XI

TAGS, PINS, AND BALDRICS

LACES—THE EVOLUTION AND VAGARIES OF THE SAFETY-PIN
—PRIMITIVE METHODS OF CARRYING BURDENS AS ILLUSTRATED BY MUFF-CHAIRS, BALDRICS, AND YOKES.

DURING the course of their evolution many little appurtenances in connection with dress go through a number of changes. Some of them, which at first are useful, afterwards become ornamental. Others, which have reached a stage in which they are both necessary and decorative, may for a time be simplified and retain a practical importance only, while at a later period they resume their ornamental character once more.

We have at the present day various laces which are provided with simple metal tags, and which are as primitive as they very well can be. (See Figure 95.)

If we examine the dresses of both sexes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we shall find that ties were used to a great extent instead of buttons, and they were provided with metal tags of an ornamental character called aiglets, or, more properly,
aiguillettes. In many cases the chief object of the ribbons which they adorned was that of embellishment, for as many as a dozen or more might be found round one knee. Sometimes the tags were in the form of little figures, and in the "Taming of the Shrew" it is said of Petruchio that if you gave him gold enough any one "might marry him to a puppet or an aglet-baby."

Of recent years the velvet ribbons which ladies have worn round their necks have been provided in like manner with little tags (see Figure 96), though the fashion does not seem to have developed again to any very great extent.

The safety-pin is an object which may well occupy our attention for a moment. As we knew it when we were children, it was merely a piece of wire that had
been pointed at one end and bent into the required shape. (See Figure 97.)

The point was protected in a very simple manner, and the safety-pins used for fastening hooks to curtains are still constructed in the same way. Occasionally gold safety-pins of a plain and even ornamental character were made and used as brooches by ladies for fastening lace, or by men for securing their ties in the place of the straight scarf-pins. It would seem therefore that a brooch is a development of the safety-pin rather than the reverse; but if we study the brooches or fibulae of the Romans, we shall find that the pin, instead of being hinged, was often made in one piece with the rest of the structure. A coil or two in the metal acted as a spring, as in the case of the safety-pin, and prevented breakage. We may even find an Etruscan fibula of such simple construction (see Figure 98) that it is to all intents and purposes a safety-pin. All sorts of devices have been invented for the better protection of the points in modern safety-pins, as well as for rendering the opening and closing more easy; but this is the development which has taken place along practical

Fig. 97.—A simple safety-pin.
lines. Such pins are for use only, and are not intended to be seen. When, on the other hand, safety-pins are not hidden, they retain their more simple character as regards their fastenings, though they themselves again become decorative, and are ornamented in various ways. We have therefore a very good illustration of the evolution of one thing along two different lines, and of the survival of the fittest types in each case.

The ornamental safety-pin in recent years has changed its habits, and it is interesting to note its
vagaries. A little while ago its sphere of action was extended, and instead of figuring under the chins of ladies it took up a position in the back of their waistbands (see Figure 99), where it occupied itself with the duty of keeping blouse and skirt together. Then, as if this situation were not important enough, the safety-pin migrated to the head and usurped the place of the straight hat-pin (see Figure 100), just as in the case of men it has sometimes ousted the tie-pin proper.

During the process which we have described the safety-pin has become stronger and larger, until in the last stage it has grown almost out of recognition.

Straight pins have developed along the same two lines, and we have the strictly useful pin and tie- or hat-pins, which are often quite as important as fastenings, but which may also be highly ornamental.
TAGS, PINS, AND BALDRICS

These small articles have a special claim to our attention, as they have been taken as being emblematical of clothes, or at least of female attire. Even now the allowance which a lady is given for dress is called "pin-money." Moreover, it is possible to illustrate by means of pins the various phases of culture through which mankind has passed in the process of civilization. We meet with pins of bone, in the stage of stone, before metals were used. In the stage characterized by bronze we have pins made of this alloy. Such pins occurred in Egypt before the historic period, and they have been found in the Swiss lake dwellings as well as in our own country.

Although we now live in the iron, or perhaps more correctly steel, stage of culture, the familiar

Fig. 101.—A muff-chain.
pin of to-day is still usually made of brass; but nevertheless we find steel pins of the ordinary form which are plated with brass, and glass-headed steel pins are very common. In early times also gold, silver, and precious stones were pressed into service for making ornamental pins, and very handsome pins are represented on effigies of the fourteenth century in Westminster Abbey. These, no doubt, have for their descendants the scarf-pins of to-day.

A muff-chain is a thing which is very often seen at the present day, and this simple arrangement, coupled with the way in which it is worn (see Figure 101), may lead us along a very interesting line of research, which we may follow for a short time. If we look once again at the muff, we shall see that it is supported by a chain which goes round the back of the neck, allowing the muff to rest against the front of the body. This is a primitive method of carrying a burden. Pedlars of old made use of it, and it is still adopted by the hawker (see Figure 102), because, if necessary, the hands can remain free, while a modification of the same principle is seen when the strap takes the form of a baldric, and passes over one shoulder and under the arm on the other side. In this way travellers carry their courier-bags (see Figure 103), the school-boy or girl supports his or her satchel, the fisherman his creel, and the sportsman his field-glasses. To a baldric also was attached the quiver of the archer, and sometimes such a band was
Fig. 102.—A hawker, illustrating the primitive way of carrying a burden.

Fig. 103.—A courier-bag supported by a baldric.
merely worn as a decoration. (See Figure 104.) In the illustration which we give, and which is of the time of Henry V, the baldric is hung with bells like those which were worn by horses. Possibly a survival of the ornamental use of the baldric is to be seen in the ribbons of various orders and in military sashes, though no doubt the bandoleer which carries the pouch or cartridges of a modern soldier represents the useful baldric. It is of interest to note that the red or blue cord worn over the cross-belts of the Life Guards and Horse Guards is a survival of a cord by which the horn containing powder for priming muskets used to be suspended. In this connection we might also mention the leather sling of a rifle and

Fig. 104.—An ornamental baldric of the early fifteenth century.
(Royal MSS. 15 D. 5, after Fairholt.)
the strap by which the itinerant harpist, in common with the organ-grinder, carries his instrument.

The ordinary belt should not be overlooked, as from it many things, such as weapons, may be suspended, not to mention pouches, which may carry ammunition, flint and steel, and so on.

![Figure 105](image)

Fig. 105.—A lady's dress, showing the part which is called a yoke, and recalls a primitive method of carrying burdens.

Even more intimately connected with dress are pockets, and they may be touched upon here, for they are intended for carrying small objects. We have seen how the flaps of pockets which have become ornamental survive after the pockets themselves have disappeared (see Figure 21), and it is worthy of note that clothes in various countries lend themselves to
the transportation of commodities. It has been pointed out by Mr. Otis T. Mason⁹ that the Oriental, especially the Korean, has pockets in his sleeves having the capacity of half a bushel; while the Turk and Arab can stow an equal amount in the ample folds of their robes. The writer also remembers hearing the account of a journey in Asia from a traveller who, when riding in wide trousers fastened at the ankle, used to keep all his clean linen in one trouser-leg and his dirty clothes in the other.

We are reminded by the name given to the upper part of a lady’s dress, namely, the yoke (see Figure 105), of another means of carrying burdens, which still survives in London, where a few milk-women even now carry round their pails on a yoke. Their costume, which includes a small shawl and an apron, can be compared with that of the barge-girl, though the picturesque sun-bonnet of the latter is lacking.