

II.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE SUPPOSED "LEATHER LAMP" FOUND
IN AN URN IN A SHORT STONE CIST AT BROOMEND, INVERURIE,
ABERDEENSHIRE.*

As some doubt still remained as to the true character of the supposed "lamp" (whether it was formed of bark, leather, or horn, as suggested in the Notice by Mr C. B. Davidson,*) found in the larger urn or "food-



1. Clay Urn or "Food Vessel," 6½ inches in height, and utensil of Horn.
2. Utensil of Horn taken from Urn.

vessel" in a short cist, along with an adult skeleton, probably female, and that of a child, behind which a smaller urn was also discovered. A small broken portion of the supposed "lamp" [or, if we take into account the "drinking-cup or food-vessel" in which it was found, shall

* See Notice of further stone cists found at Broomend, near the Inverurie Paper Mills. By C. B. Davidson, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., Aberdeen, page 115.

we say possibly a spoon] was given by Dr J. A. Smith to Mr John Sadler, Botanical Demonstrator, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, with a request that he would make a careful microscopic examination of it. The following is his note on the subject:—"I have carefully examined, both microscopically and otherwise, the piece of the supposed lamp found in the ancient urn which you gave to me yesterday, with the following results:—It exhibits no vegetable structure, nor yet the structure of leather, but truly that of the common ox horn. The striated woody appearance of the substance is characteristic of horn, and not of leather. On boiling it, I found that it became more or less pliable, but not to the same extent as leather would; and, on burning a small portion, it consumed in the same manner as horn, and gave off the same odour. I have no doubt but that the utensil was prepared by the ancients much in the same way as our horn spoons are now-a-days, and was probably used as a ladle. In reference, however, to the idea of its being a lamp, I may mention that I once saw, about fifteen years ago, one made of horn, faced with brass or iron, in the cot of an old man at Craigend, in Perthshire. The fibrous-like matter, filling up the crack in the horn, is evidently the decayed rootlets or mycelium of some cryptogamic plant, probably a rhizomorphic fungus."

Mr J. M. Bryson, optician, Princes Street, another good microscopist, was also asked to examine a small portion of the supposed "lamp," and he states that:—"Having made a thin section of the specimen sent me, I examined it by means of the polarising microscope, and find it shews the characteristic properties of horn. From its striated surface and laminated structure, I am of opinion it is true horn."

There can be no doubt, therefore, that this curious implement is really formed of horn, which has split into laminae, and become bent, it may be, into its present shape by the progress of decay.