

CHAPTER XV.—THEIR CONNECTION WITH ARCHAIC TOWNS
AND DWELLINGS.

When cut upon rocks *in situ*, the cups and rings have usually been found, in Northumberland, within the walls of archaic camps or towns, or placed at a small distance from them. At Old Bewick, some of the sculptured stones stand both within and without the great and striking ramparts of that ancient British city; and at Rowtin Lynn and Chatton Law there are walled camps or citadels in the immediate neighbourhood of the sculptured rocks; and the sculptured rocks themselves are included within their secondary defences or out-towns (see *ante*, p. 50). We have found the same observation to hold good in reference to examples of other isolated cut stones in Northumberland, Cornwall, Isle of Man, &c.

But in highly cultivated districts the march of agricultural improve-
without any central cup or side duct. On the same rock were initials and crosses carved out. Dr Mitchell found also circular marks on the rock, varying in diameter from ten to thirty inches—of an older date, and some of them turf-covered—which had been made, not by a knife, but by a pick or pointed chisel. The larger circles are averred by the natives to be of Danish origin.

ment has generally swept away all traces of ancient human habitations in the neighbourhood of the sculptured cists and monoliths; though not always. We have, for example, found (p. 45), within a few miles of Edinburgh, the carved kistvaen at Craigie Hill placed outside the ramparts of an ancient walled town; and the monolith at Comiston occupying a similar position (p. 46).

There exist no precise facts to fix the age at which the ancient British towns at Old Bewick, Rowtin Lynn, Craigie Hill, Comiston, &c., were inhabited; but probable data bearing on the point may yet be recovered in the form of buried tools, pottery, and weapons—as, for example, even in the varying and particular forms of their flint arrow-heads—in the special types of their walls and defences—in the characters and shapes of their included hut and house foundations and pits, &c. Wanting, however, still any adequate facts to determine the exact age of these towns or forts, we cannot through them approach with any accuracy the era of the archaic sculptures connected with them. Nor must we forget, in attempting to reason from the age of these ramparted dwelling-places, that in all likelihood—in ancient as in modern times—the same spots served for cities and communities through many long generations; and that the sculptures may belong to their earliest and not to their latest period of existence.

Within these archaic towns and camps no lapidary circles and cups have yet, I believe, been found in immediate connection with the stones of their hut foundations, circles, and pits—the dwelling-places of their olden inhabitants. They have been discovered, however, upon the stones of single human dwellings probably equally old. Among the most antique types of artificial human habitations in this country are our underground houses or “weems.” I have already adduced instances of one or two of these underground weems having, in their structure, stones sculptured with rude cups and rings, &c. The origin and general age of this type of artificial human dwelling we know not, though the rude materials and relics occasionally found within them prove the earlier forms of them to be very ancient. But some facts show that the ring and cup cuttings were as old or older than the date of the building of the most ancient type of these weems; for in one or two archaic earth-dwellings of this kind, blocks of stone, carved with ring and

cup cuttings (see Plates XX. and XXV. fig. 3), have been discovered both in the foundations and roof of the weems, where they had apparently been introduced and used, after serving other functions as sculptured stones; and possibly at so advanced a date from the time of their carving, that all reverence for the sculptures themselves had died out in the minds of the generation who used them as simple building material.¹

These underground weems are seemingly artificial representations of those natural caves which formed in all likelihood, at a still earlier period, the dwellings of our archaic forefathers. On the coast of Fife there are several of these natural caves or "weems," as they are still called in that district. One, which was lately opened near Easter Wemyss, contained numerous relics of bones, broken and split for the extraction of the marrow, as in the bones of the ancient Danish midden-heaps. In another cave, nearer the village of Easter Wemyss, which I visited with Dr Dewar, I found faded appearances of some depressions or cups with small single circles cut on the wall. Probably a more minute and extensive search in these caves would discover many more such carvings;² and it is not impossible that they or similar rude sculpturings

¹ The edges, however, of the rings and cups upon the large stone from the weem at Letham Grange, described at p. 41, are still so sharp as to show that the block had not been greatly exposed and weathered before it was buried in the foundation of this underground house. Could the builder of this weem have cut these markings upon the stone, with the hope of thus investing it with any sacred and protective character, before he placed it in the foundation of his dwelling?

² I leave this sentence as it was written, above two years ago. Shortly after that period I revisited Wemyss to inspect the other caves of the district, and make more minute observations than I could do in my first hurried visit, and discovered on the walls of some of them many carvings of animals, spectacle ornaments, and other symbols, exactly resembling in type and character the similar figures represented on the ancient so-called Sculptured Stones of Scotland, and like them, probably about a thousand years old. The small circles and cups which I saw in the Court Cave on my first visit, proved, on more careful inspection, to be the faded fragments of ends of two or more so-called "sceptres" or sceptre ornaments. On the occasion of my revisiting the caves, I was accompanied by Drs Joseph Robertson, Duns, and Paterson; but my esteemed friend Mr John Stuart, who has so admirably collated our Sculptured Stones, declined to make one of the party, as he deemed it im-

may yet be detected on the walls of those caves which, from their containing fragments of the bones of men and animals, with weapons, and other rude works of human art, are known to have been, in very distant and remote times, the dwellings of man ; such as Kent's Hole, Wokey Hole, Brixham Cave, and the old inhabited caves of Belgium, France, &c.