

EDI

OLD PEWTER ON THE HIGH SEAS

One so naturally associates old pewter with panelled rooms, oak dressers and a homely setting, that it comes as a surprise to learn of its adventurous existence on old sailing ships.

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Fig. 1.—This "Bud" type Baluster measure was evidently dropped overboard from a ship, for it was dredged up from the bed of the Lower Rhine, Holland. It is covered with a wonderful encrusted patina. Height 7ins. (Collection of Herr Fritz Bertram, of Chemnitz).

IN the minds of most of us, pewter conjures up thoughts of bygone days in tavern or houseplace; the roysterings of cavaliers and of yuletide reunions midst steaming punch and Christmas fare. But whatever the occasion, the setting is always on *terra firma*. It may therefore come as a surprise to many to know that it was an equally important adjunct of sea-faring life and many are the references to it in the ships' inventories of earlier times.

But this is not our only available evidence of the fact, for we get additional testimony in the pieces which are not infrequently dredged up from the beds of the great trading rivers, pieces which, from their very situations when found, admit of no con-

struction other than that they have accidentally fallen overboard from passing ships, for their condition is in many cases so perfect as entirely to rule out of consideration, the thought that they have been discarded as derelict.

As evidence of this, I give in fig. I., an illustration of an extremely fine example of an English "Bud" type baluster measure, some 7in. in height, which was dredged from the bed of the Lower Rhine, in Holland, and which now graces the famous collection of Herr Fritz Bertram, of Chemnitz. The absence of a connecting strut between the lower handle terminal and the body, at once proclaims the piece to be of the seventeenth century.



Fig. 2.—A beautiful Dutch flagon, C.1500, dredged from the River Tyne (Collection of Mrs. Carvick Webster, of Monkton).

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To reverse matters, in fig. II., I show a very beautiful Dutch flagon circa 1500, which was dredged from the River Tyne, and now forms one of the chief treasures in the collection of Mrs. Carvick Webster of Monkton.

To both these pieces, it may be noted, the sea has given a wonderful coating of encrusted patina, the removal of which none but the greatest vandal would contemplate.

One could multiply such instances many times over, of pieces similarly salvaged from other river beds, but these two are typical of them all, or rather of the circumstances in which they are found.

Further first-hand evidence of its use at sea is found in the many pieces which have been recovered from the Spanish Armada galleon, "Florentia," which was sunk in Tobermory Bay, off the coast of Mull, and believed by many to have been the treasure ship of the great Spanish fleet.

In fig. III., I illustrate one of these pieces in the form of a priming-powder flask, of which the winged screw-cap is missing. The flask has been restored from the battered condition in which it was rescued to something approaching its former shape. This fine historical relic is now on view at the Exhibition of Old Pewter which I have staged for Messrs. Osborne & Co., at their galleries at 1, Grafton Street, Bond Street, W.1.

Turning from the past, in fig. IV. is shown a collection of pewter in what must assuredly be one of the most unusual settings ever devised for such

a purpose. This interesting photograph was sent to me by Lieut.-Commander (E) Charles E. Simms, R.N., and gives us a peep into the interior of his cabin in the Aircraft-carrier, H.M.S. "Argus."

One can but admire the ingenuity with which Commander Simms has contrived to overcome the technical disadvantages of a most difficult situation, and this will be at once apparent to everyone.

The central cupboard arrangement, flanked on either side by the shelves of pewter, gives to the whole a "chimney-breast" appearance, so converting it into quite a homely affair. In the collection, besides old pewter, are a few pieces of Britannia Metal, which the owner describes as his early mistakes; also pieces of copper.

Commander Simms courteously permits me to reproduce the photograph and these details, and in writing me on January 23, 1930, from Gibraltar, he says:—

"We had a bad passage coming out here, and in the Bay, particularly, we ran into heavy seas. Needless to say, all my pewter and other cabin decorations are taken down and stowed away on such occasions."

So much for the sea! On land, in addition to the ideal environment (Cont. on p. 84).

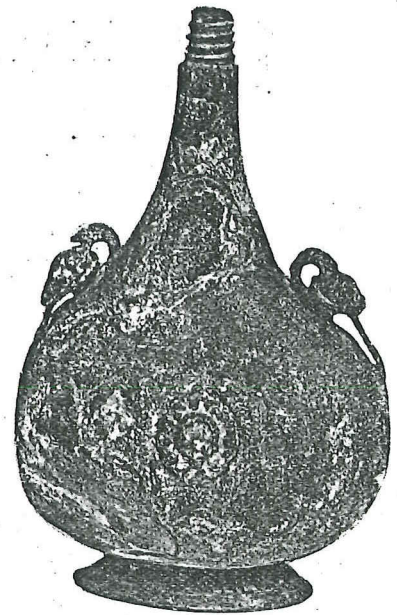


Fig. 3.—This old priming-powder flask is on view at an exhibition of old pewter at Grafton Street, W.1.

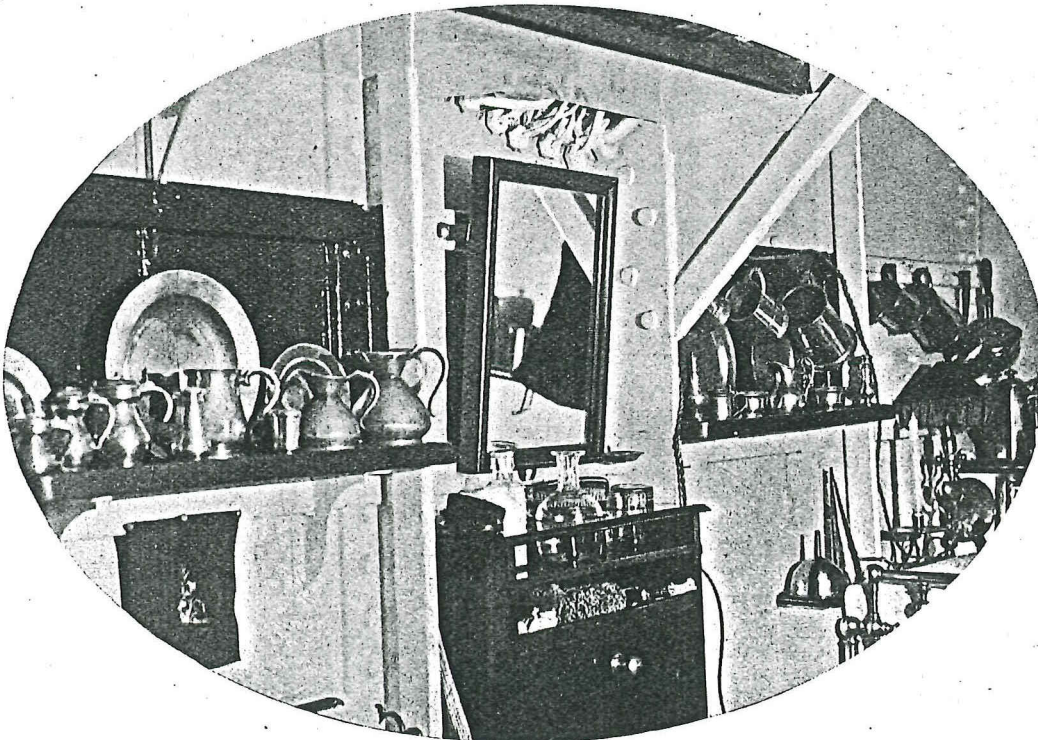


Fig. 4.—An unusual setting for a collection of pewter—the cabin of Lieut. Comm. Charles E. Simms, R.N., in the Aircraft-Carrier, H.M.S. "Argus"

Practical Points in Collecting

English Glass Mirrors.

GLASS mirrors did not become common in England until after the Restoration, when the Duke of Buckingham set up his famous works at Vauxhall. They were at first small, and bevelling did not come in until the end of the seventeenth century.

Queen Anne mirrors had walnut frames, shaped at the top, sometimes plain and sometimes moulded, with the grain running crossways. These are frequently found with the inside edge ornamented with a carved gilt slip. Marquetry frames and soft wood frames covered with spesso and gilded are also typical of this period.

Chippendale mirrors were elaborately carved and gilded, whilst those of Adam are more formal and restrained.

Queen Anne toilet mirrors were of walnut and had a flap and drawers to hold toilet requisites.

Old Sheffield Plate.

With the growing scarcity—and in consequence the higher price—of 18th century silver, the collector who admires Georgian grace and simplicity may well turn to old Sheffield Plate, though this in its turn is also getting scarcer. In spite of its great popularity during the latter part of the 18th century, it was only made for a period of 80 years, and as it has not the lasting qualities of silver,

many pieces have worn or "bled," so that the copper is visible beneath the plate. The best period of Sheffield Plate is from about 1770 to 1800, when the artistic influence of Adam and Flaxman had extended to silver, and from thence to its humbler companion. Marks are not important until after 1784, before which it was illegal to strike a name or mark on plated wares.

Chippendale-Hepplewhite Chairs.

Occasionally one comes across an 18th century chair whose back seems a strange if pleasing combination of the features of these two masters. These chairs are specimens of what is generally known as the "transition style," marking the early Hepplewhite period, before this designer had emerged from the influence of Chippendale. One finds a Serpentine Rail (a cross between the Cupid Bow and the Shield back), combined with uprights that have a true Chippendale "square" appearance where they join the seat, whilst the splat, pierced and slightly fan-shaped is not sufficiently rounded for a Hepplewhite Shield Back, nor flowing enough in line to be pure Chippendale.

Paragraphs not exceeding 150 words, giving practical notes and details gathered in the course of collecting, are invited for this page from readers.

OLD SILVER IN THE REFORMATION.

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abandoned early in the 17th century, none being found hallmarked after about the year 1600.

Accompanying these cups, in accordance with Archbishop Parker's ordinance, was an ingenious cover in shape like an ordinary kettle lid, but with a larger knob. This was utilised not only as a lid to the chalice but, when inverted, it formed a paten which held the Consecrated Bread.

A large number of these Elizabethan cups, as they are called, are still in existence, many without their cover, in various parts, especially in the remote villages of England. They have an interest of their own though they may not exhibit the artistic merit nor possess the ancient historic associations of the more beautiful vessels they replaced.

The Elizabethan cup which many an English church possesses and uses from week to week or even from day to day in the Communion, is the very chalice in an altered shape used there by the parish priest for ages before the puritanical feeling which destroyed them. This consideration may lend them even an additional interest in the minds of those who use them now, and whose forefathers used them for nearly four centuries.

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referred to at the commencement, one also associates pewter with museums, but the fact is not as widely known as it deserves to be, that at the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in Wigmore Street, W.1, there are many most interesting exhibits of pieces formerly in use by the surgeon, the barber-surgeon and the alchemist. Here, in properly reconstructed settings are to be seen an old alchemist's laboratory and distilleries; a sixteenth century barber-surgeon's shop showing the surgeon seated on a high-backed chair, with the bandaged patient dumped in a sitting posture, on the floor between his knees, and surrounded by a medley of bowls, bottles, phials, towels, a mortar and pestle, a skull and other gruesome impedimenta, the very sight of which seems more calculated to kill than to cure.

The Museum also possesses a very fine collection of barbers' basins, bleeding bowls and other vessels for use in connection with the sick-bed. Though the Museum is not open to all and sundry, admission can be obtained on an introduction by suitable people. First and foremost its mission is educative, for the profession, as opposed to the curious.