

IV.

NOTE ON PINS FOUND ON THE REAY SANDS, AND ON PIN-MAKING
AS A PRESENT-DAY HOME INDUSTRY. BY SIR ARTHUR MITCHELL,
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More than thirty years ago I heard that pins of the ordinary dress character were found in considerable numbers on the sands of the sea-shore at Reay, in Sutherland. Two or three years after hearing of this I had occasion to visit Reay, and I took a walk along the sands, examining them carefully as I went along. In a few minutes I had picked up two pins. At this point, the school of the village broke up, and a group of children ran to the shore to find out what the stranger was doing. I showed them the pins I had found, and asked them if they had ever found such objects. "*Never*," was the answer of one and all, though the sands might almost be called their playground. I then invited them to join me in my search, and offered one halfpenny for each pin found. In a very short time I owed them nearly four shillings.

Soon after, but still a long time ago, I placed specimens of these pins in our National Museum.

My interest in them, which originally depended on the circumstances in which they were found, was lately revived on learning from Mr J. K. Caird, Dundee, that pin-making still exists as a home industry in the district in which Carlsbad is situated, and that the heads of the Reay pins were made in the same fashion as the Carlsbad home-made pins.

The heads of the machine- or factory-made pins now in use form solidly a part of the pin, and may be described as discs flat on the top and thinning at the edge. The heads of the home-made pins are not of this shape, but are globular, and are made by hammering on to each pin two turns of a spiral of fine brass wire, wound round a straight piece of wire of the thickness of the pins which are to be made. It is said to take ten strokes of a hammer worked by the foot to make the head, the pin being turned the while by the hand in a cress or mould.

At one time, however, and not very long ago, the heads of machine- or factory-made pins were of this last kind, and being sold by weight, as the Carlsbad pins now are, were known in shops as "weight pins," to distinguish them from "papers of pins"—the solid-headed pins being stuck into paper in rows before being offered for sale.

In the home-made pin Mr Caird tells me that the same man carries the pin through all the stages of its manufacture. In the factory-made pin, on the other hand, there is a great sub-division of labour.

One form of the hand-made pins is the so-called insect pin, and it is understood that this pin is in demand, as being better suited for its purpose than any factory- or machine-made pin. It is long and very thin—a delicate object—and the hand seems to beat machinery in making it, as it does in other things—for instance, in the spinning of the thread for Dacca muslins, which are so fine as to have received such poetic names as "The Evening Dew," "The Running Water," and "The Woven Air." Can it be that the special handiness and skill, which are needed for the making of these delicate insect pins, explain

the prolonged life of this home industry, which machinery, with its cheap products, might have been expected to have killed completely and everywhere.

In conclusion, there is a fact regarding the Reay pins which I should like to put on record. They are all of a dark colour, nearly black, and not one of them shows even a trace of a green colour. I am not able to explain this, which all whom I have consulted seem to regard as an unexpected occurrence.

Note on a Modern Bone Bodkin.

The implement shown in the following figure is one of the wing bones of a goose, perforated at one end, but not otherwise worked or shaped by man.

It was recently found by Mr J. K. Caird, of Dundee, hanging in the



Fig. 1.—Perforated Wing Bone of a Goose, used as a Bodkin. 3.

kitchen of a house in the rice-growing district of Hungary, not far from the river Theiss. It was in use as a bodkin when found, and similar bone bodkins are said to be still in common use in that part, and perhaps in other parts of Hungary. In the specimen now presented to the National Museum, the surface of the bone is polished as the result of use, giving it a look of ancientness. It is not easy to understand why a rude implement like this should continue to be made and used, when a well-finished iron implement for the same purpose can be obtained at quite a trifling cost.