

## **Old English silver and its medical interest / Professor Sir Henry Cohen.**

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LIVERPOOL  
MEDICAL INSTITUTION



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
14TH OCTOBER 1954

Old English Silver  
and its Medical Interest

PROFESSOR SIR HENRY COHEN

LIVERPOOL  
—  
1955  
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THE LYCEUM PRESS  
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PERIOD	HALL MARK	STANDARD MARK	DATE MARK	PERIOD	HALL MARK	STANDARD MARK	DATE MARK	DUTY MARK
1500-1678				1751-1755				
1679				1756-1775				
1680-1696				1776-1820				
1697-1720	HIGHER	STANDARD		1821-1830				1821-1830
1721				1831-1835				
1722-1723				1836-1875				
1724-1725				1876-1890				
1726-1728				1890-1895				NO MARK Duty abolished in 1890
1729-1738				1896-1915				
1739-1750	1733-1751	1739 to 1755						

\*

\* Only used from 1876 to 1904.

FIG. 1. Table showing London silver marks from Queen Elizabeth I to George V. (from *Old English Silver*, Arthur Hayden).

# LIVERPOOL MEDICAL INSTITUTION

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The President and Council, after careful consideration, have decided with regret that the time has come when the increasing membership of the Institution makes it no longer possible to invite Guests to the Inaugural Meeting of the Session. It has therefore been decided to revert to the system which operated until 1947 whereby invitations to the Inaugural Meeting and Reception will be restricted to Members and Associates only. In spite of this change it is hoped that members will continue to observe the custom of wearing evening dress or dinner-jackets at this meeting. The meeting will once more be held in the Institution, on Thursday, 13th October.

Council is sorry that the social attraction of this occasion may be diminished, but would remind members that the Annual Dinner, to be held at the Adelphi Hotel on 3rd November, and the Christmas Cocktail Party, arranged for 8th December at the Institution, provide excellent opportunities for social contact. They hope that both will command the increased support of members.

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### HUGH OWEN THOMAS MEMORIAL LECTURE, 1955

*The above Lecture will be delivered on  
Wednesday, 5th October, at 8-0 p.m.*

*Lecturer: Professor J. Trueta*

*Subject: "The Aetiopathology of Osteoarthritis"*

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### SUMMER VACATION

The Institution will be **CLOSED** for the summer vacation

from

**SATURDAY, 30th JULY to MONDAY, 22nd AUGUST inclusive.**

G. SANDERSON,

*General Secretary.*

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LIVERPOOL MEDICAL INSTITUTION

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Preliminary Notice of Arrangements for the 119th Session 1955-56

DATES OF MEETINGS

1955

October	5th	-	Hugh Owen Thomas Memorial Lecture
"	13th	-	Inaugural Meeting
"	20th	-	Ordinary Meeting
"	27th	-	Pathological Meeting
November	3rd	-	Annual Dinner (7.30p.m.)
"	10th	-	Afternoon Clinical Demonstration
"	17th	-	Ordinary Meeting
"	24th	-	Pathological Meeting
December	1st	-	Ordinary Meeting
"	8th	-	Christmas Cocktail Party (6.0p.m.)
"	15th	-	Ordinary Meeting

1956

January	12th	-	Ordinary Meeting
"	19th	-	Pathological Meeting
"	26th	-	Ordinary Meeting
February	2nd	-	Ordinary Meeting
"	9th	-	Afternoon Clinical Demonstration
"	16th	-	Pathological Meeting
"	23rd	-	Ordinary Meeting
March	1st	-	Visit of Manchester Medical Society (5.0p.m.)
"	8th	-	Pathological Meeting
"	15th	-	Afternoon Clinical Demonstration
"	22nd	-	Annual and Ordinary Meetings

Afternoon Clinical Demonstrations - 2.30p.m.  
Other Meetings - 8.0p.m.



## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

### OLD ENGLISH SILVER AND ITS MEDICAL INTEREST\*

*Professor Sir Henry Cohen*

The acquisition and study of old silver is one of the few hobbies which satisfy both the æsthetic appetite and intellectual curiosity. None can deny that the beauty and craftsmanship of the domestic and church plate of earlier centuries reveal silver as one of the most suitable media for the artist in metal.

What makes silver of importance to the student and the historian are the marks, from which we know of any piece with virtual certainty (*a*) what is the quality of the silver (the "standard" mark); (*b*) where it was assayed and probably made (the "hall" mark); (*c*) when it was made (the "date" mark); (*d*) who made it (the "maker's" mark)—(*Fig. 1*).

The common standard mark in England is the *lion passant*, which indicates a silver content of 92.5% (sterling silver), but from 1697-1720 all silver bore the effigy of Britannia and the *lion erased*, indicating 95.5% silver content. This Britannia standard of silver may be and is still used. It is not to be confused with Britannia metal, which is a pewter-like alloy used since the early 19th century and often electroplated. In Edinburgh, the standard mark is the thistle; in Glasgow, the lion rampant; and in Ireland, the harp crowned. It is a criminal offence to forge, imitate or falsify standard marks.

The hall-mark varies with place and time. London is shown by a leopard's head, with or without whiskers or crown; Chester to 1697 and after 1775, by a dagger erect between three sheaves of wheat, but from 1701-1775 by three demi-lions with three wheat sheaves. Birmingham is indicated by an anchor, Sheffield by a crown. Norwich, York, Exeter, Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, and many other places have or have had (for many are now obsolete) their distinctive marks.

The *date* is indicated by the letters of the alphabet in different scripts and enclosed in a shield of varying shape. These give a 20 years' cycle by omitting J, V, W, X, Y, Z. The letters of different halls do not synchronise.

Before the 18th century the maker's mark was usually an emblem (*e.g.* a swan, a tree); then the initial letter of the maker's surname was imprinted; later the initials of both names were used, surmounted by a crown if favoured by Royal patronage.

\* Being the Inaugural Address (abridged) delivered at the opening of the 118th Session of the Liverpool Medical Institution in the Arts Theatre, University of Liverpool, on 14th October, 1954.



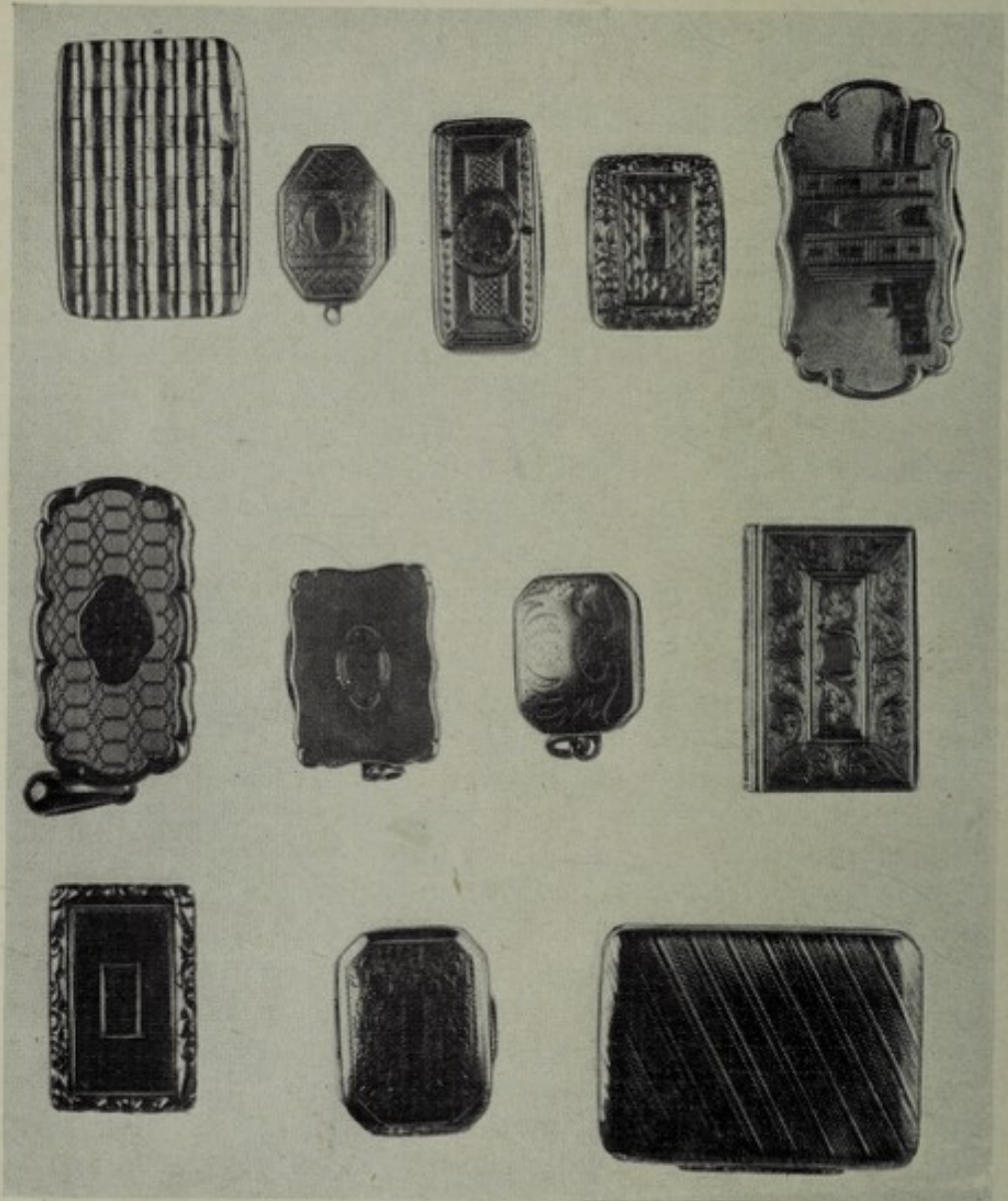


FIG. 2. A collection of vinaigrettes (early 19th century).

Between 1784 and 1890 silver carried also a *duty* mark—the sovereign's head—indicating the payment of a government tax. On special occasions, *e.g.* coronation year, jubilee of a reign, the sovereign's head was often used.

Silver had no special virtue for medical instruments or appliances, but it was perhaps natural that the more elegant and the more wealthy should substitute silver for baser metals in the manufacture of certain articles. This can be illustrated by reference to the use of aromatic perfumes.

These were for centuries accepted as essential not only to the art of gracious living but as a shield against unappetising odours, and the lurking pestilence of streets and public buildings. For this purpose in early Tudor days, posies of flowers were carried, and the custom persists with judges and sheriffs. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV* reference is made to "the perfumed chambers of the great." In Tudor times every well appointed house had its silver perfuming pan, shaped like incense burners. In the Stuart period, shallow circular pans of silver (about  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " by  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) on three tiny ball feet, were filled with perfume and covered by pierced lids.

Solid aromatic substances, *e.g.* musk, were carried on the person, often encased in perforated boxes of silver or gold. An inventory of Henry V's possessions made after his death in 1452 included several such boxes. A later development of these musk boxes was the 'pomander,' first seen in France in the early 15th century. The word derives from *pomme d'embre*—an apple or ball of amber (the word *amber* was used for solid perfumes in general and was ambergris with additions of musk, lavender, nutmeg, cloves, etc., pounded with rose water). Pomanders were of various shapes and often contained several compartments. Some shaped like oranges had a different perfume in each slice. Henry VIII had in 1530, sixteen pomanders, one inscribed H. & K., and in a celebrated portrait of Lady Jane Grey, painted shortly before her death in 1554, can be seen a striking pomander. Their use was widespread but their efficacy was not accepted universally.

In late Tudor days, the aromatic orange was introduced. The pulp of the orange was removed and replaced by "a small sponge soaked in vinegar and other confections." These included sage, mint, rue, lavender, cloves, garlic, rosemary, wormwood, camphor, etc. and being more pungent were held to be more effective against the pestilence. It was doubtless the aromatic orange which led to the orange-shaped pomander.

*Pouncet-boxes* at the head of walking sticks served a similar purpose, and were carried by doctors, clergy and others who were called upon to visit disease ridden areas in the course

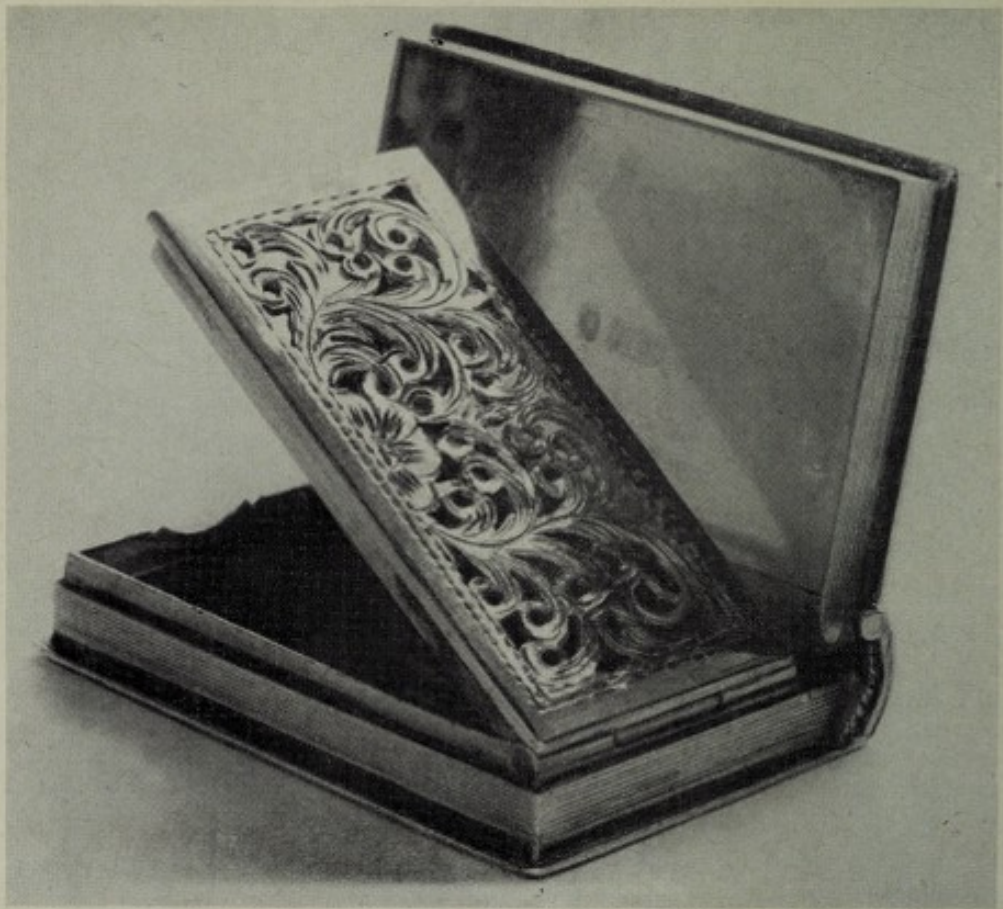


FIG. 3. A vinaigrette open to show ornate pierced lid of sponge chamber.

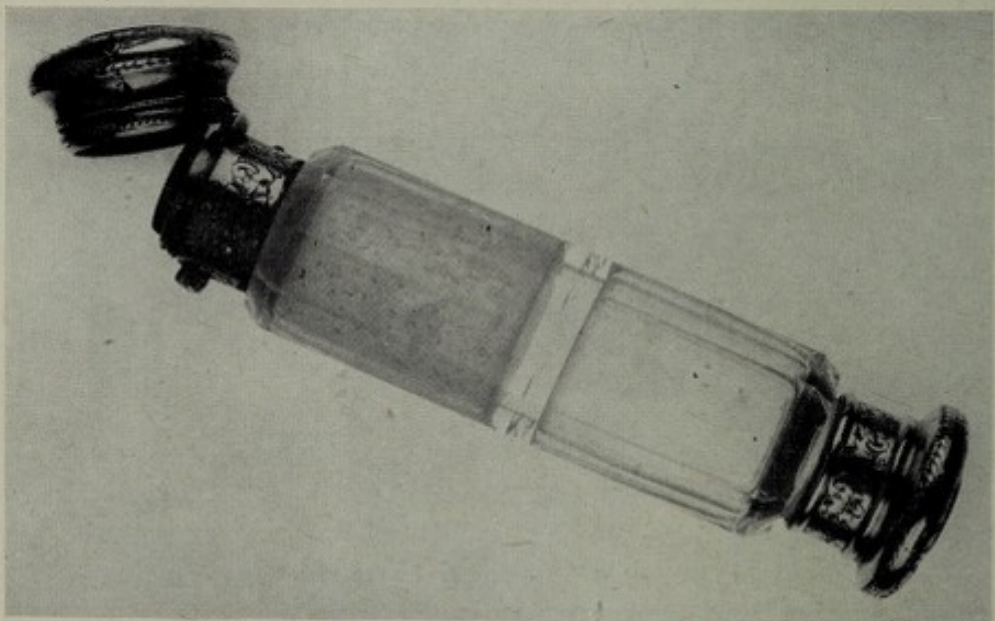


FIG. 4. Smelling bottle (1858).



FIG. 5. Bleeding bowl (1693).



FIG. 6. Plain pap-boat (1785).



FIG. 7. Ornate pap-boat (1812).



FIG. 8. Handled pap-boat with sieve (Canadian).



FIG. 9. Feeding pot (1765).

of their labours. In the later 18th century sponges soaked in concentrated aromatic vinegars, having strong acetic acid as a basis and containing chiefly oils of lavender, cinnamon, cloves and camphor were contained in small boxes of varying and beautiful design with perforated lids to the compartment enclosing the sponge. These were known as *vinaigrettes* and are very common (Figs. 2 and 3). After the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the introduction of smelling salts for the swooning Victorian female the vinaigrette and the smelling salts were combined in one smelling-bottle (Fig. 4).

#### BLEEDING BOWLS.

The practice of venesection dates back to Hippocratic times, but it reached its zenith in the 17th and 18th centuries and many bleeding bowls date from then (Fig. 5). Commander How in the *Connoisseur* (1941) suggested that there were no bleeding bowls specially designed and made for the purpose. The so-called bleeding bowl is, he asserted, a one-handed porringer and indeed examples of bleeding bowls in the Victoria and Albert Museum are labelled porringers by Oman. How adduces as evidence an old advertisement in the London Gazette for 1679 wherein are mentioned 'three porringers, one with the ear off', and states that no so-called bleeding bowl is known on which is inscribed a medical coat-of-arms. But it is pertinent to observe that some bowls have graduated marks on the inside suggesting a measure of the amount of blood withdrawn and that two-handed porringers (and even the quaich) are of a different shape from the bleeding bowl.

#### FEEDING UTENSILS.

Pap or pananda (from the Italian, *panata*, bread) was a food used for infants. It was made of bread or flour, sugar, water and occasionally milk, and was of porridge-like consistency. It was administered in *pap-boats*. Those of the 18th century are simple and plain (Fig. 6) but later were more ornate (Fig. 7). Occasionally handled and spouted examples are seen (Fig. 8).

The *caudle-pot* (Fr. *chaud*=hot) was like a two-handed porringer with a lid to keep the contents warm. There were various types of caudle:—the white caudle of oatmeal, spices and white wine; the brown, which substituted for the white wine, ale, dark wine or brandy; and tea caudle which in addition to oatmeal and wine had tea, eggs and spices. Caudles were used especially for women in childbed.

Similar in shape were *posset cups*; the posset was made by curdling milk with ale or vinegar. *Spouted feeding pots* in silver are uncommon since they are not suitable for hot fluids (Fig. 9).

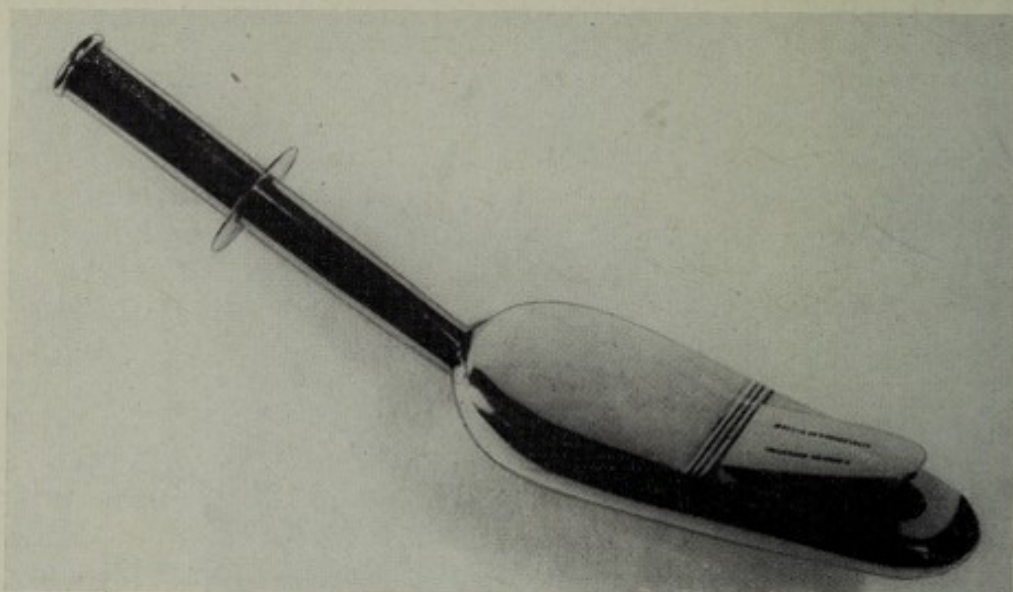


FIG. 10. Castor-oil spoon (1840).

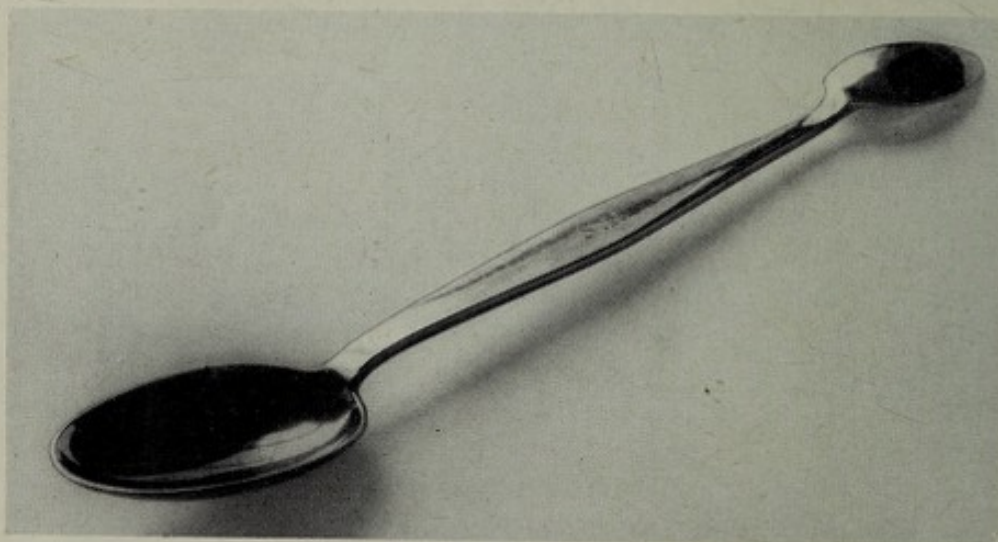


FIG. 11. Medicine spoon (1882).

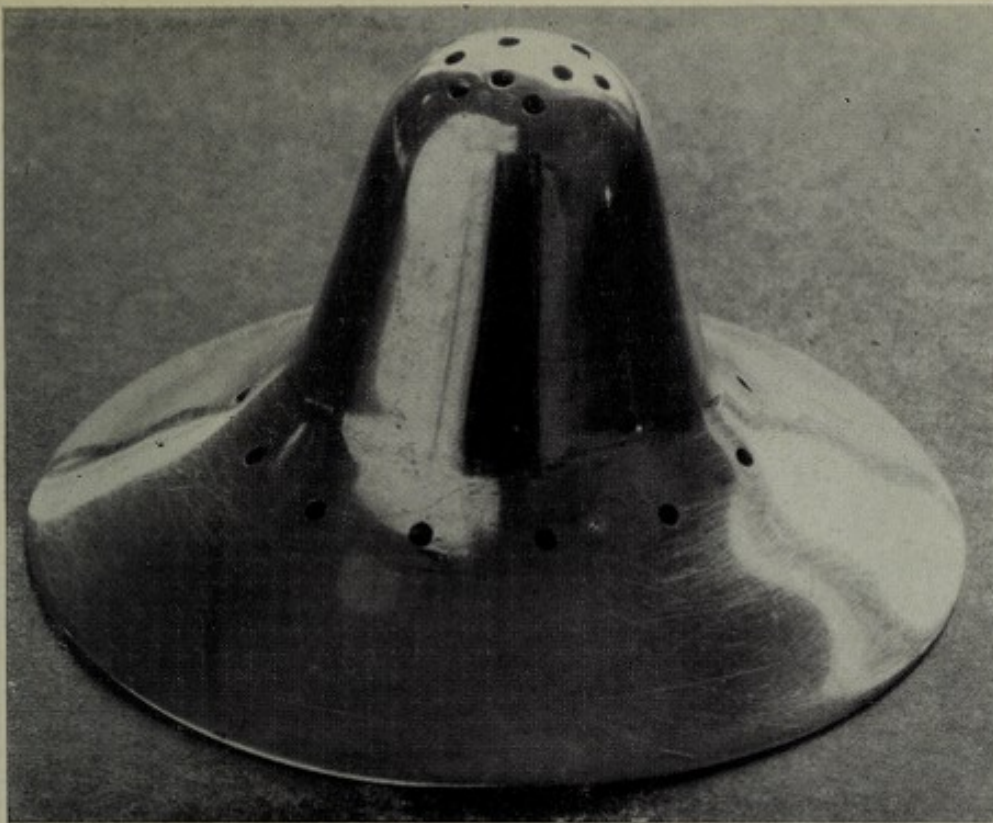


FIG. 12. Nipple shield (1801).

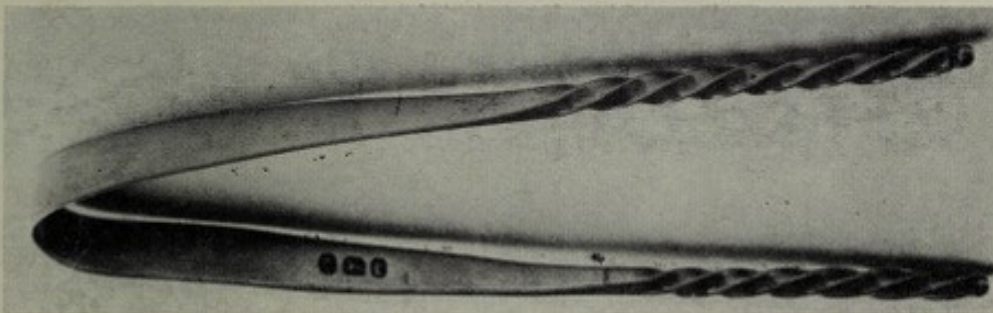


FIG. 13. Tongue scraper (1814).

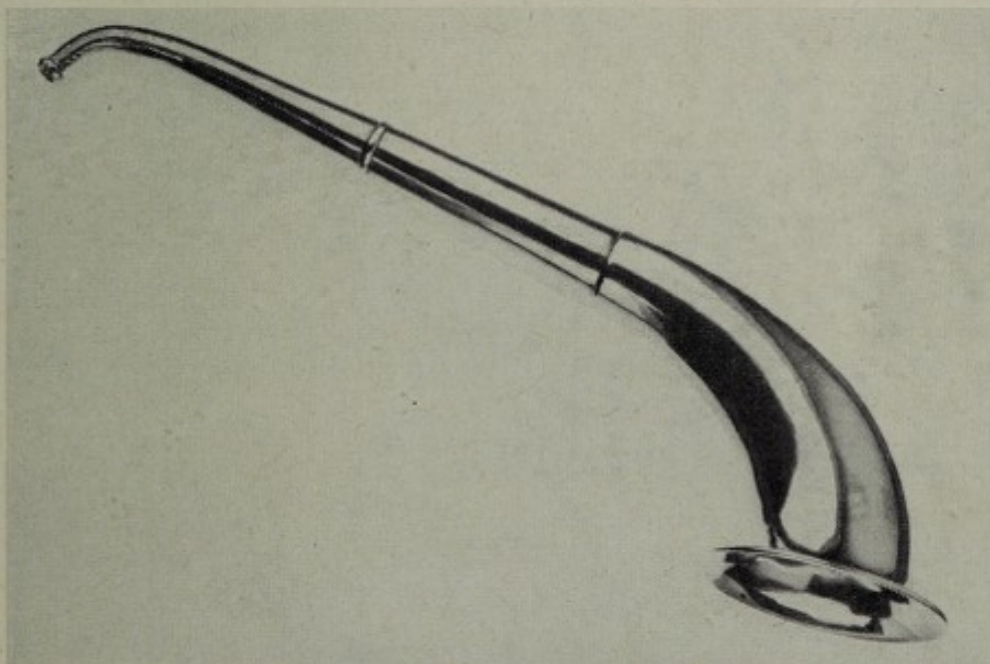


FIG. 14. Ear trumpet (1817).



### MEDICINE SPOONS.

A century ago there was commonly seen the castor-oil spoon (Fig. 10). These were filled with the unpalatable medicament and the trap door closed. The tip was placed in the patient's mouth and the flow controlled by finger pressure over the end of the tubular handle which opens into the bowl. Other forms of medicine spoon combined two measures—the table and teaspoon (Fig. 11).

### NIPPLE-SHIELDS.

*Nipple-shields* (Fig. 12) have a long history. They are mentioned by Ambroise Paré and were made of various materials. They had three main aims:—to protect cracked and ulcerated nipples; to serve as a base for attachment of an artificial nipple; and as a receptacle for escaping breast milk to prevent soiling of the clothes.

### OTHER IMPLEMENTS.

*Tooth sets*, including a tongue scraper (Fig. 13) were often made of silver. The scraper was particularly useful to clean the tongue in the days of hard drinking. Later they were often used as sugar tongs.

*Ear-trumpets* (Fig. 14) were occasionally made of silver, and other articles known in silver are *lancet cases*, *teething sticks and rattles*, *eye cups*, *pill containers*, *mortars and pestles*, *inhalers* and even *pots de chambre!* The earliest surviving example of such a pot (Fig. 15) bears the York hall mark for 1671 and was made for use at the Mansion House, York under the bequest of Marmaduke Rawdon, in whose biography is a fascinating account of the Canary Isles.



FIG. 15. Pot-de-chambre (1671).

