

I.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON THE TRAPRAIN LAW TREASURE.

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In 1928 I brought to the notice of the Society the occurrence in a late Roman inscription on a memorial stone, preserved in the Museum of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society in Wales, of the curious letter which appeared twice in the punctuated inscription surrounding the base of the neck of the small silver flask in the Traprain treasure. For the knowledge of the existence of that inscription and letter I was indebted to Professor Macalister of the University of Dublin, and now I am placed under a further obligation to Professor Macalister for drawing my attention to a second occurrence of this same letter on another inscription on a memorial stone, also in Wales. This second stone is preserved in Clydai Church in the county of Pembroke, and bears a memorial inscription in both Latin and Ogham, while at a later date the stone has been appropriated for another memorial and there has been carved on its surface an equal-armed cross within a double circle with, apparently, a shaft indicated by two parallel grooves partly obliterating the Latin inscription. The Latin inscription is said to read DOBIT (VCI) FILIUS EVOLENG, and the symbol of peculiar interest to us is the initial letter of the word Filius. The stone is described, and illustrated from a drawing, in the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, etc. (Pembrokeshire)*, p. 75, fig. 103. The peculiar feature of the letter is little more than indicated in this illustration, but it is somewhat more clearly expressed in a reproduction from another drawing in fig. 1 of an article entitled "Epigraphic Notes" by the late Sir John Rhys in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. xiv. fifth series; but the inscription has been personally examined by Professor Macalister, who has no doubt of the character of the letter. Thus beyond the shadow of a doubt the Traprain inscription must be transliterated FRUMIACOEISIAFICT. That this particular form of the letter F should thus far only have been found surviving in late Latin inscriptions in the principality of Wales is remarkable, but that fact alone is hardly sufficient to justify the attribution of the inscription to that region.

To anyone who may desire to probe further into the mystery of the treasure the following articles may be of interest.

"Niall of the Nine Hostages," in connection with the Treasure of Traprain Law and Coleraine," by Professor Sir William Ridgeway, D.Sc.,

F.B.A., in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, 1924. Professor Ridgeway in this article sets himself out to prove from literary and numismatic evidence that the treasures of Traprain and of Coleraine in Ireland were booty brought back from Gaul by one of the followers of Niall, Naoeghiallach, after that king had been slain by Eochaidh, the banished king of Leinster, on the side of the Loire, about the year A.D. 405, as related in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.

"L'expédition de Niall aux neuf Otages au Gaule et le Trésor de Traprainlaw," par M. Joseph Loth, Membre de l'Académie, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions de l'Année 1926*. Bulletin Avril-Mai. M. Loth gives reasons for believing that the legend of the expedition of Niall to Gaul, and even into more distant countries, has no historical basis, but has arisen from a confusion and corruption of certain names. He inclines also to the belief that the treasure was the fruit of plundering by Picts or Scots in Britain itself, and he explains the presence of the personal relics, for which I have claimed a Visigothic attribution, as having belonged to some Roman auxiliary serving in Britain.

Germania, December 1925, contains an important article on the treasure by the late Professor F. Drexel. Among the points to be noted are Dr Drexel's interpretation of the four groups surrounding the body of the flagon, enriched with scenes from Holy Writ. The Fall of Man, the Adoration, and Moses striking the Rock are obvious. The fourth scene, which has always been in doubt, he declines to regard as the Betrayal, and believes to be the Oppression of Moses or the Intimation of the Denial. Interesting is the observation that there is nothing definite to disprove that the vessels formed part of the household furnishings of a Roman or a Roman provincial. To an original outfit of table silver all kinds of provincial utensils might have been added, presenting an analogy in this respect to the treasure of Hildesheim belonging to a period several centuries earlier, whose owner had similarly substituted all sorts of provincial vessels for those originally brought from Rome.

Among minor points to notice are the definite identification, from parallel finds, of the bronze disk as a tag for the end of a girdle and not as a mirror. The parallels have all been found on the Middle Rhine. And in regard to the associated articles of personal use in the treasure, Drexel suggested that these objects were more probably to be connected with the Teutonic Migrations which overflowed the Rhine boundary at the commencement of the fifth century than with the Visigothic invasion.

An article by Professor R. Zahn "On Two Late Classical Silver Vessels," in *Amtliche Berichte aus den Königlichen Kunstsammlungen*,

Berlin, August 1917, illustrates (Abb. 96) a beaded bowl of silver, seemingly identical in form with those found at Traprain Law, but bearing a stamp on the bottom which is said to date it to the last third or quarter of the fourth century A.D. The article contains much information generally about this type of bowl. The other silver vessel dealt with is a ewer or flagon which presents certain parallels to some of the similar vessels from Traprain Law.