THE RUDE STONE MONUMENTS OF CORNWALL.

By R. N. WORTH, F.G.S., Cor. Mem.

Preliminary.

Although so much has been said and written on the fascinating topic of the Rude Stone Monuments of Cornwall, the subject is very far from being exhausted. Indeed it cannot be said, even after centuries of more or less accurate observation and investigation, that all the materials are yet to hand. True, most of these monuments have long been known. True that, for the most part, they have been carefully examined and described. Still, fresh facts and illustrations are always coming to light; and there are directions in which further research seems likely to be fruitful of very important results.

Under the head of Rude Stone Monuments, for the present purpose I include: 1—stone circles; 2—menhirs; 3—kistvaens; 4—cromlechs or dolmens; 5—holed stones. Of the large stone circles and of cromlechs, Cornwall contains more examples than any other county in England. Whether it possesses also examples of the stone rows, which are more common on Dartmoor than in any other part of the world, so far as is known to the antiquary, is a point as yet unsettled.

My special object is to endeavour to ascertain, as far as may be, what these monuments have to say for themselves. There have been abundant speculations, a most plentiful crop of hypotheses, a wideness and wildness of suggestion often bordering upon the ridiculous. Many a plausible theory has rested on no sounder basis than an erroneous description, or the insistance on the essential character of an isolated peculiarity. There has been too great readiness, also, to press into service traditions which by no conceivable means could be made to synchronise; to regard statements as authoritative which merely embodied the guesses of writers, far removed from us, indeed, in point of antiquity, but having no more direct knowledge of the true facts than ourselves.

It seems to me that the wisest course in these matters is to bring all the examples of each class of monument, so far as possible, under review, in order to ascertain their common features. Then, to interpret these by the facts of human nature. In these features, it is evident, their purpose and meaning must be found—if it be found at all. The true theory must be capable of universal application. Variation must always be regarded as an accident, not an essential. Unfortunately, however, many of the hypotheses which have been proposed—indeed the greater number—have been the plain result of laying undue stress upon exceptional characters. Such characters have their interest—they may have their value; but their place is subordinate. The fact that a man has eyes, is of more importance than their colour. The points that differentiate a building, between a human-dwelling on the one hand and a cattle-shed on the other, are more significant in principle than the variations between one dwelling and another—great as these may be.

Stone Circles.

What then, in the first place, are the points common to the Stone Circles of Cornwall—or, in other words, what are their essential features as a class of rude stone monuments? Two points strike us at once.

In the first place, their shape is more or less circular.

In the second, they are formed of stones set on end, at varying distances from each other.

These two characteristics are self-evident; what can we find more?

It is clear that a feature which varies so considerably as their size, cannot be an essential. The largest circle in Cornwall is the Stripple Stones, 148½ feet in diameter; and this is closely followed by the Fernacre, of 146, and the Stannon, of 138 feet. Next come the three Hurler circles, respectively 135, 110, and 105 feet. The Trippet Stones are 104½ feet over, and the Leaze circle 83½. These are all in East Cornwall; with the Duloe circle of 36½ feet.

The largest circle in West Cornwall is that of Boscawen-ûn, 80 feet; closely followed by the Bolleit circle, 75½ feet. The Boskednan circle is nearly 69½ feet, while the chief Tregaseal circle is 65 feet, and the chief Wendron is put at 52.

Cornwall, therefore, yields examples of stone circles varying in diameter from twelve yards to fifty, the interval being filled by circles—to render the dimensions more easy of comparison by putting them roundly—of seventeen, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, thirty-five, thirty-seven, forty-five, forty-six, and forty-nine yards.

Beyond the fact that the circles of East Cornwall—the Duloe excepted—are larger than those of West Cornwall, it is impossible to glean any general deduction from these figures. There is nothing to suggest that a difference in size indicates a difference in origin or in purpose; a conclusion we should never dream of drawing—for example—from the varying sizes of the dwelling-houses of the present day. There is nothing, in short, to justify the hypothesis that the larger circles are "sacred circles," or are in any way distinguished, save in size, from the smaller or presumably "profane." We shall see, by and by, that Devon will supply not merely still smaller circles, but fill up sundry of the greater intervals in the Cornish list; while Wiltshire will yield the biggest circles known.

Next, as to the number of stones forming the circles. In many cases this is by no means clear; but as a rule it can be ascertained with sufficient accuracy for our present purpose. There has been a frequent suggestion that these numbers have a mystical meaning; and because it so happens that there are, at present, nineteen stones each, in the Boscawen-ûn circle and in the Bolleit (Borlase claiming also Tregaseal and Boskednan), the late Mr. R. Edmonds, with others, proposed a connection with the Metonic cycle, which, if proved, would both indicate the approximate date of the circles and reveal their object. But, were this so, the number nineteen, singly or multiplied, would be essential, whereas the Bolleit circle is the only one in Cornwall in which the nineteen stones are certainly original—the Boscawen being manifestly incomplete,—nor is the nineteen more clearly indicated elsewhere. Of none of the other West Cornwall circles can the number be ascertained with accuracy, but there is no reason whatever to suppose that it was nineteen rather than any other figure. And on the other hand it is perfectly clear that the East Cornwall circles all had more, ranging, in the case of Fernacre, up to an observed sixty-four, and, in that of Stannon, to 76;

while the Hurlers are calculated to have had originally from twenty-six to thirty-three. The Duloe circle only retains eight. Stone circles on Dartmoor vary in number between ten and thirty-six; and it is plain that in some of them there must have been more; while in Cumberland we reach eighty-eight.

It is therefore perfectly evident that the number of stones in the circles cannot be essential. It varies, as common sense tells us it would naturally vary, with the dimensions of the circles, and in a smaller degree with the dimensions of the stones.

Neither the size nor the material of the stones, present any distinctive features, so far as Cornwall and Devon are concerned, Some of the stones used in the Cornish circles are quite insignificant; and examples are found of all dimensions, between hand-stones and the 11 ft. 9 in. member of the Stripple Stones. The average size may be put at from three to five feet. As to material, in the West of England the stones are invariably those of the locality, chiefly granite, occasionally quartz, or, as in some Devon instances, a local gabbro. Indeed the only exception to the rule, that circle stones are of local origin, that I am aware of, in the country, is that of the inner and ruder circle at Stonehenge, which must call for its own special explanation.

So far, then, we have been unable to get beyond our first two postulates. It is clear that there is nothing to guide us either in the size of the circles, or the number or character of the stones forming them.

But of late years attention has been called to their presumed orientation, in respect to which very ingenious hypotheses have been framed by Mr. A. L. Lewis. Now, it is impossible to orientate a circle, save with reference to some extraneous feature; and, if orientation be an essential, this feature must always have been present. At Stonehenge it is presumed to be the menhir called the Friar's Heel, immediately behind which it is noted that the sun may be seen to rise, when viewed from the so-called "altar stone" in the centre of the circle, on the longest day. Much the same result, though less exactly, is claimed to have been observed with regard to other important monuments of this class, as at Stanton-Drew near Bristol, and Arbor-Low in Derbyshire, and I think that some tendency must be admitted, though the explanation is open to discussion.

With regard, however, to either the Cornish or Devon circles I fail to find such evidence. There is, to the best of my observation, no circle in Cornwall so placed, relatively to the menhirs which at times accompany them, as to indicate more than a vague and very inaccurate orientation, so far as summer sunrise is concerned, at the best.

Mr. Lewis's hypothesis, however, allows of the use of hill tops and hill gaps and other prominent points of the landscape, for its support; and, this being so, it seems to me matter of some surprise that his efforts to establish the position are not more successful. It surely must be evident, on the smallest consideration, that a *circle* can be made capable of orientation, in some form or another, on any and every day in the year. And this is the more easy, where, as in Cornwall and in Devon, these circles follow the general rule of the hut rings of the ancient villages, and lie on the southern slopes of the high moorlands.

The reason for this will be evident as we proceed, and with it the reason for the undoubted orientation of such circles as Stonehenge, Stanton, and Arbor. And it may even be that orientation does exist to some extent in the West, and that minor variations may have arisen from precisely the same cause as the discrepancies in the orientation of our older churches, the fact that east was taken from the sunrise at different periods of the year. It is impossible, however, to prove that orientation is an essential feature, as we shall see most plainly when we come to deal with stone rows in connection with circles.

The last feature to be considered, in this connection, is the area of the circles. Are there any inclusions to yield indications of purpose? Here the great majority of the Cornish circles are dumb. The Boscawen-ûn and the Stripple Stones circles, however, contain menhirs; and the Duloe, the remains of a barrow. None of the others give any certain suggestion of contents; and all that can be said further, under this head, is that in most cases the circles are associated, more or less closely, with barrows, cairns, kistvaens, menhirs, and other memorials of a sepulchral character. But there is no further fixed or general rule. It will have been observed that we have only been dealing with existing Cornish circles; some, perhaps many, have disappeared; but the only means of carrying enquiry further, with regard to

them, is to examine such records as the "Antiquities" of Borlase, who certainly records the existence, in his time, of circles wholly unlike any yet in being—to wit, at Botallack. But we need be very cautious. This enthusiastic antiquary, apart from his speculative tendencies, was not always too careful to discriminate between things that differ. It is plain, alike from his drawings and remarks, that he did not distinguish between the hut-ring and the circle proper, or between either and what is called, on Dartmoor, a pound. A circle, to him, was a circle; whether the enclosing stones were contiguous or apart. We need only refer, in proof, to his figure of the Tredinek circle, which he regarded as providing seats or standing places for the chiefs of an assembly. It is simply such a big hut ring as is to be found by the score on Dartmoor, with one of the door-jambs standing. The Senor (Zennor) circle, which (in like manner) he judged to have been a place of election, is but a small cattle-pen. The Kerris Roundago, regarded by him as a place of worship, and as taking its name, probably, from the circlings of the Druids, is a structure of precisely the same type, undoubtedly denominated from its figure. With these warnings before us, we should not be hasty in drawing any conclusions from the plate of the circles at Botallack; which seems to me only too exact in its detail. According to the scale, the diameters vary from five paces to thirty—the use of *paces* instead of *feet* or *yards* does not inspire further confidence,—and only three of the five larger are complete,—viz.: the single example, and two of the supposed intersecting groups. The whole arrangement indeed suggests to me a cluster of enclosures for cattle and the like, with a hut circle or two; very much as may still be found, here and there, on Dartmoor. Since every trace has disappeared, this, of course, is sheer speculation; but I am perfectly sure that the plate cannot be trusted to add to our knowledge of the stone circles of the county.

Let us, now, see what light the kindred antiquities of Dartmoor,—which clearly belong to the same time and race,—can throw on our enquiry.

Stone circles are far more common on Dartmoor than in Cornwall, though, as a rule, smaller. Nevertheless the Forest contains such fine examples as the twin Grey Wethers of 105 and 100 feet diameter; the Scorhill of 90 feet, with one of its

stones standing nearly eight feet high; the Throwleigh of about the same size, with a neighbour of 60; the Raybarrow of 60; the Ringmore of 75; the Fernworthy of 60; the Merivale of 54; the Longstone Moor; and the Sherberton; while there were still larger circles associated with the Drewsteignton Cromlech.

But the most important feature of the stone circles of Dartmoor is the fact of their general, though not universal connection with a very singular class of rude stone monuments, in which, as I have already said, Dartmoor takes the lead. I refer to the "stone rows," so commonly and so absurdly dubbed "avenues" and "parallelitha," and more accurately but quite as pretentiously, "alignments." They were called avenues and parallelitha, clearly enough, because it so happened that, in the first examples to which antiquarian attention was called, the rows were double,—whereas the single row is as common as the double. And while on Dartmoor itself there are as many as seven rows in a group, elsewhere there are as many as twenty-three, which might fairly be called a "labyrinth." Moreover, so far is parallelism from being essential, that rows frequently converge or diverge; and even alignment is put out of court by angles and bends. As yet these rows have not been recognised in Cornwall. Inasmuch, however, as diligent search has largely added within the last two or three years to those known on Dartmoor, it would be rash to say that no Cornish examples exist. There are indeed said to have been "rows" near Kilmarth, but Mr. Lukis saw nothing in the county resembling them, save the "Nine Maidens" near St. Columb, and they, as described by him, bore no likeness to the genuine article. The "spacing" in his plan, however, is much less than in his text; and the possibility must be left open.

At the present moment, thirty-eight stone rows are known on Dartmoor; and, of these, at least twenty-five are associated with circles. The evidence indeed is overwhelming that the Dartmoor stone row, in its complete form, begins with a circle and ends with a menhir, the circle commonly, though not universally, enclosing a barrow or a kistvaen. And these circles, it must be understood, are free-standing, and quite distinct from the supporting stones which are, not infrequently, found to form the outer foundation of a barrow. They are real stone circles.

Rows with circles and menhirs, of what I regard as the typical form, occur:—at Harter, where the circle, enclosing the barrow from which a double row starts, is over 30 feet in diameter, but the menhir is wanting; at Down Tor, where a very fine single row starts from a circle, 37 feet in diameter, enclosing a barrowed kistvean, nineteen stones being standing (out of a probable twenty-six); at Drizzlecombe, where there are three circles enclosing barrows, from 29 to 30 feet in diameter, and one associated with a kistvaen; at Trowlesworthy, where one circle is 20 feet in diameter and the other 23; at Cholwich Town, where the circle is 18 feet across; at Yadsworthy, where the circle has a diameter of 33 feet; at Butterdon; at Launceston or Longstone Moor, where the circle enclosed a barrow and must have been over 30 feet across; near Erme Pound; also at Stalldon, where there is a very fine circle 45 feet in diameter, in which may be seen the traces of a barrow, and which itself was surrounded by a trench. This circle is moreover remarkable as being the starting point of the longest stone row on record, for it is upwards of two and a quarter miles in length, though much ruinated towards its further extremity, and wanting the final menhir.

The celebrated rows above Merivale Bridge, which are undoubtedly responsible for the misleading names "avenue" and "parallelithon," vary somewhat from the type. The northern double row begins with a circle surrounding a menhir, so that, save in the matter of size, the Boscawen-ûn arrangement is reproduced. The southern double row terminates with a menhir at each end, but has a twelve-foot circle midway, which once enclosed a kistvaen. The great menhir which stands to the north-west of the rows has the remains of a small circle about it, and attached are the fragments of a row, which I was the first to put on record. Hard by is the great Merivale circle, 54 feet in diameter, at present isolated. Seeing however that almost the entire row belonging to the great menhir has disappeared, probably to build an adjacent wall, and that there is some reason to suppose yet another existed, it would be very unwise to assume that this circle was always as independent as now.

Two other variants are supplied by the rows at Coryndon Ball and Challacombe. At Coryndon Ball a circle, originally about twenty-seven feet in diameter, is the starting point of no

less than seven parallel rows of small stones, one appearing to be the principal and the others accessories. Another single row, close by, starts from a cairn without a circle, a condition of affairs which is exactly paralleled at Harter, where an uncircled cairn heads a single row close by a double. At Challacombe there are at present four rows of stones ending in a menhir, which do not start *from* a circle, but run *by the side* of a circle, some of the stones of which are included in one of the rows.

Finally, we have rows associated with double and triple concentric circles of small diameter. These multiple circles do not appear to be followed in Cornwall. The most important triple circle was connected with the rows at Batworthy, which have been described as five in number, but probably formed three only, one beginning with a cromlech, another with a circle enclosing a kistvaen, and the third with the triple ring. When measured by the late Mr. Ormerod, the outer of these circles was twenty-six feet in diameter, the second twenty feet and the third thirteen feet, while three stones stood in the centre.

A similar arrangement is found in connection with the threefold rows at Cosdon, which have a double head, suggesting that what now appears to be one monument is really two, One head consists of a small stone, enclosed by what once were three concentric circles, which is however too small to be called a menhir. The outer circle is about twenty-three feet across, the second twelve, the third is not so clear, all the stones being down, but was not more than six feet in diameter. The other head is a circled kistvaen. Here, the middle circle is the clearest, about fifteen feet in diameter; and there are traces of an inner circle of six feet, and an outer of twenty-two feet. The outer circles of the kist and the standing stone must, when complete, have touched, if they did not actually interfere.

There are traces of double circles—seven and eleven feet, and eight feet and sixteen, and of two single circles, twenty four feet in diameter, with indications of rows, on the plateau of Cocks Tor, but they are very indefinite. It is clear also that a row or rows was connected with the destroyed circles at Drewsteignton.

As to the large circles of Scorhill and Fernworthy, the bearing of the various rows between them is such as to render continuation and connection highly probable. And practically the

only large circles on Dartmoor, concerning which there is no evidence or suggestion of such association, are the Throwleigh, Ringmore, Raybarrow, and Grey Wethers; and some, of course, may simply have disappeared. It must however be borne in mind that circles are not invariable accompaniments of rows. The cairns which head the rows at Assycombe, Glazecombe, and Conies Down, and the southern row at Harter, have no trace of circles; and on the other hand, one of the most complete of the smaller circles of Dartmoor, which encloses a very perfect kistvaen, on the hill above Harford, has no indication of a row. And the same is the case with circles enclosing kistvaens at Hound Tor, Bellaford Tor, Shavercombe, and Grimsgrove.

To which I may add, that this same association of circles and rows, which has been shown to exist in the great majority of cases on Dartmoor, is seen in such noteworthy examples as Avebury, the grandest of the whole, where the great circle is 1200 feet in diameter; at Stanton Drew, where the great circle, 368 feet in diameter, and the second of 97, both show remains of rows—though none are now visible in connection with the third; at Shap; at Callernish in Lewis; and at Carnac in Brittany, where one of the three chief groups commences in a circle 290 feet in diameter, a second group with a kind of horse-shoe shaped enclosure, while in the third, where no terminal circle is now found, it is noted that one may have existed. At Shahpore, in India, circles are connected by lines; and tumuli are linked in the same fashion, in Algeria.

There are other examples, but these will suffice to prove that, from the 1200 feet circle of Avebury, down to the eighteen feet circle of Cholwich Town, there is an intimate connection between stone circles and stone rows; and that the general purpose of the one cannot be disconnected from the general purpose of the other.

I may add, before going further, that the circles and rows of Dartmoor do not in any way encourage the idea that orientation in an important feature. There is no one certain rule, though in individual localities certain bearings seem more in favour than in others. Thus they have a more general easterly and westerly bearing in the southern quarter; a more general northerly and southerly bearing in the northern; while there are

exceptions in both. And we find the same thing elsewhere—Avebury, north-west and south-east, Stanton Drew east and west, Carnac east and west, while at Ashdown in Surrey and in Caithness, the direction is generally north and south. It is impossible to draw any general conclusions from orientations which box the whole compass in this fashion. The most we can say is that certain tribes, or residents in certain localities, had, for some reason or another, their special preferences. Clearly there was no common expression. The Dartmoor kistvaens indeed almost universally lie north and south. There is no evidence of orientation, however, in connection with the greater circles unconnected with rows—such for example as the Grey Wethers, or Throwleigh. There is a menhir about 8 deg. E. of S. of the Raybarrow circle, but that is a boundary stone and may be comparatively modern.

Now, whatever the precise meaning and intention of the stone rows may be—which we will not discuss at present—it is clear that their nature is funereal. Wherever they are found all their identifiable associations are sepulchral—cairns, barrows, kistvaens, cromlechs, and, I will add, menhirs. It is impossible to exclude the circles from the category. The wild idea of Mr. Fergusson that the rows represent battle plans, would only apply, if at all, in the case of double rows, and is utterly irreconcileable, even on the vaguest hypothesis, with by far the greater number of instances. Real enemies must have been utterly absent in most instances, and the event depicted an idle parade. It is, in short, purely a flight of the fancy, like the druidical assumptions of the antiquaries of the elder school.

The circles thus fall into place, as part of one great series. In the majority of cases indeed their sepulchral character is quite evident. They enclose barrows, cairns, kistvaens, cromlechs, menhirs ; while, not infrequently, interments have been found where no surface indications of them were visible. Now this is fully admitted with regard to the smaller circles. It is the larger that have been dubbed "sacred," and so regarded as mysterious, simply because they *are* larger. Yet the largest known, that of Avebury, has stone rows attached, and can be none other than sepulchral. And, in the foot-by-foot gradation of these monuments, from the very smallest, whose sepulchral character no

one doubts, up to the limits where a leap is made to Stanton, and Stonehenge, and Avebury, who will be bold enough to say where the sepulchral circles end, and the sacred begin? Or, to press the point still closer,—who will supply reasons for the differentiation; where is the line to be drawn?

It is perfectly true, as we have seen, that we find circles without rows, and rows without circles—such variations as are common in modern graveyards—and we cannot be always sure that one or the other has disappeared. But it is plain that the presence of the row is distinctive—that it indicates not merely an interment but a special interment; very possibly, as I have suggested elsewhere, that of the head of a tribe or family, the number or importance of which the length of the row might be held to express—representing in Highland phrase, "the chieftain and his tail." Adding a stone to a row is only another phase of the idea involved in adding a stone to a cairn. And I have also hinted that this peculiar class of memorial may have some connection with the wide-spread cult of the powers of Nature, which the association of menhir and circle indeed seems specially to indicate. But of this there is no evidence.

Of all the hypotheses touching the purposes for which the larger circles were designed, that of their occupation for assembled worship is, curiously enough, absolutely the one for which there is the least evidence. It is indeed purely the product of antiquarian imagination. As we have seen, it is impossible to draw any line where the accepted sepulchral circle is to end and the sacred circle to begin. Moreover, far too much stress has been laid upon mere negation. It is probably quite safe to assert that while there are many cases in which the larger circles have been found to contain remains—at Crichie in Scotland burials were noted at the foot of each stone, and occasionally there have been groups of kistvaens,—no circle from which they are presumed to be absent has been so absolutely explored as to show, beyond doubt, that they did not exist. And, beyond this, a feature absolutely fatal to the idea that a large circle must necessarily be intended for worship, is their frequent contiguity—as at the Hurlers and Grey Wethers. Mr. Lukis was not a whit too severe on this inferential suggestion of rival congregations. The grouping of graves and sepulchral memorials is a thing we all understand.

But this, of course, does not exclude the presence or the indication of religious sentiment. The less complete orientation of the circles, the more complete of the kistvaens and rows, do show some traces of a solar cult, though variously expressed, but these traces in my view are purely incidental to and dependent upon the rites of sepulture, and the current belief in the hereafter of the dead. That they led in certain cases to offerings to the manes of the deceased, and to various forms of ancestor worship in connection with circles and cromlechs and menhirs, was not merely natural but inevitable. We have no absolute proof of the existence of such practices in this county, though it seems to be hinted.

The position of the circles and such traces of orientation as they may be held to exhibit, is then easily explained. In being found on the southern slopes of hills, rather than on the northern, they simply follow the local rule for habitations. The hut circles so numerous yet on Dartmoor, always, so far as may be, have a southern exposure; and the same is the case in Cornwall. And the position of interments is always fixed by rule, although the rule varies. Aspects referring to the rising or the setting sun are the most numerous; but northerly and southerly directions are equally significant in their intention. The practice in either was in some sort, at first, the expression of a creed. But no doubt in time it hardened into unmeaning custom—just such a custom as makes us dig our graves east and west, in deference to the sun-worshipping instincts of our far-back ancestors.

And we may apply precisely the same analogy to the suggestion that Stonehenge, at any rate, was a temple of sun worship. In the course of ages our churches and our graveyards have become intimately connected, which from the beginning were not so; and the orientation of our churches is as clear a survival of the solar cult as the orientation of our graves. But the fact is not usually recognised; and if any attempt is made to account for the practice, it is generally upon the lines indicated in the tradition that the "Hurlers" were men transformed into stone for hurling on Sunday; the "Merry Maidens," in turn, petrified dancers; or Stonehenge itself the dance of giants; or Stanton Drew a wedding party. Or again, as the story in the Welsh triads, that the Boscawen-ûn circle was one of the Gorsedds

or judging-places of poetry. The whole value of such statements or legends lies in the fact, that they prove the first intention of the thing to which they relate, to have been forgotten.

Nor should we hesitate, if need be, to draw the same conclusion with regard to customs. It may very well have been that it was a Scandinavian practice to hold courts and assemblies at or near some of the larger circles, but it does not follow they were built for the purpose. Because a structure is used in a certain way it would be most unwise to contend such purpose to have been original. It is almost inevitable that places to which importance has once attached, or which are distinguished by special peculiarities, or which have a halo of mystery, should retain a prominence or use of some sort. When, however, we enquire what uses circles may be put to, in the present day, the answers are far too divergent to be conclusive of original intention. Thus the Kurds in Eastern India are said to "use circles in connection with the worship of the rising sun, the tallest member of the circle being towards the east. The worshipper perambulates the circle, with the sun, and sprinkles the stones with the blood of a cock." So, in Western India, circles occur with a central stone to which a cock is sacrificed. Again we are rightly told it is a common thing, where there is an external menhir or group, that "the external pointer bears generally a male name, while the circle is female," as in the "Merry Maidens" and the "Pipers" at Bolleit. This would, however, direct us to Phallicism. So with the custom of the modern Arab, who surrounds the grave of a man of noted sanctity with a circle of stones, and places on one side (almost invariably on the west) a little dolmen altar about three feet high, consisting of two stones supporting a third laid flat on the top. Whenever he visits the spot he kisses the stone and invokes the dead man's aid, placing his forehead on the altar, and then depositing a gift.* Traditions and customs like these, so wholly inconsistent, prove original intention to be lost. And what is most remarkable, with regard to the last mentioned, is this:—Capt. Conder figures one of these Arab circles near

*Vide Conder's *Heth and Moab*, pp. 218, 219, 327. Capt. Conder suggests that the circles with adjacent menhirs served the purpose of rude calendars, marking the changes of the seasons by indicating the course of the sun. But surely there was no need of such device as this. The idea is pure hypothesis and moreover inconsistent with the general conditions.

Heshbon; and it turns out to be simply a hut circle, such as abound on Dartmoor, the dolmen being the two jambs and lintel of the doorway. This Arab teaching, then, is quite worthless and misleading.

We may apply precisely the same line of argument to the case of Stonehenge. No doubt there seems very remarkable exactness in the orientation of that monument. But Stonehenge by its construction is one of the latest of its class. When it was built, circle-building must have lasted long enough to give the opportunity for its original meaning to have been obscured, if not lost—just as in the case of the orientation of our graves and churches. That it is however quite possible for the greatest exactitude of astronomical design to be combined with a purpose purely sepulchral,—Professor Piazza Smyth and his followers notwithstanding,—the great pyramid attests. I see evidence too, of the same sort of purposeless survival in the central groups of stones, which have been called "coves," at Avebury, Stonehenge, Stanton, Arbor, and elsewhere. They answer precisely the same end as the enclosed menhir at Boscawen and Stripple Stones, and are nothing more than a ceremonial reproduction of the cromlech, in its turn originally a greater kistvaen—the first purpose having been, as I have said, if not lost at least obscured. Hence, no doubt, a few cases in which the circle seems to be used as a mere accessory, to enhance the importance of a menhir or other rude stone memorial.

There surely should be nothing to surprise us in this. For how many centuries have we not been putting utterly meaningless urns in our churches and churchyards?—though certainly the growth of cremation seems likely to give them a turn of utility and common sense again. And, indeed, the past lives in the present most completely in our sepulchral memorials. What is the modern headstone but the ancient menhir; the grave mound but the cairn or the barrow; the altar tomb but the kistvaen? Nay, the cromlech is at times closely reproduced, as for example in such churchyards as those of Bolton Abbey and sundry of its neighbours, where a favourite form of monument is a slab of stone free-standing on supports with open space below, the structural cromlech or dolmen idea being in every point complete.

It may be granted that the stone row is not very closely represented, unless the not infrequent head and foot stone be pressed into service; but the vault is simply a modern form of the chambered cairn.

Moreover, if we do not find stone circles, we find what is, at least, the representation of the chief idea which, to my mind, they embodied,—in the boundary stones and rails by which certain plots are enclosed. For, however the practice originated, this at least seems to be clear, that the circle is intended to suggest a ceremonial separation—a dedication—if you will, of the spot enclosed to a special use, which, in connection with the respect paid to the remains of the dead, and the development of animism, would inevitably, in the course of time, come to have something sacred about it—a belief which would no doubt grow. The association of any spot with the rites of burial, and its separation from the ordinary uses of land around, could not fail to mark a stage in the development of primitive religion.

This idea of separation and dedication is akin to the "taboo" of the New Zealanders; to the feeling which prompted Moses to set up bounds at Mount Sinai; and which we see in another form in connection with the association of circles with the magical acts of the Middle Ages. There is no genuine physical separation in either case, only a ceremonial suggestion, which itself is enough to indicate some advance in religious feeling or superstition—some respect for, or dread of, the spirit world. The barrier raised is mental or moral. The appeal is to the feelings, not to physical obstruction,—to fear, it may be, but not to force. And here again we find precisely the same motives at work in the present day, and in what is called civilised society.

And a point which I regard as of the very highest importance, and which I have never yet seen dwelt upon, is this. We find these stone circles in constant association with hut circles—the skeleton circle which suggests the abode of the dead with the complete circle which formed the abode of the living.

Here, too, we have the analogue, and the survival, in the existence of the mausoleum,—carried to such an extent at Père-la-chaise, for example, that the main avenue is like a street of diminutive dwellings;—and so persistent in the East, that hundreds of tombs, of the forgotten dead, form the very sufficient

abodes of the living. Another link in the chain is the fact that the common mode of interment in the kistvaen, so generally associated with the circle, is that contracted form which recalls the position of repose, and forcibly illustrates the line—

"Our little life is rounded with a sleep."

The larger circles are of course far larger than any hut circle; but this might naturally arise from either of two causes:—the desire to lend importance to the interment; or, what we know must have been the case in many instances, the reproduction of a large enclosure which encircled a group of hut circles, probably connected by the family tie. This view is sustained by the fact that several of these large circles have been found to contain groups of interments. And while the non-discovery of interments in all cases is no proof that none exist, or have existed, some allowance must be made for the vast length of time over which circle building extended, which must have carried with it some variations in method; while it seems to be absolutely clear that in certain of these rude monuments—again paralleled in modern days—the work of construction was never completed. There are rows that appear quite conclusive on this head.

I have stated that the practice of erecting these circles extended over a vast length of time. This is easy of proof. The worked stones of the outer circle at Stonehenge, are as plainly indicative of more recent date, as the unworked "foreign stones" of the inner circle are of earlier. Some of the barrows near Stonehenge are undoubtedly of the Bronze Age; but it by no means follows that metal tools must have been used in dressing the great trilithons and their imposts. The fact that fragments of both the "native" and the "foreign" stones have been found in a few of these barrows proves that the stones were on the spot—in other words that Stonehenge, as we see it, was erected—before these barrows were formed. The suggestion has been made that the presence of the "foreign" stones, which may have come from the Channel Islands, or Wales, or in part from Cornwall and Devon, shows that Stonehenge must be a temple. Their presence certainly indicates the importance of the structure; but is the practice of bringing "foreign" stones, to lend additional distinction or dignity to a sepulchral monument, quite unknown even now?

Geoffrey of Monmouth says that Stonehenge was raised by Aurelius Ambrosius, A.D. 490, to the memory of a number of British chiefs killed by the Saxons, on the suggestion and by the help of Merlin—the sole value of which statement consists in the recognition of a sepulchral character, and is very small. The attempt has been made to sustain this idea, specially as to the date, by the character of the orientation. But that is a most uncertain foundation for any hypothesis. The present-day fact is this—that if any one looks from the so-called "altar stone" in the circle towards a tall exterior menhir called the Friar's Heel on the 21st of June, he will see, weather permitting, the sun rise exactly behind that stone. But that this present-day fact is a proof of original intention depends, for one thing, upon the so-called altar stone—which is broken—occupying its original position; whereas Aubrey expressly states that "an altar stone found in the middle of the area" had been carried away. It depends, for another, on the original position of the big stone immediately outside the outer circle, which is known as the "slaughtering stone." When this was upright, if the present site is the correct one, it blocked the view of the Friar's Heel from the "altar stone" altogether. The only certain evidence of date, therefore, (in my opinion), that Stonehenge affords, is that it was erected before or during the Bronze Age, and this of itself is sufficient to dispose of the Aurelian-Ambrosian myth, which would refer it to the days of Iron.

But Devon, if not Cornwall, yields evidence of far higher value, and shows us that we are much more likely to err in bringing down the date of these memorials than in carrying them back. There is on Dartmoor ample proof, in more than one locality, that the stone rows and the hut circles are generally, if not wholly contemporaneous, while, as we have seen, the rows are clearly coeval with the circles. Now during the past two years, several exhaustive investigations have been made into the hut circles of Dartmoor, chiefly by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, and by Mr. Robert Burnard; while in the present year an equally exhaustive examination has been made of Grimspound, in which I have had the pleasure of participating. And while refraining from going into details fully set forth by our Committee elsewhere, I may say at once that, without exception, these hut circles were

found to have been the dwellings of a Neolithic people, and apparently in a very simple and early stage, using only flint implements and possessing no knowledge of pottery. The conclusion follows that the stone circles, equally of Cornwall and Devon, are older, and probably far older, than our local Bronze period. What the date of the commencement of our Bronze period may be, I may not now stay to enquire. I will for the moment content myself by quoting what I wrote and published twenty years since, and have never yet been called upon to defend—namely, that the geological evidence offered by the ancient stream works at Carnon and Pentuan antedates the commencement of tin mining, and consequently our Bronze Age, to a time when the mammoth either still existed in the West of England or had not long disappeared; and when the general level of Cornwall and Devon was at least thirty feet higher than now. The conditions of our raised beaches and submerged forests show that the change or changes of level involved must have been very slow and gradual (Sir C. Lyell's estimate of the rate of crust motion was 2½ feet in a century) and we have direct evidence that these changes had all ceased before the historic era. The further we put back the commencement of our local Bronze Age (for the Bronze Periods of different localities by no means necessarily synchronise) the further back must we put the greater number, if not the whole, of our stone circles!

This high antiquity also disproves the suggestion that they can have had anything to do with the Keltic races. Indeed it is quite evident, from the names the Kelts gave these monuments, that they were ignorant of their origin and purpose—as ignorant indeed as the Saxons who read the simple descriptive mên into "man," or its plural into "maidens." In this connection, too, it is worthy of note that Capt. Conder was led by his explorations in Heth and Moab to suggest that in the dolmens, menhirs, circles and other rude stone monuments "we find the remaining works of an ancient stock preceding both Aryan and Semitic races, and belonging to the illiterate and consequently prehistoric ages of the use of bronze and flint."* The results of the explorations of the Grimspound Exploration Committee on Dartmoor have

*Heth and Moab, p. 196.

proved that this suggestion is in the main correct, and that the Rude Stone Monuments of Cornwall and Devon were reared by a race which preceded both Kelts and Saxons, and in an early stage of the Neolithic period. No existing ideas touching these monuments—certainly here, probably elsewhere,—can, then, be provably traced, in legend or in custom, to their authors.

[*To be continued*].

THE RUDE STONE MONUMENTS OF CORNWALL.

By R. N. WORTH, F.G.S., Corresponding Member R.I.C.

Part II.

Menhirs.

It may seem at first sight somewhat strange that circles should have been considered before menhirs—monuments of many stones before those of one. But a circle is not in any antiquarian sense an aggregate of menhirs; and we shall see as we proceed that the circle is really the most simple form of rude stone monument, and the one which has the most restricted meaning.

A menhir on the other hand may have many purposes. The difficulty is less in ascertaining what these objects may be, than in deciding which to choose as the special intention in a particular instance. These purposes may be classed as follows:—

A. *Memorial.* This is the simplest use of a stone pillar. Hence stones are erected in all ages and in all countries as the silent witnesses of special events, localities, or people. We read the record of the erection of memorial menhirs in the earliest pages of history: we erect them for similar objects now. The column which commemorates the great fire of London,—as that which preserves the memory of the brothers Lander,—but illustrates the sentiment that led to the rearing of Pompey's Pillar or Cleopatra's Needle, or the setting up of the stele at Mizpah.

And so the modern boundary stone is simply the surviving exponent of a custom which dates from the veriest dawn of civilization; and the everyday headstone merely the successor of the sepulchral pillars of forgotten races. It mattered not what had to be commemorated—thing, or place or person, the upright stone was at once the plainest, simplest, and handiest means of attaining the end in view, and its adoption to that end is one of the universal instincts of common humanity.

B. *Religious.* Here also proof is clear that upright stones have been employed as direct emblems of the deity, worshipped as symbols of the energies of nature, treated with divine honours —from the earliest records of the human race until now. Capt. Conder remarks: "there is no doubt whatever that the menhir is the emblem of the man who erects it, and that such stones were, of old, considered to be themselves the habitations of divinities."* And while the cult of the menhir yet abides in the East where such stones are still set up (as by the dwellers on the Khassia hills in fulfilment of pious vows), and they are still the object and centre of acts of worship,—it is equally certain that in Europe many menhirs were long regarded as something sacred in themselves and worshipped in various ways. Christianity has even yet failed quite to destroy superstitions connected with such monuments, which unquestionably had their origins in ancient and familiar rites.

Thus, in Skye there were in every district what were called Grugach stones, presumed to be dedicated to the sun, on which were poured libations of milk. In the West Indies, standing stones had a double symbolism—being associated with phallic worship and the cult of the sun. In the East Indies stones are erected in fields, to represent the deities who are supposed to safeguard them; and a form of worship is the anointing, or in less polished phrase "smearing" them, which continues to be practised in parts of Europe—as in Sweden, for example, on stones with small cupped holes sunk in them. It is a curious coincidence, if nothing more, that in Cornwall we should have the "Three brothers of *Grugith*," as in Skye those *Grugach* monoliths, and that these "Three Brothers" should bear those mysterious cup markings, not certainly known to exist elsewhere in the West. It may even be that there is a link between the stones frequently seen in fields, set up in modern days as rubbing posts, and the guardian pillar-deities of the East, and the form of that suggestion seems to be heightened by the fact that such rubbing posts are more common in districts where old customs and superstitions have most sway. The connection can only be a shadowy speculation at the best, yet, even so, it is well to put

* Heth and Moab, 208.

it upon record. And some of the field posts, extant in the West, are undoubtedly of very high antiquity.

The sacred stone pillar of the East is closely linked to the simple form of Pagan altar of the West, which was indeed nothing more than a rudely shapen monolith. When Jacob erected his menhir at Bethel and poured oil upon it, his act was absolutely identical with the practice of anointing such stones with oil yet current in India, and referred to by various authorities as having been a common pre-Christian custom throughout the civilized world, which Christianity by no means found it easy to destroy, and in fact has not destroyed. We need not hold that such stone idols were absolutely believed to be themselves deities. It was enough that they were regarded as emblems of the gods, or that in some special sense the gods were thought to dwell in them; nor are there wanting reasons for concluding that this belief in their sanctity developed from an original idea that they in some sort typified the life energy of nature, as in certain localities similar stones are regarded as doing now. But such inquiry cannot be followed out here. There is later evidence that Menhirs were at times the scene of human sacrifices, and that they were anointed, not merely with oil, or with the blood of animals, but with the blood of the human victims. And this really appears to be all we know concerning the religious ideas connected with them. There is no trace anywhere that they had any special association with solar worship, though in Greece and in Rome the Sun-god was one, among others, to whom certain sacred stones were regarded as dedicated, and, as we have seen, the same idea is found to prevail in the Ultima Thule and Skye.

The general problem to be solved with regard to the Menhirs of Cornwall, is, to which of these classes they belong; and whether, if to both, we are able to identify a special purpose in individual cases. The fact that they are simply called "menhirs" in Keltic phrase, or "longstones" in Saxon—a purely descriptive and not ascriptive epithet—suggests indeed that no special purpose was present to the minds of those who named them.

Now, in the first place, we can at once eliminate from this enquiry the somewhat numerous inscribed stones—the Mên

Scryfa and its companions. These of course date from a time subsequent to the advent of the Romans, and in most cases probably—not in all certainly—after the introduction of Christianity. They are purely individual. They express man's natural craving for a more distinct commemoration than the mere unlettered pillars, the personal memories attached to which most quickly pass away. But they cannot be regarded as having any religious bearing, save in such instances as the Doniert stone with its "Doniert rogavit pro anima," and the sybstel removed from Castle Goff to Lanteglos, erected, as the legend thereon states, for the "good of souls."

So many of these stones are so closely connected with churches, that we may fairly assume them to date practically from the early appropriation of special sites to Christian purposes —as for example, those at Cubert, Lewannick, Phillack, St. Hilary, and Tregoney. The Mên Scryfa itself has a cross at the beginning of the inscription, and there is no reason to question that this cross is the Christian emblem. As we all know, there are early cross-forms besides, which have no connection with the Christian faith.

I am by no means clear that we should not regard many of the earlier and ruder crosses, so common in the county, as due to the desire of the early Christian inhabitants to attach a Christian significance to a form of memorial which has, at the very least, been regarded by them as secular; but which I think is far more likely to have retained a heathen atmosphere. Indeed, as in the guise of superstitious customs the worship of stones cannot be said to be quite dead in Cornwall, even now, it seems highly probable that the famous letter of Pope Gregory, calling for the consecration to Christianity of the temples and sacred sites of the earlier faith, found plenty of scope for its operation in this county. And hence it appears somewhat more than probable that in certain of these rude crosses we have simply prehistoric menhirs, roughly converted to Christian uses. But frequently, especially in Britanny with its kindred race, crosses have been planted on them. Mawgan cross for example is in all likelihood a menhir adapted as a memorial, and furnished with the cross-head which has now long disappeared. And the

idea that certain unconsecrated menhirs became objects of avoidance to early Christians, also seems suggested in the name of the "Devil's Whetstone," applied to one in North Cornwall, while elsewhere we have the "Devil's Arrows," and kindred designations.

Memorial stones thus set aside on the one hand, and presumably converted crosses on the other, we find ourselves confronted by a point of considerable difficulty. There are many boundary stones and cattle posts in the county, of comparatively modern date. How shall we know if any particular menhir is prehistoric? Only, I think, in one of two ways. We must either judge it by the company it keeps, or by some special feature of locality. When we find a menhir associated with other rude stone monuments we may safely rank it with them. All other cases must stand on their own individual merits.

Now while it must be granted that the inscribed menhirs are not only memorial but sepulchral—fairly equivalent in fact to the modern headstone, it must follow that some at least of the plain examples are sepulchral likewise. We cannot believe that a class of monument commonly used for one special purpose should be suddenly—indeed violently—adopted for quite another. The conclusion would be absurd. Besides we know that the menhirs associated with the stone rows of Dartmoor are sepulchral, and that human remains have now and again been found at their feet in Cornwall (Mr. Borlase thus records Pridden, Trelew, Trenuggo, Tresvennack, Tregiffian—associated with a kist-vaen), while at Trewren and Tregarneris graves were found to be between them; and in some other cases where remains have not been seen it may very well be because they lie directly beneath. My own view therefore is clear, that most of the Cornish prehistoric menhirs are not merely memorial but sepulchral; and in this category I should include generally those associated with circles. Commonly indeed the association is merely one of antiquity, just as in a modern graveyard a vault and a headstone and a private burial plot may adjoin, with no necessary connection beyond their common purpose.

Other menhirs may very well commemorate important events or special sites, and there is absolutely no evidence on which we can decide,—so-called tradition being practically worthless.

But with regard to the possibility of religious uses we may assuredly go a step further. A sacred character would, as a matter of course, attach more or less to the memorials of the dead, and it so happens that while Cornwall, as far as I am aware, is silent in the absence of any distinctive feature on its menhirs, Devon has something to say. As in the case of the circles we pray either county in aid of the other.

There was found in 1879, at Lew Trenchard, by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, a menhir which had long lain buried, by the side of an old mill leat, on the worked top of which a little hollow had been sunk. Such hollows had been observed on the tops of menhirs in Brittany, but until this discovery at Lew Trenchard, it had been thought they were simply holes made to receive the shafts of the small crosses so frequently planted, to Christianise them, as already noted on these stones in that country. No such use, however, could be ascribed to this hole in the Lew Trenchard stone, and the reasonable supposition now is that these holes were in existence before the Christian era, in which case they must have had some connection with the practice of anointing and lustration. Hence some at least of the western menhirs belonged to our second class, and were connected with religious observances. These may very well have included such fine examples as the one in Constantine, which stood 20 feet above ground and was set four feet below ; possibly also The "Pipers,"—the finest Cornish pair,—15 feet and 13 feet 6 inches respectively. It may also apply to the "Old Man" on St. Breock Down. Mr. Borlase thought this stone had been enclosed by a circle. Still so far as Dartmoor is concerned, the menhir is only connected with a circle when the general inferences are sepulchral, and a sepulchral stone might as well be honoured out of respect to the one whom it commemorated, as worshipped as the representative of deity. There was never any very sharp or certain line between the manes of the dead and the spirits of the gods, and the reverence due to either would be rather in degree than in kind. There is absolutely no evidence of the

presence of phallic rites in the West in the times under review, yet the wide-spread character of that cult rather suggests such presence, and if so, the further association therewith of some of our menhirs would be inevitable.

With regard, then, to the menhir question generally, these considerations are, I think, as far as we can safely, or at any rate wisely, go.

Cromlechs and Kistvaens.

I cannot do better than introduce what I have to say touching cromlechs—a word which I use as it has been commonly used in England, as equivalent to the dolmen or table-stone of the continental archæologists—by quoting the graphic summary of Capt. Conder, which prefaces his account of the remarkable dolmen fields of Moab.*

"It is evident that an erection of two or more stones, with a flat stone roof or table above, may have had several uses. It might be an altar, or tomb, or a dwelling house ... We have to consider not only trilithons and stone boxes of four, five, and six stones, but also galleries, like those called "Grottes des Feès" on the banks of the Loire, built of perhaps a dozen stones in all, together with the great chambered tumuli of the bronze and late-stone age, the Kune beds of Scandinavia, the giant beds of Ireland or of Ammon, the demi dolmens of France and Moab; while the cists in the tumuli of the iron age, and the Arab trilithon altars of our own time, are but degenerate representatives of the older dolmens. It is clear that no hasty generalization is possible in such a case, and that dolmens are structures of primitive architecture, which may include more than one class, and may have been built for more than one purpose."

The point for us to consider is the class or classes to which the Cornish cromlechs belong. What such may be elsewhere is not absolutely essential to our enquiry.

One of the first points for decision is whether there is any real distinction between a free standing cromlech, and one that is or has been covered by a mound or cairn: which really

* *Heth and Moab*, 222. But Capt. Conder figures as an Arab trilithon, what is really the doorway of a hut circle—the lintel surmounting the door posts.

resolves itself into the initial question whether there is of original purpose such a thing as a free-standing cromlech in Cornwall at all—whether, in short, our cromlechs were not either covered by mounds originally or perchance so intended to be. Herein is matter of great controversy, and indeed it lies at the root of the whole question;—for a buried cromlech cannot be regarded as anything but sepulchral, a bigger form of the simple kistvaen, more or less capacious.

Capt. Conder unhesitatingly holds that most of the Moabite groups—probably all—could never have been covered by a mound at all. But then they differ very materially from the Cornish cromlechs, if we are to interpret literally his statement that "the main object of their erection seemed always to be the construction of a flat table, arranged with a slight tilt in the direction of its length." Cup hollows, sometimes connected by channels, are frequent on and about the dolmens, and the conclusion in his view was irresistible that there are evidences of some sort of libation on the dolmen, which "in the modern instances is simply a table or altar for offerings."

But while a buried cromlech is beyond doubt sepulchral, it by no means follows that a free-standing one is not. Certain tribes in India continue to bury in free-standing cromlechs to the present day, and surround them by circles of standing stones, and in short, as Dr. Hooker says, habitually erect dolmens, menhirs, cists and cromlechs, almost as gigantic in their appearance and construction as the so-called druidical remains of western Europe—the objects of their erection being sepulture, marking spots where public events have occurred, and the like. Thus the "unchanging East," supplied the key to the riddle of the changeful West.

Mr. W. C. Borlase, in *Nænia Cornubiæ*, adopted a distinction between cromlechs that might be regarded, from the character of the supporters, as columnar structures, and those in which the enclosed character of the kist is preserved, while he treated a third type as merely cenotaphs, erected over a grave to indicate its position, and therefore a close analogue of the modern altar tomb. As to which I would remark, that the original idea may be as well preserved by the more slender as by the more massive

supporters—just as the columnar circle carries with it the suggestion of enclosure and separation as completely as the continuous; and that the one therefore might as well be used for a cenotaph as the other.

Using the term in its wider and differentiated sense, we shall find that the majority, if not the whole, of our Cornish cromlechs can cause no difficulty.

The Lanyon cromlech had without doubt a grave within the cell, and the line of its investing barrier may yet be traced, though not so clearly as when Dr. Borlase wrote; while that at Lower Lanyon, which was buried in a mound when found, also gave evidence of interment. So with the cromlechs at Chywoon and Mulfra and Bosporthennis. Each was covered by a cairn, and each was used for burial. Zennor cromlech again was enclosed in a cairn, and this is most emphatically the case with the so-called "druid's altar" at Pawton, which is nothing more nor less than a huge kist. So the "Three Brothers of Grugith" simply cover a grave.

The re-erected Caerwynen cromlech has yielded no trace of interment, probably because it has not been adequately explored. Nor is any recorded in connection with the structure at Trethevy, which, however, is an unmistakeable kist; while there is no testimony either way for the destroyed example at Quoit, near St. Columb. Mr. Borlase classes the Caerwynen with the Lanyon as the only instances in the county of cromlechs proper, that is the columnar supported dolmen. But neither was rebuilt on the original plan, and in both, the stones are present, unutilised, which complete the original kist. So far as Cornwall is concerned, therefore, the columnar cromlech has no existence.

Hence the only problem left open in connection with the purpose of the Cornish cromlechs, is the question already stated —whether they were all in the first instance covered with a mound or cairn, or whether they were free-standing. And this resolves itself into the one instance of Caerwynen and cannot affect the assignment. The fact that while the Trethevy cromlech stands on a mound its stones are bedded in the natural soil, indicates at once the former existence of a superincumbent cairn, no doubt in part removed to build the houses hard by.

The negative evidence of Caerwynen is that the structure was free-standing, and its features may afford some slight ground for regarding it as a memorial reproduction of the more ordinary type. But then instead of looking upon it, with Mr. Borlase, as of the most primitive character, I should be inclined for once to agree with Dr. Fergusson, that it is of the most modern.

Cromlechs are much less frequent in Devon than in Cornwall. The only one yet standing, and that, like Lanyon and Caerwynen, rebuilt, though on more careful lines, is the Drewsteignton "Spinsters' Rock," which may be looked upon, curiously enough, as supplying a link between the columnar and the kist types, and which possesses no trace of an investing mound. Another, now ruined, at Coryndon Ball, was, however, buried in a cairn of great size, demolished to build an adjacent wall. The Drewsteignton cromlech was associated with circles and stone rows, which have disappeared, a noteworthy point, since none of the Cornish examples seem to have been ; though circles round the smaller kist-vaens are by no means uncommon in the county. The importance of this fact is that it brings the cromlechs in line with the rows and circles generally, which, we have already seen, are of Neolithic date.

Mr. Borlase had not such advantages as we have from the recent explorations on Dartmoor; but he seems to have had a glimpse of what might be in store—though missing the exact point—when he wrote, of the Chywoon cromlech, which stands at a distance of only 250 paces from the hill castle, close to a British village, the castle itself containing foundations of huts, —"What does this imply ? Either that the cromlech is a more recent structure than the castle, or else that the builders of the castle allowed the cromlech to remain unharmed while engaged in their work, and put themselves to the labour of obtaining stone from a greater distance rather than disturb the structure."* But surely the correct reply here is "neither earlier nor later, but (as in the case of the circles and stone rows and the kist-vaens of Dartmoor associated with them) contemporaneous." That alternative was always open; but we need not wonder it was not recognised.

* Nænia, p. 269.

It is impossible to dissociate the kist-vaens and the cromlechs from the chambered barrows, as at Brann in Sancreed and Pennance in Zennor. All belong to one class of monuments. All are different expressions of the same purpose. As to whether the kist-vaen is to be regarded as having grown into the cromlech—the coffin into the vault, the death-bed into the death-house; or whether the process was not otherwise, and the house of the dead dwindled of intention or inability into the chest—it is hard to say. What seems certain is that a time came when all these forms were in vogue, and when the choice between them was rather one of dignity, or strength, or skill,—just as in funeral ceremonies now—than for any other reason. Hence such combined interments as are found in the tumuli at Chapel Carn Brea and Ballowal. It does not seem probable that the cromlech formed the link between the kist and the chambered cairn; the latter was an independent development of whatever was the original type.

Here again the name does not help us. The word cromlech seems to mean really a crooked or a curved stone, as most of the cap stones were. The kist-vaen is simply a "little chest." So the alternative dolmen is the "table stone." As with the menhir and the mên-an-tol the nomenclature is purely descriptive; and the ascriptive element is wholly wanting. There is no trace whatever that the authors of these names had any knowledge of the original purpose of the monuments, or that they put them to current use. It is just the same as with Dawns Mên, or the Merry Maidens, or the Hurlers, or the circles. In Stonehenge we have, in like manner, simply the "hanging stones;" and so Hingston Down, like the Hingston which formerly existed at Cattedown, near Plymouth—in name Stonehenge reversed—is far more likely to refer to a long vanished cromlech than to any imaginary connection with Hengist and Horsa, or to conflicts between Saxons and Danes. In considering all those monuments we must also bear in mind that they are merely a remnant host, though in some localities the losses need not have been many or great, Cornwall being one of the most prominent instances.

Mên-an-Tol.

The holed stone monuments, of which the Mên-an-Tol is the leading example, are the chief crux of the western archæologist. They do clearly embody a religious sentiment of some kind, but precisely what that sentiment might be, it is more difficult to conjecture. The holed stone at Stennis, in the Orkneys, was made the means of adding solemnity to oaths, men holding each other's hand through the aperture, and so swearing faith. The holed stone at Applecross was held to cure disease. There are people yet who believe that the Madron Mên-an-Tol, or the Gweek Tolven, will heal crick or rickets; and who pass their children through cloven ash trees, both in Cornwall and in Devon, for the relief of rupture. Dr. Borlase noted, from Martin, that libations of beer were poured into holed stones in the Shetlands to propitiate a spirit called Browny; but query whether these were holed stones in the present sense. And very recently, I learn, children have been passed through a natural perforation in the menhir at Minchinhampton for the cure of whooping cough and measles.

Superstitious practices, connected with passing through narrow openings, by way of ordeal, are and have been common enough in all parts of the old world. They are even grafted upon Christianity, as for example the slit-way in the Saxon crypt at Ripon, called St. Wilfred's Needle, threading which was regarded as a test and proof of chastity. It seems idle, however, to conclude that the "needle" was formed with this object, and not subsequently made the instrument of an older superstition. And I think we shall see, by and by, that this may very well have been the case with our Mên-an-Tol. There is a trace of the same idea in the fact that penitents who squeeze themselves through a sacred perforated stone at Malabar obtain remission of their sins. But the original significance of such holed stones seems rather to have been connected with re-birth, after death; and this might easily become the parent of the idea of re-birth from sins.

I may say at once that I exclude from the category of tolmen such stone "deities" as Dr. Borlase cites at St. Mary's, Scilly, and the island of Northwethel in the same group, with the

so-called Tolmen of Constantine, the destruction of which, a few years since was so much lamented. All these, with the Logan stones, and the rock-basins, and such quaint piles as the Cheesewring and Bowerman's Nose, and the mural crests of the Dartmoor Tors—I ascribe purely and solely to natural causes on the one hand, and ignorance of those causes and their effects on the other. Granite rock groupings and weatherings of this kind literally teem in the west, and it is always the size—never the conditions—that attracts attention.

And I am afraid that "holed stones" have been brought into the series, claiming only a very matter-of-fact purpose and origin. Dr. Borlase suggested that certain holed posts near Rosmoddress circle were used for tying victims to, preparatory to sacrifice. It is a great deal more certain that some such were simply pierced to receive the bars of a fence, that others may have been used for haltering, and others again in connection with gates or mining operations. The holed gate-posts, for example, at Buryan and Bosworton, figured by Mr. Lukis, are absolutely identical with gate-posts through which I have seen the shanks of hinges or catches passed and secured by nuts. The line of holed stones at Tregaseal—8-ft. 9-in., 21-ft. 6-in., and 6-ft. apart—need suggest nothing more than the passage of fence rods; holes of $5\frac{1}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$-inches in diameter are no way remarkable. I have seen several fences so formed. While such casual occurrences as the stones figured by Mr. Lukis, from Trelew, Wendron, and Tregiffian might well have been used for haltering.

As for the holed slabs. Big flat stones are not infrequently used for the stiles of foot-paths and fields; and it is by no means unusual to find holes broken through them to afford a stepping place in climbing over. Removed from its connection, such a stone, to the uninitiated, might well become a mystery, no less remarkable say than the Tolven.

So far therefore as I can see, the only holed stones that call for consideration, as antiquities of the rude stone age in Cornwall, are the Mên-an-Tol and the Tolven. The latter is simply a stone slab with a circular aperture, $16\frac{1}{2}$-ins. in diameter, wrought equally from either side, which has been moved from

its original position, and the only record that attaches to it is that it has within living memory been employed like Mên-an-Tol to pass children through to cure them of rickets.

The Mên-an-Tol, however, does not stand alone, but is so related to other stones as to form part of a monumental group, being placed exactly midway between two small menhirs—9-ft. 9½-ins. apart, next to one of which there is a fallen stone while another standing stone is 32-feet from the western stone of the Men-an-Tol set, and a fallen stone 26-ft. These outliers being just 10 feet apart.

The hole of the Mên-an-Tol is ovoid rather than circular—21-ins. in one diameter and 18 in another. It has been formed by countersinking as in the case of the Tolven, the working being unequal, and, as Mr. Lukis suggests, purposely so. And as the deeper of the two sinkings is on the eastern face of the slab, he also suggests that its use was from this side, and that sun worship can have had nothing to do with the ceremony, for the actor would have had to turn his back upon the luminary.

The presence of holes in dolmens and cromlechs is of frequent occurrence. They are found in the end stones of both modern and ancient cromlechs in India; they are also found in Circassia and in France and other countries. There is a hole in the capstone of the Trevethy cromlech, but this is rectangular, and no doubt of later date. Now I cannot myself see how we can dissociate holed stones of this class from such holed stones as the Mên-an-Tol, especially as a holed stone precisely of the same character as the latter has been found dividing two compartments in a long chambered barrow. If the superincumbent earth of that barrow were removed and the side stones displaced, the remnant would be indistinguishable in plan and character from the Mên-an-Tol itself. There are indeed numerous instances of perforated stone entrances to chambered tumuli—some apparently natural and others formed for the purpose. At Rodmarton, in Gloucester, the hole is wrought out of two stones set side by side. And it has been suggested that the idea sought to be symbolised is that of re-birth already noted. Some think that robbers made the holes.

It has occurred to me that we may possibly connect such holes in monuments, so evidently sepulchral, with the evidence afforded by numerous barrows of the practice of the barrow-builders of the art of trepanning, carried out, (albeit only with flint tools), with exceeding skill. Their object seems to have been, —reasoning from somewhat analagous customs among modern tribes, to afford an outlet from the body, of a spirit supposed to have caused disease, and particularly epilepsy. The belief that spirits require to have egress provided them is widely prevalent at the present day. Even in England and in Scotland now there are localities where it is the custom, when anyone is dying, to open the doors of the house to let the spirit pass more easily. And it is not by any means an infrequent belief, whether among the followers of certain religions in the ancient East, or among more or less savage tribes in the modern West (indeed we find the dogma all the world over), that the spirit remains by the body until decay destroys its accustomed habitation. It was therefore the most natural thing in the world for adherents of cults embracing this article of faith, to provide an opening for the departure of the spirit when the progress of decomposition had released it. And this really seems to be the explanation of the openings in modern Indian cromlechs. At first distinctly utilitarian and actual, such things always tend to become more and more indicative and ritual. And all this fits in with the custom noted from several western kist-vaens—and very familiar elsewhere—of placing, with the dead, food and others matters presumed to be required by the spirit on the final passage to the hereafter.

A further fact in connection with the Mên-an-Tol itself is specially important, and brings it well into line with other rude stone groups in the county. It runs N.E. and S.W., which we shall find correspond, with slight variation, with the general orientation of undoubted sepulchral monuments of presumably the same age. Thus the kist at Grugith, The Trethevy cromlech, Chambers at Tregiffian, and Ballowal, all point N.E. and S.W. Kists near the Stripple Stones and the Nine Maidens, only vary to N.N.E. and S.S.W. The Mulfra and Chûn cromlechs, with interments at Ballowal, Tregaseal, and Pennance, point N.W. and S.E., closely followed by the N.N.W.

and S.S.E. of the kists at Chapel Carn Brea. The rule is not absolute, for the Zennor cromlech is placed E. and W., and the Pawton, N. and S. But it is evident that the orientation of the Mên-an-Tol has a general relationship with the orientation of these other memorials, which we cannot disregard.

If then we are prepared to accept the view that the Mên-an-Tol is not a complete monument, but a ruin, we shall, I think, have no difficulty in bringing it into general accord with our older sepulchral monuments, and in placing it in the same particular category as the chambered barrow with the holed stones already cited. In this case the Mên-an-Tol proper, with the stones directly E. and W., would represent, lengthwise, the chamber of a vanished barrow. The other stones, close by, might well have formed part of that chamber, or indeed of an enclosing circle. It is quite clear, also, that if the Mên-an-Tol group is to be regarded as original and complete, the Tolven stone is defective; while, if the hole alone is to be considered, there is no reason why one should be treated as typical rather than the other. The modern practices connected with either and with holed stones elsewhere—and carried out in variant form with riven ash trees —need have no direct connection with the original intention or use, and in all likelihood have not. There is, after all, very little difference in the spirit which prompts a modern antiquary to invest a rude stone monument with a plausible hypothesis, and that which led his equally ignorant, less cultured, but more practical predecessors, to conceive that these memorials were intended for some purpose, and to set about utilising them as best they knew how. They could not *write* their theories, so they *did* them.

Conclusion.

It seems, therefore, on a full and careful review of the "Rude Stone Monuments" of Cornwall, that their main object and intention is sepulchral. That such sacredness as attaches—or rather did attach—to them, comes of their connection with the spirits of the dead, regard for whom is an integral feature of all primitive religions, so far as we have any knowledge. And if it appear strange that we should be acquainted with a long vanished race, chiefly through its customs of burial, we should

remember that whether among savage or cultured people, death is the most solemn fact in human history. Respect to the remains of the dead is the very keynote of such great historical cults as those in Egypt and Greece and Rome—faiths, moreover, which held untiring sway in all the phases of social life. On the due performance of the funeral rites the future of the deceased was held mainly to depend. And whatever else Christianity rejected of Pagan custom, that idea was so thoroughly absorbed that its influence is patent yet. So strong, moreover, was the continuance of the outward feeling of respect, that the violation of sepulchres was one of the chief grounds of divorce accepted among the Christians of the Roman empire. Nor can we doubt that such sentiments and practices were themselves survivals from far earlier days. Nor should we question that among the races with whom they originated, or by whom they were handed down, were the simple neolithic folk who, spreading from the East along either shore of the Mediterranean —as their remnant works still testify—found their way, at length, to these western isles, long before the advent of Kelt or of Saxon, and left behind them these memorials, which have always roused the wonder of the ignorant, and continue a perpetual stimulus to the curiosity of the learned. Where record is wanting the abiding facts of human nature are our safest guides.