

## II.

NOTICE OF REMAINS FOUND UNDER A CAIRN, SURROUNDED BY UPRIGHT STONES, ON THE FARM OF BURRELDALES, PARISH OF AUCHTERLESS, ABERDEENSHIRE. IN A LETTER TO THE SECRETARY, BY JAMES H. CHALMERS, Esq., ADVOCATE, ABERDEEN, F.S.A. Scot.

The circle or cairn in question is on the farm of Burreldales (tenant, Mr Adam Nicol), in the parish of Auchterless, but not far from the march with Fyvie; and there are at least four others within a radius of half a mile of it, besides here and there heaps of earth and ashes, where the country folks say their predecessors, "the primitives," as the farmer's wife called them, lived. From time to time a good many urns have been found in smaller cairns, here and there, through the same small bit of country.

The circle or cairn on Burreldales consisted of a large flattened cairn, or rather raised platform of stones and earth, with three or four large stones set round it, and in the interior a smaller raised cairn, which either had been hollow in the centre, thus forming a kind of dyke or enclosure, or had been opened long ago.

The diameter of the larger cairn or platform was about fifty feet. The raised cairn in the centre was about thirty feet in diameter, thus leaving

a sort of platform all round, more or less distinct, of something like ten feet wide. On this platform, at about the west point, lay a large flat stone about five feet square and two feet thick. Another smaller stone was placed at another point of the platform. These stones, as well as those used in the other circles or cairns mentioned, are all masses of what I take to be graywacke, with quartz veins, and are found on the side of a little den not far off.

The cairns, both outer and inner, consisted chiefly of stones, but the interstices were quite full of earth, which seemed to have been used along with them. The soil below was either gone, or at least had been disturbed and mixed with the stones. The subsoil for some distance down had been loosened. All about under the inner cairn there were extensive traces of burning—bones, black earth, and a sticky clay-like stuff. The inner cairn, I think, had been raised over these remains.

So far I ascertained by a partial examination in October 1860. Within the last few days the farmer has trenched over the whole cairn. Between the large flat stone and the central hollow, and just under the raised inner dyke (if a dyke or hollow cairn), or under the west edge (if it had been a cairn subsequently opened), he found a cist of an unusual shape. It is about 3 feet deep, 20 inches long, and 16 inches wide, and consists of a flat stone in the bottom, four upright flat stones for sides, and a flat cover.

In this cist he found one urn, if not two. The cist was full of earth, sand, and burnt stuff; and in clearing it out with his hands, he found (after removing a smaller flat stone which seemed to have been placed on the top of the urn) pieces of an urn. He does not seem to know whether the urn was broken, and lying in a heap as it were, or whether it had preserved its shape, and he had pushed it out of shape in scraping about. Below this, about midway down the cist, was another flat stone, and below that, he says, more fragments of an urn. From the appearance of the fragments, I am inclined to think there had only been one urn, placed between the two stones, but he is very positive that the lower flat stone was only about midway down. The urn (or one of them) was of very peculiar character, as I shall presently notice.

In the outer platform to the south or right-hand side of the large flat stone, the farmer found a hole in the ground about three feet in diameter, tolerably regular in shape, though not lined with stones, and at least four

feet deep. This hole was quite full of a very black close stuff like animal charcoal, veined with white bone-dust, about the consistence of rich Stilton cheese, says Col. Leslie, in a letter to the Secretary [probably adipocere—Ed.]; but nothing else was found here. To the east of the cairn, and under the inner dyke or edge, he found a few stones put together, leaving an irregular cavity or cist. In this he found some burnt stuff, which he believed to be fragments of another urn, and a piece of metal, shapeless with rust, which, after he had scraped at it, has assumed a shape very much like the blade of a knife. It is of bronze. This is all that he has found, and the whole place has now been trenched over.

I went to see it on the 6th of February, on hearing of the discoveries; but there being a couple of inches of snow, I could not make much of it. I picked up a quartz pebble, however, which I think had been worked on, with the view of grinding it into an axe-head. There is not much on it to show this, but I think I am right. The urn had apparently been inverted. I send for presentation to the Museum one piece of the urn sufficient to show the character of its ornamentation, and of the projections on it. Its surface is covered with shallow rounded indentations, and here and there a plain piece of clay is projected from the surface, forming a short bar or ornament. I also send some of the animal charcoal from the hole, also two bits of bone from the urn, and one bit from the hole.

I think the discovery is interesting. The shape of the cist is unusual, and the ornamentation of the urn is, so far as I know, unique. If the farmer is right as to its shape, and as to there being two, one over the other, it is remarkable in these respects too, I think.

It seems evident that there had been a very great deal of burning of flesh at the place, and this was the receptacle of the products. There was a great deal of similar stuff under the inner cairn.

MR JOHN STUART pointed out the analogies between this deposit and others at various stone circles in the same county, where urns, burnt bones, fragments of bronze, and pits filled with burnt matter, had been found, and added, that these spots were doubtless the burial-grounds of old Pagan times.

Professor SIMPSON stated that all the bones now exhibited from Bur-reldales were unquestionably portions of a human skeleton.