Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Victorian "Cradle" Bedpan by S. Maw, Son & Thompson, London, Circa 1880

£45

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Description

Victorian "Cradle" Bedpan by S. Maw, Son & Thompson, London, Circa 1880

An unusually decorative Victorian "Cradle" bedpan by the celebrated London medical-supply firm S. Maw, Son & Thompson, dating to circa 1880. Far removed from the utilitarian appearance of later medical equipment, this handsome earthenware example is decorated with an intricate black floral and foliate pattern, demonstrating the surprising care given to the design of domestic and nursing objects in the 19th century.

The form was developed for use by patients confined to bed for prolonged periods. Its generous, carefully shaped basin was intended to provide greater comfort and reduce pressure, while the raised neck offered a practical grip for handling. The "Cradle" patent name remains visible, linking the piece directly to the Victorian concern with improved nursing care, hygiene, and the growing professionalisation of medicine.

The decorative transfer-printed design is particularly appealing. Its dense scrolling foliage creates an almost textile-like effect against the pale earthenware ground, transforming an inherently practical object into a piece with real visual character. Such a combination of utility and ornament is quintessentially Victorian, when even the most functional household and medical wares could be made with pattern, elegance, and individuality.

S. Maw, Son & Thompson was one of the foremost suppliers of surgical instruments, pharmaceutical goods, and nursing equipment in Victorian London. Pieces bearing the firm's name offer a tangible connection to the history of medicine and nursing, and this unusually decorative example is especially desirable for its strong design and historical interest.

A fascinating and highly displayable piece for collectors of antique medical equipment, nursing memorabilia, Victorian ceramics, or unusual domestic objects. It would make a memorable addition to a cabinet of curiosities, period interior, or collection focused on the social history of healthcare.

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