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p. 235-240

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons

By Chas. G. J. Port

THIS article is not written with a view to describing Continental base metal spoons generally, the subject being far too large to be treated in a magazine article, but rather for the purpose of illustrating and briefly describing a few spoons that differ from the ordinary types which were in general use in England and on the Continent.

No book, in English at any rate, has ever been published on Continental base metal spoons, but a considerable number are described in that extremely interesting work, *Old Base Metal Spoons*, by the late Mr. F. G. Hilton Price, Dir. S.A., whose fine collection is now in the new London Museum. It is really a work on English spoons, only those of Continental make that have been found in England being noticed. Several writers on Silver, notably Mr. C. J. Jackson, F.S.A., and others on Pewter, deal with spoons but little is said of the kind now referred to.

There are few collectors of foreign base metal spoons in England and very few specimens in the museums, and, as far as the writer's limited experience goes, the same remark applies to the Continent. In many of the museums in the larger towns there are scarcely a dozen specimens and they, as a rule, are not considered of sufficient importance to be labelled.

With regard to the makers' marks, it is extremely interesting to find that as far back as the fourteenth century both pewter and latten were marked; in fact, at any period it is unusual to find pewter spoons, especially in England, unmarked but on the Continent comparatively few latten were marked, particularly in the seventeenth century.

As the term "latten" may possibly be new to some few readers, it may be mentioned that latten is composed of about 73 per cent. of copper, 25 per cent. of zinc and 2 per cent. of iron and practically all base metal spoons, other than pewter, are latten, though occasionally they are found in brass and

bronze. Generally speaking, in England the pewter far outnumbered the latten. On the Continent it was the reverse. There is no doubt that a great many spoons, principally latten, were imported into England from France and other countries. The writer has a peculiar flattened baluster knop from Belgium; one precisely the same in the British Museum was found in London. He has two specimens of latten beaded stems with hoof knops exactly alike, one from Northern Italy and the other found in London; and the late Mr. Hilton Price described a twisted stem spoon, with rough engraving of a church on the back, of which three at least have been found in London, as probably of Russian or German make: fifteenth century. All these spoons are undoubtedly of foreign origin.

A curious feature about English base metal spoons is the absence of the round bowl. With the exception of a large soup spoon, with portraits of George III. and Queen Charlotte, the writer has never seen a round bowl English pewter spoon. He has never seen one in latten, brass or bronze, though a few latten are very nearly round, such as some of the apostle, the sitting lion knop and the remarkable globe knop which was in the collection of the late Mr. George Dunn, recently acquired by the writer. On the other hand, among Continental spoons we find the round bowl continually cropping up in pewter, latten and brass in various sizes, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

There is a considerable difficulty in dating many foreign spoons. In England the pewter and latten spoons, with few exceptions, were contemporary with or followed the silver spoons and the date letters of the latter settled the question; but many Continental base metal spoons do not seem to have been made in silver. The recurrence of the round bowl and the absence of the makers' marks add to the difficulty in many cases.

The Connoisseur



1. Pewter; found in the river Scheldt at Antwerp. A fine example of twisted stem (rare in pewter), with the badge of Flanders—a lion and a shield—as a knop. Sixteenth century. Mark: crown, hammer, and initials indistinct.

2. Pewter (Flanders). This is an uncommon type, and difficult to date, but, in the writer's opinion, its extreme lightness (just over three-quarters of an

ounce) points to its being an early spoon, probably fourteenth or fifteenth century. (See a similar bowl and lower part of stem in the late Mr. Hilton Price's book assigned to the fourteenth century.)

3. Pewter (Dutch). A form of Maidenhead knop with a decorated stem. The knop is certainly not beautiful, and is very different from some of the English Maidenhead spoons. Sixteenth century.

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons



4. Brass; country of origin unknown. This is an early spoon with a kind of finial knob; but the round bowl does not assist us in fixing the date. It may be assigned to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

5. Latten, probably French. Another type of Maidenhead. Date, seventeenth century.

6. Pewter (Dutch). A fine example of the hoof knob; one of four Dutch varieties of this spoon in the

writer's collection. This form of knob seems to have been much commoner in Holland than in England, where they are very rare in pewter. Seventeenth century. Mark: crown over rose.

7. Pewter (Dutch). A pretty round bowl spoon with tulip knob. Sixteenth or seventeenth century. Mark: crown over hammer.

8. Pewter (Dutch). An interesting example of the

The Connoisseur



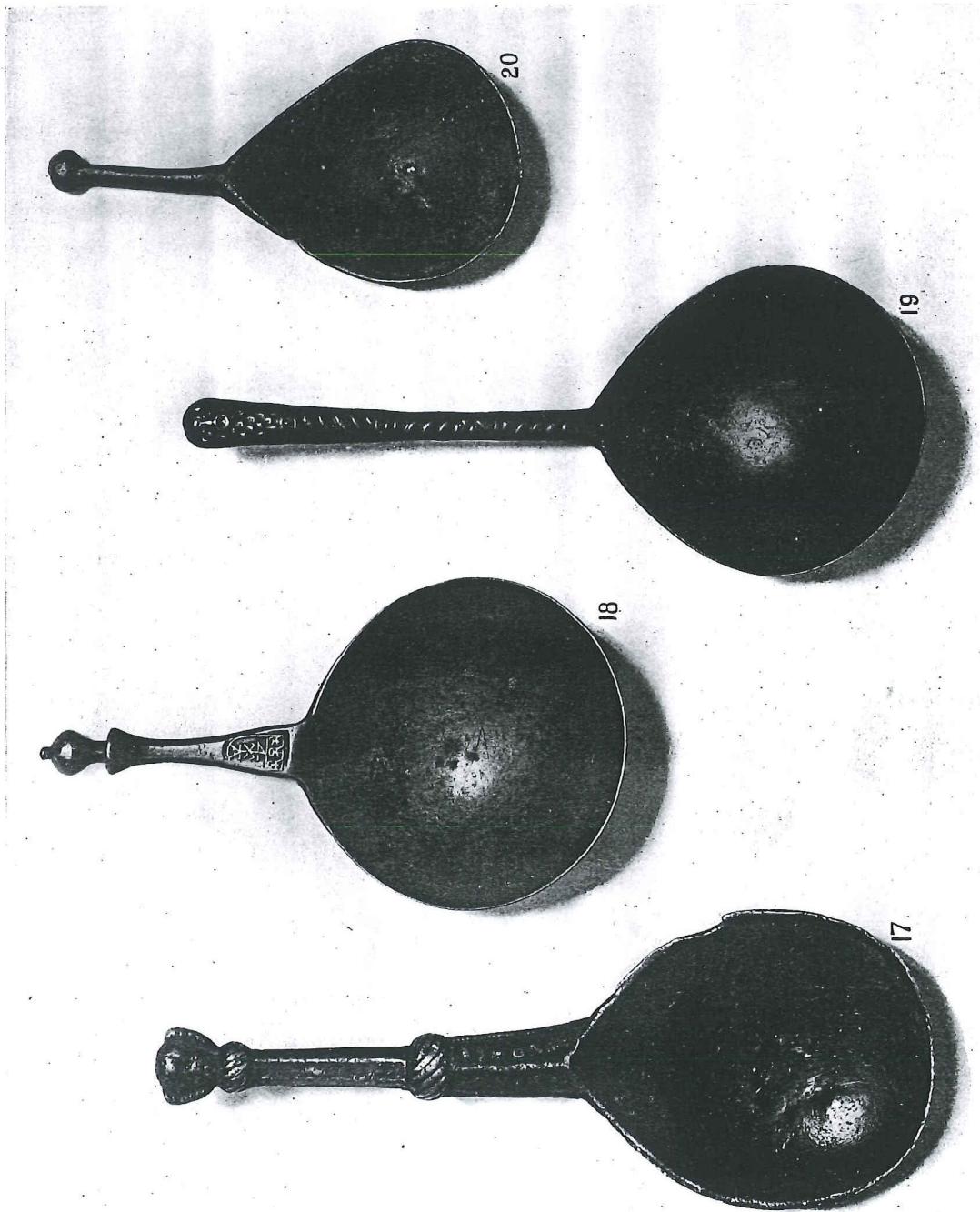
Trifid or "pied de biche" spoon with portrait of William of Orange, afterwards King William the Third of England. About 1685. Hall-marks: (1) Initials (?) J. F. and two stars. (2) Buckle and two stars. (3) Lion rampant and two stars. (4) (?) all in shields.

9. Latten (Northern Italy). Note the peculiar flat rectangular top, evidently for some special purpose.

The writer in Italy lately was unable to obtain any information as to its use. He has a smaller spoon with similar knop, but much cruder and earlier. Date, seventeenth century.

10. Latten (Antwerp). A very heavy spoon of unusual shape. Probably seventeenth century. The next three or four spoons are of the peculiar small shallow bowl type, for which it is difficult to assign a

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons



use. They are of different periods and seem to have had no counterpart in England.

11. Latten ; found in the river Scheldt at Antwerp. Shallow bowl and flat stem. Probably fifteenth century.

12. Latten (Belgium). Very shallow bowl and flat handle with strawberry knob. Probably sixteenth century.

13. Latten (Northern Italy). Shallow bowl with

bended stem and horsehoof knob. Seventeenth century. Mark: star and (?) in beaded oval.

14. Latten ; stated to have been found in England but probably Continental. Knob similar in outline (only) to the stag's head illustrated in the late Mr. Hilton Price's book. The bowl is raised above the stem. Date uncertain. Most likely seventeenth century.

15. Pewter (Belgium). A diminutive spoon with

The Connoisseur

baluster knop. Probably a child's or toy spoon, as, according to Mr. C. J. Jackson, salt-spoons were not used before the eighteenth century. The date is sixteenth century. Mark: crown over rose.

16. Latten cone end. This remarkable little spoon is referred to in the Appendix to Mr. Hilton Price's book but is probably Continental. Fourteenth or fifteenth century.

17. Pewter (Dutch). Cherub's head knop with

20. Latten (Northern Italy). Ball knop. No doubt an apothecary's spoon of the fifteenth century.

All the specimens illustrated are approximately one-sixth less than actual size, and are in the collection of the writer. Makers' marks are given in all cases where they exist.

The extremely interesting latten spoon illustrated on this page has just been acquired by the writer. It was found in the Thames but is probably of



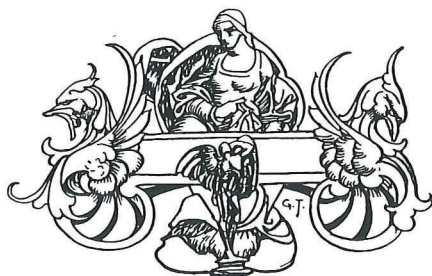
inscription, "Drinck und is (?) got nicht vergis" (Low German)—"Drink and forget not God." This spoon was in the Dunn collection. Writer can say nothing as to its use, and the date is uncertain.

18. Latten (German). An apothecary spoon, fifteenth or sixteenth century. Note the fine merchant's (not maker's) mark. These marks were used in Germany from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.

19. Latten (French). Wild-man knop with decorated stem, which is flat at the back. Possibly an apothecary's spoon, but more likely a domestic one. Probably seventeenth century. Mark: fleur-de-lys crowned in shield.

Continental make. Several experts, by whom it is considered unique, agree that it is *not* early Christian and they all, with one exception, place it before the cone ends of the fourteenth century. If this verdict is correct, it means that it is the earliest type of mediæval spoon known and may be thirteenth century or even considerably earlier.

In conclusion, the writer again calls attention to the fact that Continental spoons of the kind here illustrated are difficult to date and that they do not represent the ordinary types but rather the odds and ends that a collector comes across from time to time.





The Connoisseur
 April 1919
 p. 191-197

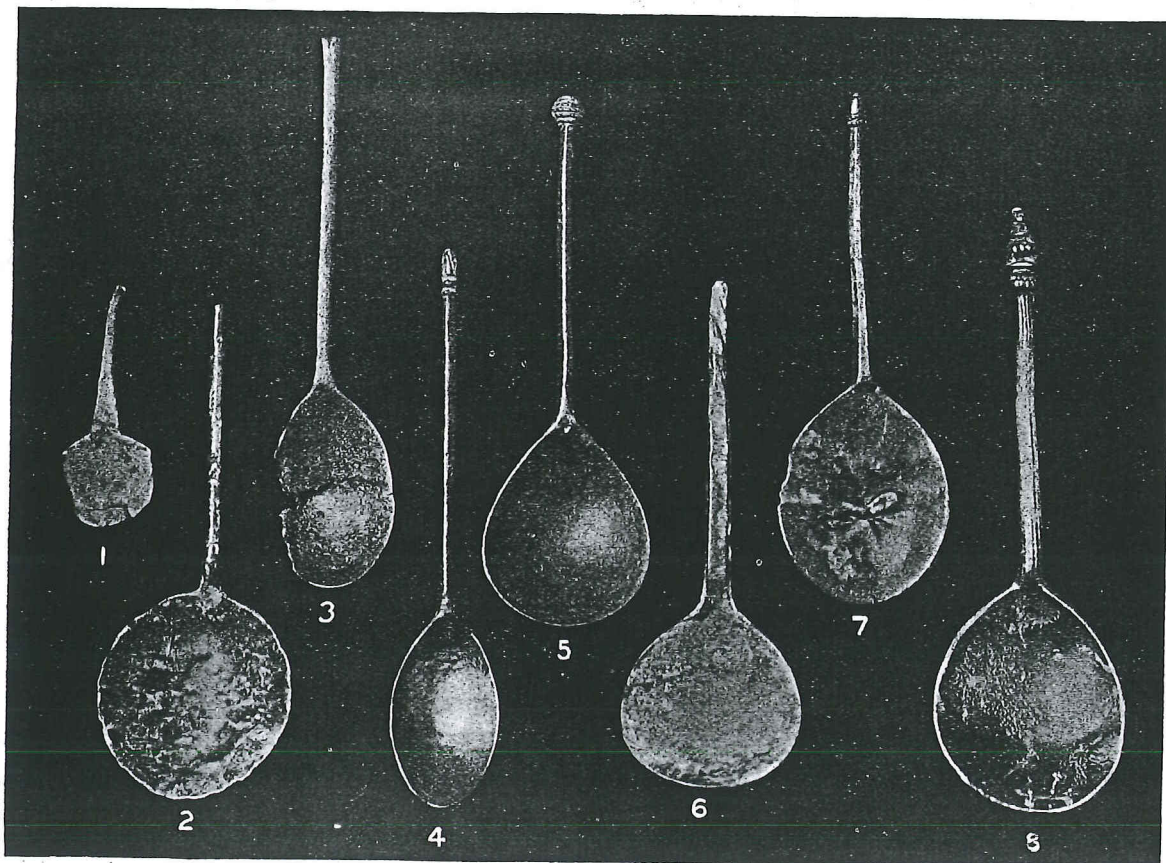
PEWTER

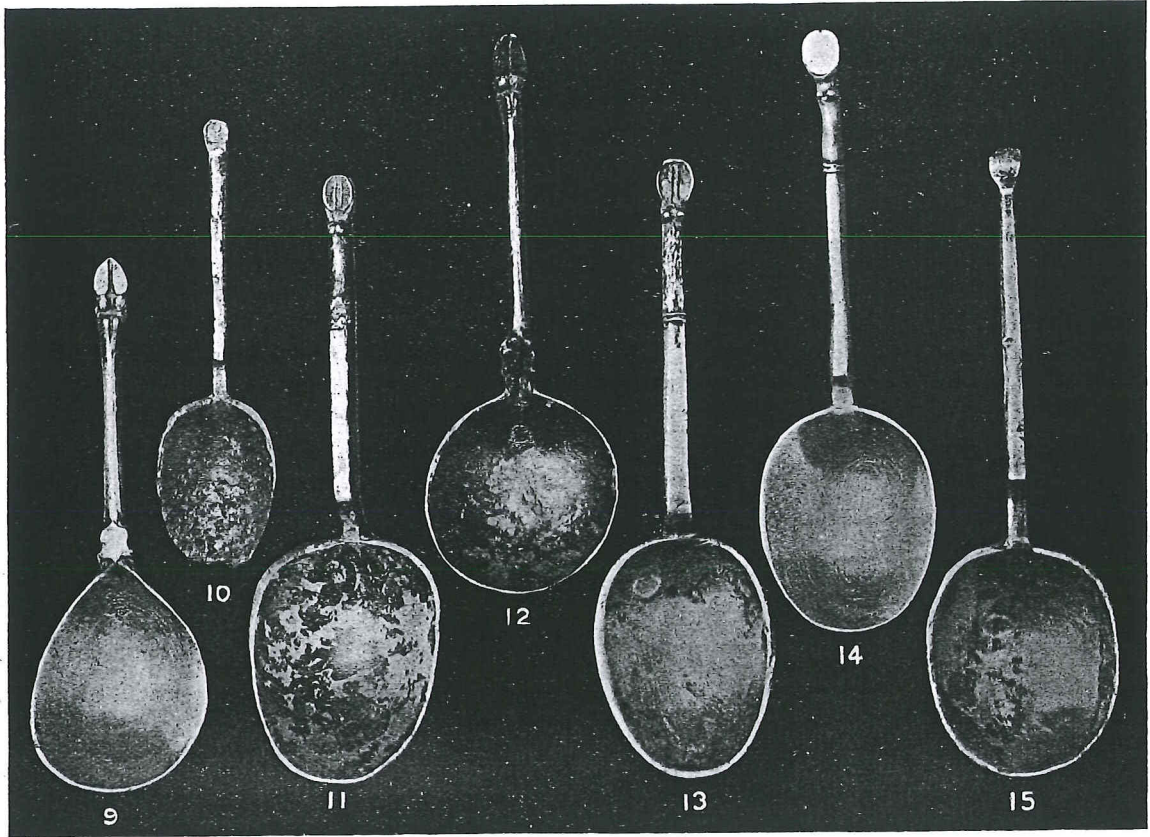
Some Continental Base Metal Spoons - Part II. By Chas. G. J. Port, F.S.A., of Worthing

PART I. of this article appeared in THE CONNOISSEUR of December, 1912, when the writer illustrated and described some twenty spoons and made a few remarks on the subject generally.

As THE CONNOISSEUR of that date may not, in all cases, be available to the present readers, a short résumé is desirable. *Old Base Metal Spoons*, by the late Mr. Hilton Price, Dir.S.A., is practically the

only work on the subject of English base metal spoons, although they are referred to in a few books on silver and pewter, but none of them deals with continental spoons outside those found in England. As far as the writer knows, very little on the subject has been published on the Continent. Latten is an alloy composed of about 73 per cent. of copper, 25 per cent. of zinc and 2 per cent. of iron. It is





generally supposed that practically all latten spoons used in England before about the end of the sixteenth century were imported from the Continent.

Makers' marks are found on some of the oldest mediæval spoons. Spoons with round bowls are, with one exception only known to the writer, peculiar to the Continent. In many cases the absence of makers' marks and the recurrence of the round bowl add to the difficulty of fixing the period which, in regard to the earlier spoons, must be taken as approximate.

It may be remarked that practically all the earlier and most of the later spoons have been discovered during excavations.

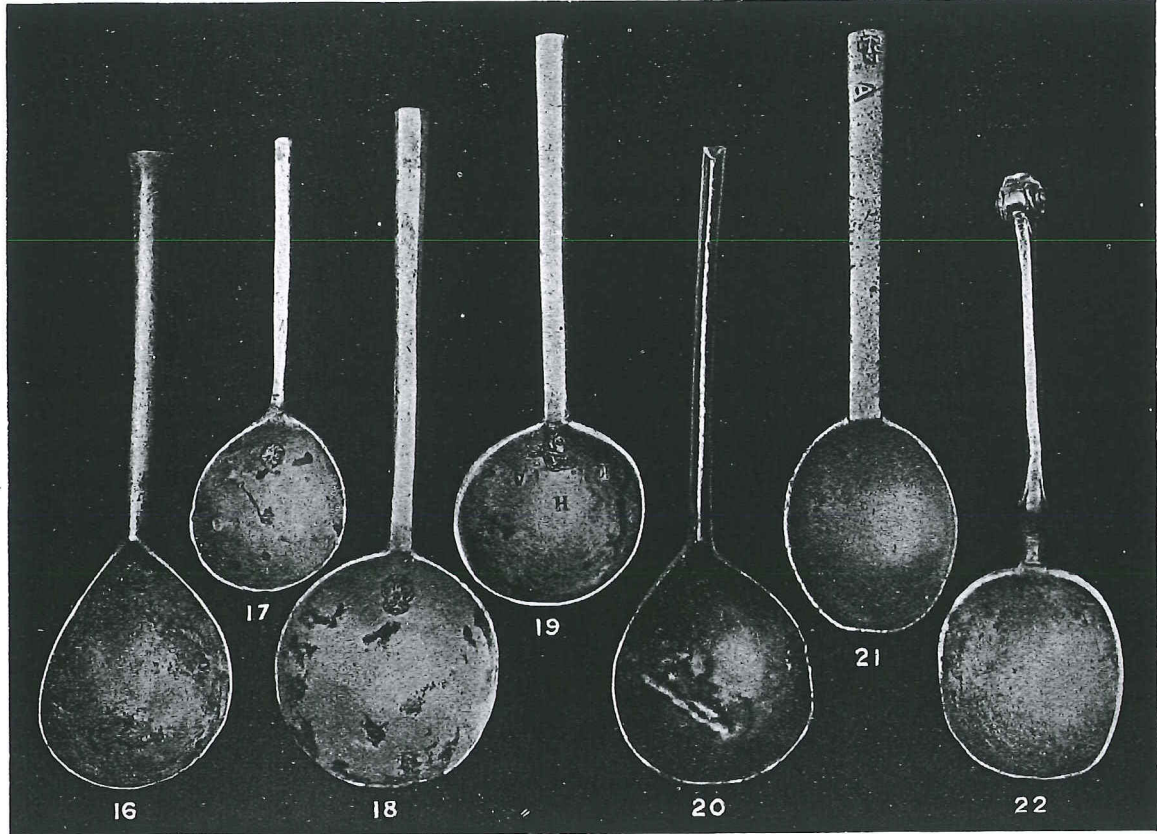
The question of the age of the early mediæval spoons is an interesting one. No date, as far as the writer knows, earlier than the fourteenth century, has been suggested. Now, the question arises, were metal spoons used between the Norman Conquest and the fourteenth century? The writer sees no reason to suppose they were not. If so, they were probably latten

and, under ordinary conditions of burial, a couple of hundred years would make no difference in their condition; but, as far as the writer knows, not a single spoon has been found differing from those ascribed to the fourteenth century onwards. The only conclusion he can come to is that many of these early spoons may well be a hundred or two years older than the period to which they have hitherto been assigned.

The question of the provenance of the continental spoons is a difficult one. As shown in Part I., spoons travelled as far as from Italy to England and in adjacent countries, like France, Holland and what is now, since 1831, Belgium, there was probably a considerable exchange of trade, including spoons. When purchased in England, little or no information as to the country of origin can be obtained.

Several important types of continental spoons are omitted here because they are either similar to English types or, having been imported into England, have already been described in Mr. Hilton Price's book.

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons



All the examples illustrated are in the writer's collection and are reproduced about half-size. Makers' marks are given where they exist.

No. 1. This fragment of a latten spoon is quite interesting. The stem is extremely slight for a mediæval spoon and the shoulders of the bowl show that it was originally circular. It was found in France in its present condition and it seems probable that, having served its useful purpose, it was, some half a dozen centuries ago, converted into a child's plaything.

No. 2. Pewter spoon found in Italy, another interesting and puzzling piece. It certainly was not made by an ordinary spoon-maker, being much too crude and unfinished. The stem and round bowl give no information as to its age, which appears to be considerable, and in all probability it will always remain a mystery.

No. 3. This latten spoon was in the collection of the late Mr. George Dunn. The type of stem is new to the writer, the form of bowl is rare and the weight

is under half an ounce. It is undoubtedly a very early piece.

No. 4. Latten cone end, found in Northern Italy, with similar type of bowl to No. 3. The cone end fixes the period at the fourteenth century or earlier: There is a maker's mark on the back of the bowl; device indistinct.

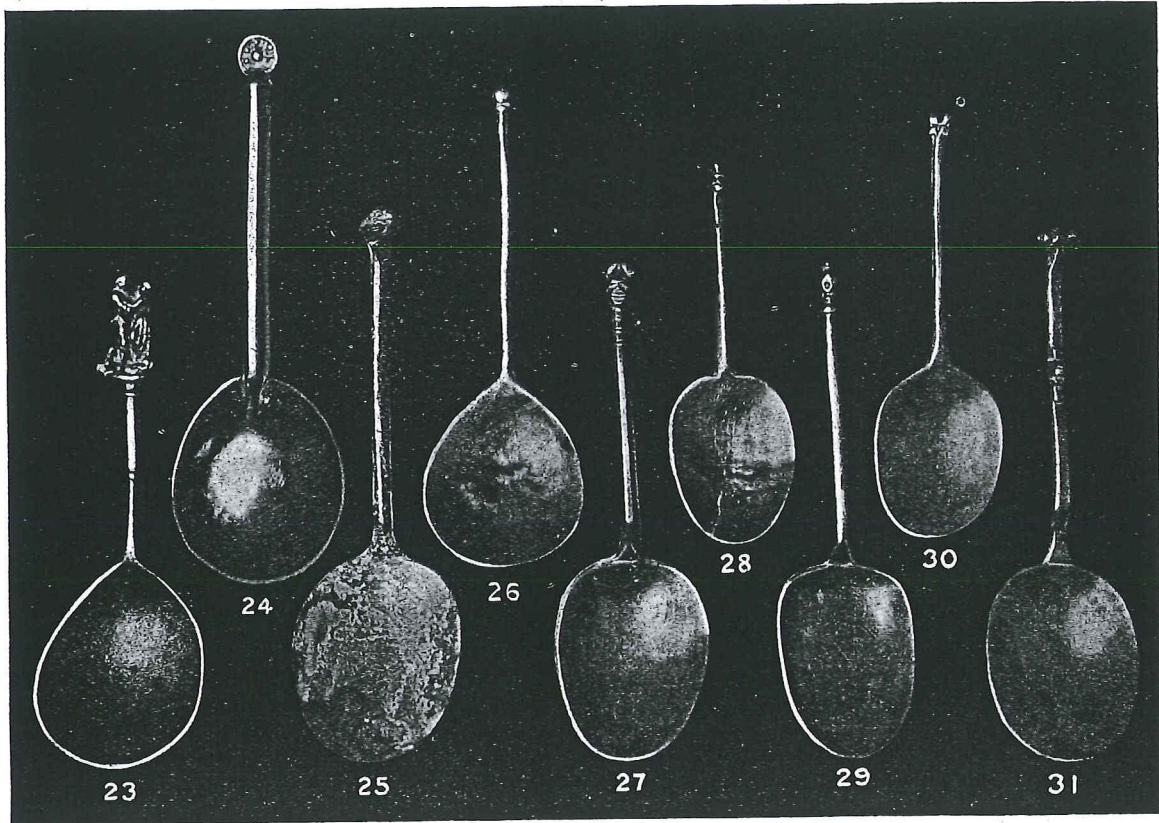
No. 5. Latten ringed cone knop, with diamond section stem. French, fourteenth century or earlier.

No. 6. This latten spoon, found in Venice, is another mystery. It will be noticed that the upper part of the damaged stem is twisted—an exceptionally rare form in or about the fifteenth century. It would be interesting to know the kind of knop it had.

No. 7. Pewter, with latten acorn knop, stated to have been found in Venice. The combination of pewter and latten is very rare, the writer only knowing of three other instances—one each of finial, writhen and baluster types—all English spoons.

No. 8. A rare type of baluster knop with ribbed

The Connoisseur



stem. Mark: rose and crown and initials P. C. Found in Belgium. Sixteenth century.

Hoof knobs seem to have been numerous on the Continent, both in pewter and latten, but only two English makers, both pewterers, are known. The latten are extremely light in weight and generally resemble No. 41. The pewter are much more varied in type and half a dozen are here shown.

No. 9. A cloven hoof with fig-shape bowl and a shield at base of rounded stem. Mark: rose and crown. Seventeenth century.

No. 10. A small example with square stem. Found in Belgium. Seventeenth century.

No. 11. A large spoon with shouldered bowl. Mark: at back of bowl, rose and crown. Found in Belgium. Seventeenth century.

No. 12. A fine example, with shield at base of stem. Found in Belgium. Mark: rose crown and initials H. T. Seventeenth century or later.

No. 13. A shouldered bowl with short rat-tail.

Mark: rose and crown at back of bowl. Found in Belgium. Eighteenth century.

No. 14. Another type. Mark: rose and crown with three initials D. D. ?. Eighteenth century.

No. 15. A spoon, hoof type, with rounded bowl and drop in stem. Mark: crown over heart. Seventeenth century.

The following half-dozen pewter spoons are types that do not appear to have been made in latten and very rarely in silver.

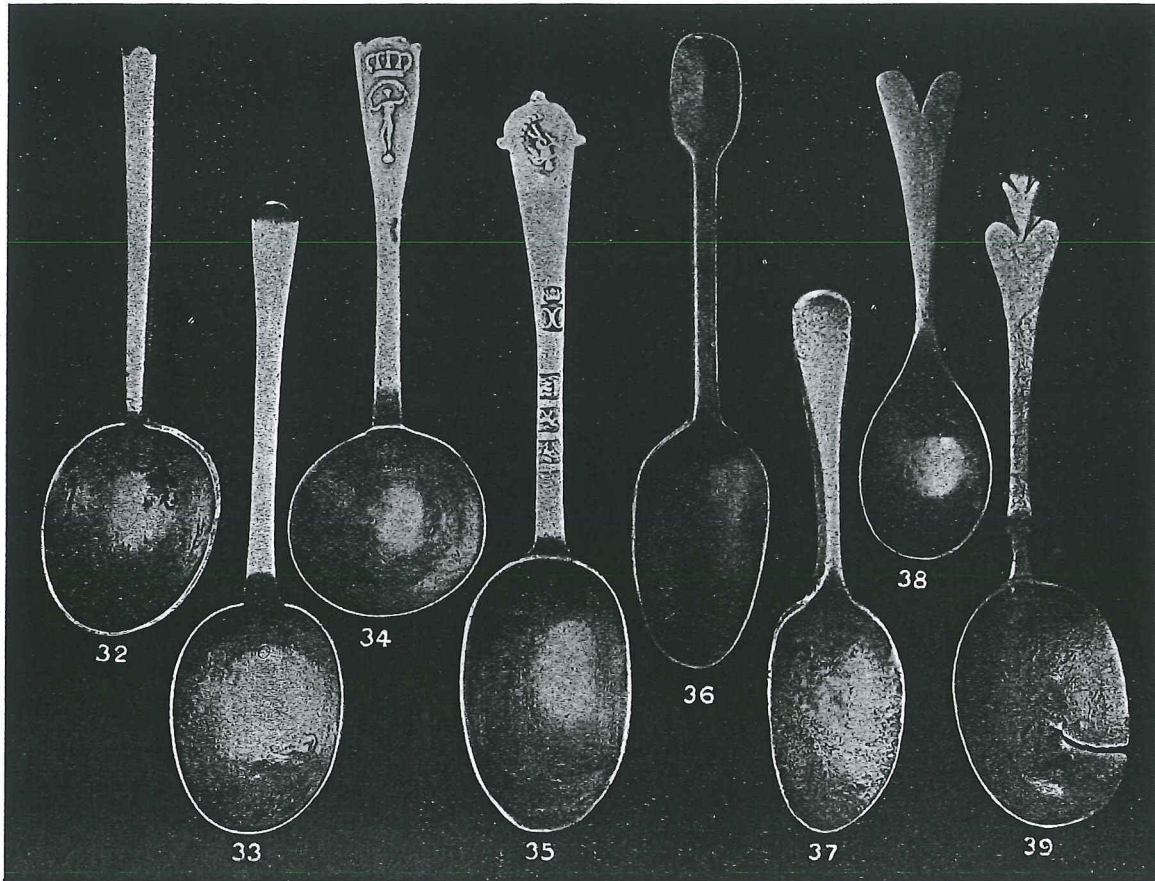
No. 16. Round stem stump end. Found in Belgium. Mark: rose and crown. Seventeenth century.

No. 17. Small stump end, square stem with slightly chamfered edges. Mark: a double-headed eagle. Seventeenth century.

No. 18. A fine hexagonal stem. Mark: crown over device (?) and two initials, ? and R. Probably German. Seventeenth century.

No. 19. A round bowl with flat hexagonal stem. Mark: rose and crown containing initials B. A.

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons



Probably Dutch. Seventeenth century. On the bowl appear the three initials, one above and two below, of the owners. Very common on English spoons of this period but rarely found on continental.

No. 20. Diamond section stem with fig-shape bowl. Mark: crown over hammer on the side of the stem—a very unusual place. Found in Belgium. Probably sixteenth century.

No. 21. This is an interesting spoon for several reasons. The stem is quadrangular, narrow at the back—a rare form—with short rat-tail. Both the maker's mark—a crown over hammer and initials P C N—and the owner's initial A are on the top of the stem—an unusual place to find both. The elliptical bowl indicates the extremely short transition stage between the earlier fig-shape and the later shouldered bowls which occurred about the middle of the seventeenth century.

No. 22. Pewter, with volute knop and rounded

bowl—a rare type. Mark on back: rose and crown. Seventeenth century.

No. 23. A latten spoon, which has been described as a “betrothal” spoon but whether the figures are embracing or dancing is difficult to say. The writer has never seen another example. Probably seventeenth century.

No. 24. A curious latten spoon, photographed from the back. The front is absolutely flat, without decoration of any sort. The stem is quadrangular, the back being very narrow and it has a kind of rose decoration in the circular knop. Seventeenth century or earlier.

Nos. 25 to 31. These latten spoons are probably all Italian. Nos. 25, 29 and 31 have rat-tails. None is marked and they belong to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

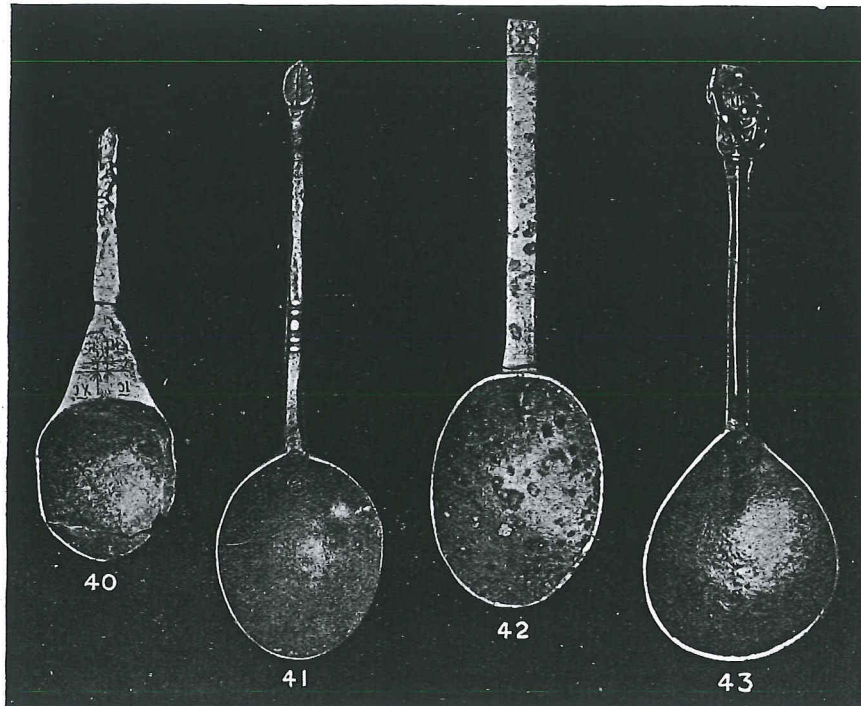
Nos. 32 and 33. Two interesting early examples in pewter of the split-end or “trifid” type. No. 32 is marked on the bowl, crown over device and four initials

The Connoisseur

A. A. I. ? No. 33 has on back of stem hall-marks—1, lion rampant in shield with crown above; 2, a stork; 3, the letter N; 4, a maker's mark. Both Dutch of the latter half of the seventeenth century.

No. 38. A latten fish-tail type, the only one the writer has come across. It is difficult to date.

No. 39. Another curiosity in latten. The base of the stem suggests Italy. Eighteenth century.



No. 34. Another example in pewter of the split-end, with drop at the base of stem. Under the figure are the initials G. H. Mark: a female figure and H. M. Sch. . . . Dutch, early eighteenth century.

No. 35. An exceedingly well-marked pewter spoon of the round-end type, with rat-tail and decoration at the back of the bowl. Maker's mark, an angel blowing a trumpet. Inscription indistinct; also a fine crowned X mark and four hall-marks—1, four initials, H. M. ? C.; 2, an angel blowing a trumpet; 3, a lion rampant; 4, a ship in full sail. Dutch, *circa* 1750.

No. 36. Latten fiddle-end, a curious type of French spoon. First half of eighteenth century.

No. 37. A very weighty Dutch pewter spoon with double drop. Probably late. Nothing like it seems to have been made in England.

The next four spoons are ecclesiastical.

No. 40. A Greek Church sacramental spoon in silver is illustrated here, as the writer does not collect silver spoons and another opportunity of describing this interesting piece may not occur. It is engraved with a cross and the letters I.C. X.C. (Iesus Christos) above and others below indistinct. It was found in Bermondsey and is probably not later than the sixteenth century. In the Greek Church the Sacrament is administered to children.

No. 41. A latten hoof knob, having the letters I H S in beaded circle in place of the maker's mark. Italian, seventeenth century or earlier.

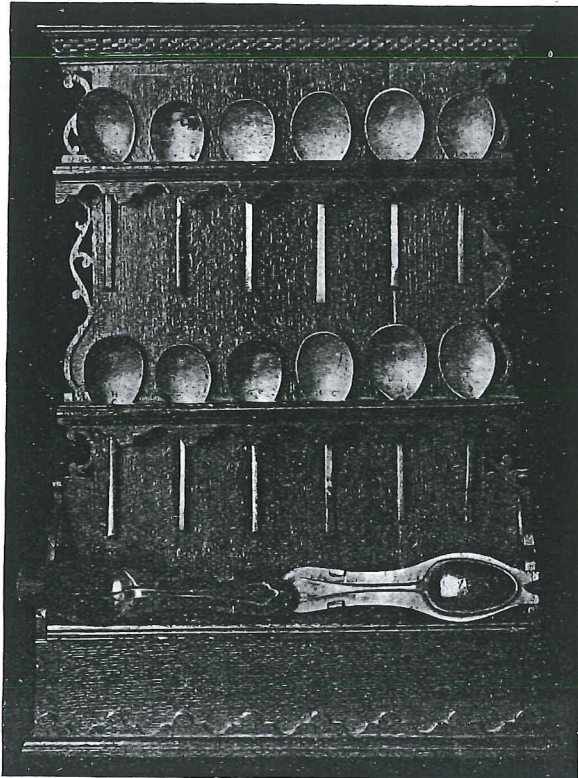
No. 42. A pewter spoon of Puritan type, with I H S and small cross in square at the top of the stem. Middle of seventeenth century.

No. 43. This latten spoon is a puzzle, no similar one being known to the writer. The knob is a seated

Some Continental Base Metal Spoons

figure, presumably St. Thomas. The stem is diamond section and suggests that it originally had some covering. On the back of the bowl is engraved "Thom." There are two hall-marks. One appears to

photographs of English pewter portrait spoons. It is generally presumed that types of base metal spoons followed the silver, but it certainly was not so in the case of portrait spoons. Mr. C. J. Jackson, F.S.A.,



be a cup with two roundels on each side; the other might be a spear and one roundel. It is difficult to date.

Spoon-racks are not common. The writer takes this opportunity of illustrating an English example in oak of the latter half of the eighteenth century. The "slipped in the stalks" spoons in it are, of course, much earlier. An English spoon-mould in gun-metal, *circa* 1690, is also shown.

It has been suggested that it is very desirable that particulars of types of English base metal spoons *not* mentioned in the late Mr. Hilton Price's book should be brought together with a view to publication. Curators of museums and collectors having any such spoons are earnestly requested to assist by communicating with the writer.

At the same time, it would be interesting to obtain

in his *The Spoon and its History*, illustrates one only continental in silver, and, in spite of enquiries in many directions, the writer has only heard of one other, said to be of Charles II. On the other hand, the writer in his collection has no less than seven in pewter, all English, and knows of two or three others. Why are they so rare in silver and common in pewter? The only possible explanation seems to be the question of manufacture. Pewter spoons were made in moulds, the metal being melted and poured in, while silver, the writer is informed, are always cut out and stamped from sheets of cold metal, a process that presumably does not lend itself to the high relief of portraits. The writer is of opinion that illustrations of all known pewter portrait spoons would prove extremely interesting, and again asks for the assistance of readers of *THE CONNOISSEUR*.