Daily Eagle

ALL ABOUT BUTTONS.

INTERESTING FACTS CONCERNING A VERY USEFUL ARTICLE.

The Greeks and Romans Did Not Have Them—We Are Indebted to the French for Their Invention—In the Olden Times When the Dudes Wore Dazzlers.

The word button (French bouton, from bout, an end or extremity, and bouter, to push or place), is less correctly applied to an appendage of dress than to a tiny projection or collet intended to be pressed by the thumb or finger for a specific purpose, of which the aptest illustration is furnished by the terminal button of an electric bell. The idea of utilizing the bouton for hanging anything thereby, or fastening anything thereto, is of comparatively modern date; in short, neither the term nor the article was known to the ancients. The dress of the Greeks and Romans needed not the presence of buttons, ample substitutes for which were found in the clasp. As evidence of this fact, it may be cited that among all the paintings and mosaics discovered in the ruins of Pompeii, no single illustration of the button has ever been brought to light. Nor did the simple costume of the Anglo-Saxons require those accessories, which nowadays we could ill afford to dispense with.

"BUTTONS ALL OVER 'EM."

Previous to the Norman conquest, then, buttons in this country were altogether unknown, so that here we have a distinct proof of our historical indebtedness to the French for all innovations of fashion in the matter of costume. The people of Normandy must certainly have been of an inventive turn of mind, or they would never have conceived the utility of buttons in relation to dress. Nothing in nature could have suggested the button, unless, perhaps, it was that species of flower known as the "bachelor's button," but this is scarcely probable. Rather let us say the suggestion came from the already familiar wooden knob or extremity known as the bout or bouton of their early furniture. We know ourselves how convenient it is to hang any article of dress upon a door or drawer handle, or even on the collet of a bedpost, so there exists no doubt that in this way it was how the Normans hit upon the idea of temporarily attaching one garment to another, until in course of time they dispensed with the ancient clasp altogether.

Once introduced, buttons soon came to be generally adopted by all classes, though no actual reference to them is to be traced in our literature prior to the early part of the Fourteenth century. The reign of Edward I, which ushered in tight fitting garments, and particularly sleeves, afforded scope for an abundant display of buttons from the wrist to the elbow, of both sexes, set as thickly as possible, as may be seen in illuminations and upon effigies of this period. The writer of "The Romance of Sir Degrevant," for example, in describing the costume of an earl's daughter, observes: "To tell her butennes was toore," i. e., hard—to count her bottons would be difficult. Even the servants of the time became infected with the craze. The habit of aping their masters in this particular is thus satirized by an old author:

Now the horse clawers, clothed in prid,
They busk them in buttons as it were a bride.

During the reign of Edward III the buttons were set close upon one another down the front of the coat hardie (coat or tunic) of males and the gown of females. In the next century, however, they suffered a considerable decline, in consequence of the introduction of laces and points; but, by the Sixteenth century, they recovered their ascendency to such a degree that not only did they appear in greater profusion and variety than before, but the material of which they were composed included gold, silver and even diamonds.

MARKS OF DISTINCTION.

In the twelfth year of Charles II buttons constituted the chief imports of the country, and were subjected to a heavy duty. Soon after this reign, however, gold and silver buttons degenerated into those of paste, which at the same time rivaled the brilliancy of the most precious gems, while steel buttons of abnormal size, highly polished, became the distinctive mark of the dandies who frequented the Mall and Birdcage walk of St. James' park in the days gone by. In proof of this, a popular caricature of the year 1777 has for its subject one of these effeminate individuals dazzling a lady by the brightness of his steel buttons.

It is, perhaps, well for us that the prosaic age in which we live affords little encouragement for eccentricity in regard to the wearing of buttons, whether in points of size or number. And yet the button rage of the middle ages certainly found a revival between the years 1873 and 1881, during which period the Birmingham button manufacturers must have made their fortunes. Then it was that the buttons on a lady's costume resembled the stars in the heavens, for there existed no possibility of counting them. There were buttons on the back and buttons down the front; buttons over the shoulders and buttons all the way down and across the skirts; buttons on the pockets and buttons everywhere; there were even buttons round the hat.

In China the highest grade of literary distinction is marked by a gold button affixed on the cap of the individual. The different grades of mandarins are likewise denoted by the color of the buttons which they are privileged to wear. So, also, in Europe a button on the front of the cap formerly represented a mark of civil honor. Thus Shakespeare makes Guildenstern in "Hamlet" say:

On fortune's cap we are not the very button;

meaning not the most highly favored. Again, George Gascoigne, in his "Woodmanship," makes a similar allusion to the courtly favor of one of his gallants:

His bonnet buttoned with gold,
His comlie cape begarded all with gay,
His bombast hose with linings manifold.

—London Queen.

"The Fourth Temperament."

A writer in The Boston Courier recently overheard a conversation among some Boston women. The subject of this was another woman—absent, of course, who would have felt little flattered if she had heard it, and who might perhaps have retorted with some sharp words about uncharitable speaking.

"Well, you see, the trouble with Eunice is that she's got the fourth temperament."

"I have heard of the fourth dimension, but never of the fourth temperament. What is it?"

"I was instructed by a wise woman," was the smiling reply, "that there are four temperaments: the nervous, the physical, the pious and the worrying. Now Eunice undoubtedly has the worrying; and that explains why it is so hard to live with her. She is a most excellent woman, but we wouldn't one of us be hired to live with her."

"We respect her, of course," another observed, "but when it comes to living with her—well, all I can say is that I had rather take my chances with the cannibals. She worries me to death. She fusses about anything and about nothing with equal readiness. You are right; she has the fourth temperament."

Dimes in a Bell.

The large time bell of the cruiser Charleston is not composed of ordinary metal, and there is quite a little story connected with it. A few days before the bell was cast the pattern maker expressed the sentiment that it would be a pity to use ordinary metal, and suggested that each workman contribute ten cents in silver to enrich the composition and give a superior ring to it. The entire force at the works responded to a man, the sum realized being $150, nearly all in ten cent pieces.—San Francisco Bulletin.

When Baby was sick, we gave her Castoria,
When she was a Child, she cried for Castoria,
When she became Miss, she clung to Castoria,
When she had Children, she gave them Castoria.

HER SLIPPERS.

Ah, those dainty little slippers,
Which encase her shapely feet,
Have cast lasting spells upon me
And my wild heart caused to beat
In time to their dulcet music
As they patter down the street.

'Neath her snowy skirts' chaste folds
They alternately peep,
And her pure Castilian instep
In my longing sight I keep,
As she glides along the pavement
With such free and graceful sweep.

Ah, how happy are those slippers
To enclasp in close embrace
Such exquisite little feet,
Gifted with such witching grace!
I envy the incensed earth
The track of their lightsome place.

Every week I hear those footfalls
Gently up the hall steps patter,
Filling all my heart with gladness
As I list to their sweet clatter—
For she's bringing clean clothes to me,
My washerwoman's daughter!

—George Austin in New Orleans Picayune.

The Greatest Smokers.

According to population, Americans consume nearly twice the amount of tobacco that is consumed by Europeans. This comes of the great smoking of tobacco in the form of cigars. In cigar smoking there is only a partial combustion of the tobacco. The tobacco in a cigar would load an ordinary pipe four or five times. There is another thing to consider. Cigar smoking is very expensive compared with indulgence in the pipe. The habitual smoker who buys the cheapest cigars could for the same money provide himself with the best and costliest pipe smoking tobacco.—Cincinnati Commercial Gazette.

Strictly Business.

A train in Arizona was boarded by robbers, who went through the luckless passengers. One of them happened to be a Hebrew "drummer" from New York, who, when his turn came, with fear and reluctance fished out $900. He rapidly took $4 from the pile and placed it in his vest pocket. "What do you mean by that?" asked the gentle robber, as he toyed with his revolver. Hurriedly came the answer: "Mine frent, you surely would not refuse me a 2 per zent. discount on a strictly cash transaction like dis?" He got the discount.—San Francisco Argonaut.

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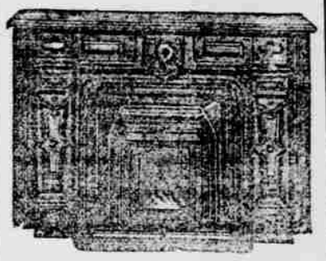

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