

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

Prehistoric Architecture

If we are to credit the speculations of certain ardent disciples of prevalent schools of natural philosophy and history, man is not only an upward evolution from the brutes, but, since becoming positively human, has been constantly ascending from utter barbarian to civilization. First, there is rough stone age; next, the era of polished stone. Third, the bronze and finally the iron age. So much for one line of induction and it would be unjust to deny the plausibility of the conclusions thus reached.

When however we turn to archaeology and tradition, we find precisely an opposite order of things. Archaeology is yearly showing that tradition with all its exaggerations and perversions is a confused memory of realities, and not the mere embodiment of solar or terrestrial myths. Even Mr. Herbert Spencer admits that process of degradation has been at least as frequent as that of advance in known history. Exploration is showing that the earliest Egyptian dynasties were especially skilled in architecture and stone cuttings and that men who lived long before Moses had their teeth filled with gold, just as do the Americans of today. It isn't known also through the recent discoveries at Tel Amarna that there were public schools and libraries in Canaan before the Jews invaded the country, and its military governors duly reported to the Pharaohs the obedience or the fractiousness of the people. It is significant also that the paths of Egypt and the great empires of antiquity were more nearly monotheistic and elevated at the earliest known period than in these later years. They declined in creed and power almost simultaneously. The barbarians, then as now, were the races which had wandered farthest from the centers of civilization. Thus philology tells us that utterly barbarous Peddas of the Cerylonese swamps are a degenerate branch of the [] race to which we belong. The remains of very ancient and in many cases strictly prehistoric architecture (lately discovered on the subject of a revived interest) are especially strong proofs of the existence of a widespread and elaborate civilization at a period when, according to evolutionists (and higher critics) there should have been complete barbarism. These remains are to be found in Arabia, South East Africa and the island of the Pacific. The remarkable Central American ruins are probably later. What is known as the Cyclopean architecture consists of walls and houses built of huge stones, more or less carefully dressed, and utterly beyond the capacities of modern Savage or even half civilized races. (On the Kusaic and Ascension Islands of the Caroline group are remains which the present inhabitants and even the early Spanish voyageurs could never have built. Kusarac is covered by the ruins of what were probably fortifications. They are composed of stones, eight or ten feet in length squared upon six sides. They are of a different geological character from any stone found elsewhere upon the island. The ruins on Ascension Island are still more impressive, though of the same order of architecture. (On the shore of one creek is a wall 300 feet long and 85 high. It is

built of huge basaltic blocks of prismatic form, and its gateway is supported by enormous basaltic columns. Inside is a court, enclosed by walls 30 feet high, and all around the inner wall is a terrace 8 feet high and 12 feet wide. The court is square in shape, and was evidently divided into three parts by low walls running North and South. In the center of each of these divisions are the remains of a closed chamber, 14 feet square, built of basaltic columns and roofed over. The outer walls are 20 feet thick at the base and eight at the top. Some of the stones are 25 feet long and 8 feet wide.

The builders of these mighty structures must perhaps remain forever unknown. Yet Judge Feranden, an Englishman of strong antiquarian tastes resident for many years in different islands of Pacific, claims that many traditions of the natives where missionary or other European influence was out of the question are strikingly akin to those of the chief continental races including the dispersion at Babel, the antecedents, Deluge and other events recorded in Genesis.

Students of ancient history are generally agreed that the Hamitic family was the first to attain power and cultivate civilized arts since the dawn of history. To it the grandest structures of Egypt are attributed. The same origin must be asserted to the ruins discovered by Mr. Palgrave in the interior of Arabia, which he visited disguised as a Dervish. They are not unlike those of the Caroline Islands in certain important respects. Equally wonderful in their way and now attracting marked attention are the ruins at Trinbalye in England's new acquisition Mashona land, South of the Zambezi River. This is the country thought by some writers (Mr. Rider Haggard among them) the scriptural Ophir. The Portuguese explorers of the 16th century held this opinion and Barris who led an armed expedition thither was greatly astonished at the structures. Loper a contemporary writer, says that in this country belonging to the Empire of [] and [] "there remain many structures of great labor and singular architecture built with stone lime and timber, the like of which are not to be seen in all the provinces adjoining." The Portuguese contented themselves with wondering. They even burnt some of the curious structures after defeating the natives in battle. Still many of the remains are incombustible and they have existed to the present day though until a generation ago, almost forgotten. In 1871 Carl Mauch, a German traveler, visited the locality. The natives who deemed the ruins to be sacred, would not allow him to explore them, but he made sketches of parts of them. Curiosity was then awakened and the London Geographical Society's Journal recently published the observations of some late visitors. The points of the reports thus far printed are as follows: The fair structure at Zimbabwe covers the slope of a hill and on an elevated terrace about three hundred yards off is another mass of ruins. There are evidences that there was formerly a connecting labyrinth of parallel walls, many of the passages ending in a cul-de-sac.

Before the days of artillery a wall thus constructed would be well nigh impregnable. Traces of the existence of an out door stair case are also to be found. The supports of the steps, projecting [] of very hard grain, still remain. They are surmounted with a pattern of diamond-shaped and wavy lines. On one wall is a zigzag frieze constructed of thin slabs set into the main structure and a height of about 25 feet from the ground. The walls and other parts of the structure are built of hewn granite [] oblong like bricks, a but a little longer and put together with out mortar. The walls are 10 feet thick at the bottom seven or eight at the top. Wonderful as are these structures, they are only a part of a series which extend to Lete, a Portuguese town far up the Zantesi. The facts above given our to be supplemented by further explanations undertaken at the Society's expense, by Mr. Theodore Bent, a skilled archaeologist. He has reached the spot and sent home the opinion that the remains are Phoenician, and not of the earlier Cyclopean order, though they resemble it in the non-use of mortar. His full conclusions have not yet been published.

The Phoenicians, as is well known, were early and intrepid voyageurs, according to Herodotus Pharaoh Necho About B. C. 630 sent an expedition of Phoenicians down the East Coast of Africa. After passing what is now known as the Cape of Good Hope, they were surprised to find the sun rise on their right hand. After many delays, they reached home via the Straits of Gibraltar. The story has been discredited, but the existence of evidences of advanced civilization in southeast Africa of which no modern race can claim the honor, induce the belief that this voyage was the precursor of others, and may perhaps have been only more extended than some of which had preceded it. About 570 B.C. The Carthaginians certainly sent an expedition down the West Coast of Africa, which reached the land where certain shaggy monsters existed. The voyages called these creatures guerrillas, thus giving a name to what were presumably the ancestors, of those far from attractive cousins of humanity introduced by Dr. Chailier to their relatives in Christendom. It is by no means certain that Sofala may be regarded as the chief part of Mashuma Land, was the entrance to the Solomonic Ophir. Yet, Salamoui Mariners were Phoenicians and they brought home besides gold, certain animals and articles which Africa produces. That some of these voyageurs should have worked African mines and built fortifications to protect themselves against the natives is not improbable. One thing is certain viz. that no negro tribe could have constructed these edifices unless there has been a wonderful decline in negro talent during the last two thousand years.

The structures found at Zambabye are such as voyageurs would build. They have the strength of the erections of the early Hamites, but are strong by the multiplication of material not by the use of great monoliths. In brief we may

provisionally conclude that the Egyptian and Arabian cyclopean buildings, and probably those of the Caroline Islands were the work of the early Hamites of whose wanderings we know nothing. Those of Mashina Land were built by the nations who, if not of Hamitic descent - this is a disputed Etheological problem - are known to have been close imitators of the early Hamites, and of the mixed races who gradually combined in the makeup of the Egyptian. Mr. Bent's full report may supply further facts. If however the full truth is ever known it will probably be learned through some inscription yet to be discovered at the place of building or perhaps among the ruins of Egypt in Asia Minor.

Whether or not this information is ever obtained, we know enough already to perceive that with all our enlightenment we have only rediscovered something that our great-great-grandfather's knew and that our intervening predecessors had forgotten. The most ancient ruins ever to reveal the existence of a stone age very different from that portrayed by Sir John Lubbock. It also seems probable that if early man could conquer in his battles with the cave lion and the cave bear, saying nothing of the still surviving [], he must have had other weapons and slings, and flint-headed arrows and spears. Armed only with these he would have been markedly inferior to the gigantic carnivora. His continuance and the disappearance of the beasts appear to prove the intelligence and at least partial civilization of early humanity.

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