

The limited space at command prevents a very full explanation of the various plate marks within the scope of this first article, but certain elementary principles will be laid down which the reader, who is desirous of giving to this interesting subject a fair degree of attention, would do well to bear in mind.

The practice of marking plate dates from very early times. As far back as the year A. D. 1180, there was a hall-mark used on genuine gold and silver articles, and in the year 1300, the present hall-mark of a leopard's head was adopted. Later on, what is known as the sovereign's mark was adopted. During the reign of the late Queen Victoria this consisted of a lion *passant*, but very often in former years, it was the custom to stamp the reigning sovereign's head in miniature.

The marks which should be found on silver of British manufacture are as follows :

1. The maker's mark, which consists of the initial letters of his Christian and surname.
2. The leopard's head, for articles which have been assayed at the London Assay Office.
3. The sovereign's mark, which may be either a lion *passant*, a lion erect, or the reigning sovereign's head in miniature.
4. The letter denoting the year in which the plate was made, which letters are explained by the table below.

In the twenty-fourth year of the reign of George III., in 1784, the fifth mark was added in order to note the imposition of a duty of sixpence per ounce upon all silver plate, a duty which in 1815 was raised to eighteen pence, at which it now stands.

These marks will all be dealt with more fully in a future article, but for present purposes the very brief outline just given will be sufficient.

By reference to the following table it will be observed that every twenty years the style of the date letter is