ROOVESMORE FORT.- PARISH OF AGLISH CO. CORK.

SLAB NEAR ROOVESBEG.

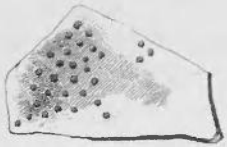


FIG. 7.

PLAN OF THE FORT.

FIG. I.

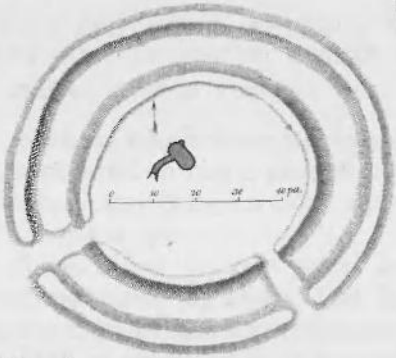
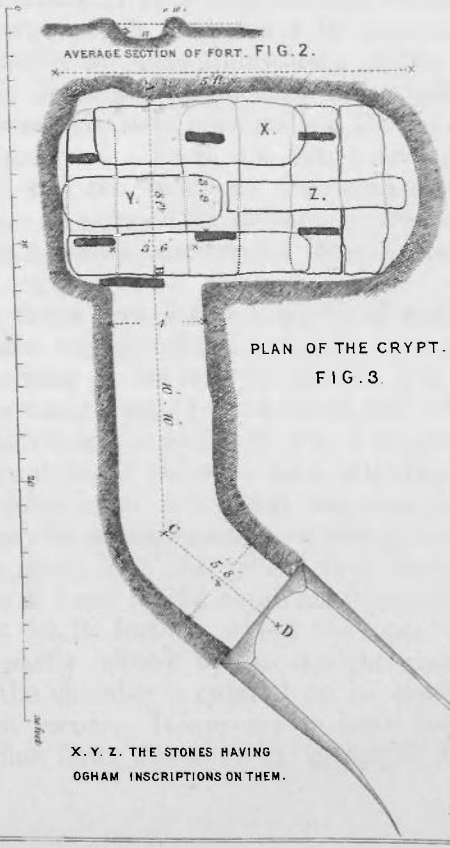


FIG. 5.

DALLAUNS
NEAR
ROOVESBEG.

FIG. 6.

SECTION ON THE LINE
A. B. C. D.
FIG. 4.



PLAN OF THE CRYPT.
FIG. 3.

X. Y. Z. THE STONES HAVING
OGHAM INSCRIPTIONS ON THEM.

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A. LANE FOX. Delt.

ROOVESMORE FORT, AND STONES INSCRIBED WITH OGHAMS, IN THE PARISH OF AGLISH, COUNTY CORK.

By Colonel AUGUSTUS LANE FOX, F.S.A.

THE Fort or Rath in which these stones were found (figs. 1 and 2, pl. 1) is situated on rising ground upon the farm of Mr. Good, about half way between Cork and Macroom, and to the south of the river Lee.

It is of the form which is most usual in that part of Ireland, an irregular circle of about 130 ft. in diameter, measured from the crest of the innermost parapet; beyond this there is a ditch of about 17 ft. in breadth, and beyond the ditch another parapet of 10 ft. base and 3 ft. high, the ditch being, as is frequently the case thereabouts, between the two parapets. The inner parapet is now nearly obliterated, but it must have originally commanded the outer one, which is better preserved. There are two entrances, one to the south-east, and the other to the south-west. The fort, if such it is, is well situated for defence, on the top of a gentle rise, and it is nowhere commanded from the outside.

The entrance to the crypt (figs. 3 and 4, pl. 1), of which nearly every rath in this neighbourhood possesses one or more, is nearly in the centre of the interior space. It is a small gallery cut in the natural soil, 4 ft. in width and 1 ft. 9 in. in height at the entrance, increasing to 2 ft. 2 in. near the chamber. The descent to the gallery is by a little ramp from the surface, but there is no proof that this was the original entrance; it may be a continuation of the gallery that has fallen in. For about 5 ft. the gallery runs northwards, and then makes a bend to the right, continuing in that direction for about 10 ft. further, where the opening into the chamber is partly closed by an upright slab: passing over this slab, the chamber is entered on its south-west side near the west corner. It appears to have been originally of quadrangular form, about 15 ft. in length by

8 ft. in width, but its south-eastern end had fallen in and could not be accurately measured. Six upright slabs had been placed as jambs, longitudinally, in two lines, at about 2 ft. from the sides of the chamber. Upon the tops of these, heavy slabs of unhewn stone were laid transversely, as lintels, and upon these again rested other longitudinal slabs of the same kind, placed side by side, the edges nearly touching, so as to form the roof. Upon examining these last with a candle from beneath, I found that the two stones (marked X Y, figs. 3 and 4, pl. 1) which lay contiguous to one another, had their edges scored with oghams. But the marks were only just perceptible, by the light of the candle, in the interstices between the stones ; only the ends of the strokes were visible, and although they were clear enough for me to recognise them at once as oghams, they might very probably have escaped the notice of any one who had not been prepared, by seeing the crypt at the Gap of Dunloe, near Killarney, to meet with an inscription of this kind on the roof of the chamber. But it was quite out of the question to attempt to read them in the position in which they were placed. The two stones touched in some places, and even where they did not touch, the further ends of the strokes were continued round the upper edges of the slabs, where they were lost to the eye or buried in the superincumbent soil. It was evident that the builders had never intended they should be deciphered by any one from the interior of the chamber. The smallest of the three stones (marked Z, fig. 3, pl. 1) could not be seen from below, and was only discovered whilst excavating the other two.

The height of the chamber beneath the lintels was only 1 ft. 10 in. This is probably less than the original height, owing to a quantity of stones and rubbish that had accumulated upon the floor, but it could never have much exceeded 2 ft. The crypts in this part of the country vary from 2 to 5 ft. in height, but rarely exceed 4 ft. There was a glimpse of daylight from a rabbit-hole at the east end, where the earth had fallen in and destroyed the shape of the chamber. On the north side were the traces of another gallery, also destroyed, but probably communicating originally with a second chamber in that direction. The upper faces of the ogham stones were found, in excavating, to be 4 ft. beneath the surface of the ground.

One of the lintels was cracked in the centre, evidently from the weight above, and it appeared probable that in course of time the roof would fall in. This circumstance, coupled with the impossibility of reading the oghams as they were then placed, seemed to make it desirable, in the interests of archæology, that the stones should be removed before they were lost in the impending ruin of the building. In so doing, I received every assistance from the owner of the property, who had long desired to remove the rath as an impediment to his farm. But it was not without much persuasion that I induced any of the labourers to work in the place, owing to the superstitious dread the natives have of meddling with these localities. To this may be attributed their preservation in great quantities throughout the south, and indeed the whole of Ireland. It is generally believed that any interference with these raths will be attended with dire calamities from the vengeance of the fairies who inhabit them; and, as these evils are not confined to the perpetrator of the outrage, but extend to the neighbourhood in which it takes place, it not unfrequently happens that some event may occur which is construed into a fulfilment of such belief. As an instance of this credulity I may mention that, on one occasion, I was supposed to have caused the death of a calf in an adjoining farm, by creeping into one of these crypts. This was no idle story got up for the purpose of extorting money, but a genuine belief on the part of the neighbours; and I extracted it from the brother of the parish priest, to whom the rath belonged, and to whom the people had appealed to prevent my working there. I believe that owing to this circumstance, Roovesmore crypt had very rarely been entered by any of the inhabitants, and, as far as I could ascertain, none of them were aware of the existence of the ogham marks. It will be seen, therefore, that in removing the stones I had other matters to contend with besides the mere mechanical difficulty of raising them out of the ground, which was not inconsiderable, the largest weighing about a ton and a half, the other two about 6 cwt. and a ton, respectively. I at last succeeded, however, in getting them conveyed to Cork, and ultimately to London, where they have been deposited in the British Museum. I may mention that the Cork Steam Company, viewing them as monuments of general interest, very liberally offered to

take them to London free of cost. With respect to the origin of these remains, and the purpose for which they were constructed, like all pre-historic monuments, much must, of course, be left for conjecture. But in the absence of any material evidence on this point, it may perhaps serve to throw some light upon the subject, if it can be shown, with anything like certainty, that the oghams are of older date than the building of which they formed part.

Several circumstances appear to point to this conclusion. In the first place, it has been already stated that the writing was illegible from its position in the chamber. Not only were the inscriptions on the two larger stones partially concealed from view, but the smaller stone z lay with its ogham face upwards, covered with four feet of earth. It is highly improbable that, if the oghams were scored with the view of recording any circumstance connected with the building or its contents, they should have been buried in a position where they could never be seen.

But, further than this, there is evidence to show that in all probability they were originally standing stones, Menhirs, or, as they are called in Ireland, Dallauns. An examination of the stones will show (pl. 2), that on all three of them there is a blank space left at one of their extremities, and that the ogham lines are principally distributed on the other ends. Upon the smallest stone, z, the lines have probably been carried all round what I consider the top end of the stone, and down the other side, leaving, as on the other two, a sufficient unscored space at the bottom to be inserted in the ground. Now it is well known that ogham was almost invariably read from the bottom upwards; it might therefore be expected that the proper way of reading these inscriptions would be found to be from the blank towards the other end. I have not sufficient knowledge of the Irish language to enable me to make anything of the two smaller stones. It is to be hoped that in their present accessible position, they may draw the attention of some person more learned than myself in such matters. The marks upon the smallest are exceedingly well defined, and they are sufficiently clear on both to make the value of the letters intelligible to any one who is able to distribute them in words. Upon the larger stone x the inscription read from the blank end upwards is plain enough; it is, according to the

THE ROOVESMORE OGHAMS.

FIG. 1.

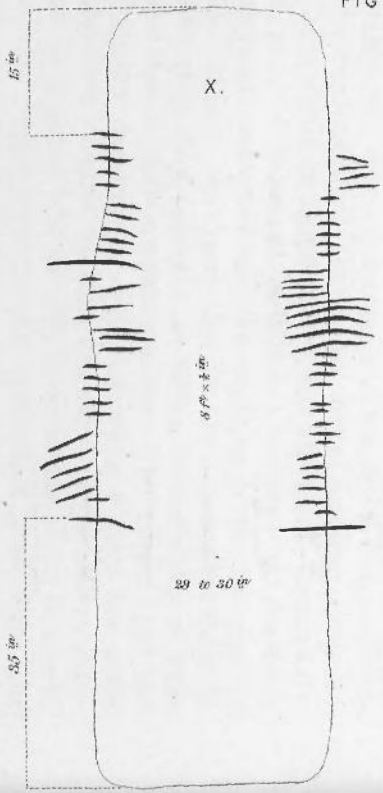


FIG. 2.

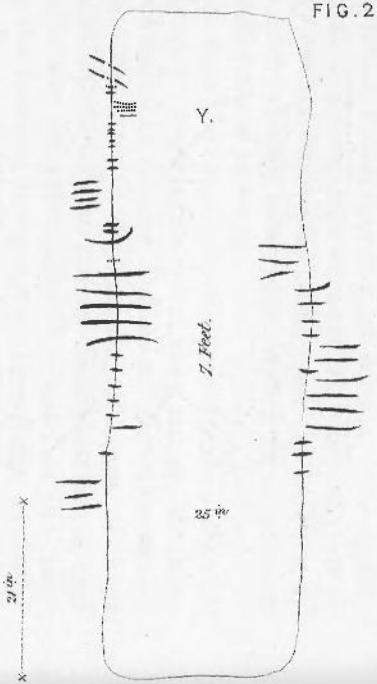
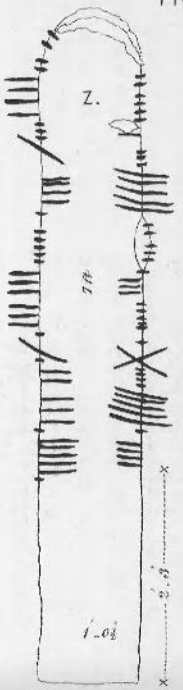
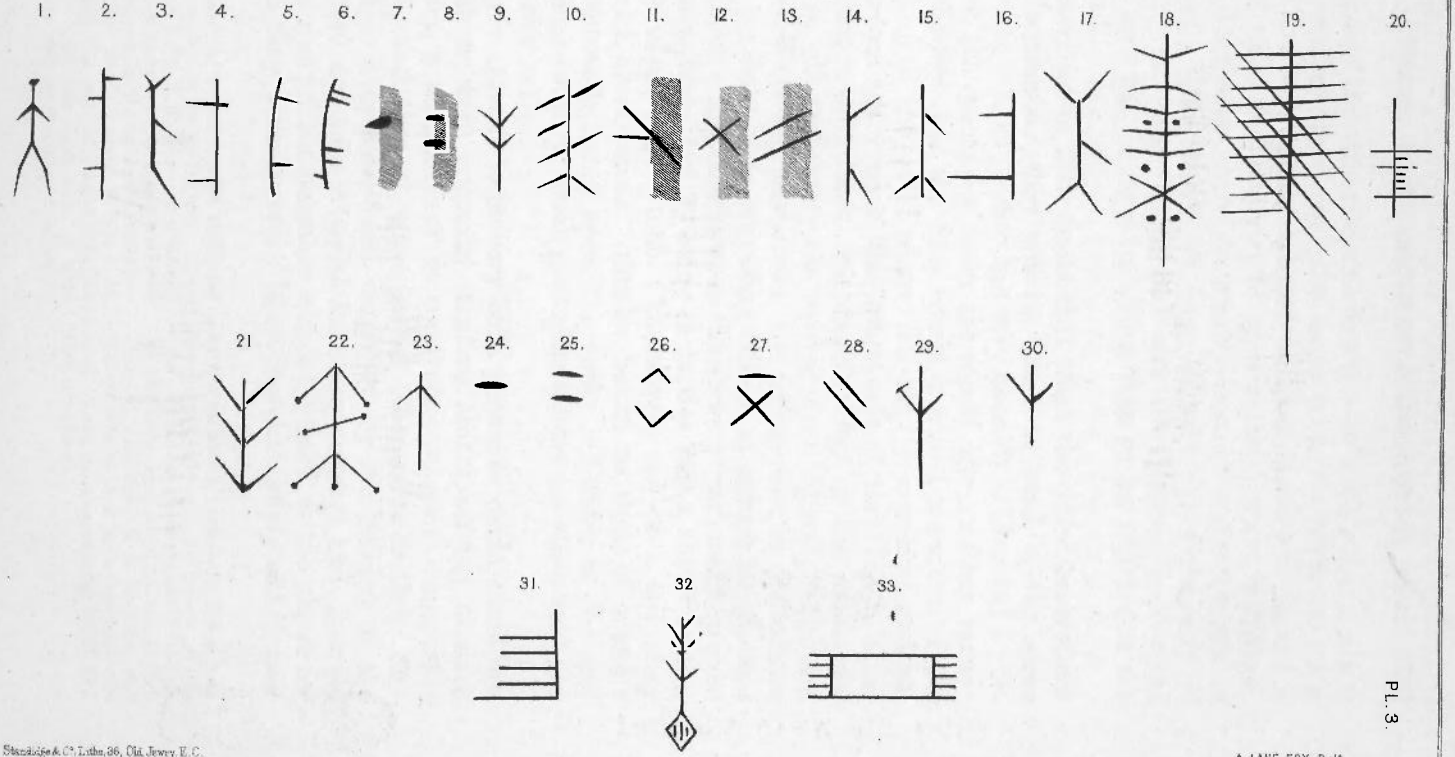


FIG. 3.



PL 2.



PL. 3.

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recognised Ogham scale, on one side,—MAQIFALAMNI, and on the other, read the same way, MAQIERCIAS. Maqi is a well known ogham version of Macc, son of, and is found upon the majority of ogham inscriptions in Ireland. The inscription therefore reads,—son of FALAMNI son of ERCIAS. Here, then, we have clearly the right way of reading it. The blank end was the bottom, and could have been left for no other object than to be inserted in the ground.

There can be little doubt that when the other inscriptions are deciphered,[1] they will be found to read in the same direction. A large chip has very possibly obliterated a portion of the inscription upon the top of the smallest stone; but the fact that the lines continue round a portion of the bend, up to the point where the chip commences, and recommence again upon the other side of the chip, is alone sufficient to prove that this was the top of the stone, and that in all probability the writing was originally continued all round the top, and down the other side, in accordance with the frequently prevailing custom of ogham inscriptions elsewhere. The marks upon the stone X are much jagged and time-worn, but Y, being of harder stone, shows evident traces of an edged tool. The stones are of a red slaty material, or rag-stone. Similar blocks to those of X and Y are frequently found upon the rocky hill sides in the surrounding country, which geologists inform me show evidence of glacier action.

There appears to be very little reason to doubt, therefore, that these were originally standing stones, serving to mark a grave, a boundary, or to commemorate some remarkable event; and that at some period subsequent to their construction they have been employed by the builders of the crypt as a handy material for their purpose, and inserted in the roof of the chamber without regard to the object for which they were scored. If so, it would imply either that

[1] According to the Ogham scale, the letters appear to be as follows. Upon the stone Y (fig. 2, pl. 2.):—upon the left side, TABI RAMOCOI, the remainder very doubtful,—upon the right side, USALET.—Upon the smallest stone Z (fig. 3, pl. 2);—upon the left side, ANAFLAMATTIA SMUCE;—upon the right side, if read from the chip at the top, downwards, OE(L?)URIAFIA(AE)ERAS,—but if read from the bottom upwards the letters on this side would be CARE(AE)AITAIRU(D?)EO. As the slabs now stand at the British Museum, the stone X is inverted, and the left side in pl. 2 is on the right. It is of course quite immaterial which way they are placed.

a considerable period elapsed between the scoring of the oghams and the construction of the crypt, during which time the inhabitants had either outgrown or lost sight of the superstitions of a prior age, a circumstance which the still existing fetishism of the country would hardly warrant us in assuming ; or, that it may have been constructed by an intruding race, which had no knowledge or reverence for the monuments of their predecessors.

This latter view might appear to have some support in the very wide-spread tradition of the country, that the raths were erected by the Danes, were it not for the enormous numbers in which they are found dispersed over the island, rendering it unlikely that they should have been constructed by that race during their limited occupation of the country.

Another circumstance which leads to the belief that these slabs may originally have been dallauns, is the fact that such monuments are found in unusual numbers in the immediate vicinity of the rath. At about 300 yards to the west are five dallauns in line, of which one is still erect. To the south-west, at about 100 yards' distance, are two large slabs turned on end ; and 100 yards further south, are four stones in line, the longest of which, 15 feet in length, has fallen ; two others are short stones, perhaps broken ; and a fourth, 9 feet high, is erect. Further still to the south-west, and at about 100 yards from another smaller rath called Roovesbeg, is a dallaun, the front and sides of which are given in figs. 5, 6, pl. 1. This is 5 feet high, and has five distinct ogham marks on its east side ; it is illegible from the "Fleasq," or central stem line, the corner edge having probably been broken off. Upon the broad face of this stone, 3 ft. 10 in. in width, and facing south, are seven shallow, cup-shaped depressions, and upon another slab, which lies flat, at a distance of 9 paces to the north-west (fig. 7), I counted as many as thirty of these shallow depressions, some of which were so much weather-worn as to be scarcely discernible. The association of oghams with these circular marks is worthy of notice, and, if they may be assumed to have been cut at the same time, would seem to imply a very early date.

The occurrence of graven stones in subterraneous chambers, with evidence of their having been carved before

placing them in the buildings, has occasionally been noticed elsewhere. At Gavr-Innes and Loc-Maria-ker, in Brittany,[2] at New Grange also, in the North of Ireland, the sculptures are described as having evidently been cut before building them into the earthworks in which they are found. But what is more to our present purpose, is the cave at the Gap of Dunloe, near Killarney. Here the ogham marks upon the lintels in the roof are continued round the ends of the stones which are inserted into the sides of the cave. I found that it was only by scooping into the earth that I was able to disentomb some of the marks, and a considerable portion of them can never be reached without destroying the building. In this chamber we have a precisely analogous construction to that at Roovesmore, furnishing also additional evidence in favour of the hypothesis that the ogham writing is more ancient than the crypts; or at any rate, than those particular crypts in which they are found. The Dunloe crypt, however, differs, in being unconnected with any rath, or entrenchment, of which there are any visible traces. Another instance of the appropriation of ogham stones for building purposes; serving to fix the date with greater approach to accuracy than in the preceding cases, occurs at Ardmore, in the county of Waterford, where an ogham stone was found built in amongst the masonry of St. Declan's Oratory, in such a manner that the greater part of the inscription was concealed from view; the stone having been used as an ordinary building-stone. As St. Declan is supposed to have been a contemporary of St. Patrick, and to have been buried in that building, this must be one of the earliest structures of the Christian era. From information given me on the spot by the owner of the property, there can be no doubt of the stone having been actually found in the spot indicated, which circumstance appears to be in itself sufficient to fix the origin of ogham in pre-Christian times.

The fact that Latin inscriptions have been found in oghams proves unquestionably that such mode of writing must have been used up to a comparatively recent date. But as inscriptions are also much more frequently found in Irish, whilst others appear not to be amenable to either Latin or Irish interpretations, may not the ogham have been derived, as

[2] Early Races of Scotland, by Lieut.-Col. Forbes Leslie, vol. ii. p. 86.

its extremely simple construction would appear to indicate, from some very primitive method of recording ideas, and have subsequently undergone modifications, and been adapted in later times to a regular phonetic alphabet, in which the Irish and Latin languages could be expressed? The occurrence of bilingual or rather biliteral inscriptions in four places in Wales,[3] in which the same words are written both in oghams and Roman letters, shows that in all probability they must have been intended to be read by two distinct classes of persons, to one of whom the ogham character was familiar, whilst the Roman letters were unknown.

In many parts of the county of Cork I have met with incised marks upon dallauns and cromlechs, which, though resembling oghams, cannot be interpreted by the Ogham scale. One of these occurs on a dallaun called Clogheenmilcon near Coolowen, north of Cork. The marks are all horizontal, and appear, by the coincidence of their edges in a uniform vertical straight line, to be referable to an imaginary "fleasq," but they are quite illegible. Another of these stands in the entrance to a rath west of Blarney. Upon the top of Knockeencragh, west of Mallow, I found a dallaun, having traces of oghams that were unintelligible.

The late Mr. Windele of Cork, who devoted much of his time to the study of these subjects, possessed a number of specimens of ogham, collected from various parts of the country, some of which are now in my possession; yet, although no man was more familiar with what has been dignified by the name of "Ogham literature," there were several specimens of undoubted oghams in his collection which he could never convert into Irish or any other language. May not these be referred to a period anterior to that in which the ogham was systematised into the scale by which the later inscriptions have been interpreted? At Logie in the Garioch, and at Golspie in Sutherland, are two ogham inscriptions which appear to differ from the Irish scale.[4]

[3] The Sagranus stone at St. Dogmael's Abbey, near Cardigan; the stones at Llanfechan, Cardiganshire, at Trallong, Brecknockshire, and at Llanarth, Cardiganshire, Arch. Camb., vol. vi. third series, p. 128; vol. vii. p. 43; vol. viii. p. 52; and vol. ix. p. 262. See also Proceedings, Kilkenny and S.E. of Ireland Arch. Soc., vol. iii. part 2, p. 229–303; vol. iv. p. 206. It is remarkable that the name Sagranus, found on the first of these examples, occurs likewise on the biliteral slab obtained at Fardel, Devon, now in the British Museum. It is figured in Arch. Journal, vol. xviii. p. 176.

[4] Figured by Mr. Stuart in the Sculptured Stones of Scotland, first series,

It has been held by some that ogham is a contrivance of post-Christian origin, and that the separation of the vowels from the consonants by distinct classes of marks, furnishes internal proof of its having been arranged by persons possessing some grammatical knowledge. Others, on the contrary, deduce from ancient Irish manuscripts, and from tradition, that it was introduced into Ireland by the Tuatha de Dannan about thirteen centuries before the birth of Christ.[5]

I am far from possessing any information by which I can hope to throw light upon this disputed question, for the proper consideration of which a knowledge of the Irish language is of course essential. I venture, however, to think it may prove interesting in connection with this subject, with the view of showing how ogham might have arisen spontaneously from the rude hieroglyphics of a barbarous people, and subsequently have undergone development or rearrangement, to compare with the unintelligible ogham marks above mentioned, some of the figures by which the Esquimaux mark their bone arrowheads, spoons, knives, and other property.

These marks present a very curious analogy to ogham in many ways. They consist of short strokes, cut right and left of a central stem or "fleasq," which, as in ogham, is either represented by a corner edge of the arrowhead, or is cut in the face of the bone. Nos. 1 to 19, pl. 3, are from specimens in my own or in the Christy collection recently bequeathed to the British Museum. No. 1 is clearly intended to represent a man, cut in straight lines, as a child would draw it. Nos. 2 to 6 might possibly be animals. No. 18 a tree. Nos. 7 to 17 can hardly represent anything in nature, and might be taken for isolated examples of ogham letters. No. 19, on the handle of a knife in the Christy collection, is a very close approximation indeed to ogham. Not only is the "fleasq" distinctly cut down the

1856, pl. iii., and xxxiv. In the Logie example the oghams are cut on a circle that here takes the place of the Fleasq. See also pl. i. where a slab with oghams is figured, that exists at Newton in the Garioch. The Logie and Golspie oghams are noticed also in a memoir on Cryptic Inscriptions on the Cross at Hackness, in Yorkshire, by the Rev. D. H. Haigh, Kilkenny Archæological Society's Journal, vol. ii. p. 186.

[5] See the learned remarks by Dr. Graves (now Bishop of Limerick), who has long had in preparation an elaborate treatise on oghams; his account is given by Sir W. R. Wilde in the Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Royal Irish Academy, Stone, p. 136. Some notices may also be found in this Journal, vol. xviii. p. 180, where the Ogham scale or alphabet is given.

length of the handle, but there is not a single stroke in it that might not be referred to the ogham scale; and had this knife been discovered in Ireland, it would undoubtedly have been supposed to express the letters DAIO or DMRG, with an ST cut across the other characters. No. 20 is from a small Esquimaux implement in the British Museum. It would represent in ogham the letters MFMBM, and as engravings of dogs and deer are unmistakeably depicted on the same implement, it is impossible to confound these rectilineal figures with conventional pictographic representations of any kind. They can be nothing else but scorings, serving to record either figures or words.

That such scorings do exist amongst the Esquimaux seems not improbable. Although it has been generally believed by most Arctic voyagers that the Esquimaux is an unwritten language, Sir Edward Belcher[6] inclines to the opinion that they are not without the means of recording events, and that the use of "notched sticks" and "working of the fingers" has "a deeper signification than mere numerals." Speaking of the Kuskutchewak, the most western of the tribes of Prince William's Sound, Sir John Richardson[7] says that every hunter preserves some remembrance of each reindeer that he kills by a mark on his bow. The Esquimaux are known to take the same pride in their arrows that an artillery officer does in his cannon, and they hand them down from generation to generation with the history of their performances attached to them.[8] Captain Hall also speaks of mysterious signs, consisting of particolored patches sewn on to sealskins, and hung up near the dwelling of the Angeko for the information of *strange* Innuit travellers, and "to direct them what to do." There appears, therefore, grounds for supposing that these people may eventually be found to be in possession of some code of signals which are received generally among the Esquimaux race, though possibly kept secret by their "Angekos" or priests, respecting whom but little reliable information has been as yet obtained.

It is not here pretended there is any evidence which might

[6] Sir Edward Belcher on Works of Art by the Esquimaux, Transactions of the Ethnological Society, vol. i. p. 135, new series.

[7] Sir John Richardson, Arctic Searching Expedition, vol. i. p. 368.

[8] Paper on the Esquimaux, by Dr. Sutherland. Journal of the Ethnological Society, vol. iv. p. 205.

lead us to suppose that the "Beithluisnion" of the Irish ogham is likely to be found a living alphabet amongst the Esquimaux, or even that any actual connection may be found to exist between these two obscure modes of writing names and short sentences, but simply a strong analogy of method and form; the Esquimaux representing the art of writing in so extremely infantile a stage as to be incapable of comparison with anything but the scorings of an uneducated child, and yet possessing those characteristics which in Ireland and the west of England might, under perhaps Phœnician influence, have developed into the ogham character, and serving to show how, in tracing out the origin of any art, the obsolete customs of one country may find their illustration in those of another whose inhabitants are in the same stage of progress and civilisation.

Figs. 21 and 22 are representations of incised marks found by Dr. Hunt, director of the Anthropological Society, upon two slabs in the island of Bressay, in conjunction with wooden coffins, but not necessarily connected with the coffins in point of date. They have been variously, and, as I venture to think, unsatisfactorily interpreted as combined runes or monograms; but Professor Stephens of Copenhagen, the highest authority on the subject, is unable to identify them as Runes, and I believe that Dr. Hunt himself does not consider them to be Runes.[9] Although they cannot be interpreted by the ogham scale, the stem line gives them more the appearance of ogham than of runic characters; an ogham inscription, moreover, has been found in the island of Bressay.[1] It will however at once be seen that their affinity to the Esquimaux arrow-marks is far closer than to either ogham or runic letters.

Viewing the resemblance of the Picts' houses and tumuli which abound in this neighbourhood and throughout Ireland and the west of Scotland to the yourt and igloo of the Esquimaux, and many other points of resemblance in the

[9] Memoirs of the Anthropological Society, vol. ii. p. 373.

[1] This remarkable sculptured headstone found in 1852 at the ruined church of Cullensbro, in Bressay, was first made known by the Rev. Z. Macaulay, at the Annual Meeting of the Archæological Institute at Newcastle. It has been published by Dr. Charlton, Archæologia Æliana, vol. iv. p. 150; in this Journal also, vol. xviii. p. 181; and in Mr. Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland, plates xciv, xcv. At a meeting of the Institute in May, 1855, Dr. Graves, now Bishop of Limerick, gave an interpretation of the ogham inscriptions occurring on the two edges of the slab; one signifying—The Cross of Natdodd's (or Nordred's) daughter here;—the other—Benres of the sons of the Druid here.

implements of the two countries that might be noticed; and considering also the geographical position of these Bressay stones upon the confines of the ogham region, and inclining towards that of the Greenlander and Esquimaux, it seems not impossible that these inscriptions may eventually be found to establish some link of connection between them, an hypothesis rendered all the more probable by considering the very wide extent of territory over which the Esquimaux now ranges, extending from Greenland on the one hand to Behring Strait on the other, and their affinity to the Tchukchi and even to the Laplander of Europe and Asia. This view of the case is also confirmed by the discoveries which have recently been made in the French caves, tending, in the opinion of the explorers of those caves, to show that a race akin to the Esquimaux in their arts and implements, if not the Esquimaux race itself, did actually occupy Europe in conjunction with the reindeer, at a time anterior to that in which the ogham character must have originated in Great Britain and Ireland. Should it be hereafter discovered, as appears not unlikely, that scorings having an affinity to ogham are found on the primeval monuments of Brittany, it will of course tend greatly to strengthen this argument, by showing that it must have appertained to the whole of that aboriginal race, which was pressed by the great wave of eastern immigration into the north and west of Europe.

Much valuable information no doubt remains to be brought forward upon a subject, the study of which has hitherto been confined almost exclusively to the British isles. In the meantime there is not wanting in the ancient bow-marks which have been discovered in Europe, sufficient evidence to show that a similar method of scoring the owner's name to that above noticed was practised in ancient times. Figs 23 to 30 are from arrows discovered in Denmark in the Nydam Moss,[2] with others, having what are believed to be Runic characters upon them. Although they are no doubt much more recent than the deposits of the French caves, they are almost identical with these marks of the Esquimaux arrows. To go further east, the derivation of the Assyrian cuneiform character from the early Chaldean which has been traced by Mr. Rawlinson,[3] consisting of representations of the object to be

[2] Denmark in the Early Iron Age, by Conrad Engelhardt, pl. xiii.

[3] Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies, vol. i. p. 81.

described by means of straight lines of nearly uniform thickness, of which figs. 31 to 33 are examples, shows by the resemblance of these letters to oghams, that a certain family likeness may exist in the written characters of nations widely removed from each other when traced to their origin. Of these, fig. 31 represents a hand drawn with five straight lines joined to a stem; fig. 33, a woman, or the double-tooth comb, the emblem of woman; and the connection of the derived cuneiform character expressing the same words, would never have been imagined, had it not been for the discovery of biliteral tablets containing the same inscriptions in both characters, so exactly resembling each other in general arrangement and outline as to make the identity of the inscriptions obvious.

These comparisons of course prove nothing, beyond the prevalence of like modes of procedure under similar conditions of life. They lead us, however, by the continuity they display in the development of improved forms, to expect that a corresponding gradual progress may be traced in all other systems of writing, which have been widely received as such. And they make it far more reasonable to suppose by analogy that oghams may be indigenous or of natural growth, and derived from some prior and less systematic method of scoring names, or from tallies, than to believe, without sufficient evidence, that a trick of the Middle Ages—a cipher based upon the Latin alphabet—should have been so widely accepted, as to leave its traces upon monuments in all parts of Ireland, in Devonshire, also in Wales, Scotland, and in the Shetland Isles.

It has been suggested to me that a short description of the raths in the south of Ireland would be interesting, in connection with the site where the remarkable ogham monuments that I have described were brought to light.

In speaking of these works, such as that at Roovesmore, as forts, I have only adopted the term in general use for them by the country people. But it is not by any means certain that the whole of them were constructed as defensive works, although, from their commanding positions, there can be very little doubt that this was the intention of the majority. Others, on the contrary, are situated in positions that could never have been occupied for such a purpose, even in the most primitive state of warfare.

That they were inhabited, appears to be satisfactorily proved by the remains of hut circles that are found in some of them, by their being almost invariably found in close proximity to a good spring, and by their being usually located in the most fertile spots upon the hill slopes and valleys; whilst the rocky and unproductive country to the west of Cork, and south of Kerry, is almost devoid of them.

Wherever they are found in the rocky parts of the country, their ramparts are formed of uncemented and rudely built-up masses of stone, and they then come under the denomination of "Cahir," the well-known Celtic word denoting a fortified place, and from which such towns as Caernarvon, Cherbourg, and many other ancient fortresses derive their names. The "Cahir" is thus distinguished from the "Rath" or "Lis," which is a work of the same form, but surrounded by an earthen bank and a ditch, of which class of iutrenchment Roovesmore may be regarded as a typical example.

They vary from 30 to 100 and 200 ft. in diameter. The largest I know of, in the south of Ireland, called Lis-na-raha, has a diameter of 280 ft., with a ditch 12 ft. deep and 30 in width on the outside. They are invariably circular, but the circle is traced with sufficient irregularity to show that it was laid out by the eye, and not by measurement. They often consist of a single ditch, with a bank on both sides of it; a method of intrenching which, although it appears to be almost as advantageous for the attacking as for the defending party, does not at all preclude the possibility of their having been used as forts, as we find this kind of intrenchment frequently employed elsewhere in ancient works of an undoubted military character.

The interior space of the rath is almost invariably undermined by a set of chambers, called by the natives "pol-fatalla," or "hole of a house," the entrance to which is usually by an opening so small as barely to admit the body of a man creeping upon the belly. These chambers vary in size, but average about 9 ft. in length by 3 to 4 in height, and the same in width. Similar narrow openings communicate onwards to other chambers, and sometimes these underground galleries diverge into two or more strings of chambers, occupying the whole interior space within the circuit of the

intrenchment. The main entrance is frequently in the ditch of the rath, and is not unusually the smallest.

When the nature of the ground admits of it, they are often excavated in the natural earth, and domed over, without any artificial support; but others are lined in the inside with undressed and uncemented stones, the sides converging towards the top, which is usually flagged over with large and heavy slabs of stone serving to roof the chamber, and at the same time, by their weight, to prevent the sides from falling in. At other times, though rarely, they are formed by upright jambs and lintels of unhewn stone, like the crypt at Roovesmore.

Querns have frequently been found in these underground chambers, showing that they must have belonged to an agricultural people.

To the West of Kerry, where the rocky nature of the ground precludes the possibility of burrowing, "cloghauns," or bee-hive shaped and elongated huts of exactly the same shape and size as the underground chambers, are built with stones upon the surface, and are often covered with turf.

I have found the raths to be more frequently situated upon the shoulders than upon the summits of the hills, being generally placed in positions in which the occupants could see into the valleys beneath, in which probably the flocks and the fields of the inhabitants were situated, near the springs; but I have not observed them to be arranged in threes, as some persons have supposed, nor could I ascertain that they are located, in any especial manner, in positions that are suitable for intercommunication by means of signals. They are so numerous as to be necessarily within sight of each other, and no doubt signals might have been communicated from one to another over a considerable tract of country. But motives of security would cause them frequently to occupy commanding positions, from which an extensive view of the surrounding country could be obtained. The hill forts of the South Downs of England are so situated that when, during the French war, it became necessary to establish signals between the sea coast and the interior, the sites of the ancient British forts were found to stand on the most convenient spots for the erection of beacons. But this affords no proof that those sites were originally selected by the ancient inhabitants for the purpose of internal commu-

nication. In those primitive and barbarous times we must be prepared rather to find evidence of the isolation of tribes, and of frequent intestine quarrels, in which each section of the community fortified itself against the attacks of its immediate neighbour, than of any extensive and combined system of national defence. In so far as my own observation in the south of Ireland enables me to judge, the selection of the sites for the raths appears to have been influenced chiefly by the fertility of the soil and by the water supply.

I have calculated from the Ordnance Map, in which every vestige of antiquity in the country has been carefully delineated, that in Munster alone there were, at the time of the survey, no less than 10,000 of these remarkable earthworks distributed throughout the country. Many have been since removed; and as the curious myths and superstitions with which they are associated in the minds of the country people, and which have so long preserved them from destruction, gradually die out, they are fast disappearing before the plough of the farmer, reminding us that the time for active exploration must be no longer delayed if the archæologist intends to derive from them the only evidence of their ancient inhabitants that the world is ever likely to receive.

As regards the probable date of these works, all that I have been able to ascertain respecting them tends to show, that however early they may have originated—and their construction would lead us to assign a very early period to some of them—they must in all probability have continued in use until comparatively recent times, for I have on two occasions found them to be associated with implements of iron; in my collection also there is an iron axe and part of the pointed ferrule of a lance, the former of which was derived from one of the underground chambers, and the latter was excavated from the centre of a rath in which it was found three feet from the surface, together with a quantity of ashes and fragments of burnt bones.

From the really very little reliable information that can be obtained upon the subject, it would appear probable that, like the kraal of the Kaffir, the raths were employed for a variety of purposes, in fact, for all which the simple wants of a primitive people could turn them to,—as habitations, defences, places of assembly and of public worship, pens for their cattle, and very probably as receptacles for the dead,

for the absence of tumuli generally in this part of Ireland leads to the supposition that the rath must also have been used for that purpose, and skeletons have occasionally, though rarely, been found in the crypts.

That so little is known of the contents of the raths must be attributed to the want of careful exploration. They afford an almost virgin soil to the pre-historic archæologist who will patiently and dispassionately search them in the interests of science. But I fear that they offer a somewhat uninviting field of exploration to some of those, unfortunately too numerous, antiquaries of the sister country who are bent upon seeing in every hole and corner, which at any period of antiquity might have harboured a dog, vestiges of the departed and still fading splendour of the Emerald Isle.

Besides these circular raths, some of which have double and triple banks and ditches, oval entrenchments of the same kind are sometimes, though rarely, found; and, in the central and southern parts of Munster, rectilineal works of nearly the same superficial area are distributed in belts over the most fertile parts of the country. These are devoid of underground chambers, but querns have been found in their banks, and they are associated with the same animal remains as those found in the circular forts, viz. the bones of the horse, the ox, and of the pig or wild boar.