County Louth Archaeological and History Society

County Louth Election Medal, 1755

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County Louth Election Medal, 1755.

(See Illustration.)

ALMOST one hundred and fifty years ago, an Election was fought for the representation of the County Louth in the Irish House of Commons. Unfortunately there was no local press in existence at that period to place on record for the benefit of posterity, the eloquent speeches and lavish promises so often uttered by candidates and their friends in the days before the ballot-box. *

The only memento we have to remind us of what was evidently a contest of absorbing interest at the time, is a silver medal—the earliest medal in connection with a County Louth event of which I have any record. Medals relating to elections are uncommon, unlike election literature in general of old and recent times. Addison, in his “Dialogues upon the usefulness of Ancient Medals” observes: “We ought to look on medals as so many monuments consigned over to posterity, that may possibly last when all other memorials of the same age are worn out or lost.”

This medal was struck by the Louth Independent Club to commemorate the return, as members of parliament, of Thomas Tipping and the Right Hon. William Henry Fortescue (afterwards Lord Clermont) in opposition to Mr. Bellingham. It is now very rare.

On the obverse:—A rock rises from the sea, on which Hibernia stands, holding a harp—the four winds blow on the surface of the rock. Inscription: “Firm to our country as the rock in the sea.”

Reverse:—By our strict union in Louth, we disappointed the hopes of our enemies, on the 1 of Novem 1755 in the 29 year of the reign of K. Geo. the II. whom God long preserve. Above is a heart with two hands clasped together, and around is the inscription:—“May the lovers of liberty never lose it.”

The illustration shows the medal exact size: 45 millim. My specimen is suspended by a dark green ribbon, two inches wide, possibly to be worn as a club badge.

Dr. William Frazer, who describes this medal in his papers on “The

* The first Newspaper published in the County Louth was the “Drogheda Newsletter,” a bi-weekly paper, price 4d., C. W. Evans, Drogheda, 1800 to 1812. The first Dundalk newspaper was the “Louth Free Press,” which appeared in March, 1829, edited by Wm. Brett, author of “Reminiscences of Louth.”

LOUTH ELECTION MEDAL, 1755.

To face page 50.

Medals and Medallists of Ireland" in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (p. 313, vol. VIII. fourth series) with good reason describes it as resembling the work of Thomas Pingo, who possibly struck it. Dr. Frazer also states one in lead appeared for sale in a Catalogue some years ago.

This medal is also described and illustrated (p. 678), in "Medallic Illustrations of British History." Compiled by Edward Hawkins—Edited by Augustus W. Franks and Herbert Grüber, London, 1885. Two vols.

It would be very interesting to know more about this old county Independent Club—if there are any minute books or other relics of it in existence?

JAMES M'CARTE, M.R.S.A.I.

[Mr Garstin, F.S.A., has memoranda about this Medal and the election it commemorates. He exhibited and described it to the Members of the Royal Society of Antiquarians of Ireland last year.]

Notes and Queries.

IN the "Newry Magazine" (vol. I. page 293) published in the early years of the last century there is a description of a stone said to be in the front of an old house at Castletown, belonging to Charles Eastwood, Esq. The writer describes it as having been a gravestone dedicated to the memory of John Bellew, knight, and Margaret Plunkett, his wife, who were father and mother to Robert Bellew, A.D. 1526.

The writer of the article, John Bell, gives an illustration, drawn by himself, engraved by Brocas (No. 17 on plate) with his reading of the Latin inscription, the letters of which were cut in relief in 'German' characters:—

"Johannis Bellew Militis
et Margareta Plun-
ket uxoris ejus qui
fuere pater et Mater Roberti
Bellew memorie dedicatione anno 1526."

I would like to know if this stone is still preserved, or its present location if at Castletown? Perhaps some readers of these notes will oblige with the desired information as it is very desirable to have all such stones carefully noted, and where possible photographs or rubbings taken from them.

By the way, this John Bell was a contributor of many articles (and some illustrations) to the "Newry Magazine," many of them dated from Dundalk, and describing local scenes and places; the subterranean chambers in the Roden Demesne, the Cromlech on Killen Hill, which was *then* evidently little changed since Wright described it. But some years after it fell a prey to the 'improving' farmer and was totally destroyed, to the great loss and regret of antiquaries.

William Shaw Mason, author of a "Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland" (3 vols., Dublin, 1814-15) left accounts of the parishes of Dundalk and Termonfeckin which, I believe, have never been printed, and are now in the Record Office, Dublin.

J. M'CARTE, Liverpool.

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