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Note on Prehistoric Internments of the Cotteswold District

by G. Rolleston
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THE FOLLOWING NOTE
ON THE PRÆHISTORIC INTERMENTS OF THE
COTTESWOLD DISTRICT

HAS BEEN FURNISHED TO ME BY

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The principal Præhistoric Interments of the Cotteswold Hills are of two very distinct types, and I believe of two very distinct periods. One class of these barrows is two or even three times as long as broad; and these "Long Barrows" we suppose, and justly, to be older than the other class, the so-called "Round Barrows," because in them we do not find any traces, as we do in the others, of the use of metals. The men of the "Long Barrow" period used stone and bone implements, they were short in stature usually, but always long as regards skull-length when compared with skull-breadth; a state of things which, as the matter has been more and more closely looked into, has been found to prevail in the Neolithic age from the Dniester to the Ebro. The men of the "Long Barrows" examined in Gloucestershire by myself and others did not, so far as I know and recollect, usually practise cremation; though "Long Barrow" men did so elsewhere in these islands. I ascribe this peculiarity to the fact (if fact it be) of their having been peaceably settled here; a view which I owe to old HERMAN, the classical commentator, who held that cremation was practised only or mostly out of necessity, such as wars or pestilence produces. In favour of the suggestion that these "Long Barrow" people enjoyed the blessings of peace, I would adduce the certain fact of the paucity of any axes or hatchets amongst the multitudes of flint arrow-heads in Gloucestershire collections of flint weapons.

The "Long Barrows" of the Cotteswolds resemble the Long Cairns of Caithness in having one of their ends produced into two "horns." This community in an unexplained peculiarity with barrows so far off even now, and so much farther off then, in the absence of roads and railroads, is obviously a point of cardinal importance, both as regards the antiquity and the community of origin, of the populations concerned. The "Round Barrows" we suppose to be later in date because we find metal implements in them. They contain sometimes burnt bodies contained in urns, sometimes burnt bodies not so contained, sometimes unburnt bodies, with or without drinking-cups and food vessels. These last are always found to have been laid in the contracted position, *i.e.*, with the knees, and usually the hands, up at or near the face; and in this particular the buried bodies of the "Long Barrows" resemble them, and with them differ from later races, except in the cases where they appear to have sat up in a chambered grave in the sitting position.

The skeletons from the "Round Barrows" show that their owners were of a more powerful and a taller race than the men of the "Long Barrow" period; and they differ from them as strong men do differ from weak ones in most races except the Teutonic, in being Brachycephalic, *i.e.*, in having subquadrate and not boat-shaped skulls.

Both classes of tumuli resemble each other in one very important point;—both are very large relatively to the number of bodies in them. This fact shows us that in them we have to deal with the burial places of the Kings and Chiefs. "Where are the people?" as Alexander of Russia asked when the Emperors came to England in 1814. I have sometimes thought that a body found accidentally, and as the finders phrase it "humpy crumpy," or as we phrase it "in the contracted position," and in a shallow grave, may have belonged to one of the larger class of the community. Canon GREENWELL has observed and (see Mr. G. F. PLAYNE'S paper on the Early Occupation of the Cotteswold Hills by man; Trans. Cotteswold Field Club, Vol. v.) recorded

the existence of groups of smaller mounds, sometimes 50 or 60 in number, in the neighbourhood of the longer ones, which he thinks may have been "*miseræ plebi commune sepulchrum.*" These small mounds, it is true, have never been found to contain skeletons, but their small size will account for this, as it would give free access to rain and carbonic acid, to say nothing of rodents and carnivores, and the larvæ of insects, all of which animals learn, and act upon the learning, the value of phosphate of calcium.

The absence of the class which Mr. Grandcourt, in Daniel Deronda, speaks of as "brutes," is not hard to account for; he would not have troubled himself to speculate about the cause of it, and we need not labour at a proof that the earth was likely to lie light upon them indeed, as Mr. MATTHEW ARNOLD describes it as lying upon Arminius in his "Friendship's Garland." We may—indeed we must—judge of the past by what we can see and verify in the present. The modern lines quoted by Lord PALMERSTON in the House of Commons

"Rattle his bones over the stones
He's only a pauper whom nobody owns,"

enable us to understand the paucity of skeletons in the often huge tumuli of Præhistoric times, and to feel the force of Juvenal's line,

"Oblitum vulgi perit omne cadaver."

Oxford, August 28th, 1876.

Sept. 27th, 1876.

Since writing as above, I have learnt, under the teaching of G. F. PLAYNE Esq., to recognize in the Pit-dwellings on Minchinhampton Common and Selsley Hill, described by him, Proceedings Cotteswold Field Club, Vol. 5, pp. 286-288—fasciculus for 1874-1875, pp. 213-214, the dwellings used by the Præhistoric men during life. If we put ourselves, in imagination, into the condition of these savages, much as some of our countrymen

have of late been putting themselves in feeling into *rapport* with worse savages than they, we may see them occupying the open hill tops whilst the valleys are densely covered with woods. Huts, such as RAPIN saw in Ireland, raised over Mr. PLAYNE'S pits would be scattered sparsely over the open plateaus; round them would be seen a few long-nosed long-legged black swine feeding, with, here and there, a goat tethered: at points distant from any of the huts a few deer, either *elaphus*, *dama*, or *capreolus*, would be seen, at the right season, gliding along the rim of the forest, which sheltered them and gave mast to the pigs aforesaid, but defied the stone weapons of their owners. In the huts the male savages would be found lying idle, whilst the females would be cooking or cowering round a fire outside them, forming as a whole a group more instructive than pleasant to couteemplate.