

On some of the more remarkable

BRITISH MONUMENTS

IN DEVON.

“ Ad quæ noscenda iter ingredi, transmittere Mare solemus. Ea sub
 “ oculis posita negligimus seu quia ita natura comparatum ut prox-
 “ imorum incuriosi, longinqua sectemur: seu quod omnium rerum
 “ cupido languescit, quam facilis occasio est: seu quod differimus,
 “ tanquam sæpe visuri quod datur videre, quoties velle cernere.”

Plinii Epistol. Lib. 8. E. 20.

NOTHING can more tend to the amuse-
 ment, if not to the enlargement of the human
 mind, than a retrospective view of the earlier
 ages of the world. From the contemplation
 of the manners of mankind in a ruder and
 more uncivilized period, a fund of curious and
 rational entertainment may be drawn; and,
 perhaps, if we were to form a just compari-
 son between the darkness which then brooded
 over

over the intellectual world, and the luminous rays that now encircle it, the result may not be less productive of instruction.

The farther we go back into history, and the more minutely and impartially we enquire into the condition of mankind, we shall have the more to wonder, at the slow progress which the human mind made in the attainment of that knowledge, which (whether it be considered in the form of science or religion,) was stored with a profusion of blessings. It might have been supposed that the genius of human nature, so intuitive and comprehensive as we now find it, would at once have grasped at a vast number of advantages, which were sparingly discovered by mere accident, or by the most gradual advances. Yet those who evolve the pages of antiquity, will, with astonishment, perceive what clouds of ignorance obscured the intellect! what mists of error! what wretchedness! what barbarity! The ancient Briton, as the savage which then prowled among the forests, rushed from his cave, or wicker habitation, in the pursuit of a similar prey, and when acquired, fed on it in the same voracious manner; while the Druid, the Priest and Tyrant

Tyrant of this wild race, shackled it with the chain of superstition, and terrified it with the perpetration of "deeds unutterable."

In a review of so dark a period, we shall with difficulty be induced to believe, that man was the same being we now find him. The posterity, however, of the savage who was rough as his native wilds, have been those who have chiefly contributed to the refinement of human nature; who have thrown a polish on human society; have adorned the globe which they inhabit; and have placed, within the attainment of every individual, the means of being as happy as elegance, science, humanity, and true religion will admit of in this present state of existence. Though the sketch I have taken of the first and rudest period of the natives of Britain, shows them to have been highly barbarous and uncivilized; yet an enquiry into their manners will not be unattended with amusement and advantage. The search also after any of those relics that may elucidate their history, will be deemed, by many, an undertaking of the most pleasing and instructive kind. I shall therefore, however I may fail in the latter, attempt the former, in laying before you a cursory dissertation

dissertation on the monuments now subsisting in this county, which we have reason to ascribe to the Britons, or to some of those marauding nations of the north, so repeatedly making their incursions into this island; who, whether of Gothic or Celtic origin, yet evidently adopted similar rites in their superstition, and have, in their respective countries, left monuments of the same kind behind them for posterity to contemplate.

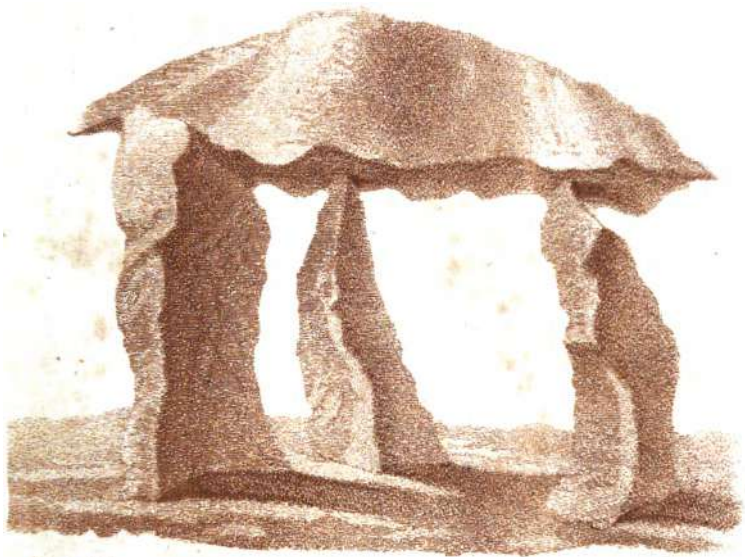
Those remains of the British æra, which we can with probability ascribe to it, are but few; and are, in general, to be met with in those wild and unfrequented parts, where the hand of agriculture could have but little prospects of reaping a produce that might compensate its labors. The interest of the husbandman seems to be inimical to the preservation of such objects of the antiquarian's veneration: in his language, they cumber the ground, and the materials may be converted to serviceable uses. 'Tis to this circumstance, doubtless, that such rude monuments are so rarely to be found in the more cultivated parts of the kingdom, and that we hear of them only on barren rocks or plains, in those spots
where

where strata of the same stone abound, and which appear to be

“ Non rastris hominum, non ulli obnoxia curæ.”

In the mountainous parts of Wales and Scotland, on the plains of Sarum, in the wastes of Derbyshire and Cornwall, these huge monuments of the first natives of this island are frequently discovered. In our county they are rare; the descriptions of these to which I shall now confine myself, were taken on the several spots.

The CROMLECH is the most considerable monument of any that now remain. The only one in the county is situate on a farm called Shel-stone, in the parish of Drewsteignton (so named, I should conceive, not from the Norman Drogo, as Risdon hath asserted,) but from this and other relics therein remaining, appropriated to the Druids, simply deriving its appellation from the residence of the Druids on the river Teign. The Cromlech here, is perhaps the most perfect in the kingdom. The covering stone or quoit hath three supporters; it rests on the pointed tops of the southern and western ones, but that on the north side upholds it on its inner inclining surface



J. Smith delin

J. Alton fecit

A Cromlech at Drewsteington

surface somewhat below the top, its exterior sides rising several inches higher than the part on which the super-incumbent stone is laid. This latter supporter is seven feet high—indeed they are all of such an altitude, that I had not the least difficulty in passing under the impost erect, and with my hat on; the height, therefore, of the inclosed area, is at least six feet. Of the quoit I made a measurement, and found the dimensions to be, from the north to the southern edge, 14 feet and half; and from the east and west it was of similar length. These edges or angles seeming to present themselves (as far as I could make an observation from the sun,) exactly to the cardinal points. The width across was ten feet. The form of this stone was oblate, not gibbous, but rounding from the under face, rising from the north about 13 inches higher than in the other parts; yet so plane on its superficies, that I could stand on it, or traverse it without apprehension of danger. That the Cromlech was a monument of the Britons, there can be no doubt; but that it was a Druidical altar, and of old, applied to sacrificial uses, cannot now be ascertained. Borlace and others who have treated
this

this subject, judge the species of monument to have been sepulchral; and there is reason for the supposition, since they are often found erected on barrows, which are avowedly sepulchral. Indeed, in Ireland, the matter hath been sufficiently elucidated; for bones have been absolutely found in the area which some of them inclosed. Though Borlase, therefore, failed in Cornwall, it rests on more than probability, that, to whatever other purposes it might have been applied the use and intent of the Cromlech, that is, the crooked (or as some interpret the word, consecrated stone,) was primarily to distinguish and do honor to the dead; and at the same time to inclose the venerated reliquiæ, by placing the supporters and covering stone in such a manner as to be a security to them on every side.

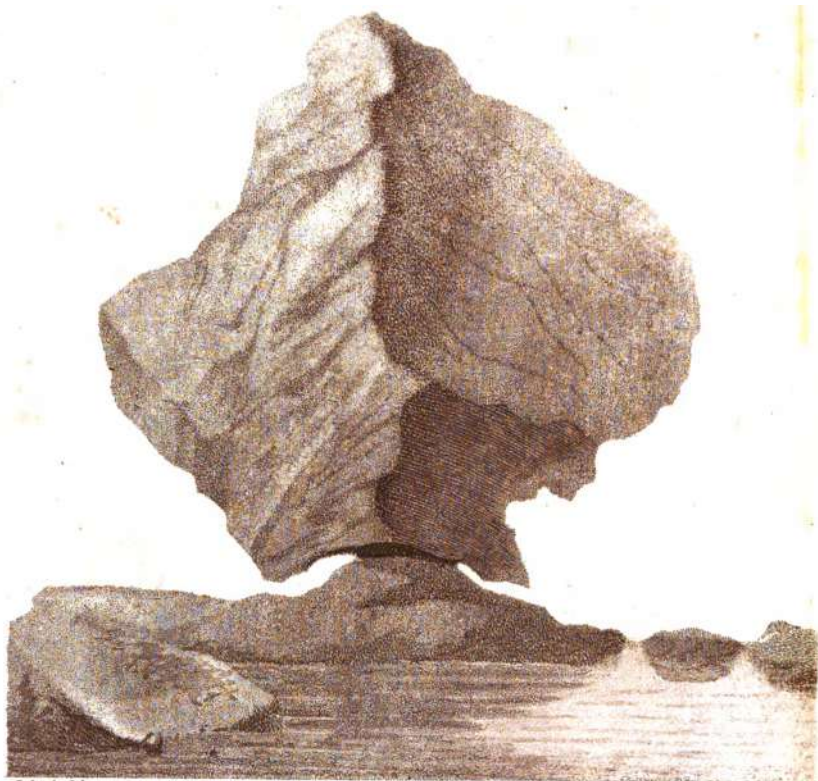
This opinion receives additional weight, and is corroborated by the usage of the northern nations; for though they were chiefly Gothic, yet some of their ritual observances and religious customs were analogous to those of Celtic origin; indeed we may well suppose, that in those early and barbarous ages, the habits and customs of men were nearly the same in every part of the globe; “for the
more

more mankind are considered in a state of wild and uncivilized life, the greater resemblance they will be seen to possess in their manners, because savage nature, reduced almost to mere brutal instinct, is simple and uniform; whereas art and refinement are infinitely various."—Olaus Wormius 'authenticates the existence of monuments of this nature among the northern tribes, and the uses to which they had been applied.' "Sed neque veteribus Gothis, aliisque Gentibus in Septentione, defuit *memoria majorum*, quin et eis exhiberent (quos humi recondere placuit) honorabiles statuas lapidum-excelforum, prout hodie cernuntur mirâ compagine immensa Saxa, in modum altissimæ latissimæque Januæ sursum transversumque viribus Gigantum erecta." The ignorance of succeeding ages not being able to comprehend how such stupendous edifices could be constructed by the common race of mortals, have attributed them to giants and dæmons; but although we derive from the mechanical powers a variety of succours in the transporting and raising large and ponderous bodies, of which we well know the founders of these monuments could not have the assistance, yet it hath been well observed, that

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great

great things might be accomplished by men of such mighty force, as we are certain many of these antient tribes possessed in strength and remarkable stature, co-operating together. The lances, helmets, swords, and other arms, which have been preserved in the museums of the curious; the accoutrements of the heroes of other times, are a full conviction of their vast size, and are objects of curiosity and astonishment to those whose ancestors are reputed to have wielded them. This circumstance, however, is not solely applicable to Europe, for by our later discoveries we learn, that the Americans (particularly those of Peru,) unaided by the engines we apply to these purposes, have raised up such vast stones in building their temples and fortresses, as the architect of the present times would perhaps not hazard the attempt to remove. One may, however, conceive, that perseverance, united with strength, might be enabled to convey such immense stones from one place to another, by means of the lever and artificial banks. Down the slopes of these they might cause them to slide, and afterwards set them upright by letting them down into perpendicular pits; having, by the same means, placed their



J. Smith del.

J. Allen fecit.

A Logan stone on a rock in the River Feing.

their transfoms on them, they might clear away the mound which they had raised. I shall quit the discussion of the Cromlech with the conclusion, that most probably they were 'tumuli honorabiliores'—that they were the appropriated monuments of chief Druids or of princes; and this is confirmed by the appellation of the famous Cromlech in Kent, known by the name of 'Ket's Coity-house,' being the sepulchral monument, or quoit, over the body of Catigeon, a British prince, who was slain in a battle, fought with the Saxons near Aylesford, in the year 455.

LOGAN-STONE.—In the same parish of Drewsteignton is a Rocking or Logan-stone: its British name I found to be yet retained by the country people, who call it a Logging-stone, a stupendous block of granite, detached and resting at its base on a rising narrow point of another mass, deep-grounded in the channel of the river Teign. An equipoise was thus formed, and though by accounts given in the neighbourhood, the motion had ceased to be so sensible, as in former times, it was yet to be produced by pressing against the stone with some force. It is doubtful whether this Logan-stone was ever applied to religious uses by the

Druidical superstition; though we are certain that it cannot be artificial: that such, however, were constructed where there were none naturally so circumstanced, is extremely probable, for as they were employed in deceiving the common people, we may reasonably conclude, that some methods would be used to supply such a deficiency. The power of producing any surprising effect from a natural cause, discovered, perhaps, by accident, and kept secret from the people, was sufficient, with the addition of a few mysterious words or ceremonies, to pass for preter-natural endowments. Thus Toland, in his history of the Druids, is of opinion, that these holy Juglers made the multitude to whom monuments of this kind were sacred, believe that they only could move them. The effect was supposed to be miraculous, and by it they condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought criminals to confess what could in no other way be extorted from them. The dimensions of this stone are enormous; at the west end it is ten feet high, and from the west to the eastern point, the length may be about eighteen feet. The local circumstances of it are almost as extraordinary as the stone itself.

The

The river Teign rolls its waters around, and it is seated among those wild romantic hills, whose shaggy sides are overspread with fragments separated from the craggs above—on the bold tufted crest of the opposite eminence, in Widdon park, groups of deer are seen, during the mid day heats of summer, inhaling the breezes of the hills, and silence would have kept a repose uninterrupted, had it not been broken by the crash of the shattered rocks or the shrill cry of the mountain kite.

“ Along this narrow valley you might see
 “ The wild deer sporting on the upland ground ;
 “ And here and there uprise a stunted tree
 “ Or mossy stone, or rock with ivy crowned :
 “ Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound
 “ Of parted fragments tumbling from on high ;
 “ And from the summit of a craggy mound,
 “ The perching falcon oft was heard to cry,
 “ Or on resounding wings to shoot athwart the sky.”

BEATTIE.

I know of but one other Logan-stone in the county now extant, and that is found among

a carnedd of moorstone rocks on the downs in the neighbourhood of Ashburton; which, though the tender balance is now in a great degree destroyed, was so equipoised a few years since, as to have been an amusing instrument for cracking nuts. It now retains, and is known by no other name than that of the Nutcracker. The equilibrium of this also seems to have been affected by accident, by the operation of winds or rains, or by the decomposition of the smaller stones around, and in magnitude it is much inferior to that before noticed.

ROCK-BASON.—On a common in the vicinity of Dartmoor, among a number of carns, or series of granate rocks, heaped naturally on one another, there is one of an oblate form, serving as a cap to others, which is of a singular and curious appearance: its surface is rather gibbous, swelling into little inequalities, and is in four different places scooped out into cells of various forms; these are all indisputably the effect of art, and seem to have been intended for reservoirs to retain a liquid, that, falling on the superficies of the stone, was to be conducted to them by means of grooves or channels, which appear to be cut in it, in an undulating

*A Rock Bason
on a Horn called Mill-tor in the parish of Widdacombe*



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|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Dimensions</i> | <i>of the Quoit</i> | <i>from West to South</i> | <i>Feet</i> | <i>Inches</i> |
| | | | 12 | 0 |
| | | <i>South to North</i> | 8 | 0 |
| | <i>of the Basons</i> | <i>N^o 1</i> | 2 | 9 |
| | | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| | | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| | | 4 | 1 | 0 |

undulating direction. The sides of them all are rounded, and, diverging from the margin, are well adapted to the more ready reception of whatever shall be poured on the stone.—The lips seem to have been intended for letting out the liquid at will, for cleaning the basins, or for other purposes, and were probably stopped up when that liquid was to be retained. To what uses these caverned stones may have been applied, we have nothing left us but conjecture—no legend or tradition appears to throw any light of importance on the subject; and though as these monuments have been generally found among others, which are expressly dedicated to religious purposes, we may well suppose that they also had their appropriate uses: yet, whether they were altars for the immolating human victims, or (as Dr. Borlase supposes,) for the ritual of water libations, is a matter of uncertainty. That the ancient nations, with but few exceptions, sacrificed men to their gods, is a point too well confirmed to be at all doubted. “Phœnices in bello et pestilentia amicissimos homines immolabant Saturno.” And according to Lactantius, “Carthaginenses (who were a colony of Phœnicians) ab Agathocle victi, quum iratum

fratum sibi Saturnum crederent, ducentos ei nobilissimos juvenes immolabant." Galli Esum et Teutatem humano cruore placabant, I have produced these several instances with a view of shewing from what sources the Britons probably derived their knowledge and observance of this horrid right. Uncivilized nations have been marked for their superstition and barbarity; living in a state of warfare with all nature, among wild forests and gloomy woods, they are beset continually with terrors, and keep themselves armed with ferocity and distrust. Hence that thirst of revenge and destruction which savage tribes cannot dispossess themselves of; hence that impious prejudice which makes them imagine the gods to be as sanguinary as themselves.— Thus, among the more humanized Greeks, the deity, or the manes to those to whom the sacrifice was offered, were invoked to quaff the blood of the immolated victim, of which we have an instance in the Hecuba of Euripides.

“ Δεξαί χρας με τας δε κλητηρις

“ Νεκρων αγωγυς ελθε δε ως πιης μελαν

“ Κορης ακραιφνης αιγ’ ο σο δαρμεθα.”

In

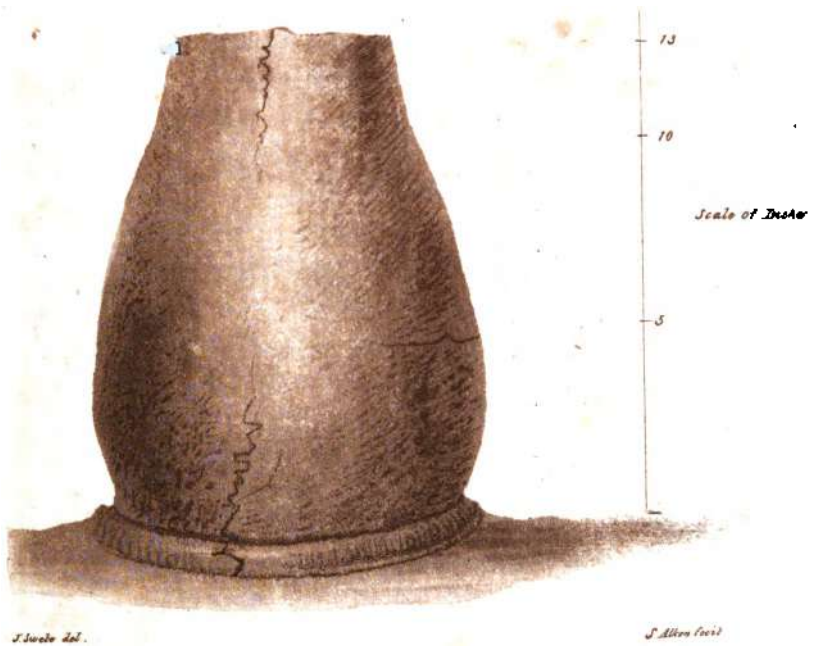
In Friezland, (says an ingenious French author), and in several places of Germany, altars are to be met with composed of such immense stones, that they could neither be destroyed by the ravages of time, nor by the zeal of the first converts to Christianity. These altars, according to the tradition of the inhabitants, have served for those unnatural sacrifices. In Iceland also, an historian of that country records an altar plated with iron, which was seemingly consecrated for the like purpose; and what seems not inapplicable to the present enquiry, upon it was placed a vase of brass, in which was received the blood of the victims; beside it stood a brush, which was made use of to sprinkle the blood upon the bye-standers.

This was in an age when temples had been erected, when the arts had introduced a variety of conveniences; when altars, plated with iron, and brazen vases had been substituted instead of the rude mass of stone, and excavated basin. Thus then we collect that human victims were sacrificed, that their blood flowed into some sort of receptacle, and that with it the people were sprinkled. In the earlier ages all this might have been done,
and

and exhibited on such a stone as that above described.

The only argument Borlase brings of any weight to invalidate this idea, is the difficulty of getting the victim on the rock, which in some few instances hath been found to be 20 feet high. It would indeed, I allow, be a laborious task to raise an ox or a heifer thither; but surely not so in regard to a human victim. If the Druid could climb there for the purpose of lustration, the person who was to be sacrificed might either voluntarily, or by compulsion, be able to do the same. The priest also, from so elevated a spot, might more conspicuously display the horrid rite to the surrounding populace, and have it in his power more easily to sprinkle them with the consecrated blood.

Tho' Dr. Borlase, by his learning and ingenuity, hath made it appear that the rite of lustration among the Druids is not without some traces in history, and that it was very agreeable to the general tenor and cast of their superstition; yet, having some pretext at least for a different conjecture, and some ground to rest on, I shall hope to derive a plea for having thus long trespassed on your patience,
and



An Urn found, inverted, in a Barrow on Haldon.

and shall quit the discussion with a reference to the plate for the figure, and dimensions of the stone and the several basons.

The **BARROW** on Haldown, and the **URN** found in it.—The barrow on Haldown known to the country around, by the appellation of the great stone-heap, which though originally of a conical form, as are all the tumuli in these parts, being now intersected by an opening made in the year 1780, affords a singular and conspicuous object to the subjacent country. The form of this barrow was nearly circular, being rather more than 200 feet in circumference, and in height about 15. By the aid of 14 men a passage into it was effected almost due east, about 8 feet wide; at nearly the same space from the margin was discovered a dry wall about 2 feet high, which was separated from without by very large stones in the forms of piers or buttresses: on arriving near the centre were seen a great many huge stones (all of them flint) placed over one another in a convex manner; and in the middle a larger stone nearly globular, 2 feet in diameter, covering a cell on the ground 2 feet square, formed by 4 stones of considerable size, which were placed upright on their edges.

edges. In this cave, or, as it is termed, Kist-vaen, the urn was found; and what was rather a remarkable circumstance, inverted, containing the ashes and the burnt bones of a youth, as was probable from their being small, and with little muscular impresson. When the urn was removed, these appeared as white as snow, though, soon after they had been exposed to the air, they lost that whiteness. From the size of the tumulus and this circumstance, there seems to be grounds for the conjecture, that the ashes and bones here encased, were the remains of a person of dignity, whose surviving friends, in honor to his memory, had taken care to have them *well burnt* and blanched by the intenseness of the fire λευκα οσρα. Thus, among the Greeks, Homer, describing the magnificent funeral of Patroclus, adds,

“ Next the *white bones* his sad companions place,

“ With tears collected, in a golden vase.”

For it was considered as the highest disgrace which could be offered to the dead body, that it should remain but *half burnt*; and this indignity we find was put upon the corpse of Tiberius,

Tiberius, which Suetonius says, was carried "in amphitheatro semi ustulandum." This urn is 13 inches high, 10 in diameter at the mouth, and 5 at the bottom, near half an inch thick, and holds about 10 quarts; it is made of unbaked clay, smoked, and discolored by its exposure to the fire, and consequently without inscription or embellishment.

One of the most antient modes of sepulture was covering the bodies of the dead with high mounds of earth, or a collected mass of stones, in later times called barrows, (or more properly burrows, a term derived from the Saxon *birighe*, to hide or bury,) in the composition of which (whatever fanciful conjectures may have been started) there can be no doubt but that the tumulus was formed of earth, or stones, or of an intermixture of each, as the strata of the spot around could furnish. Thus, in Wiltshire, they are universally composed of earth and chalk, whilst, in this county, they as invariably consist of stones collected as convenience led from the grounds adjacent.— That this custom prevailed not only among the antient inhabitants of Europe, but in almost every part of the world, appears from old writers on the subject, and from the discoveries

coveries of modern travellers. Ifidore speaks of it as a general usage, "apud majores, Potentes aut sub montibus, aut in montibus sepeliuntur." Bell, in his travels thro' China, notices these sepulchral hills: and in Captain Cooke's account of le Fooga, (one of the Friendly Isles,) he gives a description of one of very large size. All the old historians of the north are diffuse on the point; and tho' our antiquarians in descanting on those which remain in this kingdom, are for referring every vestige of this sort to the Druids; yet, as this kind of monument is so simple and obvious; and as, without doubt, it must have prevailed among many nations of very different origin, so it cannot easily be ascertained whether the barrows on Haldown ought to be ascribed to our Gothic ancestors the Saxons and Danes, or to the more antient inhabitants of Celtic race, the Britons. From local circumstances, and from the contents of the tumulus, a gleam of light is not unfrequently thrown on these matters: with respect to those on Haldown, we might be induced to ascribe them to the Danes, and that perhaps without much temerity, when we consider the numerous encampments in the vicinity, which are generally imputed to that

that nation. Battles may have been here fought, and here may the chieftains slain, have been intumulated; the spot selected, always indeed an object of consequence, was highly conspicuous; and this, the largest burrow on the down, should seem to have been raised in honor of some chief or person of eminence, for the tumulus was large, in proportion to the quality of the deceased, and to the affection, power, or opportunity of his surviving friends: where, however, these local references may be wanting, the contents, such as urns, arms, utensils may give a designation of the people.

The Romans, all the northern nations, the Gauls, the Britons, (whatever might be their general usage,) certainly at times, and on particular occasions, *burnt* their dead, and collected the ashes and bones into *urns*. “*Cineres et ossa, cado sive urna colligebantur;*” and then placed them in the centre of the burrows. These urns were of various forms, elegance, and materials, and from hence, conjectures are deduced, frequently decisive. The Roman urns were generally of the most exquisite workmanship, and formed of precious metals, porphyry, and glass. Virgil

notices

notices the bones of a person which were collected in a brazen urn :

“ *Offaque lecta cado texit Chorinæus ahenò.*”

Among nations, however, less civilized, the arts were in their infancy, and their productions were rude. Thus the urns found in the burrows in these parts, are composed of coarse pottery, rather smoked than burnt, (as in the present instance,) and often of clay unbaked. We may therefore refer them either to the Britons or Danes, who continued Pagans longer than the Saxons in this country. The latter becoming Christians soon after their arrival in the island, left off the heathenish usage of burning bodies, though they still retained the burrows.

From the custom of burning with the dead, or laying in the same grave the arms, spoils, or implements of the deceased, the nation may be also sometimes traced; this likewise the Romans practised, as noticed by Virgil.

“ *Hinc alij spolia occisis direpta Latinis*

“ *Conjiciunt igni, galeas, ensesque decoros*

“ *Frænaque, ferventesque rotas—pars munera nota*

“ *Ipforum clypeos, et non felicia tela.*”

Tacitus

Tacitus relates the same of the Germans, and we find the Scandinavians excited to it by their superstition; for Odin had assured them, that whatever was buried or consumed with the dead, would accompany them to his palace.

From the line in which these burrows (of which there are many,) on Haldown are ranged, it would seem that some road had past that way; and indeed they have a direct tendency to the station now visible, in the park of Lord Clifford at Ugbrook. The Roman sepulchres were often raised near the common roads, and the reason of it is assigned by Varro, who says, "*secundum viam sunt, quo prætereuntes admoneant et se fuisse, et illos esse, mortales.*"

Reflecting on the remote age in which these tumuli were formed, during which lapse of time almost all other monuments have had one common fate, we shall not be surpris'd that these are even now in being. Their size, peculiar composition, and the religious veneration in which they were held, exempted them from the ravages of time, or the more baleful depredations of avarice and sacrilege. "*Maiores nostri statuas multis decreverunt, sepulchra*

chra paucis, sed statuæ intereunt tempestate, vi, vetustate: sepulchrorum autem sanctitas in ipso solo est, quod nullâ vi moveri, neque deleri potest." The prospect from this burrow, to which I now return merely to bid farewell, for its beauty and extent will not often, perhaps, be found rivalled—Mamhead's pine-clad hill, the castellated grandeur of Powderham, the more immediate rural and picturesque scenes of Bickham, Trehill and Oxton; the expanse of ocean stretching to the east, the cathedral towers of Exeter rising on the north; between which (through a fertile wooded valley, decorated with towns and villas of every description,) are seen, flowing on, the widening waters of the river Exe; these form the outlines of a fine picture, the variety and splendor of which can never fail of exciting uncommon admiration.

N. E.

Historical