

**Basket.** 1. A vessel made of flexible materials lapped or interwoven. The art of interweaving wands, leaves, and splints is of great antiquity. The ark of Moses was a basket of interwoven bulrushes, made water-tight by slime and pitch (Ex. ii. 3), 1571 B. C. The chief baker of Pharaoh dreamed that he had three white baskets upon his head filled with bake-meats, which probably meant cakes. This was 1717 B. C. (Gen. xl. 17.)

The ordinary use of the basket in gathering in the crop is indicated by the blessing of basket and store. (Deut. xxviii. 5.)

On opening one of the ancient tombs of Egypt, a lady's work-basket was found, containing the following articles, which may now be viewed by generations from twenty-five to thirty centuries subsequent to the time of the lady who used them. They are in the Abbott collection, New York City.

- Two skeins of thread ;
- A small white glass bottle ;
- An ointment-box ;
- A toilet-box to contain kohl, for blacking the edges of the eyelids, as in the days of Jezebel ;
- A wooden netting-needle, charged with the original thread ;
- Two bronze needles ;
- One blade of a pair of scissors ;
- A piece of linen, partly darned ;
- Some bronze pins ;
- An ivory dress comb ;
- A wooden comb ;
- Four small ivory pegs, use uncertain ;
- A bronze spatula, for spreading unguents ;
- Some false hair, plaited.

Baskets from ancient Egypt, preserved in the Abbott Museum of Antiquities, New York City, are made of grass, reeds covered with leather, and of date-tree fiber.

Pliny refers to the suppleness and graceful slenderness of the osier willow, as fitting it for the weaving of baskets and many utensils employed in agriculture.

In ancient Egypt, wicker-work baskets were made of osiers and the stalks of the palm-leaf. They were made with and without handles, for various purposes, and of different sizes and shapes. Grain was sown from a basket; eggs, figs, and grapes are represented in baskets in the field and the store-room.

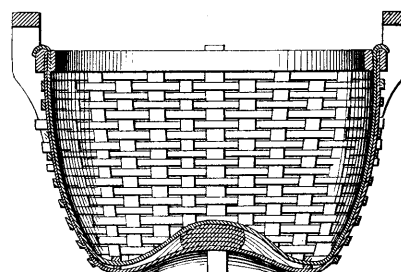
Baskets made of palm-leaves are preserved in the British Museum.

The ancient Britons excelled in making baskets, which were largely exported and sold for high prices at Rome. British articles were transported to Rome in baskets, and the British name for these hampers was there retained, — *bascuda*. The Welsh preserve it as *basgarwd*. When Britain was first known to the Romans, the natives made boats of basket-work covered with hides, and boats made in a similar way are still used in parts of Wales. See **CORACLE**. Boats of split bamboo, woven like basket-work, are used in Hindostan, and in some parts of South America rush baskets capable of holding water are made by the natives.

A two-horse carriage of basket-work, termed a "Holstein wagon," is used in some parts of Europe, and this material is very commonly employed in the United States for the bodies of sleighs, and sometimes for pony phaetons. Rattan is, however, the neater and more desirable material.

For the finer kinds of baskets particularly, osier is the material most commonly used, but for a coarser

Fig. 592.



Splint Basket.

basket, strips of split hickory, oak, or black ash, are frequently employed. Osiers are prepared for the basket-maker by being split asunder or stripped of their bark, according to the kind of work for which they are intended. Previous to being stripped, they require to be soaked in water, and the stripping is performed by drawing the willows through iron *brakes*, which remove the bark; they are next cleaned by a sharp knife, and exposed to the sun and air. The barked or white osiers are assorted into bundles or fagots according to size, the larger ones being used for the strong work in the skeleton of the basket, and the smaller for the bottom and sides.

When the osiers are used for ordinary work, they are taken whole; but for fine work, they are divided by an instrument consisting of two edge-tools set at right angles to each other, which quarter the rod longitudinally through the pith. These are next drawn through an implement resembling an ordinary spoke-shave, keeping the outer part of the split next to the wood while the pith is presented to the iron edge of the instrument; the split is further reduced and made regular in thickness by being drawn through a flat piece of steel having one cutting edge like a chisel; the flat is bent round so that the plain and cutting edges are made to approach or recede by means of set screws, regulating the thickness of the osier.

In basket-making, a number of rows are laid cross-wise to form the start for the bottom, and are woven together by a spiral weft of wands, which pass alternately over and under the radial wands, to which others are added as the size increases; the wands are bent up to form the sides, and other rods are woven in and out between each of them, until the basket is raised to the intended height. The edge or brim is

Fig. 593.



Basket-Making.

finished by turning down the projecting ends of the ribs, whereby the whole is firmly and compactly united. Handles are formed by forcing two or three osiers, sharpened at their ends and cut to the proper length, down the weaving of the sides close together, and they are pinned fast about two inches from the brim, so as to retain the handle in the proper position. The osiers are then bound or plaited, and the handle is finished.

Of late years much ingenuity has been exercised in devising forms of baskets for the carriage of fruit to market in packages of size proportioned to the character of the fruit. Osiers, splints, veneers, and paper have been employed. Some of these baskets are made frustum-shaped, so as to pack in nests for return ; others have been made folding or collapsible ; others of such cheap material and workmanship as to be sold with the fruit.

Veneer baskets are made with bails or handles, or simply as boxes. The parts are sometimes interwoven, but more often fastened by tacks or rivets.