

Some Historic Cradles.

BY SHEILA E. BRAINE.



SCATTERED about here and there, in museums, castles, palaces, and private houses, occasionally putting in a modest appearance at a loan exhibition, but living for the most part in an honourable seclusion, are certain quaint old memorials of bygone generations, of which, collectively, very little notice has hitherto been taken. Nevertheless, as being intimately connected with the earliest days of persons hereafter to become famous, they undoubtedly possess an interest of their own; and although a cradle may be a homely object, it is seen alike in castle and cottage, nor does there seem any near probability of its going out of fashion.

To the crude masculine eye all babies are said to look the same—a sentiment a mother invariably treats with the scorn it deserves; but, leaving that vexed point untouched, there can be no denying the fact that considerable diversity prevails with respect to the cribs, cots, and cradles that shield the slumbers of the blessed little beings.

Roughly shaped out of the trunk of a tree, or carved with the best skill of a cunning workman; stuffed with moss or lined with embroidered pillows; carried upon the back of a barbarian mother, hung from the ceiling of a peasant's hut, rocked by a stately nurse in a Royal chamber; scarcely one of them resembles another. And yet a certain touch of Nature renders them all akin. For humanity begins with the cradle, even as it ends with the grave; at these two fixed unwavering points we units touch each other, while between them lies the brief uncertainty of this our little life.

The cradles of the Greeks and Romans were of various shapes; the infant Hermes is represented in one formed like a shoe. They were occasionally made of basketwork, sometimes with handles; and could be suspended by ropes. Infants were rocked and sung to sleep by their nurses, and had their rattles, even as modern babies.

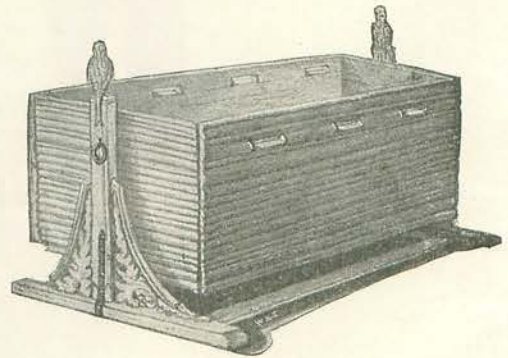
The word cradle is Anglo-Saxon; in Anglo-Norman it was *bers*, or *bersel*, from which is derived the modern French *berceau*. Walter de Bibblesworth, writing towards the close of the thirteenth century, says: "As soon as the child is born it must be swathed; lay

it to sleep in its cradle, and you must have a nurse to rock it to sleep."

In the seventh century we find an Archbishop of Canterbury ordaining that a woman who left her baby "lying loosely around" on the hearth, so that it got scalded to death through the caldron boiling over, was to do penance for her negligence. The curious part of it was that the husband, who put the water into the caldron, was acquitted of all blame; the idea being, we must suppose, that he could not be expected to know that the rolled-up bundle on the hearth was a member of his family. It would seem from this that cradles were not in everyday use at this date; and that infants were brought up in sweet simplicity on the floor.

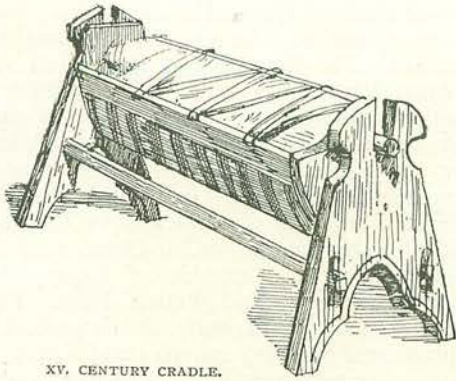
M. Viollet-le-Duc tells us that the simplest and most ancient cradles were formed out of part of the trunk of a tree hollowed out, with holes at the sides through which cords were passed to keep the child in. Baskets were also used, and later on the cradles resembled small beds, fixed upon two curved pieces of wood.

In the fifteenth century a change was made, and the cradle, usually shaped like a box, swung between two uprights, which were fixed. The cradle of Henry V., which



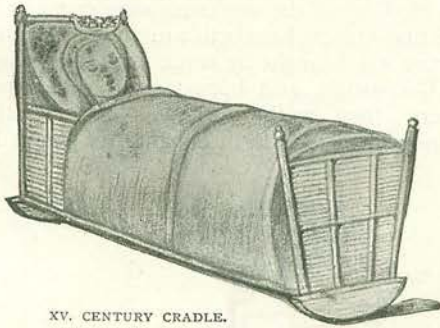
CRADLE OF HENRY V.

belongs to the latter part of the fourteenth century, is of this kind, and is the earliest specimen extant. Some writers call it Edward II.'s, but there are no proofs of its having belonged to that unlucky Prince. The story runs that Henry V., born at Monmouth Castle in 1388, being a delicate child, was sent to Courtfield, about seven miles distant, to be



XV. CENTURY CRADLE.

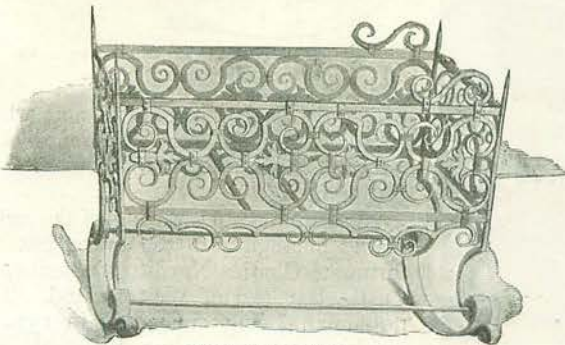
nursed, for the benefit of his health. Here the cradle of the future warrior King was preserved for many years, eventually being sold by a steward of the property; who should have been prosecuted for it, one would imagine; but apparently went to his grave in



XV. CENTURY CRADLE.

peace. The cradle passed at different times into the possession of various individuals; and is now exhibited to tourists as a relic of undoubted historic interest. It is 3ft. 2in. long, 1ft. 8in. wide at the head, rather less at the foot; 1ft. 5in. deep; the foliage corroborates the date.

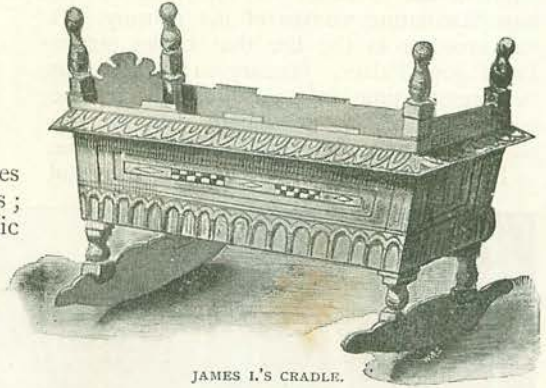
The cradle or crib of Harry of Windsor, son of the Monmouth Harry, preserved



HENRY VI.'S CRADLE.

in the Ashmolean Museum, at Oxford, is of ironwork, and of an entirely different character. The attendant at the museum, questioned upon the subject, informed us with candour that for a long time they knew not whose it was, nor where it hailed from; and we gathered that it had at length turned up "promiscuous-like" in a catalogue of the seventeenth century. A former attendant took it into his head to give it a coat of paint, for what reason we do not undertake to say, unless it was to while away a tedious hour. It is evident that the cradle formerly possessed a head, and there are indications of gilding about it.

The names of many of the Royal nurses are to be found in ancient accounts. Edward II. gave twenty shillings to Mary of Carnarvon for "coming all the way from Wales to see him"; Henry V. settled an annuity of twenty pounds upon Joan Waryn; Henry IV. had an Irish nurse, Edward IV. a French one. The longed-for son and heir of bluff King Hal was nursed by Sibilla Penne, the wife of the Court barber-surgeon. Mistress Penne did rather well for herself, for she obtained the grant of both a monastery and a manor. We find that the

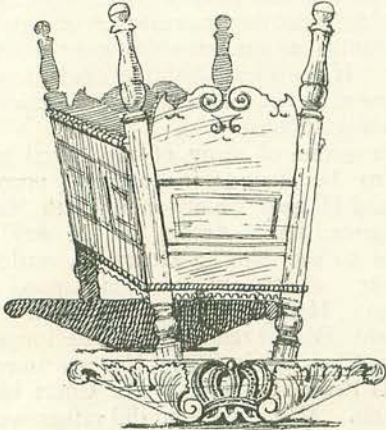


JAMES I.'S CRADLE.

Princess Mary gave her for a New Year's gift five yards of yellow satin at 7s. 6d. the yard. My Lord Prince had four rockers in addition to his nurse; his food was tasted for fear of poison, and no one was permitted to approach his cradle without an order signed by the King. Small scions of Royalty usually had from two to five attendants, known as "rockers," who were duly sworn into office by the Lord Chamberlain. James I. had five, all Scotch, namely, Lady Kippenross, Jane

Oliphant, Jane Crummy, Katherine Murray, and Christian Stewart.

The heavy cradle of carved oak, used for the high and mighty Prince who was to unite the Thistle and the Rose, is now in the possession of the Earl of Mar and Kellie. It was to be seen at the Glasgow Exhibition of 1888; as was also the carved oak cradle of Mary Queen of Scots, distinguished by its



CRADLE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

Royal crown. Few people, apparently, are aware of the existence of this relic of the most fascinating woman of her century. It was saved from the fire that broke out in Linlithgow Palace, January, 1746; and at the present time is at Edinburgh, in the possession of a gentleman who kindly allowed the annexed sketch of it to be made.

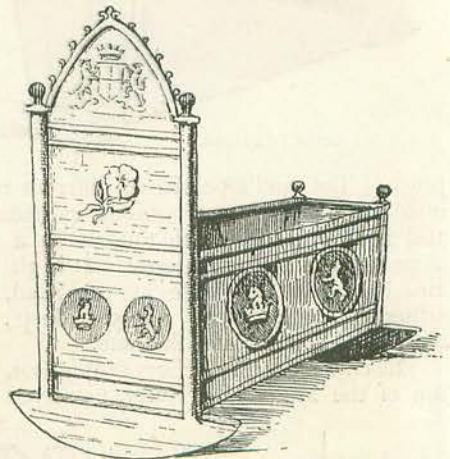
To the same category belongs the beautiful



QUEEN ELIZABETH'S CRADLE.

carved cradle of Queen Elizabeth, with which every visitor to Hatfield House must be familiar. The initials, "A. R.," stand for "Anna Regina," the ill-fated Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth. These cradles all partake of the characteristics of the period, for the furniture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—influenced by the Flemish refugees who flocked to England with their handicrafts—is handsome, massive, and more or less capable of defying the ruthless touch of old Father Time. The beds of those days were like huge tents; surmounted by heavy canopies and shrouded with voluminous curtains, warranted to secure the night-capped sleeper from every breath of air.

The quaint cradle-tomb in Westminster Abbey has a canopy, and was probably designed in imitation of the cradles in use at the beginning of the seventeenth century; it has the Royal arms in a lozenge upon the back. In 1606, when the workmen were engaged in erecting Queen Elizabeth's monument, a tiny corpse was brought by barge from the palace at Greenwich, and buried close to the spot where they were working. It was the Princess Sophia, fourth daughter of James I.,



CRADLE OF CHARLES NEVILLE, EARL OF WESTMORLAND.

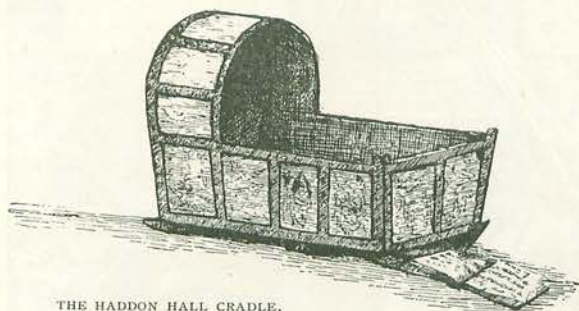
who only lived three days, and whose name is rescued from oblivion by the curious monument which marks her resting-place.

Next we have a drawing of the oaken cradle belonging to the brave but unfortunate Charles Neville, of Brancepeth Castle, last Earl of Westmorland. This nobleman, being concerned in 1570 in an insurrection against Elizabeth, was

attained, and fled beyond the seas, where he died in great poverty. Upon the cradle, in circles on a red ground, are the bull's head and the lion rampant, the crests of the Neville and Mowbray families; the white rose de-

Radcliffe, Earl of Derwentwater. This unique specimen has been lent to the South Kensington Museum by R. D. Radcliffe, Esq., F.S.A.

Ancient inventories furnish us with occasional glimpses of the stately cradles provided for Royal infants, who, "born in the purple," were put to sleep amid the glories of "yalowe clothe of gold," crimson velvet lined with green buckram, red and blue sarcenet curtains, and so forth. At the

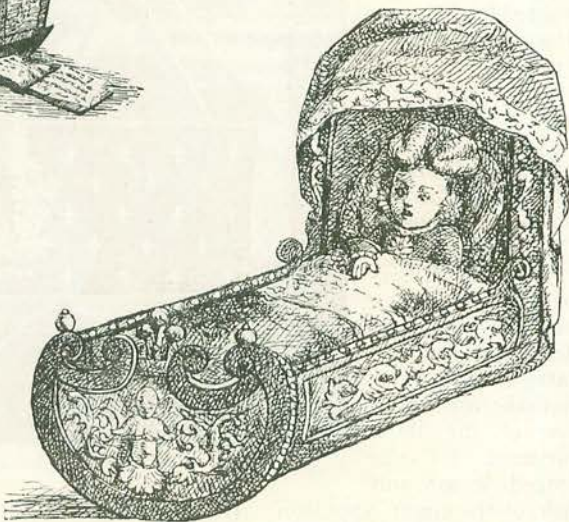


THE HADDON HALL CRADLE.

notes the attachment of the Nevilles to the House of York.

Speaking of earls' cradles, we have here two other specimens, one of which is the oaken "berceau" which stands in the magnificent State bedroom at Haddon Hall, and which is declared by tradition and the guide-books to have protected the infant slumbers of the first Earl of Rutland.

The second is an exceptionally fine cradle of carved oak of the seventeenth century, surmounted by a coronet, and bearing the initials "E. R.," which stand for Edward



CRADLE OF THE "OLD PRETENDER."



CRADLE OF THE EARL OF DERWENTWATER.

same time, a baby of importance usually had one cradle for use and another for ornament: one for private life, the other for receptions; hence the origin and reason of the numerous "berceaux de parade" alluded to in Royal accounts. Many of these were veritable works of art, painted and decorated by the best artists of the time, and great store was naturally set by them.

Among the jewels claimed from the Crown of England as having belonged to Isabel of France was "un bersel d'or," and likewise "un bersel d'argent bel et gracieux." The State cradle of a defunct Dauphin is mentioned as having been placed in "guard and garrison" in the jewel chamber at the Louvre, carefully wrapped up in four ells of linen.

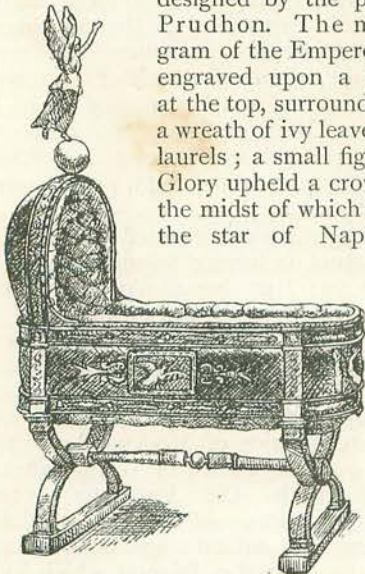
When Beatrice of Modena fled with her infant son, the Prince of Wales—afterwards known as the Old Pretender—to the hospitable shores of France, the baby's cradle was left behind; and one was fetched for his use from the Trianon, which had, no doubt, served for the son of Louis XIV. It

was covered with satin, and ornamented with gold and silver.

Costly and sumptuous as they were, cradles came to be regarded as suitable offerings to be made to Royal expectant mothers. Marie of Medicis received from the Grand Duchess of Florence a magnificent one, with the polite wish that it might soon be wanted for a "beau Dauphin de France"; a richly jewelled and altogether splendid specimen was also sent from India by Warren Hastings as a present to Queen Charlotte.

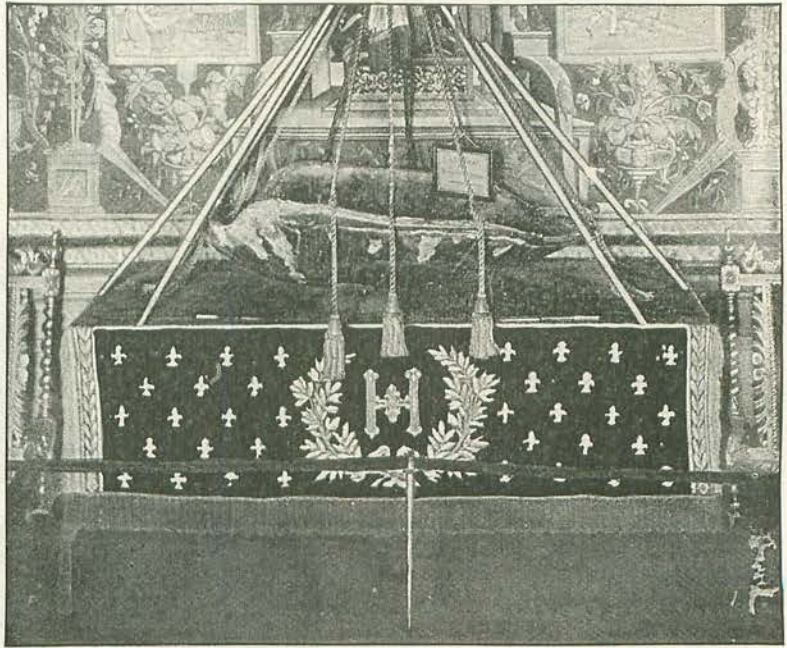
The City of Paris presented those used for the Comte de Paris and the late Prince Imperial; and also one of the three prepared for the longed-for son and

heir of the Great Napoleon. It was a magnificent piece of work, in silver gilt, representing a ship, the emblem of the capital, and designed by the painter Prudhon. The monogram of the Emperor was engraved upon a shield at the top, surrounded by a wreath of ivy leaves and laurels; a small figure of Glory upheld a crown, in the midst of which shone the star of Napoleon,



CRADLE OF THE KING OF ROME (AT FONTAINEBLEAU).

gazed at by a young eagle with half-expanded wings placed at the foot. The cradle was emblematic of the future glory of the unconscious King of Rome, whose birth

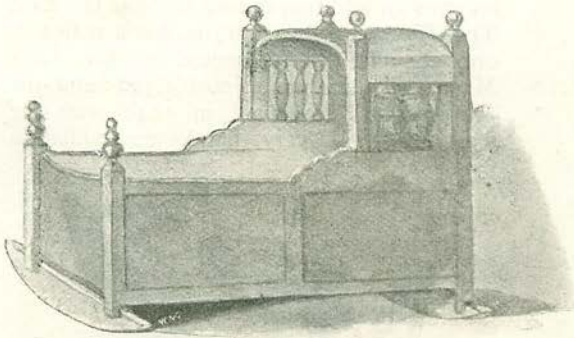


CRADLE OF HENRY IV. OF FRANCE (AT PAU).

excited a tumult of enthusiasm; whose death passed well-nigh unnoticed. The star of the young Napoleon had no sooner risen than it was doomed to set; the heir of those boundless hopes inherited nothing, and died a pensioner upon Austrian bounty. His magnificent cradle, weighing 5cwt., was presented by him to the Imperial Treasury at Vienna.

Another belonging to him may be seen at the castle of Fontainebleau; a third is in the "Napoleon Room" at Madame Tussaud's. These superb cradles were on a par with the magnificent and costly beds of the *ancien régime*, the *lits de parade*, upon which, gracefully reclining and elaborately arrayed, ladies were in the habit of receiving visitors, and even the whole Court.

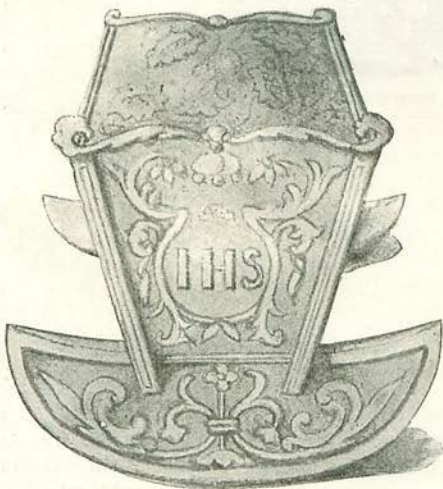
It was etiquette to make a profound reverence on passing the couch of a King or Queen; possibly the cradle of an heir-apparent was saluted in the same way. It was not all joy to be born in the purple; there were too many State regulations for a Royal baby's life to be a happy one. At certain hours he was to be fed, at certain hours he had to be rocked, no matter whether



CRADLE OF A PILGRIM FATHER (DR. SAMUEL FULLER).

he were asleep or no ; he might yell himself hoarse, but no one might venture to take him up but the proper person. It was, as the chronicler, Barbier, feelingly remarked, "une vraie misère."

We must not omit to notice the great tortoiseshell, exhibited at Pau as the veritable cradle of Henri Quatre, in which his grandfather, old King Henri d'Albret, bore him to the font, after rubbing his lips with garlic to make him hardy. This historic shell has had its vicissitudes. It would have been destroyed at the time of the French Revolution, whose agents spared neither the town of Pau nor its illustrious old castle, had it not been, with the connivance of the caretaker, secretly abstracted by a Royalist of good family, a certain Monsieur de Beauregard. Not until the year 1814 was it considered safe to produce the concealed treasure ; which was then, with much rejoicing, reinstated in the castle. It now reposes in all honour beneath the plumed helmet of the Huguenot monarch, its original occupant.



CRADLE OF MAXIMILIAN I.

A quaint old memorial of the Pilgrim Fathers is the cradle of the Fuller family. Dr. Samuel Fuller was one of the elders who sailed in the *Mayflower*, and was no less remarkable for his piety than for his skill in his profession. His wife was left behind, but followed her husband afterwards in the *Anne*. Dr. Fuller died in 1633.

More than three centuries divide the German Emperors, Maximilian I. and William I. Alas for modern progress in the arts and crafts : it is but too clear that the monarch of the Middle Ages, who compiled his own curious biography, possessed the more artistic cradle

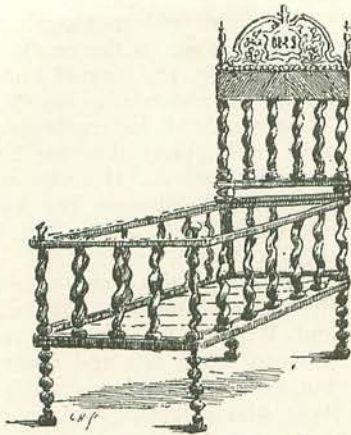


CRADLE OF WILLIAM I. OF GERMANY.

of the two. A very similar one, a decided "thing of beauty," was unearthed by a traveller some years ago in a remote Alpine village. The symbolic "I.H.S." is also to be seen at the head of the seventeenth century English crib, given in our next illustration.

An ancient cradle from Cairo, exhibited in the South Kensington Museum, is inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and is a veritable *berceau de luxe*. For what olive-skinned morsel of humanity, Royal or otherwise, it was prepared we know not.

In striking contrast is the roughly-made but comfortable cradle of the Hungarian peasant, in which the baby lies snugly corded, and which can be easily rocked with the



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CRIB.

foot. By the way, there is a widespread superstition that it is a disastrous thing to rock an empty cradle; a new baby would speedily arrive to fill it.

Before closing this article, a passing mention should be made of the ancient custom, still kept up, of presenting a silver cradle to the wife of a Mayor whose family

receives an addition during his year of office. The *Times* of July 1st, 1799, has a notice of one about to be presented to the Lady Mayoress, which was to cost £500; and the Mayoress of Liverpool in 1848 was the recipient of a very handsome miniature



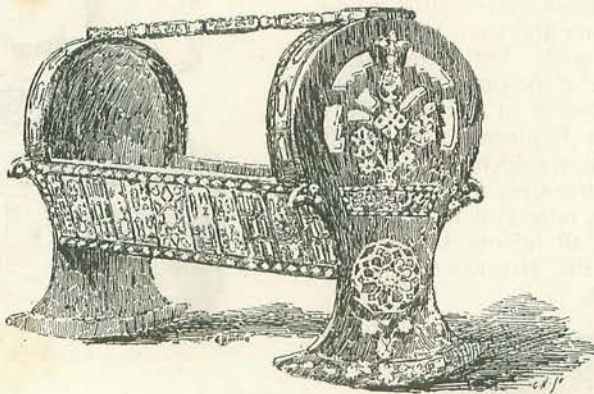
H. Fletcher

HUNGARIAN CRADLE.

“berceau” shaped like a Nautilus shell. Upon the base was inscribed:—

YE SPIRIT OF YE LEGENDE.

Gif Leverpooles good maier everre bee
Made fatherine inne hys yere of maiorattee,
Thenne sal be giften bye ye townmenne free,
Ane silverre cradle too hys faire ladye.



ANCIENT INLAID CRADLE FROM CAIRO.