

DISCOVERY OF A ROMAN HOARD IN EAST
LANCASHIRE.

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BEING in the neighbourhood of Bury in July, 1864, and learning that a quantity of Roman coins and other objects had been discovered near "Grant's Tower," I visited the locality and examined such of the remains as had escaped dispersion. I was fortunate in meeting with three gentlemen, into whose hands the chief objects had fallen, each of whom courteously afforded the fullest opportunity of minute inspection. On arriving at the locality of the find I was likewise with equal freedom permitted to examine all the coins and other articles which then remained in the possession of the farmer who made the discovery. From these sources I have been enabled to gather the following trustworthy information respecting this interesting contribution to local archæological knowledge.

The urn, or small earthenware vessel, in which the coins &c. were deposited, was found buried in the earth, near a modern occupation road leading to a farm house inhabited by Mr. Nuttall, on "Throstle Hill," in the township of Walmersley. The locality is situated about three miles, in a straight line, to the north of Bury, and about half a mile to the east of "Grant's Tower." It is distant about three miles from the Roman highway which leads from Manchester, by Cockey

Moor, to Ribchester. The old road from Bury to Burnley and Colne passes near the spot.

The earthenware vessel which contained the hoard was covered by a small flag. It was buried on the edge of the moorland overlooking a well cultivated but secluded and picturesque valley. It contained from five to seven hundred bronze coins, chiefly of the small or "third brass," all of which belong to what is termed the "lower empire." None that I have seen are earlier than the time of Gallienus and his wife Salonica (A.D. 253-268). The latest, in point of date, are coins of Maximianus (286-310), and Carausius (287-293). I noticed others of Posthumus (260-267), Victorinus (265-267), Claudius Gothicus (268-270), Tetricus (267-272), Quintilius (270), M. Claudius Tacitus (275-276), and M. Aurelius Probus (276-282).

The following articles were deposited with the coins :—

A pair of silver bracelets, slightly, not elaborately, ornamented, one with the vine leaf the other with bunches of grapes. The latter was broken, the former perfect. The workmanship is not of a superior character, but rather suggestive of provincial inferiority, or a low period of artistic skill.

A plain bracelet of massive silver, about one-third of an inch in breadth, broken.

Two armlets, one about one-eighth of an inch in thickness, formed of twisted silver cord, the other about one-tenth of an inch thick, formed of a single wire fashioned so as to resemble the one made of two twisted cords.

Two fragments of another armlet, about a quarter of an inch in diameter, formed of thick silver wire twisted round a bar of bronze.

Three silver finger rings, one with a red stone attached.

Several pieces of broken silver rings, like wedding or ear

rings in form ; and some pieces of a thin bronze armlet, and a small bronze hinge.

The blade or bowl of a bronze spoon, elegantly shaped, rather more than one inch and a half in length, by a little over half an inch in breadth.

An amulet of amber, richly streaked with orange-coloured veins, and pierced so as to be suspended alone, and not so as to form a portion of a continuous string of beads. This, perhaps the most interesting relic in the "find," is heart-shaped, and measures less than an inch in its longest diameter.

There have been several treasures of a similar character found in Lancashire, in recent times, besides others at earlier periods. Amongst the former may be mentioned one not very far from the site of the present hoard, which was discovered in 1856, in the neighbourhood of Hooley-wood, near Heyworth, on the estate of John Fenton Esq. ; one at Whittle, near Chorley, in an old stone quarry ; one, containing a hundred denarii, of the "higher empire," at the foot of the old "Wery Wall," at Lancaster, in 1856 ; one on Leyland Moss, in 1820 ; and another at Worden, near Leyland, in 1850.

It has been customary to regard these buried treasures as archæological evidence of the truth of the following extracts from Saxon authorities :—

A.D. 418.—"In the ninth year also, after the sacking of Rome by the "Goths, those of Roman race who were left in Britain, not bearing the " manifold insults of the people, bury their treasures in pits, thinking " that hereafter they might have better fortune, which never was the " case ; and, taking a portion, assemble on the coasts, spread their " canvass to the winds, and seek an exile on the shores of Gaul."—*Ethelwerd's Chronicle.*

A.D. 418.—"This year the Romans collected all the treasures that " were in Britain, and some they hid in the earth, so that no one has " since been able to find them ; and some they carried with them into " Gaul."—*Saxon Chronicle.*

I am inclined, however, to think that the treasure recently discovered at Walmersley may have been deposited in the earth during the troubles attendant upon the usurpation of

Carausius, the admiral of the Roman fleet stationed to protect the coasts of Britain from the ravages of Saxon pirates. The coins I have enumerated do not extend over a period of fifty years; and the most numerous and most recent are those of Carausius and Maximianus. The former was slain, after usurping the imperial authority in Britain for six years, by his lieutenant Allectus, who continued the usurpation about three years longer, when he succumbed to the emperors Diocletian and Maximianus. During this period, many parties would become obnoxious to the imperial authority, and, like their successors about the year 418, would seek safety by flight.

A few of the coins of the reigns of Tacitus, Probus, Maximianus and Carausius are base, being formed of bronze and afterwards silver plated—a practice sometimes adopted, even by the imperial government, during troubled periods like the one referred to.