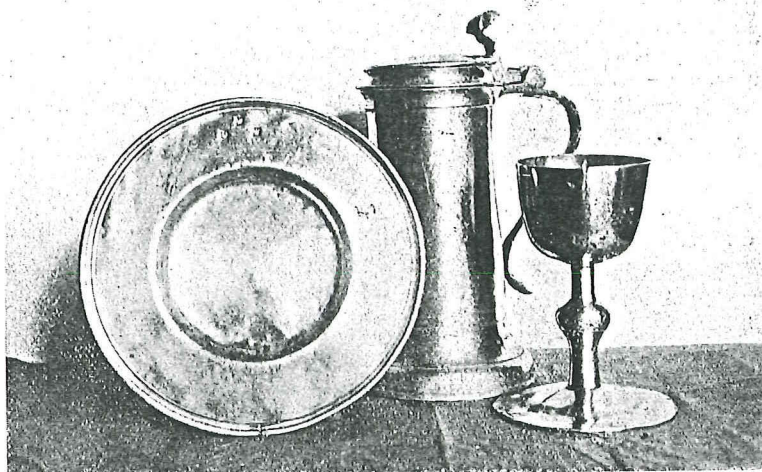


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The Art of Collecting PEWTER

by
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A magnificent mid 17th Century Communion Service. The Chalice and Paten bear the same London touch. In the Young Collection. Diameter of Paten 7½ in.

THE days may be over when old Pewter plates and measures could be purchased for a few pence apiece, but to the person of average means it still remains, not only one of the most delightful, but one of the least expensive branches of collecting, provided one is content to acquire, at first, such examples as are not in greatest demand. For so one may, by the outlay of only a few pounds, make quite a respectable start with a few measures and peppers, a snuff-box and a candlestick or two, backed by a dozen or so of quite ordinary plates and dishes.

These at least will—if nicely cleaned—provide a first satisfaction to one's desire, and, from so small a beginning one can learn much as to the colour, the "texture" and the "feel" of pewter. Even if with increasing knowledge and experience, such pieces have eventually to be weeded out and passed on, the money expended will have taught one *very* much, and—who knows?—a judicious re-sale may show a small margin of profit wherewith to purchase more worthy pieces. To this extent every collector is a dealer in embryo!

Such then is the best way to commence and, in the end, the least expensive.

No Pewter is cheap to-day, but much of it is quite inexpensive by comparison with its increasing scarcity. It is by no means impossible to buy, with luck, quite good ordinary plates round about fifteen shillings each, though between twenty to thirty is the usual price, whilst for seventeenth

century examples those prices will have to be more than trebled. Measures, peppers and other small pieces may be picked up in junk shops for a few shillings, and between these and the more expensive fine collectors' examples, the prices range to fifty or a hundred pounds, or even more.

To the beginner I would say, do not despise the plainer and purer types of Continental and Channel Islands wares, whose form is in many cases most pleasing, and containing shapes far more dainty than anything made in this country; *e.g.*, small Altar Cruets and Vases, little ewers and inkstands, and a hundred and one other types, may be discovered. Leave the more expensive Stuart Tankards and Salts, Jacobean Candlesticks and Broad-rimmed Dishes, and Church Flagons and Chalice for a while, until you have bought your experience. They'll still be available when you want them; even advanced collectors must die from time to time and their worldly goods pass into circulation once again.

If you unearth something which seems *too* good a "find" to pass, and yet are not sure of your own judgment, never hesitate to pay a moderate "vetting" fee to an expert and, fortified thus, "butt in" and buy it, with fullest confidence.

Such chances are *not* gone for ever. More than once, twice or thrice have I given a report during the past year "Buy it up to £50," and it has been landed for less than a half, or a quarter, or a fifth of my valuation. In others it has, for a fee of a few shillings, saved the locking up of many pounds in a fake!