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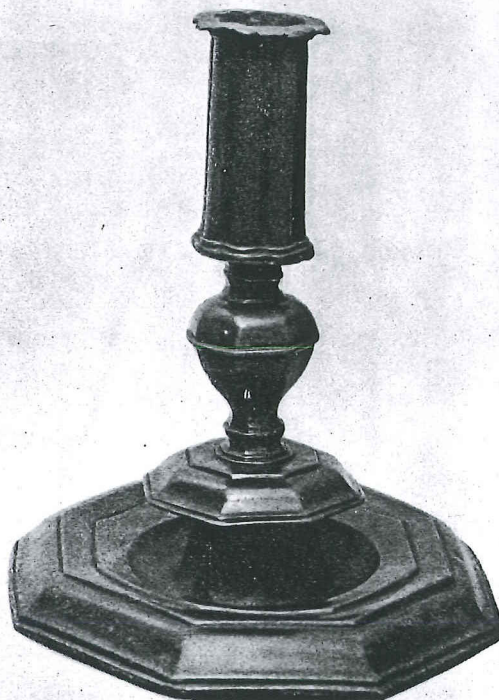
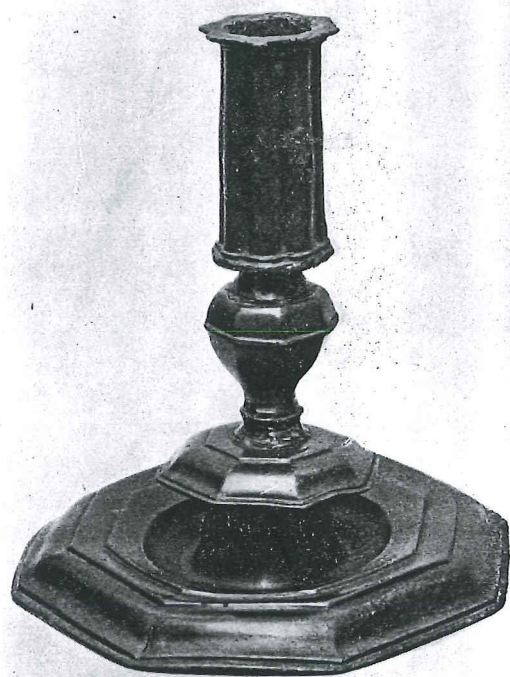
# FINE BRITISH PEWTER IN AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

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Figs. I and II.

A pair of rare pewter candlesticks showing the Touch of Hugh Quick. Size 9½ in. high.

IT would, I think, be difficult to find a piece of American pewter in any British collection. The British collector takes, as a rule, little interest in pewter other than that of his own country; and when he does, it is usually of European Continental origin; and as most of the really fine Continental pieces are already in museums, private collections abroad, or perhaps in America, he has to satisfy himself, anyhow as a beginner, with such things as French or Belgian sets of cylindrical measures.

The American collector, however, is, as I have already hinted, much wider in his outlook, and there are quantities of British pewter to be found across the Atlantic. And it is not only the ordinary stock-in-trade of the British dealer that finds its way on to American shelves. Here and there are to be seen pieces of the highest class in their respective groups, and it is my purpose here to illustrate some of these which are outstanding, and probably the equal of, if not superior to, anything of similar type in this country.

Fig. I illustrates a pair of candlesticks, a notable exception to the rule that pewter articles were made solely for utilitarian purposes. They are 9½ ins. in height and 7⅞ ins. across base parallels, and have obviously not been touched for the better part of two centuries. They are covered by a fine glowing black patina which it would be disastrous to try to remove, as there is little doubt that the surface would be ruined and holes appear. As a general rule it is advisable not to attempt any drastic acid treatment to remove black skin and expose virgin metal on these ancient pieces. I remember seeing a fine old charger bearing an engraved inscription and a late XVIth century date, in itself an exceedingly rare feature; it was covered, like these candlesticks, with a fine black patina; I saw it again some years later, during which interval its owners had attempted to "clean" it; as a result the inscription and date were ruined and the charger looked more like a piece of lace. Returning to the candlesticks,

each bears the Touch of Hugh Quick, one of a numerous pewtering clan at the turn of the XVIIth century. This particular member struck the Touch (Fig. II) on the first of the Touch plates preserved by the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in 1674 (which date it bears); he obtained Livery in April 1685, became Upper Warden in 1704 and Master of the Company in 1708.

One who knew these candlesticks well before they went to America has given his opinion that, in the passing of the years the stems have sunk somewhat, that the double octagon base above the Syma reversa should be level and not sunk towards the well, and that, if this could be put right without harming the piece, it would add dignity to it. Next I would like to comment upon a piece of a very different kind. It is a "Scale-Plate", and in case the title does not convey a clear meaning, I show one (Fig. III) in its working position, held by the four arms of a pair of scales. This is not, however, the plate to which I am drawing attention, which is seen in Fig. IV and is quite a century older. The plate on the scales was made by Samuel Cocks in the first quarter of the XIXth century, whereas the example we are considering was made by Richard Webb, whose so-called "Hall marks" appear in Fig. V and who struck his Touch in 1687. How much it gains by the multiple reeded edge, which lifts it up from being a featureless plaque into the realm of design. Lastly I illustrate what must surely be one of the finest—probably the finest—XVIIth century flat lidded tankards in existence (Figs. VI and VII). Its proportions, its fine double curved shield-ended handle and beautifully designed wriggle-work containing birds and beasts, flowers and acorns, and the subtle entasis given to its drum, all combine to place this piece in the very top class of its type; but what causes it to stand out as unique is the line engraving of the head and shoulders of James II upon the front of the drum. Howard Cotterell, in his "Old Pewter, its Makers and Marks"



Figs. III, IV and V. At the top a pair of scales ; in the middle a Scale Plate ; and beneath the Touch of Richard Webb.

shows several tankards engraved with portraits of Charles I, evidently in memoriam pieces, made after the Restoration, as for many reasons it is hardly possible that they could be contemporary. There are also many portraits of William and Mary, and of William alone, which are contemporary ; but I have never seen the bust of Charles II nor, until shown this specimen, of James II ; and it is perhaps odd that although Charles reigned for 25 years and James for four years only, it should be the latter whose portrait should now appear, more especially as, although James achieved some popularity when, as Duke of York, he commanded the fleet which defeated the Dutch at the battle of Lowestoft in 1665, it waned later, and when he warned his brother of plots against his life, Charles replied "They will never kill me, James, to make you King". The only flaw in this otherwise perfect piece is the evidence of removed spots of corrosion which mar the face of the portrait. Unremoved spots can be seen in the illustration (Fig. VIII) of the makers Touch. This appears upon the bottom inside and is that of John Donne who became a freeman of the Company in November, 1683, and commenced business as a Master pewterer in 1686, which date appears in his Touch.

The candlesticks are owned by Mr. John M. Graham of Williamsburg, Virginia, to whom, and to the authorities of Colonial Williamsburg, owners of the Scale-plate and the tankard, I am indebted for permission to illustrate these pieces.



Figs. VI, VII and VIII. Two views of a flat lidded tankard, XVIIth century, together with the Touch of John Donne.

