

SENTINEL

England's Oldest Handicrafts.
Antiquary.

The most ancient of all human inventions is the weaving of cloth of one kind or another, and though before the coming of the Normans the handicrafts of the country were few and simple, this industry had its place in the daily life of every homestead. Sheep were the chief possessions of the Anglo-Saxons, and their wool was combed, carded, spun, woven and dyed by the women, from the King's daughter to the wife of the churl. Queen Boadicea wore in her last great stand for freedom, "under her cloak a tunic of English made wool chequered in many colors," says the Roman historian Dion Cassius, and he goes on to speak admiringly of the brilliant tints the Britons gave to their wools: light red, green, blue, madderpink, sometimes violet and mulberry color, no doubt woven into plaids much like those the Scotch Highlanders use to-day. The Romans always paid special attention to textile manufactures, and one of their earliest acts, after subjugating Britain, was to set up a linen and woollen factory in the fortified town of Winchester. No doubt the soldiers of the various cohorts were supplied with raiment from its shores, for it was a Government establishment, with a manager, appointed by the Emperor of Rome. To some extent the trade of Winchester languished when the Romans withdrew from the country, but four centuries later we find the people of England using Winchester linen.

Until the Normans came to England the wool woven produced only a coarse cloth and a rough kind of blanket. English wool was then, as now, the best known and most highly prized, but the Saxons had not acquired the art of weaving it with any degree of perfection. They did little more than collect the fleeces over and above what were needed for actual clothing, and send them to Flanders, then and throughout the Middle Ages the centre of woollen manufacture. At what date wool was first exported from England we cannot tell. It must have been very early indeed, for we read of merchants going to Marseilles and attending the great French fairs at Rouen and St. Denis in the ninth century. Before that time commercial intercourse was carried on, for we have a most interesting document—our first treaty of commerce, in fact—dated 796 A. D., by which Charlemagne grants protection to certain English merchants trading between France and Mercia. Henry of Huntingdon, writing in the twelfth century, alludes to the extensive exportation of fine English wool "to the main"—an exportation which eventually reached such proportions that a large number of ships were used to throw half the population of Flanders out of work.

Taxes, until almost the close of the Plantagenet period, were calculated not in money but in wool. In one year the Parliament granted Edward III. 20,000 sacks of fine wool, and in another year 30,000. In 1339 he was to have "the tenth sheep, fleece and lamb." The Cistercian monks, since their settlement in England, were notable wool growers, an order for Benedictine monks contracting for all their wool supply. Indeed, England supplied during the fourteenth century almost all the wool used in northern Europe. Spain also grew wool, but it was far more difficult to carry goods from the Peninsula to Flanders than across the German Ocean, whereon light craft plied constantly. The monks also grew much flax, some affirming that the soil of Great Britain was more suitable for its production than that of any other country, and its crops the largest, toughest, and finest in the world. Such natural advantages marked England for a manufacturing country; and though unnoted and unheeded by knight and by baron in medieval towns, in merchant and craft guilds silently but surely was growing up the slow structure of England's commercial wealth and influence.

In the train of William the Conqueror had come certain Flemings skilled in textile art, and what had been a languishing and unproductive handicraft received impetus and improvement. Winchester remembered its old glory, and made efforts to revive its trade, gaining permission from William to hold a great annual fair on St. Giles's Hill, where its manufactures might be displayed, and to which merchants of other districts might resort. This fair was a great centre of trade for several centuries. Its duration, limited by William to one day, was gradually extended, until by a charter of Henry II. it was allowed to last for sixteen days. During the time it was held the shops of Southampton, as well as Winchester, were closed, and all wares sold outside the fair, within a radius of seven miles, were to be forfeited to the bishop. Tolls were established on every bridge and roadway, and the revenue thus levied on goods taken to the fair and on persons going there to sell, was very considerable.

The cloth fair in St. Bartholomew's churchyard was one of the oldest and most important commercial institutions of early times. Founded in the reign of Henry I., it lasted, though in a gradually diminishing state of prosperity, until 1855, when the nation having outgrown it, a municipal court quietly decreed its extinction. The fair in its early and prosperous days consisted chiefly of the booths and standings of the "clothmakers of all England and the drapers of London, who there closed within wall of which the gates were locked and watched every night for safety of men's goods and wares." A "draper" was then the London name for clothier, very few of the Drapers' Guild living beyond the boundary of the city.

The Secret of a Grave.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire, about four miles to the north of Driffield, and somewhat off the high road, lies a secluded valley, long known as Dunsdale. In this valley, among the trees, are a number of mounds, which are known to be graves, and which had got the name of Dunes' Graves. The owner of the dale was averse to any investigation, from a motive everyone must respect—that of fear lest the remains should not be treated with reverence. However, in 1881, a storm blew down several trees in the dale, and in uprooting them left some mounds exposed. It was now seen that the pottery in the graves was not Danish, neither in shape nor fabric, and that the bodies were buried in ancient British fashion, with the knees pulled up towards the chin, and the arms more or less doubled so as to admit the hands being placed on the heads, and it became almost certain that the graves were not Danish, but British. * * * In time the property changed hands, and the new owner did not share the reluctance of the former one to allow investigation to be made. Accordingly, a number of antiquarians, armed with pick and shovel, set to work and opened thirteen of the mounds. In some nothing was found, in others only human remains were discovered, but in one which was supposed to be that of the chieftainess of the tribe, was found two wheels of her chariot, the bits of her horses, a dress fastener of iron pin, and a beautifully enamelled iron pin.

Some may be interested to learn how our arrival with any degree of accuracy at the date of the grave. Well, it was possible to identify the people who used polished instruments of stone with the long headed race whose skulls were frequently discovered. These people were conquered by a round headed race of people who introduced the use of bronze into Britain. It was from what was found buried in the graves with them that the deductions are made. When the teeth were ground flat like a horse's, it was evident the owner ate his food much like a horse does; when he knew how to use iron he hunted prey, and ate his meat with teeth shaped like ours. When he used only stone implements, it was customary to bury flint arrowheads and battle-axes with the corpse; but after stone gave place to iron, it is only iron weapons that are found. Of course no man living would venture to lay down the dates with mathematical precision, but there is no reason to doubt the early iron using people came into England (probably from South Germany) about 300-200 B. C. It that be true, one secret that the grave contained was that those ancestors of ours who met Caesar were no painted savages, smeared with woad, but men who had clothes on their backs, and well made weapons in their hands, and chariots to carry them. There was no trace of the scythe said to be attached to the wheels which did such execution upon the legs of the enemy, nor has any such been found. Enough was found to show how mistaken we have been on one point—viz., the equipment of those of our forefathers who encountered Julius Caesar. The skeleton found was that of a woman—a woman with her chariot and charioteer. Evidently she was a woman of importance, probably a chieftainess of a tribe. * * *

Who first discovered enamel? nobody knew. The Roman ornaments bore no trace of it before Caesar's invasion of Britain, but many traces have been found at Pompeii and elsewhere, showing that after their intercourse with the British the use of enamel became known. Were we face to face with the discoverers of enamel at these early British graves? Certainly no other origin could be suggested and in the beautifully enamelled pin found within the mound there was the indisputable fact that enamel was known in Britain two hundred years before the Romans landed there. Fincy a question which has long puzzled men being solved (as possibly it was) at this grave! The grave also contained a secret of religion. What was the meaning of the charioteer and chariot, and the bits of the horses which were found buried in the grave? They proved a belief in a future world, and those who buried the woman thought these things would be of use to her in the new abode she was journeying to. * * * Indeed it would have been singular if we had not found traces of such a belief. For Homer lived 700 years before the ancient Briton we have been unearthing, and he certainly knew of another world—the world of spirits.

A bankrupt saloon keeper, not long since pleaded rats as the cause of his failure, and, it is alleged—we do not vouch for the truth of the story—that in a restaurant no longer existent the diners were treated to the spectacle of a rat fight in the centre of the floor. A contemporary some months since offered a substantial prize for the best practical plan of dealing with rats, and the winner's suggestion was the keeping of the mongoose on the premises infested with the vermin. This plan might be tried by individuals, or perhaps the corporation might be persuaded to keep an official staff of mongoose,

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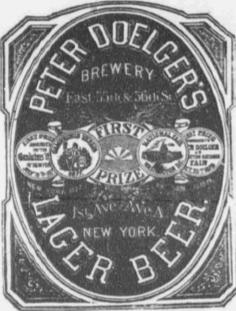
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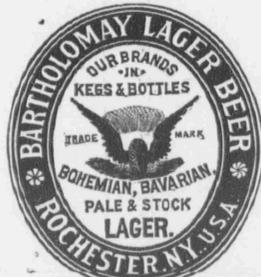
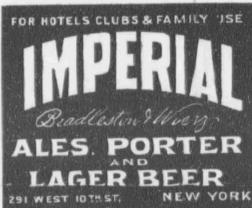
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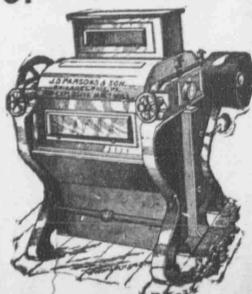
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