

ON A MEDIÆVAL CHALICE AND PATEN FOUND IN WALES.

By W. CRIPPS, C.B., F.S.A.

Amongst the most interesting of the specimens of mediæval art which have come under the notice of the antiquarian world of late years must certainly be included the Chalice and Paten discovered by some labouring men buried in the earth near Dolgelley. The circumstance of their discovery was as follows:—Some workmen in the employment of Mr. Pritchard Morgan, who was at that time actively engaged in searching for gold in Wales, or else working a “set” of their own in connection with that industry, curiously enough in the course of their mining operations lighted in the early part of 1890, upon a Chalice and Paten, at first said to be formed of the precious metal of which they were in search, but which eventually proved to be of silver. After some negotiations in the course of which a question of “treasure trove” was raised by the coroner, which seems to have come to nothing, they were sent to London and an account of them and of the circumstances of their discovery appeared at that time in the daily papers. They were not, however, submitted to the opinion of any expert of authority, certainly not to the British Museum, and the writer also failed to have any opportunity of examining them. For some time past it has not been possible to ascertain in whose possession they remained.

But in the spring of the present year they have re-appeared, this time in the rooms of Messrs. Christie, Manson and Woods; and their sale by auction, in the month of March, for no less a sum than £710 for which they were secured by Mr. W. Boore, the well known dealer, has again attracted popular attention to them.

Their real interest became very evident on examination, and justifies a short notice like the present, even if their history is not as yet finally elucidated, nor their date absolutely ascertained. The weight of the two objects is 46 oz.

The Chalice, as will be seen by the illustration, is of a very early type, much reminding us in many of its details of some of the most ancient of the vessels which have been found from time to time in the tombs of great ecclesiastics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In different ways it resembles more than one of these interesting relics of ecclesiastical art, its knop recalling one thought to be of 1340 at York Minster, the lip of the bowl not unlike the beautiful cup discovered in the grave of Abp. Hubert Walter at Canterbury Cathedral and the overlapping ornament of the foot, a third such chalice preserved at York, but of uncertain date.

But with all these aids to identification, it is not so easy as it might seem to give it an exact date—for if the bowl indicates, as it does, a very early period, perhaps not later than the very commencement of the thirteenth century, the knop and the adornment of the stem and foot point to the fourteenth. It would be impossible to assign it to any single type under Messrs. Fallow and Hope's well-known classification; but it would come under the earliest class in the more general classification adopted in *Old English Plate* by the present writer. There is no possible reason, even if examples are seldom found to illustrate the point, why a later artist should not, now and then, recur to vessels of an earlier period than his own for his model; and it may very well be that this has happened in the present case. All that can positively be said of it is that it is earlier in style than the Gothic series of chalices which come next in date to those with circular feet. These commence in the middle of the fourteenth century, though an example of earlier character, might well be found after the newer fashion had established itself. The Paten which was found with the Chalice is of the character usually identified with the Gothic period; but it should be noticed that there is little of the Lombardic in the character of the lettering in which the inscription running round the central device is given.



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The six-lobed form of paten has seldom or never been found with coffin chalices, and as massing plate is not usually referable to an earlier period than the fourteenth century.

There remains to notice the inscription which occurs under the foot of the cup in small capital letters very like those which appear on the paten. This runs as follows:—NICOLVS ME FECIT DE HERFORDIE. This Nicholas has not as yet been authoritatively identified, but a friend has drawn the writer's attention to the fact that in Cooke's *Continuation of Hereford Antiquities*, vol. iii, pp. 86-91, a celebrated divine called "Nicolus (or Nicolas) Herfordie" flourished at Hereford about the year 1382, and seems to have been a person of some importance. Time and further research will clear up his connection with these interesting relics, if there is any; but in the meantime there is nothing in the character of the Paten, and very little in that of the Chalice to make it impossible that they are of his date, and owe to him their origin.