

III.

NOTES RELATING TO DUNSINNANE HILL. BY THE REV. THOMAS BROWN, MINISTER OF COLLAGE. COMMUNICATED BY ALEXANDER LAING, Esq., F.S.A. SCOT., NEWBURGH.

Rev. Mr Brown, who was present when the excavations afterwards referred to were being made, has favoured me with the following Notes on Dunsinnane, which, relating to a site so world-renowned, are sufficiently interesting to be brought under the notice of the Society:—

“In the course of the summer of 1857, during the progress of some excavations which were being made at the time by T. M. Nairne, Esq. of Dunsinnane, a small spiral ring of exquisite workmanship was found. The form of the ring was that of a serpent; in size it was about as large as that usually worn on a woman's finger, and was made apparently of

bronze, which, however, from its age, had become so soft as to be easily scraped away with a penknife. The workmanship was most perfect, the eyes and scales on the back being carved in the most minute manner, and were of the most perfect regularity; so much so, that owing to their being so small it was only when they were looked at through a microscope that their beauty and exquisite workmanship became apparent.

“The ring was found in making a trench near the gateway of the fort, and when discovered was lying on the surface of the earth and rubbish which had been thrown up while the digging was going on, but before the workmen had left the spot for the day. Very careful search was made both at the time and afterwards, but nothing else interesting was found. The ring was given to Mr Nairne at the time, but after being in his possession for about a year was unfortunately lost.

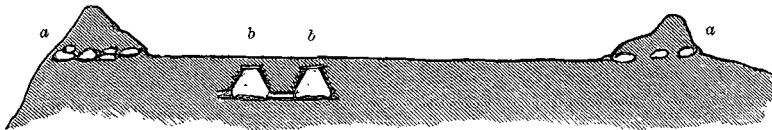
“In the course of the excavations there was, however, discovered a doorway, consisting of two rude unhewn slabs forming the posts, and a similar slab forming the lintel. From the doorway, which was low and narrow, and could not have been entered by a man in an upright position, there was a sloping passage leading to what seemed to be a house or burrow of considerable size, but underground; so that, while the house, if such it can be called, would have contained more than one, perhaps two or three persons, the doorway could only have admitted one at a time, and the passage could easily have been defended by any one armed with a spear.

“Another fact worth mentioning connected with the ruins on the top of the hill, whatever they may have been, is, that within the rampart no water has ever been found, nor has any trace of it been discovered, as indicated by the soil or the plants growing there. It is difficult to explain how the fort should have been so strongly fortified, as it evidently was, and yet have no water within its walls; as in these circumstances it would, in a very short time, have been reduced by being merely invested.”

In addition to the facts communicated by Mr Brown, I may mention that the fort on Dunsinnane is vitrified. In the autumn of the year 1867, I dug from the foundations several pieces so thoroughly vitrified that several stones of red sandstone of considerable size were firmly bound together as if by *slag* from a glass-work. One of these pieces is in the Museum.

The underground or *Eirde* house, which on investigation would probably be found to be larger than indicated by Mr Brown, the vitrification of the walls of the fort, and the spiral ring, all tend to throw back the construction of the fort to a period of great antiquity.

[An account of the Hill Fort of Dunsinnane, with notices of the excavations made by Mr Nairne, and of three skulls found in the underground chambers (which were exhibited to the Society) by T. A. Wise, M.D., F.S.A., Scot., was read before the Society in April 1855, and published in the Proceedings, vol. ii. p. 93, where the annexed section of the structure which occupies the top of Dunsinnane Hill is given.



Section of the Hill Fort of Dunsinnane.

a a, Earthen rampart, packed with boulders. *b b*, Underground chambers.