

III.

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF ANTIQUITIES NEAR LOCH ETIVE. PART IV.

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I did not expect to address the Society again on a subject which has occupied a considerable part of three communications. It is, however, one which, to my eyes, grows very much in interest, because it affords the best prospect I know of obtaining a clue to the time of erection of vitrified forts, and may lead to the verification of many dates and facts. I have ventured to adopt, or at least to hold provisionally, the opinion that the vitrified fort of Dun Mac Uisneachan was inhabited in the early centuries of our era. We need not be desirous to define particularly the date to a century or two. Traditions and the dawnings of history, like the fancies of childhood, are mixed with the real and the ideal, whilst time and place are not very distinctly bounded.

It was interesting to obtain a vitrified site to which any faintest clue of occupation was attached, and I am unwilling to let it go so long as any help can be obtained from farther searching. Circumstances unfortunately prevented much digging this year (1874), but enough was done to show that it was no Roman camp; and all doubt may henceforth be put aside that it was a dwelling-place carefully built and fortified by people of another civilisation. All fancies about earthquakes, volcanoes, and lightning, go also from the site—fancies which I would not mention had they not been entertained by men whose opinions are to be respected on other subjects.

The hill on which is the Dun is long in proportion to its breadth. The top is pretty well defined, as the sides are almost everywhere either very steep or actually precipitous. The length is 250 yards, its breadth at the most 50. The broader part is near the west, and looks on the Bay of Ardnamuic, with a magnificent view around. This part is most fitted for habitation, and has been most inhabited; it is also farther from the side where the rise is more gradual and an attack easier, as at the east. Here were the houses built, or at least the more important, and here were the meals, as sufficient remains show. On the north of this part are natural walls, one may say, as well as on the south, and between these, well

defended from the storms, the principal dwellings were built. On the west there was a space of nearly 40 yards before reaching the precipice that formed the boundary on the shore. The central living place was 30 yards broad by about 45 long.

The debris was not rich, except in bones of common animals; but here were found the iron brooch of a previous paper, the mica, and the bronze wire. On the eastern side a mound seemed to be natural, and only an accident led me to doubt this. It was found to be the remains of a strong wall regularly built, and defending the inner part of the fort even after the rest of the enclosure, or top of the hill to the east, might be taken. About 6 feet high of the debris are remaining, but they slope down gradually, and are covered with grass. The inside was not so high as the outside of the wall. There was an inner wall, apparently more carefully built than the outer, and more of a house wall than a fort wall. This inner wall followed the form of the ground, and did not form rectangular apartments. The enclosure, however, is not all dug up. There was an entrance to it from the western court, as we may call it, through a narrow passage.

Vitrified walls are found along the outer edge of the hill in most places, and on the western part an inner wall runs along them, the breadth and space between being about 9 feet. The vitrification is never carried inside, where a more refined work was required. The vitrified wall is not built on absolute precipices, but on those parts difficult to scale. The cross walls, even those defending the central or high enclosure from the camp, are not vitrified.

At a point of the northern wall was dug up a piece of enamelled bronze, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide. It seems to have served as a cap for something, as there is a hollow on one side by which it may have fitted. On the other are concentric circles, the hollows being filled with enamel, and that of a red colour, whilst the centre piece is of a slight yellow. It belongs to the class called *champlevé*. Ornaments of concentric circles are by no means uncommon in the drawings of Stockholm bronze objects by Professor Montelius of Stockholm, but the enamel points rather to Celtic art, without determining the century. It is well, however, to have some indication of origin. Concentric circles are very ancient ornaments, whether we look on the ancient sculptures of this and neighbouring countries or to the

remains in Schliemann's Trojan Collection, as in p. 137 and on plate xlvii. (where also circles of depressions are seen, although on a small scale, not unlike northern cups and circles as on p. 235, English edition). The circles have enamel reddened with the green oxide of copper. The yellow central piece is very like that used a good deal by the Japanese, and said to contain silver. The piece is so small that I am unwilling to destroy any; besides, it is entire, whilst the enamel of the circles has come out to a large extent.

I shall postpone sending the plan of the fort until it is more complete. These points are made out:—

(1.) The weaker parts of the dun were walled, the outer wall, or part of wall, being vitrified.

(2.) The wall of the western part is double; the outer being vitrified, the inner built, 9 feet being the distance from surface to surface.

(3.) The interior walls were built without mortar, whether they were cross walls or formed lining to the outer wall.

(4.) The eastern wall of the inhabited part had been rebuilt, partly at least, by using some of the waste of the vitrified part.

(5.) The occupation continued after the ruin of the chief structure, perhaps by stragglers, or as poorer cottages now linger about ruins.

(6.) The act of living in a vitrified fort does not prove that the same people built it. It may have been built for the Uisneachs, and as more than one fort of this kind is connected with their name, it does not appear as if they came accidentally to one.

(7.) Vitrified forts are not common in Ireland, and the improbability of the Uisneachs bringing the plan or custom over is great; indeed, we may say that they certainly did not. It is probable that the forts were built for them by the people of Alba, it being the fashionable mode of building at the time for important people. I am not inclined to look at anything mythical in the name when more than one are called after Deirdre. The word *myth* is not a very definite one as used by antiquarians, and often denotes merely a fact which has lost its original clearness.

(8.) The vitrified fort was introduced by men who understood the mode of putting stones together in layers. A part of the vitrified mass *in situ* was overlying a built portion of a wall.

The system, as I before indicated, was evidently introduced for want of

stones large enough to make a firm foundation, or for want of convenience for cutting them, or of ability. It was probably the custom to vitrify to about the height of a man, putting looser stones above that, as we do not find high walls. There seems to have been no desire to form a nucleus over which to build; such an outer coating would have required very exact building, and the amount of vitrified matter is not at all stinted in certain places. It was to a large extent a successful mode of building, but so extravagant as to last only for a short time; the fuel of a county would soon be expended. It might have been devised by men who had been accustomed to fortifications made of enormous stones, and not finding workmen in this county able to carry out their views, took this method of approaching the subject.

When speaking of this I may mention that I visited this year the fort of Perran, near St Brieuc, and was astonished at the amount of vitrified matter, although in few parts has the heat been sufficient to cause sufficient aggregation. It so far differs from ours as being almost on a plain, and the lines almost unbroken. I here quote a portion of a letter received from M. Gesl de Bourgogne (President de la Société d'Emulation des Côtés du Nord), who lives at St Brieuc. He says that in fourteen or fifteen diggings he has found Roman bricks under many of the places which have been burnt (if we may so translate here his word *foyers*), and also a Germanicus; he cannot therefore doubt that this camp was made near to the time of the Roman occupation of Armorica, and not after. This, he says, is confirmed by finding a fibula of the Frank period, but neither bronze nor polished stone weapons or ornaments. There were but few scraps of iron, and these highly oxidised. He is inclined to believe that the fort was made by invaders from the north about the end of the fourth or in the fifth century, perhaps Frisians. Perran is also Cornish.

The vitrified fort is rare in France, and was probably introduced, as indicated, by incursionists; but who these were is not very clear, although it is extremely interesting to have this testimony to the period as not being out of the region of historical investigation, and it is remarkable how many things come nearer when examined. We have been rather liberal with our millions of years.

Although by no means prepared with conclusions on vitrified forts,—places which require much study,—it is difficult to avoid some observa-

tions of a general kind, which are now sufficiently obvious. The vitrified fort did not come from Ireland. There are many in Scotland, but only a few in Ireland, and these few are near to Scotland, where they are found in the very east. It is next to certain that they spread from the east to the west, and reached only feebly the north of Ireland. (The north of Scotland must be included in the east, but the true north has no extension for our speculations.) We are led from their distribution to look to a population in the east of Scotland either inventing new arts or receiving them by holding communication with foreigners, if not by receiving these as immigrants, voluntary or otherwise.

The same remarks may be made regarding brochs. There is no proof of their coming from the west, or rather the contrary is clear, and we are driven to the east and north.

If again we examine the position of the peculiar Scottish sculptures, so magnificently shown in Dr Stuart's volumes, we find that the east part is their centre of emanation.

We have no proof, however, that these three peculiar customs came to the east of the country from any foreign shore. Ireland and Scandinavia, the nearest coasts, cannot be held as the origin, neither can England in the south. We require some new source for Scottish antiquities of the kind, or we must give the inhabitants an amount of originality rarely if ever attained at the then stage of development of a nation.

I think it more probable that the ideas were modified from imported ones, and the question occurs, How did people manage to alight on the north-east unless they were Scandinavians? Before we suppose anything, let us look to the earliest navigator who described his voyage here, although that account remains for us only in poor fragments.

Pytheas, about 340 B.C., came to explore the western and northern regions, and he found it more natural to come up the eastern side of Britain, although he came direct from Marseilles, and of course along Spain. It is not surprising if we consider that it requires a very bold seaman to go direct from Spain or France to Ireland or Cornwall, because nothing is seen for a long time; whereas, by keeping the Continental coast, a sight of Kent is obtained, and the road to the north is opened—on a sea, too, which is less frequently agitated than the Atlantic, although

violent enough at times. I am inclined to think, therefore, that the natural road to Scotland, even from the Mediterranean, was by the east. This does not deny that some better sailors had previously learnt the western road, and attained Ireland. Men had been in Britain from the Mediterranean before Pytheas. So natural did this way mentioned seem that the north of Scotland is in Ptolemy's map turned directly east, as if projecting into the German Ocean, although Pytheas, much earlier, does not seem to have made this mistake.

The remarks regarding that navigator's journey are founded on the book "Pytheas und die Geographie seiner Zeit," by Joachim Lelewel, the German edition.

It may also be said that the new ideas which we trace in these arts may have come through Eastern Europe by some narrow tract not hitherto observed. The numerous emigrations have certainly not all had their historians, and certain families or small tribes may have had their own usages not cared for by larger populations. Although this is most probable, no such road is proved as bringing the new habits, and the facility of reaching Scotland, even from Gibraltar, in preference to Ireland, at least for inexperienced people, is simply a well-attested fact. At any rate, it is clear that in three cases at least new ideas have come, and these the most striking peculiarities in the arts, and not one of them is from Ireland.

Whilst on this subject I may mention another point, which, however, deserves a long study and separate treatment. I am inclined to account for the peculiarities of the Scottish countenance by similar immigrations on the east, feeling perfectly satisfied that there is something not found either in the rest of Britain or in Ireland. I am, of course, perfectly aware that Scotland also contains abundance of the countenance of the Irish Celt or Scot, and have observed also those peculiarities which are seen in Iceland, Denmark, and Germany. The examination of this part of physiognomy relating to expression has been hitherto made too roughly, perhaps it will reveal some of the least delible characteristics of a face. The examination of skulls has not been successful; the bone is by no means the great characteristic of man, nor, so far as I know, has it ever been shown that any particular character of nerve or muscle is essentially connected with a certain form of bone. The progress of development

seems to be in the parts not hitherto put under the full dominion of the microscope. Skulls of men, who would be known at once to be savage from the undeveloped face, are riddles to us. We cannot find the speaking faces of the past, but we may trace characteristics through a population. The Rev. Dr M'Lauchlan has made observations on the tone of voice, and it is extremely probable that it is one of the very permanent remainders, resisting expulsion even with a change of language, and keeping its place in defiance. I hope he will proceed with the inquiry, but shall be glad also if some one would take up the question of physiognomy in its ordinary meaning, attending to the points that strike the most common observers, and such perhaps as the inferior animals would notice as well as those left for scientific man only. The face shows the spirit and the fine results obtained by the invisible movements of those atoms or molecules which we cannot directly watch.

Those who care to begin this will find some very interesting observations in a paper by Dr Beddoe, and his paper on the Size and Weight of Man in Various Countries is one of wonderful interest. He would do wonders if he gave himself to the subject.

Before I leave the fort for the year, I would mention an additional name of interest, and tending to illustrate the chief legend. It was given me by Mr Duncan Clerk of Oban. There is a large stone near Bunawe, towards the west, near the loch, and this has received the name of Clachmanessa; does this mean a stone named in honour of Nessa? Concobhar Mac Nessa was the king of Ulster, for fear of whom the Uisneachs came to Loch Etive. Nessa was a strong-minded woman, his mother, who put him on the throne. This stone is almost exactly opposite the remains of dwellings connected in tradition with an Ulster lady, and previously mentioned. She is called the daughter of the king of Ulster, and we need not wonder that the exact relationship is not remembered.

It is the custom to call great stones here after the people of the day. There is a great boulder dedicated to Rob Roy, and a stone pillar set up to the Duke of Wellington on hearing of the battle of Waterloo,—or perhaps it was for the battle itself,—the first monument of the kind raised in all probability, as it was immediately on receipt of the news, and one of the latest specimens of an old habit of publicly erecting unpolished and unworked stones as memorials. There seems little reason

to doubt that, in a similar way, when *Conor Mac Nessa* was famed in Ireland, and when the *Uisneachs* brought over the fame of him and his mother, that some object would be held as a remembrance of one to whom they were still attached. Regarding the time before this family came, and after they left, I know of nothing to connect *Nessa* or *Mac Nessa* with *Loch Etive* but such remains as buildings, and the still more wonderful exactness of many names fixed on places and on such natural objects as this and the *Grianan of Deirdre*.