

**A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE
OF THE ANTIQUITIES OF
GOLD IN THE MUSEUM OF
THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY**

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A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities of Gold in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy
by W. R. Wilde

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W. R. WILDE

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NOTICE.

TO FINDERS OF ARTICLES OF ANTIQUITY IN IRELAND.

Royal Irish Academy House,
19, Dawson-street, Dublin,
March, 1862.

THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY have been pleased to authorize an arrangement by which articles of Antiquity found in Ireland may be purchased from their possessors at the full value, and placed, for the public benefit, in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland has ordered the Constabulary to receive all objects of Antiquity offered to them, and to pay the finders the value placed on them by the Committee of Antiquities of the Royal Irish Academy, to which they will be forwarded, free of expense.

This arrangement protects finders of "Treasure-trove" from all legal claims, and secures them higher prices than they can otherwise obtain for ancient articles, the actual bullion value of which may be much increased by the possessors being careful to forward them in a good state of preservation, accompanied by an exact account of the places and circumstances of their discovery.

Possessors of ancient Irish articles can obtain further information by communicating, by letter, with the SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE OF ANTIQUITIES, Royal Irish Academy House, 19, Dawson-street, Dublin.

CHARLES GRAVES, D. D.,
President of the Royal Irish Academy.

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OF
THE ANTIQUITIES
OF
G O L D
IN THE
Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.

BY
W. R. WILDE,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY.

Illustrated with Ninety Wood Engravings.



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CATALOGUE
OF
THE MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES
OF THE
ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY.

CLASS V.—METALLIC MATERIALS.

ORDER V.—GOLD.

INTRODUCTION.



ALL probability gold—in Irish, *Or*—was, for the reasons stated at page 354 of Vol. I., the metal with which the primitive inhabitants of Ireland were first acquainted. A greater number and variety of antique articles of gold have been found in this than in any other country in North-Western Europe, from the Alps to the utmost inhabited limits of Norway, or Sweden.

Records of these discoveries can be traced through all the works relating to the archæology and history of Ireland, published during the last two hundred years, and are also preserved in the unpublished Minutes, as well as the printed Proceedings and Transactions of the Academy. These antique manufactured specimens of gold for the most part consist of articles connected with personal decora-

tion, such as ornaments worn on the head,—diadems, tiaras, lunulæ, hair-plates, and ear-rings; those used for the neck, as, for example, gorgets, small torques, flattened beads, globular balls, and necklaces; for the breast, as circular plates, fibulæ, and brooches; for the limbs, as armillæ, bracelets, and finger-rings; and for the chest and waist, in the form of large torques: besides various minor trinkets and miscellaneous articles, such as bullæ; small, circular boxes; penannular-shaped articles, supposed to represent money; bracteate medals, and some other objects of undetermined use. Of all these there are good representations in the magnificent Collection of the Academy, which at present (Jan., 1862) contains as many as three hundred specimens of antique manufactured gold. These, however, are but a small portion of the gold antiquities found in Ireland, even within the past century, the great bulk of which had been melted down by jewellers, long before the institution of the Academy's Museum, about thirty-three years ago. And even during this latter period, far more articles of Irish gold have in all probability found their way to the crucible than have been anywhere preserved as objects of antiquarian or historic interest. Besides those in the Academy, there are many noble specimens of Irish art in the Museum of Trinity College, and in the collections of private individuals, not only in Ireland, but also in England and Scotland; and the majority of the gold articles illustrative of the antiquities of the British Isles, now preserved in the British Museum, are Irish. The ignorance of the finders, the fear of detection, the low antiquarian value heretofore attached to such articles, the want of a law of treasure-trove,*—such as exists in other countries,—the smallness of the fund placed at the disposal of the Academy for the purchase of such articles, rendering it unable to purchase many valuable specimens that have been offered for sale, and

* The Treasury Minute respecting "*Treasure-trove*" in Ireland only came into operation in April, 1861, and its effects have as yet been tested but to a very limited extent.