

Celtic Remains

IN THE

WEST OF CORNWALL.

1892/10

O.VI. u. 14

The Rev. J. S. Ballou  
with Mr. Cotton's kind regards.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 311

LECTURE 1

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LECTURE 1

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

Stone Circles, Cromlechs,

AND

Other Remains of the Aboriginal Britons,

IN

THE WEST OF CORNWALL:

FROM DRAWINGS MADE ON THE SPOT, IN 1826.

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BY WILLIAM COTTON, ESQ., M.A.

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## PREFACE.

“—— FEW THESE AWFUL ROCKS REVERE,  
AND TEMPLES THAT DESERTED LIE.”

*CARN-BREH, an Ode by PETER PINDAR.*

DURING a visit in Cornwall, in the autumn of 1826, I was led to notice the various remains of the superstition of our Ancestors, consisting of Circles of Stones, Cromléhs, Hill Castles, and singularly shaped Rocks, which there abound: and having made sketches of several near the Land's End, I was induced, by a curiosity to know something more about them, to read through Dr. Borlase's learned work on the “Antiquities of Cornwall.”

The following pages, illustrative of the Etchings, consist, for the most part, of extracts from the above-mentioned work; and the Etchings themselves have been the amusement of leisure hours since my return.

They pretend only to give a more faithful representation of these objects than I have hitherto seen, and are accompanied by plans and measurements taken on the spot.

Three of the Circles, and one of the Cromléhs, have never, I believe, been engraved before; the latter was discovered about the year 1800, and is described in the *Archæologia*, vol. xiv.

It must not be expected, that in these pages any new light will be thrown on this subject, the investigation of which, as Aubrey tells us, is a “mere groping in the dark;” the history of these early monuments being so enveloped in obscurity, that he who thinks by some fortunate adventure to discover the truth, where all is doubt and uncertainty, will be likely soon to lose his way in the devious paths of conjecture and hypothesis—being of necessity often forced to guess at random, with this disagreeable circumstance attending (as Mr. Strutt observes), that if by chance he should hit the mark, it is impossible for him to be certain that he is perfectly in the right.

*The Priory, Letherhead,*

*June 1, 1827.*



## CHAPTER I.

### OF THE ABORIGINAL BRITONS.

As mankind were originally united in one bond of society, and influenced by the same religious opinions and customs, it may be allowable, in explaining the antiquities of the Western nations, to have recourse to the sacred and other historians of the East, since the whole world was peopled from thence: and if we find in them a description of monuments similar in figure, situation, materials, and dimensions, to those now remaining in the Northern and Western nations of Europe, it may reasonably be inferred that such remains are evidences of a custom originally derived from the East, and common to mankind in a more united state.

The resemblance between the Celtic tribes, who overspread the North of Europe, and the Eastern nations, is striking; for though the sect of the Druids had raised a superstructure, which distinguished their priesthood, the foundation was old.

The immortality of the soul, and the belief of a future world, were among their principal doctrines: they endeavoured to propitiate the Deity by sacrifice; and, like the people of Canaan and Moab, stained their altars with human gore.

They also, like the Canaanites of old, offered up their prayers in consecrated groves, and performed their sacred rites in open and uncovered temples.

Dr. Borlase thinks that the ancient inhabitants of this island derived their religious notions and ceremonies from the nations of the East; and that the island itself was peopled first of all from Gaul, soon after the general dispersion of mankind. He says, it is probable that Britain received its first inhabitants from Gaul, because from thence our shores are seen; and that this emigration took place about the same time, or very soon after the first peopling of Gaul, because the same restlessness which scattered inhabitants over the face of the earth, brought them also over to Britain.

Nor can it well be supposed, he adds, that Britain was first colonized from more distant countries, as by the Phœnicians or Grecians, because we find, wherever the ancient Britons were necessitated to retire, as into Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Bretagne in Normandy, the remains of one and the same language, the same monuments, civil and religious: besides, when the Saxons had driven the ancient Britons into Wales and Cornwall, they were called Galli; Wales received the name of Gallia or Wallia; and Cornwall, Cornugallia and Cornwallia.

But as we derive nearly all the information, which can be depended upon, concerning the early history of our island, from Cæsar, Tacitus, and Pomponius Mela, it may seem to militate against this opinion, that in Cæsar's time the Gauls knew little or nothing of Britain, its internal resources, its rivers and cities: for Cæsar tells us he convened the merchants to satisfy his inquiries about Britain, but they either knew, or pretended to know, nothing more than the maritime coast.\*

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. iv. cap. 20. "Itaque, evocatis ad se undique mercatoribus, neque quanta esset insulæ magnitudo; neque quæ, aut quantæ nationes incolerent, neque

Yet, from the same authority, we learn, that in almost all his battles with the Gauls, they received aid from Britain, and that there was a constant traffic and communication kept up between the two nations, quite sufficient to prove the possibility of their having had a common origin.\* Besides, Cæsar tells us it was thought the Gauls received their Druidical priesthood from Britain; and that it was customary for persons who wished to dive deeper into the mysteries of their religion, to go over to Britain for that purpose.†

If it be therefore probable that Britain was first peopled from the neighbouring shores of Gaul, we have in the next place to inquire into the origin of the Gauls; and Cæsar tells us, that the same people which the Romans called Gauls, were in their own language called Celts.‡

The Celts extended over a very considerable portion of Europe, and were more anciently called Cimbri: their origin is supposed to reach up to the dispersion of mankind after the flood, being derived from Gomer, the son of Japhet, who was the leader of those who came from Babylon into the Western parts of the world, now called Europe.

In this opinion Dr. Borlase is supported by the authority of Camden, who observes, that Moses has informed us that the islands of the Gentiles were divided by the posterity of Japhet, son of Noah;§ and Josephus and

quem usum belli haberent, aut quibus institutis uterentur; neque qui essent ad majorum navium multitudinem idonei portus, reperire poterat.”

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. iv. c. 20. “ In Britanniam proficisci contendit, quòd, omnibus ferè Gallicis bellis, hostibus nostris inde subministrata auxilia intelligebat.”

† Ibid. lib. vi. c. 13. “ Disciplina in Britannîâ reperta, atque inde in Galliam translata esse, existimatur; et nunc, qui diligentius eam rem cognoscere volunt, plerumque illo, discendi causâ, proficiscuntur.”

‡ Ibid. lib. i. c. 1. “ Qui ipsorum linguâ Celtæ, nostrâ Galli appelluntur.”

§ Gen. x. 5.

other authors have delivered it as their opinion, that Europe fell to the share of Japhet and his sons. Moreover, we have seen in the nations of Europe that prophetic benediction of Noah fulfilled—" God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant ;"—for it was Europe, as Pliny observes, which produced that people, who were the conquerors of all other nations, and triumphed over the other parts of the world, which were the portions of Shem and Cham.

In these our remote parts of Europe, Gomer, the eldest son of Japhet, gave his name to the Gomerians, who were afterwards called Cimbri and Cimmerii, which name did in process of time almost fill these parts of the world, and spread itself in Germany and Gaul. Josephus observes, that those who are now called Galli, were from Gomer called Gomari and Gomaræi,—and from these I have always been of opinion that our Britons had both their original and name.\*

Having thus traced the probable descent of the first inhabitants of this island from the nations of the East, let us in the next place inquire what opinions, manners, and customs, they may have derived from such a source ; let us see if their religious tenets and ceremonies, their sacrifices and their altars, were at all similar, or likely to have originated in one common superstition, thus brought from the East at the dispersion, and propagated among the Northern tribes of Europe.

The most distinguishing parts of the Druidical superstition were their *grove worship* and the sacrifice of *human victims*.

The first of these was so common among the Canaanites in the time of Joshua, and attended with so much impiety and lewdness, that it caused their utter extirpation by divine command. Isaiah, reproving the

\* Camden—see Preface to his Britannica, p. xiii. 2d Ed.

idolatries which were so openly practised in the latter times of the kings of Judah, says, “Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree:”\* and Ezekiel, denouncing God’s judgment against idolatry, says, “Then shall ye know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak.” These were the noted places for idolatrous worship; and we find that the Druids performed their sacrifices and built their altars on the tops of mountains and in groves:†

“Nemora alta remotis, incolitis lucis.”

LUCAN, lib. i.

The oak was, more than any other tree, sacred among them. But there is another remarkable instance of similarity in the 57th chapter of Isaiah, where it is said, “Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion, even to them hast thou offered.” Upon this passage, Dr. Lowth has the following note:—“The words may be understood of the altars built there, or of stone pillars erected for idolatrous worship, which they used to anoint with oil, or pour out their offerings upon, such as the text here mentions: from whence came that proverbial expression, ‘Παντα λιθον λιπαρόν προσκυνών, a worshipper of every shining stone,’ mentioned by Clem. Alexand.”

The same learned writer supposeth these to be the most ancient

\* Isaiah, lvii. 6 and 7.

† “Lucus erat longo nunquam violatus ab ævo;

———— hic barbara ritu

Sacra deùm, structæ diris altaribus aræ,

Omnisque humanis lustrata cruoribus arbos.”

LUCAN, in *Obsidione Massiliae*.

monuments of divine worship, and older than the use of statues and images; for we find that Jacob, in compliance with the then received practice, as it is likely, “Set up a pillar in Bethel, and poured oil upon it.”—Genesis, xxviii. 18.

That the same custom of setting up stone pillars existed in this island at a remote period, is proved by the stones themselves standing to this day in Cornwall and elsewhere; and it seems to me reasonable to suppose that they are the remains of an idolatrous worship of the very earliest ages.

The other distinguishing character of the Druidical superstition is the sacrifice of human victims;\* which sanguinary and cruel custom obtained also among the nations of the East in very remote periods;—the Egyptians,† the Phœnicians, and the Carthagenians,‡ all followed, it is well known, the same unhallowed rites. Nor did they hesitate

“ ———— *flagrantibus aris,*  
*Infandum dictu, parvos imponere natos.*”

SIL. ITAL. lib. iv.

Like the Israelites, who derived the unnatural custom of burning their children, by way of sacrifice to Moloch, from the Canaanites.§—See Psalm cvi. 38. The place where they performed this inhuman rite was

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi.

† Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. c. 79.

‡ Q. Curtius, lib. iv. c. 3. Justin, lib. xviii. c. 2, 6. Plin. xxxvi. c. 5, 37. Diodorus Sic. lib. xiv. c. 20.

“ Et Pœnei solitei sôs sacrificare puellos.”

Q. ENNII *Fragments*, p. 28.

§ Psalm cvi. 37. “Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils. Verse 38. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood.”

called Tophet, from the tabrets which sounded there to drown the cries of the children. See Bp. Lowth's note on Jeremiah, vii. 31.\* We shall have occasion to notice the sacrifices of the Druids in the next chapter.

\* Jeremiah, vii. 31. "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire."

## CHAPTER II.

## CONCERNING THE DRUIDS.

IT is most likely that the Druids were so called from their regard for oak trees—not from the Greek  $\delta\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$ , an oak, but from the Celtic word *deru*, which signifies the same thing, and in which the *e* is pronounced very short.

Cæsar, who has given us a full description of the Druids of Gaul, says, that they were not only the same both in manners and customs with the British Druids, but adds, that the order was first instituted in Britain, and from thence transported to Gaul: so that those who would be thoroughly initiated in the learning of the Druids, went over from Gaul to Britain to acquire it in its original purity.\*

Though this kingdom was anciently divided into several petty governments, yet the power of the Druids was universal; they were the sole arbitrators of disputes, and determined all controversies, public and private, civil and religious,—whoever did not abide by their decisions was excommunicated; which was the most severe punishment that could be inflicted, as persons thus excommunicated were shunned like a dangerous infection by every one.

The Druids had over them one primate or chief, who possessed supreme authority.

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi. c. 13.



The great privileges and authority of this order made people desirous of being admitted into it; and children of the noblest families were sent to be instructed by them.\*

Cæsar tells us that the Druids of Gaul assembled, at an appointed time of the year, at a consecrated place, near to the borders of Chartrès; thither came all those who had disputes, and submitted them to the general council: and Mr. Strutt very reasonably conjectures that Stonehenge might have been a consecrated place of assembly for the British Druids, where they met at stated times to adjudge such causes as from their nature or difficulty were reserved for this grand tribunal.†

There existed an inferior order of Druids, called Bards, who were remarkable for their memory, learning by heart and singing the actions of their kings and heroes.

Female Druids are also mentioned by some writers.

The island of Anglesea is thought to have been the chief residence of the British Druids. Tacitus‡ mentions them only there; but they were a holy order common to all the nations of the Britons, and diffused every where, as appears, not only from history, but from monuments extant in many parts of the island, particularly in Cornwall.

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi. c. 13. “Sed de his duobus generibus alterum est Druidum, alterum Equitum. Illi rebus divinis intersunt, sacrificia publica et privata procurant, religiones interpretantur: ad hos magnus adolescentium numerus disciplinæ causâ concurrat; magnoque ii sunt apud eos honore: nam ferè de omnibus controversiis, publicis privatisque, constituunt; et, si quod est admissum facinus, si cædes facta, si de hæreditate, si de finibus controversia est, iidem decernunt; præmia pœnasque constituunt: si qui, aut privatus aut publicus, eorum decreto non stetit, sacrificiis interdicunt: hæc pœna apud eos gravissima. His autem omnibus Druidibus præest unus, qui summam inter eos habet auctoritatem.”

Pomponius Mela, lib. iii. c. 2.

† Strutt's *þorða Anzel. cýnnan*, vol. i. p. 10.

‡ Tacit. *Annal.* lib. xiv. c. 30.

The Germans suppose the Druids to be as old as the migration of the Celts from the East, mistaking the religious tenets for the establishment of the priesthood: but it is more reasonable to suppose that they had their beginning after the Celts separated into Germans, Gauls, Cimbrians, Teutones, &c., taking place only among the Gauls and Britons; being a sect peculiar to those two nations, and not of foreign institution, but first invented and established in one or other of them.

The Germans, Danes, Swedes, and Russians, who were branches of the Celtic nation, had no Druidical priesthood: but, if we find the same kind of monuments in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Germany, as we find in Britain and Gaul, we may attribute them to a religion essentially the same, although it cannot be proved that the Druids were established in all these countries. Cæsar, Strabo, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela, mention the Druids only in Britain and Gaul; but whatever religious ceremonies are recorded of the Germans and other northern nations, being part of the old Celtic religion, and common to all the West of Europe, and consequently to the Druids, may justly be referred to, as illustrative of their customs and habits; — since the Druids only improved the Celtic religion, by adding science and a contemplative life; they separated themselves into a distinct order, holding annual councils, and carrying their mysteries and learning to a height unknown before in Europe.

Cæsar tells us,\* that the Druids not only held the immortality of the soul, but its migration after death from one human body into another.

Diodorus Siculus† also says, that the opinion of Pythagoras prevailed among them.

According to Valerius Maximus,‡ it was an ancient custom of the

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi.

† Diod. Sicul. lib. v.

‡ Val. Max. lib. ii. c. 6.

Gauls to lend money upon condition that it should be repaid in the next life,—so persuaded were they that the souls of men were immortal.

Ammianus Marcellinus\* informs us, that the Druids, men of exalted genius, ranged in regular societies, by the advice of Pythagoras raised their minds to the most sublime inquiries, and, despising human and worldly affairs, pressed upon their disciples the immortality of the soul.

Again, Lucan tells us that, according to the Druidical opinion, the ghosts of the dead descended not to Erebus, or the empire of Pluto, but that the same soul actuated another body in another world: and Pomponius Mela declares that the Druids maintained the soul to be eternal, and that there was another life after this, wherein the soul existed; and that for this reason it was their custom to burn and inter with the dead what suited their rank and inclinations when alive. Cæsar says the same of the Gauls: “Animalia, servi, clientes, justis funeribus confectis, unà cremabantur.” And again; “omnia quæ vivis cordi fuisse arbitrantur in ignem inferunt.”† Speed mentions a sort of Druids who forbade the worshipping of idols, or any other form intended to represent the Godhead: and Origen, on Ezekiel, chap. 4, says that the Druids taught the Britons to believe that there was only one God; but Cæsar and Pliny are so express as to their superior and inferior deities, that their polytheism and idolatry cannot well be disputed. Mercury was their chief god; next Apollo, under the name of Belesus, or Belis, and by him they meant the sun. Mars was called Hesus, or Hesius; Jupiter, Tarany, or Toramis, the Thunderer; and Minerva, the patroness of the arts. Besides their celestial gods, they had idols, or symbolical representations. The tallest oak tree was the symbol of Jupiter.‡

\* Ammian. Marcel. lib. xv.

† Cæsar, lib. vi. c. 9.

‡ Maximus Tyrius.

It appears by these notices of the Druidical priesthood, which we find in the ancient authors, that they were a studious and learned body of men: but however extensive their knowledge, we have sufficient testimony of their ignorance concerning the benign nature of a merciful God, as well as proof of their wanting the common charitable feelings of human creatures. Cæsar gives a very deplorable picture of their horrid superstitions and barbarous rites: not only beasts, but men were equally the victims of their bloody sacrifices, and they thought that the gods were never better pleased than with the oblation of a human victim.\* At times there were public sacrifices, when the wretched victims were shut up in a large wicker image, made to represent the human figure, and burnt alive.† Cæsar does indeed say that these miserable men were generally malefactors, whose crimes had subjected them to the penalty of the law; but for want of such, the innocent and harmless often suffered.

Let us turn from the contemplation of so inhuman and barbarous a scene—with this previous remark, that the custom, however barbarous, of sacrificing human beings to the Deity, prevailed in all the most civilised nations of antiquity—as the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, the Carthagenians, the Persians, the Grecians, and among the Romans also,‡ who were not forbidden human victims till the consulship of Lepidus and Crassus; about 97 years before Christ.

Although the Druids held it unlawful to commit the mysteries of their

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi.

† “ Publicèque ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia. Alii immani magnitudine simulacra habent, quorum contexta viminibus membra vivis hominibus complent; quibus succensis circumventi flammâ exanimantur homines. Supplicia eorum qui in furto, aut in latrocinio sint comprehensi, gratiora diis immortalibus esse arbitrantur: sed quum ejus generis copia deficit, etiam ad innocentium supplicia descendunt.”—CÆSAR, lib. vi.

‡ Plin. lib. xxx. c. 1.

order to writing, yet in other affairs they made use of the Greek character in their writings; though it is probable they did not use the Greek language in conversation, but the Celtic or British; as Cæsar was obliged to have an interpreter in his discourse with Divitiacus, a learned Druid.

Their computation of time was by nights, not days; the reason of which, Cæsar thinks,\* was because they considered themselves sprung from Dis, or Pluto: but it may be rather considered a relic of the ancient tradition, that darkness, or night, existed before the creation of light, and therefore to be placed in reckoning before the day.

The Druids were learned in astronomy, and in the virtues of plants and herbs.†

Pliny says,‡ “ They account nothing more sacred than the oak mistletoe, which is rarely to be found, but is approached with great reverence, and is cut down with a golden hook, and many religious ceremonies, when the moon is six days old; at which time they begun their months and years, and ages every thirty years.”

The mistletoe made into a potion was thought to be an antidote against all sorts of poisons.

We now come to the question, whether the Druids had temples or places marked out and set apart for religious rites. Keysler thinks they had not, quoting this passage in Tacitus: “ Præsidium posthac impositum victis, excisique luci sævis superstitionibus sacri.”§ If, says he, there were any temples, why were the groves only to be cut down, when it was the intention of Suetonius Paulinus to destroy all traces of that barbarous religion? But there are strong testimonies, says Dr. Borlase,

\* Cæsar de Bel. Gal. lib. vi.

† Pomp. Mela, lib. iii. c. 2.

‡ Plin. lib. xvi. c. 44.

§ Tacit. Annal. lib. xiv. c. 30.

that the Druids had temples as well as consecrated groves. On the defeat of the Romans by Boadicea, there were great rejoicings in the British temples, but chiefly in the wood consecrated to Andate.\*

Suetonius says,† that Cæsar pillaged the fanes and temples of the gods in Gaul, which were full of offerings:—and Tacitus speaks of the temples of the Germans.

Among the eastern nations, no superstition was more famous than that of the Persians, and there is a remarkable conformity between the religious sect of the Magi and the Druids. The ancient Persians did not admit of covered temples for the worship of their gods:‡ and Cicero tells us,§ that in the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, all the temples were burned at the instance of the Magi, because the Grecians were so impious as to think to enclose those gods within walls who ought to be free and unconfined. But this subject more properly belongs to the next chapter, which will treat of the circles of stones placed upright in the earth, and supposed to be temples of the ancient Celtic religion.

In concluding this chapter on Druidism, I will only further observe, that it was strictly prohibited in Gaul, as early as the time of Tiberius and Claudius. In Britain it was practised long afterwards, in all its most dreadful rites, which made Pliny say the Britons outdid the very

\* Dion. in Nerone.

† Suet. “In Galliâ fana templaque deûm donis referta expilavit.”

‡ “The temples of the Hyperboreans,” says an eminent Greek author, “according to some national religious system, are kept not under a roof, but in the open air.” Τα γὰρ ὑπερβορέων ἱερά κατα τινα πατριον ἀγιστεῖαν, καὶ ὑπο στεγνῆν, ἀλλ’ ὑπο αἰθροῖον διαφυλάττεται. — HESY. voc. αἰθρία.

§ Cicero de Legibus, lib. ii. “Nec sequor Magos Persarum, quibus auctoribus Xerxes inflammâsse templa Græcia dicitur, quòd parietibus includerent deos: quibus omnia deberent esse potentia ac libera, quorumque hic mundus omnis templum esset et domus.”

Persians. Archbishop Usher and Leland think that it was not extirpated till the reign of King Lucius, A.D. 177, when bishops were ordained.

Druidism continued in Mona, the island of Anglesea, till Crathlintus, king of Scotland, expelled the priests, and settled a bishop there.

In Ireland the sect existed in full possession of its powers till the year A.D. 432, when St. Patrick undertook the conversion of that island.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF CIRCULAR STONE MONUMENTS.

DR. BORLASE says, it is highly probable that these circles were of religious institution, and designed originally and principally for the rites and ceremonies of sacred worship, though they afterwards may have been used for other purposes. In support of this opinion, it may be remarked, that when the Schechinah, or visible majesty of God, appeared to Jacob, and revealed the gracious promises to be fulfilled in his family, Jacob, we are told, set up a pillar to record the Divine goodness, and called the name of the place *Bethel*, *i. e.* the house of God.\* We learn also from the sacred history, that “Moses, having received all the words of the Lord, rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.”†

It cannot be doubted that these were religious monuments, the altar for sacrifice, and the twelve stones for a prince of each tribe to stand by, as the representatives of all the people. But since Scripture leaves us in the dark as to the plan and form of this last monument, it may be observed, that the ceremonial circumstances of the solemn reception of the tables of the divine law, by the twelve chiefs in behalf of all the people, and in the presence of God, signified by his holy altar in the

\* Genesis, xxxv.

† Exodus, xxiv. 4.



midst, seem to suggest the idea of a circular figure as the most appropriate.

In obedience to the divine commands, we find in the 4th chapter of Joshua, that there was a monument set up in Gilgal to commemorate the miraculous passage of the Israelites over Jordan on dry ground, which consisted of twelve large stones taken from the bed of the river and fixed in the earth; and also, that a similar monument was set up in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the priests who bore the ark stood,—and, says the sacred historian, “they are there unto this day.” From this passage, Dr. Borlase argues, that, as monuments usually resemble some part of the principal incidents they were intended to commemorate, as well as from the name Gilgal, which signifies a wheel (Buxtorf. Lex.), it is probable that the plan of this monument was circular, because the stones set up in the midst of the river were to represent the priests who bare the ark of the covenant, and those who surrounded it to prevent the approach of any unholy thing.

“And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood:” but there is no mention of the priests standing round about the ark, or any thing to indicate a circular form in preference to any other. And with regard to the doctor’s reliance on the word *Gilgal*, it does not appear to be better founded—as the explanation of the term, given in the 9th verse of the next chapter, is as follows,—“And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I *rolled away* the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (*i. e.* rolling, in marg.) unto this day.”

The Hebrew root *Galal*, from whence the word comes, signifies to remove, take away, or devolve. (Patrick’s Com.) But, although it may not be allowed that there exists in these passages of Scripture any

sufficient grounds for supposing these monuments to have been circular, or otherwise,—yet it must be conceded, that the earliest monuments, either of devotion, or as records of remarkable events, were pillars or great stones set in the earth: and the custom, as it became more widely extended, gave rise to that idolatrous worship of stones among the Gentiles, which caused the erection of them to be afterwards forbidden by the law.\* Let us, however, trace, as far as we can, the history of these stone pillars. In chap. vii. of the first book of Samuel, we read that “Samuel judged Israel, and went from year to year in circuit, to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah”—which last was a stone monument set up by Samuel himself: so that it appears these places were used as the seats of national council and judgment, as well as of religious sacrifice and devotion. Saul was made king in Gilgal, and there they made sacrifices of peace-offerings before the Lord; see 1 Sam. xi. 15. Will it therefore be an unreasonable conjecture, to suppose that these stone monuments, being so frequently resorted to on public occasions, and for the most solemn purposes, may have been afterwards enlarged and converted into uncovered temples, such as we see remaining in England and elsewhere; and that these latter were dedicated to the purposes of religion, as well as of national convention and judicial assemblies, being built after the model of the patriarchal temples, by the earliest inhabitants of Europe, who migrated from the East, under the direction of Gomer, son of Japhet?

The Bethel and Gilgal† became afterwards places of notorious idolatries, where Jeroboam set up his golden calves, and polluted the sacred places with the worship of the false gods of the Egyptians; and

\* Note on Exod. xxiv. 4. Patrick’s Commentary.

† Hosea, ix. 15. “All their wickedness is in Gilgal.”

if they were similar to the circular stone monuments found in England, they certainly suited well with the principles of the eastern superstition, which did not admit of enclosed or confined temples, lest it should look like a limiting or imprisoning an infinite, ubiquarious being.

The Phœnician Hercules, or the sun, was adored in an open temple,\* and the sacrifices and public devotions were always *sub dio*, on the tops of rocks and mountains, or in the midst of groves. This prevailing principle was thoroughly recognised in monuments of this kind; the sacred spot was sufficiently marked out by stones placed at some distance from each other, on their ends, to preserve it from profanation; and yet there was no absolute and complete enclosure.

It is impossible to demonstrate that the monuments now remaining in Cornwall and other parts of England, and consisting of several stones placed upright, at certain distances, in the periphery of a circle, were exactly similar to those mentioned in the sacred history: but there is sufficient resemblance to infer that the former may have derived their origin from eastern prototypes; and we may believe that, as it was the custom with the first inhabitants of the earth to record remarkable events, and signalize their devotions, by setting up stone pillars; so the same method of consecrating places to religious worship, or for public assembly, may have been brought from the East with the first inhabitants of Europe into our islands. However this may be, it seems clear, from Tacitus,† that in these open and unconfined temples the fundamental doctrine of the Celtic religion was preserved. A consecrated spot was thus fenced off and guarded from the unhallowed approach of

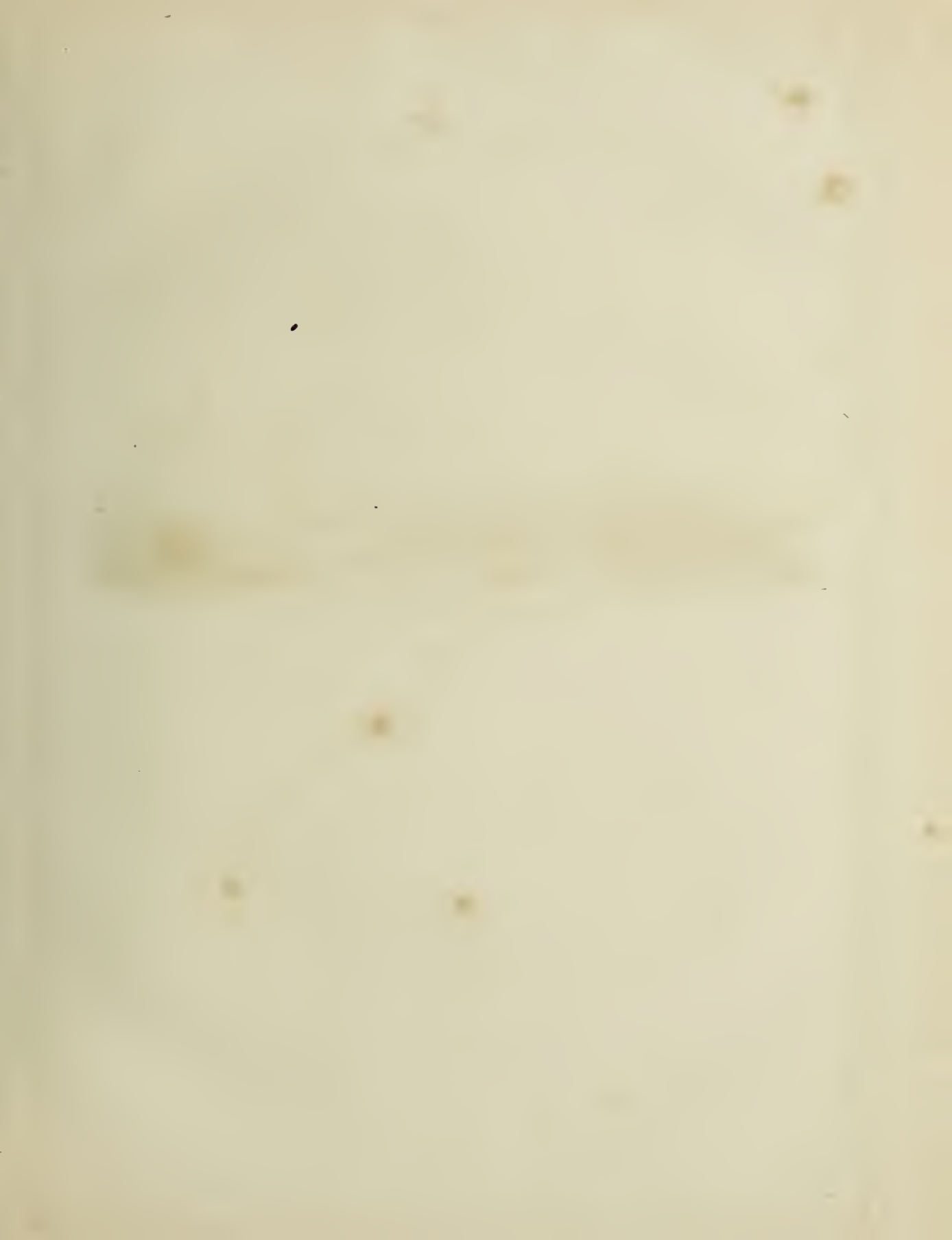
\* Maundrel's Travels, p. 21.

† Tacitus de Mor. Germ. lib. xi. "Cæterùm nec cohibere parietibus deos, neque in ullam humani oris speciem assimilare, ex magnitudine cœlestium arbitrantur."

the multitude, without seeming to confine or limit the attributes of their deities.

It may be remarked, that the frequency of their sacrifices required such fires as would not admit of a roof or covering in their temples;—as also, that the Druids were addicted to magic, in which art the circle is of essential importance. Pliny remarks,\* that the Britons were so much given to magic, that they might seem to have taught even the Persians.

\* Plin. lib. xxx. c. 1.





*Dance Maine at Bolleit, in the Parish of Burian.*



## PLATE I.

## VIEW AND PLAN OF DANCE-MAINE AT BOLLEIT.

THIS circle of stones is in a field at Bolleit, in the parish of Burian, very near the high road, though it is not seen from thence. It originally consisted of nineteen stones, set upright in the earth, at nearly equal distances, in the periphery of a circle, which measures 83 feet in diameter, N. and S., and 72 feet E. and W. There are sixteen stones only now standing, two appear to be lying on the ground in their proper places, completely covered with heath and furze, and a third is wanting altogether. The distances between the stones vary a little, some being 8 feet 4 inches, others 9 feet 6 inches, and some 7 feet 4 inches, apart: their height is about 4 feet.

Dance-Maine signifies the Stones' Dance, and is a name derived from a popular opinion, that they were young women so transformed, like Niobe, to stone, for impiously dancing on the Sabbath day. Hence the common appellation of the "Merry Maidens," which distinguishes this as well as other circular temples in Cornwall.

At a short distance, on the opposite side of the road, are two tall, uninscribed stones, standing about *a furlong* apart, one being about 12, and the other 16 feet in height: these are called "the Pipers," upon the authority of the same whimsical tradition.

Dr. Borlase remarks, that there are four circles in the hundred of Penrith, having nineteen stones each; viz. Boscawên-ân, Rosmodereuy,

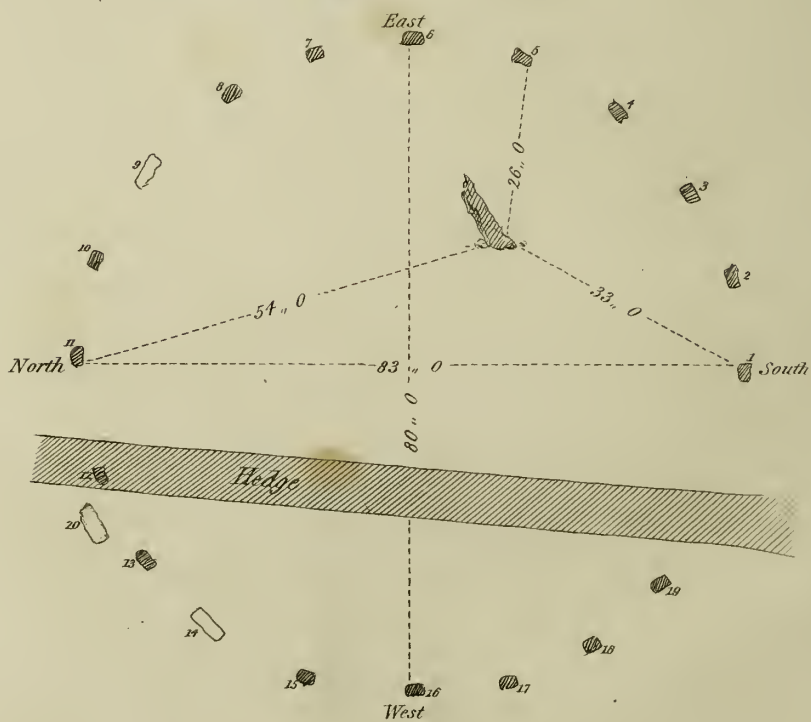
Tregaseal, and Boskednan; the two most distant, not eight miles apart, which is a surprising uniformity, expressing, perhaps, two of the principal divisions of time; viz. the twelve months of the year, and the seven days of the week.







*Boscawen-Ūn Circle in Sancred.*



## PLATE II.

## VIEW AND PLAN OF BOSCAWEN-UN CIRCLE IN SANCRED.

ABOUT a quarter of a mile north of the road leading to the Land's End, is Boscawên-ûn circle, in a croft or piece of waste ground, covered with furze and brier. Seventeen of the stones are now standing, in a circle of 80 feet E. and W. by 83 feet N. and S.: generally speaking, they are about 8 feet 6 inches apart, and about 4 feet high.

Dr. Borlase says that this circle consisted of nineteen stones, and all other writers concerning it have copied his description; but there is reason to suppose it consisted of twenty;—as there are seventeen standing, and two lying flat on the ground, in their places, leaving a space between the stones numbered 19 and 1 (see the Plan), which seems to require another to complete the circle. A large stone, No. 20, lies on the ground, in the exterior of the circle, near the stones marked 12 and 13. It may have been part of a portico or entrance, as it nearly fronts the great central stone, which is 8 or 9 feet high, standing within the periphery of the circle, though by no means in the centre of it, and forms a very distinguishing feature of this monument. Its exact position is marked in the Plan.

Dr. Borlase conceives that these circles, though designed originally and principally for the rites of worship, may have been used as places of council and judgment; and that whilst any election or decree was pending, the principal persons concerned stood each by his pillar; and

that where a middle stone was erected, as at Boscawên-ûn, there stood the prince or general elect, as was the custom in very ancient times. Thus Saul was confirmed king in Gilgal,\* *i. e.* the monument set up by Joshua, consisting of twelve stones.

At the stone of Shechem, erected also by Joshua, Abimelech was made king; † Adonijah, by the stone of Zohemoth; ‡ and Jehoash was crowned king standing by a pillar, as the manner was. §

A modern hedge intersects this circle, and makes it difficult to measure it exactly.

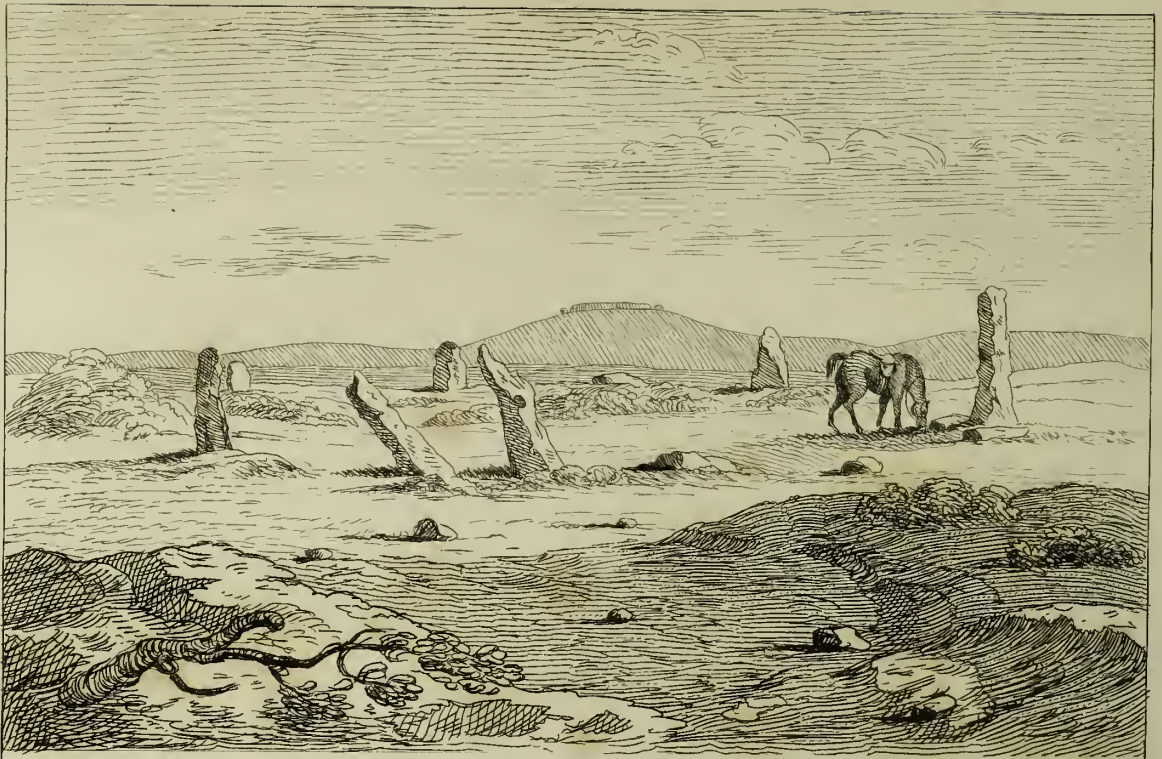
\* 1 Sam. xi. 14.

† Joshua, xxiv. 26.

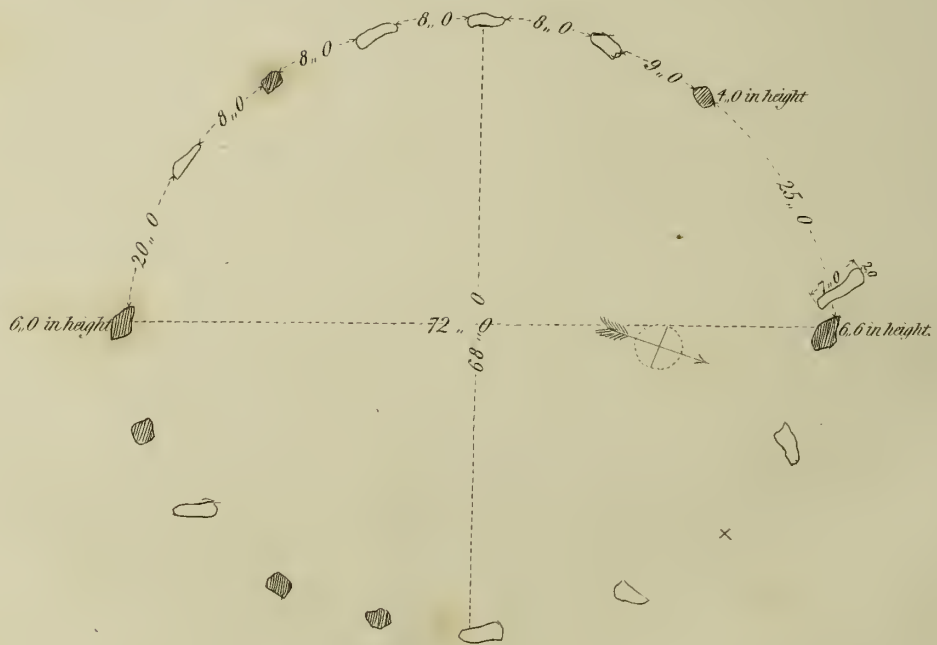
‡ 1 Kings, i. 9.

§ 2 Kings, xi. 14.





*Circle in the Parish of Maddern.*



## PLATE III.

## VIEW AND PLAN OF A CIRCLE IN THE PARISH OF MADDERN.

THIS circle of stones is little known; it is situated on the waste and bleak downs north-west of Maddern church town, near Ding-Dong copper mine. It consists of seven stones standing, and nine lying on the ground, half buried: the diameter of the circle is 72 feet N. and S., by 68 feet E. and W.

It appeared as if a stone had been lately removed from the spot, marked with a cross in the plan; and by supplying the vacant places to complete the circle, it may be supposed that this monument originally consisted of nineteen stones: some of those which remain are much taller than others, and indeed than the generality of stones in the circles of Cornwall; one measures 6 feet 6 inches in height, and by its side there is another lying on the ground, 7 feet in length; a third is 6 feet, and a fourth only 4 feet in height. Close to the outer periphery of the circle is a small barrow or tumulus of earth and stones, and on the summit of the hill, in the distance, are seen the walls of Chûn Castle.

## PLATE IV.

## VIEWS OF TWO ADJOINING CIRCLES IN ST. JUST.

I AM not aware that these circles have been noticed by Dr. Borlase, or by any other writer on the antiquities of Cornwall. They are situated between two ridges of hill, in the parish of St. Just, near Karn-Carnidjac, which occupies the summit of one of the hills, and commands an extensive sea view over the promontory called the Land's End. Both these monuments are exact circles, 67 feet in diameter; and it is remarkable that they are the same distance apart, in a line E. and W. The easternmost consists of twelve stones standing, and three lying on the ground; they are about 8 feet apart, and 3 or 4 feet in height. Computing the number of stones wanting to complete the circle, and taking the general distance between each stone at 8 feet, there is exactly space for nineteen stones, which I conceive to have been the original number. The other circle, which is 67 feet distant towards the west, is also 67 feet in diameter (as before stated), and consists of ten stones standing, three of which are enclosed in a stone wall or hedge, as it is provincially termed, and three more lying on the ground and nearly covered.

In this circle also, if the distance of 8 feet is allowed between each stone, the total number of stones will be nineteen.

In this view the church and town of St. Just are seen, and beyond them the Scilly Islands in the distance.





*Two Circles of Stones standing in the Parish  
of St. Just, near Karn-Carnidjoc.*









*Plan of Circles of upright Stones near Karn-Carnidjac in St. Just.*

## PLATE V.

## PLAN OF THE FOREGOING CIRCLES.

It will be observed in the plan, that a small enclosure is formed on the western side of one of these circles by several stones, having the appearance of a Kist-vaen.

There are other large stones standing at various distances, but so separated, that no distinct arrangement could be traced: nor could we make out any resemblance to the Botallack circles, as described by Dr. Borlase. Our guide assured us that he was well acquainted with the country round Botallack, and knew of no other circles of stones than those we visited. It is much to be regretted that the preservation of the *ancient monuments* should not be more attended to in Cornwall, as it is very possible the Botallack circles may have been deranged or destroyed since Dr. Borlase's time, like *Sennor Cromlêh*, *Chapel Euny*, and *Kerris Roundago*, which last was demolished for the construction of the pier at Penzance.





PLATE VI.

THE MEN-AN-TOL, IN MADDERN PARISH.

NOT far from Lanyon Cromlêh, in a northern direction, are two more remains of the same period, — the “Mên-an-tol,” *i. e.* the holed stone, and “Mên Skryfa,” *i. e.* the inscribed stone. The first of these consists of three stones, the middle one of which is perforated with a circular hole, 18 inches in diameter. Their relative positions and sizes are marked on the plan.

Dr. Borlase tells us, that in his time it was believed by the common people that this “holed stone” possessed the power of healing all who crawled through it of rheumatic pains and other affections of the limbs.

The “Mên Skryfa” is *evidently a sepulchral stone*; it was lying on the ground till set up by Captain Giddy, as well as the last-mentioned monument, in 1824. The inscription on it is “Riolobran Cunoval Fil.”





*The Men an Tol - in Muddern Parish.*





## CHAPTER IV.

## OF CROMLEHS.\*

THESE rude monuments of a people who in times past inhabited this country, consist of large masses of granite set upright in the earth, supporting a flat stone of still larger dimensions. They do not fail to engage the curiosity of travellers, as well as excite their astonishment, in consequence of the difficulty which must have existed in raising so considerable a weight as the incumbent stone, without the aid of mechanical knowledge.

Many edifices of a later period, however costly and magnificent, are no more; but these ancient relics, having withstood the power of time and the fury of the elements, still remain. They remind us of our forefathers, and are almost the only memorials we have of them. Hence a strong desire to develop their history has been naturally excited in many antiquaries.

In Cornwall several Cromlêhs remain very entire, and are commonly called Quoits, from the oblate form of the upper or incumbent stone, resembling a discus.

The same term is applied to them in Wales, where there is a Cromlêh called *Koeten Arthur*, or Arthur's Quoit. In the island of Jersey they are called Pouqueleys; but the general name by which they are distinguished among the learned is Cromlêh, which signifies in

\* From the Armoric words *crum*, crooked, and *leh*, a stone.—*Ency. Brit.*

Cornu-British, a crooked or rough stone. Dr. Borlase says, it is very probable that the Druids erected monuments of this kind, for there are the remains of several in the island of Anglesea, and in places denominated from the Druids; but they cannot be said to be peculiar to them, because they are found in countries where that sect never, that we know of, had footing. Some have attributed them to the Danes; but here again it may be said, that as they occur in places where the Danes never were, they cannot be all Danish; neither are they such monuments as sojourners would have leisure and security enough to erect.

May we not attribute them rather to the earliest inhabitants of this country, and to that ancient Celtic religion which spread originally over all Europe, and was prior to the establishment of the Druidical priesthood; so that it is no wonder we find similar monuments in northern countries where the Druids never prevailed, since they only improved and raised to a greater degree of excellence the science and knowledge of the old world, and constructed their temples in a grander and more artificial manner, giving to them so noble an aspect as to lead the celebrated Inigo Jones to assert, that Stone Henge was a temple of the Romans.

Many conjectures have been formed as to the probable use and intent of these curious monuments called Cromlêhs. Some have argued that they served as altar stones in the druidical sacrifices; and others have been inclined to consider them as sepulchral memorials and tombs of the warriors of a far distant age: to this latter opinion Dr. Borlase adds the weight of his judgment; he made several excavations under them, for the purpose of ascertaining the fact, but without success. In Cornwall, he says, and elsewhere, we find many Kistvaens, that is, an enclosed area, about the size of a human body, formed of stones set upright in

the ground : these certainly once enclosed the bones of the dead. The Cromlêh is nothing more than a Kistvaen, consisting of larger side stones, and covered with a mass of extraordinary magnitude on the top, as the Cromlêhs of Molfra and Chûn : thus the dead body was protected and fenced in on every side. It seems natural that a rude people should thus enclose and protect, by the application of immense labour, the bodies of their deceased friends : no monument could be better calculated, by the stability and simplicity of its construction, to endure for ages.

Since Dr. Borlase's time, however, this question has been fairly set at rest, and the fact proved to be as he supposed. In the 14th vol. of the *Archæologia* an account is published of the discovery of a Cromlêh a few years previous to the year 1802, in the parish of Lanyon, buried under a heap of earth, within which, upon excavating the ground under the covering stone, the bones of a human skeleton were found, with appearances which left no doubt of its having been an ancient sepulchre. But we shall have occasion afterwards to describe this discovery, when we come to speak of the Cromlêh itself.

## PLATE VII.

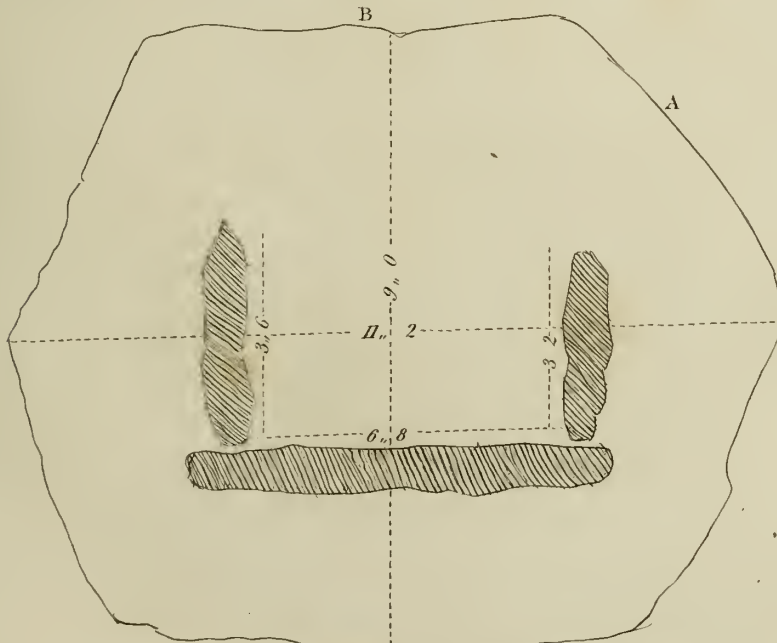
## MOLFRA CROMLÈH.

THIS Cromlêh is situated in Maddern parish, on the top of a round, bald hill, as the name in Cornu-British signifies, and commands a view of the Mount's Bay, with the long strip of table land running out into the sea, and terminating at the Lizard Promontory. The hill on which it stands is covered, so as almost totally to exclude vegetation, with large detached masses of granite, or moor stone; presenting a singular scene of the wildest and roughest nature, contrasted with the beautiful and tranquil bay beneath.

The covering stone of this Cromlêh, which has been thrown down from its original position, measured 36 feet 5 inches in circumference; but as a piece seems to have been broken off at some time or other (see letter A in the plan), and as part of the stone is buried in the earth, it probably measured more originally: Dr. Borlase says, it measured 9 feet 8 inches by 14 feet 3 inches. Of the supporters only three remain, about 4 feet 4 inches in height. They enclose an area 6 feet 8 inches from east to west, and between 3 and 4 feet wide, and open towards the south; the stone which formed that side of the Kistvaen having been probably removed, or broken to pieces, when the top stone was overthrown. This Cromlêh is surrounded by a stone barrow nearly 2 feet high, and 37 feet 3 inches in diameter.



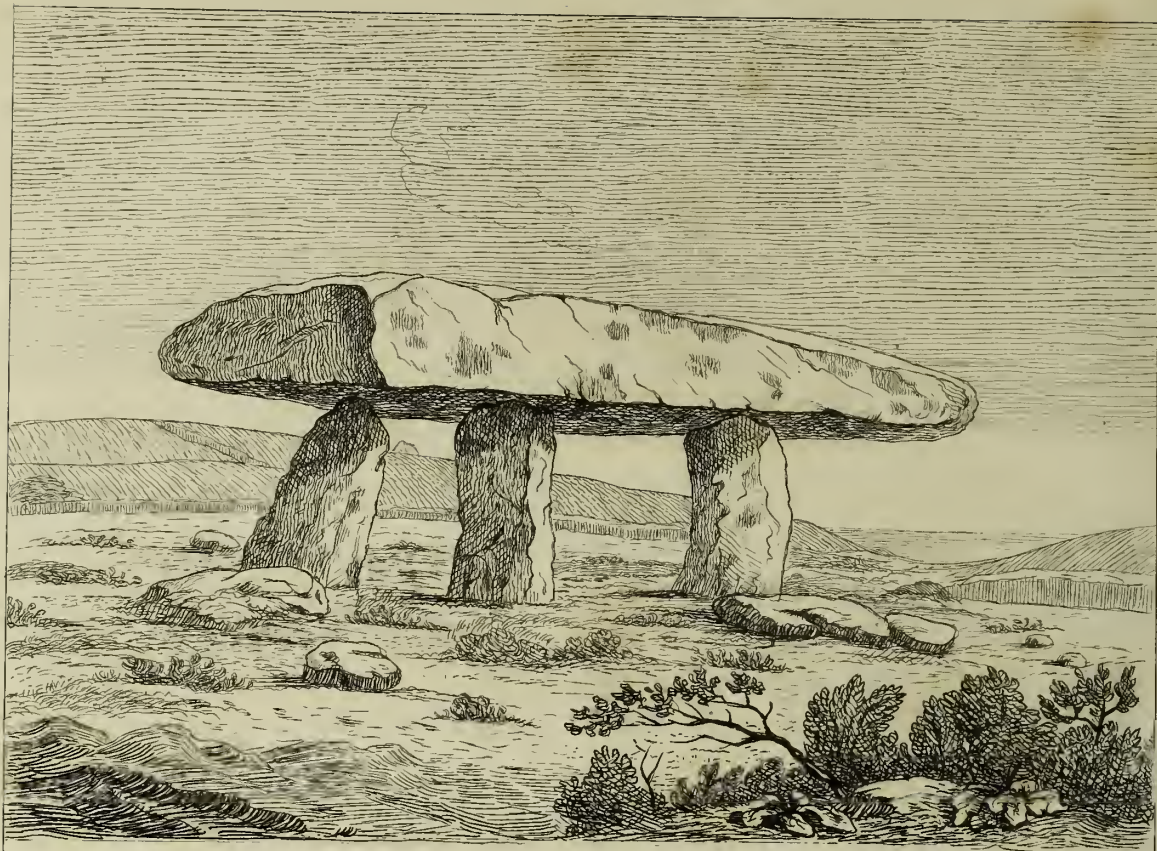
*36.5 circumference.*



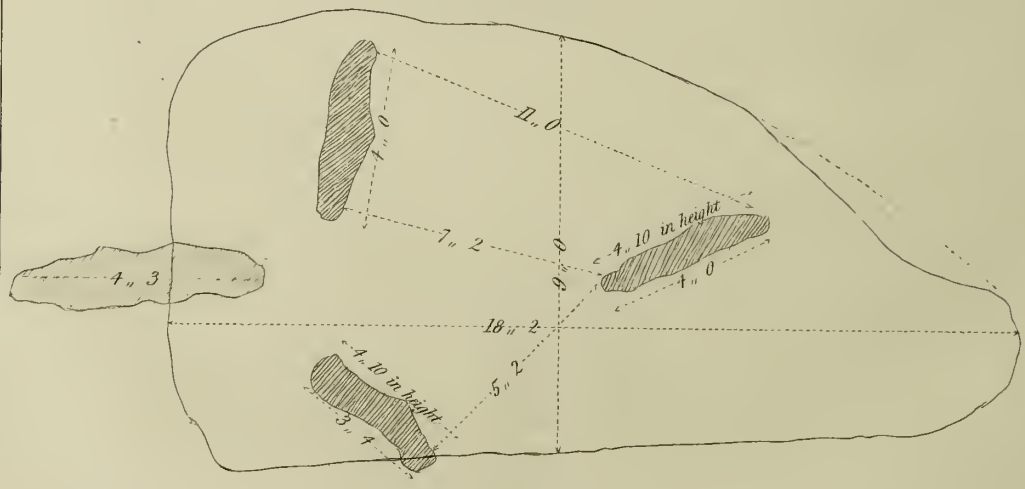
*Mottra Cromlèh - in Maddern Parish.*







44. 10 in circumference



Lanyon Cromlech...as it was set up in 1824



## PLATE VIII.

## LANYON CROMLEH.

ABOUT a mile and a half north of the church, in the parish of Maddern, and close to the road side, is Lanyon Cromlêh, so called from the name of the estate on which it stands. The covering stone, which is nearly flat, and of a triangular figure, measures 44 feet 10 inches in circumference, 18 feet 2 inches in its greatest length, and 9 feet in width, and weighs 15 tons. This Quoit, as it is usually called, was originally supported on four upright stones, describing an open area 7 feet in length, north and south, but not forming an enclosed Kistvaen, like Molfra and Chûn Cromlêhs. During a very violent storm in the year 1815, when the Delhi East Indiaman was wrecked in Mount's Bay, it fell to the ground, and one of the supporting stones was then broken. It is probable that the earth beneath it, having been frequently loosened by excavations, was washed away by the heavy rains, and caused its downfall. In the year 1824 it was again set up, by subscription among the inhabitants, with the machinery used in replacing the Logging Rock, under the superintendence of Captain Giddy, R.N., whose zealous exertions overcame every difficulty, and merit the thanks of all topographical antiquaries. The Cromlêh now stands as firm as ever: in putting it up, a piece was broken off the top stone, at A, (see the plan). It is supported on three upright stones, each 4 feet 10 inches in height, the tops having been made level, and their positions a little altered.

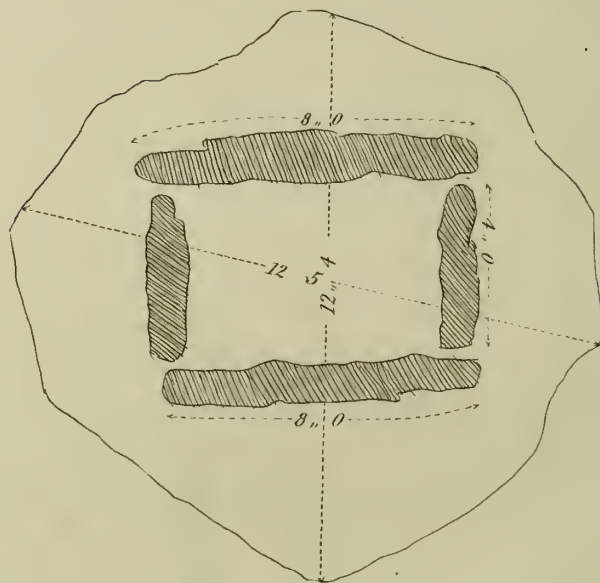
This view represents Lanyon Cromlêh as it now stands, and differs from all the prints I have seen of it,—which have been uniformly copied from Dr. Borlase's book, and do not, by any means, give a correct representation. The doctor says, in his time a man on horseback could ride under the incumbent stone—now, its height from the ground is only 4 feet 10 inches. The figures 1824, to mark the year when it was re-erected, have been rudely inscribed on one of the supporting stones.

Dr. Borlase caused an excavation to be made under this Cromlêh, as well as under the last mentioned, but without discovering any human bones; he was led, however, to conclude, by the appearance of the earth, that a body had been interred there.





*36.0 in circumference.*



*Chân Cromlêh in the Parish of Morva 1826.*

## PLATE IX.

## CHUN CROMLEH.

THIS monument stands on the S.W. side of a wild and barren hill, covered with moor stones, in the parish of Morvah, and about 500 yards from Chûn Castle, which occupies the summit of the hill.

The incumbent stone is 36 feet in circumference, and measures 12 feet 5 inches, by 12 feet 4 inches, in diameter. It is 2 feet 6 inches in thickness, and very gibbous: its weight may be about 20 tons. This stone is supported on four others, forming an enclosed Kistvaen, the two side stones being 8 feet in length, and the end stones 4 feet.

A low barrow, or heap of stones, surrounds this Cromlêh; and it has probably never been dug under, or disturbed from its original position.

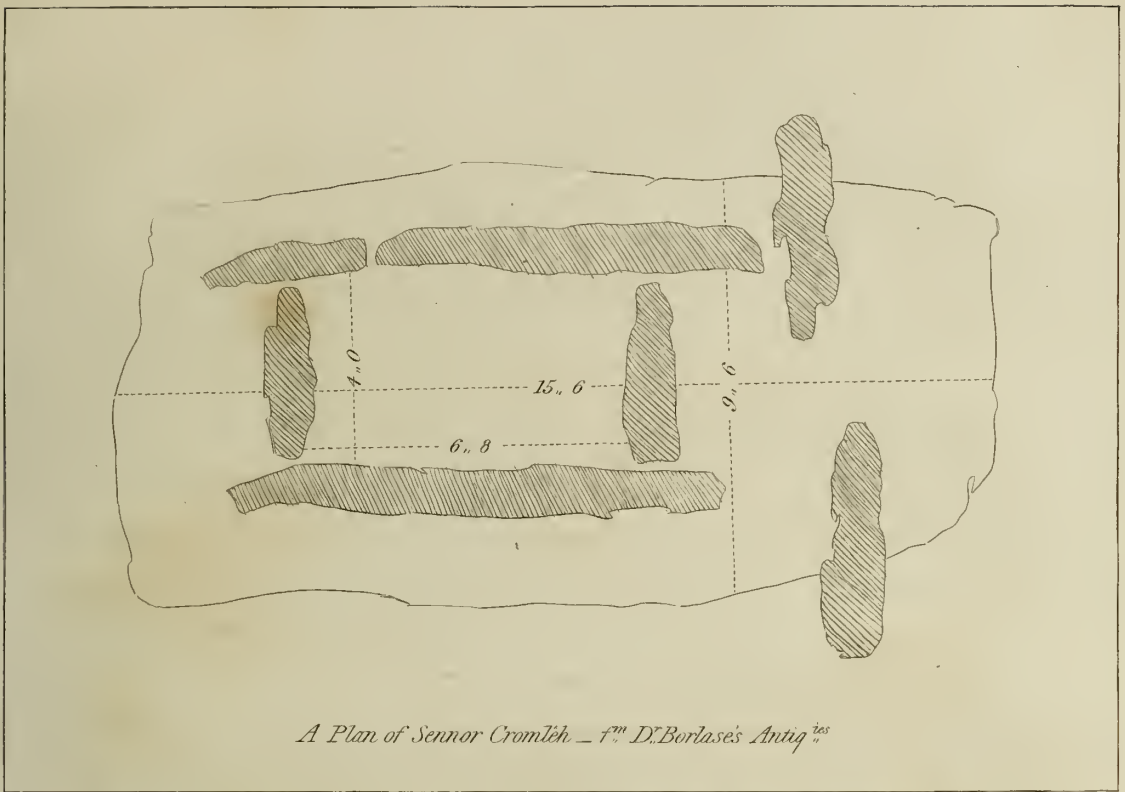
## PLATE X.—FIGURE 1.

## PLAN OF ZENNOR OR SENNOR CROMLEH.

THIS Cromlèh stood on the summit of a high hill, half a mile east of Sennor church town: it is described by Dr. Borlase as being large and handsome; but within these few years it has been wantonly overthrown and totally destroyed. The plan is copied from Dr. Borlase's work, who remarks, that the area enclosed by the supporters is exactly of the same dimensions as Molfra Cromlèh, and points the same way, viz. E. and W. The Kistvaen was nicely formed, and fenced in on all sides; but its most peculiar feature was, that the side stones projected and formed a little cell towards the east, terminated by two stones placed at right angles with them. The Kistvaen was 8 feet in length.

A stone barrow, 14 yards in diameter, was heaped round about it.





*A Plan of Sennor Cromlèh. — from D. Borlase's Antiquities*



*A Cromlèh at Lanyon. — discovered A.D. 1800.*





## PLATE X.—FIGURE 2.

VIEW OF A CROMLEH AT LANYON, DISCOVERED ABOUT THE YEAR 1800.

AN account of the discovery of this Cromlèh is preserved in vol. xiv. of the *Archæologia*, and is as follows :

“ The gentleman who owns the estate of Lanyon happening to be overtaken by a shower of rain, in walking through his fields, took shelter behind a bank of earth and stones ; and remarking that the earth was rich, he thought it might be useful for a compost : accordingly he sent his servants soon after to carry it off ; when, having removed near one hundred cart-loads, they observed the supporters of a Cromlèh, from which the covering stone was slipped off on the south side, but still leaning against them. These supporters include a rectangular space, open only at the north end, their dimensions being of a very extraordinary size ; viz. that forming the eastern side being 10 feet 6 inches long ; that on the west 9 feet, with a small one added, to complete the length of the other side ; and the stone shutting up the south end being about 5 feet wide. The cover-stone is about 13 feet 6 inches by 10 feet 6 inches ; but its length, and the height of the supporters, cannot be exactly ascertained, as they are inserted in the ground ; the present height being about 5 feet. This Cromlèh is dissimilar to all others found in this county,\* which

\* It is singular that the Rev. Mr. Hitchins should have stated that this Cromlèh differs from all the others found in Cornwall, in consequence of its being enclosed,—when Molfra, Chùn, and Sennor Cromlèhs were all so. Lanyon Cromlèh, being the most accessible and the best known, generally suffices for all the rest, and few visitors see any other. In Mr. Lysons' *Magna Britannia* is the only accurate representation of Chùn Cromlèh that I have seen.

have small supporters, and the area under the cover-stone open on all sides; whereas this, when the cover was on, was shut up almost quite close to the top, and on three sides, having only the entrance at the north end open; and therefore appears to resemble Kitts-Cotty-House in Kent, though the dimensions of this are larger.

“ As soon as the gentleman observed it to be a Cromlêh, he ordered his men to dig under it, where they soon found a broken urn, with many ashes; and going deeper they took up half a skull, the thigh bones, and most of the other bones of a human body, lying in a promiscuous state, and in such a disordered manner, as fully proved that the grave had been opened before; and this is the more certain, because the flat stones which formed the grave, or what Dr. Borlase calls the Kist-vaen, *i. e.* the stone chest, and a flat stone about 6 feet long, which probably lay at the bottom, had all been removed out of their places.

“ The skull and some other bones were carried into the gentleman’s house, and shewn to his friends as curiosities, but were afterwards re-interred in the same spot, enclosed in a box. These bones, I have been assured, were above the size of those of the present race of men; but I was not so fortunate as to hear of this event in time to get a sight of them.”

See an Account of some Roman Urns and a Cromlêh lately discovered in Cornwall, in a letter from the Rev. Malachi Hitchins, read March 11, 1802. *Archæologia*, vol. xiv. p. 225.

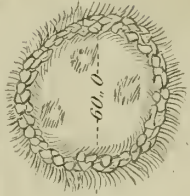




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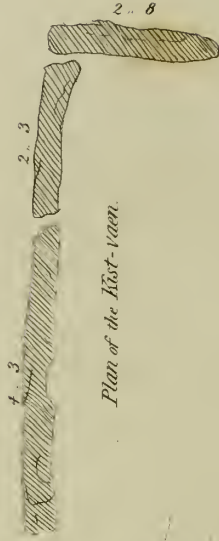
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*Plan of the Three Barrows on Botra Hill*

*View of the Burrow opened on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1826.*



*Plan of the Kist-vaen.*



*Arrow-heads of Flint found in the Kist-vaen.*

AN ACCOUNT  
OF SOME  
BARROWS ON BOTREA-HILL,

NEAR THE LAND'S END, CORNWALL,

*Which were Opened on the 26th of September, 1826.*

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It was a custom of great antiquity to heap up a tumulus of earth or stones over the bodies of the dead, which was equally practised by the most civilised and the most barbarous nations. History and the early poets inform us of this fact, and that such was the mode of sepulture practised by the Persians,\* the Grecians,† and the Romans.‡ It prevailed also among the Germans and other northern nations,§ as well as among the Indians of South America, whose custom it was “to place stones around the corpse, and cover it with a rude vault; they then heaped up the earth till a considerable hillock or tumulus was made. Many of the sepulchral monuments of the Indians, called Guacas, are seen throughout the kingdom of Quito, generally from 18 to 25 yards high, and 40 or 50 yards at the base.”|| The most ancient barrow we read of in history, is that which Semiramis caused to

\* Xenophon, lib. vii.

† Iliad, lib. xiv. v. 119.

‡ Virg. Æn. xi. v. 20.—Liv. lib. xxxvii. c. 42.

§ Tacit. de Mor. Germanorum.

|| Gent. Mag. vol. xxxii. p. 210, year 1752.

be raised over the body of her husband Ninus, who was the founder of the Assyrian empire, according to Diodorus Siculus.\*

Pausanias tells us that the monument of Laius, the father of Œdipus, was extant in his time, and that it was formed of stones heaped one upon another.†

Tydeus, the father of Diomed, was buried under an earthen barrow during the siege of Thebes; and it was the universal custom of both Greeks and Trojans so to inter the dead during the Trojan war. The tumulus of Hector is supposed to remain to this day. See Sir W. Gell's Topography of Troy.

In the British islands barrows are very frequent; and we learn from Pomponius Mela,‡ that the Druids burnt and then buried their dead.

Among the northern nations it was customary to deny the honour of being buried under barrows to tyrants, parricides, and other criminals; but to grudge no labour or expense in erecting tumuli to the truly great and illustrious: thus the carcass of Fengo was to have neither urn nor tumulus, but to be burned by the soldiers, and the ashes scattered in the air.§

Silbury Hill, in Wiltshire, is an evidence of the labour and time the ancient Britons sometimes bestowed on such works; its diameter at the base being about 200 feet, and its perpendicular height 170 feet. Though no monument of this size remains in Cornwall, there is a great number of barrows on almost every plain, and on the tops of hills, where engagements as well as encampments generally take place. On

\* Diod. Sic. lib. ii. c. 1.

† Pausanias, lib. x. c. 5.

‡ Pomp. Mela, lib. iii. c. 2. This author flourished in the first century, during the reign of Claudius.

§ Sax. Gramm. as quoted by Dr. Borlase in his Antiquities of Cornwall, p. 209. 2d Edit.

St. Austle downs there are as many as two, three, and even seven, in a straight line. They vary in height from 30 feet to 4, and from 130 to 15 feet in width.\*

The Barrows on Botrea-hill are at least five in number, placed in a line north and south; but three seem distinct from the rest, and engaged our attention. Their situation is on the bald summit of a hill, about four miles from Penzance, on the left of the road to St. Just, on the estate of Colonel Scobell, of Nancealverne. This elevated site commands a fine sea view over the Land's End and Cape Cornwall.

The circumstance of an urn† having been found by some workmen in removing the stones from one of these Barrows, awakened the curiosity of some gentlemen in the neighbourhood, and induced us to examine the others more carefully. We proceeded to the spot on the 26th of September (1826), and examined two Barrows, in one of which the urn had been found; they were the southernmost of the line, and very near each other. We found them to consist of a mass of stones and earth mixed together, and covered with a black vegetable mould, in which grew heath and furze. Around the base of the Barrows were several very large stones of granite, which seemed to have formed a boundary to the work at bottom, and enclosed a circular area of about 20 feet in diameter. These large stones were laid together like a wall, and the heap of earth and loose stones made upon them.

At a little distance from these, towards the north, we found three circles in the same line, at distances of about 300 feet from each other. These circles are formed by a low wall or bank of earth and stones, which may be perceived, by some portions remaining, to have been formerly built up in a regular manner, without cement. Their areas

\* Dr. Borlase.

† This urn was unfortunately broken to pieces by the men.

are slightly elevated above the level of the ground without, (about 18 inches): that towards the south is the most perfect in respect to the size and preservation of its walls; its diameter is 60 feet. The middle circle, which is distant from the last-mentioned about 350 feet, is 90 feet in diameter: and the most northern one 98 feet in diameter, and distant from the middle circle about 260 feet.

It appeared to us pretty evident, that these circles were nothing more than the bases or foundations of Barrows, similar to the two first examined; and that the superstructure of earth and stones had been removed for the purposes of building walls or hedges, as they are provincially termed, for the surrounding enclosures.

Dr. Borlase observes, that, “ in the construction of plain tumuli, “ nothing more was requisite than heaping together the materials, till “ they made a hillock over the dead body, of a conical shape. There “ are others which shew greater exactness; and some are surrounded “ with a single row of stones, which forms the base; and others with a “ ring or fosse of earth.”

The areas of these circles were slightly elevated in three or four places in each, which circumstance induced us to remove the earth from one of them, and we presently came to a small vaulted cell, measuring 3 feet 6 inches long, by 2 feet wide. It was formed with flat stones, artificially arranged, and covered with a large stone on the top. Within we found a cylindrical earthen pot or urn, about 12 inches in diameter, standing on a slab of granite.

On examining the urn, we found it to be made of a coarse kind of clay, mixed with small particles of decomposed granite, very little, if at all, baked; perhaps only burnt in the funeral pile. It contained a rich black earth, unctuous to the touch, and the ashes of burnt wood.

This urn was not found standing downwards on its mouth, as they



sometimes are, but upright: it broke to pieces in attempting to remove it. Its shape was not remarkable; but the upper rim was ornamented with a double border of parallel lines, rudely indented or scratched.

It is curious, that a small flint was found embedded in the greasy earth within the urn, shaped, and in size, like a common gun-flint. It is probable that it was the instrument used in scratching the ornamental border, as it fits exactly in the marks made on the urn.

Dr. Borlase, in describing the method practised by the ancients in urn burial, says; “ that the urns might be guarded from the weight above and around them, they are generally found in small cells of stonework, standing erect on their bottoms, and covered with a flat stone or tile; but sometimes they are found with their mouths downward.

“ In these urns the friends of the deceased thought it their duty to lay up the collected bones; the larger ones being burnt again and again, till they were reduced to shreds.

“ The bones, being laid in the urn, were covered with earth, pressed in close; hence in some we find the roots of grass; in others the bones seem to have been cemented with strong mortar: but the most ancient and effectual way was to cover the bones with the fat of beasts, the oil of which, being imbibed by the bones hot from the embers, kept them better preserved. Achilles, out of tenderness for the remains of his friend, orders his attendants to cover the bones of Patroclus with a double coat of fat.”\*

—— “ Then, as the rites direct,  
The hero's bones with careful view select,  
These wrapt in double folds of fat prepare,  
And in the golden vase dispose with care.” — POPE.

\* Il. xxiii. v. 243.

The black earth which we found in the urn had all the appearance of having been saturated with fat or animal matter, and was plentifully mixed with ashes and charred wood. This proves, beyond a doubt, that the body of the deceased had been burnt, previous to interment under the Barrow.

Cremation appears to have been practised in India and Asia from the very earliest periods; hence it was brought into Europe by the Celtic or Cimbric tribes, together with other customs and opinions. See Dr. Borlase's *Antiquities of Cornwall*, book i. chap. 6.

Herodotus speaks of cremation and barrow-burial as united among the Thracians.\* It preceded interment among the Greeks. Cæsar and Tacitus may both be quoted to prove its adoption by the Gauls and Germans.

That the ancient Britons also burnt their dead, and interred the remains in urns, cannot well be doubted, from the number of Barrows which have been opened, and the ashes found within them.† That the ancient Gauls did the same, we learn from Montfaucon;‡ and, speaking of the tombs of the northern nations, the Cimbri, Danes, &c., he says that sometimes a whole family was buried under the same tumulus. Dr. Borlase describes the finding about fifty urns, in the year 1733, surrounding a Kistvaen, or cell paved underfoot, in which was also found an urn, finely carved and full of human bones.§

We had not the good fortune to find more than one urn, yet, as that was not in the centre of the Barrow, but under one of the little elevations of earth and stones, of which there were three or four in each Barrow, we were led to conclude that there had been more deposits. Some we

\* Herodotus, lib. v. at the beginning.

† Borlase, book iii. chap. 10.

‡ Montfaucon, tom. v. p. 194.

§ Borlase, book iii. chap. 10.

opened, but found only large stones lying promiscuously under the turf, and which probably had been disturbed, and examined before.

Continuing our researches notwithstanding, we found in the most northern Barrow the remains of a Kistvaen, or stone grave, consisting of two large stones, set up edgeways, in a line with each other, about 15 inches in height, and 6 feet 6 inches in length: another stone was placed at right angles with these, and formed one end of the grave: (see the Plan.)

Dr. Borlase informs us, that in a similar Kistvaen was found, in 1748, the carcass of a man laid at full length; a long stone being on each side, and one at each end, on their edge: the bones were large sized, and there was no stone to cover the body. It is remarkable, that this discovery was also made in searching the last of three Barrows, lying in a line nearly S.E. by N.W., in the tenement of Bosavern Rós, in St. Just.

The stones which formed the other side of our Kistvaen had been doubtless carried away; but in turning over the black earth with which it was filled, we found two very curious arrow-heads, of flint stones, barbed and sharp pointed; they were ingeniously wrought, and one inch and a half in length, by  $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch in breadth: they afforded us a reasonable ground for supposing these Barrows of the greatest antiquity, before the use of metal was much known to our warlike ancestors.

Iron, we are told by Cæsar, was very scarce in Britain; it was only found near the sea coast, and in a small quantity.

The Germans had none in the time of Tacitus.

The Gauls and the Danes made their weapons of brass; and that the Britons used the same metal, is clear from the pieces of it so frequently found in Barrows, and the remains of a sword found at Mén in Sennan.

The ancients worked in brass much earlier than in iron.\* Mr. Douglas, in his Sepulchral History of Great Britain, says : “ whereve arrow-heads of flint are found in Barrows, they are incontestably the relics of a primitive people, and precede the era of those Barrows in which brass or iron arms are found.”† And Dr. Borlase observes, that, “ as the mode of burying the dead under tumuli was so universal, it is no easy matter to determine by what nation, or at what period, any Barrows were erected, unless something is found within to assist the judgment.” In this instance we were led to suppose, both from the rude workmanship and materials of the urn, as well as from the arrow-heads of flint, that these Barrows were the work of the ancient British or Celtic inhabitants; perhaps before the invasion of the island by Cæsar, or the final settlement of the Romans in it.

In conclusion, it may be observed, that, as these Barrows are in a line, and at nearly equal distances apart, as also from their containing several deposits in each, we were led to conjecture that they might have been raised over the bodies of some warriors who fell in battle; and the circumstance of finding warlike instruments, and their position on the open downs, where battles usually take place, seem to strengthen this idea.

\* Borlase. Hesiod, *εργα και ημερ.* 142. Lucret. lib. v.

† *Nænia Britannica*, p. 154, note 3; as quoted in the *Archæologia*, vol. xii. p. 331.

THE END.













