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THE BOOK OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH CLUB

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THE BOOK OF THE
OLD EDINBURGH CLUB





SIR DANIEL WILSON, AUTHOR OF 'MEMORIALS OF EDINBURGH.'
 From painting by Sir George Reid. Reproduced by permission of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

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THE BOOK OF THE OLD EDINBURGH CLUB

SEVENTEENTH VOLUME



EDINBURGH

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1930



poration took its rise, it is certain that, as already indicated, candlemaking was being carried on in Edinburgh in the reign of James IV. Allusion has also been made to the fact that tallow was then the principal ingredient and that the process caused a stench which at times was intolerable. It is therefore not surprising that the early entries in the Burgh Records should deal with this nuisance. On October 3, 1505, the melting or rinding of tallow in 'fore housis on the hie gaitt' was forbidden, the penalty being 'escheitt of the stufe.' In February 1557-8 the President of the Court of Session had evidently complained of the smells caused by candlemaking, for there is a quaint entry from which it appears that the Town Council ordained Thomas Mow and Elizabeth Nudry, his spouse, 'to abstene, desist, and ceis in all tyme cuming fra all melting of ony crakkingis of talloun within thair bak hous or ony vthir houssis liand in William Huchesonis clos sa lang as maister Henrie Sinclair, dene of Glasgow, president of oure Souerane Ladeis counsall and sessioun, remains within this burgh, for avoyding of the corrupt and ynhalsum air cumand thairthrow to my said lord presidentis hous.' Towards the close of the same century complaints of rinding and melting of tallow in 'forebuthis and forehoussis contrer the statutes of the toun' were still vocal. On March 14, 1592-93, candlemakers were warned that they would be fined if they allowed the 'savour' of their trade to 'cum to the Hie gaitt, Kowgaitt or common streits.'

But the Town Council were insistent that the finished article should be above suspicion though they banned the noisomeness attending its manufacture. Candles must be of 'guid and sufficient stufe bayth weik and talloun,' and must be sold 'na derare than for iijd.' the pound (October 30, 1508). Rigorous fines were imposed upon craftsmen who sold their wares above statute price, and the frequent mention of the subject rather implies that the practice was common. Similarly, candlemakers must have 'thair ballandis and wechtis' always

ready, so as to be able to sell in pounds and half pounds. Defaulters were to be punished, the penalty to be increased for each offence (October 8, 1529).

The large quantities of tallow consumed in candlemaking brought the Craft into close relations with the Fleshers, and, as the sequel will disclose, the two Incorporations were constantly at variance, the one accusing the other of infringing its rights, or of taking an unfair advantage. On May 4, 1526, it was ordained that the Candlemakers 'sall extent and beir all portable chairgeis with the . . . flescheouris, becaus it wes vnderstand that the said candilmakeris was in vse till extent and be with the saidis flescheouris in tymes bygane.' In 1579 the relationship of the two groups of craftsmen was invested with a sombre touch, for on May 22 the Fleshers came under obligation to furnish the Candlemakers with a mort cloth.

'The haill members of our said Craft (Fleshers) Binds and obliges us that the said Mort Cloth shall be furth command to all and Sundrie the Dead Corps of the said Candlemaker Craft, as well as to the Corps of our Defunct, for their honourable convoy to buriall.'

The Fleshers were not to sell tallow to strangers but only to 'nychtbouris and to the Candlemakers,' but an Act of the Privy Council, dated December 28, 1693, permitted unfreemen and country fleshers to sell outside Edinburgh. Tallow was also the cause of a dispute with the Cordiners, an echo of which is heard in an entry in the Burgh Records for October 15, 1548, where it is declared that Candlemakers buy 'na kitchein fie nor paynsche tawche (tallow) in hurt of the occupatioun of cordiners.' By an Act of the Town Council (April 20, 1546) craftsmen were to be fined who carried 'ony candill owtwith the towne to sell in landwart.' Decrees in similar terms were issued in 1551, 1553, 1554, and 1555. Neither candles nor tallow were to be transported abroad; and in 1581 a royal licence granting permission to transport was actually renounced. But in spite of the embargo the offence was widely

prevalent, and sometimes caused a local scarcity of candles and tallow. The penalty in 1590 was £10 Scots, but it seems to have had little effect. In 1594-95 it was discovered that 'ane intollerabill quantity of maid candill' was being 'transportet furth of the realme' that had been 'maid and furnist be the candill makers of this burgh, quhairby the derth of talloun and candill is greittlie increst.' Consequently, the Magistrates on January 15 summoned the members of the Craft and compelled them to promise that in future they would not 'dispone . . . abone the quantity of six stayne at anes without speciall licence' from a bailie. By 1623 the regulation was so far relaxed as to allow of the disposal of twenty stone of tallow.

There appears to have been a good deal of illicit candle-making carried on outside the Town Wall, the produce of which was shipped abroad. On December 11, 1583, a group of candlemakers 'dwelland in St Mary Wynd' were obliged 'to withdraw thame selffis, houshald and famileis, and dwell within the wallis of the town,' that thoroughfare being 'ane suspect pairt for randing of talloun and sending the sam away furth of the realm, to the greitt hurt of the King's Graces lieges.' One of the offenders was John Dudgeon, who was ordered to remove 'furth of the place quhair he dwellis vpoun the town wall in Leyth Wynd.' Here also abode Henry Wilkie who, exercising his craft in similar circumstances, was ordered, on March 9, 1603, to 'remove his famile and warkhous furth of the said wynd and cum and dwell . . . within the portis of this burgh.'

But the Town Council sometimes rested from their labours of imposing what to interlopers at least were vexatious restrictions, and turned a sympathetic ear. On January 6, 1579-80, the Craft petitioned to be freed 'fra all poynding . . . for ony soymes quhairto they war extented be the merchantis . . . in-safar as they war subiect to beir all portabill charges with the . . . fleschour craft,' and the city fathers, taking into consideration that the Candlemakers had 'na vther tred to leve

by,' decreed that they 'sall be extentit with the saidis fleschouris, and that sic of the candilmakeris as vsis only tred of merchandise lyke as thay have bene in all tymes past subiect to extent with the merchantis sall pay extensis with the merchantis alsweill for tymes bygane as to cum.'

In December 1668 the Town Council ordained 'the haill Candlemakers of the burgh' to keep three market days each week—Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday—the market place to be betwixt Niddry's Wynd and Blackfriars Wynd, and the 'mercatt time' to be between 'nyne hours in the foirnoon and two hours in the afternoon.' Neither the Candlemakers within the burgh nor those coming from Dalkeith and other places in the neighbourhood were to sell their produce 'upon the Streetts or in the weighous or any uther publick place of the City (the Candlemakers of the city ther shops being excepted) bot upon the said mercatt days' under the pain of 'forfaulter of ther candle' and a money penalty. This Act and another in similar terms (passed on December 12, 1683) was the result of protests by members of the Craft, who, having enjoyed several 'very ancient privileges' relating to 'ther trade of making candle,' were injured by the promiscuous selling of candles within the burgh.¹ Nor was the vigilance of the Craft limited to seeing that the stranger within the gates sold only upon market days. It was insisted that his goods be of the best quality; and in order that this obligation might not become a dead letter, the Magistrates were petitioned 'to send ane visitor throw the Mercats to try the sufficiencies of all Candle that shall be ther presented.' The 'visitor' (what would now be called an inspector) was to be empowered 'to confiscat any candle that shall be found unsufficient, and [to] applye the one half thereof for the poor of the Candlemakers and the other half to the use of the hospitall within this city.'

¹ An interesting commentary on this action is afforded by an entry in the Minutes, dated May 6, 1766, where it is recorded that a quantity of candles taken from hawkers were given to the Clerk of the Incorporation 'as usual.'

In 1693 the Incorporation was greatly perturbed over the action of the White Paper Manufactory. This Company claimed to have made great progress in the making of white paper, and, for their encouragement, craved that a considerable duty should be imposed on imported paper, likewise that an Act of the Privy Council, 'lately impetrat by the said White Paper Men,' be declared to have the effect of an Act of Parliament. This proposal gave much offence to the Candlemakers, who had already suffered at the hands of the White Paper Men. Notwithstanding that by 'immemorial use and wont' the Incorporation had had the right of 'making Rage-weik-Candle, as an Advancement and good to their Craft and matter of great Contentment and Conveniency to the Leidges,' the Paper Company had 'in a most Clandestine manner' obtained a measure 'discharging the Candlemakers from all further . . . making of Rages . . . under severe Pains and Penalties.' The Incorporation regarded this fresh attempt at legislation on the part of the Company as likely to end in a further encroachment on their rights and privileges, and resolved to frustrate it by every means in their power. A war of pamphlets ensued. The case for the White Paper Manufactory was bolstered up by 'fallacious and frivolous arguments,' and, if successful, would 'sett up and establish the said White Paper Company upon the Ruines of the Candlemaker Craft, and that most wrongously and unjustly.' Besides, the inhabitants of the burgh were 'better served with Ragg-weiks than any others, as affording the absolutely clearest Light.' Then, as a parting shot, it was urged that the Candlemaker Craft was 'more universally useful . . . and more absolutely necessary to the Nation than that of Paper.' This 'designed Monopoly' caused much searching of heart for several years, and the pamphleteering war was still proceeding briskly in 1700 when the Incorporation issued a spirited reply to the arguments of the White Paper Manufactory. How it all ended has not been ascertained, but the episode is typical of the tenacity with which the Candle-

makers held to what they conceived their ancient rights and privileges.

IV

But this contest was of minor importance in comparison with the protracted and at times embittered controversy waged with the Fleshers—a controversy carried on in defiance of the elementary principles of political economy, for it occurred before the days of Adam Smith. As we have seen, tallow at that time played so important a part in candle manufacture that the dependence of the craftsmen on the Fleshers was vital. The Candlemakers therefore procured certain privileges from the Town Council, the object of which was to safeguard their industry by securing a steady and plentiful supply of tallow. One statute prohibited the selling of this commodity in open market, a matter on which the Incorporation laid great stress. Only after the Candlemakers had been served were the Fleshers entitled to sell tallow to all and sundry. Nor was this the only restriction. The Fleshers were bound to dispose of tallow to the Candlemakers at prices fixed by the Town Council. In 1693 the price of rough tallow did not exceed 48s. Scots per stone, and as this figure was lower than could be obtained from outsiders, the Fleshers naturally chafed at the regulation, and repeated and insidious attempts to evade it were a fruitful source of friction. One method employed to circumvent the Candlemakers was to mix offal with the balls of tallow ('flesh or insufficient stuff' is the phrase used in the Records), a subterfuge which led the Craft to propose that one of its members should be appointed 'searcher,' *i.e.* to see that what was offered by the Fleshers was the genuine article. It is noteworthy that so late as 1810 the Candlemakers corresponded with the Fleshers regarding the appointment of searchers of rough fat, and that in 1826, when the Fleshers proposed the discontinuance of the office, the Candlemakers declined to return an answer till the former established a regular and

proper market in which tallow would be exposed for sale. Finally, in 1829, the Candlemakers appointed a committee to wait on the Fleshers with reference to the searching of tallow.

Convinced that without tallow of good quality their trade was gone, the Candlemakers throughout a long period bombarded the Town Council with complaints of the inferior tallow offered by the Fleshers, while the real substance was finding a market either beyond the burgh or in foreign countries. The Fleshers vigorously took up the challenge and sought to demonstrate that they were the injured party. The Candlemakers, it was averred, were charging high prices, but it was answered that if there was a 'heightening of the rate of the candle,' it was due to the 'unreasonable exactions' of the Fleshers in the matter of tallow. In 1712 the Procurator Fiscal took action against the Incorporation for charging 'extravagant prices,' which resulted in the Town Council issuing a proclamation regulating the price of candle as well as of tallow, non-compliance with which incurred a penalty. Three years later, the Fleshers were flagrantly defying the municipal statutes, and the Candlemakers obtained a Declarator restraining them from rinding of tallow. The judgment of the Court also declared that the Town Council could compel the Fleshers to sell tallow to the Candlemakers to be consumed within the burgh as well as fix the price. But this decision was reversed by the House of Lords on June 29, 1715. After the triumph for the Fleshers matters seem to have quietened. Not only did the Magistrates cease to fix the price of candles; they encouraged the Craft 'to buy and make good Work in expectation of a better price.' The Fleshers, again, were at liberty to sell their tallow to whom and at what price they pleased, or, if they did not get the price they wished, they could rind the tallow and send it to foreign parts. In 1784 the Candlemakers were again ventilating an old grievance—the 'mixing of offal and refuse' with

rough tallow and the selling of this substance as the genuine article. The complaint evidently was well established, since the Fleshers ordained that any freeman-member found guilty would be liable to a penalty of £12 Scots for the first offence, £24 Scots for the second, and £36 Scots for each additional offence.

There was more than a suggestion of inconsistency in the fact that while the Craft kept a watchful eye lest any person who was not a member should make or sell candles within the liberties of Edinburgh, it was not averse to importation of the goods for hard cash. If it be true that in 1704 James Hardie, journeyman to the Incorporation, bound himself not to make or sell candles in any part of the suburbs nor within five miles of the city under a penalty of 500 merks Scots, it is equally true that in 1710 the Incorporation granted a 'tolerance' to John Moffat, candlemaker, Musselburgh, for payment of £16 yearly. In other words, Moffat might import candles into the burgh without being interfered with, though he could not set up a booth or sell to retail shops.

V

It cannot be definitely stated when the Incorporation was first established in the thoroughfare that has long borne the name of Candlemaker Row, at the head of which stands the Convening Hall with its quaint frontage and moulded doorway above which is displayed the arms of the Candlemakers, their motto, *Omnia manifesta luce*, and the date 1722. Most likely the craftsmen fixed their quarters in this locality early in the seventeenth century. Previously their workshops had been situated in or near the High Street, but the unsavoury smells connected with candlemaking caused the Town Council in August 1621 to pass an Act enjoining the members of the Craft 'to provide themselves of Houses, for melting of their Tallows and Cracklings, at some remote parts



CANDLEMAKERS' CONVENING HALL, SHOWING INSCRIBED PANEL

of the Town, from the Common Streets, Closes and Vennels of the same.' At this time the locality which came to be known as Candlemaker Row was not regarded as part of the burgh, and the Magistrates allotted it as 'the most proper place for the Candlemakers.'¹

In the absence of the Minutes of the Incorporation for this period it is difficult to say how far and precisely in what circumstances the terms of the Act of 1621 were given effect to. Gordon of Rothiemay's Plan of 1647 shows no buildings in the above-mentioned area, which seems to indicate that the removal of the Candlemakers, if it actually took place, was of a temporary character. Probably, too, the Act, for reasons which cannot now be stated, was not made obligatory on all members of the Craft. Anyhow the industry was being carried on in other parts of the town in the middle of the seventeenth century. One candlemaker, Thomas Burne, had his premises in Forrester's Wynd. On October 24, 1654, a fire occurred in his workhouse, which destroyed much property. This calamity led the Town Council to appoint a committee to consider ways and means of preventing 'the danger of fyre by removeing of candlemakeris and brewers of quaaavitæ to corneris, and for provyding of watter spowttis and uther instrumentis and things relating to the safetie of the toun.' The committee recommended that the Candlemakers should be segregated in the Muck Port in Leith Wynd, but the latter petitioned in favour of a piece of waste ground at the Society Port 'betwix the porter's house, down along the kirkyard dyke to the Greyfreir gate, for against the east end of the kirk, for workhouses for melting tallow and making

¹ In the middle of the eighteenth century the craftsmen for some reason temporarily removed their workshops from Candlemaker Row, which caused 'the proprietors of Brown's Buildings' to raise an action in the Court of Session. As the MS. from which this information was abstracted is torn, the result is unknown, but there is this note: 'Altho the Candlemakers are advised by their Counsel that this action is not well founded, yet as the pursuers seem determined to distress them, it becomes necessary for them in their defence to know every particular that may lead to defeat of the action.'

