

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ANTIQUE PLATE
BELONGING TO CHRIST'S HOSPITAL.

*Read at a Meeting of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society at Christ's Hospital,
on Friday, the 20th April, 1900,*

BY

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I HAVE have been asked to say a few words on the subject of the Christ's Hospital Plate. I will endeavour to condense my remarks into as limited a space as possible, as our time to deal with the subject in an exhaustive manner is inadequate. I will also, to the best of my ability, avoid the use of technical terms. It is a most interesting collection, and one well worthy of your attention and inspection for three reasons. First, because most of the pieces are excellent examples of their kind; second, because many of them are extremely rare; and, third, because I think I may say that all of them, without exception, are in an unusually fine state of preservation. I have never seen any collection of plate which equals them in the latter respect, and it reflects great credit upon the past custodians, who have exercised a most pious care of these valuable objects which were committed to their charge. It is my firm hope and belief that that care will not be allowed to diminish in the hands of the present custodians. I will deal with the pieces, as far as I can conveniently, in the order of date. No. 1.—This is a fine Drinking Horn. The earliest drinking vessels were made from natural objects—horns, shells, etc. From the shell we derived

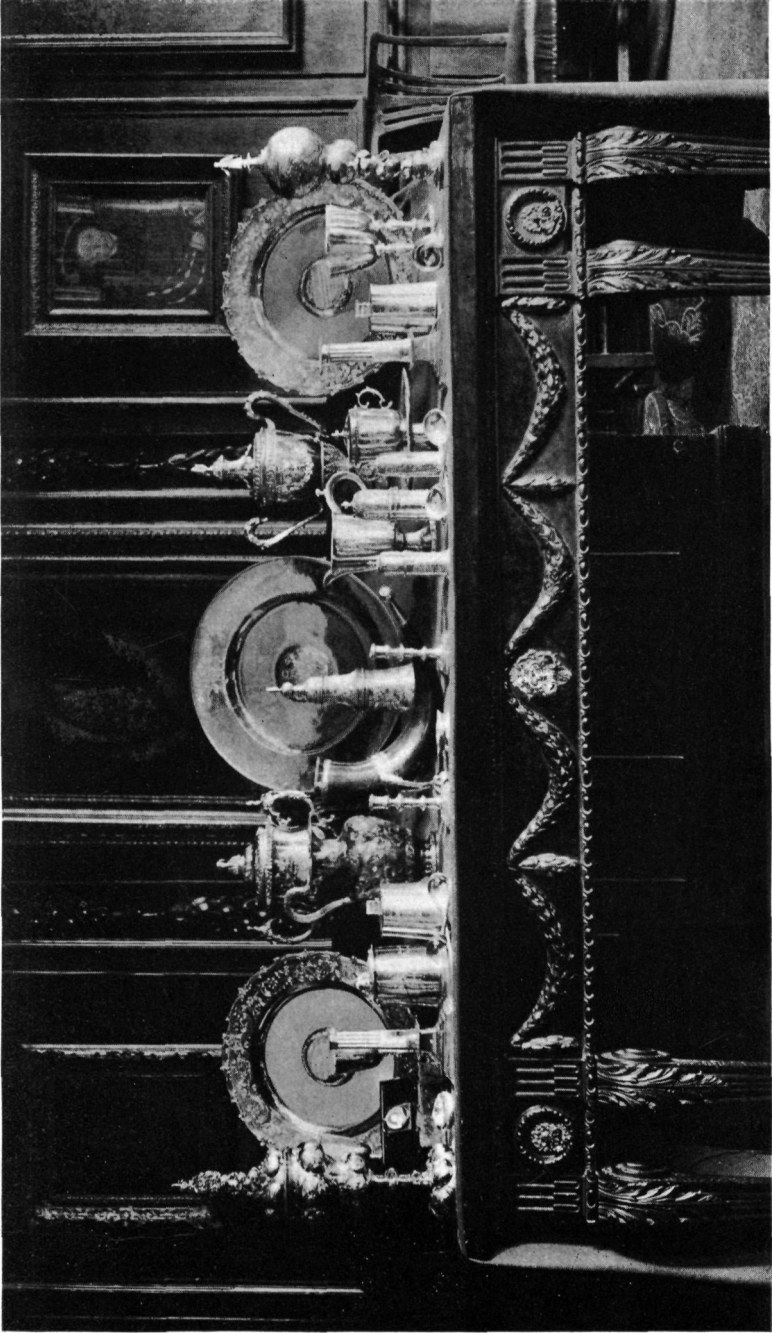


PLATE IN THE POSSESSION OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL.



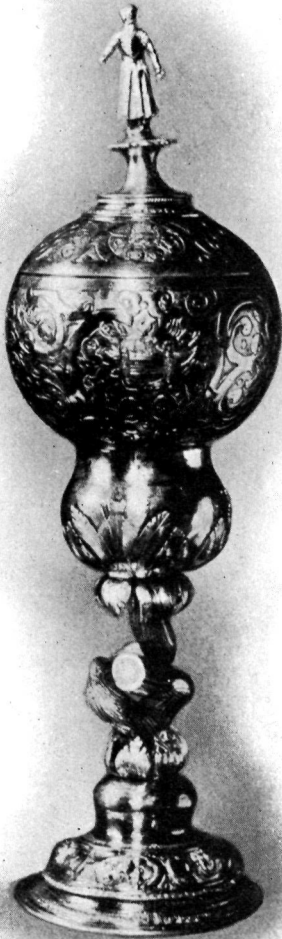
CHRIST'S HOSPITAL PLATE, I. DRINKING HORN.

the spoon, and from the horn we got the beaker. This is a particularly fine specimen of a horn, mounted in silver gilt. The mouth is furnished with a bell-shaped rim with a reeded lip, springing from a foliated or imbricated collar. It is supported on two claws with feathered legs. The ball-and-claw decoration is familiar to everybody, and there is not a design more persistently in vogue, not only in metal work but in furniture. The legs are attached to the body by a broad silver gilt band, upon which is an inscription: IN GOD IS AL. The point of the horn is shod with a ferrule or tip, which terminates in a ball with a reeded belt round it, and at the extremity is a Tudor rose—the double rose. There is neither Hall-mark nor Maker's mark upon this piece, and the question now is, to what date to assign it. The rim, with its reeded lip and its collar, is almost exactly like some found upon the mazer bowls of the middle of the fifteenth century. The lettering of the inscription also points to the same period—each word is separated by a floral design and the letters are of the type then employed. If that were not sufficient, we have the Tudor rose, which is not found anterior to 1485, so I think we are safe in saying that this horn dates from about 1485 to 1490, the commencement of the reign of Henry VII. Upon the rim is pounced this: "The gift of Thomas Bankes to Christ's Hospital, 1602." I do not wish to detract from the merit of Mr. Bankes—the Bankes family were great benefactors to this Institution—but I cannot help thinking there is a little question whether this inscription is accurate. In the account book of the Hospital there is an entry, under the date 1567, which describes this horn as being the property of the

Hospital at that date, and it would appear, therefore, that the inscription must have been put on long after. Accidentally, no doubt, this horn was in error ascribed to Mr. Bankes, whereas, in fact, he gave something else. No. 2.—The next piece is a bell-shaped Salt, and it has, as you will notice, the ball-and-claw feet. It is a three-decker, in three tiers. There are receptacles for salt, pepper, spices, and what-not. It is an unusually fine salt, and I have never seen one finer. It is in admirable preservation, and stands fourteen inches high. It is ornamented with conventional Elizabethan scrolls or flowers, centering alternately in chrysanthemums and Tudor roses. The Hall-mark is of the year 1607, and the Maker's mark is N R over a helmet. The salt has engraved upon it a coat-of-arms, Between four fleurs-de-lis a cross charged in the fess point with a crescent for difference. These are the arms of the Bankes family. A pounced inscription states that it was given by Mr. Bankes about 1632, showing that it was inscribed some time later. Probably the inscription on the Drinking Horn was made at the same time. No. 3.—This is a very fine example of a tall Standing Cup and Cover. The Hall-mark is of the year 1594, and the Maker's mark is I E over three pellets. The cup is pyriform in shape, and is elaborately embellished with Elizabethan scroll and foliage decorations. The stem is formed as a forked and twisted trunk of a tree. In some specimens of this sort of cup which I have seen there has been added, at the base, a little statue of a woodman engaged in felling the tree. A raised collar of vine leaves encircles the cup. The foot is decorated with alternate masks and clusters of fruit. The cover is



CHRIST'S HOSPITAL PLATE. 2. BELL-SHAPED SALT, 1607.

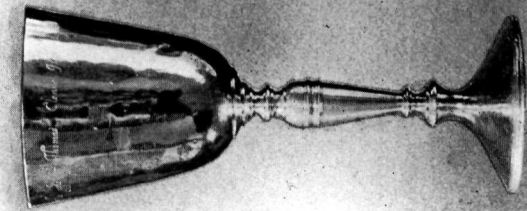


3. STANDING CUP, 1594.

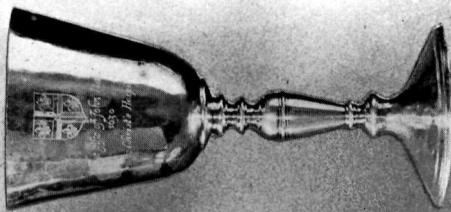


18. NUREMBURG CUP.

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4. WINE CUP, 1630.



6. CLEAVE CUP, 1637.



7. EWER, 1638.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL PLATE.

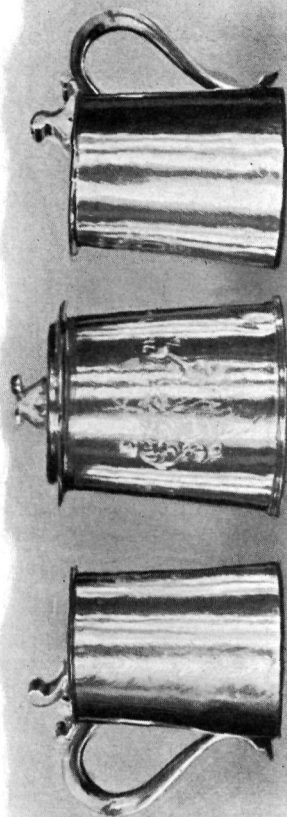
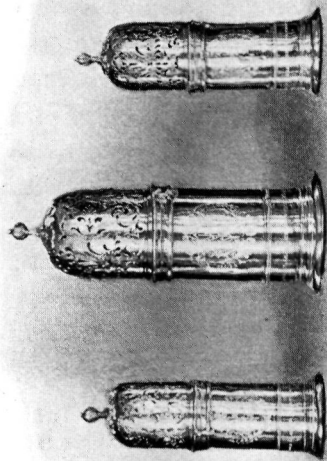
surmounted with a statuette of a blue-coat boy. His dress is slightly different to that of the present day. It has a falling collar to the coat, and round the waist is a tassled girdle, from which is hanging a pen-case. Boys in those days carried their cases hung on to their girdles. This cup was given by Mr. John Bankes, citizen and barber surgeon, in 1602. No. 4.—These are three Wine Cups, all identical in form. They are quite plain, with baluster stems, and they bear the London Hall marks of 1630, which are so fresh that one might imagine that they had come straight from Goldsmiths' Hall into this room. The Maker's mark is "R. S." over a heart. The Bankes' arms are on one side and the Bankes' crest on the other. I have not been able to discover to which branch of the Bankes family this crest belonged. The inscription upon them records that they were given by Mr. John Bankes, in 1630. No. 5.—I now come to the Spoons. As you may be aware, spoons are among the most ancient objects to be found in silver; and the ancestor of the spoon was, no doubt, the cockle shell. Perhaps, here, I may be allowed to digress a little. Among the ancient Greek and Roman spoons, by far the most common type we find has a long tapering stem, terminating in a very fine point, and the Latin poet, Martial, in one of his quaint epigrams, seems to have been under the impression that the name "Cochleare" (spoon) originated not from its resemblance to the cockle shell, but because it happened to be used for extracting cockles. He says:

"Sum cochleis habilis sed non minus utilis ovis.
Numquid scis potius cur cochleare vocer?"

which may be freely translated—"I am handy for

cockles, but I am equally useful for eggs. Why should I have been called a 'cockler' instead of an 'egger'?" These spoons, which bear the Hall mark of 1630, and the Maker's mark, R. I. over a mullet, also were given by Mr. Bankes. There are twelve of them, and they are remarkably fine spoons. You will observe that they terminate in busts of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They were commonly called Maidenhead spoons, which are mentioned certainly as early as the 15th century. These are the latest in date that I have seen. I have not hitherto seen any which were made so late as the year 1630. No. 6.—Here is another Wine Cup, very similar to those I have already shown you (*see* No. 4). This is a plain cup, also on a baluster stem, and it bears the Hall mark of 1637. The Maker's mark is T. C. over a rose. It is inscribed "The Gifte of Thomas Cleave, Haberdasher, for Christ's Hospital September. 1639." No. 7.—The next pieces were also presented by Mr. Cleave. They are a tall Ewer and Rose-water Dish, the latter of which is gilt. They bear the Hall marks of 1638 and 1639 respectively, and they were presented by him in December of the latter year. The Maker's mark is W. M. over a rose between two pellets. They are very fine specimens indeed. Engraved upon them are the arms of the Haberdashers' Company. I do not know why Mr. Thomas Cleave had the Haberdashers' arms engraved upon the plate which he was about to present to Christ's Hospital. Perhaps he had intended giving them to his own Company, and afterwards changed his mind, thinking this Hospital a more worthy object, and that the education of youth in

15. DREDGER AND CASTORS, 1599.



8. FLAT-TOP TANKARDS, 1640.
CHRIST'S HOSPITAL PLATE.

letters was more worthy than instruction in the mystery of haberdashery, whatever that may be. No. 8.—These Tankards are extremely interesting, being a very early form of the flat-top tankard. They are of a rare design, and they bear the Hall mark of 1640. The Maker's mark is G. D. over a rose between three pellets. The inscription upon them is as follows:—"The gift of Rowland Willson, one of the Governors of this House, 1640." They also have the Willson arms upon them:—Argent, a wolf salient. In chief, between two mullets gules, a fleur-de-lis. No. 9.—Of the same date are some very fine specimens of Spoons, with plain cut-off ends. The Maker's mark is W. C. over a mullet. They are of early pattern, dating as far back as the early Tudor period, and you will find them mentioned in inventories of that period, under the quaint description of spoons "slipped in lez stalkes." These were not a benefaction, but were purchased by the Governors in 1640, and they bear the Hall mark of that year. Having seen an account of what they cost, all I can say is that it was a remarkably good investment of the purchase money. No. 10.—At the same time was purchased this small Trencher Salt, which bears the Hall mark of 1639. The Maker's mark is IB (probably Babington). Trencher salts were so called from their shape, and they were placed down the side tables at intervals, below the Master's salt at the high table. No. 11.—I now come to some Candlesticks, which are extremely interesting. They are of very handsome design, which is worthy of being copied at the present time. They bear the very early Hall mark of 1680. They stand on square bases, and have fluted columns cabled

in the lower half. Candlesticks like these are extremely rare. Having regard to the great antiquity of candlesticks, it is singular that very few in silver are known to exist now. I know of none earlier than Charles II, and I could count on the fingers of one hand those of that period. These candlesticks are the earliest I have ever seen. I have seen some which purported to be genuine, but they were not. A Latin inscription records that they were given by John Johnson, out of love and affection for the Hospital, in 1681. No. 12.—This is a silver gilt two-handled Posset Cup or Porringer and Cover, and you see it is quite plain, with the exception of a decoration of leaves, in cut cardwork, as it would be technically termed, round the base and the cover, which has a gadroon border. The Hall mark is of 1687, and the Maker's mark is S under a crown. It is engraved with the arms of the Hospital, and the inscription records that it was presented by Mr. James St. Amand, Armourer, and on the back is the date 1756. Rather an odd thing comes to light in connection with this porringer. The arms on the cup are not the arms of the St. Amand family at all, but were borne by a Mr. Samon. It would appear that Mr. Samon was like some other people we have heard of, not content with the patronymic he was born into, and changed his name for one that looked or sounded better. But apparently he forgot to assume the proper coat of arms. However, Mr. James St. Amand was a liberal benefactor, and gave not only this porringer, but also Nos. 13, 14, 15 and 16. No. 13.—This is a silver gilt Salver, on a plain circular foot. It bears the Hall mark of 1686, and the Maker's mark is the same as

that on No. 12. It is like a church paten, a form which is not to be found much in secular use. No. 14.—These Candlesticks were also presented by Mr. St. Amand. They are on short baluster stems, with square bases and cut off corners. They are not remarkable, but are very good of their sort, and bear the Hall mark of 1697. They were made by Anthony Nelme, in Ave Maria Lane. You will observe that this is the first time that I have been able to tell you the maker's name, and I will just digress for one moment to tell you how it is. Unfortunately, the record of the names of the goldsmiths and silversmiths which were entered at Goldsmiths' Hall prior to the year 1696 were destroyed by fire, and all we have left is their marks or initials, so that we have to guess, as well as we can, who the maker was. But from 1696 the books are complete, and we know the names of the makers, and are able to tell the very date in which the names first appeared on the Goldsmiths' records. No. 15.—These were also given by Mr. St. Amand. They are very fine examples—a tall Dredger and two smaller Castors, a set of three. They bear the Hall mark of 1699, and were made by Anthony Nelme. In the reign of William III these castors had not long been in vogue, and consequently but few of that date are now in existence. No. 16.—These are two small Salts, which are not so fine compared with the other beautiful things. They bear the Hall mark of 1709, and were made by a man named Thomas Ash, who worked in Steyning Lane. No. 17.—This large gilt Ewer was made by a man whose name is probably known to many of you, Paul Storr, in 1810. The

firm for which he worked was Rundell & Bridge, about 1780, and it afterwards became Storr & Mortimer, and now it is Hunt & Roskell, a very well-known firm indeed. This is a remarkable piece of work, profusely decorated with incongruous ornamentation in the vogue of the period. This was very much approved then, but it would not suit the more refined tastes of the present day. No. 18.—This is the only foreign piece in the collection. It was made in Nuremburg, and is of a fashion much followed 300 years ago. I should like to put its contemporary, a piece I showed you just now (No. 3) by the side of this one, because I think you will be able to see that notwithstanding the difference in detail, both seem to spring from a common ancestor. The designer of each was probably a German. In Elizabethan times our silversmiths were largely indebted to German artificers for their designs. The other pieces—the two large cups and the rose-water dish that you see here—are not antique, but are modern, made about 1840 or 1850, and therefore do not require any explanation from me, as you can all see for yourselves what they are.
