

I.

ANTIQUARIAN NOTES FROM NASSAU. By CAPT. F. W. L. THOMAS, R.N.,
F.S.A. Scot.

1. *Identity of design between some Bronze Ornaments and the British Rock Sculptures.*—In the Wiesbaden Antiquarian Museum, among a number of bronze relics of great interest, I was particularly struck with some labelled “from German graves in Bauwald,” which I suppose is in the Nassau. The relics were bronze ornaments, eleven in number, all of the same size, and appeared to have been cast in the same mould. I made a careful sketch of one of them, from which Mr Sharbau has made the enclosed drawing. (See the accompanying woodcut.)

The shape of the ornaments is a disk with a handle, being in outline

very like the "mirror" on some of the sculptured stones. But there is no further resemblance, for the disk, which is about the size of a penny piece, has a central boss, one-sixth of an inch high, which is surrounded by five concentric ridges or circles, and the ridges are connected by a radial ridge. The handle is plain. Along with the disks were two long, plain, bronze-wire pins.

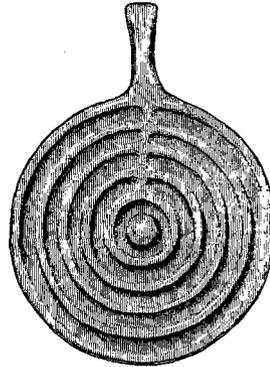
It will be seen at once, by turning to Sir J. Y. Simpson's "Archaic Sculpturings" (Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot., vol. viii. App.), that the design on the bronzes is exactly that of "Type 4 of Cup and Ring Cuttings," and indeed the mould in which the bronzes were cast must have been identical in design—but not in size—with those found engraved on rocks in the British Isles.

These Wiesbaden relics will, I believe, bring the rock sculpturings within the Bronze period, but the actual date and duration of that period must be left for a more learned antiquary to determine.

Judging from the additional information which the relics supply, the rock sculpturings are simply ornamental designs which were in use when the ring cuttings were made, and, having been executed only to exercise the skill of the engraver, have no—or a very distant—symbolical meaning.

In the design under consideration, I cannot help supposing that a shield has been imitated, the raised boss representing the boss of the shield which covered the handle, and the radial ridge being the cord or strap by which the shield was hung when not in use. This is much more apparent in the rock cuttings.

2. *Probable Meaning of the "Spectacle Ornament" of the Sculptured Stones.*—In the same Museum there appeared to me a strong confirmation of Dr Stuart's opinion that the spectacle ornament of the sculptured stones was a decoration, for on the effigy of a Count of Katzenellenbogen of 1276 or 1315, there is the exact likeness of the spectacle ornament. It was, in fact, the representation of two hemispherical jewels, about the



Bronze Object from a German Grave. (Actual size.)

size of half an egg, connected together by a strap, which was 6 or 8 inches long. The strap went across the chest, just below the clavicles, and the jewels acted as buttons to keep a very scanty cloak, or rather cape, upon the Count's shoulders.

3. *Modern use of Pre-historic Decoration.*—In Nassau the people still build "frame" houses, but in Hereford and Worcester shires, although the method of construction is known (*viz.*, one side of the house is bolted together on the ground, and then reared upright in one piece), I could not learn that any had been made for two or three generations. In frame houses the panels are filled in with basket-work, which is daubed with clay.

Once when rambling among the "vils" of the heights of Nassau, I drew up in front of anything but a savoury dwelling, and gazed hesitatingly. There was a vague idea that I had seen the like before, and a further cogitation brought up the recollection of the chambered cairns of Gavr Innis and New Grange. On the panels, while the clay was moist, scores (etchings) had been made, and the combination or effect was to reproduce the æsthetic whole of the graved stones of those noted tumuli. There were bands of parallel lines, circumflex bands of various orders, but there were no spirals. My first idea was to take a rubbing, but this was too absurd upon a work of art which had been accomplished by "Hans" perhaps last winter. I must therefore be content to refer to Plate XXX. of the comprehensive memoir on "Archaic Sculpturings" (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. vi. Appendix), where, in fig. 7, they are completely anticipated.

It is not proposed to enter on the question of the archæological value of the coincidence of the Nassau peasant exactly reproducing the designs of the ancient tumuli, but I record the fact.

It would seem that the smooth clean surface of the clay irritates the peasant to exercise the faculty of design, and—but my information rests upon a twofold translation—a piece of wood, say 4 inches broad, is notched into six or eight teeth; with this "formula" the æsthetic builder goes over the surface of the moist clay, scoring bands of lines, sometimes straight, sometimes waved, "as fickle fancy pleases." With such an instrument, revolving on a centre, concentric circles would of course be described, but I did not see any. It is quite possible they will be found if sought for.