

kindness of Mr. Dundas for a drawing and description of this venerable vestige of remote antiquity.

ALBERT WAY.

#### NOTE.

The value of popular tradition will be fully recognised by those who are engaged in Archaeological inquiries; it must, however, be always received with the utmost caution. It may deserve mention, although a doubt has been expressed as to the existence of such tradition, previously to the discovery being made at Largo, that, as we have been assured, an obscure belief had subsisted amongst the neighbouring peasantry, that in "Norrie's Law" had been deposited a warrior and his steed, placed in an erect position. He was, according to this popular relation, the chief of a great army, and his armour was of massive silver; in the whole host, he alone was armed in that manner.

Singular as this tale may appear, such tradition is not without parallel in the records of our National Antiquities. In the Ashmolean Museum a gold plate is preserved, which was found in the latter part of the seventeenth century near Ballyshannon, solely in consequence of the song of a harper who chanced to come in whilst the Bishop of Derry (Dr. Hopkins) was at dinner. The Bishop, desiring to know the purport of his lay, the herdsman was called in as interpreter, and explained it to be this: That at a certain spot a man of gigantic stature lay buried, his breast and back covered with plates of gold, and large golden rings upon his fingers. On digging at the place, this plate, still to be seen at Oxford, and another were found. Bishop Gibson relates this remarkable incident in his edition of Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>6</sup> Another striking circumstance of a similar nature has occurred in more recent times. Some years previously to the discovery of the golden corslet at Bryn-yr Ellyllon (the Fairies' or Goblins' Hill), near Mold, in Flintshire, now deposited in the British Museum, an aged woman, returning late from Mold, imagined that she had seen a spectre cross her path to the identical mound where the skeleton encased in gold was subsequently found; she described the phantom as of gigantic size, and clad in a coat of gold, shining like the sun. This she related the next morning to the farmer, whose workmen actually found the corslet in 1833, and there can scarcely be a question that a lingering remembrance of a tradition which she had heard in early years associated with the "Goblins' Hill," presented to this woman's imagination such a golden effigy.<sup>7</sup>

#### NOTICES OF ANTIQUITIES, AND OF CATACOMBS DECORATED WITH FRESCOES, DISCOVERED AT KERTCH, IN THE CRIMEA.

THE Archaeological research, zealously and successfully prosecuted in the southern part of the Russian empire, in recent times, has been productive of many important results. Some of our readers are, doubtless, acquainted with the discoveries, comprising gold ornaments of the most elaborate and skilful workmanship, brought to light at Kertch, and made known to the archaeologists of Western Europe

<sup>6</sup> Edit. 1695, p. 1022. See also Catalogue of the Ashmolean Museum, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> Archaeologia, vol. xxvi., p. 425, where a representation of this corslet is given. A

corslet of gold sold for 600*l.* to a goldsmith at Cork, was found near Lismore. Walker's Dress of the Irish, p. 177.

through the interesting Memoir given by Mons. Raoul Rochette, in the *Journal des Savans*. The detailed accounts of subsequent investigations have, as we believe, been published only in Russian—a language rarely studied in this country—and in works difficult of access to the English antiquary. It has, therefore, appeared desirable to invite attention to these curious remains in the ancient kingdom of Bosphorus; and it is hoped that the following notices may prove acceptable to the readers of the *Archaeological Journal*.

The town of Kertch is situate in the Crimea, on the Strait of Jenicale, and occupies the site of the ancient Pantikapeum, the capital of the kingdom of Bosphorus. The entire district around Kertch, and from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azof, is studded with tumuli of great antiquity, now known under the general appellation of kurgans, and which rise to the height of from 25 to 30 feet above the level of the plain. There are two great ranges of these kurgans. The first and principal range runs in an almost uninterrupted quadrant from the Sea of Azof, and extends to Pavlovsk. The other range, commanding all the immediate environs of Kertch, extends westward, and terminates at the mountain Mithridates. For centuries these tumuli have been excavated for the purpose of finding treasure. The Genoese and Turks alike ransacked them for the gold they were believed to contain; and when the Crimea fell into the possession of Russia, in the year 1774, every one was allowed to explore them at pleasure. It was not until 1820 that a proper restriction was imposed upon this practice: in that year Count Rumjanzov obtained from the Russian Government the exclusive right of excavating the kurgans.

In the year 1828 the *Archaeological Museum* of Kertch was established, and from that period the director of the Museum has acted as superintendent of the excavations. This office was performed by Herr Blaramberg, the first director, until his death in 1832, when it devolved upon his successor, Herr Ashik, who has produced an important work upon this interesting subject.<sup>1</sup> About ten of these kurgans are excavated every year, and the most precious portion of the objects dug up are deposited in the *Hermitage* at St. Petersburg, the remainder finding a place in the Museum at

<sup>1</sup> Description of a Pantikapean Catacomb, ornamented with Frescoes. (Kerchenskiya Drevnosti, &c.) Odessa, 1845. Fol.

Kertch. These particulars are taken from an article in Erman's "Archiv für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland : " Band 4, 1844,<sup>2</sup> in which the author observes, "The result of the excavations at Kertch, notwithstanding their great importance for history and antiquities, have remained almost unknown to the learned world, so little has the public interest in them been aroused, even in Russia, to the present time. How few are there who know that that kind of ancient vase, which is improperly termed Etruscan, is also dug up in Russian ground—that Greek sculptures of the highest art are dug out amongst us—that we possess splendid monuments of Cyclopæan architecture, and that, far from both capitals, on the extreme edge of the southern Steppes towards the Black Sea, there exists another Herculaneum, another subterranean Etruria, rich in treasures, often unique in their kind, and which throw light upon the darkest periods of the past."

The curious publication by the Director of the Kertch Museum (Anton Ashik), to which allusion has been made, consists, for the most part, of a description of the frescoes on the walls of one of the catacombs or kurgans, opened by him in the year 1843. He states that, up to the year 1834, not one of the searchers after antiquities suspected that in Panti-kapæum, as in Italy, there existed catacombs cut in the rocks; the discovery of this interesting fact belongs properly to himself. These tumuli had been opened by many archaeologists, but it had escaped their attention that under these mounds were concealed an innumerable number of funeral caves. This discovery was made in the following manner :—In the year 1834, while superintending the excavations of the kurgans, and observing closely the regular ranges of these tumuli, M. Ashik observed that at the foot of each mound, towards the north-east,<sup>3</sup> there was a small cavity in which the earth was always moist, whence the herbage there was more green than in the other parts of the tumuli. He immediately ordered one of them to be opened. At the depth of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet they came to a rock, in which was a cutting of the width of 7 feet, the space between the two walls being filled up with rubbish: following this narrow way to about the

<sup>2</sup> See also Demidoff, *Voyage dans la Russie Méridionale*, vol. i., p. 535 et seq.; vol. ii. p. 1, et seq.

<sup>3</sup> This fact is very striking. In British tumuli the deposit has frequently been found in a similar position.

depth of 18 feet, they came to a semicircular opening, which proved to be the entrance to a subterranean vault. A stone slab, intended as a covering for the entrance, was found removed from its place, whence it was concluded that the vault had been visited at some former period. The entrance being filled up with stones, it was impossible to enter the catacomb otherwise than by crawling on hands and knees. The chamber was 14 feet long,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, and 8 feet 9 inches high. In the centre there stood a sarcophagus made of ordinary Kertch stone : the bones of the deceased were collected into a heap. On the left side of the catacomb a niche was formed in the rock, in which lay three skeletons placed with regularity. There was a good deal of earth in the vault, on sifting this some pieces of gold were found, which had probably ornamented the dress of the deceased person whose remains were in the sarcophagus. A great many fragments of earthen vessels, phials, and two broken amphoræ, were also found. It was evident that the catacomb had been already plundered. The key of these ancient structures had, however, been discovered, and in the course of the year M. Ashik opened as many as twenty catacombs of different sizes. In some of the tombs he found coins of Sauromates VII., with the head of the Emperor Constantine on the reverse ; also earthen lamps, amphoræ, and phials.

Amongst the catacombs discovered by M. Ashik, there was one with three divisions, and with circular openings on both sides, by which it was connected with other catacombs having similar openings. In this manner, five catacombs were united, forming nine separate funereal chambers. In the first, there lay eighteen skeletons, by twos and threes together, on benches cut out separately from the rock itself. Altogether there were forty-eight skeletons in these vaults, lying in regular order, but in different directions. The catacombs of Pantikapæum are cut in the rock similar to those in the ancient Tarquinia, and are from 11 to 14 feet, and sometimes more, below the level of the road.

M. Ashik, anxious to discover catacombs which were untouched, and which might merit full attention, continued his labours, and, in 1841, he opened one in two divisions, the walls of which were covered with paintings. Of the character of these interesting specimens of art he gives the following account :—

“ These paintings excel every thing of the kind which had

been discovered up to that time in our subterranean Etruria ; not so much however by their execution as by their subject. I showed them to many learned archaeologists of Italy and Germany, to whom it appeared incredible that objects of antiquity so remarkable could be found in Taurida. The painting of the catacombs belongs to the Greek style—there is observable in it, however, the reflex of art prevailing in Rome at the commencement of the Christian era. The walls of the catacombs were covered with stucco or plaster, on which the drawings were made in water-colours—white, black, red, yellow, blue, green, grey—with the same colours, in short, which are observed in the frescoes discovered in several parts of Tuscany, particularly near Corneto, in the year 1831. When we entered the catacomb the painting was very fresh and no where injured. I immediately commenced copying the paintings, and in three days, with the assistance of M. Stephanski, draftsman to the Kertch Museum, I succeeded in making a faithful fac-simile, corresponding to the original even in the minute parts. It was observed that the air penetrating into the vaults, from which the rays of light had been excluded during the course of many ages, destroyed not only the paintings, but even the plaster. In fact, the next day after they were discovered there appeared on the walls a great deal of humidity, the colours began to grow pale, and the plaster to detach itself from the wall and fall at the slightest pressure. Almost all the monuments of funereal painting discovered in Italy have undergone the same fate ; *there*, likewise, they have not been able to protect them against the influence of the air and damp.”

This talented archaeologist then gives a minute description of the frescoes, ten in number, preceded by a description of the catacomb in which they were found, and illustrated by twelve plates, representing the drawings in outline. A satisfactory notion of these examples of ancient art can only be gained by reference to the work itself ; we will, however, lay before our readers the following description of the catacomb and of one of the frescoes at length, as an example of their highly curious character :—

“The tumulus in which this catacomb was discovered, measured in the centre, is 13 feet in depth, to the top of the catacomb. The digging was carried on, as has been cus-

tomary, perpendicularly to the base, from the north-east, and was commenced at the spot where the hollow was observed, to which allusion has previously been made. On penetrating into the cavity about three feet, a cutting in the rock was found, 3 feet 10 inches wide ; following this direction, more than five feet in depth, the excavators came upon the slab covering the entrance to the cavern. This entrance was of the height of 5 feet 6 inches, and 2 feet 4 inches wide. The entrance to the tomb was filled with earth, from the very top where the rock commences : in this earth were found pieces of amphoræ, fragments of painted vases, and phials. The earthy portion of this rubbish was light, whence it might be concluded that the grave had been already despoiled ; this was subsequently confirmed, when, having arrived at the slab, it was found that it did not fit close to the entrance of the tomb. Having been removed with difficulty, the next proceeding was to clear away the earth, which had fallen through the uncovered opening into the first chamber, which was about 14 feet in length, 10 feet 3 inches wide, and 6 feet 3 inches high. The second chamber was about 12 feet long, 9 feet 9 inches wide, and about the same height as the first. In both divisions were found fragments of vases, amphoræ, and phials. There is no doubt that precious objects had been deposited here ; and that, had the catacombs not been already pillaged, besides the frescoes, constituting in themselves an important discovery, the Museum would certainly have been enriched by considerable acquisitions of objects of antiquity."

M. Ashik then proceeds to give a description of the frescoes of the first chamber—"The drawings on this wall are divided into two portions or lines, ornamented above the frieze with a grey flower, 1 foot 3 inches wide. This frieze comprises, in itself, ten oblong squares : in the centre is represented a head in profile, with the mouth half open ; at the sides are peacocks, and in the remaining squares are seen two masks of fauns, with long ears, two ordinary female masks, and three branches of the pomegranate tree, with flowers and fruit. Along the whole length of the frieze, below, there is a garland of vine branches, and clusters of grapes. Immediately below the garland, in the centre of the wall, there is represented a couch, on which a male figure reclines, with the left elbow resting upon a cushion ; in the



right hand, which is elevated, it holds a bunch of grapes. This figure, which is clothed in a rose-coloured girdled tunic, is enveloped, up to the middle of the body, in a yellow-coloured cloth ; near the pillow is a little three-legged side-table, on which lies some round object, resembling a pie or bread ; before the couch is a stool ; further on, on the right side, is an attendant in a short Grecian tunic, with sleeves, and of a pale grey colour, in half-boots, and with a narrow yellow under-garment. In the right hand, which is extended towards the reclining figure, there is a cup, probably containing some liquid, poured out from a vessel which a servant holds in the left hand. Immediately behind these last are three male figures, almost in the same position, enveloped in mantles, in short under-garments of different colours, and in half-boots : further on is an olive-branch. On the left side of the recumbent figure is seen a group of eight women, in long tunics, and different-coloured mantles ; three of the women are represented sitting, with stools under their feet. The first female figure occupies the principal place, sitting in a large arm-chair with four legs. Their costume consists of a long tunic, of a yellow colour, and a white peplum."

The subjects in the lower part are thus described—"Under the socle the width is  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches. On the left side there are six horsemen, armed with spears, rushing upon their enemies. All these warriors are bareheaded, in pale grey doublets, red under-garments, and half boots. Under the caftan appears what resembles a leathern cuirass, of a blue colour. The horses are without saddles, with bridles only. On the right side there are five horsemen, also galloping, with spears ; between these two groups, three warriors, slain, are lying upon the ground ; two of them are overthrown, together with their horses ; the third is likewise thrown from his horse ; his cap is fallen from his head, and lies by the body. The position of this group, and the costume of the warriors, is very striking. The first and the third of the five horsemen are clothed in long, girded, sleeveless Greek tunics, of a pale grey colour, with squares ; on their heads are pointed caps, with ear-pieces, and with tufts on the top ; the three remaining horsemen have, like the three who are slain, sleeveless tunics of a yellow colour. Over the tunics they wear armour, completely covering the breast ; the under-garments are of a red colour ; they have boots ; on the heads of these

warriors are pointed caps, with ear-pieces, but without tufts on the top. Two warriors, having long tunics and caps, with tufts, are sitting on their horses [sideways], in the same manner as ladies in Europe in modern times."

The rest of the frescoes are described with equal minuteness, and are no less curious and interesting. The author has introduced into his work, chapters "On Ancient Pagan Catacombs in General," "On Roman Christian Catacombs," "On the Paintings of the Ancients," and "On the Various Representations upon Ancient Tombs and Monuments," &c. But these are all subordinate to the description of the frescoes.

These researches must be regarded as of high interest, in connection with the discoveries made in recent years in various parts of Western Europe, illustrative of the sepulchral usages and decorations of former times. We regret to be unable to lay before our readers a specimen of the curious illustrations which accompany M. Ashik's valuable publication. The English archaeologist will not fail to recognise the curious coincidence in the fact of the deposit in these *kurgans* being commonly on the north-east side of the tumulus, which is in accordance with the observation frequently made in the examination of barrows in our own country.

J. WINTER JONES.

#### THE CORDWAINERS AND CORVESORS OF OXFORD.

(Concluded from page 159.)

It has been already observed that the annual meeting was holden upon the Monday after St. Luke's day,<sup>1</sup> but sometimes it took place on the festival itself, and from the 22d Hen. VIII. to the 25th Eliz. (1583), either upon that or upon the Sunday. With respect to the place of assembling, it was prescribed by the Ord. 2 Eliz. to be at the Master's house, but we may suppose, in the absence of better information, that when the company became more numerous, it was somewhere in the vicinity of the White Friars; and certainly it was so after the 37th Eliz. (1595), when, in the Master-ship of Mr. Thos. Bland, they commenced building a common hall, called Shoemakers' Hall,<sup>2</sup> upon leasehold ground at Bocardo.<sup>3</sup> For this, however, they had scarcely funds

<sup>1</sup> See Ordinances, 2 Eliz.

<sup>2</sup> B. 103, 116.

<sup>3</sup> B. 109.