

XVIII. *Observations upon a Pair of Caudlesticks and a Pix, both of the twelfth Century, preserved at Goodrich Court in Herefordshire : by SAMUEL RUSH MEYRICK, LL.D. F.S.A., in a Letter to HENRY ELLIS, Esq. F.R.S., Secretary.*

Read 20th May, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,

20, Cadogan Place, May 18, 1830.

THE great age of a pair of Candlesticks, and a curiously shaped Pix, induces me to presume, that the exhibition of them to the Society of Antiquaries might be attended with some gratification. The former were purchased at Aix-la-Chapelle, at the house of a travelling dealer, so that it is impossible to ascertain their original locality ; the latter was bought in London, though a foreign importation.

The Candlesticks are of copper, engraved and gilt, and ornamented with enamel of seven colours let into the metal, and their height, including the spike at top, is sixteen inches. The stem, which is surrounded at equal distances with three bosses, rises from a hollow triangular truncated pyramid supported by three legs. On comparing the etching on these legs with what the Society has had engraved from a corbel between the arches of the nave of Malmsbury Abbey, Vetust. Mon. vol. V. pl. ix. fig. 12, the resemblance is striking.

Each face of the pyramid has a distinct subject within a circular compartment, flanked on the opposite sides with grotesque figures, which, although intended to be the same on both Candlesticks, are by no means fac-similes. In one a young man of rank is portrayed on horseback with the hawk on his fist: without the circle on one Candlestick at top, are what heralds would term two crosses patée, and on the other two

bezants. Two grotesque lions passant, each seized on the head by a serpent that has entwined itself round the body of the animal, fill up the vacant space on this side of the pyramid, the ground being in one specimen semée of crosses, and in the other semée of bezants. Next, in a circular compartment, is a knight bare-headed, and defending himself against the attack of a lion, simply with his sword and a kite-shaped shield. On each side of this is a bird, the tail of which ends in foliage, having a human head, wearing the chapelle de fer, as it appears on the seal of Rufus. The grounds have the same variation as in the preceding instance. The remaining face of the pyramid contains within a circle a man and woman in earnest conversation, her head being enveloped by a hood. This compartment is flanked by two naked human figures, designed with great spirit, each riding on a bird, holding the neck in one hand and in the other the tail, the arm of the last having been passed under the thigh. The tails of these birds terminate in flowers, and they wear on their head that kind of cap which is an exaggeration of the Phrygian, and which, subsequently to the age of these Candlesticks, occurs frequently on heraldic crests. On the upper and lower bosses or knobs, that have been mentioned as enveloping the stems, are simply scrolls, but the middle ones are ornamented each with three birds, apparently of the goose kind, but with so little attention to ornithology, that it would be a useless puzzle to endeavour to assign the genus. The stems are covered with a scale pattern.

On an attentive consideration of that unerring guide—the costume, these curious specimens may be safely assigned to the commencement of the twelfth century, and it is surprising, when considering the elegance of their form, that they should have been so well preserved during seven hundred years.

The Pix, though evidently not belonging to the candlesticks, is of the same age, the style of art and enamelling corresponding in character. It is a hollow cylinder, with a conical cap, moving on a hinge. On the first are four angels, and in a trefoil on the other are three.

Two ancient Candlesticks have been engraved at the Society's ex-

pense: one in the XIVth Volume of the *Archæologia*, p. 279, found in the bed of the Witham, near Kirksted; the other in Vol. XV. p. 402, discovered in an old chest in the chancel of Ashbury church, Berks. In the description of this latter it is observed, that “the most ancient candlesticks had not sockets, but the candles were stuck upon spikes.” If so, for assenting to which I shall presently give my reason, that of iron found in the Witham cannot be of so great antiquity as those now exhibited, being provided with two sockets. How old may be the invention of this more convenient mode I cannot undertake to determine, though two held by a figure in the costume of the time of Edward the Third, preserved in the College at Hereford till the late fire, take it back to that date, which is further confirmed by a similar figure brought to this country about four years ago from Germany, and another (the nozzles being omitted) engraved in Hope’s *Costume of the Ancients*, erroneously as Etruscan. At the same time it must be confessed, though it by no means weighs in deciding the question, that spiked candlesticks have been continued for altars in some of the colleges at Oxford to the present day.

The word candelabrum, which is of classic use, occurring in the writings of Cicero and Martial, might lead one to suppose that candles were of high antiquity; yet all discoveries tend to show that this was a stand (originally at any rate) on which lamps were placed, or from which they were suspended. The Romans called such lamps in their own language *Lucerna*, because they gave *Lux* or light, as the Dutch and Germans term a candle *Licht*. They also naturalized the Greek words *Lampas* and *Lychnus* (Λύχνος). Thus the parable of our Saviour in the fourth chapter of Mark, verse 21: No one places ὁ λύχνος (a lamp) under a bushel, but places it upon τὴν κλίνην (a stand). So what has been termed the candlestick of the Synagogue, was a candelabrum with seven branches, on each of which was burnt the holy oil. Its form we know from the sculpture on the arch of Titus.

Yet the word *candela* is certainly of Roman origin, and with the use of candles was carried into all the Celtic and most of the Gothic nations.

Hence in Welsh the term is *canwyll* (pronounced *canoolth*), and in Gaelic *coinneal*. Our Saxon ancestors called it *candel*, and the ancient Danes, according to Wormius,^a *kindil*. The *chandelle* of the French, the *candela* of the Italians and Spaniards, and our own *candle*, prove this assertion. When the filum, or wick of the lamp, was first dipped in animal fat, or surrounded with wax, the records of antiquity do not inform us, though Pliny mentions the fact, when describing the torch by the name of *candela*. His words are, “Funiculus pice illitus, aut cera vestitus, ex scirpo etiam fiebant;” which refer to the link, the torch, and the rushlight.

Considered as torches the use is very ancient. Thus, in the description of the palace of Alcinous, in the *Odyssey*, we have :

“Youths forged of gold, at every table there
 Stood holding flaming torches, that in night
 Gave through the house each honour’d guest his light.”

These figures of young men were also applied for holding lamps, for Lucretius has :

“Si non aurea sunt juvenum simulacra per ædes,
 Lampadas igniferas manibus retinentia dextris,
 Lumina nocturnis epulis ut suppeditentur.

It has been already observed, that the spiked candlestick is more ancient than that with a socket, and it appears to me that by means of this spike the candelabrum, which previously had been the support of a lamp, was first made to hold a candle. Both the words *candela* and *candelabrum*, are derived from *candeo* “to shine, glitter, or burn,” and we may conclude, that the candle, as distinguished from the torch, had become established during the lower empire. The convenience of the invention had made the fashion prevalent before the Romans were compelled to withdraw their power from the greater part of Europe.

Gregory of Tours, who lived in the latter part of the sixth century,

^a Lit. Run. p. 164.

relates^b the story of a French nobleman, named Rauching, who, when a servant held a candle before him at his supper, made him uncover his legs and allow the burning wax to drop on them. If the man offered to move, he was ready with his sword to run him through, and the more the unfortunate sufferer lamented the more his unfeeling persecutor convulsed himself with laughter.

So the Welsh laws of Howel the Good, compiled in the tenth century, declare that "the candle-bearer ought to hold the candle before the king on the opposite side of the dish when he is eating," and we may admire the simplicity of the times which assigned as his fee all the broken bread, and whatsoever fell from the royal dish. If, therefore, good breeding depends on depriving oneself of an advantage for the benefit of another, the Chesterfield doctrine must have been inverted, and the more awkwardly the king took his meal, the greater would be his politeness. Whether his gentleman of the household had the candle-ends and cheese-parings we are not told, but may fairly infer the first of these from his office, and the latter from his country.

These living supporters of candles, like the torch-bearers of old, were soon imitated in metal, and in succeeding ages were varied in costume, displaying the civil or military dress, that of a fool, or the appearance of a naked savage.

I cannot better conclude these remarks, than by the insertion of the extract you were so kind as to send me from a manuscript^c of the time of Henry the Sixth, as it shows that in his time the wax candles of Paris were esteemed above all others. Under the head "de Officiariis in curiis Dominorum," is the following short section "de Candelario" the Chandler :

"Now speke I wylle a lytull whyle
Of the CHANDELER, with outen gyle,

^b Hist. lib. v. c. 3.

^c Among the Sloane collection and entitled the "Boke of Curtasye."

'That torches & tortes & preketes con make,
 Perchours, smale condell I under take ;
 Of wax these candels all that brenne,
 And morter of wax that I wele kenne ;
 The snof of hom dose a way
 With *close sesours*, as I 3ow say,
 The *sesours ben schort & rownde y close*,
With plate of irne up on bose.
 In chamber no ly3t ther shall be brent
 Bot of wax ther to yf 3e take tent.
 In hall at soper *schall caldells brenne*
Of Parys ther in that all men kenne ;
 Iche messe a candell fro Alhalawgh day
 To Candelmesse as I 3ou saye."

I remain, my dear Sir,
 most truly yours,

SAMUEL RUSH MEYRICK.

TO HENRY ELLIS, Esq.
 F. R. S. &c.

REFERENCES TO THE PLATE.

Fig. 1. One of the Candlesticks seen in perspective.

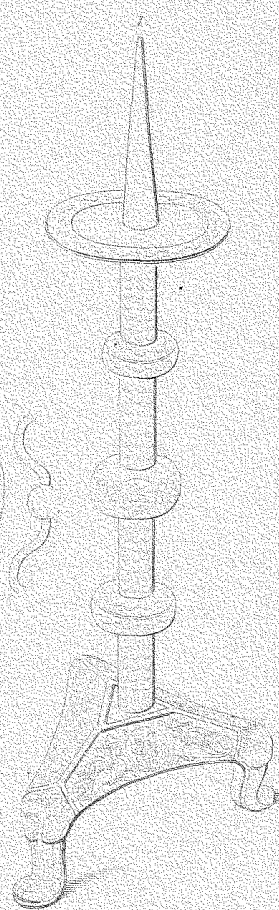
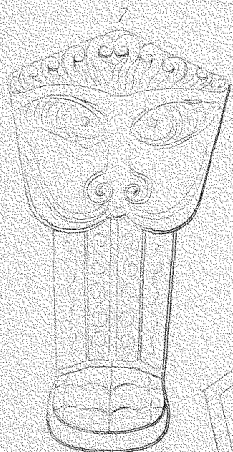
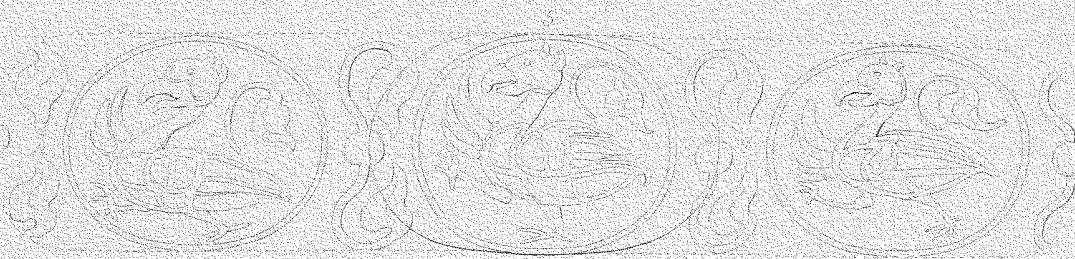
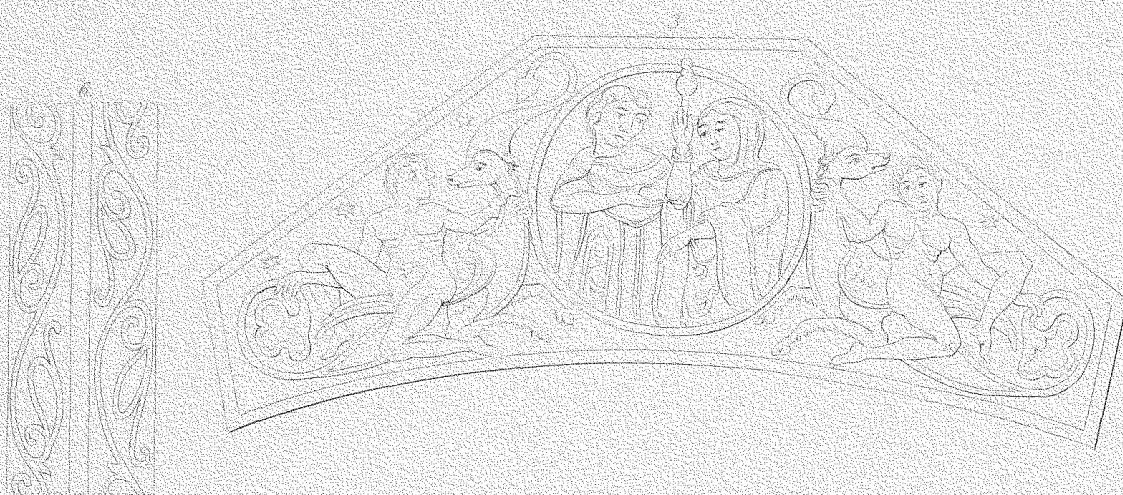
Fig. 2, 3, and 4. The three sides of the base of the Candlestick, of the full size.

Fig. 5. The centre Boss of the Candlestick of its full size.

Fig. 6. Portion of one of the other Bosses of the full size.

Fig. 7. One of the Legs of its full dimensions.

The Candlesticks and Pix are now at Goodrich Court, in the County of Hereford.



Details of one of a pair of Candlesticks of the XIIth century, preserved at Goodrich Court.