II.

NOTICE OF THE VARIOUS ATTEMPTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO READ AND INTERPRET THE INSCRIPTION ON THE NEWTON STONE, GARIOCH, ABERDEENSHIRE. By ALEXANDER THOMSON of Banchory, Esq., F.S.A. Scot. (Plates X. and XI.)

Although no satisfactory progress has yet been made in reading and translating this mysterious inscription, it seems desirable to collect together and preserve a brief notice of what has hitherto been done, in the hope that scholars may be stimulated to further exertions. It is *provoking* to have an inscription in our own country of unquestionable genuineness and antiquity, which, up to this time, seems to have baffled all attempts to decipher it, and that, too, in an age when Egyptian hieroglyphics and the cuneatic characters of Persepolis, and Babylon, and Nineveh have been forced to reveal their secrets to laborious scholars.

The greatest difficulty with regard to the Newton Stone arises from its being unique; no other inscription is known in precisely the same character, so that there is nothing with which it can be compared. It is in six unequal lines, and consists of forty-six letters, giving sixteen or seventeen different forms; but there is no reason to suppose that it furnishes us with an entire alphabet of the language, whatever it may be.

It is a proof how little local antiquities were studied in Scotland, that so remarkable a monument should not have attracted any attention until the beginning of the present century. It appears to have been first noticed in 1803, by shepherds in the neighbourhood, and the late Earl of Aberdeen went to examine it in 1804; and it was very much through his instrumentality that it gradually became known. He fortunately preserved a note of the exact appearance of the stone at that time,

with the small lichens growing *in* the letters, as well as on the general surface of the stone, previous to the many tracings, and rubbings, and castings in plaster to which it has of late years been subjected. (See "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," pp. 1 and 2.)

The earliest engravings of it appear in Pinkerton's Inquiry into the History of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1814, and two are given in our Transactions, "Archæologia Scotica," vol. ii. p. 316, in "An Account of some Sculptured Pillars in the Northern Part of Scotland," by the late Professor John Stuart of Marischal College, Aberdeen, a zealous and accurate antiquary. This paper was read in the Session 1821–22, and printed in 1823, and thus drew the attention of members of our Society to the inscription. None of the engravings are altogether accurate, but the larger of Professor Stuart's is the best,—neither of these gentlemen gives any reading or translation. Mr Stuart, however, refers to what was the first attempt at translation, so far as we know, which was made by General Vallancey, the well-known Irish antiquarian. The inscription was sent to him not long before his death, and he at once read the first two lines,—"Gilf Gommara," or "Prince Gommara;" but he could go no further. He appears to have read it through some fancied resemblance of the characters to Roman letters.

Wilson gives a more correct representation of the inscription than either Pinkerton or Stuart, but he also gives no reading or translation. His valuable work, published in 1851, assisted, however, in making it more generally known.

The late Earl of Aberdeen continued to take a lively interest in the inscription, and he and his son, the Hon. Arthur Gordon, brought it under the notice of the late Dr Mill of Cambridge, one of the most profound oriental scholars of the day; and before his death he had written by far the most important dissertation on the subject which we have yet obtained.

Dr Mill's paper is a remarkable example of bringing a vast amount of learning to bear upon an inscription in an unknown character. It would be unfair to his memory to regard the result he has attained as absolutely certain; he probably did not so regard it. Dr Mill proceeds on the theory that the inscription is in the old Phœnician character and language.

The frequent resort of these enterprising navigators of ancient times

to Britain in search of tin is well known, and gives at once a possibility, if not a probability, to the supposition, that some of them may have ventured in exploring voyages beyond the Cassiterides, and even reached the north-east of Scotland in search of additional supplies of the valued metal, and that the stone may have been erected and the inscription engraven by some such party.

Giving due weight to the consideration that these Phœnicians were the only lettered people of whose intercourse, in the most ancient times, with our country we have certain knowledge, Dr Mill was further strengthened in this supposition by the oriental appearance of the inscription, and confirmed in it by the resemblance of the characters to the ancient Phœnician, with which and the cognate dialects he was well acquainted.

He treated the Newton Stone inscription as Barthelemy, Swinton, Akerblad, Movers, and others had done undoubted Phœnician inscriptions found along the shores of the Mediterranean, trusting especially to the labours of Gesenius, the greatest of Phœnician scholars. He read the inscription, of course, from right to left,—he analysed (so to speak) each letter, and assigned to it its letter in the Hebrew alphabet corresponding with the ancient Phœnician, and then translated into Latin and English.

The process was laborious, and Dr Mill brought a vast amount of learning to bear upon his work; and it is to be hoped that his paper (which is known to be in type) will soon be published by his friend, the Rev. George Williams of King's College, Cambridge, to whose care Dr Mill's manuscript was intrusted by the Hon. Arthur Gordon. Hitherto it is only known by having been read, or an abstract of it, by Mr Williams, at the meeting of the British Association at Cambridge in 1862.

The result of Dr Mill's work is given in the Appendix to this paper, No. II. The English translation is, "To Eshmún [God of health], by this Monumental Stone, may the wandering Exile of me thy servant go up in never-ceasing memorial: even the record of Han-Thanit-Zenaniah, magistrate, who is saturated with sorrow!" Eshmun is the Syrian Esculapius.

The correctness of this translation was impugned at the meeting by Mr Thomas Wright, who, seeing the inscription for the first time, at

once declared it to be *Latin*, written in a debased character, of a date subsequent to the departure of the Romans from Britain, and which he stated to be well known to English antiquaries, but he does not seem to have pointed out any instances where it could be seen and compared.

He, however, at once read the first two lines,—"Hic jacet Constantinus," while in the following lines he said that he saw the word Filius, with the name of the father of Constantine in the genitive case. He was followed by Simonides, who, with equal confidence, pronounced and read it as *Greek*, and what was very remarkable, extracted the same meaning from the Greek as Mr Wright did from the *Latin!* These two critics may therefore be fairly held as having effectually confuted each other. Certainly they left untouched the learned labours of Dr Mill. Even if hereafter it should be found that Dr Mill's translation is not correct, still his work must ever continue to be a valuable monument of patient laborious investigation, and an admirable example to other scholars.

As I spent last winter in Italy, I thought it might be worth while to take correct copies of the inscription with me; and for this purpose I had very careful photographs prepared by Mr A. Riddle, and these I showed and gave to persons likely to be able to throw some light upon it. I had it done in two different sizes, which I now send for exhibition, the smaller being the one which I prefer, and of which I made most use. Most of those who saw it, at once confessed their ignorance of the characters, and declined any attempt to read or translate.

I met, however, with one learned padre in Rome, who at once pronounced it *Celtic*, and that if I would allow him a few days, he would read and translate it for me.

This he did, and brought me the transcription and translation, after some weeks of work. (See Appendix, No. IV., p. 232.) I saw him repeatedly; and after a good deal of cross-examination, I found out the *processes* by which he had arrived at his result.

He first *restored* the inscription, *i.e.*, he altered various letters at his pleasure. This is a proceeding scarcely admissible in any case, and I stoutly protested against its application to the Newton Stone, seeing that it is composed of the hardest granite or gneiss, and retains the letters precisely as they were originally cut.

The next step was to *modernise* the inscription, *i.e.*, to turn it into modern Celtic; this obviously opened a way to make it into anything he pleased. On examining the modernising, I pointed out to him that he had given different modern forms to the same ancient characters; he admitted this, but declared it to be of no consequence.

Not being a Celtic scholar, I got him to dictate to me the words in English letters. The result, when translated into English, is,—

"Boundary of the Royal Field, the all powerful O Aremin (*doubtful*) this stone [erected] a flock of sheep [he placed on the domain]."

In Florence I met with Dr Davis, the well-known explorer of Carthage. He at once pronounced the inscription to be Phœnician; and his opinion on the question is entitled to great weight; for no other person has disinterred, copied, and published so many inscriptions in that language from the ruins of Carthage, Utica, and other adjoining towns. A large volume of inscriptions, the result of his labours, has recently been completed and published by the British Museum; besides his own more popular publications.

It is, however, one thing to copy inscriptions correctly, and become familiar with the character in which they are written and its variations, and quite another to translate from a language at present so little known as the ancient Phœnician.

Dr Davis set to work on the same principle and in the same manner as Dr Mill, changing the characters into the corresponding Hebrew letters, and then translating from the Phœnician; but when he brought it to me he expressed himself very doubtful as to the result he had attained; and he had very little time to devote to the work, as he was on the point of starting on an exploring expedition into Abyssinia.

The result of his endeavours, which differs widely from that obtained by Dr Mill, is given in the Appendix, No. III. p. 231. His translation is as follows:—

"A monument is placed [here] may the memory of the departed prove a blessing. He fell [in this] solitary place, and lay prostrate.

"Guard [the grave of] Atalthan, son of Pazach, [a man of] renown. Behold mother lamenting the treacherous calamity they have inflicted on [her or him]."

At Milan I gave the inscription to the Abate Ceriani, the learned

librarian of the Ambrosian, and on the first glance he pronounced it to be *Palmyrene*. I immediately said, that I could scarcely see the possibility of Palmyrenians having ever reached the north of Scotland, but it might be so. He was much interested by the inscription, and set to work to decipher it. In a day or two, however, he came to tell me he was mistaken; that though some of the letters seemed to be Palmyrenian, he could not identify all; and that he had compared it with all the *alphabets* in the library, but in vain. I gave him several copies for himself, and for friends to whom he was to send them. I have had one letter from him, but only to say that hitherto it had baffled them all. I expect to hear again, and hope it may be with more satisfactory tidings.

I had heard in various parts of Italy that Count la Marmora, at Turin (brother of the commander of the Italian troops in Naples), was one of the most learned students of ancient inscriptions in Italy. On reaching Turin I wrote to him, and sent him a copy. He was much interested by it, though so unwell he could not set to work to study it, and a few days afterwards he died. I understand that a great amount of antiquarian knowledge has been lost to the world by his death.

I gave a copy to Signor Matteucci, Minister of Public Instruction, who laid it before the Accademia Reale, who, after examination and deliberation, came to the conclusion, that "the inscription must be the work or jest of some wag;" an idea which cannot for one moment be entertained by any one who has seen the monument. (See Appendix, No. V.) I gave copies of it to the University librarians at Heidelberg and Bonn, and also to Monsieur Rainaud, keeper of the manuscripts in the Imperial Library at Paris. All promised to write to me as soon as they could say anything of importance on the matter, but, I am sorry to say, I have not yet heard from any one of them.

On my return to London I went to see Mr Vaux of the British Museum. He considers the inscription to be mediæval Latin; but I did not feel at all convinced by his reasoning. He referred me to the Cross of St Cadfan as being inscribed in the same character; but on comparing the plate of St Cadfan's Cross with the Newton Stone, I cannot see the identity of the characters. Two or three are *similar*, but the others are *as dissimilar* as possible.

Mr Vaux advised me to write to Dr Graves of Trinity College,

Dublin, who has devoted special attention to ancient Irish monuments. Dr Graves supposes the lines on the edges of the Newton Stone to be Irish Oghams, and waits photographs of them to renew his studies. He had studied the inscription on the face of the stone years ago, without then attaining any satisfactory result; but he is not without hope of yet succeeding, and if he do, it will be deeply interesting not only to our Society, but to students of ancient inscriptions in all parts of Europe.

Mr Westwood, of Oxford, well known by his antiquarian researches, has suggested the possibility of the inscription being Gnostic—an opinion which he founds mainly on the spectacle figure which occurs on so many of our sculptured stones, although not on the Newton Stone itself.

From these brief notices it will be seen that we have at present five distinct theories as to the language of the Newton Stone,—Phœnician, debased Latin, Celtic, Irish Ogham, and Gnostic.

It is not for me to pronounce any judgment on their respective merits; all that I wish to do, is to bring before the Society the present position of the investigation, and to express the hope that competent scholars will not cease from their labours until the inscription be unmistakably read and translated.

Appendix.

I. See Plates X. and XI. for careful copies of the lettered Inscription, and the Oghams, on the Newton Stone; taken from photographs.

II. Translation of inscription on Newton Stone, by the late Rev. Dr Mill of Cambridge, who regarded it as Phœnician; and, transferring the Phœnician characters into the corresponding Hebrew, read and translated it as follows:—

Line 1.	לאשמ *ad æsculap-*	mshel
Do. 2.	ן · בנציב · יטל *-ium per lapidem ascen-*	lty . bytsnb . n
Do. 3.	ע · לעֿ · טעש · עבדך *-dat in æternum circumnavigatio servi tui.*	kdbȧ . shȧt . ȧl . ȧ

Line 4. זכרן · חנתנט tnthnkh . nrkz
Memoria (sc.) Han-thaniti

Do. 5. זנניה · hynnz
Zenaniæ.

Do 6. שפט · שבע · כעש · shâk . âbsh . tphsh
Suffetis repleti mœrore.

"To Eshmún [God of health], by this monumental stone, may the wandering exile of me thy servant go up in never-ceasing memorial: even the record of Han-Thanit-Zenaniah, magistrate, who is saturated with sorrow!"

III. Translation of inscription on Newton Stone, by Dr Davis, the explorer of Carthage, who regards the inscription as PHŒNICIAN, which he also changes into the corresponding Hebrew letters, and gives the translation with doubts:—

Line 1. עשׂ״ז ל״ז
A monument is placed [here], may the memory [of the departed] prove a blessing.

Do. 2. שך שפי ויט נ
He fell [in this] solitary place and lay prostrate.

Do. 3. טר עטעלתן
Guard [the grave of] Atalthan.

Do. 4. בן פזח שם שע
Son of Pazach [a man of] renown.
Behold a

Do. 5. אם ניה
Mother lamenting.

Do. 6. שו עש כ[ק]טן על
The treacherous calamity they inflicted on [her or him].

"A monument is placed [here], may the memory of the departed prove a blessing. He fell [in this] solitary place and lay

prostrate. Guard [the grave of] Atalthan. Son of Pazach, [a man of] renown. Behold a mother lamenting the treacherous calamity they have inflicted on [her or him]."

IV. Translation of inscription on Newton Stone, on the supposition that it is CELTIC, by Padre ——, Rome. Inscription restored:—

Line 1.	THEUF Boundary
Do. 2.	GOMMATOMACH Of the Royal Field
Do. 3.	CHOED AGUS The All Powerful
Do. 4.	O AREMIN O Aremin (*doubtful*)
Do. 5.	CLOCH This Stone [erected]
Do. 6.	GOMODRACH A Flock of Sheep [he placed on the Domain].

V. DELIVERANCE OF SECTION OF ACCADEMIA REALE DI TORINO.

To the excellent Commendator Matteucci, my illustrious Colleague.

I have myself examined, and presented to the examination of the Section (of the Academy), the photographic copy of the inscription found in the county of Aberdeen, which you had the kindness to send me lately.

I copy the deliverance which I have placed in the minutes of the last meeting of the Academy, which expresses the opinion of the Section as to this inscription.

"The Secretary presents to the Section a photographic copy of an inscription found in the county of Aberdeen, which our colleague, Matteucci, lays before the Section from Mr Thomson, in order to have

our opinion of it. The Section fully concurs in the opinion expressed by one of its members, the Cavaliere Amedeo Peyron,—that is, that the characters of this inscription do not appear to correspond with any known alphabet, and that the inscription must be the work or jest of some wag."

Such is the judgment which I myself at once formed, and which is confirmed by an authoritative and competent judge, the Cavaliere A. Peyron.

Accept the assurance, &c.,

(Signed) G. GORRESIO.

TURIN, *7th June* 1863.

Various admirable photographs of the stone taken by Mr Riddle were exhibited to the meeting.

The very irregular shape of the Newton Stone makes it impossible to take the inscription fully in one photographic view. The instrumen must be shifted about a quarter of the compass round, in order to give an equally correct full view of all the characters. The two engravings accompanying this paper are from photographs thus taken, and it is hoped will enable students to work satisfactorily. (See Plates X. & XI.)

Plate X. gives the greater part of the Inscription in full front view; and Plate XI. gives the left-hand portion of it, with the whole of the Oghams, which are engraved along the edge of the Stone.

There is every reason to hope that we shall ere long have a reliable translation of these from some of our Celtic scholars. It may be that the Oghams contain a repetition of the Inscription, and that thus the monument is bilingual, or it may be that the Oghams are of much more recent date than the Inscription, and if so it is a proof of a certain degree of respect and even veneration for the ancient Inscription, when the monument was employed to receive a second inscription without in any way interfering with or damaging the first.

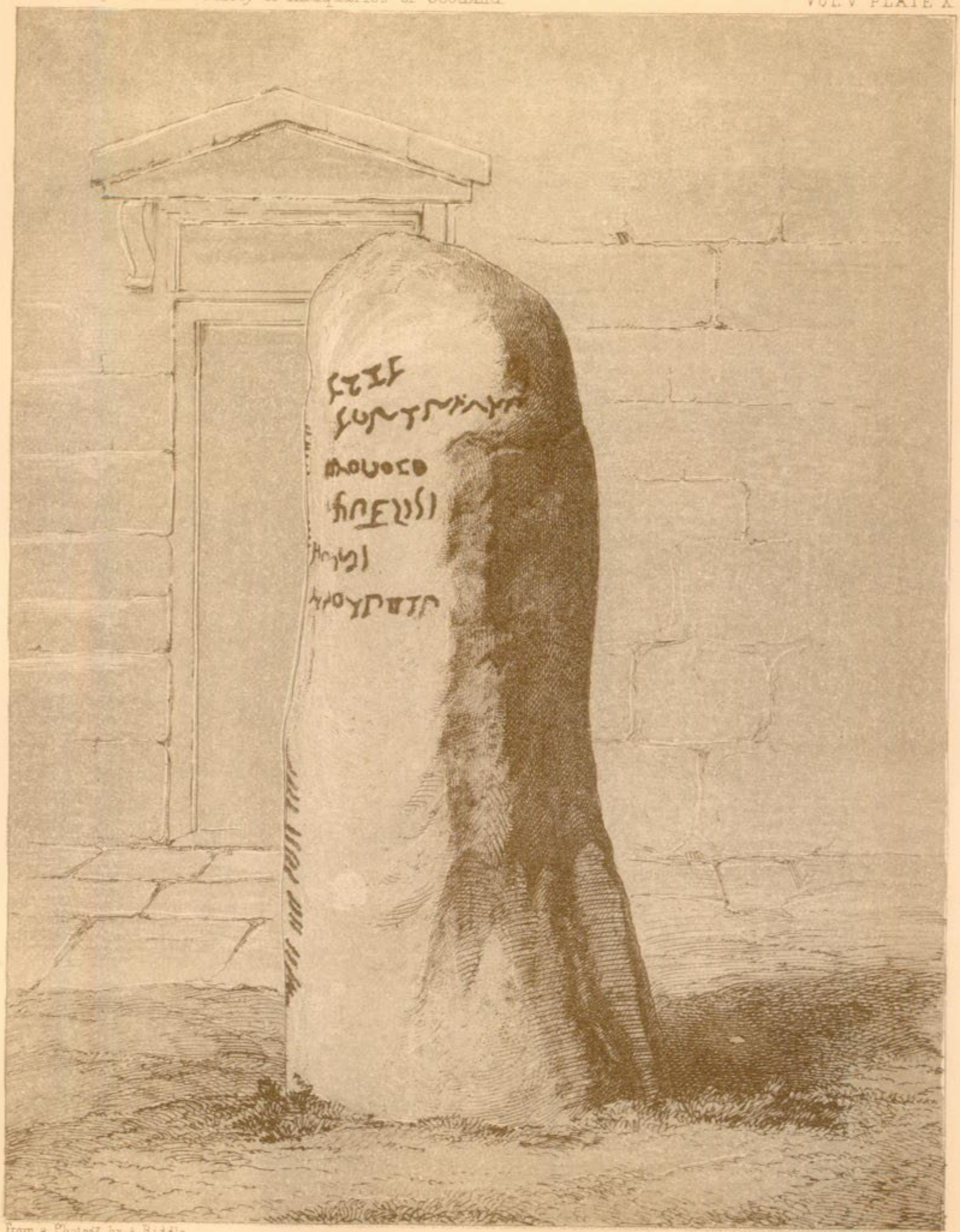
Mr STUART made some observations on the original site of the stone, near to which some graves had been found; and after alluding to some of the Welsh stones, which had Roman and Ogham inscriptions, and to the reading of the latter by Dr Graves, of Dublin, he expressed his belief

that we might look with hope to the result of Mr Skene's labours, who was now engaged on the Oghams of the Newton Stone.

The Rev. Dr LINDSAY ALEXANDER stated, that he had for long taken an interest in this curious inscription, and had compared it with the Phœnician and other alphabets, but without being able to find anything beyond resemblances. More recently he had been struck with the similarity of character between the letters on the Newton Stone, and those of the Sinaitic inscriptions and of the caves at Ellora.

Mr SKENE expressed his hope to be able to report the result of his labours on the Oghams ere long, and his belief that this was the line of inquiry most likely to be successful, from our knowledge of the alphabet. So far as he had gone, he did not think that the Oghams on the Newton Stone presented any unusual difficulty.

Professor SIMPSON joined in the expression of interest in this inscription, and hoped that the efforts to read its interpretation might not be relaxed. He mentioned that Professor Aufrecht and Mr Yates concurred in the opinion that the letters were Phœnician.



From a Photog^r by A. Riddle

W. & A.K. Johnston

THE NEWTON STONE FROM THE S.W.

From a Photog^h by A. Riddle W. & A.K. Johnston

THE NEWTON STONE FROM THE N.W.