a chain in the parish church, and is now kept in the town hall. The ancient Greeks and Romans supposed the stars to be the home of the gods. Falling stones signified the descent of a god, or the sending of its image to earth. The envoys were received with divine honours. A meteorite which recently fell in India was decked with flowers, daily anointed with clarified butter, and subjected to ceremonial worship. From 400 B.C. to 300 A.D. coins were struck in honour of such divinities. As a rule the images were naturalistic in olden times, and became human-like afterwards. Among the meteorites in whose honour coins were struck were the Omphalos of Delphi, a black stone given to Uranos instead of the new-born Zeus, the stone of Astarte which fell as a star from heaven and was worshipped at Sidon, represented on a coin of the Emperor Elagabalus lying on a car, and the conical stone of Aphrodite Urania. The rarity of meteoric falls is opposed to the theory that meteoric iron was the material used by prehistoric man; and although some meteoric iron is malleable, and there are undoubted cases in which it has been successfully forged, the difficulty of obtaining tools suitable for cutting a meteorite makes it probable that this material was used only in exceptional cases, and that the first discovery of iron was due to the accidental melting of a rich iron oxide with charcoal.

The period of the first use of iron in Ancient Egypt has been warmly discussed. Some contend for its use in mythological times, while others would bring it as late as 600 B.C., and, disregarding all evidence of the discovery of iron remains, insist that stone, copper, and bronze tools were used exclusively up to that date, even in the building of the pyramids. These wonders of the world, the graves of Egyptian kings, were built 3000 years before Christ. Herodotus tells of the building of the Great Pyramid, stating that 100,000 men were employed for twenty years; and he expresses wonder at the amount that must have been spent on their board and clothing, and "on the iron with which they worked." The accuracy of the statements of Herodotus is borne out by the present condition of the Great Pyramid, which is built of granite blocks from the Upper Nile, lined with slabs of nummulitic limestone from Arabia. The magnificent temple at Thebes and the obelisks of a later period afford striking evidence of the technical skill, mathematical knowledge, and excellent tools possessed by the ancient Egyptians. The evidence of ancient Egyptian metallurgy and mining are not of less importance. Gold was, of course, the metal most prized. There is preserved in the museum at Turin a map, drawn 1400 years before the Christian era, showing the situation of some ancient gold mines—undoubtedly the oldest topographical plan in existence. Diodorus describes how these mines were worked by slaves, and gives a harrowing picture of the hardships they suffered in these ancient Egyptian penal settlements. That iron was known to the Egyptians, even in the earliest times, is evident from their conspicuous metallurgical knowledge, and from the facts that the working of granite and porphyry is scarcely conceivable without steel tools, that the oldest tombs have inscription referring to iron, and that sources of supply of manganiferous iron ore were found by Professor Bauerman in Upper Egypt. All possible doubt has been removed by remarkable archæological discoveries. An iron sickle, found by Belzoni under the feet of one of the sphinxes at Karnak, is deposited in the British Museum, and proves that the smith's art was practised at about 600 B.C. In 1837 a fragment of a wrought-iron tool was found in blasting operations in the Great Pyramid. This piece of iron, nearly 5000 years old, is also preserved in the British Museum. Analysis showed it to contain a small proportion of nickel; but as it also contained combined carbon, it was not of meteoric origin. In the British Museum there is also exhibited a lump of what is now iron rust, which was found wrapped up in a fabric with a mirror and tools of copper dating back to 3300 to 3100 B.C. Much stress is laid by supporters of the theory of the primitive use of meteoric iron on the interpretation of the Egyptian word for iron, "benipe," as "metal from the sky." In view of the fact that in Egyptian mural paintings blue is the conventional colour for iron, one cannot help suggesting that the word might be translated as "metal of sky-blue." Much of the metal used in Egypt was imported as finished material from Ethiopia, and later from Phœnician merchants. Indeed, it is probable that Ethiopia was the earliest centre of iron manufacture. The illustrations preserved of Egyptian iron manufacture show that the process was precisely the same as that still obtaining among Ethiopian races. On a stone, preserved at Florence, a negro slave is depicted working bellows from which the blast is conveyed by a bamboo pipe to a shallow pit in which the iron is smelted. In a second illustration is shown the forging of the iron by hammering it with a rounded stone on a stone anvil with wooden base. It is clearly proved by pictures on Egyptian tombs that bellows were in use in the fifteenth century B.C. This shows a distinct advance over the primitive method of smelting on a windy hillside; and it is curious to note that even at the present day furnaces with a natural air draught are used for lead-smelting in Bolivia. An idea of the relative value of iron in the fifteenth century B.C. is given by the story told by Herodotus (ii. chap., 135) of the beautiful Rhodopis, who, having amassed great wealth in Egypt, wished to leave a memorial of herself in Greece. She therefore determined to have something made, the like of which was not to be found in any temple, and to offer it at the shrine at Delphi. So she set apart a tenth of her possessions, and purchased with the money a quantity of iron spits, such as are fit for roasting an ox whole, which she presented to the oracle. Rhodopis lived in Egypt in the reign of Amasis (570 to 526 B.C.).

Turning to the eastern neighbours of the Egyptians, the Semitic peoples inhabiting the country between the Mediterranean and Persia, we find that iron was known to the Chaldeans from the earliest times. The action of rust has, however, prevented discoveries of much in the way of iron in the ruins of Babylon. Only iron rings and bracelets have been found. A cuneiform inscription in the British Museum is interpreted to mean "With an iron sword I slew another lion." In 1867 the discovery was made in the ruins of the palace of Khorsabad of a store of merchant iron perforated with holes to facilitate transport. It is evident that the kings of Assyria stored up in their treasure-houses masses of iron for building and war. The Assyrians were acquainted with steel, but, like all other ancient peoples, had no knowledge of cast iron.

In Syria the fame of the swords sold in the market at Damascus dates back to the earliest times. In the time of Abraham, Damascus was an important commercial centre. At a later date the Roman Emperor Diocletian had a sword factory there for his army; and even in the time of the Crusades the swords made of a combination of steel and wrought iron polished and lightly etched were prized throughout Europe. Iron was worked with skill; and long before Moses came to Canaan there was a high degree of civilisation in this promised land, that was inherited by the Children of