

THE WOMEN'S PAGE

PERFUMES from the PTOLEMYS to the PRESENT



Fifty Centuries of Sweet Scents That Have Linked Antiquity to Modern Times

By Leigh Mitchell Hodges

WHEN milady uncorks the costly cut-glass bottle that decorates her dressing table and sprinkles her filmy handkerchief with circumspect eau de violette or amber extract of oriental blooms, she little dreams that she is perpetuating the sway of what was once a power in religion, society and commerce.

She does not realize how universal was the knowledge and use of perfumes in ancient and medieval times, nor does she know that

even today, with the sweet scents restricted to toilet uses, they form the basis of a world-wide trade which amounts to many millions of dollars annually and gives employment to thousands and thousands of men, women and children.

But if she should spend a few spare hours delving into the recorded doings and sayings of ages long dead, she would marvel at the high part perfume has played in history; at its potent influence among peoples who were great when the race was young.

AMONG the Egyptians, the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and other eastern nations of antiquity, balms, ointments, essences and scent-powders were held in high esteem, not only for purposes of personal adornment, but as adjuncts to the religious rites and ceremonies of the times.

In the land of the fragrant lotus three kinds of incense were burned to the great god Ra-aromatic gums at dawn, myrrh at noon and six different ingredients at sunset. As a high offering to Isis, an ox stuffed with sweet herbs, camphor and incense and sprinkled with perfumed oil was burned on the altar, and the other gods were worshipped with accompaniment of scented gums, woods, oils, herbs and flowers.

Who would consult Isis as an oracle must first fill his lamps with scented oil and let the fumes of incense rise before his altar. Indeed, perfume was as much a part of Egyptian worship as prayer and praise of modern religion.

ANCIENT WORLD MARKET

For many years the Nile nation was the world's premier market for perfumes. It was to a company of Ishmaelites, come from Gilead with spicery, balm and myrrh, that Joseph was sold; and the perfumers were among the richest merchants of those remote times.

The storied "balm of Gilead," then so common, and now so rare that only the sultan can have all he wants, is distilled from the amyrin, a bush that once upon a time covered the mountains of Gilead. In vain today might Jeremiah cry out: "Thine ointment balm of Gilead, is there no physician there?"

And this lamentation, which did come from him, evidences the fact, not generally remembered even by those who may have read or heard it, that the first physicians freely prescribed sweet odors, especially in nervous diseases.

The ancient Hebrews made wide use of perfumes—first in their religious ceremonies. Indeed, their love of sweet odors was on a par with their love for gold and precious stones; and as certain of the latter had to be used for the adorning of the high priests, so were certain perfumes set aside for the service of the altar and the inner temple.

Sweet incense, made according to minute directions and allowed to be used only for the purpose stated, was burned morning and evening in the houses of worship, and a "holy ointment" for anointing the sick, the wounded or the faithful was compounded of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia, each of which is to this day used medicinally.

The Jews perfumed their beds, scented their hair and beards and wore alabaster vials filled with musk, attar of rose, balsam or costly spikenard of the sort with which the woman bathed the feet of Jesus of Nazareth. And it is a significant testimonial to their high regard for perfumes that of the three offerings borne to the infant Saviour by the wise men two were of perfume—frankincense and myrrh.

The Talmud directs that one-tenth of each bride's dowry be set aside for the purchase of perfume, and the queen of Sheba was long remembered in Judea for having introduced there a delightful odor known as the "Balsam of Mecca," which gained great popularity. It is now grown in only one place—a certain Arabian plantation—and the total annual yield is three pounds.

As it unfolded into a center of civilization, Greece also became a center of scent-use, and although the sale of these luxuries was forbidden by Solon and Socrates, the trade in them was enormous. When the perfume casket of Barius fell into the hands of Alexander the Great, the world conqueror threw away the bottles and boxes to make room for his copy of the Iliad.

But Athenians, as a whole, made prodigious use of perfumes of all sorts. Not only did they perfume their dining halls, but scented all drinking vessels, and had slaves whose sole duty during the course of a feast was to sprinkle rare essences on the guests.

One society leader of that day gained enviable notoriety by losing in his banquet room four scented pigeons, from whose flapping wings different sweet odors were rained down on the guests. Probably no people before or since made such a detailed study of the use of cosmetic perfumes. Each part of the body had its special unguent—sweet marjoram for the hair, wild hyacinth for the face, mint for the neck and knees, mint for the arms, palm oil for cheeks and breast and Egyptian ointment for the legs and feet.

The perfumers' shops were centers of gossip in matters of art, love, intrigue and politics; and in dreaming of what was to follow this life the Greek men and maidens fancied the Elysian fields as being watered by a river of sweet scents, which flowed around a city of pure gold, whose half a thousand fountains were ever spouting skyward jets of amorous odors!

From Greece to Rome spread the craze, and soon the city by the Tiber was noted for the number and elegance of its perfume shops, all of which were located in a quarter called the Via Thuraria, where each was denoted by a bunch of sage hung out in front. In Capua the "unguentarii" were so numerous

as to fill the great street, and every Roman lady kept one slave whose sole duty was to keep her in fashionable odor.

Pliny says Arabia and India drew from Rome \$1,000,000 a year for perfumes alone, and Lucian warned his countrywomen against their extravagant use of these luxuries. But they did not heed him, and finally the perfume problem became such a live issue that the great Caesar himself promulgated an edict forbidding the sale of foreign essences, which only made them the more desirable and costly.

Excelling in this as in every other excess, Rome carried the use of perfumes to the most absurd extremes. Every article of dress, every piece of furni-

ture and even the cooking and eating utensils were scented. The amphitheaters reeked with aromatic odors; the walls of the baths were thus saturated, and even the military ensigns were anointed.

When Poppaea died Nero lavished on her funeral more incense than Arabia could supply in a year, and Caligula, Gaius and Hellogabalus were immoderate in their use of perfume. At one of his fetes the emperor who is said to have fiddled while Rome frizzled spent half a million for flowers alone.

With the waning of Rome's power and glory the popularity of perfumes and scents dwindled somewhat, but not until the times of Elizabeth do we again strike a high wave of such sweetness. The virgin queen was extraordinarily fastidious as to her scents, however, and it was an unwritten law among the ladies of her court that each should have some knowledge of the making of perfumes.

SWEET CANDLES BURNED

Sweet candles were burned in bedrooms, sweet cakes were thrown upon the fire to diffuse gentle odors, scented lozenges were eaten everywhere by every one who was any one; and not satisfied with scenting their garments and gloves and shoes, the knights and ladies carried about with them "cassia bottles" and "pomanders" and the latter wore strings of scented beads for necklaces.

The earl of Oxford gained great pre-eminence at court by introducing new perfumes from abroad, and he so pleased the queen with a pair of scented gloves that she at once commanded the said handgear to be immortalized in a portrait of herself. The scent does not cling to the canvas, but it is a fact that the musk mixed with the mortar in which the bricks of the mosque of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, were laid, 700 years ago, is still giving evidence of its presence in that somewhat stinkish manner which is pleasing to a certain element of present-day perfume users.

It is also a fact that if a piece of polished steel be laid away for a few days in a drawer or box in which is a small quantity of musk, the steel will smell musky for months to come, so powerful and lasting is the odor of this animal product, which still holds first place in the manufacture of all perfumes.

FROM BEAU BRUMMEL'S DAY

Strange as it may seem, the moderate use of perfumes dates from the days of Beau Brummel, and it was this dandy who brought about the change, by declaring against their use by men. From that time until the present scents, odors and oils have been largely but not extravagantly employed.

At present Paris is the perfume center of the world, and there the manufacturing of extracts and toilet waters, sachet powders and scented soaps, is one of the leading industries, radiating out through all of France to the lovely sources of the trade—the flower fields.

In this country the making of perfumes has attained a magnitude sufficient to support a nation-wide association of manufacturing perfumers, and while there is still a large market here for foreign perfumes, the American product is gaining in popularity from year to year.

Instinct of Young Turtles

EVERY creature seems possessed of more or less instinct, and it is remarkable the manner many types of life manage to guard against many dangers in the lower order of creatures there is none that shows more real instinct than the young sea turtle.

Just as soon as a baby turtle emerges from the egg, off he scuttles down to the sea. He has no one to teach him, no one to guide him. In his curious little brain there is implanted a streak of caution based on the fact that until a certain period in his life his armor is soft and no defense against hungry fish, and he at once seeks shelter in the tropical profusion of the kelp weed, which holds within its branching fronds an astonishing abundance of marine life. Here the young turtle feeds unmolested while his armor undergoes the hardening process.

Whatever the young sea turtle eats and wherever he eats it—facts not generally ascertained—one thing



A Modern Devotee of Perfume

A French Woman Using Perfume in the Salon Period

A Woman of the Middle Ages at Her Toilet



A Greek Woman at Her Toilet, Receiving a Jar of Perfume



A Babylonian Princess Dipping Her Dainty Fingers in Perfume at Her Toilet

Our Girls vs. the Foreign Brand



flirt. The freedom and boldness of her sisters "over the water" is corrupting her manners, he declares, and she is in grave danger of losing that simplicity which is supposed to be the chief charm of a bride.

Whether the situation is serious is chiefly a matter of opinion. Over here it may be viewed with amusement. Over there it is undoubtedly a cause of alarm. And what is perhaps of most consequence for the girls of this country is that the best of French social circles are likely to take their tone from Monsignore Boito and to be more guarded than ever as to the young foreigners they admit to their family circles and social events.

FRAGMENTS of Monsignore Boito's address, which created a real sensation recently, have been reaching this country piecemeal the last few weeks, and each piece seems a little more cutting than its predecessor. Here, for instance, is one pretty strong paragraph:

"The young girls of our society of today are no longer very timid and almost all are well educated. The little creature with a shy laugh has disappeared from our natural history; another species is attempting to replace it, one which Schopenhauer would have called the 'monkey with a pig tail.' But because this young girl of today takes liberties like an American, girls like an English girl, reads like a Norwegian, is omnivorous and versatile as a Russian, uses her eyes like a Spaniard and tomorrow may be dressed like a Turk, this is not enough to conclude that she is quite French, or even quite Parisian."

Again he says:

"No more do we find young women in our households who are content to sew with their mothers, embroider slippers for their fathers. Gone are the young women of France who sang only pure songs and who read only pure books. In their place we now find, too often, girls about to marry who have nothing



to learn. They have already found out, I regret to say, that life has to teach them. Men, I should think, must fear to marry such young women."

To Americans some of this may sound rather inflated. For so long have we been used to girls and women doing about as they pleased that their liberty seems a matter of course. But in France it is just the opposite.

Here, if mother catches daughter in a hammer-lock hug which reeks with all the bliss that a favored suitor can bestow, mother might be angry and give daughter a good scolding. Ordinarily, though, daughter is too fussy to get caught.

In France such a thing would be unheard of, undreamed of, impossible. A girl would never be allowed alone with a young man, to begin with; and if she succeeded in eluding mother and granting a private interview to the object of her affections, there would be a scandal if she got caught.

What would an American girl think, for instance, of never once being allowed alone on the street until she was married?

Yet, in the beau monde of France, no girl ever goes on the street unattended. When she is young she has nurses. When she outgrows them, the chances are she goes to a convent. There her schooling largely consists of restraint. She dare not romp and yell, because it is unladylike. Anything that our girls would consider worth while would be thought unladylike, and therefore frowned down.

Once out of the convent, or what amounts to the same thing, out of the hands of governesses and private instructors, the young woman has far from a hilarious time.

ALWAYS UNDER GUARD

Practically, she is always under guard. Whenever she wants to go anywhere, even if it is only a morning shopping trip or a call on a friend, she must be accompanied. For her to stir ten steps away from her own door without a duenna would occasion comment.

Had to restrain themselves as she does they would rather stay at home. If it is a dance, she would never dare think of giving one man more than one glimmer on her program. For one thing, no man would think of asking her to do so.

When young men call at her home there are always one or more persons there to see that the proprieties are observed. Conversation necessarily consists of commonplace.

All this is expressly designed to prevent what most American girls would insist expressly insist upon, and that is personal choice of a husband. Certainly, the girl must marry. She has no other recourse. Unless she wants to be kept in leading strings all her life, she must take refuge in matrimony.

After marriage she may become as brilliant, as individualistic as she pleases. Before she is a bride she must, on the surface at least, appear a pretty little simpleton.

Generally she must take whatever husband her parents select for her. He must be suitable as regards family and fortune. Any other kind the parents would keep strictly out of her way.

Generally speaking, Miss French Girl does nothing that American girls do. The latter do everything that she doesn't.

is certain; it agrees with him immensely. He leads a pleasant sort of life, basking in the tropical sun and cruising leisurely in the cool depths.

Once he has attained the weight of twenty-five pounds, which usually occurs within the first year, the turtle is free from all danger. After that no fish or mammal, however ravenous, however well armed with teeth, interferes with the turtle.

When once he has withdrawn his head from its position of outlook into the folds of his neck between the two shells, intending devourers may struggle in vain to make an impression upon him.

If some other types of life exhibited as much of a degree of instinct, there would be less slaughter by other forms of life.

We know of nothing from which so little is naturally expected that exhibits as great a degree of what might be properly called real good sense. If this instinct was not provided, the young turtles would be destroyed as soon as they reached the water. As it is, many are devoured by fish before they secrete themselves in the growths in the sea, and by birds and land animals before they are able to get to the water.

New Method of Mining

THERE have been so many disastrous explosions of dust and gases in deep coal mines in various parts of the world, caused in many instances by the use of explosives in tearing the coal asunder, making it easy for the workmen to remove it with their tools, that a great effort has been made among engineers and mechanics to find a safer method of putting the coal in condition to be easily removed.

In Germany a system is being used that promises to go into general use. Instead of the powder or other powerful explosives being used, holes are drilled deep into the coal vein just as if blasts were to be inserted; but instead of the explosives that so often set off a lot of accumulated gas or dust, a pipe is inserted and a heavy pressure of water forced into the block of dry coal. The water finds its way into the crevices and produces others, and in a short time such a pressure has been brought to bear on the coal that it opens up and is ready for the men with their picks and shovels, and no dust or dry gas has been formed. It is stated this method is much safer, and is healthier, even more rapid, as there is no loss of time by the men waiting for a mine or shaft to clear itself of the poisonous fumes produced by the explosives.