

The Indian Shoe Maker.

There are in Hindostan swarms of native shoe makers. No "station" is too small to accommodate one or two of the fraternity. In infinitesimal places such as Aoula, Serampore and Konnager, in the northern half of India, and in the diminutive Madras "stations," as, for instance, Kurnool, Mysore and Seringapattam in South India, the "mochi" is to be found. At Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bandra, and other Bombay presidency "stations" he piles his trade; while at Sialdra, Jhelum, and elsewhere in the Punjab he follows his calling. And, it may be added, that the oriental representatives of the craft appear to find it pays them to make "boys' laced boots for school wear" at four rupees (five shillings), patent leather buttoned boots at six rupees (eight shillings), pumps at three rupees (four shillings), and Wellingtons at seven rupees (eight shillings) and four-pence.

In the large towns, such as Lucknow, Allahabad, Cawnpore, in the northwest provinces, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Lahore in the Punjab, Hyderabad and Kurachi in the Madras presidency, and Nagpore in the central provinces, it is said there are almost as many "mochis" as inhabitants. Madras and Bombay find employment for a vast number of them, though, in the latter city, the Parsee element somewhat cut into the business. In Calcutta there are no operatives of the latter description, but the Chinese keenly competes with the Aryan craftsman. And when the Celestial encounters the "five, almond eyes glare at those of shade and mud color; black blood stains Calcutta's metropolitan thoroughfares.

It is, perhaps, interesting to note that the oriental boot maker has few expenses. His living, including clothing, fuel, lighting, and the education of his progeny, works out at about 4s to 5s a head a month. It is thus apparent to the most limited understanding that the "mochi" can afford to work at the very lowest rates, especially if he is not encumbered with a nursery. And although the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian members of his clientele may cut him down in price, there always remains to him an appreciable profit.

The exact rate of profit at which he works is, perhaps, somewhat difficult to determine, since his charges are based upon a sliding scale. Roughly speaking, however, 5 per cent satisfies him. He usually purchases his leather in small quantities, and from a local leather merchant ("chumra-wallah"), who will, in all probability, experience a difficulty in obtaining a settlement of his account. "Cash on delivery" is therefore apt to be the hard and fast rule of the European merchant when accepting an indent from his "Aryan brother."

The supplying of the various schools in Simla, Darjeeling, Poonah and Patchmari provokes much competition amongst the local "mochis." The indigenous boot maker would also be very happy to tender for the supplying of footgear for the troops. He is, however, not in a sufficiently large way of business to undertake such contracts, much as he would like to.

This patronage is bestowed upon the Cawnpore factories, whose workshops turn out "Wellingtons," riding boots, gaiters, and ammunition boots worn by our English and native troops in India. And not only in times of peace do they serve their purpose, but when engage in frontier warfare they appear to afford satisfaction to their wearers. Indeed, they are stoutness and durability personified. The "mochi" is also to be found in the emporia of the European boot makers of Lahore, Kurachee, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Bangalore, Secunderabad, Poonah, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore and Simla, working under Anglo-Indian supervision. When subject to control his work is less unsatisfactory than when work-but he, unfortunately, does not make ing on his own account. But inspection by the European manager of Anglo-Indian tendencies does not necessarily result in satisfactory work—far from it.

The tools employed by the "mochi" correspond with those used by members of the craft in civilized countries; the same skillful use of them. The late Mulchund, a Fyzabad boot maker, on being asked why he could not cut out his boot properly, replied that "old tools did not agree with new leather." The English of this sapient speech was that he could not afford to replenish his equipment, as 5 per cent of his pro-

fits went in bribing the domestics of his European clientele. India is the land of "palm-oil."

On completing the execution of a patron's order, the mochi will demand a "chit" (certificate), which will be placed in a book containing, amongst others, the following:

"Binsar.

"Aug. 1st, 1858.
"I certify that Budri Dass made me an excellent pair of boots for two rupees.

"Colonel.

(In those days the English equivalent of the rupee was two shillings and sixpence.)

"Alipore, Sept. 15, 1879.
"Budri Dass is a capital mochi. He works well and cheerfully. He should, however, seek extended knowledge.

"C. S."

"Budri Dass is an idiot, and can't make boots for nits.—Cawnpore."

"Budri Dass is a good working fellow. He was jump high. He had made me English boots of fabulous fineness. He is quite the good workman. God bless him.

"Ram Chunder Bux,
Darjeeling, Aug. 30th, 1881."

"Great Eastern Hotel,
Calcutta.

April 2, 1900.
Budri Dass is wasted as a repainer of boots. He and Barnum should become acquainted.

GEORGE CECIL."

It is difficult to determine when boots and shoes of English pattern were first introduced to the favorable notice of the native shoe makers of India. Rossetti, in his work on Egyptian antiquities mentions the sandal—the forerunner of the shoe—as being of great antiquity in the orient and east generally. But he makes no reference to European footgear being copied by the original mochi. In all probability, the Indian followers of Saint Crispin, and Cyprian, his brother, took to making boots of European pattern about the beginning of the last century, whilst for many hundreds of years they have manufactured the sandal peculiar to India. It may, however, be added that in boot making lore of Hindoostan there is no mention made of the Aryan contemporaries of Saint Ananias. It is, perhaps, interesting to note that the "mochi" does not invite the help, as a general rule, of other operatives. Unless he is in a comparatively large way of business, he is his own shoemaker, bootman, and boot closer, though his spouse (singular or plural, according to whether he is a Mohammedan or Hindu) sometimes delicately as a shoe closer. On the same principle, he himself cuts out the boot, tacks the upper leather to the insole, undertakes the sewing in of the welt, the stitching to the welt of the top sole, as also the building and sewing down of the heel. He also attends to the setting, besides polishing and final cleaning up. He is his own cutter and designer and his knowledge extends to lasting and shank pieces.

The position employed by the "mochi" when working is much the same as is utilized by the European operative. In addition, he sits upon the floor. The hollow at the base of the breastbone occasioned by the pressure of the last, which is noticeable in English St. Crispin's, is by no means uncommon in India boot-making centers. Indeed, the more ancient Hans Sachs of Aryan mercantile circles are as bowed as was the hunchback Quasimodo of "Notre Dame" notoriety. The "standing-bench," however, is not favored by the fraternity in India. Their forebears in the shoe-making line have sat on the ground, and they continue to do likewise. Were their descendants to adopt any other method of accommodating their vile bodies, the wraiths of long departed "mochis," stretching back many generations, would rise in wrath, for the oriental is an animal of conservative tendencies; he is opposed to progress. As he had clothed himself in the colored turban, white pyjamas, and short linen jacket of the pattern affected by his great-great-grandfather, so he has inherited that ancestor's methods of working; and ideas in general.—George Cecil, in *Leather Trade Review*, London, England.

It is told of a bishop that he was mistaken for a salesman and when asked what line he represented, replied, "spiritual."
"Is that so?" said the questioner.
"But my, what an awful price you've run gin up to."

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