

Clifton Camps.

BY MR. G. M. ATKINSON.

THERE are three British stations on the Avon, one at Clifton, and two on the Somersetshire side opposite, called Bower Walls, and Stokeleigh.

That on Clifton Hill is placed on the highest point of St. Vincent's Rock, which rises nearly perpendicular 285 feet over the river at high water. It consists of a plot of ground on the very top of the hill, now covered with turf, and containing between three and four acres. It is surrounded by two ditches, which form three aggers, or ramparts. The inner rampart is 293 yards in circuit.

It rises about three or four feet above the level of the area, probably there was once a wall upon it. When the turf is removed, a quantity of lime or soft loose mortar is seen among the stones, and traced to the depth of two or three feet, and a slight layer of charcoal is found under this mortar in some places.

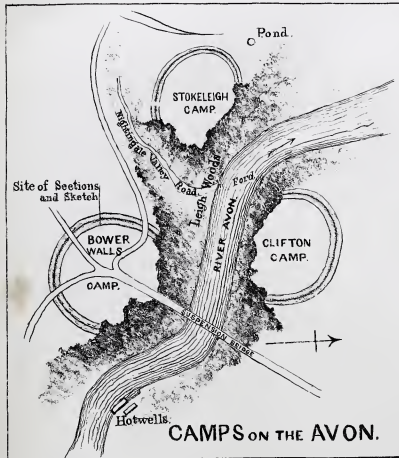
The ramparts are formed in most places by digging out the natural rock and finishing with earth, or loose stones. The entrance is on the north-eastern side. In the western corner is an inclosure, about 40 yards square, from this corner, a foot-way slopes down towards the river with a regular descent, and in this place at low water, during

spring tides, the river may be easily forded. The remains of an artificial ford founded on a natural ledge of rock, is here intended to form a communication between the camps on each side of the river. On quitting the river there may be seen a piece of hard road leading up the valley, now called the Nightingale Valley. On following up this valley, the other two camps are situated on the very summit of the precipices, one on the right, and the other on the left hand. The easternmost, that nearest to Bristol, is called Bower Walls. It is bounded to the east by a precipice, which renders all artificial defence unnecessary, and measures about 270 yards. The northern point appears about a quarter of a mile from the nearest point of Clifton Camp, in a straight line across the river. On a still day a man may speak across. It is about the same distance across the valley to the nearest point of Stokeleigh Camp. On the north-west side this camp is bounded by another valley, about 155 yards long.

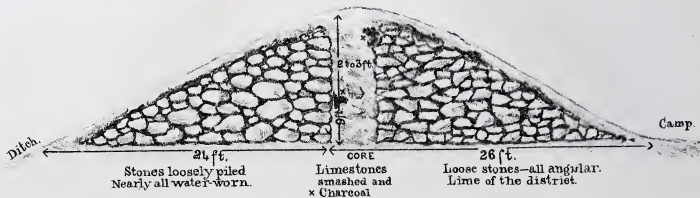
These precipices are connected by three ramparts, enclosing an oval space, now overgrown with forest trees, and containing about seven acres. The highest rampart was about 18 feet above the area inside. It is in the parish of Ashton. The suspension bridge cuts into it at Clifton. Bower Walls is synonymous with "Borough Walls," derived from Saxon "Burgh," and proves that the memory of habitation there had reached Saxon times.*

The western is called Stokeleigh Camp, it measures 280 feet, and is calculated to contain about eight acres. The north side rests on the precipice. The top of the rampart is from 10 to 14 feet high above the area, and from 25 to 30 above the bottom of the ditch, and overgrown with forest trees. Beyond this ditch is another, 12

* See the plan of river Avon, and three camps.



CAMPS ON THE AVON.



SECTIONS—BOWER WALLS CAMP.



feet deep, and 36 wide ; and also a third. These ramparts and ditches gradually sink into the declivities on each side. There are evidences of buildings by the mounds, stations for signals perhaps, as it commands an extensive prospect. Within the area, near the north-western entrance, is a subsidence of the ground, perhaps the mouth of a well. Somewhere in this camp (Barrett's His. p. 20), was once found a stone with a hole in the middle, probably a hand-mill. Of the three camps, Clifton is unquestionably the parent of Bristol, the Caerodor, and by the Roman coins found down the hill can be traced the expansion of the settlers. It is strange to find a return to the old spot now taking place.
