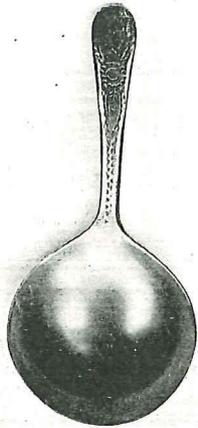


EAN

THE EDUCATION of a SPOON COLLECTOR

By DR. WILFRED HARRIS



No. I.—MY FIRST ACQUISITION: A FEATHER-EDGE CADDY SPOON OF 1790

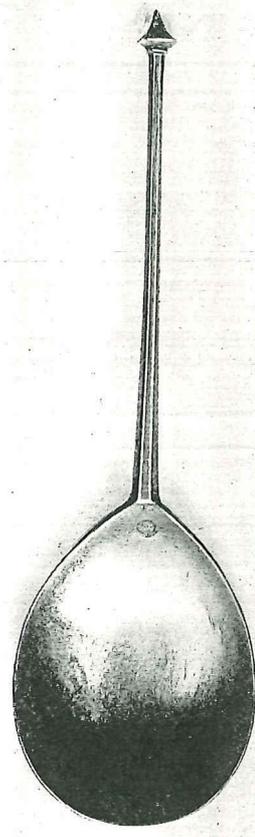
IT was in 1887 that I bought my first piece of old silver, a small feather-edge caddy spoon of 1790, for half a crown (No. i). I still think it is pretty. It is shown here with my last acquisition, a diamond-top spoon of circa 1400 (No. ii). My second piece, bought the next year at Cambridge, a nice George II cream jug, was sold to me as Queen Anne! To this day I dislike that shop, and would never enter it again. Feather-edge spoons and Georgian silver appealed to me for some years, and gradually I accumulated sufficient plain Old English-type table, tea and dessert spoons for the house. Three-pronged Georgian forks I could not afford, so had them made from a fine Georgian model in Britannia standard, at

one-sixth the price. The older William and Mary and Jacobean forks I think extremely ugly, though doubtless rare and valuable. I bought Jackson's *English Goldsmiths* when published in 1905, and his illustrated *History of English Plate* in 1911, and gradually began to learn to distinguish the marks of the different cycles of date-letters, and something of the varying forms of plate in the different reigns and centuries. One reason for collecting spoons rather than larger pieces of silver is that tankards, cups and standing salts, etc., of sixteenth-century date are so very rare and expensive that comparatively few can afford them, and fifteenth-century plate is so scarce that it never comes into the open market, and is to be found only in the possession of city guilds, colleges and museums. Spoons, on the other hand, of Elizabethan origin are not so uncommon, while those of Henry VIII period, Edward VI and Queen Mary, though much scarcer and more expensive, are still to be captured at auction occasionally. Spoons of Henry VII period and earlier are rare indeed, and if in fine condition with full London marks will cost a lot of money. Yet even now good diamond-points of the Fifteenth Century, or earlier, may be obtained at a reasonable price if they bear no hall-marks, either London or provincial. I have seen a fine unmarked diamond-point knocked down at auction as recently as three years ago for nine pounds. If such a spoon were stamped in the bowl with a good mark of the uncrowned leopard it would be the object of keen competition,

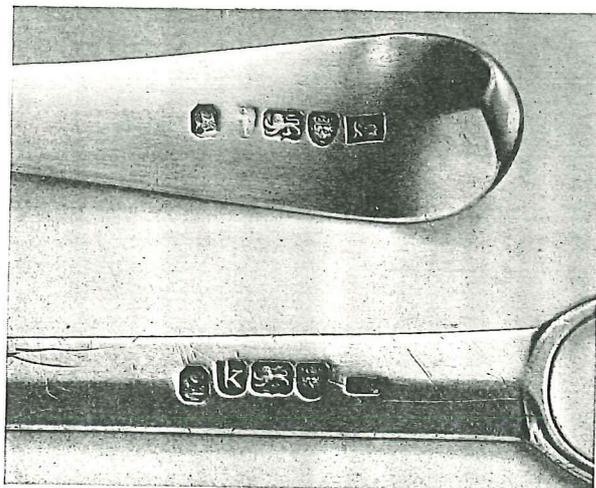
and would certainly fetch a substantial sum.

Gradually one's taste tends to reject the modern for the older types, and though plain Georgian silver still pleases us as a half-pint mug, or household spoons and forks, we no longer look on a Georgian spoon, even by Hester Bateman, as more than an article for domestic use. With a few exceptions this period loses its charm, though I always feel interested in pieces with the incuse sovereign's head of 1784-5, and I still keep in my silver cabinet a soup ladle marked with the *i* and the incuse head of the few months from December 1784 to May 1785 (Nos. iii and iv).

Christening spoons have a very special human interest, whether it be a simple Georgian or seal-top or trefid with the child's initials, and perhaps the donor's and the date engraved, or the richer apostle. In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries the giving of sets of twelve or thirteen apostle spoons was fashionable amongst the wealthy, and single spoons might be chosen to match the child's name, as John, Peter, Andrew, etc. Even Nicholas and Christopher have been used, but I have seen only one each of these. Shakespeare in *King Henry VIII*, Act V, Sc. 3, when Cranmer hesitates to accept the office of godfather to a maid, makes the King say, 'Come, come, my lord, you'd spare your spoons.' I have three George II tablespoons of 1736-40, engraved *E.H.*, *M.H.*, and *S.H.* The two latter spoons were made in 1738 and 1740, which fit the engraved dates of birth, but *E.H.*'s spoon, engraved *Born March ye 2 1735/6*, has the date-letter *a* of 1736-7, so evidently his spoon was an afterthought (No. v). More interesting are some seal-tops, two of Lincoln belonging to the same child, the smaller spoon engraved *M.O.*

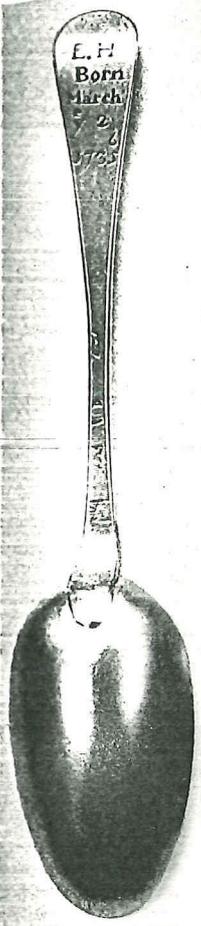


No. II.—MY LAST ACQUISITION: A DIAMOND-TOP SPOON, C. 1400 WITH THE UNCROWNED LEOPARD HEAD IN BOWL

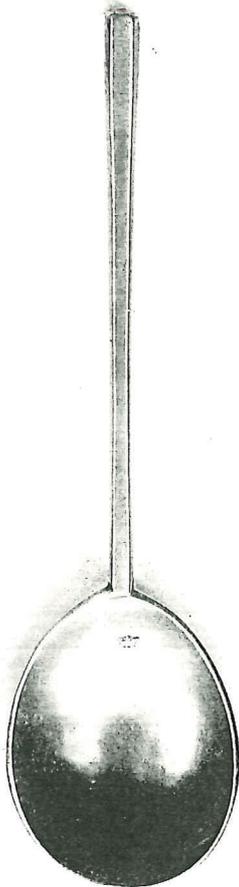


Nos. III & IV.—TOP, LADLE, INCUSE HEAD OF SOVEREIGN, 1784 BELOW, SKEWER WITH INCUSE HEAD OF SOVEREIGN, 1785

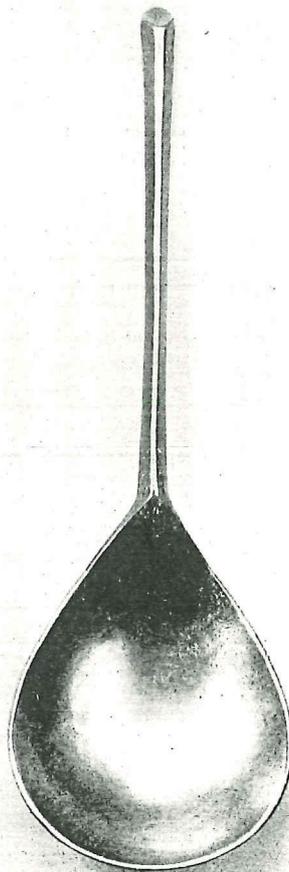
THE EDUCATION OF A SPOON COLLECTOR



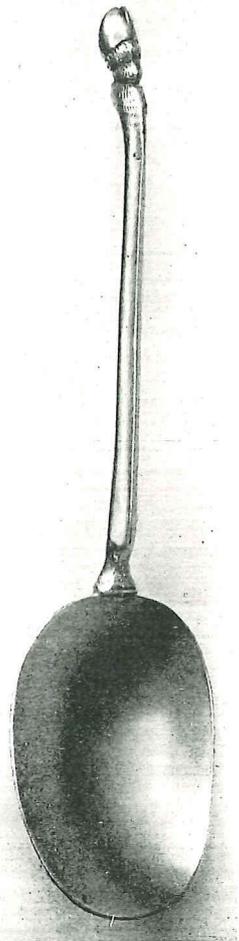
No. V.—CHRISTENING SPOON, GEORGE II, 1736



No. VII.—STUMP-TOP, ONE OF A PAIR, 1635

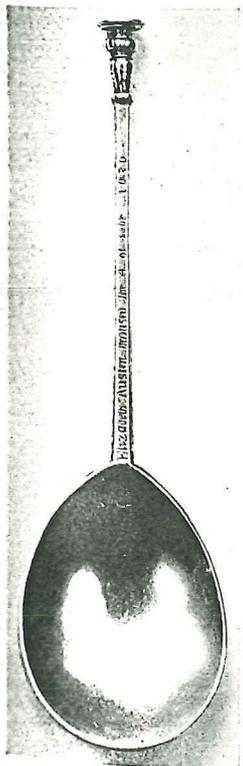


No. VIII.—A FRENCH SLIP-TOP OF CIRCA 1400



No. IX.—HOOF-TOP OF C.1825

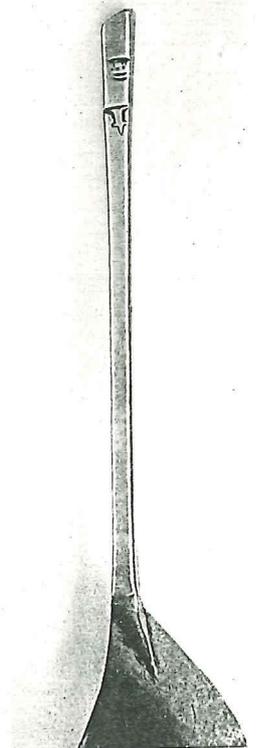
No. VI.—CHRISTENING SPOON, CHARLES I, 1636

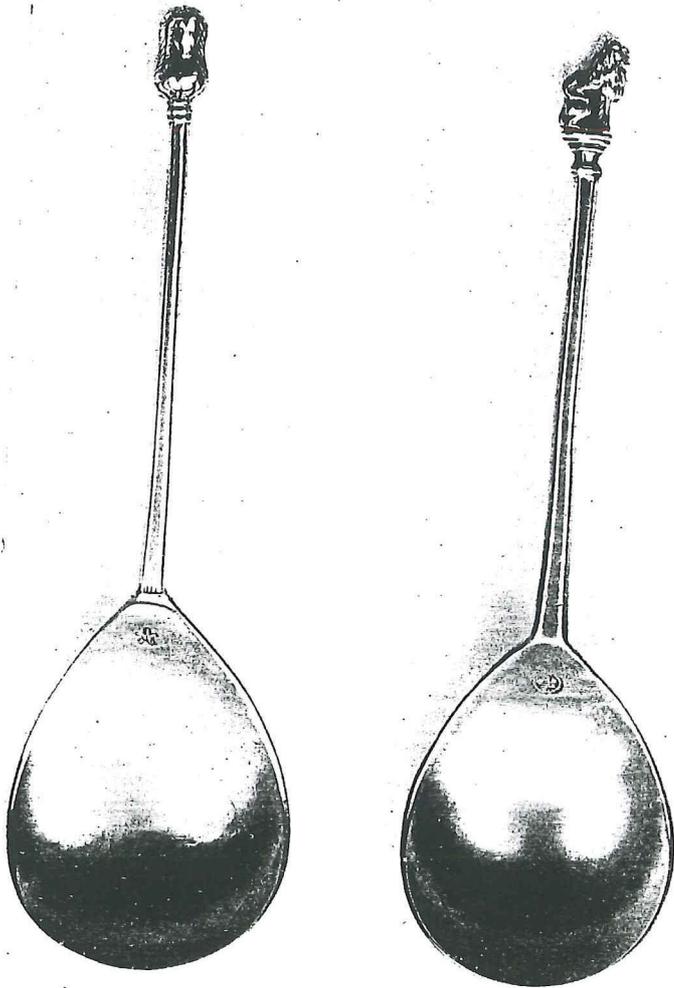


W.O. 1622, and the other with another donor's initials, *W.S. 1622*, on the seal, and engraved on the back of the stem *W.O. Borne thursdayer night: 5: of December 1622*. The smaller spoon bears obviously, on the back of the bowl, the pointed marks of *W.O.*'s molars, a very human touch which only spoons can show. Another, also of Lincoln, has engraved on the stem *O.P. Borne a wensdayer 6 December*, with initials *R.G. 1620*, of the donor. A fourth seal-top, of London 1636, is engraved on the front of the stem *Elizabeth Austen baptised the 4 of febr 1636*, with the child's initials *E.A.* pricked on the seal (No. vi). In Jackson's *History of English Plate*, Vol. II, Fig. 643, page 512, is illustrated a similar spoon of 1610, which has engraved on the front of the stem *Margaret Austen borne the 11 day of September 1610*. Surely this spoon must have belonged to the same family as my spoon, probably to an aunt of Elizabeth. Sir Charles Jackson was so interested in acquiring makers' marks that he came to see my early efforts at collecting when I wrote to say I had three marks unheralded in his famous first edition. I was thrilled to watch him making his records by pressing small pieces of tinfoil into the marks and putting them away in a small matchbox.

Seal-tops next attracted me, and I acquired gradually quite a number, some with balusters below the seal, but presently they began to pall, and two pairs of slip-tops, 1628 and 1629, and a pair of stump-tops, 1635, varied the collection. Slip-tops were made from the latter end of the Fifteenth Century to past the middle of the Seventeenth; they are always marked with the date-letter near the sloped end of the stem, it is said to prevent thieves shortening the spoon. They are said to represent the idea of the primitive stick-and-shell spoon of uncivilized man. Stump-tops are much rarer, even singly, though flat-stemmed, square-ended spoons approaching the

No. X.—MARKS ON STEM OF FRENCH SLIP-TOP, No. VIII





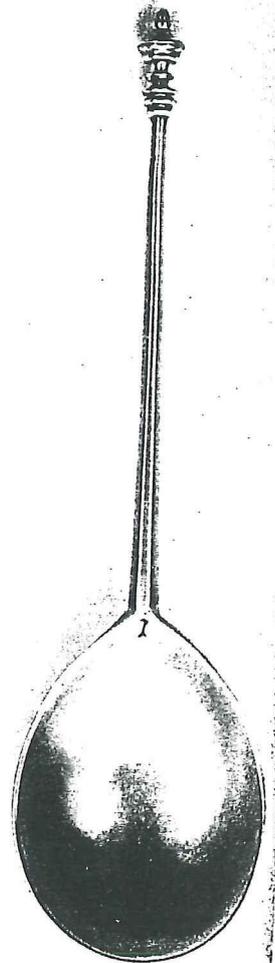
No. XI.—MAIDENHEAD, C. 1470, PROVINCIAL

No. XII.—LION SEJANT SINISTER PROVINCIAL, C. 1470

or apostle, where the finial is soldered into the top of stem. In all these the bowl and stem are hammered out one piece of silver. I have also a small hoof-end medicine spoon, the gift of a friend, in which the bowl is a handshell, to which the stem is clipped. Jackson, in *The Spoon and Its History*, mentions shells as having been used spoons in very early times. Gold spoons are now extremely rare, but in the Old Testament (Numbers vii. 86) it is stated that the princes of Israel gave twelve gold spoons weighing ten shekels each, equal to $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz., for the dedication of the altar in the tabernacle. In mediaeval times gold spoons were found only in Royal collections: Henry VIII had a considerable number, but all have vanished, probably melted down by Charles I. Even silver spoons were owned and prized only by the better class, while pewter and wood were the materials for the spoons of the common people.

Lion sejanter and *Maidenhead* spoons are fascinating, and are met with from the Fifteenth to the early Seventeenth Century. Very few fifteenth-century examples are known and the two I have of this period are provincial, the *maidenhead* marked in the bowl with a cinquefoil like starfish, and a maker's mark of a saltire on the back of the stem (No. xi). The *Virgin's figure* is quite different from the rather stereotyped sixteenth-century form, a lovely spoon. The *lion sejanter* is unique in that he is sitting sinister instead of *affronté*, which is almost invariable, and with his tail curled inside his right leg instead of the left, as in all other *lions sejanter* (No. xii). There is one in the Victoria and Albert Museum where the lion is sitting dexter, but his head is *affronté*. My spoon is marked in the bowl with a five-petalled flower. Both spoons are beautifully made, and have the deeply dropped bowl so characteristic of the second half of the Fifteenth Century. Another *lion sejanter* of Edward VI, 1548, has the *lion passant* on the stem marked with a crown.

Wrythen knops are extremely scarce, and their period covers barely eighty years. I have a perfect specimen of 1509 which was found a few years ago under some flooring in an old manor house in the south of England, black with age, but when cleaned proved to be not at all corroded, and was in mint state, as though unused (No. xv). Another larger one, with the deeply dropped bowl *circa* 1460, has a fine uncrowned leopard's head in the bowl in a circle of pellets, with the Lombardic letter B stamped on the protruded tongue, and a maker's



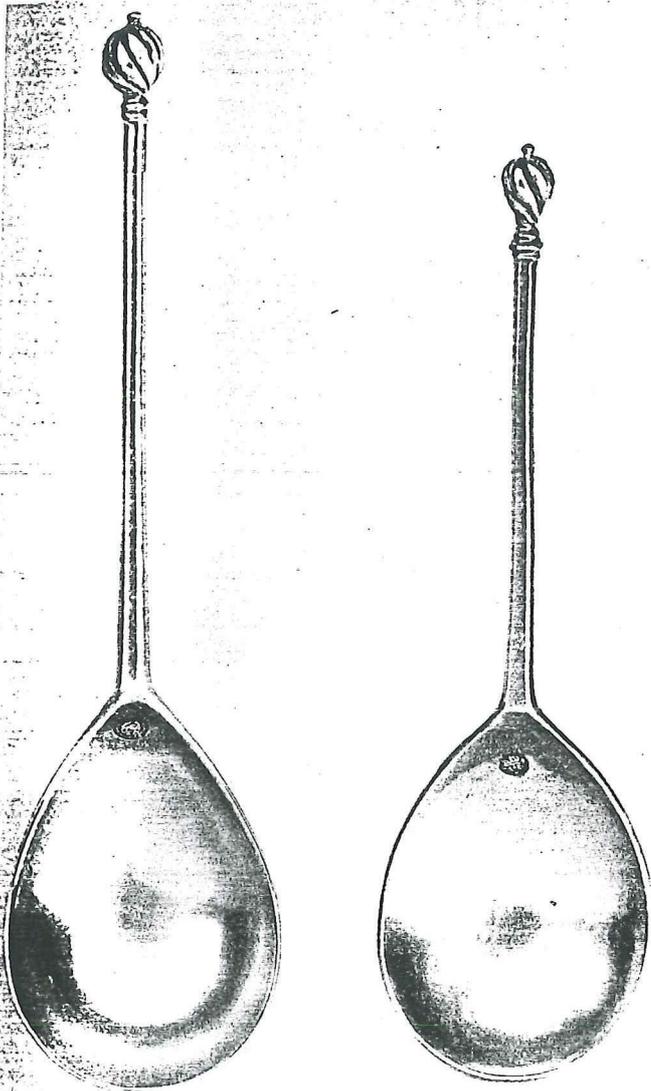
No. XIII.—TURRETED FINIAL C. 1400

Puritan type are often wrongly described as 'stump-top' (No. vii). Slip-tops appear to have been earlier and more numerous in France, and every now and then it may be possible to pick up one or a pair of fifteenth-century date. One I got at a big auction of spoons in London six years ago for a very small figure, catalogued as English sixteenth-century but obviously foreign, and very early, *circa* 1400, in mint state and marked near the end of the stem with early (possibly French) marks (Nos. viii and x). Some years previously, at the same auction rooms, I had bought a set of five early Orleans spoons with good marks on the stems, and signs of corrosion. Many years after, it was definitely proved that they had been electro-plated, and the bowls refashioned, a trap for the unwary. The earlier in date a spoon the more likely it is to be corroded, from burial, or careless treatment; but if otherwise in good condition, boiling it in caustic soda will remove the worst of the corrosion, and mild polishing will gradually improve the surface of the metal. Jeweller's rouge should not be used. *Trefids* and *Puritans* never attracted me much. They replaced the seal-tops and apostles almost abruptly at the time of the Restoration. Another rarity is a hoof-end spoon, have, full size, *circa* 1625, maker's mark only (No. ix). Smaller spoons of the type are known as medicine spoons. Here the finial and stem are made in one piece, and the bowl is soldered on to the stem, the reverse of the seal-top

Thus does one's taste veer more and more to the ancient forms, and with this change in our affections the cost is increased in proportion. Where do we go from there? The answer should be the *Acorn-knop*. The only one I possess besides the one with the turreted finial is an Elizabethan spoon of 1585 with a very large acorn-top, quite out of its period (No. xix). The ancient acorns of 1300-1400 are very rare, usually rather small spoons. I missed the chance of my life several years ago when I refused a friend's offer of a pair, in perfect condition except for being very dirty and stained, for ten pounds, he telling me they were modern copies, and he did not want them in his collection. So, without using my own judgment and examining them carefully, I declined. They were later proved genuine!

The Woodwose, or Wild Man, finial is one of the rarest types; there is a fine example in the Victoria and Albert Collection, formerly belonging to H. D. Ellis. A specimen is illustrated in Jackson's *History of English Plate*, Vol. II, Fig. 612, page 501, where it is described as an apostle spoon, St. James the Less, with a fuller's bat, pre-1478. It is a relief to know that even the mighty may make a slip!

Marks on silver help to date their manufacture and town of origin, and thus vastly increase their interest and value. Silver collectors have this great advantage over furniture collectors, with the additional protection of a very live Guild in Goldsmiths' Hall behind them! Although Henry III in 1238 ordained that no goldsmith should use in manufacture any silver of a fineness below the standard of the coinage, it was not until 1300 that Edward I passed an Act making it obligatory for all gold-

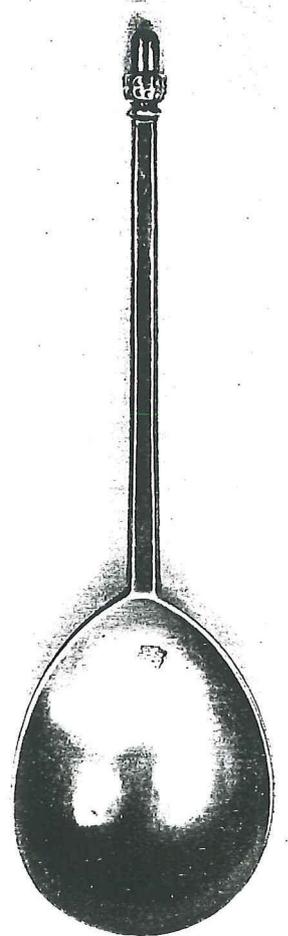


Nos. XIV & XV.—LARGE WRYTHEN KNOP, PROBABLY 1463, & WRYTHEN KNOP OF 1509

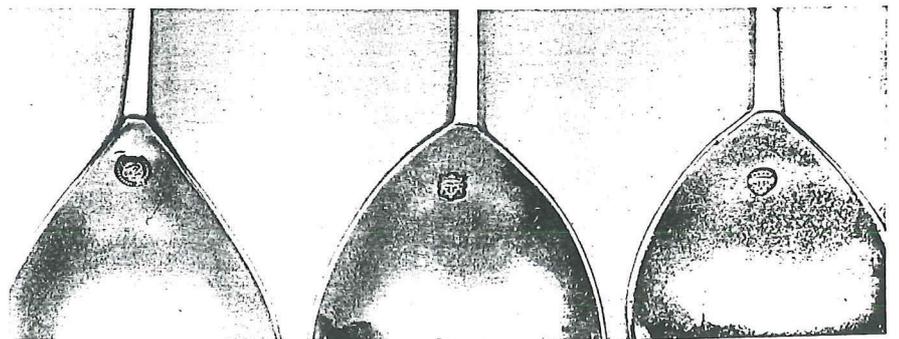
mark of a sheaf of corn on the back of the stem (No. xiv).

A most interesting spoon I have, of date *circa* 1400 or earlier, has a lovely turreted finial of six rings surmounted by an acorn in cup. It is undoubtedly English, and is marked by a Gothic I engraved in the deeply dropped bowl, the inside of which and the finial are lemon-gilt (No. xiii). The slender hexagonal stem is $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, the whole spoon $6\frac{3}{8}$ in.

Perhaps the most interesting spoons are the diamond-points, which were the commonest spoons used between 1350 and 1500. They vary considerably in size, and are hammered out of one piece of silver, including the six-sided so-called diamond-point finial. Many bear no mark at all, but some are marked in the bowl with the uncrowned leopard (see No. ii), and I have seen one marked in the bowl with the crowned leopard and the Gothic letter *a* of 1498 on the stem, very late for a diamond-point. The six-sided finials generally show traces of gilding, but rarely the bowl or the stem.

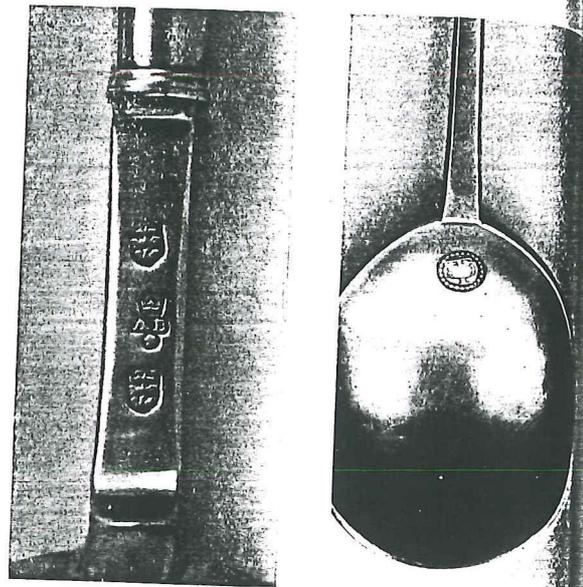


No. XIX.—AN ACORN-TOP OF 1585

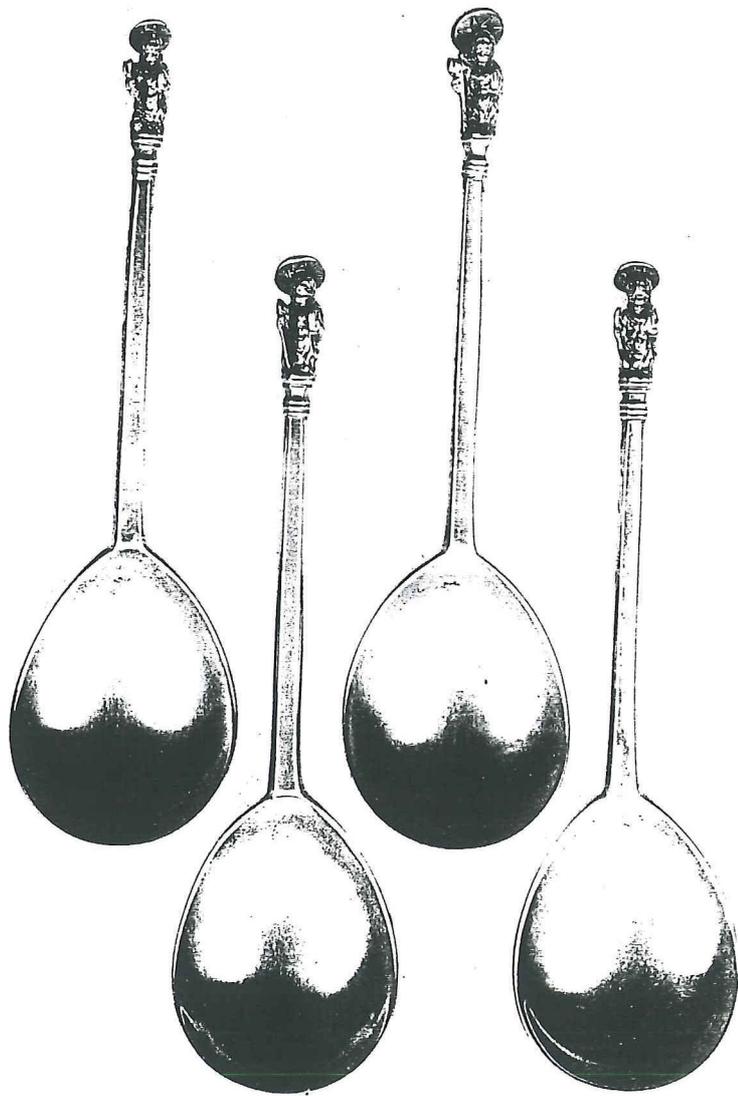


Nos. XVI, XVII & XVIII.—THE THREE MAIN TYPES OF LEOPARD'S HEAD : L. TO R., UNCROWNED LEOPARD, 1463 ; OPEN OR DUCAL CROWN, 1499 ; CLOSED OR FILLET CROWN, 1549

smiths to have their silverware assayed by the Wardens of the Craft, and if proved at least of the fineness of sterling that the piece should be stamped with a leopard's head. Edward III in 1363 added to this law that after assay and the stamping of the leopard's head, the King's mark, the silverware should be marked also with the private mark of the goldsmith, which mark must be known to the surveyor, or assay master. Yet despite these two laws it is remarkable how few pieces that have come down to us bear even the King's mark, the leopard's head, and no maker's marks are met with until the latter half of the Fifteenth Century. Since Edward IV's Act of 1477, the most important changes were made: the leopard's head became crowned, a cycle of twenty date-letters was commenced in 1478, and maker's marks also became regularly affixed. The cycles of date-letters have continued to the present day, each cycle differing in form from the preceding one. The new crown on the leopard's head was the ducal or open crown until 1515, when for the next thirty-five years until 1550 it was changed to a closed or fillet type of crown (Nos. xvi, xvii and xviii). It is very important to recognize this difference, so as to distinguish pieces made before 1515 from silver made between 1515 and 1544, as the first and third cycles of Lombardic letters are very similar, and several of the fourth cycle are also very difficult to distinguish. These marks were in-



Nos. XXI & XXII.—MARK OF ABRAHAM BARACHIN OF HULL AND OF A TAUNTON APOSTLE BY THOMAS DARE



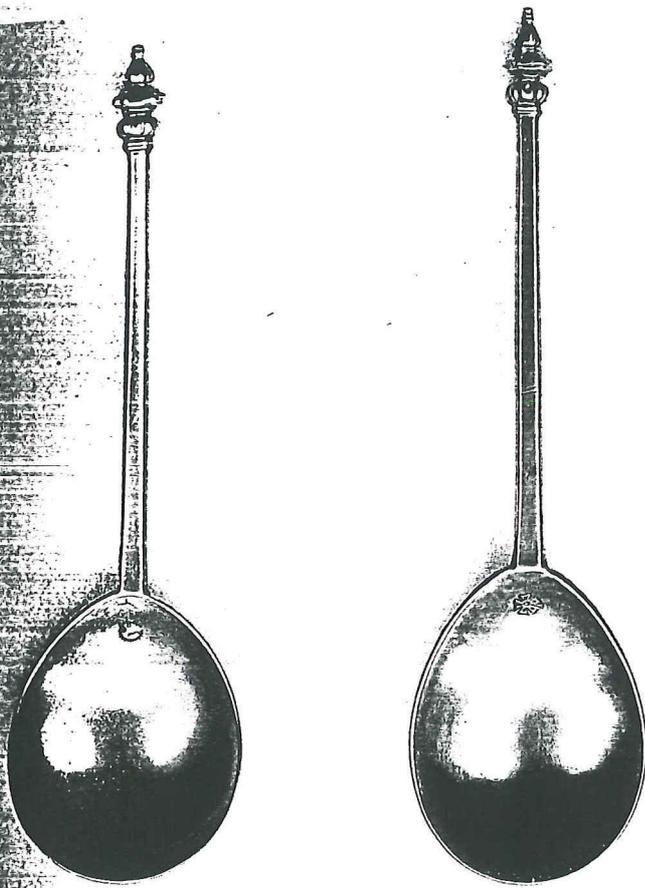
No. XX.—TYPICAL BARNSTAPLE SPOONS: FOUR OF THE APOSTLES: BY THOMAS MATHEW: SS. PETER, MATTHIAS, PHILIP AND JAMES THE LESS

stituted not only as warranty that the piece was made of sterling silver and within a given cycle of twenty years, but that the maker could be traced and held responsible.

In the June 1949 number of *THE CONNOISSEUR* Commander How put forward the most interesting suggestion that a cycle of letters was begun in 1462 in consequence of Edward IV's Act of that year, since a diamond-top spoon was sold at Sotheby's in the previous April, which has a fine mark in the bowl of an uncrowned leopard, with a perfect Lombardic E stamped upon the protruded tongue, and he refers to three other spoons of about this period with other Lombardic letters similarly stamped upon the leopard's tongue, including my large wrythen knob with the letter B (No. xiv). If the Commander's theory is correct, and his arguments are most convincing, then my spoon is definitely dated 1463, and the diamond-top is 1466.

In 1543 the iconoclast Henry VIII debased the coinage by fifty per cent. to enrich his coffers, having spent the million and more that his father had left him, so that it was no doubt found immediately necessary to add a new mark on silverware to show that it was made of the fineness of the old sterling. This is almost certainly the reason, though there is no documentary proof, for the adoption in 1544 of the lion *passant guardant* as the mark of the old sterling, and the leopard's head, or King's mark, the original guarantor of sterling quality, has been gradually recognized as the London mark of Goldsmiths' Hall. Hence the term 'Hall-mark.' In its first year, 1544, the lion *passant* has a bold crown, and is stamped in a square punch, though for the following five years the punch is shaped to the outline of the animal. Moreover, for that year the leopard has the old open ducal crown instead of the fillet type, but for the six following years the crown reverts to the fillet type, until 1551.

THE EDUCATION OF A SPOON COLLECTOR

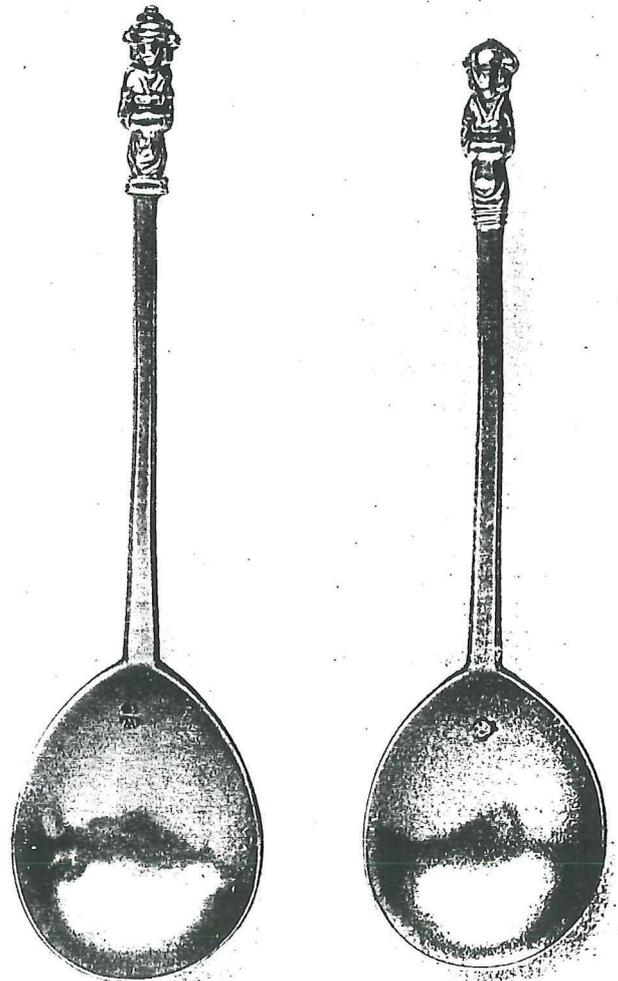


Nos. XXIII & XXIV.—TWO FINIAL TOPS BY PETER QUICK OF BARNSTAPLE
LEFT WITH BIRD MARK : RIGHT, ONE OF A PAIR OF C. 1590

and the lion *passant* still carries a crown until 1549. Pieces of 1544, with the crowned lion *passant* in its square punch, are rarely met with, and a spoon fully marked of that date is a collector's prize. There is a seal-top with these marks in the Carter silver collection in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Not only did this robber King steal from Wolsey, Cranmer and from many others, as well as from the monasteries, from Becket's shrine in Canterbury, and other ecclesiastical foundations, and then debase the coinage, but he next cast a covetous eye upon the plate and endowments of the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. To this end he appointed a Commission to investigate this matter. Had it not been that the Master of Queens' College, Cambridge, was a friend of Catherine Parr, Henry's last Queen, the two universities would have been sadly despoiled and ruined in satisfying his rapacity, but she seemed able to influence the King, and, coached by the Master of Queens', all the members appointed to the Commission were university officials, and *Non Placet* was their verdict. But that is another story. Thus the three essential marks since 1478 became four in 1544, until 1784, when the sovereign's head was added, to indicate payment of the new duty on silver plate, making five marks obligatory until 1890, when the duty on plate was abolished (see Nos. iii and iv). The only other instance of the sovereign's head being used on plate was for the years 1933-5, when the doubled heads of George V and Queen Mary were stamped, during the year of Jubilee, on new plate of those three years, if so desired. In 1696, because of the drain on the coinage, which was

being freely melted down for the manufacture of plate reversing indeed the melting-down of plate fifty years earlier by Charles I to provide money for his armies, an Act was passed to raise the fineness of silver used for plate from 11 oz. 2 dwt. to 11 oz. 10 dwt. pure silver in every 12 oz. (Troy weight). Two new marks, Britannia and the lion *erased*, took the place of the leopard's head and the lion *passant* to indicate that all plate so marked was of the new Britannia standard (no longer obligatory after 1720). The figure of Britannia was taken from Miss Stewart, favourite of Charles II, later Duchess of Richmond. At the same time the maker's mark was altered to the first two letters of his surname. With the change in the sterling standard in 1697, all the provincial assay offices were closed and most of the minor guilds, such as Norwich, never reopened. Those which reopened in 1701, like Exeter, changed the ancient town mark, Exeter giving up the crowned X and adopting a triple-towered castle, the city arms. Numerous provincial towns, such as Hull, Lincoln, Leicester, Carlisle and Barnstaple, had from early times used part of the town arms to mark their silver. The three coronets of Hull are now favoured objects of competition in the auction room (No. xxi), and the fleur-de-lis of Lincoln, the cinquefoil of Leicester, and the rose and crozier *patée* of Carlisle are also often met with. Some used the first two letters of the name, such as *Br* for Bristol, *Tr* for



No. XXV.—TWO EXAMPLES OF SO-CALLED 'BUDDHA-KNOP' SPOONS
WITH GILT FINIALS : WEST COUNTRY

Truro, ABD for Aberdeen. Taunton used the device of T over a tun, a rebus on the name, and apostle spoons by Thomas Dare command a good price if the T-on-tun mark is in good condition (No. xxii). Barnstaple, though a small borough, was wealthy in the Fourteenth Century through the woollen and cloth trades, and, with the neighbouring silver-mines of Combemartin some twelve miles distant, it is not surprising that fine silver-ware was manufactured in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Thomas Mathew, in the latter half of the Sixteenth Century, is the best known of these, and his apostle spoons and larger pieces are as well made and almost as well known as those of London makers. I have a lion *sejant* by him and four of his apostles (Nos. xxvi and xx). The Quick family from 1573 to 1640 turned out some remarkable spoons, unlike any produced in London or elsewhere. I have a set of three by Peter Quick the elder, with gilt turreted finials, two with a curious cinquefoil mark in the bowl, with PQ stamped at the back of the stem close to the bowl (Nos. xxiii and xxiv). This mark is included amongst Jackson's unascrived marks, page 476, *circa* 1590. They were sold

to me as Leicester, but the clue to their provenance came when a third similar spoon came my way, stamped in the bowl with the well-known bird mark of the Barnstaple borough seal, and PQ stamped on the back of the stem. A number of highly chased gilt ceremonial spoons are also to be found, made by John Quick, probably another member of his family. The berry mark in the bowl of some of them is probably a rebus on the name Quick, local Devonian for a berry. The proof of their origin in Barnstaple was furnished by Commander How, who showed that the repeated marks BM and RM on the stems were abbreviations of the local shortening 'Barum' for Barnstaple. The most remarkable of them all, and the most highly chased and decorated, also by John Quick, has a large decorated and perforated hollow ball in the middle of the stem, which is soldered on to the bowl and held by a monster's head, reminiscent of the twelfth-century Coronation spoon (No. xxvii). Quite a number of so-called Buddha-knop spoons, probably all made in the West country, are known, some made by Raleigh Clapham of Barnstaple. All have gilt finials, and vary from 7½

in. to 7¾ in. in length (No. xxv). One I have is marked in the bowl and on the back of the stem by B over a staple, a rebus on the town's name. The terminal figure differs from that on the ceremonial spoons in the arrangement of the hair, which has given them the name Buddha-knop, but the figures are certainly females, and can have no connexion with Buddha, Krishna or Vishnu, all masculine deities. After 1625 John Peard used as town mark the newly granted arms of a triple-towered castle, with his initials on either side and BAR UM above and below. I have a family trefid marked thus on the back of the stem, and a separate stamp of his initials above and below (No. xxviii).

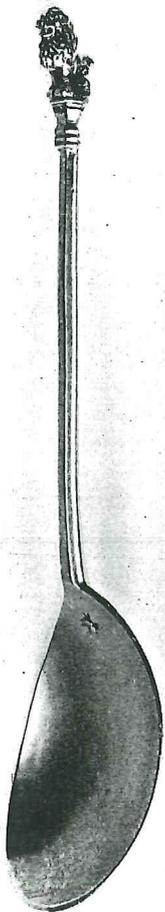
Any collector who aspires to a real understanding of silver plate must know and be able to remember the main facts of this abstract of the history of marks on silver. He need not remember the outlines of all the letters of the various cycles, for small pocket-books of reference give these sufficiently well, but he must be able to recognize the appearance and colour of antique silver, with its numerous small dents and scratches, unless it has been spoilt by heavy burnishing. The more special knowledge giving the facility to recognize cast spoons and other frauds can be obtained only by long experience and by painful lessons, acquired mostly at auctions. My advice to a collector-beginner of

spoons is to study actual specimens in museums such as South Kensington and the Holburne Museum at Bath; to watch the auction sales at Christie's and Sotheby's, and if anything attracts his fancy to invite a well-known dealer's opinion upon it, and with his approval give him a commission up to an agreed figure. If he takes no advice but his own, until he has acquired expert knowledge himself through making many mistakes, he will lose much more than the percentage commission the dealer charges.

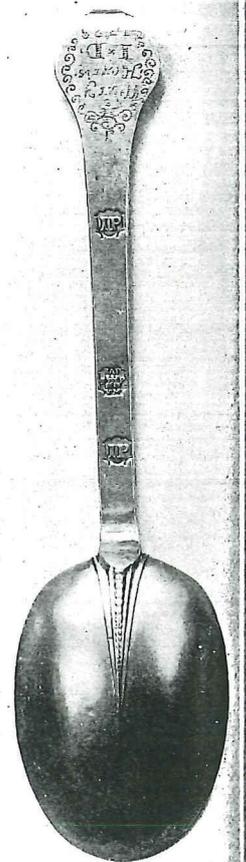
High-class dealers may be counted on to give of their best knowledge to their client, and they may always be trusted to take back a piece sold to him from stock which after study does not satisfy him, and if his complaint is genuine. However, *caveat emptor* is a good working rule, and the more knowledge the collector has himself acquired the more he will enjoy his hunt for rarities, and especially their pur-



No. XXVII.—CEREMONIAL SPOON BY JOHN QUICK BARNSTAPLE, C. 1600



No. XXVI.—ALION SEJANT BY T. MATHEW, BARNSTAPLE



No. XXVIII.—CHRISTENING SPOON BY JOHN PEARD BARNSTAPLE

(Concluded on page 50)

LEONARDO DA VINCI AND ANDREA SALAI

(Continued from page 7)

'one could not be distinguished from the other.'* During a later period, the students of Leonardo, some of whom had lived in the master's home for many years and had absorbed his style, often made use of Leonardo's designs for their pictures, assisting each other and in turn being assisted by their master.

Art critics of authority have been baffled at times in their attempts to distinguish the work of Leonardo da Vinci from that of Verrocchio, of Credi, and of his many pupils when relying on intuitive judgment or the 'sixth sense' method for conclusions regarding their identifications of the authorships of border-line pictures of the school of Leonardo da Vinci.

This writer has developed a scientific detection method of identification in connexion with pictures, which is based on methods employed by criminologists in crime detection, which he has used with great success in identifying the authorships of unidentified paintings and drawings by artists of many schools.

Detective analysis reveals the Edwards *Madonna with the Farn Winder*—which is of superlative quality in parts, including the head of the Madonna and the figure of the Child—to be the work of Leonardo da Vinci, as it contains evidence of left-hand execution and also evidence that the identical system of plane geometry that Leonardo da Vinci had employed in the construction of the head of *Mona Lisa* was also employed in the construction of the head of the Edwards Madonna; and it also reveals that the Buccleuch and the Reford Madonnas, which some authorities consider as the work of Leonardo, are really the work of Leonardo's favourite pupil, Andrea Salai, called Salaino, as we shall see.

* * * *

Leonardo da Vinci was in his thirtieth year when he left his native city of Florence for Milan. Three men who came in personal contact with Leonardo after his arrival in Milan, state in their documents that Leonardo da Vinci was left-handed.

Fra Luca Pacioli, the mathematician who shared Leonardo's home for three years in Milan and who accompanied Leonardo to Venice and Mantua, states in the Preface to his *Trattato de Divina Proportione*, published in 1509: 'The sixty geometrical drawings for this publication have been made by Leonardo's ineffable left hand (*ineffabile sinistra mano*), well-schooled in every mathematical exercise. He writes on the reversed plan, so that it becomes impossible to read unless one uses a mirror, or if one holds the reverse side of the paper against the light as is my custom. This is the way in which Leonardo da Vinci, who is *left handed* (*quale e mancino*) writes, as I have stated several times.'

Similarly, Fra Sabba da Castiglione, who lived in Milan during the period of Leonardo's activities in that city, states in his *Ricordi* that Leonardo wrote and drew with his left hand.

According to a manuscript in the Royal Library at Naples, written by Antonio de Beatis, secretary to Cardinal Louis of Aragon, with whom he visited Leonardo on

* Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, George Bell & Sons, London, 1887, Vol. III, p. 144.

October 10th, 1517: 'Leonardo's right hand had become paralyzed.'*

These statements are confirmed by Giorgio Vasari, who wrote: 'There are, besides, certain writings of Leonardo, also written with the left hand.'† Vasari received a great deal of his information regarding Leonardo da Vinci from the Milanese painter Francesco Melzi, Leonardo's friend and last pupil.

Through personal observation and study of the original manuscripts, drawings and paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, I have come to the conclusion that Leonardo da Vinci was ambidextrous during his youth, and that he discontinued the use of his right hand for writing, drawing and painting shortly before his twenty-first year in 1473, and thereafter, until the end of his career, wrote in reversed script, and also drew and painted with the left hand.

Reversed writing, or mirror script, is the result of a change from right- to left-hand writing by one who had learned to write with his right hand. An ambidextrous person usually reverses his writing if he attempts to do it with his left hand. It is generally believed that Leonardo da Vinci wrote in reversed script in order to conceal the contents of his manuscripts, but that was not the case.

The earliest dated work by Leonardo da Vinci is a pen-and-ink landscape drawing in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence (No. xi). It is inscribed and dated 1473 in reversed script at the upper left. It was executed with the left hand, and according to the date, Leonardo was twenty-one years of age at the time. This landscape drawing is considered the first pure landscape representation in the history of art.

On the reverse side of this sheet, there is another pen-and-ink landscape drawing of a somewhat earlier date, also executed with the left hand; but above this landscape drawing, at the upper right, there are sketches of a man's head in profile; the figure of a man running; a series of oblique parallel lines and normal writing, all executed by Leonardo da Vinci with his right hand (No. xii). The lines in the sketches on this sheet that were executed with the right hand, are heavy and laboured, while those executed with the left hand are lighter, more refined and reveal a greater facility of execution.

(To be concluded)

* Edward McCurdy, *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci*, Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1928, p. 147.

† Giorgio Vasari, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 381.

THE EDUCATION OF A SPOON COLLECTOR

(Continued from page 34)

chase when overlooked by the professionals. Probably these chances have occurred more frequently with antique spoons than with larger pieces, though an antique silver-gilt ewer and dish, black with age and dirt, have been mistaken for brass.

In cases of doubt as to the genuineness of a piece, the collector has Goldsmiths' Hall and its Antique Plate Committee behind him, and the writer of this short article may confess without shame that on three occasions he has been able to get his money refunded through action of that court of appeal, for the selling of fraudulent plate—whether by auction or in private deals—is punishable by law, and Goldsmiths' Hall is very jealous of its privileges.