

AN "URN FIELD" AT MERROW, GUILDFORD.

BY FRANK LASHAM.

IT has been aptly said that the history of a country lies buried beneath its soil, and in numberless instances this is proved to be correct. It was by the merest chance that even any fragments of urns from what must have been a cemetery near Merrow have been saved from ruthless destruction. Information having been given me, through the kindness of Mr. A. H. Bowles, Lord Onslow's land agent, as to the discovery of pottery on land in the occupation of Mr. Powell, a visit to the spot soon proved that a find of great local interest had been made. For a month or more, trenching and digging operations had been carried on in a field situated on the left of the road toward St. Martha's Lodge and contiguous to Merrow Downs. During these works many urns had been destroyed as of no value; but I have, fortunately, set up two in a fairly perfect condition, which are here figured. It was calculated by Mr. Powell that as many as ten had been destroyed. If this number have been turned up in addition to those figured, and taking a large number of urns and fragments—some twelve distinct varieties found—the cemetery must have been an extensive one. The depth below the soil at which the urns were discovered was from two to three feet, and they were scattered over a fairly wide area of the field. In shape and form they appear to be Romano-British, the two figured being of fine proportions; they both have cross-markings for ornamentation slightly traced



CINERARY URNS. MERROW.

on the sides. The urns contained remains of cremated interments. An iron nail, a few fragments of shaped (?) iron stones, charcoal, and burnt flints being the only other objects of interest found. The soil is sandy loam 420 O.D.; the ground faces the west; the setting sun would be in full view seen from this chosen position. In the course of trenching, a floor of puddled clay, a large quantity of burnt flints and charcoal, and a number of broken urns or vessels were found together. As the edges of these pieces were old and worn, it is conjectured that the urns were destroyed at or soon after their being deposited in the soil. From rims set up from these fragments, one vessel would certainly measure 34in. across the mouth and would be quite 14in. in depth. Some of these fragments are of coarse gritty clay, but they all appear to be lathe turned, and of about the same age as the pottery found in excavations at the Peasemersh (near Guildford) some years ago. A small urn found entire was kept in a shed for a long time, but has now disappeared. Information was given me that in the course of digging the workmen came across a place which had apparently been occupied by two or three urns, which had evidently been removed from the ground some years ago.

There are "earth banks" in the valley, not far from the gamekeeper's cottage on the Merrow Downs, and a round barrow opened by Gen. Pitt Rivers lies south-east of Levelys Dene. This barrow contained a British urn. At Newland's Corner, again, are evidences of habitation, but this is somewhat doubtful.