

III.

REMARKS ON THE CIRCULAR STONE MONUMENTS NOTICED BY
MR LAWSON IN THE PARISH OF CREIGH, FIFESHIRE. BY JOHN
STUART, Esq., Sec. S.A. Scot.

Mr Lawson's accurate description of the monuments, and of the circumstances connected with their discovery, is sufficient for enabling us to judge of their character; while the slab which he has presented to the Museum gives the best illustration of the style of the sculptures, as the figures on the other slabs are carved in exact conformity with those now exhibited.

It seems plain, from the abundance of traces around, that Creich had been the centre of an early and abundant population. The stone fort on the crest of Norman's Law overhangs the site of the monuments, and other enclosures with hut circles and cairns are in the neighbourhood.

It appears to me that the circles now described are nearly unique, although, of course, before the recent great development of agricultural improvement, it is possible or probable that many others like them might have been seen on our moors and hill sides.

They are distinguished from the circles of stone pillars, which at no distant date were so numerous in this country, in having been placed beneath the surface, and in the closeness of the stones to each other.

They resemble many of the circles of pillars in being concentric, in having the surface of the inner circle paved, and in the use of different kinds of stones in their construction.

Such concentric circles of small stones have been frequently discovered beneath cairns or mounds, but there is no suggestion that such erections were ever placed over the circles at Creich. The figures cut on the stones are in high relief, and have an air of considerable ease and finish in their execution. If we are to ascribe these monuments to the time when burial by cremation prevailed, it will carry them to a period antecedent to the introduction of Christianity; for that system was irreconcilable with burning of the dead, and immediately proscribed it. On the other hand, the occurrence of such sculptures at that period is a circumstance not to have been anticipated and difficult of explanation.

On the whole, I conceive the subject to be one of great interest, and deserving of careful study. The facts connected with the discovery of the urns harmonise with others now well authenticated, and which show that our pagan forefathers, at some time of their history, and probably towards the conclusion of their period, were accustomed to bury in certain selected spots, and not indiscriminately and singly; just as we find from their remains that they *lived* at one period of their era in communities.

The drawing of the stones at manse of Creich, now exhibited, was made for me by Mr Horsburgh of Lochmalony, a zealous member of this Society, and a most skilful draughtsman, whose recent death we have to deplore.

I am glad to have this opportunity of directing the attention of the

Society to the valuable services of Mr Lawson, the parish minister, in the care bestowed by him in recording the discovery of various remains in his neighbourhood during the last fifty years, and especially in connection with the monuments in question.

When it became plain that the last discovered one must be destroyed, from the cultivation of the ground, Mr Lawson made an accurate plan of it, and then removed all the stones to their present site, where he re-erected them precisely as they stood before. It was thus that I had the satisfaction of recently inspecting the monument, with as much advantage as if I had been present at its discovery in 1816. It has now been rescued from all danger, and will remain for the inspection of inquirers in all time coming.

I feel sure that the Society will authorise me to express to Mr Lawson its appreciation of his care for the archæological remains in his parish, and his disinterested efforts to make the discovery of them available to all students of antiquity—carried out, too, at a time when the general taste for such pursuits was at a very low ebb.