

COPPER.

Every one knows that the region where Lake Superior borders on the northern part of Michigan abounds in copper, which occurs here in a native state and in immense masses, the separation of which and raising to the surface contribute in no slight degree to the difficulties of the mining process. Long before Europeans penetrated to those parts, the aborigines already possessed a knowledge of this wealth of copper. This fact became known in 1847, at which time the traces of ancient aboriginal mining of some extent were pointed out in that district. The circumstances of this discovery and the means employed by the natives for obtaining the copper being now well known, a repetition of those details hardly would be in place, and I merely refer to the writings relating to this subject.*

Copper was, indeed, the only metal which the North American tribes employed for some purposes before their territories were colonized by Europeans. Traces of wrought silver have been found, but they are so exceedingly scanty that the technical significance of this metal hardly can be taken into consideration. Gold was seen by the earliest travelers in small quantities (in grains) among the Florida Indians;† yet, to my knowledge, no object made of gold, that can with certainty be attributed to the North American Indians, has thus far been discovered.‡ The use of copper, likewise, was comparatively limited, and cannot have exerted any marked influence on the material development of the natives. The copper articles left by the former inhabitants are by no means abundant. As an example I will only mention that, during a sojourn of thirteen years in the neighborhood of St. Louis, which is particularly rich in tumular structures and other tokens of Indian occupancy, I did not succeed in obtaining a single specimen belonging to this class. Copper implements, such as axes, chisels, gravers, knives, and points of arrows and spears, have been found in the Indian mounds and in other places; but most of the objects made of this metal served for ornamental purposes, which circumstance alone would go far to prove that copper played but an indifferent part in the industrial advancement of the race. If the ancient inhabitants had understood the art of melting copper, or, moreover, had nature furnished them with sufficient supplies of tin ore for producing

* Squier and Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1848. Foster and Whitney, *Report on the Geology and Topography of the Lake Superior Land District, Part I*, Washington, 1850. Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes of the United States, Vol. I*, Philadelphia, 1851. Lapham, *The Antiquities of Wisconsin*, Washington, 1855. Whittlesey, *Ancient Mining on the Shores of Lake Superior*, Washington, 1863. Sir John Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, London, 1865, &c.

† See: Brinton, *Notes on the Floridian Peninsula*, Philadelphia, 1859, Appendix III.

‡ In the Smithsonian Report for 1870, just published, the occurrence of gold beads in a mound near Cartersville, in the Etowah valley, Georgia, is recorded. Native gold is said to be found in the neighborhood, (p. 380.)