

RENDHAM. UNIQUE ROMAN FIND.

BY CHARLES GANZ.

In *The Athenæum's* report of a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries on December 3rd, 1908, mention was made of a life-sized bronze head exhibited by Sir L. Alma Tadema, R.A., who said that the bronze found in the Spring of 1907 in the river Alde in Suffolk, was one of the finest specimens of Roman portrait sculpture discovered since the Roman occupation. The sculptor must have been one of the foremost amongst the many who worked in Rome during the Augustan era, and the head appeared to be a portrait of one of the princes of the Augustan family, for it showed all the characteristics of the portraits accepted as representing members of that stock. The way the head was poised upon the neck suggested an equestrian statue, and the rough manner in which it was separated from the body that it *may* have been destroyed and divided in equal quantity of metal as spoil.

A photograph of the head will appear, I understand, in the next number of the "Archæologia."

This unique find, measuring about a foot in height, was discovered by a youth named Arthur Godball on the banks of the river Alde, at Rendham, near Saxmundham, on the estate belonging to Mr. E. R. Hollond, who purchased the find and who has since submitted it to the British Museum.

In the river-bed, out of reach of injury, this head must have lain buried ever since the first century. Water preserves metal, and its weight would have sunk the head into the mud, out of harm's way. No record of Roman remains has been hitherto traced at Rendham, where once

a ford, now replaced by a bridge, may have existed over the river. The Aldeburgh Literary Society intends to investigate the site.

The head would seem, by its jagged edges, to have been detached by a sharp instrument or hatchet from the trunk. The ears protrude rather noticeably from the head, which is covered with wavy hair. The eye-holes are open as in bronze statues.

In the British Museum, a bronze-head portrait of the Emperor Hadrian, found while ballast-digging in the river Thames, is exhibited; and in his paper (*Archæologia*, vol. 28, p. 45) Mr. Roach Smith describing the discovery in 1837 of several other Roman statues in the Thames, near London Bridge, quotes the Venerable Bede, to shew that the destruction of Pagan Idols was the duty of early Christians. These statues were intentionally disfigured, and then thrown into the river, and were evidently part of the Penates of a Roman of some distinction.