

## CHAPTER XII.

### ANTIQUITIES, &c.

1. The known antiquities of our village are not many. There is one, however, of especial interest and value, now in the possession of the Rev. R. Hankinson, rector of Walpole St. Andrew. It is a silver Roman ampulla, or bottle-shaped vessel, in good condition, containing seven small silver coins or tokens, of the reigns of the Emperors Valentinian (who held a military command in Britain A.D., 360,) and Arcadius and Honorius (who divided the Roman Empire between them A.D. 395, Britain with Gaul falling to the latter). It is therefore about fourteen centuries and a half old at least. Its weight is 8 oz. and its height 8 inches. It was found behind the plough by a labourer at Fincham, in September, 1801, and taken to Lynn, and sold as old metal to a silversmith, of whom Mr. Hankinson bought it. This interesting relic would worthily occupy a conspicuous place in any museum.

A valuable gold coin was discovered at the roots of one of the large elm trees blown down at the rectory by the very severe gale of February 28th, 1860, which is worthy of especial notice. It has been compared with those of its class in the British Museum, and pronounced to be of the time of Julius Cæsar, and probably coined in France. Its weight is nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. The obverse side is blank. A skeleton-like figure of a horse occupies the reverse. It remains in my own possession.

Many ancient copper coins and tokens, of various



reigns, from the times of the Roman Emperors downwards, have been found in the parish, but I have not leisure sufficient to enquire into their history.

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## 2. FINCHAM SWAN MARKS.

In days of yore our forefathers were accustomed to serve up at their feasts various birds, which at the present day do not occur in our bills of goodly fare. However unpalatable we should probably esteem them now, the Crane, the Heron, the Peacock, and the Swan, anciently graced the tables of the great. At the feast made on the inthronization of George Nevil, Archbishop of York and Chancellor of England, in the sixth year of King Edward IV., no less than 400 swans are numbered among the provisions for the same. On such special occasions the Peacock, and also the Swan, Crane, and other large birds, were served in all their plumage.

In the account of the provisions expended at the installation of Ralph Bourne, Abbot of Canterbury, which took place in the second year of King Edward II, A.D. 1309, are set down 24 Swans, price £7, or 6s 10d each. This is on the authority of Warner's "Antiquitates Culinariæ," professing to quote "Thorn;" it must, however, be observed that Dugdale, also quoting the "Chronicle of William "Thorne," has it "De Cignis xxxiiij. precium. vij<sup>li</sup>, prec. unius "iiij<sup>s</sup>. i<sup>d</sup>. q. q." which is probably the correct account.

The ordinances and laws regarding swans were very strict, and there were regular sessions of swans ; and actions in the case of any trespass were to be brought "afore the King's "Justices of his sessions of swans, upon pain to forfeit to the "King's Grace 13s 4d." For



stealing or taking of swan's eggs, the punishment (in 11th Henry VII) was imprisonment for a year and a day, with a fine at the King's will. Cowel states that "it was a custom in "ancient time that he who stole a swan in an open and "common river, lawfully marked, the same swan, (if it may "be), or another swan, shall be hanged in a house by the "beak, and he which stole it, in recompense thereof, "compelled to give the owner as much corn as may cover all "the swan."

Swans being birds of stray and kept on open rivers, it was especially necessary that the several owners should each have his peculiar mark ; these marks were made on the upper mandible of the beak, and in some instances on the leg, and were registered in a roll or book by the King's swan-herd.

There is in the possession of A. H. Swatman, Esq., a MS. entitled "The laws, orders, and customs for swans, taken "forth of A Booke which ye Lord Buckhurst deliver'd to "Edward Clarke of Lyncoln's Inn to revise : Anno "Elizabethæ<sup>1</sup> 26," (1584) ; and it appears, from the names entered in the said book, that it appertained to the district watered by the rivers Nar, Ouse,<sup>2</sup> Nene, Wissey, &c. From it the marks on the accompanying plate, connected with the name of Fincham, are derived.

No. 1. This would appear to be the swan mark of Edward Fincham, son and heir of Robert

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<sup>1</sup> This date, 26th Elizabeth, refers, it seems, to the laws, &c., of the Lord Buckhurst's book. The roll itself, although it contains names of persons who flourished at that time, and which might be continued on the roll, has also other names which belong to the succeeding reign. Consequently its date would not be earlier than James, or even Charles I.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Spelman writes of the Ouse what Ovid had said "de Pergusâ lacu," that the Cäyster itself was not more famous for the Songs of swans along its gently flowing waters :-

"non illo plura Cäyster  
"Carmina cygnorum labentibus audit in undis."

Ovid, Met. v.

Fincham, of Outwell. He lived A.D. 1566-1631.

- No. 2. This has no Christian name affixed. The game with this mark were probably, (the note being written in a later hand), sold to one of the Warner family.
- No. 3. To what Robert Fincham this belonged is uncertain. It could scarcely be the father of Edward, of Outwell. It might have been Robert, his second son, which would accord with the passing of the ownership to John Thurston, who married Catherine, daughter of John Fincham, of the younger branch of the Outwell family, circa 1624.
- No. 4. This would seem to be the mark of John, Fincham, son of John Fincham and Christian Whale, and who was distinguished as John *junior*, of Outwell, who was born in 1611.
- No. 5. This belonged to the same John.

Those who remember the old coaching days, before mighty steam caused a complete revolution in travelling, will call to mind the sign of the "Swan with two Necks," in Lad Lane, -- a curious bird doubtless, but owing its birth simply to the change of a letter. It would appear that the Royal game, the Kings swans, were marked on the beak with two nicks or gaps, and so called swans with two *nicks*, which in process of time was corrupted into the swan with two *necks*. Another mistake has arisen : A special day was fixed when the swanherds were to meet the King's swanherd, for taking up cygnets for marking. This ceremony was called the swan *upping*, which has been transformed into swan *hopping*.