

IV.

THE TREASURE OF TRAPRAIN—THE INSCRIPTION ON THE FLASK.

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One of the most interesting pieces of the treasure from Traprain Law is the small silver flask, by reason of the inscription which it bears. This inscription occurs around the base of the neck of the vessel, formed in Roman capitals by small dots or punctulations. All the letters are perfectly fashioned, and with one exception unambiguous. This letter which occupies the first and fourteenth places in the inscription until recently was believed to be unique, and in as much as it resembled both a P, and an F, led to diverse renderings of the inscription.



Fig. 1.

In describing the treasure,¹ I expressed the opinion that the letter was an F, and gave my reasons for so thinking; interpreting the inscription tentatively as *Frymiaco eisia fict* (fig. 1) for *Frymiaco Eisia Fecit*; i.e. Eisia made this for Frymiacus.

Opposed to this, M. Theodore Reinach has propounded a totally different rendering which has been adopted by other authorities in France. On the assumption that the doubtful letter was a P² he has deciphered it thus, *Prumiaco e(ccle)sia(e) Pict(avensis)*, suggesting that by *Prumiacus* was intended the town of Prigny in Les Moustiers, and that *Pictavensis* connoted the diocese of Poitiers in which Prigny was then situated.

Unfortunately, at the time of publishing the account of the treasure, I was unaware of the existence of an inscription on a late Roman memorial stone preserved in the Museum of the Carmarthenshire

¹ *Treasure of Traprain*, p. 19.

² *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, Appendice aux Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Année 1922; *ibid.*, 1926, p. 49.

Antiquarian Society in Wales, in which the ambiguous letter appears in a position which leaves no shadow of doubt as to its identity, occurring as the first letter of the word *Fidæi* (fig. 2).

To this inscription my attention was drawn by Professor Macalister of Dublin University. It is in rustic hexameters, and runs thus :

“Servatur fidæi Patrisq(ue) semper amator
Hic Paulinus jacit, Cultor Pientis(s)imus æqui”;

or, rather, it is recorded to have so run, for the stone has been broken for many years, and the fragment with the concluding word has been lost. Professor Macalister further adds in his letter to me: “There is nothing to identify the virtuous Paulinus, but he has been supposed to have been a person of that name who was tutor of St David and was alive in A.D. 545.” If this attribution is correct, it shows that this form of letter continued in use for probably a century and a half after its employment in the Traprain inscription.



Fig. 2.

The Welsh inscription is recorded with a photograph of the stone in the *Carmarthenshire Inventory of the Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Wales and Monmouthshire*, p. 35, fig. 44, also in Hübner's *Inscriptiones Britannicæ Christianæ*, p. 29. In the former the letter of importance to us is not very clearly shown and in the latter it is shown incomplete. It is, however, also reproduced, and more clearly, in the *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society*, vol. xv. 1921-2, p. 21. To make assurance doubly sure, I applied to the Rev. George Eyre Evans, the Hon. Secretary of the Carmarthenshire Society, for a squeeze of the word *Fidæi*, which he most courteously procured for me. It left no doubt as to the identity of the letter in both inscriptions. Whatever meaning the inscription on the flask is intended to convey it cannot therefore be a reference to the church of Prigny in Poitiers.

As is shown above, I am much indebted to Professor Macalister, also to Mr Eyre Evans for the trouble he took to obtain the squeeze from which the illustration is reproduced.