

ANCIENT SEPULCHRAL REMAINS AT AMBLE.

IN the middle of April last, about fifty yards north-east of the Cliff House, Amble, and about twenty yards from the end of what is called Warkworth South Pier, the pikets came upon a long upright stone, standing out of the shale to the height of twelve or fourteen inches, which had been laid bare by the recent heavy gales, but which, from its rude appearance, did not afford the idea of anything beyond a mere accidental tilting. Alongside this upright stone was a large unwrought slab, which, on being raised, was found to be the covering of a cist or sepulchral chamber, containing a perfect skeleton. The figure was lying on its left side, with the head to the south-west, having the knees much doubled, and with the right arm thrown back. By its side stood an urn of unbaked clay. This urn, now in the Museum of the Duke of Northumberland resembles in size and shape that which was found a few years since at Hawkhill, and which is preserved in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle. It contained a small quantity of dark earth.

Having given this general outline of the discovery, I shall proceed to offer such observations as I have been able to make, and have considered worth recording. I grieve to say, that before the period of my visit the spoiler had been busy with these venerable remains. The skull had been broken up, the jaws smashed, every tooth appropriated, and the bones indiscriminately mingled, after many a century of undisturbed repose.

The cist or chamber containing the remains was composed of four slabs, inserted edgewise in a cavity which appeared to have been dug out of the friable shale which lies upon the harder rock in this locality. It ranged south-east and north-west, and measured as follows:—Depth, $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width, 26 inches; length at bottom, 4 feet, at top, 3 feet 4 inches; the difference between the top and bottom measurements being accounted for by the shrinking of the ends. The cavity in the shale was much larger than the cist, and the space between the slabs



URN AND FRAGMENT OF SILEX FROM A CIST
AT AMBLE.



and the shale was closely filled in with stones, roughly broken, commingled with earth and larger stones. The side slabs projected somewhat beyond the ends. The bottom of the cist was covered, to the depth of about half an inch, with dark, unctuous mould.

Amongst the rubbish composing the filling up of the space above mentioned, was found an angular piece of silex, probably an unfinished arrow-head; and in the south-west corner of the cist lay a large, smooth cobble stone, which, when considered in conjunction with the flint flake, the imagination may easily construe into the club of this ancient denizen of our shores. The slab which constituted the cover of the cist was of great size, and extended in every direction considerably beyond it; and the upright stone was set up, not at one of the ends, but along its length. It is remarkable that a close inspection of these stones give no trace of chisel-marks in any part. In order that the cover might lie level, pieces of shale, flags, &c., were laid on the uprights which formed the cist, wherever an irregularity presented itself.

Within the memory of man the rock ran out from this point for some yards into the sea, at a considerable elevation; but the construction of a pier in the immediate neighbourhood has caused the removal of much of the stone, and the spray of our wild sea-waves now dashes over the spot which for countless generations may have been peacefully tenanted by these nameless bones. At the same time, it does not appear probable that at any period there has been, at this particular point, a very deep covering of the sand and bent which are found thick and rank upon the adjacent 'links.'

The skull must have been very characteristic, having attracted general observation from the extraordinary lowness of the frontal region, the great development of the occipital portion of the head, and the width and length of the lower jaw from its anterior junction to the articulation of the temporal bone. One person observed that during life the man "must have measured as much to the top of his eyebrows as to the top of his head;" and another, whilst expatiating upon the thickness of the skull, irreverently assured me that "they don't make such skulls now a days." The teeth are said to have been very beautiful and regular, and quite sound. With the exception of a front tooth, which was missing in the lower jaw, they were perfect. The thigh-bone measured $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches, indicating a man of large size; whilst the porous internal organization of the bones gave probable evidence of comparative youth.

The urn is unbaked, of a light clay colour, and measures in height 8 inches, in depth $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and in diameter $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It is ornamented with zigzag scorings, alternating with dotted lines, and upright

(and sometimes slanting) scorings, which appear to have been made with some rude instrument whilst the clay was moist. The scorings are continued over the edge of the rim. On being rather roughly seized by one of the men, it being expected that it contained treasure, a piece was broken off; but no material injury has been occasioned.

The stone found in the cist does not resemble any that one may pick up upon the neighbouring shore, and attracted attention from its bearing no assignable relation to what I may call the masonry of the tomb. I have since learned that stones are not unfrequently found in Teutonic graves on the Continent, and that recently a singular oval stone was found in a tumulus on Petersfield Heath.

It appears that, a few years ago, in the immediate proximity of the present discovery, two or more tumuli were found, which contained urns and bones; and flint arrow heads of elaborate finish have been occasionally met with. It is, therefore, every way likely that more of these curious and ancient tombs, with other records of an early and primitive race, long since, with all its customs and associations, passed away, will from time to time be brought to light.

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