V.

DESCRIPTION BY AHMED IBN-FOZLAN (AN EYE-WITNESS) OF THE CEREMONIES ATTENDING THE INCREMATION OF THE DEAD BODY OF A NORSE CHIEF, WRITTEN IN THE EARLY PART OF THE TENTH CENTURY. TRANSLATED FROM HOLMBOE'S DANISH VERSION OF THE ARABIC ORIGINAL, WITH NOTES ON THE ORIGIN OF CREMATION, AND ITS CONTINUANCE. By JOSEPH ANDERSON, Keeper of the Museum.

The following description, by an eye-witness, of the ceremonies attending the incremation of the dead body of a Norse chief, on the banks of the Volga, in the early part of the tenth century, is so remarkable, that I have thought it might be interesting to have it presented to the Society, by translating Professor Holmboe's Danish version of the Arabic original, along with such portions of his notes as exhibit the correspondence of the remains found in the early Norse tumuli of the cremation period, with the ceremonies here described. In his introduction Professor Holmboe says :—

"The remarkable find at Mammen[1] in Denmark, and the find at Nedre-Haugen[2] in Norway, in some respects analagous to it, have induced me to bring out a translation (which has lain beside me in manuscript for many years) of an Arabic description of the funeral obsequies of a Russian (that is, a Norseman) of rank on the banks of the Volga. The burial rites here depicted are manifestly the same as those that were in use among our heathen forefathers in the North, and therefore form a connecting link between the north of Europe and Asia, where we find much

[1] Aarboger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed, 1869, p. 203.

[2] Aarsberetning for 1867, fra Foreningen for Norske Fortidslevninger Bevaring, pp. 59–61.

similarity. We find again a correspondence both to the rites described by the Arab and to the usages of the North, in the burial mounds in the government of Moscow, which in 1838 were explored by the Russian archæologist A. B. Tschertkoff,[1] and pronounced by him to be Scandinavian. In some of these skeletons were found, as in the Mammen-how, deposited in pits deeper than the surrounding surface of the ground."

"The Arab I speak of was called Áhmed Ibn-Fozlan (or Fodhlan), who in one of the first decades of the tenth century A.D. was sent by the Caliph Al-Moktader (who reigned from A.D. 907 to 932) as an ambassador to the King of Bolgaria (Volgaria), on the Volga. Here he came into contact with the merchants of that nation, whom the Arab writers of the middle ages called Russian,[2] and by which they understood the people who in the greater part of Europe were called Northmen, and later Scandinavians. Ibn-Fozlan employed his sojourn in Bolgaria (among other things) in obtaining information regarding the so-called Russian usages and customs, and writing a manuscript in which these are described. This manuscript was, in the thirteenth century, incorporated into an Arabic geographical work by Abdallah Yakut, of which manuscript copies are preserved at Paris, Oxford, Copenhagen, and St Petersburg. The Copenhagen Codex was translated by Professor Rasmussen, and published in a treatise entitled "On the Commercial Intercourse of the Arabs and Persians with the Russians and Scandinavians in the Middle Ages," printed in Molbeck's *Athene* for 1814. But this translation contained a number of misrenderings, partly in consequence of the imperfect condition of the manuscript. A critical edition of the manuscript was first given in Frähn's work in 1823, entitled "Ibn-Fozlan's und anderer

[1] Memoirés de la Soc. d'Archæol. et Numismat. de St Petersburg, vol. iii. p. 197.

[2] Frähn says that when the Arab writers speak of Russians, they constantly mean the people who in the middle ages were called in Europe Northmen; while they always use the word Seklab, *i.e.*, Sclave, or Slave, to designate the people who afterwards took the names of Russians, Poles, Sclaves, &c. Nestor states that it was the Northmen in fact who, under the name of Variago-Russians, established the Russian empire in A.D. 862. This statement of the Slavonic chronicler is borne out by the facts, that the names of the "men of the Russian nation sent by Oleg in A.D. 907 as ambassadors to Constantinople are those of Northmen," and not Slavonic; and that in Igor's great embassy of more than fifty persons, who in 944 concluded the treaty with the Greek emperor, there are only three Slavic names, the rest being all those of Northmen.

Araber Berichte über die Russens älterer Zeiten." The Danish translation was rendered into Swedish by Adlerbeth, and printed in English in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,"[1] and finally translated from the English into French in the "Journal Asiatique," vols. iv. and vi., 1824, 1825. The misrenderings of the Danish translation were naturally reproduced and considerably multiplied in the subsequent versions. Some of these were pointed out in the notes to the French translation. Frähn's German translation has thus been hitherto the most trustworthy, but it also stands in need of occasional corrections, and I have found it the most suitable version as a foundation for the illustrative notes which I have added.

Ibn-Fozlan's account is to the following purport :—

"Having been told that they did things on the death of a chieftain, among which the burning of the corpse was one of the least important, I desired to know something more particular of the matter, because I was informed that a great man among them was just then dead. They laid him in a grave, over which they erected a roof, for the space of ten days, until they were ready with the shaping and sewing of clothing for him. When it is a poor man, they get a boat on which they lay him, and so set fire to it; but when a rich man dies, they gather together all his possessions, and divide them into three portions. One third part goes to his family, the second third part is spent for clothing to him, and the third third part to purchase strong drink, to be used on the day when his maids offer their lives, and are burnt along with their lord. This nation is much given to wine and drink, by day and night; and it is not uncommon for one and another of them to die with beakers in their hands. When a chieftain dies, his family ask his maids and men-servants, 'Which of you will die with him?' One of them will say 'I,' and by this promise he is bound, and cannot revoke it; if he should desire to do so, he is not permitted. It is mostly the serving-maids who are willing. So now when the chief whom I have mentioned was dead, they asked his maid-servants, 'Which of you will die with him?' One of them answered, 'I.' Then they charged the other servants to take care of her, and to serve and

[1] This appears to be a mistake. A search through the magazine referred to, which the publishers have kindly caused to be made, has failed to find it.

accompany her wherever she went. Thereafter they occupied themselves with the affairs of the dead man, making clothes for him, and preparing all things necessary; while the maiden every day drank, sang, was lively and merry.

"Then, when the day came on which the dead man and the maiden both should burn,[1] I betook me to the river where his ship was. The ship was already drawn up on the strand, and they were preparing four posts of birch and other trees, and therewith they set up all round images of men[2] (?) and vessels of wood. Then raised they the ship up on the posts, after which the people began to come and go (to jabber) in their foreign speech, which I did not understand.

"The dead man was in the meantime away in his grave, from which as yet they had not taken him. Now came a man with a bed, which he set up in the ship, and provided with mattresses and pillows made of Grecian gold embroidery.[3] Then came an old crone, whom they called the dead man's angel, and laid them to rights on the bed. It was she who took charge of the making of the clothes with which the dead man

[1] It is known that it was an ancient custom in the north that the thralls were killed and burned with the corpse of their master. That widows were subjected to the same custom can scarcely be doubted. Ibn Haukul says:—"The Russians are that people who burn their dead, and with the rich among them it seems their women also burn themselves of their own free will." And Mas'udi also has this statement in regard to the Russians and Slavonians:—"When a man dies his wife is burnt with him; but with wives who die there are never men burnt." We also see from the old mythology that this custom was practised in the North. Nanna was burnt on the ship which served as the pile for her husband Balder's corpse. So, in the Saga also, Brynhilda made herself be burned with Sigurd's corpse.

[2] The Arabic word *Kebâr*, rendered by Frähn "men-like figures," really means vessels or jars of clay; but as the Arab writers would not have been acquainted with the art of the cooper, and therefore would have had no word which would rightly express a wooden vessel, they have used the expression *kebar* (jar) with the explanation "of wood." If my conjecture be right, reference is here made to such wooden vessels as are often found in the grave mounds of the Northmen. In the Mammen-how we find that two such vessels were set above the corpse-kist. We may infer that they would have had such vessels in readiness to place the burnt bones in them, or, as in the Mammen-how, to set them above the cist.

[3] So there was in the Bjerring-how mound a corpse laid on "pillows filled with down," a circumstance which has been once before remarked in connection with the Nedre-how mound, where were found large lumps of feathers with layers of cloth interposed.

was to be dressed, as well as all the needful arrangements. It was she also who was to put the girl to death. I saw her; she was sallow and stern. The multitude had now betaken themselves away to the grave, shovelled the earth off the wooden roof, after which they bore the corpse forth, attired in the shirt in which he had died. I saw him; he was black, in consequence of the cold which prevails in this country. There had been placed in the grave with him intoxicating drink, fruits, and a musical instrument[1] (lute or harp). All this was now taken out. The body, which had as yet undergone no change but change of colour, was now arrayed in drawers, breeches, tunic and boots, with an upper garment or mantle (caftan) of gold-worked cloth, with golden studs, and on his head was placed a cap of gold-worked cloth, encircled with marten's fur.[2] Then they carried him in under the tent[3] which was raised on the ship. Here they laid him on the mattress, and stayed him up with pillows. So brought they the strong drink, the fruits and odoriferous herbs, and set them by his side; they also placed bread, meat, and onions for him. Then came a man forward with a dog, hewed it into two portions, and cast them into the ship. So brought they all the dead man's weapons,

[1] That victuals were placed in the grave with the dead we know from several instances. See Holmberg's "Nordbon i Hednatiden." But it does not appear from any other case to have been the custom to place musical instruments with them. It is worthy of remark that provisions were placed also on the funeral pile, but it is not said that the lute or harp was laid there.

[2] As to the splendid clothing of the (dead) man, we are struck by its resemblance to the Mammen find, where there was deposited "some gold-worked cloth," which was believed to have served for a decoration for the head-dress, "considerable portions of very finely-woven woollen stuff, plainly the remnants of a cap, adorned with embroidery of woollen threads. The dress, as it seemed, had been adorned with spangles (?) of gold, and appeared to have had a border of fine fur, of which even now some short tails, ending with long black hairs, are recognisable." Moreover, bands were found both of wool and of silk, some portions of the latter being inwoven with gold thread, remains of silken cloth, and a remarkable belt of silk, excellently woven and inworked with gold, and bordered on the back with a remarkably fine chain stitching. A comparison of this Norse chief's equipment seems to give the same things as were found in the Bjerring-how—the gold-worked stuff for pillows or feather-bed, the outer head-dress of gorgeous workmanship, the woollen cloth for a coat for the corpse, and the fur for his bonnet,—and the resemblance, extends also to the fact of their being of gold-worked embroidery.

[3] The Volsunga Saga makes Brynhild Gunnar erect a tent over the pile on which she was to be burnt with Sigurd's corpse.

and laid them by his side. Then they led forth two beasts of burden (packhorses), and made them run till they were covered with sweat. Then they hewed them in pieces with the sword, and cast their flesh into the ship. So brought they forth two oxen, hewed them in pieces, and cast them into the ship. Next they came with a cock and hen, slew them and cast them into the ship.[1]

"In the meantime the woman who was to die kept going backwards and forwards; at last she went into one of the tents . . .

(Here, says Holmboe, I have omitted several words which have an obscene meaning).

"As it was now after mid-day on Friday, they brought the woman away to an object which they had made, in the form of the frame of a door-case.[2] She set her feet on the palms of men's hands, stepped up on the frame, and said some words in their tongue, after which they made her stand down. Then they lifted her a second and third time up, and she went through the same ceremony. Now they handed her a hen, the head of which she cut off and cast away, but the body cast they into the ship.[3] I asked my interpreter what it was that the woman had said. He answered:

[1] Bones of animals are usually found in Norse graves, the remains of the animals slaughtered as funeral offerings, and part of which may likely have been consumed at the funeral feast. Bones of horses (chiefly teeth, see Nicolaysen's Norske Fornlevninger), of oxen, of dogs, and of fowls, are frequently found. Thus, we see that the remains which would be found with the Norse chieftain (burnt and buried) on the banks of the Volga, would be the same as those that are usually found in Scandinavian interments—namely, horses, oxen, dogs, and fowls. The resemblance of the grave-mounds on the Volga to those of Scandinavia is further marked by the opening of a grave-mound at Novgorod, by Chodakowski, in 1821, in which, among the ashes, were found two jaw-bones of horses, two of the dog, and the skull of a fowl.

[2] Here the allusion is probably to a scaffolding, resembling the trilitha of ancient Norse burial places, or two stones set on end, with a third lying transversely across them "like the frame of a door." In Sweden many such trilitha are found, which Almuen and Svein Nilson have called sten-galgar—stone-gallows. They are also found at Ekornvalla Heath, not far from Skara, nearly two ells high, as related to me by an eye-witness, a doctor, who took part in the great encampment at Axvalla Heath in 1858. In Brittany, according to Keferstein, at Auray alone more than 150 of these are found. Their purpose is unknown. The use mentioned in the text appears to have been to elevate the victim doomed to the pile, so that the people crowding round might see and hear her taking leave of life.

[3] This custom may have given rise to the superstition which Holmberg, in his "Northmen in Heathen Times," describes as still existing in Sweden.

'She said the first time, "Lo! I see my father and my mother." The second time, "Lo! here I see seated all my deceased relations." The third time, "Lo! here see I my master seated in Paradise—Paradise, beautiful and green! My master, surrounded by his men and his menials! He calls for me; bring me to him."'

"They convey her thereupon to the ship. She took the two bracelets from her arms and gave them to the crone whom they called the dead man's angel, the same who was to slay her; so took she the rings off her feet, and gave them to the two young girls who had attended on her, and who were the dead man's angel's daughters.[1] They made her next mount the ship, before they should convey her into the tent. Now came men with shields and staves, and brought her a beaker of strong drink.[2] She sang a song on receiving it, and drank it out. Folk said to me that she thereby took leave of her friends. They reached her a second beaker; she took it, and sang a long time. The old crone bade her hasten to empty it and go into the tent where her master was. I saw her; she was out of herself. In attempting to go into the tent, she stuck by the head in the space between the tent and the ship. The old hag caught hold of her by the head and dragged her in with her, while the men commenced to beat their shields with their staves, that her shrieks might not be heard, and so frighten other girls and make them unwilling to die with their

[1] Indian women who were burned with their husbands gave away their ornaments to their friends. See Ward's View of the History, &c., of the Hindoos, 3d edit. vol. ii. p. 99.

[2] It was also the custom in India to make the victims doomed to the pile intoxicated before they were sacrificed. The Brahmins say that widows and concubines willingly share the pile with their lord's corpse. But this is not confirmed by the evidence of Europeans. Ward, in his "View of the History of the Hindoos," says: "The Brahmins drive the trembling, half-dead widow round the pile, and cast her like a log of wood by the side of her dead husband; they press her down with bamboo poles, and hold her down with them till the fire has bereft her of the power to rise up and run away. Her shrieks are drowned by a tremendous beating of drums." Egerton, in "A Winter's Tour in India," mentions that, at the burning of the Queen of Nepaul's body, which took place immediately before his arrival, according to some accounts five, and according to others three, young females were burned with the corpse. It was given out that they had done it willingly, but several Hindoos insisted that it never was done willingly, but that they stupefied them with opium and bhang, and bound them to the pile.

lords. Now went six men into the tent,[1] . . . and laid her by the side of her lord. While two men held her hands fast, and two her feet, the woman whom they called the dead man's angel wound a cord round her neck, and gave the ends to two men, so that they should pull them, while she herself took a large broad-bladed knife, struck it in between her ribs and drew it out again, and the men choked her with the cord till she was dead.

"Then the dead man's nearest relative stepped forth, took a fire-brand and kindled it.[2] Naked, and walking backwards, he approached the ship, holding the brand in one hand, and both his hands behind his back, until the wood under the ship was beginning to burn. Then every man present straightway brought more wood. Each one carried a stick, the one end of which had been kindled in the fire, and cast it into the blazing wood. The wood straightway caught fire, and then they applied it to the ship, with the tent, the dead man, the girl, and all that was in the ship. A heavy storm, which was just beginning to rage, fanned the flames, and drove them aloft to a great height. A Russian (Norseman) was close by my side, and I heard him speak to my interpreter who was by him. I asked what he had said. 'He says,' replied the interpreter, 'that you Arabs are fools, because you take the man whom you most have loved and honoured, and put him down into the earth where vermin and worms devour him; we, on the contrary, burn him up in a twinkling, and he goes straight to Paradise.' The Russian thereupon burst into a hearty laugh, and added, 'His god seemed to have a strong affection for him by the gale he raised to give him a speedy dismissal.' In reality, it was but a short time when the ship, the pile of wood, the girl, and the dead man, had vanished into ashes. They erected on the spot where the ship had been drawn up on the land something resembling a round hillock,[3] on whose midst they set up a stout birch trunk.[4] On it they carved the

[1] Here some words are also omitted for the reason previously mentioned.

[2] In India also the pile is kindled by a near relation, and the kindred standing by when the pile is fired take seven pieces of wood, break them asunder, and, with the back turned towards the pile, cast them into it.

[3] The Arab seems not to have been present at the throwing up of the grave-mound.

[4] The reason why they set up a birch tree post on the grave-hill was very likely because they could not find in the neighbourhood the customary bauta-stone, or if a

names of the dead man and of the Russian (Norse) King. Thereafter they all went away."

Ibn-Fozlan's account of the funeral customs prevailing in the region of the Volga at the period when he visited it is curiously corroborated by a passage in the Saga of King Olaf the Holy (Olaf Haraldsson), who reigned in Norway from A.D. 1015 to A.D. 1030. It is there incidentally mentioned, in describing an expedition which King Olaf sent to Bjarmaland, the region lying between the White Sea and the Volga, that—

"It was so established in this land, that when a rich man died, all his moveable goods were divided between the dead man and his heirs. He (the dead man) got the half part, or the third part, or sometimes less, and that part was carried out into the forest and buried—sometimes under a mound, sometimes in the earth, and sometimes even a house built over it."

As an additional illustration of the curious customs connected with the burning of the dead among the northern nations, I have appended the following account of the funeral ceremonies of the Estonians (the "Æstiorum gentes" of Tacitus,—"quibus ritus habitusque Suevorum, lingua Brittanicæ proprior"), whose territories lay to the east of the mouth of the river Vistula. This account is taken from King Alfred's Saxon version of Orosius, translated by Dr Ingram.[1] King Alfred is describing the manners of the Estonians, from the account of Wolfstan, who had seen them, and the narrative proceeds to the following effect:—

"There is also this custom with the Estonians, that when any one dies, the corpse continues unburnt with the relatives and friends for at least a month, sometimes two; and the bodies of kings and illustrious men, according to their respective wealth, lie sometimes even for half a year before the corpse is burned, and the body continues above ground in the house; during which time drinking and sports are prolonged till the day in which the body is consumed. Then, when it is carried to the funeral pile, the substance of the deceased which remains after these drinking

suitable stone could have been found, that the dead man's followers could not remain so long as would be necessary to carve the Runic inscription in stone.

[1] Dr Ingram's Inaugural Lecture on the Utility of Anglo-Saxon Literature, as quoted in Archæological Journal, vol. v. p. 290.

festivities and sports is divided into five or six heaps, sometimes even more, according to the proportion of what he happens to be worth. These heaps are so disposed, that the largest heap shall be about one mile from the town, and so gradually the smaller at lesser intervals, till all the wealth is divided, so that the last heap shall be nearest the town where the corpse lies.

"Then all those are to be summoned together who have the fleetest horses in the land, for a wager of skill, within the distance of five or six miles from these heaps, and they all ride a race towards the substance of the deceased. Then comes the man that has the winning horse towards the first and largest heap, and so each after the other, till the whole is seized upon. He procures, however, the least heap who takes that which is nearest the town; and then every one rides away with his share, and keeps the whole of it. When the wealth of the deceased has been thus exhausted, then they carry out his corpse from the house and burn it, together with his weapons and clothes; and generally they spend the whole substance by the long-continuance of the body within the house, together with what they lay in heaps along the road, which the strangers run for and take away.

"It is also an established custom with the Estonians that the dead bodies of every tribe or family shall be burned; and if any man findeth a single bone unconsumed they shall be fined to a considerable amount."

In the Capitulary of Charlemagne, A.D. 785, the practice of burning the dead is forbidden as a capital offence:—

"Si quis corpus defuncti hominis secundum ritum Paganorum flamma consumi fecerit, et ossa ejus ad cinerem redigerit, capite punietur."

Before finally quitting this curious subject, it may not be out of place to append a few notices regarding the origin of cremation,[1] the customs by which it was characterised, and the latest instances on record.

The origin of cremation appears to have been due to the notion of purification by fire. It is noticed by Eustathius that Euripides says that the body of Clytemnestra was purified by fire. Iamblichus says that fire destroyed whatever it found material in the sacrifice, purified and released

[1] See a learned paper on this subject, by Rev. Dr John Jamieson, in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, vol. viii. p. 83.

it from the bonds of matter, and by reason of its purity made things fit for the fellowship of the gods; and, according to Lucan, the power of flame carried the soul into the eternal world.[1] Compare with this the lines of Silius Italicus describing the funeral of Paulus:—

"Recens crepitantibus undique flammis,
Æthereas anima exultans evasit in auras.—"*Lib.* x.

Eustathius expressly states that "it was a custom among the Greeks to burn their dead, which custom still remains among some northern barbarians; and they do this to indicate that the spiritual part of man, being carried upwards as in a chariot of fire, rises with heavenly objects, but that the earthly remains behind." It is curious, as illustrative of the notion of purification by fire, that the Greeks and Romans forbade the cremation of the bodies of those who had been killed by lightning, while also it is said that the funeral pile of Hercules was kindled by the thunderbolt of Jove. The same notion of purification appears to have actuated those who gave themselves alive to the flames. This is the reason given by Porphyry: "They cast their body into the fire that they may separate the soul from it in a state of the greatest purity."

Quintilian, speaking of the soul, says, "Quoties humani pectoris carcerem effugerit, et exonerata membris mortalibus, levi se igne lustraverit petere sedes inter astra."

According to Pliny,[2] the ancient Romans practised inhumation, although it would seem from the prohibition, which Plutarch says Numa issued against the burning of his body, that cremation must have been practised in his time. Cicero[3] states that the Greeks, during the reign of Cecrops, practised inhumation, and Elian[4] attests the same thing of the Athenians. Tertullian, remarking that some of the Gentiles, in the early ages of Christianity, disapproved of the method of burning, because they wished to spare the soul, which hovered over the body after death, adds, "But we have another reason, that of piety, not as flattering the reliques of the soul, but as detesting cruelty even to the body, because being itself man, it does not deserve to be subjected to a penal death."[5] He also ridicules the common custom among the heathen, of first burning their

[1] Pharsalia, lib. ix. 9. [2] Hist. Nat., lib. viii. c. 54. [3] De Leg. lib. ii.
[4] Var. Hist. lib. v. 14, vii. 19. [5] De Anima, c. 51.

dead, and then cooking the funeral feasts on the same fires.[1] We obtain the curious information from Minucius Felix, that the heathens taunted the Christians with this, that they execrate the funeral pile, and condemn sepulture by burning, as if it precluded the possibility of the resurrection. To which Minucius replies, that they feared no injury by this kind of sepulture, as the heathen believed, but they adhered to the custom of inhumation as the more ancient and the better mode.[2]

That there is ground for believing inhumation to have been the earlier mode of sepulture, may be inferred from the fact that, among the Institutes of Lycurgus, it is enacted that the dead should be deposited in the ground, wrapped in scarlet cloth, and surrounded with olive leaves. The Greeks ascribe the introduction of cremation to Hercules; and it was not a new thing among them in the time of the Trojan war. It is probable, however, that both customs prevailed side by side for a long time, until the one gradually gave way before the popular predilection for the other. That they were both in use in the time of Socrates may be inferred from the language ascribed to him by Plato, when he says that, after he is dead, it will be a matter of complete indifference to him whether he is burned or buried.

It is to be remarked, however, that the presence of charcoal in graves is not necessarily an evidence of the cremation of the body. Instances have been remarked of the abundant presence of charcoal in and about cists containing urns of the food-vessel type, deposited with unburnt skeletons. Durandus[3] mentions the placing of embers and incense in Christian graves, and also of the placing of charcoal in the grave to serve as an imperishable protest against using the soil of the grave for secular purposes.[4] The old liturgists allude to the placing of charcoal and incense,

[1] "Ego magis ridebo vulgus, tunc quoque quum ipsos defunctos atrocissime exurit, quos postmodum gulosissime nutrit, iisdem ignibus et promerens et offendens."—De Resurrectione, c. 1.)

[2] "Veterem et meliorem consuetudinem humandi frequentamus."—Min. Fel. Octavius, pp. 327–8, edit. Ludg. 1672.

[3] "In testimonium quod terra illa in communes usus amplius redigi non potest; plus enim durat carbo sub terra quam aliud."—Lib. vii. c. 35.

[4] See also Cochet. Normandie Souterraine, I. pp. 198, 253, 304; Kemble, Horæ Ferales, pp. 98, 104; Wylie, Fairford Graves, p. 29; Professor Rolleston, Frilford Graves, in Archæologia, vol. xlii. part ii. p. 426.

as well as earthen vessels containing holy water, in the graves of the dead in the 12th and 13th centuries. Oberlin says this custom ceased in the 13th century; but Wylie is of opinion that recent researches have proved its existence in France down to the 16th century.[1] The custom of placing earthen vessels in graves has come down almost to our own time in remote districts such as La Bresse and Morvan in France.[2]

The funeral feast held at the open graves of the departed was a subject of scandal among the early Christians from the excesses which arose out of it, and is frequently denounced in the writings of the early Christian Fathers.[3] In the collection of the Canons of the Greek Synods, by Martin, Bishop of Braga, who died in A.D. 580, it is said, "Non oportet, non liceat Christianis prandia ad defunctorum sepulchra deferre, et sacrificari mortuis."

The practice of burying with the dead the objects of daily use during life has also survived to very recent times. Weinhold states[4] that, in some remote districts in Sweden, the tobacco pipe, the pocket knife, and the filled brandy flask, were placed in the grave by the relatives of the deceased, and Keysler mentions that, in his time, the Lapps buried with the dead man his bow and arrows, his hatchet, and his flint and steel.[5]

[When the foregoing was passing through the press the following account of the cremation of the body of the Maharajah of Judpore, who died on the 13th February 1873, was going the round of the newspapers. It seems to me to be of sufficient interest to warrant its insertion here by way of contrasting an authentic account of cremation in the 19th century[6] with that of the 10th century. The writer, a native, dating from Judpore, February 21st 1873, says :—

[1] Proc. Soc. Antiq., Lond. 1853, p. 47.

[2] Cochet, Archæologie ceramique, 1860, p. 1.

[3] See Archæologia, vol. xlii. part ii. p. 424.

[4] Altnordischen Leben, p. 493, cited by Prof. Rolleston, Archæol., vol. xlii. p. 425

[5] Keysler Antiquitates Septentrionales, p. 173.

[6] Curiously enough, the same newspaper which contained the account of the cremation of the Rajah's body, contained also an account of the burning of the bodies of the captain and four sailors of the brig Champion of Banff, at Madeira. The vessel had been driven ashore, and the men were drowned. The bodies came ashore, but as the Roman Catholic law of the island did not permit their interment, they were coated with tar and publicly burned by the authorities, in spite of the remonstrances of the resident English.

"On the 13th inst., the reigning Maharajah Takht Singh departed this life at the age of 52, after a brilliant reign of 28 years. Immediately after his death, preparations were made for the ceremony of cremation. Early in the morning his corpse was dressed in the royal robes, and decked out with jewellery to the value of one lakh and 50,000 rupees (£15,000). Placed on a sedan chair in a sitting posture, the deceased Rajah was then carried to the appointed spot, followed by the usual cavalcade and a band of musicians. In the front of the procession were two elephants laden with gold and silver coins to the amount of one lakh and 25,000 rupees (£12,500), which were scattered at every hundred paces among the spectators. In such a dense crowd the struggle to obtain possession of the coins was something terrible to witness. At a distance of six miles from the capital the corpse was brought to the Rajah's ancestral place of cremation. A large funeral pile had been constructed of sandal wood, and quantities of combustible materials, and upon this the corpse, fully attired with all the jewellery, and wrapped in Cashmere shawls, was reverently laid. The Brahmins set fire to the pile, and as the flames darted up in the air, such a deafening wail was uttered by the surrounding crowd that for a moment I was fairly stunned. After a short time I tried to make my way near the pile, but the heat was so terrific that it was impossible to approach within a hundred yards of it. In the course of a few hours the corpse was entirely consumed, not the slightest trace of it remaining. The embers were left for two days to cool, after which the ashes were brought back to the palace, with great pomp and ostentation, and will in due time be carefully sent to the holy places. The deceased Rajah had a considerable number of wives and concubines, many of whom expressed a strong desire to immolate themselves on the funeral pile of their late lord—some because they were really grieved at his loss, and others no doubt because it was considered respectable. Thanks, however, to the influence of the British rule and the interference of the Governor-General's agent, it was not practicable to revive the barbarous custom of human sacrifice. On previous similar occasions as many as a dozen women were obliged to submit to self-immolation, but on this occasion everything passed off quietly, and without any injury to human life."]