EPV

at these smoke-emitting giants. Although John Ruskin and William Morris are out of sight, they are not out of mind, and we can but regret that they lived their little span a few years before the world in general was ready for them. Electricity has come to supersede steam, and when the chimney-stack or chimney-stalk is needed no more, it will not be too much to expect the cornmill and factory to assume such a shape as William Morris and H. G. Wells have prophesied. HARWOOD BRIERLEY.

A CHAT ON PEWTER.

ENTOURAGE—what a comprehensive term; how subtle, how reasonable its mission; how necessary, not only for the happy development of all artistic impulse, but for the proper exposition of any work of art! And for the want of stimulating surroundings, how often does the initial idea falter, and the result of inspired effort lose its physiognomy in the blight of unsympathetic environment! Indeed, the output of all creative effort, if it has its source in inspiration, owes its existence also to the gradual or instantaneous influence of entourage. And this is equally true of him who repudiates absorption from externals; for isolation is an entourage as subtle and effective as is the companionship of exciting surroundings. The scholar who retires within himself has already absorbed from his entourage stores of thought, of observation, of digested knowledge, which keep him company substantially during his solitary hours. The student of Nature, *per contra*, gathers material and enthusiasm from daily contact with actualities. To the inanimate world, the law of harmony applies in the same relative degree. Incapable of action, of self-help, they still embody—things of beauty—the living soul of him who fashioned them, and cry out mutely, indeed pathetically, for surroundings which invite a confident display of their charms. Else all is discord or bruised harmony. I have seen a bit of Chelsea on an oaken dresser shrink with almost human understanding. Reverse the order; a Jacobean cupboard in a Louis XV. boudoir. I cannot imagine which of the two would be the most injured commentator; the pouting protest of gold leaf and dainty line, or the embarrassed hauteur of the dark stranger. Yet within their own proper domain the world beautiful could not afford the loss or maltreatment of either. Maltreatment—that is the term, the transgression; indeed, the sin and retribution in one. And the more refined the single specimen, the more delicate its personality, the greater need of a *milieu* of apposite relation. And if this be true of the exquisite, how much more so of the work of humble hands. I was asked the other day what I thought of housing a collection of pewter in London. I must acknowledge that the question itself, or rather the shock due to its anomaly, should have provoked the only possible answer. On the other hand, I could not help but think, and say in the end, that if the collector were a lover of pewter, surroundings might well be ignored, that the knowledge to be acquired by the indulgence of the hobby be not jeopardised or lost. There is the further argument that services of pewter were used in London, as in many other towns throughout England, and that the metropolis still contains seventeenth and eighteenth century houses wherein pewter undoubtedly held pantry dominion. But these habitations are but remnants of the past, and the modernity of the London of to-day is too permanent and universal to admit of the reinstallation of so humble a ware as pewter. And for the reason that if a single specimen of delicate art be at a disadvantage amid surroundings that are uncongenial to it, fashionable quarters would but startle and humiliate a family gathering of humble pieces. They would hold, no doubt, the advantage over the solitary specimen—the comradeship of numbers contributing mutual support—but they would soon grow embarrassed, and in the end would only feel at home when the lights were out, the play of embers burnishing their shy faces. Among abuses: a row of pewter plates touring the top of a dining-room wall may be an acrobatic feat, but the inspiration has no advent in the mind of a collector in the true sense of the term. From their exalted position—unless the top shelf be a Campo Santo for spurious pieces—they are asked to do false duty, and are hopelessly beyond the reach of loving hands. As well argue that the early French mode of inlaying manorial rafters with designs in pewter was a branch of the art of collecting domestic specimens of the same metal. No—if the ware itself cannot be brought back to its original daily use—and I do not see why it should—give it at least an abode where before exile it held early sway, and where the old surroundings survive to offer it a familiar home-coming. But let it be in some village or country nook, in some cottage or manor house, where the lowly service will not be snubbed by its silver peers, where the gloss of chintz and the perfume of lavender still haunt the panelled rooms, and where pantry and parlour have not lost their old-world intercourse and mutual support

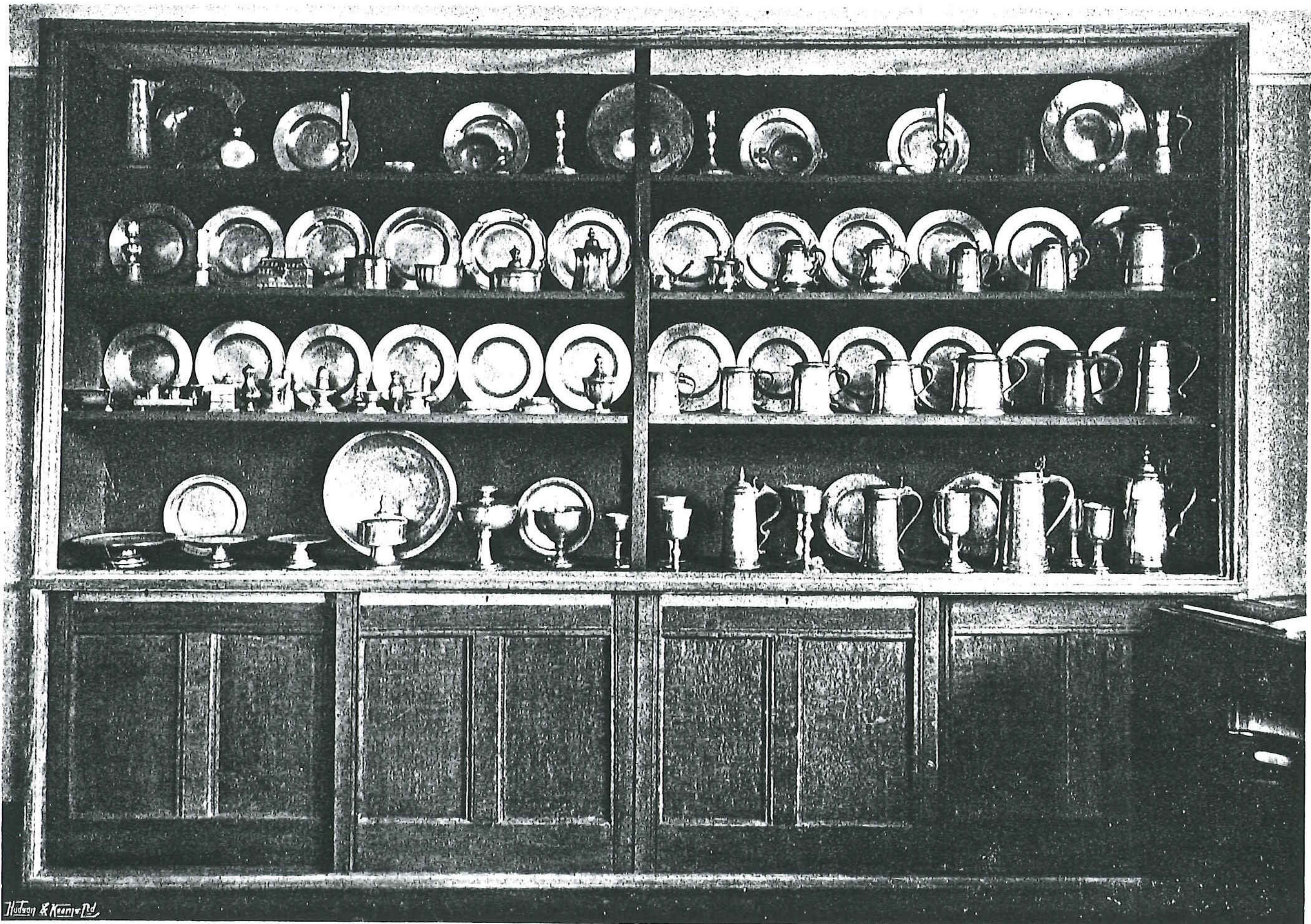
PEWTER CHALICE AND COVER (ENGLISH).

PEWTER CHALICE AND COVER (SCOTCH).

To my mind—and it has occupied itself with many experiments—the shallow dresser, with shelves above, offers the best resting-place for a collection of plates, dishes and chargers; a few of the smaller culinary pieces finding each their niche in the perpendicular recesses at each end. For the rarer specimens, salts, spice-boxes, tankards, candlesticks, snuff-boxes, caddies, etc., I know of nothing as quietly effective as the excavated recess in a deep wall; back, sides, and shelves lined with a moss green fabric which contributes a sympathetic background

to the favoured pieces. There is a finality about this mode of installation not to be found in a perambulating show-case. The latter proclaims a certain ostentation, an obvious artificiality, undiscoverable in the retiring recess of an embrasured wall. Here, indeed, is a shelter, a permanent home; while the show-case, at best, is but a transparent prison-house. It must be admitted, however, that whether in show-case or recessed wall, the accumulation of many pieces, however well chosen, in a circumscribed space, will have its insuperable disadvantage. Each specimen cries for manual examination, all call simultaneously for study, appreciation; and unless one be possessed of a "swivel-eye," the chorus of jealous competitors must be silenced by a very determined effort at individual examination. A difficult task, and unsatisfactory, the close proximity of other pieces, clamouring for attention, making concentration almost an impossibility. The result is confusion, an *embarras des richesses*. This is but natural. Each specimen is the product of thought, care, patient labour, and the appreciation of its qualities demands, again, thought, opportunity, undisturbed leisure. Nature also contributes her protest, and her reprimand makes clear as well the reason why all "collections" are necessarily unsatisfactory. In his love of beauty, or his desire for acquisition, the collector forgets that possessions. Church pieces should be kept apart, not only because of their consecrated use at some time of their existence, but for the reason that, being ecclesiastical pieces, they do not fraternise with their domestic *confrères*. Flagons, lavers, fonts, alms-dishes, chalices, patens, cruets—if any have survived the Reformation—they form a family numerous enough to complete a group of their own. Exceedingly rare, and rarer still now that the incumbents of churches are made aware of the law forbidding their sale, they deserve a place apart, some corner sanctuary, where they may commune unrestrainedly among themselves.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure I have experienced in my association with pewter has been in acquiring pieces for friends, starting budding lovers of the ware with the advantage of the experience gained through my own initial failures. Beginners, in their haste for acquisition, more than often accept what the added knowledge of a few weeks must inevitably repudiate. Standing on the threshold of an entirely novel experience, they are seized, or, rather, they surrender themselves eagerly to a conspiring number of emotions: the desire for acquisition, the excitement of the first plunge (which will lend a glamour to even scrap-iron), subconsciously the pride of possession, the acquired object already in view, the reputation of "connoisseur" buzzing



AN EMBRASURED WALL.

each specimen was originally fashioned for some particular need or use; and here they are gathered together in promiscuous array, denied their special office, spending and ending their days in cabinet adolescence. Obviously, the only satisfactory method is to acquire a few specimen pieces, and to place them effectively and at peaceful distances, in a room of congenial size and character. A *tour de la chambre* would reveal each piece separately, the precautionary isolation would prevent confusion (or competition), and the tax upon one's archæological and appreciative powers would leave memory free to remember each piece individually. The only exception that occurs to me where a close congregation of pieces is advisable, indeed, necessary, is where it is desired to illustrate the evolution of some interesting specimen. In a museum the conditions are different; space is precious, and the close location of pieces is necessary for purposes of education, of classification and chronology. In one's own domain, if the specimens are allowed to increase in number—and they do, with all the subtlety and artfulness known to the "antique" bacillus—difficulties and, what is worse, responsibilities, increase in the same ratio. This is inevitable, and has been so ever since the world began. The sad man in the Bible is perhaps the oldest known victim of such complication. He had many at the ear—and the deed is done. Then the aftermath; the gradual awakening with the growth of knowledge; and, finally—the dust-heap. For there are no means of disposing of one's failures, unless the courage of a hard-ned collector inhabit the conscience of the beginner. In such cases it has been considered advisable to forage for another beginner, that, by a judicious placing of the peripatetic piece, knowledge may thus more quickly be brought to his door. Time, knowledge, are of such vital importance to the amateur! It is often a disappointing process to advise the beginner; and to attempt to stem the tide of his first enthusiasm, when he is running amuck amid a whirl of lashing incentives, is certainly to expose both one's patience and friendship to what may be a mortal encounter. But it is worth the trial; for if successful—starting as it does the amateur on a higher plane of taste and judgment—one becomes at least the parent of his youth, of his early and successful endeavours, and later . . . shall I say, the grand-parent of his ultimate renown.

Food for remembrance, this; a pipeful of gratification, of consolation, when at evening by the fireside regrets of one's own failures, of opportunities missed, invade the mind.

ANTONIO DE NAVARRO.

thought, and she have learnt what loving means. . . . The past's buried, Miss."

There was a little silence in the room. Damaris Garland said to herself, "The past's buried." She envied this girl who could bury the past. Her eyes fell upon her; she wanted to say something to her—hesitated, smiled.

The old grandmother, murmuring, followed to the door. She said, "I be sorry to have brought you up this way, Miss. But there be naught that can stand up against love."

It was dusk when they reached the shore. Night, sure-footed, was creeping towards them across the marshes, the wind had fallen, the tide was running out.

Neither of them had spoken since they left the cottage; they pressed forward in silence into the luminous gloom.

Damaris Garland knew in her heart that nothing. . . . But no!

Her defences were down; did he guess that?

He said to her, once, "The past's buried."

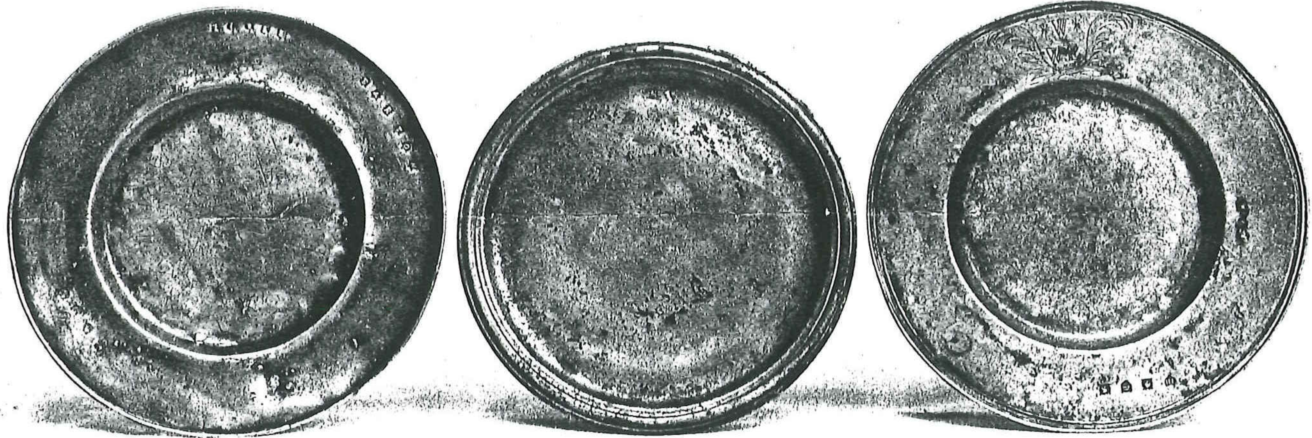
She did not answer.

Again a shower beat upon them and a pale radiance appeared in the darkening sky. . . . She paused to see the last of the daylight fade from the old ruins above them. . . . He came behind and laid his hands upon her shoulders, and stooped and kissed a rain-wet cheek. . . .

PATENS.

Of all church pieces, plates are to be found in greatest number. And the reason is not to be discovered in the fact alone that they played many and varied parts, but that their renewal after a bruising life was a matter which taxed neither household resources nor parish economies. Of all domestic vessels they were the most numerous and the least costly. Elevated to ecclesiastical uses, they served principally as alms-dishes, and this fact must account for a large proportion of the number to be found in parish churches. Many of these still collect the offerings of generous parishioners—a piece of silent cloth at the bottom of the dish contributing privacy to the contribution, and longevity to the plate. Some of the higher class specimens, emblazoned with the sacred monogram, were elevated to the called a peripatetic piece, and was destined "to round" the table as a salver, a waiter, in ordinary parlance. Relieved of its touring responsibilities, it served as a coaster on which to rest the drinking-cup, porringer, tankard, etc. Its appearance coincided with the reign of Charles II.; its disappearance with that of the second George. During Cromwell's tenure of office and the reigns of Charles II. and James II., large dishes on a central foot were found in combination with covered caudle-cups, and those were used both as rose-water dishes and as stands for cups.

The old alms-dish survives in considerable numbers, and is to be found in wood, as well as in brass and pewter. The most interesting examples of the latter are the Scotch specimens, which occasionally contain a cup or receptacle in the centre of



PATEN PLATES.

communion table, where they did duty as patens. A third use, discovered in a churchwarden's account of the Church of St. Michael, in Bedwardine, "neere the Cittie of Worster in the County and Dioces of Worster, taken the eightwenty day of May Ano Dom. 1641" affords yet another explanation of their great number:

> Two flagon pewter pottes for the Wine at the Coion, the one Pottle, the other three pints.
>
> Two Pewter Plates to sett under the said flagon upon the Coion Table to preserve the Cloth and Carpett from spillings of wine.

The pewter paten did not follow the many variations of its silver model. The latter included the ordinary plate, the circular salver on foot, the small square tray on four feet, the paten on baluster stem, the cover-paten and the low paten with cover surmounted by a cross, resembling a dwarf ciborium. The "Romanist" reproductions, which included chalices with covers finialed with crosses—in reality ciboria—were probably of Laudian influence. The only existing pewter patens are those of pre-Reformation date—small, circular, with central depression to fit the chalice and hold the wafer-bread for the priest—and the two specimens of post-Reformation origin—the ordinary pewter plate, with or without wide rim, and the paten-on-foot. Of the first, it is safe to believe that when the ordinary plate was designed especially for paten use it had usually a wide rim and, on occasion, was emblazoned with the sacred monogram. Its narrow-rimmed *confrère* graduated, no doubt, direct from domestic service. The paten-on-foot, tazza-salver, salver-paten, or bread-holder, as it was variously called, entered the church during the seventeenth century and was of domestic origin. There is, I know, a pious tenacity of claiming for it an ecclesiastical nature, but this is not the case. Domestically, the paten-on-foot was what might be the dish for holding the coins of higher value. This cup would correspond in place to the elevated boss in the centre of the pewter salver bearing the coat of arms in coloured enamel. Of these time produces a gradually increasing number. The first Pewter Exhibition of 1904 revealed the existence of two fine specimens, said to have been made "with others" for the express use of Charles I. At the last Exhibition of Pewter (1908) this number had increased to four exhibits, and several other specimens have since come unexpectedly to my notice. As in the case of other domestic vessels, the salver also found its way into church precincts, where it served as an alms-dish. In several of the churches of the City of London there are

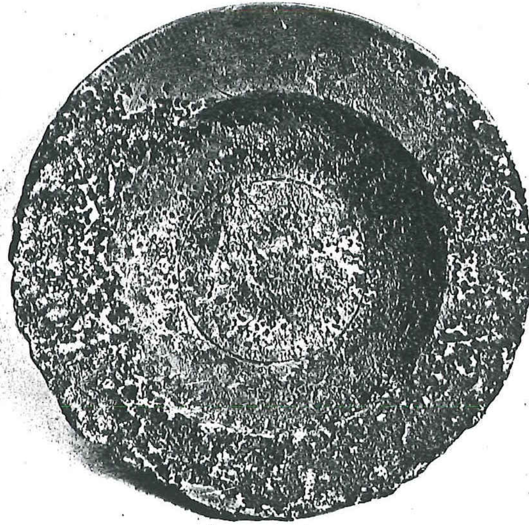
> a considerable number of alms-dishes made of pewter, and a set of four made in the early part of the seventeenth century, at St. Katherine Cree, and one at St. Olave, Hart Street, with centre bosses decorated with the Royal Arms in enamel, are especially interesting. The boss of one of the St Katherine Cree dishes is decorated with the Prince of Wales's feathers in enamel and the letters C.P. This church, it will be remembered, was consecrated by Archbishop Laud when he was Bishop of London, and very likely these dishes were presented by King Charles I. . . . St. Alban, Wood Street, has four pewter dishes made in the middle of the eighteenth century, also decorated with the Royal Arms in enamel on the bosses. ("Communion Plate of the Churches in the City of London," by Edwin Freshfield, jun., 1894.)

In the parish church (St. Mary) of Mildenhall, Suffolk, there are two pewter salvers with central boss in enamel bearing the coat of arms of Charles I., the Royal initials C.R., and the date 1648; these are now used as alms-dishes.

To those who know, it matters not; but to those who in happy ignorance cling to the belief that all that is used in churches must be of ecclesiastical origin, it is a painful duty to have to insist that since the Reformation, almost every branch-

of church plate has been supplied from domestic sources, and in fairly numerous cases has presumably served domestic wants before the transfer to church precincts. Chalices that once were cups, patens that served as plates, flagons that may have poured both water and wine, alms dishes, basins, porringers, did double duty on board and communion-table, and for the reason that the rubrics of the Reformed Church did not demand an invariable adherence to ecclesiastical models. This latitude must, I believe, owe its origin to that clause in the Communion Service of the First Prayer Book of Edward VI., which says:

> Then shall the minister take so much Bread and Wine, as shall suffice for the persons appoynted to receive the holy Communion, laiying the bread upon the corporas, or els in the paten, *or in some other comely thyng*, prepared for the purpose. And puttying ye wine into the Chalice, *or els in some faire or convenient cup*. . . .



PRE-REFORMATION PATEN.

The italicised words represent the open door through which passed the numerous pieces of domestic plate, which in many parts of England still minister to ecclesiastic needs. In the Catholic Church, the alternative was never allowed with chalice or paten, but we do find in early wills, best capes, cloaks, etc., left to be transformed into vestments; jewels, gold and silver plate to be melted down for the making of monstrances, ciboria, etc. Perhaps the most remarkable bequest was the gift of Petronella, Countess of Leicester, who gave her beautiful hair, from which was to be suspended the silver sanctuary lamp of St. Mary of the Meadows, the Abbey Church of Leicester.

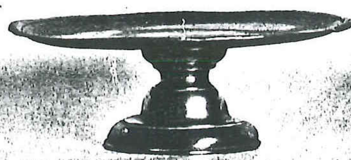
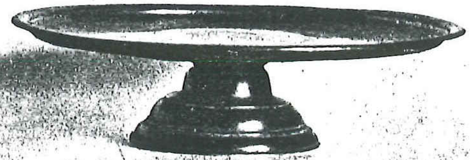
To the sensitive mind, there is, no doubt, a disturbing effect in the ecclesiastical use of private or personal belongings; but if the transfer be understood in the light of the intention of the donor, much of the repugnance, if I may use so strong a term, will, of necessity, disappear. The mental attitude of him who gives, and the understanding of Him who receives, must of necessity supernaturalise both giver and gift. This is equally true of Catholic and Protestant. If, therefore, the clause in the Prayer Book of Edward VI. is responsible for a certain confusion of domestic and ecclesiastical vessels, it must also be admitted that it enabled the beneficent parishioner to take from his private plate pieces of special beauty or interest to celebrate perhaps a beloved date, an event of importance, to pay an indebtedness, possibly of gratitude, calling for eager consummation. Repentance, also, has opened the hand of generosity, and chalices may still be pouring atonement for transgressions unrecorded but in the book of life. ANTONIO DE NAVARRO.

HOME-BRED WOODCOCK IN THE HIGHLANDS.

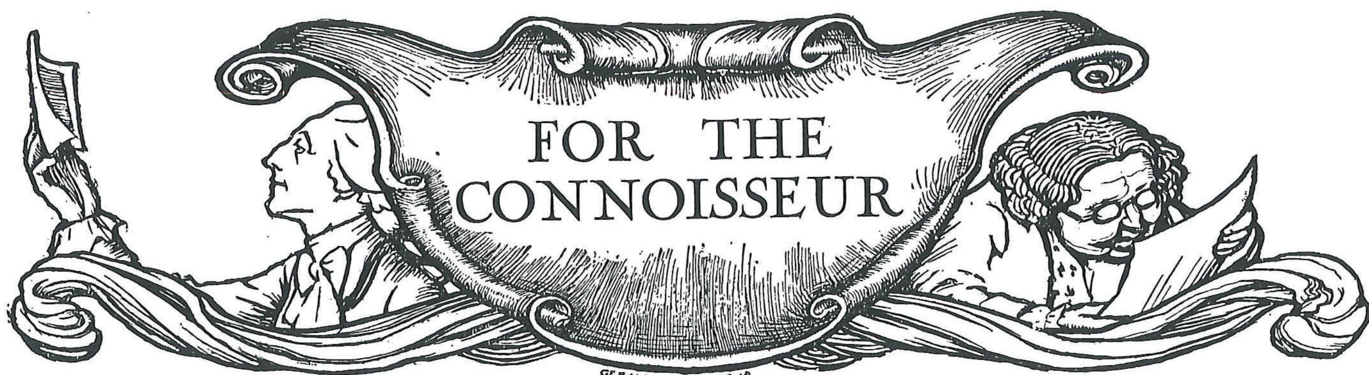
IN Lower Badenoch and Strathspey large numbers of these birds are bred annually. As elsewhere, the home-bred birds are decidedly on the increase, while the number of "flighters," which reach us in autumn are decreasing. The explanation of this is probably that on the homeward migration in March the birds find a greater extent of suitable nesting-ground than in former days, owing to the growth of young woods and coverts. The homeward migration is dependent upon weather conditions, and the first spell of mild weather in the month of March seems to set them on the move. On the other hand, so long as the Highlands are covered with snow, the birds remain in their winter quarters on the West Coast and in Ireland. Early in March, in the spring of 1908, a level fall of about 20in. of snow choked up practically all the feeding-grounds of cock in Badenoch, and the writer completely failed to find any evidence of their presence. Had they been in the district he could hardly have avoided noticing them in the few springs which remained open. Yet in spite of this fact there were more woodcock bred in the district than in any other year within my memory. Year after year the same thing happens, and the cock are temporarily cleared out by some severe storm during the winter or early spring. This shows that it is on the homeward migration we must rely for our supply of home-bred birds.

We must now consider what takes place when the breeding season comes to an end, and must remember that two broods are reared in the season. Thus the early hatched broods will undoubtedly be able to migrate, should they wish to do so, at least a month before the late broods can travel far. With regard to the latter, they are generally shot in September and October, probably when the woods are shot through for rabbits and black-game. They will still be in the neighbourhood of the home where they were reared. The early broods, however, have a curious knack of disappearing a few days before the woods are shot. Up to a certain date—generally about the end of July—they may be seen flighting on well-defined routes, uttering the two notes characteristic of this period—the croak generally followed by a squeak. In my opinion, this energetic flighting, in which the whole broods may be seen taking part, is a preliminary to departure, the powers of the young being tested with a view to prolonged flight. No other theory seems to account for it, courting being out of the question at this season. Night after night we may watch them by the light of a summer moon, till at length there comes an evening when the "roads" are deserted and the home-bred cock have gone.

Two proprietors—one in Inverness-shire, the other in Perthshire—decided to shoot their home-bred cock early in August, as in preceding years they had lost them altogether by leaving them till September. The former took a line of guns and beaters through a pine wood with deep bracken and birch, where a large number were known to have bred. The ground was beaten closely with spaniels, and only one woodcock was seen. A few days later this gentleman went to shoot with his friend in Perthshire in woods where forty or fifty cock could be seen any evening in July. They found only a few late broods, cheepers and their parents, which were spared. At this time the writer made the discovery that the home-bred birds had returned to the wood in Inverness-shire or that another flight had appeared. He then secured about forty within a few days. In all probability the fact is that during August small flights of home-bred cock are moving about the Highlands, but we are generally too busy with grouse and deer to notice them. The woods are seldom beaten till later, probably at the worst time of all as regards woodcock,

BREAD-HOLDERS OR SALVER PATENS: EARLY XVIII. CENTURY.



THE SALT

SALT! A breeze, a brine in the term; on lip and tongue a savour of the sea. Salt, a condiment, a remedy, a preservative; a symbol, an adjective, a sacrament—the earliest trade routes astir with its world-wide distribution.

From prehistoric days man has known the process of extracting salt from sea water; probably learned the secret of evaporation from the saline deposits that rim the seaboards of the world. It must not be supposed, however, that this phenomenon—nature ministering to man's delectation unasked—is confined to coastal regions alone. In Cyprus, in the environs of Memphis, Phrygia, Cappadocia, in Bactria especially—all distant from the sea—lakes abound, their contents charged with brine. Perhaps the most bountiful of inland seas is the lake of Tarentum, whose waters in summer are transformed into salt. A metamorphosis. The soul of the sea captive in a crystal shroud.

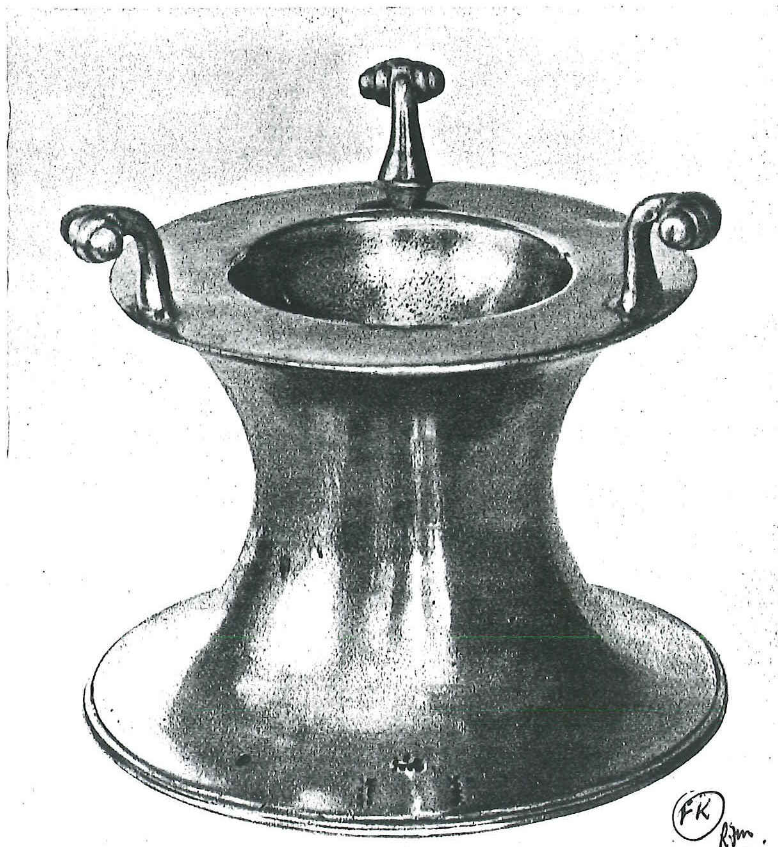
Whether the root-meaning of the term be condiment or preservative, it is from the parentage of both that sprang derivatives which outnumber the progeny of any other substantive in the language—derivatives that correspond in number to the attributes of perhaps the most richly endowed mineral in nature.

The use of salt as a condiment was not universal, but depended upon diet. Those who fed on milk and flesh, and consumed the latter raw or roasted in order not to lose its salts, needed no addition of sodium chloride. Those, however, who indulged a cereal, vegetable or boiled beef diet, required salt as a necessary adjunct. It will be seen, therefore, that the increased use of salt as a condiment coincided with an advance from nomadic to agricultural life. The important part played by the mineral in the history of commerce and religion had intimately to do with this advance: commerce busying its trade routes with the transportation of the mineral from seaboard to inland markets; religion sanctifying a beneficent provision of nature; symbol and metaphor making of salt the emblem of purity, fidelity, hospitality, incorruption. The trade routes (corseted in steel to-day) are still plying with saline cargoes; but the ways of the world are destitute now of early sentiment: except in remote lands saved from civilisation—gone the old traditions. Salt and incense, the chief economic and religious necessaries of the ancient world. Incense the fragrance of vanished years, salt the relish of animals and men. "A substance dear to the gods" according to Plato; "divine" in the words of Homer; "a sacred pledge" to Byron; "something holy in salt" to Hawthorne. Emblem of hospitality from earliest ages—where now "the covenant of salt," the covenant meal which, presided over by the little crystal "round," confirmed agreement, seasoned obligation, "partook of a sacred character and created a bond of piety and guest friendship"? Where on our sumptuous boards to-day, what post for the Master-Salt? Host at the upper table for undisputed centuries, servant now of the palate! In the immutable Church alone an enduring harbour for the legendary mineral: salt still a sacramental necessity, an essential for consecration.

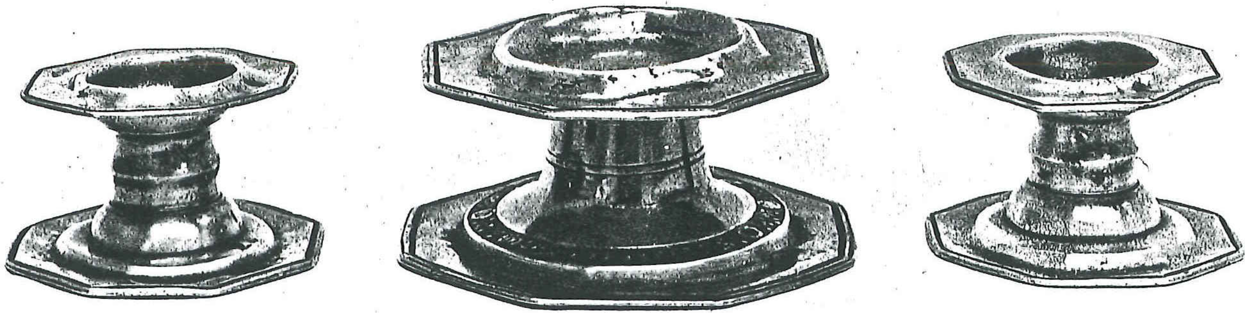
The ill-omen attached to the spilling of salt is a supreme tribute to its importance; perhaps one of the oldest superstitions in the world, and one of the most reasonable. Its origin dates probably from prehistoric times when the use of salt as a necessary of life became relatively universal; its rationale, to the exceptional virtues of the mineral, and to its sacred character. To spill salt was to waste what was costly and difficult to obtain; to waste what was sacred in character was to provoke divine retribution. The superstition may, therefore, be as universal as the use of the mineral itself, tradition, proverb and graphic art testifying to the fact. Perhaps the most notable and moving representation of the spilling of salt is to be found in da Vinci's "Last Supper," a standing salt overturned by Judas: "Amen I say . . . one of you is about to betray me!"

Consonant with the character and dignity of the mineral the salt-cellar was the most important article of domestic plate in the Middle Ages; the vessel ultimately honoured with the name of the mineral itself, "the salt"—no other term of sufficient savour to define adequately the vessel which held the sacred commodity. The honour was not one of name only, but a distinction that enlisted the highest endeavours of art to perpetuate its unique importance. To the tradition each period made its obeisance, contributed its proudest expression of plastic beauty.

Of all domestic plate the standing-salt had the most sensitive personality. However resplendent with precious vessels the cupboards of the great hall, "the salt" always occupied the post of honour in the centre of the upper table; host, condiment, social arbiter, exercising there its mysterious sovereignty. The late Sir Charles Jackson contended that "a great deal of twaddle" had been written "to the effect that the salt served to divide the lord and his noble guests from the inferior guests and menials"; but his dictum has been traversed by adverse pronouncements too numerous and documented to admit of argument. Doubtless, necessity preceded ceremonial, savour before symbol; but the advent of



PEWTER SALT WITH NAPKIN BRACKETS. *CIRCA* 1660.



SALTS OF ABOUT 1640.

"the salt" on the upper table established a pale of priority in palace, castle and manor house that prevailed undisputed for centuries. "To sit above (or below) the salt" is a phrase of venerable significance, hall-marked by proverbial adoption.

The standing-salt had generally a cover to protect its contents; the smaller cellars, in most cases, had none. This anomaly was corrected about the end of the Commonwealth period by a salt (in turn circular, square, octagonal) which had upon its upper rim three, sometimes four, super-imposed brackets: little arms stretching up for a napkin to hide the sacred mineral, to protect it from the indignities of damp, dust, inquisitive insects.

In attendance upon the standing-salt (to right and left of the lord or master on the upper table) ranged a number of smaller cellars at convenient reach of the distinguished guests. Although of diminished height and importance—couchant before their standing chief—these small receptacles were honoured by special favour of the silversmith. Their contents doubtless retained something of a symbolic nature, the near presence of the standing-salt still radiating parental authority. But when the mineral left its post of honour in the centre of the upper table, it was a departure for practical service that had no relation with symbolic tradition. It is probable that these attendant cellars were of kindred likeness, a gathering of family pieces. It is the case, however, that, after spoons, salts were the most favoured of gift offerings, and their appearance upon the upper table might well have been the cause of discordant congregation. I do not know of any standing-salt (in the strict sense of the term) in base metal, but in the smaller habitations salt-cellars in pewter were to be found in numbers, a reproduction of the silver model raising the base ware to distinguished altitude. The most important of these (with superimposed brackets) might well have assumed the duties of social arbiter on manor-house board, where seating according to priority was also faithfully observed. Those at the lower tables maintained jealously their own order of precedence, but without the intervention of the cellar. A large amount of salt was already in the provisions of the lower classes. During five or six months of the year salted meat and fish were their chief food. Root crops being unknown in mediæval times, it was the habit to kill the winter's meat in autumn, and then "salt it down."

Receptacles for the holding of salt must, obviously, have existed from earliest times; but their character is lost in the obscurity of unrecorded centuries. The earliest known English example in silver is a standing-salt at New College, Oxford, presented by Warden Walter Hill (1475-92). Of hour-glass shape, and swathed in lavish ornamentation, it represents the supreme regard for the mineral prevalent at that remote time. An early mention of a salt-cellar in base metal occurs in the records of the Pewterers' Company in the year 1351; but I know of no pewter example earlier than the seventeenth century—an interval of nearly three hundred years! The complete disappearance of all that obviously existed during those blank centuries is due not only to the softness of the base metal and to the usury of time, but to a subconscious disregard for what is not of precious or permanent importance. Silver, on the contrary, had its constitution of precious metal to ensure longevity, rigidity to guarantee duration, preciousness to induce protective care. Of later centuries—seventeenth and eighteenth—pewter specimens exist in numbers, occasionally emerging from their hiding when least expected: trencher-salts, round, octagonal, triangular, hexagonal; master-salts of singular distinction; a variety of design exceeding that of any other pewter utensil, among them specimens which seem to have had no precedent in silver. Fortunately, few examples survive to represent the period of tripod anomalies: decapitated heads crowning amputated extremities, footed freaks waiting but for a signal to hop off the table in search of their missing remains. These standardised abortions seem to have been spared the humble ware, to have been reserved for precious metal distinction.

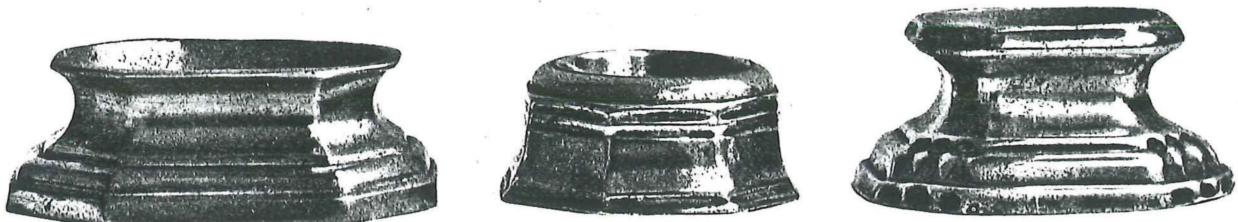
Despite its universality, the cost of salt in early days was very high. Obtained with difficulty, it was used with corresponding thrift. As a condiment, a small amount satisfied the mediæval palate; an equally small measure sufficed to represent its symbolic meaning and use. Those were pinch-of-salt days, the point of the knife doing extempore duty for the salt spoon, which was not to make its appearance until the eighteenth century. As the cost of production and transportation diminished the size and number of cellars increased in conformity with a growing demand for the mineral. But with this increase in size was lost an early daintiness of feature—the measure of pioneer frugality. That departure was the first manifestation of an evolution which was eventually to despoil the standing-salt of its official character. Two factors contributed to the ultimate decay of a tradition that for centuries had withstood the convulsions of time: the growing abundance of a commodity that had once been a distinguished rarity, and a corresponding consumption of what in early days was partaken of in scrupulous moderation. Both abased the dignity which rarity and discretion had won for the precious mineral. A disregard of its emblematic importance was the inevitable consequence.

The passing of the standing-salt sounded the knell of symbolic supremacy. Arbitrary sentinel, whose sovereign silence had ruled for centuries the upper table, voiceless now, its authority at an end. On important occasions still upon the upper board—a work of art, no longer host.

How distant the days of slow-moving convoys, of legendary trade routes. How remote the probity of early hospitality, the romance of early symbolism.

Where now the standing-salt? The soul of the sea in a silver reliquary.

A. DE NAVARRO.



TRENCHER SALTS, RESPECTIVELY OF 1720, 1650 AND 1750.

E. W. Taylor. . . . WHICHEVER WAY IT MAY BLOW
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