THE WARWICK VASE.[1]

By PROFESSOR E. C. CLARK, LL.D., F.S.A.

I can add but little to the account given by the official guide and the various guide books. Some few particulars I have gathered from other sources as to its history, its probable author, and its possible original destination.

The guide-books tell us that it was purchased by a *late* Earl of Warwick from Sir William Hamilton towards the close of the last century. The inscription on the pedestal[1] tells us that the vase was dug out of the ruins of Hadrian's "lordly pleasure house" at Tivoli, that it was repaired at the charge of Sir William Hamilton, then our ambassador to the King of Sicily, sent home by him and dedicated by him to the "ancestral or national genius of liberal arts" in 1774. The inscription in question is not, as sometimes at Rome, a defacement of old work, the pedestal, and part of the foot of the vase, being modern. The repairs you can see. They are evidently the faithful replacement of the original in all cases but one—to be mentioned presently—as to which there is some question.

What Sir William Hamilton meant by "the ancestral or national genius of liberal arts," I do not exactly know. Sir William was a man of elegant taste in more directions than one. We owe to him the collection and preservation of many beautiful works of ancient art, the majority of which were purchased by Parliament for the British Museum after his death in 1803.

[1] Read at Warwick Castle, August 9th, 1888.

[1] I suppose this was the second Earl Brooke and Warwick who, according to West, writes thus of the work of art and its present locality: "I built a noble greenhouse and filled it with beautiful plants. I placed in it a vase considered to be the finest 'remain' of Grecian art for its size and beauty." Query, the Earl's or West's writing?

The present one was engraved in his "Vasi e Candalabra," by Piranesi, from whose brief notes to the engravings I learn the further particulars that it was found in the year 1770, during excavations carried on in the bed of a small lake called Pantanello, which was anciently included in the *enceinte* of Hadrian's villa. Of course, this is not the time to describe that wonderful town of walls and terraces which Hadrian built or finished on his return from his last progress round the world. I cannot trace this lake Pantanello on the modern plans. Near the entrance are the remains of what is generally considered to be a Greek theatre, overlooking the so-called valley of Tempe and the stream at the bottom of that valley. The "lake" may have been there. How the vase came into it we do not know. The villa is said to have been occupied by the Gothic King Totila, 544 A.D., in his siege of Rome. This precious monument of art may have been flung in to save it, on the invader's approach, like the mass of curiosities in the well of Coventina, near Hadrian's own Roman wall from Newcastle to Carlisle. Hadrian's villa was finished between 135 and 138 A.D., but the works of art brought to it from all parts of the world might have various and much earlier dates. This work is, I know not on what authority, generally attributed to Lysippus, celebrated for his portraits of Alexander, a Greek artist of what is called the third period, about the close of the fourth century before Christ, in which the beautiful or elegant style began to replace the noble severity of Phidias and his school. The subject speaks for itself. The lower rim, so to speak, is covered by two tiger or panther skins, of which the heads and the fore paws decorate the sides of the vase, while the hind legs are interlocked, and hang down between the handles. These handles are formed of pairs of vine trunks, the smaller branches and grapes of which twine round the lip of the vase. Heads, each with a thyrsus or a club, belonging to the owner of the head, are arranged along the tiger skins. With one exception these heads are generally, and, I think, correctly regarded as Silenuses, or male attendants of Bacchus, the god of wine. The exception is of a very beautiful female face. This has been held by some *savants* to be modern, and it

has been suggested that it is in fact a portrait of Lady Hamilton. I leave the question to interest your curiosity or thirst for knowledge as soon as I have done, which will be in a very few moments. There is a crack round the greater part of the head ; the face is somewhat modern ; the restorations of the eighteenth century were by no means free from insertions of this kind. On the other hand, the *hair* is, I think, continuous with the main substance of the vase ; the face is attributed, you must remember, to a period of beauty and softness rather than of Phidian dignity; and it does not appear to me to be exactly that of Lady Hamilton. That she loved to be represented as a Bacchante, we know—whether she would have acquiesced in the pointed Faun's ear, which this figure bears, as cheerfully as Hawthorn's Donatello, I am not so sure. Piranesi gives the female head in his engraving, and says nothing of any change. Assuming this to be an original Bacchante or Faun, the somewhat masculine surroundings of the lady are not out of keeping with the accounts of the strange and rather mixed picnics in which the votaries of Bacchus indulged. Classical scholars will remember, in that weird play, the Bacchae, how the mother of Pentheus vaunts her prowess and success in their wild hunting revel over the hills of Boeotia. Apropos of hunting, I may say a word on the club. This object is both pastoral and hunting—used to throw at a stray sheep, also to knock down a chance hare. The *thyrsi* bear the usual fir-cone, or the whorl of vine or ivy-leaves, with the pyramid of grapes, or the spear-point, inciting to madness, which peeps through. The tigers or panthers, the vine trunks, tendrils, and grapes, the thyrsi, and the beautiful Bacchante, amidst the Silenuses, all belong to the same god. This is a Bacchic representation, a subject which will suit very well with the time of Lysippus, as the beauty of the work suits the traditional characteristics of his school.

Several suggestions have been made as to the original destination of this vase. The most favoured one appears to be that it was "a vessel in which to mix *wine* with water, and was intended for the centre of such apartments as were devoted to festive entertainments," or "was pro-

bably dedicated in some temple of Bacchus." With regard to this wine mixing story, I may remind you that the vessel holds 163 gallons. It may have had that quantity of liquor put in it in Hadrian's time. Even in our degenerate days we read of conduits and fountains running wine. But I think you will agree that the original destination of the vase could scarcely have contemplated this as an ordinary proceeding. Moreover, I believe I am correct in saying that no aperture has been found in the bowl, which is, perhaps, a little against its having been used for holding any liquid. A fountain might have been intended to play in it, of which the water was to run over the edge, but even here we should expect a pipe to introduce the supply. I should question whether this particular specimen, and others like it, were ever meant for anything but purely decorative purposes. But as most decorative objects have had their origin in a use of some kind, I am inclined, in the case of these large vases, to suggest the *bath* as furnishing their first idea. The Greek bath was not on so vast a scale as those stupendous labyrinths of building which we see at Rome—club-house, public-house, people's palace, all in one. The great hot-air chamber and cold swimming bath were by no means the invariable and conspicuous features which they became in the days of Diocletian and Caracalla. What we do see, in the Greek painted representations of bathing, is, sometimes a basin or tub wherein the bathers could stand or sit, but more often a round or oval vase, resting on a pedestal, round which they stood to wash themselves. That is the vessel which I imagine to have been enlarged into the great ornamental vases, such as the one before you. Athenæus, it is true, writing under the Roman Empire, speaks of those *in use* as holding sometimes as much as 50 gallons. This is much larger, and, if for use, would I think have been of metal. Of course, this is far too clean and sharp workmanship to be a copy from metal, though metal copies have been made of it.

I take the object, then, of this work of art to have been, from the first, purely decorative. From the Bacchic emblems which it bears, I think its original *locale* to have been, very probably, a temple of Bacchus, as was suggested

by Piranesi ; nor is it impossible that Hadrian may have placed it in some corresponding position within his town-like palace under Tivoli. There was, as I have said, among the other theatres, one which modern antiquaries consider to be a copy of the Greek ; and Greek theatres contained frequent artistic references to the origin of all dramatic representation in the feast of Dionysus.