ANCIENT AND RECENT STONE MONUMENTS

IN Mr. Fergusson's new book on Ancient Stone Monuments, mention is made of the Menhirs and Dolmens, both ancient and modern, which are found in the Khasia Hills, North-Eastern Bengal.

Having been for some time engaged in the survey of these hills, I can furnish a few particulars concerning these monuments which may be of interest. On one occasion, returning to my camp after a day's work, I was startled by hearing a loud shouting as of a number of men exerting their strength together and getting the time by shouting in chorus, much as sailors do on board ship.

I found that the sound proceeded from an assembly of Khasias, who were putting up three of these menhirs to the memory of a deceased villager. They were at a considerable distance from me, so that I could not clearly see their mode of procedure, and as on occasions of funerals and the ceremonies connected with them the Khasias are invariably more or less drunk and unruly, it would have been inexpedient to have gone amongst them. I was therefore compelled to wait until the next morning, when I went and inspected the scene of operations.

I found that three menhirs of no very great size had been put up, and that the stones had been raised in a very simple way by the use of long levers formed of young trees and ropes made of an exceedingly tough kind of creeper found in abundance all over these hills. The whole affair had been made the occasion of a feast on a very large scale; bones of slaughtered cattle, and empty grog jars lay around in numbers; the skulls of the oxen (some fourteen or fifteen in number) being arranged in a very fantastic way before the menhirs. As the arrangement of these skulls at once suggested to my mind the probable origin of a well-known architectural ornamentation, I attach a sketch showing how they were placed, viz.,

in a row at even distances apart on two horizontal poles, which were themselves supported on two upright poles. I was at some pains to inquire the meaning of these menhirs, but could only gather that they were intended to perpetuate the memory of some local celebrity.

In the case of the dolmens, so often found put up in front of the menhirs, I was informed that they served to give a kind of rough shelter to the ashes of the deceased, these ashes being kept for a year or two in the house and then brought out and scattered under the broad flat stone of the dolmen.

Moreover, the Khasias use these dolmens in their extraordinary form of divination by the breaking of eggs. This divination, which may be said to form their nearest approach to a religious worship, and which is on that account of peculiar interest, is conducted as follows:—On the top of the dolmen the Khasia who officiates puts five

little pellets of clay and chewed betel nut, in the form of a semicircle, thus—

Then he stands upon the stone, and commences a wild kind of chant, having a rhythm and intonation utterly different from that of their ordinary songs. At a certain period in this chant he draws an egg from his pouch, and dashes it down on to the stone, as near the centre of the semicircle as he can. If the mass of the yolk scatters towards and over the pellets the omens are propitious, each pellet of the five having its meaning; but if the yolk scatters away from the semicircle of pellets the prognostication is unfavourable.

In his book Mr. Fergusson seems to suppose that the Menhirs and Dolmens mark places of assembly; but this is not the case, for near almost every large and old-established village there is found a place of assembly provided with stone seats, often prepared with much labour, and well adapted to the purpose for which it is intended.

I would also demur to Mr. Fergusson's inference that the Khasias are a physically inferior race; on the contrary they are a race possessing muscular strength to a singular and exceptional degree, as witness the fact that it is a very ordinary feat with them for one Coolie to carry a full-grown man in a kind of chair strapped on his back, along a road more than eight miles long, and ascending upwards of 4,000 feet.

M. T. SALE

DISCOVERY OF EXTINCT MAMMALS IN THE VICTORIA CAVES, SETTLE

THE scientific public will be pleased to hear that the Committee who have been exploring the Settle caves for two or three years past, have at length met with a great success. Till within the last fortnight we had discovered only remains of different ages from the Neolithic period to the present. These, though of great interest as throwing light on the vicissitudes and succession of later races, had to a certain extent been forestalled by the previous researches in this district of Mr. James Farrer, of Ingleborough, and by Mr. Jackson, the original discoverer of the Victoria Cave, and present superintendent of the work carried on in it by the Committee. Those remains were all in comparatively recent deposits. Beneath them was a great thickness of barren ground, consisting of a laminated clay in some places twelve feet thick, and below that again a great accumulation of angular fragments of limestone in a matrix of clay.

At a depth of about twenty feet in this we have now found elephant, rhinoceros, hyæna, a crushed canine of a much larger carnivore, &c. The elephant's teeth found belong to a young individual, and the number of gnawed bones and other indications of the cave having been a den of some large carnivores render it probable that the elephant was dragged into it by them.

The facts have a special interest, from this older group of mammals not having been previously met with in this district. It is to be hoped that when we can investigate these important beds more thoroughly we may get some light thrown upon the relation of man to these extinct animals, and of both to the Glacial period, undoubted deposits of which occur in other caves hard by.

Great credit is due, amongst others, to Mr. Walter Morrison, M.P., and to Messrs. John Birkbeck, Sen. and Jun., who have spared neither time, trouble, nor expense, and that in face of many discouragements.

R. H. TIDDEMAN

NOTES

THE belief in the safety of Dr. Livingstone caused by the telegrams which we published a fortnight ago, has been strengthened by further intelligence received since our last issue. The following telegram was to hand in London on Saturday last by the Falmouth, Gibraltar, and Malta Telegraph Company :—“Kirk reports from Zanzibar Livingstone safe at Unyanyembe. Visited north end of Tanganyika. Rivers said to flow into Lake Tanganyika. Stanley near the coast with letters. —GOVERNOR.” No date is attached to the telegram ; but at the meeting of the Royal Geographical Society on Monday evening, Sir Henry Rawlinson stated that he considered all doubt now to be removed, and that the intelligence now in hand is really authentic. He laid great stress on the well-known cautiousness of Dr. Kirk in receiving and communicating information respecting Dr. Livingstone. The following despatch from the Sultan of Zanzibar to Sir H. Rawlinson was read at the meeting :—“In the name of the Most Merciful God.—To our esteemed friend, Sir Henry Rawlinson. May the Almighty preserve him in health and happiness.—Your friend is quite well, and the object of our letter is to inform you that at the auspicious moment of our safe return from performing the pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, my friend the Consul called on me and presented to me Lieutenant Dawson and his companion, and at the same time he delivered to me the letter from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Earl Granville, and also the gift presented by the Royal Geographical Society, through the President. And it has pleased me much to do that which is considered advisable, and that I am enabled to aid the people in their search for my friend Dr. Livingstone, and I pray God that certain information regarding him may soon be received, and I will give my aid to those gentlemen whom you have sent in attaining their object. And the Consul having requested me to grant the use of my steamer to the above gentlemen to convey them to Mombassa to procure men to accompany their expedition, I have done so, and, please God, I will continue to render assistance to those whom you have sent in your endeavour to explore the mysterious regions of the unknown country, because their object is praiseworthy, and tends to increase our knowledge of what the Almighty has created in these our countries.—From your friend, BURFASH BIN SAYYID.—Dated Zanzibar, the 5th day of Safr, year 1289 of Hejira, corresponding with the 14th April, 1872.” Further telegraphic intelligence may be expected at any moment, and should this arrive we purpose next week to resume the present state of our knowledge respecting Dr. Livingstone's safety.

WE learn with great regret, from the scientific editor of *Harper's Weekly*, of the death of Dr. William Stimpson, late Secretary of the Academy of Sciences of Chicago. Dr. Stimpson's health has been quite precarious for several years past, making it necessary for him to proceed every winter to the warmer climate of Florida, and the past winter was spent by him in the same region. He was engaged in the earlier part of the season on board the United States Coast Survey steamer *Bache*, in superintending a series of dredgings, which, however, he was compelled to abandon through increasing ill-health, and returning not long since to the residence of his father-in-law, near Baltimore, he became gradually worse, and died there on the 26th of May. For a time a pupil of Prof. Agassiz at Cambridge, Dr.

Stimpson made his first mark as a scientific author in 1851, in a work on the shells of New England, which was soon followed by a paper on the marine invertebrates of Grand Manan, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1853, and which is still a standard work on the zoology of the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. Shortly afterwards he was appointed zoologist to the North Pacific Exploring Expedition, in which he was occupied for several years. When the late Mr. Robert Kennicott went to Alaska, in 1865, in the service of the Russian Telegraph Expedition, Dr. Stimpson moved to Chicago to take charge of the general affairs of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, and maintained that connection until his death. As a scientific investigator Dr. Stimpson occupied a very high rank for the thoroughness of his researches and the clearness and accuracy of his descriptions, in these respects leaving nothing to be desired. No one, with the exception, perhaps, of Prof. Dana, has described so many new species of marine animals as he. The detailed accounts of his new species, forming a large number of valuable zoological monographs, with large numbers of illustrations, and nearly ready for publication, were unfortunately all destroyed by the Chicago fire, together with most of the types of his species—a calamity which of course affected him severely, and in all probability materially influenced the state of his health. Among these works were synopses of the mollusca of the East coast of North America, and of the crustacea of both coasts, to be published by the Smithsonian Institution.

It is rumoured that the dignity of K.C.B. is about to be conferred upon Mr. G. B. Airy, Astronomer Royal, and President of the Royal Society.

THE Albert medal of the Society of Arts has been awarded by the Council this year to Mr. Henry Bessemer, “for the eminent services rendered by him to Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, in developing the manufacture of steel.” The *Conversazione* of the Society will be held on Wednesday, June 19, at the South Kensington Museum.

MR. CHAMBERS, F.R.S., Superintendent of Colaba Observatory, has been presented by the Bombay Harbour Board with a valuable gold watch and chain for his service towards the port in putting up a time ball.

THE examiners in the Natural Science School at Oxford, Dr. W. Ogle, Mr. R. H. Bosanquet, and Mr. A. W. Reinold, have issued the subjoined Class list :—Class I. : Henry Cooper, All Souls' ; J. P. Earwaker, Merton ; C. J. Moullin, Pembroke. Class II. : H. Green, Queen's College. Class III. : E. C. D. Fox, Exeter. Class IV. : J. A. Lloyd, St. John's.

THE following ladies have passed the examination for special certificates of higher proficiency at the University of London :—In Mathematics and Mechanical Philosophy, Mary Stewart Kilgour, Ladies' College, Cheltenham ; in Geology and Palæontology, Laura Gertrude Eaton, Ladies' College, Cheltenham ; in Political Economy, Jane Ellen Harrison, Ladies' College, Cheltenham ; and in Harmony and Counterpoint, Mary Amelia Bennett, North London Collegiate School for Ladies.

PROF. HUMPHRY, F.R.S., will commence his Course of Three Lectures on Human Myology at the Royal College of Surgeons on Monday, June 17, at 4 P.M. They will be continued on Wednesday and Friday at the same hour. The lectures will discuss the morphology and teleology of the muscular system of man.

A TELEGRAM from Madras, printed in the *Times*, states that a court of inquiry is being held, with closed doors, on the conduct of Mr. Pogson, the Government Astronomer, who seems to be held responsible for the damage done by the late disastrous cy-