

XXXIII.—*An Account of certain Articles taken from the Graves of the ancient Peruvians, in the neighbourhood of Arica, on the West Coast of South America, in a Letter from JOSEPH H. FRYER, Esq. to JOHN ADAMSON, Esq., Sec. See Plate VIII.*

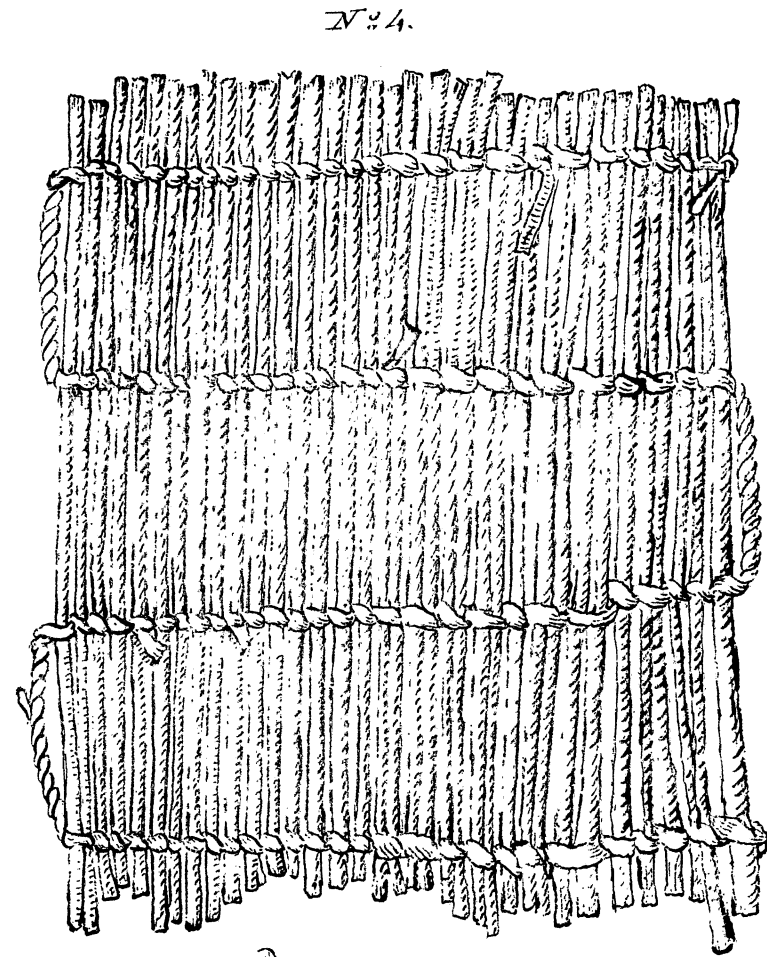
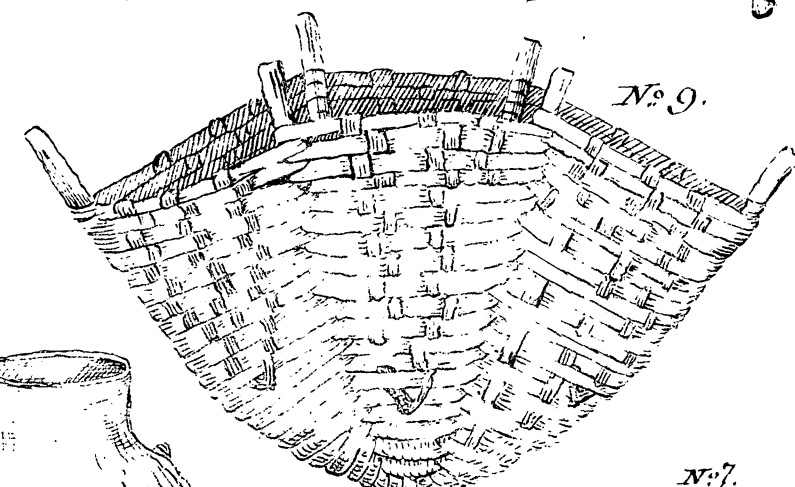
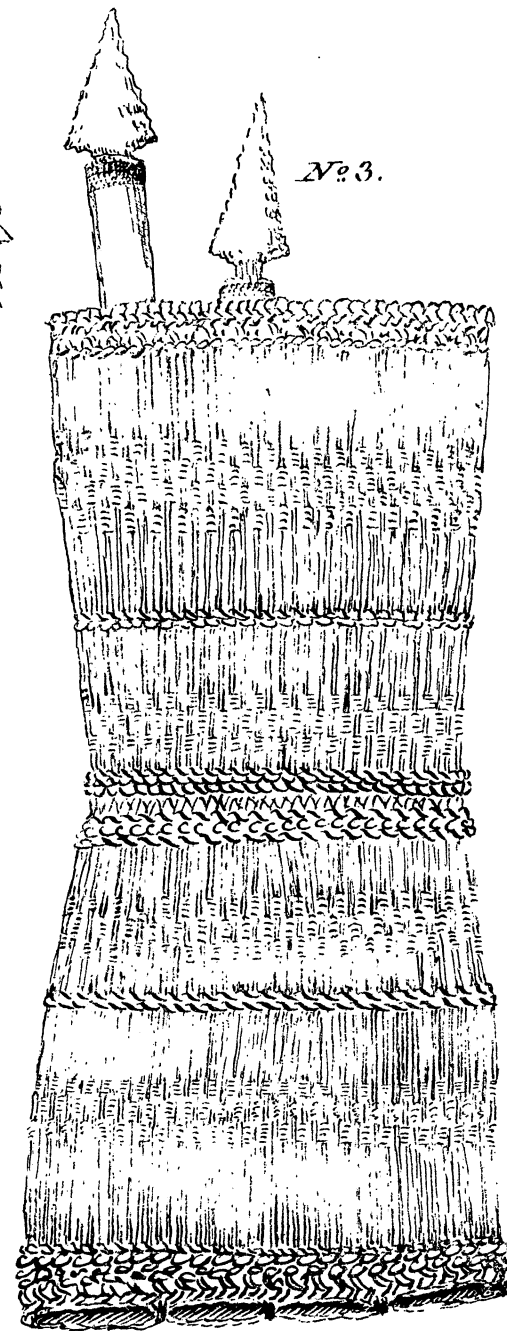
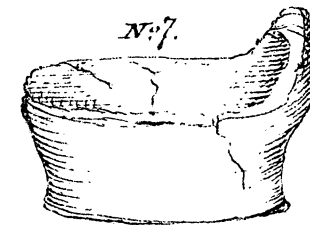
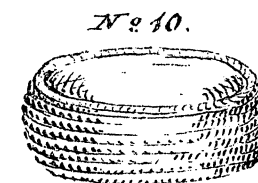
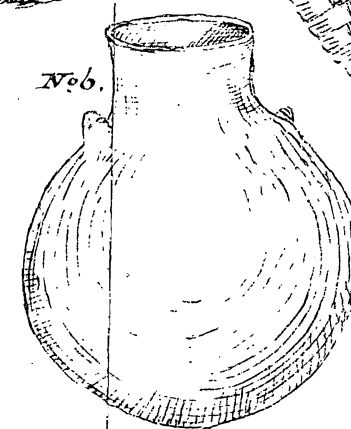
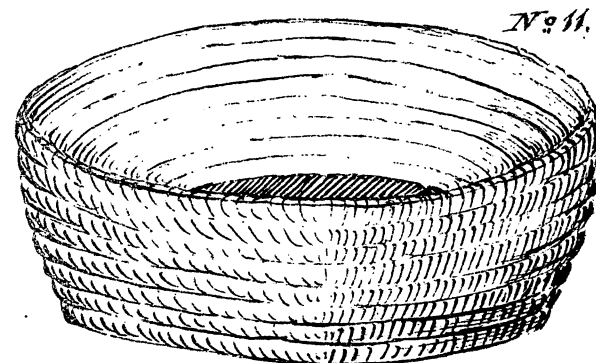
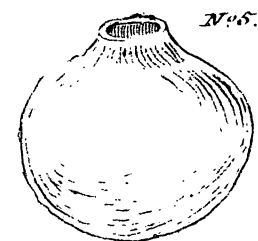
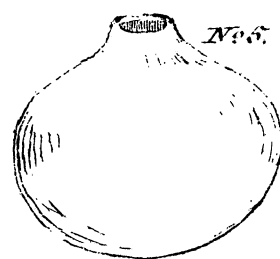
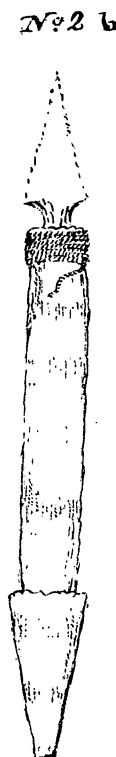
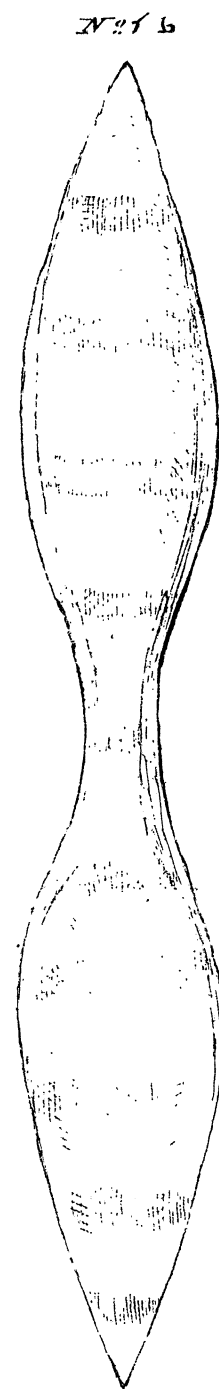
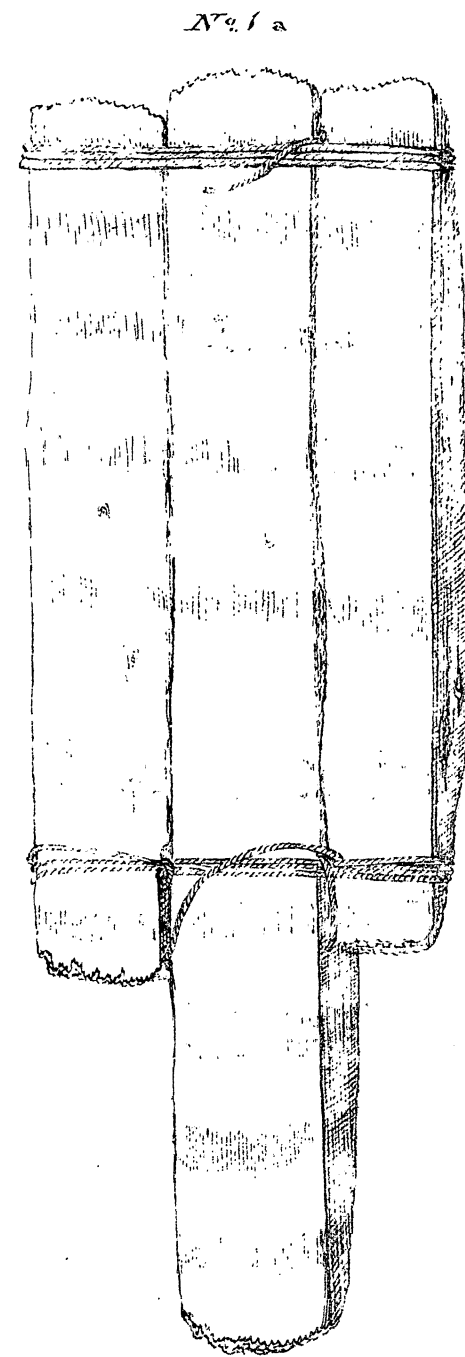
Newcastle, 5th January, 1829.

DEAR SIR,

THE things I send you with this were taken from the graves of the ancient Peruvians, in the neighbourhood of Arica, a small village on the West Coast of South America; if you think they will be acceptable to the members of the Antiquarian Society, you may present them at the next meeting, with the following short notice of the manner in which they were found, and what I consider to have been their uses.

The country about Arica, although now a barren desert of sand and salt, must, I should suppose, formerly have been extremely populous, from the astonishing extent of burial grounds which surround the town, the graves being as close as in the church-yard of a populous town in England, and have been almost all explored by the Spaniards, in search of treasure, it having been the custom of the Peruvians, of the higher classes, to bury at least a portion of their most valuable effects with the dead.

I was desirous of seeing a grave that had not been disturbed, but as there did not appear to be any chance of finding one in the immediate vicinity of Arica, I went along the coast about a mile and a half to the southward, where I had seen similar graves not so generally explored. This place appears to have been a fishing village, and there is no doubt has not been used as a burial place since the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards, they must, therefore, be the sepulchres of people who



DRAWN ONE HALF OF THE SIZE
OF THE VARIOUS ARTICLES.

existed at least three centuries ago. They extend for a mile along the coast, and after very few trials, I was so fortunate as to fall in with a tumulus, consisting entirely of graves in three courses, one above the other. The space occupied by these graves did not exceed a cube of two feet square, being formed either of pieces of wood, apparently the masts and paddles of their boats, or of thin pieces of sandstone. The bottom was invariably covered with a considerable quantity of shell fish, placed there, I have no doubt, from religious motives, either for food for the person interred, or to serve for bait to his fishing hooks, which occur in every grave. A straw mat was placed upon this bed of shells, on which the body was found.

The body was in a sitting posture, the knees bent up close to the sides, the hands crossed over the breast; in this position it was enveloped in a woollen cloth, which, in its manufacture, resembled an extremely coarse crape, over this the Poncho was put, wrapped round the whole and tightly sewed, and covered by a neat net-work of well-made cordage, with large meshes. The head was enveloped in the same crape-like cloth, with a closely woven cap, or surrounded by a wreath of feathers. The bodies were in a perfect state of preservation, dry, hard, and brown, like an Egyptian mummy, but soon mouldered away upon exposure to the air. I do not suppose that any means had been used to preserve them, their state being entirely attributable to the perfect dryness of the atmosphere, and the sand and salt in which they are deposited.

On the breast, underneath the Poncho, was a small bag, containing *coco*, the leaf of a plant very much used by the Peruvians for chewing, being mixed with wood ashes and lime, in the same manner as the beetel nut is used in the East Indies. In the joint of the elbow, on each side, was placed the small pottery vessels, No. 5, closed by the core of the maize (which is still generally used in the country instead of a cork), and which, I suppose, must have been filled with Chicha, the favourite drink of the Indians; it resembles beer, and is made from maize.

The other things were all upon the floor of the grave, the earthen vessels Nos. 6 and 7 on each side, and No. 8 in front; the latter evidently

intended for the purpose of cooking the provisions deposited with the body, being precisely similar to those at present used in the country; the other two for holding water and Indian corn in the ear. No. 1 *a* and *b*, is a model of a boat with its paddle, and is the more curious, as nothing resembling it is now found on the coast; indeed, the country being completely destitute of wood, precludes the possibility of their being made, the only vessel at present used being made of seal skins sewed together, and blown full of air, as well described by Captain Hall. With the boat I also found the model of the harpoon, No. 2 *a* and 2 *b*, having a point of chalcedony, or quartz, with a number of spare pieces adapted to the same shaft, frequently tastefully disposed in the basket-work, No. 3.

The basket, No. 9, contained fishing lines with copper hooks, and a fishing spear, also with a copper point, some neatly made cotton cordage, some stronger cordage made of seal skin, and a few small sticks which I do not know the use of.

One or two other baskets, Nos. 10 and 11, were also in every grave, one containing cacao, the other a few small roots like onions. A bag, similar to that I have mentioned, but larger, was full of ground maize. The small matting, No. 4, resembles what is now used by the Indians when travelling, to lie upon when the ground is damp.

The only difference in the graves was, that the females had in addition to the things already mentioned, a bag of cotton and a spindle, No. 12, with cotton on it, and thread partly spun. In one grave I found a Pan's pipe, made of reeds tied together by small thread, and having eight notes; the thread being decayed, it very soon fell to pieces.

Small tooth-combs were not uncommon, extremely neatly made of very thin pieces of wood, ingeniously tied together with fine cotton thread.

I did not, nor could I hear of any one, ever finding any thing made of iron, in any of the Peruvian graves.

It must be observed that almost all the utensils, vessels, weapons, &c. are models, and bear a striking resemblance to those used by the Indians of the interior.

Nos. 1 *a* and *b*, and 2 *a* and *b*, have been crossed with streaks of red upon the wood, as shewn by the lines of the plates. The various articles are given in the plate half the size of the originals.

I am, MY DEAR SIR,

Your's most truly,

J. H. FRYER.