

# Architectural Digest

## Articles of More Than Passing Interest From Our Contemporaries

### A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF POTTERY.

The potter was the first artist. He was also the pioneer of the world's great industries. His creative instinct found its earliest expression in clay. His earthenware is contemporary with the Pyramids. Two thousand years before the Christian era he made bricks, and stamped them with the names and titles of the monarchs for whom they were manufactured. The antiquity of the art is emphasized by Homer. It contributes to the household service of the humblest cottage, and adorns the palace of the king. Pottery has provided the only existing record of the past. The pioneers of modern sanitary science have found in the potter their most useful ally, frequently anticipating the best inventions for improving the health of towns, and meeting every claim upon his ingenuity and skill.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century two potters of Amsterdam became acquainted with the fact that at Bradwell, in the vicinity of Burslem, there was a bed of beautiful red clay, peculiarly fine in grain and color. It is thought that John Dwight, of Fulham, one of the foremost artists in clay at that time in England, supplied his two friends, or correspondents, with this valuable information. These two potters, on the strength of the English red clay, emigrated to Staffordshire and established a pottery at Bradwell in 1690, where they endeavored to imitate one at least of the foreign kind of ware. With a mixture of red clay and a little ochreous clay they made red porcelain inglated teapots; and, by adding manganese, they produced red porcelain, or Egyptian ware. These novelties were stored at Dimsdale, about a mile distant from the work, and the buildings were said to be connected by a speaking tube. They were very jealous of their manufacturing secrets, and looked rather to strategy than to patents for their protection. One can well imagine how the foreigners would pique local curiosity. Moreover, it is easy to understand that they would not be likely to make many friends in the neighborhood, seeing that their manners were said to be somewhat supercilious; the fact being that, considering their origin and bringing up, they would not be likely to find among the local potters of the Staffordshire district of that time many cultured acquaintances. The Dutchmen kept themselves to themselves, affected, no doubt, a superior tone in their limited associations with their neighbors, and in presence of this foreign hauteur of the invaders and their great success in pottery with local clays, it is not surprising that their stratagem of secrecy was met with opposing artifice. Their very precautions must have been regarded as more or less of a challenge. John Astbury and Josiah Twyford evidently acted upon this view, as well as with a desire to advance their own practical knowledge. The Dutchmen kept a careful guard over their works against strangers. Between their establishments at Burslem and Bradwell they had a code of signals to warn each other of the approach of strangers. They selected their servants and laborers from the dullest and most stupid people they could find. They looked for hands, not heads. An idiot was employed to turn the thrower wheel. Each person was locked in the place where he was employed. Previously to the few work people retiring at night, each was subject to a strict examination. In this state the processes were pursued, when the two local potters, Twyford and Astbury, applied for employment at the works. Twyford seems to have been the first to succeed. He relied upon a carelessness and indifference of manner that went without challenge. It was not a question of assuming a virtue, though he might have it not, but of sustaining the disguise of a shrewd intelligence under the aspect of a doltish stupidity. They took him on, and he successfully played his part of an indifferent toiler who was content with his humble wage and position. Astbury appears to have found it necessary to adopt more severe shifts than Twyford, or was more resolute in his determination to master the secrets at all hazards.

After two years of this strange employment, Astbury came to the conclusion that he had no more to learn in this factory, and he availed himself of a real or feigned sickness to remain at home, and the Dutchmen had the mortification to discover that they were no longer the only persons who could make the pottery they had introduced in the district.

Disturbed, if not disgusted, with the inquisitiveness of Burslem potters, and believing in the desirability of being near the principal market for their wares, they removed to a manufactory near London, where a branch of the family is still resident.

Josiah Twyford of this incident established his works near Shelton Church and the residence of Elijah Fenton. Parts of the buildings in connection with these works, the cottages for the work people, and "Twyford Square" are still in existence; also pieces of pottery made by him are still to be found when the ground is disturbed. He died in 1799, and was buried in Stoke Church. Prior to fifty years ago operations at these works were confined to general pottery. Sanitation was in its infancy. Mr. T. W. Twyford saw that there were possibilities of great development in the art and business of the sanitary potter, who at that time was content (with few exceptions) to receive, for his share of a misnamed "Sanitary Appliance," 2s. for the earthenware, the brass and iron-founder getting from 20s. to 50s. He thought this was hardly equitable in principle, and so conceived the idea of the "National" basin, made all in earthenware, to displace the old "pan" closet and similar unsanitary systems. At first this innovation met with scant success owing to the difficulty with which old-fashioned notions and customs are superseded. During the first year of its introduction, not more than fifty were sold; the next year about two hundred; a year or two later, when its advantages, from a sanitary point of view, were generally discovered and acknowledged, the sales reached about ten thousand a year.

In the summer of 1835, when an inquiry was received through the Paris agent from a French architect of advanced views in sanitary engineering, who desired to know if he could be supplied with a basin to be fixed open and exposed, without any wood enclosure, Mr. Twyford replied in the affirmative, and at once had a design prepared and submitted to the architect, who was so well pleased with it that seven hundred were at once ordered, to be fixed in some large residential flats which were then being built under his supervision in Paris.

This basin, which was of a large type known as the "Wash-out," under the name of the "Unitas," was the pioneer of "Pedestal" closets, and was really the commencement of the present fixing basins open and exposed, so that all joints and connections can be examined, abolishing corners or concealed places in which dirt can accumulate unperceived.

The "Unitas" was exhibited at the Health Exhibition, 1886, and excited many comments. While on sanitary grounds the principle was commended, yet it was generally remarked that the innovation would never be popular. Indeed, had it not been for the loyal support of the medical profession, who unceasingly, in their own journals and also by their own example, advocated this new principle in sanitation, it is questionable whether it would not have been sacrificed to the conservation of old prejudices and false ideas of propriety; happily, however, science triumphed over sentiment.

The same progress and advance has been made in other branches of sanitary pottery. Lavatory basins of large size and improved construction have to a great extent taken the place of the unsatisfactory and often unsanitary wood top, marble or slate, with plug basin underneath. Indeed, it is now quite common to see fine pieces of lavatory earthenware that a few years ago it would have been deemed impossible to produce. Then, again, it is now possible to produce lavatory ranges of any length, fitted together with joints so perfect and complete that they can scarcely be detected, and forming, when complete with their stands, fittings, and pipes, real marvels of constructive sanitary art.

Architects, builders, and sanitary engineers were quick to take advantage of the practical advance in providing for the better health of towns, and Twyford's followed the agitation with an energy and inventive capacity that soon covered the country with their new sanitary appliances, which they first made chiefly for private firms, and after a time with their own name and guarantees of perfection.

Prior to this new departure at Twyford, enamelled fireclay had been made principally in Yorkshire, at Stourbridge in Worcestershire, and in various parts of Scotland, the porcelain enamelled baths of Stourbridge being especially celebrated. From Mr. Twyford's experience in the manufacture of large pieces of earthenware in connection with his sanitary pottery, he recognized the possibility of utilizing the fireclay of the district in the production and manufacture of specialties in the shape of sanitary and culinary vessels, sinks, cisterns and baths of a size and strength which had hitherto not been projected. A considerable time was spent in experimenting and testing the various clays, some of which, having an undue proportion of alkalis or alkali earths, would not stand the fire; others, having too great a percentage of silica, would not take the enamel; others, being too much impregnated with oxides of iron, discolored the enamel; whilst many contained other impurities which rendered them impossible for the purpose.



THE LATE LT.-COL. S. G. BECKETT

Commander of the 75th Battalion, C.E.F., who was killed on the Somme recently, particulars being still lacking. The late Lt.-Col. Beckett was a very fine officer and prior to the war practised in Toronto as an architect. He and his partner, Col. Vaux Chadwick, gave up their business to serve the Empire.