

## IV.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PLATE-MARKS USED IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE YEAR 1457, AND CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THOSE OF EDINBURGH FROM 1681; TO WHICH IS ADDED A NOTE OF THOSE USED IN GLASGOW. BY MR JAMES H. SANDERSON. (Plates XIX. and XX.)

The only Government Assay Offices in Scotland are those of Edinburgh and Glasgow, so that all plate made in Scotland is stamped at one or other of these offices. The Edinburgh office is, like most others, under the management of the Goldsmiths' Corporation, which we find existed previous to the year 1457. The deacon and wardens are chosen annually, who appoint their assay-master and officers, and are required to pay quarterly to Government the duties collected on gold and silver plate; which in some years amount to a considerable sum. In answer to a return ordered by the House of Commons, we learn that the Edinburgh Office stamped in the year 1847 nearly 29,000 ounces, and paid to Government L.2152. It may be interesting, although not strictly belonging to the plate-marks of Scotland, to see the particulars of the returns made to the House that year from the various offices in the United Kingdom (which are subjoined), with the number of ounces stamped, and the amount paid by each office, amounting in all to L.82,876, 10s. 4d.

The assay or plate-marks, as they are generally called, are understood by many to be a proof only that the article so marked is made of metal of a certain purity, which is so far correct; but these marks (now five in number), when properly understood, are of great use to the Government, and to the dealer in plate, and prove highly interesting and instructive to the archæologist, for they clearly indicate the name of the maker, the town the plate was made or stamped in, the quality of the metal, the date of stamping, and also that the duty has been paid. Those for Edinburgh are—

- I. The **MAKER'S MARK** is his initials.
- II. The **TOWN OR HALL MARK**, a Castle.
- III. The **STANDARD MARK**, a Thistle.
- IV. The **DATE MARK**, a Letter of the Alphabet.
- V. The **DUTY MARK**, the Reigning Sovereign's Head.

I. The first of these, the **MAKER'S MARK**, was introduced by Act of the Scots Parliament in the year 1457. This is the only stamp which

belongs to the maker, and is impressed on the work by himself; but before doing so he is required to send it to the Goldsmiths' Hall, where a metal impress is taken of it and retained for reference. When the assayer has tested the work, and found the metal to be of the requisite quality, he then affixes to it the remaining four Government stamps.

II. The TOWN MARK was introduced by Act of Parliament in the year 1483.

III. The STANDARD MARK, by minute of the Corporation of Goldsmiths of Edinburgh in 1759, but from the year 1457 to this date, a period of above three hundred years, the initials of the deacon of the Corporation were used instead of the thistle.

IV. The DATE MARK, in 1681, by minute of Corporation; the letter is on an escutcheon or shield-shaped punch, and is changed every year, in September.

V. The DUTY MARK was introduced in 1784; and is useful in the event of exporting plate, as Government allows a drawback of the whole duty, provided the plate is new and has not been used.

It is satisfactory to find that the early Scottish plate is stamped in strict accordance with the various Acts of Parliament, Royal Grants, Acts of Town Council, and Minutes of Goldsmiths' Corporation, all tending to protect the public interest, and regulate the proceedings of the Corporation of Goldsmiths in Edinburgh. By Act of Parliament, so far back as 1457, in the reign of James II., it was enacted "That Gold Work be not worse than<sup>1</sup> XX grains, and silver<sup>2</sup> XI grains fine, and that it be marked by the maker and deacon, or head officer of the Town." The only marks used from the above date for twenty-five years would be the initials or mark of the above two parties. And by Acts of Parliament in the reign of James III., in 1483; James IV., in 1489; and Queen Mary, in 1555, it is provided "That no Goldsmith make work of silver under<sup>2</sup> eleven penny fine, and of gold under<sup>3</sup> 22 carats fine, if otherwise, the work to be broken down, and the maker tine his goods to the king, and his life be in the king's will; and that all work be marked by the maker, deacon, and town-mark." For nearly two hundred years, from 1483, the hall-marks were in accordance with these Acts of Parlia-

<sup>1</sup> 20 grains or parts of fine gold in 24.

<sup>2</sup> 11 do. of pure silver in 12.

<sup>3</sup> 22 parts of fine gold in 24.

ment, see example No. 1 (Plate XIX.), from the mace of the city of Edinburgh, known by the City records to have been made in 1617, by George Robertson, and bears his initials, the deacon's, and town-mark.

No. 2, from the plate belonging to the Trinity College Church, Edinburgh, bearing date 1633.

No. 3, from the High Church plate, dated 1643.

No. 4, that of Newbattle Church plate, dated 1646.

No. 5, the Dalkeith Church plate, has no date, but is known from the records to be older than that of Newbattle. In this case both the maker and deacon have their marks along with their initials.

No. 6, from a peg tankard, the property of Sir John Maxwell, Bart., of Pollok, said to be of the sixteenth century, but now known from the initials of maker and assay-master to have been stamped about the year 1681. In this instance, probably, the maker and deacon were the same individual.

The other early Acts regulating the management of the Corporation of Goldsmiths in Edinburgh, and hall-marks are,—A grant by the Town-Council to the hammermen, including goldsmiths and others, in 1483.

Letter under the Privy Seal of James VI., in favour of deacons and masters of the Goldsmiths' Craft of Edinburgh, in 1586.

James VI., Act of Parliament in favour of the goldsmiths of Edinburgh ratifying the above letter, dated 1587.

Act of Council in favour of goldsmiths' craft, "Anent the supplication gevin in before thame be George Heriott, deykin of the goldsmiths, for himself, and in name and behalf of the remanant brethers of said craft, in 1591."

Charter by James VII., in favour of the goldsmiths of Edinburgh, sealed at Whitehall in 1687.

As already mentioned, the date-mark was introduced in 1681, at the term of Michaelmas (29th September), and the letter continued till that term in the following year, so that each letter embraced part of two years.

The alphabet chosen for the *first cycle*, as shown in list (Plate XX.), was a small black letter, commencing A in 1681, and finishing with Z in 1705; in all twenty-four letters, there being no J nor U, four stamps only being used from this period, till 1759. (See example Plate No. 7, T.C., maker's monogram; the *castle*, the town mark; the small black letter B, the *date*; and the manuscript capital B, the deacon or assay-master's initial.)

For *Cycle II.*, Roman capitals, commencing in 1705 and finishing with Z in 1730, no J used; in all twenty-five letters.

For *Cycle III.*, italic capitals, commencing in 1730 and finishing with Z in 1755, no J; in all twenty-five letters.

For *Cycle IV.*, a black letter capital, commencing in 1755 and finishing with & after Z in 1780, has neither J nor U; in all twenty-five letters. In this Cycle the standard-mark was introduced (in 1759) instead of the assay-master's initials (see example No. 8).

For *Cycle V.*, Roman capitals [the same as Cycle II., but has now the standard-mark], commencing in 1780, and finishing with Z in 1806: has no J. In this Cycle the duty-mark was introduced (in 1784). The letter G is repeated, giving in all twenty-six letters (see example No. 9), which five stamps are continued to the present time.

For *Cycle VI.*, a small Roman character, commencing in 1806 and finishing with Z in 1832: has the letter J; in all twenty-six letters.

For *Cycle VII.*, an old English capital, commencing in 1832 and finishing with Z in 1857: has no J; in all twenty-five letters.


For *Cycle VIII.*, Egyptian capitals, commencing in 1857, and will end with Z in 1882, provided the J is not used.

LIST OF PLATE FROM WHICH THE ANNUAL LETTERS HAVE BEEN  
TAKEN, MANY OF THEM BEARING DATES.

CYCLE I.

Most of the letters in this Cycle are taken from the Minutes of the Goldsmiths' Corporation, in many cases from an impression of the actual punch given on the paper. Those from plate are—

B. 1682-6. A Jug, the property of the late Lord Murray. There seems to have been another form of B used this year, as on the

Duddingston communion cups, dated 1682, the B is thus, 

E. 1665-3. Auchtermuchtie Communion Cups, "gifted by Janet Ross," bearing date 1686.

N. 1693-4. Trinity College Communion Cups, "the gift of George Stirling," the arms of Edinburgh engraved inside, and bearing date 1693.

R. 1697-8. A Cup at Messrs C. R. & Son.

- S. 1698-9. Trinity College Communion Cups, a gift, arms of Edinburgh inside, and dated 1698.  
 W. 1701-2. New North Kirk Communion Cups, "the gift of Mr William Archibald," 1702.  
 Y. 1703-4. New North Kirk Communion Cups, "the gift of John Cunningham of Bandales," 1704.

## CYCLE II.

- C. 1708-9. Lady Yester's Communion Cups, "presented by Thomas Wilkie," 1708; another C. New North Kirk Baptism Laver, "gifted by Mary Ereskin," 1708.  
 D. 1709-0. Eddleston Communion Cups, bearing date 1709.  
 H. 1712-3. A pair of Candlesticks, at Messrs C. R. & Son.  
 P. 1719-0. Punch Bowl, Royal Company of Archers, bearing date 1720.

## CYCLE III.

- B. 1731-2. Sugar Basin, Messrs Mackay and Chisholm.  
 O. 1743-4. Silver Club, the Edinburgh Golfers, bearing date 1744.  
 T. 1748-9. Dinner Spoon, Mr Munro.  
 U. 1749-0. The Old Church, St Giles', Communion Cups, bearing date 1750.  
 Y. 1753-4. Dinner Spoon, Mr Stewart.

## CYCLE IV.

- B. 1756-7. Tea Pot, Messrs Mackay and Chisholm.  
 H. 1762-3. Old Chapel of Ease Communion Cups, St Cuthbert's Parish, 1763.  
 J. 1763-4. Baptismal Laver, do. do. 1763.  
 M. 1766-7. Cake Basket, Messrs Mackay and Chisholm.  
 N. 1767-8. Snuffer Tray, late Lord Murray.  
 P. 1769-0. Sugar Basket, Messrs Mackay and Chisholm.  
 Q. 1770-1. Spoon, Captain Gordon of Cluny.  
 R. 1771-2. Salt Cellar, Messrs C. R. & Son.  
 S. 1772-3. Spoon, Captain Gordon of Cluny.  
 Y. 1777-8. Salver, Messrs C. R. and Son.  
 &. 1779-0. Spoon, Mr Munro.

## CYCLE V.

- E. 1784-5. Medal, Royal Company of Archers, 1785.

- K. 1790-1. Cup, Messrs C. R. & Son.  
 L. 1791-2. Medal, Royal Company of Archers, 1792.  
 R. 1797-8. Spoon, Mr Sanderson's.  
 W. 1802-3. Spoon, Mrs Aitchison's.

## CYCLE VI.

- A. 1806-7. Salver, Mr Nisbet's.  
 D. 1809-0. Pepper-box, Messrs C. R. & Son.  
 E. 1810-1. Salver, Mr Nisbet's.  
 G. 1812-3. Basin, do., 1812.  
 H. 1813 4. Spoon, Mrs Aitchison.  
 L. 1817-8. Medal Royal Company of Archers, 1818.  
 T. 1825-6. Mr Sanderson's.

Cycles VII. and VIII. require no proof.

*The particulars of the return made to the House of Commons, showing the quantity of wrought Gold and Silver in ounces Stamped at each of the Assay Offices in the United Kingdom, in the year 1847, with date of Establishment, and Town Mark of each.*

	Estab- lished.	Town Mark.	Gold, 17s. per oz.	Silver, 1s. 6d. per oz.	Amount paid to Government.
Birmingham,	1773	An Anchor.	2-276	42-985	L.5,011 12 9
Chester, . .	1700	{ A Sword between three Garbs. }	.221	.379	211 9 0
Exeter, . . .	1701	A Castle.	.294	41-597	3,282 11 10½
Newcastle, <sup>1</sup>	1423	Three Castles.	.203	12-382	1,074 1 11½
Sheffield, . .	1773	A Crown.	...	54-012	3,931 12 0½
York, . . .	1423	{ A Cross with five Lions passant. }	.78	1-651	185 10 0
London, . . .	1300	A Leopard's Head	5-196	983-250	64,026 11 5
Edinburgh,	1457	A Castle.	.62	28-729	2,152 15 1
Glasgow, . .	1819	{ A Fish, Tree, and Bell. }	.5	23-751	1,741 9 1½
Dublin, <sup>2</sup> . .	1638	A Harp Crowned.	.70	20-398	1,258 12 1
Total, . . .	...	.....	8-405	1-209-134	L.82,876 10 4

<sup>1</sup> Although Newcastle-on-Tyne was appointed in 1423, it seems to have relinquished its privilege, as it was reappointed in 1701.

<sup>2</sup> The Corporation of Goldsmiths in Dublin is known to have existed long previous to 1638. Although it was not until December of that year that they obtained a charter from Charles I., and that the Harp only was used as *Town Mark* previous to the Harp Crowned.

From a careful calculation from the figures brought out in this return, it is estimated that not less than L.824,000 was paid for gold and silver plate in that year.

Mr Morgan, in his interesting paper on the subject, informs us, that there were other cities in England appointed to have "divers touches," as they were called, or assay offices; that by statute in 1423, Lincoln, Norwich, Bristol, Salisbury, and Coventry were named; but with the exception of Norwich, they do not seem to have exercised their privilege; and that of Norwich for a short time only.

There are now two Standards for Gold and Silver work, sanctioned by Act of Parliament, called the Old and New standards.

The *old standard* for gold is 22 carats fine, which is 22 parts of pure gold (in 24) to 2 parts, or  $\frac{1}{12}$ th of alloy. The *new standard* is 18 carats fine, which is 18 parts of pure gold to 6 parts, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of alloy.

The *old standard* for silver is 11 oz. 2 dwt. of pure silver in a pound Troy; and the *new standard*, 11 oz. 10 dwt. of pure silver in the same weight (this standard has not been used hitherto in Scotland).

By Act of Parliament in 1836-7, in the reign of William IV., entitled "An Act to fix the Standard Qualities of Gold and Silver Plate in Scotland, and to provide for the Assaying and Marking thereof," the marks required are—

For *gold* of 22 carats, the five stamps already given—the Maker's initials, the Town, the Standard, the Duty, and Date marks.

For *gold* of 18 carats, the same, with the additional stamp of 18.

For *silver* of the old standard, the same stamps as for gold of 22 carats.

For *silver* of the new standard, the same stamps, with the additional mark of Britannia.

In these days, when electro-gilding and plating is so much resorted to, it would be advisable that some distinction should be made between the stamps used for standard gold and that of silver. Such as are adopted in London, by the recent Acts of Victoria, gold of 22 carats has a crown and the figures 22, instead of the standard mark; and as provision is now made for stamping gold of a lower standard than 22 and 18 carats, viz., 15, 12, and 9 carats, and that at a trifling expense, all gold work should be stamped with one or other of these numbers, provided it can be done without defacing the work. Were the provisions in these recent Acts

adopted in Scotland, it would prove a benefit to the public generally, and could not be objected to by the dealer.

#### GLASGOW HALL MARKS.

(The Glasgow Assay Office was established by Act of Parliament in May 1819.)

- I. The **MAKER'S MARK**, his initials.
- II. The **HALL MARK**, the Glasgow Arms, a Tree, Fish, and Bell.
- III. The **STANDARD MARK**, a Lion rampant.
- IV. The **DATE MARK**, a Letter of the alphabet, changed every year on 1st July.
- V. The **DUTY MARK**, the reigning Sovereign's head.

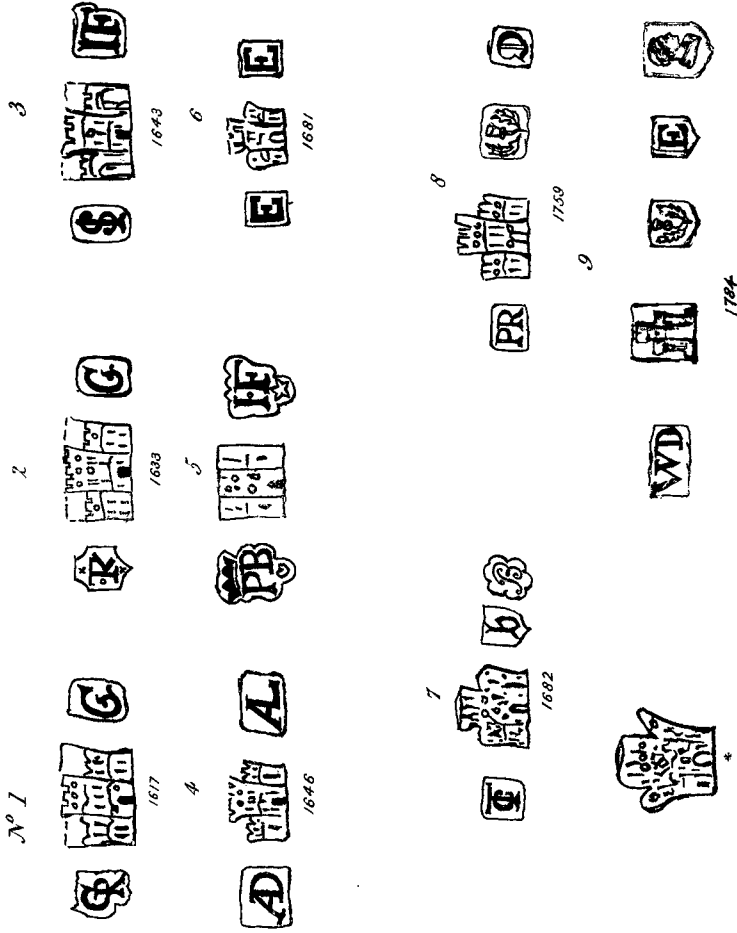
**CYCLE I.**—A large Roman character, commencing with A in 1819, and finishing with Z in 1845. They use the J, in all twenty-six letters.

**CYCLE II.**—An old English character, commencing with A in 1845, and will finish with Z in 1871.

I have to apologise to the Society for the length of this paper, which has far exceeded my original intention. I have endeavoured as much as possible to avoid trade technicalities, and I hope have been able to make the subject sufficiently understood. My best thanks are due to the Deacon and members of the Goldsmiths' Corporation, for allowing me to examine their records on the subject, which are continued in regular succession for nearly two hundred years; and to several gentlemen and friends who have kindly given me access to their plate, from which these marks have been procured.

I am still adding to my collection, and may bring before the Society at some future period an earlier list of these interesting marks, and I shall be glad to receive impressions in wax or gutta percha taken from any antique plate.





\* On early pieces of plate, by hammering into shape after it has been stamped, the Castle not under, presently assumes this form.

THE EDINBURGH HALL MARKS FROM 1617 TO 1784.

THE STANDARD for gold of 22 cts. and silver of 11 oz. 2 dwt. The mark is a Thistle, introduced 1759 by Minute of Corporation. For 18 ct. gold, a crown and 18.		THE HALL MARK, or Town Mark. A Castle, introduced in reign of James III. in 1483, by Act of Parliament, and repeated in Queen Mary's reign in 1555.		THE DUTY MARK. The Head of the Reigning Sovereign, introduced in 1784. This mark indicates that the duty has been paid.		THE DATE MARK. A Letter of the Alphabet, introduced 1681, and changed every year in Septem- ber, by Minute of Corporation.									
CYCLE I.		CYCLE II.		CYCLE III.		CYCLE IV.		CYCLE V.		CYCLE VI.		CYCLE VII.		CYCLE VIII.	
	CHARLES II. 1681-2		ANNE. 1705-6		GEORGE II. 1730-1		GEORGE II. 1755-6		GEORGE III. 1780-1		GEORGE III. 1806-7		WILLIAM IV. 1832-3		VICTORIA. 1857-8
	1682-3		1706-7		1731-2		1756-7		1781-2		1807-8		1833-4		1858-9
	1683-4		1707-8		1732-3		1757-8		1782-3		1808-9		1834-5		1859-0
	1684-5		1708-9		1733-4		1758-9		1783-4		1809-0		1835-6		1860-1
	JAMES VII. 1685-6		1709-0		1734-5		*1759-0		†1784-5		1810-1		1836-7		1861-2
	1686-7		1710-1		1735-6		GEORGE III. 1760-1		1785-6		1811-2		VICTORIA. 1837-8		1862-3
	1687-8		1711-2		1736-7		1761-2		1786-7		1812-3		1838-9		1863-4
	WILL. & MARY. 1688-9		1712-3		1737-8		1762-3		1787-8		1813-4		1839-0		1864-5
	1689-0		1713-4		1738-9		1763-4		1788-9		1814-5		1840-1		1865-6
	1690-1		GEORGE I. 1714-5		1739-0		1764-5		1789-0		1815-6		1841-2		1866-7
	1691-2		1715-6		1740-1		1765-6		1790-1		1816-7		1842-3		1867-8
	1692-3		1716-7		1741-2		1766-7		1791-2		1817-8		1843-4		1868-9
	1693-4		1717-8		1742-3		1767-8		1792-3		1818-9		1844-5		1869-0
	1694-5		1718-9		1743-4		1768-9		1793-4		1819-0		1845-6		1870-1
	WILLIAM III. 1695-6		1719-0		1744-5		1769-0		1794-5		GEORGE IV. 1820-1		1846-7		1871-2
	1696-7		1720-1		1745-6		1770-1		1795-6		1821-2		1847-8		1872-3
	1697-8		1721-2		1746-7		1771-2		1796-7		1822-3		1848-9		1873-4
	1698-9		1722-3		1747-8		1772-3		1797-8		1823-4		1849-0		1874-5
	1699-0		1723-4		1748-9		1773-4		1798-9		1824-5		1850-1		1875-6
	1700-1		1724-5		1749-0		1774-5		1799-0		1825-6		1851-2		1876-7
	1701-2		1725-6		1750-1		1775-6		1800-1		1826-7		1852-3		1877-8
	ANNE. 1702-3		1726-7		1751-2		1776-7		1801-2		1827-8		1853-4		1878-9
	1703-4		GEORGE II. 1727-8		1752-3		1777-8		1802-3		1828-9		1854-5		1879-0
	1704-5		1728-9		1753-4		1778-9		1803-4		1829-0		1855-6		1880-1
			1729-0		1754-5		1779-0		1804-5		WILLIAM IV. 1830-1		1856-7		1881-2
									1805-6		1831-2				

From the year 1457 to 1483 two stamps only were used—the Maker's and Assay Master's Marks.

From 1483 to 1681 three stamps were used, the Town Mark being added to the above.

In Cycle I. four stamps were used—the Maker's Mark, Hall Mark, Date Mark, and Assay Master's initials; has no letter J or U.

In Cycle II. the same stamps; has no letter J.

Cycle III. the same stamps; has no letter J.

Cycle IV. the same stamps to \*1759, when the standard mark was introduced instead of Assay Master's initials; has no letter J or W.

Cycle V. has five stamps; which five stamps are still in use. † The duty-mark was added in 1784. Has no letter J, and the letter G is repeated in 1787.

\* The letters are on an Escutcheon or shield-shaped punch, changed each year in September, so that each letter embraced part of two years.