

ARCHÆOLOGICAL REPORT

EUROPEAN ORNAMENTS.

GT

2250

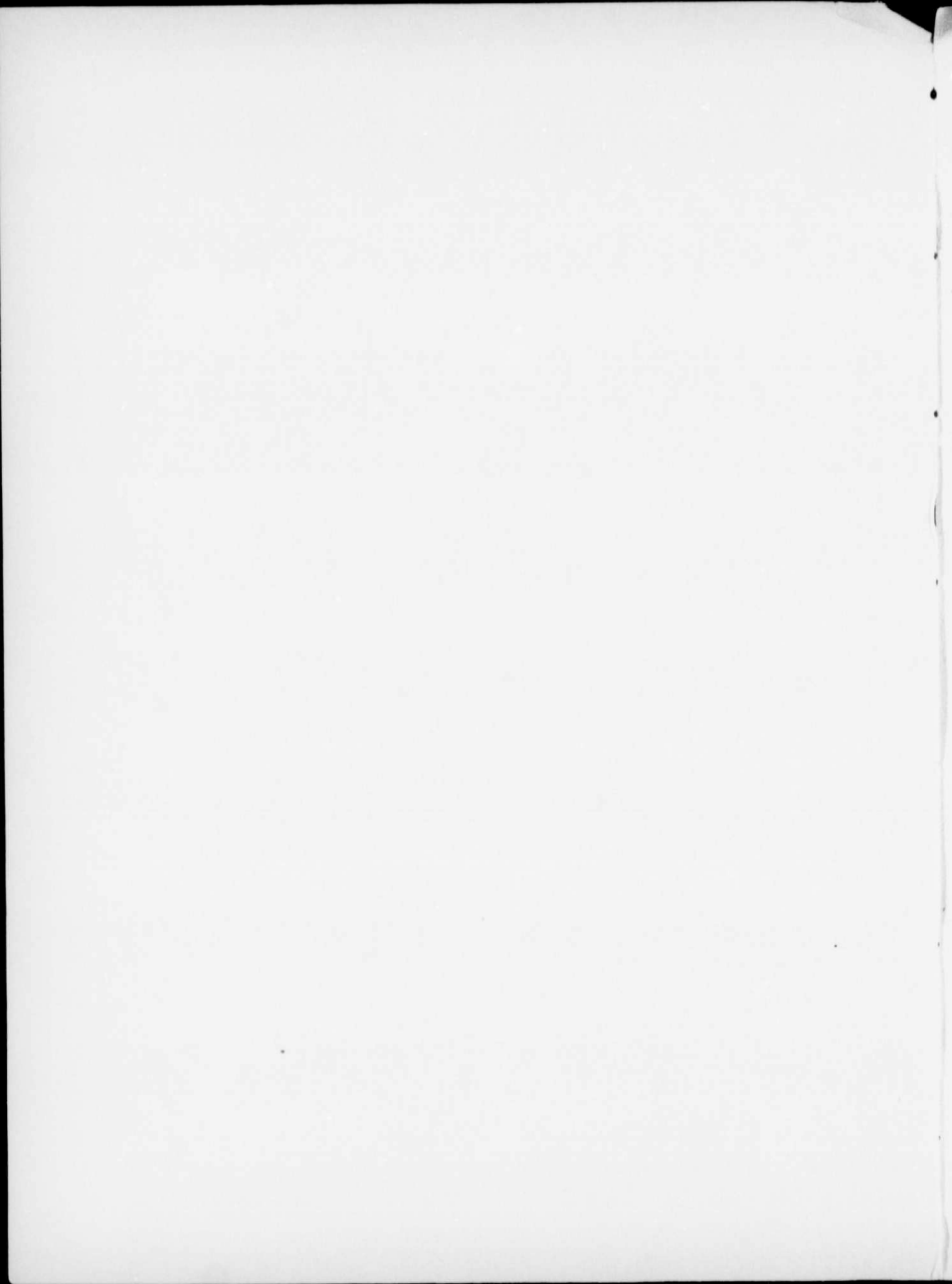
A67

1906

1. 1. 1.

1950

2230910



ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

EUROPEAN ORNAMENTS.

The European Jack Tar, who sails in ships visiting foreign and far-away ports, is strongly disposed to do a little trading on his own account. This is especially true when his voyages bring him into contact with peoples who are savage, or semi-savage, and who possess material of various kinds which he regards as curiosities, and which are again disposable when he arrives at home. It is to such sailors, probably quite as much as to regular traders and trading companies, that nic-nacks and gew-gaws find their way among simple-minded communities.

It is even said that in former days, when voyages of this kind were much more frequent than they are now, or can ever be again, that when Jack signed papers for his ship there was a special clause in the agreement permitting him to engage in petty traffic of this kind to a limited extent. In this way numerous trinkets were easily and speedily introduced among the natives of any country to whom glass and metallic articles were novelties, and thus it seems credible that many objects of European make might become widely spread throughout any country, passing from hand to hand by way of barter among the natives long before any attempt was made at settlement by the new arrivals, or even long before the natives of places remote from a port of call had ever seen a white man. It is not, therefore, safe to conclude that there was always actual or personal European contact with our own aborigines, simply because we meet with evidences of European presence somewhere on the continent, perhaps a thousand miles distant from any coast. But whatever may have been done by means of individual effort, the regularly chartered trading companies accomplished infinitely more in this way. For a few barrels of glass beads, of fish hooks, of pocket knives, of brass buttons, earrings and the like, costing tens or even hundreds of dollars, the returns in furs would amount to as many thousands, or hundreds of thousands, and as the Indian travelled immense distances to reach trading-posts we may readily understand why the white man's workmanship must have frequently long preceded the white man himself.

On the authority of Miss Tah ne-mah-ge-wah-nok (Going down stream) a highly intelligent Ojibwa, the statement is here made that Indians as a matter of taste prefer silver to gold. This statement was volunteered one day not long ago when the lady was examining a case of silver trade-ornaments in the museum. These have been collected, mostly through purchase, from a few Iroquois and others. The objects in question almost invariably take the forms of brooches, bracelets, finger and earrings, crosses, hatbands and a few medals. The brooches, bracelets, and hatbands were mostly made from metal in thin sheet form, and quite springy as a result of having been rolled cold in the manufacture. All the patterns on these articles are the result not of casting, but of cutting and embossing, as the nature of the material demanded, and in this way they were produced very cheaply. As a matter of course the medals were made by means of dies and these decorations were given by the government and presented or sold by wealthy trading companies to distinguished Indians, or to others whose favor it was desirable to win for commercial purposes.

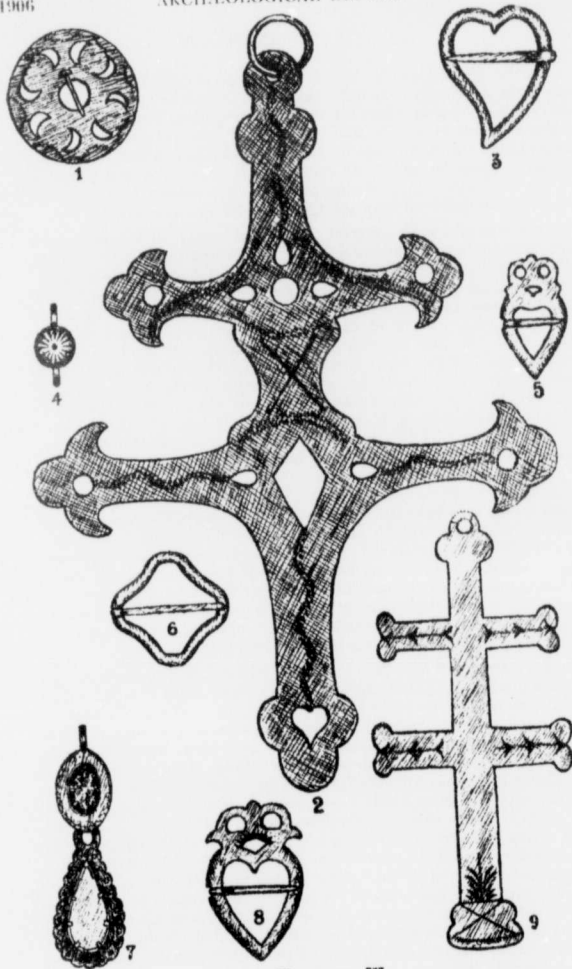


PLATE III

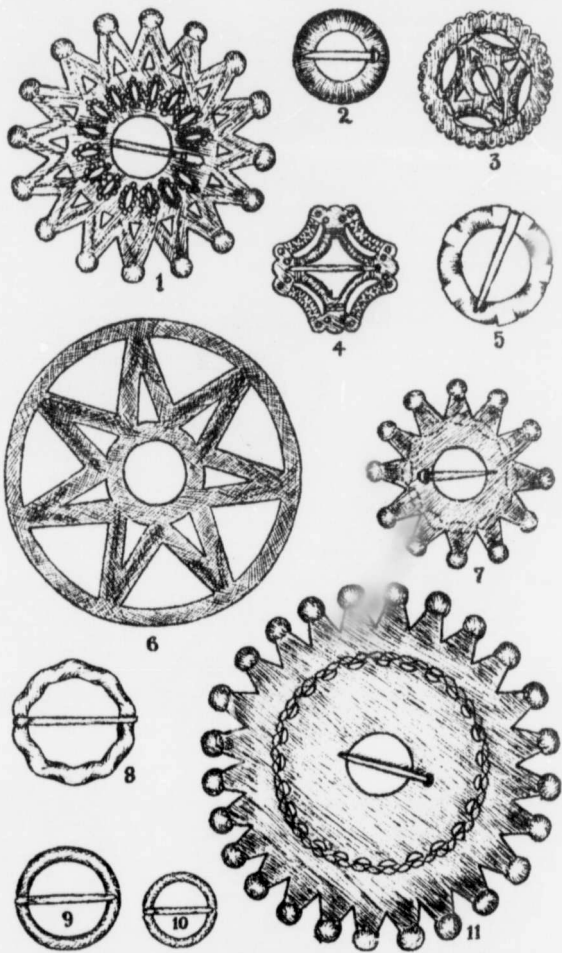


PLATE I

ARCHÆOLOGICAL REPORT

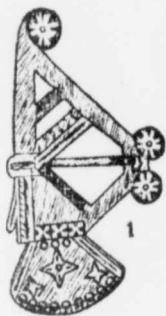


PLATE II

So far as our collection is concerned, brooches are, by all odds, most numerous, and nearly all these correspond very closely with similar objects found in the State of New York. My friend, the Rev. Dr. W. M. Beauchamp, of Syracuse, has devoted a great deal of attention to this matter, as he has to so many others connected with the early occupants of the soil, and under the auspices or patronage of the University of the State of New York, has issued several bulletins on archæology. In one of these (Archæology 8) "Metallic ornaments of the New York Indians," he refers to upwards of four hundred articles of this kind, including those of brass and copper as well as of silver, all of which he has either examined personally or had accounts of from others who own the articles.

It does not appear necessary to refer individually to each of the illustrations, many of which are but types of what our case contains. It may suffice to refer to these silver specimens as they appear, in groups.

Plate I shows eleven drawings of the most common kinds of brooches. In figures 1, 7 and 11, the rounded extremities of the radiations are embossed showing slightly raised eminences on the upper side—the side which is shown in every case on this as well as on Plates II and III. Figures 2, 9 and 10 are of the plainest pattern, the only attempt at ornamentation consisting in the metal being convex in cross section on the upper side, and correspondingly concave on the lower one, a device which was adopted perhaps rather to stiffen the metal than to ornament it, although the curve served both purposes.

Figure 11, Plate I, is one of the largest of its kind (3 inches in diameter) reported to have been found in America. Dr. Beauchamp pictures one (fig 10, plate 2, N. Y. State Museum Bulletin 73) which is about the same size, and regarding which he says. "It is the largest he [the finder] has obtained or seen." The New York specimen has only twelve rays, while ours has twenty-four.

Plate II represents brooches, four of which, (figures 1, 4, 7 and 9) bear Masonic devices—the square and compasses. The appearance of this pattern leads naturally enough to the conclusion that many Indians belonged to the Masonic fraternity, but the supposition is not a correct one, notwithstanding the fact that the "ancient mysteries" are said to be well calculated to prove attractive to savages in general, but the truth seems to be that trinkets of this and other kinds were passed from hand to hand indiscriminately.

In taking up this subject on page 91 of the Bulletin of the N. Y. State Museum, Dr. Beauchamp says, "Out of a large number of these masonic brooches, over a score have been selected for illustration, in themselves far more in number than all of the [Indian] Free Masons known. Joseph Brant was a well known member of the fraternity and Red Jacket has been claimed. There were a few others, but these were common ornaments." He proceeds to state in respect to the large number that have been found, "This abundance is proof that they had no [Masonic] significance to most of their wearers."

This was no doubt true also regarding many of the crosses. They were worn merely as ornaments in a large number of cases simply because they were white and shiny.

As will be seen from Plates II and III, the conventional representation of a heart was a favorite emblem among the Indians, who regard the

heart as the seat of courage just as common language indicates our own belief to be. When the heart symbol was employed for brooches it was seldom used singly (fig. 3, Plate III) but either in combination with a crown, or, in duplicate, surmounted by some sort of coronal decoration.

Ear-rings and finger-rings of silver do not occur frequently in Ontario. Fig. 7, Plate III is one of a pair of the former from the Six Nation Reserve, Tuscarora. The middle of the upper part is of red glass and of the lower part, green glass.

With respect to the crosses, one would suppose them to have been looked upon with something akin to religious awe, or fervor, or, at the very least, as keepsakes, but this does not appear to have been the case, if we accept the belief that they passed from hand to hand quite as freely as did brooches, rings and other silver articles. However, this may have been in a general way there can scarcely be a doubt that at least some of the recipients of such objects did regard them with special favor.

Besides the two patterns shown on Plate III we have a few others, but most of them quite small, and several of them made of brass.

Figure 2, plate III, represents one of two large specimens purchased at a country store (Six Nations) on the Tuscarora Reserve, Brant County.

When Cardinal Merry Del Val was in Toronto, opportunity was taken of his visit to the Museum, to discover if possible the origin of double-barred crosses in Canada, and their meaning in a general way. His Eminence stated that they were "archiepiscopal, pectoral, processional crosses," and he could only wonder that such articles should have been found in comparatively common use among the Indians. If we could summon the spirit of some old French fur-trader, an answer might be forthcoming.