An Introduction to Irish Silver

By THE RIGHT REVEREND DR. ROBERT WYSE JACKSON

"A word fitly spoken
Is like apples of gold
In baskets of silver."

The scriptural simile suggests all the poetry of the ancient craftsman's work. Richness and splendour created from the two loveliest metals. Gold and Silver have qualities which fit them for craftsmanship of dignity. They have rarity, great weight, and beauty of texture. In Ireland, at any rate, the metal worker's craft came to its fullest early flowering in the service of the Church.

It is the craft of the silversmith rather than that of the goldsmith which we have described as being Christian. The heyday of the worker in gold was during an earlier pre-Christian era. The golden torques and lunulas which are the splendour of Dublin's
National Museum, belong to the Bronze Age. But the devotionally wrought objects of ritual use are made of silver, and mixed metals, and belong to the later years of the Celtic Church—from the 9th. to the 13th. Centuries. The surviving products of this era are greater in quality and quantity than those found in England, Scotland or Wales. Typical are the twelfth century shrine of St. Patrick’s bell in bronze with gold and silver panels; or the Tara brooch of perhaps the eighth century, of gilt bronze with gold and silver panels; or the book shrines and reliquaries, like the eleventh century Soicel Molaise, a bronze reliquary with silver panels and gold filigree, or, greatest of all, the Ardagh Chalice.

The great two-handled hemispherical Ardagh Chalice was found in the Rath of Reerasta near Ardagh in County Limerick. It was in a hoard which included also some silver brooches. Its materials are profuse in their variety, and its craftsmanship both delicate and exuberant. Gold, silver, bronze, brass, copper, lead and enamel are all used in its ornamentation, which has affinities with the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow. Recent opinion assigns it to the eighth century. Round the bowl are inscribed the names of the twelve Apostles, substituting that of St. Paul for St. Matthias.

It is suggested that the Ardagh Chalice may have been one of the treasures mentioned in the account of the desecration of Clonmacnoise in 1125. The story in the Chronicon Scotorum recounts that, “the altar of the great stone church of Cluainmac-Nonis was opened and precious things were taken out of it.” These included “a silver chalice with a burnishing of gold and an engraving and a silver cup of Ceallach, comarb of Patrick”.

Ireland is rich in this kind of monastic work, which delighted in the use of artistically contrasting base and precious metals. There is a sharp distinction between this and the later Gothic work, which confined itself legalistically to precious metals of a definite standard of purity. The Irish adherence to the “sterling” standard is observable not only in the Dublin work of the seventeenth century, but also in local work of that and the previous century.

The development of the conventional chalice as we know it today can be traced back to Ireland in an uncomplete way to the thirteenth centuries. It is the evolution of a kind of design quite different from that of the Ardagh Chalice. It is a design which belongs to the Norman and Gothic traditions of western Europe and which has nothing to do with the Celtic monastic tradition. The English design of the twelfth century Hubert Walter Chalice of circa 1160 (found in Canterbury in 1890) was basic all through the thirteenth century. It comprises a wide shallow bowl, rather squat in shape, and with a rounded plain foot. Only one early Irish example of this design seems to have survived. This was excavated at Mellifont, and it is a miniature chalice in the National Museum, assigned to circa 1250 A.D.

Gradually the bowls of these shallow chalices deepened and grew conical. Later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the bowls became hemispherical. The foot, which had been circular, became hexagonal, in order to avoid the danger of rolling when the chalice was laid on its side to drain into the paten. The stems grew taller, and the decorated knob more significant. The European Gothic tradition is noticeable here. Purely Irish influence is no longer to be observed such as was so clearly seen in the Ardagh Chalice. Much silver of the western tradition would have been provided after Bishop John Comyn’s Synod of 1186 in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, which laid down that “in monasteries and rich churches chalices should be provided in gold and silver”. These would be in the new English tradition, not Celtic.

Dublin
of that era records the names of craftsmen: — Williclum aurifaber from Shrewsbury, Roger aurifaber, William, Giles and Godardus all "aurifabers" or goldsmiths, none of them identifiably Irish.

The old fashioned bronze with gilt and silver embellishments had gone out of fashion. The modes of the Synod of Cashel were in vogue, and the standard of the English silversmiths would be followed henceforth. It is relevant to record that the ordinance De auro fabricando in Civitate Londinarum of 1238 ordered that no silver chalices should be made worse in fineness than that used for coinage at the Mint. The use of the sterling standard—the "sterling allay" of 1300—was to become the normal and rigid rule of the craft henceforth.

Buckley, in Irish Altar Plate, gives illustrations of a good many chalices of the mediaeval era up to the mid-seventeenth century, before the Dublin Guild started.

Notable gothic chalices include the De Burgo-O’Malley Chalice, perhaps one of the most gracious designs ever made. It is of course unmarked, and it is unsigned. Possibly it was manufactured in Galway which later had a good tradition of Church silver, but there is nothing to prove that this is so. It seems to be of the English-Sterling standard. It was made in 1494 and is inscribed "Thomas De Burgo et Gravina ni Malle me fieri fecerunt". Possibly it was given to the Dominican monastery of Burrishoole. Grauina was probably a grand-aunt of the famous "Grania of the Ships," the celebrated sea-queen of the West. The name of another Irishwoman famous in history is recalled by the gift to Mellifont in 1157 of a golden chalice by Queen Dervorgilla.

The Ballylongford Cross, made for Cornelius O’Connor in 1479.

National Museum Photograph
DE BURGO-O’MALLEY CHALICE
The workmanship of the Knop of the De Burgo-O Malley chalice is so similar to that of the Ballylongford latten processional cross (in the National Museum) that it suggests the possibility of the same craftsman. The cross is signed "per manu Corneli", so that Cornelius must be one of the earliest named silversmiths whose work survives in Ireland. Not that the name is an Irish one, so that the possibility must not be excluded that these two items are both importations.
A later chalice of beauty and interest is the William and Kathleen Archer Chalice, circa 1500-1510, a very beautiful and elaborately decorated piece now in the Museo Christiano in the Vatican. It bears a curious inscription of later date. “Ricardus Pococke Episopas Osoriensis ab igne redemptum sacris restituit ano saltis 1761”. It was a fortunate snatching from the flames of a great treasure, made by a man who was a cultured scholar, a world traveller and a man of letters. Again there is nothing to prove whether it was made in Ireland or not.

Altar plate comprises the bulk of the surviving work of the mediaeval Irish silversmiths. But, apart from altar plate, Ireland also possesses one of the greatest western examples of the craft in the mitre and crozier of Cornelius O’Dea, Bishop of Limerick. The work is not only signed, but also is dated—“Thomas O’Carryd Artifex faciens”, on the mitre, and the date 1418 was inscribed on both pieces, though it is now missing on the mitre. O’Carryd (probably a version of McCarthy) is an Irish name, though the style is not especially Irish. It is in fact typical of western continental art of the era, and it has no Celtic idiosyncracies. However, the influential Irish saints are shown on the crozier—St. Patrick, St. Brigid, and St. Munchin of Limerick. The balance of probability would suggest that this is of Irish manufacture. Illustration will show the qualities of this Gothic pontificale far better than description, so we show pictures of the mitre and of the upper part of the crozier.

If reliquaries of Celtic times are not uncommon, the only Norman example which springs to the mind is the shrine of the heart of Archbishop Laurence O’Toole, who died in 1182.

The silver of the Stuart and Georgian eras is, on the whole, much of the English fashion. Ireland’s only exclusive inventions seem to have been the Georgian harp—
Dublin Dish Ring of the late 18th century, by William Townsend. Note the elegant Rococo with its touch of chinoiserie. National Museum Photograph.

handled cups and the dish rings which were made in such quantities during Dublin's age of elegance towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Civic silver would require a monograph to itself: Dublin's makers (including the famous Thomas Bolton) produced some very fine early eighteenth century maces and so forth.

It was inevitable in a settled society, such as seventeenth century Dublin was, that sooner or later the craftsmen in silver and gold should combine in a company to protect their interests and to control the quality of merchandise offered for sale. By an act of 1300 the goldsmiths of London had been charged to mark their wares with the leopard's head punch as a guarantee that their silver was “of the esterling alay or better”. Twenty-seven years later—in 1327—the trade guild of “The Wardens and Commonality of the Mystery of Goldsmiths in the City of London” had been incorporated by letters patent of Edward III. Dublin was later than this. The first recorded mention of a company of goldsmiths in Dublin is to be found in 1498, when they were represented with the other city guilds in the Corpus Christi ceremonies that year. The earliest significant reference to their charter is in 1557, when they produced evidence before the Dublin City Council that they were already of ancient incorporation, but that their charter had been accidentally burned. On this occasion the company was reincorporated, but on the terms that “none shall be admitted to the fraternity without he be of English name and blood of honest conversation and also free citizen of this city”. But a definite mark of guaranteed assay was not imposed until 1695. During the few years previously there had been
a great many complaints about fraudulent "indirect and sinister" dealing. To cope with dishonest workmanship, marks certifying standard quality were ordered to be struck—a lion, a harp and a castle. The resolution ordered "that trial shall be made before they put the stamp to any parcel of plate, and if by such trial or upon touch thereof it appears to be corrupt, mingled with baser, or not made altogether of as pure silver as the standard silver coin now current in this Kingdom", it should be forfeited. A fee of a halfpenny an ounce was payable by the goldsmiths for assaying. (Whether in fact this was ever done is not known: if it was, no examples have yet been found.) It is quite possible that the need for silver after the 1641 Rebellion caused any existing examples to be melted down. In January 1643 all Dubliners were ordered to sell half their plate for coming at five shillings an ounce: it appears that twelve thousand pounds worth did in fact come in.

In 1637 the complete organisation of the Company of Goldsmiths came about. By request, on December 22nd. of that year, they obtained a new Royal Charter. This was intended to enable them to regulate the entire trade in Ireland. It ordered that the King's stamp, the harp crowned, was to be used to indicate that silver had been assayed (or tested for quality), and that it was of the standard of at least 11oz. 2dwt. for silver per pound. (It is clear, however, that not much early silver was in fact assayed apart from that made in Dublin. A good number of obviously seventeenth and eighteenth century pieces have no mark, or local provincial town marks.)

The Dublin charter included an oath of allegiance to the sovereign, which no doubt excluded many Irish goldsmiths. Buckley's extensive catalogue of altar plate, which includes many from the seventeenth century, show that examples with marks, either official or unofficial, are the exception. It would seem that the Galway workers liked to sign their works. Most other provincial silversmiths preferred to remain anonymous. We publish illustrations of typical chalices of the period, some anonymous, and some identifiable, including a few which are signed.

The Charter lists the names of its first members, who were all Dubliners—they were William Cooke, John Woodcocke, William Hampton, James Vanderbegg, William Gallant, (the maker of the 1641 Russell-Taaffe chalice, National Museum), John Banister, Nathaniel Stoughton, James Acheson, Clement Evans, George Gallant, Sylvanus Glegg, William St. Clare, Gilbert Tongues, Edward Chadsey, Peter Vanein-thoven, Matthew Thomas, William Crawley, Thomas Duffield, John Cooke and John Burke.

The maker's marks of some of these Irish pioneers survive. To judge from the Assay Books of 1638-44, not all the members of the Company did in fact submit silver for assay during those years.

Country makers were also ordered by the charter to bring silver to Dublin for assay, but judging by the names in the early books not by any means all did. During the first half of the eighteenth century one finds few more than Caleb Colbeck, John Robinson, Jonathan Buck and a maker called Hall, of Limerick; Hercules Morgan of Clonmel, Joseph and William Wall of Kinsale and Thomas Miles of Waterford. Of course, Dublin agents also presented country-made silver.

After the time of the Revolution, Dublin makers' marks began to blossom into a rash of crowns. Silversmiths using them included John Phillips, Alexander Sinclair, David King, John Hamilton, Thomas Sutton and John Taylor. Though the use of the symbol was forbidden under threat of dire penalties, the crown was not discarded as rapidly as one would have expected. Probably the penalties were more nominal than authentic. After the middle of the eighteenth century the maker's mark was
in most instances the two initials of the silversmith.

The Dublin marks, which eventually became a substantial collection, owing to the successive imposition of duty charges, were stamped individually with steel punches (Efficient forgeries were unmasked some years ago in America because the marks had been forged en bloc; in fact, of course, no two authentic series of marks are quite identical.)

The shape and outline of the punches also varied over the centuries, so that it is possible to give approximate datings even when the date letter is missing. The normal series of marks include all or some of the following:— the town mark, the date letter, the maker’s mark, the duty mark of 1730 and the duty mark of 1807.

The town mark for Dublin was the crowned harp. Up to 1787 normally speaking, the outline of the harp and crown were followed by the punch. From 1787 to 1794 they appeared in an oval shield. From 1794 to 1809 the shield was an oblong with the corners clipped off. Since then there has been variety in the shape of the shield.

The date letters form a code which shows (with some irregularities during time of war and political crises) the year during which the piece of silver was assayed. The table will show these breaks. Up to 1712 the alphabets excluded J, plus V W X Y Z giving a cycle of seventy years. V did not appear until 1811; W X Y Z were used first between 1712 and 1717.

The various alphabets are comparatively easy to tell apart, as their background shields vary in shape, and, apart from the period 1747 to 1846, the style of the letters is reasonably distinguishable.

 Needless to say, examples of the early years are extremely rare. But they do exist, and we know of several pieces of Church plate on which they are found. Thus a flagon in Trinity College, Dublin has “A”. A chalice, paten and pair of flagons in St. Fin Barre’s Cathedral, Cork have “B” for 1639-40, as have the chalice and paten in Fethard-on-Sea Church. “C” for 1640-41 is found on the chalices of St. Peter’s and St. John’s Churches, Dublin, and on that of Templemichael in Lismore Diocese. Derry Cathedral and St. Anne’s Church, Passage East, Co. Waterford have pieces marked “D” for the fateful year of the Rebellion, 1641-2. On the whole, it is unexpected that even these should still exist in spite of subsequent war and civil strife—and more especially as the total of silver assayed in Dublin was small enough. During those early days, in the reign of Charles I, the average yearly output was only 1,300 oz (dropping between 1645 and 1649 to only one-fifth of that), compared with the princely total of more than 80,000 oz assayed in Dublin during 1788. Considering what the wastage must have been, we are fortunate in possessing, in the National Museum, one piece made in Dublin during the Protectorate—a unique example, a goblet of 1654 by William Cooke.

Thirdly came the maker’s personal mark—in fact his own trade mark, by which the individual silversmith was to be identified. The style of this mark varied with the changing course of fashion. Most frequently, and most satisfactorily, it consisted of a couple of initials (like the I.B. for Jonathan Buck of Limerick) or of a monogram such as the conjoined T B for Thomas Bolton, that most prolific of early eighteenth century Dublin makers. (It was recorded of him that on one occasion he sent to be assayed no less than 700 oz of silver at one time.) At certain periods makers preferred to indulge in fanciful emblems, of which a typical example is the piping shepherd with a dancing lamb which is on the Emily Cathedral chalice and paten made in 1708-9 by the Dublin silversmith Francis Girard, or the buck of Adam Buck of Limerick.

The Dublin Assay Office has kept a record of these makers’ marks, registered from the
The only surviving Dublin made piece from the Commonwealth period.

*National Museum Photograph.*

12
punches on a sheet of copper or pewter, which assists greatly in identification.

Next came the figure of Hibernia Seated, added in 1730, to show that the duty of sixpence an ounce had been paid. This was imposed on all manufactured silver and gold, and was originally intended to last for only 21 years. However, at the end of the 21 years, the duty was re-imposed, and when later the duty was increased, Hibernia was still allowed to remain. She does so to this day, though in fact the duty was taken off plate in 1890.

The increasing output of Irish silversmiths towards the end of the eighteenth century was no doubt a temptation to the authorities to go for an increased revenue, and in 1807 the sixpenny duty went up to one shilling. To show that it had been paid a fifth mark was employed. Now the Sovereign's head was added to the procession of the other hallmarks, (leaving Hibernia unchanged). The style of the effigies of the Georgian Sovereigns and of the shields in which they are portrayed changed constantly between 1807 and 1837 (after which Queen Victoria's head begins). But they can be identified by the fact that George III looks to the onlooker's right, George IV to the left; William IV to the right, and Victoria to the left again.
After Dublin, the greatest centre of the silversmiths' craft was Cork, where indeed silver is still made by the firm of Messrs. Egan.

During the reign of Charles I the Mayor of Cork was empowered by Charter of 1631 to appoint a clerk of assay. (So also had been Youghal by the 1608 Charter of James I.) But it was not until 1656, right in the middle of the unpromising Commonwealth period, that the Goldsmiths Company of Cork was incorporated under the title of "The Master Wardens and Company of Goldsmiths in the City of Cork". The Guild continued until about 1728, languished and died, but was revived about 1780 and continued to flourish for some forty years.

Its most famous member was Robert Goble, who was Master of the Guild in 1694. He was a craftsman who rose to the best standards of the period. Up to about 1720, he and several of the other Cork silversmiths used marks based on the City arms, a three-masted ship between two towers. There are various differing punches of the ship and of the castle: one maker, Walter Burnett, 1670-1729, used a design incorporating both in one single design. Goble tended to use both castle and ship together; other makers such as Richard Smart, used the castle alone. From about 1710 "Sterling" came to be added, and the older town marks ceased to be used. ("Sterling" is found engraved on a cup dated 1698 in Buttevant Church but the matching cover is London made, so it is risky to draw any conclusion from the early date.) Sometimes "Sterling" was found in conjunction with the Dublin assay marks. The first recorded instance of Cork silver having been sent to Dublin for assay and marking occurs in 1709. In general, the Cork Sterling mark is intaglio, and of serif capital letters, but there is no uniformity in it.
County Cork, in early days remote enough from the possibility of importing plate from Dublin, was remarkably self-contained in its home manufacture of silver articles. A curious example exists. Ballymodan Church, Bandon, had secured in 1630 a newly made Communion cup of London manufacture complete with the leopard's head mark. It is almost identical with a cup in Cloyne Cathedral which, however, is inscribed on the foot "Jo Moore de Bandon me fe". Did Moore of Bandon use the London chalice as a model? Whether or no, his is the only piece definitely assignable to Bandon town.

The Youghal makers, like those of Cork, used the town arms as a mark. This is a single-masted boat, in slightly differing forms, but in every case readily distinguishable from that of Galway (e.g. on the 1644 "Marquess of Bute's chalice", Buckley. The best known makers were John Sharpe, who flourished during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and Edward Gillet, who was of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and who is represented in the National Museum by a tankard, as also by a paten in St. Mary's Collegiate Church, Youghal. In 1687 the Kinsale Company of Blacksmiths, Goldsmiths, Silversmiths, Cutlers, Glaziers, Graziars, and other hammermen that worked by fire "acquired a new Charter at the cost of £8". The Dublin records show that between approximately 1700 and 1736 Joseph and William Wall made plate in Kinsale. It is possible that the mark W in a heart-shaped shield ought to be ascribed to the Wall family.
The heyday of the Kilkenny silversmiths was the last quarter of the seventeenth century, in so far as identifiable examples can be found from that era. The names of a few Kilkenny apprentices who were enrolled to serve under Dublin Goldsmiths at that time are still recorded. In 1678 Joseph Teate was enrolled. He was a son of the late Joseph Teate, Dean of St. Canice's Cathedral. Two years later the name of John Cooke of Kilkenny occurs. And there are a number of pieces of silver of that era in Kilkenny churches, which probably are locally made. Furthermore, there is a town mark based on the Kilkenny three-flagged castle. This is found in conjunction with the letters E R. It is found on a tankard of 1680 in the National Museum, and on several pieces of Church silver, notably in Screene, (illustrated), Piltown, Fethard, Co. Tipperary, and Carrick-on-Suir, where the inscription links the chalice with Kilkenny by saying that it was given (in 1673) by “the Duke of Ormonde’s Troop”. It has been conjectured that the E R may have been a member of the Kilkenny civic family of Rothe.

Galway was famous for its Church plate down to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was particularly good during the first half of the eighteenth, and initialled pieces are to be found by such makers as Richard Joyce, or Bartholomew, Mark and Martin Fallon. The town mark at that period was usually an anchor. A lymphad, or sailing-boat, with sail furled on a horizontal yard arm, is also to be found as an earlier mark of origin, as on Bartholomew Fallon’s Cornin-Macnamara chalice of 1683. A group of typical Galway-marked chalices is shown.
Limerick silver started its distinctive city marks of origin during the sixteen sixties, as far as surviving examples show us. Earlier pieces of course have shown signatures in the cases of O Carryd (the O Dea mitre and crozier) and Fennell who made the Quin chalice 1670 and the two Ennis chalices 1761. The late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries show the castle mark—the civic emblem—and a star,

The Ennis Chalice, 17th Century, showing Limerick Castle mark and Star
sometimes wavy. After about 1720 STERLING is found in various forms. During the eighteenth century a mark rather like a three feathered plume is found—e.g., on the Newmarket-on-Fergus chalice or on the Peter Haly chalice of 1734 in Killarney Cathedral, which has the sterling mark and the initials CR (perhaps one of the Robinson family), as well as the plume mark. At this era some Limerick makers produced a mark which enclosed their initials with a crude resemblance to the Dublin crowned harp. The best known of the Limerick makers included the families of Buck, Johns and Robinson.

Limerick Silver, two-handled Cup and bright Cut Spoon (Note typical Fleur-de-Lys)
The incomparable M S D Westropp listed the recorded makers in a paper in this Journal, "the Goldsmiths of Limerick". He illustrated it with his drawings of some of the marks (which we reproduce) and also gave an alphabetical list of makers as far as it was known. No research seems to have added much to his list, though credit is due to JNA Wallace of this Society for the identification of the Limerick star mark.

Westropp’s Drawings of Limerick Makers’ Marks
Here is Westropp’s list—Adam Buck, died 1725—(there is a spirited little animal in his personal mark to be seen on an item in the National Museum); Jonathan Buck, 1725-40; Collins Brehon, died 1768; George Brush 1769; Robert Bradford 1770; Thomas Burke, died 1800; Caleb Colbeck, 1720, 1730; John Collum 1751, died 1788; Patrick Connell, 1784-8; Henry Downes died 1788; Maurice Fitzgerald, 1760-1810; Garret Fitzgerald, 1768, died 1780; William Fitzgerald, 1800; William Fitzgerald and son, 1820; John Gloster 1755; Hill 1727; Joseph Johns 1731, Mayor 1773 (the great maker of two-handled cups and who also made the Waterville Killeely communion plate); Samuel Johns 1765, died 1795; George Halloran 1766, died 1804; John Hackett, 1770-84; George Hurst of Pallaskenry died 1842; Daniel Lysaght 1786, 8; John Laing 1846; Donald Mecgillysaghta 1559; George Moore 1768, 84 (whose mark has been punched on the Tudor paten of Eglash, Offaly—); W D Moore 1779, Thomas O Carryd 1418; Gilladiffe O Cowltayn 1559; Robert O Shaughnessy, 1802, died 1842; Edward Parker 1731, died 1782; John Purcell, 1787, died 1813; Francis Phipps, 1788; Samuel Purdon, 1800, 46; James Robinson 1690, 1696; John Robinson, 1730, 39; George Robinson, 1750, 68; Joseph Robinson, died 1767; Robert Smith 1674, 87; John Strit or Stritch 1771, 84; H Smith and R Wallace, 1882, 40; Philip Walsh 1777, 84; Matthew Walsh 1784; T Walsh 1810, 46; John Walsh 1846; William Ward 1798, 1810; James Watson, 1774.
The illustrations show typical pieces of Limerick made silver. Church plate. Two-handled cups—a favoured Irish production at about the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Freedom and seal boxes—the illustrations show those engraved with the arms of the city, the castle which had been used as a town mark of origin. And spoons—many bright cut, and of these, mostly engraved with a fleur de lys.
THE CORK AND LIMERICK BRUHENNY SILVER

An interesting point emerges from the examination of the Bruhenny Chalice, flagon, and plate, now kept in Buttevant Church.

All writers on Irish silver have followed Sir Charles Jackson in saying that these pieces—undated, but the gift of Sir John Percivall are the oldest known pieces of Limerick silver, and also that they are Limerick made.

The Bruhenny chalice and flagon each have two marks—the Limerick castle and the letters IB separated by three mullets or stars in a quatrefoil shield. It has been suggested that this is the mark of one of the elusive Buck family of goldsmiths—probably of a John Buck of Limerick. The same mark is found on two other undated pieces—the chalice of Kilmastulla, Killaloe, and the small paten of St. Mary’s Cathedral, Limerick. A similar mark, though not from the same punch—a star between IB—is found on the 1732 beaker chalice of Kilmeehy, in the Diocese of Limerick.

Now Cork also claims John Buck. Charleville and Castlemartyr have chalices and covers marked IB in a circle, but with the Cork town mark of a three-masted ship in a similar circle.

Dean Webster thinks that these latter could be of the 1660 period, because of a similar mark on the Lismore Cathedral silver, which is dated 1663. But Jackson conjectures that the Bruhenny silver is circa 1710. Hence between Cork and Limerick, we have dates for the various form of the maker’s mark “IB” about 1660 up to 1732.

Accordingly it is interesting to find that the Bruhenny plate, or paten similarly inscribed to the chalice and flagon, is not of Limerick make, in spite of Webster’s statement. It has, instead, the Cork three-master town mark, identical with those of Charleville and Castlemartyr, together with the Cork version of IB in a dotted circle. Yet the plate belongs to the same local set as the two other pieces. It is a service of two matching pieces, one of which was made in Cork, and two in Limerick.

It would appear then that these two “IBs”, the Limerick maker and the Cork maker have a very close relationship. It is a matter for further discovery whether they are the same man, or contemporaries of the same family, or two provincial branches of the same firm.

Since the Bruhenny set of three pieces is obviously a unity, clearly it would throw light on the dating of both Cork and Limerick marks if its date could be discovered with any accuracy. By a freak of history, this can be done with unusual closeness. For the set was given by a “Sir John Percivall, Eques Auratus”. Mr Gerald Slevin, Chief Herald, has identified this nobleman, together with the dates which are relevant. The clue lies in the words “eques auratus”. The phrase applies to a knight. A John Percivall was knighted in Dublin Castle in 1658. Sir John Percivall became Baronet in 1661. Mr Slevin thinks we must assume that these were the same, which means that Sir John was eques auratus for only three years. Therefore these Cork and Limerick marks belong to the period 1658-61.

It is satisfactory to find an approximate definite date, 1660 to which the elusive Limerick Castle mark can be attached. The Askeaton chalice dates the Limerick star to 1663.
DATES OF SOVEREIGNS

1637 First year of Dublin Hall Marks.
1649 Commonwealth.
1660 Charles II.
1685 James II.
1692 William III.
1702 Anne.
1714 George I.
1727 George II.
1730 Hibernia Sealed Duty Mark.
1760 George III.
1807 Extra Duty Mark—Sovereign's Head (to right).
1820 George IV.
1822 Sovereign's Head to left.
1830 William IV.
1831 Sovereign's Head to right.
1837 Victoria.
1838 Sovereign's Head to left.
1890 Sovereign's Head disused.
1901 Edward VII.
1910 George V.

I am indebted to the National Museum for Photographs, and to The Royal Society of Antiquaries and the N.M.A.S. for the loan of Blocks.
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**Symbols for Counties:**
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- **Galway:**
- **Cork:**
- **Kilkenny:**
- **Limerick:**