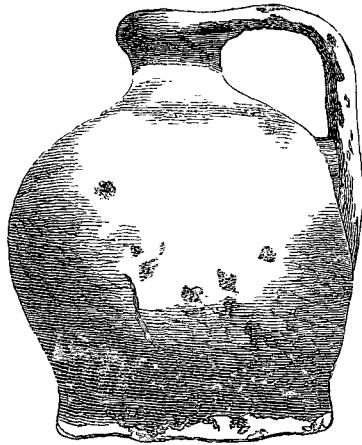


### III.

NOTICE OF AN EARTHEN JAR FOUND IN EXCAVATING THE  
FOUNDATION OF AN OLD HOUSE AT LEITH. By ROBERT  
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This jar (see the annexed woodcut), composed of coarse yellow clay, and presenting no ornament, manufacturer's mark, or initial, is unsymmetrical in shape, 6 inches high,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in circumference at its mouth,

and 15 inches in circumference at its widest part ; but the handle had been roughly attached to the jar, the marks of this junction being indicated by the remains of coarse streaks or scrapings. It has been fashioned after a Roman model. The handle is small, the lip turned over, the neck narrow, gradually widening to the body, which again gradually tapers to the base.



Many jars of similar material and shape have been found in Britain, but they have all been of larger size. One jar found by Mr Roach Smith, and described in his catalogue of Roman remains found in and around London, approaches this jar very nearly in shape; but it is symmetrical, and much larger. Such Roman vessels were called *Gutturniæ*; they were water jugs or ewers, with the mouth compressed and turned over, to allow the water to be poured out slowly or in small quantities. The Roman amphora, again, had two handles, a more elongated shape, and was used for holding wine or oil.

The unsymmetrical form, rude execution, and small size, conclusively withdraw this specimen from the Roman catalogue, and place it among mediæval productions. Dr D. Wilson, in referring to the mediæval pottery of Scotland, says that it is always much smaller in size than the

Roman, unsymmetrical in shape, and generally glazed. Mr Birch of the British Museum, whose opinion on such subjects is unquestionable, and who has kindly examined this specimen, says, "that its material and style characterise it as mediæval." I have just quoted Mr R. Smith as my authority that the Romans used jars of this shape for holding water; but I will now show that the jar under consideration must have been used as a wine vessel. When found it was empty, with the exception of a little agglutinated sand which closed its mouth. Adhering to the interior of its neck and body was a dark purplish brown substance, which was readily shaken out in small masses. I collected a quantity of this, and requested my friend Dr Murray Thomson to subject it to analysis. His report, which is too elaborate to quote here, states that the substance sent him for analysis exhibited all the reactions of bitartrate of potash, the characterising ingredient in lees of wine, and that, from the dark purple colour which this exhibited, he had hoped to have extracted the colouring matter also. In this, however, he failed; but expresses his conviction, from the various characteristics of the contents of the jar, that had he possessed a larger quantity of material in which to seek for the colouring matter, it ought to have been discovered.

Putting this down, therefore, as a mediæval wine-bottle, it would be interesting to find data which would enable us to approximate to what period of the ten centuries usually included in the middle ages, such jars were manufactured and used. I hope that some data connected with the discovery of this specimen will throw some faint light on its age.

It was found lying on its side, upwards of six feet under the foundation of one of the oldest houses in the town. The bed of sand in which it lay was pure sand, what geologists call blown sand, and its position bore the evidence of an entombment perfectly undisturbed.

A few years ago, in removing the foundation of the old house, which had been built upwards of six feet above the spot where this jar had been quietly entombed, several carved stones, sculptured memorial tablets, and portions of pillars were exhumed.

My friend the late Mr P. Hamilton, architect, who assisted his father to remodel the present South Leith Church, at once recognised these carved stones as portions of the clerestory windows, and the pillars as similar to

those existing in old South Leith Church; he had no doubt but that they had belonged to the choir of the old Church. History comes to our aid in explanation of this. The Church was demolished by the English army in May 1544, under the Earl of Hertford; the choir was at that time completely destroyed; and we know that his army did not long remain in Leith, but proceeded towards England, after burning and destroying everything of importance which was found in the town and neighbourhood.

As we know that it was the practice of the time to make the ruins of sacred edifices the quarries out of which the houses of the neighbouring towns or villages were constructed, so we think it likely that Leith was no exception to this rule, and that soon after the destruction of the choir of the old church, those building houses in the neighbourhood had recourse to this common source of building material. We thus infer that soon after the destruction of this portion of the sacred edifice, the foundation of this house was laid, and in all probability the greater proportion of it built out of the materials thus afforded. But if we believe this jar to have been deposited in a bed of sand which was gradually increased over it by the variable winds of the locality, we must look for some explanation of the presence of a wine jar in this particular locality. Maitland, in his "History of Edinburgh," 1753, supplies us with this. He says that the western boundary of the oldest portion of the ancient town of Leith was within a few yards of the spot where this jar was found. "The first time," says he, "that I read of this ancient portion of the town is in the beginning of the twelfth century, and the second time in 1329." (P. 485.)

The presence of inhabitants so near this place in the early part of the twelfth century gives us a starting-point, between which and 1544 (the period of the destruction of the Church, out of the ruins of which the houses seem to have been built) this jar was in all probability manufactured, used, and lost on the spot where it has been recently disinterred.