

No. 1.—Group of Old Pewter on the Mantelpiece in Mr. Jackson's Studio.

The Art Journal 1899

SOME RARE OLD PEWTER.—I. *by R. Davis Benn.*

WHEN we hear of any man that he "lives with a pewter pot in front of him," our natural interpretation of the phrase is that the individual whose character is so tersely summed up must be bibulously inclined. Carrying the idea to a logical conclusion, what impression would be conveyed by the statement that So-and-so "lives absolutely surrounded by pewter pots"? Possibly an indictment of that kind would lead the majority of auditors to decide that a home for dipsomaniacs would be the only fit and proper resting-place for any such member of society, and yet I shall make bold to prefer it against two highly-respected inhabitants of Bedford Park without fear of forfeiting their friendship by so doing, for it is far from being my intention, for a single moment, to call the sobriety of either into question.

It must not be forgotten that there is pewter *and* pewter, and though nowadays any mention of that metal, or rather alloy, suggests all manner of undesirable associations, there was a time when it occupied and graced positions far prouder than those to which, by common consent, it has since been relegated. In centuries gone by, gifted artists designed, and skilled craftsmen made, table services in pewter which remain to this day as models of good taste, while, as I shall presently prove by actual illustration, it has even played an important part in the most sacred of ecclesiastical rites.

I believe that I am right in asserting that the most exhaustive search through the whole of the public and private libraries of this country for literature of any kind, illustrated or otherwise, to guide collectors in this particular direction, would be labour lost, for there is practically none in existence. Pottery, porcelain, glass, silver, gold, and who shall say what else, have all had their historians, and able ones too, but this humble product of the furnace has, to all intents and purposes, been ignored by writers of books, unless among "books" we include the records of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, and even those documents are not now available in their entirety, for disastrous fires have put many of the most valuable beyond the reach of students.

It will be understood, from this brief statement as to

the position of affairs, that when, some twelve or thirteen years ago, Mr. Frank Jackson determined that the collection of pewter should be a hobby with him, the path was beset with difficulties, for he was practically alone in the field, with no one to whom to look for guidance, and therefore compelled to rely solely upon his own investigations for any information that was to be obtained. However, the very obstacles to be overcome imparted a fascination to the pursuit, and he went steadily on his course. When, after some years, Mr. W. Churcher came to share Mr. Jackson's enthusiasm,



No. 2.—A Corner in Mr. Jackson's Studio.

and the two commenced to "hunt in couples," as they have done ever since, many rare "finds" were unearthed, and, one by one, enigmatical "marks," whose



No. 3.—Old Oak Dresser in Mr. Churcher's Dining-room.

interpretation had for long been sought, were, by persistent study, forced to reveal their hidden meaning.

I am fortunate in having had the whole of the treasures embraced by the collections of both these gentlemen placed at my disposal for illustration in the pages of THE ART JOURNAL, a rare privilege which I fully appreciate, and of which I naturally hastened to take advantage, for it is one that has long been unsuccessfully sought by others. Feeling that drawings of the pieces, however skilfully executed, could not adequately represent them, photographs have been taken specially for these articles, and are here reproduced in as perfect facsimile as possible.

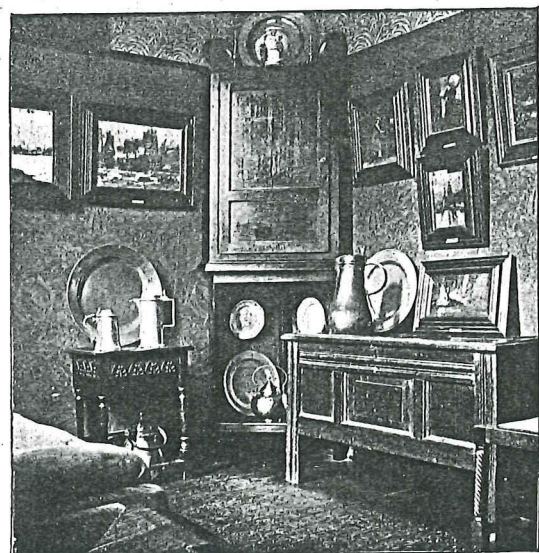
It is not at all necessary to the object in view that I should enter into a lengthy disquisition upon the composition of pewter, even were I capable of so doing; suffice it to say that it is an alloy in which tin predominates. In the finest—"tin and temper," as it is sometimes styled—copper only is added to give the requisite durability, but in inferior qualities lead takes the place of the copper, and, as lead costs but little, the commercially-minded manufacturer has sometimes been tempted to employ it with a free hand—a temptation not always resisted.

The fact that old pewter will really repay the attention of collectors has not even yet received proper recognition, and this accounts for its comparative rarity. But a few years ago it was nothing more nor less than a "drug in the market," for which there was no suggestion of a demand, and not a few dealers—now it is being so eagerly sought by the few who have learned to appreciate its value—remember with regret the tons melted down by their instructions because it was not worth even warehouse room! That much of the best was disposed of in this way is not open to dispute, as those who were responsible for its destruction will ruefully admit, with a sigh at the thought of what might have been. It is essential that I should emphasise this point in order

that credence may be given to the relation of an incident which actually occurred to the owners of the collections under consideration. Bent on the attainment of the object they had in view, and wishing to leave no stone unturned, Messrs. Churcher and Jackson advertised, years ago, that they were willing to inspect any old pewter with a view to purchase; in response to this announcement a letter was received, in which the writer stated that he had "no old pewter," but was in possession of several tons of "scrap iron" that he was prepared to part with at so much "per load!" In addition to this, innumerable glowing descriptive letters have been received, containing offers of dilapidated tea-pots, candlesticks, and pots and pans galore, at "reasonable prices"; of course, most of them have proved to be of Britannia metal or some inferior composition, and very few of the much-desired pewter.

It is to be expected that the reader will ask "How is the genuine article to be recognised?" and to such an enquiry I can only reply that long practical experience alone brings the knowledge essential to the detection of the spurious. Apart from the assistance given by the marks—and their name is "legion"—genuine pewter has a "feel" and "look" of its own which once appreciated can never be mistaken; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that a connoisseur could tell the false from the true blindfold, if permitted to exercise the sense of touch; but the power of doing so is not acquired in a day.

With respect to the question of the period when pewter came into common use as an accessory of the table, it may be regarded as the immediate successor of the ancient wooden platter; its general employment for domestic purposes lasted throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; some few nineteenth-century examples are shown here, but they, of course, have not the high value from the collector's point of view as have their older companions.



No. 4.—A Corner of Mr. Churcher's Dining-room.

To deal with the subject adequately within the limits of a single necessarily brief article, is quite out of the question, for there is much to be said, and many exam-

ples must be illustrated to freely represent the treasures upon which Messrs. Churcher and Jackson set so great store. As this is the case, it is, I think, advisable to adopt the manner of the pulpit and classify my remarks, so far as may be practicable, under two "heads"; we will this month consider a selection collectively, leaving the discussion of individual pieces, and their characteristics, for the most part until the next issue of *THE ART JOURNAL*. There is some advantage, too, in following this plan, for first impressions are said to be lasting, and I am anxious that those I shall attempt to convey of pewter collecting shall be good ones. We have agreed, I think, that pewter is suffering under the stigma of the proverbial "bad name," and were any of my readers suddenly to announce their intention at home of "going in for it," careful housewives, proud of their rooms, would conjure up distressing pictures of their sideboards, cabinets, mantelpieces, and dressers being crowded with "nasty, dirty old pots," and it is more than likely that they would emphatically object to any such proceeding. The best means I am able to suggest for the suppression of antagonism of this kind is to bring the objects face to face with the general effect of two collections in their own tasteful homes, for by so doing it will be made perfectly clear that they are endowed with something more than mere antiquarian interest to recommend them.

The ideal environment for pewter is old oak, and, recognising this, Mr. Jackson has most of his displayed in juxtaposition with authentic seventeenth-century woodwork. The group heading this article is from the mantelpiece in his studio, and has for a background as fine a piece of Elizabethan panelling as one would wish to see. I shall not speak of these specimens individually at the moment, except of the one in the centre, which, though comparatively modern, is of great interest, being part of a Communion Service, and thus demonstrating the truth of my assertion that pewter has, in the past, been deemed worthy to play a part in the most sacred rites of the Church. This is dated "July, 1830," the diameter is 14 inches, and the enrichment is "punched"—that is to



No. 5.—A Corner in Mr. Jackson's Studio.

say, it consists of a succession of small indentations impressed by means of a round-pointed tool. In the centre, beneath a celestial crown, are the monograms, "I. H. S." and "I. M. R.," the former surmounted by a cross, and the latter by a smaller crown.

In the second illustration, we have a corner of the studio, well worth reproduction if only on account of the old Stuart chest, which not only serves as a dignified and fitting support for the pewter in evidence upon it, but is, moreover, filled to the lid with precious plates and dishes of many periods and descriptions. The magnificent suit of fifteenth-century Japanese armour in the foreground reminds me that its owner is an ardent student of the art of the country from which it comes, but I must not now be tempted to touch upon that phase of his work.

A glimpse of yet another corner of the studio is given in the illustration No. 5, by an examination of which may be gained a still more complete conception of the

remarkable diversity of the collection under review. Particulars must be given of some of the articles which appear here, but as they are so small in the illustration in question, we must return to them with the publication of larger photographs in our next article.

The two groups, Nos. 3 and 4, are from the beautiful home of Mr. W. Churcher, who also holds that no wood-work but oak is to be tolerated in such an association, and has, in accordance with that principle, furnished his dining-room throughout in that wood. I should greatly like to digress for a moment to tell of the pictures on either side of the old corner cupboard, for they are by some of the most gifted of our living artists, but "pewter" is my subject, and to it I must adhere.

My notes for the present must be brought to a conclusion by just one or two brief comments upon a few of the members of the group selected to form a "tail-piece" to this article. At each end will be seen three liqueur cups—at least, they are used for that purpose now—which may be classified among the greatest rarities the collector is likely to come across. Both Messrs. Churcher and Jackson have endeavoured, in all their purchases, to confine their attention to English work, but as it was their ambition to secure, in pewter, for studio feasts, every article essential to the enjoyment of the kindly fruits of the earth, and as "home-made" liqueur pewters were not to be had for love or money, these dainty little cups from a foreign land were permitted to take their place among their insular relatives. They were acquired by Mr. Jackson in Algiers, having formerly been in the possession of General Hanson, who discovered them in Morocco. Possibly they once held the fragrant mocha of some Oriental potentate, but that can only be con-

(To be concluded.)

jectured. They are $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. high; the diameter at the top is $1\frac{1}{4}$ in., and the bowl of each is enriched with fine waved lines, the multiplication of which gives somewhat the effect of a "scale" pattern.

In company with these, on the left and right of the group, are four old tavern pots, interesting chiefly on account of the inscriptions they bear. On the first is—

"Henry Casey at ye duke of
marlbora head at hatton" (garden),

with "G. H. M." on the handle. On the second is—

"Richd. Yeo at ye blew lettice
in ship yard without temple barr,"

and "Y. R. A." on the handle. The third is marked—

"Jane Fischer living in ould bedlam
next dore to ye 5 bells and mortar,"

and on the lid, in three shields, "R. E. E." On the fourth is—

"Tim Buck at ye fountain in
portugall st against ye playhouse,"

with "B. T. M." on the handle. These were originally in the collection of the Rev. S. M. Mahew, F.S.A., and are early seventeenth-century productions. The rather florid sauce-bowl is portion of a service of which I shall have more to say later. In the meantime I hope that this general review will serve to show that the pursuit of pewter may prove not only a fascinating hobby, but may be highly conducive to the embellishment of the home. In returning to the subject I shall give further illustrations and facts for the guidance of those who are disposed to follow Messrs. Churcher and Jackson's example.

R. DAVIS BENN.



No. 6.—A Group of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Pewter.

The four tavern pots (incl. the balcanic measure) are now in the Guildhall Museum, London (1963). The three banded pots are actually recorded in the Guildhall Catalogue of 1903. R.F.M.



No. 1.—A Group of Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century English Pewter.

SOME RARE OLD PEWTER.—II.*



No. 2.—Early Eighteenth-Century Flemish Crucifix, with Vessel for Holy Water.

other countries differ as widely from one another as do the proverbial "chalk and cheese." It is practically useless for collectors whose preference is for elaborate forms and a redundancy of ornamentation, to look for those qualities at home; if they be wanted, Continental markets must be requisitioned, while, by way of contrast, for sturdy, simple dignity, old English pewter holds its own. The foreign article possesses comparatively small value to the collector, and, as it is being imported into this country in very large quantities at the present time, may be acquired without any great expenditure or trouble.

Considering first those pieces that are to be met with

* Concluded from page 316.

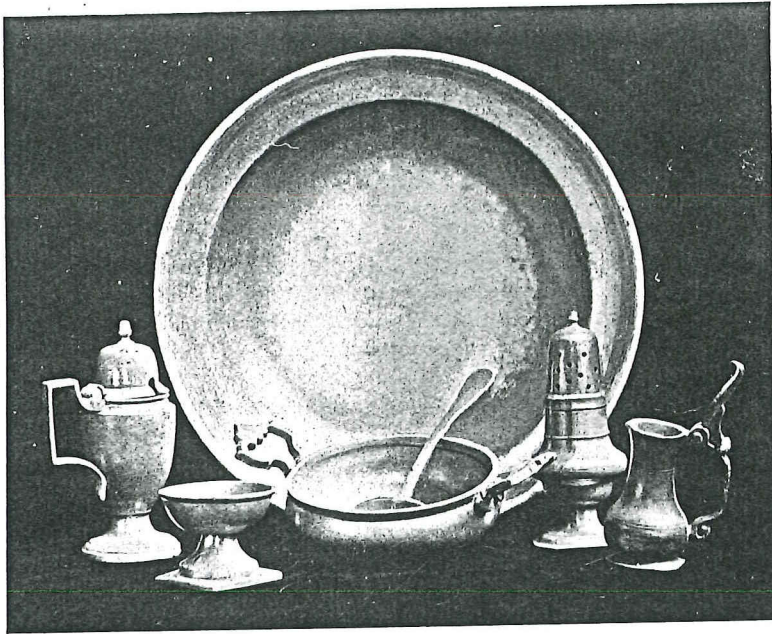
IN my first article I intentionally emphasised the fact that, throughout the formation of the two collections of pewter which constitute the subject of these notes, the one aim has been to adhere almost exclusively to national productions. It is most important that this should be distinctly understood, that their true value may be justly estimated, and no false comparisons instituted, for the work of our own old manufacturers and that from

most frequently, plates and dishes naturally outnumber any others. These, in the ordinary way, vary in size from 5 inches to 2 feet in diameter, and examples have been found of a diameter of 3 feet, but they are of great rarity. It may be accepted as a general rule that the larger the plate the greater is its value, as those of small dimensions are by far the most numerous. Then, again, there is another point to be borne in mind, and that is the *depth*. The majority are shallow, as are most of those illustrated last month, and when deep ones are found, if genuine, any opportunity of acquiring them should not be allowed to slip.

The three plates at the head of this article—part of a complete set—are not, I may mention, regarded as valuable possessions, save on account of the fact that they represent an unusual divergence, perhaps not altogether successful, from the simple circular form, and thus tend to render the collection more complete. They were made in the year 1830 by an English manufacturer for a French firm, and are 9½ inches in diameter; each one is stamped with two G's entwined, encircled by a wreath of tiny leaves. At the end of this same group, on the left, is a bowl-shaped piece 2¼ inches high and 4 inches in diameter, which was probably used originally as a "salt," though it now does duty as a sugar-basin in its present home. If a "salt" its dimensions are somewhat unusual, but nevertheless, Mr. Jackson is of opinion that it was made for that purpose.

As a proof of the association of pewter with religious rites, I have reproduced the old Flemish crucifix (No. 2), with its vessel for holding holy water, made about the year 1700.

The principal piece in the third illustration is a deep plate or porringer, valuable on account of both size and depth; it is 15 inches in diameter, and the marks prove conclusively that 1720 was the year of its manufacture, though it is but little the worse for the wear and tear of over a century and a-half. To the left of this is a decidedly graceful mustard-pot, 5 inches high and 2¼ inches in diameter, every line and curve of which stamps it indelibly as belonging to the days of Good Queen Anne. Next comes a simple Georgian "salt," 2 inches high, and 2½ inches in diameter, while on the other side

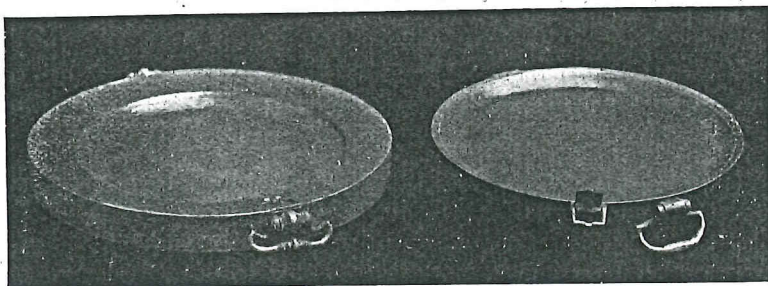


No. 3.—Deep Plate or "Porringer," Mustard Pot, "Salt," Pepper Box, and Elizabethan Measure.

of the group is a George the Third pepper caster (height $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, diameter $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches), the parent of a long line of descendants, in all of whom the "family likeness" may easily be traced. The crookedness of the last piece on the right side of the group may perhaps be pardoned when it is known that the days of Elizabeth saw it in use as a measure for spirit or liquid of some kind. It is $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, and is, as far as I am aware, unique of its kind, its fellows having, most probably, found their way into the melting-pot.

I have intentionally placed the two hot-water plates, shown in No. 4, side by side, that they may be carefully compared with one another. The first is quite a familiar pattern, as such were in common use up to twenty or thirty years ago, but its companion, dating back to an earlier period, is much more rare an account of its gracefully shaped underpart and handles. It is a pity that the more modern manufacturers did not select this last as a model for perpetuation instead of the square-edged type.

In the concluding group of my last article there appeared a sauce-boat, and in No. 5, herewith, is illustrated the soup-tureen belonging to the same dinner-service as that of which it forms a part. The date is probably about 1830, a period during which the Applied Arts of this country could hardly be described as having "flourished"; it is oval in shape (height $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, length 12 inches, width 7 inches) and not altogether ungraceful, though the enrichment is of that class



No. 4.—Hot-water Plates, showing common and rare type.

inspired by the French rococo, with which we are all too well acquainted. However, it must be judged on its merits as an example of old English pewter, and as such is well worthy a place in any collection.

The first of the two jugs in No. 6 is not English; it comes from Belgium, and is representative of many used to this day in old Flemish and Dutch inns, some of almost identical form having a Delft body, with handle and lid of pewter. This is 8 inches high and $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter. The maker's name is "De Witte," and upon the side are stamped the letters "L.D.C.," with many other marks. The second is an old Leicestershire jug (height 9 inches, diameter $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches), made about the year 1730; and it certainly compares favourably with its Continental fellow, though the lines of the handle strike one as being somewhat awkward.

No. 7 shows an old Dutch jug (height $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, diameter 5 inches), included because of its quaint shape, and a "College Pewter" from Magdalen College, Oxford, characteristic of those used in

Hall for "long drinks." It has a glass bottom, and the arms of the college are incised upon the body, but is of



No. 5.—Oval Soup Tureen, English, date about 1830.

no special value, except as representative of the class to which it belongs. A form very similar, but marked by greater refinement, has frequently been adopted for "Racing Pots."

A special article might be devoted to candlesticks alone, such varieties does one meet with in them, but the four which appear in No. 9 are characteristic of the periods from which they date. The first is early Georgian, the second late eighteenth century, the third "Queen Anne," and the last early eighteenth century. The curious vessel occupying the central position in the group is unquestionably of great age, but it is difficult to assign a date to it; and, indeed, some uncertainty exists as to the use to which it was originally put. Whether it is an old lamp—which is possible—or a primitive oil-can, has not yet been decided.

One might search for long and fail to discover a fellow to the fine Cromwellian



No. 6.—Belgian Tankard and Leicestershire Beer Jug.

piece reproduced in No. 8, now used by its owner as a cheese-dish, and regarded by him as one of his greatest treasures. That it is of exceptional rarity may be judged from the fact that, throughout their exhaustive search for old pewter, extending over so many years, neither Mr. Churcher nor Mr. Jackson has been able to find another like it. In the same group we have yet another form of jug—oval this time—and a couple of round spoons with straight handles; the "rat-tail" handle also is frequently met with in pewter spoons, but that is so well known as to render its illustration here unnecessary.

With this I must prepare to dismiss the subject, for the time being at all events,

though the two collections have not been by any means exhausted. I must not, however, omit to mention one of the great triumphs of Messrs. Churcher and Jackson's labours—the acquisition of the old Staple Inn Dinner Service, consisting of over fifty pieces, each one of which is dated, and impressed with the mark of the woolsack tied at the four corners. This is a joint possession, and, moreover, one with which no offer, however alluring, would induce its owners to part.

I have not yet said much about the question of marks, and really that phase of the subject is one that cannot possibly be dealt with adequately in the space remaining at my disposal; I must, therefore, touch upon it with great brevity. It is hardly necessary for me

1899

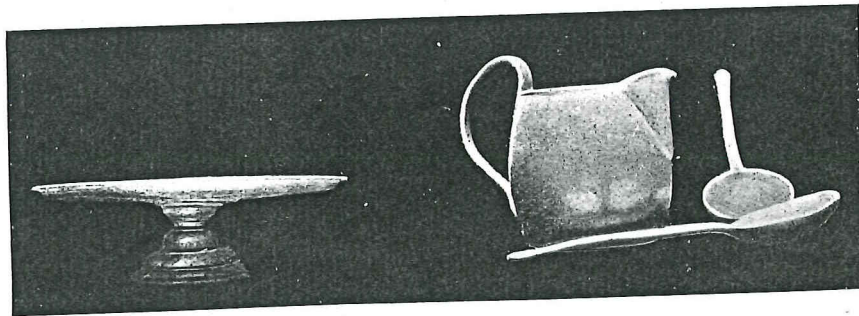


No. 7.—Dutch Jug and piece of "College Pewter."

to remind readers of THE ART JOURNAL, that, in the old days, pewter was taxed, so that every genuine antique piece bears the Excise stamp, a cross and crown. Then there were the marks designed in the interests of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers, closely related to those employed upon the silver of the same periods, while others still indicate the makers' names, years of manufacture, etc. To illustrate and comment upon all would occupy many pages, so that it is useless for me to

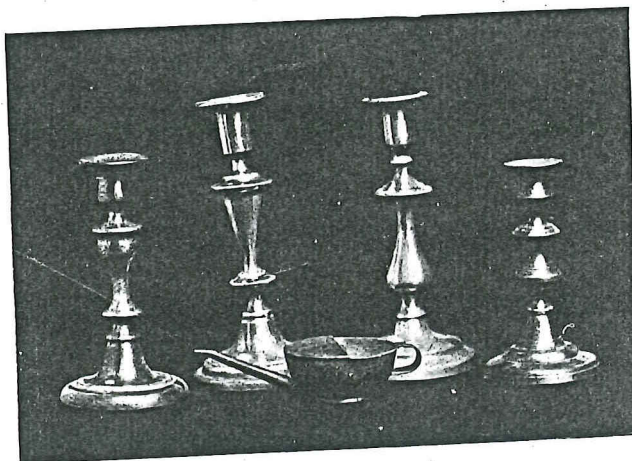
attempt the task.

Of course, the evidence of a desire on the part of collectors to secure old pewter has had the inevitable result: not only are all manner of jugs, lamps, épergnes, and other articles



No. 8.—Cromwellian Cheese Dish, Oval Jug, and two straight-handled Spoons.

in foreign pewter alluringly placed in dealers' windows to tempt the inexperienced and unwary, but the original old English moulds have been sought and found, and are now being taken advantage of by unscrupulous manufacturers for the production of plates and other things which are subsequently faked so cleverly as to deceive all but the most expert. Only a short while ago—but a few weeks, in fact—an order for replicas or an antique dinner service was given to, and rapidly executed by, a certain firm, though I do not suggest that in this case there was any suspicion of a desire to deceive; the fact is quoted simply to show what great care should be exercised in purchasing. As a final word to would-be collectors, Mr. Jackson's



No. 9.—Eighteenth-Century Candlesticks.

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advice may be summed up briefly; he says that, of course, pewter, as pewter, has but small intrinsic worth, and, therefore, only those old pieces which differ from modern productions are to be regarded as of value. I cannot say much about current prices now, but, to indicate how greatly they vary, may mention that, recently, six 8-inch or 9-inch plates were sold by public auction for twenty-one guineas; two 5-inch plates, with arms, for twenty-three and thirty-five shillings respectively; while a 16-inch plate has "fetched" as much as five pounds.

And now, as I close these notes—all too fragmentary, I

am aware—I can see the studio in which they have been made illuminated by candles and rushlights, an effective setting for a fine old Cromwellian table, laden with true old English fare on a complete service of this rare old pewter, and the hosts surrounded by a merry party of congenial spirits, among whom the faces of George C. Haité, Dudley Hardy, Robert Sauber, Frank Nott, and other well-known men are easily recognised. The picture, once seen, is not easily forgotten, and Messrs. Churcher and Jackson may well be proud that their years of collecting have been crowned by such delightful "Pewter Dinners."

R. DAVIS BENN.

INDUSTRIAL ART.

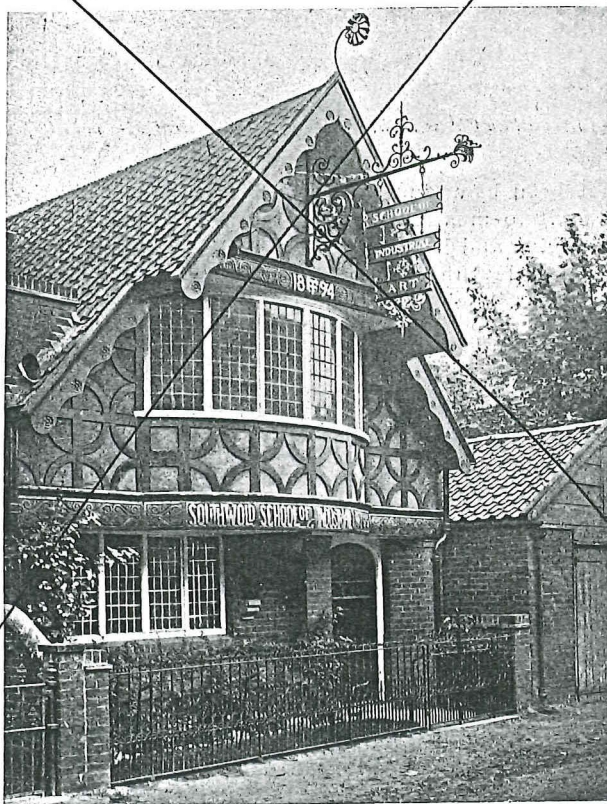
OF the many centres of Home Arts and Industries that have been started and carried on with great success, one of the oldest is that of the Southwold wood-carving class, which has annually displayed its work at the Albert Hall Exhibition, and which has there gained much distinction and praise by the high standard of excellence attained in its work. Like most of these industries, it was first begun on a very small scale, and the boys met for work in a room over a stable; but in 1894 Mr. Arthur Flower built the present picturesque black-and-white timbered house, with its quaint but handsome wrought-iron sign bearing the inscription "School of Industrial Art," which at once attracts the attention of any stranger visiting Southwold.

The school is now managed by Mr. Voisey, who himself draws most of the designs and teaches the classes on winter evenings. The classes are principally composed of fisher and other lads, who have not yet learnt any special trade; but men are also allowed to come and work when it is too rough for them to go fishing, that being the almost universal occupation of the inhabitants of the place. The boys number about fifty, and take keen interest in their work, and many of them show distinct talent. Mr. Voisey always encourages them to draw their own designs, holding that, when possible, a craftsman should know his craft from the very beginning. They are paid for all their work as soon as it is finished, and when they begin to learn tools are lent to them, until they have earned enough money to enable them to buy their own.

A cabinet-maker is engaged to teach them how to make up their work, so that the more advanced ones can begin and completely finish each article. But besides earning money, the boys are interested in making things for their own homes, and always take pride in making and carving the frames for the certificates of merit that they have gained; and one dares to hope that the better style of ornament thus imported into their cottages may in time oust the bead mats, shell boxes, and artificial flowers that have so long reigned there supreme.

In the hall of the Swan Hotel, at Southwold, stands a handsome oak settle, which was carved at the school last spring. The design is the conventional vine, and the back of the settle is divided into panels, each of which is carved; two brackets for papers have also been carved to match this settle, and the whole is specially appropriate to the pretty old-fashioned style of the hotel. The vine seems one of their most frequently selected and successful designs, together with the Celtic ones, which also seem to find much favour with them.

I greatly admired a billet-chest with a Celtic design of dragons in front, having on the sides an intricate strap pattern; some of the conventional designs were also very good. Many smaller things were on view at the school, such as photograph brackets, carved bellows with long handles, both corner and straight cupboards, and a variety of different-sized caskets and tea-tables, the tops of the latter being only incised; these were arranged in the first or large hall,



The Southwold School of Industrial Art.