

WHAT WAS STONEHENGE?

(From the Broad Arrow.)

Visitors, whether military or otherwise, who may visit the neighbourhood of Salisbury on the occasion of the approaching manoeuvres, will doubtless have their attention directed to that venerable monument of antiquity, Stonehenge. Having from their childhood been led to believe that these Cyclopean remains formerly constituted a Druid Temple, they may probably be surprised to find this belief called in question, and perhaps rudely shaken, when arguments are adduced in attempting to prove that their erection is to be attributed to a race more ancient than that to which the Druids ministered, and that in all probability Stonehenge was originally a temple for Sun if not for Phallus worship. To prove that it could not have been a Druid temple the fact is alleged that the Druids worshipped in groves, whereas there is no trace whatever of the possibility or probability of trees, more especially the oak, having occupied the surface of the surrounding plain, the soil of which is not sufficiently deep to support the growth of timber. A brief personal inspection of the ruins will be sufficient to show that there is much greater evidence of design displayed in the original construction to the temple than is generally supposed. The present remains indicate that the building was enclosed within a ditch and mound, now well nigh obliterated; that the first outer circle was composed of great stones placed end-wise, with other stones laid across, these were succeeded by an inner circle of rough stones likewise set up end-wise, but bearing none crosswise; then came three pairs of high welltooled blocks set up on end with other blocks set crosswise, the centre pair being much higher than the others, and all higher than the outer circle. And it is to be noted that the upright blocks have bases cut on the top to fit into mortices of the overlying blocks, and that the part of the uprights which were below the ground were left wide so as to secure a greater support. In front of these trilithons, as they are termed, were set up granite posts or pillars cut to a conical point, and rising in height towards the centre from right and left, arranged in a horseshoe form, so as to constitute an apse. Within these and in front of the tallest trilithons, facing the entrance was the altar-slab. The large blocks of building are of a kind of siliceous sandstone such as may now be found lying in detached masses scattered over the chalk downs in various parts of the country, and notably in the northern part of Wiltshire. The altar-slab is said to be a piece of lias limestone; the entrance is towards the north east; from it an avenue between earthen banks leads away in a sloping direction, and then curves upwards to a singular oblong enclosure, called a sursus or racecourse, about half-a-mile off. It is probable this avenue and the embankment of the circular ditch were lined with stones; only three of these now remain. A large one in an inclined position, just at the point where the avenue crosses the mainroad is riddled with holes, and has been likened to a leaning Druid. It is thought to have been a blowing stone. Two smaller stones are near the temple; these, it is said, were pointers, and marked the rising of the sun at the summer and winter solstice respectively. An old man named Brown, the Stonehenge antiquarian, attends daily at the ruins. He occupies a little wooden hut on wheels. He has models of the ruins and of the supposed original temple to show,

and also books containing descriptive accounts, written by his father, to sell, in which may be found recorded many of the speculations as to the purpose for which the building was erected. The devout lucubrations of Mr. Brown on the subject are humorous and entertaining, if they be not conclusive. The surface of the downs around Stonehenge appears to constitute one vast cemetery, being covered with barrows in every direction. Within half a mile or so of the temple is a large entrenchment, called *Vespasian's Camp*. Camps of various forms and sizes abound on different hills and high localities in the country round, the more important of which is the singular entrenched hill of Old Sarum, which commands the entrance to the bourn or valley of the Upper Avon as approached from Salisbury; indeed, Salisbury Plain would appear to have formed one vast camp, defended on strategic points by fortifications of earthworks. Some of our readers, in the course of their travels in the East, have no doubt met with remains of a similar kind to those now attempted to be described, and may, probably, from their experience, be able to throw some light on the object for which Stonehenge was erected. Local tradition and custom often prove trustworthy guides when we are attempting to be investigate the question; and we therefore with great pleasure call attention to the following account of witnessing the sun rise from Stonehenge, which appeared in the *Times* not long since:—

"To the Editor of the Times."

"SIR,—It is no slight inducement that will take a person into so exposed a situation as Salisbury Plain at the chilling hour of three o'clock in the morning; but, unless bad weather prevails, a group of visitors, more or less numerous, is sure to assemble at that hour of dawn every 21st of June, to watch for the rising sun. As the hour approaches, they gather to the circles of Stonehenge, from the centre of which, looking north-east, a block of stone, set at some distance from the ruin, is so seen as that its top coincides with the line of the horizon, and, if no mist or cloud prevent, the sun as it rises on this, the morning of the longest day in the year, will be seen coming up exactly over the centre of the stone, known, from this circumstance, as the *Pointer*. Our group of watchers numbered about thirty five, assembled chiefly from the neighboring towns—four of them, however, from London who had walked from Salisbury through the night, for the chance of seeing this interesting proof of the solar arrangement of the circles of Stonehenge. As one who has now on several occasions been present and seen the sun thus come up over the *Pointer* and strike its first rays through the central entrance on to the so called altar stone of the ruin, I commend this proof of solar worship in its constructors to those recent theorists who see in Stonehenge only a memorial of a battle or a victory. Let a visitor, also on any day at noon, look to this *Pointer*, and see if the huge stone be not set at such a particular inclination as to be like the gnomon of a sundial.—Your, &c.,

"Stanford Hill, June 22."

"WILLIAM BECK."

Stonehenge is situated about seven or eight miles to the north east by north of Salisbury. The best way to reach it from the city is to proceed by the beautiful valley of the Avon, called the *Bourn*, visiting if you will old Sarum on the route, returning across the plain, and by way of Wilton, where Wilton House and the costly Byzan-

tine church, erected by the late Lord Herbert, of Lea, are well worth a visit. As to the lions of Salisbury itself, after the cathedral has been explored, a visit may well be paid in connection with the present suggested enquiry to the *Blackmore ethnological collection*, and much information collected as to the habits of prehistoric man by examining the "flint chips" therein contained. Singularly enough, in the library at Wilton will be found a book with the singular title, "Man before Adam," date of publication 1656! Will one of our friends take the opportunity of perusing the book, and kindly let us know the gist of the author's argument?

In the report upon the operations of the Second French army corps during the late war we read: "If the losses of this portion of the French army at Gravelotte were relatively inconsiderable, the circumstance must be attributed, beyond all dispute, to the precaution taken to provide shelter for the combatants, in the shape of earthen screens and epaulments at important points, and to the enforced observance of the injunctions to take advantage of undulations and hollows in the ground, not for the purpose of hiding the troops and keeping them inert behind the shelter so provided, but to protect them in the delivery of their fire. So convincing a proof of the efficacy of hasty entrenchments in the field of battle has not before come under our notice, and we commend it accordingly to the attention of all future commanders." Thus General Frossard, a foreign military critic, who quotes the above: "Nowadays an army repudiating the aid of a pick and shovel will expose itself to enormous loss, as surely as one immobilising itself in an entrenched position will see its opponents pass unharmed and out of range, to turn its flank or to take it in rear."

A short time ago Prince de Bauffremont who commands a French cavalry regiment, got into conjugal hot water, and called out a brother officer and prince who took his wife's part. Prince de Bauffremont, who was a slightly wounded by Prince Bibesco, then wished to fight that officer's seconds General Douay and General Valaze—both of whom, for various reasons, declined to accept the challenge. Prince de Bauffremont, has now written to the papers, speaking most disrespectfully of the generals.

In the history of the campaign of 1870-71, which is about to be published under the direction and on the authority of Count von Moltke, the responsibility for the origin of the war is attributed less to the Emperor Napoleon than to the French nation. "In the whole affair," it says, "the Emperor seems to have played a passive and involuntary part." In regard to the French army, the German historian says it entered upon the campaign without having been placed on a war footing, and all the preparations had been made with the most inconceivable negligence. Of this several examples are given. The fortifications and strong places of France generally were specially unprepared.

The French Assembly Committee on Fortifications has agreed to strengthen the fortifications at Gravelines, Dunkirk, Lille, and Calais.