

PEWTER SPOONS.

Some Early Examples Discovered in the West of England—Collecting Sets of Measures and How Constituted.

By E. W. TURNER, M.A.

SPOONS are somewhat of a study by themselves, and for some reason seem to belong to museum rather than to private collections. Perhaps it is because there are so few to be found, and when excavations and demolitions bring them to light they find their way, as if by predestination, to the cases and shelves of museums, where, reposing in the distinction of their labels, they keep silent company with the "laten" and base metal spoons of other periods. The first spoon was probably a shell; the second a hollow piece of wood; the third, fashioned from horn; the fourth, of bronze; and perhaps the fifth was of pewter.

Changes in Design of Spoons.

Quite a number of fourteenth and fifteenth century spoons are in existence, and the interesting features about them are that their bowls are fig-shaped instead of oval (as is the case with nearly all later spoons), and secondly, that the tops of the handles carried an ornamental device. The earliest device appears to have been a plain knob, fashioned doubtless to balance the bowl and to move easily in the hollow of the hand—for the stems were short. Following the ball, and close in the wake of the designs of the silversmiths, came the acorn top, the seal top, the apostle top, the maidenhead top, the lozenge, the strawberry, and others. Later in the sixteenth century, these gave place to no top at all—the stem was cuffed off at an angle or "slipped" as a gardener would cut a rose, and these slip-topped spoons remained in vogue till the flattened ends, with their various roundings and mouldings, took their place and became the accepted pattern of today. Old records show that the pewterers made and sold their spoons in sets of twelve, and old wooden wall racks to hold twelve are still preserved.

The illustration on facing page, which is very far from being a representative one, shows two fourteenth century spoons with the fig-shaped bowls and hexagonal stems. One has an acorn top, the other an apostle. They were both found at the bottom of an old well at Bridgwater, and the finder was unshakeable in his conviction that the apostle was an image of Mr. Shakespeare! They both have touchmarks in the bowl; the acorn spoon, a device of two small concentric rings, and the apostle, a four-leaved clover with four pellets in each leaf.

On the left of the illustration is an early Victorian tureen spoon, and next to it an Irish spoon showing the harp as a touchmark. On the right is a punch-ladle with wooden handle, and next to it an early eighteenth century dessert spoon. Above, is a curious heavily-made spoon which is presumably a chandler's spoon for serving treacle or some viscous liquid. In the Guildhall Museum in London, there is a good collection of old pewter spoons together with those of "laten" or base metal which have been found during excavations in the old Fleet river bed, in drains, etc., and on the sites of the refuse heaps of Old London. At Exeter, too, a number were found recently, and these were probably of West Country make, for a spoon maker of repute resided and worked at Bideford.

In addition to the fig-shaped bowl and the oval, there are in England a number of Dutch or Flemish spoons with almost circular bowls, and a few, too, of English make. These are nearly all of the slip-top variety, and the guide to their nationality is to be found in the hardness or softness of the metal, for the English pewterers subjected their wares to thorough hammering. Difficulties in collecting a representative set of old pewter spoons are very great; difficulties, however, are but incentives to the great hearts who pursue and again pursue.

Pewter Measures.

Some collectors find interest and pleasure in assembling complete sets of measures. Pewter measures were in country-wide use for nearly two centuries, and the task of assembling a set is a comparatively easy one with later varieties if opportunities of travel and inquiry are fully used, but as the age of the measure increases, so, too, does the difficulty of completing a set. It is, perhaps, this increasing difficulty which gives zest to collecting pewter. Here are illustrated (Fig. 2) six types of measures, but in no case is the set complete. There are probably as many sets more of other types of English, Scottish and Irish measures. The first shows the familiar Channel Island types—those on the left being from Jersey, and those on the right from Guernsey. Channel Island measures nearly all bear a London mark, from which it may be inferred that the London pewterers commanded the Channel Islands market.

There are several other known sizes of the Jersey type, and possibly one or two other sizes of the Guernsey type.

Fig. 3 shows what are known from their shape as baluster measures. They are Georgian in period and design, they have the bulbous termination to the handle, and flat lids, with a fleur-de-lis superimposed as a terminal to the thumb-piece, which consists of two solid outward curves and is known as "double-volute." Half-gallon measures of this type are rare.

Fig. 4 shows a nearly complete set of lidless measures of the early nineteenth century—the half gallon is missing. They are of elegant design. The gallon measure of this type is rare; the one shown in the illustration was in the possession of an East Coast chemist or his forebears for over a century.

Fig. 5 is the well-known, much-collected and still much-sought after "tappit-hen" of Scotland. Tappit-hens occur in two varieties—with the flat-domed top and with the crest or finial. There are as many as ten sizes known of the uncrested variety shown. These are earlier than the crested type. The Scots measures differed widely in capacity from the English; for example, a Scots gallon was equivalent to three English gallons. The Northern table of measures ran thus:—4 gills=one mutchkin; 2 mutchkins=one chopin; 2 chopin=one pint.

The Scots pint was thus equal to three English pints. The tappit-hen is quite unlike any other British measure, and the quaintness of its design is doubtless partly accountable for its popularity, but as has already been said, it bears at first sight and impression some likeness to the measures of Northern France.

In Fig. 6 are the "haystack" or Irish "harvester" measures. These again are easily distinguishable from others, although there is a Bristol measure without the definite junction line around the waist, which, in the smaller examples, has been confused with the Irish measures. The "harvester" measures are nearly all of nineteenth century make, and were presumably used for potheen. Eight is the accepted number of a complete set.

U.S. Production of Hardware.

The United States Department of Commerce announces that according to data collected at the biennial census of manufactures taken in 1928, the establishments engaged primarily in the manufacture of hardware of the classes specified in the table below reported, for 1927, a production valued at 208,253,586 dollars, a decrease of 7.5 per cent. as compared with 1925, the last preceding census year. In addition, similar classes of hardware are made to some extent by establishments engaged primarily in other lines of manufacture. The value of such hardware thus produced, outside the industry proper, in 1925 was 14,627,285 dollars, an amount equal to 6.5 per cent. of the total value of products reported for the industry as classified. The corresponding value for 1927 has not yet been ascertained, but will be given later. The statistics for the census years are as follows:

	1927	1925	% Change
Number of establishments ..	485	476	+1.9
Wage-earners (average number) ..	47,834	52,349	-8.6
Wages ..	\$69,827,474	\$65,561,817	-7.2
Cost of materials, factory supplies, fuel, and purchased power, total ..	\$71,877,955	\$77,502,839	-7.3
Materials and supplies ..	\$68,440,109	Not Reported	—
Fuel and power ..	\$3,427,946	Separately.	—
Products, total value ..	\$208,253,586	\$225,052,644	-7.5
Builders' hardware, other than locks ..	\$41,140,002	—	—
Casket hardware ..	\$4,421,487	—	—
Furniture and cabinet hardware ..	\$10,520,307	—	—
Locks ..	\$37,157,855	—	—
Piano and organ hardware ..	\$1,232,370	—	—
Saddlery and harness hardware ..	\$5,225,324	Not Reported Separately.	—
Trunk and suitcase hardware ..	\$2,954,744	—	—
Motor-vehicle hardware ..	\$48,487,556	—	—
Other vehicle hardware ..	\$651,120	—	—
Other hardware ..	\$37,425,736	—	—
All other products ..	\$19,031,085	—	—
Value added by manufacture ..	\$136,376,531	\$147,549,805	-7.6
Horsepower ..	99,624	68,278	+44

OLD PEWTER.

More old pewter is described by Mr. E. W. Turner, M.A., on the facing page. Fig. 1, shows a collection of old pewter spoons; Fig. 2, six types of measures; Fig. 3, Baluster measures; Fig. 4, Lidless measures of the early 19th century.

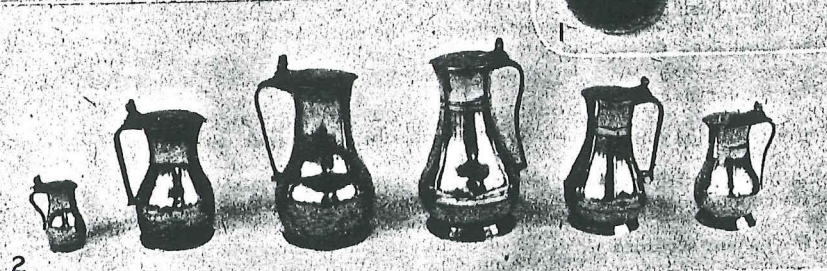
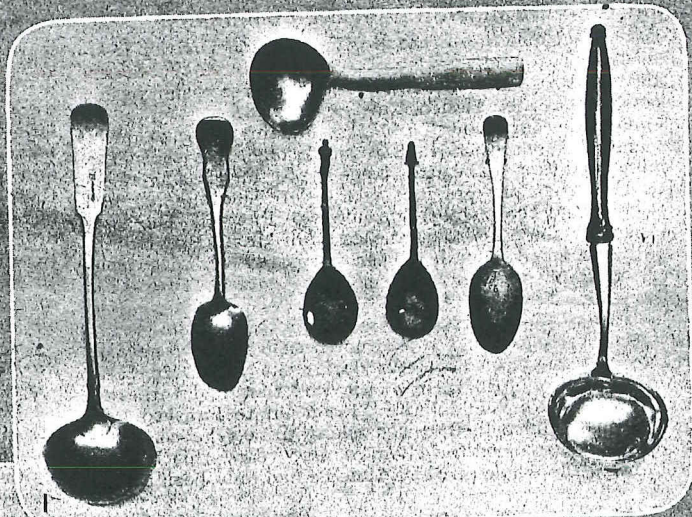


Fig. 5, the well-known... and still much sought "Tappit - Hen" of Scotland.



Fig. 6, The "Haystack" or Irish "Harvester" measures of the 19th century.