

I.

NOTES ON SOME RELICS OF PRINCIPAL CARSTARES. BY PROFESSOR
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In a paper read before this Society on the 11th May 1891, and published in its volume of *Proceedings* for 1890-91, the author, Mr A. J. S. Brook, refers to the thumbscrews which were used in the examination of William Carstares before the Scottish Privy Council on the 5th September 1684. The thumbscrews were not exhibited, and there were one or two slight inaccuracies in Mr Brook's paper; and I have, accordingly, thought it well to let the Society see the malignant little engine, and to offer a few remarks upon its history.

When it was fastened on Carstares' thumbs, it was, presumably, a brand new instrument. On the 23rd of July 1684, the Privy Council, noting with satisfaction that "there is now a new invention and engine called the 'Thumbikins,' which will be very effectual to explicate matters relating to the Government," resolve to apply them, as well as the boots, to reticent witnesses, if it be found "fit and convenient." The only person who enjoyed this convenience between the 23rd July and the 5th September was Spence, a servant of the Earl of Argyll—so that Carstares was but the second victim. The fact that a smith had to be fetched to unscrew it on his release, shows that the engine worked stiffly, and confirms our conclusion that this was a new pair, probably the first made and used in Scotland. The "Pilniewinks" were, as Mr Brook has pointed out, in much earlier use; and it is singular that so exact an historian as Mr Hill Burton should have confounded them, or some similar instrument, with the thumbkins, as he does in describing the instruments of torture employed under the Stuarts (*Hist.*, vii. p. 454).

The ostensible cause of Carstares' arrest and examination was his supposed complicity in the Ryehouse Plot, with which, in point of fact, he had nothing to do. He was, however, cognisant of much of the plotting of Argyll and his friends, and was in most confidential intercourse with the Scottish exiles in Holland. Immediately after the discovery of the Rye-

house Plot he was apprehended in Kent, and sent down to Scotland—quite illegally—in order that torture, which was not permitted in England, might be applied if “fit and convenient.” Sir George Mackenzie, who failed to extort satisfactory answers from him in London, “told me,” says Carstares, “that the boot in Scotland should drive out of me what I refused to confess.” The real object of the Privy Council was, if possible, to get at the secrets of Argyll and the other malcontents abroad, whose disaffection to the Government and friendly relations with the Prince of Orange were a constant source of suspicion and alarm to King James and his ministry. Carstares was not only in the confidence of the exiles, but he was in close correspondence with the most trusted agents of the Prince. He had kept up this correspondence with Fagel and with Bentinck until the very date of his arrest. What the secrets of it were he would never, even after the Revolution, reveal; but Fagel spoke of them to Bishop Burnet as affairs of the greatest importance, the disclosure of which would have laid the English Government under the deepest obligations to him. The Scots Privy Council was, apparently, ignorant of this correspondence, and addressed their investigations mainly to the point of Carstares’ knowledge of, or engagement in, the recent plot, and the designs of those believed to have been concerned in it. About that plot he knew enough to make certain statements, which, as it had already exploded, were of little value; while, on the momentous machinations that were going on in Holland, he was silent as the grave. Even what he did disclose, he only revealed after the torture was over, on the solemn assurance that what he said should never be used as evidence against any accused person. This condition was nefariously violated by Carstares’ “confession,” as it was called, being brought forward as evidence in the trial of Baillie of Jarviswoode. Although thus breaking faith with Carstares, Sir George Mackenzie, in the course of his pleadings in Jarviswoode’s trial, could not refrain from paying a tribute to his constancy under the torture. “All,” he said, “had, on that occasion, admired Mr Carstares’ fortitude and generosity, who stood more in awe of his love to his friends than of the fear of torture, and hazarded rather to die for Jarviswoode than that Jarviswoode should die by him.” For the grievous wrong thus done to him, however, and for the dark suspicion

which it seemed to cast upon his honour and his fidelity to his friends, he could wring no redress from the Government. It was not until the better days had dawned that such reparation as was possible was obtained. In July 1690 Carstares petitioned the Parliament that, "in testimony of their abhorrence of so foul a breach of public faith, the sacredness whereof is the security of a government," they should order his misused depositions to be "razed and for ever delete out of the records of these courts where, contrary to the public faith, they were made use of." This petition, which was accompanied by a brief narrative of the relative transactions, was found, on investigation, to be "sufficiently instructed and verified by a declaration under Lord Tarbat's hand, of the date of these presents, and other testimonies." The Parliament declared that Carstares was "highly injured, contrary to public faith," and ordained his petition and accompanying letter to be "recorded in the books of Parliament, and book of adjournal, or any other court books wherein his testimony was made use of."

Although there is no proof of any connection between this action of the Scots Parliament of 1690 and Carstares' possession of the thumbscrews, I am inclined to think that the gift of the instrument with which he had been tortured probably followed the official acknowledgment of the base use which had been made of his statements. Be that as it may, the thumbscrews (fig. 1) were presented to Carstares by the Privy Council, and have ever since been treasured by his kindred as a memorial of a brave and good man's courage and constancy. In Mr Brook's paper they are described as in the possession of "Mr Alexander Graham Dunlop, Consul-General, London, a lineal descendant of the Principal." Now, Principal Carstares never had any descendants. He was married in 1682 to Elizabeth Kekewich, of the ancient family of Kekewich of Trehawk, in Cornwall, but had no children. On his death the thumbscrews, with other properties, passed into the hands of his favourite sister, Sarah, wife of William Dunlop, Principal of the University of Glasgow. Dunlop was the eldest son of that Rev. Alexander Dunlop of Paisley, whose "holy groan" is commemorated by Mr Buckle, as a proof of the fanatical devices to which the Scottish clergy resorted in order to impress their hearers. The Carstares relics have

come down from Carstares' nephew to the present representative of the Dunlops of Gairbraid, and are in the custody of the step-daughter and executrix of my late cousin Alexander Graham Dunlop; and by her kindness I am enabled to exhibit them to-night.

Mr Dunlop, I regret to say, died last July. He was not an unworthy scion of a good old stock. After some years of experience of colonial finance in banks in Jamaica and in Canada, he became, in 1858, private

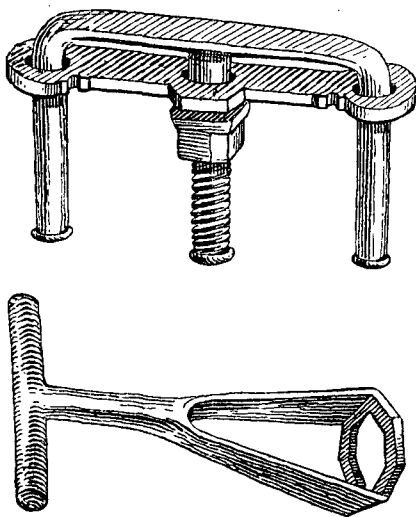


Fig. 1. Thumbscrews with which Principal Carstares was tortured, and their Key.

secretary to Lord Augustus Loftus, then Ambassador at Vienna; was a little later attached to Mr Gladstone's mission to the Ionian Islands; then, for a couple of years, engaged in special diplomatic service in Hungary; after which he was appointed Vice-Consul at Constantinople; and subsequently Consul in Crete, in Cairo, and in Cadiz. In 1868 he was promoted to the important post of Consul-General and Commissary Judge in Cuba, from which office he retired, with a pension, in 1876.

The story of King William's experience of the thumbscrews is accurately given by Mr Brook. What he says about myself and Her present Gracious Majesty is, however, not perfectly historical.

It may seem a small matter, but Mr Brook invests me with an office I do not own, and I object to appear in the records of this Society as "Dean of the Chapel Royal." In these days, when every tenth civilian you meet on the street is a colonel, or major, or captain, and when numerous clerics are floating about, sporting titles under which they could neither be sued at law or received at Court, one is bound to be exact as to one's designation. I am one of Her Majesty's chaplains, and not a dean of the Chapel Royal, or of anything else. When bidden—in my capacity as chaplain—to Balmoral, in August 1886, I proposed to Sir Henry Ponsonby that I should bring the thumbkins with me for the Queen's inspection. He replied, "Her Majesty will be glad to see, but not to try, the thumbkins you propose to bring here." I accordingly took them to Balmoral, and, on Sunday 12th September, at a private interview with the Queen, I had the honour of exhibiting them to her; and, in spite of Sir Henry's *caveat*, I ventured to suggest that she should place a finger where one of her royal predecessors had placed his—a suggestion with which she was pleased to comply. This instrument thus possesses the unique distinction of having enclosed the digits of two sovereigns of Great Britain. The Queen was so much interested in the thumbscrews, that, in the saloon after dinner, she bade me fetch them again, that they might be seen by the Princess Beatrice and the members of the Court. Among these was the minister in attendance, the Earl of Iddesleigh, who tried them on.

The account of Carstares' torture, drawn from his own narrative, is to be found on pp. 93-4 of my *William Carstares*.

The other relics in the Dunlop collection are—(1) Two silver cups, which formed part of Carstares' camp equipage when, as his chaplain, he attended King William in his continental campaigns. They bear, on one side, the arms of Carstares, with the date 1715, and the name William Carstares; on the other, those of Dunlop of Gairbraid. (2) A gold ring, enclosing a small lock of the hair of King William, and given by him to Carstares. (3) A gold ring, containing a small lock of the hair of King

James VII, and a minute effigy of that monarch, with the letters J.R. (4) A gold seal with carnelian stone, engraved with the figures of two cupids, and the legend, "Tam amor quam amicitia." This was given to the Rev. John Carstares, father of the Principal, by the Marquess of Argyll, whom he visited in prison, while he awaited execution, and whose devotions he guided on the last Sunday of his life. (5) A spoon, known in the family as "Bessie Mure's Spoon," and believed, I have never ascertained on what authority, to have belonged to that Elizabeth Mure of Rowallan, who was the first wife of King Robert III. The Mures of Glanderstoun, now represented by Mure of Caldwell, were a collateral branch of the family of Rowallan. Janet, fourth daughter of William Mure of Glanderstoun, married the Rev. John Carstares, and was the mother of William. If this spoon be the veritable property of Bessie Mure, who intermarried with the Royal house in the fourteenth century, this alliance of the families of Mure and Carstares, in the seventeenth, affords the only conjecturable explanation of the venerable article being found among the relics of William Carstares, with the tradition I have mentioned appended to it.

Along with these relics, I am allowed by my friend the Rev. Robert W. Weir, minister of the Greyfriars' parish, Dumfries, to exhibit another cup which belonged to Carstares, and which was left to Mr Weir by his mother, who was a daughter of Dr Henry Hill, Professor of Mathematics in the United College, St Andrews. Professor Hill was descended, on the mother's side, from one of Carstares' younger sisters, Jean, who married Principal Drew of St Andrews, and who, no doubt, obtained this cup as a memento of her illustrious brother. It bears the same (Dutch) hall-mark as the cups in the Dunlop collection, into the smaller of which it exactly fits, and must have been part of the same camp equipage as these. The name of Carstares and the dates engraved on it are recent inscriptions.