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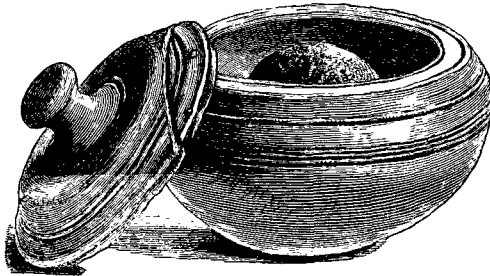
ON THE USE OF THE "MUSTARD CAP AND BULLET" IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND. BY JOHN ALEX. SMITH, M.D., SEC. S.A. SCOT.

The Wooden Mustard Cap and Iron Bullet now presented to the Museum of the Society from my friend Mr George R. Kinloch, belong to a class of domestic usages becoming rapidly extinct throughout the country, and are therefore worthy of being recorded among the minor antiquities of Scotland, before they have entirely passed away, and been forgotten.

Some sixty years ago it was the almost universal practice in the Mearns, and, indeed, throughout a great part of Scotland, to grow in the different gardens and kail-yards a patch of white mustard; the crop was sedulously protected from the birds, and the seeds were carefully gathered when ripe, and preserved for family use. The mustard cap and bullet, consisting of a wooden bowl (*Scottice, Cap*), some 8 inches in diameter, by 4 inches in depth, having a wooden cover, and a heavy iron bullet, 3 inches or so in diameter, was then frequently employed to prepare the mustard for domestic use. This was very simply done, by putting the requisite amount of seed, along with a little water, and a slight sprinkling of salt, into the wooden cap, the heavy mustard bullet was then introduced, the lid put on, and a rapid rotatory motion given to the bullet by the movement of the knee and hands, until the

whole was reduced to a pulp sufficiently smooth for use. The bullet was then removed, and in the humbler households, the cap and its contents, being mill and mustard pot in one, was placed on the table, to be used with the potatoes or other vegetables which formed the simple repast. Milk or cream was sometimes added, as an improvement to this simple condiment or sauce.

The mustard, added in this way to the starchy components of the vegetable diet, supplied the necessary nitrogenous elements which would otherwise have been lacking; and reminds one of the analogous hot and stimulating curry which the native of Hindustan finds it necessary to add to his insipid meal of rice.



The Mustard Cap and Bullet.

The not unfrequent use of the mustard in place of animal food (or "kitchen," as it was termed) with vegetables for dinner, even among a somewhat higher class of the community, appears to be referred to in one of the Penny Histories of the last century, entitled "John Thompson's Man; or, a Short Survey of Married Life;" where the writer states that vanity in dress had come to such a height, that rather than not be in the fashion, some people would be content to deprive themselves of everything, except the very cheapest fare, and live, for a time at least, on this inexpensive diet. "For vanity," says he, "is now come to such a height, that vanity was never so vain, nor virtue less prized, in any age than this; for some, if they have no more in the world, must retain the *à la mode* fashion, with their old daggled silk tail,

and pair of old laced shoes, and all her tattering decorations, and these they will not want, if they even should lick mustard a month."

The prevalent use of salted meat by nearly all classes during winter, especially in the country districts, some seventy or eighty years ago, also necessitated a great consumption of mustard. The use of the mustard cap and bullet seems to have prevailed, Mr Kinloch informs me, all over the north-east of Scotland, perhaps even to John o' Groat's, if not also to the Orkney and Shetland Islands—at least from Forfarshire northwards. I have not, however, been able to learn anything of its use in a similar way in the southern parts of Scotland.

The early use of mustard in Scotland is well known, and I need only refer to the fact mentioned in the "Registrum de Aberbrothoc," that in the year 1310 Michael de Monifoth, one of the vassals of the abbacy, binds himself to pay annually to the Abbacy of Arbroath half a boll of mustard seed—"unam dimidiam bollam seminis grani sinapis"—no doubt to be used in the daily meals of the monks.

Spottiswoode, in his edition of Hope's "Minor Practicks," 1734, appends a list of the Heirship Moveables, being the articles which the heir-at-law of a prelate, baron, or burgess, dying intestate, is entitled to claim *ex lege*, as his own, and among these he includes the useful "Mustard Bullet;" he does not, however, specify the necessary accompaniment of the mustard cap, but enumerates "a pewter mustard dish," which could not well take the place of the humbler wooden mustard cap, in which the mustard was at once ground and made by the bullet, but was the vessel into which the mustard was removed when ready for use, at least in the houses of the more wealthy classes. The frequent occurrence of iron bullets near old houses in different parts of the country, where they had fallen aside, and their domestic use had been forgotten, has often made the local inquirers into antiquities fancy wild scenes of blood and war, with which these supposed cannon balls had been connected, without thinking that their presence there might probably, in many, if not in most cases, be due to a very different and peaceful family use.

The Coal Bullet.—I may, in addition, notice another of our minor antiquities, belonging to this same domestic class—another and larger kind of iron bullet, the presence of which in some places may have given rise

to similar, and perhaps not altogether unnatural, mistakes—I refer to the “Coal Bullet,” which was also a rather important article in the household economy of our ancestors. “A Bullet for breaking coals,” as it is described by Spottiswoode, and included in the list of Heirship Moveables to which I have already referred. In some cases the coal bullet was pierced with a hole, through which a loop of rope was passed to form a handle.

The use of the coal bullet, however, unlike the previous one, was not apparently known in the northern counties, as I am informed by Mr Kinloch, but seems to have been confined in a great measure to the middle and south-western districts of Scotland. This circumstance may probably be accounted for by the fact of the northern counties having been formerly supplied with coals brought entirely by sea from England, which being soft, and broken into small pieces, rendered the use of any such implement entirely unnecessary; whereas in the more southern counties, where the larger and harder Scots coals were used for fuel, and got from the neighbouring coal pits, the heavy iron bullet or hammer was required as a necessary domestic implement to break them into pieces small enough for ordinary use; in the Border districts, again, from their proximity to England, the English coal was formerly in common use, and the coal bullet was little needed, and apparently scarcely known.

As this meeting concluded the business of the Session, the Society then adjourned to the 30th of November, St Andrew’s Day, the commencement of next Winter’s Session.



Canoe (22 feet 6 inches long) found in Loch Canmore, Aberdeenshire, 1859, and described by the Rev. James Wattie, Bellastraid.