

An Account of the Opening of an ancient Grave near Denton, in the County of Northumberland; and some Notices respecting an Arrow Head of Flint, by Mr. EDWARD WOODHOUSE, of Scotchwood.

THE small urn and arrow-head of flint, which I presented to the Newcastle Antiquarian Society some time ago, through the medium of Mr. Stanton, were found in the under-mentioned situations.

About two years since I found the urn in the most elevated part of a field, in the occupation of my father, a little more than a quarter of a mile south west of the Roman wall, and almost in a direct line to the same point from Denton Hall, three miles west of Newcastle, in the county of Northumberland. A large stone had, for several years, obstructed the plough, and on raising it I found three enclosures, about two feet in length, and from twelve to eighteen inches in breadth; they were each composed of four flag stones set on edge, about eighteen inches deep, the uppermost edge of each stone level with the surface of the ground. The longest stones ranged south west and north east. There was a space of about twelve inches between each, filled up with tumbling stones, apparently to support the flags, and keep them upright; the same occurred at the extremities. The centre enclosure contained the urn, the bottom of which was about the same depth as the edge stones; the remaining space within was filled up with very fine soft yellow sand, almost to the surface. The urn contained a substance very much resembling (what is commonly called) shag tobacco.* The eastermost one was quite full of bones, the greatest part of them, from time, reduced to white powder. I

* The capacity of this urn is about a quart of wine measure.

found many pieces from a quarter of an inch to an inch in length. The whole were so much decayed, as to render it impossible to ascertain whether they were human or not. There was nothing found in the westermost division, but the same kind of sand as that in which the urn was placed: it was quite of a different nature to any of the soil in the field.

To the best of my recollection the arrow was found about fifteen years ago, upon that part of Lanchester common, called the less improveable part, about a mile and a quarter west of the village of West Butsfield, in the county of Durham. It was a part of the common purchased by my father, now called Woodburn Farm. At that time it was entirely covered with the various kinds of heath natural to this island. After pairing and burning, which is generally the first operation in the cultivation of this kind of land, it was afterwards ploughed; some time after which the arrow-head was found upon the surface, washed quite clean by the previous rains. There was not the least trace, or smallest vestige of this land ever having been in cultivation before.

EDWARD WOODHOUSE.

Might not the eastern division of this arca contain the bones and ashes of a person, who had fallen in some battle; and the urn in the centre division, some manuscript roll on papyrus or bark, containing an account of the conflict in which he fell? Or perhaps more possibly, the person interred here might be of some religious order, and the contents of the urn a book on matters relative to his profession. When Numa Pompilius was buried, his body was put into one arca, or coffin of stone, and his sacred books into another. He died before Christ 670, and 485 years afterwards, when one Terentius, a writer, was improving a piece of ground, near the Janiculum, he struck upon these coffins in which the books, which were made of papyrus, were remaining in a perfect state. Pliny says, he derived this account from Cassius Hemina, a very ancient annalist, who to the question of persons who wondered, how it was possible that the books could have lasted so long, gave this reason:—"Lapidem fuisse quadratum, circiter in media arca vinctum candelis quoquò versus. In eo lapide insuper libros impositos fuisse: propterea arbitrarier eos non computruisse. Et libros cedratos fuisse: propterea arbitrarier teneas non tetigisse. In libris scripta erant," &c.—*Nat. Hist.* xiii. 13. See also Plutarch's *Life of Numa*. *Valer. Max.* l. i. c. i. sec. 12. and Varro quoted by S. August. de *Civit. Dei*. J. H.

