

the second piece in the top row is a fine early box, probably circa 1750, with a cast lid bearing a hunting scene design with a retriever in the foreground and a sportsman with gun in the bushes behind.

This particular design has been found on other boxes of rectangular shape. The third is a later box with an inset panel of brass, or pinchbeck, in basketwork design. The oval box in the second row is another early type, of heavy construction; this bears the original owner's name, "C. Parker," engraved on the lid.

Of the articles in the second row of the illustration the standing piece is a pewter pipe-stopper, modelled into the likeness of a seated dog. These small implements have been used for pressing down the tobacco, or half-smoked dottle, in pipes for over 300 years, and the practice has continued, but in the form of a more utilitarian article, to the present day.

These pipe-stoppers are rarely found in pewter. This particular specimen is not unduly old, being perhaps circa 1820; it is, however, the only pewter stopper in a collection of approximately a hundred of these objects in the author's possession. It is not claimed that the item opposite the tobacco stopper has any connection whatsoever with the smoker or snuff-taker—this is a pewter dog whistle formed into the likeness of a hound's head and is another rarity in pewter, ivory or bone examples being more frequently seen.

The third and fourth rows of the second illustration show a selection of Scottish pewter mounted snuff mulls. The term "mull" is essentially a Scottish word and is not used elsewhere to denote the same thing. Some of those illustrated bear the maker's name, "Durie" (*op. cit.* No. 1477), whereas others, although they would appear to be by the same maker, are unmarked.

Unfortunately, in the case of Durie (and for that matter also in that of R. Webster, mentioned previously), nothing is known of the time and place of his manufactory, although the late Mr. Ingleby Wood, in his *Scottish Pewterware and Pewterers*, claimed that Durie was a Scot and, judging from the types upon which his name appears, there seems no reason to doubt the claim.

It is the exception rather than the rule for pewter snuffboxes to be marked at all. This is due probably to the fact that the majority of boxes are of comparatively late manufacture and were made since the time when the Pewterers Company held a tight rein on pewterers and insisted on the marking of all pieces with the maker's touch.

The marking of pewterware was obviously to ensure good quality work being produced, but, so far as snuffboxes are concerned, it was certainly not any feeling of ashamedness in their productions which accounted for pewterers not marking their pieces, for it is a remarkable fact that the metal used and the workmanship involved in the making of the majority of these boxes is of the highest quality. This is particularly true of the Scottish mulls in the second illustration, which of necessity were made by hand, due to the diversity of size and shape of the hoof or horn to be mounted.

The collection of snuffboxes under review, which in number totals about 60 items, was formed piece by piece over a number of years.

The only pieces included *en bloc* are some of the horn mulls, which were purchased recently from a well-known collection; it is believed, however, that many of the latter and also some of the former boxes were originally contained in the collection of the late Mr. Walter Churcher, whose name is legion among



Fig. II

pewter collectors, and came upon the market when his collection was broken up.

It is a difficult task to-day to find items worthy of acquisition and in fact a magazine review of a collection of pewter snuffboxes in 1937 read: "The collection of these delicate little pieces of the pewterer's craft was gathered together from the four corners of Britain—a feat almost impossible of achievement to-day."

Although written in 1937, this review related to a collection formed many years earlier and it was the remark referred to which was mainly responsible for the formation of the author's collection which, at that time, consisted of only about half-a-dozen specimens of pewter boxes.

#### PISTOLS

W. W. Gower, Manhattan Beach, Cal. In answer to your inquiry as to the origin of the mask butt on pistols, I would say, in the first place, that the term "grotesque" better expresses the appearance of these masks than the term "fiendish" which you use. The grotesque mask was a popular form of ornament in practically all branches of applied art, not only in post-Renaissance art but also during the Middle Ages. I consider therefore that the grotesque character of these masks was not due to any particular wish to develop a form of ornament which would stress the offensive nature of the weapon, but was a normal utilisation of an element from the common stock of ornament of the period. While the application of the mask butt was originally dictated by its convenient shape, its survival into the XIXth century was a consequence of the force of tradition. The steel pommel was presumably fitted in order to render the pistol effective as a club. In fact, however, the finer pistols were usually cut so thin in the small, and made of such short-grained wood, that they would not have stood up to such use without damage.

You do not quote my opinion quite correctly. During the XVIIth century the centres of firearms production were in Germany, France and Italy. There were few really skilled gunsmiths outside these countries. During the second half of the XVIIth century, emigrants from these countries came to the smaller European countries and set up workshops, so that by the end of the century we find national schools of gunmaking generally throughout Europe. An important factor in explaining the similarity between XVIIth century pistols produced in different countries is the influence of the French Pattern Books, which were used throughout Western Europe.

Your Italian pistol sounds very interesting, but without a photograph it is not possible to express an opinion.