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----- Journal of the PS,
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Mr Michaelis has received a letter from our Honorary Member, Ing. Robert M. Vetter, who sent his greetings to the officers and members of the Society and enclosed the following contribution to this Journal, which we are very pleased to be able to print.

"THE MAGIC OF PEWTER"

About sixty years ago I acquired my first piece of Pewter at Winterthur, Switzerland, a handsome, 18th century Salt, covered with lovely shaded patina. I often try to recall to my mind the urge which prompted me to the purchase and the feelings which accompanied the act and the enjoyment experienced when examining my treasure at home. Then I found that, in one way or another, I had succumbed to what I believe to be a magic spell emanating from well-fashioned, good Pewter. At that time I had no idea that with this acquisition I had committed myself to a life-long passion for Pewter. It was a time when fine pieces of Pewter could be had, not

exactly for a song, but still at reasonable cost. Soon I began to visit Museums and made acquaintance with Swiss Pewter collectors, becoming aware of their affectionate devotion to the mysterious metal. I became more or less familiar with the characteristic shapes of Swiss wine flagons which widely differ in form according to the region wherefrom they hail. I, too, became convinced that in the whole world there was no better, nor more beautiful, Pewter than that fashioned in Switzerland; most Swiss collectors held the same opinion. Since that time, however, I have lived and collected Pewter in various other European countries and found that most collectors were convinced that the best had been made only by their own ancestors.

By a curious combination of circumstances I became at that period acquainted with H. H. Cotterell and a lively exchange of correspondence ensued which, later on, led to fruitful co-operation. His enthusiasm for old Pewter was contagious - I hardly ever met a man who was so completely under its spell. Through him I learned to approach the subject scientifically and critically. He introduced me into the realm of British Pewter, but I must confess that, being used to the more ornate types and styles of Continental, especially French and German, Pewter, the sobriety of British Pewter was at first sight a little disappointing. However, I had not yet handled a British specimen and had seen only rather indifferent pictures. Cotterell, I believe, was not only one of the best interpreters of form and detail of British Pewter, but he took also an unprejudiced interest in Continental Pewter. Not being aware of the vastness of the subject, we undertook a descriptive series of articles on Continental Pewter Types, which appeared in many parts in the American magazine, "Antiques". The resulting, friendly co-operation lasted until his death. It was only natural that Cotterell should draw my attention to the particular charm of British Pewter, and to demonstrate its undoubted superiority. My first actual encounter with it took place in 1918 at a dealers' shop in Innsbruck, Tyrol, where I found a magnificent, hammered dish 17" in diameter. Never before had I seen anything similar, and immediately it struck me as marvellous that one could instill so much elegance into so simple an object. I still consider this piece as a "primus inter pares". The hammermarks are struck with unfailing regularity, the flat rim is adorned by simple reeding, the proportions are perfect and the metal hard and ringing. It bears the touch of Nicholas Kelk, London (Cotterell 2704). My second success was at Brunswick in 1922, where I found two hammered plates with reeded flat rims, about 10" in diameter, made by Thomas Powell (Cotterell 3750). Although the hammering is not so perfect as in Kelks's dish, I am very fond of these unassuming items. By what I believe to be a very early Capstan salt I enriched my small group of British Pewter at Amsterdam. The flat, circular top is reeded but the handsome piece is unmarked. The crowning glory of my tiny collection I found at Graz, Styria in the shape of a lidded tankard by William Eddon, London (Cotterell 1503). It is dated 1750, and is curiously engraved (not "wriggled") with two symbolic figures, probably meant to represent Worldly and Spiritual Love. It is of good metal, meticulously finished and in excellent condition. It seems remarkable that all these finds were made on the Continent and that the respective vendors were quite unaware of their original provenance or nationality. It must be assumed that these pieces are remnants of imports from England which took place centuries ago. These five pieces made a distinguished array within my collection.

During my stay in various European countries, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, Hungary and Austria, I have had occasion to study and collect typical pieces with national features, some very ornate, others more simple, and a few very ancient. I met collectors of different nationalities and with different levels of intellectual scope, who, although firmly convinced of the superiority of their national product, were not averse to adding a fine specimen, albeit of exotic origin, to their collection. This applies, I believe, also to British collectors. The most exclusive Pewter enthusiasts I found in Switzerland, whereas Dutch collectors are rather broadminded. Austrian collectors are, as a rule, led by aesthetic principles and the search for ancient pieces. Objective observation and analysis alternate with subjective emotion in the Pewter-collector's mind but intuition seems to

dominate. British Pewter appears to me to be a splendid combination of usefulness and subtle elegance. This is easy to recognise but difficult to define. I would say there is a "just-so-ness" about it. As hinted in the title of this attempt to enter into the mysterious character of Pewter, there clings to Pewter something strangely friendly; a subdued charm, and a jovial irresistibility - "the magic of Pewter".

Robert M. Vetter