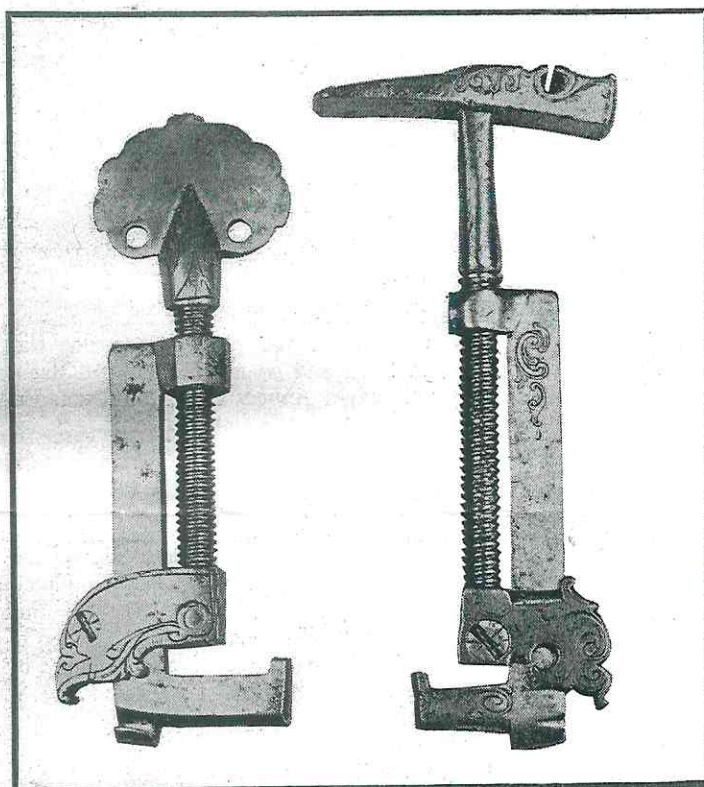


# MIQUELET ACCESSORIES

By JAMES DUNCAN LAVIN



1 Two Spanish miquelet mainspring vises dating from the second half of the 18th century.

## Some of the tools used with the distinctive Spanish lock

COMPARED with the conventional flintlock, the Spanish miquelet lock has been neglected by firearms students. An archaic development, its intrinsic excellence and perhaps traditional Spanish conservatism caused it to be retained and perfected on the Iberian Peninsula almost to the exclusion of the more sophisticated French flintlock. Its peculiar construction necessitated the employment of some accessories not identical to those used on the flintlock of French style. Other implements, although universally applicable, retained through custom a shape or style of decoration common only to the Iberian Peninsula. In nearly every case these accessories were made, and often signed and dated, by the gunsmith himself.

Of primary interest are those accessories made for use by the owner rather than by the manufacturer of the arm. Since Spanish firearms are never found cased with their accessories, some of these have not until recently been associated with their true purpose.

Apart from the screwdriver, the most elementary tool required by the 18th-century sportsman was the mainspring vise. Upon the heavy, externally

mounted mainspring of the miquelet, inverted in relation to that of the flintlock, the ordinary spring clamp was useless. Illustrated in Fig. 1 are 2 Spanish mainspring vises recently discovered by the author in England. These vises are similar to the 17th century flintlock vise before the latter acquired the horizontal traveling jaw familiar during the 18th century. Their application to the lock is shown in Figs. 2 and 3. The relatively large size of the vises is accounted for by the superior strength of the miquelet mainspring.

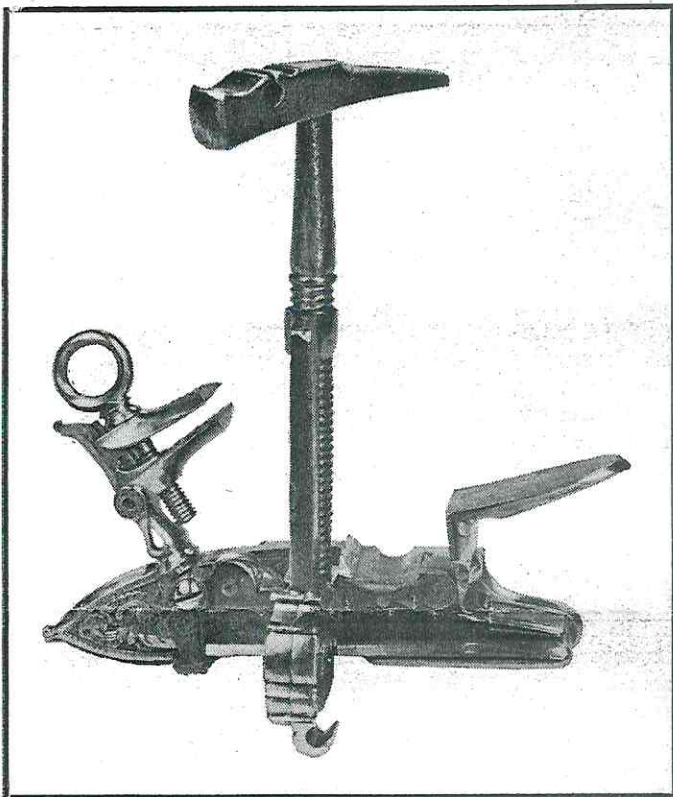
### Disadvantages in design

Two inherent disadvantages are apparent in the design of these vises. Since they are anchored to the base of the plate, it is impossible to remove and replace the mainspring while it is compressed. Also, as a result of the greatly varying widths of miquelet mainsprings, it was also necessary that the vise be tailored to the individual lock. This involved varying the length of the fixed base jaw to allow the movable leaf of the spring to remain just within the confines of the vertical arm. While the

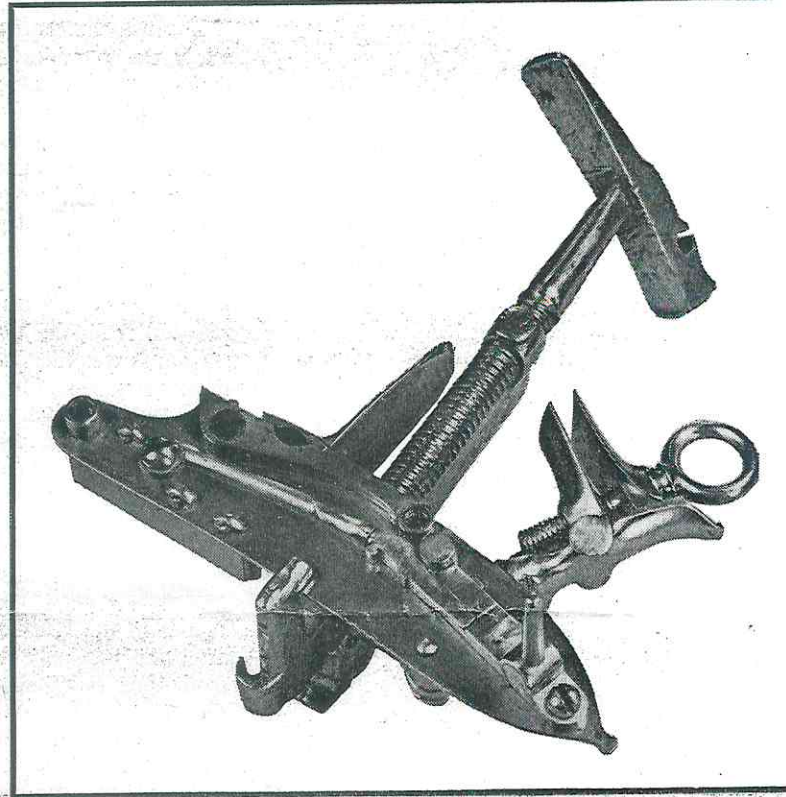
use of too small a vise was impossible, too large a vise would cock and bind under the pressure of the mainspring. This meant that a gunsmith, who was expected to work on all sizes of locks, was required to maintain a complete range of vises.

One can only speculate on the use of the small hook to be found at the base of each vise. However, with the traveling jaw screwed to the top of the vise, this hook, engaged from below over the end of the upper jaw of the battery spring and levered downward against the lower jaw, quite conveniently compresses the battery spring, allowing the removal of the battery screw. This is possible only on the *tres modas* form of miquelet lock—that with the conventionally shaped plate (Fig. 2)—since only on that lock was the battery spring mounted forward of the battery and not enclosed behind the abnormally large battery bridle found upon the traditional wasp-waisted or *espanola* lock. During the 18th century, the former lock was manufactured almost entirely in Madrid and Barcelona while the latter continued in popularity in Ripoll and the provinces.



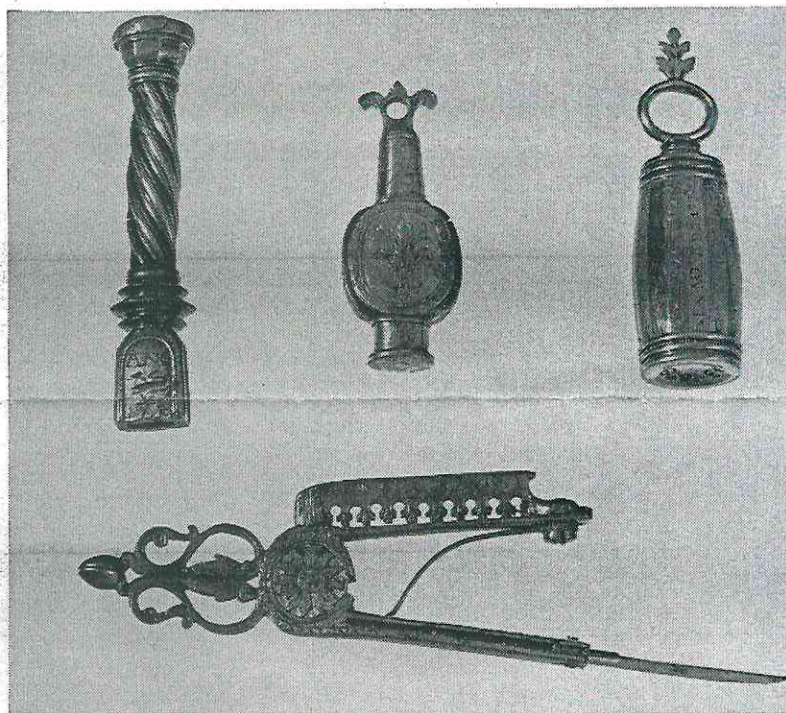
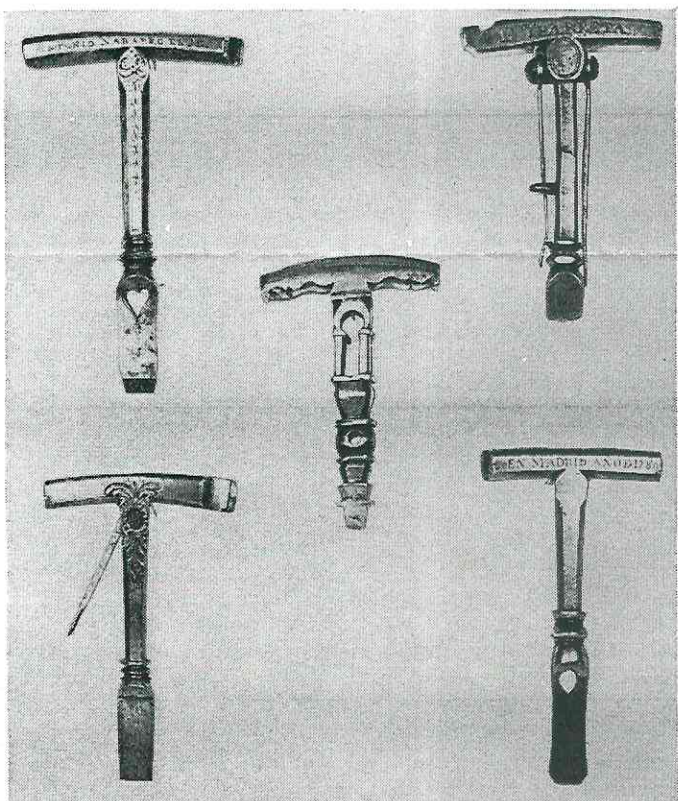


2 Mainspring vise shown applied to a miquelet lock; the spring fully compressed. The decoration shows the vise to be almost contemporary with the lock which is dated 1775.



3 Interior of the Fig. 2 miquelet lock, showing the manner of attaching the mainspring vise to the lower edge of the plate.

4 Spanish *eslabones* or fire strikers. Held by the handle forming the screwdriver blade, the curved upper surface was struck against a flint to produce a spark. That signed "d Ybarreta" (upper right) incorporates a dog whistle and 2 touch hole picks. 18th century. Victoria & Albert Museum.



5 (l.-r., at top) A steel handle, gunsmith made, probably from a seal, dated 1778 and 2 engraved steel oil bottles with dippers attached to their stoppers. The bottle on the right is signed: "Francisco Antonio Garcia, En Madrid, Ano de 1774." (Below) Combination fire striker, tongs, and penknife signed: "Gabiola / En Eybar." Victoria & Albert Museum.

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Because the mainspring vise did not allow the removal of the compressed mainspring, a particular sequence of disassembly of the lock had to be observed. First the cock was cocked, both compressing the mainspring and allowing space for the vise to be fitted between the cock and pan. Then, holding the cock, the arm of the sear was drawn to the rear and the cock eased forward until it moved freely upon its screw, released from the tension of the mainspring. It was then necessary to remove the screws retaining first the full-cock, then the half-cock sears and separate these pieces from the plate. If the half-cock sear was of the type engaging the shoulder of the cock foot (Fig. 2), it would catch the mainspring as the latter was released and could be damaged by the upward pressure. The mainspring was then released and the cock bridle swung to the rear to allow its removal after the retaining wedges were driven from their holes inside the plate. After this the bridle could be completely unscrewed. The small hook at the base of the vise could be used as described to compress the battery spring while the battery screw and battery were subsequently removed. The battery spring was separated from the plate in the same manner as the mainspring. On the Spanish lock, the pan was almost always permanently attached directly to the plate.

### T-shaped fire strikers

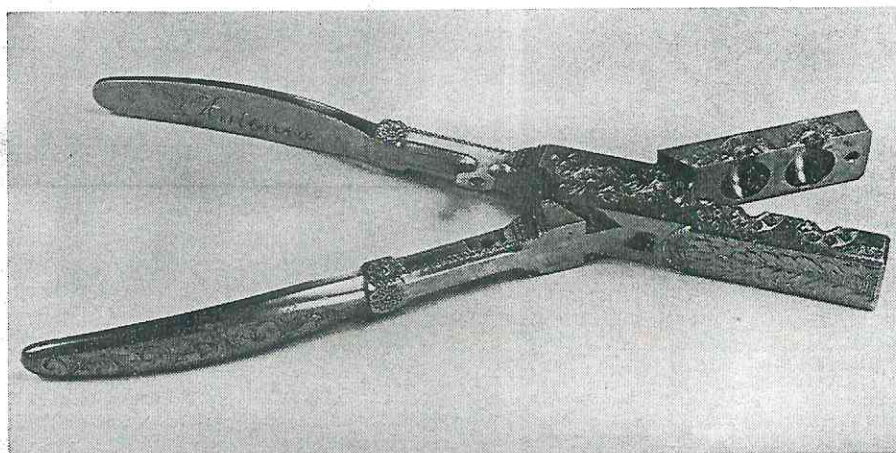
Peculiarly Spanish are the T-shaped *eslabones* or fire strikers which double as screwdrivers. These appear to have been first used during the latter part of the 17th century and remained in vogue until the demise of the miquelet flintlock. The upper surface of the cross-bar is striated in the same manner as the face of the earlier miquelet battery

and was used to the same end. One end of the bar served as a hammer, ostensibly for shaping flints although considerable dexterity, probably beyond the skill of the average sportsman, would be required for this. As can be seen in Fig. 4, many 18th century examples were fitted with touch hole prickers and one, signed "d Ybarreta", incorporates a dog whistle. These pieces are usually found signed by the gunsmith, often with the same mark or countermark used for marking barrels. The *eslabon* and mainspring vise were the only tools required for dismounting the miquelet.

### Another version

Another version of the *eslabon* is that in which the fire striker forms one handle of a pair of tongs used for transferring the lighted coal. The example shown in Fig. 5, signed by the gunsmith Gabiola of Eibar early in the 19th century, contains the blade of a penknife in its opposite handle. Also in Fig. 5 are shown 2 small oil cans, the one on the right signed and dated 1774 in Madrid by the gunsmith Francisco Antonio Garcia who in 1788 became royal smith to Carlos IV. Garcia is also responsible for an excellent powder horn with belt hook dated 1789 now in the Real Armeria, Madrid.

One universal accessory was the bullet mold. The only distinction which Spanish molds seem to have enjoyed besides their manufacture by the gunsmiths themselves was their ornate decoration which rivaled that of engraved steel gun mounts. The 2-cavity mold by Antonio Bellido (Fig. 6) casts balls of approximately cal. .63. The smith's first name is engraved inside one handle while his surname appears inverted inside the other handle so that both sides may be read from the same position without turning the mold.



6 Two-cavity Spanish bullet mold of approximately cal. .63. Signed "Antonio Bellido." Late 18th century.