



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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BLACKSMITHS.

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THE Plate represents a blacksmith seated at work at his forge, accompanied by his bellows boy and hammer man. The bellows is of the ordinary kind, in use all over India, and consists of rings of ratan or other pliant material, over which leather is sewn. The ends of each are fitted into nozzles of iron for the fire, and the upper end is an open valve with handles to work it. As one is raised the valve is shut, and the bag is depressed full of air, which is discharged into the fire, while the other is raised to perform the same office. Thus the two bellows are employed, and keep up a continuous stream of wind. Bellows of the same kind are depicted in African books of travel, as used among the Negro tribes wherever iron abounds. Whenever a larger or stronger fire is required, two or even more pairs of bellows are employed. The tools of an Indian blacksmith are very simple: a few steel faced hammers, including the heavy one used by the hammer man; an anvil, which in this case appears to be of an English pattern; files, which he usually makes himself and tempers well; pairs of pincers, large and small; and cold chisels. The forge is a hole made in the ground, and the whole plant of the shop may be removed anywhere it is required. Some blacksmiths who are stationary, use the double-action bellows of the English artizan, but these are comparatively rare. The work of the village blacksmith is ordinarily rough: coulter for ploughs, with other plough gear, iron work for wells of irrigation, shoes for bullocks in stony districts, iron buckets, frying pans, spoons, and other household utensils and necessities, as hinges, padlocks, hooks and fastenings, all roughly made, but serviceable. But among them, manufacturers of more delicate work are often found, and the native armourers of Cawnpore, Monghyr, &c., in Bengal, can make rifles, guns, table knives and forks, with a very respectable degree of finish and strength; and the hunting knives of "Arnachellam," of Salem, in the Madras Presidency, were at one time highly prized for temper and strength, and perhaps may be so still. All blacksmiths are clever at making and putting on iron tyres of wheels, fitting iron axles to carts,

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