



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

ANCIENT SEALS FOUND AT CARRICKFERGUS.

The seals, of which the above are engravings, have been found at different times, at Carrickfergus, by Mr. James Stannus, the present harbour-master of that ancient borough. The first (Fig. 1) was discovered by him in cleaning out a well in the keep of Carrickfergus Castle in June, 1843, which had been for a long period filled with rubbish. The well was sunk in the living rock, and, in a chink at the bottom of it, the seal was discovered. It is of yellow brass, oval in shape, and well engraved. It is in a state of perfect preservation, and had probably lain in its resting-place for centuries. It is not unlikely that it may have been brought over from Scotland by some of the monks who accompanied Edward Bruce to this country in 1315, when he besieged and took Carrickfergus Castle. St. Margaret being a Scottish saint, would strengthen this supposition. She is represented on the seal at full length, robed, and standing with her feet on a dragon, holding a cross in her right hand, the end of which is inserted in the dragon's mouth. Round the seal is engraved the legend, "MARGARETHA, ORA PRO NO[BIS]." All but the three last letters of this inscription are perfectly legible.*

A few words respecting the history of this saint may not be unacceptable to our readers. There are six saints of the name in the Roman calendar. (See Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.)^a The most

* Since the foregoing was set in type, the seal has been carefully cleaned and examined, and the indistinct letters now prove to be AB. (joined) RA. Our learned and ingenious friend ERIGENA, to whom we submitted the seal for inspection, has suggested what we consider the correct reading, ORA PRO NO[BIS]. AB[BATISSA] R[EGINA] MARGARETHA. The asterisk before ORA indicates clearly that the inscription commences there. The *Crown* represented on the figure of the saint corroborates the idea that Queen Margaret of Scotland is intended.

^a Five of them are as follows:—

Day.	Born.	Died.	
June 29	1243	1271	Princess of Hungary.
Feb. 22	1247	1297	Cortona.
June 10	1046	1093	Queen of Scotland.
July 20	—	—	Antioch.
Sept. 2	—	cir. 1230	Louvain.

celebrated is Margaret, the queen of Scotland, and wife of Malcolm. She is commemorated on June 10. There is also an eastern saint of this name, commemorated on July 20th. Several metrical legends of St. Margaret are extant; one is in the Vernon MSS. at Oxford, beginning—

“ Sainte Margurete was an holi maid and good.”

There is a representation of this virgin saint in stained glass, in the north aisle of Winchester Cathedral. She is there represented treading on a blue dragon, spotted yellow, under her feet. There is also a representation of her, in the same attitude, on the font, at Stoke Golding, Leicestershire. A life of the Scottish St. Margaret was published at Douay, in 1660, and reprinted in Paris in 1661, under the title of “The Idea of a perfect Princesse in the Life of S. Margaret, Queen of Scotland; with Elogiums on her children, David, King of Scotland, and Mathilda, Queen of England; also a Postscript clearly proving Charles II.’s right and title to the Crown of England.” It is a small 8vo, and very rare. She and her husband, King Malcolm, were interred in the nave of the church of Dunfermline; and in 1250, on the finishing of the Eastern Church, their bodies were lifted and translated, by order of Alexander III., to the choir above the Lady Chapel, where their position is still marked by large blue plinth stones, with eight circular impressions of pillars for supporting the canopy. St. Margaret was canonised by order of Pope Innocent IV., in 1251.

The following extract from “*The Idea of a perfect Princesse*,” mentioned above, will show in what veneration she was held in former days, when relics of saints received superstitious reverence:—

“The coffre, wherein was the head and hair of St. Margaret, was, in the year 1597, delivered into the hands of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, then Missioners in Scotland, who, seeing it was in danger to be lost, or prophaned, by the seditious Hereticks, transported it to Antwerp. The Lord John Malderus, bishop of that city, that he might know the truth of this relick, examined very diligently, and upon oath, the Fathers of the Society, and gave an authentick attestation, under the seal of his office, dated the fifth of September, 1620.” This relic was afterwards preserved in the Chapel of the Scotch College, at Douay.^b Another relic of St. Margaret is said to exist in the Escorial, in Spain.—

The other seal (Fig. 2) had a large wooden handle, and was found floating among the rocks at the foot of Carrickfergus Castle. This was probably a seal of the Custom-House, at the time when Carrickfergus was a port of considerable trade. In the centre is a three-masted ship, with her sails furled; above the main-mast is the Irish harp, on either side of which is an anchor; beneath is a serpent, with its head erect; above a leopard or lion’s head, with the mane streaming down on either side; around the seal are inscribed the words, “**PORT CARIKFERGVS.**” From this manner of spelling the name of the town, I infer that the seal is about two hundred years old.

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^b For several of the above particulars, I am indebted to *Notes and Queries*, 2nd series, vol. iv.