

NOTES ON PONTIFICAL BULLÆ, WITH REFERENCE TO THAT RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN CHETWODE CHURCHYARD.

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THE discovery of a Bulla, the leaden seal, so to speak, attesting the validity of one of those once formidable mandates, the Bulls of the Popes of Rome, must always afford considerable interest and speculation. These seals, for so they are to all intents and purposes, are not unfrequently met with in England, at least prior to the time of the passing of the famous law *De Præmunire*, since when the Papal power has "neither tythed nor tolled" in England without permission. They differ from ordinary pendant seals only in their material, but we have abundant evidence of the use of attesting leaden pendants by others besides the Roman Pontiffs.

When we consider the numberless occasions in which the freedom of the Church of England was curbed by an alien power, necessitating a constant issue of Papal "Bulls" (so called, as is so well known, from their attached "bulla"), it is not surprising that so many have been met with. Their weight, great in proportion to the slender silken cords of the older documents, parchment ligatures being a sign of later date, readily caused separation to result, and they became detached from the documents.

All that have come under my inspection have been of lead, roughly circular, fully one-and-a-half inches in diameter, and of uniform type. The obverse bears the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul confronting each other with a small Latin cross on a stem between them, the

whole of very rude execution and bearing little trace of Italian art. The reverse contains the name of the reigning pontiff, by whom the bull was issued. All these usual indications appear on the example from Chetwode figured on the accompanying plate. The faces of Peter and Paul are of rather worse execution than on other examples. St. Paul occupies the dexter, and St. Peter the sinister side, while above, to render the matter very clear, is the inscription SPA SPE.

The reverse has the inscription in letters of the fourteenth century as indicated on the plate, showing that it was issued by Pope Innocent VI., Pope at Avignon. He was pontiff 1352 until 1362, in which year he died. The abbreviation P.P., before the Latin numerals VI., is for "Papa," which appears in full on many specimens.

It has been said that these Bullæ were formed by striking two plates of lead which were thus firmly welded together, the ligatures to attach it to the deed, which it was required to verify being first placed between. The impressions on all the examples which have come under my notice are certainly "struck," and not cast. Should this be correct, it is but right to say, that they exhibit, like the example under notice, no evidence of their double thickness.

There is an engraving in the second volume of the Journal of the British Archæological Association, p. 97, which shows the instrument for striking "bullæ." It has the name of Pius II. The instrument is in form of a pair of shears, seven inches long, with the obverse and reverse at the extremities. It is equally adapted for striking in one thickness or in two.

The number of Papal Bulls being so great, there is more than a suspicion that many of these were forgeries of contemporary date. Indeed, it is supposed, but on what ground it is not apparent, that the instrument referred to was for fabricating seals for equally forged deeds.

A similar Bulla of Pope Innocent VI. was discovered in 1867 beneath the foundations of the demolished church of St. Benet's, Gracechurch Street; and another, supposed to have been found in the Thames, was exhibited to the Association in 1859.

Bullæ were extensively used by the ancient Romans, who derived them probably from the Etruscans, but the

BULLA OF POPE INNOCENT VI.
FOUND ON THE SITE OF CHETWODE PRIORY.



name was applied in several senses for various articles of ball or boss-like form.

The children of patricians wore bullæ of gold suspended by a cord around their necks, while those of freedmen had to be content with bullæ of leather. An interesting review of these articles has been published by my friend, Mr. Syer Cuming, F.S.A. (Scot.), in the journal already alluded to, vol. 1857, p. 321.

A quotation has not long since been made by Mr. C. H. Coote, F.S.A., from the "Acts of the Passion of Maximilian," where it is stated that recruits to the imperial army were initiated into their new profession by the reception of a signaculum of lead which every soldier wore around his neck, and which was the emblem of his service. This statement is of considerable interest to British archæologists, for it enables us to assign a use for the little-known bullæ of lead which have been found in rare numbers on the site of some ancient Roman stations.

Dr. Hübner has vainly sought for them on the continent. Mr. Roach Smith, F.S.A., figures several in his *Coll. Antiq.*, vol. iii., p. 197, and vol. vi., p. 117, etc., and others from Gurnard's Bay, Isle of Wight, are in the *Journal*, vol. xxvi., p. 358.

The positions of their discovery favour the supposition of their military use. No example has been found at any great commercial centre, but they have been met with, so far, mainly at military stations, and recently by Mr. R. Blair at the newly-discovered station at the Lawes, South Shields, one of the supporting stations of the great Roman Wall.

Prior to the knowledge of the quotation given, Mr. Roach Smith had come to the conclusion that "these seals were attached to some kind of property belonging to military bodies."

It may be a subject of much local interest to consider what was the purport of the bull to which the seal found at Chetwode was attached. The date assigned with so much certainty, within the short period of ten years, may afford some aid towards this.