

ART. XII.—*A Seventeenth Century Silver Spoon.* By L. E. HOPE, Museum Curator, Tullie House.

Read at Carlisle, June 27th, 1912.

AN old silver spoon was purchased by the Museum Committee a few months ago. It is an example of the type of spoon in use in England during the seventeenth century and after the Restoration.

The spoon is ornamented with a design known as the "rat tail," a long triangular member running down the back of the bowl, covering and forming the junction between handle and bowl.

The handle is heavy compared with the bowl, and the end is three-lobed, a type of handle which was introduced during the period immediately following the Restoration.

On the underside of the wide part of the handle are two initial letters, M.L., and a date which I make out to be 1657, a date which perfectly coincides with the design and pattern of the spoon.

Along the back of the stem or handle is stamped a series of four Tudor roses, and it is in these roses that the interest of the spoon lies. The roses are stamped or punched in relief, and are the type of rose which figures on the arms of the city of Carlisle.

The late Chancellor R. S. Ferguson, in his paper "On a supposed touch or assay of silver at Carlisle" (these *Transactions*, o.s. vii., p. 64), suggests that during the sixteenth century Carlisle had some sort of an irregular assay, or at least had silversmiths practising their art and stamping their work with their initials and with a rose or roses, which may have been the mark of the city. He instances three communion cups at Bolton, Ireby and Cliburn, which possess these marks, and from their



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SILVER SPOON
IN THE CARLISLE MUSEUM.

Phot. by L. E. Hope.

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rudeness of workmanship and primitive manner of construction infers that they are of local manufacture ; and as they bear the rose mark, what place is more likely to have produced them than Carlisle? The rose on these cups is a simple sexfoil, similar to the rose upon the ancient seal of the city of Carlisle, which was in use in the fifteenth century and exists to-day, and such as was used on the Siege coins of Carlisle struck during the siege of 1645.

The initials on these cups are undoubtedly those of the maker, and the roses, if not, as the late Chancellor suggests, evidence of an assay at Carlisle, are possibly an additional maker's mark.

It became compulsory during the fourteenth century for silversmiths to mark their work, to ensure quality, and later these marks were generally the maker's initials, although up to 1720, when more stringent regulations were enacted, it is possible that additional marks were used which might be simply a trade mark, not necessarily an assay or Hall mark. This being so, what more suitable mark could a Carlisle maker use than the rose as it figured on the great seal of the city?

Returning to the roses on the stem of the silver spoon ; if this spoon was made in Carlisle in the seventeenth century, and before 1720 (as we know it was from the inscribed date), it is quite possible that it would bear a maker's mark, and that mark might, I think, be a rose, of the type which figures on the arms of the city—a barbed Tudor rose.

The difficulty which presents itself with a piece of silver of this period is the absence of the initials of the maker, the practice of using the initials being general if not compulsory at that time.

After examining the spoon carefully I have formed the opinion that bowl and handle are not of the same class of manufacture.

The ornament of the bowl enclosed by the "rat-tail" is extremely fine work and daintily executed, whilst the ornament on the stem is simply done with a punch, and the spacing is somewhat irregular and unsymmetrical, possibly the work of a Carlisle silversmith, and just the class of work to be expected; whilst the bowl is finely made and the ornament the work of an expert, more like the work of a London silversmith or even of a Continental workman.

If the spoon was originally the work of a London silversmith the London mark and the maker's initials would be on the original handle, which probably was broken off and lost. The bowl may have been brought to the Carlisle silversmith to have a new handle attached. He probably did the best he could to match the bowl by fitting a three-lobed handle and ornamenting it on the back with a row of four roses; Tudor roses, because he possessed a stamp which had probably been the mark used by his predecessors at Carlisle for generations.

The spoon was sent to Mr. Wheatley from a client at Sheffield, and from him passed into the hands of the Museum Committee through Major Spencer Ferguson, who is interested in the rose mark on silver.