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GLASS-MAKING IN ENGLAND



GREEN WIDE-BOWLED TAZZA

GLASS-MAKING
IN
ENGLAND

BY
HARRY J. POWELL, C.B.E.

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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

SEVERAL BOOKS have been written about the craft of the collector of old English glasses and about the craft of the dealer in antiques, but the history of the handicraft of glass-making has only received cursory attention.

The history of glass-making in England is dealt with from a collector's point of view in Hartshorne's *Old English Glasses*; it is briefly noticed in Nesbitt's *Handbook of Glass*, and some valuable papers by E. Wyndham Hulme on "English glass-makers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" appeared in the *Antiquary* towards the end of the last century.

Few genuine handicrafts remain, and the handicraft of glass-making is doomed, owing to the scarcity of recruits and the development of machinery. The training required to equip a competent glass-blower is long and arduous, and the prospect of ultimate success is not sufficiently bright to attract youths to adopt glass-blowing as their trade. Moreover, training is less easily obtained now than in the past because many simple processes, which used to afford practice for learners, are now more speedily and economically carried out by improved mechanical appliances and by machinery. A modern automatic bottle-making machine sucks up molten glass from a feeding-tank and turns out finished bottles continuously as long as the tank is supplied with glass, and the machinery is kept lubricated and adjusted.—The last fifty years have witnessed greater changes in the glass industry than in any other. The conception of the material itself is changed; many of its physical and chemical characteristics differing widely from those of a rigid solid. Whereas the varieties of glass, chemically distinct, could formerly be counted on the fingers of one hand, they are now numbered by the hundred. Rule-of-thumb methods are yielding to scientific methods, primitive tools are being superseded by machines of great complexity, and handicraftsmen by engineers and mechanics.

The foundation of the Glass Technology Society in 1917, the establishment of a School of Glass Technology in connection with Sheffield University and the inauguration of a National Glass Research Association

prepare the way for the speedy development of the industry on modern scientific lines.

As the threatened handicraft possesses both antiquity and interest, it may not be amiss to try to piece together the few records which are now available in order to form a framework into which fuller information can be fitted in the future.

I wish to make acknowledgments to the late Albert Hartshorne for his friendship and for stores of information contained in *Old English Glasses*; to Mr Francis Buckley for his generosity in placing at my disposal the results of his long and laborious research; to Mr E. F. Chance for his paper dealing with the history of the Spon Lane Works; to the late Rev. F. S. Cooper for many facts about the Old Chiddingfold Glass-houses; to Mr E. Thurlow Leeds for his assistance and for his pamphlet on the "Dating of Glass Wine-Bottles"; to Mr J. A. Knowles of York for several valuable suggestions, to Mr Wilfred Buckley, to Mr Dudley Westropp, and to a long succession of able craftsmen at the old Whitefriars Glass-house to whom I owe whatever practical knowledge of glass-making I may possess. My thanks are also due to Mr Edward Arnold, to Messrs Pilkington Bros., to the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, and to the proprietor of *Country Life* for permission to make use of illustrations and articles.

H. J. P.

October 1922

POSTSCRIPT

It is with deep regret that the publishers announce that the author did not live either to see his book published or to witness the transference of the glasshouse, which was the centre of his life's labour, to a new locality; the old Whitefriars Works, which for more than two centuries rested under the shadow of St Paul's, having now been removed to Wealdstone, Harrow.

Mr Harry Powell's whole attention was focused upon the craft of glass-making as an English fine art and it was one of the regrets of his later years to note the passing of the old-time craftsman. Modern conditions of education and industry call for new methods of training, and with this end in view it was decided to remove the glasshouse to more healthy surroundings, to take advantage of the latest developments in the science of glass-melting, and to provide adequate means for the systematic training of young men in the craft.

These plans have now materialised and although, as the Lord Mayor pointed out at a farewell visit to the old works, London has lost one of its ancient landmarks, it is to be hoped that the craft of glass-making will benefit by the change.

January 1923.

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