

with strength. The rounding enables the pen to hold the requisite ink, and to distribute it more gradually than could be done with a flat blade.

The little hole which is cut at the end of the slit serves to regulate the elasticity, and also facilitate the running of the ink. Then comes the process of hardening and tempering. The steel is heated to a cherry-red, and then plunged suddenly into some cool substance. This at once changes the quality of the metal from that of a soft, lead-like substance to a brittle, springy one. Then the temper of the steel must be drawn, for without this process it would be too brittle. The drawing consists of heating the pen until it reaches a certain color. The quality of the temper varies according to the color to which the steel is permitted to run. It is the quick eye for color and the quick hand to fasten it that constitutes the skill of the temperer of steel. When the steel is heated for tempering, it is bright. The first color that appears is a straw color. This changes rapidly to a blue. The elasticity of the metal varies with the color, and is fastened at any point by instant plunging in cold water.

The process of slitting, polishing, pointing and finishing the pens are operations requiring dexterity, but by long practice the workmen and workwomen become very expert. There have been few changes of late years, and the process of manufacture is much the same that it was twenty years ago, and the prices are rather uniform, ranging from 75 cents to \$4 a gross, according to the quality of the finish. The boxes sold almost universally contain a gross.

Fancies come and go in the styles of pens as in other fashions. One American maker alone turns out about 350 different patterns. Some of them are very odd, such as the stub pen; the draughtsman's pen, which makes two parallel lines at once; the mammoth pen, suited to use on rough paper; and the pen with the turned-up point, which writes a thick mark, yet runs smoothly over the paper. Then there are delicate pens for ladies, pens that make a fine hair line and yet can spring out to a heavy shading. Already the American steel pens have become famous abroad, and many are exported. Many pens are