

ANTIQUITIES
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK.

BEING THE RESULTS OF EXTENSIVE ORIGINAL SURVEYS
AND EXPLORATIONS,

WITH
A SUPPLEMENT

ON THE
ANTIQUITIES OF THE WEST;

ILLUSTRATED BY FOURTEEN QUARTO PLATES AND EIGHTY
ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD:

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FROM THE "SMITHSONIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE."

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the town of Clarence, Erie county, contained not less than four hundred skeletons. A deposit of bones comprising a large number of skeletons was found, not long since, in making some excavations in the town of Black Rock, situated on Niagara River, in Erie county. They were arranged in a circle, with their heads radiating from a large copper kettle, which had been placed in the centre, and filled with bones. Various implements both of modern and remote date had been placed beside the skeletons.

In Canada similar deposits are frequent. Accounts of their discovery and character have appeared in various English publications, among which may be named the "British Colonial Newspaper," of September 24th, 1847, and the "Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal," for July, 1848. From a communication in the latter, by Edward W. Bawtree, M.D., the subjoined interesting facts are derived.

A quantity of human bones was found in one spot, in 1846, near Barrie, and also a pit containing human bones near St. Vincent's. Great numbers were found in the latter, with several copper and brass kettles, and various trinkets and ornaments in common use among the Indians. This discovery led to the examination of a similar pit, about seven miles from Penetanguishene, in the township of Giny. "This pit was accidentally noticed by a Canadian while making sugar in the neighborhood. He was struck by its appearance and the peculiar

pository of the dead. It was a pit excavated to the depth of four or five feet, filled with human bones, over which were piles of sandstone. Hundreds seem to have been thrown in promiscuously, of both sexes and all ages. Numerous barbs or arrow-points were found among the bones and in the vicinity. It has been conjectured that this had been the scene of some sanguinary battle, and that these are the bones of the slain. A tree, standing directly over the spot, had been cut down, upon the stump of which could be counted 230 concentric circles of growth. Rude fragments of pottery, pieces of copper, and iron instruments of rude workmanship, had been ploughed up within the area; also charred wood, corn, and cobs."

sound produced at the bottom by stamping there; and, in turning up earth to a little depth, was surprised to find a quantity of human bones. It was more accurately examined in September, 1847, and found to contain, besides a great number of human skeletons, of both sexes and all ages, twenty-six copper and brass kettles and boilers; three large conch-shells; pieces of beaver-skin in tolerable preservation; a fragment of a pipe; a large iron ax, evidently of French manufacture; some human hair (that of a woman); a copper bracelet; and a quantity of flat auricular beads, perforated through the centre.

"The form of the pit is circular, with an elevated margin; it is about fifteen feet in diameter, and before it was opened was probably nine feet deep from the level of its margin to its centre and bottom; it was, in one word, funnel-shaped. It is situated on the top of a gentle rise, with a shallow ravine on the east side, through which, at certain seasons, runs a small stream. The soil is light, free from stones, and dry. A small iron-wood tree, about two inches in diameter, is growing in the centre of the pit.

"The kettles in the pit were found ranged at the bottom, resting on pieces of bark, and filled with bones. They had evidently been covered with beaver-skins. The shells and the ax were found in the intervals between the kettles. The beads were in the kettles among the bones, generally in bunches or strings.

"The kettles, of which Fig. 9 is an example, resemble those in use at the present day, and appear to be formed of sheet copper, the rim being beaten out so as to cover an iron band which passes around the mouth of the vessel. The iron handle, by which they were suspended, hooks into eyes attached to the band above mentioned. The smallest holds about six gallons; the largest, not far from sixteen gallons. The copper is generally very well



FIG. 9.

preserved; the iron, however, is much corroded. Two of the kettles were of brass.

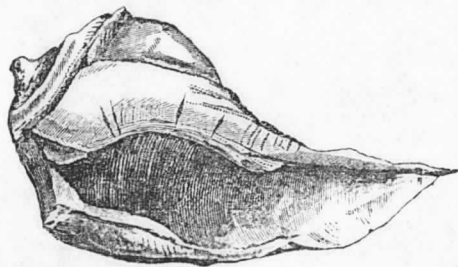


FIG. 10.

"The largest of the conch-shells, Fig. 10, weighs three pounds and a quarter, and measures fourteen inches in its longest diameter. Its outer surface has lost its polish, and is quite honey-combed by age and decomposition; the inside still retains its smooth, lamellated surface. It has lost its color, and appears like chalk. A piece had been cut from its base, probably for making the beads that were found in it.* From the base of the columella of the smallest shell a piece had been cut, evidently for the purpose of manufacturing beads. The extreme point of the base of each shell had a perforation through it.

"The ax, Fig. 11, is of nearly the same model with the tomahawk now in use among the Chippeway Indians, though very much larger, measuring eleven inches in length and six inches and a half along its cutting edge. Numbers of these have been found in the neighborhood on newly cleared land.

"The pipe is imperfect. It is made of

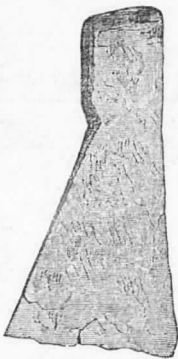


FIG. 11.

* Dr. Bern W. Budd, of New York, states that this shell, the *pyrula perversa*, abounds in the Gulf of Mexico and particularly in Mobile Bay. It has also been found by the officers of the U. S. Coast Survey as far north as Cape Fear, in North Carolina.

the earthenware of which so many specimens are found in the neighborhood, in the form of vessels and pipes. The spots where the manufacture of these articles was carried on are still to be seen in some places.

"The beads are formed of a white, chalky substance, varying in degree of density and hardness; they are accurately circular, with a circular perforation in the centre; of different sizes, from a quarter to half an inch, or rather more, in diameter; but nearly all of the same thickness, not quite the eighth of an inch. They may be compared to a peppermint lozenge with a hole through the centre. They were found in bunches or strings, and a good many were still closely strung on a fibrous, woody substance. The bracelet is a simple band of copper, an inch and a half broad, closely fitting the wrist. The hair is long, evidently that of a woman, and quite fresh in appearance.

"Another pit, about two miles from that just noticed, was also examined in September. It is considerably smaller, being not more than nine feet in diameter, by about the same original depth. It is situated on rising ground, in a light, sandy soil, and there is nothing remarkable in its position. A beech tree, six inches thick, grew from its centre. It contained about as many skeletons as the other pit, but had no kettles in it. The bones were of individuals of both sexes, and of all ages. Among them were a few foetal bones. Many of the skulls bore marks of violence, leading to the belief that they were broken before burial. One was pierced by a round hole, like that produced by a musket-ball. A single piece of a brass vessel was found in the pit; it had been packed in furs. A large number of shell beads, of various sizes, were also found here. Besides these, there were some cylindrical pieces of earthenware and porcelain or glass tubes, from an inch to a quarter of an inch in diameter, and from a quarter to two inches long.* The former had the

* These were clearly the European imitations of the much-prized Indian *wampum*.

appearance of red and white tobacco-pipes, worn away by friction, the latter of red and white glass. A hexagonal body, with flat ends, about an inch and a half in diameter, and an inch thick, was also found. It was composed of some kind of porcelain, of hard texture, nearly vitreous, and much variegated in color, with alternate layers of red, blue, and white. It was perforated through the centre.

"The third of these pits was examined in November, 1847. It is situated in the township of Oro, on elevated ground. The soil is a light, sandy loam. It measures about fifteen feet in diameter, has the distinctly defined elevated ring, but the centre less depressed than in those before examined, which may have resulted from the greater bulk of its contents. On its margin grew formerly a large pine, the roots of which had penetrated through the pit in every direction. The bones, which were of all sizes, were scarcely covered with earth. The skeletons amounted to several hundreds in number, and were well preserved. On some, pieces of tendon still remained, and the joints of the small bones in some cases were unseparated. Some of the skulls bore marks of violence.

"As in the first noticed pit, so in this, were found twenty-six kettles—four of brass and the rest of copper—one conch-shell, one iron ax, and a number of the flat perforated shell beads. The kettles were arranged in the form of a cross through the centre of the pit, and in a row around the circumference. The points of this cross seem to have corresponded with the cardinal points of the compass. All except two of the kettles were placed with their mouths downward. The shell was found under one of the kettles, which had been packed with beaver-skins and bark. The kettles were very well preserved, but had all been rendered useless by blows from a tomahawk. The holes were broken in the bases of the vessels. Should any doubt exist as to the purposes of these pits, the fact that the kettles were thus rendered unserviceable would tend to increase that

doubt, as it appears to have been a proceeding so very contrary to the habits and ideas of the Indians in general.*

"A pipe was found in this pit, described as having been composed of blue limestone or hard clay. On one side it had a human face, the eyes of which were formed of white pearly beads. An iron ax and sundry beads were also found here.

"A fourth pit was opened in December, 1847. It is situated on a gentle slope, in the second concession west of the Penetanguishene road, in the township of Giny. In size it corresponds very nearly with the two first described, and probably contained about the same number of skeletons. In it were found sixteen conch-shells; a stone and clay pipe; a number of copper bracelets and ear ornaments; eleven beads of red pipe-stone; copper arrow-heads; a cup of iron resembling an old iron ladle; beads of several kinds, and various fragments of furs. The shells were arranged around the bottom of the pit, not in a regular row, but in threes and fours; the other articles were found mixed with the bones. The bones were of all sizes, and the skulls uninjured except by time. The accompanying sketch (Fig. 12) will sufficiently indicate the character of the pipes. The arrow-heads, as they are supposed to have been, were simple folds of sheet copper, resembling a roughly-formed ferule to a

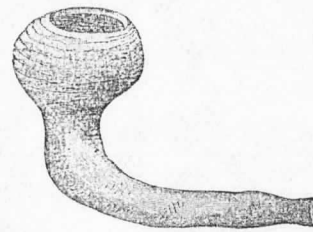


FIG. 12.

walking-stick. Besides the flat circular beads, which were found in great numbers, were a few cylindrical porcelain beads, etc. The red stone beads were five eighths of an inch broad,

* Dr. Bawtree is mistaken in supposing this practice uncommon. The Oregon Indians invariably render useless every article deposited with their dead, so as to remove any temptation to a desecration of the grave which might otherwise exist. A similar practice prevailed among the Floridian Indians.

coffins or boxes, made of flat stones. These coffins measure about two feet in length and nine inches in depth. A small, rude, earthen vessel, accompanied by some small shells, is usually found near the head of each skeleton.—(*Featherstonhaugh's Trav.*, p. 48.) Similar burial-places are found in Missouri, particularly in the vicinity of the Marimec River. The "coffins" are neatly constructed of long flat stones, planted vertically, and adapted to each other edge to edge, so as to form a continuous wall. At either end of the grave the stones project a little above the surface. These stone sarcophagi are usually from three to four, but sometimes as many as six feet in length. The bones in these appear to have been deposited after having been separated from the flesh, in accordance with a practice well known to have been common among many Indian tribes.—(*Beck's Gaz. of Missouri*, p. 274; *James's Exped.*, vol. I., p. 55.) Other extensive cemeteries are found in various parts of the country. One near Alexandria, in Arkansas, is said to be a mile square.*

A very extensive cemetery has been discovered in Bracken county, Kentucky, occupying nearly the whole of the "bottom" or plain, on the south bank of the Ohio, between Bracken and

* Accounts of a number of these ancient cemeteries are given by Gen. Lewis Collins, in his recently published History of Kentucky, from which the following notices are condensed. Six miles N. E. of Bowling Green, Warren county, there is a cave which has a perpendicular descent of about thirty or forty feet. At the bottom are vast quantities of human bones.—(p. 541.) On the north bank of Green River, in the vicinity of Bowling Green, are a great many ancient graves; some of which are formed of stones set edgewise. A similar cemetery occurs near the mouth of Peter's creek, on Big Barren River; the bones are inclosed in stone coffins, which are about three feet long, and from one to one and a half wide. On the same river, three miles above Glasgow, and on Skegg's creek, five miles S. W. of the same place, are caves containing human bones; those in the last-named cavern seem to be exclusively the bones of small children.—(p. 177.) Similar caverns are found in Union and Meade counties, all of which are said to contain human bones in abundance.

Turtle creeks. The village of Augusta has been built upon it in latter times. The following account of this cemetery was communicated to the author by Gen. John Payne, of Augusta. It will be observed that iron was discovered in some of the graves; which demonstrates that a portion of the burials took place since communication was established between the whites and Indians, and very likely within the 18th century.

"The beautiful bottom upon which it stands, extends from one creek to the other, about a mile and a half, and averaging about 800 yards wide. The town is laid off at the upper end of the bottom. The hill back of it is high, but not precipitous; and upon arriving at the summit, it almost immediately falls toward the south with a gentle but deep descent, and immediately there rises another hill. I am thus particular, that you may have a knowledge of the ground where now rest the skeletons of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of an ancient race, as well as of the surrounding localities. The soil of the bottom-land is alluvial.

"The village rests upon one vast cemetery: indeed, the whole bottom appears to have been a great burying-ground; for a post-hole can hardly be dug in any part of it without turning up human bones, particularly within three or four hundred yards of the river bank. The ground appears to have been thrown up into ridges, one end resting on the river bank, and the other extending out some two, others three hundred yards, with depressions between of about one hundred feet, the ridges rising to an elevation of about three feet, and are about fifty or sixty yards wide. These ridges are full of human skeletons, *regularly buried*. My house, at the lower end of the village, stands upon one of these ridges: and in excavating a foundation for the basement story, seventy by sixty feet, and four feet deep, we exhumed one hundred and ten skeletons, numbered by the skulls; but there were several more, the skulls of which were so much decayed and intermingled with others that I did not take them into the calculation. I have no doubt that there were at

least one hundred and forty bodies buried within the bounds above mentioned; and then on every side the skeletons had been severed, a part taken away while the remains were left sticking in the wall. My garden, extending one hundred and fifty feet back from my house, is manured with human bones, and is very productive. I cannot turn up a spadeful of earth without disturbing the remains of the ancient dead.

"Those exhumed by me, I have said, appeared to have been regularly buried; they were about two feet below the surface generally, but some not more than a foot or eighteen inches, invariably with their heads toward the river—the river at this point running south 70° west; some had rough unhammered stones extending on both sides the full length, with a head and foot stone, and a stone covering the head; others, again, would have only a stone on each side of the head, a head and foot stone, and a stone covering the head; others, only a head and foot stone; and others, and much the greatest number, had 'nothing to mark the ground where they were laid.' Most of the bones were entire; but when exposed to the atmosphere, many soon crumbled into dust, though others remained quite firm. Several of the skulls, in a good state of preservation, I had in my house for months, until they were broken up. The teeth appeared sound: I do not recollect an instance of defective teeth; there were many absent teeth, but this evidently arose from their dropping out after burial. There were some skeletons of children: the bones of those mouldered into dust almost immediately.

"Many articles of Indian ornament, use, and warfare were excavated, such as arrow-heads of flint and bone, glass beads, and that peculiar kind of ancient Indian pottery, formed of clay and pulverized or pounded muscle-shells, which had evidently received the action of heat to harden it. Some of the specimens of the latter were very perfect, with well-formed ears, like our pottery ware; some well-formed, handsome stone pipes,

glass beads, both black and blue, ornaments of bone, etc. The other ridges, where they have been opened, have exhibited like results: they are full of human bones, apparently regularly buried; but the skeletons have not been always found to lie at right angles with the river, but sometimes parallel, and at other times diagonally. Upon this bottom, and covering these remains in 1792, when the bottom was first settled, stood some of the largest trees of the forest. We have sycamores now standing on the bank, between these remains and the river, five feet in diameter at the stump.

"There is another fact which perhaps I should mention. Maj. Davis, who owned a farm on the Augusta bottom, about half a mile below the village, passing opposite his lands where a part of the bank had fallen into the river, discovered a bone sticking out of the bank; and upon drawing it out, it proved to be the bone of the right arm, and upon the wrist there were *three hammered iron rings*. They were evidently of manufactured iron, round and formed to fit the wrist: the ends brought together but not welded or closed; the iron was destroyed—it had been so completely oxydized as to break very easily; the workmanship was rough, and the print of the hammer was upon them.

"A full cart-load of bones, taken from the basement story of my house, I had wheeled off into my garden; over them I erected a mound, and crowned it with a summer-house; and there they shall rest for the future.

"About forty years ago, Dr. Overton, then of Lexington, was upon a visit to Augusta. I had heard of a large pile of stones upon the spur of a hill overlooking the Ohio, about three miles above. We went to visit it, worked hard nearly all day, and, at the depth of about five feet in the centre of the pile, found about a half bushel of charcoal and ashes; this was all that we could discover.

"I know of no fortifications, nor of any mounds or tumuli, in