

CHAPTER XVI.—THEIR PRESENCE ON THE STONES OF THE MOST
ANCIENT FORMS OF SEPULTURE.

Our archaic forefathers have left us many more specimens of the tombs of the dead than of the dwellings of the living; and ancient sepulchres have ever formed great treasures for archæological investigation. These sepulchres are, as we have already seen, especially rich in the rude sculpturings after which we are inquiring. They have been found (see Chapter iv.) on the stones covering urns; on those forming the lids of kist-vaens, specially of the short and earlier form; within sepulchral chambers; and on the stones of cromlechs; not to speak of their appearance upon sepulchral stone pillars and megalithic circles. Some of these forms of sepulture, as the megalithic circle, the chambered tumulus, and its fundamental prototype, the uncovered cromlech, are in their origin beyond—perhaps very far beyond—our historic era. The carvings upon these sepulchral stones are probably all as old, and some of them even older, than the megalithic tombs of which these stones form a part. We have evidence of this in the facts I have already adverted to in pp. 81 and 105,—as that, for example, in one or two of the sculptured stones within the great sepulchral chamber at New Grange, some sculptures can be felt carved upon the backs of the blocks,—a position in which they could only have been cut before the sepulchre itself was reared. It is apparent that on other stones the sculpturings were made after the blocks were placed, as the patterns

probable that we would find anything interesting. I described at length these Fife Cave carvings to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the 2d January 1865, and illustrated them by a full series of drawings of the sculptures made by Mr Drummond, R.S.A., and Dr Paterson. My communication on the subject (see Appendix) was published in the "*Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*," vol. v. p. 521 to 526.

are continued from the face of one stone to another.¹ Not knowing with any reliable exactitude the era of these great sepulchral works, on the stones of which the cups, rings, &c. are cut, we fail of course in fixing the data of the sculpturings themselves. But that some of these sepultures and their attendant sculpturings are very ancient, we know from another piece of evidence which we shall consider for a moment, viz.,—the nature of the relics which have been found in connection with them.