

## I.

NOTES ON THE "CARLES" OR WOODEN CANDLESTICKS OF WIG-TOWNSHIRE. BY SIR HERBERT EUSTACE MAXWELL, BART., M.P., F.S.A. SCOT.

The three objects shown in the engraving belong to a class of domestic utensils which must have been a familiar article in Scottish households, but which, since the invention of improved illuminants, have completely disappeared from use, and have never yet received notice in the *Proceedings* of the Society.

They are veritable candlesticks, sticks to hold tallow dips, and were used, as the old people tell me, with the big spinning wheel.<sup>1</sup> They are known in Galloway as "carles," and in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire it is said that somewhat similar articles for holding fir-candles, or splinters of bog-fir, are known as "peer men," i.e., "poor men." These synonymous terms may have been applied to the tall candlesticks, from the habit of making vagrants and gaberlunzies of some use, in return for alms or food, in holding the light for the spinning-wheel.

1. The first specimen (fig. 3) is from a farm-house in the Glenkens. It is formed by two cross pieces of wood forming a cruciform base, to which is attached an upright stick 21 inches in length, of which 3 inches is inserted into the socket. The two pieces of wood forming the socket each measure 12 inches long by  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches thick, and are dovetailed into each other where they cross in the centre. At each end the socket pieces are bevelled away at the ends on the top, and on the under side they are cut away in the centre, so as to leave a

<sup>1</sup> These large wheels have well-nigh fallen into disuse in Galloway. I only know of one house (in Mochrum parish) where one is still regularly employed, though doubtless there are others.

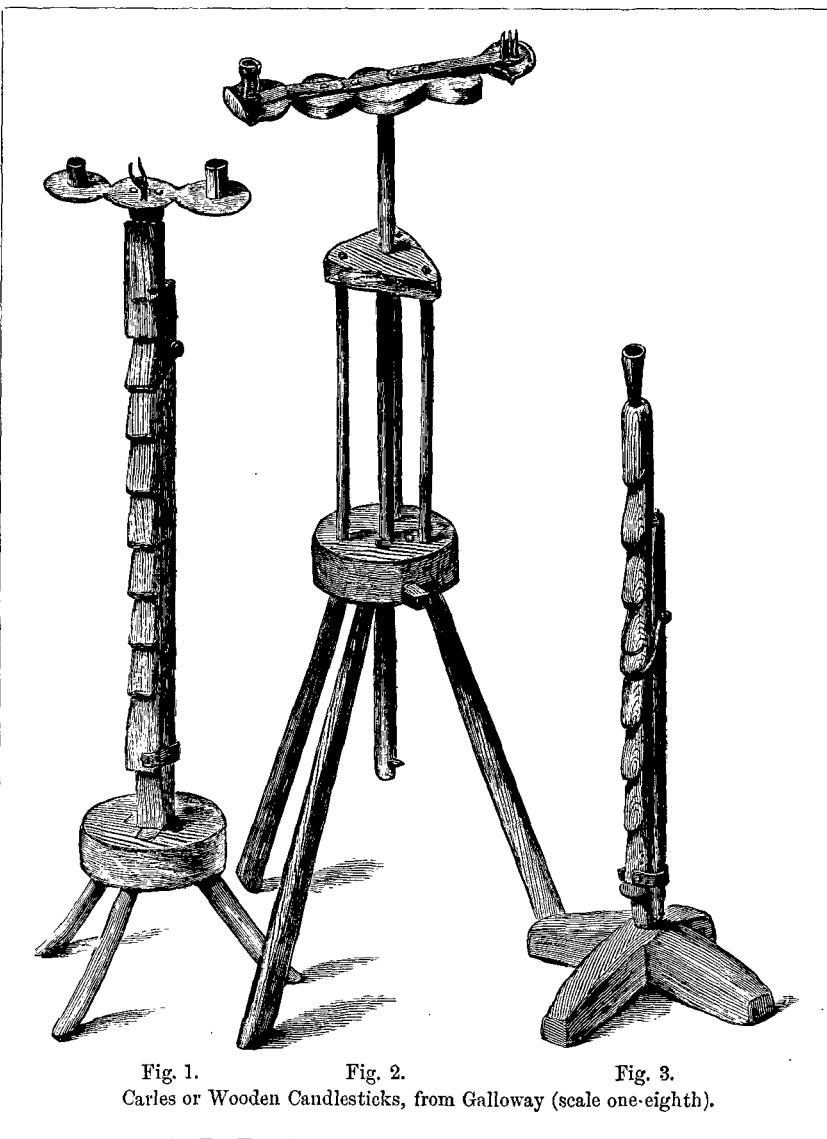


Fig. 1.  
Fig. 2.  
Fig. 3.  
Carles or Wooden Candlesticks, from Galloway (scale one-eighth).

rude resemblance to four feet. At a distance of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the top of the upright stick there is attached a piece of iron  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch broad, and in the shape of the letter U. This piece of iron is fastened by a nail driven through each end, and through the wooden upright in such a manner as to allow the iron to describe an arc of half a circle on one side of the upright. The upright itself is attached to the two bottom cross-pieces by being whittled off to a cylindrical shape and inserted into two circular holes in the cross-pieces, and held there by a nail driven through it to prevent its slipping out. At the top of the upright there are three small nails inserted for the purpose of holding a candle-end after it has burned too low for the socket, and also for suspending therefrom a bunch of dips. Clasped to the fixed upright is what may be termed a free-moving upright. This free-moving upright consists of a piece of wood  $21\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, one side of which is cut into a series of eight deep notches at intervals of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, with the exception of the fifth (*i.e.*, from the bottom), which is at a distance of only 1 inch from the preceding one, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the following one. The notches commence at a distance of 4 inches from the bottom, and terminate at a distance of 3 inches from the top. Inserted into the top of this upright is an inverted conical-shaped ferrule of thick tin or thin sheet-iron, and which projects to a height of  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and measures  $1\frac{5}{6}$  inch diameter at the open end, and narrowing to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch at inserted end. This second and free-moving upright is held in its place at the top by the U-shaped iron before mentioned, which is also for the purpose of catching into the notches, and so allowing the upright to be raised by successive stages to a height of  $32\frac{1}{2}$  inches, an increase of about 9 from its normal height of  $23\frac{3}{4}$  inches. At the bottom this upright is held in position by another U-shaped piece of sheet-iron  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch broad, which permits the upright to be freely raised from notch to notch. Owing to the fixed upright having been shortened in repairing at its insertion into the base, the three upper notches are now useless from the iron catch being too low down.

This specimen is the one presented to the Museum.

2. The second specimen (fig. 1) came from Glenruther, in Penninghame. It is constructed on the same general principle as the first, but

differs in the following particulars :—The foundation of this carl consists of a base resembling a cutty-stool, being formed of three legs inserted into a circular flat top. The legs project to a distance of 7 inches from the flat top, but owing to their great slope they only elevate the stand to a height of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The flat top measures  $6\frac{1}{4}$  by  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter by 2 inches in thickness, and into this is inserted an upright similar to the one described above, and measuring 22 inches in length. In this case, however, the upright is oblong in section, whereas the other is rudely circular. At a distance of 2 inches from the top there is a round bar of iron  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter, bent so as to form three sides of a square L. The two free ends have been expanded into small eyeholes, through which an iron pin passes, thus securing the catch to the upright. The upright itself is secured to the base in the same manner as the former, with the exception that it preserves its oblong shape in the socket hole. The free-moving upright consists of a bar of wood of the same shape as the fixed upright, and measures 22 inches in length. This second upright is held in its place at the bottom by an iron band 1 inch broad, which encircles the fixed upright. It is cut into a series of eight regularly made notches at a distance of 2 inches from each other. Attached to the top of the free upright is a plate of sheet-iron in the form of three discs attached to each other in a direct line, and each  $2\frac{5}{8}$  inches diameter. The two outer discs have attached to their upper surfaces two candle sockets of sheet-iron—one on each disc—each  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch in diameter, and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  and  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inch in height respectively. The centre disc has a small three-pronged projection for holding the candle end, one of the prongs of which is broken off. This specimen is much more carefully finished than the first.

Exhibited by Lady Maxwell.

3. The third example (fig. 2), which is exhibited by Major-General the Hon. A. Stewart of Corsbie, is constructed on an entirely different plan from the first two. The base is formed in the same manner as No. 2, being formed of three long legs, each 17 inches in length, inserted into a circular disc of wood  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter by  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in thickness. At a height of 11 inches from the top of the circular base is a triangular piece of wood  $5\frac{1}{2}$  by  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches diameter by 1 inch in thickness. This

triangular block of wood is held in its place by three upright sticks inserted into the under side at each corner, the other ends of which are inserted into the circular disc before mentioned. These upright sticks are each  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches long and half an inch in diameter, of which one inch of each is inserted into the triangular block ; and an inch and a half of the other end of each is inserted into the circular block, thus holding the two blocks at a distance of 11 inches from each other. Through the centre of the triangular block, and through the centre of the circular block, a round hole has been cut so as to allow a stick 27 inches long to pass freely up and down. This stick, which is circular, and 1 inch in diameter, can be raised to a height of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and held there by a wooden pin which passes through the side of the circular block and presses against the elevated stick. This elevating stick corresponds to the free-moving uprights of the previous examples. At the top of the elevating stick a piece of wood has been attached of the same shape as the triple-disc iron plate in No. 2. On top of this again has been fastened a horizontal bar of iron,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch broad and  $\frac{3}{16}$  inch thick, the two ends of which have been expanded into saucer-shaped cups 3 inches diameter. To the same bar, and extending over to the centre of the cups, are, on one side a candle socket  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch high and 1 inch diameter, and on the other three upright prongs  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch in height.

It is difficult to assign a date to these archaic candlesticks. John of Trevisa may have had in his mind a "candelstikke" of this description when he wrote towards the close of the fourteenth century, and the type may have persisted, like querns and spindle-whorls, down to relatively recent days. The material of which they are made is ash and pine ; the latter appears to be Memel, or possibly Scots fir. They are such as may have been made at home, with the aid of the blacksmith, to supply the metal parts. I have been told by Sergeant M'Millan of the Wigtownshire Constabulary (who collected the three specimens exhibited), that carles made entirely of iron still exist, but I have not seen them. Wooden articles, when disused, so readily disappear as firewood, that we owe thanks to Sergeant M'Millan for having preserved these.

Dr Jamieson, in his *Scottish Dictionary*, does not notice the specific

meaning of a tall candlestick either under *carle* or *puir-man*. The earliest use of the word candlestick in English literature occurs in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 1102. The chronicler, in describing how "there came thieves, some from Auvergne, some from France, and some from Flanders, and broke into the monastery of Peterborough," states that they "þærinne naman mycel to gode, on golde and on seolfre, þet wæron roden, and calicen, and candelsticcan." In the *Anglo-Saxon Gospels* (ed. Thrope) the word candlestick, in Matt. v. 15, is rendered *candel-stæf*; but in the Rushworth MS. of Matt., this word is changed into *candel-treow* = "branching candlestick," lit., a "candle-tree." In Middle English it first occurs in John of Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* (A.D. 1387), where it is given as the equivalent of the Latin *candelabrum*.