



THE CORDWICK LARK.

## THE CORBRIDGE LANX.

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THE numerous vestiges of Roman occupation in the Northern Marches, and especially near the line of the great Mural Barrier, deservedly claim attention, not less for their remarkable number and variety of inscriptions and sculpture, than as examples of antique art highly decorated in workmanship, and of unusual intrinsic value in their material. Besides the golden relics connected with the *cultus* of the *Deæ Matres*, found near Newcastle and figured in this Journal,<sup>1</sup> the silver vessels brought to light in 1747 near Capheaton, Northumberland, enriched with a profusion of mythological subjects, hitherto unexplained,<sup>2</sup> numerous precious relics of Roman taste and luxury have been revealed near the great monument of Roman subjugation, and the stations *per lineam valli*. Of these may specially be cited the beautiful *patina* of silver found in 1736, now unfortunately destroyed, the unique vestige, of its class, of Christianity in Britain at that early period, and bearing the monogram composed of the Greek letters X and P;<sup>3</sup> and, lastly, the silver *lanx*, to which the following observations relate. These two precious objects were brought to light near *Corstopitum*, Corbridge, on the Roman Wall.

The *lanx*, in possession of the Duke of Northumberland, is familiar to many in our Society, not only by numerous representations and notices in archæological works, but chiefly through the kind courtesies of the liberal patron of our exer-

<sup>1</sup> Arch. Journal, vol. viii., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> They are figured in the *Archæologia*, vol. xv. p. 393, plates xxx.—xxxiii. This remarkable treasure-trove is now in the British Museum.

<sup>3</sup> A drawing has been preserved in the

minute books of the Society of Antiquaries of London. See also Camden's *Brit.*, ed. Gough, vol. iii. p. 509; and the "*Lapidarium*," by Dr. Bruce, No. 653, under "*Corbridge*."

tions in years past. It will be remembered that, by favour of the late Duke (Algernon), the precious original was entrusted to us for exhibition on occasion of the meeting of the Institute at Newcastle, in 1852; subsequently, by his Grace's indulgence, we were likewise permitted to make more leisurely examination of the curious mythological details with which the *lanx* is enriched. An electrotyped facsimile was sent by the Duke, in 1860, to one of our monthly meetings in London.<sup>4</sup> A full account of this sumptuous production of Roman art,—of the discovery, in 1735,—the claim also and ultimate rescue by the lord of the manor, the Duke of Somerset, as treasure trove, has been related elsewhere. It may suffice here to state that the costly dish was noticed by the daughter of a Corbridge blacksmith; the glittering angle projected from the bank of the Tyne, near Corbridge, and attracted the girl's notice.

The *lanx*, it may be observed, measures 19 in. by 15 in.; the weight is 149 oz. It had, when found, a raised base or rim attached to the under side, which was cut off by the smith and sold in Newcastle.

We are indebted to Dr. Collingwood Bruce for the use of the accompanying woodcut. It may suffice to indicate the various portions of the design that render this important example of Roman iconography peculiarly interesting. The reader, who may desire to appreciate with accuracy the style of art, and the mythological details, will be gratified by examination of the admirable engraving by Mr. Holl, from a careful drawing executed by Mr. Scharf. This has been recently given by permission of the Duke of Northumberland, amongst the costly illustrations of the "*Lapidarium Septentrionale*," published by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle under Dr. Bruce's editorial care. (See p. 340.) A fully detailed statement will there be found of various suggestions that have been offered in regard to the signification of the design, with references also to engravings and other published notices of this most important monument of classical Toreutic art.

The subject of the chasing is the Delphic Oracle, expressed by the various deities connected with its establishment. The principal figure is the *Pythia*, Phemonoe, seated on her bronze throne over the orifice of the prophetic cavern, holding in her hand a full *spindle*, as being guardian of the

<sup>4</sup> Arch. Journal, vol. xvii. p. 261.

decrees of Fate, and listening with all attention to the dictates of the god who inspires her responses. *Apollo* standing within his shrine, in the attitude of one declaiming, utters to her his oracles in hexameter verse, holding aloft his unstrung bow with his left hand, and with the other extending a branch of a tree of singular appearance, upon which some remarks will be offered when we come to consider the various attributes and symbols introduced into the piece. By the *Pythia's* side stands *Themis*, daughter of Earth and Goddess of Justice (a character denoted by the long sceptre in her hand) ; she holds this place by right, for she was the first owner of the Oracle, which she afterwards ceded to *Diana*, who immediately transferred it to her brother : a transaction fully detailed by *Æschylus* in the prologue to his " *Eumenides*."

Next to *Themis* stands *Minerva*, with shield reposing on the ground, holding up her finger to enjoin attention to the utterance of the god. This gesture appears to be occasioned by the entrance of *Diana*, and her obstreperous hound, for it would be too far-fetched a supposition to credit the late Roman *cælator*<sup>5</sup> with the knowledge of that deity's transient ownership of the shrine.

The accessories form perhaps the most curious portion of the whole *tableau*. The spreading *tree*, above the heads of the two goddesses, despite its *metallic* stiffness and contortion, is probably nothing more than a conventional tree, merely introduced for the sake of affording a perch to *Apollo's* peculiar bird of augury, the *raven*, "*oscinem corvum*," and the *hawks*, his attribute in his other character of the Sun-god, as the same bird was of his prototype, the Egyptian *Phre*. There were, indeed, certain celebrated trees in bronze decorating the sacred inclosure at *Delphi* : notably the immense palm-tree, the gift of the *Corinthians*, described by *Plutarch* in his interesting tract, "*De Pyth. Orac. xi.* ;" and another with dates of gold, supporting a *Minerva* in gilt metal, dedicated by the *Athenians* to commemorate their double victory on the *Eurymedon*. This latter is mentioned by *Plutarch* (in his *Life of Nicias*) and by *Pausanias*,<sup>6</sup> who

<sup>5</sup> The use of spiral columns in the architectural portions proves that the design cannot be earlier than the reign of *Severus*.

<sup>6</sup> *Descriptio Græciæ* I. 15, 4. His very detailed account of the statues and relics

at *Delphi*, as existing in the middle of the second century, will afford archaeologists, dissatisfied with my interpretation of the scene before us, plentiful materials for making out another exposition more to their own liking.

quotes the old historian Cleodemus about the strange omen presaging the Athenian disasters at Syracuse, how a vast flock of crows alighted upon their *donarium*, and pecked to pieces the owl, spear, robes of Pallas, and the dates of her tree.

This brings back our attention to the *branch* held forth in Apollo's hand; in which it is impossible to recognise the bay twig, the customary badge of the god, in the character in which he is here depicted. It is unmistakeably cut from a chesnut tree—one having no connexion with this god under any of his many titles—the trees consecrated to him being the palm and the bay; from either of which were woven the wreaths given for prizes to the victors in his games. The only conjecture that suggests itself to me in explanation of the anomaly is that the Roman artist, to add stronger expression to the character filled by the god in the present scene, has chosen to equip him with a sprig of the oracle-giving *φηγὸς* of Dodona. That the latter was the *chesnut*, not the *oak*, as commonly understood, is evident from the distinction Pausanias makes between its fruit (as the sole edible mast) and that of other *ὄρεος*; <sup>7</sup> as well as from the name *Διὸς βάλανος* appropriated by the Greeks to the sweet, or Spanish, chesnut. To the famous *omphalos*, "the centre-point of earth," is given due prominence, in the shape of the conical pillar in front of Apollo; it was made, Pausanias tells us, of white marble.<sup>8</sup> The present figure of this primæval monument is highly valuable, as it has the look of a faithful picture of the original; for, although it regularly forms the seat of Apollo on the coins of the Seleucidæ, yet the minuteness of the space there available reduces the copy to a merely conventional representation. The pillar at the back of Themis, supporting a celestial *globe* (or, perhaps, sun-dial) is frequently introduced in sculptures and gems representing astrologers and their operations, and may therefore be reasonably supposed to have reference in this place to the visible presence of the solar deity.

The subjects filling the exergue remain to be noticed. The dwarf *tree* at the right hand extremity, with its singular fan-shaped terminations, can be meant for nothing else than the palmetto, which doubtless was then cultivated at Delphi

<sup>7</sup> I. 17, 5, for the nature of the tree at Dodona; VIII. 1, 6, for its fruit, the discovery of which he assigns to Pelasgos, the civilizer of the aboriginal Arcadians.

<sup>8</sup> It exactly corresponds in shape to the Hindoo *Lingam*, the universal emblem of the Creator, and was in all probability the original idol of the holy place.

with the same care as at Nice at the present day, and with a similar religious destination. Next comes the *gryphon*, compound of lion and eagle, and the regular attribute of Phœbus, whose presence it accompanies, or replaces, upon the Greek coinage from the earliest times. He is looking back very wistfully at his proper prey, Diana's *stag*, from which he is separated by the intervention of the *great altar*, upon which all who consulted the Oracle were bound first to offer sacrifice. The indecorous attitude of the stag, as he rolls upon the ground, may be supposed given to the animal in order to express the sense of security inspired by the sanctity of the place, although in such close proximity to his natural enemy; it is in modern phrase "the lion and the lamb lying down together." One cannot, however, avoid suspecting a deeper motive in the selection of this pose for the creature—it allowed incidentally the exhibition of the *fascinum*, that potent amulet whose presence was indispensable in all displays of pomp and luxury liable to bring down upon the possessor the ever to be dreaded stroke of the Evil Eye. Next we see a weird-looking flower, which can be intended for none other than Apollo's favourite, the *Hyacinthus*; and certainly it bears some resemblance to the fleur-de-lys, the plant that has the best claims to be identified with that insoluble problem of ancient botany. Diana's *hound* may be left to speak for himself; and the row is closed with the famous fountain, *Castalia*, tumbling down from its native rocks.

The *running vine* forming the border to the chasing indicates the festive destination of this magnificent piece of plate, which, however, falls rather under the denomination of "pinax" than of "lanx," the normal shape of the latter being *circular*, as appears from Horace,<sup>9</sup> from the application of the name to the scales of a balance, and, pictorially, from the "lanx satura" carried by the figures of Bonus Eventus. The "*pinax*," on the contrary, is called "quadrangular" by Athenæus, when speaking<sup>1</sup> of one of such enormous size as to contain a boar roasted whole; but the material was still of *board* (the proper meaning of the word), with threads of gold let into it, or, in modern phrase, ornamented with *pique-work*.

<sup>9</sup> Sat. II. 4, 40.

<sup>1</sup> In his amusing description of the Wedding of Caranus (IV. cap. 5).



In introducing here the following observations by a distinguished corresponding member of our Society, no apology will be necessary. The brief outline of the Baron de Witte's view of the details displayed on the Corbridge lanx was indeed not destined for publication. In connection, however, with the difficult mythological details under consideration, the opinion of so erudite a student of antiquities, whose attention has long been specially devoted to the elucidation of classical art, as displayed in the most precious monuments of Greek and Roman iconography, cannot fail to prove a welcome supplement to the foregoing dissertation, which was composed before the receipt, and quite independently of the Baron's communication.

"Je n'ai pas oublié la promesse que je vous ai faite de revoir avec soin le sujet de l'Apollon Hyperboréen sur le *lanx* d'argent de *Corstopitum*.

"Il me semble que le sujet peut s'expliquer de la manière suivante.

"Apollon arrive du pays des Hyperboréens à Delphos. Il tient d'une main des épis, et de l'autre son arc. Le temple de Delphos est indiqué par l'édicule supporté par deux colonnes d'ordre Corinthien. Un autel formé de plusieurs assises de grosses pierres est placé devant le Dieu. Sa lyre est posée à terre contre une des colonnes du temple. A ses pieds est le griffon, animal consacré tout particulièrement à l'Apollon Hyperboréen : plusieurs monuments montrent Apollon monté sur un griffon.

"Une femme voilée assise sur un siège sans dossier, le dos tourné à Apollon, se retourne vers le Dieu et exprime par sa main gauche levée son étonnement. Dans sa main droite se voit un objet difficile à expliquer. Est-ce le *plectrum* ? Est-ce un rouleau (*volumen*) ? Est-ce un autre attribut ? On pourrait penser aux prémices envoyées par les Hyperboréens à l'Apollon de Prasies dans l'Attique (Paus. i. 31, 2), τὰς δὲ ἀπαρχὰς κεκρύφθαι μὲν ἐν καλᾷ πυρῶν. Ce seroit une des vierges hyperboréennes, Opis où Hecarge (Paus. v. 7, 4), qui tiendrait les prémices enveloppées dans de la paille de froment. S'il s'agissait d'un monument qui appartenait à la belle époque de l'art, on pourroit donner une explication plus sûre et basée sur les traditions religieuses ; mais comme nous avons sous les yeux un monument de basse époque, où souvent les idées religieuses sont mêlées et confondues sans

règle, il devient difficile de préciser le caractère des personnages. Doit-on reconnaître dans la femme assise la Pythie ? C'est encore possible, et peut-être cette explication est-elle préférable, parce qu'elle est plus simple. Quoiqu'il en soit, derrière cette femme assise est une colonne surmontée d'un globe qui semble indiquer le Stade de Delphis. Plus à gauche sont deux déesses qui se tiennent debout ; dans l'une on reconnaît facilement Pallas, au casque, à l'égide et à la lance. La seconde, la plus rapprochée de celle que je désigne sous le nom de Pythie, n'a d'autre attribut qu'un sceptre. C'est peut-être Thémis, qui autrefois avait possédé l'oracle de Delphis. Au devant de ces deux déesses vient Diane en costume de chasseresse, armée de son arc. La déesse a blessé un cerf étendu aux pieds de la Pythie. Entre ce cerf blessé et le griffon est un autel chargé d'offrandes. Aux pieds de Diane est son chien de chasse, et tout auprès, à gauche, on remarque un vase renversé d'où s'échappe l'eau ; ce vase doit indiquer la source Cassotis, qui coulait dans l'intérieur du temple. Entre Diane et Pallas est un autel chargé d'offrandes, et un grand arbre dans lequel on doit reconnaître un platane ; dans les branches de l'arbre sont plusieurs oiseaux, et entre autres le corbeau consacré à Apollon ; contre le tronc du platane est posé le bouclier de Pallas. Il est question du platane dans les traditions de Delphos (Plin. Hist. Nat., xvi. 44 ; Théophrast. Hist. Plant., iv. 13).

“J’ai publié, dans les Annales de l’Institut de correspondance archéologique de Rome, un article sur la topographie de Delphos, et vous y trouverez (année 1841, p. 1 et suiv.) des notes exactes.

“Puissent ces quelques renseignements vous offrir quelque intérêt.

“JULES DE WITTE.”