

CHAPTER XX.—THE RACE THAT FIRST INTRODUCED THE CARVING
OF THE LAPIDARY RING AND CUP SCULPTURINGS.

British historical records can only be truly said to begin with the notices of our Island and its inhabitants left us by Julius Cæsar, half a century before the commencement of the Christian era. At that date the population appears to have been mainly Celtic, but partially also Belgic and Iberian (if we may trust to the subsequent observations of Tacitus upon “the dark and curly-haired Silures”); and many have held that the Celts—including the two divisions of the Cymry and Gael—were the aborigines of these islands. During the ten or twelve centuries that followed the commencement of our historical records, we know that England was subdued and overrun by four different races of conquerors, viz., by the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans; and during the long prehistoric ages that preceded the notices left by Cæsar, our country was probably then—as afterwards—the seat and scene of repeated immigrations of new inhabitants and conquerors. For we know that when the curtain of western European history first rises in Pre-Christian times, it affords us strange glimpses of whole nations and hordes, like the Cimbri and Helvetii, changing from site to site in greater and smaller masses in quest of new settlements and new conquests. By the era of the first Roman invasion of Scotland, A.D. 81, our forefathers were already so advanced in civilisation as to build and use war chariots—a fact in itself showing no mean progress in the mechanical arts; and they had ere this time passed through the era of bronze weapons, for they fought at the battle of the Mons Grampius with what, to the Roman eye, seemed huge (*ingentes*) swords, large and blunt at the point (*enormes gladii sine mucrone*),¹—a form of weapon which we can only suppose to have been made of iron.²

¹ Tacitus, *Vita Agricola*, § 32.

² A century and more before Agricola invaded Scotland, Julius Cæsar had found the Celtic nations of Gaul provided with long two-edged iron swords (see Livy,

We have no adequate data as yet to fix the date of advent to our shores of the Cymry and Gael, and to determine whether or not they brought along with them, at their first arrival, as some hold, a knowledge of the metallurgic arts. But much evidence has been gradually accumulating of late years to prove that there had existed some pre-Celtic races in Britain.¹ Without venturing in the least to point out all,

xxxviii. 17 and 21). Diodorus Siculus states that they had also spears formed with a long blade of iron, and had invented iron coats of mail (V. 30). When the Roman armies first encountered those of Gaul in 222 B.C., the Gauls were even then, according to Polybius (ii. 33), provided with iron swords; but the metal was soft, and bent in battle. It was, says Mr Aiken, when describing this circumstance, "of the kind at present called 'hot-short,' a defect which," he adds, "much of the iron now made in the southern departments of France is very liable to" (*Illustrations of Manufactures*, p. 251). When Julius Cæsar attacked by sea the Veneti, or inhabitants of Armorica, in the year 56 B.C., he found them furnished with a strong fleet of oak ships, above two hundred in number, clinker-built with large iron nails, and the anchors of the vessels provided with chain cables of iron. In a very suggestive chapter in his late interesting work on the "Early Races of Scotland," Colonel Forbes Leslie hints that the Veneti owed probably their knowledge of naval architecture to the previous influence of Phœnician art and science among them (p. 47 to 61).

¹ Perhaps comparative philology, and the study of the ancient names of some of our mountains, rivers, and places, may yet afford the archæologist surer means than we generally use of ascertaining the presence in this island, in ancient times, of races before the Celtic. That Iberians, speaking the Basque or Euskarian language, partially inhabited the southern and western parts of Great Britain in the time of Tacitus, and long previously, is generally admitted to be of high probability; and their presence in western Europe is held by most ethnologists to be ante-Celtic. Perhaps they will yet be found to have left some of their language and appellatives not in south Britain only, but even far northward. One of the best known provinces of Spain bears the Basque name of Asturia, or, in other words, a district of "river and rock," from *Asta*, rock, and *Ura*, water. In Scotland we have the Basque word "Ura" forming—apparently now in modified forms—the names of various streams and lakes, possibly before the advent of the Celts; as the rivers and lochs Ure, Urr, Ury, Ore, Orr, Ayr, Aire, Yar, &c., used either singly, or as prefixes and affixes to other names. Tacitus tells us that Agricola, after passing the isthmus formed by the estuaries of the Clota and Bodotria (Clyde and Forth), stationed his army during the winter before the battle of the Mons Grampius, or A.D. 83, in the land of the "Horesti," a district which is usually supposed to be Fife, or more probably the southern part of Perthshire. May this term "Horesti"

let me simply note two or three. A race of Megalithic Builders—if we may so call them—who have not left in their sepulchres, and therefore we infer did not possess, in their earlier era at least, any metal tools or weapons, seem to have either preceded the Celts, or to have formed our first Celtic or Aryan wave; and judging from the extent of their remains in massive chambered catacombs and cromlechs, in numerous cyclopean forts, gigantic stone circles, &c., they must have held the country for a considerable length of time, and overspread the whole of it by the diffusion of their population. From their remains, as left in their tombs and elsewhere, we know that they employed weapons and tools of horn, wood, and *polished* stone; manufactured rude hand-made pottery; had ornaments of jet, bone, &c.; partially reared and used cereals, as indicated by their stone mullers and querns; and possessed the dog, ox, sheep, and other domestic quadrupeds. I do not stop to discuss the various questions whether these Megalithic Builders did or did not hollow out and use the archaic single-tree canoes found on our shores, rivers, and lakes;—whether they were the people that anciently whaled in the Firth of Forth with harpoons of deer-horn, when its upper waters were either much higher or its shores much lower than at present;—whether they or another race built the earliest stone-age crannoges or lake habitations;—and again, whether there was not an antecedent population of simple fishers and hunters, totally unacquainted with the rearing of corn and cattle, and who have bequeathed to Archæology all their sparse and sole historic records in casual relics of their food, dress, and weapons—buried in heaps and mounds of kitchen refuse which they have incidentally accumulated and left upon our own and upon other northern and western coasts of Europe. Whether these formed one, or two, or more races, let me add, that long anterior to the Megalithic Builders

not be composed of the same elements as the Basque word Asturias, but reversed; the *Ura* or *Or* being placed first, and the *Asta*, or *Esta*, being last; and the whole signifying—like the analogous Euskarian word—“a land of rivers and rocks, or hills?” Sometimes the accidental change of a single letter makes the recognition of an old word very difficult, as in the instance of the word cited above (Bodotria). It has been often said that there is no traceable relation between the river Forth and this its old Latin name Bodotria. But the properly spelt form was possibly Fodotria, and if so, the analogy between it and Forth then becomes self-evident.

there certainly existed in our Island a tribe of inhabitants that dwelt, in part at least, in natural or artificial caves, where their bones and their contemporaneous relics have been found; who possessed implements and weapons of stone and flint, but rough, and *not* polished like those of the Megalithic Builders; who seemingly possessed no pottery; who—if we may judge from the want of rubbers and querns to grind corn food—had little or no knowledge of agriculture; and who lived in those far distant times when the colossal fossil elephant or mammoth,¹ the woolly-haired rhinoceros, the gigantic cave-bear, the great hyæna, &c., were contemporaneous inhabitants with him of the soil of Britain; when the British lion² was a veritable reality and not a heraldic myth; and when possibly England was still geologically united to the Continent, and the Thames was only a tributary of the Rhine. I am not aware that we have yet sufficient evidence to consider as of the same family with these ancient Cave-men, or as of a race still anterior to them, the Flint-folk of the southern counties of England, whose *unpolished* flint hatchets—besides being found in great abundance on the banks of the Somme and Loire—have been discovered in various parts in the river-drifts of south England, and an excellent specimen of which, along with the bones of an elephant, was dug up, in the last century, from a gravel-pit near Gray's Inn Lane, in the centre of London itself.³ It sounds like an archæological romance

¹ According to Professor Buckland the fossil elephant was—judging from the specimen found in the ice at Tunguss—“clothed with coarse tufty wool of a reddish colour, interspersed with stiff black hair, unlike that of any known animal; that it had a long mane on its neck and back, and had its ears protected by tufts of hair, and was at least sixteen feet high.” (See his *Reliquæ Diluvianæ*, p. 172. See also a drawing and description of it in Figuier's “World before the Deluge,” London, 1865, p. 350.) Between the years 1820 and 1833, on the coast of Norfolk alone, the fishermen, in trawling for oysters, have fished up no less than two thousand molar teeth of the fossil elephant—one proof among others of the former abundance of the animal in this part of the world. (See *Ibid.* p. 336.)

² The *Felis spelæa* or pleistocene lion, has (observes Mr Owen) left its remains in many stratified deposits of the pliocene period in Britain (*Palæontology*, p. 384). It measured, if we may judge from its remains, “four yards” in length, according to Figuier, “with a size exceeding that of the largest bull” (*World before the Deluge*, p. 354). Lately Messrs Dawkins and Sandford have shown that the *Felis spelæa* is a large variety only of the *Felis Leo* (*Palæontographical Society Essays*, vol. xiii.)

³ The original account of the discovery of this British elephant and the stone axe,

thus to find the rude weapon of an archaic Briton, who hunted of yore on the ground where the metropolis of England now stands, apparently lying alongside of a skeleton of the wild game which he then and there pursued,—and that game nothing less than a British elephant.¹ What

as given in a letter written by Mr Bagford in 1715, and published in Hearne's edition of Leland's *Collectanea*, vol. i. preface, p. lxxiii., is probably worth quoting. Mr Bagford is not, of course, aware of the specific difference between the British elephant (*Elephas primigenius*), whose fossil tusks, teeth, and bones, often turn up in our soil, and the African and Asiatic elephant (*Elephas Africanus* and *E. Asiaticus*), known to the Romans. After speaking of the antiquarian zeal of Mr John Conyers, Mr Bagford remarks:—" 'Tis this very gentleman that discovered the body of an elephant, as he was digging for gravel in a field near to the sign of Sir John Oldcastle in the fields, not far from Battlebridge, and near to the river of Wells, which, though now dried up, was a considerable river in the time of the Romans. How this elephant came there is the question? I know some will have it to have lain there ever since the universal deluge. For my own part, I take it to have been brought over, with many others, by the Romans in the reign of Claudius the Emperor, and conjecture (for a liberty of guessing may be indulged to me as well as to others who maintain different hypotheses), that it was killed in some fight by a Briton; for not far from the place where it was found a British weapon, made of a flint lance, like unto the head of a spear fastened into a shaft of a good length, which was a weapon very common amongst the ancient Britons, was also dug up, they having not at that time the use of iron and brass, as the Romans had. This conjecture may perhaps seem odd to some; but I am satisfied myself, after having viewed this flint weapon, which was once in the possession of that generous patron of learning, the reverend and very worthy Dr Charlett, Master of University College, and is now preserved among the curious collections of Mr John Kemp, from whence I have thought fit to send you the exact form and bigness of it." A rude figure of this flint weapon was published by Hearne; and a more careful one is given by Mr Evans in one of his excellent papers on Flint Implements in the Drift (see the *Archæologia*, xxxviii. p. 301). This London flint weapon is not smooth and polished like those found in the Brittany and other megalithic tumuli and cromlechs, but rough, unpolished, and similar in shape, size, and form to those found on the banks of the Somme and Loire. It is now preserved in the British Museum.

¹ Dr Buckland enumerates various localities in the valley of the Thames where the remains of the mammoth have been discovered. These remains seem to be specially frequent on the site of London. "In the streets of London," he observes, "the teeth and bones are often found in digging foundations and sewers in the gravel." Again, he speaks of the remains occurring "in almost all the gravel pits round London," (see his *Reliquiæ Diluviance*, pp. 174, 175);—as if forsooth the site of the

a contrast do such antiquarian revelations suggest between the objects of pursuit of the archaic and of the modern Londoner!

To which of these races of men, or to what others, should we refer the first sculpturings of the cup and ring cuttings which we have been considering in the present essay? The question is one which, in the present state of archæological knowledge, cannot be positively answered. Many additional data are required,—particularly in the way of more careful and correct observations on the contemporaneous works and relics with which the sculptures are generally connected; and also on the extent of their diffusion. Do they exist over Europe generally, or are they limited to special localities in it? Sculptures, analogous, at least, to the cup and ring carvings of Britain, are, we have seen (see p. 71), traceable in Scandinavia. Are they common in that or other countries which the Celtic race never reached? But still more, are they to be found in the lands of the Lap, Finlander, or Basque, which apparently neither the Celt nor any other Aryan ever occupied? Do they appear in Asia within the bounds of the Aryan or Semitic races? Or can they be traced in Africa or in any localities belonging to the Hamitic branches of mankind? Do they exist upon the stones or rocks of America or Polynesia?

But we have some data which perhaps entitle us to suggest a possible approximate opinion on the question of the race or races that first cut these cup and ring carvings. They have now been found in sufficient abundance upon the stones of the chambered catacombs, cromlechs, and megalithic circles of this country, of the Channel Islands, and of Brittany. We have already, a few pages back, seen that the relics found in some of the chambered catacombs where these rude lapidary sculptures are carved, belong entirely to the Stone period, and consequently we infer that the age of the earliest of these sculpturings—as found in this connection—was the Stone era. But further, if any of them were thus carved in the Stone age, they were carved—according to the chronological opinions of most archæologists—anteriorly to the advent of the Celt to our shores.

English metropolis had been formerly a favourite haunt and home of the gigantic English mammoth. In Plate XXI. he represents a section of the cave called Goat-Hole, in Glamorganshire, where an elephant's head and human skeleton are marked on the spot in which they were actually found—lying near to each other (p. 275).

Besides, on another ground, we believe the earlier of these stone carvings are possibly anterior to the age of the Celt, namely, because they are found—though hitherto but sparingly—on cromlechs and dolmens; and cromlech-burying and building is not characteristic of the Celt; for in all probability this form of sepulture—involving, as it does, a rude but quaint type of architecture often so massive and gigantic as to be difficult of execution—was commenced and practised anterior to his arrival in our Island and in Western Europe. For though found in some countries—like Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, &c.—inhabited since the beginning of the historical era by the Celt, yet both the simple and galleried cromlech are relatively or entirely wanting in other countries—like Cisalpine Gaul and some of the most central and eastern provinces of ancient Gaul¹ itself—districts that were assuredly Celtic in their popu-

¹ In his excellent essay, *De la distribution des Dolmens sur la Surface de la France*, M. Bertrand points out that, geographically, these megalithic structures—"dolmens," and open galleried cromlechs or chambered barrows—exist chiefly on the islands, capes, and coasts of Northern and Western France, from the mouth of the Orne to the mouth of the Gironde; that in the interior of the kingdom they are met with principally in proximity to the course of navigable, and particularly of large, rivers that they are almost entirely wanting, however, along the chief ancient tracts of Celtic and Pre-Roman commerce by the valleys of the Rhone, of the Seine, Soane, and Upper Loire; that they are similarly sparse and deficient in the last, and in the very heart of ancient Gaul or in the olden Celtic districts of the *Ædui*, *Senones*, *Lingones*, *Bituriges*, *Arverni*, *Cenomani*, *Boii*, and *Ambarri*, except at some points where these districts are penetrated by the rivers *Garthe*, *Eure*, and *Orne*; that they apparently belong, in their larger and most massive forms, chiefly to the latter part of the Stone age, and to a population which generally buried and did not burn the dead; and that their builders did not migrate across France from east to west, but penetrated first from the sea-shore, and by its rivers, into the western portions of the kingdom. Baron Bonstetten, in his *Essai sur les Dolmens*, endeavours to show that—as far as we can judge from the aggregations and chains of stone relics that they have left—the race of cromlech-builders, along both of the shores of the western portion of the Baltic, through Denmark and the Danish Isles, onwards to the northern parts of Holland, stretched their habitations at the same time from the shore inward into Mecklenburg, Hanover, &c. According to the same author, without remaining in Belgium, they seem to have passed onward into France, following the geographical points and routes pointed out by M. Bertrand. They crossed over into Great Britain, and occupied principally its western section

lation in the earliest historical times. Besides, it is a form of sepulture which has been followed in countries, as Scandinavia, where the Celt never dwelt, and in others, again, where neither the Celt nor any other branch of the Aryan race ever penetrated, as in Barbary, Constantin, Algiers, Oran, on the banks of the Jordan, &c.¹ In other words, the race that erected

and the eastern and southern section of Ireland. Arrived at the Gironde, they left the sea-shore, avoided the travelling difficulties of Gascoigne, and crossed southern France, obliquely in the direction of the Gulf of Lyons. Thence their remains are found running like a broad belt along the whole northern and western shores of the Spanish peninsula. They reappear in Grenada and Andalusia, on the southern coast of Spain, and stretch southward across the Mediterranean to Algiers, Constantin, and other parts of northern Africa; and perhaps passed, Baron Bonstetten suggests, to Egypt, and there formed the Tamhu (or men of the north) under Rameses [who, we may remark, are represented in the Theban tombs with leather dresses and tattooed limbs]. All the more northern cromlechs that remain in Europe are found to be of the Stone age. But as we pass southwards, bronze implements, at first seemingly altogether of foreign manufacture, gradually, though sparingly, appear, till at last, in the cromlechs of Africa, bronze, stone, and iron are found mixed up together in their contents. In this long pilgrimage the race of cromlech-builders, whilst apparently always keeping near to the sea-shore, still spread to a certain distance inwards for pasture and food for their flocks, which consisted evidently, from the various relics left, of the ox, sheep, horse, &c. Their weapons in the earlier and northern part of their European journey seem to have been entirely those of the Stone era, with the celts, axes, beads, &c., in some instances highly worked up and polished. Baron Bonstetten—whose account I have been following—further believes that, before appearing on the shores of the Baltic, they had passed or been pursued across Europe from the Black Sea and Caucasus,—and perhaps from still more southern districts,—where their remains are traceable; and that at different times they sent away offshoots that reached India, Palestine, Greece, Etruria, and elsewhere. In their long pilgrimage from the Baltic to the African shores of the Mediterranean, the nomadic race of cromlech-builders formed, Baron Bonstetten maintains, a pastoral people, living upon the products of their flocks, and upon fishing and hunting; and he holds, that the chain of cromlechs which they have left in their long and probably slow migration from the shores of the Baltic to the frontiers of Egypt, are so similar in general type as to prove the identity of the great tribe or nation of men who, out of veneration for their dead, reared them;—and yet the very name of this people is lost in prehistoric darkness. They succeeded, in his opinion, to the Cave-men of the west; but preceded all historical races. He adds an interesting map illustrative of his ideas of the geographical course and extent of their pilgrimage.

¹ See the observations of Mr Rhind in *Journal of Archæological Association*, vol. i.

megalithic cromlechs has been much more widely diffused over the world's surface than the Celtic; possibly, or indeed probably, sojourned in our country before them;¹ and in other parts, as Greece, pre-existed the oldest remains of the earliest traces of historic civilisation.²

(1859), and in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxix.; Shaw's *Barbary and Levant*, p. 67; Irby's *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*; Madden in *Transactions of Royal Irish Academy for 1863*, p. 117; Sir Gardner Wilkinson, in *Journal of Archæological Association for 1862*, p. 43, &c.

¹ Archæologists, very zealous for the continuation of the most archaic practices down to the most modern times, might argue that the old memorial standing stones and slabs are perpetuated in our present churchyard obelisks and upright grave-stones; and that cromlechs have *their* prototypes in the table or flat form of tomb-stone supported by lateral slabs or by stone props, that is so common in many of our Christian burying-grounds. In the churchyard of Santon, Isle of Man, is a very massive unhewn slab, formerly supported by corner-stone props, and which no doubt formed, before it fell, no contemptible specimen of a cromlech. In 1656, the vicar of the parish, Sir John Cosnaghan, was—in consequence of a strong desire expressed by him before death—buried under this, “The Great Stone,” as it was then termed. But for a far more interesting notice of the continued construction in the present day in Upper India of cromlechs of this form, and other megalithic structures, see Dr Hooker's “*Himalayan Journal*,” vol. ii. p. 276.

² We have already alluded in a preceding footnote (see p. 99) to the very ancient tombs or so-called treasuries at Mycenæ; and they afford us a kind of chronometer of the great age of our European cromlechs. For, near Mycenæ, there is an old cromlech of the usual form, built of massive unhewn stones, according to the common type and arrangement. (See a sketch of it in Bonstetten's *Essai sur les Dolmens*, p. 41). How very much older must this rude megalithic structure be than any of the ruins in the city of Mycenæ itself, archaic as these ruins are? The so-called tomb of Atreus or Agamemnon is usually considered as reaching to twelve or more centuries B.C. (see Gell, Hughes, Clarke, &c.), “the remains of Mycenæ being,” to use the language of Mr Dodwell (*Travels, &c.*, vol. ii. p. 229), “enveloped in the deepest recesses of recorded times.” The tomb is of the form of a gallery, chamber, and side crypt, very analogous in type to that of New Grange and other western catacombs; but its stones are polished and hewn, and the ornaments upon its pillars are, from the specimens left, of a simple yet elegant character. (See footnote in a previous page, 99.) The enormous lintel stone placed over the entrance of the dome-shaped chamber or tomb may “perhaps (observes Dr Clarke) be mentioned as the largest slab of hewn stone in the world” (*Travels*, 4th ed., vol. vi. p. 503). If these tombs are, as usually believed, thirty centuries old, the rude unhewn cromlech near Mycenæ, and other similar cromlechs, must be many

It appears to me not improbable, therefore, that the race of Megalithic Builders, whether Celtic or Pre-Celtic, who had tools of flint and polished stone, first sculptured our rocks and stones with the rude and archaic ring and cup cuttings. But the adoption, and even more extended use, of these forms of ornamental and possibly religious symbols passed down, in all likelihood (with their sepulchral practices, and with other pieces of art and superstition), to the inhabitants of the Bronze age, with its era of cremation and urn-burial,—and thence onwards to other and later times; and perhaps they can be still traced in the spiral, circular, and concentric figurings upon our ancient Celtic bronze weapons and ornaments; on their stone-balls and hatchets; on ancient bone implements and combs; and even possibly among some of the symbols of the so-called “Sculptured Stones” of Scotland.¹

It is important, at the same time, to recollect that the *origin* of the cup and ring cuttings may be still older than even the age of the earliest Celts or of the Megalithic Builders, for no doubt man attempted to carve and sculpture at a still earlier epoch in his history. We have proofs of this in the works of the archaic Cave-men of the Dordogne in France, who were contemporary in that district with the reindeer, had no pottery, and apparently possessed no domestic animals—not even the dog. Among their cave relics² there have been found several rude draw-

centuries older still. Let me merely add here, that the so-called Gate of the Lions at Mycenæ—built, along with its cyclopean walls, at a very early period of the city's existence—is archæologically interesting as the oldest piece of known lapidary sculpture in Europe; and it is interesting to connect with it the other fact, that scenes in the Agamemnon of Eschylus and the Electra of Sophocles—plays written four or five centuries before the commencement of the Christian era—are placed by their ancient authors in front of this very archaic sculptured gate, the remains of which continue comparatively entire down to our own times.

¹ See, for instance, the drawings of these Sculptured Stones in Mr Stuart's magnificent work on the subject in Plates IX., XXV., XXVII., &c.

² See M. Lartet's *Cavernes du Périgord; objets gravés et sculptés des temps Pré-historiques*, &c. See especially the drawings in pp. 20, 29, and 31. Latterly M. Lartet has found in these caves a broken plate of ivory, scratched with a portrait of the mammoth, and evidently executed by one who had himself seen this fossil elephant. (See a copy of this remarkable portrait in the *Annales des Sciences Naturelles*, 5^{me} série; *Zoologie et Paléontologie*, tom. iv. Pl. xvj.)

ings of animals, &c., scratched on bone and stone, apparently by means of the sharp point of a flint implement; and a poinard made of the horn of a reindeer, and having a rude attempt at the carving out of the form of that animal upon the handle of the weapon. It is possible, as I have already ventured to hint, that the examination of the *walls* also of these old inhabited caves and rock-shelters may yet detect upon them also some attempts at lapidary cuttings or sculpturings,—and none could be well conceived of a more primitive and rude type than the cup and ring cuttings described in this essay.