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ON THE GOLDEN ARMILLÆ IN THE SOCIETY'S
MUSEUM.

BY EDWARD PRETTY, F.S.A.

IN the early part of the autumn of 1861, three golden armillæ, or armlets, and a trumpet-shaped ornament, also of gold, probably used as a fibula to hold together parts of a dress, were offered to me for sale. They were stated to have been found in the Medway, below Aylesford, enclosed in a box, which was not produced, but was alleged to have been thrown again into the river. For the accuracy of this part of the story I cannot vouch. If it is to be relied upon, it is much to be lamented that a relic should have been lost which might in itself have been scarcely inferior to its precious contents in interest, and possibly have contributed something to their history. I readily purchased these articles, in order that they might be preserved to the county; and at the October meeting, in 1861, of the Kent Archæological Society, the Council secured them for the Museum of that Institution. These articles were exhibited at the Hythe Congress. Similar reliques in bronze, with rings or manillæ, broken daggers, a celt, and rings, also broken, were found in an urn at Marden, in this county, near the junction of the rivers Beulth and Teise, and are now in the Charles Museum, at Maidstone. An account of this discovery is given by our learned member the Rev.

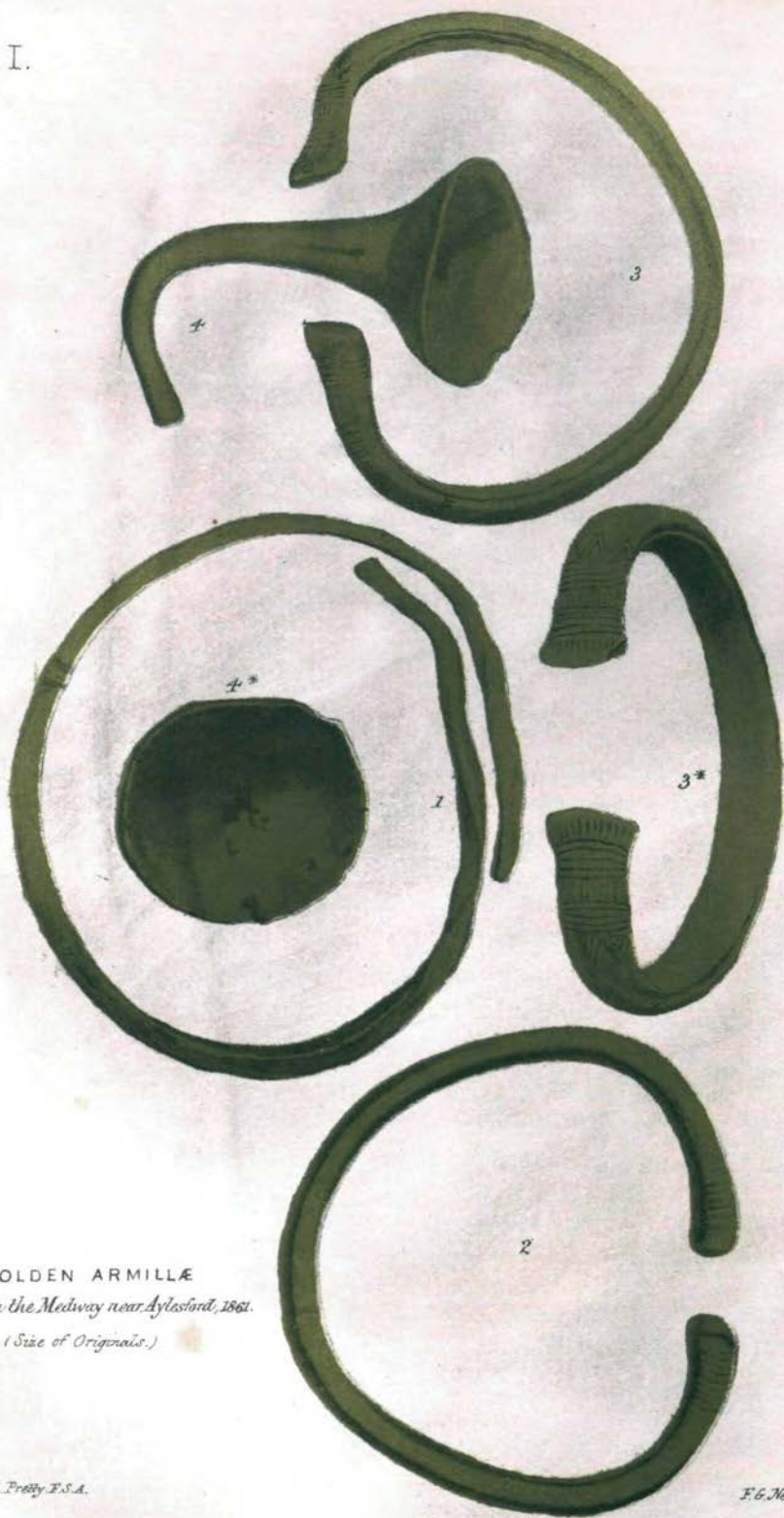
Beale Poste, in the 'Journal of the British Archæological Society,' vol. xiv. pp. 257-262.

With the exception of a torques, to which I shall allude presently, and a serpent-headed armilla, figured in Fairholt's 'Costume in England,' I have not met with any other articles of a Celtic character found in this county.

Roman armillæ (or more properly, having reference to their size, bracelets) have recently been found at Canterbury, in gold and bronze. During the holding of the Congress at Rochester, in 1859, a silver armilla¹ was purchased by one of our members from a silversmith of that city, who, unaware of its archaic value, sold it at the price of old silver. I regret that, in consequence of the absence of its owner from England, I am unable to give a representation of it; it was formed of a light four-sided bar of silver, twisted into the torques pattern. Douglas also, in the 'Nenia Britannica,' gives an account of armillæ found in Kent; a glass armilla (p. 59), and brass armillæ, or bracelets, gilt (p. 62), which may be considered, from the ornamentation of one of them, as late Roman or Saxon.

I have only met with one account of a torques found in Kent. It is described in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' vol. xlii. (1772) p. 266, as follows:—"It was found in a ploughed field, near Dover. It was of pure gold, and weighed nine ounces; it approached very nearly to a circle, of which the circumference was 16 inches. In the middle, opposite the opening, it was an inch and a half round, from whence it gradually decreased to the extremities, each of which terminated in a flat kind of fibula; the inside was flat, the outside round (similar to armillæ), and quite plain, excepting some small flutings

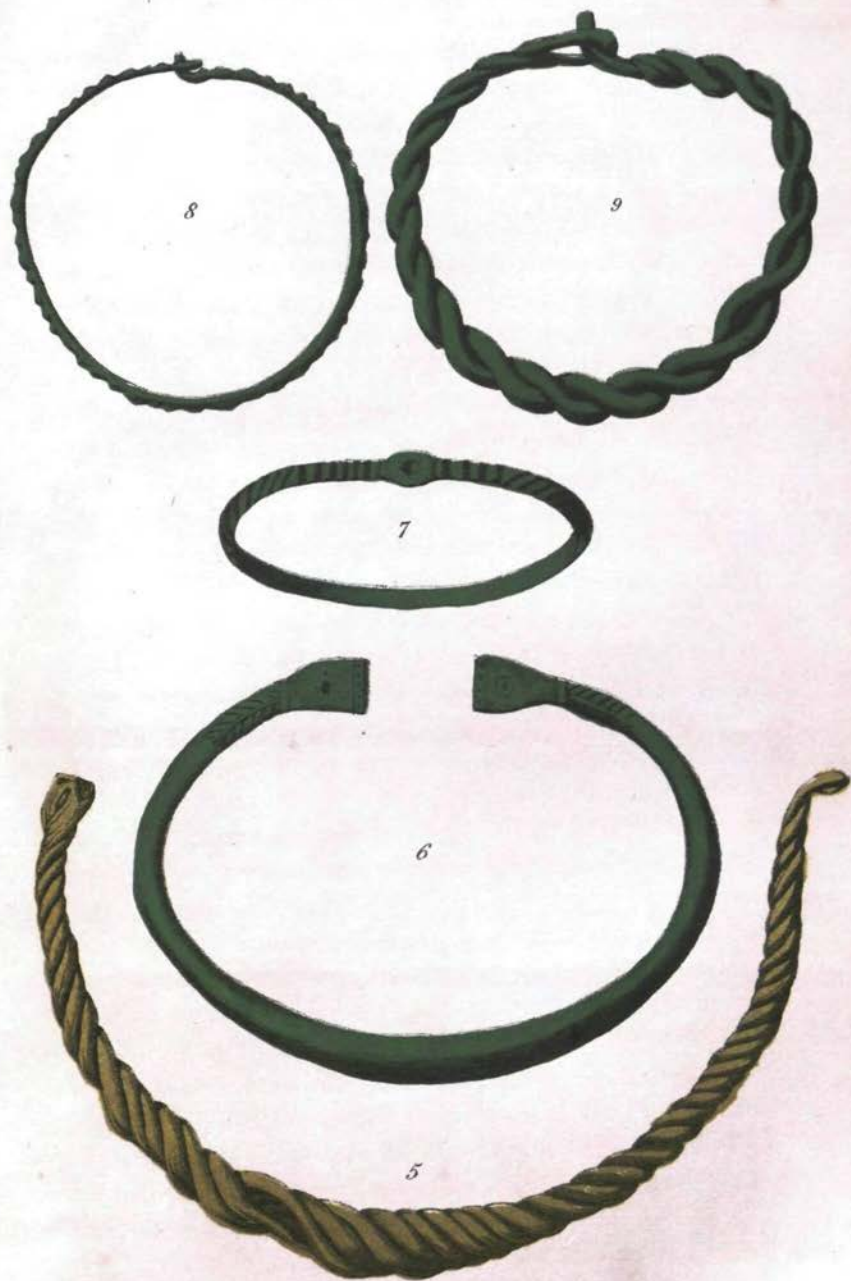
¹ Supposed to have been formerly in the possession of a cottager at East Farleigh or Boughton, and probably found in that locality; it was sold to a pedlar from Rochester.



GOLDEN ARMILLÆ

Found in the Medway near Aylesford, 1861.

(Size of Originals.)



ARMILLÆ FOUND IN CANTERBURY.

(Size of Originals)

at equal distances." In Mr. Roach Smith's 'Collectanea Antiqua,' vol. ii. p. 141, is given the figure of M. Coelius, from his cenotaph found at Zanten. He wears a civic crown; upon his wrists are armillæ, over his military dress are suspended phaleræ, and a torques is round his neck. The reader is further referred to the passage quoted above from Douglas, for the extreme antiquity and the distinctive uses of this kind of ornament. The variety of sizes of the rings found at Marden, as above mentioned, sufficiently shews that they had a sort of money value, and were used as a medium of barter.

To revert to the golden bracelets found in the Medway:—

Fig. 1 appears to have been cut and hammered out in the most primitive way, and then bent to the size of the wrist. This may be considered of the very earliest date. Its weight is 2 oz. 2 dwt. 3 gr.

Fig. 2 is probably the next in point of antiquity; it is slightly ornamented with lines round the end of the bracelet; its weight is 2 oz. 2 dwt. 9 gr.

Fig. 3 is more highly ornamented with lines and the Vandyke pattern, so very usual in early ornamentation. The weight is 2 oz. 11 dwt. 19 gr. Fig. 3* exhibits the same in perspective, to shew the ornamentation on the front.

The curious trumpet-shaped article (Fig. 4), weighing 1 oz. 10 dwt. 2 gr., is probably the half of a mamillary fibula, or fastening for a cloak, specimens of which description have been frequently found in Ireland. Its interior is shewn in Fig. 4*. For a very interesting account of such articles, the 'Catalogue of the Antiquities in Gold in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy,' by W. R. Wilde, Vice-President of the Royal Irish Academy, should be consulted.

Fig. 5 is a representation of a golden armilla, found at Canterbury, drawn by a member of our Society, Mr.

W. C. Trimmell, and kindly communicated by him: it is in the possession of his father. "It is formed," he says, "of four pieces of solid gold wire, weighing 2 oz. 2 dwts.; the wire, instead of being drawn, is hammered, being much thicker in the middle than at the ends. It appears to have been hooked together to keep it fastened. It was found about a mile from Canterbury, in making the railway to Dover, in 1860; there were two found, but we were not fortunate enough to obtain both of them: the other, I am told, was not quite the same pattern. A human skeleton was found with the armillæ, and the workmen who found them supposed them to be coffin-handles."

I am indebted to the same gentleman for drawings of four bronze armillæ, of various sizes, in the possession of J. Brent, jun., Esq., F.S.A., Canterbury. Mr. Brent states that the armillæ (Figg. 6, 7, and 8) were found in the Well-field, near the Dane John, within the city, with an ivory pin, beads, and large hollow coffin-nails; and Fig. 9, near Martyrs'-field, Canterbury, in 1861. All are undoubtedly Roman.