

IV.

NOTICE OF THE EXAMINATION OF A CIST, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER ADD—AT CRINAN, ARGYLLSHIRE. BY REV. R. J. MAPLETON, CORR. MEM. S. A. SCOT.

About a quarter of a mile from Old Crinan, *i.e.*, the hamlet from which the Crinan-Canal takes its name, there is a small cave in the face of some rocks, that recede from the shore of the River Add, and form a semicircular recess of flat ground; this is a favourite spot for tinkers and tramps to camp in. On the other side of the parliamentary road that runs by, there is a wide expanse of sand that soon merges into wet moss land, and in this sand, which is covered by water only at high tides, there is an extensive deposit of large oyster shells: evidently a bed of oysters when the sea covered that portion of land, *i.e.*, before the rising of the 25 foot beach. A fortnight ago a tinker had pitched his camp there, and wishing to avoid the cold winds, dug out some of the soil, to make the cave larger and deeper. In doing so he came upon a "stone coffin," as he called it, and a quantity of bones. I immediately went to the spot to examine the place, and

¹ More probably in that of the former, or about the close of the sixteenth century, the spelling "Brus" of the name being discontinued about the close of that century and the more modern one of Bruce being then adopted.

found the cist itself destroyed by the tinker, but it appeared to have been a very rough one. Upon digging down and all around it, we found mixed with soil and with lumps of stone, human bones, the bones and teeth of a pig, a few bones of a cow, a great quantity of cockle, periwinkle, scallop, and oyster shells; also two pieces of flint, one of which was manufactured, and about 24 pieces of an urn, or rather of two urns, one of which, the larger, was very thick and coarse, the other apparently of the ordinary size and make, the only ornamentation being lines made by the impression of a cord. All these things were mixed up indiscriminately, several of them in ground beyond the cist, and not disturbed by the tinker, evidently showing that some disturbance had taken place years ago. The human bones were clearly belonging to at least two persons, as the weight and substance of the bones were very different. One lower jaw is perfect, but only small portions of a skull were found here and there among the mass. It was difficult to make out the history of the place. It seemed to me, however, that there had been an original burial, and that this burial had been disturbed by a subsequent burial. That the spot had also been occupied as a dwelling, and the shells and animal bones and flint were the refuse of their food (a small "kitchen-midden"), and that this had all been disturbed at some later period, as shells and bones and urn were all mixed together.

The important feature in this burial and dwelling is the presence of the oyster shells. It is clear that the oysters must have been used as food. from whence were they procured? The nearest known spot, where oysters can now be procured, is a sea Loch 3 or 4 miles away; but there was a large oyster-bed close to the cave, not 100 yards off. Is it not reasonable to suppose that it was from this bed of oysters that the people drew their supplies? If this be so, it may throw some light upon the age or date of the circumstance. The burial certainly took place before the dwelling, and the dwelling probably before the sea receded from its old level, *i.e.*, probably before the raising of the 25 foot beach.