

APOTHEOSIS OF THE POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH'S LACED HANDKERCHIEF.

If you did not understand the meaning of the word apotheosis, I hope, my dear reader, that you looked for it in the nearest dictionary, and having found it, no doubt you will wonder what in the world it has to do with a pocket-handkerchief. This is only natural, if you know nothing of the early days of the handkerchief; of its degradation before the 15th century, its rise to grandeur and dignity, to the most gossamer of cambric, and the most costly of lace; when it became an article of fashion, an ornament to be worn, and carried in the hand and used on state occasions.

The first word that we find used in English for handkerchief was "muckinder," which was also written "muckiter," and "mockadour." This word has its origin, probably, in the Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, old German, or some of those early tongues; but it exists in Spanish as *mocador*, in Provençal as *moucadou*, in French as *mouchoir*, and in Latin as *muccinum*. So this word, though not at all an elegant one, was probably the word applied to the handkerchief, as used in daily life, from a very early date.

We find this word "muckinder" applied, in its last days, to the handkerchief worn by children and hung to the side. It was generally attached by a tape, so that it might not be lost. This name is found during the 17th century up to the end, when it was superseded by the word "kerchief." When handkerchief was introduced, and that monstrosity, "pocket-handkerchief" came in, I cannot tell. The latter was perhaps inspired by the French *mouchoir de poche*, but it is quite a needless addition. A recent writer says that this word pocket-handkerchief is one of the most curious compounds in the language. The first form of the word being *kerchief*, from the word *couverchief*, a covering for the head, then we prefixed the word hand, and got handkerchief, a covering for the head held in the hand, but when we use the term pocket-handkerchief we speak of a covering for the head, which is held in the hand, and is kept in the pocket. The words handkerchief, and still worse, pocket-handkerchief, are, says the same

writer, verbal monstrosities. So I hope my readers will begin to use the old word kerchief or at least handkerchief at once.

The word kerchief or chief comes from old English coverchief, and the French *couverchief*, from *couvrir* to cover, and *chief*, the head. In Scotland a curch is a covering for the head. The word cur, for *courvir*, is found in curfew, also in curtain, where it still retains the sense of covering. The vulgarism "handkercher" which is still used amongst us, is found in Chapman in the year 1654, when apparently it was not a vulgarism, but in ordinary use. However, that was a time when many things were in vogue which we should deem worse than vulgar now.

It does not seem improbable that the idea of much decorated and embroidered handkerchiefs came to Europe from Eastern lands, where they have been employed for ceremonial uses from a great antiquity. When presents are given, they must be enveloped in one of these much ornamented handkerchiefs, and they are used at all ceremonials. At what time they were introduced it would be impossible to say, but in the year 1498 the Portuguese began to trade with a part of India, and there was always a certain amount of intercourse with other countries in the East.

We find an allusion to this habit of wrapping valuables in napkins or kerchiefs in our Lord's Parable of the Talents, St. Luke xix. 20.

The earliest historical notice of handkerchiefs is, perhaps, the mention in the Acts of the Apostles xix. 11, of the handkerchiefs which had touched the body of the apostle Paul, being carried to the sick, for their healing and relief from evil spirits. And at an earlier date than this we find the traditional story of the handkerchief of Veronica. Dr. Brewer gives it as follows, "It is said that a maiden handed her handkerchief to our Lord on His way to Calvary. He wiped the sweat from His brow, returned the handkerchief to the owner, and then passed on. The handkerchief was found to bear a perfect likeness of the Saviour, and was called *Vera-Iconica* (true likeness), and the maiden was ever afterwards called St. Veronica. One of



MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S HANDKERCHIEF, 1800.