

III.

NOTICE OF BRONZE RELICS, &c., FOUND IN THE ISLE OF SKYE.

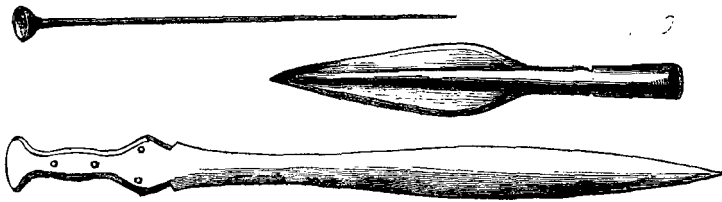
By JOHN ALEX. SMITH, M.D., F.S.A. Scot.

In the months of October and November last I visited the Isle of Skye; and at Armadale Castle, the Right Honourable Lord Macdonald kindly showed me various bronze relics in his possession, of which I made rough sketches; these I now lay before the Society.

The first I shall notice is a group of weapons belonging to a very early period, consisting of a Bronze Sword, two Bronze Spear-heads, and a long, narrow, pointed Pin of Bronze. They were found, some five or six years ago, by a man while cutting peats, about four miles across the island from Armadale Castle, and about half a mile from

the sea-coast, on the north side of the Point of Sleat, between the farm of Gillean, and Achnacloich. The Bronze Leaf-shaped Sword is beautifully formed; it measures $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch at its greatest breadth of blade, and 2 inches across the upper part of the handle; there is a perforation through the middle of the handle, with two shallow depressions above and one below, on each side, by means of which the outer handle of wood or bone had been attached. It is of the usual type of those found in various parts of the country, but of rather more than ordinary elegance in its shape and finish, and considerably resembles in its details two specimens in the Museum, which were found, during the construction of the Queen's Drive in 1846, on the southern slope of Arthur Seat.

The two Bronze Spear-heads, one of which only is shown in the drawing, are almost exactly alike, measuring $7\frac{8}{16}$ inches in length and $1\frac{1}{2}$



inch across the widest part of the cusp. The socket in which the shaft had been fixed forms about half the length of the spear-head; it is 1 inch in diameter, and also tapers gradually along the middle of the blade to the point of the spear. The socket is perforated by a hole on each side to admit the nails for fixing the spear-head to the shaft. [Spear-heads, similar in character to those described, have been found in various parts of the country. Some, in the Museum, form part of the interesting collection of bronze weapons, leaf-shaped swords, &c., generally more or less injured by fire, which were discovered in a bed of shell marl at the bottom of Duddingston Loch in 1780. Indeed, the spear-heads found there seem to have been principally of this type. Another spear-head in the Museum, of similar type, but smaller in size, was found, with a cinerary urn and several bronze armlets, in trenching a field near the

old castle of Kinneff, Forfarshire.] With these weapons was found a long, narrow, rounded, tapering instrument, or Pin of Bronze, measuring $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in breadth across its upper part or neck, above which it expands into a cup-shaped cavity or head about $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch in depth and $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch in diameter, and in the bottom of this cup a small point projects upwards about $\frac{1}{3}$ of an inch (see woodcut, in which, for the sake of convenience, these weapons are figured of different scales). It is not easy to conceive the use of the long-pointed weapon, unless we suppose it to have been a hair-pin, or a long pin for fastening together the loose robe or dress, or merely the tongue of a fibula or brooch, as the cup may have been the socket for containing an ornamental head of stone or amber: it would appear, however, from its length and sharpness, to be rather a dangerous ornament for ordinary wear. I have not observed any similar pointed weapon of bronze described. These relics are made of the yellowish-coloured bronze, and were found lying all together, along with several pieces of oaken boards about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, and of nearly the same length as the sword, and were supposed to be portions of a strong box within which the weapons had been placed; or perhaps simply a protecting bundle of boards that had been carefully wrapped round them; and from the shortness of the oaken package, there had of course been no handles or shafts fixed in the spear-heads. The weapons do not appear to have been much used, as far as one can judge; and from their style and finish, it becomes a question, whether these very ancient weapons could have been of native island manufacture, or belonged to some trader, who had found his way at a very early period to these wild western coasts of Scotland. No other remains of any kind were found beside them in the peat bog.

The other bronze relic I have to notice, although still ancient, belongs to a very much later date than those I have just described. It is a very elegantly-formed Bronze Spur, chased and jewelled (see figure). The shanks are about four inches in length along the side, and curved to fit the ankle, terminating in a double loop at each extremity for fastening it on the foot. The neck is $1\frac{1}{3}$ inch in length, and terminates in a prick or four-sided and sharp-pointed extremity or head, measuring about 1 inch in length. The spur is chased over with a pattern of interlacing ribbons,

enclosing quatrefoils, and has three oval-shaped sockets for gems projecting from each shank ; on the one side three of these sockets are filled



with transparent gems, or perhaps coloured glass ; on the other shank only one socket retains the stone, which is of a pale blue colour. There is also a socket on the stem or neck, which is now empty, and two side by side on the upper part of the tapering or slightly concave and sharp-pointed head ; only one of these gems now remains, and is of a green colour. The spur shows traces of having once been gilded. One of the shanks is partially bent, apparently by some instrument, which has left three deep indentations on the outside, and cracked the centre gem ; as if it had been forcibly torn from the foot.

The spur was found about thirty years ago, when the loch at Monkstadt was drained. Monkstadt is in the north of Skye, in the parish of Kilmuir. It is the property of Lord Macdonald, and on what was once an island, formerly surrounded by the waters of the loch, there are still to be seen the remains of ecclesiastical buildings of great antiquity, to which Dr Reeves, in his lately published edition of Adamnan's *Life of St Columba* refers, as probably belonging to the times of St Columba, or that of his immediate successors. The spur is apparently Norman, and belongs probably to the eleventh or twelfth century ; it closely resembles one figured at page 104 of Fairholt's "*Costume in England*," which is described as having been of the kind formerly used at tournaments.

Lord Macdonald also informed me that several chessmen, carved in ivory, were found in this loch at Monkstadt during the process of draining, and are now in the possession of Lord Londesborough.

[A chess-piece, carved from the tusk, it is believed, of a walrus or sea-horse, was presented to the Museum of the Society by a former Lord

Macdonald in 1782, and was described as being the handle of a Highland dirk, for which purpose it had probably been used. (Two figures of it are here given.) It represents two helmed knights, seated back to back,



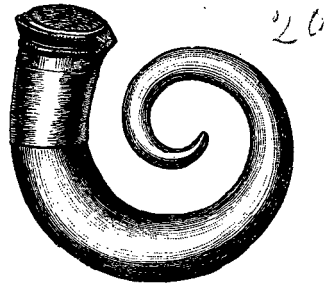
in what appears intended for plate armour, armed with drawn sword in right hand, and shield on left arm, charged apparently with armorial bearings; and interlacing bands, terminating in foliage, fill up the space betwixt and around the knights. It is of the age probably of the twelfth century]. These relics, which I have described, with others of a similar character found in the Lewis and elsewhere, seem to suggest a degree of refinement and art which we might not at first expect to find at that early period in the Western Islands.

One or two minor antiquities may also be noticed :

Lady Macdonald kindly informed me, that in the latter part of October last there was brought to her what seemed to be the top of a barrel, and a portion of red deer's hide which had been wrapped round it; the barrel was filled with what was supposed to be tallow. It was discovered in a moss, where a man was digging peats, towards the Point of Sleat. At the time this occurred Lady Macdonald was particularly engaged, and regretted she had not desired the barrel to be brought for her in-

spection. In all probability the barrel was similar to those which have been found in the bogs of Ireland, filled with bog-butter, as it has been called, one of which is represented in the first part of the Catalogue of the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. I am not aware of any notice of similar barrels having previously been found in Scotland.

I also made a sketch (see figure) of a personal relic, of considerable interest, a Snuff-horn or Mull, mounted in silver, with an agate set in the lid, and a band of silver round the upper part of the horn; it is of the slender form of those formerly used by ladies. The horn was the property of the celebrated Flora Macdonald, and was presented to the Lady Macdonald by Mr Macdonald, Monkstadt, parish of Kilmuir (already referred to), one of his Lordship's tenants in the north of Skye. Mr Macdonald is a descendant of Flora Macdonald, and has in his possession the lady's small habit-shirt of fine linen, with large upright collar, which Prince Charles Edward wore when he made his well-known escape in female attire from South Uist to Skye.



MONDAY, 12th April 1858.

COSMO INNES, Esq., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following Gentlemen were balloted for and elected Fellows of the Society:—

Sir JAMES MATHESON of the Lewis, Bart.

Rev. THOMAS BUCHANAN, D.D., Minister of Methven, Perthshire.

Charles S. Leslie, Esq., younger of Balquhain, exhibited a finely pre-

served piece of Spanish ecclesiastical embroidery of the sixteenth century, and a Belgian mediæval ivory carving.

Professor Aytoun, Sheriff of Orkney, exhibited specimens of the hoard of very interesting silver ornaments, brooches, torques, bracelets, as well as several Saxon and Cufic coins, &c., Treasure-Trove recently found near Sandwick, in Orkney, and now in his custody, previously to handing them over to the Exchequer. These reliques were much admired, and a strong wish expressed by the Members that they might soon find their way to the Museum of the Society, which is now the national repository of Scottish antiquities. Thanks were at the same time tendered to the Sheriff for his attention and kindness in exhibiting them to the Society.

The Donations laid on the table included the following:—

Three Farthings of John, King of England. By JOHN LINDSAY, Esq., Hon. M.S.A. Scot., Cork. Presented through George Sim, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Two of these farthings are of the mint of Downpatrick, and the other is of Carrickfergus.

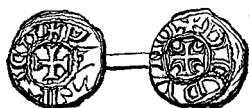


Fig. 1.

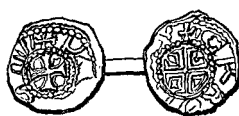


Fig. 2.

Those of Downpatrick present on the obverse a short cross within an inner circle, with "PATRICII" as legend: and on the reverse a similar cross in an inner circle, with legend "DE DVNO." (See woodcut, fig. 1.)

The farthing of Carrickfergus presents a similar obverse to those of Downpatrick, but differs on reverse, in having a short double cross within an inner circle, and "CRAIG" as legend. (See woodcut, fig. 2.)

No single coin being perfect, the reading can only be made out from a comparison of several specimens. The Society is indebted to William Frederick Miller, Esq., engraver, Hope Park, for the accompanying careful drawings of these rare coins.

The donation was accompanied by the following note from Mr Lindsay:—

MARYVILLE, BLACKROCK, CORK,
March 20, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,—I know not whether you have heard of the discovery of the large hoard of silver coins found about two months since near Newry. I will therefore give you some account of them. They consist principally of common triangle pennies of John, and short cross English pennies of Henry III. ; with a large number of farthings of a description hitherto unknown. These coins, which appear to have been struck at Downpatrick and Carrickfergús, were probably coins of John, and contemporary with the “ Dom ” halfpence and Masle farthings, and coined either in the reign of Henry II. or Richard I. ; and the hoard was probably deposited before the coinage of the long cross coins of Henry III. The following is a list of the coins, as drawn up by Dr Smith, who had the first pick of them, and got some very fine and rare varieties, and purposes giving a particular account of this hoard, with one or two plates:—

- 5 Pennies of William the Lion.
- 2 Halfpence “ JOHANNES DOM.”
- 1 Halfpenny “ CAPUT JOHANNIS,” unpublished.
- 10 Masle Farthings.
- 289 Common Pennies of John “ ROBERD ON DIVE.”
- 1 Common Penny “ JOHANNES ON DIVELL.”
- 1 Do. do. blundered.
- 2 Halfpence “ ROBERD.”
- 1 Farthing “ ROBERD.”
- 534 English Short Cross Pennies of Henry III.
- 5 Halves of do.
- 238 “ PATRICII ; ” reverse “ DE DUNO.”
- 26 Do. reverse “ CRAGF ”—“ CRAGENF ” on a few.

1115

The Patricks were mostly mutilated and defaced. Several of the Downpatricks were pretty good, but almost all the Carrickferguses were bad.

After Dr Smith had selected what he wanted they were sent down to Cork, and Mr Sainthill and I selected about 70 each. The discovery of the coin with "Caput Johannis" confirms Dr Smith's supposition, that the full-faced head on the "Dom" halfpence represented the head of John the Baptist. I enclose for your acceptance a few of the Patricks—viz., two with "Cragf," and six "De Duno;" and as these little farthings are a novelty, I thought specimens might be desirable for the Museums of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the Advocates, and also enclose three coins for each, which I would thank you to present,—and remain, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

JOHN LINDSAY.

GEORGE SIM, Esq.

From the circumstance of so many of the common Irish coins of John being in the hoard, there can scarcely be any doubt that Mr Lindsay is right in his attribution. This discovery of a kind of coins hitherto unknown throws new light upon the coinage of this king. It had long been the wonder of Numismatists that no *English* money of John had been discovered, but the matter has recently been cleared up by an extract from the Close Rolls of his reign, to which attention has been called by Richard Sainthill, Esq., in his interesting work, "Numismatic Crumbs." Mr Sainthill there gives the following translation of the extract in question:—" (Close Roll, 7 John, No. 26.) The King to his Barons, &c. (of the Exchequer).—Account with Robert de Veteri Ponte, for what he shall reasonably expend in the carriage of 400 *marks* of Irish money from Nottingham to Exeter, and in carrying our bows (or crossbows) from Nottingham to Norham.—Witness my hand at Marlborough, the 27th of May (A.D. 1205)."

Mr Sainthill, with reference to this extract, observes,¹ "In the absence of any English coins of King John, and with the positive evidence of this writ, that King John's Irish coinage was put into circulation from the Royal Treasury at Exeter, the natural inference would seem to follow, that King John's ostensible Irish coinage was in reality equally his English, and that a coinage bearing the impress of an Irish mint, be it

¹ Numismatic Crumbs, p. 119.

Dublin, Limerick, or Waterford, was coined in England and circulated in England."

It is now therefore presumed to be as vain to look for an *English* penny of John as for a *Roman* brass Otho.

Specimens of the Coins of Ceylon, of which three are of early native Sovereigns. By JAMES STARKE, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Mr Vaux of the British Museum attributes the coins of Ceylon to the sovereigns who reigned from A.D. 1050 to 1300. (See Numismatic Chronicle, vol. xvi. p. 121, where he gives a very interesting account of these coins, and other information regarding the Island of Ceylon.)

Our late lamented Curator of Coins, Dr Scott, however, states (Num. Chron., vol. xviii. p. 83), that after examining upwards of 200 of these curious coins, he was led to form an opinion as to their relative age and attribution somewhat different from that arrived at by Mr Vaux. He gives his reasons for differing from Mr Vaux, which seem to be well founded, and attributes them to sovereigns and usurpers who reigned between A.D. 1216 and 1314.

Pair of Steel-framed Barnacles and large Wooden Case. By Mr J. E. VERNON, Jeweller, Edinburgh.

Memoires de la Société Impériale d'Emulation d'Abbeville, 1852-57. 8vo, 1857. By the SOCIETY.

Antiquites Celtiques et Antédeluviennes.—Mémoire sur l'Industrie primitive et les Arts à leur origine. Par M. Boucher de Perthes. Paris, tome ii., 1857. By the AUTHOR.

The following Communications were then read :—