

Proceedings at the Meetings of the Society.

TWENTY-SEVENTH GENERAL MEETING,

Held at IRONMONGERS' HALL, on Thursday, March 10th, 1864,

The Right Hon. Lord TALBOT OF MALAHIDE, F.S.A. President,
in the Chair.

The Ironmongers' Company exhibited their Plate, Funeral Pall, and Charters, which have been published and illustrated in the History of the Company, by John Nicholl, Esq. F.S.A., and in other works.

Mr. G. R. FRENCH read "A Sketch of the History of the Ironmongers' Company;" and the Rev. THOMAS HUGO, M.A. F.S.A., read a paper on "The last Ten Years of the Priory of St. Helen, Bishopsgate, with the Topography of the House" (printed in the present volume, pp. 169-203).

The METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS sent for exhibition—Roman Amphoræ from Old Ford; also a small Lead Coffin, and the lid of another of larger size of the same material, from East Ham. These coffins were part of an interesting discovery made in Nov. 1863 in a field on the south side of the High-level sewer at a quarter of a mile west of East Ham church, Essex. The first coffin discovered was of stone, 6 feet 9 inches long and about 2 feet square at the ends, with a very thick coped lid. The stone was coarse, and very full of shells, in that respect resembling Purbeck marble. This coffin was placed nearly north and south, and contained two skeletons, the head of one being to the north, the other towards the south. They were quickly destroyed, and the earth, &c. in which they were found taken away. Afterwards three leaden coffins were discovered, all lying in the same direction as the stone coffins. They contained each a skeleton; one was very roughly used and was thrust into the stone coffin, and its contents mixed with the skeletons found therein. The other two leaden coffins at first were treated more tenderly, and were with the other remains placed (by the kind permission of the Rev. E. F. Boyle) in the porch of the church of East Ham, where they were inspected by a great many persons. Unfortunately the skeletons and the earth in which they were deposited were much disturbed. Had they been removed at once to their present resting-place (the British Museum), they would have formed the most interesting and perfect examples of this kind of Roman burial in existence. Now they appear but the wreck of what was discovered. Two of the lead coffins were about 5 feet in length, each containing one body; the other (the one ex-

hibited) is 2 feet 4 inches long, and there can be no doubt contains the body of a child in the earth with which it is filled. The portion of a lid exhibited belongs to one of the other coffins.

All the four coffins were found at about the same depth, and at no great distance apart. Around them were placed urns, some filled with burnt bones; likewise other kinds of pottery belonging to the Roman period. The lead coffins were of the same character as that discovered at Bethnal Green and described in the Proceedings of our Evening Meetings. They were ornamented on the lid with the peculiar mouldings described and figured there, and the scallop-shell is introduced in beautiful variety of arrangement. The lids likewise lap over the coffins in the usual Roman manner, differing from anything medieval.

At about the same level with these coffins, or perhaps a little lower, were found a considerable quantity of bones and a white deposit. These were supposed to be the indication of a cemetery of great extent. The bones do not appear to belong to man, but are those of animals, frequently found in the diluvial deposits of these parts, and the white deposit contains much of the remains of vegetable substances usually occurring in the beds of lakes and rivers. A more minute account of these interesting antiquities, with plates representing them, has been published in the Transactions of the Essex Archæological Society, vol. III. part iii.

The following remarks on the ornamentation of the coffins have been communicated by HENRY CHARLES COOTE, Esq. F.S.A. :—

“I think, from the abundance and frequency of the scallop as an ornamentation of Roman leaden coffins, that it may be taken to be a symbolism of some sort. If this be so, the only question remaining is the intent of the symbol.

“Whether the body of a deceased Pagan was burnt or buried, the soul became a unit of that grim corporation—the *dii manes*. Consistently with this theory, a sacrifice was always offered to the *manes* at the time of the burning or the inhumation.—*Cod. Theod. de Sepulchris*.

“This sacrifice, like all others, was a meal also to the mourners and the bystanders, and being taken late in the day, in accordance with the funeral laws of the Empire, it was a *cæna*, and was called the *cæna feralis*.—*Ibid*.

“This sacrifice and *cæna* was by common usage composed of shell-fish.—*Juv. lib. 5, vv. 84, 85*.

“The scallop-shell, therefore, upon the leaden *arca* may be taken to express the sacrifice made to the *manes* within. In other words, it commemorates the *cæna feralis*.

“At the same time the objects which composed the *cæna* were symbols of Venus, who at Rome, under the strange name of Libitina, possessed the attributes of Proserpina, and presided over Roman funerals.

“A more extended paper of mine upon this subject is in the hands of the Editor of *Notes and Queries*.”

Other Roman antiquities were exhibited by Messrs. J. Walker Baily, Gunston, J. E. Price, Horner, and A. White.

The company afterwards visited the churches of ST. MARTIN OUTWICH and St. HELEN BISHOPSGATE, at each of which Observations on the Architecture and Monuments were offered by Mr. C. Baily, the Rev. Thomas Hugo, and Mr. J. G. Waller.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL AND NINTH
ANNUAL MEETING,

Held at the Society's Rooms, No. 22, Hart Street, Bloomsbury,
on Monday, April 11th, 1864,

J. W. BUTTERWORTH, Esq. F.S.A. in the Chair.

The Report of the Council and that of the Auditors were read by the Rev. THOMAS HUGO.

“REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

“The Council regret that their Report has not been ready to be laid before the Members until the present time, in consequence of the difficulties into which the Society had been allowed to drift.

“On the resignation of Mr. H. W. Sass in February 1863, the honorary secretaryship was undertaken *pro temp.* by Mr. Bassett Smith, who kindly held office until in November 1863 the present honorary Secretaries, the Rev. Thomas Hugo and Mr. Charles John Shoppee, accepted the appointment.

“Since the last General Meeting the Council have had to contend with serious difficulties, it being impossible to ascertain from the Society's books a correct list of the subscribing members, or to know when their subscriptions had been paid.

“This has been remedied by a long correspondence, which has necessarily absorbed considerable time.

“Upon the appointment of the present Honorary Secretaries in November 1863 the liabilities of the Society amounted to 128*l.* 14*s.* 10*d.*, and the available assets at the Bankers to 3*l.* 19*s.* 5*d.*

“The difficulty arising from this deficiency was met by a donation on the part of the Council and officers, and by the Collector being actively employed in obtaining subscriptions and arrears from Members.

“This has resulted in a sufficient sum being raised to pay off all out-