

II.

ON THE CLASS OF STONE VESSELS KNOWN IN SCOTLAND AS
DRUIDICAL PATERÆ. BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D.

The analogies which recent archæological investigations have established between the primitive relics discovered in our own country and throughout the

north of Europe, and those pertaining to aboriginal modern races still in a state of barbarism, and totally ignorant of all metallurgic arts, furnish an interesting element of comparison and elucidation in reference to that early era to which the name of the Stone Period is now, with so much reason, applied. Much valuable light, I feel assured, may still be thrown on that dim and remote era of the history of British and European aboriginal races, by the intelligent archæologist recording such analogies as are presented from time to time to his notice; and with this view I have thought that one or two recent observations of this kind present materials of comparison calculated to illustrate in some degree the uses of that class of primitive stone vessels usually styled *Druidical Pateræ*. These have heretofore been found chiefly, if not exclusively, in Scotland and Ireland; and frequently under circumstances not altogether unsuited to suggest the idea of their original destination bearing some relation to the mysterious rites originally pertaining to the megalithic circles, so generally assumed to have been the temples of the Druids; although it will be found that their nearest analogue is a domestic utensil still in use in the Faroe Islands.

Relics of this class are by no means rare in Scotland, and sufficient attention has been paid to the circumstances in which they have been, from time to time, discovered, to leave us in no great doubt as to the data at least from whence our conclusions are to be derived.

In the year 1828, for example, two of these stone vessels were discovered in the immediate vicinity of a megalithic circle at Crookmore, in the parish of Tullynessle, Aberdeenshire, one of which was presented to the Society. The following is the account given of this discovery by the donor, John Stuart, Esq. :—

“The farm of Tullynessle, on which, till lately, there was a considerable proportion of rough uncultivated ground, is situated on Donside, about a mile and a half below the bridge of Alford, which crosses that river.

“The *Druidical* circle in question was of considerable size, and the stones composing it were inserted in the centre of a mound or dyke of some elevation. The earth in the interior of the circle had been withdrawn, probably to form the dyke to which I have alluded, and it presented the appearance of a bason which, at a former period, might at the centre have been eight or ten feet deep. Around the circle, to about the extent of an acre, the ground was covered with a close pavement of large flag-stones, which did not appear to be of the nature of the stones found in the neighbourhood, but of the same appearance as those found on the hill of Coreen, which last are much used for pavement at present.

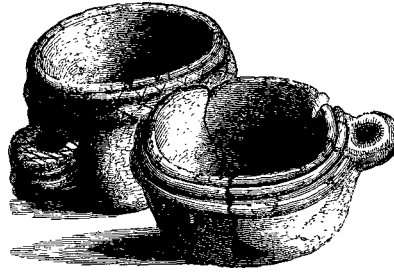
“Pointing in a south-easterly direction, a paved road, of about twelve feet in breadth, of the same material as the causeway, was discovered extending about

five hundred yards, and from the situation of the ground it seems to have been intended as an approach to the circle through a marshy piece of ground.

“ The circle was situated on a slope tending to the *west*, and the stones of which it was composed were of the common whinstone of the district.

“ In the vicinity of the circle, and under the pavement, there was found two stone vessels of rude structure, and composed of a soft calcareous stone, and beside them a large quantity of a black substance resembling charcoal.”

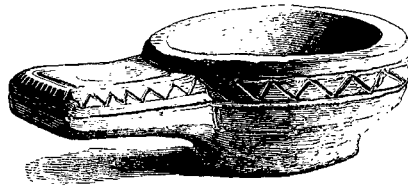
One of the vessels here referred to, was presented to the Society by Mr Stuart, and is figured in the accompanying woodcut, along with another Scottish example of the same class of relics.



The instance here cited, of the discovery of these stone vessels within the area of our Scottish monolithic circles, is by no means singular. An example is referred to in the Society's Transactions, vol. i., 284, of one found within the area of the celebrated Hebridean circle of Classernish. Another was found in 1827 within the area of a stone circle at Whiteside in Aberdeenshire; while two others in the Society's Museum have been dug up within the ruins of the northern Burghs, or so-called *Pictish Forts*,—the one in Caithness, and the other at the How of Hoxay, in the island of South Ronaldsay, Orkney.

Another Stone Patera, recently presented to the Society by our noble President, was found in the vicinity of Taymouth Castle; and the small vessel of the same class, now exhibited to the meeting, was dug up about fifteen years ago near the ruined and picturesque fortalice of Fairlie, on the Ayrshire coast. It is now the property of Charles Wilson Brown, Esq. of Wemyss.

The accompanying woodcut exhibits an accurate representation of a stone vessel of nearly the same dimensions as the most of those found in Scotland, and usually termed *Druidical Pateræ*. It was brought from the Faroe Islands by Sir Walter Calverly Trevelyan, and presented by him to the Society.



Such vessels are there made, and used as lamps or chaffing-dishes, for carrying live embers in. The only point of

difference between the ancient and modern vessels, is the greater length of handle in the latter ; an improvement calculated to increase the adaptation of such a vessel for the carrying of glowing embers without injury to the bearer. The following notice may also be assumed to add another example of the modern use of similar vessels :—

In a communication to the Geographical Society of London, November 22, 1852, by Captain Inglefield, R.N., “ On his recent Voyage to the Arctic Regions in Search of Sir John Franklin,” it was remarked—“ On the shores of Whale Sound he found a number of natives, who, on seeing the crew, indulged in immoderate laughter, and expressed the utmost astonishment at their clothing. They had evidently never seen Europeans before, but they soon became friendly, and many small articles were purchased of them ; the most singular of these was, perhaps, a vessel called a pot-stone, which they used to melt their blubber in. These vessels are hollowed out of solid stones by means of a harder kind of stone, and the formation of one is a work requiring immense time and labour.” This last named element of time is indeed among the most important of all the considerations to be kept in view in regard to primitive arts. Time, which is of so much value in our civilized and highly artificial state of society, is of little or no moment to the rude barbarian. Hence the elaborate decorations of the New Zealand war-club or paddle ; and hence also, in like manner, we may conclude, the finished construction of implements and weapons fashioned by the rude British aborigines with the most imperfect tools, and from the most impracticable materials.

By such analogies we may discover not only the long obsolete uses of the primitive relics of the British aborigines, but also the processes by which such rude yet ingenious manufactures were elaborated, and brought to such perfection as the simple arts of the period of their use were capable of effecting.