

Notes On Limerick Silver Marks.

By J. N. A. WALLACE.

In our Journal, 1939, Vol. I., p. 159, Mr. M. S. D. Westropp contributed a paper on Limerick Goldsmiths. In it he describes and illustrates the makers' marks on silver and adds a list of the known members of the craft with the dates during which they worked. Further research has added some important information which it is desirable to put on record. It is only within the last few years that the study and examination of Irish Ecclesiastical Silver has received the necessary attention which it deserves and the publication of the results is steadily proceeding.⁽¹⁾

The Silver with which these notes are concerned, can be dated to the latter half of the 17th century and is still in use in Protestant Churches situated within that area which would come under the trade influence of Limerick. The characteristic silver marks on all these pieces—with the exception of one—are the Limerick town mark of a castle gateway, and from a separate punch an eight pointed or rayed star. The makers' initial or initials are in most cases added from another punch.

The following is a list of the silver under consideration :—

1663.	Askeaton	<i>Chalice.</i> Castle and Star.
"	"	<i>Paten.</i> Castle and Star.
1685.	Ennis	<i>Chalice.</i> Castle, Star and Maker's Initials.
Circa 1695.	Limerick Cathedral (St. Mary's)	<i>Flagon.</i> Castle, Star and Maker's Initials.
Circa 1695.	Ballintemple (Co. Tipp)	<i>Chalice.</i> Star (duplicated) and Maker's Initials.
"	"	<i>Paten.</i> Castle, Star and Maker's Initials.

The Askeaton Chalice and Paten are the earliest in the series and are dated by the following engraved inscription on the chalice :—"Ex Do : Simos Eaton Arm^r Par : Askeaton, Anno. 1663." The silver marks on both pieces are, a castle gateway and a star. The castle mark in each case is set in a plain Norman shield. The rays of the star on the chalice appear to be "wavey," not straight. No maker's mark appears on either of the pieces. The chalice is 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches high, the diameter of the bowl being 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The paten which has a diameter of 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, forms a cover to the chalice.

The Ennis Chalice comes next in date. It is a very fine and well preserved piece of silver, it also is dated by an inscription on the bowl, which runs as follows :—"For Ennis Church, 1685." Under the lip on the side of the bowl opposite the inscription are three punched marks :—an eight rayed star, the maker's initials, R.S., and the castle gateway. All these marks are set in quatrefoil shields with pointed bases. It is most fortunate that the maker's name can be identified from his punch mark, R.S. In Mr. Westropp's paper there is a Robert Smith shown as working in Limerick between the years 1674—1687. In the year of the gift of the chalice to Ennis, 1685, we find that a Robert Smith was Mayor of Limerick, and that during his term of office he rebuilt the Island Gate of the city. This Mayor is most probably our silversmith.

(1) Irish Ecclesiastical Silver :—Recent publications relating to Dioceses in North Munster. *Church Plate, &c., Diocese of Cashel and Emly*, by the Ven. Archdeacon Seymour. Clonmel, 1930. *Antique Chalice in Killaloe Diocese*, by the Rev. P. O'Halloran. Molua, 1936. *Ancient Chalice in Killaloe*, by Dermot F. Gleeson. Molua, 1939. *Old Church Plate in East Killaloe*, by the Rev. R. Wyse Jackson. *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, Vol. II., p. 63. *Silver Plate in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick*, by J. N. A. Wallace. Annual Report of the Friends of St. Mary's, 1939. *Some Irish Altar Plate*, by J. J. Buckley, *Journal R.A.S.I.*, 1939, 1940 and 1941.

The large Flagon belonging to St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, has already been noted by Westropp and illustrated on Plate XXXII. in Vol. I of our Journal. The marks on the whole are somewhat similar to those on the Ennis Chalice, except for the maker's mark, which in this case is the capital letter B in script. The writer of these notes was of the opinion that this flagon was made in Dublin by Thomas Bolton, a well known maker of ecclesiastical silver,⁽²⁾ but the now noted frequency of the star mark in association with the castle mark makes such an opinion untenable. The flagon is of Limerick origin and the B mark is that of some member of the Buck family of silversmiths. The flagon is engraved under the lip with an elaborate crest and coat of arms, that of the Williamson family,⁽³⁾ below which is the following inscription:—"Ex Dono Josephi Williamson Equitis Aurati Ecclesiae Cathedrali Beatae Virginis Limericensis." This flagon can be dated circa 1695.

The last two pieces come from Ballintemple, in the Diocese of Cashel and Emly.⁽⁴⁾ The chalice is marked with a maker's mark, I.P., in a quarterfoil shield on either side of which is punched a six rayed star with pellets between the rays. It is also marked on the stem with the letter P in a small oval shield; this mark is repeated three times. The maker, I.P., of this chalice is so far unknown among Limerick silversmiths. The chalice is engraved as follows:—"The Gift of Antony Maude Esqr. to the Parish Church of Ballytemple." The donor lived at Dundrum, Co. Tipp., and was M.P. for Cashel in 1695. The paten belonging to this Church has three marks, an eight rayed star, a monogram and a castle gateway. The maker's mark is stated by Archdeacon Seymour to be "C.R. in monogram," but it is greatly worn, the R is plain enough, but the other letter is doubtful. There was a James Robinson working between the years 1680 and 1698 in Limerick and the paten is possibly his work.

A Star has not so far been recorded as the mark of any Irish silversmith or Guild of Silversmiths in Dublin or the provinces. Its presence on several pieces of silver in the Limerick district in association with the well known Limerick town-mark of a castle gateway and the identification of the maker of the Ennis Chalice, places beyond doubt the conclusion, that the castle, gateway and star marks were in general use with Limerick silversmiths in the latter half of the 17th century. Up to the present time no reason can be given as to why the "Star" mark was adopted during this period. Could it be the sign or emblem of a Guild of Smiths? Another Limerick mark on silver, whose origin is equally obscure, is the plume of three feathers or fleur-de-lys, which was in common use during the last half of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The writer would be glad to receive any information on the subject of these marks and of notice of other pieces of silver, ecclesiastical or domestic, with Limerick marks, many of which must be still in use.

(2) Report of the "Friends of St. Mary's Cathedral," 1939. *Silver Plate in St. Mary's Cathedral*, by J. N. A. Wallace.

(3) *Journal R.S.A.I.* Vol. 54. *Notes on Plate, Dublin Corporation*, by W. G. Strickland.

(4) *Church Plate, &c., Diocese of Cashel and Emly*, 1930, by Archdeacon Seymour.
