

IV.

NOTICES OF THE DISCOVERY OF A HOARD OF RAPIER-SHAPED
BLADES OF BRONZE AT DRUMCOLTRAN, IN THE STEWARTRY
OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT, AND OF A VIKING SWORD AT TORBECK-
HILL, NEAR ECCLEFECHAN. BY A. O. CURLE, *Director of the Museum.*

In describing the circular earthwork at Drumcoltran in the *Proceedings* of the Society for the session 1892-93, vol. xxvii. p. 106, Mr F. R. Coles relates that "in the trench where deepest there was found in 1837 a hoard of bronze weapons, and in 1867 the present tenant, Mr Copland, found in the same trench an 18-inch blade"; while the Dumfries and Galloway Antiquarian Society's *Transactions*, January 1863, describes the find as one of "twelve very fine bronze spears." This autumn I was fortunate enough to meet Mr James Houston, Dumfries, the owner of the three weapons illustrated here, being the remainder of this hoard, and he knew of only six rapier blades having been found. Of these, two were taken to America; one, believed to be the finest, passed into the hands of a workman; and the remaining three were in Mr Houston's possession. They are slender and tapering, as is characteristic of the type, are covered with a fine green patina, and measure in length respectively 20 inches, 18.2 inches, and 14 inches. The 18-inch blade is still almost of its original length, but both of the others have lost their points. Each has a marked midrib and flutings along the sides. Judging from the appearance of the best-preserved specimen, the bases have been notched, rather than perforated, for the rivets.

In January 1867 a discovery of six similar blades, of lengths varying from 12 to 22 inches, was made in a meadow in Devonshire¹; and among numerous other examples recorded by Sir John Evans is one,² also from an earthwork, at Badbury, Dorsetshire. On learning of the importance of these relics, Mr Houston generously presented the best of the three to the National Museum; and has lent the other two for exhibition.

VIKING SWORD.

In the autumn of last year there was presented to the National Museum by John Bell, Esq., of Torbeckhill, Ecclefechan, an iron double-edged sword (fig. 2) of a well-known Viking type, which was found at a depth of some two feet under the surface, on the top of a quarry situated on the left bank of the Mein, just below the outlet of the Annan District Water Works, on the estate of Torbeckhill, and some 9 miles inland from the Solway. No other relics or any evidences of an interment accompanied the sword. The point of the blade is wanting; the complete length of the weapon as existing is 2 feet 6 inches. The pommel is trilobate, and shows on the front of the central division a circular border, which has contained a mark or symbol now indecipherable. It rests on a forked plate, acting as an upper guard, curving upwards at either end, while the guard at the lower end of the tang curves downwards.

A similar sword, found with a pair of convex oval brooches of bronze at Santon, Norfolk, is preserved in the British Museum. In describing the latter sword³ Sir Hercules Read quotes Dr Sven Söderberg of Lund, to the effect that in all the Swedish graves excavated by Dr Stolpe the Santon type of sword is invariably associated with relics of a later date than the year 1000, while the straight guard and triangular pommel accompany interments of the three centuries preceding this date.

¹ *Archæological Journal*, xxiv. p. 110.

² *Ancient Bronze Implements, etc.*, p. 250.

³ *Archæologia*, vol. 1. p. 531.