

***CHARLES WYLLYS
ELLIOTT***



***POTTERY AND
PORCELAIN,
FROM EARLY
TIMES DOWN
TO THE PHILADELPHIA
EXHIBITION
OF 1876***

Charles Wyllys Elliott

Pottery and Porcelain, from early times down to the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876

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PREFACE.

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WHAT we have attempted has been to gather and present, in a way to be easily understood, the most important facts respecting "Pottery and Porcelain."

The study of this interesting subject has for more than a century been constant in Europe, and notably so during the last twenty-five years. A correct knowledge of it may now almost be called a liberal education. In the United States something has been done; and the public mind is now asking, "What is it that makes 'pottery and porcelain' so attractive to scholars, statesmen, women, and wits?"

In some degree we have answered this question. My part of the work has been to gather where I could such historical and technical facts and such illustrations as seemed most valuable, not only to the student but to the collector.

Many of these came from Europe, of course, where since Queen Anne's day the love of "old china" has at times risen to enthusiasm. But I have drawn from our own collections whenever it has been possible. In the preparation and engraving of the illustrations I hope the judicious critic, as well as the judicious public, will give due credit to the publishers and their artists, who, it seems to me, deserve great praise for having so well done what they have undertaken to do. Permit me to say a word for *collectors*.

Busy men who are making railways and coal-pits, under the pleasing illusion that they are developing the country more than the rest of us, are apt to think a man with any hobby except that of making money is wasting his time.

I would like to remind the reader that there are a few—many of them young men and young women too—who have money enough for all reasonable wants, and who do not

care to waste time and life in getting *more* money, for which they have no special uses; these persons find a perennial occupation in the study, the comparison, the purchasing, the collecting, of all that will illustrate their subject of study—their hobby. Around this subject of pottery and porcelain may be grouped, if one so pleases, all the habits, the wants, the inventions, the growths, of human society.

Some have yet a notion that the study of the politics and the fightings of man is most important; others, how man came to be an Arminian or an Augustinian; others, whether the sun is or is not gradually cooling down, and must finally cease to be, or whether, on the contrary, its flames are fed by the self-sacrificing stars.

Without detracting from their labors, I beg leave to say that my great hobby or central fact being the *home*, I hold that whatever makes that interesting, beautiful, or useful, is, or should be, interesting, beautiful, and useful, to all the world. I believe that what we call politics, or government, is only valuable in that it helps to create and to protect desirable homes; all the rest—all the speeches, and processions, and crownings, and court-balls, and receptions, and dinners—are “leather and prunella.”

Therefore I believe the “art of living” is first and foremost; to know how to make *this* life comfortable and beautiful is all-important. Yet there is not a teacher of this great art in all the land, although “professors” are legion.

We may well ask, when we go to a house: “What have they there to tell us—what to show us? What have they collected to interest, to please, to instruct?”

If a person has only many bonds bearing coupons locked up in his safe—delightful as the fact may be to him—what pleasure or satisfaction is that to us?

But if in that house are gathered all the interesting examples of any growth of Nature or of Art, what a

pleasure to go there!—they may be beetles, or butterflies, or stones, or shells, or silvers, or porcelains. I thank God that here is a man who can and does collect—one who does care for something which I too care for.

I wish, therefore, that every young man and young woman would get a *hobby* early in life to which he or she can at any time devote some spare time and spare money. *Ennui*, the demon who afflicts the idle, is thus exorcised, and vice loses its charming power.

The collector, too, does not waste his money. There is not a collection of pictures or of minerals, of birds or of butterflies, of chinas or of books, of armor or of gems, of laces or of tapestries, if made with ordinary care and knowledge, but is worth more—often ten times or fifty times more—than it has cost. Even in a pecuniary way, therefore, the hobby is productive; and the collection is not only as interesting, but it is as good as gold.

OUR COLLECTIONS.—Of collections of porcelain and pottery one must of course look for great exhibitions to the museums of Europe—such as the Kensington Museum, in London; the Cluny, in Paris; the Green Vaults, in Dresden; the Oriental, at Leyden—and to private collections, such as the Rothschilds have made at London and at Paris, to Lady Schreiber's, and many more, in England.

What are accessible to us are the private collections of some of our own people.

In New York, Mr. WILLIAM C. PRIME'S collection is quite large, numbering some four thousand pieces. It is particularly devoted to the porcelains of Europe, and is an excellent collection. In it are some four or five complete dinner-services of old Dresden and Sèvres porcelain, and many single pieces which rank high.

Mr. S. P. AVERY'S collection of Oriental porcelains is the most complete we have, and is very rich in all the departments, especially the Chinese. His pieces of "celestial blue"

number more than any other single collection in this country.

In the Loan Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art have been exhibited many examples from Mr. Prime's collection of porcelains, and about five hundred pieces of Oriental ware from Mr. Avery's, of nearly every distinctive style made in China and Japan in their best times.

The collection of Mr. ROBERT HOE, Jr., is extremely choice in its admirable specimens of Oriental porcelain. Its eggshells, crackles, and "celestial blues," are not to be excelled. In this collection are also examples of other styles, among them some of the best of old Dresden.

Mr. W. L. ANDREWS, of New York, has a very choice collection of Oriental porcelain, probably the best in the country, and, containing the most of the "rose-back" and other "egg-shell."

Mr. EDWARD CUNNINGHAM, of Milton, Massachusetts, has many superb vases, some of them of great size, obtained by himself in China.

In Albany, Mr. J. V. L. PRUYN has several complete dinner-services of Sèvres porcelain, made for King Louis Philippe, one large service of Lowestoft, and many other individual and interesting specimens. Some of his examples of Sèvres painting cannot be surpassed. He has also a small breakfast-service of "celestial blue," mounted in silver, which is excellent.

In Boston, Mr. G. W. WALES's collection is very varied and rich. He has excellent examples of Oriental and of European porcelains, and some perfect pieces of "celestial blue." Many of his best specimens are on loan in the Boston Art Museum.

Mrs. ANSON BURLINGAME's collection of Chinese porcelain, at Cambridge, made while in China, is not large, but it has in it some of the best examples of the "green," the "celestial

blue," the "rose," and the "chrysanthemum." Some of these have been exhibited in the Loan Collection in Boston.

Dr. F. W. LEWIS and Mr. E. S. CLARKE, of Philadelphia, have small and good collections, particularly devoted to Oriental porcelains.

Mr. W. S. VAUX and Dr. LEWIS have made interesting exhibitions of the pottery of Greece and of Italy.

Mr. JOSEPH A. CLAY, of Philadelphia, has a small and valuable collection of early Peruvian pottery, of the period before the Spanish Conquest. There is also a varied collection of South and North American Indian pottery in the Peabody Museum at Cambridge.

There may be, and probably are, in the United States many interesting collections of which I know nothing. I am told that Mr. WALTERS, of Baltimore, and Mr. PROBASCO, of Cincinnati, both have many very rare and valuable pieces; but, I regret to say, I have had no opportunity of seeing them.

I do not doubt that the love for these fine works of man's hand will grow, that more and more small collections will be begun, and that time will make them large and valuable and interesting.

A word of caution may be said to guard against imitations, which abound in Europe. I hear now that the Chinese and Japanese are learning, all too quickly, our Christian ways of counterfeiting, and are likely to better the instruction.

In conclusion, I implore our people not to fill their houses with imitations of old things—not even when the antiques are good is it desirable to encourage porcelain-painters in that sort of thing: when it comes to copying antiquity which is *poor*, it is inexcusable; and when we reach the *counterfeiting* of the antique, it smacks of baseness.

For this sort of thing we, the public, are responsible. The painter paints what will sell.

No gentleman or lady should consent to be shabby, or to help other people along that facile road. Let us keep our eyes open to any and all *new* work which is good, and especially to all which shows originality and courage on the part of modelers or of painters. Let us moderns admire the good in the Orientals, but let us worship our *own* gods, and dare and do for ourselves.

As far as practicable, I have in these pages pointed to examples, and have illustrated by such as are owned in this country; so that many persons who wish to examine these interesting works of fictile art may see them for themselves.

The public collections are of course all open; and I am glad to say that private collectors seem willing and ready to open their collections to students as much as possible. It is human and pleasant to wish that others should enjoy what we enjoy.

Marks, and especially upon porcelain, are not the most important thing; but still they are important, and to many are most satisfactory. I have therefore included in this volume all the prominent ones; so that the book will be found useful not only to the collector at home, but also to him who travels abroad.

The traveler who has a wise hobby gets a thousand times more pleasure from his travels than he who has no purpose except change of place and aimless movement. I suggest to the man who has none to try "pottery and porcelain."

As to *prices* of porcelain, etc., I have given those paid at actual sales whenever I could find them; they will be of service to buyers and collectors, as something of a guide to what they may safely pay.

Books which may be referred to, and especially such as may be found in some of our public libraries, are given at the end of the volume.

I hope the public will buy this book, and also good pottery and porcelain.

C. W. E.

CHAPTER I.

UNGLAZED POTTERY.

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The Pottery of the Stone Age.—The Lacustrine Dwellings.—Vases of the Bronze Age.—Peruvian Pottery.—Mexican Pottery.—Pottery of Western Mounds.—The Cesnola Collections.—Roman Pottery.—Saxon and Scandinavian Pottery.—The Pottery of Ancient Gaul—of Ancient Germany.



FIG 1.—*Bowl of the Stone Age.*

SO ancient is the potter's art that it may be said to have begun with the beginnings of man. A belief exists still in Silesia that there is a mountain out of which cups and jugs spring spontaneously, as the mushrooms shoot from the moist soil of the plains. Interwoven, then, as pottery is with the history of the race, having relations daily and hourly with man's universal and greatest vocation—the preparation of the food which supports and continues *life*—it has had and will have an interest as vital as it is widespread.



FIG. 2.—Vase of the Stone Age.



FIG. 3.—Vase of the Bronze Age.

MAN A COOKING ANIMAL.—Man is the only cooking animal, so far as I know. It is easy to believe that archaic man, when he began to evolve from the animal state, at once began to invent, and that, after he had discovered the uses of fire, the first need was of vessels which could be used upon the fire to seethe and boil.

And what do we find?

THE REINDEER AGE—THE STONE AGE.—Of prehistoric times, when the reindeer roved free over Europe, even to the shores of the Mediterranean, in the Stone age, even when man lived in caves and was only able to fashion things with stones, a few pots have been found, showing how early his wants led him to fashion things of clay.



FIG. 4.—Vase of the Bronze Age.

The LACUSTRINE DWELLINGS of the Stone Age have given up a few traces of men. The remains of lake-dwellers have been found mostly in Switzerland, but somewhat in Ireland and Scotland. These reveal a people who built their huts for safety upon piles or upon fascines anchored in the small lakes. A variety of interesting things, consisting of spear-heads, knives, hatchets, etc., have been found, some of flint, some of bone, and some of bronze. Among these, which pertain to our subject, are a few pots of clay, which have survived the gnawing tooth of Time.



FIG. 5.—Bronze Age.

In Figs. 1 and 2 are to be seen two of these. They are coarse and clumsy, and are of blackish-gray clay, hardened in the sun or in an insufficient fire. They are not turned upon a wheel, but show marks of the fingers impressed in the soft clay. Yet we cannot but be struck with the faint attempt at decoration to be seen on the foot of one of them, even in that era of savageness.



FIG. 6.—*Bronze Age.*



FIG. 7.—*Bronze Age.*

The BRONZE AGE yields up pottery which does not yet show the invention of the potter's wheel. The work is still moulded by the hand, but the clay is better, and the forms begin to show clear indications of a sense of proportion and a considerable degree of choice. The shapes are in greater variety, and some of them certainly are good. Of the five examples (Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) none are very bad, and two (Figs. 3 and 4), if not three, are excellent.



FIG. 8.—Peruvian.



FIG. 9.—Peruvian.

The pointed bottom appears here as it does in the early forms of the Greek amphora; and, as the illustrations show, this involves a necessity for a further invention in the tripods upon which they rest. I have seen no explanation of this more difficult construction, and can think of none. It is certainly no easier to make the pointed than the flat bottom, and it certainly is not so useful. Why, then, was it so common? I can only suppose that when *first* made the point was intended to be thrust into the ground; but the moment they had hit upon the flat bottom, that moment the point, I should fancy, would have been abandoned; but it

evidently was not. Perhaps they loved the *old* as some of us do, not because it was good, but *because it was old*. Who can tell?



FIG. 10.—*Ancient Peru.*



FIG. 11.—*Ancient Peru.* FIG. 12.—*Ancient Peru.*

How early the varied decoration showed itself we cannot know, but in many examples of early fictile work, the meander, the chevron or saw-tooth, and the fret, now called the Greek fret, are sure to appear—and among the most diverse and distant nations; so, too, the forms and the uses of the vessels.



FIG. 13.—Ancient Peru.

Do not these things show that man develops everywhere along a corresponding line? They have not copied from one another, but a like want has produced a similar result in all.



FIG. 14.—Ancient Peru. FIG. 15.—Ancient Peru.

As we approach the historic ages, we find among the Egyptians, the Mexicans, the Peruvians, the Greeks, the Assyrians, the Romans, the Gauls, the Germans, the use of the potter's wheel, one of the earliest machines made by man. Of the Egyptian and Greek pottery I shall have something to say in a chapter upon the "*Greek Vase.*"



FIG. 16.—Roman Cup.

The MEXICAN pottery, sometimes called *Aztec*, is usually of reddish clay, and the vessels are almost identical in form and decoration with those of the Peruvians, which will appear in their place. They are of great variety, and must have been made in large numbers. The Mexicans also made grotesques and idols of clay, which are usually hideous, and are intended to be; for the gods of evil were those they feared and worshiped most. These potteries are of unglazed clay, as are all those we are now treating.



FIG. 17.—Roman Vase.

The civilizations which organized themselves in Mexico have always been an interesting and curious study. When Cortez and his conquering, gold-seeking white men reached the high lands of the beautiful interior (1517), they found the splendid city of Mexico, built over and along the shores of the inland lake, and stretching toward the foothills which protect it from unfriendly winds. Here the

Aztecs had organized society. They had succeeded to the Toltecs, a prosperous, industrious, and probably a peaceful people—a people coming from the warmer South, and unable to cope with the more hardy Aztecs, who came down from the North.



FIG. 18.—Roman Vase found at London.

These Aztecs had not only developed the arts of architecture and painting, as well as most of the mechanic arts; they had also reached to a literature, to laws, to a religion most elaborate and splendid; and they had not neglected to conquer and tax surrounding tribes, and make them pay tribute, as all the “great” white nations of the world have done. But all their civilizations, laws, religions, arts, were swept into ruin by the conquering hand of Cortez and his successors.

And what have we now in Mexico? What has come of the destruction of the great Indian races there? What but greed, anarchy, cruelty, ruin? It would be a curious speculation now to picture what that country—the most beautiful and most bountiful—might now be in the hands of its own people, and with a government which could protect life and make labor safe. As it is, its life and its art give us nothing to look at or to enjoy.

Must man always destroy first in order that he may build up, and then be himself destroyed? No remains have come

to us of glazed pottery belonging to these times; and it is probable that, their wants being fewer, their climate milder, and their food simpler, invention was not so much on the alert as it might have been in a colder and harsher climate. That these races were for some unknown reason superior to those living farther to the north, none will doubt when they know what they accomplished as compared with the Indians of the United States.

The PERUVIANS were the most cultivated and comfortable nation upon the Western Continent when Pizarro (1531) invaded, and, I may say, destroyed them. Indeed, when we read the accounts given of them by the Spanish writers themselves, we have only another proof that what we call "carrying to other peoples the blessings of civilization and Christianity" means rather the cursing them with cruelty and greed.



FIG. 19.—Vase. Pottery of Ancient Gaul.

A large collection of their pottery was shown at the United States Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, and there is a sufficient and most interesting exhibit of it in the Peabody Museum at Harvard in Cambridge. In this collection, also, are to be found many examples of like unglazed pottery found in the Western mounds of the

United States by Professors Shaler and Carr, who for some years have been engaged in researches in Kentucky and at other points in the West.

Upon some examples of this American pottery (Figs. 8 to 15) are to be seen decorations in color, mostly red, black, and brown; and it would seem impossible that these colors should have lasted through so many centuries, if they were not fixed by fire, and therefore were mineral.



FIG. 20.—Pottery of Ancient Gaul.

The decorations, too, were somewhat varied, but in none which I have seen do they go beyond the elementary styles already mentioned.

The production of idols and fantastic vases, animals and grotesques, must have been extensive, as so many of these have already been found; indicating that they must have been common in their day. Examples of this fantastic decoration and modeling are seen in Figs. 12 to 15—and in Fig. 14 is an approach to portraiture. In one (Fig. 15) is seen the double-bellied bottle, so much in use in China and Japan. The twin-bottles seen in Figs. 8 and 9 are good examples of a fancy which evidently pleased potter and people in those “good old Peruvian times.”

A most singular fact is mentioned by Demmin, that on one of their *casseroles* the handle is clearly the phallus,

symbol of life, found on Egyptian sculptures, and once worshiped.

One curious fact is asserted by the French *savants*,^[1] that there is abundant evidence to show that through a long succession of years, perhaps three thousand, the character of these American potteries grew less and less pure and simple, and more and more debased and vulgar; which one can well believe, when we see everywhere that whole nations, some of them calling themselves civilized, have gone the same road, downward from the good to the bad, and not upward toward the true and the beautiful.



FIG. 21.—Ancient Gaul.

The opening of the *CESNOLA* collections, at the New York Museum of Arts, shows us a vast number of early potteries which are as yet hardly classified or understood. Many of them bear marks of Assyrian or of Phœnician inspiration; and among them are rude vessels closely resembling those of Peru, and also many grotesque forms of vases and animals, such as mark the early attempts at Art in other nations. That collection should be examined by those who are interested in this subject.

The hand-book published by the Museum is full of condensed information, and should be carefully preserved.

The pottery of the ROMANS went wherever their armies went. Thus it is found in France, in England, in Germany, in Spain, etc., etc. This Roman pottery has been found where excavations have been made, in Italy, in France, in England, along the Rhine, and in other places. It is distinguished as being more heavy and clumsy in form than that made in Greece, and the color of the clay is red, lighter or darker. The best of the Roman ware is often called *Samian*, because it was supposed to resemble that made at Samos in Greece, though it is quite different. The finest pieces approach to the color of sealing-wax, and have a lustre thin and brilliant, which has given rise to some dispute whether or not it is the result of an applied mineral varnish, or whether it is the product of careful hand-friction, developed and perfected by a high heat. The varnish, if such, is so thin that it has not been possible to analyze and decide upon it.



FIG. 22.—*Ancient Gaul.*

This red Samian or Roman much resembles the polished red ware made to-day in Egypt—of which a collection was

shown in the recent Philadelphia Exhibition, and this bore no varnish.

One thing remarked as to this Roman pottery is, that it is never decorated with designs or ornaments in one or more colors. The decoration is sometimes incised, but more often is in relief. This is curious, too, as those master-potters, the Greeks, used colors in their designs. These pieces are to be seen in the museums of Paris, London, and elsewhere. The example engraved ([Fig. 16](#)) is a cup on which the decoration is in relief, and the fillets and bands are carefully moulded on the potter's wheel.

Figs. 17 and 18 were found in excavations made in 1845 in the city of London, and are excellent examples of this pottery. They are now in the Museum of Geology at London.

Fig. 17 is a sort of vase, or perhaps a drinking-cup, and is ornamented with the head of an animal. It is described as of "a pale red with a darkish-brown varnish."

Fig. 18 is called the "Cup of Samos," resembling so much as it does the work made at Samos. While these pieces were found in the earth beneath the city of London, many others have been found elsewhere; and much is believed to have been made at the old Anglo-Roman town of Caistre, in England, where remains of many furnaces have been unearthed.



FIG. 23.—Ancient Gaul.

Roman pottery has been found on the banks of the Rhine, near Bonn, Coblenz, Mayence, in Baden, etc., etc.; in France, at Auvergne, and at other points.

This finer work is supposed to date about the first century of our era. It is classed by M. Demmin as being made at Arezzo, the ancient Aretium, in Tuscany.

COMMONER styles of Roman pottery were made, and many examples of these have been found of a coarser clay, and varying in color, gray, black, and yellow, or light paleish red; sometimes with a black or brown varnish. These were doubtless made for the common uses of the kitchen. The drinking-cups of this pottery often bore inscriptions, such as *Ave*, welcome; *Vivas*, live; *Bibe*, drink; *Vive, bibe multum*, live and drink much, etc.



FIG. 24.—*Ancient German.*

Pottery was undoubtedly made by the Saxons, the Scandinavians, the Gauls, and the Germans, before the coming of Roman armies and Roman potters. Of these early remains examples have been found in the *barrows* of England, and in other excavations.

M. Cleuziou published a work in 1872, "La Poterie Gauloise,"^[2] warmly and strenuously claiming for the Gauls an art and a pottery before the coming of the all-grasping Romans; who, he asserts, not only stole their country, but also have claimed to be their benefactors and civilizers when they were not. I cannot, of course, discuss the question here. The engravings given (Figs. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) are quoted by M. Figuier, from whom I take them, as examples of this early and curious work. Some of these certainly seem to indicate an inspiration original and quite different from what we see among the Romans. Later, and after the coming of the Romans, there were produced in Gaul vases and other articles, which may well be called "*Gallo-Romaine*," or *Gallic-Roman*.



FIG. 25.—German Pottery. FIG. 26.—German Pottery.

The GERMAN potters also produced at a very early day large quantities of pottery, which has a character of its own. That it must have been very extensively made and used is evident from the many specimens exhumed in various parts of Germany; in such numbers, indeed, that the peasantry have a profound belief they are the work of the dwarfs, and that they sprout spontaneously like mushrooms, as I have said. The examples we present are more simple than most of the Roman work, and the decoration is more severe. (Figs. 24, 25, 26.)

Pots, vases, and children's toys, are also found in tombs in various parts of Germany, some of which show decided marks of art.

In some of these are found the ashes of the dead, in others bones broken up, and so preserved.