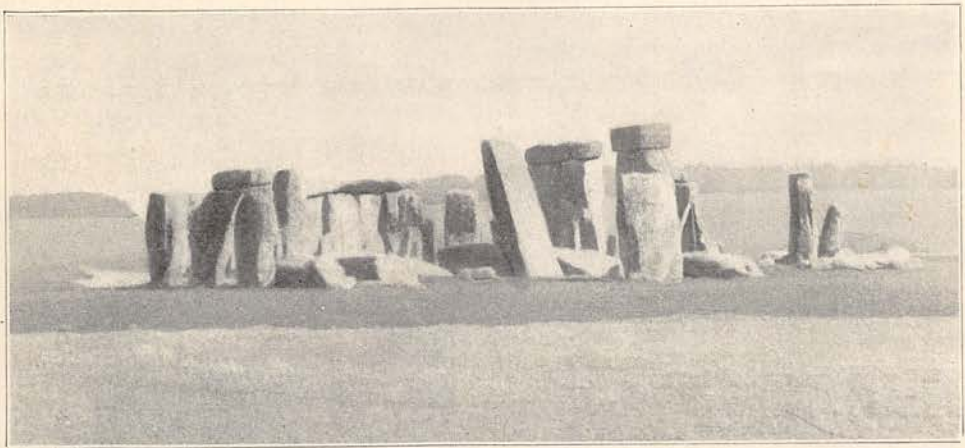


STONEHENGE.

Photographs by Mrs. Catherine Weed Ward.

THE announcement that the famous and mysterious circles of stones known as Stonehenge had been offered for sale gave a new impulse to the interest which these remains of an earlier time have always excited. Those who hold our national monuments in high regard at

out that the ground upon which Stonehenge stands might very well be added to the manœuvring area on Salisbury Plain. The price named for Stonehenge and for about 1300 acres of land adjoining was £125,000, and up to the moment of writing no purchaser had been found



GENERAL VIEW OF STONEHENGE.

once were troubled with visions of the speculative plutocrat, probably from across the Atlantic, who would purchase and carry away bodily the monoliths, to be erected perchance on alien soil, as a standing memorial that our honourable title, "a nation of shopkeepers," had indeed become our reproach. And lest this should come to pass, grave counsel was offered to the Government advising it forthwith to acquire Stonehenge for the nation. As a further inducement, military authorities were not slow to point

Should the Government remain unmoved, it is devoutly to be wished that the proprietor will dispose of Stonehenge only to some patriotic purchaser who will guard it as it deserves.

Like all the standing stones, Stonehenge is, of course, a mystery, and all solutions of its eternal riddle must at best be guesses. The name is a corruption of the Saxon Stan-hengist—the uplifted or hanging stones—and this has, no doubt, given rise to the legend of enlargement and alteration by the British King

Ambrosius, aided by Merlin, during the period of Hengist. Of such is ever the etiological myth. But although absolute

that the circles were erected to commemorate the four hundred nobles treacherously slain by Hengist, near the site of Stonehenge, in 472 A.D. The date of Nennius's writings is about 810.



STONEHENGE FROM THE WEST.

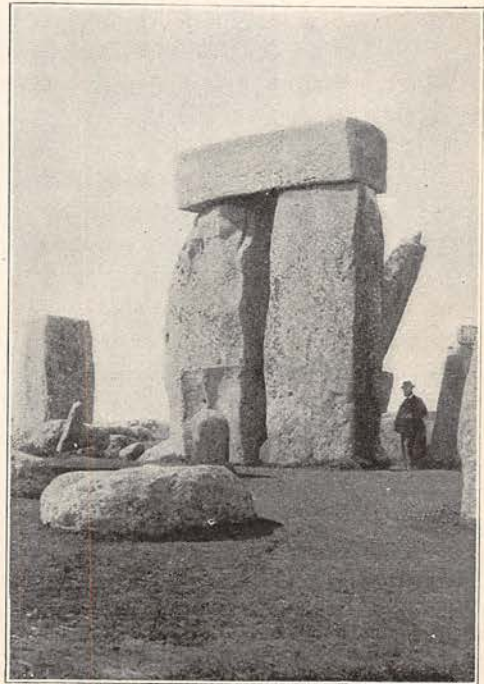
truth is impossible, the views of antiquaries concerning the origin of Stonehenge are worth considering. Some attribute the circles to the Phœnicians or to Phœnician influence, and connect them with Baal-worship; others favour the familiar theory of Celtic or Druidical origin. To the Danes and Romans also the relics have been ascribed. All these points of view have been summed up in Warton's sonnet—

Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle!
 Whether by Merlin's aid from Scythia's shore
 To Amber's fatal plain Pendragon bore,
 Huge frame of giant hands, the mighty pile,
 To entomb his Britons slain by Hengist's guile;
 Or Druid priests, sprinkled with human gore,
 Taught 'mid thy massy maze their mystic lore;
 Or Danish priests, enriched with savage spoil,
 To Victory's idol vast, an unhewn shrine,
 Reared the rude heap; or in thy hallowed round
 Repose the kings of Brutus' genuine line;
 Or here those kings in solemn state were crowned.
 Studious to trace thy wondrous origin,
 We muse on many an ancient tale renowned.

The earliest mention of Stonehenge in literature occurs in the dubious author Nennius, in his "Historia Britonum," a mythical account of the Britons, the Roman occupation, the Saxon settlement, and the Arthurian epoch. His story is

1655. He laboured to prove that the circles had formed a Roman temple, a theory that in more recent treatises

In the triads of the Welsh bards a similar story is told, but there the erection of the circles is ascribed to Merlin, the successor of Vortigern. One of the first writers to examine Stonehenge critically was the great architect Inigo Jones, whose work dealing with the subject appeared in



THE LARGEST TRILITHON NOW STANDING.



STONES AROUND THE ALTAR.

The leaning stone shows the fin upon which the "impost" (now fallen) fitted.

has found little favour. The opinions as to its age are legion, some holding that the circles must have been formed in the century before the Christian era, others placing them as late as 500 A.D. The old puzzle as to the mechanical power employed is here, of course, particularly insistent, on account of the ponderous cross-pieces of the trilithons. The inclined plane is the most likely means, but even here speculation at its utmost can but hazard a wild surmise. It seems safe to

conclude, however, that the stones of the inner circle and inner oval had been brought from a distance, and are of earlier origin than the others.

Stonehenge is situated in the Wiltshire parish of Amesbury, on Salisbury Plain, about two miles west by north of the town of Amesbury. By the ancient Britons the circles were called "Ambres," a name signifying "the holy stones." They also called it the "Choir Gaur," or "great round church," and in the Middle Ages the remains received the title of "Chorea Gigantum," or the Giants' Dance. Among more recent theories as to the origin of Stonehenge is that of Sir John Lubbock, who inclines to the opinion that the circles were erected during the Bronze Age in Britain. It is, however, not improbable that various portions of the monument should be assigned to various dates.

Theories, however, are out of place in an article the limits of which preclude detailed examination and discussion. More to the point in the present instance is it to give some description of the circles, further to elucidate the excellent Illustrations which we are enabled to reproduce on these pages. The main features of Stonehenge are a *via sacra* or "holy way," two concentric circles of upright stones



LOOKING NORTH FROM THE ALTAR-STONE.



THE INNER AND OUTER CIRCLES.

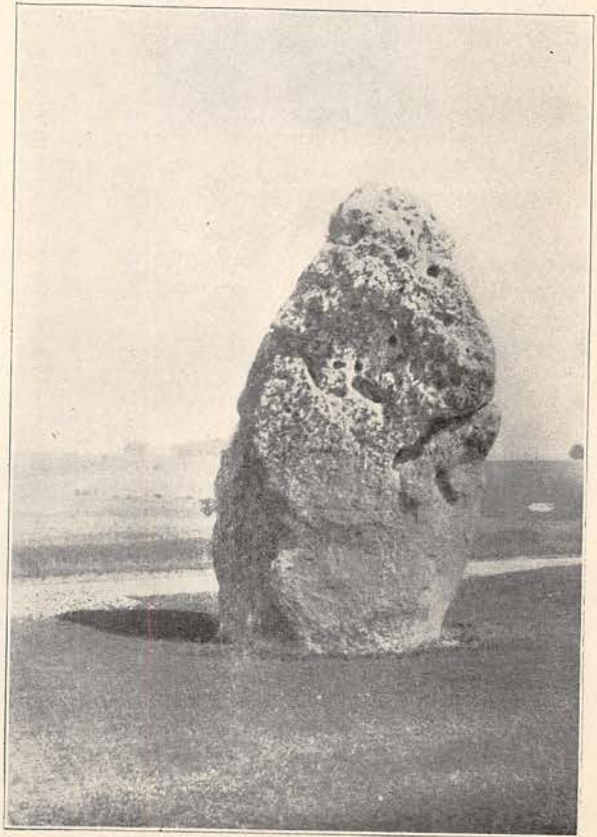
two elliptical groups of stones known as the great and little, a circular embankment, and, at a considerable distance from these, an isolated monolith, upon which tradition has bestowed the familiar name of the "Friar's Heel."

The via sacra, otherwise termed the cursus, is an avenue 1782 ft. long. It runs in a north-easterly direction, and has, at the present day, the appearance merely of a long earthen embankment of inconsiderable elevation. A like decay has overtaken the circular embankment, which at one time had been at least 15 ft. high, and was defended by an entrenchment. The entire circuit of this mound measures 1009 ft.

Proceeding inwards from the circular mound for a distance of about forty yards, the visitor reaches the outer circle of the group. This at one time consisted of thirty upright stones, $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. apart, rising to the height of 16 ft., coupled by horizontal imposts so as to form

trilithons. The rude mortice and tenon arrangement by which these were held together is excellently exemplified in one of our pictures of a ruined trilithon, where the stone pin at the top of one of the uprights may be clearly traced. Of this circle there remain now only sixteen uprights and six cross-pieces or "imposts."

Nine feet within the outer circle are the remains of the second ring, containing now only seven upright monoliths, very



THE FRIAR'S HEEL.

similar to the circles of Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland, notably the famous standing stones of Stennis. Within this second circle, again, is the remnant of what had been the most magnificent portion of Stonehenge—the first ellipse. Of these original five or seven trilithons of this course, there remain only two and two single uprights. These, however, reaching at their utmost a height of 21 ft. and nowhere less than 16 ft.—16 ft. also being the length of the impost—*are sufficient to prove the ancient grandeur of the first ellipse.* The second was originally composed of nineteen uprights, of which only six now remain. Within these is the so-called altar-stone, a flat block 15 ft. long.

It remains only to describe the Friar's Heel, which stands isolated at a distance of 120 ft. from the circular embankment, or 240 ft. from the outermost stone circle, the embankment being thus exactly midway

between the Friar's Heel and the first circle. It is a huge irregular block 16 ft. high, of curiously "weathered" stone in a leaning position. Those who favour the Phœnician theory find in this monolith an astronomical significance, and regard it as the gnomon or pointer of the rising of the summer sun. An astronomical use is also assigned by those theorists to the so-called "altar-stone."

Whatever may have been its uses, whether, amid shadowy groves of oak, these stones bore witness to the awful mysteries of the Druids with their dread rites of human sacrifice, or whether, standing clear, as they do to-day, on the breezy plain, they aided Phœnician star-gazers in their purer efforts to resolve the secrets of the heavens, Stonehenge remains for us at once a fascinating riddle and a splendid national possession, which no scheme of monetary speculation must be suffered to alienate.



Photo. by P. J. Rust.

SILENCE.