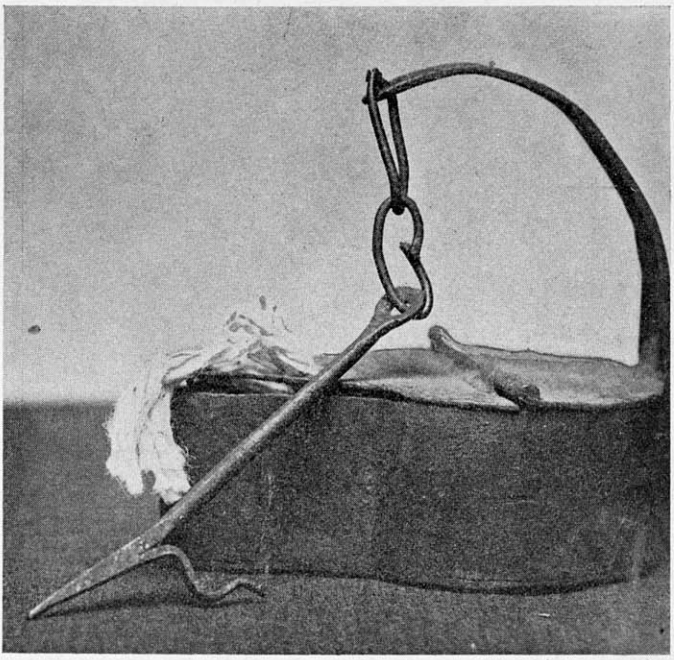
WORK OF ROBERT JARVIE

AN APPRECIATION OF THE WORK OF ROBERT JARVIE.

To the true student the more difficult the task of obtaining knowledge on any subject, the more interesting and diligent becomes the pursuit. The task of discovering any authentic and connected information relating to the history of the lighting of homes and public buildings is most difficult. Practically nothing important concerning it has been written in English, and those who would know more of the means used by the ancients and by our own ancestors to dispel the shades of darkness, have been obliged to content thmeselves with stories of ancient times, pictures of primitive interiors, stray articles concerning the customs of our forefathers, and the few genuine relics which have remained.

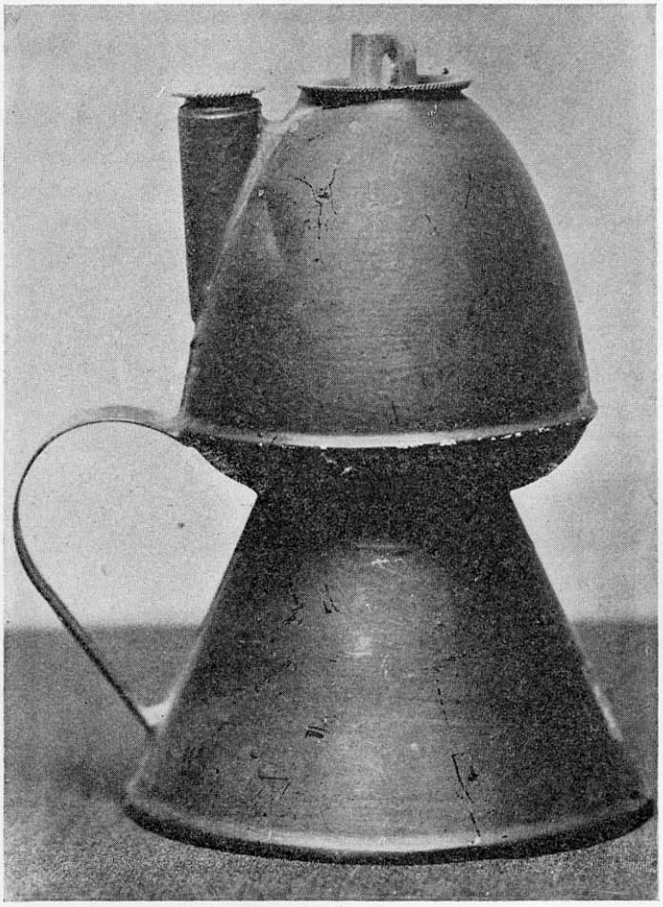
Mr. Robert Jarvie, of Chicago, became interested in this study almost by accident. Although a business man, he possesses a strong artistic impulse; from his boyhood he has been fond of "making things," and has devoted much time to various forms of art:—cabinet making, pen and ink sketches, and book binding, in a desultory way. He chanced one day into the antique shop of a friend who asked him where an iron lantern might be found,—one with horn lights like the old Dutch lanterns. Without hesitation he replied that he could get one made, and would design it from an old cut. There was no doubt in his mind that to get a simple iron frame made would be an easy matter, and horn,—were not thousands of cattle slain each day at the Stock Yards?—surely they could be had in abundance. An old Hollander was found whose confidence in his own ability to make a Dutch lantern was unbounded. He received the order, and Mr. Jarvie hurried away for the horn. He found horns in abundance, but horns just off the head are far from being nicely polished pieces for lantern lights. He bought several specimens, however, and took them home, but after a few sad experiments gave up his attempts to cut and polish this very raw material. His discouragement was further enhanced by a visit to the old Dutchman, whose idea of a lantern was far removed



Iron grease lamp, period 1600

from the one entertained by Mr. Jarvie, and who, unfortunately, was one of those persons not amenable to criticism.

Determined to succeed—being a Scotchman—Mr. Jarvie purchased sheet iron and rivets, and at a temporary work bench set up in one corner of the dining-room of his apartment, began his serious work as a craftsman. Only the angels who hover about the earnest arts and crafts workers can tell why he was not driven forth from that building by the irate tenants below, when nightly the sound of his hammer was persistently heard. After much difficulty, he succeeded in getting flat pieces of polished horn which he bent himself. At last, the lantern stood before him complete,—as shown in illustration—and it soon hung in front of his friend's shop.

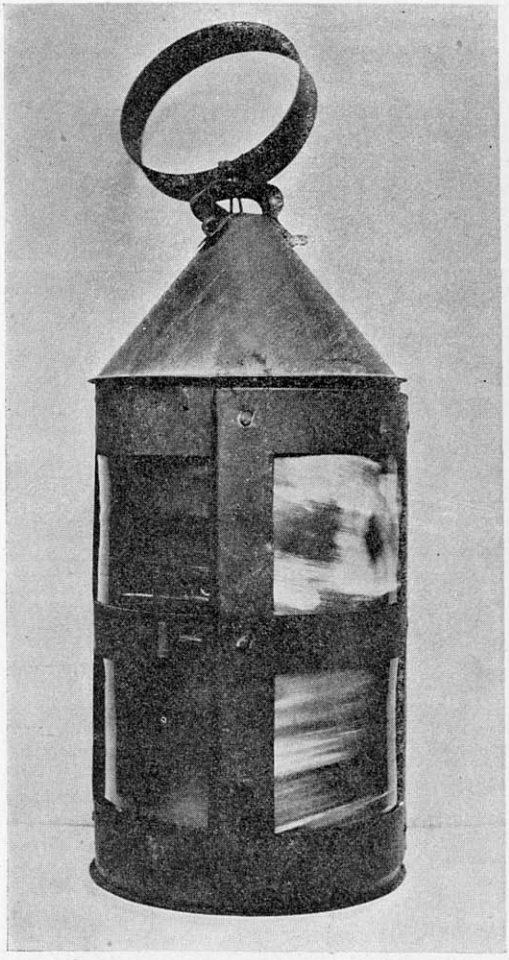


Petticoat lamp: tin; period 1800

The making of this lantern not only revealed to Mr. Jarvie his ability to do good work in metal, but turned his attention to interior illumination. He began to haunt libraries, art galleries and antique shops in an endeavor to discover the history of this most interesting subject, from the fires lighted on the domestic altars of the ancients,—which served for illumination as well as religious observance—and the blazing pine torches thrust into the clay walls of the primitive log cabins of our own country to the delicately shaped modern electroliers. He has succeeded so well that he expects soon to publish the results of his researches. In his workshop may be seen an interesting collection of American lamps, from the queer little iron grease lamps of the sixteenth century to the modern kerosene oil lamps.

One blessing which the taste for "old things" has brought lies in the more artistic lighting of our homes; for in place of the high, flaring gas jets and glaring electric bulbs we may now have the mellow light of

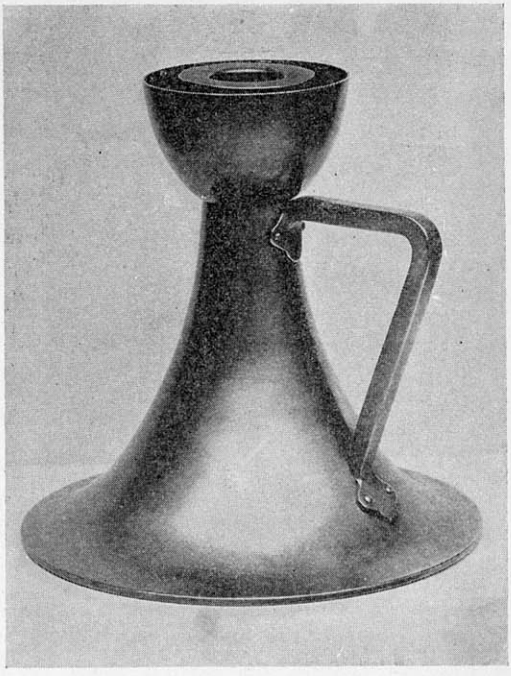
candles and of lamps practically, as well as artistically shaded. We may have even the



Dutch lantern, iron with horn lights

bayberry candles with their faint green tinge and delightful fragrance so cherished by pioneer housewives, the making of which craftswomen in the East have revived. But Mr. Jarvie was not satisfied with the modern candlesticks he found in the shops, and following his custom of making for himself what he cannot find elsewhere, he designed and made a brass candlestick. Its success was so great that others soon followed, and Mr. Jarvie earned for himself the sobriquet of "The Candlestickmaker."

Nearly all this work is of cast brass or copper, brush polished, a process which leaves the metal with a dull glow. Some pieces are cast in bronze and their unpolished surfaces are treated with acids which produce an exquisite antique green finish. There is also a quaint design in spun brass: a low candlestick with a handle, quite different from the tall ones. The charm of these candlesticks is in their simplicity and purity of form. The graceful outlines and soft lustre of the unembellished metal combine to produce

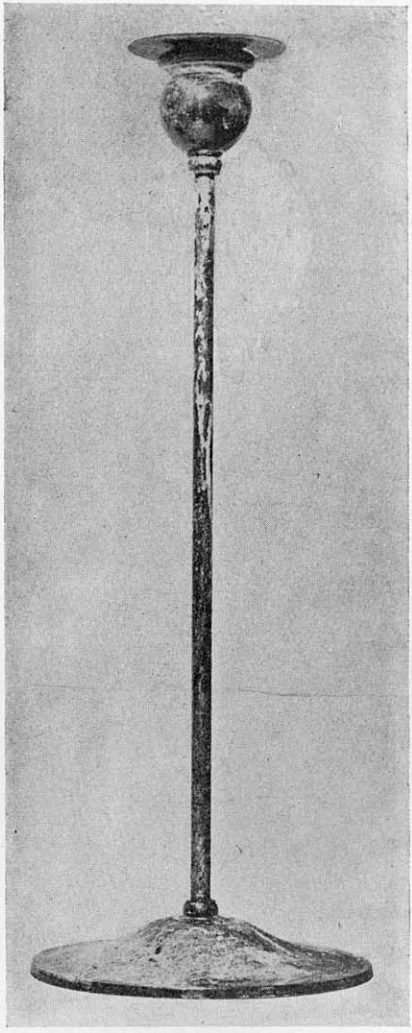


Candlestick: spun brass, 6 inches high

dignity as well as beauty, and the possessor of one of the Jarvie candlesticks must feel

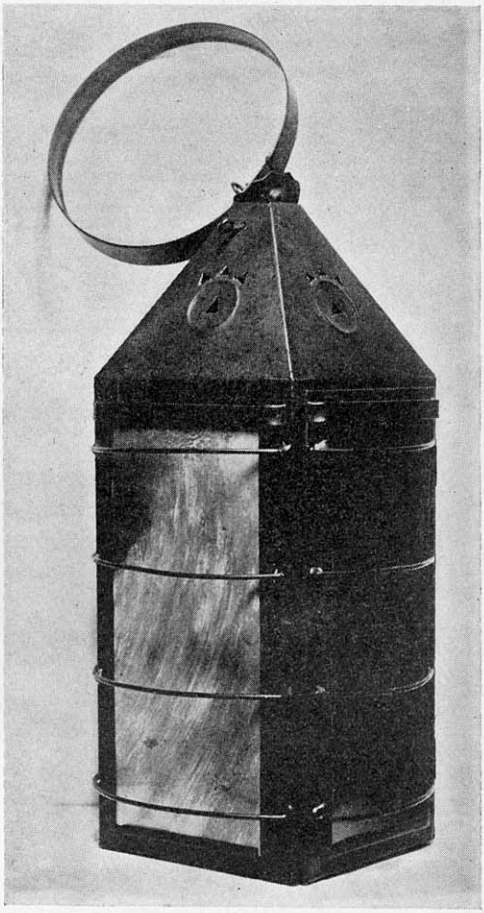
that nothing tawdry or frivolous can be placed by its side.

While most of Mr. Jarvie's productions



Spun brass, 13 inches high

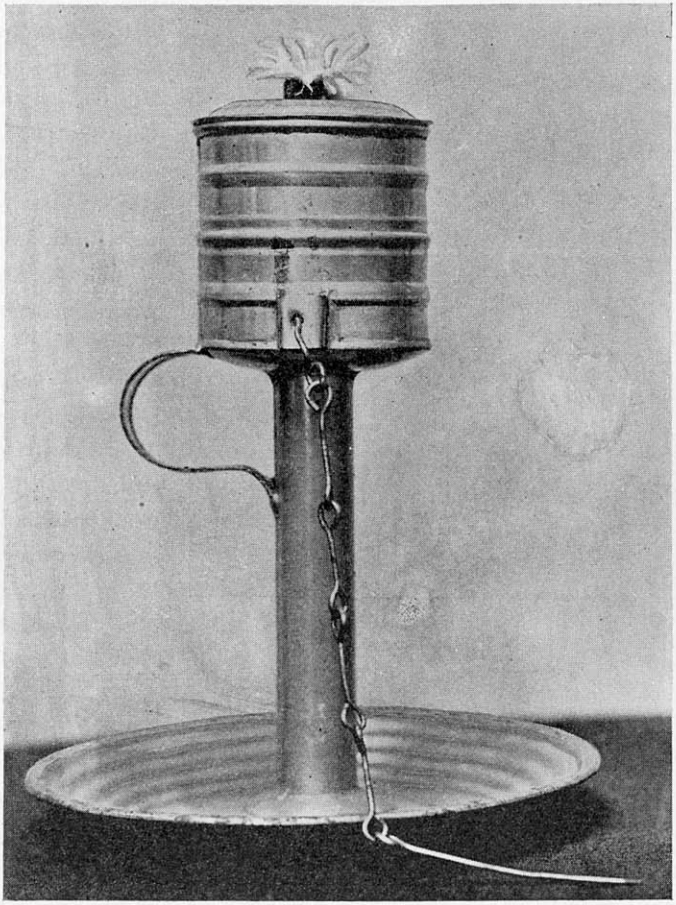
and design and make for it a shade, not only artistic and harmonious, but practical as well. The material for these shades is opalescent glass, put together with narrow copper strips or fine lead. One has but to visit the department and even the so-called art stores crowded with impossible creations



Iron lantern with horn lights

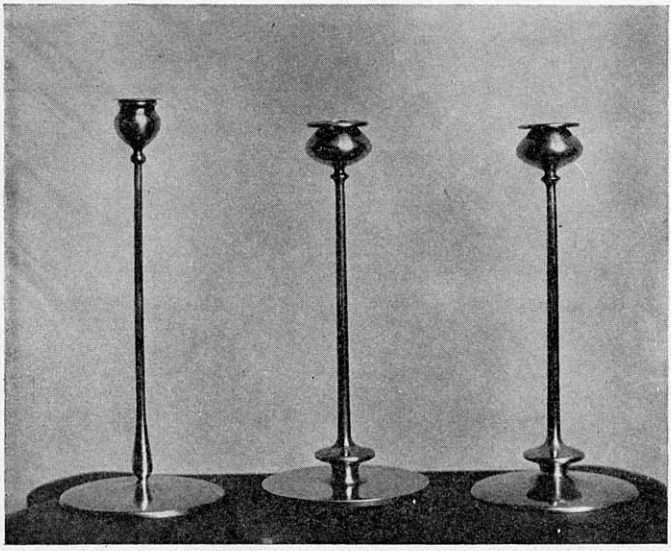
are candlesticks, his greatest personal interest is in lamps and lamp shades, and nothing delights him more than to discover a suitable vase or jar, to convert it into a lamp, of metal, gauze, silk, beads and paper, in order to appreciate the quiet but satisfying beauty of Mr. Jarvie's lampshades.

The motive in all Mr. Jarvie's work is



TIN GREASE LAMP; PERIOD 1650

utility and simple beauty rather than a striving for striking effects. He believes that a candlestick is not the place for the display of the human form, and that sea



Candlesticks: brush finished brass

shells and mushrooms should be viewed in their native element rather than as shades for lamps.

HINGHAM ARTS AND CRAFTS. THEIR AIMS AND OBJECTS. BY C. CHESTER LANE.

THE Hingham Society of Arts and Crafts was organized two years ago. Its object is "to promote artistic work in all branches of handicraft. It hopes to bring designers and workmen into mutually helpful relations, and to encourage workmen to execute designs of their own. It endeavors to stimulate an appreciation of the dignity and value of good design, and to establish a medium of exchange between the producer and the consumer."*

The movement started among a few people who realized the possibilities of industrial development in the old town. Hingham was one of the earliest settled points on the Massachusetts coast, and is rich in historical associations. The early inhabitants were industrious, intelligent, and well-to-do. They brought with them from the mother country not only a knowledge of farming, but also a fair proficiency in the mechanical arts. As time went on, special lines of industry came into prominence, and Hingham manufactures were widely known and widely used. The Hingham bucket was especially famous and found its way into almost every household in New England.

Other manufactures were more or less successful, but the perfecting of machinery in the latter part of the nineteenth century threw much of the costlier handmade product out of the market. America has had her Dark Ages of workmanship and design, when houses were filled with ugly, ill-made furniture and crude decorations. The ginger jars and drain pipes covered with gaudy pictures and varnished with a heavy glaze, the *macramé* lambrequins which hid the beautiful lines of colonial mantelpieces, the sideboards and rocking-chairs with no semblance of beauty or usefulness: these,

*From the circular issued by the Society of Arts and Crafts, Hingham, Mass.