

CHAPTER VII.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

SOME of the terms used in the foregoing chapters, apart from their ordinary meanings, have others of a somewhat technical nature in connection with ceramics. There are a few minor subjects, too, about which some information would have been offered, but its insertion would have interfered with the form in which this little work has been cast.

An alphabetical arrangement, therefore, of such terms, with a descriptive meaning attached, may be of use for reference.

Amorini.—An Italian term, often found in descriptions of ceramic decoration, signifying “cupids.”

Amphora.—The name of a vase used by the ancient Greeks for domestic purposes, and also for coffins; when for the latter purpose, they were made in halves, and after the insertion of the remains, rejoined. (See ANCIENT POTTERY, page 6.)

Antique.—This word denotes no particular date, but is generally applied to those monuments of ancient Greek and Roman art that have been handed down to us.

Atelier.—Our word “studio” almost exactly expresses its meaning.

Beaker.—The derivation of this word would show its reference to a drinking-cup, as distinguished from a tankard, but the term is almost exclusively employed to designate a peculiar form of Chinese or Japanese vase, cylindrical except at its mouth, where it widens like the large end of a trumpet. The “sets” of Chinese and Japanese vases generally consist of five—*i.e.*, three jars and covers, and two “beakers.”

Benitier.—A small vessel for holding holy water. They are generally formed by a saint or angel holding a shell.

Biscuit.—This term is applied to unglazed porcelain. Its appearance is aptly described by Chaffers as like a new clay tobacco-pipe without the least gloss upon it. (See also *Kiln.*)

Bistre.—A pigment of a warm brown colour of different tints, prepared from the soot of wood, that of the beech being preferred. Specimens of old Frankenthal and other German factories are found decorated “*en bistre.*”

Böttcher.—An apothecary’s assistant at Berlin, who being prosecuted for alchemy fled to Saxony, and was the originator of the Dresden manufactory, giving his name to a red kind of jasper ware which was the forerunner of true porcelain.* (See *Dresden*, pages 90, 93.)

Byzantine.—This style of decoration is the elaboration of Oriental detail, grafted upon classic forms, and was *en vogue* with the Romans, after the removal of their seat of Empire to the east.

Camaïeu.—Painting “*en camaïeu*” is understood to be executed in a single colour, varied only by the use of its different shades to heighten the effect. An old Sèvres vase of rich, *gros*

* The word is spelt here as generally seen, but Professor Church has informed me that there is a medallion in Lady C. Schreiber’s possession and also papers to show that the correct spelling was Böttger. — *Note, 3d Edition.*

bleu ground with a medallion painted "*en camaïeu*" on white ground is particularly artistic.

Can.—A cup of cylindrical form, when of small size called a cannette; this shaped cup has been a favourite one with the Sèvres manufactory.

Celadon.—This term was originally applied only to Oriental porcelain, of which the decoration was peculiar in having a pale sea-green colour mixed with the paste before firing, and so producing an effect, perfectly distinguishable from that where the colours have been afterwards applied. Latterly the French, and our English factories have adopted this form of decoration, and such pieces are also called celadon.

Ceramic.—Derived from the Greek word *Keramos*, meaning clay, and therefore used in the designation of all articles made of that material.

Chiaro-oscuro.—That part of the art of painting which relates to light and shade. A specimen is said to be painted in *chiaro-oscuro* when different shades of only one colour are used. A good example of this class of painting is the set of Della Robbian plates (see page 17) in the South Kensington Museum.

Clay.—(See *Kaolin*.)

Colours.—These are applied to the *unglazed* or *glazed* surface of the porcelain, according to the nature of the metallic oxide employed, some being unable to bear intense heat without volatilising. The preparation is made by the metallic oxide being ground down with fusible glasses, which, when applied to the porcelain and placed in the kiln, melt and adhere to the surface.

Gold is applied in a state of amalgam, ground in turpentine, and afterwards burnished with agates.

Blues are made from cobalt, the shades being varied by the addition of oxides of tin and zinc; white, from arsenic and tin; and so on. (See also *Kiln*.)

Crackle.—(See *China*, page 76.)

Craze.—An appearance somewhat resembling crackle, but produced by being withdrawn from the kiln, before it has been allowed to cool, or from a defect in the firing. This appearance is not infrequent on pieces of old Chelsea.

Dealers.—The increase in the number of dealers in old china within the last thirty or forty years is very considerable: if one takes the London Directory of the present year, under the headings of Bric-a-brac, Foreign and Fancy China Dealers, and Curiosity Dealers; there are no less than seventy names, and this is exclusive of many houses who sell the present artistic productions of our English manufactories.

Fifty years ago the trade in the then modern artistic porcelain was very limited, and that in old china was confined to a few dealers, such as Baldock & Hitchcock of Hanway Street, or Hanway Yard, as it was then known; Fogg & Isaacs of Regent Street, Owen, & Town & Emanuel of Bond Street, with Bentley, Jarmin, and Forest, whose names a few very old collectors now living may recollect; some ten years or so later, Litchfield (the writer's father), Wilson, and one or two others commenced business, while the past twenty years has seen very numerous additions to the list.

Of course, from the writer's position it would be particularly invidious to give more than general remarks upon a subject so likely to create a trade jealousy, and this will be carefully abstained from, only information that may be of interest to collectors being rendered without injury or favour to any one. Until 1860, when

Government duty on foreign porcelain was abolished, the importation of artistic porcelain was carried on with great difficulty.* The importer had to exhibit each consignment for the inspection of custom-house officers, and if his own valuation were considered low, a trade opinion would be taken, and the importation, divided into small lots suitable for private buyers, would be sold by private auction, the importer only receiving a small profit upon the valuation he had given.

The abolition of the East India Company's monopoly of Eastern trade in 1858 had also a great effect upon the traffic in foreign china, letting in quantities of Chinese porcelain, which had hitherto been rare and expensive, and gradually bringing about the special Eastern manufacture for the European markets. Previous to this, a considerable sale had been found for what was technically called "clobbered china," that is, blue and white Chinese porcelain painted over in more attractive (to the taste that day) colours, and refired, a process which the nature of Chinese porcelain admits.

Some twenty or twenty-five of the London dealers have very large sums locked up in their stocks. It is a business that could not possibly be successful without a natural taste for the subject, and perhaps this causes a weakness for continual purchases that in some cases ends in such an accumulation of stock as to only return a very moderate interest for the invested capital.

Enamel.—A vitrifiable composition used for coating pottery. The term is also applied to Oriental porcelain, where the colour stands in slight relief from the surface. Chinese porcelain known as "old green enamel" is valuable and rare.

Fabrique.—The private establishment of a master potter of

* The duty on foreign porcelain was, until its reduction by Sir Robert Peel, as much as thirty per cent., but was then reduced to ten per cent., and ultimately removed by Mr. Gladstone in 1860.

the Renaissance period, a meaning that the word "factory" or "pottery" fails to convey exactly.

Faience.—The origin of this term is either the name of the town Faenza near Bologna, or of Fayence in France, where majolica was manufactured; it has come, however, to designate all kinds of artistic pottery.

Fictile.—The term applied to all ancient pottery, from the commonest products in clay to the highest form of the art. Ceramic has a very similar meaning.

Fresco.—Painting *al fresco* is the execution of a design upon *wet* or *fresh* ground, and is difficult, as it cannot be retouched or corrected.

Glaze.—The glaze for covering the biscuit (see *Biscuit*) is composed of elements similar to those of glass; that for pottery is opaque, as made from lead or tin, and silex; while that for common stoneware is produced by the decomposition of salt. This latter is said to have been accidentally discovered by the boiling over of the brine in which some pork was being cooked, and covering the sides of the earthen vessel with a glaze, which was subsequently manipulated and improved.

Greybeard.—A name applied to a kind of stoneware drinking-jug, used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ornamented with a bearded face in relief, on the upper part of the spout.

Grisaille.—Literally means, "in grey;" a kind of painting by which solid bodies are represented, the different tints of grey being employed to give the effect of relief.

Ironstone China or Ware.—A very fine pottery closely resem-

bling porcelain, made in England; the best known bearing the mark, "Mason's Ironstone China."

Kaolin.—Porcelain clay which, with felspar, unites to make the product known as porcelain. Kaolin is prepared for the potter's use by being subjected on an inclined plane to a constant fall of water, which washes it into a trench, whence it is conducted to a series of "catchpits" that serve to relieve the matter of impurities. The clay is then allowed to settle in tanks or ponds, and the superfluous water withdrawn by drainage. The clay is then cut into masses of nine inches to a foot square, and dried under sheltered huts, whence it is conveyed to the potteries. The finest clay procured in England is that from Cornwall. The clay used for pottery is found in Devonshire and Dorsetshire (Poole), and is of a coarser nature. (See also *Petuntse.*)

Kiln.—Common pottery kilns are destitute of interior fittings, while those used for the better kinds have shelves and partitions to keep separate the pieces while firing. With porcelain kilns, however, the extra precaution is taken of using seggars or crucibles made of the strongest clay, to resist the action of the fire and protect the pieces enclosed. The firing is perfected in three processes—the first, in which the piece is exposed to 4717° Fahr., transforms the paste into a biscuit (see *Biscuit*), the second is the glazing process; and the third is that of fixing the colours by vitrification. (See also *Glazing.*)

Knock-out.—This is a slang term for what is virtually a syndicate of dealers to purchase upon terms advantageous to themselves at public auctions. The system is often exclaimed against, and appears but little understood, the present instance probably being the only one in which an explanation has been published.

The dealers who intend putting in their claim to the lot in

question abstain from bidding, and it is knocked down to one of their number, generally the senior, if he is enabled to bid a higher price than any other purchaser present. They then adjourn to a convenient place and hold, as it were, a kind of private auction among themselves.

Thus A. having bought lot 100 for £10, B., C., D., E., would offer an advance of say £2. A., however, thinking the article worth more, or perhaps having a special customer for it, would refuse this and make a further bid of £1. Any one who still felt speculatively inclined could continue to advance until all his opponents retired, upon which he would pay them out their shares in money. Thus, for the sake of explanation, let us suppose that the utmost trade value of the lot was reached when A. virtually offered £13. B., C., D., E. would now withdraw, upon which the advance of £2, in which they had all participated, would be divided into five portions of 8s. each, which A. would pay out saving his own, and so, with the payment of the £10 to the auctioneer, holding the lot at £11, 12s. instead of paying £12, 12s., which he must have bid had he been opposed by the four other dealers who required the lot.

In some instances where articles of great value are sold, and the general public present are ignorant of their worth, considerable sums would be "knocked out."

That such combinations cause a heavy loss to the estates entitled to benefit by the proceeds of a sale is evident, but it must be borne in mind that it is often the fault of an auctioneer whose knowledge of works of art is very partial; and his clients would be considerably benefited, were he to seek the advice of a respectable dealer, who, for a moderate fee, would give him an opinion or valuation of the goods he did not understand. The right of dealers to form a syndicate can scarcely be disputed, by which they gain the benefit of their judgment instead of others in whom they are not interested. The system, however, is a bad one, and has become further abused by the participation of

dealers who are not *bonâ fide* purchasers, but join merely for the sake of taking out their "shares" in money, and in these cases the "knock-out" becomes a game of brag, the result of which is the *bonâ fide* purchaser has to pay profit to a number of the trade who haunt the salerooms for the purpose of levying a species of black mail.

Kylin.—A Chinese monster, something between a lion and a dog, said to be an emblem of good fortune, and a favourite ornament on Chinese pottery and porcelain.

Medieval.—A period between the taking of Rome by the Barbarians, and the sacking of Constantinople by Mahomet II. in 1453, which overthrew the Greek Empire there.

Parian.—Differing only from biscuit in the employment of a felspar that is fused at a lower temperature, and its invention was brought about by experiments to produce a peculiar kind of biscuit. The greatest care and skill are required in modelling figures and groups of this material, on account of the liquid state of the paste and the great amount (20 to 25 per cent.) of shrinkage, which takes place in firing. (See also notice on *Spode*, now *Copeland*.)

Paste.—The word signifies the body or matter of the potter's production, as distinguished from its decoration. The paste of pottery is hard or soft according to its composition—thus a brick is soft; a piece of Queen's ware, or of any stoneware, is hard. In porcelain hard paste (*pâte d'ur*) is the product of a mixture of china clay (*kaolin*) and felspar (*petuntse*), and breaks with a smooth vitreous fracture in which point it differs from pottery. Soft paste (*pâte tendre*) is the result of a mixture of fine clay with siliceous and other materials. The English manufactures belong to the soft-paste school, partly on account of the character of the

clay, but chiefly from the quantity of ground bones that enters into their composition. The finest *pâte tendre* was that made at Sèvres in its palmiest days (see *Sèvres*), and at Naples (see *Naples*) during the administration of the factory by Charles III.

Patina.—The rust which forms in the course of great age on antique medals or bronzes. It has been a vexed question lately, whether the surface of porcelain is, in process of time, subjected to some chemical action of the atmosphere, such as reduction of glaze, and also of a slight change in colour. The difficulty experienced in exactly imitating the bluish white of the old Nankin, and of peculiar tints of white in the grounds of other fabriques, has caused this question of *patina*, respecting porcelain, to be discussed.

Petuntse.—Known by its English name of felspar. It results from the disintegration of granite, and is used with kaolin (see *Kaolin*) to produce porcelain; felspar differing from kaolin in this important feature, that it is fusible at great heat and melts in the furnace into a white milky glass.

Photography.—Is now used as a decoration for porcelain. By means of a printing process, portraits may be easily transferred on to a cup or plate, and by some variations of colour a pretty effect produced.

Pigments.—The colours used in painting.

Plateau.—The china stand or tray used for a tea-service. In most of the old ceramic factories, we find a favourite form of service was the *dejeuner*, or *tête-à-tête*, consisting of milk and coffee, or tea pots, *sucrier*, two cups and saucers, and the "plateau." Many plateaux are very fine specimens, and appear to have scarcely been intended to be hidden by the pieces they

were made to hold. An effective way of using them for present decoration, is to mount them on velvet shields with the other pieces grouped around them on little brackets.

Pottery.—The term applied to all ware that is distinguished from porcelain by being opaque and not translucent. Modern English pottery has lately been made so fine in texture, and finished highly, with so fine a glaze, that it approaches very closely to porcelain.

Printing.—Is now very largely applied to earthenware, especially the commoner sorts of English make, for domestic use. Its invention is of disputed authorship, but was about the year 1757. The process was a simple one. Transfer papers engraved from copper were applied to the ware, the ink being made from linseed oil, which evaporated in the baking, and left the colour of which it was the vehicle, on the piece.

The famous "Frederick of Prussia" mugs and Liverpool ware are the most notable examples of early English printing, the productions of the Creil factory, of the French adoption of the process, being some twenty years later.

Samian Ware.—Strictly speaking, this should mean the ware manufactured in the island of Samos, but the term was used for some of the Roman pottery which was sufficiently good to be assimilated to it. The Samian potters were celebrated B.C. 900.

Seau, Sçeaux.—A French word meaning literally "pail" or "bucket," but in ceramic art the term means an ice-pail, or vessel very similar, and in fact often used as a flowerpot.

Slip.—The liquid mixture of clay fluid reduced to the consistency of cream. In early attempts at fictile decoration what is now called the "slip" process was much used. (See ANCIENT

POTTERY, also RENAISSANCE.) The coarse clay vessel when partly fired, was coated over with this clayish fluid, and then baked.

Stoneware.—Hard pottery glazed with fused salt.

Tiles.—The earliest attempts at ceramic art included enamelled tiles, and specimens have been found in the ruins of Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, and Arabia. The fortress-palaces of the Moors contained abundant specimens of this kind of brilliant mural decoration. In our own time the manufacture of encaustic tiles has become a department of national trade (see *Mintons, &c., &c.*) The old Dutch tiles, of which copies are now made in Holland, are very grotesque, the subjects being mostly scriptural, but so rough in finish, and with such primitive attempts at literal illustrations of texts, as to form really caricatures of the subjects they would represent.

Works of Reference.—The following works are recommended with every confidence to the reader who desires a thorough knowledge of the subject, so far as book-lore can render it to him :—

Metyard's "Life of Josiah Wedgwood;" MM. Delange and Borneau's three folio works :—1, "L'Œuvres de Bernard Palissy," 2, "Fayence Dites de Henri II.," 3, "Fayence Italiennes de Moyen Age et de la Renaissance;" "A Century of Potting in the City of Worcester," by R. W. Binns, F.S.A.; "Musée Céramique," by Alexander Brogniart; "Ancient Pottery," by Dr. Birch (with coloured illustrations, latest edition published 1873); "A History of Pottery and Porcelain," by Joseph Marryat (illustrated); "Marks and Monograms on Pottery and Porcelain," by William Chaffers, F.S.A. (sixth edition, containing 3000 potters' marks and monograms, published by Bickers & Son); "History of the Ceramic Art," being Mrs. Bury Palliser's translation of M.

Jacquemart's work ; "Ceramic Art in Great Britain," by Llewellyn Jewitt, F.S.A. ; also any of the popular series published by the Council of Education and sold at the South Kensington Museum.

All these and many other useful works upon the subject may be consulted at the excellent library in the South Kensington Museum, by those who have the desire and leisure to read up a most interesting study ; and as this convenient reading-room has, moreover, the immense advantage of being in the very centre of a collection of specimens, illustrating every branch of the subject, from the prehistoric vases and ornaments recently excavated by Dr. Schliemann, to the purchases by the Science and Art Department from the Paris Exhibition of 1878, here surely is a source of information and instruction within everybody's reach !



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



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