

The Archaeological Journal.

JUNE, 1852.

ON THE ASSAY MARKS ON GOLD AND SILVER PLATE.

EVERY person who is possessed of an article of gold or silver plate has most probably observed a small group of marks stamped on some part of it. Few, however, have, I believe, regarded them in any other light than as a proof that the article so marked is made of the metal which it professes to be, and that the metal itself is of a certain purity. And this is, in fact, the real ultimate object and intention of these marks; but besides this, the archaeologist can deduce from them other important and interesting information, as by them he can learn the precise year in which any article bearing these marks was made. It is, therefore, to these marks that I am about to direct attention, with a view to elucidate their history, and peculiar meaning.

There are no articles, in the manufacture of which such extensive frauds can be committed in so small a compass as in those made of the precious metals; and there are no frauds more difficult to be discovered by ordinary persons, since it is only by a minute chemical examination that they can be detected; and but few persons have either the skill or means to perform the necessary operation. This difficulty of detection, and the consequent probable escape from it, have at all times been an inducement to commit such frauds. This we find confirmed in the old story of Hiero's Golden Crown, which, upon the King entertaining suspicions of the fineness of the metal, was referred to Archimedes, who, being well skilled in mechanics and hydrostatics, used the means with which he was most familiar, and detected the fraud by means of the specific gravity of the metal instead of by a chemical analysis, at the time not understood.

Those early times do not concern our present inquiry,

which has relation only to the middle ages. I shall not say anything respecting the antiquity or mode of working the precious metals, that being a distinct subject, but shall endeavour to give a history of the different marks which have been used in this country for stamping gold and silver plate; and shall treat the subject, as far as I can, in chronological order, by giving—

1st. Some account of the Assay as the groundwork of the subject, together with a brief history of the Goldsmiths' Company of London, as being intimately connected with it.

2nd. A short Abstract of the Statutes by which the marks are ordained, and goldsmiths' work regulated.

3rd. A particular account of the several marks themselves, as used in London, and

4th. Such accounts of the Provincial marks as I have been able to obtain.

The precious metals, gold and silver, when in a state of purity, are too soft for the purposes of either coin or plate. It was, therefore, in early times found necessary to employ some other metal to form with them an alloy, to give them the required degree of hardness without materially affecting their colour. Copper or silver are the only metals which can be employed in forming such an alloy with gold. The admixture of silver renders the alloy paler and yellower than pure gold, while copper makes it more red.

Copper is the only metal which can advantageously be used for the alloy with silver; the white metals, tin, lead, and zinc, rendering it brittle, and not easily workable. The maximum hardness is obtained when the copper amounts to one-fifth of the silver, but the colour is scarcely impaired when the alloy consists of equal parts of the two metals; hence a means of committing great frauds. The proportions, however, found by experience to produce the required results are, for gold, twenty-two parts (in technical terms called carats) fine or pure gold, and two parts alloy: and for silver, 11 oz., 2 dwts. fine silver, and 18 dwts. of copper in the Troy lb. of 12 oz. This is called the standard, or sterling alloy of the realm, and has been so since the Conquest. It may here be proper to remark that the fineness of gold is estimated by carats; originally, for this purpose, the Troy ounce was divided into 24 carats, and each carat into 4 grains. Now, however, the carat is only understood to be $\frac{1}{24}$ th part

of the gold ; and gold of 22 or 18 carats is understood to consist of 22 or 18 parts of fine gold, and 2 or 6 parts alloy.

The great frauds which were abundantly practised by dishonest workmen, and the consequent necessity of affording some protection against them by an examination, under authority, of the articles put for sale, in order to certify to the purchasers, by an authorised stamp, a certain standard purity of metal, seems to have been the origin of the marks which we find on the gold and silver plate of most countries.

In very early times, those who carried on particular trades or handicrafts, were accustomed to form themselves into guilds or fraternities, for the purpose of protecting and regulating the trade or mystery, as it was called, which they exercised. These were at subsequent periods incorporated by royal charters, and had particular powers and authority given to them. Amongst such fraternities that of goldsmiths seem to have been early formed in many countries, and it is most probable that one of their objects was to protect their trade against fraudulent workers, and that such an examination as that above mentioned formed part of their duties.

The earliest mode of testing the fineness of these metals seems to have been by the touchstone, or " *pierre de touche*," an imperfect black jasper, or black flinty slate, originally brought from the Mountain of Tmolus in Lydia, and thence also called *Lapis Lydius* ; it is, however, found in various parts of the world, and indeed any hard black siliceous substance will serve the purpose. This mode of trying the fineness was called "touching." The name obtained for a long time after the adoption of the chemical assay, and the word "touch" seem to have been generally applied to the trial, the standard quality of the metal, and the mark impressed upon it.

For the trial of gold two sets of touch needles, or bars, were used, one set alloyed with copper, and the other with silver, twenty-four in each set, according to the twenty-four carats fineness of gold. The streak, or touch made on the touchstone with the piece to be examined, was compared with the streaks made by the needles ; these streaks were also washed with aquafortis, which, dissolving the alloying metals, left the gold pure, and thus its fineness was deter-

mined. For testing silver, sets of needles were also used. In Germany the set consisted of sixteen, after the sixteen loths, according to which their standard of fineness was computed; but it is probable that they varied in different countries, according to the computation of the standard. This mode has, however, been discontinued for many centuries, and it could not have been a satisfactory mode of ascertaining the purity of silver, into which so much copper could be introduced without materially affecting its colour, though it is probable that the hardness of the alloy aided the detection of fraud.

The period of the adoption of the chemical assay, or assay of silver by the cupel, I do not know; but the knowledge of it was probably coeval with the science of metallurgy. "The touch," however, continued as the mode of trying gold for a very long time, and indeed is even used at the present day for rough examinations. This much, however, is certain, that the assay was practised in the thirteenth century, and, as we shall see, was the mode of examination adopted by the authorities in the fourteenth, and this is early enough for our purpose.

In the thirteenth century, the standard or "touch of Paris" was esteemed the best alloy for gold, and for silver that of the sterling or coin of England. At this period, however, frauds in goldsmiths' work and jewellery were committed to an enormous extent; not only was gold of inferior quality substituted, but articles made in latten were gilt and sold for gold, and pewter was silvered and sold for the genuine metal; so that it became necessary for the provost of Paris, about 1260, to issue a code of statutes for the regulation of the goldsmiths, who already existed there as a corporate body.¹ In these statutes gold is ordered to be of the "touch of Paris," and silver as good as Sterlings (estelins), which was the standard of the English coin.

In England a fraternity or guild of goldsmiths had existed from an early period, for in 1180, 26th of Henry II., it was, among other guilds, amerced for being adulterine, that is, set up without the King's license. It was not, however, incorporated by charter for nearly 150 years after, although it had special duties assigned to it.

¹ A work recently published in Paris, gives much curious information in this matter. "L'Histoire de l'Orfèvrerie et Joaillerie,"

We now proceed to consider the origin and history of our English marks. The first mention we find of a mark is in the year 1300, when it seems that frauds were committed to such an extent that the interference of the legislature became necessary, for in that year, 28th of Edward I., it was ordained by statute that no goldsmith should make any article of gold or silver unless it be of good and true alloy, that is, gold of the "touch of Paris," and silver of the alloy of the sterling coin; that all articles should be *assayed* by the wardens of the craft, and marked with the *leopard's head*; that the wardens should go from shop to shop among the goldsmiths to assay if the gold be of the aforesaid "touch," and that everything which they should find of lower standard should be forfeit to the King; that no false stones should be set in gold, and no real stones in base metal. We here see the "wardens of the craft" called into operation to assay suspected articles and to mark those of the true standard with the "leopard's head." This is the earliest mention I find of an assay.

The process of the assay in contradistinction to the "touch" is as follows:—for gold, a portion of metal scraped off the article to be examined, after being accurately weighed, is digested in nitric acid, which dissolves the copper, silver, &c., leaving the gold in the form of a black powder, which may be fused into a button of the pure metal, and the difference in weight will show the quantity of alloy. The silver is thrown down from the solution by common salt, and the copper is precipitated by iron.

For silver, the process is by the cupel: a certain portion, usually about ten or twenty grains is scraped off the article, some being taken from each separate part; it is accurately weighed, and wrapped in a piece of pure *lead* foil of proportionate weight: this is placed in a small, shallow, porous crucible, made of bone ashes, called a cupel, and exposed to a bright red heat. The metals melt; the lead and alloying metals become oxydised, and are absorbed by the cupel, leaving a button of pure silver; the difference in weight between the remaining button and the original weight shows the amount of alloy.

Of this process a minutely-detailed account is given in a small book published in 1675, called "A Touchstone for Gold and Silver Wares;" and the process is now carried on

at Goldsmiths' Hall in precisely the same manner as then—even to the mode of folding up the papers to contain the scrapings of the metal to be assayed. If the article examined is found to be of the required fineness, the marks are stamped on it with punches; but if the metal is not of the proper quality the article is crushed, and so delivered back to the maker. It is scarcely to be believed possible that every separate part of every article made of silver in this country should go through this process of examination, but such is the fact; and the public are greatly indebted to the Company of Goldsmiths for this most effectual protection against the frauds which prevailed in earlier times.

That the mode of assay as now practised was in use in the fourteenth century, we find from some very curious and interesting particulars given in the "Publications de la Société Archéologique de Montpellier," respecting the early goldsmiths of that place, which was long famous for its gold and the workers of it, who in the fourteenth century constituted a fraternity governed by statutes. Montpellier had also a standard of its own, which however does not seem to have been a very high one, since fine silver might consist of one-third alloy, or such silver as would come white out of the fire, and gold of fourteen carats might be worked. By these statutes the goldsmiths were expressly forbidden to manufacture articles in gilt or silvered copper or brass, save ornaments and utensils for churches, to mount real stones in jewellery of base metal, or to set false stones in gold or silver.

The account of the goldsmiths of Montpellier throws much light on our subject. It appears that in 1355 great abuses had been introduced into the fabrication of articles of silver, and the result of the consequent disputes between the consuls of the town and the goldsmiths was, that the following regulations for the trade of goldsmiths were made:—

That all vessels and works of silver made by the argentiers of Montpellier must be of the standard of 11 deniers and 1 obole or 12 grains at the least.² The goldsmiths were to

² Denier was the term used in France to denote the fineness of silver as carat is for gold. The silver is divided into twelve deniers, and each denier into two oboles or twenty-four grains: hence silver

of twelve deniers was pure, and eleven deniers and one obole had only one twenty-fourth part alloy. This quality was also called Argent le Roy.

make two patterns or trial pieces of silver, of the standard of 11 deniers 14 grains, marked with the puncheon of Montpellier, (for Philippe le Hardi had in 1275 ordained that each city should have a *particular mark* for works in silver) after which the goldsmiths should work, with the allowance of 2 grains. One of these trial pieces should be kept at the consulate, and the other by the warden of the goldsmiths. That a third trial piece should be made of 11 deniers and 1 obole, also marked, which should remain with the consuls for trial with suspected works. Every master silversmith should mark, *with a particular mark*, the pieces of his work, and deliver them himself to the warden. The warden, before marking the piece with the puncheon of Montpellier, should remove a portion of the silver called, in the language of Montpellier, "borihl" (a technical term for a portion of metal removed with a buril, burin, or graver, for the purpose of the assay), which he should put into a box, keeping a separate box for each workman, and once or twice a year make an assay of these "borihls;" and if the standard was found below the 11 deniers 1 obole, they should denounce the worker to the consuls, who should make a second assay, and if they found the fraud confirmed should deliver him over to justice. Moreover, the wardens might break such articles as seemed to them insufficient. In the original documents nothing is said of the method of performing the operation of the assay; but as it is expressly ordered that, in assaying the trial pieces and "borihls," the same ashes (probably bone ashes to form the crucible), *lead*, and fire should be used, it is clear that the assay was by the cupel.

Nothing had hitherto been done or said about gold; but, though less worked than silver, there were equal abuses; and, in 1401, the consuls and wardens of the mystery, assisted by several argentiers, made a regulation in presence of the consuls of the city, by which the standard of gold, which originally was only 14 carats, and had, by a subsequent decree, been raised to 18 carats, was now reduced to 16 carats; and there is here a question of the trial of gold by the "touch," showing that it was then in use.

In the fifteenth century, abuses and frauds in the trade had greatly multiplied. Public clamour was raised against the principal silversmiths for working below the standard of 1355. A process was instituted against them in 1427.

The consuls seized several of their works, had them assayed, found them fraudulent, and made them appear before the tribunal. In their defence, they pleaded that the ordinances of 1355 were obsolete with regard to small "orfèveries." They were condemned to pay a fine of 10 marks of silver each; and, on appeal, the sentence was confirmed. They claimed exemption from marking girdles and small works; an inquest was held, and the following ordinances resulted, which were solemnly renewed in 1436 with still stricter conditions; and they show with what care the fabrication of works of gold and silver was regulated. To insure, therefore, the legal standard, they ordained, besides the ordinary precaution of the box, the "borihls," the trial pieces, and the name of the silversmith, that the name of the warden of the mystery inscribed on the register of the city, and on the private book of the silversmiths, should be followed by *one of the letters of the alphabet*, which should be *reproduced* beneath the ecusson (shield of arms) of the town on each work, in order that it might be known under what warden it was made.

These proceedings of the goldsmiths of Montpellier are highly interesting and important, since they not only give us an account of the frauds and the alteration of the standard, together with the particulars of the assay, which in its system with the box and trial pieces bears a very strong analogy to our trial of the Pyx, but also gives us the date, origin, and establishment of three important marks, viz., the mark of the country or city, the mark of the maker, and the annual letter, all of which have been adopted in this country.

The fraternity of goldsmiths at Paris, which, as we have seen, was very early established, and had a code of statutes given to it in 1260, had a second and more extensive code given to it by the King (John II.) in 1355. Here it is ordered that every goldsmith who was approved by the masters of the craft should have a puncheon with a counter-mark of his own. Amongst other things, they were forbidden to work in gold unless it be of the touch of Paris or better; and we are there informed that it is better than all the golds which they work in other lands, and that its fineness is $19\frac{1}{2}$ carats. They are also forbidden to work in base metal, to use false stones of glass, or to put coloured foil beneath real stones. Their silver was to be "argent le roy,"

11 deniers 12 grains ; and there were also jurors, or "prud-hommes," appointed to guard the trade, with power to punish those who worked bad metal.

At Nuremberg and Augsburg, those ancient cities so famous for their works in metal, as well as in other places, similar guilds of goldsmiths, regulated by statutes, existed ; but as the instances given are sufficient to show the practices which prevailed on the Continent, and the means taken to prevent them, and which seem to have been generally adopted, this not being a treatise on goldsmiths' work in general, it will not be necessary to travel further.

In the year 1327, the Goldsmiths' Company of London was first incorporated by letters patent from Edward III., under the name of "The Wardens and Commonalty of the Mystery of Goldsmiths of the City of London." This charter,³ which is in old French, states that the goldsmiths had, by their petition, exhibited to the King and council in parliament, holden at Westminster, shown that theretofore no private merchants or strangers were wont to bring into this land any money coined, but plate of silver to exchange for our coin ; that it had been ordained that all of the trade of goldsmiths were to sit in their shops in the High-street of Cheap, and that no silver or gold plate ought to be sold in the city of London except in the King's Exchange, or in Cheap, among the goldsmiths, and that publicly, to the end that persons in the trade might inform themselves whether the seller came lawfully by it ; but that of late both private merchants and strangers bring from foreign lands counterfeit sterling, whereof the pound is not worth 16 sols of the right sterling, and of this money none can know the right value, but by melting it down ; and that many of the trade of goldsmiths do keep shops in obscure streets, and do buy vessels of gold and silver secretly, without inquiring whether such vessels were stolen or come lawfully by, and immediately melting it down, make it into plate, and sell it to merchants trading beyond sea, and so they make false work of gold, silver, and jewels, in which they set glass of divers colours, counterfeiting right stones, and put more alloy in their silver than they ought, which they sell to such as have no skill in such things ; that the cutlers cover tin with silver, so sub-

³ The Charter will be found at length, both in French and English, in Her-

bert's History of the Twelve City Companies.

tily, and with such sleight, that the same cannot be discovered nor separated, and so sell the tin for fine silver, to the great damage and deceit of us and our people; we, with the assent of our Lords, spiritual and temporal, and the Commons of our realme, will and grant for us and our heirs, that henceforth no one shall bring into this land any sort of money, but only plate of fine silver, and that no plate of gold or silver be sold to sell again, or be carried out of the kingdom, but should be sold openly for private use; that none of the trade should keep any shop except in Cheap, that it may be seen that their work be good; that those of the trade may, by virtue of these presents, elect honest and sufficient men, best skilled in the trade, to inquire of the matters aforesaid, and that they who were so chosen reform what defects they should find, and inflict punishment on the offenders, and that by the help of the mayor and sheriffs, if need be: that in all trading cities in England, where goldsmiths reside, the same ordnance be observed as in London, and that one or two of every such city or town, for the rest of the trade, shall come to London to be ascertained of their touch of gold, and to have their works marked with the puncheon with the leopard's head as it was anciently ordained.

By the 37th Edward III. it was ordained that every master goldsmith should have a mark by himself, which should be known by them who should be assigned to survey their work; that the goldsmiths should not set their mark till their work was assayed; and that after the assay made, the surveyor should set the King's mark, viz., the "leopard's head;" and that then the goldsmith should set his mark, for which he should answer; that no goldsmith should charge for silver plate but 1s. 6d. for the pound of two marks, as at Paris; that no silversmith should meddle with gilding; and that no gilder should work in silver.

This is the first introduction of the maker's mark into England; and it seems pretty clear that in the fourteenth century, owing to the frauds committed, a great move was made throughout Europe with respect to goldsmiths, France, and very probably Montpellier, taking the lead.

The charter of Edward III. was found insufficient for want of proper persons being named in it; therefore Richard II., in 1394, incorporated them by another charter, confirming

the first, and giving them power to choose wardens and other officers. In 1423, 2nd Henry VI., another statute ordained that no goldsmith or jeweller should sell any article unless it was as fine as sterling, nor before it was "touched with the touch," and marked with the workman's mark; and the cities of York, Newcastle, Lincoln, Norwich, Bristol, Salisbury and Coventry, were authorised to have "touches;" and no goldsmith was to sell any gold or silver but as was ordained in the city of London.

Edward IV. not only confirmed the charter of Richard II. but constituted the Goldsmiths' Company a body corporate and politic, with perpetual succession, power to use a common seal, hold lands, &c., and by this charter invested them with a privilege of inspecting, trying, and regulating all gold and silver wares, not only in the City of London, but also in all other parts of the kingdom, with power to punish offenders for working adulterated gold or silver. These powers were continually exercised; and from the records of the company it appears that periodical progresses through the country were made by the assay wardens for that purpose. Several kings at various times gave them new charters, enlarging and confirming the older ones. The latest is an "Inspeximus" of James I., which recites and confirms all those previously granted.

The records of the company commence about the 5th of Edward III., 1331, and continue to the present day. They consist of the wardens' accounts, which begin the year above-mentioned, and amount to many large volumes—the illuminated MS. volumes of their ordinances, and some other books relating to their estates. They contain some very curious and interesting particulars, many of which are detailed by Mr. Herbert in his history of the company.

This company, as might be expected, formerly possessed a considerable quantity of ancient plate, especially a large figure in silver-gilt, of their patron saint, St. Dunstan; but their books show that to supply the necessity of the time, a vast quantity was sold in 1637; and, though some was re-made after the Restoration, their finances being at a very low ebb after the Great Fire of London, it was nearly all sold to raise funds for the rebuilding of their Hall.

This company is one of the most wealthy, munificent, and hospitable in the City of London; and I must here take

occasion to express my thanks to them, for their kind permission to inspect their records; and for the very obliging and ready assistance given to me on all occasions by their officers.

The members of the fraternity were originally all goldsmiths, as mentioned in their first charter, which states that all they which are of the Hall sit in their shops in the High Street of Cheap, which was probably a street of goldsmiths, similar to those which we find at Paris, Genoa, and other ancient cities. The company is governed by a Prime Warden, three other Wardens, and 98 Assistants, with a livery of 198 members. The wardens are now annually elected on the 29th May; previous, however, to the Restoration, in compliance with their ordinances, St. Dunstan's Day was their proper day of election. On the day of election, when the new Prime Warden enters upon the duties of his office, the new punches for the marks having been prepared, are delivered by him to the officers of the Assay Office. Formerly the old punches were all preserved, and had been so for a very long period. Not many years ago, however, their accumulation being very great, and found inconvenient, it was considered that such a mass of old iron was useless,—and they were destroyed. It is much to be regretted that impressions of each series were not taken on a copper-plate previous to their destruction; though it is hardly probable that there were any earlier than the time of the Great Fire in 1666.

The ordinances or statutes of the company are contained in a fine MS. on vellum, with illuminated initial letters. It is therein stated, that “this Boke was made and ordeyned by Hugh Bryce, Altherman, Henry Coote, Myles Adys, and William Palmer, Wardens, the 20th day of September, in the yeare of our Lorde, 1478, in the 18th yeare of King Edward IV.” The “Kalendar (or index) made and ordeyned by Henry Coote, Stephen Keltre, John Ernest, and Allen Newman, the last day of August, A.D. 1483, the 1st of King Edward III.” It contains, first, the oaths for the wardens and officers; and secondly, the ordinances for the government of the company, which *inter alia* “ordayne” that the wardens shall be chosen on St. Dunstan's Day. They chiefly, however, consist of regulations for the masters of the craft, and the taking, keeping, and conduct of apprentices. But “For the working

of gold and silver to the standard, and how it shall be delivered," "Also, it is ordeyned that no goldsmith of England, nor nowhere else within the realme, work no manner of vessel nor any other thing of gold nor silver ; but if it be of verry alloy, according to the standard of England, called sterling money, or better." "That no manner of vessel, nor any other thing, be borne out from the hands of the workers, nor sold till it be assayed by the wardens of the craft, or their deputy, the assayer ordained therefore, and that it be marked with the lyperde's head, crowned, according to the acts of diverse parliaments, and the mark of the maker thereof." No worker was to be a freeman of the company until he had been apprenticed seven years ; and the ordinances were to be read publicly every St. Dunstan's Day. At the end of the book are some additional ordinances of the 22d Henry VII., 1507, by which it is ordained that no goldsmith should put to sale any vessel or other work of gold or silver, until he had *set his mark upon it*. That he should take it to the assay-house of the Hall of the Goldsmiths to be assayed by the assayer, who should *set his mark upon it*, and should deliver it to the warden, who should set on it *the leopard's head*, crowned.

Again, in another MS. book on vellum, which has the arms of the Goldsmiths' Company emblazoned on the first page, and contains ordinances dated 24th July 1513, 5th Henry VIII., we find that it is ordained that before any work of gold or silver is put to sale, the maker shall set on it his own mark ; that it shall be assayed by the assayer, who shall set on it his mark, and the wardens shall mark it with the leopard's head, crowned.

Here, then, in both sets of ordinances, we have three distinct marks mentioned ; the maker's, the assayer's and the leopard's head, or king's. What the assayer's mark was we are not informed, nor have I been able to discover it.

The pound sterling of silver had been lessened in value several different times since the Conquest, but it was always effected by diminishing the weight, leaving the fineness of the silver unaltered ; but, in 1543, Henry VIII. not only altered the weight, but reduced the standard from 11 oz. 2 dwts. fine and 18 alloy, to 10 oz. fine and 2 oz. alloy. In 1545 the fineness was again debased, it being but 6 oz., or half fine and half alloy. In 1546 the fineness was still

further reduced to 4 oz. fine, and 8 oz. alloy. In 1576, however, by the 18th Elizabeth, the standard for gold and silver wares, was restored to its original fineness, and the workers were forbidden to use solder or other stuffing beyond what was necessary for finishing the work ; they were also forbidden to take more than 12*d.* for the ounce of gold, or pound of silver "beyond the fashion," above the intrinsic value of the metal. One of the frauds abundantly practised, was the filling up hollow places with solder, or rather "stuffing." Another mode of giving a fraudulent appearance of fine silver to a base alloy, was by boiling the work in an acid, which, by dissolving the alloying metal on the surface, left a thin coating of fine silver on the base metal.

The following entry is found among the records of the company : "4th May, 1597.—Edward Cole, Attorney-general, filed an information against John Moore and Robert Thomas, 'that whereas it had been heretofore of long time provided by divers laws and statutes for the avoiding deceit and fraud in the making of plate, that every goldsmith should, before the sale of any plate by him made, bring the same first to the Goldsmiths' Hall, for trial by assay, to be touched or marked, and allowed by the wardens of the said company of Goldsmiths ; the which wardens did, by their indenture, in their search, find out the aforesaid deceitful workmanship and counterfeit also of plate and puncheons ; yet the said John Moore and R. Thomas, being lately made free of the Goldsmiths' Comp'y, did, about three months past, make divers parcels of counterfeit plate debased, and worse than her Majesty's standard 12*d.*, and more in the oz. ; and to give appearance to the said counterfeit plate, being good and lawful, did thereto put and counterfeit the marks of her Majesty's *Lion*, the leopard's head, limited by statute, and the *Alphabetical mark approved* by ordinance amongst themselves, which are the private marks of the Goldsmiths' Hall, and be and remain in the custody of the said wardens, and puncheons to be worked and imprinted thereon ; and the said John Moore did afterwards sell the same for good and sufficient plate, to the defrauding of her Majesty's subjects, &c.'" They were convicted and sentenced to stand in the pillory at Westminster, with their ears nailed thereto, and with papers above their heads, stating their offence to be "for making false plate and counterfeiting her Majesty's

touch." They were then put in the pillory at Cheapside, had one ear cut off, and were taken through Foster Lane to Fleet Prison, and had to pay a fine of ten marks. Here we have the first mention of *the Lion* and an *Alphabetical letter*.

In this state things remained till, in 1675, "for the prevention and redress of great abuses," the Goldsmiths' Company put forth a notice, dated 23rd February, to the effect that, whereas sundry wares had been worked, and put to sale worse than standard, and not marked with the leopard's head crowned, "all plate workers are required to cause *their respective marks* to be brought to Goldsmiths' Hall, and there write the same in a table to be kept at the Assay Office, and write their names and places of habitation in a book; and all who exercise the trade of a goldsmith in the cities of London and Westminster, are required to repair to Goldsmiths' Hall, and *strike their mark on a table appointed for that purpose*, and enter their name in a book. And all workers shall forbear putting to sale any works not being agreeable to standard, and no person should put to sale any article before the workman's mark be put thereon, and the same assayed at Goldsmiths' Hall, and there approved by striking thereon *the Lion*, and leopard's head, or one of them." This is the first mention made of the Lion in any statute.

In the minutes of the company is found the following entry of this date (*Feb. 1, 1696*): "The bill laying the duty of 6*d.* per oz. read. This bill provided that all persons, guilds, fraternities, colleges, halls, and bodies corporate and politic, being the owners of any wrought plate, who shall be minded to keep their plate, should bring the same to certain officers of the excise, who should be appointed, and have the proper stamps so to be ordered, to have the same stamped thereby, and pay a duty of 6*d.* per oz. to the king, in case they should not chuse to take the same to the mint to be melted down and coined; and if they neglected so to do, the plate was to be forfeited, two-thirds to the informer, and one-third to the poor of the parish. A committee was appointed to consider the same, and petition the House of Commons." The bill did not pass, or a wholesale destruction of ancient plate must have been the result.

A practice having prevailed of melting down the coin of the realm for the purpose of making the silver into plate, in

1697 the standard for silver plate was raised, by statute 8 & 9 of William III., from 11 oz. 2 dwt. to 11 oz. 10 dwt. in every pound Troy ; and, in order to distinguish the plate of that quality of silver, the marks were changed. The maker's mark was ordered to consist of the two first letters of his Christian and surname, a lion's head erased was substituted for the leopard's head crowned, and a figure of Britannia was to replace the lion passant ; also a distinct and variable mark was ordered to be used to denote the year when such plate was made. This is the first mention in any statute of the annual letter. The plate made at this period is usually called Britannia plate, to distinguish it, the silver being of finer quality.

The cities of York, Exeter, Bristol, Chester, and Norwich were, in 1700, by Act of Parliament, appointed for the assaying and marking of plate, and Goldsmiths' Companies were incorporated, and Halls established in some of those cities for that purpose ; and in 1701, another act was passed by which Newcastle-upon-Tyne was again appointed an assay town, and the Ancient Goldsmiths' Company incorporated for that purpose ; and all silver-plate assayed there, was ordered to be marked with the city arms, in addition to the other marks. In 1719 the ancient standard of silver was by Act of Parliament restored ; the ancient marks were resumed with it, and a duty of 6*d.* was to be paid to the King for every ounce of silver-plate made or imported. And lastly—

In 1784 an additional duty was imposed on plate. This was 8*s.* per oz. on gold plate, and 6*d.* per oz. on silver plate, and a new mark was added, viz. the head of the reigning sovereign in profile, which was stamped on the plate to indicate that the duty had been paid, and has been continued to the present time.

OCTAVIUS MORGAN.

(To be continued.)

ON THE ASSAY MARKS ON GOLD AND SILVER PLATE.¹

HAVING brought down to the present time the general history of the Assay and the Assay marks, the next division of the subject comprises—

A short Abstract of the Statutes by which the goldsmiths, their works, the Assay, and these marks have been regulated.

As these Statutes contain much curious matter, I recommend a perusal of them by those who take an interest in the subject; they will find them at length in the Statutes at Large. The original early Statutes were in Norman French, and where I have considered the original French words important or interesting, I have given them. The abstract, however, I have confined as briefly and as nearly as I can to the particular subject.

The first Statute on record is—

A.D. 1300, 28th Edward I., cap. 20.—Ordains that no goldsmith should make any article of gold or silver unless it be of good and true alloy, *i. e.* gold of the standard of the Touch of Paris (Tuche de Parys), and silver of the sterling alloy of the coin, or better, (argent del alloy de le esterling, ou de meilleur). That all articles should be assayed by the warden of the craft, and marked with the leopard's head (e q'ele soit signée de *une* teste de leopart). That the wardens (gardiens) should go from shop to shop, (de shope en shope) among the goldsmiths, and assay the gold (assaient); and all that they should find of lower standard should be forfeit to the King. That no false stones should be set in gold, and no real stones in base metal.

A.D. 1363, 37th Edward III., cap. 7.—Ordains that no goldsmith within the realm should work any gold or silver but of the alloy of good sterling (alloy de bon esterlyng). That such master goldsmith should have a mark of his own, known to those who should be assigned by the King to survey their works and the alloy; that after the said surveyors had made their Assay (Assay), as ordained by

¹ Continued from p. 140.

the King and his council, they should set thereon the King's mark, and then the worker his mark, for which he will answer. That no goldsmith take for silver work but 18*d.* for the lb. of 2 marks, as in Paris. That no worker in silver should meddle with gilding, and no gilder work in silver.

A.D. 1379, 2nd Richard II., No. 30.—In the Rolls of Parliament of this date are found the following ordinances:—
“Because the gold and silver which is worked by goldsmiths in England is oftentimes found less fine than it ought to be, because the goldsmiths are themselves the judges, be it ordained henceforth that each goldsmith should have his own mark upon his work; and that the Assay of the touch be to the Mayors and Governors of the Cities and Boroughs, with the aid of the Master of the Mint, if there be one, putting the mark of the City or Borough where it is assayed.”

“Item: it is ordained that each goldsmith of England have his own mark for himself; and if any vessel which is made be found within the realm after the Nativity of St. John next coming, not marked with the mark of the goldsmith who made it, or if it be of worse alloy than sterling, then the same goldsmith shall pay to the party complaining double the value of the same vessel, and be imprisoned, and pay a fine, according to the quantity and quality of the trespass. And our Lord the King shall appoint whom it shall please him to make the Assay, as well in London as elsewhere, as often as it shall be necessary; and after the Assay made to mark the said work with another mark, thereto appointed by our Lord the King. And it is assented that this ordinance shall commence at the said Feast of St. John, and shall last till the next Parliament, to try in the meantime if it be profitable or not.”

These ordinances are not found in the “Statutes of the Realm,” and therefore seem to have been only provisional, and were not confirmed or enacted when Parliament assembled.

A.D. 1381, 5th Richard II., cap. 2.—Ordains, “That for the great mischief which the realm suffereth, for that gold and silver, as well in money, vessel, plate, and jewels, as otherwise by exchangers, is carried out of the realm, so that in effect there is none thereof left, the King enjoins all

manner of people, as well merchants, clerks, as strangers, that none send or carry away gold or silver in money, bullion, plate, or vessel, without special licence, upon pain of forfeiting the same.

A.D. 1402, 4th Henry IV., cap. 16.—Enacts again that no person shall carry gold or silver out of the realm without the King's licence.

A.D. 1404, 5th Henry IV., cap. 13.—In order to prevent frauds it was enacted that no artificer should gild or silver any locks, rings, beads, candlesticks, harness for girdles, chalices, hilts, pomels of swords, powder-boxes, nor covers for cups made of copper or latten, on pain to forfeit to the King 100*l.*; but that chalices excepted, artificers may work ornaments for the Church of copper and latten, and the same gild and silver, so that at the foot, or some other part, the copper and latten shall be plain.

A.D. 1414, 2nd Henry V., cap. 4.—It is enacted for that the goldsmiths of England, of their covin and ordinances, will not sell the wares of their mystery gilt, but at the double price of the weight of the silver of the same, which seemeth to the King very outrageous, and too excessive a price: the King, for the ease of his people, hath ordained that all goldsmiths of England shall gild no silver wares but of the English sterling; and that they take for a pound of Troy gilt but 46 shillings and 8 pence at the most; and of greater weight and less, according to the quantity and weight of the same; and that which shall be by them gilt from henceforth shall be of a reasonable price, and not excessive; and if any goldsmith do contrary to this Statute, he shall forfeit to the King the value of the thing sold.

A.D. 1420, 8th Henry V., cap. 3.—It was by this Statute forbidden to gild any sheaths, or any metal but silver, and the ornaments for churches; or to silver any metal but Knights' spurs, and all the apparel that pertaineth to a baron, and above that estate.

A.D. 1423, 2nd Henry VI., cap. 14.—It was ordained by this Statute that no goldsmith or jeweller should sell any article of silver unless it was as fine as sterling, nor before it be touched with the Touch, and marked with the workman's mark or sign, under penalty of forfeiting double the value. And if the keeper of the Touch shall touch any harness with the leopard's head, except it be as fine as

sterling, that the keeper of the Touch shall for everything so proved forfeit the double value to the King and the party. The cities of York, Newcastle, Lincoln, Norwich, Bristow, Salisbury, and Coventry, were to have divers Touches, and no goldsmith to sell any gold or silver wares but as it is ordained in this City of London.

A.D. 1477-8, 17th Edward IV., cap. 1.—It was enacted, inter alia, that no goldsmith or worker of gold or silver should work or put to sale any gold under the fineness of 18 carats, nor silver unless it be as fine as sterling. Also that no goldsmith work or set to sale harness of silver plate, or jewel of silver, from the Feast of Easter, within the City of London, or within two miles of London, before it be touched with the leopard's head crowned, such as may bear the same touch; and also with a mark or sign of the worker of the same so wrought, upon pain of forfeiture of the double value of such silver wrought and sold to the contrary. That the mark or sign of every goldsmith be committed to the wardens of the same mystery, and if it be found that the warden of the Touch of the leopard's head crowned do mark or touch any harness with the leopard's head, if it be not as fine as sterling, he shall forfeit double the value of the silver; and that the craft of goldsmiths of London shall be answerable for the non-sufficiency of the warden. This Statute was enacted for seven years, and was afterwards re-enacted for twenty years in 1489, and again for twenty years in 1552 by 7th Edward VI.

A.D. 1489, 4th Henry VII., cap. 2.—It was enacted, for the amendment of money and plate of the realm, that everything might be reformed to the right standard; that the finers and parters should only sell their gold and silver to the Masters of the King's Mint, at London, Calice, Canterbury, York, and Durham. That no alloys should be made but by the goldsmiths and Masters of the King's Mints. That silver be made so fine that it bear 12 pennyweights of alloy in the lb. weight, and yet be as good as sterling; and that all finers should set their marks upon it. The gold of Venice, Florence, and Gean (Genoa) to be 12 oz. to the lb. weight; and the export of gold and silver was forbidden.

A.D. 1576, 18th Elizabeth, cap. 15.—Feb. 8. In order to prevent the frauds which were then committed, it was enacted, that after the 20th April next, no goldsmith shall

work, sell, or exchange any plate or ware of gold less in fineness than 22 carats ; and that he use no sother, amell, or other stuffing more than is necessary for finishing the same, and that they take not above 12 pence for the ounce of gold, beyond the fashion, more than the buyer shall be allowed for the same at the Queen's Mint. Nor any wares of silver less in fineness than 11 oz. 2 dwts., nor take above the rate of 12 pence for the lb. weight of silver, above the fashion, more than the buyer shall be allowed for the same at the Queen's Mint. Nor put to sale any ware before he hath set his own mark on so much thereof as may conveniently bear the same. And if after April 20th any gold or silver wares shall be touched for good by the wardens or masters of the mystery, and there shall afterwards be found fraud or deceit therein, the warden shall pay forfeit the value of the thing so marked.

A.D. 1624, 21st James I., cap. 28.—Repealed portions of the 28th Edward I., 37th Edward III., and 2nd Henry VI.

A.D. 1697, 8 & 9 William III., cap. 7.—In order to prevent the silver coins of the realm being made into plate, it was enacted that after the 25th March, 1697, no worker of plate should make any article of silver less in fineness than 11 oz. 10 dwts. in every pound troy, nor sell any article made after that day, but of that standard, and until it had been marked as followeth, viz.—with the worker's mark to be expressed by the *two first letters of his surname*. The marks of the Mystery or Craft of the Goldsmiths, which instead of the leopard's head and the lion, shall for this plate be the figure of a *Lion's head erased*, and the figure of a woman commonly called Britannia, and a distinct and *variable mark* to be used by the warden of the same Mystery to denote the year in which such plate is made.

A.D. 1700, 12 William III., cap. 4.—For the convenience of goldsmiths, the several cities of York, Exeter, Bristol, Chester, and Norwich, where mints had lately been erected for coining the silver monies of the kingdom, were by Act of Parliament appointed for the assaying and marking of wrought plate, and Goldsmiths' Companies were thereby incorporated in each for that purpose.—No goldsmiths were to make plate less in fineness than the standard of the kingdom, nor to sell any article until marked as following :—*“the worker's mark* to be expressed by the *two first letters of*

his surname, to denote the maker." "The lion's head erased and the figure of a woman commonly called Britannia," and *with the arms of such cities* where such plate shall be assayed and marked, to denote the goodness thereof, and the place where the same was assayed and marked; also with a distinct and variable mark or letter, in Roman character, which shall be annually changed, upon the election of new wardens, *to show the year* when such plate was made. The assayers were to be appointed in each city by the Company.

A.D. 1702, 1st Anne, cap. 9.—This Statute, after reciting the last Act, and the powers given to the various cities, states that in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, there is, and hath been time out of mind, an ancient Company of Goldsmiths, who with their families were like to be ruined by the provisions of that statute; also, that by the Statute 2d of Henry VI., it was one of the places appointed to have "Touches" for wrought silver plate; enacts that it shall be a place appointed to have an Assay of wrought silver, and incorporates the goldsmiths thereof in a similar manner, and with similar powers to those conferred on the other cities by the last Act.

A.D. 1719, 6th George I. cap. 2.—By this Act the ancient standard of 11 oz. 2 dwts. for silver plate was restored, by reason of the articles made thereof being, as stated in the preamble, more serviceable and durable than those made of a higher standard. The Act came into operation June 1, 1720, after which day a duty of 6 pence was to be paid to the King for every ounce of silver plate made or imported, the plate to be assayed and marked according to the regulations of the previous Act of 1797.

A.D. 1739, 12 George II. cap. 26.—After reciting the above Acts, in order to prevent the frauds which were then practised, enacts that the standard should be again fixed at 22 carats for gold, and 11 oz. 2 dwts. for silver; that no gold or silver less fine should be worked or sold after 28th June, 1739; after which time no one should work, sell, or export any gold or silver wares below that standard, nor until they should be assayed and marked as followeth, viz.—with the worker's mark, which shall be the *first letters* of his *Christian and Surname*; the *Leopard's head*, the *Lion passant*, and a distinct and variable mark or letter to denote the year in which such plate shall be made; or with the

mark of the worker or maker, and the marks appointed to be used by the assayers at York, Exeter, Bristol, Chester, Norwich, and Newcastle; or plate of the standard of 11 oz. 10 dwts., with the mark of the worker and the Company's marks, viz.—the Lion's head erased, the figure of Britannia, and the mark or letter to denote the year.

A.D. 1784, 24th George III., cap. 53.—By this act there was imposed from December 1st, 1784, an additional duty of 8 shillings per oz. on gold plate, and 6 pence per oz. on silver plate. It was also enacted that the wardens or their Assay master should mark the pieces with a new mark, viz.—*the King's head*, over and above the several other marks directed by law.

A.D. 1798, 38th George III., cap. 69.—By this act goldsmiths were authorised to work gold of 18 carats fineness, which was to be marked with a crown and the figures 18 instead of the Lion passant.

We now come to the particular consideration of the various marks which are found on British plate.

The earliest notice I have found of any authorised mark on plate is the recorded fact that in 1275 Philip le Hardi, King of France, ordained that each city should have a particular mark of its own for works in silver. The next in order that I find is our statute, passed in 1300, above referred to, with which our own marks begin.

The marks which are found on plate made in London, are in their chronological order as follows:—

1. The Leopard's head crowned.
2. The Worker's or Maker's mark.
3. The Annual letter.
4. The Lion passant.
5. The Lion's head erased.
6. The figure of Britannia.
7. The Sovereign's Head.

The Provincial, together with the Scotch and Irish marks, will be noticed hereafter,—and first of

THE LEOPARD'S HEAD.

This mark, as we have seen, was first established by statute in 1300, and in the statute of 1363, it is called the King's Mark. In the translation of the original Norman-

French given in the Statutes at Large, the words used are "*the Leopard's head*," as if it was some long known and recognised symbol ; but in the original, the words are "*une Teste de Leopard*," and from the use of the article "*une*" I am inclined to infer that it was a new mark, invented and established for that express purpose. Some confusion and error seems to have existed with regard to the term "*Leopard's head*," it being, in fact, a Lion's head. The error has arisen from the fact not being known or understood, that in the heraldic language of old French (the language of our early statutes), the term "*Leopart*" means a Lion passant gardant. The arms of England from the time of Henry III. have been three lions passant gardant, and in the old French heraldic works are described as three "*Leoparts*," or Lions Leopardies. The leopard's head therefore is properly the head of a Lion passant gardant, which, in fact, is a lion's front face, as is this mark, and it was most probably taken from the arms of the sovereign, and the crown added as indicative of its being the King's mark.

All the early examples of this mark show a fine bold lion's face, with mane and beard, having on the head, a ducal crown. In the reign of George III., however, the size of the head was diminished ; and about the year 1823, from the fact, as I am informed, that in some document the simple "*Leopard's head*" was found mentioned, without being followed by the word crowned, and the parties employed, probably not being aware of the circumstances above related, the form of the stamp was altogether changed when the new punches were engraved ; the lion's head was deprived of his crown, and shorn of his mane and beard ; and it has ever since then presented an object far more resembling the head of a cat than the fine bold lion of former days ; and I must confess that I should like to see the King's mark restored to its pristine form.

THE WORKER'S OR MAKER'S MARK.

The next that we have to consider in the chronological series, is the Maker's Mark, which was first instituted in England by statute in 1363, which orders that every master goldsmith should have a mark of his own, known to those who should be appointed by the King to survey the works, which marks, for which the goldsmiths should answer, should

be set on the works after they had been assayed. This was enforced in almost every subsequent statute, in which it is often styled the "Mark or *Sign*" of the worker. These marks were at first emblems or symbols, as a bird, or other animal, a cross, a rose, heart, or flower; probably often selected in allusion to the name of the maker. In early times most shops had signs by which they were known, and some retain the custom even to the present day, especially on the Continent. This probably arose from the fact, that as few persons could read, the writing of the name would be of little use, whereas the setting up of some sign, such, for instance, as the golden ball, which was easily understood, gave a convenient name to the shop; it is, therefore, not improbable that the goldsmiths in some cases took for their mark, the sign of their shop. Sometimes, however, letters were used as the worker's mark. The earliest piece of plate which I have seen is the spoon of Henry VI., of which I shall speak presently more at length; it has the figure of a heart ♡ stamped on it, and most of the earlier pieces of plate have similar symbols. At Goldsmiths' Hall is preserved in the Assay Office, a large copper plate stamped in columns with a vast variety of these marks, some large and some of smaller, for pieces of plate of different sizes. These consist chiefly of emblems or symbols, as birds, flowers, &c. It seems to have been a plate on which the makers were obliged to strike their marks, but there is no reference to any book, nor is anything certain known respecting its age, but there is a tradition that it was preserved from the great fire of London, in 1666. It would be very desirable that this plate should be copied, and lithographed or engraved, and by thus having ready access to the marks thereon, some might be found on pieces of ancient plate, and thus its age determined. It is probable that some confusion had arisen from several persons adopting the same symbol, for we find that in 1696-7 it was enacted that the worker's mark should consist of the two first letters of his surname; and in 1739, by the 12th George II., this was changed to the initial letters of his Christian and surname. Were a large collection of these marks made, it might be possible, by the examination of ancient inventories, where the names of workers and artists are mentioned, as well as some peculiar marks on the plate, to identify some of the marks with the workers who used them.

THE ANNUAL LETTER.

The next mark in our series is the Annual Letter, and this is perhaps the most interesting, for it enables us to ascertain the precise year in which any piece of plate was made.

The earliest notice respecting this mark which I have found in any document, is in 1597, when the Attorney-general filed an information against certain parties for working fraudulent silver, and counterfeiting the marks. It is there styled "the alphabetical mark approved by ordinance amongst the goldsmiths," although I have not been able to discover the ordinance by which it was authorised, nor any earlier mention of it. It had, however, been very long in use, as we shall see. The letter was annually changed on the day of election of the new wardens (that being St. Dunstan's day prior to the Restoration, and the 29th May subsequent to it), when the new punches were delivered to the Assay Master. Nothing is however said of the letter till after some dispute with the officers of the Assay, after which the letters were mentioned. The earliest, however, that I find is that for 1629, and after that date they are sufficiently regular to construct the alphabet. For the earlier letters, therefore, it is only by the examination of a great many pieces of ancient plate, chiefly belonging to public companies, colleges, corporations, and churches, of which the histories are known, that I have been able to collect the information necessary to enable me to construct a table of the various alphabets used, which I hope soon to complete. The principle by which this mark was regulated, seems to have been by cycles of twenty years, a new alphabet having been adopted at every such period. When, therefore, a certain letter is found to belong to a certain year, and that its proper one in the order, the character of the cycle of twenty years is obtained; and I have found all other letters of similar character to tally with and confirm it. The dates, however, which are found engraved on ancient plate, cannot always be relied on for the date of the work. Oftentimes pieces of plate which individuals or their families have had in their possession for many years have afterwards been given or bequeathed by them to public bodies, and then the date of the gift is recorded in the inscription, which will not


agree with the period of the work. Again, plate given to public bodies having been worn out, has been remade at subsequent periods, or exchanged for more useful articles, and the original date has been engraved on the new made piece. I will give one instance in illustration: One of the loving cups of the Goldsmiths' Company goes by the name of "Hanbury's Cup," and bears engraved on it the record of its having been the gift of Richard Hanbury, in 1608. The form and workmanship of the cup is clearly of the period of Charles II., and that was confirmed by the Annual Letter. This perplexed me till, in searching the books of the Company, I found by accident a memorandum stating that "Hanbury's Cup, weight 60 oz., was sold with other plate in 1637, and re-made in 1666," which date agrees exactly with the annual letter. The earliest piece of plate with a mark that I have met with, is the spoon of Henry VI. It was given by the King, together with his boots and gloves, to Sir Ralph Pudsey, of Bolton Hall, after the battle of Hexham, in 1463. These relics have been carefully treasured ever since, and are now preserved by Pudsey Dawson, Esq., at his seat, Hornbey Castle, in Westmoreland. Of the genuineness of this spoon there is no doubt; the head of the handle is octagonal, somewhat resembling the capital of a Gothic shaft, and on the flat top is engraved a single rose, the badge of the King. The spoon is of the usual form of ancient spoons, and the marks thereon are as follows:—inside the bowl is stamped the leopard's head, and all the ancient English spoons previous to the Restoration which I have seen are so marked. On the back of the stem is stamped with a punch a small heart ♡ which I consider to be the worker's mark, and above that is the annual letter *h* also stamped with a punch. This, according to my conjectural calculation, will give the spoon the date 1445, which agrees well with its form, character, and history.


With the exception of two cycles of twenty years I have obtained examples of all the various alphabets used since the year 1438; and, for the reason I am about to give, I am disposed to think that that date was the period of the first adoption of the annual letter. I hope soon to be able to commence the series, and give all the alphabets in a tabular form.

It will be remembered in the extracts from the proceedings

of the Montpellier Goldsmiths, that in consequence of repeated and increased frauds, new securities were invented from time to time to provide against them, till at last, in the year 1427, it was ordained as a fresh security, that, in order to insure the fineness of the articles assayed after that time, the name of the warden of the mystery inscribed on the register of the city, should be followed by one of the letters of the alphabet, which letter should be reproduced beneath the arms of the town on the piece of plate, in order that it might be known under what warden it was made, so that in effect he might be held answerable for having made a fraudulent assay, and suffered bad silver to be sold as good standard. And that this was the object of the annual letter seems to be confirmed by the Statute of Elizabeth in 1576, which ordains that, if any article shall be touched for good by the wardens, and there shall afterwards be found fraud or deceit therein, the warden shall pay forfeit the value of the thing so marked.

The fact of the Montpellier ordinances giving the specific reason for the introduction of a new mark, seems to me very like the origin of it, and I am much inclined to attribute the first invention and adoption of this mark to the authorities of Montpellier in 1427; and when once adopted in one place, it probably soon became a custom in others, as an improved security against fraud; and the date of our first alphabet here, in 1438, very well agrees with the supposition of that being the period of its first introduction into this country. The cycles of twenty years seem to have proceeded regularly from 1438 to 1696, when on the occasion of the new standard being introduced, and the concomitant new marks, a new alphabet was begun. The entries in the Goldsmiths' minutes are as follows:—

A. D. 1696, May 29th.—New puncheons received; the letter for the year being *t* in a scutcheon, 

A. D. 1697, March 27th.—The puncheons for the remaining part of this year were received, being according to an Act of Parliament, a Lyon's head erased, a Britannia, and for the letter, the great court A in an escutcheon, 

It must be borne in mind that as the new year before the correction of the style did not begin till March, and as the new letters were not fixed till the 29th May, each letter served a portion of two years; this T and A, therefore, were

both letters for the year 1696, *i.e.* for the year beginning 29th of May, 1696, the real letter for 1697-8, court B, not being appointed till May 29th, 1697. Instances, however, of the letter *u* occur for the year 1697 on articles which were probably made but not marked or sold previous to the adoption of the new standard.

Pieces of very early English plate are of great rarity, and therefore seldom met with ; but it is quite possible that some articles may still exist in the possession of public bodies or private persons, which will supply the deficiency in my table ; and now that attention is particularly called to the subject, I hope such may be found, by which it may be completed and made correct ; for as only a few letters of some of the alphabets can be met with on pieces of plate, the remainder must be supplied from other sources, which, till sufficient proof is obtained of their correctness, can only be conjectural.

Characters of the Alphabets of Assay Office Annual Letters.

- 1438 to 1458.—Lombardic, simple.
 1458 to 1478.—Unknown.
 1478 to 1498.—Lombardic, double cusped.
 1498 to 1518.—Small black letter without Lion passant.
 1518 to 1538.—Lombardic, cusps internal, no Lion.
 1538 to 1558.—Unknown.
 1558 to 1578.—Black letter small, Lion passant.
 1578 to 1598.—Roman letters, capitals.
 1598 to 1618.—Lombardic, cusps external.
 1618 to 1638.—Italics, small letters.
 1638 to 1658.—Court hand.
 1658 to 1678.—Black letter capitals.
 1678 to 1697.—Black letter, small.
 1696 to 1716.—Court hand, with Britannia.
 1716 to 1736.—Roman capitals.
 1736 to 1756.—Roman letters, small.
 1756 to 1776.—Old English capitals or black letter.
 1776 to 1796.—Roman letters small, King's head.
 1796 to 1816.—Roman capitals, King's head.
 1816 to 1856.—Old English or black letter capitals.

THE LION PASSANT.

The next mark to be considered is the Lion Passant. It seems evidently to have been taken from the arms of England, but its origin, intention, and the precise date of its adoption are obscure, for they are not mentioned in any document I have met with, and are, therefore, at present only matters of conjecture; but it is possible that among the many folio volumes of the records of the Goldsmiths' Company, there may be some explanation, although I have failed to find it. The earliest mention of it which I have met with, is in the indictment filed by the Attorney-general in 1597, against certain parties for working and selling fraudulent silver, and "counterfeiting the marks of Her Majesty's lion, the Leopard's head, limited by statute," and the marks of the Goldsmiths' Company. At the Assay Office it has been usually considered the King's mark, as ordered to be set on plate by the Statute of Edward III., in 1363. But this it cannot be, for I have not seen it on any piece of plate earlier than the reign of Elizabeth. I was at one time inclined to think that the lion might have been the assayer's mark mentioned in the Goldsmiths' ordinances of 1507; but in that case it should be found on all plate made after that period, whereas that is not the fact. It is possible that it may have been adopted in the reign of Henry VIII., as a mark of the inferior silver when that monarch caused the standard to be debased; but I am more disposed to consider that it was most probably introduced in the reign of Elizabeth, when in the year 1560 she restored the standard to its original quality, for the purpose of distinguishing the plate made of that silver from that of the debased standard of her father, a practice which was, on a subsequent occasion in the reign of William III., adopted for a similar purpose; and though I find no mention of it in the Goldsmiths' Records, it may have been appointed by warrant or ordinance from the Queen. This hypothesis agrees also with the fact of its being called in the above mentioned indictment, "Her Majesty's Lion," whilst the Leopard's head is described as being "limited by statute." The earliest piece of plate on which I have found this mark is a chalice of the date 1563. It is, however, to the Archæologist an important mark, as its absence or presence

greatly assists in fixing the date of an article ; in addition to which, it also serves now to distinguish English from Scotch or Irish plate, and this may by possibility, have been its original intention, although I have no ground for hazard-ing such a conjecture.

LION'S HEAD ERASED AND FIGURE OF BRITANNIA.

Of these two marks there is little to be said. They were ordered by the Statute in 1696, which raised the standard for silver plate from 11 oz. 2 dwts. to 11 oz. 10 dwts., to distinguish the plate so made from that which had previously been made of the lower standard, and they were substituted for the Leopard's head and Lion passant. They continued in use till 1719, when the old standard was restored. All plate made of that silver was so marked, and it is possible that some articles may have been so made and marked after that date.

THE SOVEREIGN'S HEAD.

Of this mark there is still less to be said. It consists of the head of the reigning sovereign in profile, as on the coins, and is of course changed at the beginning of every reign. Hereafter, therefore, there will be no doubt as to the period when any piece of plate was made. It was first ordered by statute in 1784, when the additional duty was put on plate.

There is, however, one other mark occasionally found on ancient plate, which seems to bear some relation to our English marks, or rather to partake of both French and English ; this is the Leopard's head crowned and Fleur de lis dimidiated and joined together on one shield. This seems to be a mixture of the English and French marks, for the Fleur de lis was the ancient mark or touch of Paris. In the Statute 4th Henry VII., cap. 2., 1488, it was enacted for the amendment of money and plate, that the finers should only sell their gold and silver to the masters of the King's mint at London, *Calice*, and certain other places. Calais was taken by Edward III. in 1347, and remained in possession of the English till 1558. As it was under the crown, and part of the realm of England for so long a time, and as the King had a mint there, I venture to hazard an opinion that there might also have been goldsmiths there subjects of the King of England, and that this stamp,

dimidiating the King's marks of England and France (for the King bore the arms and title of King of France), might have been the mark used at Calais, for the same purpose as the Leopard's head in England, to distinguish the plate made there.

I have now brought to a close this account of the English Assay marks for plate used in London. As the paper has extended itself far beyond the reasonable limits of such a communication, I shall reserve the Provincial, Scotch, and Irish marks for consideration on a future occasion. My chief difficulty, however, has been in this case to condense, into the form of a paper, matter that might with greater fairness have been amplified into a volume.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ALIEN PRIORY OF ANDWELL, OR ENEDWELL, IN HAMPSHIRE, A CELL OF THE ABBEY OF TYRONE; WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE FAMILY OF DE PORT OF BASING, ITS FOUNDERS.

NOT far from the town of Basingstoke, and old Basing, so famous for its sieges in the wars of Charles and the Parliament, is the ancient manor of Andwell, or Enedewell.¹ It still retains some traces of its antiquity,² and the inquiring eye of the archæologist may observe indications of its original destination. It was in truth an ancient Priory, a dependency of the great Cistercian Abbey of Tyrone in France. "This house and St. Cross (Isle of Wight)" says Tanner, "are reckoned among the houses of the Benedictine Order, "but should rather be Cistercian, if cells to Tyrone."³ This seeming difficulty will vanish, if it be remembered that the

¹ The name seems equivalent to Ducks' well, from A. Sax. *Ened.*, Lat. *Anas*. See Mr. Way's note, *Prompt. Parv.*, voce *Ende*.

² The buildings seem to have enclosed a small quadrangle: on the western side is a portion of an ancient wall, in which is a doorway which opened probably into the refectory, now the kitchen of the farmhouse. The chapel stood on the north side of the quadrangle. It was of small dimensions, and had an entrance both on its south and north sides. The

eastern end has been demolished. The original windows were mere loopholes splayed internally: but there is one of larger dimensions on the south side, an insertion of later date, of the period of Adam de Orlton, Bishop of Hereford and afterwards of Winchester, who, A.D. 1325, granted an indulgence of forty days to all who should visit the church of Andwell. This would seem to imply that some work was then in progress there.

³ *Mon. Angl.*, vol. vi. p. 1047.

The Archaeological Journal.

DECEMBER, 1852.

ON THE ASSAY MARKS ON GOLD AND SILVER PLATE.¹

ON THE ASSAY MARKS OF THE PROVINCIAL TOWNS.

WE now come to the concluding portion of our subject, viz., the consideration of the Provincial Assay Marks on Plate. On this head, however, there is less to be said than might be supposed, and much has been anticipated in a work recently published, intituled "The Assay of Gold and Silver Wares," by Arthur Ryland, Esq. To complete the subject, however, it will be desirable to give a brief account of them.

In 1423, by statute 2nd Henry VI., the cities of York, Newcastle, Lincoln, Norwich, Bristol, Salisbury, and Coventry, were appointed to have "divers Touches." But with the exception of Norwich, I find no trace of any of them having exercised the authority thus conferred upon them, notwithstanding most, if not all, had guilds or fraternities of goldsmiths established in them. Indeed, it is very likely that they did not, else it would hardly have been necessary to reappoint them by statute in 1700, to have the assay of plate. These cities were most probably selected for Touch towns on account of mints existing in some or all of them, as that was the reason for their selection in 1700.

In Norwich, plate was made, assayed, and marked, at an early period, and specimens among the plate belonging to the corporation exist of the date 1567. The distinguishing mark is an escutcheon with the arms of the city of Norwich, viz., a castle in chief above a lion passant in base. An annual letter seems also to have been used, for on two pieces of plate of 1567, a Roman C is found, and on one of 1568, there is

¹ Continued from p. 246.

a Roman D. On these there are other marks, probably those of the maker, such as a sun with rays, a trefoil, or some other emblem. I have in my possession a spoon with the Norwich mark, which has been stamped in the bowl with a rose surmounted by a crown, just in the place where the leopard's head is usually found, from which it may be supposed that that was used as the standard mark. There is also on the stem a lion rampant. A similar rose and crown is found on a piece of plate at Norwich of the date 1631, which is about the date of my spoon; in 1634, a crown without the rose was used, and seems to have continued for some time, as it is found on a piece of plate of 1684. A rose sprig, with stalk and leaves, is also found on the piece of plate of 1634. In the court books of the Corporation of Norwich, is an entry dated "1624, ult., July," which states, that by the authority of the Mayor a mark, viz. the castle and lion, was delivered to the wardens and searcher of the trade of goldsmiths; and in 1702, July 1, Mr. Robert Hartstonge was sworn assayer of gold and silver to the company of goldsmiths of the city. The assaying of plate in Norwich, seems, however, to have been long discontinued, as there is now neither Goldsmiths' Company nor Hall, nor has there been within the recollection of any one now living. A hall, however, is mentioned by Bloomfield; but no part of it remains.

In 1700, York, Exeter, Bristol, Chester, and Norwich, where mints had lately been erected for recoining the silver monies of the realm, were by statute appointed for the assaying and marking of wrought plate. Goldsmiths' Companies were incorporated in each; no plate was to be made less in fineness than the standard of the kingdom, and the following marks were appointed—the worker's mark to be expressed by the two first letters of his surname, the lion's head erased, the figure of Britannia, and the arms of such city where such plate shall be assayed, and a distinct and variable letter in Roman character, which shall be annually changed upon the election of new wardens, to show the year when such plate was made. In 1701, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, having been omitted in the Act of the previous year, was added, the Goldsmiths' Company there having existed "time out of mind." Of these cities, Bristol alone appears never to have exercised the power of assaying plate, though Norwich seems soon to have abandoned the privilege. The other

cities all carried the provisions of the Act into effect by establishing assay offices, which still continue in active operation. The early plate of these cities bears the lion's head erased and Britannia, but when the standard was reduced in 1719 these marks were abandoned, and the old leopard's head and lion passant restored. In York the annual letter seems to have been regularly changed; but I have been unable to learn the order of the alphabets. The distinguishing mark is the arms of the City of York, which are five lions passant on a cross.

In Chester no records or particulars of the assay office are to be found, till within the last twelve years, they having been either not kept or destroyed. The arms of Chester, viz., three gerbes, two in chief, having a sword between them, and one in base, are the mark which distinguishes the office of this city. There is, however, at least one evidence that plate was made and marked at Chester at a period earlier than 1701. For on examination of the large silver-gilt mace belonging to the Mayor and Corporation, which was given by the Earl of Derby, when he was Mayor in 1668, I find it stamped with the Goldsmiths' mark, and the arms of the City of Chester, as they were then borne, viz., three lions rampant dimidiated, impaled with three gerbes dimidiated. There is, however, neither leopard's head, lion passant, nor annual letter to be found, and the marks which are there have been nearly obliterated by the burnisher when the mace was regilt. It may be as well to mention here, that when ancient plate is repaired or regilt, silver-smiths should be careful not to deface the marks, as is often done; for considerably more interest, and therefore value, is attached to plate of which the precise age and date can be ascertained. The mace in question, is very handsome, and in style and size resembles those of the House of Commons and Royal Society. Nothing certain relative to this early assay of plate at Chester seems to be known, but it is said to have been under the authority of some charter supposed to have been granted by Edward I., long since lost, and of which no authentic record seems to remain.

In Exeter the records have been carefully preserved, the provisions of the Act immediately put in force, and wardens and assayers appointed. The series of annual letters is as follows:—

1701 to	1724	Roman capital A.
1725	„ 1741	— small letters a.
1749	„ 1772	Roman capitals.
1773	„ 1796	Ditto ditto.
1797	„ 1816	Ditto ditto.
1817	„ 1836	Roman small letters.
1837	„	Old English capitals.

The arms of Exeter are a castle.

At Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the annual letter appears to have been in use from 1700, but the Roman capital is the only character employed till about thirty years ago, when a small letter was adopted. The arms of Newcastle, the distinguishing mark, are three castles.

The assay offices of Birmingham and Sheffield being of very recent origin, it will not be necessary to notice them here further than to say, that an anchor is the mark of Birmingham, and a crown that of Sheffield.

In Scotland attention was paid at an early period to the fineness of wrought gold and silver, and steps were taken by the Legislature to prevent frauds in the working those metals. For in the reign of King James II., A.D. 1457, a statute was enacted by the Parliament of Scotland, for “the reformation of gold and silver wrought by goldsmiths, and to eschew the deceiving done to the king’s lieges, there shall be ordained in each burgh where goldsmiths work, one understanding and cunning man of good conscience, who shall be deacon of the craft; and when work is brought to the goldsmith, and it be gold, he shall give it forth again in work, no worse than eleven grains, and he shall take his work to the deacon of the craft that he may examine that it be as fine as above written, and the said deacon shall set his mark and token thereto, together with the said goldsmith: and if fault be found therein afterwards, the deacon aforesaid and the goldsmith’s goods, shall be in escheat to the king, and their lives at the king’s will; and the said deacon shall have to his fee of each ounce weight one penny, and where there is no goldsmith but one in the town, he shall show that work, tokened with his own mark, to the head officers of the town, which shall have a mark in like manner ordained therefore, and shall be set to the said work.”

In the reign of James III., 24th Feb., 1483, the following

statute was ordained by the Parliament :—“ Also it is advised and concluded by the Lords of the articles, that for the eschewing of great damage and scathes that our Sovereign Lord the King’s lieges sustain by the goldsmiths in the minishing the fineness of the silver work, that henceforth there be in each burgh of the realm where goldsmiths are, one deacon, and one searcher of the craft, and that each goldsmith’s work be marked with his own mark, the deacon’s mark, and the mark of the town, of the fineness of twelve penny fine, and when there is any such work within the fineness, the work to be broken, the workman to make up the availe of the fineness required, and to be punished at the King’s will.”

In 1489, another statute to the same effect was ordained : by this, each goldsmith was to have one special mark, his works were to be of the fineness of the new works of silver of Bruges, and there was to be a deacon of the craft, who was to examine and mark the works.

Again, in 1555, “ Forasmuch as there is great fraud and hurt done unto the lieges of the realm by goldsmiths that make silver and gold of no certain fineness, but at their pleasure, by which there is some silver work set forth of such baseness of alloy, viz., of six and seven penny fine, against the public weal of the realm, it is ordained that no goldsmith make in work, nor set forth either his own or other men’s silver, under the just fineness of eleven penny fine, under the pain of death and confiscation of all their goods and moveables ; and that every goldsmith mark the silver work with his own mark, and with the town’s mark : Also, that no goldsmith set forth either his own or other men’s gold under the just fineness of 22 carats fine, under the pain aforesaid.”

By these statutes it will be seen that there were three marks, the goldsmith’s, the deacon’s, and the town’s mark ; but nothing to indicate the years. What these marks were is not any where indicated, and they most probably were numerous. It will, therefore, be a good object for some Scottish antiquary to work out the marks of his own country, by an examination of ancient pieces of Scotch plate, as well as the records of the various burghs. There is, however, one mark which I have occasionally met with on ancient plate, resembling a letter X or a St. Andrew’s cross, surmounted by a crown exactly resembling the Scottish crown in shape.

This I have been inclined to consider a Scotch mark ; it is usually accompanied by some other mark, an emblem, which is repeated three times. For a very long period plate has not been marked anywhere but at Edinburgh. Glasgow was, however, also made an assay town by the 59th George III., by which the assay offices are now regulated. Scotch plate is now indicated by the mark of a thistle. A castle distinguishes that made at Edinburgh, and the arms of Glasgow, a tree on a mount with a salmon in fess over the trunk, mark the plate made there.

With regard to the marks on Irish plate, a full account of these, together with a copy of the charter of the Goldsmiths' Company of Dublin, is given in the work before alluded to, called "The Assay of Gold and Silver Wares ;" a brief notice here will therefore suffice. The Goldsmiths' Company of Dublin was incorporated by a charter from Charles I., dated 1638 ; it gives the Company the power to assay gold and silver wares, and appoints for a mark, a harp crowned, to be stamped upon them. In 1729, 3rd George II., the Irish Parliament enacted that all articles of gold and silver should be assayed at Dublin, by the Assay Master appointed by the Company of Goldsmiths, fixed the standard of gold at 22 carats, and silver at 11 oz. 2 dwts., and ordered that the articles should be marked with the marks then used.

In 1783, the 23rd and 24th George III. repealed that statute as far as gold was concerned, and fixed three standards for gold, of 22, 20, and 18 carats. All articles of 22 carat gold, were to be marked at the Assay Office, Dublin, with the maker's mark ; consisting of the first letter of his christian and surname, and the harp crowned : and at the Assay Office at New Geneva, just then established, with the harp crowned, having a bar across its strings : 20 carat gold at Dublin with the maker's mark and a plume of three feathers ; and at New Geneva, with a plume of two feathers ; and 18 carat gold in Dublin, with a unicorn's head ; and at New Geneva, with a unicorn's head, with a collar round his neck. It further ordered, that the punches were so constructed that the impression should be indented, instead of being in relief, so as to prevent its being defaced.

New Geneva is a village near Waterford, where in 1783, a colony of foreign protestants was established after some persecution on the Continent. Many Swiss were among them, especially Genevese, whence the name ; they exercised

various trades, especially working in silver and jewellery, and hence the establishment of an Assay Office and particular marks. After a few years, and the expenditure of 30,000*l.*, the settlement was abandoned; the Genevese became discontented at not having obtained as much as they wanted, and quitted the country, and the place has dwindled to a small obscure village without any trade; it is, therefore, probable that very few, if any, articles were assayed or marked there.

I have now brought to a conclusion the history of British plate marks, giving all the information I have been able to collect. With regard to the marks on ancient foreign plate, I must leave them to some Archaeologist who has opportunities of visiting the cities on the Continent, and investigating the history of the marks used there.

OCTAVIUS MORGAN.