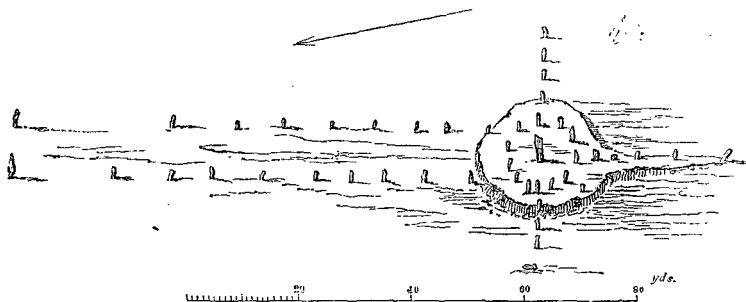


I.

NOTICE OF THE STONE CIRCLE OF CALLERNISH IN THE LEWIS,
AND OF A CHAMBER UNDER THE CIRCLE RECENTLY EXCA-
VATED. COMMUNICATED IN A LETTER TO MR INNES, BY SIR
JAMES MATHESON, BART. BY COSMO INNES, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The following is the substance of a Communication from Sir James
Matheson, Bart., of the Lews, on the subject of the removal of the peat

moss from the Druidical circle at Callernish. (For a general description of the circle itself, reference is made to the last number of the Proceedings of the Society, p. 380, where it is mentioned that the excavation now completed was in contemplation.) The work was executed under the immediate superintendence of Mr Donald Munro, Sir James Matheson's chamberlain in the island, who took every precaution necessary for noting any particulars that might be interesting in clearing away what was considered to be the gradual accumulation or growth of ages.



Stone Circle at Callernish.

The average depth of the moss, from the surface to a rough causewayed basement in which the circle stones were imbedded, was 5 feet, and the workmen had not proceeded far with their operations, when, in front of the large centre stone, and extending to the eastern wing, they came upon an erection which proved, as the work proceeded, to be the walls of a chambered building,¹ consisting of three compartments, the dimensions of the one nearest the centre of the circle being 4 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 1 inch; the next, which was connected with the former by a narrow opening, was larger, being 6 feet 9 inches by 4 feet 3 inches, from which there was a narrow passage 2 feet wide, extending the rest of the distance to the circumference of the circle. The larger chamber was found to have two stones on each side, forming jambs for the entrance to the smaller chamber; and in close proximity to these, there was found a separate stone 4 feet long by 12 inches, which fitted, and was supposed to be a lintel to the jambs referred to. These stones were rough and

¹ See woodcut, next page, for the ground plan.

unhewn, and the whole building, although otherwise regular, was composed of the rudest materials.

With regard to the contents of these chambers Sir James Matheson says:—"I enclose some minute fragments of what we suppose to be bones¹ found in the chamber, and a specimen of a black unctuous substance, in which these fragments were contained." Sir James adds, "It is remarkable that the sides of the small chamber are quite undisturbed—not a stone even of the uppermost tier removed from its place, which leads to the inference that it was at one time covered up by design, since, if it had been left uncovered till the moss grew naturally over it, it is to be supposed that some of the upper stones would have been displaced by the feet of cattle, or by any other of the numerous accidents that would have been likely to disturb them, yet I have not heard that the superincumbent substance over the chamber was in any respect different from the surrounding peat moss."

