

## I.

### NOTICE OF A HIGHLAND TARGET, HAVING EMBOSSSED UPON IT THE COGNISANCE OF THE LORD OF THE ISLES. BY JAMES DRUMMOND, ESQ., R.S.A., F.S.A. SCOT. (PLATE XIX.)

There is a class of Scottish antiquities to which hitherto comparatively little attention has been paid by the archæologist. I mean the warlike weapons, offensive and defensive, of our Highland forefathers, many of which were used down to a comparatively recent period. Of all such much ignorance seems to prevail, and among none more so than the Highlanders themselves, who almost invariably answer inquiries as to age, &c., that they had no doubt they had been so used from time immemorial.

At present I wish to call attention only to one of these Highland weapons, the target, and on some future occasion may notice others. No weapon of war has at different periods and among different nations assumed so many shapes as the shield, but the circular and oval seem to have been the most common and the most continuous in their use, and it is with these we have at present to do.

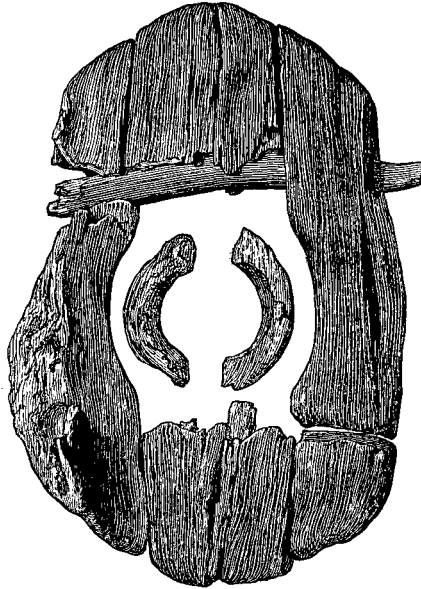
The round shield was an early Greek, Etruscan, and Roman form; it was also used by the Assyrians and Mexicans. On the Trajan column both the Romans and Dacians, again, have them nearly all of an oval form; while on the Roman sculptured stone found near Carriden, Linlithgowshire, the ancient Britons have them of an oblong square, a boss in the centre, and the Roman soldier of an oval form. The Scandinavian and British shield of bronze was circular, and was chased

or struck up in the metal itself, generally having a large boss in the centre, with a series of concentric circles, between which the space was filled up with rows of small nail-head like studs. Occasionally there are more large bosses than the central one, these again surrounded by smaller studs in rows; below the central boss is the handle.

I should suppose, however, that the wooden shield was more common than the bronze one, from the immense number of bosses which have been found all over the country, the wood having rotted away, leaving this, which is of iron or bronze. During the excavations in the peat mosses of Thorsbjerg and Nydam, in South Jutland or Slesvig, under the sanction of the Danish Government, and conducted by Conrad Engelhardt, between the years 1858 and 1863, remains of wooden shields were found in great abundance. Numerous iron and bronze bosses have been found in Anglo-Saxon graves; one was found in Yorkshire, in a perfect state, having a bronze boss and a metal rim.

There are in our Museum the pieces of some wooden object, very much decayed, and called in the catalogue a wheel; but from the loose way in which they were joined, it was difficult to say what it had been. On examining this, Mr Anderson and I were certain it could not have been a wheel, seeing, when it was carefully put together, it was oval. I was now confirmed in my conjecture that it had been a shield, there being enough to show that the centre had been hollowed out for the hand, which on the outside would form the boss. It and part of another was found in Blair-Drummond Moss, and presented to the Museum by the late Henry Home Drummond, Esq. The fragments of another were found in the same moss in 1831, and somewhere near it a quern or hand-mill, fashioned from the section of an oak; there were also some flint arrow-heads. Fortunately for comparison, a perfect specimen has been found since, in Ireland, in the parish of Kiltubride, county Leitrim. It is  $26\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by 21 inches broad, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. Besides the boss, which is perfect and 3 inches high, there are seven slightly raised concentric circles, the whole carved out of one piece of wood, in this respect differing from the Blair-Drummond one, which is composed of three pieces, most ingeniously put together by two mortices through the whole breadth, into which are put two pieces of wood about 2 inches broad and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick, these not only holding it

together, but preventing warping. The centre is a solid piece of wood, which is hollowed out for the hand, and is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, the two edges gradually bevelled to make them join firmly. It is 2 feet long, 1 foot 7 inches broad, and at thickest point  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and gradually thinning towards the outer edge, where it is about 1 inch.



Wooden Shield found in Blair-Drummond Moss.  
(2 feet in height.)

There can be no doubt that the Highland target is the traditional continuation of these early bronze and wooden shields, but having some features different. It is almost invariably made of wood, and covered with leather, the instances to the contrary, when they have been made of iron or steel, being the mere whims of individuals. The leather is very generally embossed with Celtic ornamentation, a sort of *repoussé* work, in the

form of the twisted interlacing ribbon pattern, with scroll leafage filling up odd corners of the design; now and then rude attempts at animals, sometimes initials and a date, the whole design divided by concentric circles of brass nails and bosses, the latter often engraved. In this style of ornament they resemble the early bronze shields, with their bosses and smaller studs. Occasionally they were converted into formidable weapons of offence, by having a strong and long pike screwed into the centre. The question naturally suggests itself, Where were these made? Certainly not in the Highlands; my own opinion being that for the West Highlands, at all events, they were made in Glasgow. In confirmation of this opinion, my friend, the late Joseph Robertson, told me that in the MS. account of one of Queen Mary's masques, Highlanders are mentioned as appearing in their native dress of skins, and having Glasgow targets. Mr Dickson was kind enough to make search for this, but did not succeed in finding it, although he also thinks he saw it somewhere. These targets generally have so much similarity in design that we cannot help thinking they must have been made at one place in great quantities. In the specimens figured by Skelton, Logan, and Dr Stuart, this likeness is very apparent. The specimen to which I would now call attention is not only different from these in the beauty and symmetry of the design, but is peculiar from having embossed at its centre the heraldic cognizance of the Lord of the Isles, of which Nesbit says, "The Macdonalds of the Isles carried, as in our old books, a double-headed eagle displayed." It must not be thought that leather-covered targets were peculiar to the Highlands. In mediæval times they were common in many European countries. Spain, in particular, was famous for them; and it may not be improbable that this was made there for one of the Macdonald chiefs, there having been a great traffic between the West Highlands and Spain, hides being exchanged for armour of all sorts, swords in particular. Spencer also speaks in his "View of the State of Ireland," 1586, of the northern Irish, especially of the Scots, as having round leather targets, often coloured in rude fashions. In this respect they differ from those of our Highlanders, as I am not aware of theirs ever having been painted. These targets differ from the early British and Scandinavian ones in having an arm-piece as well as a handle, the early ones having only a handle opposite the central boss. On the Trajan column all the shields seem to have the

double arrangement, while the Greeks used an arm-piece and a handle towards the rim. In Dr Stuart's "Sculptured Stones of Scotland" will be found many specimens of these early circular shields. In one case there are a number of large bosses. A cast of this stone (Dull, Perthshire) is in the Museum. The shields of the sculptured figures of Highland chiefs have always the triangular form, and on one tombstone only have I seen a circular shield, viz., at Kilmory, Argyllshire.



*(Twenty Inches in diameter.)*

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HIGHLAND TARGET, THE PROPERTY OF M<sup>r</sup> DRUMMOND, R.S.A.