

# THE ART OF DYEING

What it was and what it is.

Nearly three thousand years ago purple dye was so extensively used that it brought wealth and prosperity to the cities of Tyre and Sidon. When the Romans conquered the East they so liked the colour that they reserved it under penal statutes for imperial use. Its production from that time declined and eventually both the material and the art of using it were lost. A great pity. There was, indeed, purple after that, for investigators were enabled to rediscover the shell-fish which yielded the dye, but the colours furnished by it were neither so bright nor so permanent, and the imperial purple was even less beautiful than that produced by the most common dye of the present day.

In the days of Moses, long before the flourishing days of Tyre and Sidon, dyes were used, but to a very limited extent. Then it was not a common art, and a person wearing a garment of blue, purple or scarlet, was one of distinction. The purple made at Tyre was produced from a drop in the throat of a shell-fish, and was purple, blue, or violet, according to the treatment. The vermillion of the ancients was a dull red, such as is seen on the monuments, where it has preserved its tint for many years. Those colours were indeed fast colours. Homer, Strabo, and Herodotus, wrote of colors, and it is clearly shown that the manufacture of colored tissues was carried on by the ancient nations. Westward, the knowledge of the art spread slowly, but up to the thirteenth century there are few records of its existence to be found. Apparently the Jews held the secret of the dyeing art during this long period, for, from scant records, they carried on the business in Jerusalem and Italy, and the trade was entirely in their hands. It is somewhere said that the Archbishop of Pannonia, in the year A.D. 853, endowed the Convent of the Bleeding Heart, at Tirnova, with the secret of the art of dyeing, and that institution prospered and grew wealthy through it. It is not supposed, however, that the art of dyeing was exclusively controlled by this convent or that it was ever completely lost: the domestic records of all modern nations speak of

dyers and dyed clothes. <sup>4</sup> Curious were some of the laws enacted in respect to the using of colors. In Ireland, in its early days, there was a law laying down the number of colours that may be employed in the dress of various classes of society, the monarch alone being permitted to wear seven colors. From this it may be inferred that if the Irish, at a very early period, were not dyers, they, at least, had variously dyed articles.

Very few ancient examples of the dyer's art have been preserved. There is, however, one account of a cloth containing dyed yarn which may have been in the dyer's hands in Egypt 1000 years before the Christian Era, and there are still in good preservation ecclesiastical vestments containing dyed silks which are certainly 600 to 700 years old. From old manuscripts is discovered the means by which dyes were made, and various data point to the fact that dyeing was well understood in Europe in the 15th Century, and that the materials at the command of the dyer were sufficiently numerous and varied to enable him to produce all desired shades of color. From that time until the commencement of the present era of artificial dyeing there was not any very great change in the principles of coloring. The discovery of America was followed by the introduction of many new materials for the production of dyes of a superior character: such as cochineal, logwood, and later on catechu. In 1858 commenced the discovery and application of a series of artificial colouring matters, which have created a distinct era in the history of dyeing. Mr. Perkin was the first to practically produce a dyeing material from aniline, the well-known mauve or purple shade so much in vogue for many years. Other discoveries rapidly followed and in the course of a few years about a hundred patents were taken out for methods of making artificial coloring matter from aniline, supplying the dyer with every shade and hue which could be desired. Since then rapid advances have been made in the production of dye stuffs by chemical processes, and to-day we have the benefit of the long years of thought and labour of eminent chemists in the use of the famous Turkish Dyes, which have gladdened the heart of many a fair damsel. Many a shabby dress in these hard times has been claimed from the rag bag and made to look like new by the judicious use

**TURKISH DYES ARE BRIGHT, PURE AND LASTING.**