

I.

ON SOME MEGALITHIC REMAINS IN FRANCE. ILLUSTRATED WITH PLANS AND DRAWINGS. BY SIR HENRY DRYDEN, BART., HON. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

Of this communication, which was an extemporaneous description of the plans and drawings exhibited, only the briefest abstract can be given.

In the outset, Sir Henry remarked that the first necessity of human life was food, and this did not require constructive operations. The second was to obtain shelter from the weather, which in the primitive ages did not require large works, and all of these are now gone, except a few lake-dwellings and hut-circles and caves. The third was defence against the attacks of their enemies. This was a more difficult operation, and hence the principal remains of ancient populations are their earth-works. In all countries we find traces of a religious belief, divided into a belief in a subsequent life and in divinities, to the first of which is attributable the care exhibited in the disposal of the dead, and to the second the erection of places of worship. The remains he brought under the notice of the Society were, with a few exceptions, in Brittany, and all apparently erected previous to the Roman invasion. He had spent five summers in France, and assisting Mr W. C. Lukis to make plans of these remains, and the literary part of the matter was left to Mr Lukis. There are five classes of rude stone remains in Brittany, viz.,

(1.) Menhirs, or stone pillars.

(2.) Lines or rows of stones placed upright, generally in-groups of lines nearly parallel.

(3.) Circles of stones placed upright.

(4.) Dolmens, or chambers formed chiefly of upright slabs, and roofed with horizontal slabs, enclosed in mounds of earth for the purpose of tombs.

(5.) Walls of barrows, most of which are in the last class, as they are the boundaries of mounds which cover or have covered dolmens.

The menhirs vary in height from 4 to 60 feet. Their uses were various, as boundaries, monuments, memorials. Examples of several were shown, the largest being that at Locmariaker. The groups of lines—of which rough plans were exhibited—were eleven in number. The lines are not strictly parallel in each group, as they are usually wider apart at one end than at the other. Many of the stones of which they are composed were boulders, but most were quarried. The circles are generally of thinner stones than the lines, their height averaging about 5 feet, and their thickness a few inches, while the diameter of the circle varied from 50 to 100 yards. Plans of six circles were exhibited. Having described the various forms of dolmens or chambered cairns, and shown that they were all originally enveloped in mounds of earth or stone, he spoke of the sculptures with which the large stones of the chambers were frequently ornamented, and exhibited drawings of a number of these. Having exhibited plans and elevations of all the forms of dolmens, with sketches of several of them in their present condition, he noticed the various disputed questions connected with them, and described the kindred remains in the Aveyron, and in Caithness, Sutherland, and other places. He then exhibited plans and details of the unique monument at Confolens, in the Charente, which rather proved than disproved the great antiquity of the dolmens. It was now clear that this monument had been adapted to Christian purposes, as a *baldachino* over the altar of a chapel which had been built round it. The original props had been removed, and four columns in the style of the eleventh or twelfth century inserted, the tops of which were not on the same level, thus showing that they had been fitted up to the stone.