

ON A BRONZE STRIGIL FOUND AT COVEHITHE.

BY REV. JOHN JAMES RAVEN, D.D., F.S.A.,

Vicar of Fressingfield with Withersdale,  
and Honorary Canon of Norwich Cathedral.

About twenty years ago, as I am informed by the Rev. Philip S. Gooch, rector of Benacre, a labourer at Covehithe brought him the little implement of the bath-room and the gladiator's gymnasium, which is here engraved.



The centuriation of the district, traces of which still seem visible in the regular and symmetrical fields and roads of that part of the parish wherein this *strigil* was found, that is to say, near the ruins of the grand old church of Northales or Covehithe, has been recently treated of by Mr. J. E. Grubbe in the records of our Society. The discovery ought not to remain without record, in connection

with Mr. Grubbe's paper; and the history and usages of the word may here appropriately receive a brief notice.

The Latin *Strigil* has its counterpart in the Greek *στλεγγίς*, both referable doubtless to a common root, which, like many others belonging to familiar matters, appears to exist in Semitic language, as well as in that great group of tongues now designated by the name Aryan. The spheroid, great or small, assumed by bodies under the law of gravitation, seems to be the base of a great number of cognate ideas, framing themselves into words of the radical letters *s t r*, or *s t l*. The grammarian Festus, who represents the views of the great Augustan etymologist Verrius Flaccus, and of the older M. Porcius Cato, in treating of the word *stiricidium* (a fall of snow flakes), names *stillicidium* (the fall of drops frozen by the cold), as another form. For *Stiria*, he adds, is the root, and *stilla* the diminutive. Our *Strigil*, then, distilling the precious drops of *sudor* from the body of some brawny legionary, goes in company with *στλεγγίς*, *στρεγγίς*, *στελγίς*, *στελεγγίς*, of the same significance, to join *stella*, *astrum*, our old friend *Shethar-boznai* (shining star) who withstood Ezra (Ezra v. 3) and another brilliant luminary, long extinct, whose name only remains in Esther i. 14. And curiously enough, just as we get *stellio*, the spotted lizard, as a derivative from *stella*, so the eruption of hæmorrhoids on the men of Ashdod (1 Sam. v. 9) is described by a verb of the same root.

To come to the uses of the word *στλεγγίς*. The first thing we find is a constant and humble companion of the flesh-scraper, the oil-bottle, *λήκυθος*. Whatever may be the date of the quasi-Platonic dialogue called the *Hippias Minor*, it represents with tolerable fidelity the Athenian talk of the 5th century before the Christian era. Here we have Socrates congratulating Hippias on his various accomplishments as displayed in his belongings—a signet-ring of his own engraving and another seal, and a flesh-scraper and an oil-bottle (*καὶ στλεγγίδα καὶ λήκυθον*), with shoes and garments, all his own handiwork. A proverbial adage, *οὐδ' ἐστὶν αὐτῷ στλεγγίς οὐδὲ λήκυθος*, equivalent to saying

that a man has not a pot or pan of his own, and a passage in which the flesh-scraper is coupled with the σφάϊρα (a padded ball used by boxers), are quoted from the fragments of Aristophanes, a contemporary of Socrates. That great philosopher's pupil Xenophon mentions στλεγγίδες made of gold, and given as prizes by Cyrus when he held athletic sports for his army at Peltæ, τὰ δὲ ἄθλα ἦσαν στλεγγίδες χρυσαῖ. It is true that the word had other significations, but they seem to have arisen out of the flesh-scraper. Some sort of female head-piece undoubtedly was called by this name,\* as well as a pipe for straining wine,† but that Cyrus's prizes were flesh-scrapers seems reasonable enough. The articles were in common use. They would be most serviceable to a soldier. Though gold seems too precious a metal for such mean purposes, it must be remembered that the productiveness of Thrace in that respect, and the falling off of silver from Laurium had brought gold to be then only ten times the value of silver. † Another passage throws light on this use of στλεγγίς. In the *Knights* of Aristophanes, the Chorus of Athenian gentlemen expresses a hope that when peace comes no one will grudge their possession of hair brush, and being ἀπεστλεγγισμένοι.

This word the grammarian Herodian, a contemporary of the Emperor M. Aurelius, explains by being cleansed from ointment (τὸ ἄνευ ἀλείμματος λούσασθαι), giving ξύστρα as an equivalent for στλεγγίς, with Archippus the comic poet as authority for it. Phrynichus, another of the great school of second-century grammarians, who is always most particular in keeping his disciples to the best forms of expression, like the old lady of Aberdeen, who deplored the vulgarity of one of her acquaintance in saying *snib* the door, instead of *sneck* the door, lays it down that στλεγγίς is more genteel.

Ξύστραν μὴ λέγε, ἀλλὰ στλεγγίδα.

The objectionable term may have been as ancient as the other, as its derivation would suggest, but inadmissible in

\* Suidas in στλεγγίς. † Aristoph. *Thesm.*, 556.

‡ Blakesley on Herodotus III., 96.

polite discourse, as savouring of low life. On the whole, I venture to plead before the learned editor of Phrynichus, Dr. Rutherford, Head-Master of Westminster School, for the admission of *στλεγγίς* as signifying a flesh-scrapers among Attic words.

No such doubt hangs over the Latin word *Strigil*, which is used in the flesh-scrapers sense from Plautus to Priscian. The grammarians derive it from *stringo*, which seems to lead up to the origin already pointed out.

It is enough to quote one passage, which is clearly on the same lines as the flesh-scrapers and oil-bottle companionship. Cicero (*de Finibus* iv., 12), speaking of trifles, ridicules the Stoics for saying that if a *strigil* or an *ampulla* were added to a virtuous life, a wise man would prefer a life with the addition of these things to a life without them, and yet would be none the happier.

Another strigil of a different type has been found at Great Thurlow, and has been kindly lent to me by the owner, Mr. W. Wootten of that parish, through the Rev. Hugh Fleming. It is nicely lacquered, and is constructed, as usual, with an open handle, for the purpose of suspension, like that found by Gage in the Bartlow Hills, and figured in *Archæologia*, xxvi., 300.

This Thurlow strigil seems to have been used laterally, whereas our present specimen would be applied in a plane perpendicular to the surface of the flesh, the apex being first in contact, and thus by a gradual depression of the other end there would be a steady flow through the tube, the drops finding their resting place on the bath-room floor. It is a pleasing subject for contemplation:



## ANNUAL EXCURSION

## CLARE, POSLINGFORD, CAVENDISH.

The Annual Excursion took place on Thursday, June 22nd, 1893. A pleasant and profitable day was spent in the old churches and manor houses round about Clare, a delightful country rich in scenery, and in objects of antiquarian interest. The party, graced by the presence of a considerable number of ladies, left Ipswich, Bury S. Edmund's, Saffron Walden, and other places in East and West Suffolk, in the morning, in time to meet at Clare Railway Station shortly after twelve o'clock. Upon the arrival of the train the archæologists and their friends were conducted along the train line as being the nearest cut to the Priory.

## CLARE PRIORY

Was the first place named on the day's programme. John Rand, Esq., kindly threw open the Priory to the members, who assembled on the lawn in front of the old historical building, when the Rev. Henry Jarvis, M.A., gave a description of the Priory, being a resumé of his paper formerly read before the Society, and printed in the Proceedings (Vol. VI., p. 73). Though the ruins have been frequently explored and described, no plan of Clare Priory had existed until Mr. A. A. G. Colpoys, A.R.I.B.A., of Hastings, carefully examined and measured the remains of the ruins. Our thanks are due to him for an excellent ground plan.

Mr. Jarvis at the conclusion of his address conducted the party through the Priory and its grounds, and at various points delivered a series of lecturettes to groups of interested listeners. The party then left the Priory grounds for Clare Church.

On the way thither attention was directed to heraldic carvings over the Post Office and Swan Inn. Davy thus describes the latter (19, 102. I.) "On the front of the Swan public house is a carving of some antiquity. A white swan ducally gorged and chained to a tree, which is before it, behind it a vine. On the dexter side France and England, quarterly, with a label of three points, sinister side Mortimer, quarterly 1 and 4 Mortimer, 2 and 3 Burgh, or. a cross gu. also a crescent surmounted by a star:—two suns, &c."

Both these specimens of quaint carving received a good deal of notice. A remarkable gabled house, with richly pargeted walls, moulded tie beams and open fire-place, over-looking the churchyard, next claimed attention. The Vicar, the Rev. R. Sorsbie, being unwell, the Rev. J. Harrison, the Curate, received the party at the Church, saying, "I am desired by my rector to give you a hearty welcome to the Church of Clare, Royal in its associations with the past, Royal in its beauty and nobility." When the members were seated the Honorary Secretary read the following paper:—



SWAN INN, CLARE.



PARGETED HOUSE, CLARE.