

Spinning Wheels.

THE ORIGIN OF SPINNING DATES back to very early times. Starting with the primitive forms of hand spinning it has gradually developed into the present-day commercial industry of machine spinning.

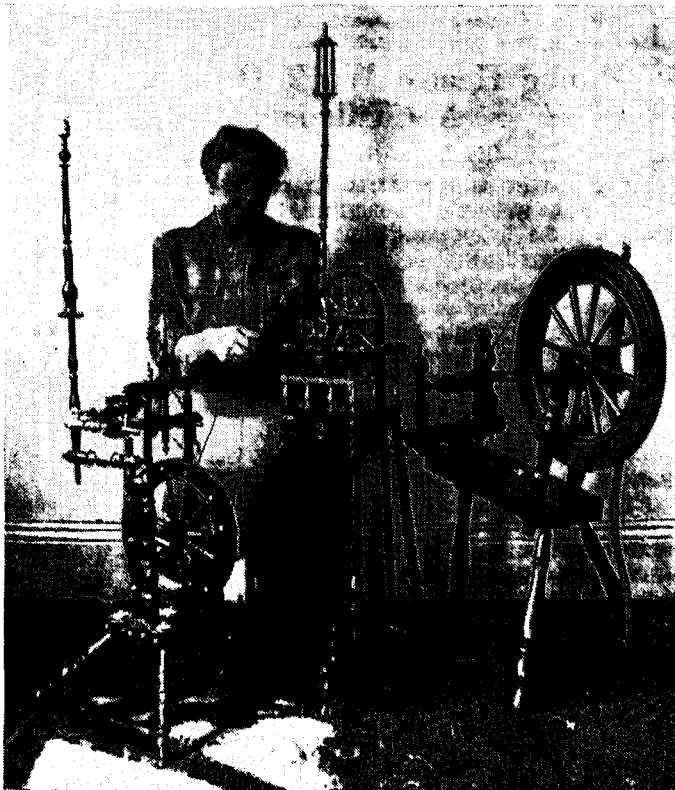
The revival of the ancient form of hand-spinning provides a fruitful occupation for the craftswoman at home, and is of real educational value to children at school, being the first stage in the making of cloth.

There are two methods of spinning, one with a spindle which is the oldest form of the craft. The other method is with a spinning wheel, which provides a much speedier method than the spindle. It is worked by foot power, leaving both hands free for manipulating the wool.

Here we have three illustrations showing three different types of spinning wheels.

Left to Right

(1) This is a Black Forest or Austrian Wheel.



The Author of this Article with her Spinning Wheels.

Flax spinning was very late in being established in Germany, and therefore hand-spinning as a living industry continued to very recent years and long after it was forgotten elsewhere.

Women of but middle age tell the tale of these days, when they were young and spinning wheels were buzzing in every rural home, and mistress and maid alike contributed to the yarns for domestic use.

These girls were true spinsters and before marriage had a fine stock of household linen prepared, and later this profitable employment was continued.

The usual marriage gift of the parents was a spinning wheel and reel; often richly carved. German folk lore and song is rich in reminiscence of the spinning wheel.

Andrew Garranton, in a publication issued by him in 1677 describes a German spinning school: Around a large room a number of benches were placed, in which sat, perhaps 200 children spinning. In the centre stood a pulpit in which the

mistress sat with a long white wand in her hand watching the spinners. Any child seen idling would be tapped with the wand, but if that warning was not effective, a small bell was rung, which brought out a woman to whom the offender was pointed out and who would take the idler into another room for chastisement. All this was done without a word being spoken.

In the reign of Edward III England was the great wool producing country, and at this time spinning wheels were sent to Scotland from Ireland, and Flemish weavers came to England and settled in the Eastern counties.

In Scotland the teacher was given ten spinning wheels and an allowance of £10 a year. She had ten pupils. The yarn was the personal property of the teacher and as a child became an efficient spinner the wheel was presented to her.

The centre wheel of this illustration is of a type often found in museums. They are usually very ornate and were undoubtedly used by ladies of means. One might have seen a number of these wheels in Germany, France, England or Scotland during the spinning wheel period. The easy access between these countries at that time makes their presence in any one of these countries easily understood.

The only replica of this wheel known to me at the present time is the property of the Earl of Strathmore, and has its home in Glamis.

The low Irish wheel is the most sought by collectors, usually called the Old Irish Spinning Wheel. It is third in our illustration. Its shape is graceful, and it certainly was the wheel most in vogue in Ireland during the days of hand flax-spinning.

In records of 100 years or more, this wheel is always called, with truth, the Dutch Wheel. It was introduced into Ireland from Holland by the Earl of Strafford. Definite records prove that this wheel is distinctly Dutch.

Irish Spinning Wheels are greatly prized as Ireland took the lead of the three kingdoms engaged in the flax-spinning industry, and today Ireland takes the lead in modern mechanical flax-spinning of the world. It is on record that Irish linen was used in Winchester in the reign of Henry III. in 1272. The bodies of the dead, at least those of eminent rank, were wrapped in fine linen. There is reason to believe that fine linen was possessed by the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland A.D.500; no linen was exported previous to the advent of the Normans in 1156. In the clothing dales of the West Riding, at Colchester and at Taunton, children of five years old could earn a living in spinning in the home of their parents. Spinning was done chiefly in country cottages by women and children and weaving chiefly in towns and villages by men.

A. R. B.

A Thought for the Month.

June, Flaming June.

The smooth velvety green lawn edged with rhododendrons and azaleas.

Rhododendrons, majenta shading off to pearly white, dark green foliage polished and cleaned in April showers.

Azaleas, yellow, peach and gold. Spikes of pale green, sticky leaves; scent of entrancing sweetness.

Larks soaring high in full song in a blue sun filled sky.

Thrushes and blackbirds bursting their throats to take their part in the choral worship of this glorious picture from Nature's magic brush.

The pond, deep and dark, fringed with the polyanthus in all its lovely soft colouring. Silk and velvet woven without a loom.

Kissed by the dragon flies in passing, giving a magic carpet, to the water hen through which she darts hither and thither. All these proclaim man's heritage. Beauty. Give this beauty a casket in memory's archives. Take them out in darker days, in office, factory, or the turmoils of city life. Guard them for your soul's refreshment.

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