1810, and by this method the Oriental ones have been exceeded



THE HANDKERCHIEF AND FAN, 1847.



THE PRE-RAPHAELITE STYLE.

in precision and beauty. And as the process is an interesting one, and in vogue to the present day, I will describe it to you. The pattern, which in the real bandana (or bandanna as the earliest spelling was) is spots or diamonds, is cut out in leaden plates. These are placed at the top and bottom of a thick pile of handkerchiefs, which have been dyed a dark colour, mostly red. Hydraulic pressure is then applied, and the pattern is made by discharging the colour with bleaching liquor, which is run in on the uppermost plate, and passed through all the folds of the fabric. The pressure required to work the pattern clearly is said to be enormous. In England, in the year 1851, the chief seat of this trade was stated to be in the vicinity of London, though it was also pursued in Lancashire, Cheshire and Scotland. The trade in that had been reduced to one-fifth in less than sixteen years; the change in the fashion from coloured silk handkerchiefs for men, to white, having then commenced. On reading over this report an item has suddenly come under my eye, which shocks me dreadfully. In 1700 the chintzes and muslins which were worn by the upper classes, and were beautifully fine, and well printed, all came from India, and they were so popular that they nearly superseded other fabrics, which excited popular clamour against them and all printed fabrics, including the bandannas. The Government of the day actually yielded to the clamour, and passed an Act of Parliament prohibiting the wearing of all printed calicoes whatsoever, an Act which disgraced our English Statute book for ten years! This was in the reign of good Queen Anne, I suppose; though I cannot find the exact date, which is not mentioned in the report. I have been trying to think what people did without their chintzes, but I suppose they returned to woollen and linen, both of which were made in England; gingham gowns were worn in the country at this period, which was a coarse woollen cloth.

are the only country, however, where this change has come in, for in Germany and Switzerland those used are as large as ever.

Many years ago, when people now living were young, it was a matter of pride to be considered not to find it necessary to have resort to a handkerchief at all. I have recently heard a lady say that her grandmother never used a handkerchief—at least, I suppose, not visibly—and in this connection it was amusing to hear, as I did this year, that on the Continent we are considered not to use them, or very little indeed.

“I should never have thought of blowing my nose before my father,” said an elderly lady the other day. “He would have been quite outraged by such a thing. We were never allowed, as children, to blow our noses in company.” And even to the present day this seems to be the teaching of the well-brought-up English child, and is probably the origin of the small use we make of the handkerchief. Until you live in the house with persons who have not been taught to consider the feelings of others in their use of the handkerchief,

The costliest lace handkerchief in the present day is said to belong to Queen Margherita of Italy. It was sent to the World's Fair in Chicago, and is valued at £6000. It took twenty years to make, and three people were engaged on the work. Its lightness is so great that you could not feel its touch, and it can be folded up into the size of a halfpenny stamp.

In San Francisco, some of the millionaires are reported to have their initials worked on their handkerchiefs in diamonds; and I daresay, in any account of a New York trousseau, you would not fail to see the value of the wedding handkerchief marked at £1000, or even more.

We have only one proverbial saying in English, I think, derived from the handkerchief, and that is taken from a game which is still played by children, called “Kiss in the ring.” A handkerchief is thrown from one player to another; the one to whom it is thrown carrying on the game. Dr. Brewer also mentions a Norfolk game of a similar kind, and gives a quotation from the *Times*, showing the use of the proverb in a Committee of the House of Commons.

The handkerchief, since the advent of Her Most Gracious Majesty, has gone through several phases and has been much decreased in size. We

you will never fully estimate what a really disgusting habit it may become—using it otherwise than absolutely silently.

There are several methods of using the handkerchief which are objectionable in the extreme. The first is, rolling it into a ball, and the next is shaking it out before you use it. I cannot think of anything that requires to be so carefully taught to children as the use of the handkerchief, for it seems to be a key to the delicacy and refinement of the character.

As an unfailing remembrance, a knot in the handkerchief seems to be a man's supreme belief; but I do not notice that many women share it. I have known a man to arrive at home with a perfect army of knots, having forgotten the reason for every one. The effort to recall them to his memory taxes the wits of the whole family; but as they are generally acquainted with the grooves his mind runs upon, you may rely on it they will guess nearly all. I am sure you are all well acquainted with the old story of the gentleman who put a knot in his handkerchief to remind him to propose to his wife, or rather the lady he wished to make his wife! And I have always wanted to know how the story got out.

The illustrations will show you some of the variations in the use of the handkerchief in society from the early days of the century till now. It used to be carefully unfolded and spread over the front of the best gown in the partaking of a “dish of tea,” as it was then called; and I am not sure that they were not refolded and returned to the pocket. The teacups in those days had no handles, and the tea might very easily have been spilt, I think; and the company rejoiced in hot buttered toast and such muffins and crumpets as we can only dream of.

After this there came a time when the handkerchief was held in the hand; being



HANDKERCHIEF IN THE GIRLDE.

taken delicately by the middle and shaken out so that it looked even as to the corners and the embroidery and lace was properly visible. The fan and the bouquet were its accompaniments in general; and you may see, in the sketches of those days, how much was made of this part of the apparel.

I have several of these old handkerchiefs in my possession, and they are veritable wonders in the way of needlework and fine stitchery. Valenciennes lace was that most generally chosen for their decoration. Indeed, in those days, a gentlewoman thought there was nothing possible in the way of trimmings for her linen but cambric frilling or Valenciennes lace, or both together.

Then there came a time when the handkerchief was carefully stuck into the front of the dress in such a manner that the pretty corners showed; and later on it was tucked in under the waistband, and the ends fell below it on the skirt. Then followed a season when it was severely left to its proper uses, and it was not the thing even to take it out at afternoon tea, nor to let people know you owned one at all.

From being twenty-five inches square in the '30's it sank to twenty; and in the '50's and '60's fell to fifteen. To-day we have arrived at a handkerchief of ten or twelve inches square—generally made of the thinnest cambric, or muslin even—and the very last ones seem even smaller, and are constructed of coloured cambrics, the favoured hues being mauve and a pale shade of grey.

We have quite changed, some of us, in our habits of carrying it, and have gone to the army for our examples in stuffing it up the left sleeve. The army, as is well known, is not allowed pockets, and our female sufferings are somewhat of the same nature, for we are only allowed pockets at the extreme back of

the gown, where it is impossible to get at them, especially when the hand chances to be covered with a glove.

Just as I finish this I have made a discovery. Below my window lies one of those encampments formed by the workmen when any reparations are being carried on in the streets. First there is a small wooden house, painted drab, on wheels; then, in front, a confused mass of picks with no handles, machinery in a pile covered up with a black tarpaulin; and, in front of that, a brazier, about two feet high or so, filled with live coals. All round this there runs a fence or barrier made of long poles and cross-trees. It is a kind of London *laager*.

In the space round the ruddy warmth of the brazier are gathered ten or a dozen workmen, who are each supplied with a tin bottle or can, and on the lap of each is spread a red-and-white handkerchief, containing their mid-day meal. This evidently is the correct thing, as every man has the same, and it is also the rule in all the other London *laagers*. So there are clearly fashions even where red-cotton handkerchiefs are concerned!



HANDKERCHIEF IN SLEEVE, MILITARY STYLE, 1896.

VARIETIES.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

*Father*: "Now, see here! If you marry that young pauper how on earth are you going to live?"

*Sweet Girl*: "We have figured that all out. You remember that old hen my aunt gave me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have been reading a book on poultry-farming, and I find that one good hen will raise twenty chicks in a season. Well, next season there will be twenty-one hens, and as each will raise more chicks, that will be four hundred and twenty. The next year—even allowing for a few disasters—the number will be eight thousand four hundred, the following year a hundred and sixty-eight thousand, and the next three million, three hundred and sixty thousand. Just think! At only two shillings apiece we will then have over three hundred thousand pounds. Then, dear old papa, we will lend you some money to pay off the mortgage on this house."

THE FUNNY SIDE OF IT.—Take life humorously if you can, not flippantly. There is a wide difference between humour and frivolity; when we have found the difference, we cannot have too much of the former. In particular do women need the leaven of a joyous spirit. Too many are prone to seriousness, which often becomes absolute and pervading gloom.

FLATTERY.—Flattery is often a traffic of mutual meanness where, although both parties intend deception, neither are deceived.

A VENOMOUS CRITIC.

"With looks of horror some one said,  
The critic Zoilus is dead!  
Poisoned! by whom, how, where and when?  
By accident; he sucked his pen."

TAKE THE STAINS OUT.

A fashionable lady, in boasting of her new palatial residence, said the windows were all of stained glass.

"That's too bad!" cried her mother.  
"But won't soap and turpentine take the stains out?"

IF I WERE AN EMPRESS.

*Mr. Whiffle (reading)*: "The Empress of Austria suffers from insomnia."

*Mrs. Whiffle (meditatively)*: "Well, no wonder. I'm sure if I was an empress I'd be so proud of it I couldn't sleep a wink."

DOUBLE ACROSTIC II.

Adventurer, discoverer, soldier bold,  
Who brought a boon more precious far than gold  
From foreign climes. His country understood  
Its value—it has proved a nation's food.

1. A famous General in Napoleon's time,  
Served him in many a battle, many a clime;  
Yet after Leipzig his allegiance changed,  
And he from Bonaparte to Bourbon ranged.  
Then he forgot the faith to Louis due,

And served his ancient Chief at Waterloo.  
But after Waterloo's disastrous day,  
Again to Louis' Court he made his way.

2. Upon an island in a tranquil sea,  
Is seen a town, which was ordained to be  
A Conqueror's birth-place; here, without a scar,  
He made his first essay at real war.  
War followed war; his triumph seemed complete,  
For neighbouring countries lay beneath his feet:

And tourist-travellers go to see the town,  
Which owes to him its interest and renown.

3. Set, like Jerusalem, upon a hill,  
And flanked by mountains rising higher still,  
This Cambrian country-town no beauty shows,

Save where of old the Norman church arose;  
Whereof, not given to *one* holy name,  
Three Saints at once the dedication claim.

4. The "Festivals of Liberty," that kept alive  
The memory of those who slept.  
In death upon the field their valour won,  
Well might each matron glory in her son!

5. A most unwelcome visitor I come,  
Amid the close recesses of your home:  
Oft caused by poverty, more oft by wealth;  
But, be that as it may, I tend to health.

6. This was, in olden days, the glorious name  
Given to a victor who aspired to fame;  
But we, in modern times, require that he  
The conqueror not of others but of himself  
must be.

XIMENA.