

Why I Collect Empty Bottles



Hard Cider, 1840

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR
Rare Washington Flasks

Ship Franklin, 1825

OF THE scores of people to whom I have shown my collection of Early American flasks and bottles, only three failed to make the same remark. Of these, one was a deaf mute, another had an ulcerated tooth, and the third was a psychiatrist who did not look at my bottles but at my eyes. In the end I disappointed him; but all the others with the same sickening post-Volstead smirk, asked:

"But why do you collect empty bottles?"

I am, I may say, a professional listener, making my living by writing down answers to questions. For years I merely smiled at the silly query, proud to remain guiltless of justifiable homicide. But the other day a distinguished New York lawyer, instead of implying, asserted:

"I don't see any sense in collecting empty bottles!"

"And I don't see any sense in remarks born of ignorance," I retorted. "You cannot possibly understand collecting because you do not know what a collector is."

He stared at me. I went on:

"My definition of a collector is, a man lucky enough to be born with a mind that grasps the uncommon interest possessed by common objects, and therefore perceives what is unusual in the usual. The true collector is bent on finishing what he has started—an admirable trait! He persists even when he knows he can't possibly live to complete his task. The French, more accurately, call the true collector a 'collectionist.' You must admit that 'collectioning' tells a great deal more than 'collecting.'"

What is Worthless?

BUT all that my lawyer friend admitted was: "But why should anyone collect perfectly useless things that have no artistic merit? Empty bottles were intended to be thrown away."

"My friend," I said, with that patient urbanity at which people who contradict me never cease to marvel, "as Feuillet de Conches once remarked: 'Every collection has its useful side; every form of collecting its sane phases.' We who collect know that the day is bound to dawn when something or other about a collection of seemingly worthless objects will acquire an unexpected interest. A figurine, a tile, a scarab, a dagger, a valentine, a fragment of anything, may serve to throw light on antiquity, forge a chronological link between two historical periods, trace the advance or the decline of an art—which is to say, of human progress. Since it is in collections that the investigator finds the needed proofs, they always justify the collector."

"But I am still not ready to admit that collecting empty bottles is as sensible as collecting, for example —"

"Tut! Tut! Don't take it upon yourself to decide for others what is collectible. Instead, ask what is not. Of course, you must deal with closed series and not with what is being manufactured by machinery today or what is

limited to one specimen. I mean, you might collect waterfalls, but you could not collect Niagaras. And when you collect, for instance, the works of living authors, they must be only first editions—which become a closed series the moment the second edition is on the press. Moreover, as the late John B. Kerfoot pointed out, there must be competition; and competition is possible only under compression.

"Things made to look at or to wear, to admire or to dread, to live with or to kill with, are alike collectible. A Frenchman collected wigs and wrote a very interesting book about them. You'd be surprised to know how much there is to be said about wigs. One of the most amusing and erudite brochures I have ever read describes a collection of neckties, and proves how not only the manners but the morals of an age may be deduced from its cravats. One man collected 2700 portraits of Napoleon and not one duplicate among them. The Englishman Tyrwhitt, as you doubtless remember, collected pieces of rope. . . . Oh, no; that was not foolish. You see, the pieces were parts of hangmen's nooses. His earliest specimen was one that

PHOTOS BY THE BULKLEY STUDIO, MANCHESTER CENTER, VERMONT
Rare Eagle Flasks. End Ones Show the Reverse

had been used to stretch the aristocratic neck of Sir Thomas Blount, who departed this life by way of the gallows under Henry IV of England, in the fifteenth century. Tyrwhitt accumulated a lot of hemp that way; but he really collected gruesome stories. See? When the late Laurence Hutton collected death masks, he really collected the tales of their wanderings—from the death beds to his walls. An old neighbor of mine in Dorset, Vermont, collected wishbones. I went to a lot of trouble to secure for him the furcula of an ostrich to exhibit beside that of a baby humming bird. I did it gladly, because every collector is interested in collecting, irrespective of what is collected. You will notice that all collectors possess the same admirable traits—imagination, observation, persistence and optimism.

"That is why any collector can listen for hours to another collector telling the story of how he found his rare items. Each man sees himself in the act of being lucky. When a man says 'pewter plate' or 'ship model,' I instantly translate the words into 'flask' and get the thrill, because his quest automatically becomes my quest, and his success is vicariously mine. Where the mere faddist accumulates, the true collector discriminates. That makes all collectors brothers. We are a large and loving family."

Bits of American History

"YES, but why do you collect empty bottles?" he persisted. He was a lawyer.

"There are bottles and bottles. You don't collect anthracite pellets, which are pure carbon, but you treasure diamonds, also pure carbon. I collect Early American historic flasks, not because they are old bottles but because they have interesting stories to tell about our country, that, but for them, I never would have heard.

"For example?"

"Well, here is a flask that says: The American System. What does that mean?"

"What American System?"

"I knew it! That was the phrase used by Henry Clay in 1824 when he made his great speech advocating a high tariff in order to develop American manufactures. That phrase swept through a slogan-loving country and did more for protection than all the economic arguments. Incidentally, I deduce that this rare flask was made between 1824 and 1826, because by 1827 the American System had begun to be so unpopular in many of our flask-toting states that such a flask would not sell well. Here is another with Washington the Father of his Country on one side, and on the reverse a bust of Zachary Taylor and A Little More Grape, Capt. Bragg. . . . Well, what General Taylor actually said at the Battle of Buena Vista was: 'Give 'em hell, Captain Bragg.' What wouldn't I give for a Give 'Em Hell, Captain Bragg, flask! Here is

one with a ship, Franklin, and the slogan Free Trade and Sailors' Rights. . . . No! It was not made during the War of 1812 but years after. The Franklin was our first ship of the line. It was launched in Philadelphia in 1815 and was carried on the lists of the United States Navy exactly one hundred years, being sold for junk in 1915. Here is another rare flask. It says Hard Cider and it shows a barrel and a log cabin. Perhaps you know it was made for the campaign of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." But do you know how the emblems came to be adopted? If you collected flasks you would know—and be a better American for knowing it. This Ballet Dancer is Fanny Elssler, who dazzled our great-grandfathers in 1840. I owe to this bottle my acquaintance with George C. D. Odell's fascinating

Annals of the New York Stage. Here is a flask, just about 100 years old, that says: 'Success to the Railroad.' But instead of a locomotive it shows a horse pulling a loaded wagon over rails. Why the equine? Well, the reason for it makes a corking yarn. This other has a locomotive and is eight or ten years younger. And here is the inexplicable flask, one of the very rarest. It shows the bust of John Quincy Adams, who of all our thirty Presidents, was the least qualified to decorate a whisky flask. I shall not tell you why this flask has no reason to be nor why I am certain it was blown in 1824. To reach that conclusion I had not only to read much history but to interpret it. It took two years of flask-collecting to convince me that I had reason to be glad of living in Herbert Hoover's time instead of under any one of the first six Presidents. No collector of historical flasks will yap about our ignorant masses or our corrupt voters, past or present, for he will know what sort of men originally drank out of these same bottles. It took flasks to make me more bullish than ever on America and the American people, by making me study American history as an adult. And there are still other reasons, all equally good, why I collect what you called empty bottles."

A collector, being reasonable, hopes that possibly 1 per cent of the noncollectors to whom he shows his treasures may admire them intelligently—with some help, of course. But the average layman stares at the loaded shelves and usually remarks: "I never knew there were so many bottles in the world!"

Even after your illuminating lecture your rare flasks remain merely old bottles to him—junkman's loot. Under such circumstances all that the collector can do is to crush the insect. The easiest way is with a gold weight. It works where erudition fails. I usually tell him with a smile:

"And you never knew, either, that empty whisky flasks found in old barns and cellars may easily sell for \$100 apiece or over. Did you?"

"No, I didn't!" Having wiped the superior smile from his face, I proceed:

"That one cost me \$180. I refused \$250 for it."

"For that old flask?" The incredulity is about your sanity. The respect is for the flask's gray hairs reckoned in dollars.

"It is the only one in existence. The man who sold it to me found it in an attic. He paid ten cents for it."

"And you refused \$250!" After "\$250" all he has heard is "ten cents."

"Yes; and that one over there, and this one, and this, are each worth more than a hundred." His eyes glitter much as do the eyes of brokers' customers in Wall Street during a bull market. If the sparks were letters the words would be: Easy Money!

"Where do you find these bottles?" he asks. "Of course"—and I try to use the tones that some novelists would call honeyed—"not all the twelve hundred listed flasks are worth \$100. You cannot tell the price by the age, beauty, shape, color, size or relative rarity. Other factors enter. Heaps of flasks that you may pick up for fifty cents or a dollar I would gladly buy at forty or fifty dollars; others I would not take as a gift."

The answer to this rather alluring picture of the possible profits is invariably the same. They all ask: "Does it take a very long time to learn the fine points?"

"Years!" I tell them. That makes them subtle and indirect. They look as if their only interest were in my personal affairs, and ask me:

"Just how did you happen to get in this bottle game?"

In a measure the answer is implied by the question. It really usually just happens. All the collectors I know admit it.

A Free Show

I MYSELF began buying antiques years ago because I loved them. We never had other than old furniture in the house. As for collecting, I specialized on paintings, coverlets and gold dollars. Pewter, blue china and such things I bought chiefly for their decorative value on my old cupboards. After twenty years of buying antiques I had no room in my house for any more chairs, bureaus, sofas, desks or tables; no more wall space for paintings or shelf room for china. The love of antiques persisted, but far stronger was the love of peace at home.

About three years ago I happened to be riding through a Vermont village a few miles from my home when I saw on the porch of a quaint old brick house two exceedingly fine Windsor chairs.

"Tourist bait!" I thought to myself. But the guardian angel of collectors whispered: "Make sure!"

I stopped, made adequate sounds with the antique doorknocker, and waited.

A dear old lady, kindly-eyed, eager-eared, stepped out of the eighteenth century and spoke to me in a 1776 voice: "Won't you come in, sir?"

"Thank you," I said, and did as the voice wished.

I might have known it. The house was full of choice pieces. Indeed, it was over-chaired enough to allow unworthy suspicions to return. When I asked if they were family pieces, she said yes.

"And wouldn't you sell any of them?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" she answered—as usual.

"At no price, however high?"

She said "Oh, no!" with a gentle finality that made her the one New Englander in a billion. But I wasn't really



Lafayette Flasks, Made in 1825, in Wheeling, Virginia; Coventry, Connecticut, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



The Rare American System Flask, Considered by Collectors the Most Interesting of All the Historic Flasks. Maker Unknown. Date 1824-1826



The Original Log Cabin Bottle, Used During the Harrison Campaign. It Has "Tippecanoe" on Both Sides and Antedates the "Tippecanoe-North Bend" Variant. Note Cider Barrel Under Window. This is the Rarest Flask in the Author's Collection. Found in Central New York

convinced until I gradually realized what her reason was: The antique-seeking tourists who stopped at her house because of the Windsor chairs were to her the members of the only theatrical troupe that ever played in her town. Listening to them was like going to a show. They brought her messages from that strange outside world that she could not receive through the newspapers. They reconciled her to her drab life. Rich women who came in glittering motor cars made her acutely conscious that she owned something they coveted, and that made her richer than they! The tourists Rockefellerized her. To sell was for them to stop calling and for her to cease being envied—that is, to become nothing. No sense in that! The Windsor chairs on the porch were tourist bait, as I suspected, but the intent was not sordid.

I talked to her and explained as best I could how good her best pieces were, and why. She was so grateful to me for raising the inventory value of the estate that I wondered about the precise limits of her gratitude.

I happened to see on a table in a corner of the dining room a curious sort of decanter in olive-green glass that interested me. I had never collected American glass of any kind. It always seemed too fragile, and, moreover, lacking visible evidences of age. In my ignorance I could not associate a piece of old glass with people, places or periods, as I could furniture or china. Still, this bottle had an appeal that surprised me.

"How about that bottle?" I asked her. "Won't you sell it?"

"That"—she smiled—"was my grandmother's camphor bottle. I used to get it filled at the drug store when I was a little girl. I can hear my grandmother telling me to be sure and not drop it just as plainly as if she were in the room. You see, I heard her say that so many times!"

"Well, I am glad you didn't drop it; but there is no telling when

somebody might knock it off the table," I said cheerfully. "If you will sell it to me, I'll take good care of it."

"It has been here since I can remember," she smiled gently. "Ever so many people have wanted to buy it, but I would never let it go. Mrs. Blank offered me four dollars for it. Do you happen to know her?"

"Yes," I said. "I'll give you ten dollars for it." I had never before bought a bottle, but if Mrs. Blank offered four dollars, it was a bargain at ten.

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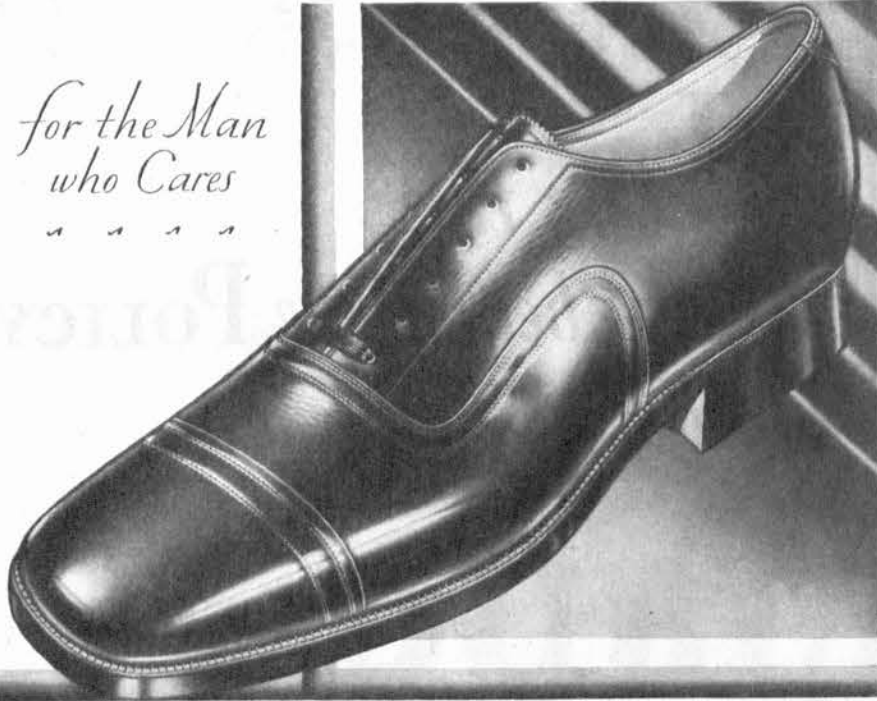


An Extremely Rare Jackson Flask Made by Laird, Pittsburgh, Probably in 1824



Zachary Taylor, 1847 to 1848. Success to the Railroad, 1828 to 1830. Top Row—Major Ringgold, 1847. Fanny Elsler, 1840 to 1841

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WHY I COLLECT EMPTY BOTTLES

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"It was grandmother's camphor bottle," she repeated. "We've always used it for that. It wouldn't seem natural to keep camphor in any other bottle."

"You would never know the difference," I assured her, and I handed her a ten-dollar bill.

She shook her head, sighed—and kept the ten dollars. But there was in her eyes what made me say to her as gently as I could: "I shall value it very highly, and I shall never sell it. I may give it to the library in my town for the historical room; and if I do, there will be a card to tell where it came from and to whom it belonged."

I went on my way and stopped for luncheon at an inn ten miles north of the old lady's house. I carried the bottle in my hand as I walked in. A tall gray-haired man in a sporty gray suit jumped up from a porch rocker and dashed madly toward me.

"Where in blazes did you find that Stoddard bottle?" he yelled, reaching for it. I looked up and saw it was my friend C. R. Clifford, whose Snupper articles in THE SATURDAY EVENING POST all antiquers remember with pleasure.

"I have been trying to get one for years," he told me in the accusing tone of voice that a real collector always uses toward a lucky moron.

"Why don't you get one, then?" I said. "I won't pay New York dealers' prices. Do you want to sell that one?"

"What will you give me for it?" "Twenty dollars," he said. Being incurably honest and, besides, seeing no sign of acceptance on my part, Clifford went on: "Of course, dealers ask more. But I won't pay it. Do you collect bottles?"

I didn't know at that time that anyone collected bottles, but twenty years of Vermont spoke through me. "Do you?" I asked him.

"Yes, indeed," he answered proudly. "Have you Van Rensselaer's book?"

"Have you?" I countered. But instead of answering yes or no like a gentleman, he asked: "Will you sell that bottle?"

"No!" I said.

Beginner's Luck

I would not accuse a friend of a crime, but it was only when he found out that he could not coax that Stoddard bottle from me that Clifford went to his automobile and came back with the Van Rensselaer's Check Lists. He not only showed it to me but more, he lent it to me; and I would have you know that he had checked off his own specimens on it and marked the prices he had paid for them, and what rare ones had brought at auction sales. He let me keep it a week, and my gratitude was boundless. Of course, before the week was over I realized that I must collect bottles. After that I looked for them in antique shops as well as in houses, barns and cellars. I did not know enough to specialize and confine

myself to half pints or Washingtons or Pitkins. I was sure they would not fill up the house as furniture did.

I was mistaken! But if I had not just happened to run across a Stoddard bottle, C. R. Clifford and Stephen Van Rensselaer's bottle book all on the same day I would know less of American history and I would have missed thrills galore.

The first flask I ever bought from a private person I found in Pawlet, Vermont. I knew nothing about market values and neither did the owner. In my masculine innocence I offered what I thought was fair. In her feminine wisdom she said she might possibly be induced to accept double my price. I bought it. On one side it had a bust of a man in uniform and the inscription Major Ringgold. On the reverse, another bust and Rough and Ready.

I knew that Rough and Ready was Zachary Taylor, and I assumed Ringgold must be a contemporary. But when I looked in a history of the Mexican War all I learned was that "the lamented Major Ringgold" lost his life in the Battle of Palo Alto. It did not tell what else he did to deserve the immortality of flaskdom.

Who Was Major Ringgold?

My favorite club is to New York what the Athenæum is to London. Its members represent the last word in culture, knowledge and antiquity. Among them are found great writers and near-great editors, prosperous painters as well as geniuses, and generally the élite of the learned professions. It is the highest-brow club in America. It was there I asked a distinguished lawyer:

"What do you know about Major Ringgold?"

"Is he up for membership?" side-stepped the distinguished one.

"I might have known it!" I said, and turned to a fine-looking architect, whose works you cannot help seeing from the deck of your liner as it comes up the bay. Of him I asked: "Old man, do you know anything about Major Ringgold?"

He put on the straining look of a man trying to remember. "The name," he said encouragingly, "is familiar."

"Of course!" And I moved away. At the door I bumped into an international banker of parts. I looked him straight in the eye and asked: "Did you ever hear of Major Ringgold?"

"Ah—er—um ——" He belongs to a profession that never says "No," except when the collateral is inadequate.

"You never did!" I confessed for him.

"No!"—peevishly. "I never did!" And he passed on, frowning, into the lounging room where the other famous men were.

I asked nine more men, all of them college graduates and, to be just, well-informed

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FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR
Masonic Flasks, 1820 to 1830, From New Hampshire, New York and Connecticut

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men. Not a word from any of them about Major Ringgold!

I was not especially thrilled to discover that so many of my fellow citizens knew as little about American history as I did. Just then a fine-looking man, white-haired and white-bearded, walked in. I rose to greet him, for he was a lecturer on American history at a famous university, and I thought my troubles were over at last. We shook hands and I said:

"I was just asking Blank about Major Ringgold. What did he do to make him famous?"

"He was one of the heroes of the Mexican War!"

"And of what did his heroism consist?" I asked.

"Er—as I remember, he was killed at either Palo Alto or Buena Vista. What do you wish to know about him?"

"I found his bust on an old whisky flask and wondered why it was there. A man has to do something big to achieve such distinction," I said.

"Oh, doubtless a contemporary tribute. It's an old bottle, I take it." Think of it!

"Thank you, professor," I said politely. Then and there I made up my mind to find out who Ringgold was if it took all summer. As the result of many hours of research, this is what I learned:

Samuel Ringgold was born in Washington County, Maryland, in 1800. He died at Point Isabel, Texas, May 11, 1846. His mother was the daughter of Gen. John Cadwalader, of Philadelphia. Ringgold was graduated from West Point with high honors in 1818 and entered the artillery as lieutenant. He was a fine-looking chap, witty, keen-minded, magnetic, and Gen. Winfield Scott selected him as one of his aides. Ringgold served for several years in that capacity. In 1836 he was actively engaged in the Florida campaign and for his valuable services he was brevetted major.

He knew his trade thoroughly. He invented a saddle for the use of our cavalry that was later known as the McClellan army saddle. He introduced flying artillery into this country and did much to improve that arm of the service as well as its equipment. He invented a rebounding hammer, made of brass, for exploding the fulminating primers in a way to prevent the blowing away of the hammer. An ingenious, competent and popular officer.

On the Job to the End

At the opening of the Mexican War he commanded the corps of flying artillery which he had organized—the first body of that kind in this country. Powell, in his Life of Zachary Taylor, says:

Upon reaching the field of Palo Alto about three o'clock in the afternoon of May 8, 1846, action commenced by the Mexicans opening their batteries on their right. Major Ringgold now took positions on the right and front of the eighteen-pounders and at a distance of seven hundred yards from the enemy, subsequently advanced one hundred yards on his own initiative. He opened with his battery with tremendous effect, as was shown the next day by the large number of the enemy's dead found on the field along this line.

Major Ringgold pointed the guns with his own hands with unerring precision, directing the shot not only to groups and masses but to particular men in the Mexican lines. He saw them fall in numbers and their places were re-occupied by others, who in their turn were next shot down. As he pointed his guns he would tell his men: "I am as sure of hitting my mark as if I were using a rifle."

At length a regiment of the enemy's lancers was sent to make a demonstration toward our right, apparently to gain possession of our wagon train. Lieutenant Ridgely was detached with two pieces to check the movement. This left Major Ringgold short of men or, rather, with a less number than he desired and considered actually necessary to execute his movements with celerity and to supply the places of those who fell or became disabled. This was a source of regret to him, even in his last moments, but he gallantly and nobly did his duty. Not a shade of incapacity, want of diligence or lack of bravery on the battlefield can rest on his memory or on the sunshine of his military character.

For three long hours Ringgold continued with his two remaining pieces to do great execution until he was shot through the thigh.

A cannon ball, passing from right to left, carried with it a large mass of muscle and integuments, and tore off the front of the saddle and the withers of the noble steed he rode. Ringgold fell slowly from his horse and had scarcely reached the ground when Lieutenant Slaven came to his assistance. While he supported Major Ringgold up in his arms, he called for a caisson to carry his commander to the rear.

"Never mind me, sir," said Ringgold. "You have work to do. Go ahead with your men. You are all needed at the front."

Finally he was prevailed upon to consent to their carrying him from the field. As he was leaving he turned to his lieutenant and calmly remarked: "Be sure this is an empty caisson. You will require all your ammunition!"

On the job to the end!

This was on May 8, 1846. On May eleventh the hero died at Point Isabel, Texas. His body later was taken to Baltimore and there buried "with grand civic and military honors," on December 22, 1846.

A Bottled Hero

In 1846 many Americans could remember with shame the surrender of Hull at Detroit, the disgraceful refusal of the cowardly militia to fight at Queenston, the conviction of Smyth of cowardice, the daily reports of mutiny, desertion and riot during the War of 1812. But now, in far-away Mexico, 2300 heroes under old Rough and Ready licked 6800 desperate Mexicans. Only nine Americans were killed. Unfortunately, one of them was the hero without fear and without reproach, Major Ringgold—that is, the first American officer killed in the first battle in the first foreign war waged by the United States. The circumstances of that death, the brilliancy of his maneuvers, which did so much to win the victory for the American army, his behavior when wounded, inflamed the imagination of his countrymen. Wrong the war might be, but Ringgold was 100 per cent right, for he was an American who did his duty efficiently and died gloriously. From the date of his death, I am justified in assuming that the Ringgold flasks were manufactured early in 1847 before the presidential campaign, because by 1848 the successful war was an old story and the interest of the American people was political and not military.

I do not know whether a grateful country has reared a monument to the memory of the soldier whose name was on every tongue in 1846, but I can testify that he was unknown to 99 per cent of his countrymen in 1926.

It is the privilege of collectors of historic flasks to keep green the memory of an American hero. From my shelves Major Samuel Ringgold looks down on men who ask why I collect empty bottles. He answers them for me.

There is less known about early American historical bottles and flasks than about almost anything else that scholarly men collect. Many people think that flasks are an American invention, but it is a mistake. In this country, the popularity of flasks came from our needs. I used to wonder just when our forefathers, who were chiefly of English origin and as such were ale drinkers, first took to hard-liquor drinking, so that in time we became a flask-toting nation.

My own theory is that our first settlers were too busy clearing the wilderness and keeping from starving to death to bother with ale. Making malt in small quantities for individual needs was too much bother. But even after we had towns enough for maltsters to prosper in, our country roads were wretched and it was silly for our forefathers to lug back to the farm a winter's supply of ale or of malt, when it was so much easier and cheaper to carry the same amount of alcohol in two demijohns of West Indian rum. By the time we had both better roads and malting facilities, the original ale drinkers had passed away and American-born hard-liquor drinkers had

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grown up. After the War of 1812, especially in the 20's, our glass industry perked up and manufacturing methods improved. It became easier to travel and roadhouses grew in number. Every inn sold hard liquor. An English traveler in 1820 wrote home that a man in America could get drunk twice on sixpence. Flasks for the travelers to fill and take along became a necessity. As the glass houses multiplied, competition became keener, and the containers were made more attractive in order to sell well. It was not until the 50's that paper labels with the liquor dealer's name and address came into general use.

Campaign Buttons

Among the first of the artistic flasks to be made on a commercial scale were the so-called Sunburst varieties, some of which antedate 1820. Of course, long before that we had the beautiful Stiegel and Pitkin flasks, but these were not made to be thrown away when emptied. Another early variety of historic flasks was the Masonic. I suspect that the American people first became the great joiners they have continued to be because social distractions, pastimes and amusements, theatrical and otherwise, were either commercially unprofitable in those early days of the nineteenth century, or else were frowned upon as not proper for a God-fearing people. Hence lodges in lieu of clubs. After the Masonic flasks came others with designs emblematic of America or Americanism, like the Eagles. Lafayette's visit in 1825 made him a best-seller, and the opening of the Erie Canal the same year put De Witt Clinton on a flask with the great Frenchman. Washington, of course, was first, last and all the time popular, though he was not used on flasks until long after his death. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were living when we began to manufacture historical flasks, but ex-Presidents out of active politics did not make good sellers. John Quincy Adams was the first to have a flask made in his lifetime and, of course, Jackson followed him; but I have never seen any of Van Buren, who followed Jackson. William Henry Harrison is flasked, but not his successor, Tyler. Polk is flaskless, but we have a great many Taylor flasks. After Taylor, there are no Presidents on flasks until we come to Lincoln. At least, it is believed to be Lincoln. We have Grant, naturally; but—also naturally—no Hayes, who served mineral water at White House banquets. No Garfield or Arthur, but Cleveland, yes. There is no Benjamin Harrison, but there is McKinley. And there the collector stops. But not one of these was really a presidential flask. We have never used our Chief Magistrates on whisky flasks. All the flasks that I have mentioned—Washington excepted, of course—were made during presidential campaigns. No President, at any period of our history, ever meant as much to the flask toter—that is, to the majority of our voters—as the candidates did during the two or three months before election day. The flask was in the nature of a campaign button, a party badge. To be sure, a container with a picture of the successful candidate might continue to sell during the flaskee's incumbency; but I insist that our historical flasks carry the likeness of candidates and not of Presidents. Flasks were made to sell. The very rare John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson flasks marked J. T. & Co. were, in my opinion, made by the same house, at the same time. The two men ran for President in 1824, when Adams was elected, and again in 1828, when Jackson won. But I am convinced that the flasks were made to sell in 1824, because when Adams ran for reelection in 1828, his defeat was anticipated and Old Hickory was more popular than he was four years before. For that reason I can understand Jackson flasks being made in 1828, and even later; but not the Adams. He was too unpopular with all parties. The W. H. Harrison, as well as the Hard Cider, and Eagle and Snake flasks were certainly made to sell during the 1840 campaign. Old

Tippecanoe died exactly one month after his inauguration as President. Moreover, with one exception, the 1840 flasks showed party emblems and not the candidate's likeness. If it had ever been a custom with us to flask Presidents, there would be Tyler, Polk, Van Buren and Fillmore flasks, but none such have ever been found. Taylor was very popular, if we may judge by the number of flasks of Old Rough and Ready that we have. But don't forget that by 1848 we had grown in population, glass-making skill and consumption of whisky, and more flasks were used. The fact that we have Taylor flasks with campaign slogans as well as one with Ringgold's bust confirms my belief that it was not the President but the candidate—the hero of the Mexican War—who was utilized by the bottle makers. The flask with "I have Endeavoured to do My Duty" on it is the rarest of that series, the reason being that since those were Taylor's dying words the flask was made after he passed away. Evidently a dead Whig President was not as good a seller as a live political hero in 1850, and the makers stopped before they had made many. In our own days we have had flasks of Cleveland and Stevenson, McKinley and Hobart, and Bryan and Sewall—candidates all.

These considerations compel me to believe that somewhere in this great country there is a flask of Henry Clay, clamoring to join my collection. Time and again I have been told of a Henry Clay flask owned by somebody or other, but it was not so. Once I traveled six hundred and sixty miles to buy one, only to find that the lady who had telegraphed me that she had one had made a mistake.

It does not seem possible that the popular Henry Clay should remain unflasked, while the unpopular John Quincy Adams made the grade. The Kentuckian was the idol of his partisans. Like Blaine in our time, he had the power to blind men to his faults. He was a sort of super-handshaker, overflowing with that emotional fervor without which no political leader gains blind followers. Men remained Clay's adherents when he shifted his position politically on public questions. He was more than the party to his partisans. He figured in the forefront of our political activities for more than forty years. He was a presidential candidate in 1824, in 1832 and again in 1844. Remember that he came from Kentucky, famous then, as now, for its women, its horses and its whisky. He was beloved of the masses and, being the apostle of a high protective tariff, he was extremely popular with the business interests. It is recorded that the glass makers of Pittsburgh presented him with a wonderful service. We know they made Henry Clay cup plates, as they did of Washington and Harrison and Ringgold. If these cup-plate men were flasked why was Clay left out? To believe that between 1824 and 1850 some bottle maker did not turn out a Henry Clay flask is beyond me. The hope that I may find one will make me keep on collecting to the end of my days.

The Glorious Fourth

We have early flasks of Franklin, but we must not forget that next to Washington, Franklin was the most popular, the most picturesque, the best press-agented and, indeed, the greatest American of the early days of the republic.

George Washington was succeeded as President by John Adams, a most unpopular man. Then came Jefferson, who was reelected. There is a flask which has General Washington on one side, and on the reverse a spread eagle perched on a beaded oval initialed T. W. D. On the sides are: Adams and Jefferson, July 4, A. D. 1776, and Kensington Glass Works, Phila. A few years ago, the accepted belief was that all the Kensington flasks with T. W. D. in the oval were made after 1833, when Doctor Dyott bought the Kensington works. I was sure this Adams and Jefferson flask

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(Continued from Page 238)

was made in 1826. Later Mr. George S. McKearin found a newspaper with an advertisement dated September, 1825, in which Doctor Dyott offered for sale 3000 Washington and Eagle pint flasks—the same as this, only minus the inscription—3000 Lafayette and Eagle pint flasks, and others.

In the absence of documents, flasks may be used by the historian to determine certain dates. Adams and Jefferson died on July 4, 1826; Adams at ninety and Jefferson at eighty-three. The old political animosities had disappeared. No American, whatever his politics, could forget that Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and that Adams did more than any other man to persuade a hesitating Congress to approve it. The date, July 4, 1776, was indissolubly associated with their names. Each had led a political party, and each had been President of the republic they did so much to launch. But when they were at the zenith of their political preëminence, we were not flasking our great men.

Now imagine the sensation created by the death of these two men, of all men, on that one day, of all days. The entire nation talked of nothing else for weeks. Next to Franklin and Washington, none of the men of '76 had such a hold on the imagination and respect of the American people as these two. An advertising genius like Doctor Dyott instantly perceived the golden opportunity and seized it—that is, he commemorated it in a flask. What was called at the time the "most remarkable coincidence that has ever taken place in the history of nations" would have been an old story, of no merchandising value, even one year after it happened. Therefore, the flask must have been made to sell while our people actually thought that Providence had a hand in it—picking such a wonderful day for them to die in! Daniel Webster made the inevitable speech. He told his hearers that "on the great national jubilee, in the very hour of public rejoicing, they took their flight together to the world of spirits. Washington is in the clear upper sky. These other stars have joined the American constellation. Beneath this illumination let us walk the course of life!"

"Independence Forever!"

The newspapers reported how John Adams, who, by reason of ill health, had excused himself from participating in the celebration of the golden fiftieth anniversary, complied with the request of his fellow townsmen for a toast to be drunk at the gathering, and he gave: "Independence Forever!" He was asked if anything should be added to it. "Not a word!" instantly replied the ninety-year-old patriot. Less than an hour after the toast was drunk he was dead. Early that morning, when he was awakened by the ringing of bells and the firing of cannon, he said: "Oh, yes! It is the glorious Fourth of July, God bless it! God bless you all!" He was silent a long time, thinking. Then he said: "It is a great and glorious day!" He knew he was going and his last words, intended to tranquilize his countrymen, were: "Jefferson survives!" But he was mistaken. The sage of Monticello had known for some days that his end was near. All he asked was that he might live to see the fiftieth anniversary of American Independence—another Fourth of July. On the evening of the third, being in great pain, he observed to his physician with a smile, "Well, doctor, a few hours more and the struggle will be over!"

When his desired day dawned he awoke early. The physician was at his bedside. "Doctor," he smiled, "you see I am here yet!" Later, one of his family expressed the hope that he might recover, and Jefferson said: "Why do you say that? Do you think I fear to die?" His last words were: "I resign my soul to my God and my daughter to my country." The epitaph which he himself wrote, that he wished placed on his tombstone, was: "Thomas

Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of Independence and of the Statute for Religious Liberty in Virginia, and Founder of the University of Virginia."

The two men had corresponded for years and many of the letters were made public. One, dated at Monticello, June 1, 1822, which Jefferson, then in his eightieth year, wrote to Adams, I give in full because all Americans should read it:

It is very long, my dear sir, since I have written to you. My dislocated wrist is now become so stiff, that I write slowly, and with pain, and therefore write as little as I can. Yet it is due to mutual friendship, to ask one in a while how we do? The papers tell us that General Starke is off, at the age of ninety-three! X still lives, at about the same age, cheerful, slender as a grasshopper, and so much without memory that he scarcely recognizes the members of his household. An intimate friend called on him, not long since. It was difficult to make him recollect who he was, and sitting one hour, he told him the same story four times over. Is this life? It is, at most, but the life of a cabbage, surely not worth a wish. When all our faculties have left or are leaving us one by one, when the friends of our youth are all gone and a generation is risen around us whom we know not, is death an evil? I have ever dreaded a dotting old age; and my health has been generally so good, and is now so good, that I dread it still. The rapid decline of my strength during the last winter has made me hope sometimes that I see land. During summer, I enjoy its temperature, but I shudder at the approach of winter, and wish I could sleep through it with the dormouse, and only wake with him in spring, if ever. They say that Starke could walk about his room. I am told you walk well and firmly. I can only reach my garden, and that with sensible fatigue. I ride, however, daily; but reading is my delight. I should wish never to put pen to paper; and the more because of the treacherous practice some people have, of publishing one's letters without leave.

To return to the news of the day, it seems that the cannibals of Europe are going to eat one another again. A war between Russia and Turkey is like the battle of the kite and snake; whichever destroys the other, leaves a destroyer the less for the world. This pugnacious humor of mankind seems to be the law of his nature; one of the obstacles to too great multiplication, provided in the mechanism of the universe. The cocks of the hen yard kill one another; bears, bulls, rams, do the same, and the horse in his wild state kills all the young males, until, worn down with age and war, some vigorous youth kills him. I hope we shall prove how much happier for man the Quaker policy is, and that the life of the feeder is better than that of the fighter. And it is some consolation that the desolation of these maniacs of one part of the earth is the means of improving it in other parts. Let the latter be our office; and let us milk the cow while the Russian holds her by the horns, and the Turk by the tail. God bless you, and give you health, strength, good spirits, and as much of life as you think worth having.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Adams' reply was:

QUINCY, June 11, 1822.

Dear Sir: Half an hour ago I received, and this moment have heard read, for the third or fourth time, the best letter that ever was written by an octogenarian, dated June 1st. . . . I have not sprained my wrist; but both my arms and hands are so overstrained that I cannot write a line. Poor Starke remembered nothing, and could talk of nothing but the battle of Bennington! X is not quite so reduced. I cannot mount my horse, but I can walk three miles over a rugged, rocky mountain, and have done it within a month; yet I feel, when sitting in my chair, as if I could not rise out of it; and when risen, as if I could not walk across the room. My sight is very dim, hearing pretty good, memory poor enough.

I answer your question—Is death an evil? It is not an evil. It is a blessing to the individual and to the world; yet we ought not to wish for it till life becomes insupportable. We must wait the pleasure and convenience of the "Great Teacher." Winter is as terrible to me as to you. I am almost reduced in it to the life of a bear or a torpid swallow. I cannot read, but my delight is to hear others read; and I tax all my friends most unmercifully and tyrannically against their consent.

This globe is a theater of war; its inhabitants are all heroes. The little eels in vinegar, and the animalcules in pepperwater, I believe, are quarrelsome. The bees are as warlike as the Romans, Russians, Britons or Frenchmen. Ants, caterpillars and cankerworms are the only tribes among whom I have not seen battles; and heaven itself, if we believe Hindoos, Jews, Christians and Mahometans, has not always been at peace. We need not trouble ourselves about these things, nor fret ourselves because of evil doers; but safely trust the "Ruler with



In any event wear an

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Here are the three sure ways to profits:

- (1) Forwarding the renewals of present readers in your locality for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Country Gentleman*
- (2) securing new subscriptions and
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NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

If we could get together and talk this over, we could doubtless quickly convince you how easily you may win an extra \$50.00 or more for Christmas. As we cannot, do the next best thing and mail the coupon above. It will bring you, without charge, all the information and equipment you'll need to get started right away.

Your Home May be Happier this Christmas if You Act at Once!



his skies." Nor need we dread the approach of dotage; let it come if it must. X, it seems, still delights in his four stories; and Starke remembered to the last his Bennington, and exulted in his glory; the worst of the evil is, that our friends will suffer more by our imbecility than we ourselves.

In wishing for your health and happiness, I am very selfish; for I hope for more letters. This is worth more than five hundred dollars to me; for it has already given me, and will continue to give me, more pleasure than a thousand. Mr. Jay, who is about your age, I am told, experiences more decay than you do.

I am your old friend,
JOHN ADAMS.

For the benefit of apologetic Americans, I will state that Englishmen at the time were greatly impressed by the correspondence of these two men. It makes me suspect that the British dislike for everything American does not go back to those days. Of course, the Tories hated us as rebels, in 1776, though Charles Fox and other great Englishmen thought we acted like true Englishmen. But in 1826 we were the best customers of British manufacturers, not their competitors. They were selling us everything, even dishes actually commemorating American victories over British forces. They made whatever they could sell. The dislike began when we became rivals. It increased as we grew in wealth. Today the undisputed superiority of the United States is the unforgivable offense. But let me show you what the London Morning Chronicle printed about the Adams-Jefferson letters:

What a contrast this correspondence of the two rival Presidents of the greatest republic of the world, reflecting an old age dedicated to virtue, temperance, and philosophy, presents to the heart-sickening details, occasionally disclosed to us, of the miserable beings who fill the thrones of the continent. There is not, perhaps, one sovereign of the continent, who in any sense of the word can be said to honor our nature, while many make us almost ashamed of it. The curtain is seldom drawn aside without exhibiting to us beings worn out with vicious indulgence, diseased in mind, if not in body, the creatures of caprice and insensibility. On the other hand, since the foundation of the American Republic, the chair has never been filled by a man, for whose life—to say the least—any American need once to blush. It must, therefore, be some compensation to the Americans for the absence of pure monarchy, that when they look

upwards their eyes are not always met by vice, and meanness, and often idiocy.

I am justified in insisting that what collectors of antiques really collect are stories of people and periods and customs—that is, the comedy and the tragedy of life. Mr. Hergesheimer rightly thinks that a historic flask is an ultimate antique. "The reasons for this are clear: A historic flask is, in the first place, actually historic, not only in what it may commemorate but in itself. A flask bearing the profile of Andrew Jackson is not alone a portrait in relief, it is a whisky flask of Jackson's era. It was a commonplace of its time, an object of familiar usage. In addition, flasks were made in Kentucky, they were made in Ohio, they were made in New Jersey and Connecticut and in Baltimore, Philadelphia and Albany, Pittsburgh and Boston; their legends and decorations are both local and national."

The especial superiority of flasks over other collectible antiques of course is that while you never dream of finding a fine Chippendale armchair or a marvelous Duncan Phyfe sofa in a little wayside "shoppe," a good bottle may be waiting for you anywhere, in a barn or a cellar, in an attic or on a dealer's shelves. Therefore whatever may be the errand that takes you from home there is always a delightful contingent errand: Flask-hunting.

And then, don't forget that even the rarest of historic flasks began its career of ultimate antique quite humbly. It was merely a discarded bottle, an emptied container. It has no cash value until a collector establishes it, first by finding it and next by coveting it. And because you are likely to find rare specimens in unlikely places, the spirit of adventure and a rational optimism accompany you on your travels.

Also beginner's luck does wonders, as any veteran will admit between groans. More than once it has fallen to a tyro's lot to abate the pride of a millionaire collector by finding an unlisted item. Surely, it is something to serve as the instrument of Providence! Moreover, the more flasks you own, the more good stories you have to tell to your really intelligent friends.

It is not possible for a born mute to collect historic flasks and be happy.



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A FEW months ago, Mary Carolyn Hurst, the fun-loving schoolgirl above, dreamed of earning her own money, *some*time.

Then one day she read in *The Saturday Evening Post* about how other schoolgirls were earning plenty of money and prizes. She sat down then and there and wrote for details.

Now—though using only her spare-time hours—

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Write Sunshine Club for booklet, advice, reservations, etc. Use the coupon. Winter rates and stopovers on Rock Island and Southern Pacific Lines.

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Please send me the free "SUNSHINE BOOKLET"

Name.....
Address.....

THROUGH UNCLE SAM'S BACK DOOR

(Continued from Page 57)

Among such rackets is the common one of locating some vessel left without a watch on board at night; then installing an improvised crew and loading the "melons." You collect what cash you can, order the "melons" to stay below decks till far at sea—so as to avoid discovery by customs officers—and then leave them to be dealt with next morning by the surprised, legitimate crew of the vessel, and by the police.

The old hull of a tug, long since abandoned, was recently staged for a coup worthy of Machiavelli himself. This hulk was full of stagnant water and was resting peacefully on the bottom, near shore. Some new planks were fitted to replace the rotten floor of the cabin, and were covered with linoleum. Walls and ceiling were freshly painted. Several low-voltage electric bulbs were installed, with a second-hand storage battery. Then, with a fully uniformed crew on board, it was easy to ship thirty aliens. They all came aboard at night with high hopes; paid their money to the captain and made themselves comfortable for the trip to Miami.

Just about then, captain and crew jumped over the rail into a couple of fast motorboats and vanished. A bit later, the crew of a revenue-patrol boat saw the mysterious lights aboard the hulk, came to investigate, and wrote Finis at the end of another fox-and-geese story.

"Dirty tricks like that," says my friend, "played with increasing frequency, have created distrust among the aliens, making it hard to deal with them as in the good old times. Many of us real, honest smugglers

have gone off the game. We fear the golden days of our business are forever past. How many faces are now missing from our ranks!"

"Missing," too, is often written against the names of alien-smuggling boats. "Missing, with all hands." Who cares? Only a sigh of relief escapes the world.

The last trip my friend took landed him behind steel bars.

He had a staunch little craft of the type known in Cuba as a *falucho*, with a reliable two-cycle engine, and contracted to transport forty aliens at two hundred dollars apiece—a matter of eight thousand dollars. Says he:

"We loaded them at night, as usual, and stowed them in the cargo hold, where they laid on old sails and mattresses. Just as we were getting under way, a big rowboat came alongside with fourteen Italians not of our party. I covered them with my gun and signaled the shore with my flash light for help. Their case was hard, indeed. Some conscienceless buzzard had collected passage money from them and sent them to us, telling them our vessel would transport them! We almost had a war, to stand them off. But worse was coming. A gunboat bore down on us, probably sent by the same hell bird that had tricked the poor Italians.

"Well, sir, delay breeds danger, as Don Quixote says. Action was necessary, pronto, because we had no time to unload our cargo or to cross the river mouth with loosely buoyed old ropes and rotten wire rigging to

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