

DISCOVERY OF AN IRON INSTRUMENT LATELY FOUND IMBEDDED IN A
NATURAL SEAM OF COAL IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF GLASGOW.

A communication was then read from John Buchanan, Esq., relative to the discovery of an iron instrument, lately found imbedded in a natural seam of coal in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. The instrument which was exhibited to the Meeting was considered to be modern. In his communication Mr Buchanan remarks:—

“ I send herewith, for the inspection of the Society, a very curious iron instrument found last week in this locality. The interest attaching to this singular relic arises from the fact of its having been discovered *in the heart of a piece of coal*, seven feet under the surface. To explain particulars, I beg to mention, that a new line of road, called the Great Western Road, was opened a few years ago, leading to the Botanic Gardens, which, you may be aware, are situated about two miles north-west from Glasgow. At a point on this new road are the lands of Burnbank, now in course of being extensively built upon. The person conducting these building operations is Mr Robert Lindsay, wright and builder, a most respectable individual, well known to me, and on whose veracity implicit confidence may be placed. Now, when Mr Lindsay came to excavate the foundations along the north side of the road for the range of houses, he cut through a bed of diluvium or clay mixed with boulders, *seven feet thick*, and then came on a seam of coal about twenty-two inches thick, cropping out almost to the very surface, and resting on freestone. It was necessary to remove this coal and cut into the stone below, which last was very opportune for building purposes. A quantity of the coal so removed was carted over to Mr Lindsay's workshop or yard for use; and while his nephew, Robert Lindsay junior, an apprentice, was breaking up a block of the coal, he was surprised to find the iron instrument now sent *in the very heart of it*. At first neither he nor the others about him could make out what it was, but after scraping and cleaning it from the coaly coating, it presented the appearance now before you. I send along with it a portion of the coal. Having been

made aware of this discovery, I lost no time in seeing Mr Lindsay senior ; and accompanied him this day to the spot, and had the circumstances detailed to me by his nephew, and several of the respectable operatives who *saw* the instrument taken from the coal ; and all of whom, Mr Lindsay senior assures me, are persons whose statements may be implicitly relied upon."

The affidavits of five workmen who saw the iron instrument taken from the coal were also sent, and Mr Buchanan further adds :—

" I quite agree in the generally received geological view, that coal was formed long before man was introduced upon this planet ; but the puzzle is, how this implement, confessedly of human hands, should have found its way into the coal seam, overlaid as the latter was by a heavy mass of diluvium and boulders. If the workmen who saw the relic disinterred are to be depended on (and I have no reason whatever to doubt their perfect veracity), then there may and *must* be some mode of accounting for the implement finding its way down eight or nine vertical feet from the surface."

It was suggested that in all probability the iron instrument might have been part of a borer broken during some former search for coal.

I. CONVERSAZIONE.—Dec. 15, 1852.

The First Conversazione of the Season took place in the Society's Rooms, George Street, on the evening of December 15, 1852.

Sir WILLIAM JOHNSTON of Kirkhill, in the Chair.

ALEXANDER CHRISTIE, Esq. F.S.A. Scot., delivered a lecture on the Bayeux tapestry, and its uses and value as a national historical chronicle. Fac-similes of this famous work, copied from the original in the Cathedral of Bayeux, contributed by the Rev. J. Collingwood Bruce, Newcastle-on-Tyne, author of "The Roman Wall," &c., were exhibited, suspended around the Museum. The fac-similes were drawn and coloured, and of the same size as the original.

The Bayeux tapestry, ascribed to Queen Matilda, the consort of William the Conqueror, is perhaps the most ancient and valuable of the pictorial chronicles of England. It delineates the events of the struggle for the throne of England which ended in the battle of *Hastings* and the overthrow of *Harold* ; and affords, in the primitive style of the needle decoration of the eleventh century, many

remarkable illustrations of the character, habits, and manners of the Saxons and Normans. Its length is 214 feet, by 19 in breadth, and consists of seventy-four scenes or groups.

The lecturer divided the pictorial tragedy into five acts, as follows:—*1st*, The adventures of Harold at the Court of Normandy, as representing Edward the Confessor; *2d*, The Bréton war, in which Harold aided William; *3d*, The death of the Confessor, and the acceptance of the crown by Harold; *4th*, The preparations and landing of William in England; and, *5th*, The battle of Hastings and the death of Harold. He alluded to the arguments which had been brought forward to disprove the contemporaneous date of the tapestry, and gave it as his opinion that most probably it was executed by the orders of the Queen Matilda, and by her presented to Odo, bishop of Bayeux, the brother of the Conqueror, who figures conspicuously in the tapestry, and was placed by him in his Cathedral, where it remained till within the last century, and was stretched round the choir on high days and holy days.

In pointing out the intrinsic evidences of the antiquity of the tapestry, Mr Christie, after enumerating those so ably and learnedly put forth in the "Archæologia," drew attention to one or two points which appear to have escaped the notice of the disputants. In the second division we have this epigraph "Ibi Haroldus Dux Anglorum et sui milites equitant ad Bosham," and Harold is represented with an unhooded hawk on his wrist. Now the sport of hawking, though passionately followed at the time of the Conquest, was not brought to perfection in Europe till the 12th century. Frederick Barbarossa is said to have been the first who brought falcons into Italy, and Frederick II. wrote a treatise, still preserved in the Vatican, on the nature and breeding of birds; and either he or his son Manfred of Sicily (according to Albertus Magnus), wrote a treatise in Latin, "De Arte Venandi cum Avibus." In the second book there is an account of the use and manner of making hoods, called capellæ; he says, "the hood had its origin among Oriental nations; for the eastern Arabs used it more than any other people with whom we are acquainted in taming falcons and birds of the same species. When I crossed the sea I had an opportunity of observing that the Arabs used hoods in this act; some of the kings of Arabia sent to me the most expert falconers with various kinds of falcons; and I did not fail, after I had resolved to collect into a book everything respecting falconry, to invite from Arabia and every other country such as were most skilful in it; and I received from them the best information they were able to give. Because the use of the hood was one of the most effectual methods they knew for taming hawks, and as I saw the great benefit of it, I employed a hood in training these birds; and it has been so much approved in Europe that it

is proper it should be handed down to posterity." So completely has this most characteristic point escaped notice that Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, in his Romance of Harold, when he notices the hawks of his characters, always mentions them as hooded (there cannot be a more learned, agreeable, or lively handbook to the Bayeux tapestry than the third volume of this romance). The representation throughout the tapestry of the unhooded hawk is a convincing proof of the genuine date of the work. While describing the proofs of antiquity given by the nature of the architecture, armour, and costume, which have already been given at great length in the "Archæologia" and elsewhere, Mr Christie noticed the 17th epigraph, "Ubi unus clericus et Ælfgiva," regarding which some commentators held that it must be Adeliza, the daughter of William, whose hand was promised to Harold, but the head-gear of the female figure is decisive as to her Saxon origin, as the women of that nation wore it of linen or silk, and wrapped it round the neck. The Norman head-gear on the contrary was a couvre-chef or kerchief placed chiefly on the back of the head, and partly on the shoulders, with the hair arranged in two long plaits before and behind; and the Norman dresses were cut tight to the shape, whereas this of Ælfgiva is long and loose. This compartment then must refer to some anecdote well known at that time, but not handed down to us.

The second new proof adduced by Mr Christie is seen in the 35th epigraph "Stigant Arch. Eps." In this representation Stigand does not wear the mitre. The use of this distinction seems to have been unknown in the church till the 11th century; and it does not appear to have been worn even then without special licence from the pope. This fact also fixes the date of the chessmen cut from the walrus tooth, and found in the Lewis. The bishops in these sets are mitred, and the mitre is short, shewing that the figures were cut after the privilege of the mitre had been granted, and before the mitre was worn high.

Besides noticing these proofs of the dates of the work, Mr Christie explained the events delineated, and drew attention to many curious illustrations which were presented of the manners and customs of the age, and of the national characteristics of the contending parties. At the close

Professor Campbell Swinton moved a vote of thanks to Mr Christie for his very interesting lecture; which was seconded by Mr D. Rhind, and unanimously agreed to.

Dr Wilson also proposed a cordial vote of thanks to the Rev. Mr Collingwood Bruce, for his kindness in sending the fac-similes for exhibition.