

FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

PLATE I.—TO FACE P. 381.

THE ORMSIDE CUP.

ART. XXXVII. *The Ormside Cup*.\* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A.

THE three drawings of the Ormside cup submitted herewith were made at the Museum of the Philosophical Society of York, on November 16—19, 1898, by permission of the authorities, to whom my best thanks are due for the facilities afforded. The drawings were all to the size of the object ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter, and 2 inches deep). The two figures in Plate I. are engraved on the same scale; the coloured drawing, Plate II., is reduced; and while they are as truthful as care could get them, they are, perhaps, more explanatory than photographs, in slightly emphasizing the detail throughout. A photograph by Mr. H. M. Platnauer, curator of the Museum, is added, Plate III. Four days passed in making close acquaintance with the cup naturally gave occasion for a few thoughts which may be worth writing down.

Fig. 1, Plate I., represents what would be the base of the cup when the object was so used. It is a plate of Anglo-Saxon type, not unlike a Kentish circular fibula, with five metal bosses (one now lost), and repoussé knot-work. The bosses were fixed on the plate with rivets, one of which is seen in the place where its boss is lost, and the junction of each is covered by a band of plaited wire, above which was another band of twisted wire. The knot-work is neatly executed, though hardly with unusual refinement, and the design, though good, is not of the best. It was the object of the finest designers in this

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\* See *ante* p. 378. The late Mr. Calverley was the first to draw the attention of this Society to the Ormside cup, and to urge that illustrations of it should appear in the *Transactions*. He promised to read a paper on it at the Langholm Meeting, but was unable to do so. Mr. Collingwood kindly came forward, made the drawings, and supplied these notes,

interlacing

interlacing style to cover the surface with an even distribution of light and dark, and to keep the direction of adjacent lines in pleasant contrast and harmony. Here the law of alternate "over and under" is strictly kept, but the curves are a little clumsy, and the lines in one of the knots (the lowest in the figure) are awkwardly composed. It is in every respect typically Anglian, one might say English, work. I see no reason for calling it either Celtic or Carolingian.

Round this plate, to hold it to the sides, is a very rough patch, rudely riveted on, and evidently the late addition of some barbarian, when long use or, more likely, rough treatment had already weakened the original joints. You can see that the edges of the circular plate had been badly broken (on the right hand side of the figure) before this patch was put on. You can see also that the central boss has been crushed and "telescoped" by setting the cup down violently; and the doubt occurs whether it was intended for a cup after all. At any rate it seems meant to be seen with the opening upwards, as a cup, and not as a cover; for the right way up is proved by the pattern of the sides. (See Plate III.)

Fig. 2, Plate I, shows part of the side, with the patch cutting off the lower part of the ornament. The sides are formed of a single plate of silver, beaten out into a bowl shape and covered with patterns repoussé and chased. The design is divided into four panels, matching the quadrilateral arrangement of the base, and between the panels are bosses like those of the base, which seem to show that the whole cup was planned by an Anglian, though part of the work was certainly done by no English hand.

Two of the bosses on the sides remain, bound round with twisted wire, and surrounded with repoussé circles, one plain and the other ornamented with what at first sight looks like a mere row of dots; but it is really alternate dot and line on a very tiny scale; much more delicate

delicate than the repoussé work of the base, and evidently by the hand that worked the patterns of the sides. I mention this as additional proof that the fine work of the sides was done to order of the Anglian designer; not imported and then adapted.

The panels are filled with scroll-work of boughs in which birds and nests are intertwined. The boughs are all of the same sort, though in the panel shown there are more leaves, in the next more fruit, and so on alternately. The leaves are not vine-leaves, nor the fruit grapes, for the berries are ribbed, though so delicately as not to be at once noticed. The birds on the panel shown are "decorator's pheasants," that is, based on good knowledge of natural form but adapted to the requirements of the material; and they are exquisitely modelled. The bill of the bird to the left in the picture is serrated with tiny notches, and the feet are delicately and naturally drawn. No English-bred workman chased out these details, but someone with southern impulsiveness and finesse, and all the breeding of the classic schools to hold his hand in check. My drawing is too coarse, and the reproduction is necessarily a little coarser than the drawing. You need a lens to see the original properly.

At the same time the birds are ingeniously interwoven with the boughs, in strict sequence of "over and under." You have to look for the hinder leg of each bird, straddling through the foliage to rest on a bud springing from the main stem. Here is a new idea, not familiar in classic art: the interlacing of the North.

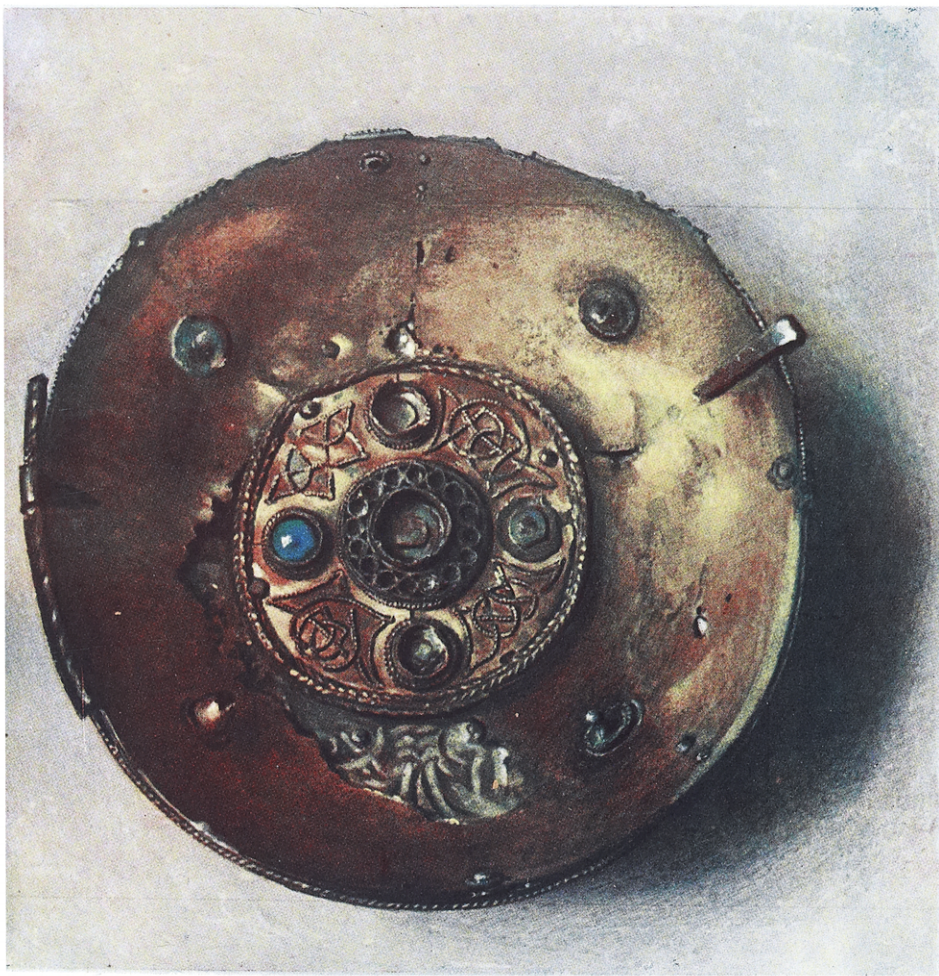
Underneath are beasts; to the left, a capricorn, similarly twisted up in boughs, with two long horns and a short woolly tail, and tufts on his back, of which the hairs are marked with chasing. On the right is a unicorn, with its horn near the foot of the bird above it; a head of the bird-dragon type, a snake-like tail twisted about its long neck, and a smooth body. The ribs and chest, like the  
articulations

articulations of the legs, are modelled with anatomical knowledge, or at least artistic acquaintance with natural structure, far beyond the ordinary work of northern animal sculpture, and entirely classical in feeling.

The other three panels of this beautiful work I have not drawn, because they are identical in style. The next one has pigeons eating the fruit, and, under them, humpless camels with woolly backs and long necks mixed up in the boughs. The third has boughs and birds like the first (shown in figure 2), and Byzantine lions, that is to say, lions of the conventional classic type, grovelling with their heads down. The fourth has fruited boughs, like the second, in which are dragon birds with snake tails ending in leaves, and long necks ending in conventional snake-heads, reaching down to two dragons with asses' ears.

I do not feel that there is any definite intention of symbolism in the figures. Of course all foliage in early Christian art may stand for the Tree of Life, and every bird and beast has its "moral." Sometimes one sees that the artist felt and meant to enforce the moral; sometimes one sees that he was more occupied with the purely artistic side of the subject, and while using the stock figures, gave all his mind to design and execution. This is the case here, I believe, as it very commonly is in similar work,—the art of those Greek craftsmen who followed the trade they had learnt from classical traditions, but employed in the service of the church, from an early part of the sixth century onwards, in the seaport towns of Italy, and wherever the influence of the Eastern empire was felt.

We are accustomed to judge of "Byzantine" art from the manufacture of its decadence, to which the revival of painting by the Cimabues and Giotto put an end; but the school of Greek art in Italy, especially in the north, during the period that used to be called the Dark Ages, was a school of masters in their own style; it produced  
work



THE ORMSIDE CUP.  
PLATE II.

work of the greatest value in its own way, besides influencing the nascent "Gothic" of European religious art. These panels are no unworthy specimens of the best work of that school; not Roman, and still less Irish or Anglo-Saxon work, but pure Greek in their varied modelling, in the "come and go" of undulating surface contrasted with crisp and delicate detail, and softly springing curves.

Plate II. takes us back to Anglian work. We had a bit of it in the two lines of twisted wire in Figure 2 bordering the Greek band of little bosses round the brim of the cup; and in the four gems in oblong settings, riveted inaccurately in the middle over the four panels, and cutting up the Greek border. In Figure 2 the gem is gone; one still remains, of light blue paste, of which the edge is seen on the top of the rim in the coloured picture.

The inside of the cup is made of a thin plate of copper, well gilt. In the middle, at the bottom, is a circular plate to match the base, but more ornate, with gems *en cabochon* instead of metal bosses, and round the centre-piece sixteen small settings, one of which still holds the débris of what is said is said in a former description of the cup to have been a pearl. The knot-work is made of twisted wire, soldered on in sections. The smith has not troubled to make his junctions accurate; the slight irregularity seems to be original, and not the result of wear and tear. The rivets of the four great bosses of the sides are covered with metal caps. Part of the copper sheath has been broken away, showing the wrong side of the repoussé panels, and the pins of the rude patch on the base come clumsily through everything. The stains on the gold are not remains of enamel, but tarnish.

Round the brim has been a lip of which part remains. It was made like a split tube of metal, and affixed with five clamps, irregularly placed, and not carrying out the quadrilateral design. This suggests that it was a later addition



addition, to turn the object into a cup for drinking, if it was not originally so intended.

We have then, I think, a very curious problem in this cup: exquisite Greek art employed by an English patron to produce something to his specification, and native English (Anglo-Saxon) art employed to complete it.

Now the Bishop of Bristol (the Rev. G. F. Browne) has told us how Greek artists from Italy were brought into Northumbria in the latter part of the seventh century, and how the Anglian craftsmen elaborated the knot-work hinted to them, he thinks, by the Greek.

The combination, so unexpected, is historically possible; and we have a parallel in stone-carving in the Bewcastle cross, which, without reproducing the identical patterns, might have been planned by the same designer. Bewcastle cross, however, might possibly have been cut by native stone-masons to the design of an artist who had access to Greek-Italian models; but the Ormside cup, I think, must have been partly made by a Greek artist in England. The interlacing of the Greek scrollwork in both is remarkable. We have plenty of Greek-Italian interlacing at Pisa, Lucca, etc., in the 11th and 12th centuries; but if the cross is rightly dated 670 A.D. the cup may be as early; and, if so, it is one of the most valuable documents in the history of Art, as showing Greek and English in the very act of that wonderful partnership from which all northern decoration sprang.

Then finally we have the broken bowl patched rudely together.

The cup was given to its present owners by Mr. John Bland, of Ormside Lodge, in 1823, and we know that it was found in Ormside churchyard. Neither Mr. Bland nor the York Philosophical Society are guilty of that patch. The missing rivets show that the cup was used long after it was mended, and roughly used too.

How did this work of art find its way, along with the sword



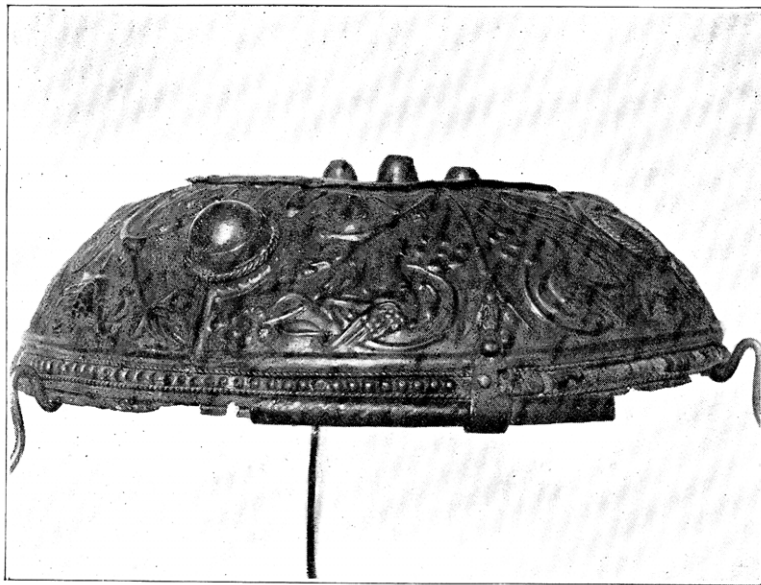


PLATE III.—TO FACE P. 386.

THE ORMSIDE CUP.

[From a photograph by Mr. H. M. Platnauer.]

sword and shield found lately, to Ormside, which was no site of Anglo-Saxon minster or palace ?

Now Ormside means the seat of Orm, and Orm is a Scandinavian name. Orm must have been a Viking, probably one of Halfdan's heathen Danes who pillaged Northumbria, and spread abroad to settle the dales westward, late in the 9th century. I am tempted to fancy that the cup was Orm's loot from York, or some great Anglian church, and that the clumsy ruffian smashed it as he went clattering over the fells, and then tinkered it up for his drinking-bouts, or gave it to the priest, for the good of his soul.

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