

III.

NOTICE OF THE EXCAVATION OF A CAIRN AT ROSEISLE; IN A LETTER FROM LADY DUNBAR TO COSMO INNES, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

Mr INNES communicated a note describing the opening of a cairn in Morayshire, which he had received from Lady Dunbar of Duffus, in the following terms :—" Sir Alexander Cumming, Dr Taylor of Elgin, and I, met at the cairn of Roseisle last week, and, with the assistance of ten men, excavated the cairn to the centre. Beginning at the north side, we first took out a large oblong stone, cut straight away from end to the centre, when we found, about nine feet deep, a cist or tomb containing an urn of rude dark-coloured clay, sunburnt, containing ashes; a few bones were in the cist. I send a sketch of the cist, made before it was removed, and a sketch after it had been removed and again set up as we found it. The urn was so frail, that Sir Alexander Cumming, with great care, only secured portions of it, which I have also sketched, and send. When the cist was removed we found that it had rested on a rude pile of stones converging to the top.

"On another day, digging to the south-east within the cairn, we dug up a skeleton of a child about ten years of age, the skull perfect, no appearance of coffin either of stone or wood, the body laid in the earth.

"In the cairn called the Tappock of Roseisle (the scene of a former discovery of a cist containing some jet beads, &c., described in the *Proceedings Ant. Soc.*, vol. iii. p. 46), we have found two other cists—one in the centre containing two skulls and bones and an urn."

A subsequent note from Lady Dunbar (September 17) described the digging out of a small cairn at Inverugie, in which a cist was found about two feet from the surface. It seemed to have been opened before, though long ago, and was empty. Both it and the Roseisle cist have been removed to Duffus, and put together in the shrubbery, exactly in the position in which they were found.

Mr JOHN STUART remarked on the value of such descriptions as the present, and suggested the great desirableness of accurate observations being sent to the Society of all such investigations. The particulars of ancient

interments were extremely various ; but if reliable information could be procured of the remains found in each, we might still hope to come to some general conclusion as to the races of whom they are memorials. He added, that in many parts of the country, where the plough had not yet interfered with ancient vestiges, there were specimens of primitive interments and traces of early habitation which would amply repay careful examination ; and, as instances, he referred to two localities in Aberdeenshire where discoveries had recently been made,—viz., at Kinstair, in the parish of Alford, and at Skilmonae, in the parish of Methlic,—and suggested that members should use their influence in getting descriptions of all discoveries sent to the Society. He added that the photographic art came to be useful in such investigations, and referred to the photographs taken by Mr Milne of Murie, and now presented to the Society ; the one showing a cist opened, and the other the urn found in it.

Professor SIMPSON made some remarks on the same subject, and referred, in illustration, to urns recently presented by Mr Dundas from Arniston, where they appear to be very numerous.