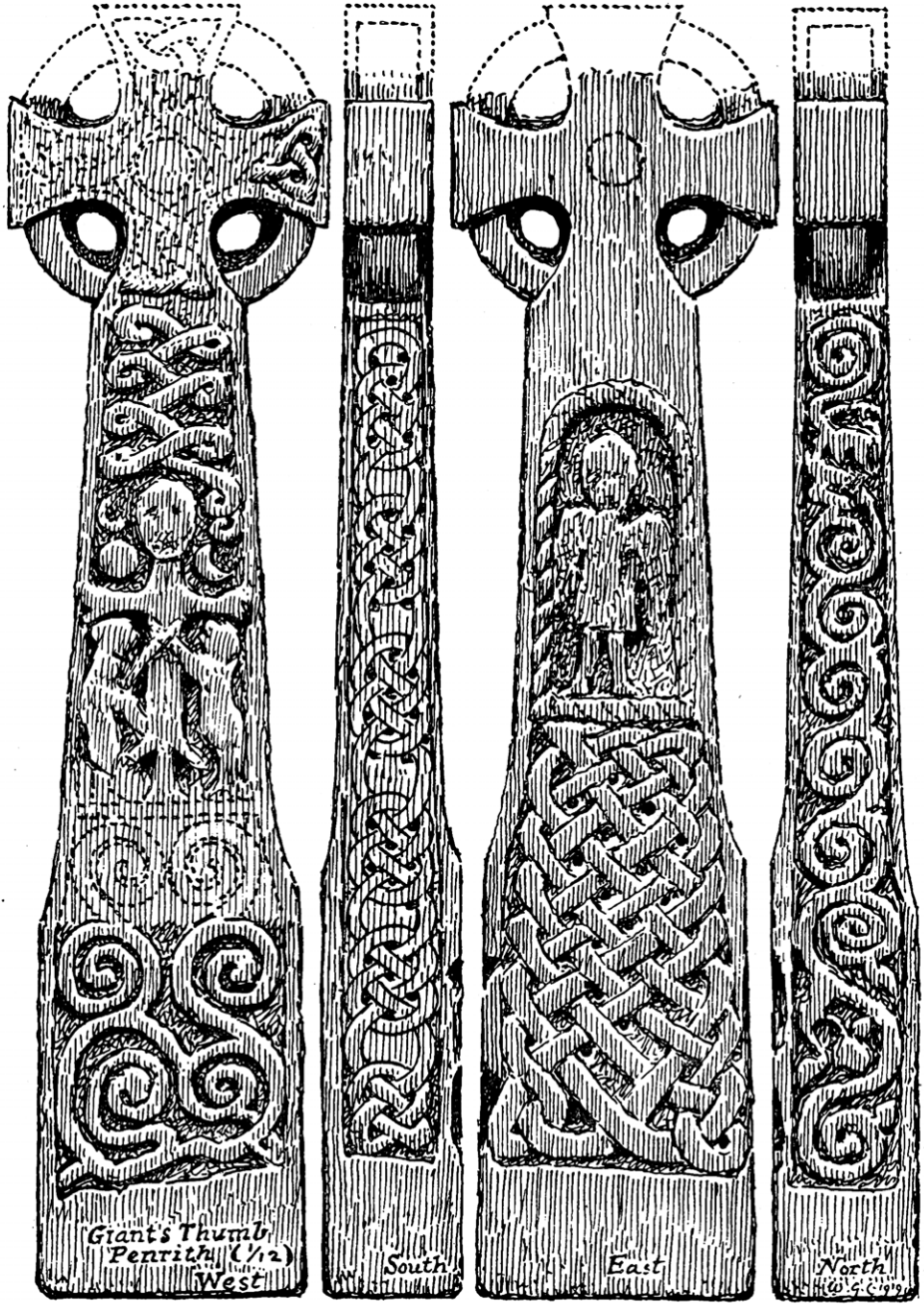


TO FACE P. 53.

ART. VII.—*The Giant's Thumb.* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

Read at Carlisle, August 19th, 1919.

THE ancient Cross at Penrith called the Giant's Thumb is well known, but it has never been described in relation to other monuments. In Calverley's *Early Sculptured Crosses* it is said to be of the Anglian type, and in these *Transactions*, N.S. iii, 388, it is noticed as having Norse motives like the Gosforth Cross; and both these statements are true. The drawing now shown gives the head restored and the four sides with the patterns made out. These restorations are not conjectural; where the design is entirely effaced by time and weather a blank is left; but all the rest can be inferred from traces of carving which can be seen in favourable lights. Thus the south side has the drill-holes of the intersections of the plait left; I have to thank my son for mapping them with great care; and from these the run of the strands is certain. So also with the basket plait of the east side. The conjoined triquetrae on the west side of the head are restored from remains on the right hand and lower arms. Part of the cable round the figure on the east side is visible, and the braid over the crucifix is only doubtful in its lower termination. The restoration of the head is obvious; the two remaining holes of the wheel-cross were thought by the late George Watson to have been enlarged when the cross was used—as tradition said—for a pillory. We have therefore nearly the whole cross complete, and it gives material for discussing its place in the history of monumental art.

The wheel-head marks it as not earlier than late ninth century, for no wheel-heads are found on the plait-and-

scroll crosses of the finer or earlier Anglian style; and this type of wheel-head is characteristic of tenth-century crosses. The basket-plait with boldly curved straps is also a tenth-century feature. The cable is sometimes found with ninth-century ornament, but is frequent in the tenth century. These three elements the Thumb has in common with Norse and Danish monuments; and the braid over the crucifix is seen also in the great Leeds cross, and at Hawsker and Kirklevington, all of the tenth century, but it is not found in Celtic ornament. It is seen in carvings at the Forum in Rome and at St. Abbondio, Como, both assigned to the ninth century, and was no doubt introduced into northern England somewhat later.

Survivals of Anglian motives are the regular plait on the south side, the ordinary "Carrick bend" (Romilly Allen's No. 568), one of the commonest late ninth and tenth century interlacings; and the scroll on the north side, a debased Anglian form, with the leafage almost gone. This is seen in many crosses dated to the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries.

The two figure-panels support this dating. The crucifix, very rude—with head too large, feet separate (a "four-nail crucifix"), sun and moon, the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer apparently made grotesque or ugly with intention—is like a series of crucifixes on ninth and tenth-century Northumbrian crosses. The figure on the east side is one of a tenth-century group; it is set in a cable-moulded frame like the Slaidburn angel and the Gosforth crucifix. In its mutilated state it is doubtful whether it was intended for an angel with wings (as on the Slaidburn stone) or for one of the round-shouldered figures like the "Bound Devil" at Kirkby Stephen or the Otley warrior. The last, indeed, is not unlike what this figure may have been, and that Otley warrior was pretty certainly a portrait, not a saint or symbol. So

also are other figures on various crosses—the warrior on the recently found fragment at Brailsford, Derbyshire; the seated warrior on the Nunburnholme shaft; the costumed figure with birds at Kirklevington; the two costumed figures on the St. Mary Bishophill junior shaft at York. It is possible also that the figure with sword and hawk on Leeds cross, and the one with staff and hawk on Bewcastle cross, are portraits. This figure on the Thumb may therefore have been meant for the portrait of the personage to whom the monument was erected; and the monument itself is an example of the transition style from late Anglian to the Viking Age. Its design is a little earlier in development than that of the great Leeds cross; and if the Leeds cross may be dated roughly about 925, the Thumb may be approximately of 920 or thereabouts. But any attempt to date such a monument is merely stating its position in the typological development of the series of crosses; the actual date may be later, though hardly earlier.

At this time Owain or Eugenius (c. 920 to c. 937) was king of Cumbria, and it is not out of place to give reasons for connecting him with this monument; to explain why he may be considered as the "giant" whose "thumb" it is called; why a non-Celtic cross was erected in a Cymric country and why Penrith was the site.

King Owain was the most important person in the revived kingdom of Cumbria, which existed from about 880 to 945 A.D. The earlier kings of Cumbria were a very ancient dynasty, deriving from the Romano-British who, after the Romans left the Wall and under pressure from Picts, Scots and Angles, banded together as Cumbri, in early British *Combroges*, i.e., confederates, under a successor of the Dux Britanniarum called by them the Guletic, in modern Welsh *Gwledig*, i.e. prince (Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, 104, 112). Ceretic the Guletic, St. Patrick's Coroticus, of the 5th century, is named as ancestor of a line of kings con-

sidered as representatives of the Roman power and therefore "Caesarian" (see pedigree herewith) and ruling the British, properly so called, of the north-west. It was only after the death of Riderch the Magnificent that

THE CUMBRO-BRITISH "CAESARIAN" LINE ACCORDING TO THE PEDIGREE OF *Historia Britonum*.

Ceretic Guletic (5th cent.)
Cinuit
Dungual the Old

Guipno — Neithon — Beli — Eugein (Owain)

Clinoch — Tutagual (Tudwal) — Riderch the Magnificent Rodercus of Alclyde (*Adamnan*); won battle of Arthuret, 573; died, 601.

Cinbelin — Clinog of Eidiu (Carriden ?)

Elfin (Alpin)

Dunnagual (Domhnall) k. of Alclyde; d. 694 (*Tighernac*).

Beli, k. of Alclyde; d. 722 (*Tighernac*).

Teudubr (Tudor), k. of Alclyde; d. 752 (*Tighernac*).

Dunnagual; d. 760 (*Ann. Camb.*)

Eugein (Owain)

Riderch

Dunnagual

Conan, k. of Alclyde; d. 816 (*Ann. Ult.*)

Arthgal, k. of Britons; d. 872 (*Ann. Ult.*)

Curig (Girig); floruit 878-889.

Run = daughter of Kenneth mac Alpin.

Eochaid, k. of Strathclyde, and k. of Scots 878-889.

Dunnagual, k. of Strathclyde; last direct "Caesarian"; d. 908.

Anglian settlers from eastern Northumbria crept over the southern, now English, part of this British territory. They had won Carlisle before 685, the date of St. Cuthbert's visit, and were then pushing northwards. In 756 they captured Dumbarton or Alclyde; but that

citadel was left in the hands of the old line of kings, though by the time of Arthgal, who died in 872, all the old land of the Cumbro-Britons except Dumbarton and its environs had been penetrated by the Angles and brought under their rule. Place-names of Anglian derivation and monuments like ninth-century Northumbrian crosses are scattered over south-western Scotland as far north as Clyde-mouth. The Cumbro-Britons, though they had erected rude stones marked with the cross, as at Whithorn and Kirkmadrine, had no art of stone-carving until they learnt it from the Northumbrian Angles. Their arts were literary rather than plastic, and analysis of the early monuments of Wales and Cornwall shows that all the cross-carving of the Welsh was learnt from the English, or later from the Vikings who inherited and developed Anglian art.

But in king Arthgal's days the Anglian kingdom fell before the Danish invasion of 865, and the Anglian ascendancy in Cumbria and Strathclyde was destroyed by Halfdan the Dane in his raid through Cumberland to Galloway about 876, when Carlisle, and probably Hoddam, were laid in ruins. This was the opportunity for the dormant kingdom of the Britons. Halfdan retired to Yorkshire, and the men of Alclyde could regain their ancient domain of Cumbria. Their chances were strengthened by an important coincidence; for Arthgal's son Run married the daughter of Kenneth mac Alpin, king of Scots, and after the deaths of Kenneth's sons, Constantine II. and Aedh, the throne of Alban went, by the law then in use, to Eochaid, son of Run and grandson of Kenneth. Eochaid, already king of Alclyde, became king of Alban in 878.

At this time, in the north country, the Danes were inhabiting only the eastern parts of Yorkshire; the Norse were just beginning to colonize Galloway and not yet touching Cumberland; the whole of Anglicized

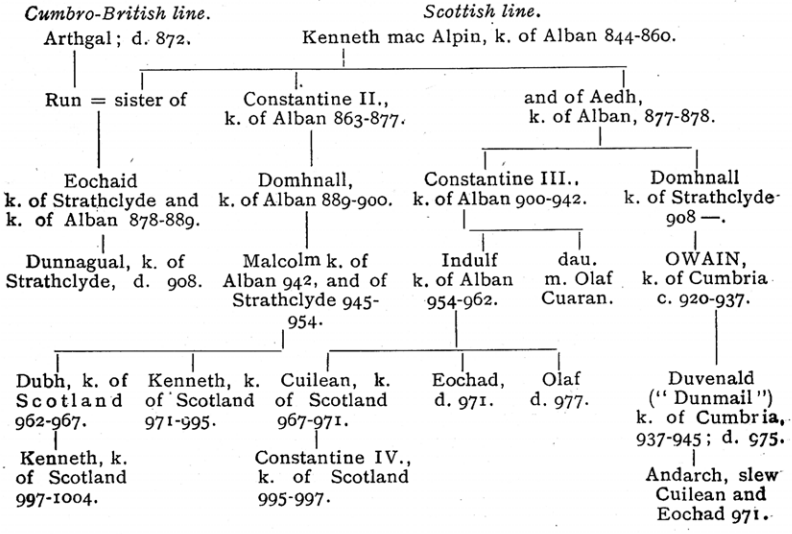
Cumbria from Dumbarton to Chester was disorganized and ready to fall under any strong hand. That strong hand was found with a man whose place in history has been rather imperfectly stated. The Pictish Chronicle tells us that king Eochaid had an "alumnus ordinatorque" named Giric, i.e. namesake of St. Cyricus, the patron saint of Capel Curig in North Wales. In the chronicles he appears as Girig, Girg or Grig, thence Latinized as Gregorius. He was chief captain and regarded by outsiders (like Irish annalists) as *de facto* king. With Eochaid's armies he made considerable—though, as we can now see, easy—conquests in the no-man's-land southward of Strathclyde. When he and Eochaid were expelled from the rule in 889, the throne of Alban went by the law of the Scots to Eochaid's cousin Domhnall, son of Constantine II., and then to Constantine III., son of Aedh, a very famous king; but the throne of Strathclyde-Cumbria, by law of the Britons, went to Eochaid's son, Dunnagual, who died in 908, the last of the direct "Caesarian" line.

The Cumbro-Britons then elected Duvenaldus,* son of Aedh and brother of Constantine III. as their king (*Pictish Chronicle*), securing the alliance of the Scots against the south. He was succeeded by his son, whose name, as of others before him on the British throne, was in old Cumbrian Eugein, from the still older British Esugenos, "child of Esus," the Gaulish divinity; Eugein in Scottish mouths became Eog(h)an, in Cymric Ewain or Owain—the king of Cumbria whose place in history we have been so long in tracing. Though a Scot, at least on the father's side (we have no information about his mother), he held the succession to the "Caesarian" line,

* The name of the old Celtic chariot-god, Domnall, in its Scottish or Gaelic form became Domhnal (in which *mh* was pronounced *v*), Latinized Duvenaldus, and is the modern Donal(d). The British or Cymric form was Dunnagual (in which *gu* became *w*) or Dungual, Latinized Dunwallo; in modern Welsh Dyfnwal.

and no doubt lived in tradition as Eoghan or Owain Caesarius. When the tradition was Anglicized, Eoghan (pronounced nearly as Hughan) might be shortened to Hugh; whence the "Sir Owen Ceesarius" of the legends handed down by Sir Daniel Fleming in 1671, and the "Sir Hugh Cesario" of Sandford, about 1675, who describes him as the champion or giant of Inglewood.

PEDIGREE OF KING OWAIN OF CUMBRIA.



He was indeed a man of parts in a stirring time. He was nephew and ally of the famous king Constantine III., and with him met Eadward the Elder who came north in 921 against the Vikings and their allies, the Celts of North Britain. They met at Bakewell, where for the first time the Northern powers acknowledged the rising importance of the Southern. Manchester was then the northernmost point to which the Southern English had reached, west of the Danelaw. Cumbria therefore must have had influence over the Britons and the interspersed but disorganized Angles north of Ribble. Indeed

there are two facts which remarkably support this view. One is that the monuments of Lancashire and south-western Yorkshire show no trace of Danish style until a later stage ; in the first half of the tenth century they seem to be still Anglian, though debased. This means that the Danes had no hold of that region ; and as the Anglian power was gone, and the Mercian had not reached it as yet, whatever rule was acknowledged at that date must have been that of Owain of Cumbria. The second fact is the definite statement in the eleventh-century *Life of St. Cadroe*, that the saint was escorted, at a date which can be inferred to be about 941-2, by Cumbrians from the court of Owain's son Duvenald to Leeds ; and that Leeds was then " the boundary between the North-men and the Cumbrians " (for further details see the Thoresby Society's *Miscellanea*, xxii., 326). This can only mean that the earlier British kingdom of Loidis and Elmete (south-western Yorkshire) had reverted to its ancient nationality in politics and had joined Cumbria ; though its art remained chiefly Anglian, as the monuments show.

Where then was the court of Owain's greater Cumbria ? Dumbarton was much too far north to be the centre of a realm which extended two hundred miles south of Clyde-mouth ; and relations with the north were friendly ; the enemies were to south and east. At this time Carlisle was in ruins ; there are no monuments of this age there, though many of earlier and later dates. To keep his eye on the Danes who might come over Stainmoor, or the Norse arriving by this time on the western coasts, and the Southerns advancing from Mercia, the king of Cumbria would need a central position on the Roman roads—then the only roads. The one central position was Penrith—*Penrhydd*, the " head or chief ford " on the main lines of communication south of Carlisle. It lay on the safe side of the river beyond which the two great roads from

Yorkshire and Lancashire met,* and at the spider's point of vantage in the cobweb of roads radiating to the coast. Penrith is also the place where there is the most considerable group of monuments of this age, and of no other pre-Norman age. It is the centre of a district in which Cymric place-names remain in some abundance, showing late persistence of Cumbro-Britons, together with a number of hybrid names indicating mixture with Angles (see Prof. Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the N.-W. of England*, p. 117). And this is the state of culture revealed by the Giant's Thumb, which is the work of a craftsman with Anglian traditions half-forgotten.

Near Penrith is Dacre. The Lion stone, of about 800 A.D., shows that the site had importance then as a place of burial for some great personage. It was probably therefore an abbey at that time, and this adds to the reasons for identifying it with the Dacore where Bede says there was a monastery in 698. The Adam and Eve stone, of about king Owain's time,† shows that the abbey still survived, suggesting a continuous history.‡ And as monasteries could afford hospitality, and were safeguarded, as neutral ground, by religious feeling, here would be the natural place—rather than at Owain's stronghold—for the meeting of the three kings in 926, when Æthelstan had come over Stainmoor from York to settle the fate of Britain with Owain and Constantine, and when the Celtic kings agreed " to forsake idolatry " —in the language of the time meaning to give up their

* The road from Penrith to Lancashire and Mercia went straight from the ford of Penrith southward, according to the important conclusions of Mr. Percival Ross in Art. I. of this volume.

† See these *Transactions*, O.S. xi., 228; N.S. xii, 157; *Calverley*, p. 113; but it may be doubted whether a treaty disadvantageous to Cumbria, and soon broken, could be the subject of this design.

‡ It was only where the first Danish invasion prevailed that abbeys were destroyed. Dacre lies off the main road of Halfdan's raiders in 876, who similarly seem to have left the Ruthwell cross untouched, because it was not in their path, while they probably destroyed Hoddam which lay on the main road. It may be added that Dacre in Yorkshire, sometimes identified with the Dacre of Bede and Æthelstan, has no pre-Norman monuments.

friendship with idolaters, the heathen Vikings. It is obvious that Owain, already king of mixed Britons and English, was encouraging the settlement of Norse, as good sheep-farmers and hardy fighters. From his point of view it was sound policy; from Æthelstan's it meant a menace to the peace of Southern England.

But Owain could not forsake the Vikings. Constantine married his daughter, Owain's cousin, to Olaf Cuaran, the most restless of the Viking leaders, and the son of Sigtrygg, whom Æthelstan had expelled from York. This was a flagrant breach of the treaty, and Æthelstan came down on the North in 933-4 (Symeon of Durham), routed Owain and Constantine, and marched through Cumbria to Forfarshire, while his ships attacked the Norse settlements as far north as Caithness, showing plainly that the object of his attack was the Ravens whom Owain led.

In return, Constantine and Owain called to their aid all the Vikings of Britain and Ireland, and in 937 advanced into Cumberland on their way to York. Æthelstan marched once more over Stainmoor, drove them back across the Solway, and brought them to bay at Burnswark (Mr. George Neilson, *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, Oct., 1909), where he won the great victory of Brunanburh. Owain is not named among the slain, but thenceforth he disappears—perhaps into a monastery, like many another dethroned king in those days. Duvenald ("Dunmail") his son reigned in his stead until he too, and for similar reasons, was driven out by Æthelstan's son Eadmund, and Cumbria was handed over to Malcolm, king of Scots, on condition of his alliance against the Vikings.

It is no wonder, then, that Owain, like his cousin by marriage, Olaf Cuaran, became the hero of legends. Olaf is the original of Havelock Cuheran and other romances; he is probably connected also with the Hamlet saga. Owain, the last great local leader, became the

giant of Inglewood, supposed to be buried in the Giant's Grave, and somehow to have left his mark on the Giant's Thumb. He was known as "Caesarius" as inheriting the last trace of Roman tradition in Britain. He was, in defeat, the hermit or robber of the caves of Isis Parlis; in his strength, a slayer of monsters, both men and beasts, "like a knight errant." His memory even mingles with the Arthurian legends, many of which are of North British origin (like Tristram and Gisolda or Iseult) and of the Viking age (like Gawain's horse, Gringolet, according to Professor I. Gollancz in *the Sagabook of the Viking Club*, v., 104). Owain was traditionally lord of Castle Ewain (Hutchinson, 1794; i., 402) connected with Gawain's adventures; and close to Penrith is King Arthur's Round Table, so called in Camden's time and owing the name to the persistence of Cymric tradition in this neighbourhood where the last great resistance was put up against the "Saxons."

Not only these slight connexions can be adduced; there is something more definite, and highly curious, in the confusion of Owain with his mythological namesake, Owain son of Urien, in the *Mabinogion*. The story of "The Lady of the Fountain," telling of Owain's adventures as a knight errant, ends with this paragraph:—

> Thenceforward Owain dwelt at Arthur's court, greatly beloved, as the head of his household, until he went away with his followers; and those were the army of three hundred Ravens which Kenverchyn had left him. And wherever Owain went with these he was victorious.

Who the Ravens were is shown more clearly in the still earlier (twelfth century?) story in the *Mabinogion* called "The Dream of Rhonabwy." It tells how a man dreamt of the meeting of the hosts of king Arthur, in the days when men were giants, for the great battle of Caer Badon. To join the Britons came men of Norway, clothed in white (the "white strangers," *Fingall*, as they

were called by the Celts of the Viking age), and men from Denmark, clothed in black (the " black strangers," *Dubhgall*)—a feature obviously of much later time than the " Arthurian " epoch, in which the battle of Caer Badon is traditionally dated 516 A.D. While waiting for the advance, Arthur plays chess with Owain ab Urien. Messengers come to Owain, one after another telling him that Arthur's men are teasing his Ravens. " Lord, forbid them," he says. " Play thy game," says Arthur. Then the tide of the quarrel turns, and messengers come to Arthur with the news that the Ravens are slaughtering the Britons. " Forbid thy Ravens," says Arthur. " Lord," answers Owain, " play thy game : " until at last Owain restrains his Ravens, and the army is ready to march against the enemy. In this it is clear that Owain's Ravens were the Vikings, and that the story embodies an incident of the Viking age worked into the Arthurian cycle. Indeed it is an incident very likely to have occurred on the eve of the battle of Brunanburh,* at which Owain of Cumbria figured—from the native British point of view—as leader of the Vikings. And so his personality, a few generations later, was merged in that of the more distant Owain ab Urien, himself identified with the sun hero of primitive Celtic mythology (Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 429).

Owain, though a Scot, was the last great leader of the British, properly so called : we are all " British " now—that is one of time's revenges. And the tradition is not unreasonable which connects him with this ancient cross

* Without pressing the analogy too far, it may be noted that the account of Brunanburh (Vinheidi) in Egil's saga says that Æthelstan put off the battle for a week, and then twice for three days more, sending offers of tribute to the Vikings and their Allies ; and " Olaf and his captains sat in council, wherein opinions were much divided." The Dream of Rhonabwy tells that before the battle (of Badon) the Saxons sent " to crave a truce of Arthur for a fortnight and a month. And Arthur rose and went to take counsel . . . with many of the men of Norway and Denmark . . . . . and lo ! there came four-and-twenty asses with their burdens of gold and silver . . bringing tribute to Arthur . . . . . "

in Penrith churchyard. It is possible—more must not be said—that he himself erected it to the memory of some important person, such as his father. At any rate it remains a witness to the short-lived glory of Penrith as capital of the land of the Cumbri a thousand years ago.