

ON  
TWO FIBULÆ OF CELTIC FABRIC  
FROM ÆSICA.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

BY

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*On two fibulae of Celtic fabric from Æsica.*

By ARTHUR JOHN EVANS, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.

Read January 7th, 1895.

DURING the recent excavations on the site of Æsica<sup>a</sup> a remarkable discovery of ancient relics was made. The deposit in question was contained inside the western guard-chamber of the south gate and about 3 feet from its northern wall. Unfortunately the discovery was made in the absence of any trained archaeologist and the data at our disposal are only of an approximate nature. The relics that have come to light consist of two large fibulae (figs. 4 and 9), a silver collar or chain (fig. 1), a gold Roman



Fig. 1. Silver collar or chain found at Æsica. †

ring (fig. 2) set with a moss agate, and another of bronze (fig. 3) set with a nicolo engraved with a gnostic subject, the familiar IAO.

According to the account given, these objects were found together about 3 feet above the level of the original floor of the room and 3 feet 6 inches beneath the surface of the earth with which the guard-chamber was mostly choked. The dis-

<sup>a</sup> Report for 1894 of Northumberland Excavation Committee, *Archaeologia Æliana*, vol. xvii. pp. xxii.-xxxii. See also Mr. Haverfield's notes, *post.*

covery of the relics was due to an excavation below them, and they were brought to light by some earth falling from the roof of the excavated hollow. It is obvious, therefore, that the find has an interesting bearing on the date of the building in which it was contained, and the period of its destruction. No notice of the occurrence of bones has been preserved, but it is evident that the deposit, whether sepulchral or not, must have been made at a time when the tower was ruined and already partly filled with earth. The rubbish inside the turret was mainly old lime from its walls, and, according to the foreman, there was no trace of a "pocket," such as would have been formed by the digging of a grave.

Of the relics found the finger rings belong to well-known Roman types. The silver collar, however, with its double links and crossbars, has a more Celtic aspect, though probably derived from a classical model, since chain necklets with somewhat similar central medallions have been found in late Greek deposits at Alexandria. Scale armour, such as has been found elsewhere along the Wall, was also found in the closest proximity to the guard-chamber.<sup>a</sup> The special home of this kind of scale armour in antiquity seems to have been the Pontic regions, and it is frequent in the Græco-Scythian tombs of Pantikapæon. The Sarmatians, as is well known, made scale armour of horn, and it is probable that this kind of armour was introduced into the Roman army from the Lower Danube.

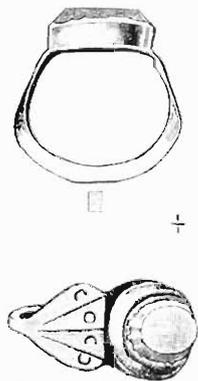


Fig. 2. Gold ring found at Æsica.

The fibulae take us on to more purely Celtic ground. Both from their size and ornament they must be reckoned among the most remarkable objects of the kind that have ever been discovered. It may indeed be said that among the fibulae found in Roman Britain there is nothing *simile aut secundum*. The great size of these brooches is alone sufficient to put them in a category by themselves, and in this respect, as in some others, the parallels that they suggest carry us somewhat far afield. The fibula (fig. 4), especially, both by its size and calibre, and to a certain extent also in its shape, carries us to another extremity of the Empire and recalls the massive clasps worn by the Pannonian women in the first centuries after our era.<sup>b</sup> The gilt brooch (fig. 9) on the other hand, in its broad decorative plates, shows a strong affinity to those later types of fibulae

<sup>a</sup> See below, p. 20.

<sup>b</sup> See below, p. 15.

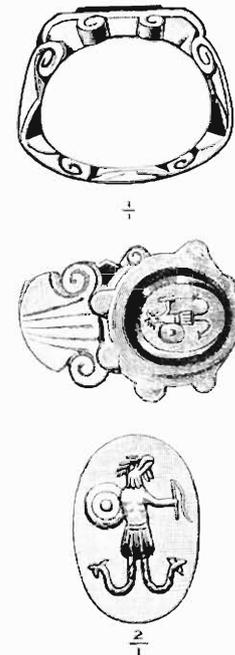


Fig. 3. Bronze ring with gnostic gem found at Æsica.

which the Saxon borrowed from the Goth and the Sarmatian, and which made their first appearance in Britain in the fifth or sixth centuries.

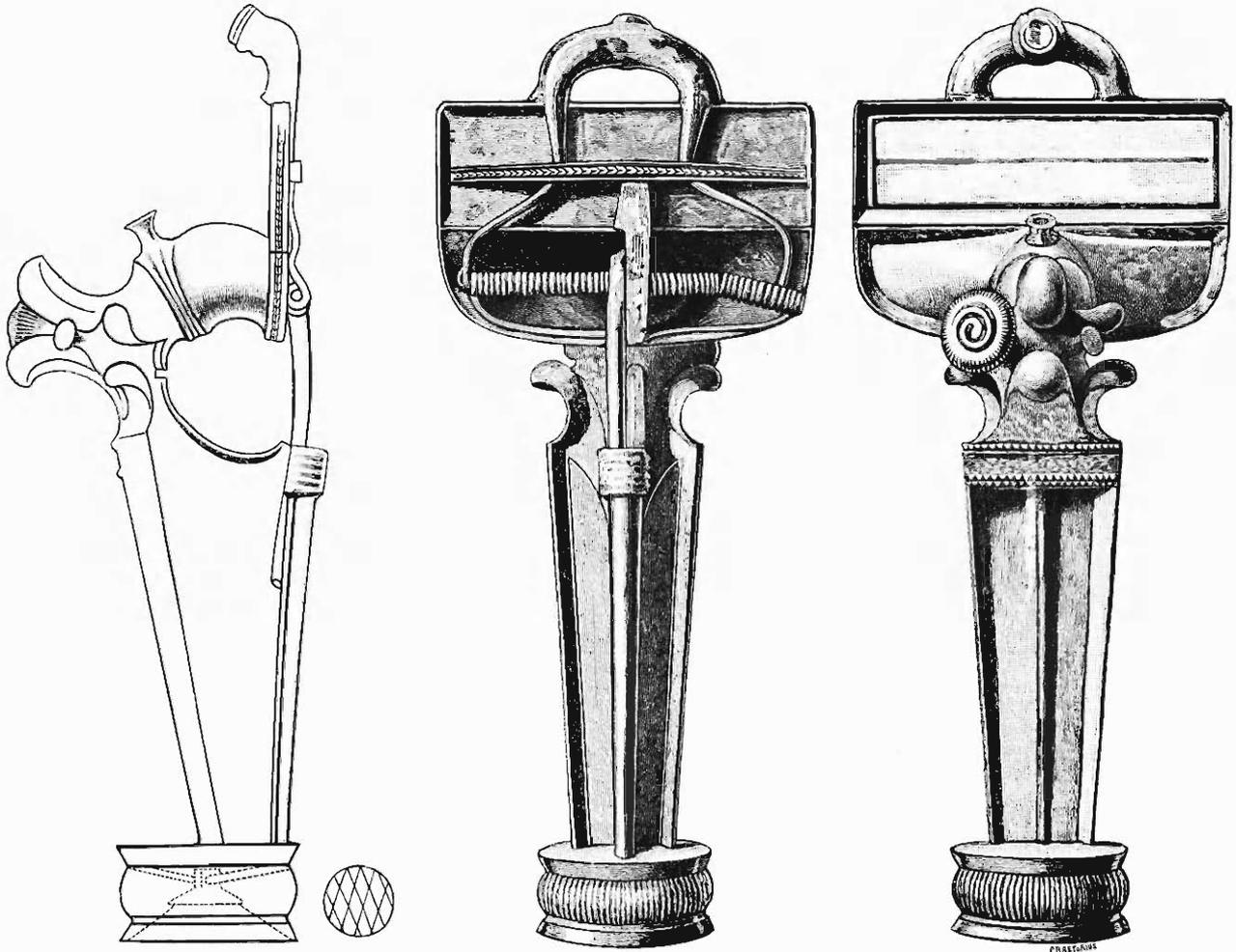


Fig. 4. Side, back, and front views of a brooch found at Æsica.  $\frac{3}{4}$  linear.

How far an East European influence may be traceable in these remarkable metallurgic works is an interesting question. But let it be said at once that in their manufacture both of the Æsica fibulæ are true productions of our insular art.

As the question must be treated in some detail, it will be convenient to begin with the larger fibula represented in fig. 4. The fibula here represented is a magnified variety of a well-established British type which in the west and north of provincial Britain survived the Roman Conquest. Its origins are purely Celtic, and are to be sought in the central and south-eastern European area, from which,

as I have shown in connexion with the Aylesford discoveries, such a considerable element of Belgic culture was originally derived. It had a wide western distribution as early as the date of the Roman Conquest of Gaul, but the more primitive examples, and those which throw the clearest light on its original evolution, seem, as already said, to belong to a more easterly region. The type is derived from a fibula which, like others of its class, is really a converted pin, the end of which is bent back over its bow, the knob itself being bound to the top of the bow by

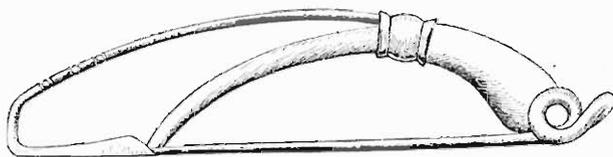


Fig. 5. Bronze brooch with retroflected foot caught by a free collar.  
From Riesenquelle, Dux, Bohemia. †

a metal collar. The stages in this process are well illustrated by two types from the Celtic settlements in Bohemia. In the first example (fig. 5) from the Riesenquelle, near Dux, the retroflected end and the collar are still separate entities. In the other fibula (fig. 6), from

the Boian Oppidum of Stradonić, the union of the pin-bow and collar has become more organic, though traces of the old separation are still seen in the line of division on the back. The recurved projection at the foot end of the collar was no doubt originally devised to keep the collar from slipping back. In some cases, as on the Pannonian example (fig. 8), there are two of these hook-like projections curving outwards, one on each side of the collar, and it is to the multiplication and development of these, coupled with the survival of the collar itself, that the bow of this class of fibula owes its typical characteristics. On the Æsica example these elements attain their greatest development.

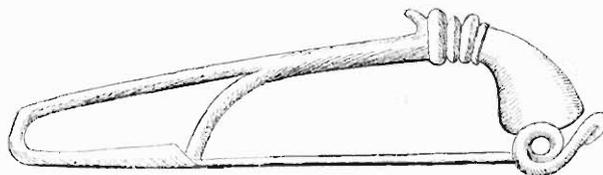


Fig. 6. Bronze brooch with collar and bow in one piece.  
(The pin and spring restored.)  
From Stradonić, Bohemia. †

The type shown in figs. 5 and 6 reappears, in the wake, no doubt, of Celtic influences, in a completely unified form both in Italy<sup>a</sup> and Gaul, though its antecedent stages must be sought outside the limits of pure Italic or Roman culture. In Gaul this type is found in the remains of Bibracte or Mont Beuvray, the predecessor of the Roman Augustodunum (Autun), and of Alesia<sup>b</sup> (Alise St. Reine),

<sup>a</sup> One probably found in the Perugia district is engraved in Montelius, *Spännen från Bronsåldern*, p. 186, fig. 188. But this earlier type is certainly rare in Italy, though a later variety with the foot no longer open but forming a single plate is occasionally found in N. Italy. I have seen examples from Liguria.

<sup>b</sup> See Tischler, *Gurina*, 26.

among the relics of the final struggle between Cæsar and Vercingetorix. This fact sufficiently dates that stage in the history of this interesting type when it had already become unified. In Britain it already appears as an imported object in one of the Aylesford graves, which from other associated relics can be shown to belong to the first half of the first century B.C.\*

In Gaul Roman influence does not seem to have favoured the further evolution of this particular class of fibula; but in Britain, where the indigenous elements were less fully assimilated by the conqueror, it was to play a more important part. It became, in fact, the progenitor of whole series of closely allied forms which characterise those parts of provincial Britain where the Celtic element still retained much of its national characteristics. Certain developments take place

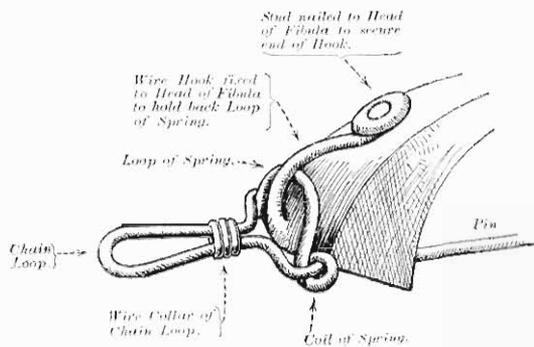


Fig. 7. Sketch shewing development of British *fibula*. From a specimen from Kingsholm, Gloucestershire, in the British Museum.

in accordance with prevailing fashions: the originally open foot becomes finally closed and forms a single plate; the loop of the spiral spring is caught in a hook on the "head" of the fibula, and a specially British development at the same time makes itself perceptible in the formation of a smaller loop at the end for the convenience of attaching a small chain (fig. 7). These fibulæ were, in fact, worn by the native women in pairs connected by a chain hanging down between them. The same fashion

recurs in other parts of the old Celtic area, notably in Pannonia, but the formation of a special loop or eye to catch the terminal rings of the chain is, I believe, a peculiarly British characteristic, and is not confined to this particular class of fibulæ. In both the Æsica brooches, though of very different types, this feature is well illustrated.

More or less Romanized forms of this originally British, or perhaps we should say Belgic, type are common on various sites in the south-eastern part of our island. But the true British examples are to be distinguished from these by

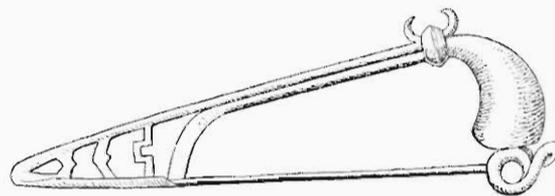


Fig. 8. Brooch of early Pannonian form.

\* See A. J. Evans, "On a Late-Celtic Urn-Field at Aylesford, Kent, etc." *Archæologia*, lii. 382, 383.

their more elaborate decoration, in which the Celtic art of enamelling and the triquetral design are special features, as well as by the terminal loop with which they are provided in order to suspend the two ends of the chain. These true British types, which continued after the Roman Conquest, occur only sporadically in the south-east. They are the special product of the west and north, and form one of a series of interesting indications that the Celtic element continued to hold its own in those parts of the Roman province. Various local fabrics of this class of fibulæ can be made out. There are western varieties, such as those found at Kingsholm, near Gloucester, at Caerleon, and Pont-y-Saison, in Monmouthshire,<sup>a</sup> of which good specimens exist in the national and other collections. Some plainer forms are well represented among the fibulæ found at the British village excavated by General Pitt-Rivers at Rotherley, Dorset.<sup>b</sup> But it is the northern types with which we are at present principally concerned. Many examples of a somewhat early variety of this fibula were found with other late-Celtic relics under the foundations of an old bridge over the Troutbeck at Kirkby Thore, in Westmorland. The deposit contained quantities of broken fibulæ and "enamelled buttons," as well as Roman coins, and appears to have been rightly set down by Captain W. H. Smyth (who described it in *Archæologia*)<sup>c</sup> as an "artizan's workshop." The coins were mostly of emperors ranging from Vespasian to Severus Alexander, including several "Britannias" of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. It is probable that the representative fibula engraved in *Archæologia*, which is of an earlier class than the prevalent "Brough type," dates from a time more nearly approaching the age of Vespasian than that of Severus Alexander, and may belong to the end of the first century of our era.

But the most abundantly represented type of these northern fibulæ is that of which a remarkable number of specimens have been found on the neighbouring site of Brough. They are evidently of the same, undoubtedly local, fabric, and their heads are adorned with Celtic scroll-work and enamel. The popularity of this Brough fabric is attested by the fact that specimens of this local class are occasionally found in south-eastern England, and one example<sup>d</sup> was even procured as far afield as Venice. From the close association in which some of the Brough fibulæ of this type seem to have been found, with leaden seals bearing the stamp of Severus, it is probable that they date from the end of the second and the

<sup>a</sup> In the British Museum.

<sup>b</sup> *Excavations in Cranbourne Chase*, vol. ii. pl. xcvii. 9-12.

<sup>c</sup> Vol. xxxi. (1845) pp. 279 *et seqq.* "On some Roman Vestigia recently found at Kirkby Thore, in Westmoreland."

In Sir John Evans's Collection

beginning of the third century after our era. A fine pair of silver and enamelled fibulæ, closely approaching the Brough type, but perhaps representing some other local fabric, found at Chorley, in Lancashire, are now in the British Museum.

But besides these Cumbrian fabrics, there seem to have been other centres of manufacture for this class of fibula in northern Britain. In Dr. Bruce's *Roman Wall* is engraved a remarkable fibula of this class, ornamented with triquetral scroll-work, both on the head and catch-plate, which was found on the site of Habitancium. It is of somewhat larger size than the usual Brough fibulæ, and shows a different ornamentation. Closely allied to it is a fibula now in the British Museum, which seems to have been found at Backworth, a little to the north of Newcastle, which in many respects shows a great assimilation to our Æsica specimen. In this case, as in that of the Habitancium brooch, both the catch-plate and the head of the fibula are ornamented with Celtic scroll-work, the decoration of the plate being on both examples strikingly similar. All that is known regarding the circumstances of its discovery is that it was found with a collection of objects, some of them bearing reference to the cult of the *Deae Matris*, and 280 denarii and bronze coins of Antoninus Pius.<sup>a</sup> One denarius of Antoninus Pius belongs to his second consulship, A.D. 139. This takes us approximately to the middle of the second century for the date of the fibula.

One peculiarity of this type, to which the name of "Northumbrian" may be provisionally applied, is the termination of the foot in a flat cylindrical case, which on the Æsica example almost takes the proportions of a small box. In a smaller form it reappears on a fibula of the same class found at Corby Castle, in Northumberland.<sup>b</sup>

In another respect the Northumbrian type shows a close coincidence of form with the Æsica fibula. The head of the bow namely widens out and is attached to a broad rectangular plate, from which issues the loop to which the chain-ring was to be attached. This rectangular plate is evolved, as can be seen by intermediate examples, from the wire coils which originally confined the neck of the terminal loop. In the Kirkby Thore fibula we already see the coils coalesced into a flattened ring, which in the later type becomes the elongated plate. The

<sup>a</sup> *Archæological Journal*, viii. (1851) 35 *et seqq.* The fibula is engraved on p. 39. For the inscription on the ring referring to the *Dea Matres*, see C. I. L. vii. 1299, and Haverfield, *Roman-British Inscriptions*, iii. 158 (in *Archæological Journal*, l. 303), where the objects are said to have been probably found at Backworth.

<sup>b</sup> Less conspicuous examples of the same class are to be seen in the British Museum, from London (Roach Smith) and Farley Heath, Surrey. But in the south of England this type is exceptional and exotic.

main points in which the Æsica specimen differs from that found at Backworth are the absence of the scroll-work on the head of the bow and the catch-plate, and the presence of two knobs, one on the posterior part of the bow, the other, now broken off, on the loop. Of these two knobs, that on the spring of the bow must be regarded as due to a cross influence, or, as German mythologists would say, a "contamination" from another form of British fibula, in which the hook on the back of the bow (which in this case catches the cross-wire or loop of the spiral spring), is secured by an ornamental stud. In the Æsica fibula this cross-wire of the spring is caught by a hook below the plate, as will be seen by fig. 4, so that no exterior hook was needed; but the prevalence of this kind of fastening with the hook and stud, of which an example from Kingsholm, near Gloucester, is given in fig. 7, has left its influence on the Æsica fibula in a purely ornamental exuberance. The stud which originally decorated the chain-loop behind was, no doubt, due to the same suggestion.

The stud on the back of the Æsica fibula is one of its most interesting features. It is coated at the top with a silver plate ornamented with an interlaced scroll of a purely Celtic character. The style of the bosses on the bow is also distinctively late-Celtic, and it would indeed be difficult to find a single feature which is not, on British soil at least, of purely Celtic derivation. The prototype was, as we have seen, already introduced into our island, probably by Belgic influence, before the Roman Conquest. The later accretion of the loop to catch the end of the chain is purely British, and quite opposed to Roman fashion. The great size is equally un-Roman, and only to be paralleled by the fibulae of some provincials on the Middle Danube, who also seem to have retained to a very large degree their Celtic nationality.

It appears, then, that the fibula (fig. 4) from the guard-chamber at Æsica is of pure British fabric and the outcome of a purely British tradition. On the other hand, its nearest prototype is a Northumbrian form, the fabric of which, from its occurrence at Habitancium, may perhaps be located north of the Wall. The type with which it stands in the closest relation seems, from the coins found with it, to date from the middle of the second century after our era, and, considering that the Æsica fibula seems to represent in its aggrandised proportions and the greater relief of its bow-ornament a somewhat later development of the "Northumbrian" type, we may with great probability attribute it to the end of the second century after Christ.

The other Æsica fibula (fig. 9) is, from an artistic point of view, very superior to the last. Of its kind, it is probably the most fantastically beautiful creation

that has come down to us from antiquity. Here, too, its history is to a great extent written on its face.

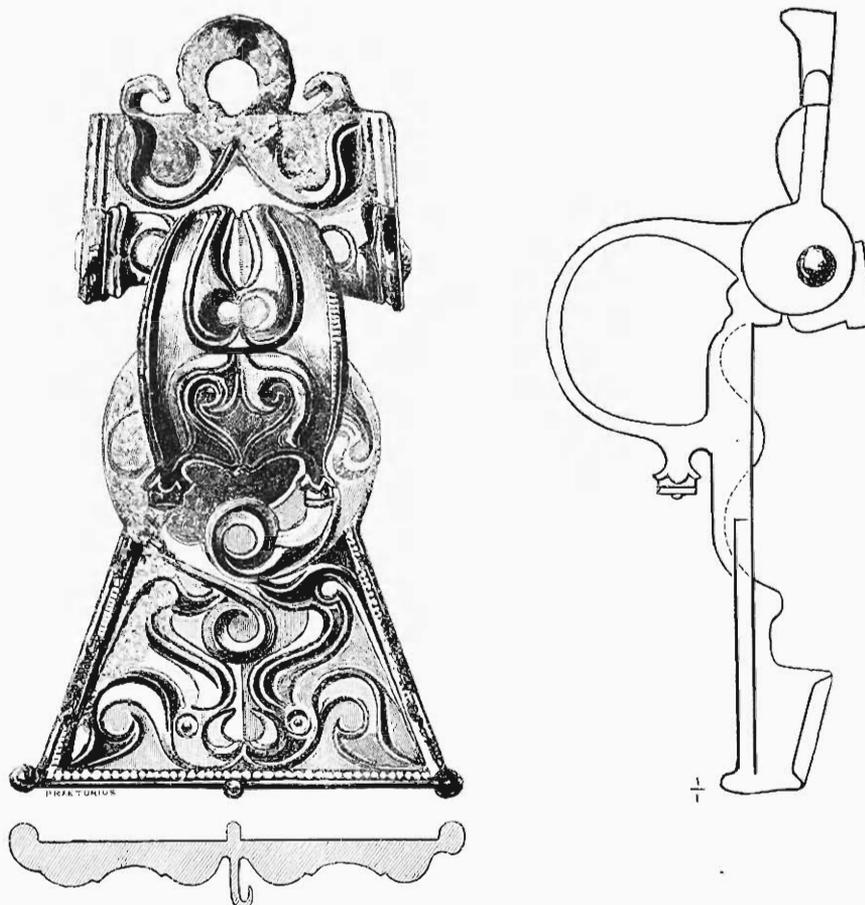


Fig. 9. Gilt bronze brooch found at *Æsica*.

The prototype from which, in its main lines, it is immediately derived is a form of fibula very widely diffused in France and the Rhinelands, and which, indeed, may be described as a typically Gallo-Roman production. In the case of this fibula the bow is made to go through a more or less circular plate,<sup>a</sup> often ornamented in relief with a kind of open-work rosette. Beyond this disk the foot of the fibula spreads out in a somewhat fan-shaped form. A fine Gallo-Roman example<sup>b</sup> is engraved in fig 10.

<sup>a</sup> In varieties of this fibula, however, its form is lozenge-shaped.

<sup>b</sup> From Sir John Evans's collection. Numerous examples from the Gallo-Roman station of Châtelet, between St. Dizier and Joinville, are engraved in Grivaud de Vincennes, *Arts et Métiers des Anciens*, pl. 40.



in Bavaria, is of Gallic work, perhaps of the third century, B.C., and displays an enamelled rosette.

It appears that in the case of some later fibulæ of this kind the simple change was made of passing the bow of the fibula through the centre of the disk in place of the rivet; this change being accompanied by a general flattening and expansion of the foot.

The type which thus originated seems to have been diffused in Gaul at a comparatively early date, and an example is known from the site of Bibracte<sup>a</sup> the remains of which date mostly from the pre-Roman period.

In Cisalpine Gaul it makes its appearance about the same time. Three examples of this fibula were found in the cemeteries of Ornavasso,<sup>b</sup> near the Lago Maggiore, the coins found in which do not reach down beyond the reign of Domitian. Others have been found in the tombs of Martigny in the Canton Valais belonging to the early Empire.<sup>c</sup> Another more or less fixed chronological standpoint is, moreover, supplied by a monument of the Blussus family at Mentz,<sup>d</sup> upon which a fibula of this type appears to be used for fastening the garment of his wife at the shoulder. This monument is referred to by Dr. Zangemeister<sup>e</sup> on epigraphic grounds to the reign of Trajan, and it therefore appears that this fibula was in vogue at the end of the first century of our era. The occasional occurrence of this type on such predominantly British sites as Hod Hill and Braughing, points also to a comparatively early date.

If we now examine the Æsica brooch it will be seen that, though its main outlines are evidently due to this Gallo-Roman type, the relationship which it bears to its model is of the most untrammelled kind. The broad bow of the fibula, instead of burying its whole breadth on the disk below, rests on it by a central support arching away from this on either side to two elegantly moulded knobs. The roll at the head of the fibula which encases the coil of the spring fits on to a broad flat plate analogous to that of the fibula found with it, and from this juts a small perforated projection of ogival form which represents the peculiarly

<sup>a</sup> S. Reinach, *Art. Fibula in Durenberg et Saglio. Dict. des Antiquités.* A specimen from this site is in the Museum of St. Germain.

<sup>b</sup> Bianchetti, *I Sepolcreti di Ornavasso* (Turin, 1895), p. 32, pl. x, 18

<sup>c</sup> H. Longon, *Anzeiger für Schweizerische Alterthumskunde*, 1892, No. 2, cited by Bianchetti, l. a.

<sup>d</sup> Lindenschmit, *Die Alterthümer* etc., band iii. heft ix. taf. 3. Lindenschmit commits himself to the statement that this fibula is common in Rhenish graves of the third century or even later; but this is more than doubtful.

<sup>e</sup> In a letter to Mr. Haverfield, who kindly asked his opinion for me

British loop for suspending the end of the chain. Finally the whole surface of the fibula exhibits, in place of the formal chevrons and parallel lines of the provincial Roman models, a succession of exquisite designs of Celtic scroll-work in relief. The whole is splendidly gilt and in this respect resembles the Teutonic fibulæ of a somewhat later date. The gilding of the Roman fibula is generally of the most cheap and perishable nature.

It will be seen that here again, as in the former example, we have to deal with a purely Celtic production, based, indeed, on a Gallo-Roman model, but a model the origins of which had been Celtic before they were in any sense Roman. The independent relation in which it stands to its prototype suggests the former existence of intermediate links of which the evidence is now wanting. Assuming, as we have some right to do, that the chronological centre-point of the provincial Roman type in question is about 100 A.D., there can be no difficulty in attributing the present fibula (which represents a further development of the Roman form), like the other Æsica example, to the end of the second century of our era.

The other fibula, as already pointed out, when carefully analysed is found to be Celtic in all its elements. In the present case, however, this Celtic character reaches a measure of freedom and originality which places it almost or quite alone among relics found in Imperial Britain during the centuries of direct Roman dominion. It is true that throughout the days of the Roman occupation a true British tradition continued to assert itself in the north and west. The fabrics of Brough, including more than one class of purely Celtic fibulæ, would be alone sufficient to prove the truth of this proposition. But for such an expansive display of Celtic decoration as is seen on this Æsica brooch we shall seek in vain in Roman Britain, at any rate during the later centuries of Roman imperial rule. The Celtic ornament which survived in provincial Britain proper, though genuine, is decidedly subdued, but here we have a specimen of truly flamboyant decoration.

In a word, the art that we here see before us, judging by all analogy, could at the time it was wrought, in the last half of the second century of our era, only have been produced north of the Wall of Antonine as well as of Hadrian.

This conclusion is altogether borne out by the character and details of the decorative designs. The bold relief, the form of the scroll-work, and some of its minutest characteristics, fit on, in fact, to the style of decoration found during this very period on a whole class of Caledonian ornaments. The best represented of these is a series of bronze armlets with embossed ornaments in high relief,

which at each extremity of the open ring enclose an enamelled roundel.<sup>a</sup> These ornaments, of which a specimen from Stanhope, Peeblesshire, is given in fig. 13,<sup>b</sup> are mostly found to the north of the Firth of Forth, and there can be little doubt that they represent a pure Caledonian fabric. The bold style of their relief approaches that of the late-Celtic ornaments of præ-Roman Britain, such as we see them in the deposit of Polden Hill, near Bridgewater,<sup>c</sup> and the

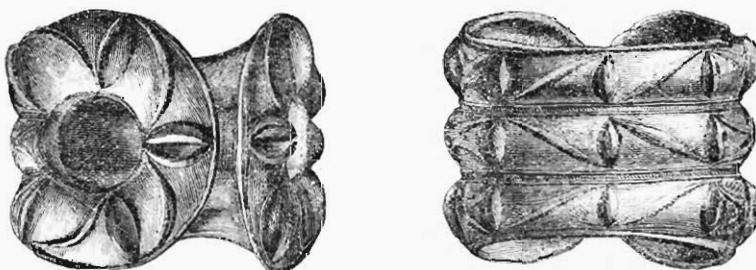


Fig. 13. Front and back views of a bronze armlet found at Stanhope, Peeblesshire.  $\frac{1}{4}$  linear.

somewhat later find of Stanwick, in Yorkshire,<sup>d</sup> which apparently belongs to the last period of Brigantian independence. On the other hand, the character of some of the Caledonian decorative bosses shows affinities with continental types of late-Celtic art, such as, for example, a bronze armlet in the National Museum at Munich,<sup>e</sup> and its beginnings therefore go back to a time before the Roman wedge had been driven home across the Celtic world.

The Stanwick find affords probably the nearest parallel from the soil of what was afterwards to be Roman Britain, and it is noteworthy that a kind of bifid *vesica piscis*, which on some of the Stanwick bronzes is found in pairs standing for animals' eyes, occurs on the Caledonian bronzes in a purely decorative capacity. What appears to be an outgrowth of the same is the central point of the design on the foot-plate of the Æsica fibulae.

<sup>a</sup> See especially J. Alexander Smith, "Notes on a Bronze Late-Celtic Armlet," in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, xv. 316 *seqq.* Examples of these are cited from Stanhope, Peeblesshire (*op. cit.* xv. 318, fig. 1); Alvalh, Banffshire (*op. cit.* vi. pl. iii. and xv. 328, fig. 8, and 329, fig. 9); Castle Newe, Aberdeenshire (*op. cit.* xv. 330, fig. 10); Drumside, Bellhelvie, Aberdeenshire (*op. cit.* xv. 333, fig. 14 and 334, fig. 15); Bunrannoch (?), Perthshire (*op. cit.* xv. 336, fig. 16 and 337, fig. 17); Pittkelloney, Muthill, Aberdeenshire (*op. cit.* xv. 340); Kinghorn, Seafield, Fifeshire (*op. cit.* xv. 342); one example has been found near Newry, County Down, Ireland (*op. cit.* xv. 362, fig. 31).

<sup>b</sup> This illustration has been kindly lent by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

<sup>c</sup> *Archaeologia*, xiv. 90.

<sup>d</sup> York volume of the Archaeological Institute, p. 10 and pl. 24. The thin plated bronze buckle of this find is suggestive of a somewhat late date. It approaches the types of the Danish Moss finds, e.g. Thorsbjerg.

<sup>e</sup> Lindenschmit, *Die Alterthümer, etc.*, band ii. heft vi. taf. 2, fig. 2.

Direct evidence as to the date of the Caledonian armlets is wanting, but that from Stanhope, in Peeblesshire, was found under some flat stones in company with a late-Celtic horse-trapping and a patella of Roman fabric,<sup>a</sup> which shows that some at least of this class overlap the Roman period in southern Britain.

There is, however, a class described as "thin-plated jointed armlets," in which the designs are executed on the lower relief, and show in their more stylistic foliations a somewhat later development of Celtic art, which, in some respects, corresponds still more closely with the designs on the Æsica brooch. A bracelet or armlet of this kind (fig. 14) was found near the ruins of Plunton Castle, Kirkcudbrightshire,<sup>b</sup> and with it may be grouped a thin-plated bronze

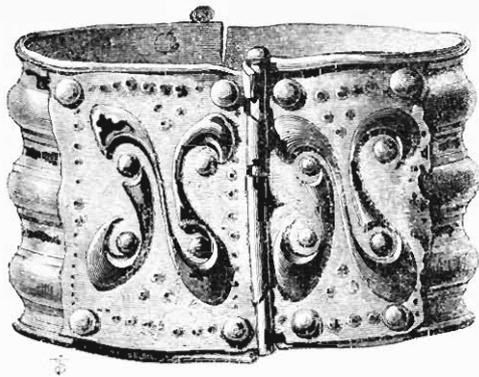


Fig. 14. Bronze armlet found near Plunton Castle in the parish of Borgue, Kirkcudbright. <sup>1</sup><sup>d</sup>

diadem found at Stichel, in Roxburghshire.<sup>c</sup> Perhaps the Æsica brooch may be taken to occupy a place intermediate between the earlier and later decorative style of the Caledonian ornaments.

In this connexion it is well to point out that the Backworth fibula, which stands in close relation to the Æsica brooch No. 1, also shows points of contact with certain late-Celtic ornaments from the northernmost parts of Britain. There exists, besides the other two classes of

armlets already mentioned, a form of "snake" arm-ring, of which a specimen was found in the Sands of Culbin, Elginshire.<sup>e</sup> The ends of this kind of ring are fashioned into the heads of animals, and in the Culbin example the zoomorphic element is traceable in a pair of fantastic eyes and lines indicative of the hair or mane which recur on other specimens of its class. It looks as if these two eyes had been taken over as ornaments of the head of the Backworth brooch.

It will be seen that though these Scotch relics, which belong to the same late-Celtic school of art, do not afford any such direct evidence of date as may be deduced from the Æsica fibulæ, there is nothing in their case to conflict with the conclusions already arrived at. The Æsica fibulæ belong, as has been shown, to the end of the second century of our era, and the chronological landmark thus

<sup>a</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, xv. 316 *seqq.*

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.* 351, fig. 28.

<sup>c</sup> Wilson, *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, ii. 146, fig. 131.

<sup>d</sup> This illustration has been kindly lent by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

<sup>e</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, xv. 345, fig. 22, and xxv. 505, fig. 30.

supplied enables us to fix the later class of Caledonian armlets above described, as well as snake rings like those from Culbin sands, to about the same period.

In the history of late-Celtic art in Britain, the Æsica discovery is of high importance as enabling us to put a date to a definite stage of decorative technique. This is the more important since the next approach to a fixed point must be sought in the mixed Saxon and Celtic contents of certain graves in Derbyshire and elsewhere dating from about the sixth century, and to the earliest illuminated and goldsmiths' work of the Irish saints.

To return, however, to the Æsica fibulae and the circumstances of their deposit. It is evident, from all Celtic analogy and from the terminal eyes or loops with which according to British usage they were both provided, that in each case we have to deal with one of a pair of brooches originally connected with a pendent chain. It might, therefore, be supposed that one fibula of each type is missing from the find. It appears, however, from the record kindly supplied me by Mr. C. J. Spence, that this loss must have taken place before the date of their deposit, and that they were either worn together as an odd pair, or were the share obtained by some individual from a double act of spoliation. Mr. Spence writes: "The fibulae were found in one lump, and there were (when I first saw them) no traces of others having been attached. There was a good covering of mud, and the back of the gilt fibula bore on its mud a clear impression of the rim on the plate of the other. They had been lashed with string to a piece of wood, the grain of which ran in the direction of the long way of the fibula."

That, however, they were originally intended to be worn in pairs by British women there can be little doubt. An interesting illustration of the manner in which they were worn is, in fact, supplied by a series of Pannonian monuments, of which an example has already been referred to. The prototype of the fibulae represented on these monuments resembles that of the first Æsica fibula, except that the hook-like projections from the bow, which keep in place the collar binding the retroflected foot to the back, in this case curve inwards instead of outwards (see fig. 8), and finally grow into a kind of arch. The costume with which they are associated and to a great extent the names of women that wear them, bear a Celtic or un-Roman character,<sup>a</sup> and in their great size these Pannonian brooches supply the best parallel to the Æsica fibula No. 1. It is interesting to note that their date agrees with that of the northern examples. They have been found

<sup>a</sup> Hampel, *Pannonische Costumbilder*, Ungar. Revue. 1881. 147-153. This form of fibula also extends to Noricum. Tischler, *Gurina*, 26 note.

with coins ranging from Domitian to the younger Faustina,<sup>a</sup> and reach down therefore beyond the middle of the second century of our era.

The suspicion may certainly cross our minds that the occurrence at the same period of a class of peculiarly large fibulæ among the Celtic border-population of North Britain and of the Middle Danube might not be a purely accidental coincidence, and that the Pannonian troops on the Wall<sup>b</sup> might have contributed to this result. It must, however, be borne in mind that these double fibulæ are female ornaments, and that of the two found at Æsica one is of purely British lineage, the other, though taken from a Gallo-Roman source, has been transformed by a Caledonian artist, and is Celticised in a fashion for which the Pannonian fibulæ afford no parallel. These brooches, at any rate the last, do not seem to have been made by any one living within the pale of the Roman dominion.

The deposit in the Æsica guard-chamber thus becomes the more remarkable. It is useless, indeed, to speculate as to the exact manner in which the relics reached the place in which they were found. We cannot positively decide whether the deposit represented a burial or a hoard of valuable possessions, though the balance of evidence seems to favour the latter hypothesis. All that we can learn from the find is that the owner of the Celtic fibulæ and collar was also the possessor of two Roman rings, but whether the rings represented spoil taken from the Romans by the barbarians or the fibulæ had been stripped from Caledonian wives by a Roman legionary, must remain uncertain. So much, however, we may gather from the circumstances of the discovery, that, at the date when these objects were deposited, at the end, namely, of the second century of our era, the turret was already in a ruinous condition and partly choked with *débris*. The objects are in too perfect preservation, and the find too homogeneous in its nature, to allow us to suppose that they had been placed in their present position at a date much later than that to which the objects themselves belong. Hence it follows that Æsica had already by the days of Severus been ruined by some barbarian incursion from beyond the Wall, and that from that time onwards no attempt was made to restore the western turret of the south gate.

<sup>a</sup> Tischler, *Gurina*, 27.

<sup>b</sup> Pannonians appear in one of the Cumberland forts just south of the Wall (*C. I. L.* vii. 417, *Ephem.* vii. 978), and we have the tombstones of individual Pannonians at Littlechester (*C. I. L.* vii. 723), and probably at Housesteads (*ib.* 692). (F. H.)

*Notes on Excavations at Æsica in 1894.* By F. HAVERFIELD, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.

ABOUT halfway between Newcastle and Carlisle the Roman Wall runs for ten or eleven miles along the crest of a high basalt ridge, which drops precipitously to the north. The range of cliffs is broken at several points by small gaps, the largest of which is perhaps that between Cawfield Crag and the Nicks of Thirlwall, where the little Caw Burn finds an outlet southwards to Haltwhistle and the Tyne. West of this streamlet the moorland rises slowly to the Nicks, and half a mile up the gentle slope is the farmhouse of Great Chesters, standing 600 feet above the sea level, in the north-east angle of a Roman fortress. The place is well situated; it has a southern exposure and gains additional protection against north winds from the rounded mass of Chesters Pike, which reaches the height of 800 feet about half a mile to the north. The fortress is of the usual shape, oblong with rounded angles; its northern face coincides with the Wall itself.<sup>a</sup> Internally it measures about 360 feet from north to south and 420 feet from east to west; the side which rests upon the Wall is, therefore, as at Housesteads and Bowness, the longer side. Its area,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  acres, agrees with that of Carvoran, Chesterholm, and in general of about half the fortresses *per lineam valli*.<sup>b</sup> Outside, to the south-east lay the usual "civil settlement;" Dr. Bruce mentions a hypocaust as partially exposed in 1867. Further south, 300 yards from the southern face of the fortress, is the vallum, and beyond it the cemetery, indicated, though not precisely fixed, by three tombstones. The water supply, according to Dr. Lingard and Dr. Bruce, was brought from a source north of the Wall by a small circuitous channel. The channel may still be seen, but there was doubtless another and nearer source available at need. The name of the place was *Æsica*, which (Pro-

<sup>a</sup> The excavations of 1895 seem to show that the masonry of the Wall was bonded into the masonry of the fortress wall. In other words, there are indications that the Wall and this fortress were built at one and the same time.

<sup>b</sup> The areas of the fortresses, according to Bruce, are as follows: Birdoswald and Bowness,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres; Chesters,  $5\frac{1}{4}$ ; Housesteads and Benwell, 5; Halton Chesters,  $4\frac{1}{4}$ ; Wallsend, Carrawburgh, Carvoran,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ; Rutchester, Chesterholm, Great Chesters,  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ; Burgh, 3; Castlesteads,  $2\frac{3}{4}$ ; Stanwix,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ; the area of Newcastle is unknown. East of Chesters (inclusive) the north faces of the fortresses project beyond the Wall; west of it (from Carrawburgh inclusive), the north faces of the fortresses coincide with the Wall, or else as at Chesterholm, Carvoran, and Castlesteads the fortress is south of the Wall.

essor Rhys tells me) is probably not a Celtic word, a remark which applies also to *Hunnun* and *Procolitia*, but not to the other mural place names. The garrison in the third and presumably in the second century was the *cohors ii Asturum*. For the further history of the place we have three dated inscriptions. One mentions Hadrian, and may perhaps record the foundation of the fortress; a second is a fragment of about A.D. 165; the third commemorates the repair of a storehouse by the Asturian cohort in A.D. 225.

The site is now a grass field, and, as it has been little disturbed except in its north-eastern quarter, the Northumberland Excavation Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle decided to excavate it. Owner and tenant gave every facility. Work began on July 23, 1894, at the south-west corner, and was continued into October. The most important result was the discovery in September of brooches and other ornaments, of which a full account is given by Mr. Evans. The following paragraphs are intended to describe very briefly the rest of the work of 1894.

1. *The south-west corner of the fortress.*—(i.) The corner turret, where the work began, is well built and well preserved; the inner walls are still standing over 6 feet high. In general it resembles the corner turrets of other mural fortresses. It has two flagged floors, one just a foot above the other: burnt refuse and marks of fire at the angles suggest that it has been used for cooking, and the objects found in it, a stone pestle and mortar, a quern, bits of iron and pottery, agree with the suggestion. (ii.) Fifteen feet east of it is a room of similar size, built like it against the wall of the fortress, but of the rudest masonry: the walls showed no outer faces, and may have been banked with earth. It yielded three coins (Trajan, Faustina), four bronze rings about 2 inches in diameter, and some iron fragments found lying together close to its west wall. It was roughly flagged, but had only one floor. (iii.) In the same quarter of the fortress the excavators found a large block of buildings, of which the south-west corner was 35 feet from the inside of the southern, 60 feet from the western fortress-wall. The masonry is rough. The block was not traced out; however, the area laid bare, 40 by 130 feet, seems to show a row of oblong chambers, each divided into two rooms, separated by narrow spaces: each chamber had its own outer walls and roof, like some buildings at Chesters and High Rochester. The floors were, as usual, double, and roughly flagged. The finds included two lettered fragments (IAE and XLVIII, not belonging together), two damaged bronze *paterae*, pottery, etc. Scattered through the rooms were half a dozen carefully-grooved, slightly-

wedged stones, which Mr. Holmes has identified as arch-stones. Similar blocks have been found at Chesters.<sup>a</sup>

2. *The Vault*.—A subterranean arched chamber has often been noted in the centre of the fortress. This was opened, or rather reopened, in August. It is a chamber about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet square, roofed with five courses of stone, the pavement being about 5 feet below the crown of the arch and 4 feet below the present average surface level. This pavement consists of 3-inch flags resting on dwarf walls which themselves rest on undisturbed soil. A modern horseshoe drain has been carried through them, and Mr. Holmes doubts if the flooring is original. On the west side of the vault some large stones form an accidental or intentional ledge 8 inches high and 28 inches wide; on the north side the bed rock (which) juts out to the same height. The exit was eastwards, but no steps were found. In general, this vault closely resembles a slightly larger vault which stands under a room on the south side of the *praetorium* at Chesters.<sup>b</sup> Vaults have been noted also at High Rochester, at Carnuntum, and in some of the Limes forts, in each case under a chamber of the *praetorium*. A variety of facts suggests (as Zangemeister and Hettner have observed) that these vaults were strong rooms under the *sacella* of the forts,<sup>c</sup> and we may well suppose the vaults at Æsica and Chesters to have served the same end.

3. Finally the south gate was discovered to have stood where the modern road passes through the wall to reach the farmhouse. It is strangely far from the centre of the south side of the fortress; a similar feature may be noticed at Housesteads. The walls of the western guard-chamber were found fairly well preserved, but neither door nor floor was recognisable. I noticed, however, clear indications that this gateway, like so many of the mural gateways, was at some time or another at least partially walled up.<sup>d</sup> Inside the guard-chamber the workmen found the remarkable fibulæ, rings, etc. which Mr. Evans describes; It is necessary here only to observe that these relics can hardly have been deposited much later than the end of the second century. It is uncertain whether they were found lying on or above the original floor level, but it is tempting, and perhaps not very rash, to connect them with the walling up of the gateway, and thus to obtain an approximate date for the latter.

<sup>a</sup> Bruce, *Handbook*, p. 101.

<sup>b</sup> Bruce, *Wall*, 155.

<sup>c</sup> See *der Obergermanisch-ræctische Limes*, No. 44, Kastell Murrhardt, pp. 9-10.

<sup>d</sup> The western gateway, excavated in 1895, was found to have been wholly walled up; the masonry indicated that one-half had been closed first and the other at a later period.

Outside the guard-chamber, and a few feet west of it, close to the inner face of the fortress-wall, the workmen found a largish quantity of bronze scale-armour. Smaller quantities of such armour have been discovered also at Wall-town Crag, not far west of Æsica, at Hod Hill in Dorset, and Ham Hill in Somerset;<sup>a</sup> and at several places on the continent, Naples, Avenches, Mayence. The sepulchral reliefs of two Sertorii found at Verona, and probably dating from A.D. 69, show that such scale-armour was worn by the legionaries, and Dio (lxxviii 57) tells us that the emperor Macrinus abolished its use by the praetorians in A.D. 217.<sup>b</sup> The scales appear to have been attached by wire, and fastened on to a leathern cuirass: there is some slight reason to think that the result was something more in the nature of show-armour than the ordinary forms of breastplate.

Twenty-eight coins were found, of which Mr. C. J. Spence has kindly sent a list.<sup>c</sup> The only coin of interest is a legionary *denarius* of Mark Antony, having on the one side ANT AVG IMPR PRC and a galley, on the other LEG X and an eagle between two standards; it was found three feet below the present surface just outside the corner turret. Antony's legionary issues were in circulation even in the first portion of the third century, and have been found at several places on or near the Wall, at South Shields, Maryport, and elsewhere. The other coins recorded from Æsica belong to Domitian, Trajan (3), Hadrian, Pius (2), Marcus, the younger Faustina, Severus, Elagabalus, Victorinus, Tetricus, Allectus, Crispus, Constans (2), and Magnentius: nine are undecipherable.

The results of the work, apart from the one remarkable find of fibulae, rings, etc., may appear scanty, but this was to be expected. Æsica seems, indeed, closely to resemble the other mural fortresses; it shows the same paucity of lesser finds, indications of the same ground plan, and the same abundance of buildings which characterises the excavated fortresses and forts in northern England, except Hardknott castle,<sup>d</sup> and distinguishes them from the forts along the German *limes*.

<sup>a</sup> Rome Hall, *Archaeologia Æliana*, xvi. 443.

<sup>b</sup> See Albert Müller, *Philologus*, xl. (1881) 248 foll.; Lindenschmit, *Tracht und Bewaffnung des römischen Heeres*, pl. xii. Presumably it was also used by auxiliaries, as on the Wall.

<sup>c</sup> It will be found in full, *Archaeologia Æliana*, xvii. pp. xxx.-xxxi.

<sup>d</sup> Excavated in 1892-3 by the Cumberland and Westmorland Architectural and Archaeological Society; see their *Transactions*, xiii. 375 *et seqq.*