

I.

NOTES ON THE BRONZE AND IRON REMAINS DUG UP IN A "PICT'S HOUSE," IN THE HOLM OF EDAY, ORKNEY (PRESENTED AT LAST MEETING TO THE MUSEUM OF THE SOCIETY). BY JAMES FARRER, Esq., M.P., F.S.A. Scot. COMMUNICATED BY JOHN STUART, Esq.

INGLEBOROUGH, LANCASTER,
January 18, 1856.

DEAR SIR,—In answer to your inquiry respecting the iron knife and bronze pin (see woodcut, fig. 1, p. 158), I may state that the former was found, as I understood the workmen, amongst the *stones*, and at no great distance from the floor of the Pict's House. I happened to be present myself when the pin was disinterred; it was about a foot, I should say, from the side of the building, and in a mass of blackish mould (in appearance), probably decayed animal matter, the debris of stone, and ashes; the latter formed a considerable part of the deposit undoubtedly. There were also some fragments of decayed limpet shells. I think the place where the pin was found would be under three feet in height from the floor. It was on the same side of the building that the charred corn was discovered. It is difficult to pronounce an opinion as to the exact position of many of the things discovered; as you must bear in mind that it is possible that in working such a large mass of rubbish as that contained in the inner area of the Pict's House, articles of any weight, and of small size, might easily find their way through the larger stones down to a considerable depth, and I therefore do not feel justified in concluding that the knife and pin are contemporaneous, though I believe there would not be much difference between their relative heights above the floor when discovered. With regard to the pin, however, the comparatively compact mass of mixed rubbish in which it was found proves that it must have been there for a very long time; and I consider it probable that there had been but little alteration in its position since the original destruction of the burgh. I ought to state farther, that all the things found were at or near the bottom, and generally near the sides. If there are any farther questions that I can answer, I shall be happy to do so. If I were to express an opinion, I should say that the iron knife belonged to a later, though still a very remote era—perhaps I may be a little influenced by its very modern appearance. As, however, the burgh, when first opened by me, had a considerable depth of soil over it, and was, in fact, a large circular hill, presenting no external appearance of a building of any sort, I cannot doubt the fact of its having remained in the same state for probably many

centuries; and as there was no subsidence of the ground, there could have been but little alteration in the relative levels of the articles buried in the ruins, so long as the mound itself remained undisturbed. I enclose a rough drawing I made of the Weem in the Holm of Eday Island, together with rude sketches of other things explored whilst on a visit to Mr Hebden; perhaps it will suffice to give you an idea of their general form. The measurements were all taken on the spot. The small Weem (also on the Holm of Eday) would appear to have been used as a place of concealment; or, possibly, it may have been the dwelling of an anchorite? The monolith (on the main island of Eday) rivals in size those of Stennis. It is evident that at some period these gigantic stones have been numerous in Eday, for I found traces of them extending nearly in a straight line for about four miles, and it is probable that at one time they may have extended the whole length of the island. The inhabitants, previous to Mr Hebden becoming the owner, appear to have broken up and removed many of those stones, and they now only remain probably in places whence the difficulties of removal were insuperable. Near the great monolith on Eday is a curious circular enclosure. Mr Hebden informed me that he had ascertained that the enclosing wall was seven feet wide at the base. The top of the wall has long been covered with peat, which must have grown over it, unless, indeed, in the long lapse of time the wall has itself sunk in the ground. The mound above Loudon Bay is sepulchral: small portions of deer bones, bone in a rotten state, and a human tooth, were found in it. It was in three compartments, and there was a passage apparently leading to a fourth, which we had not time to explore. I am unable to conjecture what was the object of the construction, with remains of towers and standing stones. Can it have been a rampart, the towers having been the residences of the defenders? The "Stone Dyke" runs down in the direction of, and, I was told, extends to the beach. An old man, long a resident in Eday, told me that thirty years ago he remembered many standing stones having been taken away from this very place. Eday abounds in objects of antiquarian interest; and it was a matter of much regret to me that I could not devote more time to their investigation. Believe me to remain yours faithfully,

JOHN STUART, Esq.

JAMES FARRER.