

## Reconsidering a Match Holder

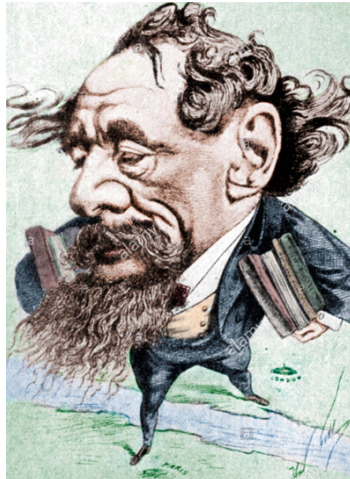
By Neil Shapiro

Prior to 1998 when IMSA was founded, match safe/match holder research was essentially non-existent. Since then many members of IMSA have significantly improved our knowledge of all aspects of match safes. But as we continue to do research we learn more about the objects we collect and sometimes we need to re-examine some conclusions we've drawn or even look again at objects that we did not know anything about and realize that there are new interpretations we can make about those objects.

Last year, I co-wrote a book, *Night Lights & Envelope Sealers*, and in that book one of the match holders made by E.G. Zimmermann, was labeled, "Gnome." I called it "gnome" because I did not know what the holder was and to my mind it sort of looked like a gnome. In hindsight, this was wrong. An image of the match holder is below:



By chance I was reading about French caricatures in 19<sup>th</sup> century France and happened upon several examples of André Gill's (1840 -1885,) work. In the 1860-1870s, Gill was the most famous caricaturist in France. Gill drew full-page colored illustrations of famous personalities that were published on the covers of large-format caricature journals. When displayed on newsstands, they functioned as political posters. His work featured a style of enlarged heads dwarfing undersized bodies, often copied by later cartoonists. It occurred to me that Gill's drawings looked very similar to my Zimmermann match holder's form. Two examples of Gill's style are shown below:



In going through Gill's work I could not find an image that matched the match holder made by Zimmermann. That may mean that I did not locate Gill's entire body of work or the match holder's likeness was original to the Zimmermann foundry or more likely, the match holder was copied from another caricaturist's work.

It would be wonderful and helpful for further research if we could identify the likeness depicted by the Zimmermann match holder and if anyone in IMSA knows who this may be would they please let me know.

Some thoughts that may aid in discovering the identity of the person caricatured on the match holder: the caricature depiction of people often harbor hints to their personality, personal traits, livelihood, fame, etc. The Zimmermann match holder is sporting a tasseled smoking cap, similar to a fez. Does the cap hint at a man sitting in his home smoking and thinking? Perhaps, the man is known as a punctilious sort who does not want his hair to smell of smoke. Maybe, the cap hints at someone involved in Turkish, Arabic, or Chinese businesses.

Another noticeable style trait of the holder is the winged collar that was new in the 1850s. Humorously, it was called a "patricide" since when the father of the wearer hugged his son wearing these sort of collars the points of the collars cut his father's throat. These collars were often worn with formal wear and the match holder figure appears to have on a formal jacket.

Since the 1860-1870s was a prolific time for both Gill and Zimmermann there may be a connection between the two. If anyone knows of such a connection please let me know.

While I was reconsidering the Zimmermann match holder I looked one again at a holder that seems to depict a Turkish soldier with a rifle by his side and a cat perched upon his



head. I thought this holder may also be a caricature and sifting through the various websites that have images for Turkish soldiers during the mid- 19th century I saw several that may have been the inspiration for this holder.



These two images of Sipahi warriors (members of the Ottoman Empire cavalry) show elaborate ornaments on their helmets, ornaments that would be easy to caricature with a recumbent cat.

Without a deep knowledge of this historical period, I can't state that Austria and Austrians wanted to ridicule the Turks, but Austria did declare war on the Ottoman Empire, so it is possible that a match holder making fun of a Turkish warrior would be made for sale.

With all of the above said, I could be suffering from an over active imagination, but part of the fun of collecting, for me, is trying to figure out who made the object, why it was made, what is it made from, and where was it made.

I welcome any and all comments about this essay.