

EDC



# Now is the Time to Buy Pewter

An Overstocked Market. ∴ If I Started Collecting To-day

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If proof were needed of the oft-repeated statement that old pewter may still be purchased at reasonable prices, it was surely forthcoming at a recent auction at a West End saleroom, when quite good collector's pieces were knocked down at absurdly low figures. Indeed, it is not too much to say that not for many years have pewter prices touched so low a level. NOW is the beginner's opportunity. *But It Will Not Last!*

The cause is to be found in the fact that, during the last twelve months, four or five very large, and some very important collections have been dispersed at auction through death and other causes, with the result that dealers have heavy stocks, to which many of them seem reluctant to add, and so the beginner has a quite unforeseen opportunity, but, as I have said, this will not last.

## American Demand

Prices may have had a check for the reason stated, but collectors will gradually absorb the dealers' stocks, and then competition will become as keen as ever again.

So I would say to those who have feared to begin . . . "Butt in" now, whilst the going's good! The field is more or less clear for you at the moment, and the chance of the present century is at hand! Moreover, you

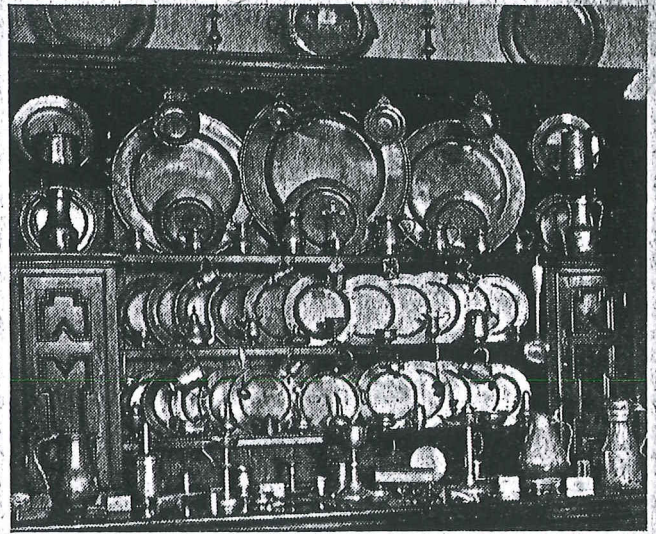
Nor is it only in the auction room that reasonable prices are to be obtained, for there are several dealers who are content to do business at a fair margin of profit over saleroom prices, and I doubt if, to the beginner, this is not the more satisfactory way of making his purchases.

Their advice will be at his disposal, and they will keep him "on the rails" if he will but admit his own lack of knowledge. But somehow the average beginner seems to find difficulty in such a course, preferring an attempt at "swanking through" on his own!

To any dealer who knows his job, that veneer will soon become transparent, and who shall blame him if he plants upon such a client some of his "less-reliable" pieces? You've had your cut at him, but, believe me, his cut will leave the greater scar!

One cannot, of course, give the names of those dealers who, from one's long experience, one knows to be really helpful, but I will gladly do all I can to help any beginner who cares to ask it of me.

So much by way of introduction.



1. The author's collection twenty years ago

Well, if it may be permitted, I show in Fig. 1 a picture of my own collection as it was some twenty years ago, for the reason that it gives some idea of the wide variety of vessels which were fashioned in the metal; and because most of them can be quite readily acquired to-day at a comparatively small outlay.

In this picture we see, suspended from the canopy of the dresser, from left to right and in the order given, an English porringer, c.1690, a 17th century French wine-taster, a French porringer, dated 1732, and a Dutch porringer, c.1780.

In the left upper recess is an oval tobacco box, c.1800, and in the right recess a plain-drum tankard of the late XVIIIth century. Below these is a pair of Normandy cider flagons, c.1750.

On the upper shelf are three chargers; the centre one late XVIIIth century and the side ones early XVIIIth, with, in front, centre, a five-lobed, wavy-edged plate, c.1750, flanked by two XVIIIth century examples, in front of which appear various baluster measures with a benitier in the centre.

On the centre shelf are seen various XVIIIth century plates, with small measures, a teapot, cruets, etc., in front and suspended from above it.

## Chalice at a Church

Another row of XVIIIth century plates backs the bottom shelf with a hot-water plate in the centre and all manner of small pieces hanging from the shelf above and standing in front.

On the body of the dresser, the seven taller pieces are, left to right, a Flemish flagon, c.1740, one of the best of its type I have ever seen; a wine bottle; an Alpine oil lamp; a Flemish chalice; another oil lamp; a Normandy cider flagon of bulbous and very pleasing form, and a Scots pint size tappit-hen, all XVIIIth century pieces. The centre chalice is now restored to its  
(Continued on page 16.)



2. 19th century pieces to look for—Glasgow and Edinburgh measures.

will acquire a gilt-edged security. The supply is not unlimited; crate-loads of it are going out frequently to America; the number of collectors is continually being added to, and prices must soar again in the not far-distant future.

The Editor has asked me to "put the case" for pewter from a beginner's point of view (in the correct formation of which some knowledge of present-day opportunities is a *sine qua non*), and to describe a small but representative collection.



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former use in the Lady Chapel in a Midland church.

Standing around and between these taller pieces are snuffs, spoons, salts, shoe buckles, a box inkstand and other items.

This picture shows how I bought my experience! There are pieces there which would be a credit to any collection, others which would disgrace any, and the remainder—good, educative beginners' pieces.

I can but say to the beginner—Go ahead and bring together some similar assembly. Many of the items can still be bought for less than a pound apiece, and a good proportion for a few shillings each.

You'll get a fine effect, for no one will gainsay the fact that this is a pleasing picture, just as pleasing to the uneducated eye as though each piece were valued at fifty pounds! From such a collection you will learn to discriminate between the sheep and the goats and to build up your own experience.

## Britannia Metal Bogey

Broadly speaking, there is little later than the end of the XVIIIth century which, apart from local or historic interest, should ever claim your serious attention. Try to confine your purchases to XVIIth and XVIIIth century items, there are plenty still to be had, and you'll cut out nine-tenths of the Britannia Metal bogey!

Do not be afraid of making an occasional mistake—we've all done it; but, having done it, learn from the experience

and do not be had a second time. Learn to lean on your own judgment and instinct.

## A Danger Signal

A collector said to me a day or two ago . . . "When I'm in doubt and going against my instinct, there's a sort of little bell rings inside me, and my greatest mistakes have been made when I have ignored it."

Learn to listen for that "little bell" and then pay heed to it, and if you've any taste at all you will not go very far wrong.

In Fig 2 I show two sets of Scottish measures of the XVIIIth century, and these may be considered an exception to the rule, excluding pieces of that century's work. These pear-shaped measures are nothing like so common as they used to be, and they are a good investment to-day.

## The "Dished" Lid

The upper row shows the Glasgow type with domed lids, and the lower one the Edinburgh, with concave-sided lids. This latter is one of the earliest types of lids found on pewter measures and on the Continent is known as the "Dished" type, from its resemblance to an inverted dish.

It is found on mediaeval, Hanseatic and other flagons, several examples of which have now found safe resting places in Continental museums and collections. Other than a few sepulchral chalices, we have nothing in this country which dates from such early times.