



ECCLESIASTICAL BELL.

VI.—*A Letter giving some Account of an Ancient Ecclesiastical Bell and Chain, discovered in the parish of Kilmichael-Glassrie, in the County of Argyll, and presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by John Macneill of Oakfield, Esq.*

By THOMAS THOMSON, Esq. Advocate, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society.

[Read to the Society 29th January 1827.]

Charlotte Square, December 25, 1826.

SIR,—I AM authorized by my friend John Macneill of Oakfield, Esq. to present to your Society an Antique of curious workmanship, in bronze, to which I am unwilling to give a name, but on the nature and age of which it will be for the Members of the Society to employ their ingenuity and research.

It was found accidentally, about twelve years ago, by workmen employed in collecting and removing stones, for the construction of a *dyke*, on a farm of Mr Macneill's, called Torrebhlaurn, in the parish of Kilmichael-Glassrie, and county of Argyll, situate about a mile and a half from the parish church, and about five miles from Carnasarg, in the parish of Kilmartin, one of the ancient Episcopal seats of the Bishops of Argyll.

The spot where it was discovered is described as on the steep acclivity of a mountain, which forms one side of a narrow and sequestered valley, rising in a conical form to a height of about five hundred feet; but the spot in question is at an elevation of not more than thirty feet from the bottom of the mountain, where the surface is covered with huge blocks of stone, thrown together in the utmost disorder, and where the slope is so very steep as not to admit of the erection of any building of the most trifling magnitude.

That it must have been there deposited for the purpose of concealment, at some period of danger and alarm, seems abundantly obvious; but of the time or occasion of this concealment no tradition has been preserved. Whether it shall be thought to have been an ancient Reliquary, or a Mass Bell, or whatever else may be conjectured of its nature and use, it may fairly be presumed to have remained in this neglected spot since the subversion of the Roman Catholic worship in the sixteenth century, when the favoured objects of ex-

ternal adoration and reverence under the former superstition came to be regarded with impatient contempt and abhorrence.

Along with the original, I beg leave to present to the Society a correct delineation of this Antique, obligingly made for me by my friend Mr Lizars. From an inspection of these, a more accurate notion of its structure may be formed than it would be easy to convey by any verbal description. But it may be proper to mention, that when found, and indeed when put into my hands for inspection, about eleven years ago, the thin brass plate, which is now detached, was firmly fixed in its place by small pegs, and was removed by me in order to ascertain the nature and form of the substance within. Whether this shall be regarded as a rude sort of iron Bell, or a Relique, or whatever else it may be, it appeared to have been enveloped in a piece of woollen cloth, the texture and consistency of which were almost entirely decayed. The clumsy perforation in the centre of this plate appears to have been recently made; and these, in so far as I am aware, are the only alterations it has undergone since its discovery in 1814.

Near to the same spot, and about the same time, was found a brass chain or collar, of rude workmanship, three feet six inches long, the extremities of which are connected by a small Cross patteé of the same metal, the pendent of which (whether of metal or stone) has been lost. This also I am authorized by Mr Macneill to present to the Society; and it is scarcely necessary for me to add, that its value is obviously enhanced by its probable connexion with the other curious antique which it now accompanies.

In the preceding statement I have refrained from hazarding any conjectures or imperfect speculations of my own, conceiving it to be enough for my purpose to record with accuracy the few facts that have been communicated to me on the circumstances of this discovery. I may however be pardoned for adding, that in the summer of 1816 I took an opportunity of exhibiting the drawing by Mr Lizars, to the Society of the Antiquaries of London; and that, in the opinion of some very intelligent members then present, and particularly of my late excellent friend Mr Samuel Lysons, the style and fashion of the workmanship and ornaments were held to be of very considerable antiquity, probably of the eleventh or twelfth century.

To the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.