

fired gunpowder. A boy, about ten years old, son to the under-tenant, was also struck down, as he was standing at the door, but not hurt. The father and his daughter felt no ill effects; but saw the lightning roll on the floor, and thought the room was on fire.

XV. *An Account of the Peat-pit near Newbury in Berkshire; in an Extract of a Letter from John Collet, M. D. to the Right Reverend Richard Lord Bishop of Oflory, F. R. S.*

My Lord, Newbury, Decemb. 2, 1756.

Read Feb. 24, 1757. **N**OW I am mentioning the peat, I beg leave to assure your Lordship, that tho' some persons have asserted, that after the peat has been cut out, it grows again after some years; yet this is not true of the peat found here, none of the peat-pits, which were formerly dug out, and have lately been opened again, affording the least reason to justify such an opinion; but, on the contrary, the marks of the long spade (with which they cut out the peat) are still plainly visible all along the sides of the pits, quite down to the bottom; and are now as fresh as if made but yesterday, tho' cut above fifty years ago: which shews also, that our peat is of too firm a texture to be pressed together, and to give way, so as to fill again the empty pits: which perhaps may be the case in some of the mosses, where the pits are found after some years to be filled up again. The

The town of Newbury lies north and south, in the shape of a Y, cross a valley; which valley runs east and west, and is here about a mile broad, the river Kennet running along the middle of it. The peat is found in the middle of this valley, on each side of the river, extending in all from between a quarter of a mile to about half a mile in breadth; and in length, along the valley, about nine miles westward, and about seven eastward; and I believe much further, tho' not yet discovered, and perhaps with some intermissions.

The ground it is found in is meadow land, and consists chiefly of a whitish kind of earth: under this lies what they call *clob*, being a peat-earth, compounded of clay, of a small quantity of earth, and some true peat: it is from four to eighteen inches thick; and where the earth above it is but thin, it is sometimes full of the roots of plants, that grow on the surface of the ground: and if the meadow also be moorish, the sedge and flags will shoot their roots quite thro' it into the true peat, which lies directly under this clob.

The top of the true peat is found at various depths, from one foot to eight feet below the surface of the ground; and the depth or thickness of this peat is also very different, from one foot to eight or nine feet, the ground below it being very uneven, and generally a gravel. My friend Mr. Osgood has dug two feet into this gravel, to see if any peat lay below it, but could not find any.

The truest and best peat has very little (if any) earth in it; but is a composition of wood, branches, twigs, leaves, and roots of trees, with grass, straw, plants,

plants, and weeds; and lying continually in water makes it soft and easy to be cut thro' with a sharp peat-spade. The colour is of a blackish brown; and if it be chewed between the teeth it is soft, and has no gritty matter in it, which the clob has. It is indeed of a different consistence in different places, some being softer, and some firmer and harder; which may perhaps arise from the different sorts of trees it is composed of.

To get at the peat, they first dig up the surface of the ground till they come to the clob, throwing the earth into the empty pits, from which they have already cut out the peat: they then dig up the clob, and either sell it to the poor for firing, or lay it in heaps, to burn to ashes, to be sold to the farmers. Then they cut out the true peat, with a peculiar kind of spade, in long pieces, vulgarly called long squares, about three inches and a half broad every way, and four feet long, if the thickness of the peat will allow that length: and as they cut it out in long pieces, they lay them in a regular order carefully, in rows upon the ground, to be dried by the sun and wind. If the peat be thick, when they have cut one length of the spade for some distance, they return again, and cut down another length of it (or four feet), and so on, till they reach the gravelly bottom, if they can sufficiently drain it of the water, which continually comes in, tho' proper persons are employed to pump out as much of the water as they can all the time. As the peat dries, and is turned by persons appointed for that purpose, to dry it the better, it breaks into smaller lengths, and then it serves not only the poor; but many other persons, for firing, and gives a good heat.

heat. It is sold for about ten shillings a waggon-load, delivered at their houses in the town. The ashes also prove very good manure for both grass and arable land; and the farmers give from four pence to six pence a bushel for them, which renders this firing very cheap.

Great numbers of trees are plainly visible in the true peat, lying irregularly one upon another; and sometimes even cart-loads of them have been taken out, and dried for firing: but the nearer these trees lie to the surface of the ground, the less sound is the wood: and sometimes the small twigs, which lie at the bottom, are so firm, as not to be easily cut thro' with the usual peat-spade. These trees are generally oaks, alders, willows, and firs, besides some others not easily to be known. The small roots are generally perished; but yet have sufficient signs to shew, that the trees were torn up by the roots, and were not cut down, there being no sign of the ax or saw; which, had they been felled, would have been plainly visible.

No acorns are found in the peat, tho' many cones of the fir-tree are, and also a great number of nutshells. They are all of a darkish colour; and the nuts are hollow within, and some of them have a hole at the broad end.

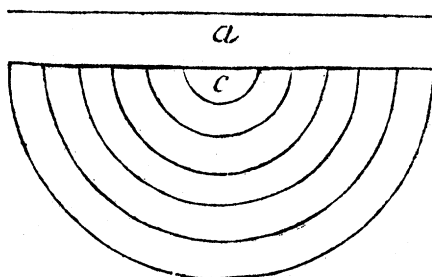
A great many horns, heads, and bones of several kinds of deer, the horns of the antelope, the heads and tusks of boars, the heads of beavers, &c. are also found in it: and I have been told, that some human bones have been found; but I never saw any of these myself, tho' I have of all the others.

But

But I am assured, that all these things are generally found at the bottom of the peat, or very near it. And indeed, it is always very proper to be well and faithfully informed of the exact depth and place, where any thing of these kinds is found; whether it is in the earth above the peat, or in the clob; or in the true peat, or at the bottom of it; which will greatly assist us in forming a just judgment of the real antiquity of the things that are found, or at least of the time they have lain there. Besides this, as they formerly used to cut out the peat in large plots here and there, leaving spaces full of peat between those pits (whereas now they draw off the greatest part of the water by pumps, and so clear out all the peat regularly as they go on); so it must be carefully observed, whether whatsoever is found here be dug out of these old peat-pits, or not; for axes, and other things, may have been formerly dropt into these pits, before they were filled up again with earth, and may now be dug out of them again. My father has now in his possession an iron hatchet, not greatly differing from the modern form, which was found lying flat at the very bottom of the peat: it was covered with a rust near half an inch thick, and the handle was to it, which seemed to be of beech-wood, but was so soft, that it broke in bringing it up: but as the person is dead, who found it, I can't say whether it lay in an old peat-pit, or no.

Mr. Osgood found, some years ago, an urn, of a light brown colour, and large enough to hold above a gallon, in the true peat, about eight or ten feet from the river, near a mile and a half west of this town, in Speen-moor. It lay about four feet below

the level of the ground, and about one foot within the peat; and over it was raised an artificial hill, about eight feet higher than the neighbouring ground; and as the whole hill consisted of both peat and meadow-ground intermixed together, it plainly appeared, that the peat was older than the urn; and that the persons, who raised the hill, must first have dug a large hole in the peat, to bury the urn there, and so formed the hill of the peat and meadow-ground mixed together. Round the hill, where the urn lay, they had made also many half-circular ridges, with trenches between them, one beyond another, in this manner:



Where *a* is the river, and *c* the hill; and the half circles shew some of the ridges, the number of which Mr. Osgood has now forgot. The urn was broke by the peat-spade, and it came up only in small pieces, so that nothing was found in it; and no body happened to be there at that time but the peat-cutters.

No coins of any fort have been found in the peat. But there may, perhaps, be a variety of things at the bottom of it: but as the peat is always full of water, which is never quite drained off, so it is not an easy matter to examine the bottom.

I beg leave to assure you, my Lord, that I am,
with great respect and esteem,

Your Lordship's most obliged,
and obedient humble Servant,

John Collet.

XVI. *An Account of the Alterations making
in the Pantheon at Rome: In an Extract
of a Letter from Rome to Thomas Hollis,
Esq; Communicated by John Ward, LL.D.
R. S. Vice-Præs.*

Read Mar. 3.
1757.

A Project was lately laid before the government by Paolo Pofi, an architect, for modernizing the inside of the Pantheon, and unfortunately approved. In consequence of which, the dome has been already cleaned, and rough cast; and the remainder of the lead taken away, which served as a lining to the silver work, that originally covered it. The vestiges of the cornices, and other ornaments of the silver work, were still discernible in the lead, which was fastened by very large iron nails. All this was effected by a moveable scaffold, that was fixed to the bronze cornice of the open circle above, whereby the temple is illuminated, and descended to the cornice of the Attic order, being as curious in the contrivance, as detestable for the purposes intended by it. It is true, we could not before see the dome in its pristine glory;