



ON SOME ROMAN-BRITISH REMAINS FOUND NEAR PLYMOUTH.

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IN the spring of the present year, in order to remove all impediments from interfering with the range of the guns belonging to the new fort erected on Stamford Hill, the engineer found it necessary to cut away the slope between it and the sea. In doing this the excavators came upon sundry evidences of the remains of an antient burial-ground.

The hill on which it stands consists of slate, and is situated between the broad bay of Plymouth Sound on the west and an arm of the sea that is known as Catwater, and flows up the estuary of the river Plym on the east. On the north the land projects to some distance, and ends in a bluff hill of limestone, known as Mount Batten; between which and the hill on which the remains were found is a low grass plane on a gravelly soil, that, previously to the erection of the Plymouth Breakwater, was occasionally flooded at high spring tides. On the east of Fort Stamford, being portions of the same rather than a separate hill, another mass of limestone stands. On the south is the high land of Staddon Heights.

The remains were found in pits, generally about four or four and a half feet deep; one foot of which consisted of soil, the remaining three having been excavated in the partially disintegrated surface of the natural rock. These graves were mere hollow excavations, the walls sometimes sharply cut. This appears to have been the more evident where the soft slaty rock was firmest. The bottoms of the excavations were deepest towards the centre, and they were filled in with the *débris* which had been taken out of them, together with numerous large, rough, worn blocks of limestone, that must have been purposely brought from one of the neighbouring limestone hills.

* The removal of the material had been proceeded with for some time, and the workmen state that they had occasionally

found bones and pieces of earthenware. It was only, however, when they found some bronze articles, for which they anticipated getting a few shillings in exchange, that they reported the discovery to Captain Moggridge, the engineer officer in charge of the fortification works. Immediately that the circumstance was known, I was kindly made acquainted with it. Hastening to the place, I watched, as far as practicable, the progress of the exploration.

The graves were very numerous, the longitudinal axis lying mostly in a direction east and west. There were evidences, however, that this was not invariably the case, for in some instances several graves broke into each other, and in one case the extremity (I say the extremity, because this was all that was not dug away when I arrived) appeared to be associated with others, as if it had been made at right angles with them.

When I first arrived, the portions of four graves were exposed in section, out of which had been previously taken some human bones, two bronze armlets, a bronze fibula, and some pottery. After my arrival, some more human bones were found, evidently portions of at least three human bodies, as well as several isolated molars of the pig, several pebbles from the sea beach, mostly of one size, and fragments of glass, together with a vase of coarse ware, in one grave. Upon opening a new grave, we found at the bottom a bronze mirror, in tolerably perfect condition, and some traces of decomposed bones. There was also found in this grave a bronze fibula, by a workman. In other places, the workmen found the handles of two bronze mirrors, two bronze bracelets, of different formations, a bronze dagger or knife in its sheath, portions of a bronze cup, and some fibulæ. There have also been found fragments of many kinds of vases, in more or less perfect pottery ware, portions of the human skeleton, and a considerable quantity of iron, in a very decomposed state, leaving traces of having been parts of implements of some kind.

BRONZE MIRRORS. (Figs. 1, 2, 3.) The first of these that we found was lying flat at the bottom at the eastern extremity of the grave. It was very nearly circular in form, being, without measurement, imperceptibly longer in one diameter than another, the shortest diameter being probably the vertical axis when in use. The front or polished surface of the mirror was placed downwards. The back, which was upwards, being the best preserved, was ornamented with a considerable quantity of scroll engraving. The pattern consisted of three circular figures, the

two lower ones being larger than that which I take to be the central top one. Although each circular scroll differs from the others, they are evidently figured upon one general plan, the lines within being segments of circles of various sizes, and form crescents with various modifications. Some portions of the engraving, in order to give solidity to the character, were filled in with numerous short striated spots, consisting of three lines in one way, and three lines at right angles. The entire surface of the mirror was surrounded by a narrow border or rim, which was formed of a separate piece, and folded over the margins. This specimen was damaged in many parts, particularly upon the under surface, and some of the edge was entirely eaten away; but where the rim was preserved, the plate was not only in good condition, but not even carbonized, retaining the bright colour of the bronze as perfect as when probably in use by the ancient possessor. With this specimen no handle was found; but a second, (Fig. 2,) of which the very small portion that has been obtained is sufficient to show it to be a duplicate in form, has the handle attached to it. This handle is cast in one piece, in the form of a loop made by folding one half back against the other, and securing them in that position by a band, the two free ends being spread out to hold the mirror, which is received in a groove, and supported on each side by a scroll work of bronze, much of which is lost, but the impression still remains upon the plate. The diameter of the mirror in its greatest length is eight inches; the length of the handle of the duplicate specimen, which is supposed to be of the same size as the missing handle of the more perfect mirror, is four inches.

A second handle (Fig. 3) has also been found of a more finished character. It consists of an oval ring, the longest diameter being at right angles with the vertical axis; a shaft, which is grooved at each end, and doubly so at the middle; at the extremity opposite to the handle is a grooved flange, into which the mirror was secured by rivets. No trace of the plate that belonged to this handle was found; and the difference of form, together with the different style of execution, seen in the detail of some little engraving that is present on the flange of the handle, demonstrates that this mirror must in its complete state have varied considerably from that previously described. The length of this handle is six inches, and the detail of the engraving is made up with small uniform notches, while that of the preceding consisted of short lines, placed by threes, alternately arranged at right angles with each other.

I am informed by Mr. Evans that these mirrors are rare, and that only a single specimen, with engraved back, has previously been found. That was in the county of Bedford, and is now preserved in the museum of the county town. I know not if that is as large as our specimens; but those found generally do not exceed three or four inches.

BRACELETS. (Figs. 4, 5.) The next objects of interest that were obtained from these explorations are a series of bronze bracelets. There were four of one form and one of a second. We will describe the most numerous first. These were formed of solid bronze, flattened upon the internal and rounded upon the external surface. They opened by a hinge in the middle, which was made by the insertion of a tongue with a deep notch or groove, and secured by a rivet, on which the two halves swung. It is not exactly clear what kind of clasp secured them when shut; two of them had one kind, whereas the third evidently differed. From the position of the rivets, it appears that the two fasten by the projection of a central piece of wire, that was caught with a spring clasp, much as we find in the bracelets of the present day. The third has a tongue very similar to that of the hinge, but smaller, and this probably was caught by a spring also. The external surface of these bracelets was ornamented by embossed markings, consisting of a running scroll, that looked like a series of the letter s, folded into each other successively. The rounded portion formed by the bottom of one s enclosing the top of the succeeding is raised and perforated by two deep holes, placed side by side. These holes are in some few places still filled by a dull red bead, as at one time, I have no doubt, were all the rest.

The material of which these beads were formed I am not certain. It may be jasper, as suggested to me by a friend, although, from its appearance under a lense, I am inclined to think that the beads may have been made out of the slag or waste material left in the pots after the melting of the bronze. This is often of a deep red colour. I am informed by Mr. Evans that the insertion of beads in bracelets of this description is rare. The second form of bracelet (Fig. 5), of which we have but two specimens, is much more slender, and almost without ornament. Five embossed bands, of which the middle one is the largest, ornament the middle, which is the stoutest part of the bracelet. This bracelet appears to have had no fastening, and it is evidently formed on the principle of a spring, that yields to the pressure of the hand as it is pressed on the wrist.

Four specimens of fibulæ were found, two in an injured, the rest in a tolerably perfect state. These antique brooches consist of bronze in an arcuate form. The upper end at which the pin is attached has a bar fixed at right angles with the brooch. The lower end is widened into a plate that gradually thins towards the extremity, which is curved to form a secure lodgment for the pin to rest in. The pin in one brooch is attached by being twisted several times round the bar at the upper extremity, and is thus made secure, as well as receives an elastic character, which renders it doubly firm when fixed. In both the others, the cross piece at the top is flattened and turned up at the extremities, and a bar is fixed between the two extremities. Passing through a hole is a pin, that is rivetted at each end. Round the bar, on each side of the pin, wire is closely twisted; this gives an ornamental finish to the brooch, as well as keeps the pin in its place. The flattened portion, which is bent to receive the pin, is perforated, in one specimen, by three holes, each encircled by a single grooved line.

SMALL FIBULÆ. (Fig. 12.) From one of the latest opened of these graves, we obtained a small bronze brooch, made upon a plan that has recently again come into use. It forms an incomplete ring, the extremities of which terminate in a small knob. The pin is lost; but it was movable, and made to pass the extremities and impinge with pressure upon the opposite side.

DIRK. (Fig. 6.) A small dirk or knife was also dug out by one of the workmen. The blade of the dirk is still within the sheath; but although the guard is of bronze, yet I am inclined to believe that the blade may be of iron, from the circumstance of there being ferruginous rust both at the entrance, as well as visible through a crack in the side of the sheath. The point that remains of the spill that was inserted into the handle shows that it was of iron also. The form of the knife may probably be suggested from the outline of the sheath. It is four inches long, and about three quarters of an inch broad nearest to the hilt, from whence the sides run parallel to nearly two-thirds the length, when they gradually narrow to the point, one side doing so more rapidly than the other, thus suggesting that one side of the blade possessed a cutting, the other a safe edge. The sheath is formed of two pieces of bronze plate; one has its edges folded, so as to enclose the smaller. A small loop of flattened wire is secured by three rivets to the margin near the handle, which thus enabled the implement to be

secured to a belt. The whole of this, as all the workmanship in bronze, is united by means of rivets, no evidence of solder being apparent in any part of this or other article.

A BRONZE CUP. (Fig. 14.) A bronze cup, or rather portions, were found by the workmen. The fragments consisted of the bottom, and a part of the rim. The bottom is about an inch and a quarter across, and the arc of the rim shows the top of the cup to have been about three inches in diameter. The edge of the rim is slightly turned out, a circumstance that is suggestive of a flowing or waved outline to the sides, which were very thin, a fact that accounts for the destruction of the cup.

GLASS BOWL. (Fig. 15.) Some fragments of a glass vase or bowl were thrown out of one grave. They are of a beautiful amber colour; the surface being only slightly incrustated with those prismatic hues, that so frequently corrode antient glass that has been long buried in the earth. The fragments that we recovered are the bottom, a portion of the side, and a part of the rim of a basin. The bottom is about two inches and a half across, from which the base passes out in nearly a horizontal line, until it reaches the approximate diameter of five inches; it then gradually ascends to the probable height of four or five inches, and as gradually increases in size until it reaches the diameter of six inches, where it is finished by a shallow rim, formed by the folding of the edge of the glass outwardly back upon its self. The lower portion of the vase is ornamented by a series of raised lines, radiating from the base, but instead of passing directly to the circumference, flow diagonally outward, as if they were formed during the time that the plastic material revolved upon its own axis. Although in many parts the workmanship shows crudeness in execution, yet the vessel, as a whole, must have exhibited an elegance in appearance, that is suggestive of the idea that it must have been the property of an individual of some pretention among his fellows, particularly when we compare it with the quality of the pottery that has been found in the same locality.

BOWL OF BLACK POTTERY. With but one single exception, all the ware that has been found in this cemetery is in a fragmentary state. Nor is this to be wholly attributed to the carelessness of the excavators, although no doubt but that in some measure it is due to the fact of the excavations having been carried on by men working for a contractor under Government. They were compelled to pursue their labour assiduously, and were not permitted the time necessary to

remove such fragile material with safety from their positions in the graves. (Fig. 16.)

The ware of this bowl is coarse; it stands upon a circular ring, which is about three inches in diameter. From this bottom the base extends on each side until the diameter is about five inches; the sides then rise inwardly, then gradually curve outwardly, terminating in a small rim at about four inches from the base. There is a small round depression upon the inside, near the upper edge, corresponding with a similar depression upon the outside, from which latter a groove passes as far as the broken edge. This marking is suggestive of a small horizontal handle having been situated in this position; but if so, there was no corresponding handle at the opposite extremity of the basin, since the two fragments together complete more than half the diameter of the vase.

SECOND BLACK BOWL. (Fig. 17.) A second black vase was found by Capt. Moggridge. This is of much finer ware than the previous one, and much more slender in texture; it is also of a much more elegant shape, though formed on the same general design.

The ring at the bottom is about three inches in diameter, the centre of which is deeply excavated, corresponding with a convex elevation on the inside. From the ring at the bottom the sides extend on each side, until the diameter is about seven inches; they then rise slightly inwardly, and then gradually curve outwardly to the edge, where they terminate, without any embossed rim, at a height of about three inches.

THIRD BLACK BOWL. Of a third black bowl or vase, one small fragment only has been recovered; but this is enough to show that the design was the same as the previous. The substance was a little stouter than the last, but less so than the first, and it differed from both in having a double embossed line all round the middle of the sides. This, like the two previous ones, is very dark, almost black, not only on the surface, but through the substance, a circumstance that I think must be due to the character of the clay of which the vessels were made, and not attributable to the muffling of the furnaces during the process of baking.

MINUTE VASE. (Fig. 20.) A very small vase, of a less darkened surface to the two previously discovered specimens, Capt. Moggridge was fortunate enough to save, from the up-lifted axe of the excavator, in a perfect state. The bottom is flat, and about an inch and a half in diameter, from which it gradually rises outwardly until just above the middle, from

which point it rounds more suddenly inwards to form a constricted ring just beneath the edge of the mouth, which turns outwards. The diameter at the mouth is about three inches, at the broadest part about three and a half, and the height is about four inches.

RED VASE. (Fig. 19.) The next vase is one that I value, from the circumstance of having figured the entire design from the character of the neck only. I afterwards found part of the sides and the bottom, and was enabled to establish the correctness of my figure. The form of this vase is much like the last described, from which it differs in having a more sudden curving just below the neck; it also stands higher. It is larger, the diameter of the bottom being about four inches, the body of the vessel at its greatest width about seven inches, and the mouth about three. The height is about eight inches and a half.

SCULPTURED BOWL. (Fig. 18.) The next vase to which I wish to draw attention differs in form, and evidently attained a higher degree of external finish. Unfortunately, of this but few fragments have been recovered. It consists of hard-baked clay, of a coarse character. The general colour is red, but in some places the external surface is blackened, probably due to the muffling of the furnace during the process of baking. The height is about four inches and a half; it stands upon a circular bottom of about three inches in diameter, which raises the vessel from the ground about an inch. The bottom of the vase within is flat; the sides gracefully rounded outwards, then inwards, and again outwards to the mouth, the diameter of which is about six inches, being, in fact, the widest part of the vessel, overhanging the body of the vase quite three quarters of an inch. The external surface is ornamented by a rim at the edge, by an embossed ring about an inch below, by a second but less raised ring an inch still lower, beneath which point the swelling part of the vessel is covered by a number of short engraved notches, placed in lines vertical to the base. This latter workmanship resembles the ornamentation of Celtic pottery.

PLAIN WATER JUG. (Fig. 22.) Two vessels, apparently intended for holding water, were found; the first was a plain earthenware bottle, made of very soft friable yellow ware. The body of the vessel was nearly circular, having a flat-ringed base and a narrow neck. This vessel was, when first found, perfect as to form, but intersected by numerous fractures, so that it was impossible to have removed it except

in a very fragmentary condition. It stood in an upright position, and, previous to its removal, I inserted my hand through the broken side, but found nothing within. The height of the bottle, which had a portion of the neck broken off, was about eight inches, and it could not be much less in diameter than six.

WATER JUG WITH HANDLE. This vessel is of the same general form as the preceding, but somewhat larger. It is of a light yellow friable ware. It probably stood about twelve inches in height, and its diameter, at its greatest circumference, was probably about eight inches. The rim round the mouth was reversed, leaving a hollow between it and the neck of the bottle. The outer surface of the rim is surrounded by a concave ring. From beneath the rim the remains of a handle exist, the opposite extremity of which was, no doubt, attached to the upper portion of the body of the vessel.

DRINKING CUP. (Fig. 23.) The only piece of pottery that I have left undescribed of the fragments that we have found, which are of sufficient importance to indicate form, is that which appears to have been part of a drinking cup. It consists of yellow ware. Its sides were perpendicular to its flat base, and it was ornamented by a double embossed line traversing the circumference on a level with the lower extremity of the handle, which was probably near the middle. Assuming this to be the case, the cup probably stood at about five inches in height, and its circumference, taken from a continuation of the measured segment, could not be less than four inches and a half. So that it was nearly as broad as high, and probably held about a pint of water.

IMPLEMENTS OF IRON. The objects that were found made of iron were mostly in too decomposed a condition for us to arrive at any positive conclusions as to what they really were. Some appear to have been the remains of the blades of knives. Some were probably the tongues of knives that were driven into the handle; and the remains of wood still attached to them, deeply stained with ferruginous rust, support this hypothesis. Some, of which there were a considerable number taken from one spot, might have been the round points of arrows, or the armature of a buckler. They consisted generally of irregularly-shaped nodules of iron, from which a point or sharp tongue projected. There are many other pieces of irregular form.

SOLITARY GRAVE. About a hundred feet from these graves, while cutting nearer towards the sea, the labourers came upon a solitary grave, of similar character to the rest, out of which

they obtained several fragments of iron, four of which, upon being put together, were found to be the remains of a pair of scissors (Fig. 25), resembling, but about half the size of, a pair of modern sheepshears. The others were part of a knife, (Fig. 24.) The point was curved forwards, one edge of the blade being sharp; the other, forming the back of the knife, was thick and safe.

LARGE BRONZE FINGER RING. (Fig. 11.) With these last implements parts of three bronze rings were found. The largest is faced with three circular discs, the middle one being much greater in diameter than the lateral ones, which are of one size. The central one is ornamented by an embossed ring round the margin, by two oval longitudinal nodules in the middle, and by three circular nodules on each side, of which the central nodule is the largest. The lateral discs are deep, and when found were partially occupied with a white material, probably the remains of a cement that was used to fix a bead in each. The ring, which is now flattened somewhat, was evidently intended as an ornament to have been worn on the finger.

SMALL BRONZE RING. (Fig. 10.) The second ring is smaller than the previous one. Its face is merely a flattened extension of itself, and is ornamented by two rows of short vertical lines, enclosed within engraved margins. This ring, of which only a portion has been recovered, appears to have been too small to have been worn on the finger even of a female; and the circumstance of the face being at right angles with the sides, suggests that it may have been used for other purposes than that of a finger ring. Some portions of a third ring were also found, but not sufficient to enable any idea to be formed of its character with certainty. The fragment consists of small wire, flattened at one extremity, the sides of the whole being closely ribbed.

Upon the completion of the work necessary for the fortification, I applied for permission to pursue farther research. In this way I have been enabled to proceed more cautiously, and obtain a clearer idea of the positions of the things found in relation to each other.

Undoubtedly the remains appear to be very heterogeneously mingled together, but still I think the following may be relied upon as being an approximation of their positions relative to each other.

The blocks of weather-worn limestone, which appear in the first instance to be so irregularly placed, I ascertained, by tracing the circuit of the walls of the graves where it was

practicable to do so, to have been placed originally as a wall, within which the corpse was placed in a sitting posture. It is probable that some of the stones were also employed for the purpose of covering in the body.

The reason why ornaments and objects of value were buried with the dead has never been clearly established. The number of things that are found interred militates against the idea which Caesar has affirmed to be the case with the inhabitants of ancient Britain, that all their wealth was buried with them; even if we suppose that the inhabitants of a Roman colony had so far adopted the customs of the people among whom they had settled, as to have copied them in their mode of interment.

Judging from these explorations, the opinion at which I have arrived is, that it was customary, arising from sanitary purposes, or from feelings of affection, to bury with the body all the objects which the individual had possession at the time of, or during the sickness that preceded, death. It is in this way only that I can account, not only for the existence of ornaments and vessels of value, but trace a reason for the presence of pebbles from the shore, as well as the teeth of the pig, all of which I assume to have been objects of amusement belonging to the child from whose grave I took them.

In the solitary grave, the discovery of finger rings, a knife, and scissors, indicate it as the burial place of a female; but why it was separated so distantly from the rest, there are at present no means of ascertaining; but that it was intentional I think may be accepted, from the circumstance that a cutting in the rock was found to exist between it and the other graves, which the engineering officer assures me, from its appearance and character, must have originally been intended as a drain.

I offer these suggestions merely as ideas that occurred to my mind as I progressed with the research, which at present must be considered in an unfinished state, inasmuch as there appears to be a considerable extent of ground not yet explored.