

Celtic origin. In the centre of each obelisk, on the more important and strongly relieved side, there always occurs a large cross, rather of the Greek than of the Roman type, and usually elaborately wrought into a fretwork, composed of myriads of snakes, raised in some of the compartments over half-spheres resembling apples. In one of the Ross-shire obelisks,—that of Shadwick in the parish of Nigg,—the cross is entirely composed of these apple-like, snake-covered protuberances ; and it was the belief of my friend, that the original idea of the whole, and, indeed, the fundamental idea of this school of sculpture, was exactly that so emphatically laid down by Milton in the opening argument of his poem,—man's fall symbolized by the serpents and the apples, and the great sign of his restoration, by the cross. But in order to indicate that to the Divine Man, the Restorer, the cross itself was a consequence of the Fall, even it was covered over with symbols of the event, and, in one curious specimen, built up of them. It was the snakes and apples that had reared, *i. e.* rendered imperative, the cross. My friend further remarked, that from this main idea a sort of fretwork had originated, which seemed more modern in some of its specimens than the elaborately-carved snakes and strongly-relieved apples, but in which the twistings of the one and the circular outlines of the others might be distinctly traced ; and that it seemed ultimately to have passed from a symbol into a mere ornament ; as, in earlier instances, hieroglyphic pictures had passed into mere arbitrary signs or characters. I know not what may be thought of the theory of William Ross ; but when, in visiting, several years ago, the ancient ruins of Iona, I marked, on the more ancient crosses, the snakes and apparent apples, and then saw how the same combination of figures appeared as mere ornamental fretwork on some of the later tombs, I regarded it as more probably the right one than any of the others I have yet seen broached on this subject. I dined with my friend this day on potatoes and salt, flanked by a jug of water ; nor were the potatoes by any means very good ones ; but they formed the only article of food in the household at the time.