

THE TOY-MAKERS.

Life Among the Ingenious Artisans of the Thuringian Forest—The Way They Work and Live—A Branch of German Industry of Special Interest to Americans.

A Heidelberg correspondent of *The Philadelphia Times* writes: A half-day's journey from Heidelberg brings the traveler into a region as full of quaint interest and strange sights as any in Germany, the land of toys, the Sonneberg district of the Thuringian forest. This world apart in the universe of industry is known very well, indeed, to a certain class of Americans, the toy-importers, better than to the importers of any other nation. The American purchasers are the only ones who come to the Thuringian forest to give orders on the spot, "compose" now dolls out of half a dozen different sorts, order toys by the hundred gross, and vanish to return like the swallows at the end of a year. As long ago as 1876 we Americans bought in this small forest nest toys to the value of nearly half a million dollars, and in 1880 our purchases had increased to nearly a million dollars, and yet how few of us, when we buy a crying doll for a Christmas present, a woolly dog, a nodding donkey, a "farm-yard," or any of the thousand toys made of wood, papier mache, or wax, think of the strange little world among the Thuringian hills whence our familiar objects come.

Back at the beginning of the fourteenth century the little town of Sonneberg had won for itself municipal rights and sent large quantities of wooden wares to the Nurnberg jahmarket, had a guild of its own before the close of the century, and continued for more than four hundred years the gradual development of the toy-making branch which has made its productions known in all the civilized countries of the world from Russia, whither Sonneberg sends Easter exibles by the thousand gross, to California, where Sonneberg is represented upon every Christmas tree.

With the opening of our own century came a new era for Sonneberg when a workingman adapted papier mache to the toy trade. Until then it had been used in Paris for ornaments and in the monasteries for figures of the saints. Henceforward it was to take up its abode in the nursery and play-room. This invention revolutionized the trade of Sonneberg. Anyone could do the work required by the new material, whereas the use of the materials before employed had required skill and therefore an apprenticeship. By degrees the whole population, from the decrepit great grandfather to the tiny primary school child was pressed into the service, and to-day the only skilled workmen are those who turn or carve legs for toy animals or the heads of jumping-jacks, and the carpenters who build tiny wooden stables, theaters, kitchens, shops, etc., such as the children of our wealthier American families delight in.

As years went by the factory system began to creep into Sonneberg as everywhere else. The first factory met with a popular demonstration of so vigorous a character in the revolutionary year 1848 that the proprietor was obliged to abandon his enterprise, but presently the crying doll was introduced, and from that moment the battle against the factory system was lost. The crying doll became the staple production of Sonneberg, and its production employs almost as many workers as that of all other toys taken together.

These are the two great changes five centuries have wrought in the toy dynasty of Sonneberg, the use of papier mache and the introduction of crying dolls, and there is small likelihood of other important changes in the near future. The merchants are said to have no love for their business whatever, the toy manufacturers are conservative beyond belief, and the workmen have no money with which to experiment. There is no industrial museum in the district, and the manufacturers oppose the foundation of one because each is afraid that the others may appropriate his models. The solitary manufacturer who has patented a toy or two and proposed some wholesale improvements of technique is so cordially hated that he employs a private watchman for his establishment, and does not venture out alone at night. Yet within the narrow limits of its methods of production Sonneberg has the most marvelous array of varied toys. Thus there are sample-rooms with 12,000 to 18,000 sample toys, and many a Sonneberg drummer carries in his sample-books 3,000 to 4,000 pictures and photographs of the productions of his firm or firms. There is a sad side, too, to the diversity; for it is all the product of the workers, of whose poverty no one who has not visited the town can form an adequate idea. Yet these poor workers have no protection for their right to their own inventions, and the only remuneration for their ingenuity consists in the increased number of orders during the weeks or months in which the invention remains a novelty. Nor is there any art or technical school in the district. Every worker must learn as he may and take the consequences.

The workers are of two sorts, the factory hands and the "masters," who work at home with the help of an employe or two, and of their own families. The position of the master varies little from that of the other workmen. The master occupies a cottage and has a potato patch on the steep, stony hillsides.

But the cottage and potato patch are usually heavily mortgaged, and in order to pay interest and taxes the family usually rent the best rooms and live in the most wretched closet-like dens. The quarter of Sonneberg where the workers live is the oldest of the city. After the Russians had destroyed the city the inhabitants are said to have taken refuge in Grunthal, a long gorge under the protection of the castle. Shut in by steep hillsides the Grunthal affords scarce room enough for two narrow rows of houses, so that many of them are built directly into the hillsides. The dwelling usually consists of a sleeping and a living room, both low-ceiled and heated winter and summer in order to dry the wares which stand about the stove upon shelves and boards. The living-room, at once kitchen, workshop, and nursery, is usually light. But the sleeping-room is rarely ventilated and still more rarely heated. It contains exactly room enough for two or three beds so close together that no one can pass between them. At night the occupant of the furthest must climb over the intervening ones. Here two, three, or four persons occupy each bed. The poverty and crowding are horrible, the want of dwellings increasing as the factory system draws more and more hands to the town. And these pens are expensive, too; the most wretched of them, with but one habitable room, costs from 50 to 80 marks, and for the usual sleeping and living room together the workingman pays from 80 to 150 marks. The cleanliness of such dwellings may readily be imagined. The week's sweeping and scrubbing is confined to Saturday afternoon, when the wares are packed ready to be taken to the merchants. The sleeping-room rarely shares the benefit of the scrubbing. The food of these unfortunates consists of potatoes eaten in the morning with a cup of chickory as lunch with bread. For dinner, potatoes with a herring or some fat from the butcher. The poorest of all go without herring and take salt liquor in which it is packed! Meat is seldom eaten. In Grunthal, where the population is the thickest, there are few butchers, and these few find no custom. Down below in the town of Sonneberg itself the butchers live near together and kill much and often. At four o'clock coffee is taken again or the water in which the butcher has boiled sausage, which these unfortunates call sausage soup. This they get for nothing, or almost nothing, and they cut slices of potato into it.

The toy business does not continue unbrokenly throughout the year. From the end of November to the beginning of March almost complete want of work prevails. These winter months are terrible. The poor little savings are gone soon after Christmas, and the family must starve along upon the potatoes that have been hoarded or fall into the clutches of the usurer. The first orders that have come in are from the American dealers, who send soon after Christmas, because the staple articles which they order, doll heads or little dolls and other such things, are cheapest then, and at the time of the Leipzig Easter fair the Yankee purchasers appear themselves. The season of wholesale export is from July 1 to Oct. 1, when it reaches perhaps seven-fold the height of the winter export. This brief season must be made the most of by the unfortunate workers if the family maintenance for the year is to be earned at all, and their efforts surpass all description. Fancy working month after month eighteen to twenty hours, day in, day out, Sunday and Monday, in such a dwelling, with such food, and working on Friday the whole night through in order to have Saturday's task ready for delivery!

After the Leipzig autumn fair, when the urgent orders come, and American telegrams for Christmas goods literally chase each other along the cables, every human being who can set at work is pressed into the service of the toy industry. Whole families work all through the night, and the heat and dust and foul air must have been felt to be appreciated, which reign supreme here, where the fire is kept burning day and night to dry the wares, when a dozen human beings crouch in a low-ceiled pen, and at night a cheap petroleum lamp adds its fumes to the whole.

The consequences of such a way of living are inevitable. In spite of the pure forest air that pours down from the heights through every lane and byway, these unhappy people are pale and feeble; they stoop and cough, have flat narrow chests, and are small of stature. Such is the race toy-makers in the Thuringian forest. In the peasant district, but a short distance thence, a hardy race of Thuringians cultivates the soil; but their lean faces, a dry, bloodless skin, betoken the wretched nourishment and overwork. When the children are a few weeks old they are fed with goats' milk and bread crusts, and when a child cries a rag filled with crumbs and sugar is thrust into its mouth to be sucked, sleeping and waking. The prevailing cause of death is consumption for those who survive the fifteenth year, and the percentage of deaths of children under six months of age is 22.

To make matters worse prices are steadily falling and employers and employes are unanimous in the assertion

that since 1873 the prices of the coarser, cheaper sorts of toys have fallen 50 per cent. The orders have increased, but only the burden of toil has kept pace with them. Twice as much is produced as of old and scarcely the old remuneration is received.

It is said with truth that one-half of the world does not know how the other half lives. How little we who buy our children German toys know of the agony which the race for cheapness, the pressure of the world's competition, the struggle to hold the American market, despite the American tariff, has cost the men and women and little children who make them.

Carl Dunder's Boy Jake.

"Dot Shake plays some more games on me again," said Mr. Dunder as he entered the Central Station yesterday. "You knows Shake?"

"Seems as if I had heard of him." "Shake vhas a smart boy. Dot time he goes to Toledo he trades watches mit a confidence man and gets one twice as big as his. One time he goes to Chicago and doan' get lost nor meet some bunko men."

"What has he been doing now?" "Well, Shake sees some tracks in der snow, and he comes to me and says maybe some colored shentleman would like to steal our chickens. He goes oop mit a second-hand store and buys a big bear-trap, and I help him set her py the der coop. Dot vhas all right. If some colored shentleman get in dot trap he vhas a goner. I got out and look at him and gif him avhay mit der police."

"I see." "We keep dot trap set two days, and nopody comes around. Last night Shake goes out mit der back yard and sets fire to some straw in a box. Eaferypody begin to calls 'fire!' and a big policeman slumps oaf der alley fence and comes down on dot trap. I neafer hear such awful yells in all my life. It vhas like two hundred lions screamin' out in der night after beef. It takes four men to pry him out, and he limps around and swears and says he can lick two thousand men mit one hand tied behind him. He says Shake put oop dot fire to make him shump oaf der, and dot he shall take him to shail for twenty years. We look around for dot boy, but he vhas gone. I guess he goes by his uncle in Springwells. Sergeant, I like to ask you if Shake haf to go in a law-suit?"

"I don't think so." "Dot policeman says I vhas in der plot to murder him; can he send me to shail?"

"No." "Dot makes me feel tickled like a child. All last night I dreams of cow-boys and shails and supreme courts, and I guess dot Shake doan' sleep a wink. I goes down after him dis afternoon, Sergeant!"

"Well." "When I get Shake home I shall tell him to come down cellar and see if some colored shentleman doan' steal our potatoes! You tell dot officer on dot beat if he hear some awful whoops and shrieks and yells to walk right on. It vhas me and Shake lookin' for der colored shentlemans mit a strap!"—*Detroit Free Press.*

A Texas Horse Ranch.

In Grayson county, five miles from Whitesboro, there is a horse ranch containing ten thousand acres, on which can be found all modern improvements, the most expensive and valuable, besides 800 to 1,000 head of horses, principally high grade Percherons; the remainder are thoroughbred Percheron stallions and mares. A large number of fine jacks and several hundred head of thoroughbred cattle are also kept on the ranch.

This ranch is owned by H. B. Sanborn, probably the wealthiest man in this state, and it is his ambition to make it eventually the finest and most expensive thoroughbred horse farm in the world.

The ranch has been established about eight years, and during the entire time every outlay necessary to its rapid advancement has been willingly made, until the enormous amount of over \$300,000 has been spent upon it. The dwellings, barns, fences, in fact everything on the place, have been finished with a view to making it a magnificent country residence, and Mr. Sanborn, who at present resides in Houston, intends making it his future home.

Enclosures of this size are generally regarded as a nuisance in a thickly settled farming country such as Grayson, but such is not the case in this instance, as Mr. Sanborn purchases large quantities of food stuffs from the people around him, always paying the highest market price.

He regards his neighbors as friends, and they consider him as a neighbor, and not as an intruder.

Mr. Sanborn spends a great deal of time on his horse farm, and always makes it pleasant for those visiting him, whether they come on business or merely to look over the great establishment. Besides this ranch, Mr. Sanborn owns a half interest in a 350,000 acre cattle ranch situated in the Pan Handle and a 15,000 acre ranch in Clay County—which he intends converting into a grain field. He was originally a farmer, and does not desire to be known as a "cattle king," nor does he assume the airs of foreign aristocrats.—*Texas Farm and Ranch.*

LIFE STUDIES.

Rarely, the horse-trainer, never married. Greatness never makes a mistake.

Needles were invented by a man. It seems needless to add that he died bald-headed.

The altitudinous female hat is doing badly as much to keep folks away from the theatres as Sam Small's sermons.

Men in high places are getting to be dreadfully reckless. Senator Van Wyck not only wears paper collars, but glories in the fact.

"The Great Conversers" is the title of a book by Dr. Matthews. It does beat all how even the best of men will jibe and jeer at the women.

A woman in Florida claims to be the mother of forty-two children. To a disinterested party it would seem as though she ought to know.

The Chinese language is made up of words of one syllable, the stove pipe not having as yet been introduced into the Flowery Kingdom.

It is said that nothing can prevent Anna Dickinson from returning to the stage. Another reason why kissing in public should be declared unconstitutional.

One by one the old landmarks are passing away. Manistee, Mich., has an orchestra that does not contain a bald-headed man. It is composed of young women.

It has been discovered that George Washington could play the fiddle. Folks who have never believed that George was much of a gun will now begin to change their minds.

It now takes but six minutes to send a cable message to London and get an answer, but it still takes an office-boy something over two hours to go round the corner and return with a plumber.

The man who years ago vowed that he would never shave or get his hair cut until certain uncertain political things happened seems to be giving the fool-killer plenty of outdoor exercise this season.

A good imitation of celluloid is now being made from Irish potatoes. Nothing but the apparent indifference of science stands in the way of something indestructible being evolved from the modern beefsteak.

Opera glasses are coming into use in city churches. This is a sensible move. There is no reason why a woman with weak eyes shouldn't have as much right to keep posted on the delicate shades in bonnet trimmings as anybody.

An old lady at Meriden, Conn., has just been jugged for alleged insanity, simply because she seemed to have an unchangeable belief that lawyers were wicked. Queer people, those Nutmeggers.

A crazy man in Pawtucket started out the other day determined to kiss every woman he met on the street. His mind is still feeble, but he seems to have more sense about some things, though he is not near so handsome as he was a month ago.

A woman cannot get up in public and say ten words before a dozen people, but she can get up before one man—if he happens to be her husband—and she can say more in ten minutes than a book-worm could find in a college library in two years of constant search.

A flea is a lively and sportive little creature—so little, in fact, that it requires a good eye and a quick sight to catch more than one glimpse of him in a lifetime; but mathematical science feels itself a toddling infant when it undertakes to figure up and explain how big it would be if it could be photographed with its mouth open.—*Lige Brown in Chicago Ledger.*

The Craze for Names.

With the most part of Thackeray's early work there was no choice of signing his name. In those days neither editors nor the public had that unreasoning craze for names which apparently possesses them to-day. "Words, words, words," said Hamlet, when asked what he was reading; "names, names, names, names," he might answer to-day. For really to-day, at any rate with our periodical literature, whether it is to be called journalism or not, there seems not only to be much virtue in a name, but every virtue. By journalism one generally understands the current literature of the daily papers, and the idea of lifting the veil of secrecy—already thin enough in all conscience—which surrounds the workers in this busy and important field, is to us, we frankly own, an appalling one. Such a custom would not only, it seems to us, cruelly hamper the workman's hands, but would also open a terribly wide floor to those sweet influences, so dangerous to meet, so hard to resist, which are ever on the watch to guide the bolts of Jove. Some rude men of the baser sort there have been to assert that this door is even now not kept so jealously shut as it should be; but this is, of course, a libel. Paris, however, can furnish some idea of the result of throwing open the shrines of journalism to the profane crowd. There the papers, some of them at least, bristle with names; there certainly publicity does not always impose that check on rash and inconvenient writing which its votaries claim for its prime virtue; while there, unless truth in her passage over the channel suffers a sea change indeed, those sweet influences we spoke of are most undisguisedly rampant.—*Macmillan's Magazine.*

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