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NOTES ON POMANDERS.

By R. H. SODEN-SMITH, M.A., F.S.A.

A FEW notes respecting the nature and use of pomanders may not be uninteresting in elucidation of the specimens of these trinkets which I have had the honour to exhibit. The name pomander—spelt “pomeambre” by Sir Thomas Elyot, 1542—is derived from *pomme d’ambre*, perfume apple or ball, an expression occurring in old French inventories, but not now recognized by modern French writers. “*Poume de Aumbre*” occurs in an inventory of jewels of the fourteenth century, which appear to have belonged to Margaret de Bohun, daughter of Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex: “*j poume de aumbre mys en iij crampouns dargent.*” This shows that the ball of perfume was carried for use in a silver mounting.

Musk-balls of gold and silver are known of earlier use: they are mentioned in the inventory of the effects of Henry V., 1423.¹

The word *pomme* was used for any object in shape somewhat like an apple; *ambre* for perfume in general, and the primary signification of pomander was not a jewel, but a ball compounded of various ingredients, mostly highly scented and considered efficacious not only against evil odours, which must have been pretty frequent in mediæval days, but also as specifics against infection.

Lord Bacon, in a passage used by Dr. Johnson in his Dictionary, and often quoted since, says, “They have in physic use of pomander and knots of powders for drying of rheums, comforting of the heart, and provoking of sleep.” In so writing, Lord Bacon would seem to have had in mind the virtues attributed by Dioscorides to the materials of which pomander was composed. Matthioli, commentator on Dioscorides, writing in the sixteenth century, says of the essences of lavender, usually one of the ingredients, that they are of

¹ See Arch. Journ. ii. 345.

extraordinary efficacy, and especially if combined with cinnamon, another frequent ingredient. "Conferunt omnibus cerebri ægritudinibus a frigido provenientes epilepticis, apoplecticis, veteriosis, convulsis, resolutisque auxiliantur." (Ed. fol. Ven. 1565.) This being so, pomander ought indeed to be efficacious, as ambergris and musk, specifics not less abounding in virtue, were commonly included in its composition.

Various receipts for making pomander are to be found, and it may be worth while to note a few of them. In some the foundation is a garden mould of special quality, and it is to this use of mould that Drayton, author of the "Polyolbion," writing in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, alludes in his "Quest of Cynthia." He says,

" At length I on a fountain light
Whose brim with pinks was platted ;"

and he demands of the fountain "Whose it is?" and it replies—

" It told me it was Cynthia's own—
And told me that the bottom clear,
New laid with many a fett
Of seed-pearl e'er she bathed her there
Was known as black as jet.
As when she from the water came,
Where first she touched the mould,
In balls the people make the same
For pomander and sold."

(Drayton's Works, fol., Dodsley's ed. 1748.)

Again, he says that the moss from the well was worn as pomander "against infectious damp."

In the pedantic old play entitled "Lingua," composed before 1603, one of the characters, "Odor," an attendant on "Olfactus," gives the following receipt for making a pomander :

"Your only way to make a good pomander is this. Take an ounce of the purest garden mold, cleansed and steeped seven days in change of motherless rose-water, then take the best labdanum, benioine, both storaxes, ambergrease, civet, and musk, incorporate them together and work them into what form you please. This, if your breath be not too valiant, will make you smell as sweet as my lady's dog."—"Lingua," act iv. sc. 3.

Sir Fred. Madden, in his "Privy Purse Expenses of the

Princess Mary," 1831, p. 257, says:—"In the 'Treasury of Commodious Conceits' (a book published in 1584 by Henry Car and to which I have not been able myself to refer) is a receipt given 'To make a Pomander.' The ingredients were, first benjamin (benzoin), storax, calamite, and labdanum, finely levigated, and dissolved in a little rose-water over the fire. The composition was then taken out, and powder of cinnamon, sweet sanders, and cloves added to it, all of which were well mixed and rubbed together. After this ambergris, musk, and civet, of each three grains, were prepared, the first being dissolved and mingled with the other two. The author then directs you 'to take your *Pome*,' and by degrees to gather up the three last ingredients, kneading and mixing them well with the ball, till they become perfectly incorporated with it."

An orange with the pulp removed and replaced by spices and perfumes seems to have been sometimes used as a pomander, and Cardinal Wolsey is spoken of as holding one to his nose while passing among a crowd of suitors. A nutmeg mounted in silver would appear to have been early used in somewhat similar fashion.²

Thus pomander was also in request to ward off infection, and the use of balls of it during the Great Plague is alluded to in a popular novel. That these balls were sometimes of a solid consistence appears by Beveridge's observation: "The pomander smells sweeter by rubbing" (*Thesaurus Theologicus*, p. 341).

Pomander being thus valued, and its composition often including rare and costly ingredients, it was natural that fitting receptacles should be made for it, and thus we have those trinkets, often of costly materials, which have now appropriated to themselves the word pomander, though they are really but its cases.

Mention is frequent, as has been already noted, of such pomanders in ancient inventories of jewels. Thus in the inventory of the jewels belonging to the Lady Mary, daughter of King Henry VIII. (1542—1546), occurs,³ "itm a pomander of gold w^t a Diall in yt." Again, part of the king her father's gift to her on New Year's Day, 1543, was, "Firste ij. long girdles of goldesmythes w^rke w^t pomandres at thendē." Again, at folio 142 of the same inventory, occurs:

² Arch. Journ. vol. ii. pp. 344, 348.

Expenses of the Princess Mary, pp. 178, 182, 187.

³ See Sir Fred. Madden's *Privy Purse*

"Itm a Tablet w^t a portculs^o of Diamonde vpon the one syde, on' the other side the History of Salomon's temple, and a fayr table Diamonde in the myddle w^t a litle pomandre pendant therat, set w^t iiij. small Diamonde and a Rubie"—an entry repeated at folio 146*b* of the same inventory. In the Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess occurs, "Itm payed to Mabell the goldesmyth for the lenghtyng of a girdle of goldesmyth worke and a pomandr lxixs."

In its simplest form the pomander-case seems to have been a ball of metal opening across the centre, and perforated to allow the perfume to escape. One such silver ball has been exhibited; this is of comparatively late date, being English, probably about 1700. Another also, in the writer's possession, is a silver ball about $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins. in diameter, perforated in a rather elegant reticulated pattern, the surface between the perforations being tooled, and having a chain and ring for suspension. It is perhaps Spanish work, and of the eighteenth century. A still more elaborate and highly finished specimen, but of the same general type, is in the possession of Rohde Hawkins, Esq., F.S.A. (See Fig. 1). It is a ball of silver twisted filigree, about $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter, composed of a series of circles symmetrically arranged, and ornamented with small projecting pellets; round the centre where the ball opens is a corded band of silver gilt, and at top and bottom are rings for suspension. It seems to be of Italian sixteenth or early seventeenth century work. Possibly the pouncet-box in *Hotspur's* description of the fop was a kind of pomander; and the walking canes with heads perforated to contain some aromatic, or what we would now call disinfecting substance, used formerly by physicians, were the descendants of the mediæval pomander; the vinaigrette also may be considered a modern successor of these often costly trinkets.

Pomanders are found fitted for suspension to the girdle, to a chain from the neck or to the wrist, and sometimes so designed that when not worn they could stand upright on the table; thus in the schedule of the household effects of Lady Margaret Long, on her marriage with the Earl of Bath, 4th Nov. 2nd Edward VI.,⁴ is the entry: "Itm, a gerdyll of crown gold set w^t great pearl and a pomender, poyse xiiij ounces and a half." In a portrait of the celebrated Eléonore Ancre

⁴ As quoted in Gage's *Hist. and Antiq. of Hengrave, Suffolk*, p. 124.

dit Galigai,⁵ the favourite of Marie de Medicis, who was executed on a charge of witchcraft in 1617, is represented a golden pomander suspended by a chain from a girdle also of gold.

In a portrait of Nicolas de Stalbourg, of the date 1504, in the Staedel Institution at Frankfort, a gold pomander, as it appears, is shown in the middle of the string of beads held in the hands of the figure; it is large and elaborate. (See Hefner-Alteneck, *Trachten des Christlichen Mittelalters*. dritte Abtheilung, 16^{tes} Jahrhundert.

In a portrait at Hampton Court, of a child in the rich costume of the sixteenth century, is shown a pomander of gold pendant from a girdle and chain of such length as to suggest that it was originally designed for the use of a full-grown lady.

In the gallery of the Antwerp Museum is a large votive picture, in two parts, by Adrian Thomas Key, representing the family Franco-y-Feo de Briez, and dated 1575; in this the principal female figure wears a massive gold chain, to which is suspended a richly wrought pomander. In the same gallery, No. 462, is a picture by Bernhard van Orley, about the middle of the sixteenth century, in which a lady bears a rosary, as it would seem, of rich beads, in the centre of which is a large perforated ball, apparently divided across the centre, and exactly resembling a pomander.

Fosbroke quotes (vol. i. 305) from Nichols's *Progresses*: "a cheyne of pomander, with buttons of silver betwene." This would indicate that a solid and probably ornamental substance was so used, and perhaps amber beads are here meant. In Shakspeare's "Winter's Tale," *Autolycus*, that arch-knave, has his pack supplied with pomanders. He says, act iv. sc. 3: "I have sold all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting."

Ludovico Vives, writing in the first half of the sixteenth century, has the following passage in his "Instructions of a Christian Woman," b. i. c. 9 (he was a Spanish divine, a learned commentator on S. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, and tutor to Queen Mary Tudor): "Our Lord hath made bald the heads of the daughters of Syon, and instead of ornamēt they shall have shame, and for their shoes and slippers, and chains,

⁵ From a miniature in oil in the possession of M. Messangere. See *Femmes célèbres; Portraits en pied*; Paris, 1841.

pretious stones, pommanders, glasses, and sweet sauors, they shall have stinke."

The simplest form the pomander-case assumed has been already mentioned ; a perforated ball which divides across the centre so as to admit the *pome* of perfume ; but other forms more ornamental or more elaborate were much affected. That of which I have had the pleasure to exhibit an example (*see* Fig. 3), is a type that found favour in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries : a base perforated beneath and fitted to hold some portion of perfume sustains a somewhat globular body, which divides like the segments of a pomegranate, and can be screwed together and suspended by the ring at its top. Each of these six segments is hollow and fitted to contain a distinct perfume, the name of which is sometimes found engraved on the little slide which closes the orifice of the segment. In the example here figured, which is of Dutch work, early in the seventeenth century, the base is elegantly perforated with a floriated design, and the globe, rising from a conventional leaf ornament, is quaintly engraved with figures of rabbits and squirrels. It is gilt within and partially so on the outside. Another specimen in the writer's possession (*see* Fig. 2) is somewhat oviform, of silver parcel-gilt, formed of delicate filigree work strengthened by bands of the metal and having a ring at the top for suspension ; it is Flemish or Dutch seventeenth century work.

Besides these specimens, it may be well to describe briefly a few other remarkable examples of pomanders.

A gold pomander, globular, openwork, wrought and chased, about 2 ins. diameter and weighing $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz., was found on the Surrey side of the Thames by "a bargeman while endeavouring to fix his anchor in the bank of the river." This fine example, dating from the close of the fifteenth or early part of the sixteenth century, was shown by Mr. Franks, at this Institute, in 1854.⁶

A very splendid specimen of a pendant jewel, somewhat globular in form, richly enamelled, which may probably have been used as a pomander, is in possession of the Empress of the French. This was graciously lent to the Special Exhibition of Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum, in 1872, and permitted to be photographed for the catalogue of that exhibition. It is of exquisite cinque-cento work.

⁶ See Arch. Journ. Vol. xi. p. 79.

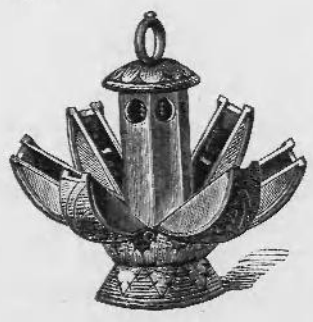
Fig. 1.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 2.



Ornament on base.

Pomanders.

There is at present in the collection of the same Museum a good specimen of somewhat similar design and ornament, also of the sixteenth century. Also a pomegranate-shaped example, in gilt metal, chased and set with enamel medallions of figure subjects. This divides into six segments, like those of an orange. It is German seventeenth century work.

Another is in the possession of Mr. Dunn Gardner, and now on loan at South Kensington. It is silver-gilt, somewhat globular, dividing into eight segments, chased and engraved with figures. Each segment was intended for a different perfume, and they are closed with the little slides previously alluded to, on which are written the names, as follows:—

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| No. 1. Canel (cinnamon). | No. 5. Ruten (rue). |
| 2. Blank. | 6. Rosen (rose). |
| 3. Rosmarin (rosemary). | 7. Lauendel (lavender). |
| 4. Schlag (Schlag-kraut,
Germander). | 8. Citronen (citron). |

Another, of similar design and workmanship, has six divisions for perfumes, on which are written (two of the covering slides are lost and one is blank)—

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| No. 1. Blank. | No. 4. and 5. Lost. |
| 2. Zimbt (cinnamon). | 6. Schlag. |
| 3. Muskatén (nutmeg). | |

A globular specimen of silver-gilt filigree is also in the collection at South Kensington. This is early seventeenth century work from Toledo, and is in the style of the Genoese filigree. Another, also Spanish, is pomegranate-shaped, and divided into eight segments; it is sixteenth century work; and lastly may be mentioned a small silver partly gilt specimen, much resembling one in my possession, and probably of English work: its date is about 1600.