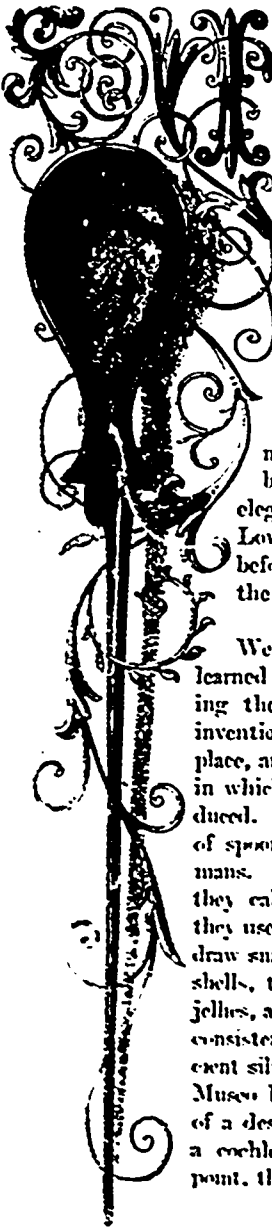




The Tea-Table and Its Adjuncts.

ANTIQUE SPOONS.



IN the history of domestic implements it may not, perhaps, be generally known that the simple and homely spoon boasts a position of considerable antiquity, and has, at one period, at least, of artistic excellence, been the subject of considerable ornamental skill on the part of its producer. We are accustomed to think of our more remote ancestors as supplying themselves with food in the most natural, not to say barbarous, fashions. Even the elegant Ovid, in his "Art of Loving," written two years before the Christian era, gives the injunction—

"Carpe cibos digitis."

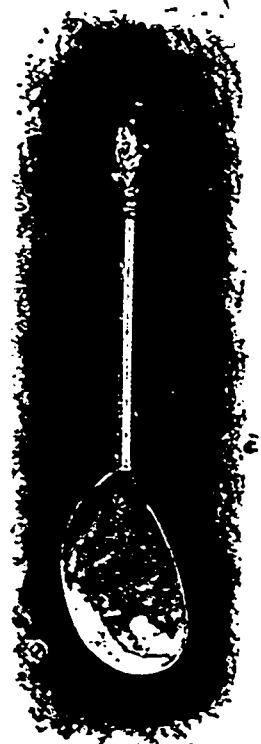
We must, however, leave to the learned antiquary the task of finding the exact date at which the invention of such instruments took place, and the name of the country in which their use was first introduced. Certain it is that two kinds of spoons were known to the Romans. One, figured in our initial, they called a "cochlear," because they used the point of the handle to draw snails and mussels out of their shells, the bowl serving for eggs, jellies, and other aliments of little consistency. Copies of three ancient silver spoons are given in the Museo Borbonico of about the size of a dessert-spoon, one of which is a cochlear with round bowl and point, the other two being of oval

shape, and with round handles. Another Roman spoon, with a bowl of oval shape, may be seen in the interesting collection of antiquities at Mayence, carved in bone or ivory, and actually possessing the familiar "rat-tail" hereafter to be mentioned.

My object in the present paper is to give some idea of the development, artistic and other, of the spoon in more modern times; and my task, I may note, is rendered easy by the presence of the hall-mark to be found on English specimens in silver, which is, when legible, an infallible guide as to the year of their manufacture. In fact, as a general rule, every English piece of plate of the last four hundred years is both signed and dated, being stamped with the initial or initials of the maker, as well as a letter of the alphabet indicating the year of its origin.

In the Middle Ages there are proofs of the existence of spoons as far back as the thirteenth century, but these were no doubt, for the most part, of wood, or of pewter. The fork, however, was not in general use till after the time of Elizabeth.

It must be a matter of common experience among those who are acquainted with the study of antiquities in the provinces, that objects of art whose origin has pretensions to a more or less remote date are almost invariably referred to the time, if not to the per-



ANTIQUE SPOON (1)

