

***FRED.
W. BURGESS***



CHATS ON HOUSEHOLD CURIOS

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PREFACE

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There is a peculiar charm about the relics found in an old home—a home from which many generations of fledglings have flown. As each milestone in family history is passed some once common object of use or ornament is dropped by the way. Such interesting mementoes of past generations accumulate, and in course of time the older ones become curios.

It is to create greater interest in these old-world odds and ends—some of trifling value to an outsider, others of great intrinsic worth—that this book has been written. The love of possession is to some possessors the chief delight; to others knowledge of the original purposes and uses of the objects acquired affords still greater pleasure. My intention has been rather to assist the latter class of collectors than to facilitate the mere assemblage of additional stores of curiosities. It is truly astonishing how rapidly the common uses of even household furnishings and culinary utensils are forgotten when they are superseded by others of more modern type.

The modern art of to-day and the revival of the much older furniture of the past have driven out the household gods of intermediate dates, and it is in that period intervening between the two extremes that most of the household curios reviewed in this work are found. Although many of the finest examples of household curios are now in museums, private collectors often possess exceptional

specimens, and sometimes own the most representative groups of those things upon which they have specialized.

The examples in this book have been drawn from various sources. As in "Chats on Old Copper and Brass" (which may almost be regarded as a companion work), the illustrations are taken from photographs of typical museum curios and objects in private collections, or have been specially sketched by my daughter, who has had access to many interesting collections, to the owners of which I am indebted for the illustrations I am able to make use of.

My thanks are due to the Directors of the British Museum, who have allowed their printers, the University Press, Oxford, to supply electros of some exceptional objects now in the Museum; also to the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, at South Kensington; and the Director of the London Museum, now located at Stafford House.

Dr. Hoyle, the Director of the National Museum of Wales, at Cardiff, has most kindly had specially prepared for this work quite a number of photographs of very uncommon household curios. The Curator of the Hull Museum has loaned blocks, and photographs have been sent by Messrs. Egan and Co., Ltd., of Cork; Mr. Wayte, of Edenbridge; and Mr. Phillips, of the Manor House, Hitchin. To Mr. Evans, of Nailsea Court, Somerset, I am indebted for the loan of his unrivalled collection of ancient nutcrackers, some of which have been sketched for reproduction. I have also made use of examples in the collections of private friends, and illustrated some of my own household curios, many of them family relics.

The story of domestic curios is made the more useful by these illustrations, and also by references to well-known collections. There is much to admire in the once common objects of the home, now curios, and it is in the hope that some may be led to appreciate more the antiques with which they are familiar that these pages have been penned. If that is achieved my object will have been accomplished.

FRED. W. BURGESS.

LONDON, 1914.

I

THE LOVE OF THE ANTIQUE

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CHAPTER I

THE LOVE OF THE ANTIQUE

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No place like home—Curios in the making—The influence of prevailing styles—A cultivated taste.

There is an inborn love of the antique in most men, although some are fond of asserting that their interests are bound up in the modern, and that they have no time to devote to the study of the antiquities of past ages or the things that were fashionable in times long past. Yet most people, when their secret longings are analysed, are found to have an admiration for the old; if not a superstitious veneration, at any rate a desire to perpetuate the memory of their ancestors and to keep in mind the things with which they were familiar. The wealthy man of to-day, who may have sprung from the people, secretly, if not openly, endeavours to surround himself with household gods which tell of a longer past and a closer relationship with the well-to-do than he can legitimately claim. In the pursuit of such things many a man has found his hobby; and there are few men who do not find recreation and delight in a hobby of some kind. Such interests outside their regular occupations broaden their outlook and widen their knowledge. Some hobbies tend to lead to specialization, and the specialist is apt to become warped and narrowed; not so, however, the collector of household curios.

No Place Like Home.

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It would be difficult to find greater delight than that which centres in those things that concern the home and home life. The love of the old homestead and the goods and chattels it contains is ingrained in the breast of every Britisher; and although families become scattered and some of their members find homes of their own beyond the seas, they find the greatest delight in the objects with which they were familiar in years gone by, and venerate the relics of former generations—the household gods which have been handed on from father to son.

It is not the intrinsic value of the household curio that is its chief charm; it is rather the knowledge that its long association with those who have claimed its ownership from the time when it was "new" has made it truly a family relic. These thoughts, being so deeply rooted in the minds of most men and women, foster the love of household curios and intensify the interest shown in their possession.

To all it is not given to own family relics; neither would they serve to satiate the ambition of the true collector, although they might form the nucleus of his collection. He seeks other treasures in the town and in the country and wherever such things are offered for sale.

Curios in the Making.

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The domestic habits of the people of this and other civilized countries have been the outcome of a slow process

of upbuilding. There has been no sudden change; in all grades and under every different social condition, at every period, the improvement of the furnishings of the home has been one of gradual and, for the most part, steady progress.

There was a time when, beyond the bare furniture, tapestry hangings, tools of the craftsmen, and weapons of the warrior, there were few household goods of a portable nature. In mediæval England the oak chest was sufficient to contain the valuables of a large household; and very often beyond a cabinet or sideboard or corner cupboard there were few receptacles where anything of value could be safeguarded. The dower chest, in which the bride brought to her husband household linen and her stock of clothing, and in the wooden compartment in one corner of the chest her jewels and coin of the realm—if she possessed any—was then a prominent piece of furniture. The oak chest, rendered formidable with its massive lock and bolts, opened with a ponderous key, was the chosen receptacle in after-years as a treasure chest, and regarded as the safest place in which to keep valuable documents and other property. In the Public Record Office may be seen the old iron box in which the Domesday Book was kept for many centuries. The old City Companies have their treasure chests still; and boxes studded over with iron nails and fitted with large hasps and locks are pointed out in many old houses as passports to family standing.

The household curios which a collector seeks include objects of utility and ornament. Many of them are associated with household work, and quite a number of one-time kitchen and culinary utensils, as well as those which

were once cherished in the best parlour or withdrawing-room, are found places among such curios. During the last few years domestic architecture has passed through several stages of advancement. The stiff and formal Georgian houses, the painful Victorian villas, and some of the earlier attempts at architectural improvement have been swept away to make room for modern replicas of still older styles which have been revived or incorporated in the *nouveau* art, which touches the home in its architecture and internal decoration, as well as in its furnishings. In modern dwellings the Elizabethan style has often been followed, although modern conveniences have been incorporated. When furnishing such houses with suitable replicas of the antique the householders of the last quarter of a century have been unconsciously, perhaps, fostering the love of household antiques and providing fitting homes for their family curios.

The Day of the Curio Hunter.

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This is admittedly the day of curio hunting, and those who specialize on household curios have exceptional opportunities of displaying them to better advantage than those who cared for such things in the past. Perhaps it is because there were so few opportunities of arranging and displaying household antiques during the last three-quarters of the nineteenth century that many objects now treasured have been preserved so fresh and kept in such excellent condition. The housewives of the past generation were undoubtedly conservative in their retention of old household goods, and it is to their careful preservation that so many

objects of interest, although perhaps fully a century old, come to the collector in such perfect condition.

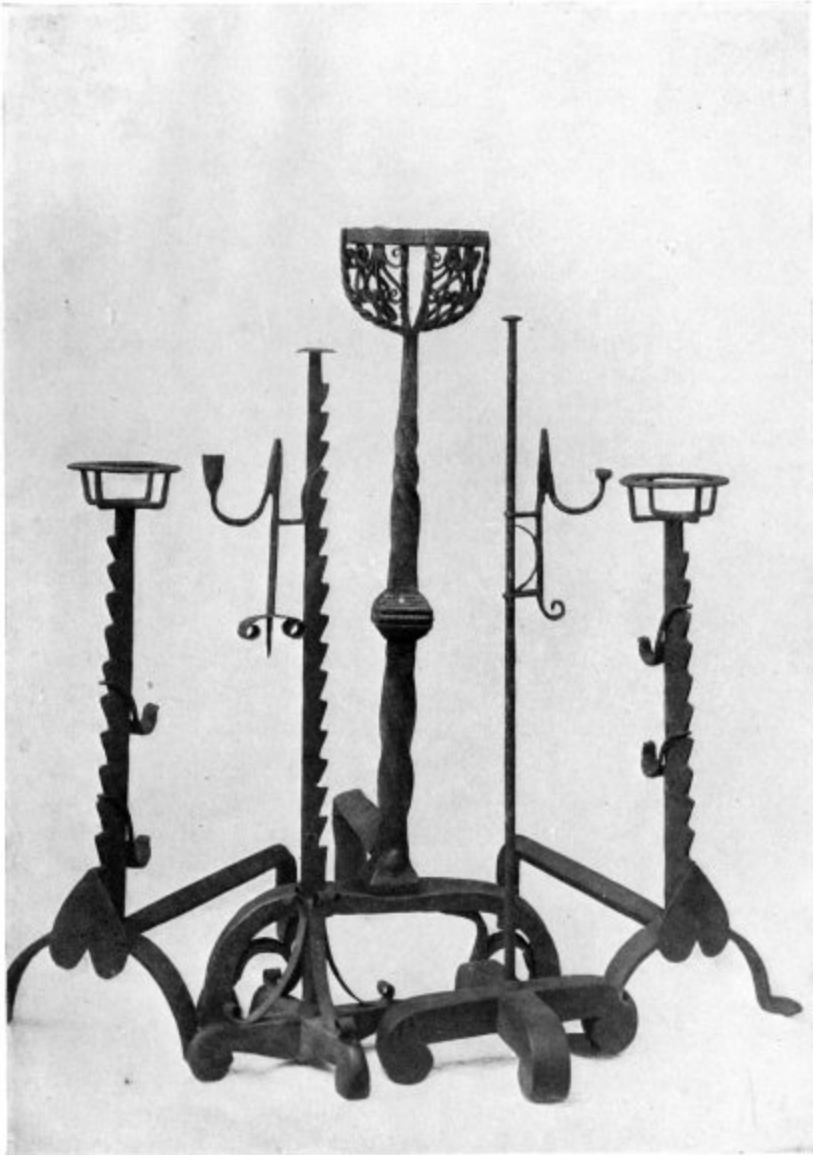
The patient labour expended by the amateur artist, the needleworker, and the connoisseur of home art a generation or two ago has provided the collector to-day with an exceptionally interesting class of curio, for there is much to admire in amateur craftsmanship, and especially in the handiwork of the needlewoman and the weaver and decorator of so many beautiful textiles which have been preserved to us. Sentiment was strong in the early nineteenth century, and among the love tokens of that day, chiefly the work of amateurs, some very beautiful and unique curios were produced. These, too, have come down to the collector of the twentieth century, and help him to secure specimens representing every decade, so that in a large collection, carefully selected, the slow and yet sure progress made in the fine arts, and the improvement in the ornamental surroundings in the home, is made clear. In each one of the different groups into which household curios may be divided there are many distinctive objects, all of which are in themselves interesting, but when viewed in association with other things which have been used at contemporary periods, or associated with the home life of persons similarly situated, but dwelling in different localities, are doubly interesting.

The Influence of Prevailing Styles.

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In determining the origin of curios, and defining the periods during which they have been made, it is useful to

have at least a little knowledge of the influence or character of the prevailing styles in the countries of origin. French art has exercised a great influence upon the productions of other nations; it has also been moulded by the curios and other articles of foreign origin then being sold in France. Regal and political influence have left their mark upon almost every period of French art, and have had much to do with the contemporary art of other nations, for France was for centuries a guide in most of the fine arts, and especially in those things which tended towards decorative effect. The furniture of France may be said to be an exponent of the country's history, so great has been the connection between French art, controlled by passing events, and its commercial products. It is said that the State pageants of the Louis XIV period tended to raise the tone of the work of French artisans and to encourage artists. That was a period of great development, for in the year 1670 the famous tapestry factories sprang into existence; and it must be admitted that the designing of those wonderful textiles influenced the manufacturers of furniture and smaller objects both in France and in other countries.



- FIG. 2.—ANDIRONS WITH RATCHETS.
FIG. 3.—ORNAMENTED CRESSET DOGS.
FIG. 4.—TELESCOPIC RUSH AND CANDLE HOLDER.
FIG. 5.—RATCHET RUSH AND CANDLE HOLDER.

Sir Christopher Wren is reputed to have been carried away by the influence of the Louis XIV art. It was in that King's reign, too, that Charles Boule perfected his veneers of tortoiseshell and fine brass work. Buhl cabinets, fancy

boxes, and many smaller objects found their way into this country, and are now household curios. When Philip of Orleans was Regent of France Boule introduced vermilion and gold-leaf as the groundwork upon which to throw up the beauty of tortoiseshell, and his designs became lavishly extravagant. Of these there are some beautiful examples extant; one, a facsimile of a bureau made in Paris in 1769, so elaborate that its cost was reputed to have been about £20,000, is to be seen in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House. In the reign of Louis XV great encouragement was given to the importation of lacquer work from China, influencing the creation of similar works in France; and it was owing to his support that the Vernis Martin enamels or varnishes were produced. Then came those beautiful paintings of landscapes with which so many of the rarer household curios dating from that period were ornamented.

The French style came over the Channel. Thus it was that French influence, as shown in its art in which its political history was reflected, permeated into the workshops of England. Then came the popularity of the designs of the Adam Brothers and Sheraton. During the Revolution in France art was at a standstill, but as soon as Napoleon had established his Empire artistic France began again, and we see its influence in the Empire ornament of furniture and curios. Perhaps one of the most striking instances of change in style was that in our own country when the Prince of Orange came over and William and Mary were crowned King and Queen. Dutch influence on the art of Great Britain was immediately seen, and in the curios of that period there is a remarkable difference between those produced at that time,

when Englishmen were content to allow the art of another nation to dominate their work, and those of an earlier date. Dutch marquetry is seen in cabinets and smaller household antiques in the manufacture of which panels were applicable. There was a change in design about the year 1695, just after Mary died, the characteristic seaweed following the floral, as if the very flowers had been banished after the Queen's death. The influence of the King and of his successors was very noticeable in the style and decoration of household goods; the history of this country at that time, just as the history of France had been, was reflected in the art of its craftsmen.

A Cultivated Taste.

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The love of the antique is regarded by some as a cultivated taste. The specialization upon any one branch of household curios may justly be regarded as such, but surely not the regard, almost reverence, for family relics, although they are but the common things of everyday life! Their collection stimulates the connoisseur, and encourages him to fresh exertions, and in that sense the habit of keeping a keen look out for anything that may illumine previous researches or add greater lustre to those things already secured, is gradually cultivated.

Household curios are not unassociated with the folklore of the district where such objects have been made, or were commonly in use; and the very names of many things, the uses of which are almost forgotten, are suggestive of former occupations and older methods of practising household

economy and the preparation of food. It is common knowledge that the purest old English is met with in the dialects of the countryside, and oftentimes once household words, now lost in modern speech, are found again when the old names or original purposes of the curios remaining to us are discovered. The cultivation of a taste for gathering together household antiques is much to be desired, and in the pursuit of such knowledge there is great pleasure—and as the value of genuine antiques is ever rising, some profit, too.

II

THE INGLE SIDE

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CHAPTER II

THE INGLE SIDE

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Fire-making appliances—Tinder boxes—The fireplace—Andirons and fire-dogs—Sussex backs—Fireirons and fenders—Trivets and stools—Bellows.

In winter the ingle side, or its equivalent in a modern house, appears to be the chief centre of attraction. It was ever so; and to-day the lessened necessity for crowding round the fire and sitting in the ingle nook, owing to modern methods of distributing the heat, in no way lessens the attraction which draws an Englishman to the fire. In the United States of America stoves of various kinds are deemed good substitutes, but in this country the open fire is preferred, and modern scientific research aims at perfecting and improving existing accepted methods of heating and warming rooms rather than of displacing them.

In the days when the earliest collectable curios of the ingle side were being made by the village smith, and the local sculptor and mason were preparing the chimney corner and the mantelpiece to surround the fireplace, it was in front of the great open fire in the kitchen, before which the large joints were roasted, that the retainers of the baron and the landowner or lord of the manor assembled on winter nights. It was around the fire which crackled on the hearth in the great hall that the more favoured ones forgathered, and in the lesser homestead the family drew up

their chairs and found seats in the ingle nook, near the fire, when snow was upon the ground, and frost and cold draughts made them shiver in the houseplace.

The fireplace has its attractions still, and builders and architects have designed many cosy corners within reach of the fire. The furnishings of the hearth have become more decorative as times have become more luxurious and art has gained the ascendant; and sometimes their greater ornament has been at the sacrifice of utility, but the root principles of construction as seen in the older grates and fire appointments remain.



ANCIENT ROMAN FIRE-DOG.
(*In the National Museum at Naples.*)

FIG. 6.—



FIG. 7.—

SUSSEX GRATE BACK, DATED 1588.

Fire-making Appliances.

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It seems natural to inquire into the origin of the need of a fireplace, and to do so we must go back to prehistoric times and trace the discovery of fire-making apparatus, for without the means of lighting a fire it is obvious that the grate would be useless. With the fire came artificial light, the two great discoveries being perfected side by side, sometimes the one gaining ground, at others the one that had fallen behind shooting ahead as the result of some great discovery, or the application of scientific principles not deemed of utility to the one or the other as the case might be. The fire-making appliances which were in use for the

purpose of lighting fires were of course used long before any scheme of artificial lighting—apart from the flames and radiance from the fire. Professor Flinders Petrie, that great investigator into the antiquities of the Ancients, tells us that fire-making by friction has been found to exist in far-off times. It would appear that the discovery of how to produce fire has been accomplished independently by men living under very different conditions and at all ages. The fire-making of the Ancients has been rediscovered by primitive people in more recent days, although it is probable that native races who until recently have been living apart from the great world outside have moved slowly in their march of civilization, and have been using the same methods as those first tried by their ancestors ages ago. In the unrivalled collection of appliances got together by Professor Petrie, there are fire drills from the Transvaal, bow drills used by the Esquimaux, and fire ploughs from North Queensland. Lighting fires must have been a slow and difficult task in the days when tinder boxes were in request, for when Curfew rang and the *couvre de feu* had done its work there was no fire in which to thrust the torch, and the entire process had to be gone over again when the fire had once more to be kindled.

Tinder Boxes.

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The tinder box, formerly a real necessary, was to be found in every house, and in many instances, in the days before lucifer matches, it was a desirable pocket companion. Tinder boxes were made of different materials;

some were of wood, others of iron or brass. They lent themselves to ornamentation: thus some were engraved and quite artistic; many of the more recent ones were made of tin, and on the covers were decorative little scenes. The contents of the tinder boxes were of course flint and steel and tinder (something very inflammable, such as scorched linen), with a damper for extinguishing the smouldering fire after a light had been obtained, or in later days by the sulphur-tipped match applied to it. Among the varieties are what are termed pistol tinder boxes, instruments which contained a small charge of gunpowder, which, when fired, lighted the tinder. Tinder pouches or purses containing flint and tinder having a piece of steel riveted on to the edge of the purse or pouch were a common form. Those brought over from Central Asia were frequently decorated with dragons and the swastika symbol, in damascened work.

Many inventions were put forward by chemists before the perfecting of the common match, the wax vesta, and the fusee. One of these was Berry's apparatus, which he devised in the beginning of the nineteenth century, calling it a "contrivance for lighting lamps in the dark." It consisted of an acid bottle with a string by which a conical stopper could be raised, and a chlorate match held against the stopper became ignited.

Match boxes are collectable, and collectors of fire-making and lighting contrivances often include a few old matches. The lucifer match consisted of sticks tipped with potassium chlorate and sugar, held together with gum, igniting when touched with concentrated sulphuric acid. They were invented in 1805, and by the year 1820 had quite taken the