

THE SPEAKER'S MACE.

By H. M. CUNDALL, F.S.A.

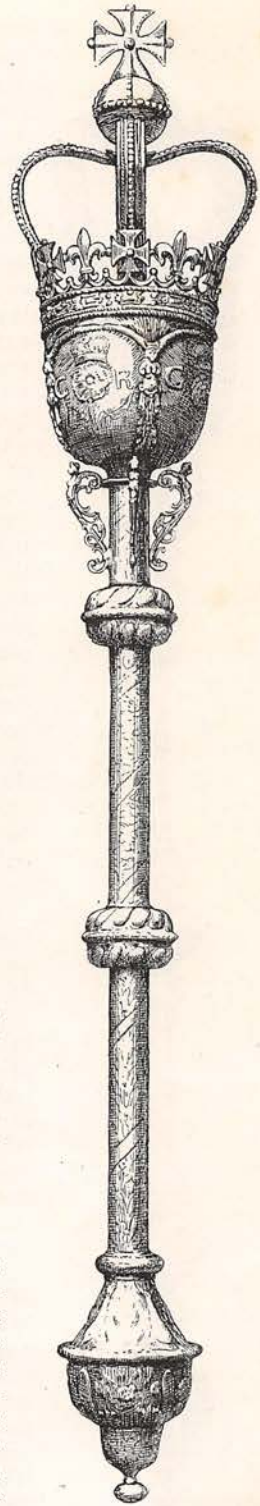
With Illustrations by THOMAS RILEY.

THE early form of the mace was a short staff with a round head, which in the middle ages became converted into flanges. As early as the fourteenth century the Sergeants-at-Arms or body attendants of the King carried these maces as a badge of office, and it was then necessary to adorn them with the royal arms. This was done by fashioning the lower end into a button, and placing the arms on it. It is the opinion of many antiquaries, that when the mace was discontinued as a weapon, and used solely as a symbol, it was reversed; and that the small button increased by degrees until in the seventeenth century it developed into its present large bell-shaped form with the addition of an open arched crown, surmounted by an orb and a cross, while the flanges grew less and less until they disappeared entirely and were replaced by various ornamentations.

At the South Kensington Museum there is a small silver mace belonging to Lord Zouche, which was formerly borne before the Warden of the Port of Chichester. This is a good illustration of the mace in the transition state. The head is semi-globular, and surmounted with a crown and the arms of King James I.; whilst the end of the stem is of iron with eight flanges.

The Speaker of the House of Commons made a statement at Leamington, in August, 1890, to the effect that a rumour was going about that there was at Kingston in Jamaica a mace which purported to be the veritable bauble Cromwell ordered to be removed when he dissolved the Long Parliament. In consequence considerable interest has recently been taken both in the present mace in the House of Commons and those in Jamaica. With regard to the former Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, Assistant Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries, is of opinion that probably as early as the time of Edward III. there was a mace in the House of Commons as a symbol of royalty, and has ascertained that a new one was ordered to be made in 1649 by a certain Thomas Maundy. This was the mace which Cromwell called "that fool's bauble," and which is supposed to be now in Jamaica; Mr. Hope, however, has ascertained that it could not have left England, as within a few days of the assembling of the Barebones Parliament the mace was ordered to be brought back to the House of Commons.

At the Restoration of the monarchy another new mace was ordered. This mace is at present in use, and when the House is not in session it is kept in the custody of the Lord Chamberlain at St. James's Palace. It is silver gilt, measuring 4 feet 10½ inches in length, and weighing 251 oz. 2 dwt. 2 gr. The head is decorated with four royal badges, and on the top the royal arms of Charles II. Judging from the ornamentation on the shaft of this mace, Mr. Hope considers that it is the same stem as made by Thomas Maundy, and that it is quite possible that the old head and foot were recast in 1660 to form the new head and foot, and so far from the famous bauble having been lost, it may be said to all intents and purposes to be still borne before the Speaker of the House of Commons.



MACE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE SPEAKER'S MACE.

There are at the present time two maces in Jamaica, and the older of the two has been thought to be the bauble. This, however, is entirely erroneous, as both maces bear the hall marks of the second half of the eighteenth century, and the decoration is of the same period. They were, it is believed, used by the old House of Assembly till some time in Sir John Peter Grant's administration, when their use was discontinued. They are now deposited in the Institute of Jamaica. Both are extremely fine silver-gilt maces, and exceptionally large, each measuring 5 feet 6 inches in length. Around the head of each are the emblems of England and Scotland combined, of Ireland and of France, and the arms of Jamaica. The royal arms are on the top of both. The older one, weighing 297 oz. 5 dwts., bears the London hall marks, and date letter of 1753 and the maker's mark, H.G., whilst the other has the hall marks and date letter of 1787 and maker's mark, M.F. There are, however, evidences of a mace being in Jamaica in the seventeenth century, for, according to the archives kept at Kingston, it appears that Lord Windsor, the first Governor of Jamaica, sent from England by Charles II., took with him a mace, which was carried before him on solemn occasions as a mark of his authority.

After Lord Windsor's departure the first assembly was convened at St. Jago de la Vega in 1664, and then adjourned to meet at Port Royal, and Sir Henry Blake, the present Governor of Jamaica, in a recent communication to the Speaker of the House of Commons, says, "No record exists to show that during that century the council afterwards met elsewhere. It is probable that the mace was in Port Royal in 1672, and went down with the public buildings and all the records in the great earthquake of that year." Mr. Hope in his research has been unable to ascertain what became of the mace, which was displaced by Maundy's new one in 1649. Is it not possible that this was the one sent out to Jamaica by Charles II. in 1664, and subsequently disappeared at Port Royal? And the fact that a new mace was ordered for the House of Commons in 1660, may perhaps be an explanation of the tradition that the bauble was sent to Jamaica.



JAMAICA MACE OF 1753.



JAMAICA MACE OF 1787.