

# *I thought it was a Lebeau*



A dear friend, gun seller working in Como, sends me the photos of an over and under, reported as Lebeau & Courally, oddly without signatures both on the action and on the barrels. More than that the Belgian punches are accompanied by those of the Italian test rig. Not having in my hands the curious item, after an exchange of views among us, I answer to my friend that, as we cannot neglect the affirmation of the report, it could be a Lebeau & Courally done before the mod. 112. . The evident graft of new pipes explains the Italian punches and the absence of signature.

Perhaps it is a handmade product built on a Lebeau's action. From the few photos received





by mail it is not possible to say more.

Some days passed, as I had to go to Bergamo to treat a superb .450 Purdey hammer rifle, I reach my friend to solve the doubts on the



(perhaps) Lebeau.

The bare aspect and the re-piping weigh as a stone on the first impression. Handling it, the music changes. The toplever's spring works really fine and the bolt has no clearance. The opening of the barrels cocks the tumblers with a correct equilibrium among mechanical resistances and "work" of the hands. The expulsion of



the cartridges is that of the noblest platform gun.

Lumps, mortises and closing are finished at the most. A layer of hardened black grease covers a

good part of the movements of the locks.

The work on the barrels penalizes the gun, but the evident quality of the mechanics and the desire to investigate keep the upper hand. After a friendly brief negotiation, I go back home satisfied and



curious as a child that can't wait to look how the new toy is made inside.

## *Surprise!*

The locks, once freed by the old grease, confirm me the quality of the gun. The parts are adjusted with care, the springs are well done, the screws are blocked by conter-screws. Once removed the dirt there is the coveted revelation: the lens magnifies the punch of August Francotte inside the plates.



Let's go, then, looking into the books. As it often happens in Italy, it is in the work of Gianoberto Lupi that the answer is found; the Francotte O/U is neatly and clearly explained and illustrated.

Once more thankful to the author, a consideration comes to me. I don't understand those people that, underline the defects rather than the merits of Lupi. A little haughtiness, sometimes an eye that looks more to the case than to the art, they are in my opinion not relevant marks, most of all if they are compared with the value of his work. An exemplary work that has taught to all of us. Lupi has correctly narrated with a flowing pen the becoming of a category of guns, making them well comprehensible. But this is not his only credit. While exposing in a plain way the pertinent basic mechanical



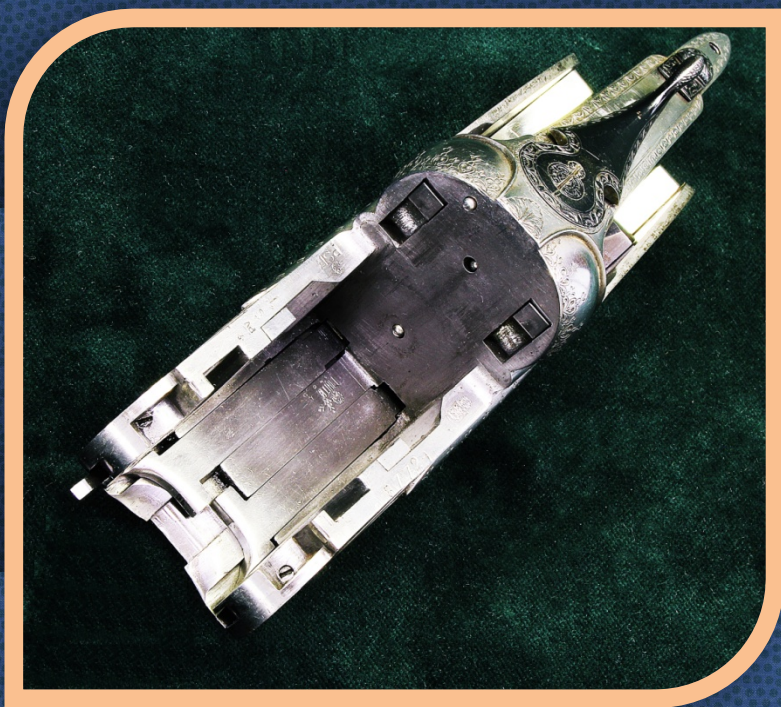
notions, he has put the most motivated people on the way of the autonomous investigation with an empirical approach.

Let's investigate, then. Once removed the trigger guard and three screws, action and stock are separated. The mechanics inside the action are the

most rational I've ever seen in an old O/U. Two cocking slides on the bottom, two cams that cock the tumblers, the strikers and the spindle of the top lever that commands the bolt.

Everything is dimensioned and treated to last.

The high positioning of the two bolts is wise, in this way they more effectively tighten the two shelves that jut out from the breech end of the upper barrel. The blocks on the side of the action, touched by the anterior faces of the lumps, are replaceable.







The rotation pins of the barrels are machined from solid.

The opening of the barrels provokes the withdrawal of the two slides on the bottom of the action.

Two cams (1) rotate under the movement of the slides and cock the tumblers (2).

I receive another surprise from the single trigger mechanism.

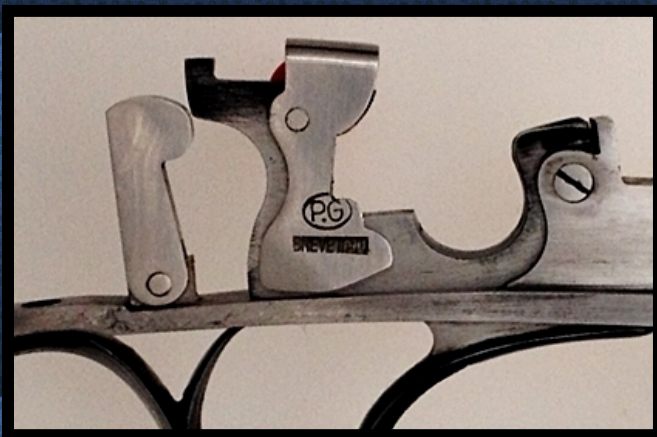
It is not Francotte, moreover the gun was born as double trigger.

A single trigger mechanism

punched "P.G brevettato" (patented) has been mounted on the original trigger plate.

Tried with sporting clays, it works great. It is a pity that there is no barrel selector. I pray who knows this P.G to inform me, please. The transformation probably dates back to 1960.

The ejector is designed with vigilant competence, it is done for working





without uncertainties.

Once fired the cartridge of the lower barrel, the right tumbler frees its own cocking slide (1), this one activates, so, the snap-action mechanism (2) of the ejector's little hammer (3). The hammer release will happen, obviously, with the barrels fully open.



*...instead, it is a Francotte.*

If I had not observed the creature of Francotte up to the last screw, I would have given a wrong judgment of it. It is possible to perceive that in this O/U from the 30s the search of distinctiveness is nullified by the lack of a rich engraving. Another thing is the quality hidden to the eyes. If, in mechanics, the illuminated simplicity is a merit, here we reach the genius. No acrobatics, here there is only the necessary and sufficient, realized with extreme care. A milestone in the becoming of the over and under.

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