

## III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY, NEAR BROUGHTY FERRY, OF AN  
ANTIQUÉ ECCLESIASTICAL GOLD FINGER-RING. BY ALEXANDER  
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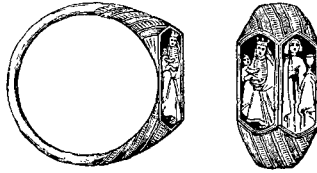
A beautiful and interesting finger-ring was discovered in the neighbourhood of Broughty Ferry several years ago, and came under my notice last year. Most unfortunately the ring has since gone amissing. Luckily before this, I had had an opportunity of making a drawing of it.

The ring was found some four years ago by a labourer while removing the ruins of an old cottage a short distance to the north of Broughty Ferry, but whether found in the walls, or in the ground while clearing out the foundation, has not been ascertained, as the original finder has not been seen. The ring was considered to be of brass, and was handed by its finder to an acquaintance, who took it home, and threw it into a little box amongst buttons, &c., where it lay unheeded for about three years, until the month of June last year, when he gave it by way of a jocular present to a friend, who shortly thereafter showed it to me. Perceiving that the ring was ancient, I obtained his permission to take it away for a more careful examination, at the same time mentioning a desire to show it to Dr Joseph Anderson. Happening to be in Edinburgh, a few days thereafter I took the ring with me, but found that Dr Anderson was from home. I however showed the ring to Dr Arthur Mitchell, and to Mr Carfrae, and to Mr Sim. These gentlemen were all greatly interested in it, and advised me strongly to endeavour to secure its ultimate deposition in some place of safety. This I was the more anxious to do, knowing from sad experience the usual fate of such articles when left in the hands of those who do not know their value, nor appreciate the interest attaching to them. My efforts in this direction, however, were unavailing, the possessor of the ring steadfastly refusing all advances.

A few weeks after I had returned the ring, my worst fears were realised by his informing me that it had gone amissing. He had laid

it in a little box on the mantle-shelf, whence it had either been abstracted or overturned into the hearth amongst the ashes, and hitherto the most careful search and inquiry have utterly failed in getting any clue to the missing ring.

Such is the disappointing history of the recovery and loss of this most interesting relic of antiquity, which, having safely escaped the vicissitudes of several centuries, and the scarcely less precarious treatment of its finders, has by the most culpable and deplorable carelessness been suffered once more to slip out of sight,—the fate of too many valuable antiquities, the loss of which we have to deplore, as the result of their remaining in the hands of individuals not alive to their value.



Figs. 1, 2. Ecclesiastical Gold Finger-Ring found near Broughty Ferry. Side and front views (actual size).

Fortunately, as I have said, before giving up the ring, I made the accompanying careful drawing and description.

The ring (fig. 1) was of 18 carat gold of the usual hue, and weighed 6 dwts. 5 grs. troy. Its dimensions were as follows:—Opening  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch, narrowest part of hoop  $\frac{5}{8}$  of one inch, widest part of hoop  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch. It bore, where the signet usually is, two slightly averted elongated, and somewhat oblate hexagonal panels, each surrounded by a plain border, and containing, in that on the right hand side, a figure of the Madonna and Child, and in the other a priest or other ecclesiastic in the act of blessing the sacramental cup (see fig. 2). These figures were executed with great delicacy and beauty in low relief, very slightly hatched, the outlines and background being filled in with black enamel.

The Madonna is seated, and wears a crown exhibiting three points of floriated design; a veil droops from the edges of the crown, and falls behind the shoulders. A mantle depending from the shoulders meets

below the waist, and enwrapping the knees falls in graceful and massive folds to the feet, which, as in the best periods of art, are not visible. The right knee of the Madonna is slightly raised as if to aid in supporting the child. Strange to say, no trace of the Madonna's arms or hands could be observed, probably out of deference to the same sense of decorum which dictated the covering of the feet. The under garment visible from the neck to the waist is lightly hatched, as if to show folds or shading of the dress. The child rests on the mother's right side, and appears to be almost wholly naked, a line across the shoulder or armpit being the only indication of a little tunic which left the arms bare from the shoulder. The right leg and arm of the infant stretch across its mother's breast, and the child's fingers are extended in the act of benediction.

The priest appears to be standing; a nimbus, or more probably a sort of hood, surrounds his head. His right hand only is visible, and is raised in the act of blessing the cup, the forefinger being so much enlarged as at first to suggest the idea of its having been meant for two or more fingers, but the other three fingers are distinctly visible. The cup is of graceful outline, and appears to rest on a stand or altar, which is entirely covered with drapery. The background of the panels, as well as the principal outlines of the figures, had been filled in with black or very dark enamel. Beyond the panels at either end the ring was gradually tapered off with a highly ornamented series of enamelled bands, alternating with gold bands, ridged and engraved crosswise with simple lines, and twisting obliquely until lost at the under edges of the hoop. Although the most of the enamelling had been lost from these bands, fortunately enough was left to show what the ring was like when it was entire. First on opposite sides were two small triangular patches of white enamel almost entire; next to these came a band of bright red or scarlet enamel; then a band of purplish chocolate; next a band of bright or emerald green, but there was not a speck left in the outer band on either side to show of what colour the enamel there had been. There were thus five or perhaps six colours of enamel. The enamels had been placed in little sunk panels or channels graved or beaten out in the gold which rose in little ridges at either side of the channels, and

indicated therefore that they belonged to the description of work called Cloisonne.

As to the period to which this interesting relic is to be assigned, a short review of the leading characteristics of the figures and their import may help to a conclusion. In all early representations of the Madonna the head is veiled. The enthroned Madonna unveiled, with long tresses falling down in front of the shoulders on either side, was an innovation introduced about the end of the fifteenth century. In historical pictures her dress is very simple, but in devotional pictures, which represent her as Queen of Heaven, she wears a crown, and is often attired with great magnificence. It does not appear when she is first represented crowned, but an example exists as early as the eighth century on a mosaic in the Cathedral of Capua. It is necessary, however, to discriminate between the crowned Madonna holding her child, where the crown is introduced merely to heighten devotional feeling, to which type the figures in this ring are to be assigned, and those figures where the Madonna is represented in the act of being crowned by the Father or the Son, which are to be ascribed to the dramatic and historical type. The child in her arms in all early pictures is always clothed in a little tunic. Towards the early part of the fifteenth century, He first appears partly and then wholly undraped. The Virgin is rarely represented standing before the end of the fourteenth century. For these particulars I am largely indebted to Mrs Jamieson's valuable work, *Legends of the Madonna*.

A consideration, then, of these well-marked features in the treatment of the figures of the ring as well as a regard for the delicacy and beauty of the workmanship, as also of the style of enamelling, would seem to assign this ring to a period not very far from the close of the fourteenth century.