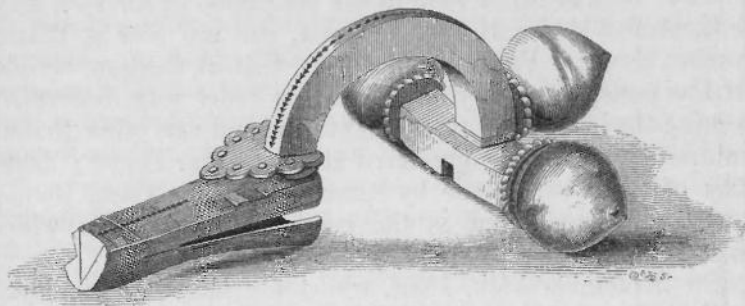


GOLD FIBULA, FOUND AT ODIHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

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AMONGST the ancient ornaments preserved in the British Museum is a fibula of gold, which was found in a garden at Odiham, in Hampshire; the circumstances of the discovery have not been stated. Its cruciform appearance, and some peculiarities in its workmanship, first gave rise to the supposition that it might be a Saxon ornament, but there is much greater reason for conjecturing it to be of very late Roman workmanship.

Bronze fibulæ of the same shape, found with Roman remains in the vicinity of Boulogne, are preserved in the museum of that town; and Mr. Charles Roach Smith possesses, in his collection of antiquities, a similar fibula, which was discovered in the city of London.

In a series of plates, published by Richot, representing antiquities found at the Châtelet, in France, (Plate 42,)^a a similar buckle is figured, and the Count Caylus, in his *Recueil d'Antiquités*, tom. i. plate 94. fig. 8. gives a representation of a bronze fibula which is precisely similar to the one discovered at Odiham; it was found in an ancient place of burial at Anières, on the banks of the Seine, opposite Clichy-la-garenne, with a quantity of coins. This fibula bears the following legend, inscribed on either side of the curved part, DOMINE. MARTI. VIVAS. VTERE. FELIX. or FELEX. The form of the letters, the errors in spelling these words, and especially the

^a The Chatelet is a hill-fortress situated on the Marne, between St. Dizier and Joinville, in Champagne, supposed to have been a Gaulish, and Roman town; exca-

vations were made there in 1772, by Monsieur Grignon. The plates above mentioned were designed and engraved by Poisson, in 1791.

title DOMINUS, appear to authorize the supposition that this fibula may have been a work of the fourth or fifth century. It may deserve notice that two were discovered together on this occasion, precisely similar in form and size, one only of them bore an inscription. Unfortunately the coins found at Anières could not be deciphered. The great prevalence of gold as a material during the Celtic period, for the formation of objects of personal adornment, leads us to conjecture that the Odiham buckle may be an Anglo-Roman or Celto-Roman work of art.

Although in poetic descriptions golden fibulæ are mentioned at the best period of the history of Rome, some restriction appears to have directed their use. At the period of the civil war^b Brutus reproaches his military tribunes with using these ornaments, thereby indirectly implying that fibulæ of this precious metal were considered as a token of effeminacy. They appear, however, to have been bestowed on the equites, as a reward for valour^c, and they were, probably, at an early period, the decorations of females, their use being derived from the more refined and artistic Etruscans. The early fibulæ were of bronze, and the military generally were restricted to the wearing of silver, gold fibulæ being only allowed to the tribunes. Valerian commanded Zosimio the procurator of Syria to present to Claudius II., when military tribune, two fibulæ of silver gilded, and one of gold, as an extra donative^d, and Aurelian conceded to the common soldiers the permission of wearing gold fibulæ^e. From this period their use may be traced under the Byzantine empire till the Saxon times, although but few Saxon ornaments formed of gold have been found. They seem, however, to have been commonly used at the time of Edward the Confessor.

The form of the ornament found at Odiham does not resemble that which fastened the abolla or the paludamentum, which is circular, and the buckles represented in Anglo-Saxon MSS. are of the same shape. It equally differs from the ordinary shape of Roman fibulæ.

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^b Plin. 33. xii. Lemaire. Paris, 1831. c. 14.

^c Livy, b. xxxix. 31.

^d Hist. Aug. Script. Pollio, vit. Claud.

^e Ibid. Vopisc. vit. Aur. c. 46.