

III.

NOTICE OF EARLY MONUMENTS IN THE PARISH OF STROWAN, IN BLAIR ATHOLE. By ALEXANDER LAING, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

During a short sojourn in the parish of Strowan, in Blair Athole, last autumn, my attention was attracted to a remarkable pillar stone in the churchyard there. It is unhewn, and four-sided, with a rude incised cross on the east, and another on the west side (see the annexed woodcut). It measures from 18 to 21 inches on the sides; it, however, does not show its original height. On the occasion of a grave being dug at its base, it fell in, and those engaged in digging the grave set it up; but from its great weight they were unable to raise it to its original level. It is said that there are about 5 feet beneath the surface; its height above ground is $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet.

This somewhat remarkable monument is summarily dismissed in the "Old Statistical Account" with the remark, "in the churchyard of Strowan there is a large obelisk, on which a cross is cut." The writer of the "New Statistical Account" passes it over with an equally brief notice. As it is similar in many respects to the pillar stones in Ireland having rude crosses carved upon them, I think it is deserving of more specific notice, and I have caused photographs of it to be taken for the Society; one of these represents the east side, another the south-east, and the third the west side. From these it will be seen that it is not unlike the one at Temple Geal, near Dingle, figured in Dr Petrie's work on the Round Towers (p. 135), and which he says marks the grave of St Monachan, one of the early Irish saints.

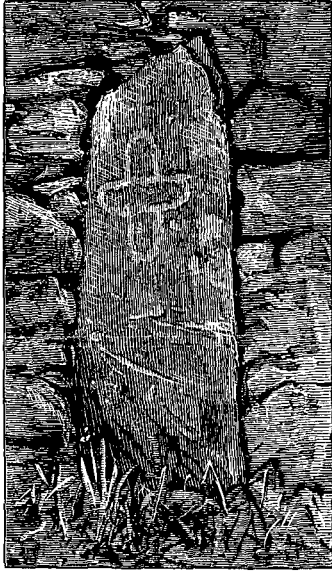
At a few paces distant, built into the west wall of the churchyard, there is an unhewn slab of schistose stone, also with an incised cross upon it; it is equally rude, but of a less common description, (as the annexed woodcut will show). There is no tradition in the neighbourhood, so far as I could discover, relating to either of these stones.

There is another singular relic of the past near Strowan church, deserving of more particular notice than it receives at the hands of the writer, at least, of the "Old Statistical Account." He says,—“A gun-shot above the church of Strowan, in the south-west bank of the Garry, is *Tom-an-tich-mhoir*, the Hill of the Great House, a small square rising ground, partly artificial, and surrounded with a ditch or fosse, said to have been raised by Allan Dirip, one of the family of Keppoch." This stronghold, which is almost



Stone with Incised Cross in Strowan Churchyard.

altogether artificial, if not entirely so, is of far greater importance and labour than this description conveys. At the base it measures 84 feet



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on two of the sides, and 94 and 80 on the other two. It is very nearly 30 feet in perpendicular height, and 54 by 58 feet broad on the top. The fosse surrounding it on three sides is 24 feet wide, and about 7 feet deep. The Garry is its defence on the north. The corners of this huge earth-work are strengthened by a sloping course of masonry, and in consequence its square outline is still entire. Originally it must have been a place of great strength, both from its position and construction; the Garry flowing close on the north, and the Erochkie at a little distance south, the two rivers meeting not many hundred yards below. This primitive fort forms a conspicuous object as seen from the railway below Strowan.

NOTE.—At p. 18 of the 1st vol. of the Society's 'Proceedings' there is an interesting account of the old Bell of Strowan, or Struan, as it is now more commonly written.