

ON ANCIENT SEPULTURE ;

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF AN URN PRESENTED TO THE SOCIETY.

By the Reverend Dr Jamieson.

THE Urn, which accompanies this paper, was lately discovered on the farm of Torcraik, in the parish of Borthwick. It is about six inches and a half in external breadth, and four inches and a half in height. It appears to be of fine clay baked, and is of a spheroidal form. An inch and a half from the bottom, on the outside, there is a circular projection, above which, nearly to the top, the vessel bulges out considerably. This projection is two inches broad. Above it, for somewhat more than half an inch, the urn is narrowed towards the top. On the bulged section there are five ears, in the form of small protuberances, extending all the depth of the bulge or belt perpendicularly. Each of these is perforated. The urn is ornamented with light fluting, from top to bottom on the bulged division, but horizontally on the inferior part. A crack, apparently

the effect of heat in the baking, extends from the top to the bottom of the urn. The interior side bears the evident marks of fire, presenting a scorched appearance. Part of the rim, indeed, has been obviously consumed by the fire ; but no vestiges of burning appear on the exterior side, from the top of the bulge downwards.

In addition to the note transmitted with the urn, I have been indebted, for the communication of several circumstances, to my friend the Reverend Mr Smith, minister of the parish of Borthwick.

The place on the farm of Torcraik, where this urn was found, is designed *the Shiel*, or *Sheal Loch*, a little to the east of the Carlisle road, about eleven miles from Edinburgh. It was taken out of a great cairn, from which a large quantity of stones was removed for making drains. It was inclosed in a stone coffin or chest, two feet six inches in length, and one foot six inches in breadth, consisting of five separate stones, of which four were set on end, these being covered with one four feet square. Both the chest and the urn were filled with soft clay. The stones, of which the chest was formed, were closely cemented with clay. This clay, as far as we may judge from a small portion of it which appears in the fissure of the urn, seems to have been of the same quality with that of which the urn itself was made. To the best of my information, nothing but clay was found either in the chest or in the urn inclosed in it.

In the same spot of ground, were found five or six other coffins of a similar construction. In these were no urns ; but some of them contained burnt bones. The coffins were not placed in similar directions. Two of the sides exhibited the appearance of the operation of fire, while the two remaining sides, and the covers, had no such appearance.

I am informed by Lord Buchan, that he and Sir John Dalrymple, a considerable number of years ago, discovered several urns in the same place.

From the restricted sense in which we use the English verb *to bury*, as the translation of Latin *sepelire*, one might at first instance be apt to suppose that the Latin term had precisely the same signification, as directly opposed to *cremare*; or, in other words, that all whose bodies were not *cremati*, or burnt, were said to be *sepulti*, or buried. But the term *sepelire* formed no proper contrast with *cremare*. Even those who were first burned, were said to be afterwards *sepulti*, or buried. *Humare* was the antithetical term to *cremare*; as denoting that the body was consigned to the earth, without undergoing any previous change by the action of fire. Hence Pliny observes, "*Sepultus intelligitur quoque modo conditus: humatus verò humo contactus.*"* It would appear, indeed, that this distinction was introduced only in a later age, after cremation had become general. For, in one of the laws of the Twelve Tables, we find *sepelire* directly opposed to *urere*. "In urbe ne *sepelito*, ne *urito.*" This, however, might be a prohibition, not only to burn the bodies of the dead, but even to preserve their ashes and bones in urns, within the precincts of the city.

It may, in this place, deserve to be remarked that, notwithstanding the modern restriction of the word *bury*, the cognate terms, used by the Anglo-Saxons and other Goths, from which it has been formed, do not determine the particular description of the exequies of the dead. The literal meaning of Gothic *berg-a*, and Anglo-Saxon *byrig-an*, is, as Pliny has observed concerning *sepelire*, to

* Hist. Lib. vii. c. 54.

cover in whatever way. Hence *berg*, *beorg*, *berig*, *byrig*, &c. and at length *barrow*, the term still used in England to denote the *tumulus* or mound which covered the remains of the dead. Now, the bodies contained in these barrows were sometimes simply inhumated, and, in other instances, had been burned before interment. Thus, to *bury*, or, as anciently written, to *bery*, primarily signified to cover with a mound, heap, or *barrow*. V. Somner. Lex. vo. *Beorg*, *Byrig*. Junii Etymolog. vo. *Burie*.

It is unquestionable, that by far the most ancient mode of disposing of the bodies of the dead was by simple inhumation. This is so obvious from sacred history, which so far transcends every other record even in point of antiquity, that particular proofs are unnecessary. In what era, or by what nation, the practice of cremation was introduced, it seems impossible to determine. It has been inferred, from the language of Plutarch, that it had never been adopted by the Romans before the time of Sylla, who ordered his body to be burned, lest it should meet with the same indignities with which he had himself treated that of Marius.* But it will afterwards appear that the inference is not well founded; because the family to which Sylla belonged formed an exception to the general custom.

Virgil and Ovid have both been cited as authorities, in order to prove that the custom of burning the dead had been general in Italy before the foundation of Rome. That this custom had been observed by some nations in this early period, is by no means improbable. But we cannot view the language of these justly celebrated writers as sufficient historical proof that the practice prevailed in Italy. According to Virgil, the Latins caused innume-

* In Vit. Syllae.

rable funeral piles to be reared for consuming some of their dead, while others were inhumated.

————— Latini
Innumeras struxere pyras: et corpora partim
Multa virum terræ infodiunt.—
Cœtera, confusæque ingentem cædis acervum,
Nec numero nec honore cremant.

ÆNEID. xi: 203, &c:

Ovid makes Romulus perform the funeral rites of his brother Remus in this manner:—

Arsurusque artus unxit.—
Ultimo plorato subdita flamma rogo.

FAST. iv: 853, &c.

Where the proof of a fact, especially if it be said to have taken place in a remote age, depends solely on poetical testimony, I need scarcely observe, that it ought to be received with very great caution, lest there may have been some use of the *licentia poetica* in the narration. As the mode of burning universally prevailed in the Augustan age, as it afforded more scope for the graces of poetical description, and tended to impress the imagination of the reader far more forcibly than humble inhumation; it was perfectly natural for these elegant writers to carry it back, not only to the time of Romulus, but even to the still more fabulous age of Æneas. We are assured, that the body of Numa Pompilius was found inclosed in a stone coffin, about five centuries after his death, by Cneius Terentius, at the foot of the hill Janiculus. It has been said, indeed, that he prohibited the burning of his body;* which

* Plutarch in Vit.

might seem to imply that this custom was then prevalent. But, even admitting the truth of this testimony, all that could certainly be inferred from it would be, that some, in that age, were disposed to prefer this, as perhaps a more honourable mode of celebrating the obsequies of the dead. Pliny expressly affirms that, “with the Romans, the ancient custom was not to burn, but to inhumate, the dead.” “Ipsum cremare, apud Romanos non fuit veteris instituti: terra condebantur.”* “Afterwards,” he subjoins, “knowing that many of their citizens were destroyed in distant wars,” they adopted the mode of burning. This had been designed to prevent the indignities that would have been done to the dead by their barbarous and exasperated enemies. Even after this practice was adopted, he says, “many families retained the ancient rites; as, for example, in the Cornelian no one is said to have been burned before the time of Sylla the Dictator.”

The Romans at first interred all their deceased relations in their own houses. A laudable veneration for departed ancestors seems, in a very early age, and almost universally, from the combined operation of pride with natural affection, to have degenerated into idolatry. Servius, accordingly, views this domestic sepulture as the origin of the worship of the *Lares* among the Romans. “Hence,” he says, “the *Lares* were worshipped in houses.”† Thus, in consequence of the permanent idea of proximity, from the superstition which has so firm a hold of the unenlightened mind, they would naturally enough come to view their deceased forefathers, to whose honoured dust their houses afforded a sanctuary, as the protectors of their families, or their household gods. For the *Lar* was designed *familiæ pater*. As they used the term *Larva* to denote the

* Hist. lib. vii. c. 54.

† In Virg. Æn. lib. v.

spectres of the departed, the same learned annotator with great probability deduces it from *Lar*.

The rites of the funeral pile, it is generally thought, retained their influence among the Romans till the time of the Antonines.* It has been said, however, that Macrobius, who lived during the reign of Theodosius the younger, speaks of it as being left off only in his time.† But the words of this ancient writer undoubtedly demand a different interpretation. “*Licet urendi corpora defunctorum usus nostro seculo nullus sit: lectio tamen docet, eo tempore, quo igni dari honor mortuis habebatur, siquando usu venisset, ut plura corpora simul incenderentur, solitos fuisse funerum ministros denis virorum corporibus adjicere singula muliebria.*”‡ When he asserts that, in the *age* in which he wrote, there was “no such practice as that of burning the dead,” although he had said nothing more, the language could not have implied that it had been “left off *only in his time.*” For the total abandonment of the practice thus asserted, would necessarily have suggested the idea that it had been relinquished in a preceding *age*. But the structure of the sentence plainly indicates, that in the time of Macrobius there was no recollection of this custom in the memory of any yet alive. He, therefore, found it necessary to appeal to *writing; lectio tamen docet*. The words, *eo tempore, quo igni dari honor mortuis habebatur*, so far from referring to a practice that had recently lost its respectability, have an evident retrospect to a *time* considerably remote. By the use of the phrase, *siquando usu venisset*, he even seems to speak dubiously of the very fact, for the truth of which he appeals to history; and he might well do so, as he connects it with a ludicrous opinion, which he ascribes

* Alex. ab Alex. Gen. Dies, lib. iii. c. 2.

† Saturnal. lib. vii. c. 7.

‡ Edin. Encycl. vo, *Burial*, p. 113.

to the ministers of the pyre, as the reason of their burning women with men, in the proportion of *one to ten*, and which he defends as well founded,—that women having more animal heat than men, the addition of their bodies made the pile kindle more easily, and burn with greater fervour.

It is most probable that the Romans had borrowed cremation from the Greeks. The account given of the introduction of this custom among the latter has much the air of fable. It carries with it, however, the evidence of a general conviction, that it was not the most ancient mode. The origin of it in their country is ascribed to Hercules. Argius, whom he had promised to restore to his father Lycymnius, being killed in the war against Laomedon, Hercules caused his body to be burned, that he might at least transmit his bones and ashes to his bereaved parent. This carries the adoption of the practice, among the Greeks, as far back at least as the Trojan war.*

To whom the Greeks were indebted for this mode we cannot pretend to say. We are well assured that it was unknown to the Egyptians, as well as to the Hebrews. Although, according to Virgil, the body of Dido was burned, the Carthaginians continued to inhumate their dead, till the time of Darius, when, by his advice, they adopted the rites of cremation.† From Strabo we learn, that the Assyrians “buried their dead in honey, the body being covered “with wax.”‡ The Persians, who worshipped fire, considered it as a profanation of their deity to burn the dead.§ The same thing is asserted of the Chaldeans.|| It is not unlikely that the Greeks might receive this custom from the Thracians, with whom it would

* V. Eustath. in Homer. A. 52.

† Lib. xvii. p. 746, Edit. Par. 1620.

‡ Browne's Hydriotaphia, p. 3. Edit. 1658.

† Justin. Hist. lib. xix.

§ Diog. Laert. Proem.

appear they were originally one people. That some belonging to this nation burned their dead, is evident from the testimony of Herodotus. After giving an account of the Crestonians, he proceeds to speak of "the rest of the Thracians." These, he says, "either bury their dead after having burned them, or otherwise inhumate them."*

Cicero infers that inhumation was the most ancient mode, not merely from the testimony of Xenophon, who relates that Cyrus was interred in this manner, but from its analogy to the state of man before he sees the light. "Mihi quidem antiquissimum sepulchrae genus videtur, quo apud Xenophontem Cyrus utitur, redditur enim terrae corpus, et ita locatum ac situm quasi operimento matris obducitur." † Had the same mode of expression been used by any Christian writer, it would have seemed almost incredible that he had not borrowed it from the poetical language of the afflicted patriarch, in which he beautifully represents the grave as the womb of his first mother. ‡

That the ancient Gauls burned their dead, and interred the ashes in urns, is admitted as a well known fact. § Caesar testifies that their funerals were very magnificent; that, with the dead, they burned all the things which they deemed most valuable while they lived; and that, in former times, not only their animals, but even their servants and retainers, who were most beloved by them, were consumed with them. || The same account is given by Pomponius Mela, when speaking of the Druids of Gaul. He assigns as the reason of their burning, and interring with the dead, the things which were useful to them while alive, that they held that the

* Terps. 8.

† Job, i. 21.

|| De Bell. Gall. lib. vi. c. 19.

‡ De Leg. lib. ii.

§ Montfauc. T. v. p. 194.

soul was immortal, and that there was another life beyond the grave.*

The custom of erecting *tumuli*, or mounds, over the bodies of the dead, especially if they had been men of rank, is of the highest antiquity, and appears to have been almost universal. Homer represents it as common both among Greeks and Trojans. Such a tumulus the Greeks denominated *σῆμα*, because it was meant as a *sign* to succeeding generations, that a person of eminence had fallen, or was interred here. They also gave it the name of *τύμβος*, which is still retained in our *tomb*. † We learn from Xenophon, that the same custom prevailed among the Persians. Whether cremation or inhumation had been used, the Thracians "raised a mound of earth upon the spot." ‡ It was also common with the ancient Germans. § That classical and acute traveller, Dr Edward D. Clarke, has traced these funeral monuments into Tartary itself. They are found, indeed, as will be shewn afterwards, in the central regions of Africa. What form soever they assume, as they have all been erected with the same design, they seem all to claim a common origin. "Whether," says this learned writer, "called *barrows, cairns, mounds, heaps*, or by whatever other name (as, for example, *Tépe* by the Turks, and *τάφος* and *χῆμα* by the Greeks), they are now pretty well understood to have all of them reference to a people of the most remote antiquity (possibly the *Celtæ*), and to have been raised for *sepulchral purposes*." || May we not trace the same design from the humble mound to the immense pyramid? Some of the *tumuli*, erected in honour of the heroes of Greece, differ from the monuments of Egypt only in

* De Situ Orb. lib. iii. c. 2.

† Herodot. ubi sup.

|| Travels, Part ii. sect. ii. p. 687, 688.

‡ Iliad, ψ. 245, 254.

§ Tacit. de Mor. Germ. c. 27.

their form and dimensions. In respect of workmanship, they undoubtedly surpass them. This observation particularly applies to that still extant without the walls of Mycenæ, which has been viewed as the *Heroum* of Perseus, but which Dr Clarke seems, with good reason, to consider as the tomb of Agamemnon.*

Notwithstanding the multitude of tumuli which formerly have existed, or which still remain, in Britain, we have no certain mark by which we can know whether any funeral monument was raised by the Romans, by the Celts, or by the Goths or Belgæ. Many have supposed that every cinereal urn, found in this country, was without question to be considered as a Roman relic. But there is the most abundant proof of the falsity of this opinion. Baron Clerk, in his excellent Letters, appended to Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, seems to assume it as an indisputable fact, that the Romans raised *cairns* or *tumuli* of stones in memory of the dead. It has been already seen, that the Roman writers mention *tumuli* as erected with this design. But these, which the Romans erected, seem generally to have consisted of earth. This circumstance may perhaps be viewed as forming a characteristic distinction between their funeral monuments and the greatest part of those which in England are called *barrows*, and in Wales and Scotland *cairns*.

The Baron, in his own account, affords a strong presumption in favour of this idea. For, speaking of what he calls a *cairn*, opened near Pennicuick, which contained three urns, and which, from the description, seems to have been Roman, he says; "This *cairn* was "of the smallest kind. There were so few stones, that nobody "could have suspected any thing to have been under them."†

* Travels, Part II. sect. ii. p. 694.

† Gordon, p. 179.

He indeed attempts to account for this, by supposing that it "was "no doubt occasioned either by an interruption of the work, or "that the body of the Romans who fought there was very incon- "siderable." He subjoins, "It is generally thought, and with "much reason, that at the funeral of the principal officers of an "army, the soldiers used to bring each a *stone*, or a helmet full of "earth, for erecting the tumulus; wherefore, we find in Tacitus, "that when Germanicus came to the place where the three "Roman legions, under the command of Varus, had been mas- "sacred by the Germans, he caused their bones to be collected, "et primum, extruendo *tumulo* cespitem posuit gratissimo munere "in defunctos, et præsentibus doloris sociis."

But this passage, it must be evident, does not at all support the idea of *stones* being brought for erecting a *cairn*; for nothing is mentioned as used for the formation of this *tumulus* but turf. The learned writer, only a little before, has quoted the account given by Tacitus of the *tumuli* of the Germans. "Sepulchrum *ces-* "pes erigit, monumentorum arduum et operosum honorem ut gra- "vem defunctis aspernantur."* The description which he gives of the supposed Roman mound, seems nearly to correspond with this account. The same idea is confirmed by the language of Virgil:

Ingens aggeritur tumulo tellus.

Such also seems to have been the common construction of the mounds raised by the Greeks in memory of their fallen heroes. For Homer, when describing the tomb of Patroclus, the bosom-friend of Achilles, exhibits it merely as a circular mound of earth.

Τορνάσαντο δὲ σῆμα, θεμείλια τέ προβάλοντο
'Αμφὶ πυρὴν εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν.

ILIAD. ψ. 25.

* De Mor. Germ. c. 27.

Tumuli of different kinds were raised by the ancient Scandinavians. "These of a more rude kind," says Wormius, "consist merely of earth heaped up in a conical form." Others, which it is supposed were erected for the generals of armies or their nobles, had one layer of stones at the base.*

I have elsewhere given an account of the funeral rites of the Scandinavians, which I shall take the liberty of inserting in this place, as illustrative of the subject under consideration.

"It is evident that the custom of burning the dead anciently prevailed among the northern nations, as well as among the Greeks and Romans. The author of *Ynglinga Saga*, published by Snorro Sturleson, in his history of the Kings of Norway, ascribes the introduction of this practice to Odin after his settlement in the north. But he views it as borrowed from the Asiatics." 'Odin,' he says, 'enforced these laws in his own dominions which were formerly observed among the inhabitants of Asia. He enjoined that all the dead should be burnt, and that their goods should be brought to the funeral pile with them; promising that all the goods thus burnt with them should accompany them to Walhalla, and that there they should enjoy what belonged to them on earth. He ordered that the ashes should be thrown into the sea, or be buried in the earth; but that men, remarkable for their dignity and virtue, should have monuments erected in memory of them; and that those, who were distinguished by any great action, should have grave-stones, called *Bautasteina*.'—*Yngl. Sag.* c. 8.

Sturleson speaks of two distinct ages. 'The first,' he says, 'was called *Bruna-aula* (the age of funeral piles), in which it

* *Monum. Dan.* p. 33, 42, 43.

'was customary to burn all the dead, and to erect monuments over them, called *Bautasteina*. But after Freyus was buried at Upsal, many of the great men had graves as well as monuments. From the time, however, that Danus Mikillati, the great king of the Danes, caused a tomb to be made for him, and gave orders that he should be buried with all the ensigns of royalty, with all his arms, and with a great part of his riches, many of his posterity followed his example. Hence the age of graves (*Haugsolld*) had its origin in Denmark. But the age of funeral piles continued long among the Swedes and Normans.'—*Pref. to Hist.* p. 2.

"According to the chronology prefixed to Sturleson's history, Freyus was born *anno* 65 before Christ. He is said to have been one of those appointed by Odin to preside over the sacrifices, and in latter times accounted a god.—*Ynglinga Sag.* c. 4.—Danus Mikillati was born, A. D. 170.

"The same distinction seems to have been common among the Norwegians in ancient times. Hence we find one Atbiorn, in an address to Hacon the Good, on occasion of a general convention of the people, dividing the time past into the age of *funeral piles*, and that of *graves*.—*Saga Hakonar.* c. 17.

"Of Nanna, the wife of Balder, it is said, *Var hon borin a balit ok slegit i elldi*, 'She was borne to the funeral pile, and cast into the fire.' It is a fact not generally known, that the inhuman custom which prevails in Hindostan, of burning wives with their husbands, was common among the northern nations. Not only did it exist among the Thracians and the Heruli, among the inhabitants of Poland and of Prussia, during their heathen state, but also among the Scandinavians. Sigrida was unwilling to live with Eric, king of Sweden, because the law of that country

“ required, that if a wife survived her husband, she should be entombed with him. Now, she knew that he could not live ten years longer; because, in his combat with Styrbiorn, he had vowed that he would not ask to live more than ten years from that time, if he gained the victory.—Oddo, Vit. Olai Tryggvason. It appears, however, that widows were not burnt alive; but that, according to the custom of the country, they previously put themselves to death. The following reason is assigned for the introduction of this horrid law. It was believed that their nuptial felicity would thus be continued after death in *Walhalla*, which was their heaven.”—V. Bartholin. de Causis Contemptus Mortis, 506–510.—*Etymolog. Diction. Scott. Lang.* vo. BAYLE-FIRE.

To these observations it may be added, that Freyus is said to have introduced the mode of inhumation in the following manner. Wishing to be deemed immortal, he caused his body to be concealed in a *tumulus*, which he had previously prepared for this purpose. Hence, many of his friends preferred interment to cremation. Sturleson also informs us, that Odin not only enjoined that the dead should be buried, but that their ashes should be dispersed on water, or buried in the earth; and that mounds should be erected in memory of illustrious men.* The same custom anciently prevailed among the Scythians, from whom the Scandinavians had their origin. We learn from Herodotus, that when they interred their princes, they dug a deep circular trench in the earth, and “ were emulous to raise as high a mound as possible.”†

The *tumuli* of the Scandinavians, although in general they were mostly of earth, sometimes consisted of earth mixed with stones. In this case, they were distinguished by the name of *holt*, which is

* Bartholin. ut sup. p. 112–114.

† Melpom. c. 71.

explained by Haldorson, *colliculus glareti*, a gravelly hillock. It is related that Ingulfus, before he expired, expressed his wish to be interred at the other side of the heap, laid with stones, where his ancestors had been buried; and that from him the place was denominated *Ingolf's Holt*.*

What Baron Clerk has attributed to the Romans, that great antiquary Camden applies with far more appearance of truth to the Goths. Speaking of barrows, he says, “ I find it the custom of the northern nations, that every soldier who survived the battle, should bring as much earth as his helmet would hold to raise a hillock over the slain.”†

The monuments of sepulture, preceding the era of Christianity, which are to be found in Britain, assume a variety of forms.

1. Urns, containing burnt bones and ashes, are sometimes found, without any superincumbent *tumulus*, or stones inclosing them, merely bedded in a richer kind of earth than that of the surrounding soil. An urn of this description was found between twenty and thirty years ago, on the side of the old high-road to Brechin, about a furlong east from the town of Forfar. The urn being inverted, covered a saucer, which contained burnt bones, ashes, and bits of charcoal. It was unluckily broken by a passenger, who saw it peering through the slight rising ground which formed one side of the road, and supposed that it contained treasure; but I recovered the fragments of it. This urn had great appearance of being deposited after the Roman manner. Although the circumjacent ground formed a bed of gravel, it was surrounded by the finest black mould, which had evidently been brought from a dis-

* MS. ap. Bartholin. p. 119.

† Britannia, v. i. p. 136, Edit. 1806.

tance. It was near the tract of a small *via militaris*, which run between the Roman camps of Battledykes and Haerfauds, the description of which has been inserted in the additions to Camden's Britannia.*

2. They are occasionally found in *cairns*, without coffins. The idea, which has been generally adopted in this country, that the discovery of an urn is an indication that the Romans have been on the spot, is completely disproved by the size of the cairns under which urns are frequently found, as well as the mode of construction. It has been already seen, that the *tumuli*, which they raised, were generally, if not invariably, of earth. Wherever, then, we meet with a cairn of any considerable magnitude, it may be concluded, almost without any hesitation, that it does not mark the grave of a Roman. The legions of Rome were scarcely ever so long stationary in any place in the northern part of our island, as to collect such immense quantities of stones as constitute some of these cairns; and when they had more leisure, they devoted their time to far more useful labours.

It seems doubtful, whether stone-mounds, those of the larger kind at least, were ever erected by the descendants of the Goths, who peopled a considerable part of Scotland. Gough, speaking of the *barrows* so frequent in England, says that some of them "are entirely of earth; and some are surrounded by a circle of large stones." These bear more resemblance to what we certainly know to be Gothic monuments in Scandinavia, as referred to above. Having spoken, however, of the different kinds of barrows, as sometimes containing heaps of stones, and at other times earth only, he leaves the appropriation as quite uncertain, adding,

* Vol. iv. p. 152-155.

'They differ in size and form, and are to be ascribed to the Britons, Romans, Danes, and Saxons, without distinction.'* Some of the *tumuli* in the Orkney islands "are encircled with stones set on edge around their bottoms."† These evidently bespeak a Scandinavian origin.

The Celts have undoubtedly the best claim to the large cairns. The size of these erected by this people would of necessity be greater than that of those which might be erected by the people of another race; because it appears to have been a very ancient custom among them, for every passenger to throw a stone, in addition to those already collected, as a token of regard for the memory of the deceased. Hence, the common threatening of disrespect proverbial among them, "I will not add a stone to your cairn."

It deserves peculiar observation, that not only are cairns found in the interior of Africa, but that the very same custom, with that above referred to, prevails among its barbarous inhabitants, as to the mode of adding to their size. In the last memorial of an adventurous, but unfortunate, traveller, we have the following account. "At ten o'clock, came close to the bottom of a high rocky hill. And on inquiring about a large heap of stones, near the foot of the precipice, I was told that the town of Madina, which was in the vicinity, was some years ago stormed by the Kaartans, and that the greater part of the inhabitants fled towards this hill. Some, however, were killed on the road; and these stones were collected over the grave of one of them. He said there were five more such near the hill; and that every person, in passing, if he belongs to the same family or *contong*, thinks himself bound to throw a stone on the heap, to perpetuate the

* Camd. Brit. i. 23.

† Barry's Hist. Orkn. p. 95.

“memory of their friend. These heaps are precisely what in “Scotland are called *cairns*.” Mungo Park’s Journal of his Last Mission to Africa, p. 80.

As urns are often found at the bottom of such cairns, it affords an indisputable proof that the Celtic nations at one period, or at least occasionally, burnt their dead. Many barrows, containing urns and burnt bones, have been opened in Cornwall, as Borlase has shewn.* They are also common in Wales, the country to which the native Britons retired, in resisting the yoke of the Saxons. In one tumulus, described by Pennant, several urns were found, one above another, which had no other defence than a flat stone above each of them, “to preserve them from being broken by the “weight above.”† A few years ago, a very large cairn at the east end of Loch-Earn was opened; in which was an urn containing ashes, and three spear-heads of mixed metal resembling brass. These spear-heads might be the trophies which some Celtic chief had gained in battle against the Romans, as the Roman camp of *Dalgin-ross* is only about five or six miles distant. It is, however, very doubtful whether these arms can be accounted Roman; as spear-heads, precisely of the same composition and description, have been found in the island of Zealand, in the Baltic, where the Romans never were. Specimens of these are in the Museum of the Society, lately transmitted by the Antiquarian Society of Copenhagen.

3. They are very frequently found in cairns, inclosed in coffins of stone. Our Statistical Accounts afford many examples of this kind. In the parish of New Deer, Aberdeenshire, several small cairns have been opened, and “found to contain urns inclosed in

* Antiq. Cornw. p. 221, &c.

† Pennant’s Tour in Wales, p. 381. *Dubl. Edit. 1779.*

“stone coffins.”* In the parish of Girvan, Ayrshire, an unglazed urn, containing a small quantity of dust or ashes, was found in a cairn among the hills. It was also in a stone coffin.† A similar account is given from Alford, Aberdeenshire.‡ Urns are found in Denmark, inclosed in the same manner. Wormius gives the following account of some which were discovered in the district of Lindholm, *anno 1637*, and which were “filled with ashes and fragments of burnt bones.” “*Urnæ hæ tumuli fermè occuparunt meditullium, in coronam dispositæ, lapidibusque undique stipatæ erant, ut violentiæ externæ fortius resisterent.*”||

But we are not warranted hence to form the conclusion, that urns inclosed in this manner are necessarily of Gothic workmanship. It is certain that the ancient Britons also used the same mode of interment. This is evident from the examples given by Borlase § and Pennant.¶

4. Urns are sometimes found, without bones or any appearance of ashes, being merely filled with fine earth or clay. There was no vestige of bones either in the urn which accompanies this memoir, or in the chest inclosing it. Both, as has been already stated, were filled with fine clay. It is possible, indeed, that the finer ashes might originally have been mingled with this. The singular construction of the urn itself might suggest the idea that it had been designed for some other purpose than that of receiving ashes. From the perforations in the protuberances, it might appear that it was meant that it should be suspended. We know that the Romans, and other more refined nations, placed not only lachrymato-

* Stat. Acc. ix. 191.

† Ibid. xii. 342, N.

‡ Ibid. xv. 473.

§ Mon. Dan. p. 42.

¶ Antiq. Cornw. p. 220, 221.

¶ Tour in Wales, *ut sup.*

ries, but lamps, in or beside their principal urns.* It cannot be supposed, however, that any of the barbarous nations adopted this custom; nor are there any vestiges of it in what may be viewed as their remains. In the cairn opened at Newbigging, in the parish of Pennycuick, as Baron Clerk informs us, there was a lamp of clay. But it was "of that kind which is commonly found in Roman sepulchres abroad, and goes by the name of the *Perpetual Lamp*. Such were lighted," he adds, "and placed by the ancients in urns, to do honour to the *manes* of the dead; and wishes were probably made that the dead might perpetually benefit by their light: Thence arose the notion of the perpetual lamp, which prevailed so much, that some persons have asserted, that upon the opening of an ancient sepulchre, light has been perceived in those lamps, which was extinguished on the admission of the air."† From the form of the lamp, as well as from the Roman *stylus* of brass, and the *Theca Graphiaria* of the same metal, found in other two urns in the same *tumulus*, it cannot well be doubted that this must have been a place of Roman interment.

We learn from Borlase that, in the year 1716, at the village of Mên, in Cornwall, a chest, formed of flat stones, was opened, in the middle of which was "an urn full of black earth, and round the urn very large human bones, not placed in their natural order, but irregularly mixed."‡

5. Stone coffins are sometimes found, containing burnt bones, or ashes, without urns. In the parish of Longside, county of Aberdeen, "there are still visible a great number of *tumuli*, or small cairns, in which are found square apartments, formed by rough

* Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, p. 12. Borlase, *ut sup.* p. 223. *Camd. Brit.* iii. 242.

† Gordon's *Itinerar.* App. p. 170, 171.

‡ *Antiq. Cornw.* p. 222.

"stones, of from eighteen inches to two feet, and containing ashes or red earth."* On opening a cairn some years ago, not far from Fraserburgh, in the same county, "large flag stones were found placed in the ground, in the form of a chest or coffin, and containing ashes of burnt bones."† *Tumuli* have also been opened at Caldale, in Orkney, with stone coffins, "containing human bones, partly consumed with fire, intermixed with a considerable quantity of ashes. In most places where they are to be found," it is added, "we meet with several of them placed almost close by each other; and, in one place, about two miles distant from Kirkwall, there are five of them, so arranged as to form somewhat the appearance of a circle."‡

6. Stone coffins are frequently found in cairns, containing unburnt bones, without urns. In the parish of Largo, in Fife, when the *cairn* was removed from an artificial *law*, "a stone coffin was found at the bottom. From the position of the bones, it appeared that the person had been buried in a singular manner. The legs and arms had been carefully severed from the trunk, and laid diagonally across it.¶ As these stone chests, even when containing unburnt bones, seldom exceed four feet, or four feet and a half, in length, it has been necessarily inferred, that it was customary to bury the body in a compressed form, with the knees pressed up on the breast, and the legs forced back on the hams; and, as far as we may trust the accounts of those who have been present at the opening of such graves, the bones were found in this position.

The opinion commonly received is, that these are Pictish graves; and, before investigating the subject more fully, I was inclined to

* *Stat. Acc.* xv. 294.

† *Ibid.* v. 97.

‡ *Ibid.* vii. 557.

¶ *Ibid.* iv. 538.

think that this opinion might be well founded. On the south side of Forfar, is an inclosure to this day denominated *Feridan-fields*. The uniform tradition of ages has been, that *Vered, Ferat, or Feredith*, king of the Picts, was interred here after the fatal battle of Restenneth, which was fought about a mile and a half to the eastward. This corresponds with the account given by Boece, that Alpin, after the battle, caused Feredith to be interred *in agno Forfair*.* In this field, between thirty and forty years ago, a grave was opened, containing a stone chest with bones, which was generally supposed to be that of Feredith.

It must be admitted, however, that even supposing that this was the grave of Feredith, the year 842, to which his death is assigned, is too late an era for forming any judgment of the more ancient mode of interment among this people, as both the Picts and the Celts in Scotland then professed Christianity. It has been inferred, indeed, from the language of Adomnan, that the Picts, in the sixth century, did not burn, but inhumated, their dead. For he relates, that Columba, in Pictorum provincia, alios ex accolis aspicit misellum *humantes* homunculum.†

From all that I can observe, it seems impossible to determine whether a sepulchral monument was Pictish or Celtic. The “discovery of an entire skeleton, placed between two flags of a proportionable size, was made near Llanarmon, in Wales.”‡ Sometimes, in our own country, the same cairn exhibits both modes of interment. At Kilhillock, in Findlater, Banffshire, “a barrow was broken up. It was entirely a cairn of stones; and, in removing them, for the purpose of inclosing, an urn was found, and likewise a stone coffin covering a skeleton.”|| Wormius relates,

* Hist. Fol. cc.

† Vit. Columb. ii. c. 12.

‡ Pennant's Tour in Wales, p. 387.

|| Stat. Act. iii. 51.

that on opening a barrow in Denmark, a beautiful urn of glass was found, covered with gold within, containing very thin boxes of wood, but no ashes or bones. Near it, in the same barrow, was dug up an entire skeleton, with a chain of gold around the neck, set with stones of various colours. Mon. Dan. p. 42, 43.

It would appear, therefore, that we have no certain proofs of two distinct *ages* in Britain, characterized, as in ancient Rome, and in Scandinavia, by the different modes of interment; but that, before the introduction of Christianity, both were, at least in some places, and in some epochs, in use at the same time. The preference of one mode to another, might, in many instances, depend on the humour of particular tribes, or even of individuals; or be determined according to the rank of the dead. Among the ancient Germans, it would appear that cremation was confined to their chiefs; unless the language of Tacitus mark a distinction only as to the kinds of wood employed in their funeral piles. *Funerum nulla ambitio; id solum observatur, ut corpora clarorum virorum certis lignis crementur.**

7. Sometimes coffins are found in cairns, without urns, ashes, or any appearance of bones whatsoever. The disappearance of the bones may, however, be ascribed to the great remoteness of the era of interment.

On the farm of Easter Dundurn, in the parish of Comrie, about twenty years ago, a very large cairn, of an oblong form, was opened. In the middle of this was a coffin, consisting of six stones, one being used at the bottom. It lay nearly due east and west. About the distance of a yard from the coffin, there was a row of large stones set on edge, placed at right angles towards

* De Mor. Germ.

each end of the coffin. These stones were about three feet high above ground. After these had been placed, all the interstices had been filled up with loose stones, in forming the cairn. I learn, from my very intelligent friend Mr Stewart of Ardvorlich, who saw this cairn opened, that, as far as he has observed, the generality of cairns in the Highlands have been formed on the same plan. Mr Chalmers views the Dundurn, mentioned in the Chronicle of St Andrews as the place where King Grig, or Gregory, is said to have died, as "*Dunaduire*, the well known hill of Dunadeer, in the "Garviach, Aberdeenshire."* But there has been a constant tradition in Strathearn, that Grig died at Dundurn, in the parish of Comrie; whence it has been conjectured that this cairn might have been the place of his interment.

8. In some instances, the coffins have been placed from east to west, in others from north to south, or in a circular form, or quite irregularly. It is generally admitted, and apparently on sufficient grounds, that ever since the introduction of Christianity, the head has been placed towards the west, that the person may seem to look towards the east. We have an instance of this mode in the disposition of the stone coffins found in a *tumulus* opened in the parish of Urquhart, county of Ross.† But many appear in a different form. At Gattonside, on Tweed, a green knoll was opened some years ago, in which were several stone coffins, containing bones unburnt. They all lay from north to south. In the Orkneys, it appears, from a passage above quoted, that they are found in a circular form. In other places, as in that in the parish of Borthwick, in which the urn presented with this memoir was found, they were placed without any apparant regard to order.

* Caledon. i. 383.

† Stat. Acc. v. 214.

From the preceding discussion, it appears that we have no certain *criteria* by which we can appropriate a place of sepulture to any one of the nations that have possessed Britain. There are, however, some circumstances which afford grounds of presumption, almost approaching to certainty, by which we may distinguish Roman from British or Gothic monuments. 1. When urns of superior workmanship are found, especially if accompanied with lamps, *styli*, &c. we may almost certainly conclude that they are Roman. 2. Those that are found under large *cairns*, ought rather to be viewed as of Celtic origin; because we have no proof that the Romans erected *tumuli* of stones. 3. Urns, ashes, or skeletons, inclosed in stone chests, are most probably Celtic or Gothic. 4. When weapons of flint or stone, or trinkets of glass, &c. appear in urns or coffins, they indicate that they are not Roman monuments. The coffins discovered near Fraserburgh contained not only "the ashes of burnt bones," but "some arrow-heads of flint."* In the parish of Monivaird, Perthshire, "a barrow was opened, in which two urns were found, each containing a stone of a bluish colour." The "urns contained fragments of human bones and ashes."† In a large cairn, near Dupplin, in the same county, a great number of stone chests were discovered, "whose dimensions were two feet eight, by two feet two, every one consisting of five flags, forming four sides, and a lid. In all, excepting one, were bones, and mixed with them, in some of the chests, were round perforated bodies, which," says the learned narrator, "I suspect to have been *Druidical* beads. There were, besides, numbers of rings, heart-shaped trinkets, and others of a flat

* Stat. Acc. v. 97.

† Stat. Acc. viii. 576. *Vide* also Pennant's Tour in Scotland, anno 1769, p. 154.

“and oblong form, all made of a coarse glass.”* The bluish coloured stone, mentioned above, seems to have been a stone hatchet, of the same kind with those which are frequently found in the *Burghs* or *Picts houses*, in Shetland, and might perhaps indicate a Pictish monument. It may, however, have been placed in the urn as a trophy won by a Celt. The druidical trinkets in all probability adorned the graves of some of the Celtic inhabitants of the country. Even when those remains which are reckoned Roman are found in an urn or coffin, if there be not other collateral proofs, it cannot be determined that a Roman was interred there, because these may have been won in battle from the Romans. But, on the other hand, it can scarcely be supposed that the conquerors of the world would deem it any honour to have the despised arms or trinkets of Britons interred as trophies in their monuments.

* Pennant's Tour in Scotland, *anno* 1772, P. II. p. 106.