

cury was poured over them, care being taken to move the articles about all the time in order to cover them with a uniform white coating of mercury. To these the proper proportion of amalgam was added, and the articles were further stirred until it was spread all over them. They were then rinsed in clean water and placed in a large, deep, copper ladle, perforated with numerous small holes, and having a long handle. In this they were held over a charcoal fire and constantly stirred about to equalize the effect of the heat. The mercury of the amalgam was soon volatilized, and the gold adhered firmly to the articles.

If, instead of a yellow gilding, a red color was desired, as it frequently was, “waxing” was resorted to. This consisted in pouring upon the pieces, kept in a ladle over the fire in a well-mixed and fluid state, a compound of oil, yellow wax, acetate of copper, and red ochre. The articles were constantly agitated, and the mixture allowed to flare up and burn out, and the whole was ultimately thrown into a diluted solution of sulphuric acid. The “waxing” was done only after the complete volatilization of the mercury. When removed from the “pickle,” as the acid was called, the gilding had a dull appearance, and it was subsequently either “scratch-brushed,” or brightened in a long, narrow bag, with small nuggets and granules of copper, and vinegar water, a too-and-fro motion being imparted to the bag, so that the gilt articles and the bits of copper polished each other. They were afterwards rinsed in clean water and dried in box-wood saw-dust.

All these processes required the skill and care of the craftsman, but one who was entirely master of his art only earned, at that time, a sum equal to about \$6 or \$8 per week—and considered himself well paid. On the other hand, his employer frequently made a fortune. He was able, before competition became keen, to charge a comparatively high price for his wares.

As a rule, it was not necessary for him to make any very close calculation as to cost, and in one case, the story of which was told to the writer by the son of the manufacturer mentioned, he was in the habit, after getting out a new pattern, of mentally fixing on two prices, either of which would afford him a handsome profit, and then throwing into the air a walking cane. If it fell on the handle end, he adopted one figure, and, if on the ferule, the other!

London was the great mart for the Brummagem gilt-trinket maker. He rode there on the top of the four-horse coach, loaded with samples and stock of his goods, which he dealt with in the neighborhoods of Clerkenwell and Houndsditch. His wares were also purchased by pedlers, who sold them through the country, frequently at fabulous prices, the rural buyers being easily persuaded that they were gold, and having no means of detecting that they were otherwise. It is thus easy to understand how “Brummagem” came to be a by-word. The discovery of the cheat led ultimately to the introduction, on a wider scale than formerly, of gold jewellery; and, as gold jewellery was naturally expensive, the limit of base alloy that would pass muster was soon reached. In addition to this, gold-plated jewellery was introduced. For this kind, a flat piece of gold, of standard or lower quality—the “standard” being 22 karats of gold to two of alloy—was superimposed and soldered on a thick strip of copper. The combination thus produced was rolled down to the required thinness or drawn into wire, so that articles made of it had an outside of gold which would wear much longer than the mercury gilding, and yet were mainly composed of base metal. Another “Brummagem” device was thus added to the *repertoire* of the jewellery trade.

The “gilt toy” trade of Birmingham gradually declined and fell. Sixty years ago it had practically come to an end.