
Koopman Rare Art

We are looking forward to exhibiting at The Winter Show, Park Avenue Armory, New York (23rd January - 1st February). We will be showcasing a selection of exceptional silver, jewellery and gold boxes. Amongst these objects is this glorious pair of silver-gilt pilgrim bottles made for Charles Gordon, 11th Marquess of Huntly.

[We look forward to welcoming you at Stand E3.](#)

Please let us know if you would like a ticket.

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A Pair of Victorian Silver-Gilt Pilgrim Flasks

London, 1890

Maker's mark of James Garrard, London, 1890

Height: 63.5 cm, 25 in, Weight: 9,775 g, 314 oz. 6 dwt

Provenance:

Anonymous sale; Christie's, New York, 25 October 1988, lot 196.

Anonymous sale; Christie's, New York, 21 April 1998, lot 149.

Literature:

M. Wrey ed., Christie's Review of the Season, London, 1989, p. 317

This week's Directors Choice focuses on this magnificent pair of Victorian pilgrim bottles. The history of these spectacular decorative objects is a fascinating journey and these oglorious ecorative triumphs were mad by the great firm of Garrard under the partnership of Sebastian and Robert Garrard.

Each flask has a flattened circular body, chased and is engraved on one side with scenes of medieval knights and horses in rocky landscapes with castles in the distance. The other side engraved with a crest, raised on a spreading rectangular stem and a shaped oval foot. This in turn chased with scrolling foliage, mermaids, and grotesque masks. The cylindrical neck with acanthus, dolphins, and flowering urns is topped by a fixed domed cover chased with leaves and with a beaded border. The scrolled handles cast with grotesque heads and acanthus issuing from the mouths of turtles surmounted by putti.





This magnificent pair of pilgrim flasks were inspired by an unmarked German silver-gilt pilgrim flask, produced in Nuremburg circa 1540, now preserved in the Green Vaults, Dresden (inventory no. IV 253). Cast, chased and applied details, from tops of the handles down to the to the feet, are faithfully reproduced, though the Dresden example is applied at the neck with the coat-of-arms of the Electorate of Saxony, and is slightly taller, at a height of 31 in. (81cm.).



German silver-gilt pilgrim flask, probably produced in Nuremburg circa 1540, now preserved in the Green Vaults, Dresden (inventory no. IV 253).

Pilgrim bottles have a rich history that dates back to ancient Roman times in the West and

to 7th-century China in the East. These vessels were made in a wide range of materials, including earthenware, porcelain, silver, and glass, and in more perishable materials such as leather. Originally, they were carried by travellers on their journeys, but the ones that have survived are so sumptuous that their function was probably purely ornamental. If they were used, it must have been, as in the case of some of the traveling tea or coffee sets of Meissen porcelain, exclusively by the very wealthy.



Ming dynasty Gift of Edward G. Kennedy, 1929

Object Number: 29.110.29 (1368–1644)

Metropolitan Museum ©

Pottery pilgrim bottles are found in China from the Tang dynasty (618–907), possibly imitations of even earlier metal prototypes dating as far back as the Zhou dynasty (1111–255 bce). In 16th-century Europe, metal pilgrim bottles—generally of silver or silver gilt and probably of Chinese inspiration—were made mainly in Augsburg, Germany, they were also made in coloured glass (generally green) with ormolu, or gilded brass, mounts. Along with

the Chinese blue-and-white Ming (1368–1644) pilgrim bottles, the most famous are the pear-shaped stoneware bottles made at Meissen by Johann Friedrich Böttger.



This pilgrim bottle from France was probably made as a diplomatic gift for a foreign Protestant prince, Johann Casimir of Bavaria (1543–1592), whose arms appear on it. The decorative scheme of fabulous beings, fruits, birds, and masks is derived from the work of the engraver and architect Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1510/12–1585). Metropolitan Museum ©

The form of the 'pilgrim flask' has its roots in the leather water flask carried by the pilgrim or traveller of the Middle Ages. Timothy Schroder in *The Gilbert Collection of Silver and Gold*, Los Angeles, 1988, p. 455, traces the development of the form to French silver examples of the late 16th century; although described as 'flagons' they have the same pear-shaped form, elongated neck and oval section of later examples. A rare French Renaissance example, with dragon-shaped chain attachments, engraved with the arms of King Henri III, is preserved in the chapel of the Order of the Saint-Esprit, Paris (Carl Hernmarck, *The Art of European Silversmith, 1430-1830*, London, vol. II, p. 97, pl. 292). Popular until the end of the 16th century, a revival of their manufacture took place in the 1660s. Particularly grand flasks with fine cut-card work were produced in the late 17th and early 18th century. They provided the inspiration for the London goldsmiths such as Edward Farrell, Rundell, Bridge and Rundell and Robert Garrard in the 19th century. They were used as grand display plate and many of the later examples were presentation pieces for the Royal Families of Europe such as the pair which were given by the Royal Families of Greece

and Denmark to Alexander III on his marriage to Marie-Fedorovna in 1866.



*A pair of George iv silver pilgrim-flasks. Mark of John Bridge, London, 1828
The arms are those of Neeld for Joseph Neeld (1789-1856) of Grittleton House, Wiltshire.
Similar bottles can be found in the collections of the Musée du Louvre, Paris and the
Kremlin Museums, Moscow.
Formerly in the Koopman Rare Art Collection*

Across all periods, silver pilgrim bottles carried layered meanings. Their form evoked the Christian pilgrim's journey and with-it Medieval piety. By the late Middle Ages, wealthy families began keeping pilgrim bottles as status symbols, even before they were made in silver. However, their shape lent themselves decoratively and often as pairs they were arranged symmetrically in a room signalling wealth and refinement. Their engraved coat-of-arms provided the aristocratic lineage of families linking the owner to his or her noble ancestry and collectors prized their form and the vessel's connection to ancient and medieval prototypes. It is not clear why such an antique form was used to create plate, but from the Middle Ages they began to be kept by wealthy noble families as symbols of their wealth and taste. Their form and the earliest versions, here in England, were brought by the Huguenot (French Protestant) goldsmiths.





The man who commissioned our wonderful pilgrim bottles was Charles Gordon, 11th Marquess of Huntly, PC, DL, JP (5 March 1847 – 20 February 1937). Styled Lord Strathavon until 1853 and Earl of Aboyne between 1853 and 1863, he was a Scottish Liberal politician. He served under William Ewart Gladstone, and was appointed Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms between January and June 1881. The Marquess of Huntly is a title in the Peerage of Scotland that was created on in 1599 for George Gordon, 6th Earl of Huntly. It is the oldest existing marquessate in Scotland, and the second oldest in the British Isles; only the English marquessate of Winchester is older.

Huntly was the son of Charles Gordon, 10th Marquess of Huntly, by his second wife Maria Antoinette, daughter of Reverend Peter William Pegus, and succeeded to the marquessate in 1863 at the age of sixteen. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1870 Huntly was appointed a Lord-in-waiting (government whip in the House of Lords) in the first Liberal administration of William Ewart Gladstone, a post he held until 1873, and served from January to June 1881 as Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms (government chief whip in the House of Lords) in Gladstone's second administration.

In 1881 he was sworn in the Privy Council.

Apart from his political career, Lord Huntly was Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen between 1890, 1893 and 1896. He also published *Auld Acquaintances and Milestones* and

edited *Records of Aboyne*. He was also a member of Huntingdonshire County Council.

Lord Huntly married firstly Amy, daughter of Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, 1st Baronet, in 1869. After her death in 1920 he married secondly Charlotte Isabella, daughter of John H. Fallon and widow of James McDonald, in 1922. Both marriages were childless. Huntly died in February 1937, aged 89, and was succeeded in the marquessate by his great-nephew, Douglas Gordon. The Marchioness of Huntly died in May 1939.

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