

II.

NOTICE OF A KNOCKING-STONE OR BARLEY MORTAR OF GRANITE,
FROM BALLACHULISH, NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM. BY
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The Barley mortar, or "Knockin-stone," lately sent to the Museum from Ballachulish, was the property of my boatman and gardener, John Mackenzie, when I was there in August and September last. It lay neglected on the roadside at the corner of his cottage, turned upside down; and so it was in danger of demolition, when the Rev. Mr. Stewart, F.S.A. Scot., his neighbour, accidentally found out what it was. The final result was that Mackenzie agreed that it should be presented to the Society's Museum.

Mr. Stewart has been so kind as ascertain the history of the stone, chiefly from an aged aunt of Mackenzie. It had been in the possession of the family for generations; and when they "fitted," it moved with them as part of their household goods. The aunt assured Mr. Stewart that it had been used by her grandfather, and his father before him, so that it may be two hundred years old at least. She perfectly remembered pot-barley being made with it in her own family when she was a young woman.

On the mainland, as Mr. Stewart informs me, its Gaelic name is "Cnotag." "*Cnot*," being the verb to husk barley, oats, or peas, *cnotag* is simply the husker. In the Hebrides it is called "Eornachan," "the (pot) barley-maker," from "*Eorna*," barley. This utensil was often made of wood, which required to be of considerable weight and size to secure the necessary solidity and fixity. But stone was always pre-

ferred, not only because it lasted longer, but likewise because it yielded more quickly a cleaner barley, fit for the broth-pot. Mr. Cameron, hotel-keeper at Lochleven Hotel, further informed me that he had, when a lad, often made pot-barley with such a knocking-stone as we have received, and that, when potatoes, cabbage, and other vegetables came into general use in the Highlands, it was also employed for mashing them.

I think the stone must weigh three hundredweight. It is rudely oval, and well rounded over all, as if it had been a thoroughly rolled boulder. The material is a light grey syenitic granite, such as occurs abundantly around Ballachulish, and in many other parts of the Highlands, and which is extensively quarried between Ballachulish and Ardsheal for building purposes. All new houses thereabouts have been built with it ; and indeed it is a beautiful and durable building stone.