

XVIII.—ON SOME CUP-INCISED STONES, FOUND IN AN
ANCIENT BRITISH BURIAL-MOUND AT PIT-
LAND HILLS, NEAR BIRTLEY, NORTH TYNE-
DALE.

BY THE REV. G. ROME HALL, F.S.A.

[Read on the 26th January, 1887.]

THE subject of the archaic cup and circle markings on earth-fast rocks and detached boulders, on so-called "Druid stones" and monoliths, on the slabs forming "cists," or stone-lined graves, or intermingled with the materials of primeval *tumuli* has, for the last thirty-five years or more, engaged the attention of archaeologists not only in Great Britain and Ireland but in many other countries of the world. Notwithstanding much patient research, no wholly satisfactory conclusion as to their exact meaning and precise age, or with what race they originated, has as yet been obtainable. The mists of antiquity and the charm of mystery still hang around this recondite study. A literature of considerable interest and value, like that respecting the long-undeciphered "written rocks" of the Wady Feiran in the Sinaitic Peninsula, has sprung up within recent years, to which the late Mr. G. Tate, F.G.S.,¹ Sir. J. Y. Simpson,² and our Vice-President, Dr. Bruce,³ have been chief contributors.

First discovered on the rocks close to Ancient British "Camps," near Old Bewick and Doddington, by Mr. Langlands and the Rev. Wm. Greenwell, F.R.S., careful observers have since then met with very many examples elsewhere in this island, from Caithness to Cornwall. On the south-west coast of Ireland also they have been noticed by the Earl of Dunraven and the Bishop of Limerick, as if implying a Celtic

¹ *Ancient British Sculptured Rocks of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, 1865.—*Trans. Bern. Nat. Club*, Vol. V., p. 137.

² *Archaic Sculpturings of Cups, Circles, etc., upon Stones and Rocks in Scotland, England, and other Countries*, 1867.

³ *Incised Markings on Stones in Northumberland, Argyleshire, etc.*, 1869.—(By direction of the late Algernon, Duke of Northumberland.—For private circulation.)

origin. Besides countries nearer home, Scandinavia, France, Germany, and Switzerland, these rock-sculpturings have now been discovered in Egypt and India, and the latest instance that has come to my knowledge is recorded by Professor R. K. Douglas in a letter to the *Academy* (June 26th, 1886, pp. 452, 453), entitled, "Cup-Markings in North-Eastern China." On the Kushan Hills in the Province of Shantung, the Rev. A. G. Jones had noticed, among relics of pre-Chinese civilisation, several granite blocks with hemispherical cavities (locally, "fairy holes") worked in them, the spot being wild and awe-inspiring, "just the place to favour the rudest form of worship."⁴

In the "Introduction" to that noble volume of illustrations of *Incised Markings on Stones* (p. 8), Dr. Bruce has observed, "The absence of these sculptures from certain localities of this country, and their presence in others is a somewhat significant fact. The part of North Northumberland where they chiefly occur is a triangular tract lying to the east of Cheviot Hills, and traversed by the rivers Greta and Till. They have been noticed at Cartington Cove, near Rothbury, and some remarkable examples have been discovered by Mr. Greenwell at Lordenshaws, in the same locality." "It is remarkable," he adds, "that we do not find them in the mountainous districts watered by the Rede and the North Tyne."

The present paper may, in some measure, aid in filling up this hiatus as to the district near the junction of the Rede with the North Tyne, where, previously, four "cup-incised" stones have been found by the writer, as "survivals" of an earlier period, in "camps" or Romano-British dwellings. The Swinburn Castle "standing stone" has also one or two cups upon it.

In January last, at our anniversary meeting, I had the honour of bringing before our Society the results of recent explorations, made through the liberal aid of our noble Patron, the Duke of Northumberland, in Pre-historic or Ancient British Barrows or Burial-Mounds near Low Shield Green and at Pitland Hills, near Birtley; the site chosen for the interment and cremation of the primeval chieftains (see *British Barrows*, p. 112) being the summit of the freestone crags and

⁴ See, for examples in the Western Hemisphere, "Observations on Cup-shaped and other Lapidarian Sculptures in the Old World and in America," in *Contributions to North American Ethnology*, Vol. V., pp. 7-112.

the adjoining plateau of limestone rock. It was then mentioned that time would not permit, in that paper, of any description with adequate details of several cup-incised stones which were discovered in the course of exploring the largest grave-hill of this group. I purpose now to remedy in some degree this omission, as every fresh example of such primitive stone or rock-sculpturings is of interest and importance, and should be carefully delineated and described; so that, by comparison with others already known, more definite conclusions may, if possible, be drawn respecting these strange relics of, probably, our most remote Pre-Roman ancestors, which confessedly still form "one of the aenigmas of archaeology." (*Scotland in Pagan Times*, by Dr. Anderson, p. 299.)

DESCRIPTION OF THE CUP-INCISED STONES.

From this single barrow, which (No. 1 of the Pitland Hills group, in the previous paper) was 46 feet in diameter from east to west, and 35 feet from north to south, its present lessened height being about 6 feet, altogether *seventeen* of these cup-marked stones were taken. Though the site was upon the limestone rock, in every instance a rough block of sandstone, hard-grained, or soft and like shale, and of very varying size and shape, has been used; whereon no trace of human handiwork is visible, except in one example and in the formation of the hollow sculpturings, in which the tool-marks are generally distinctly evident. The stones have been found, by the early inhabitants, among the *talus* of the freestone cliff about a quarter of a mile distant, or detached from the rock-face of the crags which run here, forming an uneven plateau below and to the north of the limestone escarpment, from above the farm-house of Low Shield Green to the Mill Knock quarry, its western limit. Religious worship, funeral rites and symbolism, seem from the earliest times, both among the Aryan and Semitic races, to have been dissociated from artificial means in forming their material accessories. No implement was permitted by the Hebrew law to desecrate the hallowed stones built up as an altar to Jehovah. "There (in Mount Ebal) shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones; thou shalt not lift up *any* iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones."—(Deut. xxvii. 5, 6). And a reason is given in

Exodus xx. 25 :—" If thou wilt build me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone (*Hebr.* ' build them *with* hewing '); for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."

There can be no doubt that sacrifices were offered in connection with these Ancient British interments of their honoured dead. The burial-mounds were, in a certain sense, the pre-historic altars. The stones, of which they were formed, were evidently considered sacred, and were therefore left as Nature itself had framed them as to their outward presentment. Whether we see them in standing monolith or "Druid-stone," or in primeval cairn, the rule is that no tool-mark is discerned as used in bringing them into shape. There is no "dressing" of the often rude, uncouth, irregular forms; and in this large Pitland Hills barrow this patriarchal law of construction has been fully exemplified, every stone there (with a single exception) being as Nature left it. The shapes of the various stones bearing the incised cups, of unmistakable human handiwork, are exceedingly irregular—no two of them at all resembling each other. They are nearly square, oblong, triangular, or without symmetry of any kind; in size from 20 inches in length to 10 inches or less, with proportionate width and thickness.⁵

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARCHAIC SCULPTURINGS.

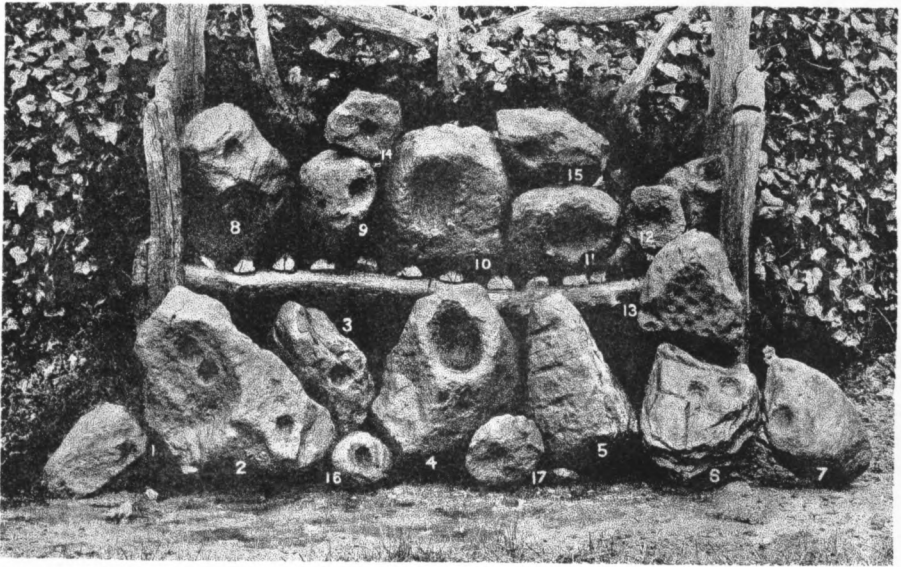
It will be best to describe these—their nature, form, and peculiarities—in relation to each of the stones on which they appear. A glance at the excellent photograph, taken by our colleague, Mr. J. P.

⁵ The only parallel instance of so large a number of cup-incised stones in a barrow is that examined by the Rev. Wm. Greenwell on Wass Moor, in the parish of Kilburn, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. He says (*British Barrows*, pp. 342, 343), "A remarkable feature in this barrow was the very large number of stones (more than twenty), of various sizes, from 5 inches to 20 inches square, and of different and irregular shapes, on which pit or cup-markings had been formed. These hollows were both circular and oval, and differed in size from 1 inch in diameter to 3 inches, and their depth was about 2 inches. The oval pits, as a rule, were not very regular in outline. Some of the stones had only one pit-marking upon them, others had as many as six; on some they were quite separate from each other, on others they were connected by a shallow but wide groove. They were all formed in a soft and very light oolitic sandstone, and the pits were in most cases as fresh as if only made yesterday, showing most distinctly the marks of the tool, which appeared to have been a sharp-pointed instrument, and very probably of flint. It is not easy to attribute any special purpose to these stones or their markings. The condition of the pits, showing no signs of wear (for had anything been ground or rubbed in them the marks of the tooling upon so soft a stone would have been speedily effaced), seems to preclude the idea that they were intended for any domestic or manufacturing purpose. On the whole I prefer to regard them as symbolic representations."

Gibson of Hexham, will give the general idea, conveniently placed as they are in front of and upon an old oaken rustic garden seat, with its back-ground of the ivy-covered rockery. We may take the lower row of stones first in their order, omitting for the present the two small rounded objects on the ground near the centre.

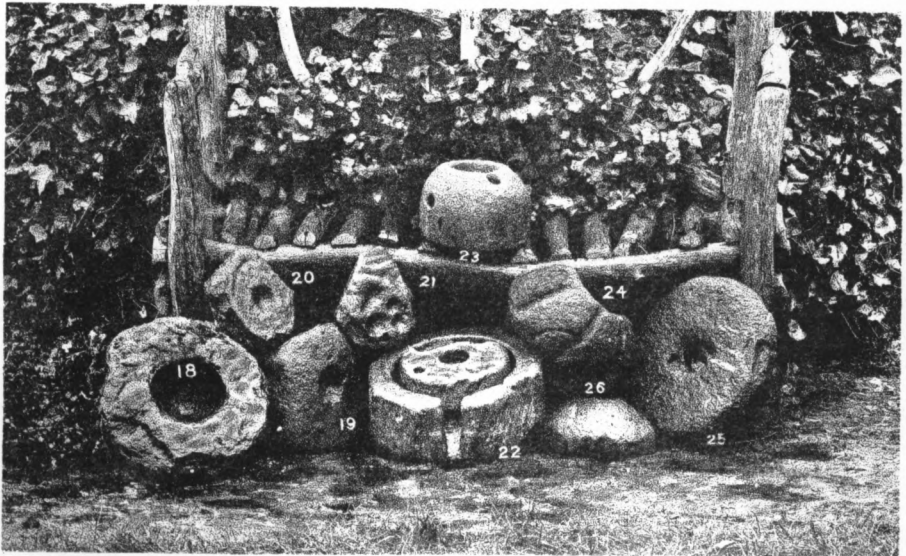
No. 1 is a thin, oblong-shaped stone, split off the original larger block, which I rescued from a stone-wall builder who had carted it away to effect repairs at the sheep-fold of the adjoining cottage at Pitland Hills. It had been already broken up, but fortunately the cup-marked portion was recovered; and the rest of the block, originally 12 inches by 8, and 7 inches deep, had nothing upon it. This stone is 1 foot in length by 8 to 5 inches in width, rounding off, as it now appears. The incised cup is in diameter 2 inches by $1\frac{3}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, the marks of the primitive pick or drill distinct. A channel, lengthwise in the stone, seems natural.

No. 2 is the largest stone of the series; an irregular block, $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $14\frac{1}{2}$ broad, and 9 to $6\frac{1}{2}$ in thickness. The two largest cups are cutting into each other very slightly; the upper being oval and angular at the top, $3\frac{1}{8}$ by $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches in its diameters, and 1 inch deep. At the bottom and at the lower side it is partly worn smooth. The rest of the cup bears pick-marks. The smaller of the twin cups, just below it, is circular, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, and 1 inch in depth. Near the top a few faint pick-marks have been left; but it has the *unique* peculiarity, so far as our chief authority, the Rev. William Greenwell, F.R.S., is aware, of being *carefully smoothed throughout its inner surface* for some purpose unknown. No other instance of an incised cup similarly treated has as yet come to light among those from burial-barrows, whether single, like these, or with concentric circles. We can only conjecture the cause of it. I thought some pigment might have been ground in the hollow, but no trace of earthy matter or colour was discernible. Could the cup have been used for grinding beads or rings of shale or jet? A long stroke, as of some sharpened instrument, has made a straight line, an inch in length, just below the junction with the upper cup. Three smaller cups appear in a line a little lower upon the stone at the right hand; the largest is only $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, while the two smaller ones above it have just been begun to be formed, and the dints of the instrument



CUP-INCISED STONES FROM ANCIENT BRITISH BARROW, (No. I).

At Pitland Hills, near Birtley, North Tyndale.



MORTAR, CUP-INCISED STONES, HAND-MILL (*perfect*) and PORTIONS OF QUERNS,

In the Collection of the REV. G. ROME HALL, F.S.A., Birtley Vicarage. North Tyndale.



are very plain. The same may be said of a sixth cup, a little below the smoothed one, where eight pick-marks, strongly defined, made by a sharp implement, form an incipient hollow. The back of the stone is unshapely; but where it is level, one cup, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across and $\frac{5}{8}$ deep, near the edge, is very distinct.

No. 3 is an oblong boulder, 13 inches long by 12 wide and 7 in thickness. A fragment has been split off square at the top corner. One cup appears nearly circular, $2\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep, the pick-marks very distinct; the rest of the surface has been untouched.

No. 4 is the largest stone of the series, except No. 2, measuring 18 by 14 inches, and 7 inches in thickness. We come now to a different type of cup-sculpturing, of greater dimensions and of oval shape, or nearly so, the marks of the tool being strongly shown.⁶ This incised hollow is *7 inches in length by 5 in width, and 3 inches in depth*. No other cup appears on the upper surface; but there are two small cups on the under surface, circular, 3 and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and 1 inch and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch deep respectively.

No. 5 possesses characteristics different from the preceding. It is of a truncated *pyramidal* form, of three faces, like that discovered at the Low Shield Green Crag cairn, and is 16 inches high—4 at the top, which is nearly square, and 11 at the base of each side. Near the bottom one small cup appears, $\frac{7}{8}$ inch across, just begun; but above this, crossing the surface horizontally, and parallel with the base line, are *three channels or ducts*, such as often appear in connection with a cup with concentric circles; these are distinct, and a fourth, between the two topmost ones, is fainter—all being about 4 inches in length. They seem worn rather than picked out—perhaps as grooves for sharpening implements or weapons. There is a natural (?) channel running perpendicularly on the right, but towards the bottom it looks as if it had been artificially widened and picked or drilled out.⁷

⁶ Cf. *Pre-historic Stone Monuments, Cornwall*, by the Rev. W. C. Lukis, F.S.A., p. 10, Plate XXIII, "The Three Brothers of Grugrith."

⁷ Mr. Greenwell (*British Barrows*, p. 342,) mentions that in the same barrow, already referred to as containing so many cup-incised stones, where the inhumated body had wholly disappeared through decay, "a stone was found in the east side of the mound having two grooves upon one face, which quarter it and form a cross; the grooves appear to have been made by grinding the edge of some sharp instrument, and it is possible they may have been for sharpening the edge of a flint or other stone axe." Compare also the cup-incised stone, No. 6, with its peculiar channellings, as described in this paper.

No. 6 is a rude block of sandstone shale, the fractured sides showing how easily the laminations would flake off by the application of slight force. It measures 14 inches by 12, and is 6 inches thick. Two well-formed cups are distinctly formed by pick or drill, the marks being larger than usual, as the material is of softer grain. The larger cup is nearly circular, $2\frac{7}{8}$ by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{7}{8}$ inch deep. At the bottom and side the stone has flaked off by the action of the pick. The other cup is 2 inches across, by only $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in depth. Hence, nearly straight downwards to the edge runs an irregular line of small round dints, which do not seem natural.

Here again *two channels or ducts* occur, that begin close to the two cups: the one above commencing near the larger cup with two small pick-marks, and continuing across to the edge, on the left hand, for 5 inches, being 1 inch wide by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep; the second channel is just below the smaller cup, and runs parallel with the other for 3 inches, is only $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep. The pick-marks are plain in each. If the stone had been so placed in process of photographing as to show these grooves running perpendicularly instead of horizontally, they would have been seen to much better advantage. A less distinct channel is visible passing along the edge of the block and joining the other two nearly at right angles, and thence down to the bottom. This may be chiefly natural. The whole effect is to represent a kind of plan of enclosures on the surface in front of the two incised cups.

No. 7 is an oval-shaped block, coming to a point at the top, flat at the back, and with rounded surface forming a ridge in front, on the edge of which is placed an oval cup 3 by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across, and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, shallowing to the top. No other cup appears on the stone.

Turning now to the upper row of incised stones, beginning, as before, at the left hand, we come to—

No. 8, an oblong block, 15 by 9 inches and $6\frac{1}{2}$ in thickness. One cup is visible upon it, 2 inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep, *the interior being worn comparatively smooth*, the pick-marks being scarcely seen. A smaller cup has been just begun, and shows large dints of the instrument; it is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches across.

No. 9 is an irregular boulder, sharp at the edge and partly rounded. An oval cup, 3 by 2 inches and 1 inch deep, has been formed at the

pointed end. Another cup appears on one of the rounded sides, 2 inches by $1\frac{3}{4}$ in diameter, chipped to an angle in one part of the circumference. Over this surface are four more small cups just begun, with other still smaller indentations which appear all over the stone. Towards the top are three of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and 1 inch in diameter, shallow, which make an arc of a circle, the pick-marks being very noticeable.

No. 10 takes the form of a nearly square massive block, rounded at the top and right-hand side, being $14\frac{1}{2}$ by 12 inches, and 7 inches in thickness. The great cup is like that upon No. 4; in size being purposely, it would seem, shaped like a gibbous moon, *7 inches long by $5\frac{1}{2}$ broad, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth*, with the pick-markings very large. At the back, near the centre, is a single cup, circular and well-formed, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{7}{8}$ of an inch deep.

No. 11 is a small oblong stone narrowing at the end, its size being 11 inches long by 5 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and 5 inches in thickness. A third example of the very largest incised cups has been formed in this comparatively limited space. The oval cup is itself *$5\frac{3}{4}$ inches long by 4 in width and 2 inches deep*, the pick or drill marks being very large. At the back of the stone is a small cup, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches across and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, with four smaller cup beginnings.

No. 12 contrasts with all the others, and is the singular exception that has come to my knowledge in connection with pre-historic burial-mounds, inasmuch as the stone now to be described is wholly of artificial formation; indeed, it is neither more nor less than a PORTION OF THE UPPER STONE OF A HAND-MILL OR QUERN. Nothing like this, I believe, has hitherto been noticed among the contents of an Ancient British barrow.⁸ The material is a hard-grained sandstone, and the original rounded outline has been slightly altered by chipping away portions. The central hollow for corn is there, narrowing in the middle as usual, and widening at the top and bottom, the latter retaining its flat surface. Here, in the centre, is a small cup, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches across and $\frac{3}{8}$ deep, the length of the stone segment being 1 foot, and its greatest breadth and thickness equal—that is, 7 inches. By careful chipping a curious resemblance to rounded human limbs has been

⁸ The writer above quoted (*Ibid.* p. 115,) remarks, "I am not aware that a quern, or hand mill-stone, has ever been discovered in a barrow upon the Wolds, though they have frequently been met with in the hut-circles (the foundations of houses) and in the camps or other fortified places of many parts of Britain."

effected; though in the photograph one limb facing the spectator appears larger in proportion to the other, which, thus foreshortened, rests against the oaken uprights of the garden seat. The latter is a little smaller. Upon the surfaces, which have been cut off sharp across and present a nearly circular aspect, being 6 and 5 inches in diameter respectively, have been graven two cups, one upon each limb; the size of one being 3 inches in diameter and 1 inch deep, the other $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches across and $\frac{3}{4}$ in depth.

No. 13—just below No. 12 as photographed—will be observed as different from all the rest on account of the large number of minute cups incised upon the stone, which is roughly triangular in shape, 10 inches across, $9\frac{1}{2}$ high, and $6\frac{1}{2}$ in thickness. There are fourteen shallow cups, all about 1 inch in diameter, with finer pick or drill marks, very distinct in their formation.⁹ On the left-hand sloping edge another of the same size appears, with two or three dints or tool impressions. Near the apex is faintly discernible what seems to be an arc of a circle partly surrounding the uppermost cup, with a radius from its centre of an inch and a half. This is the only example in the present "find" of an approximation to a concentric circle around the incised cup.

No. 14—placed upon No. 9 in the upper row in the photograph—is a thin slab, nearly square, with fractured angle 7 inches by 6, and 4 in thickness. On the front face is a single circular cup, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches across and 1 inch deep. The reverse side has a second cup, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and 1 inch also in depth.

No. 15—beneath which is No. 11—is an irregularly-rounded block pointed at one end, 11 inches long, 6 wide, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ in thickness. Where the surface widens and is fairly level, the only cup incised upon this stone appears; it is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$ diameters of the oval, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep.

Returning to the two small nearly hemispherical stones on the ground below Nos. 3 and 4, we recognise again a different type of primitive workmanship.

⁹ At the entrance of the large earth-house at Tealing, Forfarshire, discovered in 1871, in which were found ten querns, a piece of *Samian ware*, &c., a stone with no fewer than forty-six cup-markings lay on the margin of a circular paved space. On one of the rude boulders, which form the walls, a number of cup-markings also appeared, one of which is surrounded by five concentric circles. See *Scotland in Pagan Times—The Iron Age*, "The Rhind Lectures" for 1881. By Dr. Joseph Anderson, p. 299.

No. 16, that to the left, is actually in itself a kind of STONE CUP $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, the nearly circular surface at the top being $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches across, broken into by a deep hollow 3 inches by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ in depth.¹⁰ The sides have been carefully chipped off—not picked, of which there is no trace within the cup. It has been rendered easier to effect, because eight lines of natural cleavage in the stone, radiating from the original centre, have been followed. These are still noticeable around the present margin. On the sloping side a single cup has been just begun, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter.

No. 17, to the right, may also have been intended for a stone cup, but the material, being of gritty sandstone without any natural lines of fracture, did not so readily lend itself to that purpose; it is larger than the last described, 5 inches deep, and the nearly oval surface being $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. In the hollow centre a rudely-shaped cup has been made, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ deep; but it seems to have been left unfinished. This stone has been exposed to the strong fires of cremation, and is thoroughly reddened over its whole surface, as two or three of the other blocks are in part.¹¹

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The foregoing details, though, I fear, a little wearying, appeared desirable, in order that our members may be better able to judge for themselves respecting the characteristic features of these cup-incised stones. As a kindly interest was manifested in the particulars when first noted, our members may now form their own conclusions as to the purpose which would be answered by them.

1.—They belong to the *first type* of the late Sir J. Y. Simpson's "Archaic Sculpturings," being "cups of various sizes in rows, or irregularly grouped." There is only a faint trace of the existence of the

¹⁰ There is no trace of ochre or pigment in the cup. At Skaill, in Orkney (*Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, Vol. VII., p. 74), stone urns or cups were discovered in an underground, or rather sand-blown, Pict's House or Weem. "In one case a stone cup was found with a circular lid, each showing traces of a red pigment. In another case the cup and lid were triangular." Mr. Evans (*Ancient Stone Implements*, pp. 397, 398) records several examples of stone cups found in Scotland chiefly, but of an ornamental character, and they "probably belong to no very remote antiquity."

¹¹ By the kindness of the Duke of Northumberland, Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16, being among the most characteristic and interesting of these cup-incised stones, have been presented to the Museum of our Society.

second or later type in the Pitland Hills stone No. 13—namely, those where the cup is, he says, “surrounded with a single ring or circle, the ring complete or incomplete.” The example No. 6 approaches his fourth type, having “a straight line or duct” connected with the cups. This also is the only instance among them which could be considered in the light of an “Archaic map or plan,” which found favour at first among many excellent archaeologists, such as the Rev. Wm. Greenwell, Mr. Albert Way, Dr. Graves, and Sir Gardner Wilkinson. The latter thought the more complicated forms of concentric circles, single cups, and intersecting or radial grooves, might be compared to the plans traced in time of danger by the Arabs in the sand, to guide the movements of a force coming in their direction. The only specimen of this kind in North Tynedale may be seen in the portico at Chesters, where a large slab of sandstone is incised with cups, singly and in groups, and has intersecting irregular grooves or channels. I am not aware whence it has come, but it is evidently of Ancient British origin.¹²

2.—We cannot be wrong in attributing to these cup-marked stones a religious meaning and symbolism; of what precise nature, it is difficult to say, however. They suggest “the notion,” Mr. Greenwell remarks (*British Barrows*, p. 343; see also *Incised Markings on Stones*, p. 10): “that they are or may have been figures, after a very rude and conventional manner, of some object embodying an idea that involved the deepest and most esoteric principle of the religion held by these people. The *tau* symbol of Egypt, the pine-cone of Assyria, the *triangular-shaped stone* of India, the cross of Christianity, outward expressions of that which has been in almost every religion its most sacred belief, may well have been, however different in form, yet the same in essence with these mysterious pits and circles.” Being connected with funereal rites gives them a religious character, and probably symbolises the hope of a life beyond this life. They may be associated with the sun and moon worship, which is the

¹² This stone is 3 feet in length by 2 feet 6 inches in breadth, of irregular form. It has five incised cups on each side of a wide, slightly curved channel, which crosses the stone at nearly its widest part. Two other grooves intersect this longest channel, one forming a segment of a circle. At the opposite end of the slab are two nearly parallel grooves passing towards the largest hollow. The ten cups vary from 1½ inches to 3 inches in diameter, and are from half an inch to an inch in depth.



CUP-MARKED STONE,

Discovered a little to east of N. Gateway, CILVRNVM.

(This plate presented by J. CLAYTON, Esq., V.P.)



oldest of religious "cults." When the diggers at the Pitland Hills burial-mound disinterred these stones, the oval, gibbous moon-shaped, and circular hollows were filled with clay, so that the cups had quite escaped their notice. When I removed the clay, it possessed unusual tenacity, and an unctuous feeling and nature. From the Pyrenees to Scandinavia the traditions of the people connect these cups and the larger bowls or basins called "marmites du diable," and in Germany "stones of the dead," with the holding of offerings to the souls of the departed, "who were waiting again to be clothed with a human body, to appear among mortals. The prosperity of the living would depend on their good will." I have almost come to the conclusion that in this Pitland Hills barrow, at least, these cup-incised stones have held the place of the floral wreaths and crosses which Christian mourners place upon the "last home" of their beloved dead. Even at the present day, M. Desor and others have found that in many places throughout Europe these hollowed stones are filled with butter or lard—a superstitious relic of a very far-distant age.

3.—These Archaic sculpturings, I consider, were probably the work of the Gadhelic or elder Celtic race—not Neolithic, but very early Bronze-using men.¹³ The same people gave the name to the neighbouring "Mill (or Mael) Knock" camp; and perhaps worshipped around the "Devil's Stone," by the Birtley Holy Well, on which great isolated rock appear several "cups," three of them being in a straight line, which can scarcely all have been formed by natural sub-aerial forces as geological "pot-holes."¹⁴

¹³ There is only one indication of a later date, if it be such, for this barrow and its cup-incised stones, namely, that a portion of a hand-mill or quern, No. 12, is present. This has been thought to resemble some hand-mills found with Roman remains. I have found them broken up and used in building the walls of Romano-British dwellings. In the chief hut-circle in the Gunnar Peak camp, a rude mortar of stone was lying on the sunny side of the doorway with the stone pounder beside it. These seem to have been in later use than the querns in the camps of North Tynedale. Mealing-stones and corn-crushers with their bed-stones slightly concave have been discovered in the Swiss lake-dwellings. Querns and mortars were used at a very early date, and down to very recent times in the North of England. (See Note at the end of this paper.)

¹⁴ A very curious legend associates the worn cups and hollows upon the weathered and channelled summit of this great detached rock with the foot-prints of a Satanic personage, who is said to have leapt towards the farther bank of the North Tyne river, about a mile distant, above Lee Hall. Miscalculating the distance, it is averred that in his descent he touched the projecting rocks in the river-bed, which bear much larger hollows upon them in the form of indubitable water-worn "pot-holes," about 2 feet in depth by 1 foot in diameter, and then fell into the deepest abyss, according to popular belief, in the whole course of the North Tyne, where he was *drowned!* Hence the name by which it is still called—"The Leap-Crag Pool."

“The tomb was, to the Neolithic mind, as truly the habitation of the spirits of the dead as the hut was that of the living. It was the home of the dead chieftain, and the centre into which the members of the family or clan were gradually gathered, and where they led a joyous and happy life, similar to that which they enjoyed on earth.”—(Boyd Dawkin's *Early Man in Britain*, p. 289.)

A similar belief prevailed in later pagan times in Britain and elsewhere, and among succeeding races. In this particular burial-mound cremation as well as inhumation occurs, the former practice being supposed to be unknown to the Iberian Neolithic, the later Stone-using Allophyllian or Turanian people, who, it is believed, buried their dead not in “round” but in “long” barrows, of which latter we have no example in Northumberland. Of the two stone-lined graves in this Pitland Hills cairn, one contained a human skeleton, almost perfectly preserved, the adult man having been laid to rest in the usual contracted position, with a “food-vessel” at the head. The cranium was of a markedly *brachy-cephalic* or *round-headed* type, distinct from the *dolicho-cephalic* or long-headed, whom the former conquered, because they were a metal, that is, a bronze-using race. This intruding race is now identified with the earliest Aryan immigrants into Western Europe and the British Isles, the “*Goidels*,” as they are sometimes called, whom the later Welsh, iron-using invaders conquered in their turn and drove into the Highlands of Scotland, the Isle of Man, and Ireland.

Two of the cup-sculptured stones I myself found *in situ*, projecting over, in one case, the cover-slab of the larger cist at the south side, and, in the other case, over the smaller and more elevated cist at the south-east angle, which was filled with unctuous and very tenacious clay, the body having entirely disappeared. Between the two inhumations, where most of the cup-incised stones were found, the fires of cremation and of the funereal feast had raged with great fierceness. These cup-marked slabs are especially associated with burnt bodies—of which two examples were present in this barrow; the cremated ashes of a child being contained in a beautifully-ornamented cinerary urn, unfortunately crushed, and those of an adult in a circular cavity scooped out of the solid limestone rock. There was thus, as on the Yorkshire Wolds and elsewhere, a contemporary use of both burial

customs. No trace of metal, indeed, appears; but in that probably transitional period after the conquest of the Neolithic people by the less numerous invaders, bronze weapons and implements would be too precious to the living in their comparative poverty to be willingly buried with their dead, however greatly lamented and honoured.

It is not necessary to believe that these incised stones have been graven by tools of metal. A sharp-pointed implement of flint, or even angular fragments of native limestone such as were found with the inhumated chief, would answer the purpose, as a practical master-mason at Birtley assures me. Dr. Wise, in his *History of Paganism in Caledonia* (p. 59), mentions a suggestion of Mr. Stephens, in his *Incidents of Travel in Central India*, that the elaborately sculptured stones at Copan and elsewhere may have been prepared with pieces of flint or obsidian, or by the rotation of a piece of hard wood; and he found that circles and cups, such as are also found on stones in that region, could be thus prepared without difficulty on whin-stone, on the Argyleshire schist, and even on hard Aberdeen granite.¹⁵

From the freshness of the sculpturings in this Pitland Hills barrow these singular and mysterious memorial stones seem to have been graven at the time as part of the solemn obsequies of the more honoured dead. Hence a traditional sanctity may have attached to them through succeeding ages, because we find them placed occasionally as "survivals" of a past religious observance in the walls or upon the floors of dwellings in Romano-British times. They occur in the earth-house or "weem" at Tealing, in Forfarshire (*Scotland in Pagan Times—The Iron Age*, by Dr. Joseph Anderson, pp. 299, 300); in the crannog or lake-dwelling of Lochlee, Tarbolton, Ayrshire (*Ancient Scottish Lake-Dwellings*, by Dr. Munro, p. 108); and elsewhere in Scotland. In North Tynedale I have met with one cup-marked stone in a hut-circle at High Carry House (*Archaeologia*, Vol. XLV., p. 363), and another in the West Farm "Camp," near Birtley. Also a third, like the preceding, with a single cup incised, in the large oblong dwelling in the Gunnar Peak Camp, near Barrasford (*Arch.*

¹⁵ Sir J. Y. Simpson (*Archaic Sculpturings*, p. 122) describes a similar successful experiment made for him with a flint and a wooden mallet. The question was also practically solved during the International Anthropological Congress held at Paris in 1867, by M. Alexandre Bertrand, Director of the Museum of Saint Germain.

Aeliana, New Series, Vol. X., p. 28), where a second and larger much-weathered slab was found, with five cups on one face and three on the other. Besides the large slab in the portico at Chesters, with at least ten cups and several intersecting channels, there is another in one of the recently-excavated Roman buildings (from which the windowed apse projects), near the margin of the North Tyne, in the Chesters Park. It is placed in the interior wall, in what appears to be a built-up doorway, and has upon it five incised cups, small, and irregularly grouped.

The modern Hindoo, I have somewhere read, uses these cups graven in stones and rocks as aids to religious meditation, and, failing their presence, he will gaze long and intently into the cup-like hollow of his own hand, in order to assist devotional feeling. The examples of the "survival" of such pit or cup-marked slabs among the Romanized Britons on or near the Great Barrier Wall of Hadrian, even at CILURNUM, as well as in the out-lying hill and vale forts, bring us down to, at least, the second century of the Christian era. At that time the religion of Mithras, with whose worship these cup-symbols have been supposed to be associated, was the favourite religion over the whole Western Empire. But ere long, under Constantine the Great, if not before, the Persian Sun-god "paled his ineffectual fires" in presence, even in far-off Britain, of a luminary infinitely more glorious—the Divine and Eternal "Sun of Righteousness," Christ, who had arisen "with healing in his wings" for "all nations of men" that "dwell on all the face of the earth."

N O T E.

It may be of advantage very briefly to describe the cup-incised stones, hand-mills, and mortar represented in the companion photograph given with this paper (p. 274). We may begin with the object on the left hand (18)—a mortar, 16 inches long by 15 inches broad, and 6 inches in thickness, with the central hollow 7 inches in diameter and 5 inches in depth, much smoothened by use. It was found in a camp at the east end of the Gunnarton or Barrasford Crags, on Mr. Riddell's property. Next to it (19) is a cup-marked stone from

the Birtley West Farm Camp, 12 inches by 11 inches, and 6 inches thick. The cup is 3 inches in diameter, and three-quarters of an inch deep. The upper left-hand slab (20) is of indurated sandstone, which I found between Wallington and Cambo; it was given to me by the late Sir W. C. Trevelyan. It is 9 inches each way and 3 inches in thickness, and nearly resembles one found supporting a cinerary urn in a neighbouring cairn at "The Fawns,"¹⁶ by Mr. Greenwell and myself, only the latter had not the incomplete groove which, encircling the shallow cup, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, appears on this example. The third cup-incised stone (21) is from the large oblong dwelling in the Gunnar Peak Camp, and was found among the walling stones at the south-east angle. Its dimensions are $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and 3 inches in thickness. The cups seem much worn by weathering, are shallow, and vary from 1 inch to 2 inches in diameter—five being on one side and three on the other.

The remaining objects are:—An octagonal hand-mill, upper and lower stone complete (22), which was used for grinding corn by a Cumberland farmer in this century, living on the "Fell-sides" near Penrith; and it is one of the very few examples still in perfect condition. The others (23, 24, 25) are two upper stones and one nether mill-stone from the same district; the remaining smaller upper stone (26) being from the Carry House Camp, near Birtley.

¹⁶ *British Barrows*, p. 433.