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Monday, 26 February 1906.

The Reverend the President in the Chair.

The following paper was read :

ON PREHISTORIC BUILDINGS IN MENORCA.

By F. H. H. GUILLEMARD, M.D., Gonville and Caius College.

It has been my fortune to visit many ancient sites in the course of my wanderings, from the Stones of Stennis in the Orkneys to the wonderful Buddhist ruins in Java and Ceylon, but I do not think I have ever come across any more confusing and difficult to decipher than those of Menorca. Although almost the whole of the island is stony, and stony with a stoniness of which the untravelled Englishman can form no idea, it is mostly so in its southern half, and it is to this part that the antiquities are mainly, if not almost entirely, confined. Around the capital, Puerta Mahon, an hour or two's drive distant, where the *ne plus ultra* of stoniness appears to be reached, are situated some of the most remarkable of them. They have interested and puzzled archaeologists ever since the English occupation.

We may leave aside the cliff-hewn troglodytic dwellings, the very curious subterranean rock-cut chambers (as far as I can judge from Cartailhac's¹ plans—though I never personally adoption of the double-headed figure (which was known as early as 1825, became general in 1850, and has been adopted universally since 1875), their lower limbs and lower dress, which illustrated until their disappearance all the details proper to the Rouen suits.

No plea of expediency justifies the two other modern divergencies from the standard which was established during the 'Norman Conquest' of our playing-cards. In the last century the axe held behind his head by the king of hearts became a sword; and the staff held by the knave of the same suit vanished by successive stages, leaving only its top—apparently its simple cross-section—suspended mysteriously in the air above the knave's hand. This cross-section is now figured by the puzzled printers as a *leaf*! The oval tag just below this knave's chin, represents, I further suggest, the chin-beard, characteristic of him in the Rouen cards and in the cards of several English makers to the beginning of the 19th century. (See Plate XXXIII.)

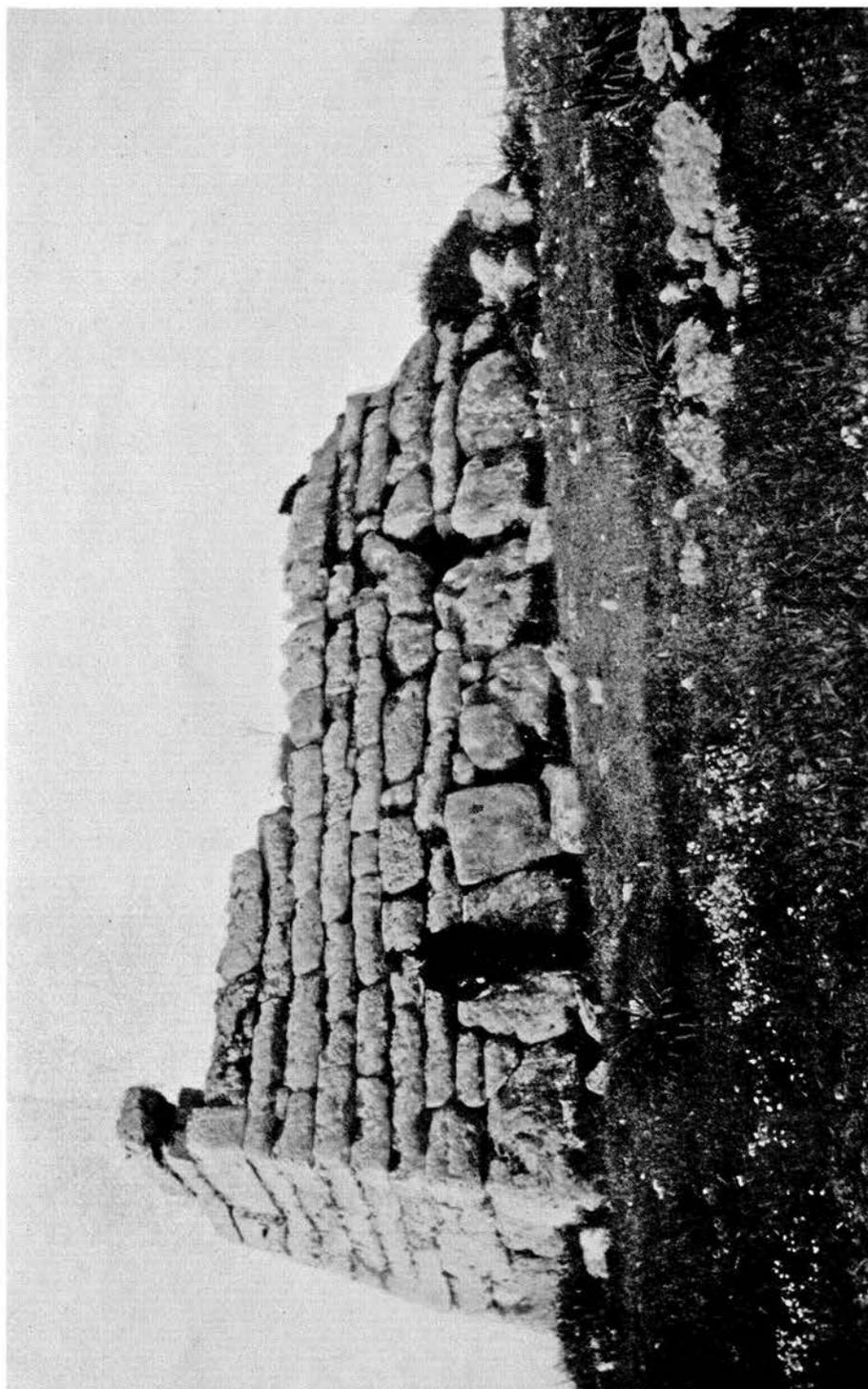
¹ *Monuments primitifs des Îles Baléares*. By Émile Cartailhac. Toulouse, 1892.

saw any—exactly like some I discovered near Cape Gato in Cyprus), and other constructions of minor importance, and turn our attention to the more specially characteristic antiquities of the Balearics. These fall under four headings :—

- (1) The so-called Towns.
- (2) The *Naus* or ship-like edifices.
- (3) The Bilitons or *Taulas*.
- (4) The *Talayots*.

Firstly, the Towns. To begin with, I think we may demur to the name. Those who have wandered over ruined cities, whether in the Nearer or the Farther East, will probably recall how striking—when the experience was a novelty—is the apparent vastness of the sites. But in Menorca the ruins of these so-called towns strike one as lilliputian, so that they really must be very small, and not “town,” but “hamlet,” would seem the more fitting designation. It is not my intention to dwell on these, for I paid but little attention to them, and the other antiquities are of more interest, but their leading characteristics may be shortly stated. They are surrounded with a wall which may be regarded as a defensive *enceinte*. It is usually very irregular, and is often furnished with a megalithic gateway, and there are sometimes little towers built in or against the walls, but these are quite possibly of later date. The walls are of large rough blocks of limestone, but it is now quite impossible to say what their height was, or what is old and what recently piled up by the peasant to clear his fields. No mortar is used.

Within the walls we find generally a wilderness of rocks and bush, shewing here and there the remains of what were once small, square, one-storeyed buildings, whose lower courses are often formed of quite large and well-fitted blocks. But the great mass of the ruins seems to consist of what M. Cartailhac has called the “galeries surbaissées”—underground passages or caves which seem to be here, there, and everywhere, without definite plan. They are low and narrow, perhaps about 4 feet square, and would seem most inconvenient for human beings to traverse. As to what their use can have been I can offer no suggestion whatsoever. So much for these so-called towns,



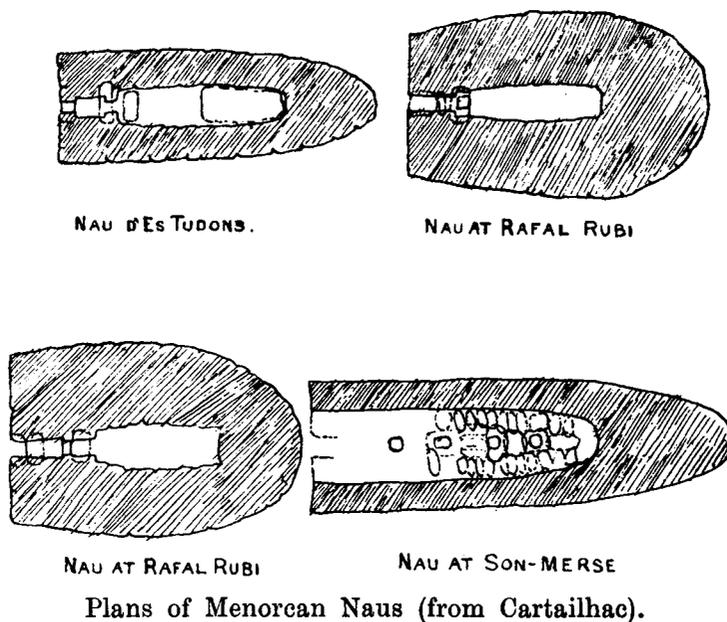
Nau d'Es Tudons from the S.S.E.

concerning which I only wish to say that the sites were so impracticable—such a jungle of scrub and stones—that it would need weeks of work to clear them, and the hasty glance I was able to devote to them is of no archaeological value at all.

Let us now turn to the three remaining classes of buildings. Of these, even if his time be limited, the traveller can form a very good idea without having recourse either to the axe or spade. Of the first—the Naus or vessel-shaped buildings—there can be no doubt whatever about the use. They are tombs. Of the second, the great Bilithons, it may be said fairly confidently that they formed part of some building of the nature of a temple. Of the third, the Talayots or bastion-like edifices, no satisfactory explanation has ever been given. They have been in turn declared to be fortresses, tombs, watch-towers, monuments, dwellings, and temples. But, whatever else they may be, they are certainly none of these. In this paper I shall venture on an explanation of the simplest character, but I am inclined, nevertheless, to think that it is the true one.

The *Naus* demand our first attention. There are but few of them upon the island. Cartailhac, who had plenty of time for his search, apparently only came across nine—at all events he alludes to no more—and some of these were much dilapidated. Their length varies from about 25 to 40 feet, their height, perhaps, was 15 or 18 feet, and their width somewhat less. By far the finest is that known as the Nau d'Es Tudons (Pl. XXXIV), in the neighbourhood of Ciudadela. They differ a good deal in the quality of their building. Es Tudons is constructed of large blocks, dressed with a hammer, and there is a Nau with even larger stones, but in this case they are not dressed. Considerable batter is given to the walls, and the shape thus obtained, combined with the fact that one end of the building is more or less pointed or rounded, while the other is quite square, has given rise to the local name (Nau or Naveta) by which they are known. Personally, however, I cannot believe for a moment that the shape has any special meaning, or at all events that it implies that it was the tomb of a great sea chief, and I regard the resemblance as unintentional. Whether

the top was flat or provided with a keel is now purely a matter of conjecture. At the S.W. end (the stern) is an entrance nearly level with the ground, and about 3 feet square. It admits to a sort of vestibule which apparently has a shaft or chimney-like opening leading upwards. Another low doorway from this gives access to the main chamber, now completely blocked by the fallen roof. The plans figured here, which I have taken from Cartailhac, are probably not quite exact, but they shew quite well enough for all practical purposes the formation of four of the most important Naus. Those at Rafal Rubi, which I did not personally see, are described as about



100 yards apart, and there are no other ruins around. The blocks of which they are built are very large and very rough, and there are an entrance, a vestibule, and a chimney exactly as in Es Tudons. Son Mersé, on the other hand, differs in having the roof supported by pillars down the middle. The materials of the walls are roughly squared stones, and the edifice is carefully built. All these tombs, for such they doubtless are, yielded human bones to the spade, and at the last-named some of the peasants found what they described as green rings.

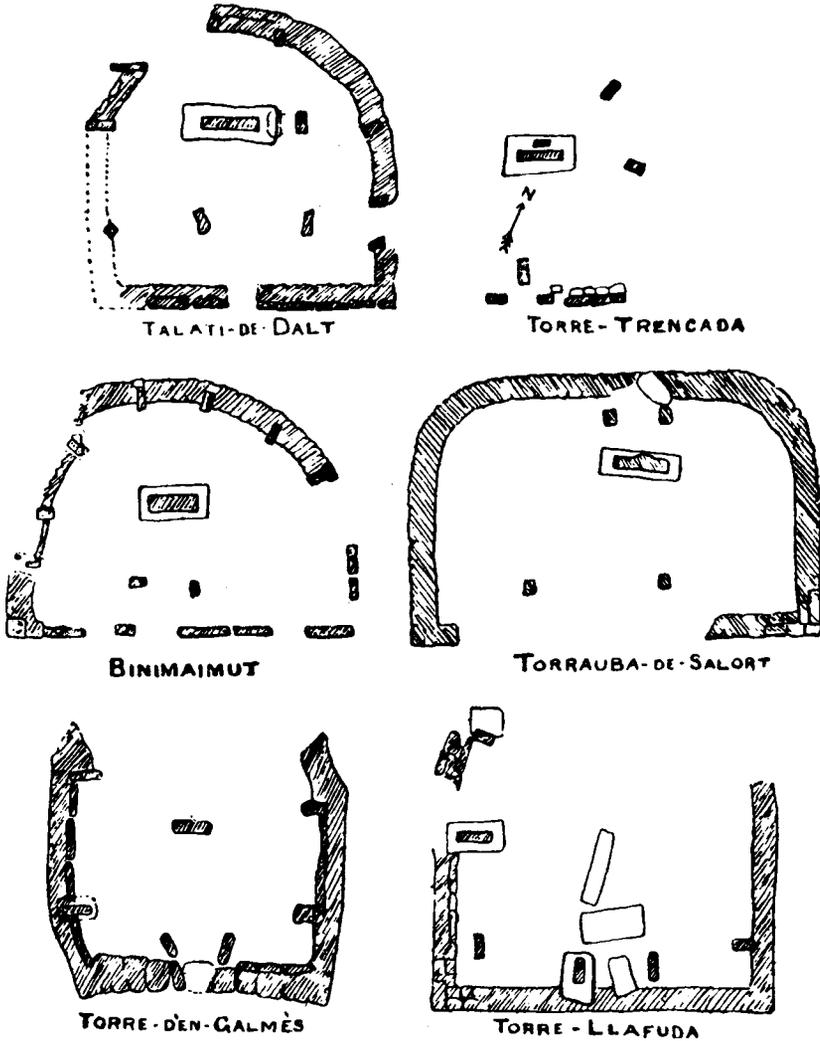
These Naus, I think, may very well be compared with certain buildings I saw in Cyprus, e.g. that known as Agia



Ruins of Temple with its central Bilithon. "Talati de d'Alt."
(One of the engaged peripheral megaliths has been used subsequently as a prop for the Taula.)

Ekaterina by the Cypriotes, which is near Famagusta. But here the whole structure is domed and the stones of colossal size.

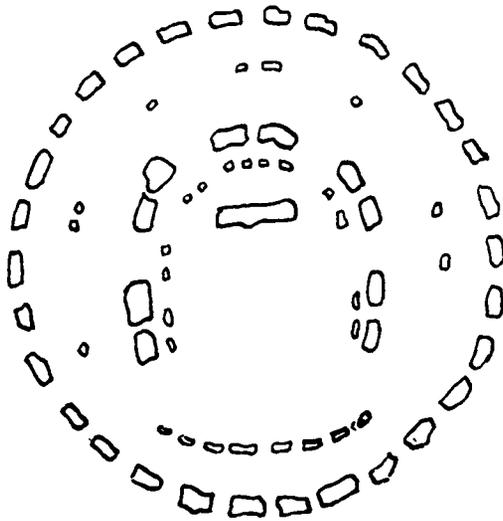
The next of the Balearic antiquities peculiar to the islands are the *Bilithons* (Pl. XXXV). These are two massive stones joined by a deep tenon and mortise, and cut with remarkable



Plans of Menorcan Temple-sites (from Cartailhac).
(Shewing acentrally-placed Bilithons.)

care, the lower flat, slab-like one deeply implanted in the ground and bearing the upper one horizontally, like a table. The first point to be noticed about them is that they have archaeologically no separate entity, but form part of a building.

These buildings are quite small, in the form of a half-circle, perhaps 40 feet or so across, and their character is best seen by referring to the plans here given. A rough wall, not very thick, of unshaped stones, whose original height it is now impossible to make out, though I do not fancy it can ever have approached the height of the bilithon, surrounded this latter object, forming a hemicycle and a chord joining its free ends. Engaged in the wall, or set against its inner face, stood rough monoliths, ray-fashion, as it were, from the centre. The wall forming the chord generally had an opening somewhere about its centre. The bilithon, it will be noticed, is in almost all cases not quite in the central spot. In one case, Torre Llafuda, there are



STONEHENGE RESTORED

apparently two bilithons stuck against the side, and quite out of the ordinary position, but this is a very much destroyed and mixed up site, and the position must be regarded as quite abnormal, and it is not at all evident that the position of the original walls is correctly given in Cartailhac's plan. The habitual place of the bilithon is evidently slightly acentral, and this instantly reminds one of the precisely similarly-placed "altar-stone" in Stonehenge, as shewn in the annexed outline restoration.

Cartailhac advances the remarkable theory that the bilithon—these enormous blocks of stone, so beautifully cut and

so accurately mortised, be it remembered—was intended to hold up the roof of the building, which he believes to have thus been covered in all round. At Biniymout he declares that the side wall was high, and “avait conservé les premières dalles horizontales qui, se recouvrant et avançant l’une sur l’autre, formaient la voûte.” But had it served this purpose the stone would not have always been acentral. Moreover, I cannot persuade myself, and think few are likely to be persuaded, that this splendidly cut stone was ever meant to be covered up, any more than Stonehenge was covered up. I cannot help regarding it as the central stone or altar under which the functions of the cult—whatever they may have been—were carried on. It is more than possible that latter-day peasants, wishing to convert the building into a shed, made use of some of the myriad blocks lying around to do so, and were the authors of Cartailhac’s roofing. With these rough stones and no mortar it is quite impossible to tell the erection of yesterday from the original.

The Bilitons, or Taulas (tables), as the natives call them, are generally found not far from talayots, but as there are only some ten or a dozen taulas left to us as against some 200 talayots, it is evident that there must be a vast majority of the latter without the former, so they are not likely to have been necessarily connected. Only one bilithon is found in the same place. None is found isolated or away from ruins of a more or less extensive kind. One cannot then, looking at the matter from its various points of view, come to any other conclusion than that these remarkably striking objects formed the main feature of a building of the nature of a temple.

We now come to the buildings which have proved such a puzzle to all who have visited the islands, namely the *Talayots*. These, as we are informed by various writers, get their name from an Arabic word *talayi*—a fact which Professor E. G. Browne confirms in a letter to me. This, with the definite article (at-talayi), would mean “scouts,” “vedettes,” and hence, no doubt, “watch-towers,” but it should be remembered (a fact that has apparently been overlooked hitherto) that no interpretations whatsoever can be drawn from names

given by a people who did not arrive in the country till hundreds of years after the buildings were erected. The word *Talayot* has no more explanatory value than has the name *taula* or "table" for the bilithon.

The Talayots (Pl. XXXVI) are round, squat towers built with a well-marked batter, and hence slightly conical. No mortar or cement was used in their construction. In none is the top quite perfect, but there seems every reason to believe that they were not of much greater altitude than they are at the present day, and that the summit was flat. Their height is usually not much more than 20 feet; indeed, Torre Nova, though two-storeyed, is less than this. Torre Llafuda, the largest, is nearly 40 feet high. Many measure 40 feet or more in diameter at the base, and perhaps six or seven feet less at the top. They are thus ill-described by the word "tower," which tacitly postulates greater height than width.

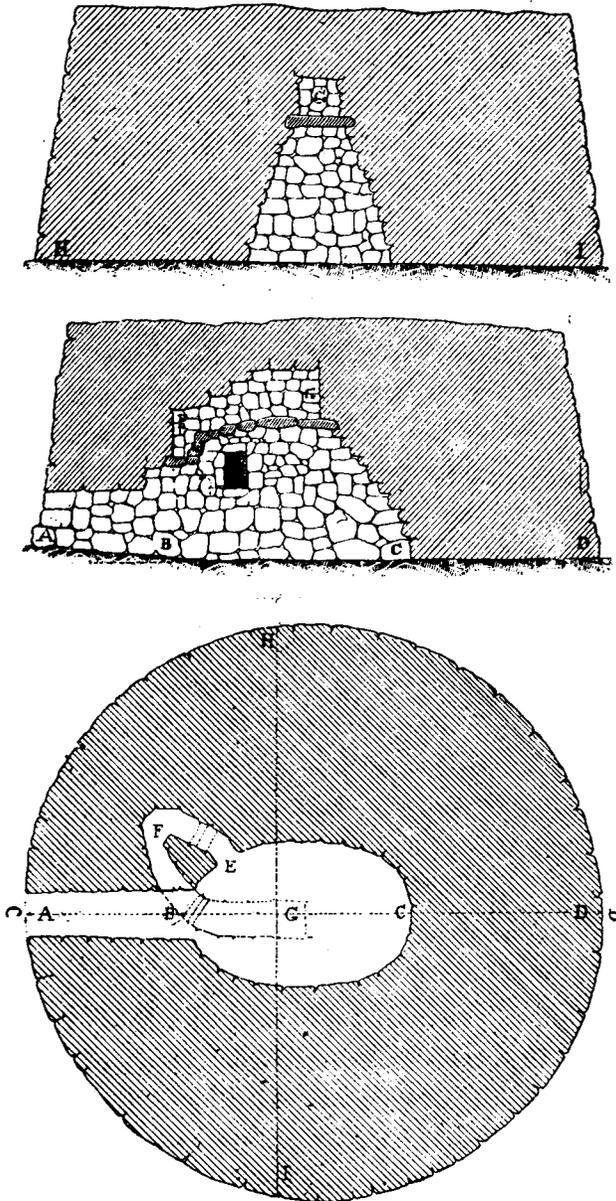
What were they? Their situation does not tell us very much. They are not nearly so common by the sea as inland, and they certainly did not serve as watch-towers to give warning of an invasion by sea. Many are isolated; in other cases they occur two or three together. Sometimes they are situated in low-lying ground; at others they are on heights, as at Torre de Gaumes, where there are a group of three on an eminence which produce quite a fortress-like effect. At another place there are seven miniature ones close together. Some are in the country, others in the so-called "towns." In short, there is no constant factor about them at all. When Ramis wrote in 1818 he gave a list of 195 talayots, of which 142 were in fair condition. But numbers have been destroyed by being used for limekilns. Twenty disappeared in and near Palma in Majorca in this way, while for centuries they have served as quarries to build houses and farms, which were often erected close to the talayot in order to have the stone conveniently handy.

We may now examine their construction and the materials which were employed. The blocks of which they are made (it is needless to say that these are all of the rough, vesicular limestone of the land around) are sometimes left untouched, but



Talayot : San Agusti.

for the most part are rudely dressed, and as a rule are rather cleverly laid in rough courses. They are often of very large size, especially towards the base, stones of eight or nine feet



Plan and Sections of a Talayot (Cartailhac).

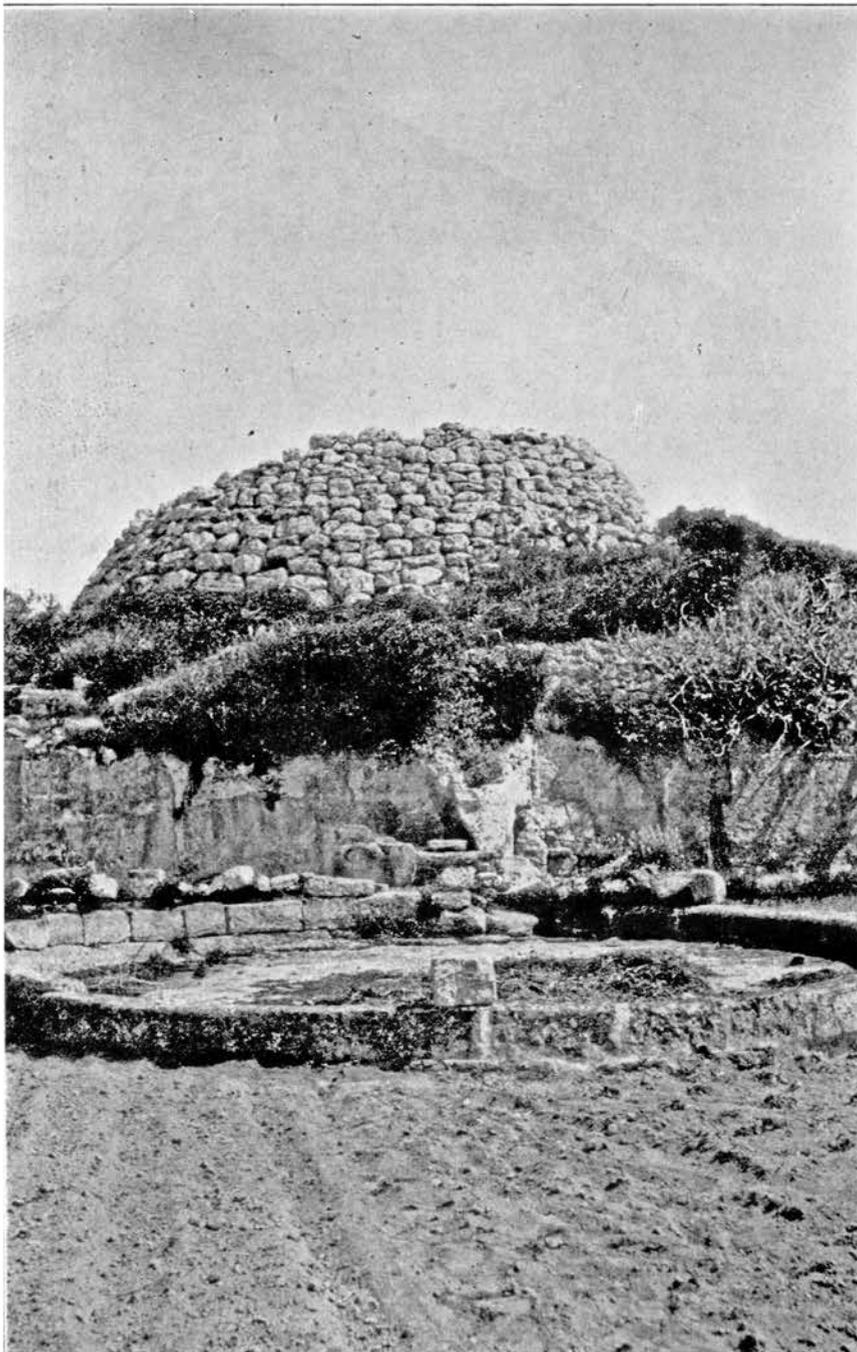
by two or three occurring in the Son Morell talayot, for example, though this is decidedly unusual, and the construction cannot be said to be Cyclopean. Examination shews, however,

that behind this outer facing the wall is often composed of quite small, rough stones, and the inner surface of the wall is again of larger ones, though by no means of the size of those of the exterior. The walls are of enormous thickness, and there is usually a single circular chamber within. Sometimes there was a second, placed immediately above the other, and reached by a sloping spiral passage in the substance of the wall. There was never an outside ramp, and what sometimes looks like one is only the result of part of the outer wall having fallen. The roof of the chamber was apparently seldom vaulted, but almost always held up by a pillar of massive stones, and when this is very large, as it sometimes is, it reduces the area of the chamber considerably. The inner walls begin to slope in at three or four feet from the ground, and the diameter of the chamber, disregarding the central pillar, would vary, perhaps, from 12 to 20 feet or so.

It is particularly to be noticed that in some instances—indeed, in several—the chambers are not circular, but rectangular or irregular in form, but the normal shape is as I have described.

I have said nothing as yet about the means of access to these buildings. A low doorway, usually about 5 ft. high, sometimes less, so that one has to stoop to go in, is generally to be found on the southern side, and the doorposts and lintel are often of large-sized stones. The passage through the thick wall shews no sign of gateway at either end. Occasionally what may be described as a sort of window exists some feet from the ground, but this apparently is now to be seen only in a few instances. The one at Torello (Pl. XXXVII) proclaimed itself as unmistakeably modern, and I learnt that this part of the talayot had been entirely rebuilt in the 18th century to serve as a gun emplacement.

I have here given, I think, the leading details of these curious buildings, and it now only remains to solve the puzzle of their purpose. I have spoken of them as peculiar to the Balearics, because they have always been so described, but I cannot look upon them as such myself. To my thinking, we must regard the Sardinian Nurhags as built by people of the



Talayot : "Torello."
(Threshing-floor, partly modern, in foreground.)

same race as built the talayots, and as serving the same purpose, though I cannot lay claim to any personal knowledge of Sardinia and its ruins. La Marmora's book¹, however, is so careful, and his plans and illustrations so abundant, that it is difficult to go far astray, and with the look of the Menorcan towers in one's mind, it is possible to visualise the Sardinian buildings almost as well as if one had seen them. Summarised, his description of them is as follows:—

They were in the form of truncated cones, the top probably being a platform. The stones are rough, or only slightly squared, never sawn, and no mortar was used. The largest are probably about 6 or 8 feet square, but the construction is never Cyclopean. They are laid in regular horizontal courses. The walls are of enormous thickness, and enclose one, often two, and occasionally even more chambers, which have conical roofs. In the lower chambers are often a couple of loculi, usually only two or three feet square, to which I shall have presently to allude. Although the entrance doorway is sometimes as much as six feet high or more, it is more often very low, so that one has to enter on all-fours. Passing it, it is possible to stand upright, but there is another low door to go through in order to enter the chamber. To get to the upper room there is a spiral ramp in the substance of the wall, and this either leads out of the entrance passage, or is attained by an opening in the lower chamber a few feet above the ground. There is commonly a square window or opening into the upper room. There are more than 3000 nurhags known. Like the talayots they occupy almost every situation, and like them, too, they are separate or grouped. But in many instances, apparently, they occur in regular clusters, touching each other, smaller ones round a big one, and look like a collection of beehives, which is never the case in the Balearic Islands.

Now it seems to me that, but for one or two minor differences, for example, the clustering just named and the conical vault in lieu of a central support of massive stones to carry the roof, we have to do with precisely the same buildings in both cases, and that any light which we may obtain from a con-

¹ La Marmora, *Voyage en Sardaigne*, Paris, 1839.

sideration of the nurhags may also help to explain the talayots—that we may take them together, in short. With regard to age we have at least one definite fact to go upon—that a Roman aqueduct at Nora in Sardinia rests on a ruined nurhag. A body with some objects of the bronze age was found interred in a nurhag, and as it is practically certain that the nurhags were not sepulchral, this interment must have belonged to a later age. No inscriptions have ever been discovered in them, and they have no constant orientation, though both in the Balearics and Sardinia the doorway is generally somewhere between S.E. and S.W.

What then were these Talayots? We will proceed *par voie d'exclusion*, and say what they were not.

1. They were not fortresses. For there is no sign of defensive work about them in any shape or form, no parapets, no vallum, nothing. They are, moreover, often situated in low-lying ground quite unsuitable for defence.

2. They are not tombs. If they were, they must have yielded bones more often to investigators, but though 3000 nurhags are known, the instances have been very rare, and the same may be said of Menorca. Tomb-riflers do not take away bones. And if the bones have all perished some pottery or ornament would have survived, but there is little enough of this also. Then, too, the staircases or ramps shew sign of much wear in many cases.

3. They were not dwellings. The absence of proper light and air and the comparatively restricted size of the chamber render such a theory quite untenable.

4. They were not watch-towers, because it is quite evident that in the nurhags there was in many cases no access to the summit. They are also placed anyhow and anywhere, and are far too numerous.

5. That they were not cenotaphs or monuments to chiefs or heads of clans is evident from the same fact of their abundance.

6. It is equally impossible that they could have been temples of some nature, as has been suggested. But of what conceivable cult? And again, why have no *trouvailles* turned

up, and why are there such numbers of them and so close together? It is conclusively evident that none of these suggestions satisfactorily explain the puzzle.

Some persons, especially those of the older school, are perhaps too apt to seek for explanations only in the realms of classical learning, or along the somewhat uncertain paths of sociology. The spade and an observant eye are better guides. I remember a case in point in Cyprus with regard to certain menhir-like monoliths, perforated in the centre, which Professor Sayce had described as Beth-Els, or sacred stones, combining the male and female emblems of fertility, and so forth. At that time only two or three were known, but in the course of my wanderings about the island I came upon some 30 or 40 more, and a little spade-work shewed them conclusively to be no Beth-Els, but the fulcra for the beams of Roman oil-presses, and the "sacrificial stones" received—not the blood of a writhing victim—but the juice of the olive. An equally common-place explanation must, I think, be found for these talayots or nurhags.

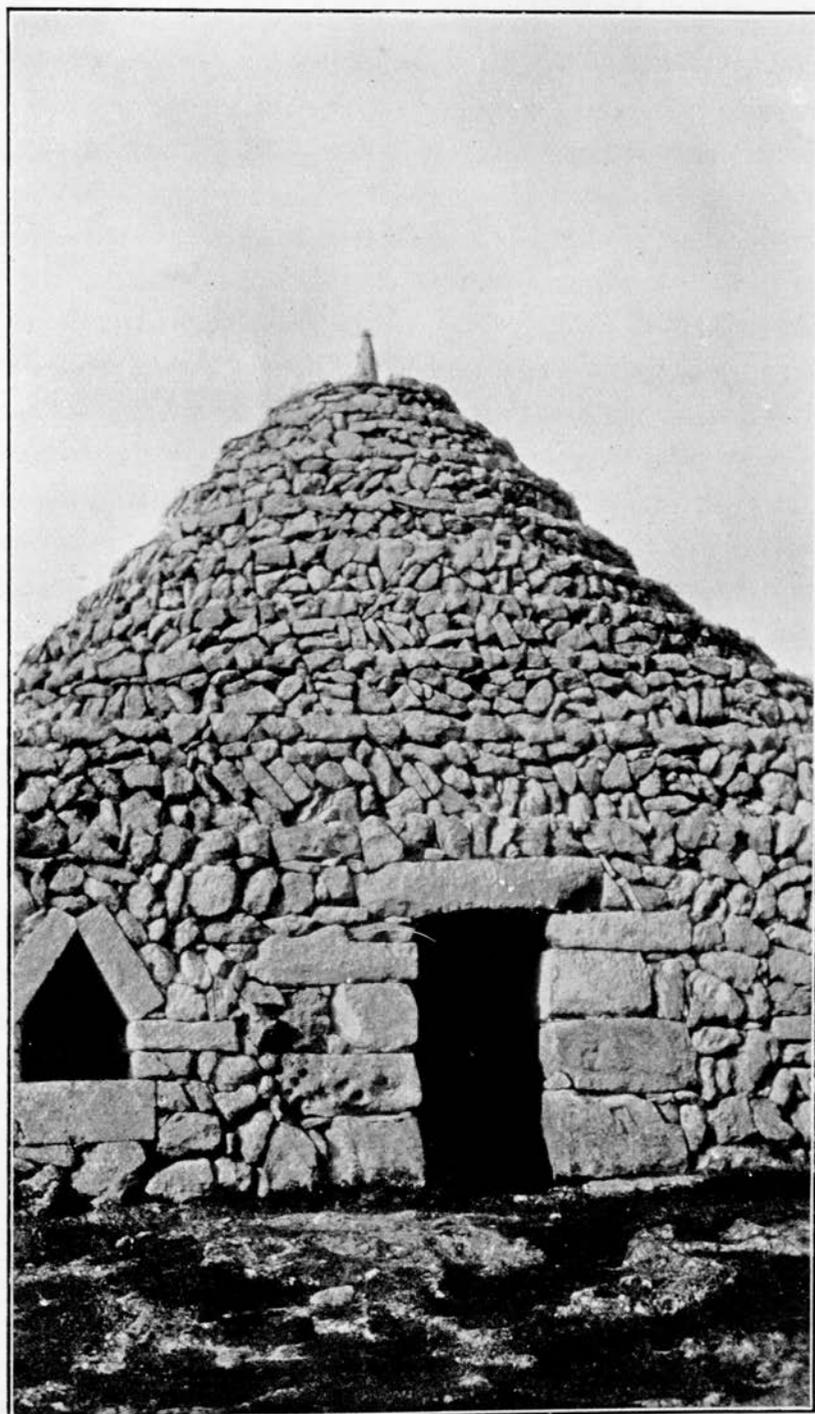
We must look to the local conditions for enlightenment. I have already said that the stoniness of Menorca is phenomenal. It is such that the land would seem uncultivable to an Englishman. But the Menorcan is a man of deep and abiding faith. He surveys this wilderness of rocks with the full resolve to make the most of the teaspoonful of earth it conceals. He sets to work and removes the stones; and then, to get them out of the way, he builds walls with them—walls three, four, five, nay, even six feet or more thick. If he has a fig-tree in the middle of his field, he builds a wall round that too. When his walls threaten to get too high, he runs another across his field and bisects it, for his task is never quite done. The heavy rains of autumn are not without their effect, and he perceives, if I may so put it, that they have caused the rock to grow through his field, and he has to set to work to hunt for the latter again once more.

I want to make it plain, then, that one of the chief employments of the Menorcan agriculturist is this getting rid of stones. He does not always find wall-building sufficient,

though he manages to dispose of a good many in this way. Something useful, if possible, but if not, useless—in any case, something—he *has* to build. It might be argued that people would never take the trouble to *build* a useless block of stones; they would just throw them on a heap. They might, perhaps, if they were pebbles, but even then they would soon roll down and spread widely over the ground. It would probably occur, even to the greatest novice at the task, to place the larger rocks on the outside and the small pebbles in behind them. And this is, actually, what is now done every day for the purpose of getting rid of the stones, and one often sees in the islands these well-built riddance heaps, with pointed ends like a shuttle, though why they should be so shaped I cannot say, or what is the derivation of the name “Clapers” by which they are known. In this connection it is worthy of remark that in our own railway stations the heaps of coal are not thrown down anyhow, but are almost always neatly built, and with a sloping, or batter wall.

All the Menorcan's endeavours to get rid of these hindrances to cultivation are not, however, so lacking in utility. The annexed illustration (Pl. XXXVIII), somewhat resembling one of the stepped pyramids of Egypt, shews a building in the neighbourhood of Ciudadela. It is in no way prehistoric, however. It is quite a modern erection; indeed it was, so to speak, built only yesterday, and its main purpose, no doubt, was to get the stones off the land. In bulk it cannot be inferior to the talayots, for—though I did not measure it—it is probably not less than 35 feet in height, and from 40 to 50 feet in diameter. Little projecting stones afford access to the summit, but why the “Barraca” (as these modern pyramids are termed) should be built in these great steps I do not know. The people, I was told, like to go on the top and look about them, and they certainly command an extensive view over the flat and treeless land. It is the use of the building which chiefly concerns us. It is a stable for sheep and oxen.

If we enter the narrow passage, we find our modern talayot—for this is what it is—to be composed of enormously thick walls surrounding a central circular chamber, with a huge and



Modern "Barraca" near Ciudadela.
(Showing manger identical with falsely so-called loculi of Talayots.)

very lofty domed roof—a really wonderful bit of construction. Outside the entrance there is a curral or yard, and the remains of a similar construction is quite usually seen in the Sardinian nurhags figured in La Marmora. On the left, outside, a manger will be noted. There are other ones within, and they are the two-foot square loculi of the ancient buildings which so disturbed previous antiquaries holding the theory that they were tombs as necessitating the dismemberment of the corpse before committing it to its last resting-place!

I was told that in the Ciudadela district there is a modern barraca with two chambers and a stairway in the substance of the wall—an exact replica, in short, of the old edifices.

To sum up then, I regard the talayot as neither a fortress nor a temple, but as a most useful building subserving more than one purpose. It cleared the land of stones; it housed the pigs and sheep at night or during the raids of unfriendly neighbours; its upper chamber acted as a loft for the storage of grain or fodder; and, finally, its summit served as a convenient watch-tower for the owner.

Thursday, 1 March 1906.

The Reverend the President in the Chair.

A paper, illustrated by lantern-slides, was read by J. W. CLARK, M.A.,

ON THE RIOT AT THE GREAT GATE OF TRINITY
COLLEGE IN FEBRUARY, 1610—11¹.

Monday, 5 March 1906.

W. M. FAWCETT, M.A., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following papers were read:

ON THE HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF GREAT
GRANSDEN.

By the Rev. A. J. EDMONDS.

¹ This paper has been published as No. XLIII. of the Octavo Publications of the Society.

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