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NOTICE OF A SILVER CHAIN OR GIRDLE, THE PROPERTY OF THOMAS SIMSON, OF BLAINSLIE, ESQ., BERWICKSHIRE; ANOTHER, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN, AND OF OTHER ANCIENT SCOTTISH SILVER CHAINS. BY JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., F.S.A. SCOT.<sup>1</sup> (PLATES XII., XIII.)

*Silver square-sided Chain, Blainslie, Berwickshire.*—Through the politeness of Robert Romanes, Esq., writer, Lauder, who got the loan of this chain for me from Thomas Simson,<sup>2</sup> of Blainslie, Esq., I am able to exhibit it to the Society. The chain or girdle measures 4 feet 3 inches in length, it is formed of a four-sided or “herring bone” series of links,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch across the side, and weighs 7 ounces 11 dwts. At one extremity there is a circular plate or disk, measuring  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, and at the other a conical or tassel-like pendant, 3 inches in length and about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch in greatest diameter near the base.

The chain itself measures  $48\frac{1}{4}$  inches in total length, and is attached to the base of a silver hook, which is fastened on the back of the circular silver plate, towards its margin. It is divided into seven portions of varying length, by open circular links or rings of silver, which measure from half an inch to  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch in diameter. The first portion of the chain next the circular plate measures 2 feet 4 inches in length; the next,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch; the third,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches; the fourth,  $2\frac{7}{8}$  inches; the fifth,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches; the sixth,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches; and the last, 6 inches in length.

The circular plate is ornamented, having engraved on its front two concentric circular bands, with scrolls of foliage between them, and the Roman letters B. C. in the centre. On the back of this disk there is fixed a large silver open hook,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch in length, to the base of

<sup>1</sup> This communication was read before the Society at the meeting on the 12th May 1872. Its publication in the last volume of the Proceedings was unavoidably prevented. (See Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot. vol. ix. p. 532.)

<sup>2</sup> I regret to state that before these sheets could be published Thomas Simson, Esq., died at Blainslie, on the 20th January 1874.

which the chain is fastened. There are three separate die stamps, side by side on the back of the plate itself; the first a monogram of two initials, V  $\bar{A}$  or  $\bar{A}$  V; next an imperfectly struck stamp, which, from its embattled appearance, appears to represent a castle, and is apparently the old castle stamp of Edinburgh; and last, another monogram, of the initials R. D.

The tassel-like terminal pendant is also ornamented with a series of engraved leaves, each rising from a central stem, which springs from the projecting ring near its base, and runs upwards towards its top; from the same projecting ring other ruder stripes or leaves taper downwards towards the bottom, which terminates in a small open ring about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch across.

The die stamps struck on the back of the roundel are of much interest, as they may assist in judging of the date when, and place where, the chain was made (see Plate of Chain, XII. I.; and fig. 1, the die stamps figured above it.)

The first pair of these initials on the back of the plate may probably be styled the Maker's Mark, being the initials of the maker of the article, which was the oldest stamp struck on Scottish silver plate.

Mr J. H. Sanderson informs us in his paper on "The Plate Marks used in Scotland," published in vol. iv. p. 541 of the Proceedings of the Society, that the Maker's Mark was introduced by an Act of the Scots Parliament in 1457. By the same Act of the Parliament of James II. in 1457, it was declared "That gold work be not worse than xx. grains fine, and silver xi. grains fine, and that it be marked by the maker and deacon, or head officer of the toun."

These individuals used the initial letters of their names as marks; so we have on this plate, in the second set of initials, the addition also made of something equivalent to a standard mark, showing the quality of the metal. It was not, however, until 1759 that the Corporation of the Goldsmiths of Edinburgh introduced the more formal "Standard Mark"—a thistle for Edinburgh, which has been continued down to the present time.

The Town Mark, indicating the place where the plate was made—for Edinburgh, the castle—was next added by an Act of the Scots Parliament in 1483.

The Date Mark, shewing the year when the plate was made, which is generally a special letter on an escutcheon, was introduced in 1681.

Lastly, the Duty Mark—the head of the reigning sovereign—was not introduced until 1784.

The absence of these two last stamps from this silver disk of course points to its being of an older date than 1681; and the same idea of age is also borne out by the character of the ornamental engraving on the plate itself; it therefore belongs to an older period. Mr J. H. Sanderson informs me he has seen the same style of letters as the engraved initials on Scots plate from about 1616 to 1670. A learned authority in all such matters—A. W. Franks, Esq., &c., of the British Museum—to whom I sent a photograph of this silver chain and plate—conjectures the date of the medallion or circular plate to be about 1550 or 1560; but this, he says, is only surmise. If this surmise is correct it would take this chain back to a time when we know silver chains were worn as ordinary girdles for the waist, for dress and ornament.

Mr F. W. Fairholt, in his work on "Costume in England," London, 1847, 8vo, when referring to the use of the girdle, or ceinture for the waist, mentions that they sometimes took the form of chains, particularly in the time of Mary and Elizabeth; and that some of them had large pendants at their ends. He also states that on monumental brasses of an older date, the girdles had circular plates, bosses, or studs in front, and that the mode of fastening these was not known. In this chain or girdle, with a somewhat similar circular plate, the fastening is seen, as I have already described it, to consist simply of a hook fixed on the back of the plate, on which one of the circular links or loops of the chain may be hooked; this probably explains how the fastening was made in some of the more ancient examples to which Mr Fairholt has referred. In the Museum of the Society there is a small broken stone statue of a robed female figure, which was discovered in taking down some old walls at Bannatyne House, Newtyle, Forfarshire; it shows the manner of wearing a chain girdle. The style of this chain is more open in character; it has, however, the large disk for fastening it at the waist in front, in this instance of an ornamented oval shape; and the pendant part of the chain falls towards the skirt of the robe in front. It has been also

suggested that this chain may have been worn over one shoulder and across the chest, instead of as a girdle round the waist. The latter however, seems the most likely way of its having been worn.

The popular story of this Blainslie silver chain was given in full detail by Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee, K.C.S.I., F.S.A. Scot., in his annual address as President of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club. It is published in their Proceedings for 1869, and from it I shall make a few quotations.

Sir Walter Elliot relates how Thomas Hardie was tenant of a portion of Tollies-Hill, called the Midside Farm. A severe winter and other causes destroyed his flock, and he was unable to pay his rent. His wife, the Maggie of the story, applied to the Earl of Lauderdale for relief, and was told, as snow seemed so plentiful and destructive at Midside, he would consider the claim for relief if she brought him a snow-ball in June. Maggie accordingly prepared a quantity of snow in the following winter to keep until June, and brought it to her landlord, reminding him of his promise. The earl gave the relief claimed, and the Hardies subsequently thrived in the farm. The earl, being a royalist, followed the fortunes of Charles II. to the battle of Worcester, where he was taken prisoner in 1651, and was subsequently confined for several years in the Tower. The Hardies, during these years, laid past their rents, and, out of gratitude, Maggie baked the gold pieces due into a bannock, which she took with her to the Tower of London, and presented to the imprisoned earl. Soon after, through the favour of Monk, the earl was released, and repaired to Holland. He afterwards returned with the king in May 1660, and, revisiting Scotland, presented Maggie, so runs the tale, with this silver chain, and allowed her and her children to sit rent free for their lives, with the remark, that "Every bannock has its maik, but the bannock of Tollies-Hill." Sir Walter Elliot says:—

"The Tollies-Hill girdle is formed of silver wire twisted in a double curb pattern, attached to a round plate engraved with arabesques of foliage, and having in the centre the letters B. C. The other extremity terminates in a silver cone, with a loop at the end fitting into the hook under the circular plate; and, if need be, into rings at various lengths of the chain, to meet the increasing rotundity of the dame's waist as she advanced in years." . . . "The signification of the letters B. C. is not apparent, nor does the story afford a clue to their meaning. The

Rev. J. Walker of Greenlaw, formerly incumbent of Legerwood parish, who was well acquainted with the Simson family, informed me that these letters were believed to be the initials of her name, which could not therefore have been Maggie, and was probably a household or pet name. The incident was first mentioned by Chambers in his 'Picture of Scotland,' on which Miss Margaret Corbet founded her story of 'Muirside Maggie,' communicated to 'Friendship's Offering' for 1829, and reprinted in 'Chambers's Journal,' iii. 331. It was afterwards made the subject of one of 'Wilson's Border Tales,' under the title of 'Midside Maggie; or, The Bannock of Tollies-Hill.' Both versions are largely embellished by the fancy of the writers; but, divested of fiction, the simple story is sufficiently romantic."

Whatever may have been the use of the chain, the character and style of its workmanship seem to belong to a period quite as early as the date of this romantic story. I am inclined, indeed, to believe, that it might perhaps have been made at a considerably earlier date. Chains of this description seem to be of great rarity.

*Silver square-sided Chain with Gilt Ornaments, at the University of Aberdeen.*—The only other chain with which I am acquainted, at all corresponding in character to that just described, is one preserved at the University of Aberdeen. It also consists of a long, square-sided, "herring-bone pattern" chain, of a similar character, with a flat circular disk at one extremity and a somewhat similar but larger tassel-like pendant at the other. The chain itself measures 5 feet  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch in breadth on the side; and instead of the six open rings, it has six projecting barrel-shaped ornaments, which are perforated by the chain, each 1 inch in length by  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch in greatest diameter at the middle, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch at each extremity. There are three of these ornaments on each side of a smaller cylindrical ornament,  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch long by nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch in diameter, which has an open circle or ring,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter, attached to one side of it, as if for being looped on the hook at the back of the disk, and so form a girdle for the waist; three of the ornaments being thus on the waist and three on the pendant part of the chain.

The circular disk (Plates XII. and XIII., figs. 1, 2, 3) at one extremity of the chain is richly gilt, and is covered with a series of three rows of projecting circular ornaments formed of twisted wire, each enclosing four smaller circles, with a small knob in the centre, and a smaller row of

single circles and knobs round an oval-shaped red stone, carbuncle or garnet, in a projecting setting, fill up the centre of the disk. This circular plate is slightly rounded in front. It measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter, and has a large hook,  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in length, fastened to the back of the plate towards its circumference, the silver chain being, as in the former instance, fastened to a loop at the upper part of this hook, next the margin of the disk. On the back of the silver disk there are two square-shaped die stamps impressed on the metal. The stamps are together: one, the larger, rather indistinct, may represent the letter D, and above it a crown, or the whole may perhaps be simply a fetterlock; the other, a smaller die-stamp, bears the letters P. H. The first may be the mark of the place where it was made, and the initials those of the maker of the chain, but I have not as yet been able to discover any further explanation of them.

Each of the six barrel-shaped slides or ornaments (Plate XIII, fig. 4), and the central cylindrical one, with the lateral ring (fig. 5), are also gilt, and covered in a similar manner to the disk, with a series of the circular projecting ornaments of twisted wire, each enclosing three circles, and small knobs, with a row of single circles at each extremity. The tassel-like pendant (fig. 6), also richly gilt, is covered by a series of eight rows of circular ornaments and knobs similar to those on the disk; the loop at the top connecting it to the chain, terminates in four somewhat pointed and projecting leaves, which pass down the tapering neck of the upper part of the pendant. It measures 4 inches in length by 2 inches in greatest diameter. The workmanship of the whole chain and ornaments, though not perhaps of the finest character, is at once rich and beautiful.

(Since this paper was read, by the courtesy of the Senatus of the University of Aberdeen, through Professor John Struthers, M.D., allowing me to get the chain for examination, I have had drawings made of it, which are given in Plates XII. and XIII.)

The chain was discovered in the year 1735 under the flooring of the old bibliothek or library of Marischal College, which originally formed part of the buildings of the ancient Franciscan convent. The place where it was found suggests the inquiry, Could this beautifully-worked chain have been a badge worn by an official of the order of St Francis?—the silver

chain first described having been the badge of a lower dignitary of some similar order—the circular loops or rings of the chain first described, and the richly ornamented knobs of the Aberdeen chain, corresponding, it may be, to the knots on the rope girdle, of this once lowly and mendicant order? These chains, however, bear no ecclesiastical emblems of any kind, and may have been either a badge of office of some civil or other dignitary, or perhaps, as I have already stated, simply an ornamental girdle—a forgotten fashion of 300 years ago. The chain is considered, by some practical men who have examined it, to be probably of old Spanish manufacture. The character of the ornamentation and workmanship, however, which is that of twisted wire formed into circles, and soldered in patterns on the silver plate, is interesting; as it is a kind of filagree-like work made apparently in many very distant places.

*Silver square-sided Chain found at Gaulcross, Banffshire.*—Part of a simple silver chain, of a similar square-sided “herring-bone pattern,” though apparently of a more loosely plaited character, than those now described, was found at Gaulcross, Banffshire, along with a silver pin, and both are figured in Dr Stuart’s “Sculptured Stones of Scotland.” The pin was somewhat similar in style and shape to one found in Fifeshire with the Norries Law silver relics, and ornamented like it with the peculiar C-like curved scrolls. This chain is therefore probably of an older date than those just described.

*Large Silver Chain found at Greenlaw, Berwickshire.*—Sir Walter Elliot, in his President’s Address already referred to, alludes to the discovery of another silver chain in the same county of Berwick. It was first noticed in the “New Statistical Account of Scotland,” in the description of the parish of Greenlaw, by the Rev. A. Home, under the date 1834. He says in this Account, published in 1845 :—

“There are the remains of an encampment about two miles above the town (of Greenlaw), at the confluence of the Blackadder and Faungrass rivers, and on the very verge of their precipitous banks. The camp, which is called the Blackcastle Rings, is on the northern side of the river; and on the south side, exactly opposite is the beginning of an entrenchment which runs about half a mile



along the bank and then turns off to the south in the direction of Hume Castle.  
 . . . A piece of a silver chain was also found at the old camp.”

Sir Walter Elliot gives us the additional information :—

“In the ascertained track of this ancient fence (Herit’s Dyke), are several British strengths, situated as usual on their several heights, as at Chesters in Fogo parish, the fort called Black-Castle-Rings near Dogdenmoss, near which a silver chain was found many years ago, and given to the last Earl of Marchmont. I have been informed by the Rev. J. Walker, of Greenlaw, that this chain was found in the dyke near Greenlaw by a woman, and was so black and oxydised, that she gave it to the blacksmith named Matheson, thinking it to be iron. It lay in the smithy for some time, till Matheson took it to repair the *rig-widdy*, or chain of a cart harness, when its true nature was discovered, and it was sent to Lord Marchmont, who died in 1794. The son of the smith is still at Greenlaw.”<sup>1</sup>

This chain probably belonged to a much greater antiquity than that first described, and, from the use to which it was intended to have been applied by the blacksmith, must have been a large linked and strong chain, probably similar in character to a curious class of ancient silver chains, formed of silver rods bent into plain rings, which have been discovered in different parts of Scotland. Three examples of these latter chains are now preserved in the Museum of the Society.

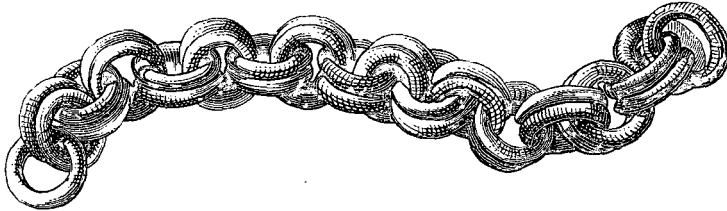
*Silver Chain, formed of large Rings, found in Inverness-shire.*—The first of these chains, formed of large plain circular rings, was presented to the Museum as treasure-trove in 1837. It was discovered in the course of the formation of the Caledonian Canal, at the bottom of a high gravelly ridge forming part of a hill fort beside an old cairn, and was figured and described by Sir George Mackenzie in the “The Scot’s Magazine,” for May 1810 (Edinburgh, vol. lxxii. 1810), as follows :—

“This chain of pure silver was found in the course of last year (1809), by the workmen employed in digging the Caledonian Canal. It is now in the possession of the Honourable Barons of Exchequer, and is conceived to be an object of considerable curiosity. We were anxious, therefore, to preserve a drawing of it,

<sup>1</sup> “Proc. Berwickshire Naturalists’ Club,” 1869, p. 18.

which we have been enabled to gratify our readers with, through the polite attention of Sir G. Mackenzie, Bart., who has not only supplied us with the engraved plate, but also with the following extract from a communication made by him on the subject to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

“The chain was found at the depth of two feet, among gravel. The length is 18 inches, exclusive of a grooved link, which has not reached Edinburgh with the chain. The single ring at one end is 2 inches and one-tenth in diameter. The rings at the other end 2·8 inches in diameter. The thickness of the rings at the end is ·45 of an inch, that of the others ·4. The whole chain weighs 92 oz. 12 dwts. It was reported that a ball of silver was found with the chain; but it has not been recovered. Sir George is of opinion, from the general appearance of the chain, that it has been used for ornament, and that it probably had suspended a lamp in some Roman Catholic Church, whence it had been stolen during the ferment excited by John Knox, and buried. Perhaps it had been concealed by the rightful owners; and, owing to some accident befalling the possessor, had lain concealed till dug up in the line of the canal.”—(P. 323.)



Silver Chain found on the line of the Caledonian Canal, Inverness-shire, in 1809.  
(18 inches in length.)

I can find no notice of this communication published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

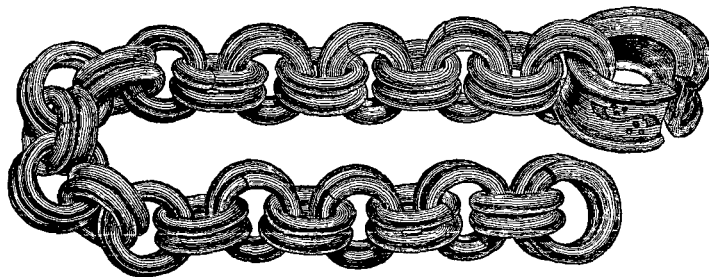
Part of this account, with the figure of the chain, is also given in the “Archæologia Scotica,” vol. iv. p. 373, and from the interest connected with it, I reproduce the accompanying figure.

As shown in the annexed woodcut, the chain is formed of a double series of plain unornamented circular rings, sixteen pairs of rings with a single ring at one extremity, thirty-three in all; not including

the large grooved link which is now wanting. The rings show distinctly the marks of the hammer used in bringing them into proper shape.

*Silver Chain, of large Rings, found at Parkhill, Aberdeenshire.*— Another silver chain of exactly similar style, but much less massive in character, was discovered in digging at Parkhill, in the parish of New Machar, Aberdeenshire, and was presented to the Museum as treasure-trove by the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, through the late John Henderson, Esq., Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer, in February 1864.

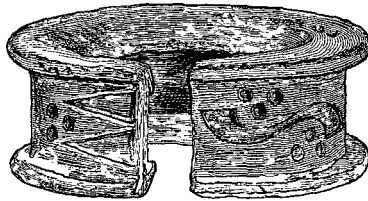
This chain is fortunately complete (see woodcut), having the terminal



Silver Chain found at Parkhill, Aberdeenshire.  
( $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length.)

grooved link or ring, which, in the case of the larger chain found near Inverness, unfortunately did not reach Edinburgh. It is formed of a series of twenty-three pairs of plain or unornamented circular links or rings, with a single larger grooved terminal ring, being forty-seven rings in all. The chain measures in total length  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and, exclusive of the large terminal ring,  $16\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It weighs 39 ounces, 15 dwts. troy. Each of the rings is formed, like the last chain, of a hammered rounded bar of silver  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch in thickness, simply bent upon itself into a circular form; with the ends cut square and brought into close apposition, but apparently not fixed together in any way. They are

$1\frac{2}{3}$  of an inch in diameter, and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch in thickness, the last pair being a very little larger than the others,  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter. The large terminal ring, however, is penannular in form, with its edges projecting in a rounded bead externally, giving it thus a somewhat grooved appearance, and having also a groove running along its internal surface. It possibly bears a close relation to the so-called grooved link of the first described chain, which was unfortunately not sent to Edinburgh, and was in all probability of an exactly similar character. It measures  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches in greatest diameter,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in breadth, and  $\frac{2}{8}$  of an inch in thickness. The opening through the circumference of this large ring, I may mention, is a little wider than the thickness of the other rings

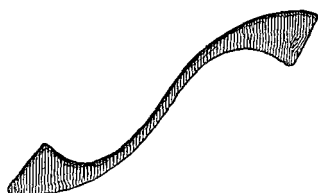


Large Terminal Penannular Ring or Clasp of Silver Chain, showing incised ornaments, found at Parkhill (actual size).

of the chain, which can thus be passed through it. On each side of the opening through its circumference, there is a series of incised ornaments; on one side two acute angled triangles, side by side, with their narrow bases next the opening of the link, and between their pointed extremities a lozenge-shaped figure formed by four depressed points; all being sunk in the flat surface of the ring. The other side of the opening is occupied by a double curved figure; with three sunk dots or points forming a triangular figure, placed opposite to each of its concave or curved extremities. All these incised figures still show traces of having been inlaid with red enamel.

The incised figures on this large terminal link were noticed and recorded

by me in the "Proceedings" at the time the chain was presented to the Museum. The publication of the second volume of Dr Stuart's important work on the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," has since made us more familiar with the various curious figures or so-called "symbols," as some antiquaries have supposed them to be, sculptured on these ancient stone monuments; and it is of much interest to find that one if not more of these incised ornaments on the large link of this chain, are exactly similar to these peculiar ancient figures cut on the sculptured stones. I refer especially to the double curved figure which occurs in various instances, and, for comparison, I subjoin a drawing of one copied from the "Sculptured Stones."



Incised figure or symbol from "The Sculptured Stones of Scotland."

This figure, or at least a closely corresponding one, only a little more ornamented, occurs on sculptured stones at Drimmies, Aberdeenshire, and Kintradwell, Sutherlandshire; one exactly corresponding to it is cut on the rocky walls of the caves at Weyms, Fifeshire.<sup>1</sup>

The curious fact of the correspondence of these incised figures on the chain, to those of the "Sculptured Stones," adds very much to the interest otherwise attached to these old chains.

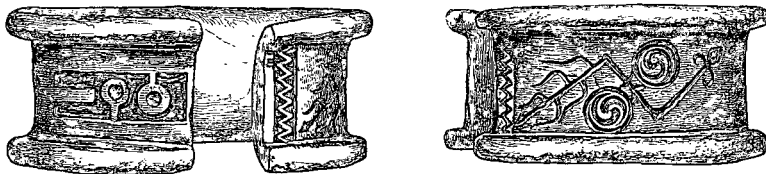
*Silver Chain of large Rings found in Midlothian.*—Another silver chain of exactly similar character, but formed of smaller sized rings or links; has been more recently presented as treasure-trove to the Museum. It was found in the course of some improvements made on the Queen's Park at Holyrood, Edinburgh.

This chain is formed of 31 pairs of plain circular rings or links, and one single link; or 63 rings in all. It is  $16\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length. Each ring measures 1 inch in diameter by  $\frac{3}{16}$ ths of an inch in thickness. It weighs 22 ounces 7 dwts. troy. Like the other chains, each link is formed of a rounded bar of silver bent into a circle, the extremities being simply brought into close apposition, and like all the others, it appears to have been shaped

<sup>1</sup> See "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," vol. ii., and p. 77 of Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot. vol. iv. p. i.

by careful hammering. There is no large terminal grooved and ornamented ring remaining attached to this chain, and like the large chain found near Inverness, one of the extremities terminates in a single ring, its fellow, however, may have been also cut off by the finders, and destroyed to discover the metal of which it was composed.

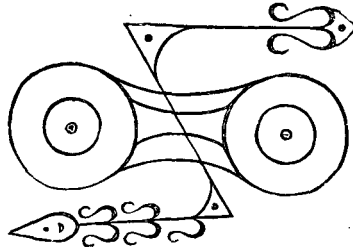
*Silver Chain of large Rings found in Dumfriesshire.*—I may refer to still another example of this same class of silver chains found in the south of Scotland. The following woodcuts are taken from photographs of it which were procured by Dr Arthur Mitchell, Commissioner in Lunacy, Sec. S.A. Scot., &c., who was informed that the chain was recently found in Dumfriesshire, in the district adjoining to Drumlanrig Castle, and was now, he believed, in the possession of His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch. As the chain appears from the photographs to be exactly similar in character (except a slight difference in the size and number of its rings) to the perfect one already described, which was found in Aberdeenshire, it has not been thought necessary to figure more than the peculiar terminal ring. (See the annexed woodcuts).



Large Terminal Penannular Ring of Silver Chain found in Dumfriesshire.

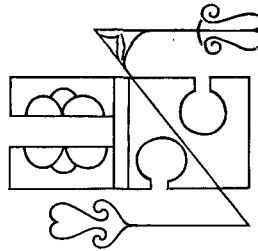
The chain consists of 22 pairs of circular rings or links, and one single ring, 45 in all, of a similar character; it, however, has also the larger terminal grooved penannular ring, the presence of which may therefore be considered necessary to make the chain complete. This penannular ring is richly ornamented with incised figures on each side of its opening, and most interesting it is to observe, that each of these figures also belongs to

the class of the "symbols" cut on the so-called "Sculptured Stones of Scotland." One of the sides of the transverse opening of this penannular



"Spectacle and Zigzag" Ornament from the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland."

ring is ornamented by a zigzag moulding or border across the plain field of the ring, and beyond it also on the field of the ring, there is incised a richly ornamented "Spectacle Ornament," with a "Double



"Oblong Ornament," with "Zigzag" or "Bent Sceptre," from the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland."

Sceptre" or Zigzag through it; the floriated extremity of the sceptre being next the opening, and the circular disks of the spectacle orna-

ment are covered with the peculiar converging *C*-like curved lines of the late Celtic style of ornament. (I give for comparison with it a sketch of this peculiar figure, taken from "the Sculptured Stones of Scotland.") On the opposite side of this transverse opening in the large ring there is, as it appears to me, an example of a variety of the so-called "Oblong ornament," with its forked or open extremity away from the opening of the ring, the field of the "oblong ornament" displays a pair of circles with central dot, each one opening on the opposite sides of the "oblong figure." This oblong figure is almost always on the Sculptured Stones, like the "Spectacle Ornament," crossed with a variety of the "Z ornament," or "Double Sceptre," as it has been designated; this, however, is absent here, the space on the field of the ring being nearly filled up by the oblong ornament itself. (I give a figure of the more usual compound or combined form of this ornament, copied also from the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland." See the preceding woodcut.)

It is interesting to observe that this last figure seems, in the relation borne by its two enclosed circles, one on each side of the "bent sceptre," itself to contain, or at least possibly to refer to, the other well-known "spectacle" and "bent sceptre ornament."

This chain is apparently about the same size and length of those already described, and is of the greatest interest from the presence of these well known and distinctive figures of the "Sculptured Stones."

*Supposed Use of the Silver Chains of large Rings.*—Sir George Mackenzie, I have already stated, considered the large chain he described, which was found on the line of the Caledonian Canal, as having probably been used for some mediæval ecclesiastical purpose,—as for suspending a lamp or censer.

Dr Daniel Wilson, in his well-known "Prehistoric Annals of Scotland," refers to this same massive silver chain, which he, however, supposes may have been probably ring money. He mentions that it was "found in the year 1808, near Inverness, in the course of excavations for the Caledonian Canal. It now forms one of the valued treasures of the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries. It weighs a little more than ninety-two ounces, and each link is open and only bent together, so that it may, perhaps, be assumed with considerable probability that it was designed to be used



in barter, being in fact silver ring money." He says:—"An additional link, which was in an imperfect state, was destroyed by the original discoverers in an attempt to ascertain the nature of the metal." Dr Wilson also alludes to the silver chain found near Greenlaw, as described in the "New Statistical Account of Scotland," to which I have referred. It was found, he says, "within the area of an entrenched camp, about two miles above Greenlaw, Berwickshire, at the confluence of the Blackadder and Faungrass rivers."

All these silver chains, I may remark, are nearly of a similar length, having thus a smaller number of links in the large chain, and a greater number in those with smaller links. It is probable, also, that each of them had a single penannular ring attached to one extremity of the chain, of a larger, different, and more ornamental character than the other rings, and the opening through the side of this larger ring corresponds apparently to the width of the smaller rings, so that they can be easily passed through it; this naturally suggests the idea of its being probably the clasp or connecting link of the chain. You can thus readily loop up the smaller single ring in some cases, or the two smaller rings, of the opposite extremity of the chain, by passing them singly through this open part of the larger ring, and the chain is thus firmly looped into a circle, which is little more than sufficient to surround the neck of a man; when there are a terminal pair of smaller rings, and both are passed through, they fix the chain, so that it cannot be unfastened until you slip them off again one by one. When the chain is looped up in this way in a circle, and you have the open part of the large ring turned to the front, it displays distinctly the mysterious ornamental figures or symbols inscribed on it. We are, therefore, inclined to fancy this larger ornamented ring may really be the terminal clasp, and that it is probable these chains of large plain rings, in spite of their great weight, may have been actually worn round the neck; as was first suggested by Mr Joseph Anderson. It would form a massive and certainly a most distinctive chain decoration or badge of honour, and might probably be worn by some ancient official, either civil or ecclesiastical.

In Sir W. R. Wilde's "Catalogue of the Gold Antiquities in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy," 1862, it is stated at p. 91:—"Of gold chains, such as those with which Muineamhon decorated the Irish

chieftains in his day (see *Annals of the Four Masters*, under A.M. 3872), and now very rarely discovered, we have as yet no specimen in the collection; but Lord Londesborough in his magnificent work (*Miscellanea Graphica*), has figured one (†) found at New Grange, county Meath." On referring to the "Annals," under A.M. 3872, I find it stated that Muineamhon was the first who introduced *muinedha oir*, neck-chains of gold, to be worn on the necks of the kings and queens in Ireland. So that we have here a reference to the fact apparently of chains being worn round the neck in ancient times. Mr Joseph Anderson has called my attention to a reference to chains being also worn by British warrior chieftains at a very early period:—

"Thus Llywarch Hen (in the sixth century), describes Cynddylan, Prince of Powys, as—

"Cynddylan, eminent for sagacity of thought,  
*Cadwynnawg*<sup>1</sup> (wearing the chain), foremost in the host,  
 The protector of Tren, whilst he lived."—*Elegy on Cynddylan*.<sup>2</sup>

It is also stated, that in ancient times the British or Welsh princes wore golden chains as the badge of royalty, and it was not until the ninth century that a royal crown appears to have been first used in the reign of Rhodri Mawr:—

"These [Cadell, Anarawd, and Merfyn] were called the three diademed princes, because they, contrary to all that preceded them, wore frontlets about their *coronau* (crowns), like the kings of other countries; whereas, before that time, the kings and princes of the Welsh nation wore only golden chains.—*Brut y Tywysogion* (Myv. Arch. II. p. 481).<sup>2</sup>"

We have also, among others, the following references to the wearing, by the ancient nobility and warriors of Britain, of a golden collar, or chain as translated by the Rev. J. Williams, M.A. :—

"Four-and-twenty sons I have had,  
*Eurdorcharwg* (wearing the golden chain), leaders of armies;  
 Gwen was the best of them."—*Llywarch Hen*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cadwyn*, a chain.

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary of Terms of British Dress and Armour, by Rev. J. Williams, M.A.; "Archæologia Cambrensis," Supplement, 1850-51.

“Frequent allusion is made to the *torch* (torques or collar), by the bards of the sixth century; and even as late as the close of the twelfth century we meet with a lord of Iâl wearing the golden chain, and hence denominated *Llewelyn awrdorchog*.”<sup>1</sup>

The word *dorch, torch* (*torquis*), or torque, in these last quotations, is now believed by antiquaries to refer not so much to a chain as to a curved or circular collar (*torquis*—literally that which is turned, from *torqueo*), formed of a bent bar of metal, frequently twisted or otherwise ornamented, and tapering generally towards its extremities, which terminate in knobs, or in hooks by which it was fastened round the neck. Various examples of this ancient ornament have now been discovered; and we have a well-known instance of its use displayed on the ancient statue of the “Dying Gladiator.”

In the first quotation given here there is, however, a manifest reference to the wearing of another distinctive decoration or ornament—the *cadwyn* (*catena*), which undoubtedly means a chain, and was worn apparently as a badge of dignity or rank.

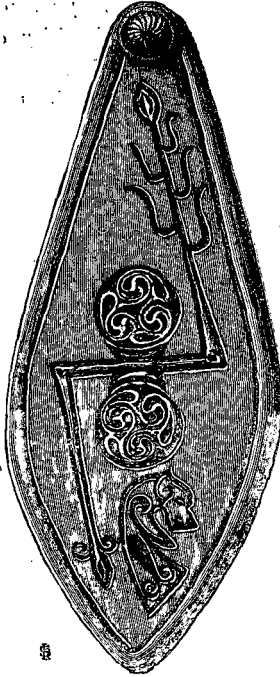
If a golden chain was thus the ancient badge of British royalty, is there not at least a strong presumption that a massive silver chain, such as those now described, displaying the peculiar figures or symbols of the ancient sculptured stones, may have been the badge of some other high State or Church official?

*Supposed Age of the Silver Chains of large Rings.*—The only other instance yet discovered of the presence of these peculiar “symbols” engraved on metal is the same compound figure of the “spectacle and double sceptre,” and underneath it there is a “Dog’s head,” another of the peculiar “symbols” of the “Sculptured Stones.” It occurs on the leaf-shaped silver plate found, with other silver ornaments, in the tumulus at Norrie’s Law, near Largo, Fifeshire. While the long pin found with them has also, on the back of its richly ornamented head, apparently the remains of the “spectacle,” or at least the “zigzag ornament.” There is however, curiously enough, on this same pin, apparently a small Greek

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary of Terms of British Dress and Armour, by Rev. J. Williams, M.A.; “Archæologia Cambrensis,” Supplement, 1850-51.

cross patée cut on the front of the rounded top, and below it we also find the peculiar *C*-like style of scroll ornament.

The peculiar character of the ornamental details and scroll work on all these silver articles, like those now described, formed by the bent

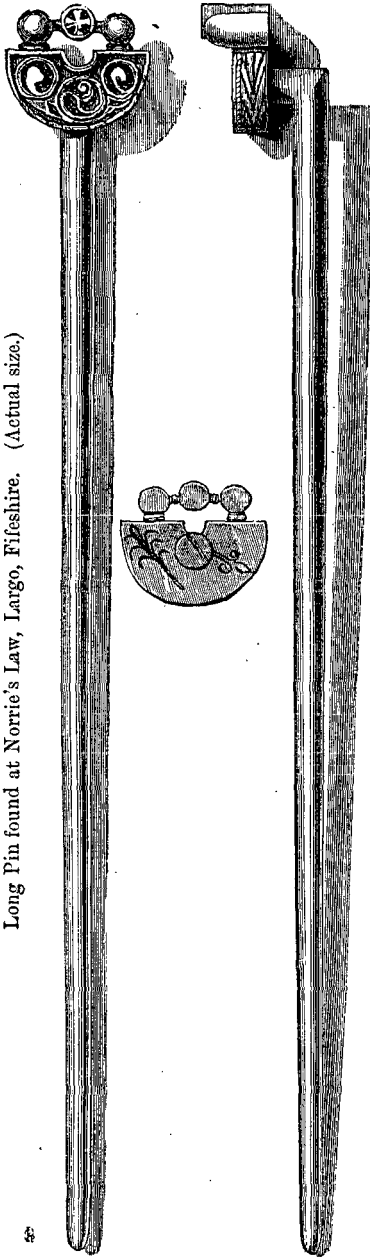


Silver Leaf-shaped Plate found at Norrie's Law, Largo, Fifeshire.  
(Actual size.)

loops, and spiral scrolls, or *C*-like curved lines, which are also found on many of the "Sculptured Stones" themselves (an example of which I give in the annexed woodcut); all apparently closely correspond to what has been described as the style of art of the "Late Celtic Period,"<sup>1</sup> by A. W.

<sup>1</sup> See Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., vol. vii. p. 334. Notice of a remarkable Bronze Ornament with Horns, &c. By J. A. Smith, M.D.

Long Pin found at Norrie's Law, Largo, Fifeshire. (Actual size.)

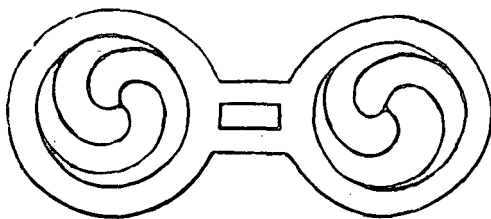


Franks, Esq., A.M., &c., of the British Museum, in the "Hore Fe-rales, or Studies in the Archæology of the Northern Nations," London, 1863. (See woodcuts.)

May we not, therefore, assume the probability of these last described chains, formed of a series of pairs of large rings, with their penannular clasps, ornamented in the same manner and style of art, also belonging to the later times of this Celtic period; which, however, probably continued in Scotland to a much later date than in England. The age it may be of the earlier monumental stones which display these same mysterious symbols, in some cases, however, also associated with the symbol of the cross itself, on the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland."

From the presence on these silver chains of the peculiar figures or "symbols" of the "sculptured stones," I examined carefully the numerous figures given of the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland" in the volumes of the Spalding Club by Dr John Stuart. Dr Stuart is inclined to believe that these peculiar figures represent personal ornaments, as brooches, &c. I had therefore hopes of perhaps discovering something sculptured on the stones themselves, resembling or representing these large

silver chains which were probably personal or official decorations or ornaments. My search has, however, as yet been a fruitless one. The "symbols" occur most abundantly on the more rude, less ornamented, and perhaps earlier sculptured stones; often nothing more than these peculiar figures themselves being cut on the otherwise unhewn blocks of granite, &c. No doubt they also occur on a few of the more ornamented stones, sculptured with crosses and various interlaced patterns of ornamental knotwork, probably of a later date; on none of them, however, could I find anything suggestive of a chain like those I have described, as displaying, engraved on their large terminal rings, the very symbols themselves.



Spectacle Ornament, with C-like Spiral Scrolls (like those on the Dumfriesshire silver chain, &c.), from the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland."

The fact of these peculiar figures being cut on the large chains seems to me rather to tell against the idea of their representing simply favourite personal ornaments, which we would scarcely expect to find figured on other ornaments themselves; though not against that of their being of a symbolic character of some kind, and possibly distinctive badges of office in Church or State.

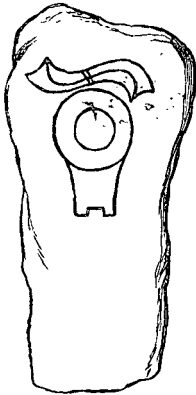
(Since this paper was read an example of a chain figured on a richly sculptured stone, not however of the most ancient character, has been recently observed on the sculptured stone at Killean, Knapdale, Argyleshire. This chain is attached to a collar fixed round the neck of an imaginary dragon-like quadruped, symbolical, doubtless, of some evil one, and its other extremity is carried up, keeping him a fast prisoner, to the adjoining outer corner of the stone. In this case, however, the chain is

of quite a different and more complex pattern, being formed of long links, open at each end, through which the adjoining links pass, the sides of the loop or link being welded or brought close together in the middle of each link.)

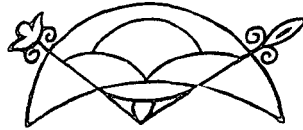
In conclusion, I may remark, that these peculiar "symbols" or figures, sculptured on the monumental stones, have been almost entirely found in the north-eastern parts of Scotland, to which districts they have accordingly been believed more peculiarly to belong. The same figures or "symbols" have, however, now been found engraved on silver ornaments; but curiously enough one of these instances occurred, with the relics of the Norrie's Law tumulus, at Largo, in Fifeshire, on the northern shores of the Firth of Forth, the most southern boundary of the supposed district to which these peculiar sculptured stones seem to belong. The very same "symbols"—the "Spectacle" crossed by the "zigzag ornament," with the same emblem of the "Dog's Head" associated with it—have been also more recently discovered cut with other emblematic-like figures (including among these, as I have already mentioned, the same double curved figure which occurs on the large terminal ring of the silver chain found at Aberdeenshire), on the living rock on the wall of the west "Doo-cot Cave," on the shore of the Firth of Forth, near East Wemyss, in the same county of Fife.<sup>1</sup> Then we have the same "spectacle and zigzag" engraved on an exactly similar silver chain, but in this instance found out of this north-eastern district altogether, away in Dumfriesshire, in the very south of Scotland. No doubt, there is nothing to prevent these symbols engraved on the precious metals being easily carried off to any part of the land. Still, we must remember that stones sculptured with some of the same class of figures have been found to the north, in Sutherlandshire, as for example at Kintradwell, the site of one of the ancient Pictish round towers or brochs, where there is a stone sculptured with a peculiar ornament, with a rounded head and forked extremities below, and above it an ornamented and more elaborately detailed variety of the double curved ornament, the simple form of which is cut on the large link of the Aberdeenshire silver chain. (See annexed figures.) Other

<sup>1</sup> See figures in Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot. vol. ix. p. 74, and "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," vol. ii. pl. 33, 34.

sculptures on stone of the same class, as the "crescent with the V-shaped sceptres" have been found also in the Orkney Islands, even in some instances used as building stones in some of the old churches, as at St Peter's Church, South Ronaldshay (now preserved in the Museum of the Society). This shows, at least, their more wide-spread character at one



Sculptured Stone found at Kintradwell,  
Sutherlandshire.



Symbol or Ornament, "Crescent and  
V-shaped Sceptres," on Sculptured  
Stones.

time, their great antiquity, and the apparent neglect of them at a later date, as when this old church in South Ronaldshay was built.

(There has also (since this paper was read) been more recently found in the ruins of a broch, at Burrian, North Ronaldshay, Orkney, one of the phalanges or bones of the foot of a small-sized ox, having cut on one side of it the "crescent and V-shaped sceptres," the ornament of the most frequent occurrence of them all, and on the other side of it a round-headed oblong figure, similar to that on the Kintradwell stone (figured above). The discovery of this bone among the debris of an ancient habitation in Orkney is of the greatest interest. A detailed account of the Broch of Burrian, by Dr Traill, will be published in the "Archæologia Scotica,"



monumental stones, which have borne them there down to our own day; where, it may be, their authors last held their ground, before the intrusion of other tribes, and, shall I say, of an alien church—the Culdee being at last absorbed in the Papal Church of Rome.

This view appears to me to be at least not inconsistent with what is known of the ancient British or Pictish inhabitants of Scotland.

Dr John Stuart considers these peculiar symbols on the “Sculptured Stones,” from the locality where they are now most abundantly found, viz., the north-eastern districts of Scotland, to have been the work of the Pictish people; and they do not apparently occur elsewhere, he says, as in Ireland, or Scandinavia, or even in Northumberland, Wales, or Brittany. He supposes they may mark their period of transition from heathenism to Christianity. “The Pictish people are spoken of,” Dr Stuart says, “by Roman authors in the third century, when the term Caledonii is given up, and we find them historically in possession of the country till they were overcome by the Scots in the ninth century.” There were two nations, the northern and the southern Picts, the former converted by Ninian, the latter by Columba in the latter part of the sixth century.<sup>1</sup>

In Mr Joseph Anderson’s important memoir on the “Brochs of Yarhouse and others,” he refers to the Picts having occupied the whole territory in which remains of brochs have been found, and states that “From their first appearance in the Annals, they were in possession of the Orkneys. Between the years A.D. 442 and 476 they had possession of the whole territory from Caithness to the Forth, and that after the departure of the Romans they occupied the territory south of the wall of Antoninus, there seems to be no reasonable doubt.” “Even throughout the Anglie ascendancy, the population of this portion of the country continued to be largely Pictish.”<sup>2</sup>

The very existence, therefore, of any of these peculiar sculptured symbols in parts of Scotland at a distance from the north-eastern districts, where they are now most frequently found, and where we know the Picts last

<sup>1</sup> Dr Stuart on the “Sculptured Stones of Scotland,” Brit. Assoc. Report, Aberdeen, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. v. p. 131, Mr Joseph Anderson on the “Brochs of Yarhouse,” &c.

held possession of the country; seems to me to suggest the probability not only of their being the work of the same people, but also of their very ancient character. As we find these outlying sculptures generally consist of simply the peculiar symbols themselves, they had probably been sculptured at the time these more distant parts of the country were still in the possession of the Pictish people, and before their borders were invaded and contracted by Scot, and Norseman, and Saxon, and their dominion gradually confined to the more northern and eastern districts of Scotland; until it was at last brought to a close by the overmastering Scots in the ninth century.

The whole subject of the history and true meaning of these symbols seems, however, still to invite the further exploration of the antiquary, and waits, it may be, for fuller explanation in the time to come.

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## DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

### I.—PLATE XII.

I. Silver Chain or Girdle, with Circular Plate, Rings, and Pendant, the property of Thomas Simson of Blainslie, Esq., Berwickshire (51 inches in total length).

1. Die stamps on back of Circular Plate.

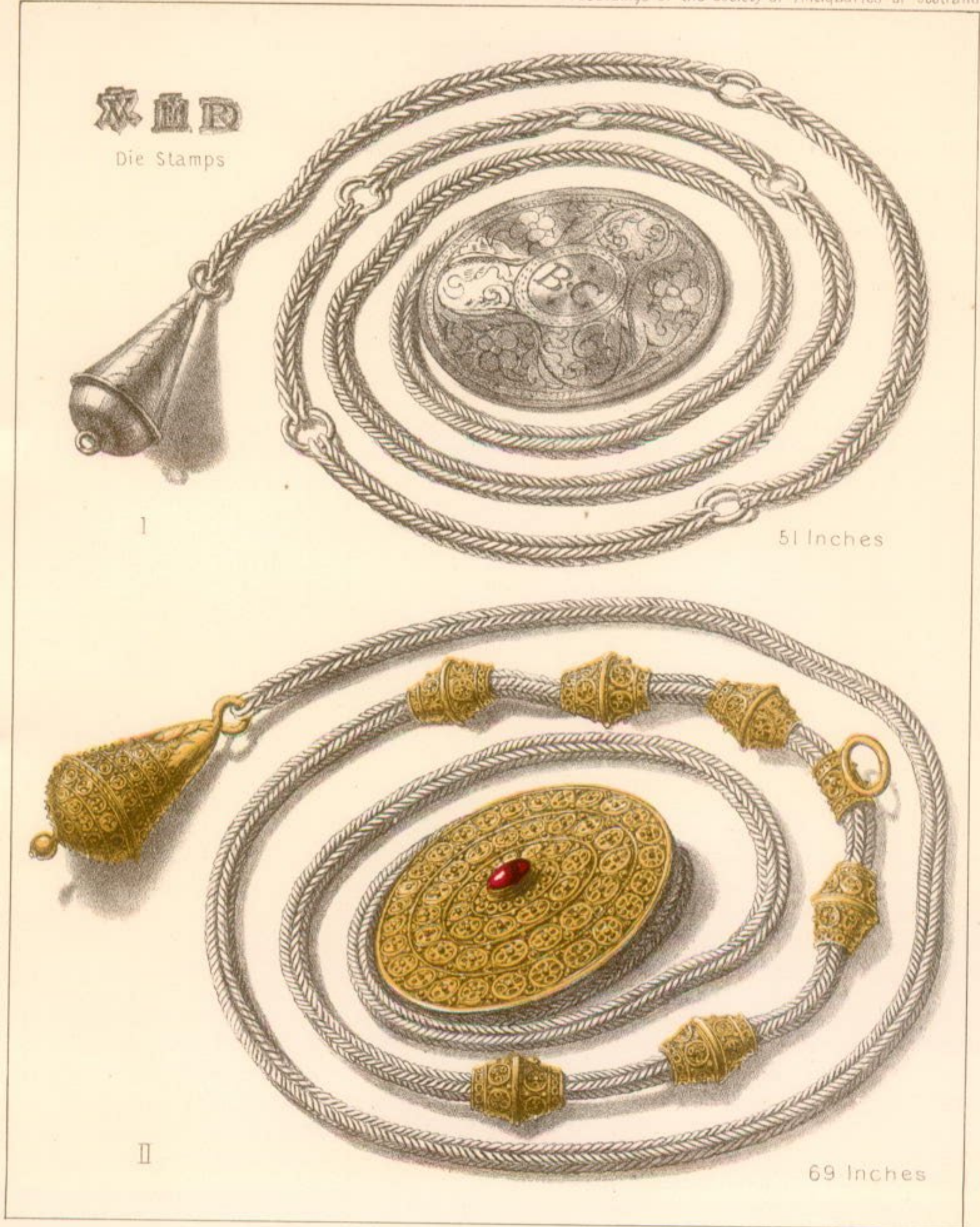
I. Silver Chain or Girdle, with gilt Circular Plate, Slides and Pendant, the property of the University of Aberdeen (65 inches in total length).

### II.—PLATE XIII.

Silver gilt Ornaments of Chain of the University of Aberdeen (actual size):—

1. Circular Plate, with flagree ornaments, and garnet in centre.
2. Circular Plate in profile, showing silver hook on back, and attachment of chain.
3. Two Die Stamps struck on back of silver plate.
4. Barrel-shaped Ornament, or slide, on chain (one of six).
5. Cylindrical Ornament, or slide, on chain, with ring attached to it.
6. Terminal Pendant, showing the chain attached to its upper part.





Die Stamps

Die Stamps

I

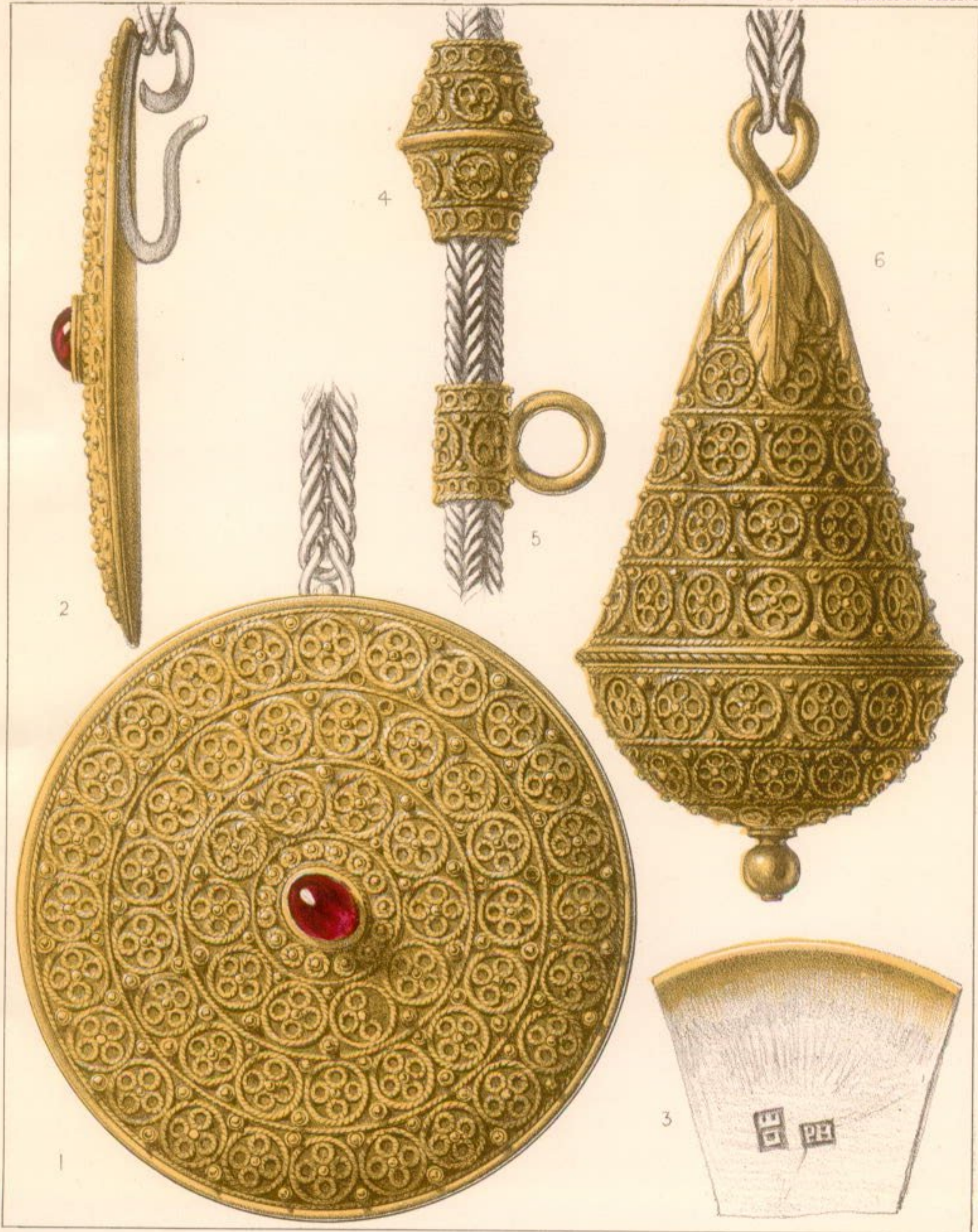
51 Inches

II

69 Inches

- I. Silver Chain,—the property of Thomas Simson of Blainslie Esq.  
II. Silver Chain with Gilt Ornaments the property of the University of Aberdeen





Silver Gilt Ornaments of Chain, the property of the University of Aberdeen.  
(Actual size.)