

## NOTICES OF THE BRANK, OR SCOLDS' BRIDLE.

BY F. A. CARRINGTON, Esq.

THIS instrument, used for the punishment of scolds, of which a specimen, now in my possession, was exhibited at a recent meeting of the Institute, appears to have been in use in this country from the time of the Commonwealth to the reign of King William the Third.

As far as I am aware, it never was a legal punishment ; indeed, in the year 1655, Mr. Gardiner, in his work hereafter cited, complains of it as illegal and improper. The punishment for scolds was, and is still, by the laws of England, the Cucking-stool, of which, in its two forms, representations have been given in illustration of a memoir in the Wiltshire "Archæological Magazine."<sup>1</sup> The fixed Cucking-stool was found in a perfect state, near Worthing, by my late friend Mr. Curwood, the barrister ; and the movable one was noticed in a state equally perfect at Wootton Bassett, by Mrs. Hains of that place, who is still living.

I know of the existence of branks in several places, and no doubt there are other examples ; the punishment must, therefore, have been quite a common one.

There was, in the year 1655, a brank at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and it possibly exists there still. Dr. Plot mentions branks at Newcastle-under-Lyme and at Walsall, in the reign of King James II. These, however, are a little different in form from that at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

There is a brank in the Ashmolean Museum, at Oxford ; and, about seven years ago, there was another in the magistrates' room in the Shire-hall at Shrewsbury, but the latter has since that time been taken away. The branks at Oxford and Shrewsbury were both similar to that figured by Dr. Plot ; except that each of them had only one staple, and not different staples to suit persons of different sizes.

A brank, from Lichfield, was formerly shown at a meeting

<sup>1</sup> On Certain Ancient Wiltshire Customs. 1. The Cucking-stool. "Wiltshire Magazine," vol. i., p. 68, where notices of

other examples may be found. See also Mr. Wright's "Archæological Album," p. 48.

of the Institute, and I am told that another exists at the church of Walton-on-Thames ; and Mr. Noake, in his " Worcester in the Olden Time," gives an entry in the corporation books of that city, relating to the repair of this species of instrument, under the date of 1658.

The brank in my possession is of the reign of William III., if a stamp of the letter W, crowned, may be considered as denoting that date. Of this brank I can give no account. The person from whom I had it knew nothing of its history, not even for what purpose it was intended.

The Venerable Archdeacon Hale, on seeing this example of the brank, when it was produced for the inspection of the Institute, remarked, that from so many cucking-stools and branks having existed from the reign of Charles II. to that of Queen Anne, and from so many entries and memoranda being found respecting them, they must have been then in frequent use ; and yet now there seemed no occasion for either. He suggested, that in those times, there being few lunatic asylums, and insanity being a disease little understood, it was probable that many insane women were violent, and punished as scolds, who would be now treated as lunatics.

It was also stated by the Archdeacon, that, in addition to cucking-stools and branks, the scolds of former days had the terrors of the ecclesiastical courts before their eyes, and that the ecclesiastical records of the diocese of London contained many entries respecting scolds ; and it is stated by Mr. Noake, in his " Notes and Queries for Worcestershire,"<sup>2</sup> that " in 1614, Margaret, wife of John Bache, of Chaddesley, was prosecuted at the sessions as a ' comon skould, and a sower of strife amongste her neyghboures, and hath bynn presented



Brank, in the possession of Mr. F. A Carrington.

of strife amongste her neyghboures, and hath bynn presented

<sup>2</sup> P. 106. This is an admirable little work. It contains much information, in a cheap and popular form, and is in effect

326 pages of addenda to " Brand's Popular Antiquities."

for a skoulde at the leete houlden for the manour of Chadsley, and for misbehavying her tonge towards her mother-in-law at a visytacō at Bromsgrove, and was excommunicated therefore.'

"In 1617, Elinor Nichols was presented as 'a great scold and mischief-maker,' who is said to have been excommunicated, and had never applied to make her peace with the Church."

I should observe, that this instrument is in some instances called "a brank;" in others, "the branks;" "a pair of branks;" and "the scolds'-bridle;" but it is worthy of remark, that the word "brank" does not occur in any dictionary that I have seen, although the instrument itself appears to be so frequently met with.

The brank is mentioned in the works of Mr. Brand, Mr. Gardiner, Mr. Sykes, Dr. Plot, and Mr. Noake, in the following passages.

Mr. Brand, in his "History of Newcastle-upon-Tyne," says,—“In the time of the Commonwealth, it appears that the magistrates of Newcastle-upon-Tyne punished scolds with the branks, and drunkards by making them carry a tub, called the Drunkard's Cloak, through the streets of that town. We shall presume that there is no longer any occasion for the former; but why has the latter been laid aside?”<sup>3</sup>

“A pair of branks are still preserved in the Town-court of Newcastle. See an account of them, with a plate, in Plot's 'Staffordshire.' Vide Gardiner's 'English Grievance of the Coal-trade.' The representation in this work is a fac-simile from his.”<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Gardiner's work, here cited, is a small quarto volume, thus entitled:

“England's Grievance Discovered in relation to the Coal-trade, with a Map of the River Tine, and situation of the Town and Corporation of Newcastle; the tyrannical oppression of their Magistrates; their Charters and Grants; the several Tryals, Depositions, and Judgements obtained against them; with a Breviate of several Statutes proving repugnant to their actions, with proposals for reducing the excessive

<sup>3</sup> For representations of both, see the plate of "Miscellaneous Antiquities," No. 2 and 3, "Brand's History of Newcastle," vol. ii., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> "History of Newcastle," vol. ii., p. 192. The representation is not very accurate as regards the dress.

Rates of Coals for the future, and the rise of their Grants appearing in this Book.

"By *Ralph Gardiner*, of *Chriton*, in the county of *Northumberland*, Gent. London, printed for *R. Ibbitson*, in Smithfield; and *P. Stent*, at the White Horse in Giltspur Street without Newgate. 1655."<sup>5</sup>

The work commences with an Epistle dedicatory to "His Highness Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, &c.," in which the writer states several public grievances, and makes ten suggestions for their remedy; the tenth suggestion being as follows:—

"X. And that a law be created for death to such as shall commit perjury, forgery, or accept of bribery."

Against this some one has written in the margin of the British Museum copy—"The author suffer'd death for forging of guineas."<sup>6</sup> The handwriting of this piece of interesting information being apparently of the reign of Queen Anne or George I.

The work contains Forty-six Depositions of witnesses in support of the Allegations—at the commencement of six of these are engravings; and the work concludes with an Abstract of Statutes from Magna Charta to 17 Charles I., and Ordinances of Parliament relating to Municipal matters from 1640 to 1653.—Chap. LV. At p. 110 the following Depositions occur, to which is prefixed the well-known engraving, which has been frequently copied, representing a female wearing the branks.

"(A.) *John Willis*, of *Ipswich*, upon his oath said, that he, this Depo-  
nent, was in *Newcastle* six months ago, and there he saw one *Ann Bidle-*  
*stone* drove through the streets by an officer of the same corporation  
holding a rope in his hand, the other end fastned to an engine called the  
Branks, which is like a Crown, it being of Iron, which was musled over the  
head and face, with a great gap or tongue of Iron forced into her mouth,  
which forced the blood out. And that is the punishment which the Magis-  
trates do inflict upon chiding and scoulding women, and that he hath  
often seen the like done to others.

<sup>5</sup> In Mr. Hargrave's copy of this work, now in the British Museum, is the following note, written by that learned gentleman:—"19th May, 1783. This book is extremely scarce. This copy of it, though without the map mentioned in the title, was sold at the sale of Mr. Gulston's books for one guinea, to Mr. King, book-

seller in Lower Moor Fields. I bought it of Mr. King, and paid him one guinea and a half for it.—F. Hargrave."

<sup>6</sup> Counterfeiting gold or silver coin was a capital offence in the reign of Charles II., but no forgery of any document was so till the reign of George I.

“(B.) He, this Deponent, further affirms that he hath seen men drove up and down the streets with a great Tub or Barrel opened in the sides, with a hole in one end to put through their heads and so cover their shoulders and bodies down to the small of their legs, and then close the same, called the new-fashioned Cloak, and so make them wear it to the view of all beholders, and this is their punishment for drunkards and the like.

“(C.) This Deponent further testifies that the Merchants and Shoemakers of the said Corporation will not take any Apprentice under ten years’ servitude, and knoweth many bound for the same terme, and cannot obtain freedome without.” 5 *Eliz.* 4.

“(D.) Drunkards are to pay a fine of five shillings to the poor, to be paid within one week, or be set in the Stocks six hours; for the second offence to be bound to the Good Behaviour. I. K. *James*, 9, 21, 7.

“(E.) Scoulds are to be Duckt over head and ears into the water in a Ducking-stool.

“(F.) And Apprentices are to serve but seven years. 5 *Eliz.* 4.”

Mr. John Sykes, in his “Local Records of Northumberland,” under the date of Sept. 14, 1649, says—“Two ancient punishments of Newcastle, inflicted on disturbers of the peace, appear as being practised *about this time*,” a Newcastle cloak for drunkards, and “the scold wore an iron engine called ‘the branks,’ in the form of a crown; it covered the head, but left the face exposed, and having a tongue of iron which went into the mouth constrained silence from the most violent brawler.” Mr. Sykes gives a copy of Mr. Gardiner’s engraving of Ann Bidlestone wearing the brank, and adds—“the branks are still preserved in the town’s court.”

Why Mr. Sykes should have inserted his notice of the brank under the date of 1649 I know not. He derived his information apparently from Mr. Gardiner’s volume, printed in 1655, and the only dates which occur in that work are of the year 1653, viz.:—

Mr. Gardiner’s Petition to Parliament, Sept. 29, 1653.

It is referred to the Committee of Trade and Corporations, Oct. 5, 1653.

And, on the 18th of Oct., 1653, that Committee directs that it shall be taken into consideration on the 15th of November then next.

After this Mr. Gardiner exhibits charges against the Corporation of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, dated 1653 (no month or day), and at the end of them he says—“The Committee drew up and signed a Report against the Corporation, and

would have presented the same to his Highnesse the Lord Protector, but I conceived that a narration was better."

Then follow the depositions—one of which, relating to scolds, drunkards, and apprentices, has been given above.

Dr. Plot, in his "Natural History of Staffordshire," chap. ix., s. 97, says—"We come to the *Arts* that respect *Mankind*, amongst which, as elsewhere, the civility of precedence must be allowed to the *women*, and that as well in punishments as favours. For the former whereof, they have such a peculiar *artifice* at *New-Castle* [under Lyme] and *Walsall*, for correcting of *scolds*, which it does too so effectually, and so very safely, that I look upon it as much to be preferred to the *Cucking-stoole*, which not only endangers the *health* of the *party*, but also gives the *tongue* liberty 'twixt every dipp; to neither of which is this at all lyable; it being such a *bridle* for the *tongue*, as not only quite deprives them of *speech*, but brings shame for the transgression, and humility thereupon, before 'tis taken off. Which being an *instrument* scarce heard of, much less seen, I have here presented it to the reader's view, tab. 32, fig. 9, as it was taken from the original one, made of *iron*, at *New-Castle* under *Lyme*, wherein the letter *a* shows the joynted collar that comes round the neck; *b*, *c*, the *loops* and *staples* to let it out and in, according to the bigness and slenderness of the *neck*; *d*, the joynted semicircle that comes over the *head*, made forked at one end to let through the *nose*; and *e*, the *plate* of *iron* that is put into the *mouth*, and keeps down the *tongue*. Which, being put upon the *offender* by order of the *magistrate*, and fastened with a *padlock* behind, she is lead through the towne by an *officer* to her shame, nor is it taken off, till after the *party* begins to show all external signes imaginable of humiliation and amendment."

Dr. Plot was keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and professor of chemistry in that university; this work was printed at Oxford in 1686, and dedicated to King James II.

Mr. Noake, in his "Worcester in the Olden Time,"<sup>s</sup> gives the following entry from the corporation books of that city.

"1658. Paid for mending the bridle for bridleinge of scoulds, and two cords for the same. js. ijd."

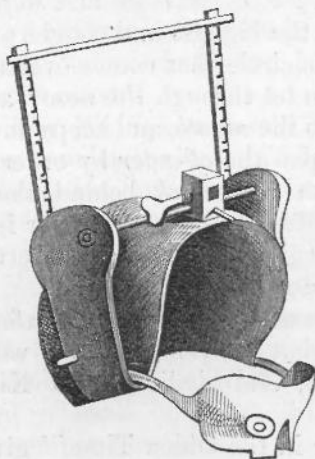


It would seem that the brank or "bridle for bridleinge of scoulds" must have been a good deal used in the city of Worcester, from its requiring so considerable a repair in 1658; and it further appears that, within thirty-five years before, the cucking-stool had not fallen into desuetude in that city, as Mr. Noake gives the following entries from the corporation books there respecting its use :—

" 1623. Allowed the money for whipping of one Rogeres, and for carrying several women upon the gum-stoole.

" 1625. For mending the stocks at the Grass-crosse, for whipping of divers persons, and carting of other some, and for halling the goome-stoole to the houses of divers scouldinge people."

Mr. Noake adds—" A curious instrument of punishment, probably used for a similar purpose, may still be seen hung up with some armour in the Worcester Guildhall. The following is from a sketch taken by me a few months ago. The head was inserted in this helmet, and the visor, which is here represented as hanging down, being connected with the toothed uprights, was drawn up and down by means of a key winding up the end of the rod which passes immediately across the top of the helmet, and which rod is furnished with cogs at the end, to fit into the teeth of the



uprights. The visor was thus drawn up so as to completely darken the eyes and cover the nose. The little square box with a hole, to which a screw is affixed at the side, was probably intended to receive the end of a pole fixed in a wall, from which the patient was thus made to stand out, though certainly not 'in relief.'

"These instruments [branks], as well as cucking-stools, were in use in nearly all towns. The present specimen is probably *temp.* Henry VII."

In the museum at Ludlow, according to information for which I am indebted to Mr. W. J. Bernhard Smith, another example is preserved of an iron cap, probably for branding offenders, much resembling that at Worcester, but perhaps

more complicated. It is furnished with a similar rack and side wheels for compression. [See page 269, *infra*.]

Dr. Ormerod, in his "History of Cheshire,"<sup>9</sup> after mentioning that a cucking-stool was in existence at Macclesfield in the last century, adds—"and *there* is also yet preserved an iron brank or bridle for scolds, which has been used within the memory of the author's informant, Mr. Browne, and which is mentioned as 'a brydle for a curste queane,' among the articles delivered by the serjeant to Sir Urian Legh, Knt., on his being elected mayor, Oct. 3, 21 Jac. I. An iron bridle was used at Bolton-le-Moors, Lancashire, a few years ago, as a punishment for prostitutes. The bridle was fixed in their mouths and tied at the back of the head with ribbons, and, so attired, they were paraded from the cross to the church steps and back again by the beadles."

F. A. CARRINGTON.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTICES OF THE BRANK, OR SCOLDS'-BRIDLE.

THE origin of the grotesque implement of punishment, forming the subject of the foregoing observations, as also the period of its earliest use in Great Britain, remain in considerable obscurity. No example of the Scolds'-Bridle has been noticed of greater antiquity than that preserved in the church of Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, which bears the date 1633, with the distich,—

CHESTER presents WALTON with a Bridle,  
To Curb Women's Tongues that talk to Idle.

Tradition alleges that it was given for the use of that parish by a neighbouring gentleman who lost an estate, through the indiscreet babbling of a mischievous woman to the kinsman from whom he had considerable expectations.<sup>1</sup> Some have conjectured, from the occurrence of several examples of the Branks in the Palatinate, one more especially being still kept in the Jail at Chester, that this implement of discipline "for a curste queane," had been actually presented by the city of Chester; it may however seem probable that the name of an individual is implied, and not that of a city so remote from Walton. Another dated example is in the possession of Sir John Walsham, Bart., of Bury St. Edmunds; it was found in Old Chesterfield Poor-house, Derbyshire, where it is supposed to have been used, and it was given to Lady Walsham by Mr. Weale, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. This Brank has an iron chain attached to it with a ring at the end; it bears the date and the initials—

<sup>9</sup> Vol. iii., p. 385 n. Published in 1819.

<sup>1</sup> Brayley's Hist. of Surrey, vol. ii. p. 331, where a representation of the "Gossip's Bridle" is given.

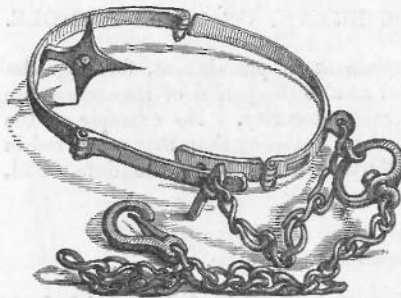


1688, T. C. It was produced at a meeting of the West Suffolk Archæological Institute, according to information for which I am indebted to the secretary of that Society, Mr. Tymms, the historian of Bury.

It is probable that at a more remote period the inconvenience attending the use of so cumbrous an apparatus as the cucking-stool,—the proper and legal engine of punishment for female offenders, whether for indecent brawling or for brewing bad beer,—may have led to the substitution of some more convenient and not less disgraceful penalty. In some parishes in the West country, cages were provided for scolds; and the ancient Customal of Sandwich ordained that any woman guilty of brawling should carry a large mortar round the town with a piper or minstrel preceding her, and pay the piper a penny for his pains. This practice was established prior to the year 1518, and a representation of the mortar may be seen in Boys' History of Sandwich. The suggestion of Mr. Fairholt, in his notice of a grotesque iron mask of punishment obtained in the Castle of Nuremberg, that the Branks originated in certain barbarous implements of torture of that description, seems well deserving of consideration. The example which he has described and figured in the Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. vii. p. 61, is now in Lord Londesborough's collection at Grimston Park; it is a frame of iron made to fit the head like the scolds'-bridle; it was attached by a collar under the chin, and has a pair of grotesque spectacles and ass's ears. There are

other examples in various collections; one of wood, in the Goodrich Court Armory, was assigned by the late Sir S. Meyrick to the times of Henry VIII.

The fashion and construction of the brank varies considerably, and a few specimens may deserve particular notice. The most simple form consisted of a single hoop which passed round the head, opening by means of hinges at the sides, and closed by a staple with a padlock at the back: a plate



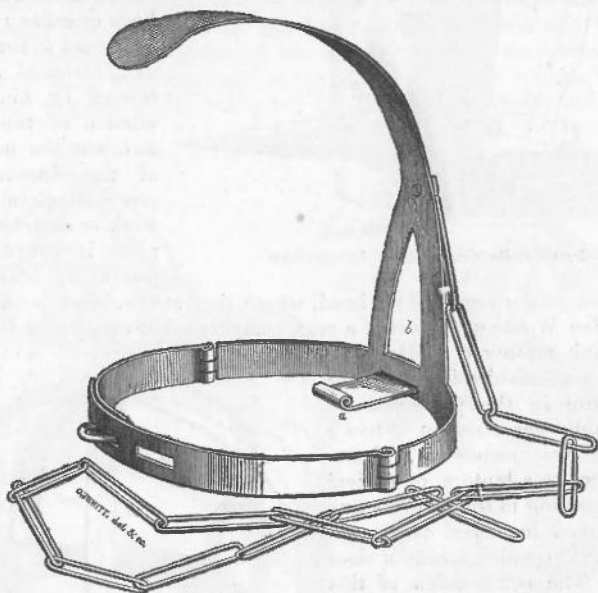
The Witches' Bridle, Forfar.

within the hoop projecting inwards pressed upon the tongue, and formed an effectual gag. I am indebted to the late Colonel Jarvis, of Doddington, Lincolnshire, for a sketch of this simple kind of bridle, and he informed me that an object of similar construction had been in use amongst the Spaniards in the West Indies for the punishment of refractory slaves. The "Witches' Branks, or Bridle," preserved some years since in the steeple at Forfar, North Britain, is of this form, but in place of a flat plate, a sharply-pointed gag, furnished with three spikes, entering the mouth, gives to this example a fearfully savage aspect. The date, 1661, is punched upon the hoop. In the old statistical account of the parish of Forfar, it is described as the bridle with which victims condemned for witchcraft were led to execution.<sup>2</sup> The facility, however, with which the single hoop might be slipped off the head, led to the addition of a curved band of iron passing

<sup>2</sup> This relique of cruelty has been carried away from Forfar, and it was in the collection of the late Mr. Deuchar of

Edinburgh. See Dr. Wilson's Prehistoric Annals, p. 693, and Sir J. Dalryell's Darker Superstitions of Scotland, p. 686.

over the forehead, with an aperture for the nose, and so formed as to clip the crown of the head, rendering escape from the bridle scarcely practicable. Of this variety the specimen preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford supplies an example. (See Woodcut). It is not stated in the catalogue of that collection, by whom it was presented, or where it was previously used; it is described as "a Gag, or Brank, formerly used with the ducking-stool, as a punishment for scolds."<sup>3</sup> In this instance, it will be observed that the chain by which the offender was led is attached in front, immediately over the nose, instead of the back of the head, the more



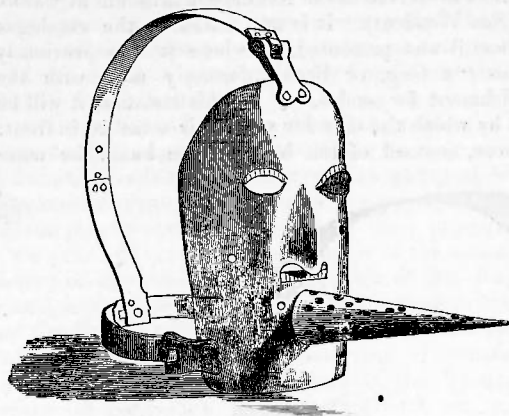
Brank in the Ashmolean Museum.

usual adjustment of the leading chain. For greater security, the transverse band was in other examples prolonged, and attached to the collar by a hinge or staple, as shown by the brank figured in Plot's *Staffordshire*, and those existing at Macclesfield, Newcastle under Line, and Walton on Thames. A very grotesque variety was exhibited by the late Colonel Jarvis, of Doddington Park, Lincolnshire, in the Museum formed during the meeting of the Institute at Lincoln. It has an iron mask entirely covering the face, with apertures for the eyes and nostrils, the plate being hammered out to fit the nose, and a long conical peak affixed before the mouth, bearing some resemblance to the peculiar long-snouted visor of the bascinets occasionally worn in the time of Richard II. (See Woodcut, next page). No account of the previous history of this singular object could be obtained.

A brank, actually in the possession of Dr. Kendrick, of Warrington, is figured in the *Proceedings of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, session ii. p. 25, plate 5. A cross is affixed to the band which

<sup>3</sup> Catalogue of the Ashmolean Museum, *Miscellaneous Curiosities*, No. 517, p. 148.

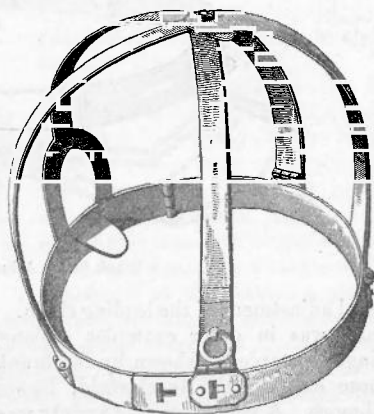
passed over the head, and a curved piece on either side clipped the crown of the head, and kept the brank more firmly in position. In other examples



Brank at Doddington Park, Lincolnshire.

we find in place of these recurved appendages, two bands of iron plate, crossing each other at right angles on the crown of the head, their extremities being riveted to the horizontal hoop or collar; in that preserved at the Guildhall, Lichfield, and exhibited by kind permission of the mayor at one of the meetings of the Institute, a more complete framework or skeleton head-piece is formed by five pieces of iron hoop, which meet on the crown of the head, where they are conjoined by a single rivet.<sup>4</sup> (See Woodcut.) Lastly, a more complicated arrangement is shown in the brank preserved at Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire, in the ancient manor-house in the possession of Lord Leigh, described in Shaw's History of that county. It bears resemblance to a lantern of conical form, presenting in front a grotesque mask pierced for eyes, nose, and mouth, and opening with a door behind. The construction of this singular engine of punishment is sufficiently shown by the accompanying Woodcuts, prepared from drawings for which we are indebted to Mr. Hewett.

There was a brank at Beaudesert, Staffordshire, as also at Walsall, and at Holme, Lancashire. There was one in the town-hall at Leicester, now in private hands in that town. That which is recorded in 1623 as existing at Macclesfield, and is still seen in the town-hall,<sup>5</sup> had been actually used, as I was assured by a friendly correspondent, within the memory of an aged official of the municipal



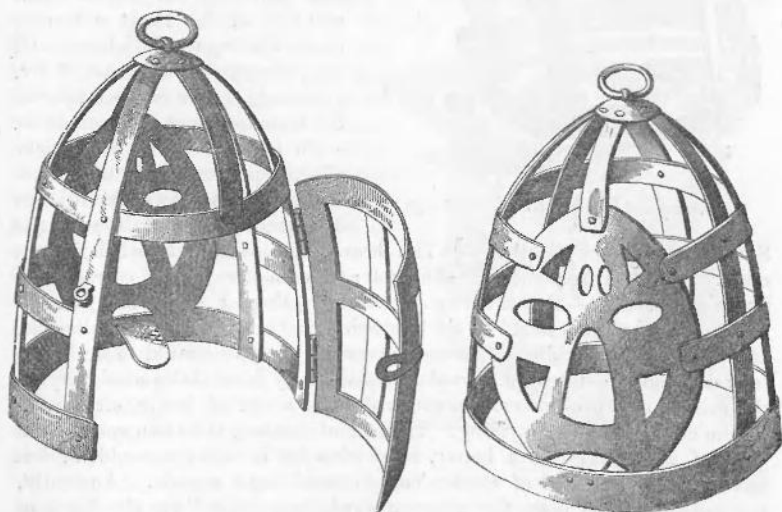
Brank belonging to the Town Council, Lichfield.

<sup>4</sup> It is believed that this is the same which Shaw mentions as formerly in Greene's Museum at Lichfield.

<sup>5</sup> Ormerod mentions this brank at Macclesfield, and within memory of his informant, Mr. Browne. It is described as a "brydle for a curste queane" in

the delivery of articles to Sir Urian Legh, Knight, on his election as mayor, in 1623. The ducking-pool also, with the tumbrel post, remained at Macclesfield in the last century. Hist. of Cheshire, vol. iii., p. 385.

authorities in that town. The hideous "brydle for a curste queane" remains suspended, with an iron straight-waistcoat, hand-cuffs and bilboes, and other obsolete appliances of discipline. To the same curious observer of olden usages I owe the fact, that within comparatively recent memory the brank was used for punishing disorderly females at Manchester. At Bolton-le-Moors, Lancashire, the iron bridle was still in use, not many years since, for the correction of immorality. It was fixed in the female's mouth, and tied at the back of the head with ribands, and, thus attired, the offender was paraded from the cross to the church steps and back again. Mr. Greene, in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries in 1849, accompanying the exhibition of the branks from Lichfield and Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire, advanced the supposition that the punishment of the scolds'-bridle had been peculiar to that county ;<sup>6</sup> its use was, however, even more frequent in the Palatinate, as also in the northern counties and



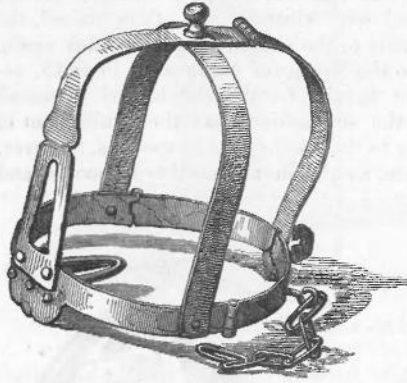
Brank at the Manor-House, Hamstall Ridware.

in Scotland. Pennant, in his *Northern Tour* in 1772, records its use at Langholm, in Dumfriesshire, where the local magistrates had it always in readiness ; it had been actually used a month previous to his visit, till the blood gushed from the mouth of the victim.<sup>7</sup> Several other examples of the brank have been noticed in North Britain ; it is indeed mentioned, with the joughs, by Dr. Wilson, in his "*Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*," as a Scottish instrument of ecclesiastical punishment, for the coercion of scolds and slanderous gossips. The use of such bridles for unruly tongues occurs in the Burgh Records of Glasgow, as early as 1574, when two quarrelsome females were bound to keep the peace, or on further offending—"to be brankit." In the records of the Kirk Session, Stirling, for 1600, "the branks" are mentioned as the punishment for a shrew. In St. Mary's church, at St. Andrews, a memorable specimen still exists, displayed for

<sup>6</sup> Proceedings of Soc. Ant., vol. ii., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Tour in Scotland*, vol. ii., p. 91.

the edification of all zealous Presbyterians, on a table in the elders' pew. It is known as the "Bishop's Branks," but whether so styled from the alleged use of such torment by Cardinal Beaton, in the sufferings of Patrick Hamilton and other Scottish martyrs who perished at the stake in the times of James V., or rather, in much later times, by Archbishop Sharp, to silence the scandal which an unruly dame promulgated against him before



Brank found in Moray House, Edinburgh.

the congregation, popular tradition seems to be unable to determine.<sup>8</sup> A representation of the "Bishop's Branks" is given in the Abbotsford edition of "The Monastery," where it is noticed. It precisely resembles the specimen found in 1848 behind the oak panelling, in the ancient mansion of the Earls of Moray, in the Canongate, Edinburgh. Of this, through the kindness of Mr. Constable, I am enabled to offer the accompanying representation.

In the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland another specimen may be seen, thus described by Dr. Wilson in the

Synopsis of that Collection.—"The branks, an ancient Scottish instrument. Its most frequent and effectual application was as a corrector of incorrigible scolds.—Presented by J. M. Brown, Esq., F.S.A. Scot. 1848."

The term brank is found in old Scottish writers in a more general sense, denoting a kind of bridle. Jamieson gives the verb, to Brank, to bridle, to restrain; and he states that Branks, explained by Lord Hales as signifying the collars of work-horses, "properly denotes a sort of bridle, often used by the country people in riding. Instead of leather, it has on each side a piece of wood joined to a halter, to which a bit is sometimes added; but more frequently a kind of wooden noose resembling a muzzle. Anciently, this seems to have been the common word for a bridle" (in the North of Scotland).<sup>9</sup> In regard to the etymology of the word, Jamieson observes, "Gael. *brancas* is mentioned by Shaw, as signifying a halter; *brans* is also said to denote a kind of bridle. But our word seems originally the same with Teut. *pranghe*, which is defined so as to exhibit an exact description of our branks; *b.* and *p.* being often interchanged, and in Germ. used indifferently in many instances. *Pranghe*, *muyl-pranghe*, postomis, pastomis, confibula: instrumentum quod naribus equorum imponitur. Kilian. Wachter gives *prang-er*—premere, coarctare. Hence, he says, the pillory is vulgarly called *pranger*, Belg. *pranghe*, from the yoke or collar in which the neck of the culprit is held."<sup>1</sup>

In a copy of Dr. Plot's "History of Staffordshire," in the British Museum Library, the following marginal note occurs on his description of

<sup>8</sup> The incident is related in the Life of Archbishop Sharp. See also Howie's Judgment on Persecutors, p. 30, Biographia Scoticana, as cited by Jamieson v. Branks.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Brockett's explanation of the word branks used on the Borders. North Country Words.

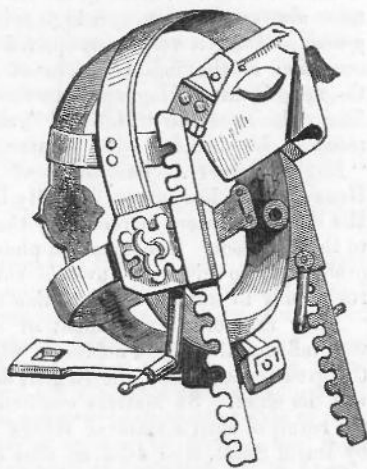
<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary, and Supp. in voce.

the Brank. It has been supposed to be in his own handwriting.—“This Bridle for the Tongue seems to be very ancient, being mentioned by an ancient English poet, I think Chaucer, *quem vide* :—

“ ‘ But for my daughter Julian,  
I would she were well bolted with a Bridle,  
That leaves her work to play the clack,  
And lets her wheel stand idle.  
For it serves not for she-ministers,  
Farriers nor Furriers,  
Cobblers nor Button-makers  
To descant on the Bible.’ ”

Whilst these observations were in the printer's hands, I have received, through the kindness of Mr. W. J. Bernhard Smith, a drawing of the horrible engine preserved in the Museum at Ludlow, to which allusion had been made in the foregoing memoir by Mr. Carrington. It appears to be analogous to that described by Mr. Noake as existing at Worcester, and of which he has very kindly supplied the representation accompanying these notices. (See p. 262, *ante*.) Of the example at Ludlow, Mr. Bernhard Smith gives the following account :—

“ I think you will find these iron head-pieces to belong to a class of engines of far more formidable character than the Branks. Their powerful screwing apparatus seems calculated to force the iron mask with torturing effect upon the brow of the victim ; there are no eye-holes, but concavities in their places, as though to allow for the starting of the eye-balls under violent pressure. There is a strong bar with a square hole, evidently intended to fasten the criminal against a wall, or perhaps to the pillory ; for I have heard it said that these instruments were used to keep the head



Engine of torture in the Ludlow Museum.

steady during the infliction of branding. Another cruel engine in the Ludlow Museum appears to have been intended to dislocate the arm, and to cramp or crush the fingers at the same time. It is so much mutilated as to render its mode of application very difficult to make out.”

In conclusion, it may be said of these antique reliques of a cruel discipline, as well observed of the Brank by Mr. Fairholt,<sup>2</sup>—“as rare examples of ancient manners, they are worthy the attention of all who study what are frequently termed the good old times, and who may, by that study, have to be thankful that they did not live in them.”

ALBERT WAY.

<sup>2</sup> Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. vii., p. 64.