

Buried Treasure

by Pinkney Gage



Colored Bull's-Eye Goblets Are Easily Worth \$300

Not long ago in visiting a home in southern Oregon I was astonished to come across a full set of violet-colored goblets in what is known as the bull's-eye and rosette pattern.

Three things were strange about it. First, the design is a fairly rare one, even in New England where it seems to have originated. Second, to have a full dozen of the goblets is almost unheard of, and third, except for this one set, I have never known them to be in color.

Essentially the design is a simple one. What it consists of is an alternating series of circles, or bull's-eyes, and rosettes, or stars, around the goblet just below the rim. On the inward curve of the bowl, pie-cut-shaped sections point downward to join each other at the beginning of the stem. Except for that there is no other ornamentation.

As for the color itself, it is a

pale violet that in certain lights seems almost to vanish only to reappear suddenly, and with a vivid brilliance.

I was astounded when our host used them to serve highballs, and I said so. "Might as well enjoy them," he rumbled. "Had them in the family ever since father moved here from Vermont in '76, and I'm sick of seeing 'em gather dust on a shelf."

"But they're irreplaceable," I said.

Our host nodded. "I know. My wife's been giving me the same tune off and on for years. She even wanted to sell the set once. Some antiquer was ready to give her three hundred dollars for it. About three times what it would bring in clear glass."

"But it wouldn't do. I forbade it. I'm going to enjoy those things of beauty that we have." And he turned toward the sideboard to pour himself another.

APPARENT TRAP REALLY AN EARLY AMERICAN TOASTER

"At first I thought it was a bear trap," said Fred, reaching down to the hearth and setting an iron instrument on the table, "one for a medium size bear."

"But then—pass the bread, please," and he took four slices from the tray, "it occurred to me there was no pan for the animal's foot and that it might just be a toaster. Which it is."

As he finished speaking he opened the jaws of the instrument inserted the slices in pairs, snapped the jaws shut and set it on the hearth, using the long handle to get it near the flames, and at an angle.

"But look here," I said, "how can you do four slices at a time. Are you just trying to warm up the outside two?"

"Not at all," he answered with a grin. "Our inventive ancestors know the value of reflected heat. The outside pieces will catch it from the side walls of the fireplace."

"But how did it get there, and where did you get it?" I asked.

Fred laughed. "Someone else must have thought it was a trap, too. I found it hanging, with several others in a second-hand store in Albany. Bought it for a dollar."

He leaned over to pull the toaster away from the fire while he switched the slices.

"As near as we can judge, it's anywhere from 150 to 250 years old. Maybe more, almost certainly no less. It's just a utensil, purely functional except for one thing. Take a look at the little piece below the jaws that hold the bottom side of the bread in place."

I had already noticed them, that they looked somewhat like the club insignia in a deck of cards, but now, on closer inspection I could see that they were a rough fleur-de-lis.

"That design was fairly common in the 1750's and earlier. Many a blacksmith used it in making such things as this for the local people." Fred removed the toast and set the ancient instrument back on the hearth.

It looked every bit as effective as the day the smith delivered it. "It's a wonderful thing to have," I said. "Its value is . . ."

"I have two offers for it," Fred broke in. "One from a museum and the other from a man who is collecting for a colonial kitchen. He's got up to one hundred fifty dollars, but I won't sell."

"PRISONER OF ZENDA" FIRST IS COLLECTOR'S ITEM

"The Prisoner of Zenda" is a whale of a good story for all those who like high adventure and romance. In fact, it is such a good one that a first edition of this noted work by Anthony Hope has distinction as a collector's item.

I learned this some years ago after already having given away—and without knowing it—a sound copy of the first edition.

I had given the book to a female cousin whom I liked very much, and one evening at dinner, when the conversation happened to touch on first editions, I was electrified to hear her say that I had given her one of "The Prisoner of Zenda."

I did not deny it, of course, and someone else asked me the embarrassment of asking how she recognized it as such.

"It's easy enough," she said, getting the book and bringing it to the table. "Just turn to page three hundred and ten."

The young gentlemen heard the volume did so.

"Now," resumed my cousin,

"the first issue of the first edition should have a line at the bottom of that page reading 'Printing Office of the Publisher.'"

"On the next page, which would be three hundred and eleven, under the heading of Arrowsmith's 3/6 Series, appear seventeen titles. If there should happen to be eighteen, then the book might be a second or third issue, but it definitely would not be a first."

The information seemed to be definitive. When the book came round to me, I saw that it was as she described, later confirming it through an expert.

As for the value of the book, first published in Bristol, England, by the way, back in 1894, it has been quoted in book auction records at \$37.50 in recent years.

But if you come across a copy, don't let it go for that. Not if it's in good condition. In such a case \$60 would definitely not be unreasonable.

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