

THE KINGSCLERE SKELETON.

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On pp. 110 and 111 of Vol. VII., Pt. I., is an account by Mr. Money, F.S.A., of the skeleton found at Kingsclere in Nov., 1910 (should be 1911). Since this account has passed from the pages of a local paper into those of a scientific journal, it is right that a scientific description of the discovery should be attempted.

I visited Kingsclere not long after the discovery, in the hope of clearing up certain points which were left doubtful by the account in the *Newbury Weekly News*. I found that no attempt had been made to secure the bones for a museum: they had, however, been preserved in a box, in an out-house, by Mr. C. E. Westcombe, who gave me every assistance in my enquiries and offered me the remains of the skeleton if I cared to have them. I accepted his offer, on behalf of Mr. Peake, Hon. Curator of the Newbury Borough Museum—where the bones are now safely housed.

The discovery was made in the process of excavating at the back of "Hillside," where Mr. Westcombe resides. The house is situated on sloping ground, so that to build an annex it was necessary to level part of the garden. In doing this, the "find" was made. Mr. Westcombe was not present at the time, but he ascertained the facts from the workmen. It seems quite certain that nothing was found buried with the skeleton. As to the position in which it lay the evidence is less clear. From the fact, however, that the lower part of the body is entirely absent, one is

inclined to suspect that the burial was an extended one. It would appear to have been cut in half by the spade across the femora, so that the lower ends of the femora and the whole of both legs below the knees are missing.

The skull was broken, but was easily mended, as were some of the other bones. When this had been done, an examination was made by Mr. E. A. Hooton, Curator of Somatology in the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. His report is:—

"Skull. Max. length: 183 mm. Max. breadth: 133 mm. Cranial index: 72.68. Basibregmatic height: 132 mm. Glabella: full.

"The skull is slightly pterugoid in form, and is sphenozygous; the supra-orbital ridges are not much developed, and the forehead is low."

"Femur. Sagittal diameter: 30 mm. Transverse diameter: 48 mm. Index of platymeria: 77.08.

"Right humerus. Max. length: 305 mm. Sagittal diameter: 42 mm. Transverse diameter: 44 mm.

"Left humerus. Max. length: 320 mm. Sagittal diameter: 42 mm. Transverse diameter: 42 mm.

"The skeleton appears to be that of a young man of 16 to 18 years of age."

It will be seen that the skull is distinctly dolichocephalic, and is not, as stated by Mr. Money, "a strongly marked example of the cranium of the brachycephalic or round-headed type." In fact it is on the contrary a typical skull belonging to the long-headed Mediterranean race. Mr. Money continues: "The teeth were perfect and not much the worse for wear, and judging from the small jaw and the size of the femur or thigh-bone and tibia, it may be inferred that the remains were of a young woman in the prime of life and of a somewhat short stature."

The writer was told that the teeth were taken as souvenirs by those who attended the discovery ; and certainly both they and the tibia are now missing, and neither of the femora is perfect. Even if Mr. Money was able to examine these portions before they were lost, the deductions which he draws are incorrect at least as to age and sex. Had the missing parts been lost after removal from the grave, one would have expected at least a few of the toes and ankle-bones to have been preserved. Since not a fragment of any bone below the middle of the femora is preserved, one cannot help surmising that they were carried away in the earth before the burial was noticed. Such a thing is not unknown in scientific excavations when a grave is opened from the end in which the feet lie, though it is very rare when the upper part of the body is the first to be disturbed.
