

# I.

NOTICE OF EASTER ISLAND, ITS INHABITANTS, ANTIQUITIES, AND  
COLOSSAL STATUES. BY LIEUT. C. M. DUNDAS, R.N. COMMUNICATED  
BY JOHN STUART, Esq., LL.D., SEC. S.A. SCOT. PLATE XVII.

Easter Island, or as it is called by the natives, Rapa-rui, is a small island, only remarkable for the gigantic statues found there, which are mentioned by Cook and other navigators. It is situated in lat.  $27^{\circ} 10'$  S., and long.  $109^{\circ} 30'$  W. of Greenwich, and at a distance of more than 2000 miles from the nearest point of South America, and about 1200 miles from the nearest inhabited island. It is said to have been seen by Davis, an English navigator, in 1686, but this is doubtful. Rogge-  
wein, a Dutchman, discovered it in 1722, and it has been subsequently visited by Cook in 1774, La Pérouse, a Frenchman, in 1786, and by a few others. In November 1868 we were there for a week in H.M.S.

Topaze, under Commodore R. A. Powell, C.B., and the following account is drawn up from what we saw.

The island is of triangular shape, and about 30 miles in circumference; the northern and southern extremities are about 1000 to 1500 feet in height, sloping gradually towards the centre. The interior is studded with smaller hills, nearly all of which are extinct craters, and the soil is evidently volcanic in its origin, decomposed lava with loose lava stones, and pieces of obsidian or volcanic glass. The coast line is generally precipitous, and there are few places where landing would be at all practicable. There is very little vegetation, but the island is covered with long brown grass. There is a shrub-like tree, generally averaging from 6 to 8 feet in height, which the natives call Toro-miro (*Edwardsia Macnabiana* ?), having a dark reddish wood, and a leaf resembling the common vetch; and also the paper mulberry, from the bark of which the natives make tappa or native cloth.

Roggewein says that in 1722 the island was well wooded, but except a few stumps of cocoa-nut palms, we saw no trees, and as in his account the natives are described as giants, perhaps we ought not to place too much dependence upon him. The natives cultivate the sweet potato, plantain, taro root, yam, and sugar cane, and their plantations are scattered all over the island. The missionaries, who are Jesuits who came from Tahiti about the year 1865, have introduced maize and other vegetables, which appear to thrive well in their garden.

There are no quadrupeds indigenous to the island except rats, which abound, and are used by the natives as their only animal food. These rats appear to be the large brown rat found on the other Polynesian islands. La Pérouse mentions having left some hogs, but we saw no traces of any. Cocks and hens are plentiful, and the eggs were offered to us for barter. Boatswain birds, frigate birds, tern, and other sea-birds were seen, but we saw no wild land birds. Although we did not succeed in catching any fish, there must be some of very considerable size, to judge from the stone fish-hooks which we found among the natives (Plate XVII. fig. 10). They also have fine nets for small fish, and they catch crayfish by diving.

We only saw one canoe; it had an outrigger, and although it was made of small pieces of wood laced together, it resembled in general form the

canoes of the Marquesans, but had evidently not been used for a long time. Cook mentions that in 1774 only three or four canoes were to be seen.

The ordinary dwellings of the natives are long narrow houses made of sticks planted in the ground at some distance apart, bent over, and tied together; the whole is thatched with straw and rushes, and resembles in shape a large canoe upside down. These average from 20 to 25 feet in length, 7 or 8 feet in breadth, and between 5 and 6 feet in height at the centre, tapering towards the ends. There are no windows, and the door is a hole in the middle of one side, from 1 foot to 18 inches square, just large enough to admit a man crawling in. Some of these houses are much larger, however; one we saw was between 40 and 50 feet long. They have no partitions or furniture, and the only household utensils we saw were a few gourds. All the cooking is done in the open air, in the same manner as is usual among the South Sea islanders, by means of hot stones. Both Captain Cook and La Perouse mention subterranean houses, but, except at the edge of the crater, I did not see any of these.

The great crater, called by the natives Te Ranu (the crater) Kau, is situated at the summit of a hill 1200 feet high, at the S.W. extremity of the island. It is 2000 yards in diameter, and about 800 feet deep, and the bottom is flat and marshy, with reeds and rushes growing in it, and pools of fresh water here and there.

I may mention here that there is not much fresh water on the island. We found it in the great crater, at the crater Otu-iti, at the eastern end of the island; and in a few other places there are springs, but the water is brackish. On the sea edge of this great crater we found a number of very curious subterranean houses, in one of which the statue which was brought home in H.M.S. Topaze, and now in the British Museum, was discovered. I should think there were at least fifty of these underground houses, but they were not counted. The natives appear to have taken advantage of the natural caverns in constructing these dwellings, and they are built up where necessary with irregular flat slabs of stone of variable thickness, gradually converging at the top, and the whole roofed with larger slabs. The doors, as in the huts, are very small, just large enough to crawl through. The general dimensions of these houses appeared to be 20 feet by 6 or 8 feet, and between  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and 6 feet in height.

The people may be described, I think, as very like the Marquesans in appearance, but generally lighter in colour. Their stature, I should say, averages from 5 feet 6 inches to 5 feet 10 inches. Their hair is black, and that of the women very long, and worn in a sort of knot on the top of the head. Their dress is the maro, as commonly worn by the Polynesians; the men wear a cincture of cord made of woman's hair about an inch in circumference. The women generally wear a short petticoat of tappa, and both sexes sometimes use a sort of shawl of the same material. They are generally tattooed in much the same fashion as the Marquesans, but the missionaries have prohibited this custom. They also colour their bodies with pigments of red earth. Some of the women have the lobes of their ears pierced, and ornaments, either of wood or fishbone, inserted; but this custom is evidently not carried to such an extent as at the date of Cook's visit, to judge by the engraving in the account of his second voyage (Vol. I. p. 290), where both men and women are represented with the lobes of their ears distended nearly down to the shoulders.

Our short stay did not allow us to come to any distinct conclusion with respect to their language; but a Frenchman, who had been wrecked on the island, and who was accompanied by a Tahitian woman, told us that she had considerable difficulty in making them understand her. Forster, however, who accompanied Cook, gives a comparative table of the languages of the South Sea Islanders, in which many words are common to Tahiti and Easter Island. The language is evidently a poor one, containing but few words.

The population in November 1868 was 900, of whom two-thirds were males. In 1774, Cook estimated the population at 700, but supposed that some of the women were concealed. La Perouse, in 1786, says they numbered 2000. In 1864 several hundreds were kidnapped by the Peruvians, and carried to the Chincha Islands to work guano; and although an order was given a year afterwards that they should be sent back, very few ever actually returned. Since this event, and the arrival of the missionaries, the natives have all congregated in one settlement, at Hanga-roa, or Cook's Bay, on the west side of the island. The birth-rate in 1868 was less than twenty per 1000, and the death-rate forty-six per 1000. As they have no written language, it is difficult to say what the tradi-

tions of their early history really are worth. The missionaries told us that a tradition exists among them, that their ancestors lived on the island of Rapa or Oparo (an island lately used as a coaling station by the Panama and New Zealand Company's steamers, nearly 2000 miles due west of Easter Island), and that having been defeated in civil war, they were put into large canoes; and were set adrift with a supply of water and taro-root; they eventually came to Easter Island, and landed at Winnipu, a bay on the south-east side of the island. That their chief or king caused the large stone statues to be hewn in the quarry at Otu-iti, where he dwelt, and finally ordered the statues to follow him to the crater Kau. This they attempted to do; some fell down, and others remain standing where they stopped. The king died, and was changed into a butterfly, and his name is still preserved as the name for all butterflies, Tu-ku-i-a. They assign no date to this story, but the island is called Rapa-nui, the great Rapa; Opara being Rapa-iti, small Rapa.

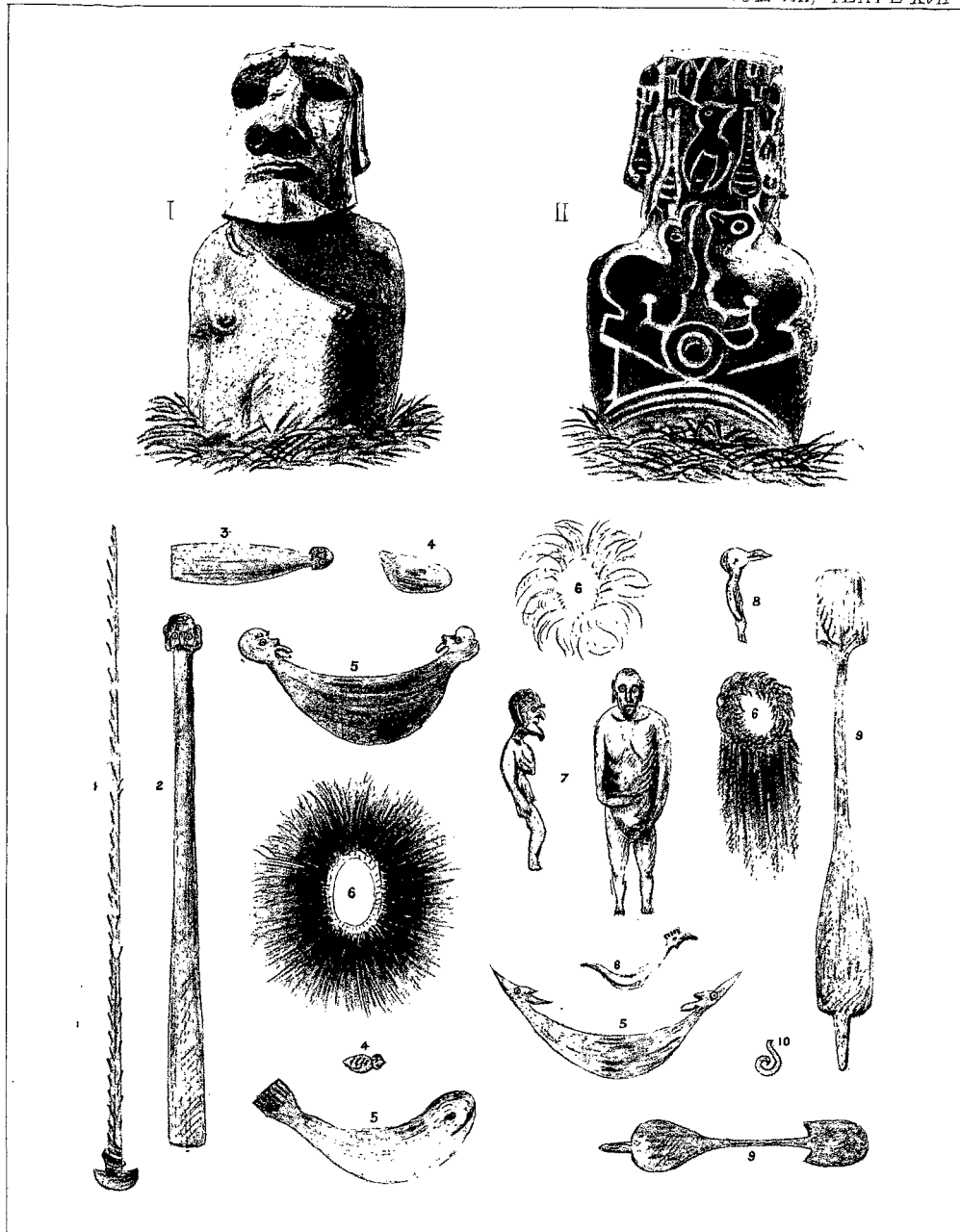
At the death of a king all the people used to assemble in the underground houses, at the greater crater; and the man who could collect the greatest number of sea-birds' eggs was declared king. This was not an easy or safe undertaking, as the cliffs are about 1000 feet high, and nearly perpendicular. They appear to have had little religion before the arrival of the missionaries, except a general belief in a great and good spirit, who planted man in the earth, and from him sprang the whole race. Of this spirit they made no effigy; and we were distinctly told that they never worshipped the large statues, nor the small wooden figures, which they used to suspend from the roofs of their houses. The taboo is respected, as in the other islands in the South Seas; and they were in the habit of protecting their plantations, by placing small cairns of stones, generally topped by a white stone, in sign of taboo. Since the missionaries have been on the island, they have succeeded in Christianising all the natives; the last was baptized a few days before our arrival.

The usual mode of burial appears to have been wrapping the corpse in grass, reeds, or tappa, and depositing them on the platforms in different parts of the island. Forster says that, in 1774, they laid their dead beside the ranges of large stone figures, and that he was told that these figures represented their deceased chiefs. There are also smaller statues, more rudely carved, which appear to have marked burial-grounds: The smaller

of the two, brought home in the Topaze, called by the natives Hoa Hava, was one of these. I also saw three corpses wrapped in tappa, and deposited in an upright position in the clefts in the face of the cliffs, on the northern coast of the island, near La Perouse Bay ; but this, I believe, was a very ancient method of disposing of their dead.

But the large stone statues are much the most interesting feature on the island ; the natives call them Te Moi Maia (the stone statues), and they also say they have a name for each individually. Cook mentions this as a fact ; but I am not certain that it is altogether true. We counted about 300 in different parts of the island ; but the greatest number are found in and about the crater Otu-iti, at the eastern extremity of the island. This crater is about 1000 yards in diameter, and the bottom is marshy, with reeds and rushes growing in it. The sides slope gradually down, and are covered with wild sugar-cane and long grass. In this crater we counted thirty-one of the huge statues, twenty of them prostrate, some evidently unfinished. Outside the crater is another large group, most of them standing imbedded in the soil up to the shoulders. They are of great size, some of them measuring eighteen to twenty feet from the top of the head to the shoulders. Between Otu-iti and Winnipu, a party of officers counted 150 of various sizes, some standing, others fallen. The largest I measured was 32 feet 6 inches in length, and about 10 feet in breadth across the shoulders ; but I believe one was seen 37 feet long. They are all mere trunks, terminating at the hips, the arms close to the side ; the hands generally sculptured in low relief ; the head large, and the top of it cut off square, to enable it to carry a large flat cylinder or crown ; but we did not find any of these in their places. The face is nearly always turned upward, with a stolid severe expression, and the lower lip thrust forward. The eye sockets are deeply hollowed ; and although we could not find any specimen, I believe that they were intended to be filled with eyes of obsidian, in the same manner as the eyes of the small wooden figures. The ears are always sculptured with elongated lobes.

In some parts of the island, especially at Winnipu, the statues appear to have been placed on great platforms of roughly hewn stones, of various sizes, but well fitted together without cement. Cook, in 1774, and La Perouse, in 1786, both mention these platforms ; and from engravings in



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FIGS. I. II. COLOSSAL STATUE, FRONT & BACK VIEW.

N<sup>os</sup> 1 to 10 Weapons, implements, & ornaments, from Easter Island, South Pacific

the accounts of their voyages, it would appear that some at least of the statues wore the large crowns of reddish lava, which are still to be found lying about, but in no case, so far as I know, in their places. The platform at Winnipu is about seventy feet long; and upon it had been placed six statues, the largest nearly twenty feet high, but they are all fallen, faces downwards, and heads landwards. Some of them seem to have been decorated with paintings of canoes, and other rude figures, done in red, black, and white earths. Skeletons and bones of human beings were strewed near this platform, so it was probably one of the places of burial. Another platform, about 100 yards south of this, is more ruined. Three images used to stand upon it; and one of them, although fallen, is still very perfect, lying with its face up, and head towards the sea, and a crown, five feet in diameter, lies close to it. This place is much overgrown with long rank grass. The statues on these platforms vary in size even on the same platform, and they generally appear to have faced inland, with their backs to the sea. Not far distant is another statue of the same material as the others, but forked at the top, and with some rude carvings, which may be intended for human faces upon it, but it is much weather-worn. There are several other platforms on the island, but our stay was too short to admit of a thorough examination of them. The stone of which the statues are made is evidently of volcanic origin. It is of a greyish colour, is unequal in hardness, and the specific gravity is nearly the same as that of granite.

About two miles east of Hanga Roa there is a small extinct crater, quite dry, where there is a quarry of the red lava, of which the crowns or hats were made. Here there are still several, finished and unfinished; and on the slope outside the crater lie about twenty of different sizes, which appear to have been in the course of removal. They vary in size from more than ten feet in diameter to less than five feet at the base, tapering slightly towards the top.

The larger and more highly finished statue of the two which were brought home in H.M.S. *Topaze*, and now in the British Museum (see Plate XVII. figs. 1 and 2), was found in one of the underground houses at the great crater Kau. The natives said that its name was Hoa-hakama-ia, and that of the house in which it was found Tau-ra-renga. The back is covered with representations of birds and paddles or rapas, and



when first discovered was painted white, and the tracings in red. The face also was painted white ; but in transporting it to the beach, a distance of nearly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and afterwards rafting it off, the colour has almost entirely disappeared. Its height is 8 feet 9 inches, and weight nearly four tons. When first discovered, it was buried up to the shoulders, and there was no crown found near it. The smaller one was brought from one of the old burying-grounds, at a place called Mata-veri (the place of the centipede), by the natives. It is evidently very old, and is much weather-beaten, and the style of sculpture is inferior to the larger one. The natives called him Hoa Hava. The implement used in carving these images was a long-shaped hard stone, chisel-shaped at one end, and rounded at the other. Only one has ever been found ; it was brought home in H.M.S. Topaze, and is now in the British Museum. The natives call it "Tingi-tingi," from the sound which it makes in striking a hard substance.

We got in barter from the natives several small wooden figures (Plate XVII. fig. 7), from one to two feet in length, grotesquely carved, and well finished. They are made from the wood of the toro-miro, the only tools used being splinters of obsidian. The figures represent a man disembowelled and flayed, and the profile in every case is aquiline in a marked degree, and totally unlike that of the natives. The heads are in many cases adorned with carvings of birds, lizards, and other grotesque figures, in low relief ; and they all have eyes of obsidian, set in a ring of bone. Both male and female figures have a tuft on the chin. The female figures are flatter, broader, and more rudely finished. Besides these there were smaller grotesque figures of animals, &c. (fig. 8),—a man with a bird's head, lizards, &c. These all appeared to be very old. Ornaments of different sorts were also procured from the natives. Head-dresses of feathers, either of sea-birds or of the common cocks and hens, and of different designs (fig. 6). Some were quite flat ; in others the feathers stood at an angle, according to the taste of the owner. Gorgets (fig. 5), made of the toro-miro wood, lunate in shape, having a head, similar to those of the wooden images, carved at each end. Some of these were also shaped like large fishes. These gorgets were worn by the men at their dances, and seem to have been intended originally for use as breastplates in war. The rapa or flat paddle (fig. 9), with a blade at each end, flourished in their hands while dancing. The patoo-patoo, or short thick

sword (fig. 3). Balls of wood (fig. 4), curiously carved into different shapes, as fishes' heads, turtles with human heads, &c. I do not know how these were used. Their only weapons were the spear (fig. 1) and club (fig. 2); but they only use them on occasions of display now. The spear-heads are made of obsidian, shaped like a half moon, and attached to the shaft by stripes of tappa. [Two of these are figured in the accompanying woodcut, of larger size than in the Plate, where the head is shown attached to the shaft.] The shaft is generally made of the rib of the palm-leaf, and about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet long. They were thrown to great distances, and with considerable accuracy; but they were only used for wounding as a rule, and the enemy was dispatched with a club. We saw very few spears. The clubs, which are now carried by the chiefs as a symbol of office, are about four feet long, slightly flattened, and bearing a double-faced head at the upper end, the eyes of obsidian, and the features flattened.

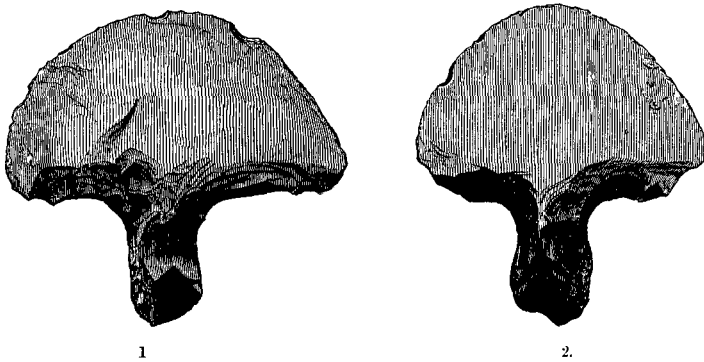
This notice is unavoidably imperfect, as our stay at the island was so short; and I have not attempted to speculate upon the great question, who were the authors of these gigantic statues, and for what purpose were they made? I must leave that to abler and more learned men.

[Since the paper was read, two of the spear heads of obsidian above referred to, have been presented to the Museum by Lieut. Dundas. They will be acknowledged in the usual way in the Donation List of the first meeting of next session, but for convenience of reference they are described and figured here.

These curious stone implements are formed from flakes of obsidian, and are somewhat of a semicircular shape, one side being nearly flat, and the other more rounded. They have been made by detaching a conchoidal fragment from the block, and then breaking away the thick back from either side, thus leaving a short handle-like projection from the centre of the straight back. The face of the weapon is not worked, and retains the original sharp, and somewhat ragged, edge of the flake. The larger of the two spear heads, No. 1, measures  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, from front to back, and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches broad, from one edge of the back to the other, being about three-quarters of an inch in thickness at the back. The stem or handle-like projection by which it was fixed to the shaft is a quarter

of an inch long. The smaller one measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches long, by 3 inches broad, and fully half an inch thick at the back. The stem or tang is fully an inch long. In the annexed woodcut the flat surface of one spear head is figured, and the rounded surface of the other.]

Dr J. A. SMITH said the communication now read included many subjects of much interest; he would, however, only refer to the curious ancient subterranean buildings, which seemed to bear a great resemblance to some discovered in our own country. This similarity had struck



Spear-heads of Obsidian from Easter Island.

( $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in greatest length.)

(No. 1. The convex side. No. 2. The flat.)

J. L. Palmer, Esq., another officer of H.M.S. Topaze, so much, he having had an opportunity of examining some of the ancient underground buildings found in Scotland, that he had written a letter on the subject, which had been published in the Journal of the Ethnological Society of London for January 1870, from which he might quote the following passages:—

“Next day (Saturday) I proposed to go to the grottos I had heard were up near the crater Te Rano Kau. I had heard that it was a long uphill walk; but as our people had got the image (four or five tons) thence, I thought I might get up. Judge of my surprise when I found that in all

essential particulars they are just like 'Picts' houses' at Moss-gail, on Sir J. Mathieson's estate, near Stornoway, in the Hebrides, where, many years since, I had much pleasure in looking over some of the most interesting remains (called Druidical) in Britain. The entrance to each house is very small (20 inches medium), a kind of portal like a square drain some 5 feet long, hollow underneath and flagged, the drain extending some feet outside, as in the Duns in Shetland, and Carloway in particular. This drain the guides said was for the 'dead' (victims?). This entrance opened into a hall, about fifteen paces long by five paces wide, and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet high. I paced one large one: the side flags were three or four feet high above; then came a series of flattish tiles of stone, piled over like oyster-shells, and, for the roof, long thin slabs, the whole covered with earth; no stone pavement. There was a great deal of a small periwinkle growing. Opposite the entrance were rude mural paintings in red ochre, usually of 'Rapas.' I cannot tell you the meaning of this word, as no one could tell me; a thing like a double paddle which they shake in the dance is also so called. Overhead, on the tiling flags, were 'Aronies.' I was told they were birds, but tradition does not say of what kind; they have mostly the toucan bill, somewhat penguin-shaped body, but, in some cases, hands and feet (see Catherwood's 'Central America'). Some of the paintings were recent enough, as I saw ships with rigging, horses, sheep; some of them very old.

"The image Hoa-Hava Nana-Ta is the sacred image of this place (there was no other there), so all the natives told me, and I went into many barrows but found none. He also had his back to the sea, and faced the crater. I did not count the number of the houses, but think there must be more than a hundred. Some have one, some two chambers; some, little chambers outside; all, their little blind drain for the dead. The barrows are irregularly built, so as to take advantage of the ground, and extend quite to the edge of the cliff. The vervain has so overrun them as to make it difficult to plan and number them at a rapid visit. At the end of this settlement, which is close to the gap whence the lava escaped, almost all the blocks of lava are more or less sculptured; but, as they are weatherworn, and the material perishable and overgrown, it is difficult to make out the design—so much so that I made the coloured sketch I sent you without perceiving at the time that one represented a face, which

quite startled me on looking at my work. I wish I could have spent some hours, nay, the whole night, up there, working away with my pencil ; but at 2.30 was the last boat, and so duty called me away from a most interesting place."