

EEP

? Apollo

RARE MAIDENHEAD SPOONS

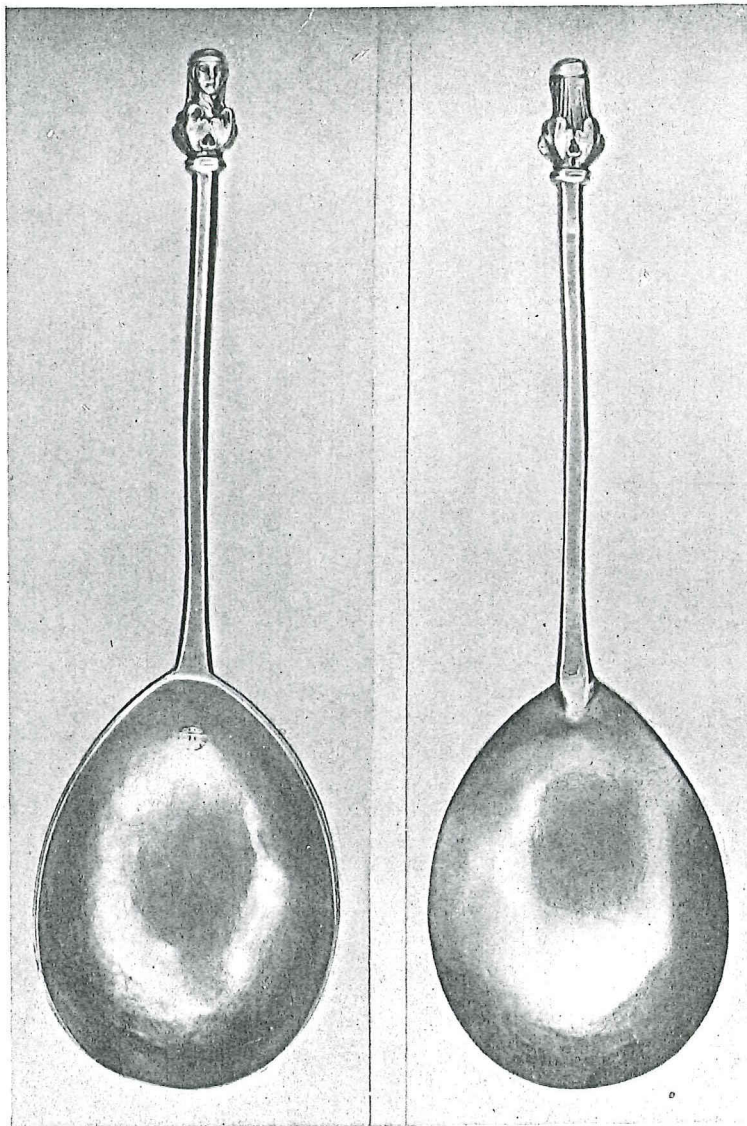
BY NORMAN GASK

FOR the benefit of new collectors, it may be mentioned that the Maidenhead spoon is so called because the top of the handle is surmounted by the little silver-gilt head and bust of a maiden emerging, usually, from the calyx of a fleur-de-lis, or iris, and representing the Virgin Mary.

Many of the silver Maidenhead spoons that have come

mens of this variety have the features of the Virgin so worn away by use and cleaning that the heads are merely silver knobs, with little more interest than as curiosities.

A comparatively few surviving Maidenheads, however, both London and Provincial, are exceptions to both these classes and are indeed little triumphs of the ancient goldsmith's art. The knobs, by the way, some-



(Left)

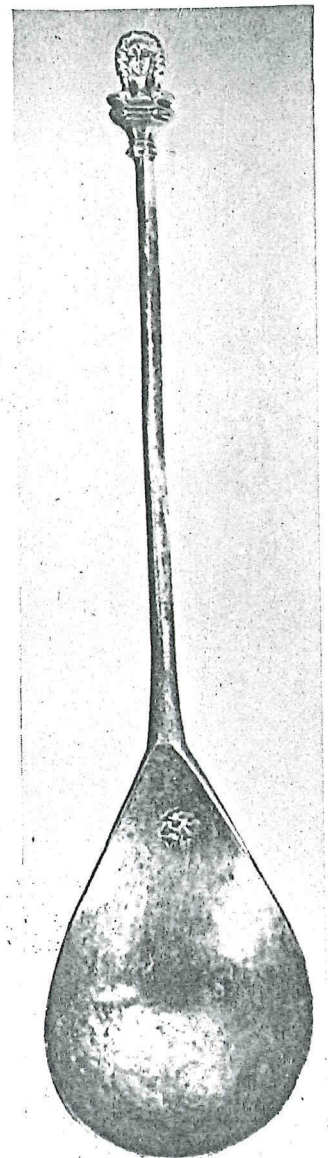
ACANTHUS MAIDENHEAD

First pictures of both sides of a very rare and beautiful variety of Henry VIII Maidenhead spoon. The head and bust of the Virgin here emerge from Acanthus leaves instead of the customary fleur-de-lis. Date: circa 1520. Maker's mark: Crescent encircling Mullet. Surface: pale honey-coloured gilding. 6 ins. Ex-Trapnell Collection. The mint condition and exceptionally fine modelling of the knob and the delicate gossamer treatment of the hair at the back of the head should be specially noted.

(Author's Collection.)

(Right)

The earliest known Maidenhead. Late XIVth century. 6 3/4 ins. Marked in the bowl with arms of See of Coventry. Long, narrow, pear-shaped bowl and thin four-sided, or diamond-section, stem. Ex - H. D. Ellis Collection. (Victoria and Albert Museum.)



down to us through the ages possess, despite their good marks, knobs of strictly conventional design and often indifferent modelling.

Again, the top of the Maidenhead, unlike that of the Apostle spoon, is unprotected by a nimbus, or halo. Consequently, a number of equally well-marked speci-

times indicate the dress and coiffure of the period.

The Maidenhead spoon ranks with the Acorn-head and Diamond-point as of XIVth century origin. The Apostle type, introduced about 1450, is beside it a relative newcomer. The Maidenhead is said to have been a favourite spoon in pre-Reformation times for

A P O L L O

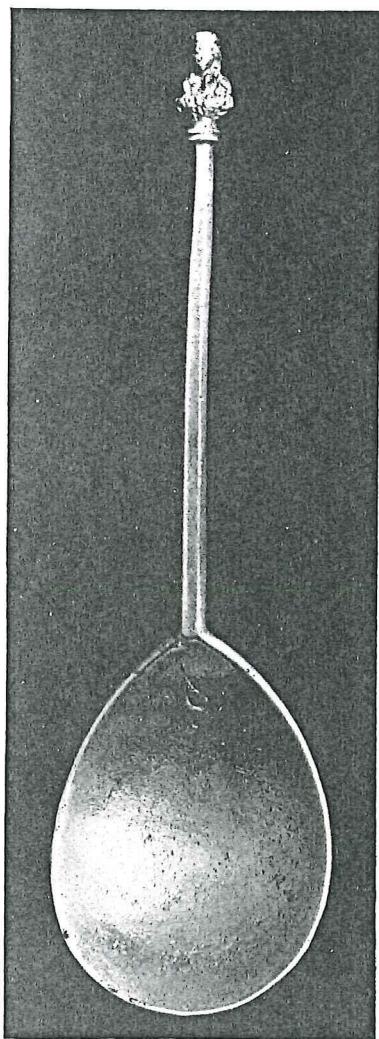
church use. An early published record of this variety is contained in an inventory of Durham Priory, of the year 1446, which tells of "ij cochlearia argentea et deaurata, unius sectae, cum ymaginibus Beatae Mariae . . ."

This type is cited in English wills and inventories from medieval times right down to early Stuart days.

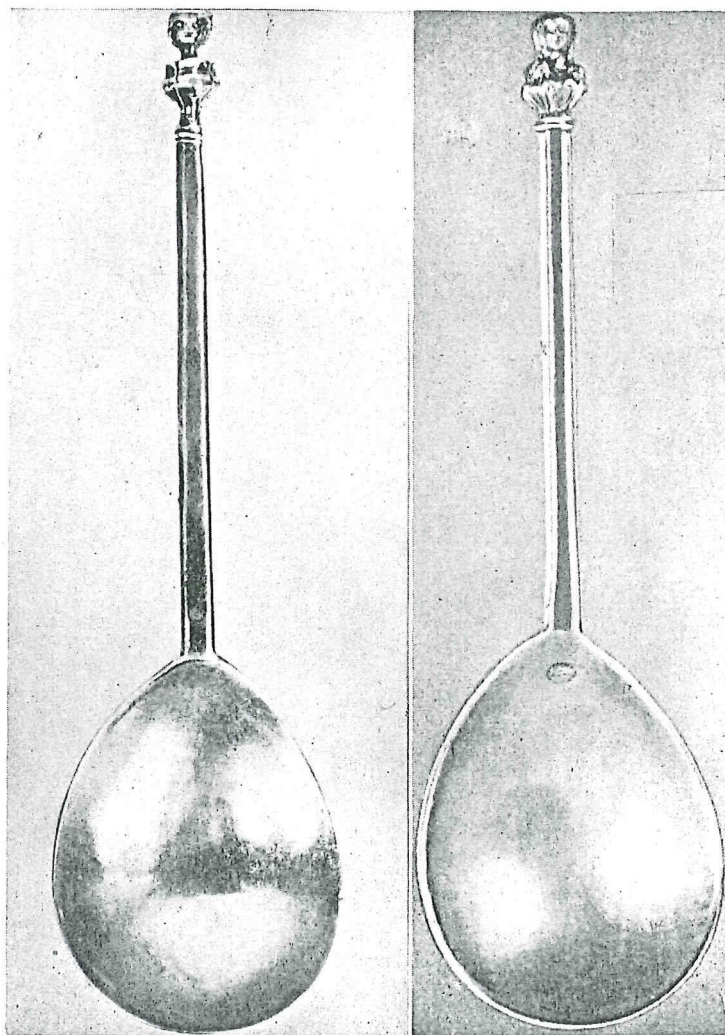
Three Maidenhead spoons, described as "wt womens heddes and faces" are mentioned in Henry VIII's Jewel-

This variety continued to be made well into the early XVIIth century, not only in London but at Exeter, Leicester, Sherborne and other provincial towns. Maidenhead spoons ceased to be made after the days of Charles I.

A remarkable set of twelve, made in London in 1630-1, is in possession of Christ's Hospital, the seat of learning of Coleridge, Lamb, Leigh-Hunt and other notabilities.



(Left)
A Henry VIII Provincial example of the gracious classic type. 6½ ins. Date: circa 1530. Mark: Dragon Crowned. Pitting of bowl and corrosion of knop suggest long burial. (Author's Collection.)



Book. Other characteristic early references include :

- 1497. . . . sex cochlearia cum capitibus puellarum (York wills).
- 1523. . . . Halfe a dossen of sylver spounys with mayden heedes on the end gylte (Inventory of the worldly goods of Dame Agnes Hungerford).
- 1525. Spone knopped with the image of our lady (Bury Wills).
- 1546. 3 silver spones with mayden heids (Richmond, York, wills).

Examples of the Maidenhead may be seen in the Ashmolean, the British and the Victoria and Albert Museums.

An unmarked Provincial specimen also of a very scarce variety, temp. Henry VII. Ex-Ellis Collection. A closely similar spoon from the same collection, bearing in the bowl a mark resembling an Escallop, appeared fifteen years ago in the London auction-room where the knop was described as "showing a woman's head-dress of Henry VII period." (*V. and A. Museum.*)

The earliest Maidenhead known as bearing full London marks. Date: 1485-6. The maker's mark resembles to some extent that shown in Sir Charles Jackson's *English Goldsmiths and Their Marks* as on a Master spoon of 1492 in the Walter Collection and described by Sir Charles as "the mark of Sir Edmund Shaa, Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company, Master of the Mint, Cup Bearer and Goldsmith to King Richard III and Lord Mayor of London in 1482." When put up for sale in the London auction-room 14 years ago it realized £225, probably a sales-room record for a Maidenhead.