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Contributors

Welch, L. B.
Richardson, J. M.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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183 Euston Road
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T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
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AN
ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTION
OF
PRE-HISTORIC RELICS

Found Near Wilmington, Ohio.

Published by Dr. L. B. Welch and J. M. Richardson.

1879.
JOURNAL STEAM PRINT,
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INTRODUCTION.

It has been too often the case that persons who have come into possession of relics of interest, and particularly those pertaining to Archæology, have given too little attention to time, place and circumstances under which they were obtained, thereby leaving room for doubt and discredit to assert themselves. Having an intimate knowledge of the locality where the within described relics were found, as well as a long and intimate personal acquaintance with the parties who made the discovery, we are at a loss to express how great would be our chagrin did we for a moment think that any doubt could be entertained as to the genuineness of the articles. And having no other object in view than the advancement of science, it would indeed pain us deeply should we think our honesty of purpose doubted.

L. B. WELCH, D. D. S.

WILMINGTON, O., April 15, 1879.

THE mound is situated upon the road leading from Wilmington to Harveysburg, and known as the Wilmington and Waynesville Pike, and about three and a half miles from the former place, due west, upon the Sparks farm, and has long been known as the Sparks Mound. It is on the north side, and perhaps 200 yards from the pike. In shape, the mound is almost round, being forty feet north and south by forty five east and west, and in height six and a half feet. As the timber was removed but about four years ago, and the ground has never been plowed but once, the mound is perhaps near its original height. The earth of which the mound is composed is of the same character as that found in the fields adjacent, being the yellowish clay of the glacial period. Upon the summit of the mound and about the center stood a large sugar tree (*Acer saccharinum*) stump; about fifteen or sixteen feet north of the center, stood another of same kind and size. There is nothing remarkable in the surroundings of the mound, save the evidence of an ancient roadway or approach leading up from the valley of Todd's Fork, which by a gradual rise brings one to the mound which, after being reached, is found to occupy a position from

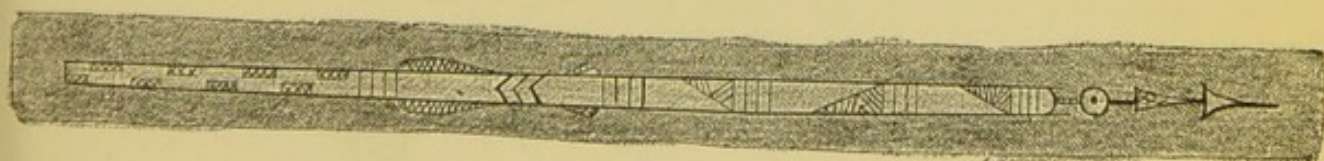
where a wide and extended view of the creek bottoms and the hills beyond can be had. Included in the landscape are other mounds.

The opening was made from east to west. After reaching a depth of three feet a layer of charcoal and ashes from four to six inches in depth, and which covered the entire surface of the mound, that is, what was the surface at the time the deposit was made, was struck, amidst which was found skeletons. The bodies had been buried in regular order, each having the head to the center and the feet toward the outer edge of the mound, radiating from the center as the spokes in a wheel radiate from the hub. Here reposed, side by side, infancy, manhood and old age, as evidenced by the fact that here was found that least perishable part of all the human anatomy, that portion upon which the ravages of time make slowest inroads—the teeth. Side by side with the nearly crownless teeth of old age we find the undeveloped teeth of youth and the fully developed teeth of middle age.

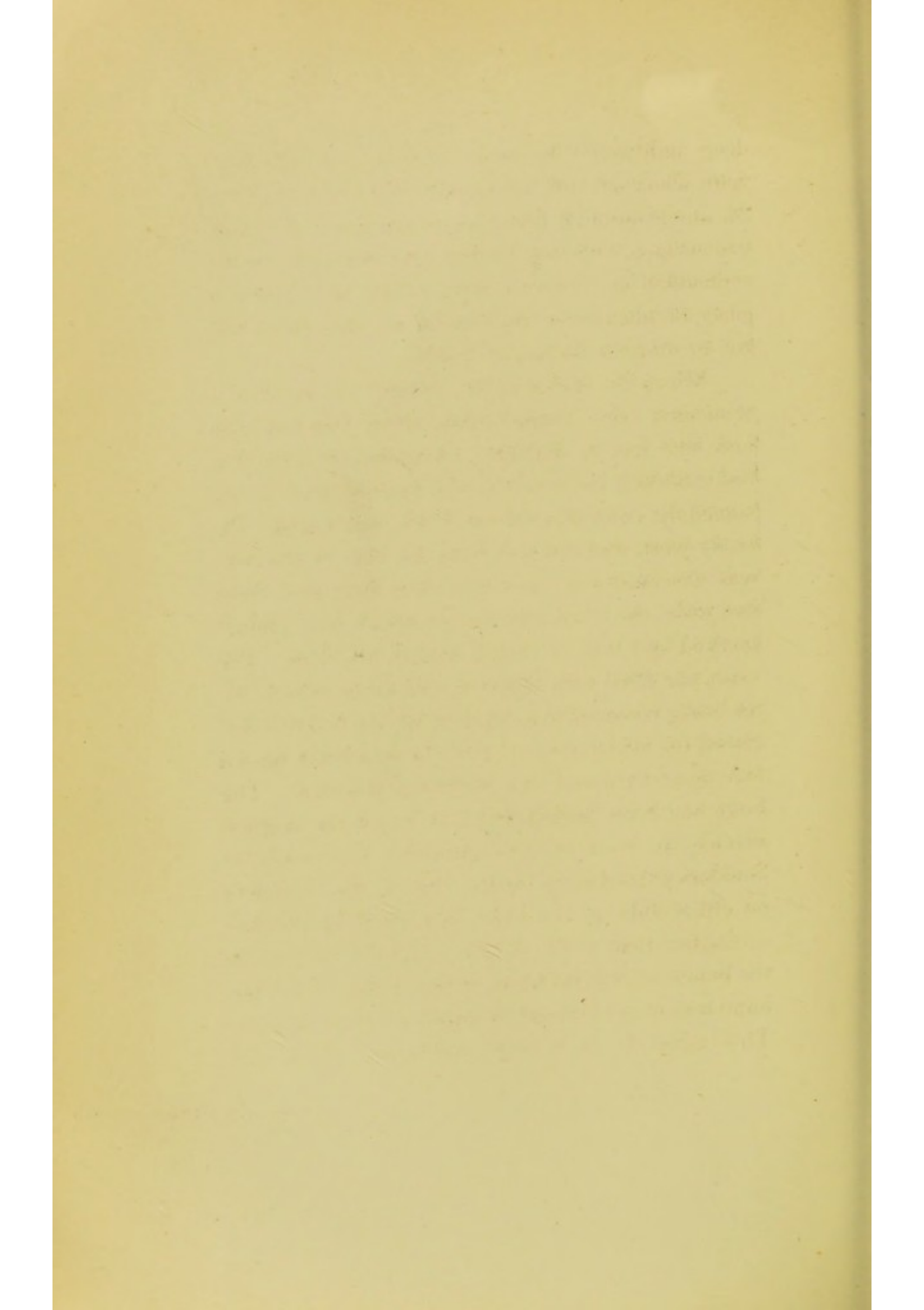
After penetrating the layer last described, the same characteristics marked the next three feet as did the first three. When the original surface of the ground was reached, and within eight feet of the center of the mound, two square holes were found, one south east and the other north east of the center. These holes were near eighteen inches



No. 1.



No. 2.—Reduced to one fourth real size.



deep and twelve by twenty inches, and were filled with charcoal and ashes with many bits of bone. At an elevation of about six inches above the original surface, and four or five feet from the center, embedded in charcoal and ashes, was found a piece of mica three eighths of an inch thick and ten by thirteen inches in width.

When the center of the mound was reached a truncated cone shaped mass, about two feet high and four feet in diameter, composed of clay that had evidently been mixed and burned until it assumed the color of a salmon brick, was found. Directly west, and one foot from the base of the cone was discovered a vault nine feet long and three feet wide, the head and foot of which was plainly marked by a wall of round, smooth boulders. The vault was filled with charcoal and ashes, which, after being removed to a depth of nearly two feet disclosed the skeleton of a man who had been buried face downward and in a horizontal position. The body had been buried two feet below the original surface or level of the ground. The walls of boulders extended no farther than to the shoulders on either side of the head, and those at the feet no farther than to the ankles. Upon a removal of the bones of the skeleton, within those of the left hand was found clasped the tablet marked figure 1. This tablet is of Waverly sandstone, three and

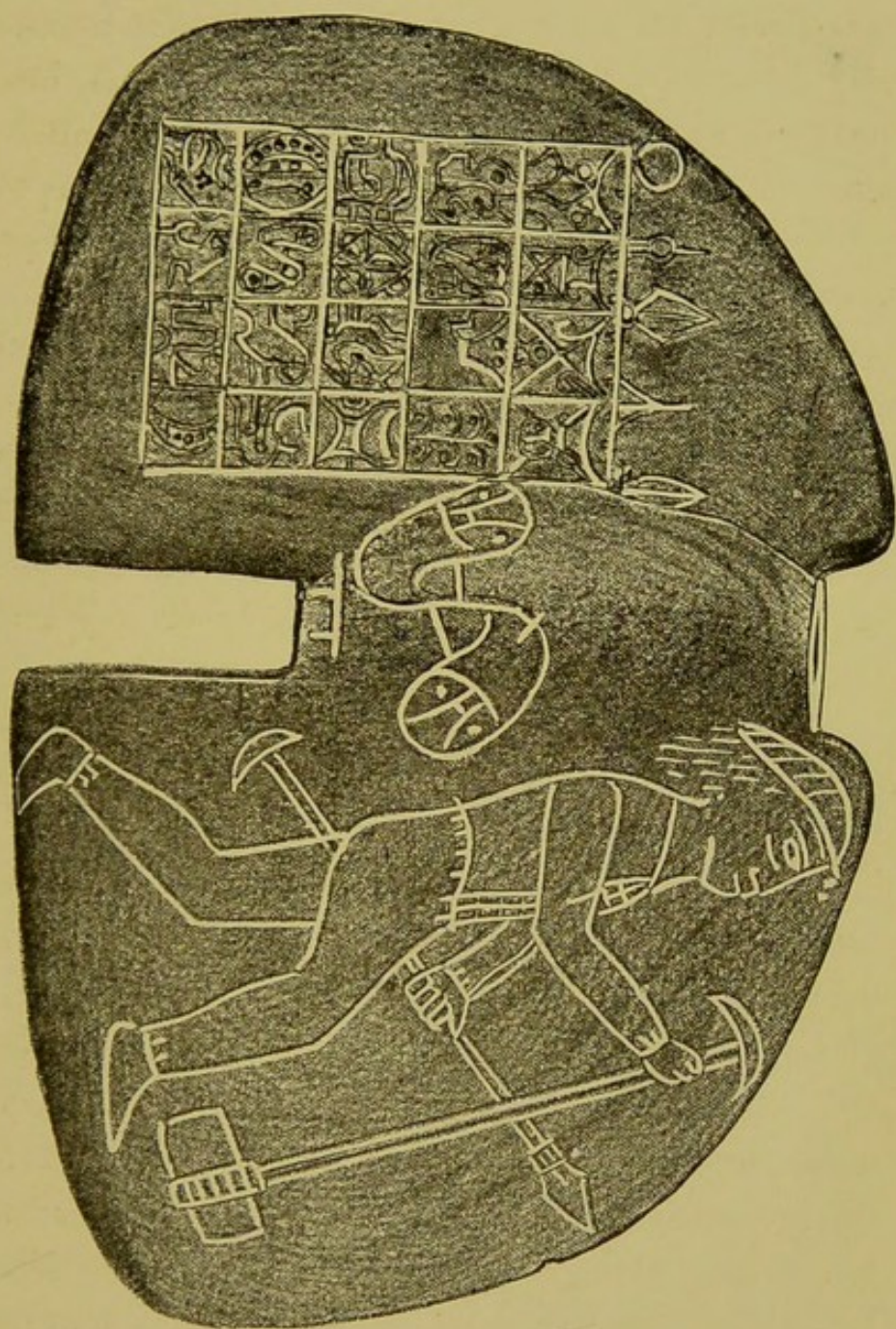
seven eighths inches wide, four and seven eighths long, and five eighths of an inch thick; the obverse being shown in Plate No. 1, it is only necessary here to speak of the reverse, which is unmarked save by five deep and three shallow grooves, and of these markings we have but this to offer as to their significance or meaning: Those acquainted with the character of the Waverly sandstone know that it possesses a fine sharp grit, and is well calculated for polishing purposes, and therefore we have no hesitancy in saying that so much of this stone as is missing was removed to be used in polishing the surface or drilling holes in some object of interest to the people or person to whom they belonged.

Plate No. 2 is an exact representation of the arrow that encircles the tablet, reduced to one fourth its real size.

This relic was found by Mr. J. M. Richardson on the 31st day of January, 1879, and is named the "Richardson Tablet," in honor of the discoverer. He was assisted in his labors by John W. Jones.

After a thorough investigation of the vault was made, and nothing farther of interest being found, the opening was filled up. Extremely cold weather setting in nothing more could be done at the time, but on the 12th day of the month following another excavation was commenced and continued in a

No. 3.

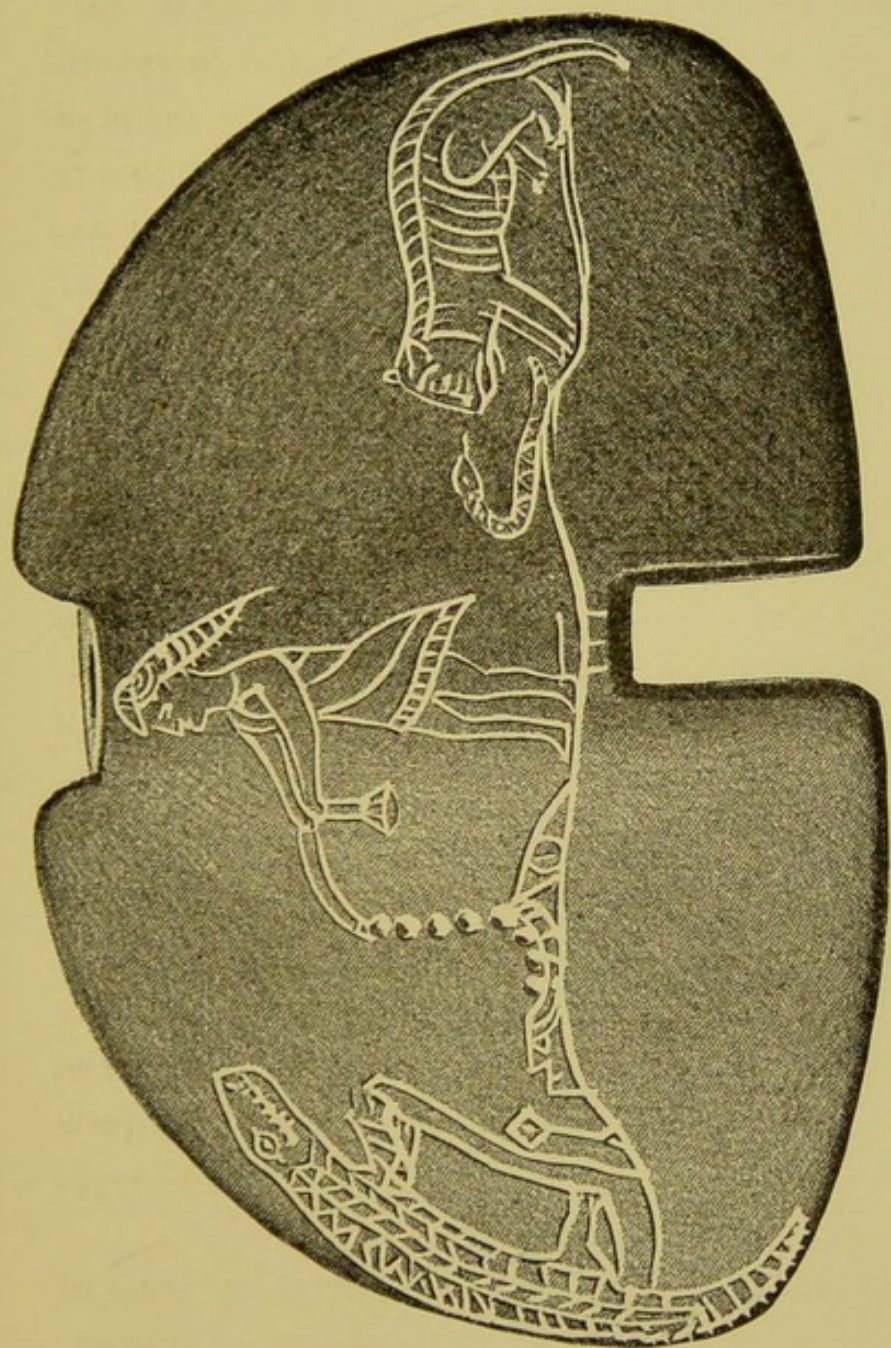


southwesterly direction from the vault. Scarcely two feet from the edge of the vault, and about the same distance from the base of the cone like center of the mound, was encountered a circle of round stones similar to those forming the extremities of the vault. This circle was upon the original surface of the ground, and in diameter was about thirty inches and was built up to a height of twenty inches. The space enclosed by these stones was filled with charcoal and ashes, and during their removal the piece shown in Plate No. 3 was found standing upon edge near the center of the pit, the bottom of which was formed of two stones, lying in a trough like shape.

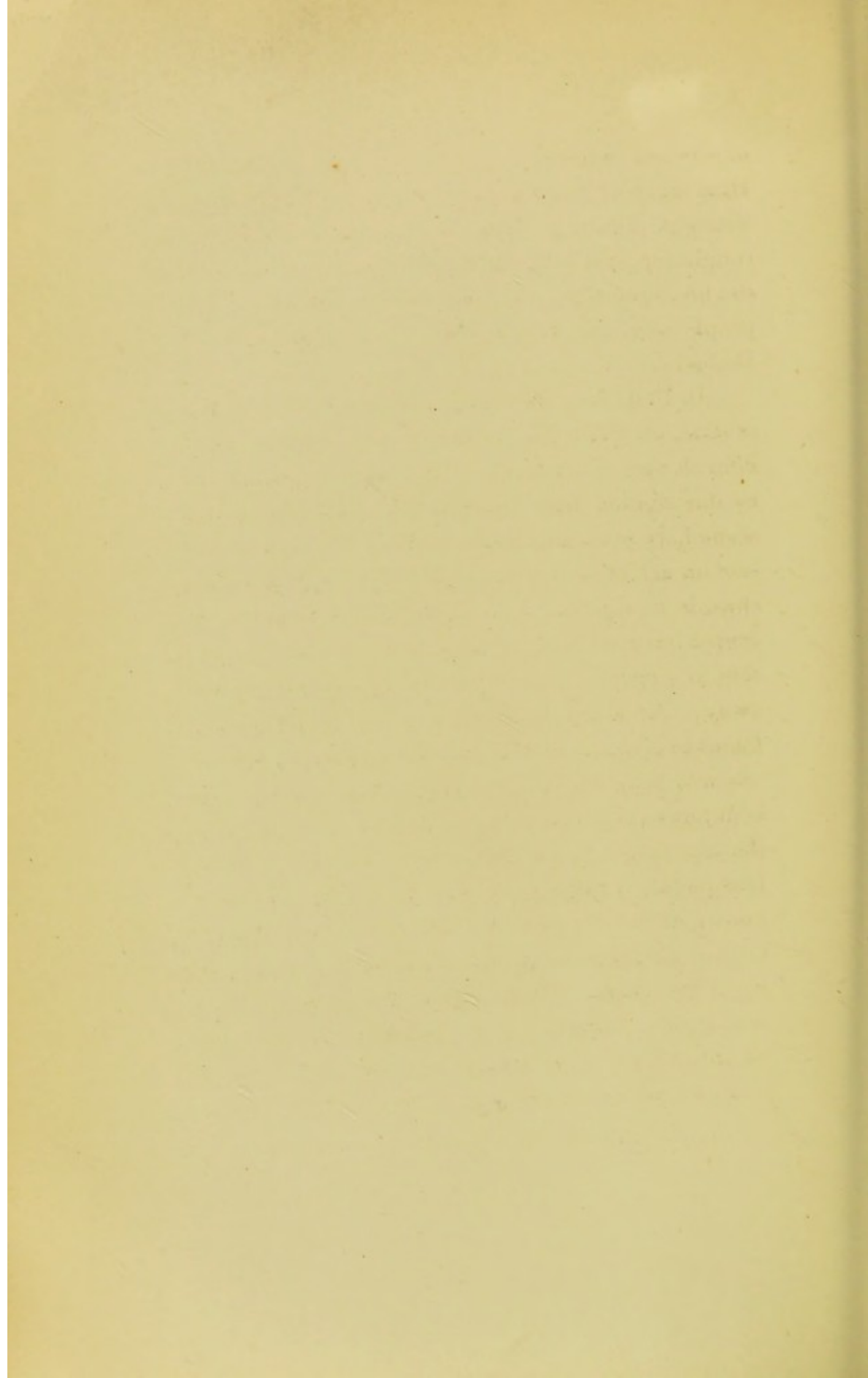
By reference to the engravings, Nos. 3 and 4, the reader will no doubt admit that this last piece found is perhaps the most interesting relic of that age about which so little is known and so much is speculative—the Mound Builder's Period—that has ever yet been found. Probably the most notable object in Plate No. 3 is the figure of a man, large, well formed, and of excellent proportions. The features are bold, massive, and are of such a character as a student of ethnology would expect to find in a man of the race that constructed such almost imperishable monuments as the Mound Builders have left throughout the Middle and Western States. The head is of the *brachycephalic*, or

short headed type ; it is squarely set on a neck and shoulders that are indicative of strength. These facts are all apparent, however, and need no farther explanation from us. In connection therewith we find an illustration of the use that was made of a certain half moon shaped stone implement that is frequently met with in archaeological collections, viz : an ornament, hand hold or finish to the spear and axe handle. Another mooted question is also settled, that of the manner of fastening the spear and axe upon their handles ; and another important matter is set at rest certainly beyond all doubt and that is that the so called Indian battle axe is not of Indian origin, but belongs to a people who evinced a skill in the formation of implements devoted to warfare or the chase far in advance of the red man, who only made use of the labor of other hands. The next thing in order is the costume, of which but little need be said, for all can see it and study it ; but we are greatly of the opinion that it is conclusive evidence that the wearer thereof was an inhabitant of a warm climate. As to the central figure, we can say but little ; but as it suggests to us the union of two bodies might it not be typical of marriage?

In the square or tablet upon the left wing of the butterfly is the center of interest, to us at least. And of this what can we say? What mean those



No. 4.



mysterious angles, curves, circles and squares? How much of history is hidden in these strangely wrought figures; how much that science has sought for, and how much of the origin, the habits, the life, language, and possibly the destiny of the people who are only known to us as the Mound Builders.

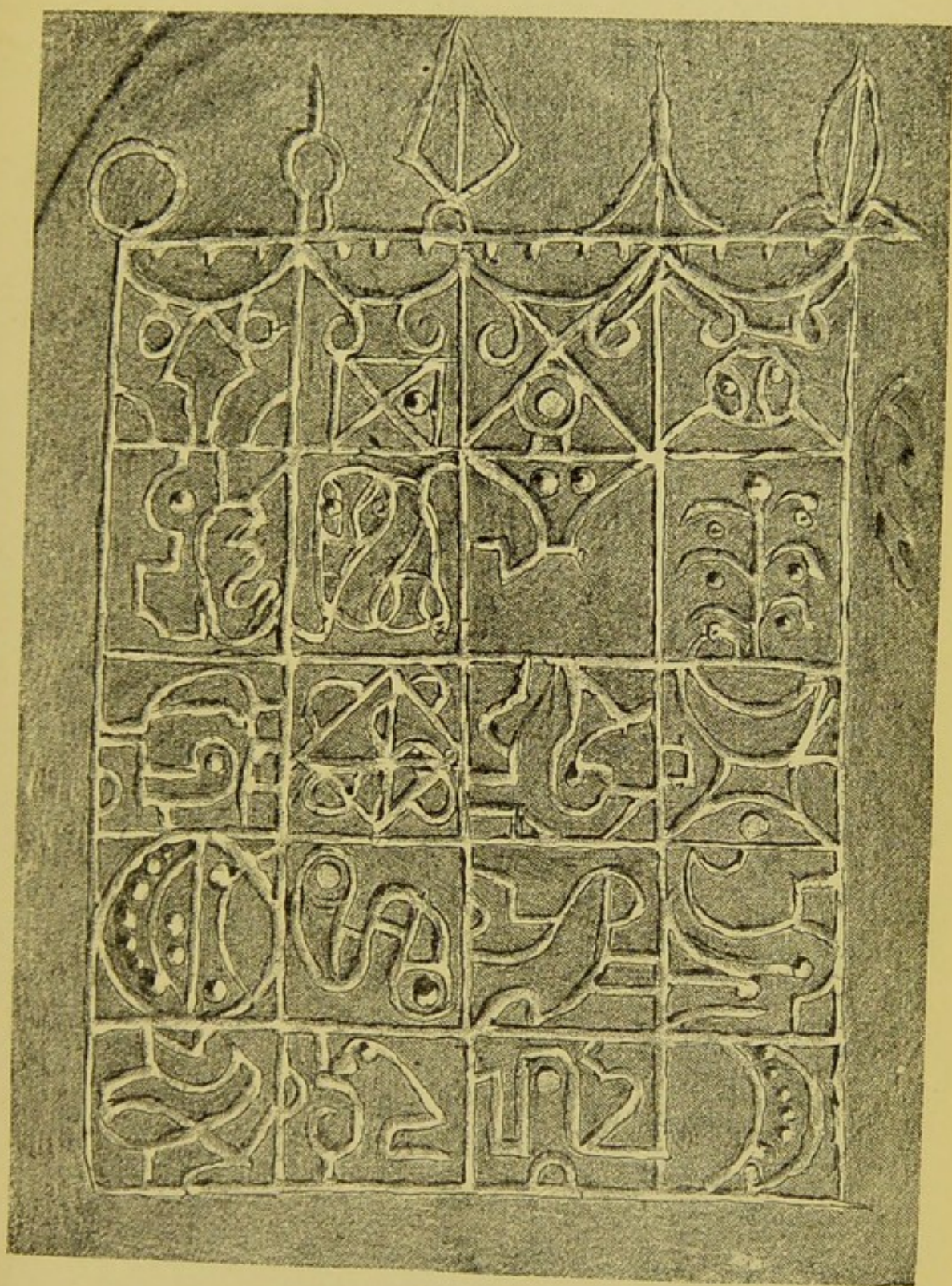
In Plate No. 4 we have a representation of the reverse of Plate No. 3, and in it we find the most difficult part of our task. So much is suggested by the figures here represented. Of what is the scene here presented emblematic? Does it represent an act of worship, propitiation, or is it sepulchral in its significance? The animals here represented have all been, at some time, objects of worship to a people that have not yet entirely passed away. As slabs of mica are almost invariably found in connection with human remains in ancient mounds, may not the object in front of the recumbent figure be a mica mirror? As to the reptile in the rear of the female figure we need say but little. It is plainly a rattlesnake, one of the species now known as the *Crotalus horridus*, and is in an attitude of antagonism to the animal upon the extremity of the plate. Here, again, we are presented with good evidence that the person represented is an inhabitant of a warm climate, as shown by the costume, which, in ornamentation, at least, resem-

bles the one worn by the male figure on the obverse of the stone.

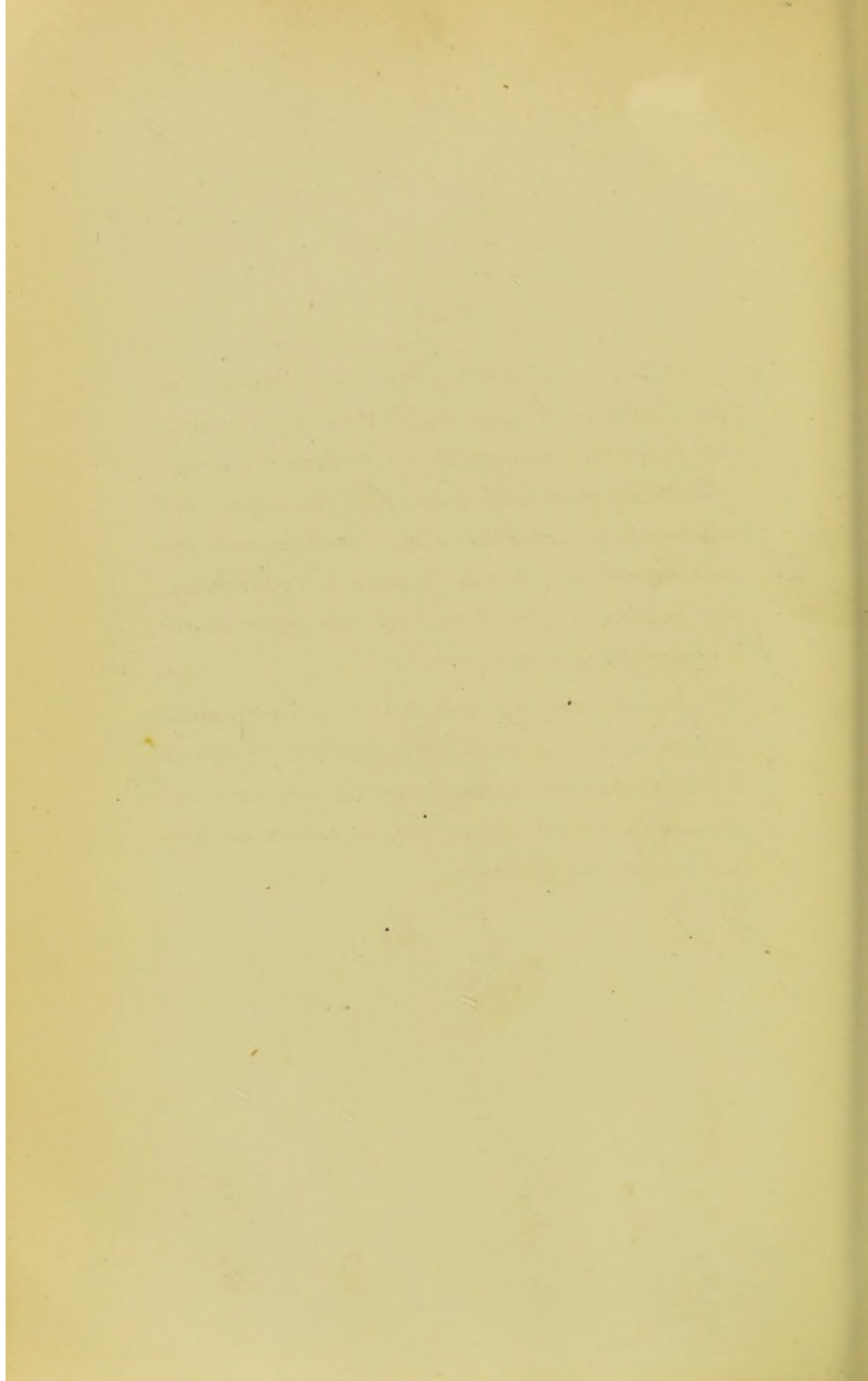
The last described relic has been named by Mr. Richardson the "Welch Butterfly," in honor of Dr. L. B. Welch, of Wilmington, O.

Plate No. 5 is a reproduction of the tablet on the left of Plate No. 3, enlarged two and a half diameters, for the purpose, if possible, of rendering it more legible.

We well recollect the cry of fraud that was raised against the Cincinnati Tablet when it was found, and that the circumstances connected with the discovery of it was of such a character as to possibly throw some discredit upon its genuineness, we do not dispute; but as to the circumstances attending the discovery of the relics herein described we are free to say that no chance for doubt exists, and having enjoyed a privilege no others ever have, that of seeing the Richardson Tablet and the Cincinnati Tablet (through the kindness of Dr. H. H. Hill, of Cincinnati) placed side by side, we do most unequivocally pronounce the Cincinnati Tablet genuine. Farther: we do unhesitatingly say that in these tablets we have the fact well established that pre-historic man, upon this continent, possessed a written language; not a pictorial language, but a language composed of different and distinct characters, well and plainly written.



No. 5.



A description of Plate No. 1 was published in the Cincinnati Commercial of February 22, 1879, which was furnished by Mr. O. S. Frazer, the regular Wilmington correspondent of that paper, and afterward, in connection with a description of the relic figured on Plates No. 3 and 4, in the Wilmington Journal of March 12, 1879, and again in the Commercial of a later date.

In conclusion we feel that it is due from us that the assistance rendered by Frank L. Fornshell in the preparation of the matter herein contained, be acknowledged, and we do hereby extend him our sincere thanks therefor.

