

CIVIC MACES.

By R. S. FERGUSON, F.S.A.

In a paper on "The Dignity of a Mayor,"¹ which I read before the Institute at Lewes, I said "The civic mace is nothing but the military one turned upside down." I now propose briefly to make good that assertion.

That the military mace is derived from a simple club, or stick, no one, I presume, doubts; the transition being through a ball-headed club of wood or of metal to the flanged or laminated maces of iron and steel used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the battle of Senlac the maces had plain globular heads; (see Fig. 1, Plate I);² in the hands of a powerful man such a mace would be a most efficient weapon, and armour of mail alone would be small defence against a blow from it, especially if delivered upon a joint, or salient part of the human frame. To ward off such a blow steel plates and caps were added to the more exposed parts of the mail armour;³ this change in the defence necessitated a corresponding one in the weapon of attack. Grooves would be cut in the globular head, parallel to the mace handle, so as to make the mace bite and tear, as well as crush, when a blow was given.⁴ From the deepening of these grooves would come the star, spike, and flanged or laminated maces: the latter being by far the best known form, and having a name of its own, *quadrell*. The head of the *quadrell* consisted of four flanges or laminæ at right angles to one another; this was probably the latest development: most of these maces have more flanges or laminæ than four, for instance the mace laid before the President of the Society of Antiquaries of London: these flanges or laminæ were generally triangular in shape, so as to have a point to bite with, when a blow was given. This was an admirable weapon for close combat, having a crushing, biting and tearing action, while the flanged shape of the head did away with much dead weight, and so the mace could readily be recovered, or brought back ready for a second blow after the first had been dealt. A fine example from the collection of my friend Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt, is engraved on Plate II, Fig. 1. The mace was superseded at the commencement of the sixteenth century by the pistol, with which it was at first combined.

¹ Printed in "The Antiquarian Magazine," vol. vi, pp. 66-71, 108-113. Confer p. 69.

² Planche "Cyclopedia of Costume," vol. i, p. 345.

³ See De Cosson "On Gauntlets," *ante*, pp. 272, 274.

⁴ Confer Pitt-Rivers "Catalogue Anthropological Collections," p. 62.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 3.



Stratford Maces.

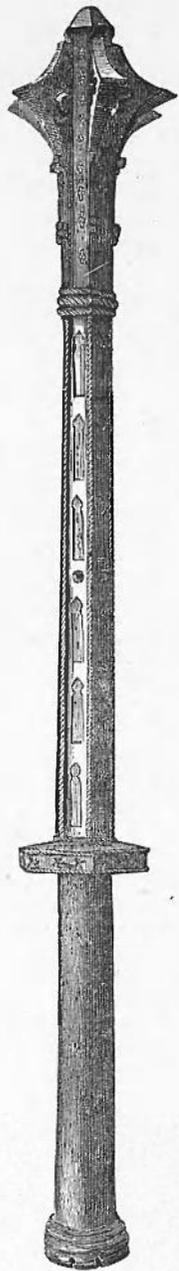


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.
Carlisle.



Fig. 4.

Fig. 3.

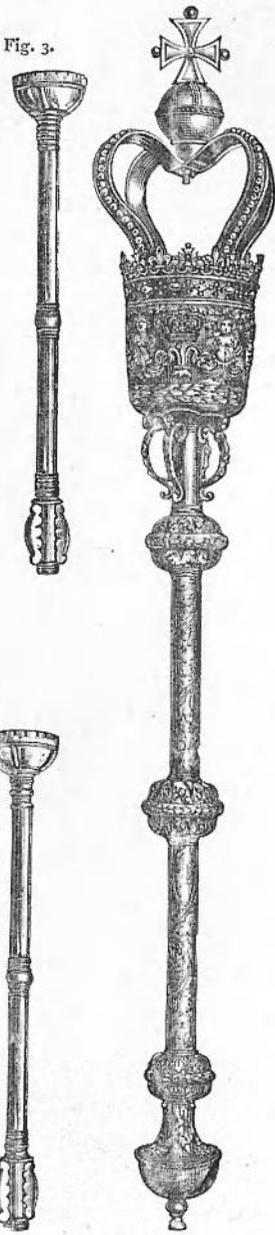


Fig. 5.

Fourteen Examples of Maces by Mr. Ll. Jewitt

Mr. Planche in his "Cyclopedia of Costume," vol. i, Plate XII, gives sixteen beautiful illustrations of flanged or laminated maces, all taken from the Meyrick collection. An exquisite example is given in Boutell's "Arms and Armour," No. 3, Fig. 27, opposite page 142. Another, a Polish example, is given in Fig. 65. Demmin in "Arms and Armour," pp. 420, 421 also gives an instructive series, showing the development I have been discussing. By the way his No. 11 is the same as Boutell's No. 3, Fig. 27. These flange-headed or laminated maces are also found in the East; Mahratta and Indian examples occur among the arms exhibited in the India Museum, now at South Kensington, and are figured in Mr. Egerton's illustrated handbook, Plates X and XIV.

Maces were the peculiar weapons of the king's sergeant-at-arms, both in England and France, as early as the fourteenth century,¹ as Mr. Planche has proved. The sergeants-at-arms or at mace were the peculiar body guard of a king: as a mark of high favour it became usual to grant to mayors and others, to whom royal authority was delegated, the right to have one or more sergeants-at-arms or at mace. Thus at Carlisle our governing charter of the time of Charles I directs:

"Quodque ipsi (that is the citizens of Carlisle) de cetero imperpetuum habeant et quod sint et erunt in Civitate prædicta quatuor alii officarii videlicet unus officarius qui erit et vocabitur Portator Gladii nostri coram Maiore Civitatis prædictæ; et tres alii officarii qui erunt et vocabuntur Servientes ad Clavas pro executione processorum preceptorum mandatorum et negotiorum ad officium Servientium ad Clavas in Civitate prædicta et limitibus et libertatibus ejusdem pertinentibus de tempore in tempus exequenda et peragenda."

After prescribing how these officials are to be appointed the charter continues:

"Et ulterius volumus et ordinamus Ac per præsentis pro nobis heredibus et successoribus nostris concedimus præfatis Majori Aldermannis Ballivis et Civibus et successoribus suis quod tam prædictus Portator Gladii nostrorum heredum et successorum nostrorum quam prædicti Servientes ad clavas in eadem Civitate deputandi Clavas deauratas vel argenteas et signo armorum hujus regni Angliæ Sculptas et ornatas ubique infra dicam Civitatem Carlioli limites et libertates ejusdem coram Maiore Civitatis prædictæ pro tempore existente portabunt et gerent."

This was merely the confirmation of a much older grant, for Carlisle possesses a set of sergeants' maces of much older date than this charter, as well as a set purchased in 1649. Similar grants could be cited from the charters of other towns: e.g., Canterbury, by charter of Henry VI; London, by charter of Edward III, etc.

Now the flange-headed or laminated mace has no very available place on which to place the royal arms; one was found by swelling out the foot of the mace into a small bell or bowl, and the arms were placed on the base of the bell. The civic mace assumed the form in the accompanying wood cut (Fig. 2, Plate II) which represents one of three iron maces, seventeen inches in length, belonging to the Corporation of Carlisle. On the base of the bell-shaped end is a silver escutcheon with the arms of France modern, quartering England; the other end of the mace is flanged or laminated. The three maces, of which this is one, are probably

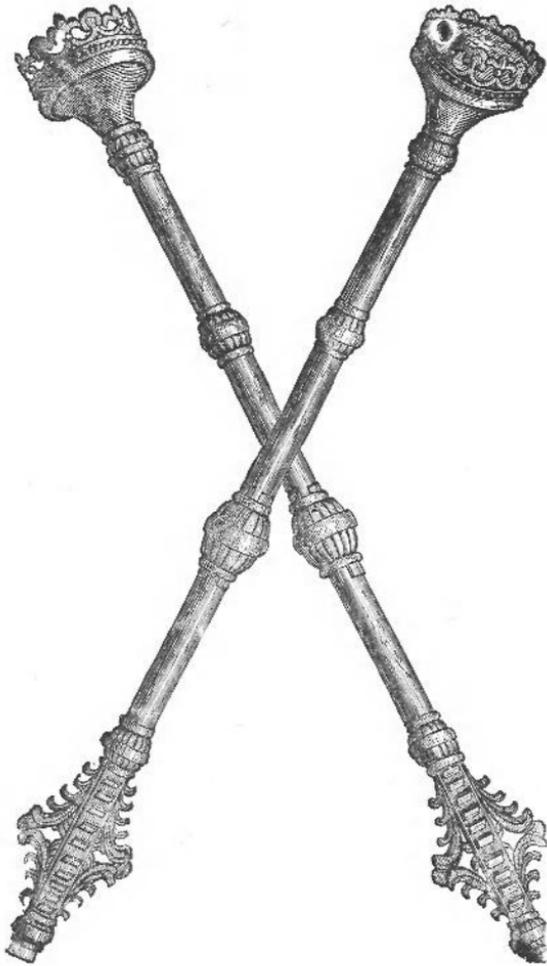
¹ Blanche "Cyclopedia of Costume," vol. i, p. 346.

of the date of Henry VII, and their use would be discontinued in 1646, in the collapse of everything which happened at Carlisle after the city surrendered. New ones were got in 1649 at a cost of £12; these I will presently describe. The Carlisle form is the common form that had been assumed by the maces of sergent-at-arms in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; Mr. Planché engraves two instances, which are reproduced on Plate I, Fig. 2 & 3: one is a portrait of a sergent-at-mace from a painting of the end of the fifteenth century, in the Lord Hastings chapel at Windsor; the mace carried by the sergent is exactly of the Carlisle pattern, and is held with flanged head upwards; the other is a hand holding a mace, from a fifteenth century incised slab, formerly at the church of Culture—Sainte Catherine, Paris—on which were four sergeants-at-mace, two in military, two in civil costume; their maces are all alike, and are carried with the bell end up, and the flanged or laminated end down, thus clearly proving my assertion that “the civic mace is nothing but the military one turned upside down.”

As the civic use of the mace (that is as an emblem of authority) gradually predominated over its military one, so did the bell with the royal arms swell and grow in size, while the flanges or laminæ dwindled, and survived alone in meaningless scroll work. My friend Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt, in his valuable series of articles on “Corporation Plate,” published in the *Art Journal* for 1880, 1881, and 1882, gives a plate of fourteen examples of early silver maces, which, by his kindness, we here reproduce; they form the central portion of Plate II. These most clearly show the transition; the flanges or laminæ dwindle in size, coalesce together, become a mere grooved knop or small club head, and finally disappear in a very small button; they go in fact through the reverse process to that by which they originated. In the case of large maces the flanges survive in a large knob at the lower end, as in the Bridgenorth great maces, which terminate at their lower end in great knops, whose spiral fluting calls to mind the groves on an early mace. These are engraved in *Art Journal* volume, 1880, p. 9. The dwindling down of the flanges or laminæ is well seen in the small maces of Stafford. (Plate II, Fig. 3 and 4.) At Colchester the flanges survive on the four sergeants’ maces in small open work scrolls at the base. Stratford-on-Avon (see Plate I) has two very interesting maces, showing two stages of the change; in one the flanges survive in an ornate form, in the other they have become scroll work. After 1660 the bell end (now the upper end) attained still higher honour, for it was generally surmounted by a crown, sometimes arched, while the flanges or laminæ frequently disappear *in toto*. Thus the more modern Carlisle ones, which were purchased in 1649, end in a simple rod, and show no survival of the flanges or laminæ at all: this may be seen in some of the examples on Plate II. In the well-known Winchcombe maces, which are engraved on Plate III, the flanges or laminæ survive in a very singular form.

When the mace was of the form of the Carlisle example engraved on Plate II, Fig. 2, it had a double use: when the sergent-at-mace served process he showed the bell end with the royal arms as proof of his authority; if the party was contumacious, he reversed his mace and knocked the contumacious one down with the military, flanged, or laminated end.

To repeat what I said at Lewes “The civic mace is nothing but the



Maces at Winchcombe.

military one turned upside down. At one end of an early mace you have the flanged blades of the military weapon, at the other on a small bowl-like head the royal arms, the emblem of authority. In a mace of later date, the flanges survive only as a small button, while the bowl, on which are the royal arms, swells, until the peaceful end is itself capable of dealing a heavy blow."

Thus far, I have been treating mainly of small maces, or the maces borne by sergeants-at-mace; but great maces, or those borne before mayors, are but small maces exaggerated, and they have the same history, except that the military part survives in a large knob at the bottom, to make the mace balance better, as in the instance from Leeds, (Plate II, Fig. 5).

Apropos of great maces, a glance at their internal economy may be interesting; they generally have in their interior a stout oaken pole, securely fixed into the bottom piece of the mace; at the top of the pole is a metallic screw, which screws into the bottom of the arms plate (the bell base) on which are the royal arms. The several pieces of the mace are all strung upon the pole, which is then screwed into the arms plate and holds the whole concern together.

P.S.—The writer has to acknowledge the great kindness with which Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt has lent him the greater part of the woodcuts used to illustrate this paper; a kindness the greater, as anticipating the publication of Mr. Jewitt's own work on "Corporation Plate," for which they are intended. He has also to thank Messrs. Chatto and Windus for the loan of electros of the Figures 1, 2, and 3 in Plate I; they are from Planché's "Cyclopedia of Costume."