ON A BRONZE STRIGIL FOUND AT COVEHITHE.


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 ἀπλεγμός, 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 *stillα* the diminutive. Our *Strigil*, then, distilling the precious drops of sudor from the body of some brawny legionary, goes in company with *σταλεγμός*, *στρεγμός*, *στελής*, *στελεγμός*, 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 1. 14. And curiously enough, just as we get *stellio*, the spotted lizard, as a derivative from *stella*, so the eruption of haemorrhoids 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 *σταλεγμός*. 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 σταλερμίδα καὶ λήκυθον*), with shoes and garments, all his own handiwork. A proverbial adage, οὐδέστιν αὐτῷ σταλερμῖς 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 σφαίρα (a
padded ball used by boxers), are quoted from the fragments
of Aristophanes, a contemporary of Socrates. That great
philosopher's pupil Xenophon mentions σπλέγμιδες made of
gold, and given as prizes by Cyrus when he held athletic
sports for his army at Peltae, τὰ ὑδά ἦσαν σπλέγμιδες χρυσάι. 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 σπλέγμις. 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 ἀπεστλέγμισμενοι.

This word the grammarian Herodian, a contemporary
of the Emperor M. Aurelius, explains by being cleansed
from ointment (τὸ ἄνεμ ἱεριμάτως λούσασθαι), giving ἐκστρα as an
equivalent for στλέγμις, 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
στλέγμις is more genteel.

Ξύστραν μη λέγε, ἄλλα στλέγμιδα.

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

* Suidas in σπλέγμις. † 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 ςτερημις as signifying a flesh-scraper among Attic words.

No such doubt hangs over the Latin word Strigil, which is used in the flesh-scraper 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-scraper 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 Archaeologia, 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.
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 archaeologists 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 résumé 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-lying 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.