

THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN.

By SYDNEY B. J. SKERTCHLY, F.G.S.

Of H.M. Geological Survey.

(Continued from page 164.)

The Neolithic and Bronze Age discoveries in England, and elsewhere, have taught us much respecting the manners and customs prevailing in those times. But, as we have already pointed out, it is to the Lake-dwellings of Switzerland that we must look for most of our knowledge respecting the domestic habits of these early peoples.

One of the most striking facts in the study of pre-historic man is the singular uniformity of the stone monuments. Whether we take Great Britain by itself, or include all Europe—nay, even if we examine Asia and great part of Africa—we find similar erections, such as mounds (or *tumuli*), circles of stones (or *cromlechs*), standing stones (or *menhirs*), covered stone chambers (or *dolmens*), and so on. The most perfect type of these erections is a stone chamber, covered with a mound of earth, surmounted by one or more standing-stones, and surrounded with a stone circle, from which one or more double rows of stones lead outwards. This perfection is seldom attained. Most frequently only one or two of the features are present.

It has been wisely said that savage races are children in intellect, and close study has proved how infantile is the savage mind. Now, if we take our own children, and allow them full scope to carry out those architectural proclivities, which seem to be as natural to childhood as mischief, what do we find? Any sea-side resort will afford ample evidence. Armed with little spades, the embryo Wrens build dolmens, cover them with mounds, erect menhirs upon them, surround them with stone circles, and construct long avenues of stones. I have often been much struck with the exactitude with which little hands and minds have performed on a small scale what stronger hands and lesser minds had accomplished ages ago on a grander plan. Here, then, we see a simple explanation of the uniformity of stone erections in different parts of the globe.

These old stone structures were confidently ascribed to the Druids before prehistoric archæology became a science; just as, in country districts at present, the demolition of castles, church sculpture, and so forth, are, by the bucolic mind, ascribed to Oliver Cromwell—or, what seems much the same thing, to the Devil.

But we now know that ages before the Druids worshipped here, these structures stood as hoary monuments of the zeal of long-forgotten races; and I know that most of them were burial or holy places of the Stone and Bronze Ages.

It must not, however, be concluded that, even in Britain, all the tumuli and heaps of stones (*cairns*) belong to remote antiquity. Tumuli were occasionally built in England as late as the third century, and cairns are still erected in the Hebrides and other parts of Scotland.

An objection has sometimes been urged against the antiquity of these structures, that they are often too massive to have been erected by people ignorant of the use of metal. But this objection is at once removed by historical facts. The Tahitians, who, when first visited by Europeans, were quite ignorant of the use of metal, erected huge stone structures for the reception of the distinguished dead. One of these, described by Captain Cook, was no less than 267 feet long, 87 feet wide, and 44 feet high. The stones were four feet deep, and were neatly squared and polished. Similar instances might be cited from other places.

Respecting the dwellings of the Bronze Age, but little is known. In Germany and Italy there have been found rude earthenware urns of this age, representing huts. Some of these are round, with a door at the sides, and with tall, conical, thatched roofs. The lake-dwellings of this age have been already alluded to.

Of the dress of these people naturally but few examples remain. In the lake-dwellings linen cloth of rude texture has been found. The most interesting discovery, however, was made in Jutland, where singularly well-preserved bodies were found in certain tumuli. One of these had the head covered with a round, thick, close fitting woollen cap, covered with threads terminating in knots. The body was clothed with a woollen shirt, a woollen cloak, and woollen leggings. The head and feet were covered with woollen shawls, fringed at the bottom.

Their weapons and tools were of bronze, stone, wood, bone, and such like materials. The bronze implements were all cast, and they do not seem to have been able to cut or inscribe the metal; even the ornamentation (which is always free-hand) being cast.

Celts, used as axes and chisels, are plentiful; and the earliest, which are seldom ornamented, are of well-known Stone Age types. These, of course, are solid. Others are grooved for the readier attachment of the handle, to which they were further secured by cords passed through a loop in the celt. A third kind was hollow and looped, but none have as yet been found with socket-holes like hammer-heads.

The swords were all small, like large daggers, leaf-shaped, double edged, and more adapted for thrusting and stabbing than for cutting. The handles were small, without guards, and often ornamented.

Javelins and spear-heads are common. Bronze arrow-heads are rare, probably because flint was less expensive, more readily fabricated, and quite as effective. Indeed, at close quarters, a bow with stone-tipped arrows is almost as deadly as a rifle. Some of the North American Indians of the present day will discharge twenty arrows in a minute, with great precision, and with sufficient force to pass right through the body of a buffalo.

Fish hooks of bronze are pretty abundant in Switzerland, but very rare in Britain. Sickles are common, and so too are knives, of which, one peculiar type, shaped like a razor-blade, and often highly ornamented, is characteristic of the period. Personal ornaments are abundant, and consist chiefly of bracelets and ornamental headed hair-pins, some of which are over two feet in length. The bracelets are generally simple spiral bands, or rings open at the side.

With one exception, no inscriptions have been found on bronze implements, though they are by no means rare in the succeeding Iron Age. The one exception is a bronze celt, found in Rome, years ago, upon which is a well-fashioned inscription, in unknown characters.

The prevailing ornamentations are series of circles, and spirals, no authentic case being known of the representation of animals or plants, which were a feature in the Iron Age.

The use of the potter's wheel was unknown until the Iron Age. The pottery is often finer than that of the Stone Age, and though similar rude ornamentations adorn it, they are supplemented by circles and spirals, which were unknown in the earlier age.

Gold was known, but not silver, lead, or zinc. Glass beads were in use, but no vessels of this material have been found belonging to the Bronze Age.

Leaving the question of the habits and state of civilisation of the people of the Bronze Age for the present, we will now describe some of the features of the Neolithic and Newer Stone period.

We have already seen that in their mode of burial, so far as the structure of their tombs goes, they were very like their successors, but, on the other hand, they seldom if ever practised cremation.

Respecting their dwellings we know but little, save with regard to the lake-dwellings. It is, however, highly probable that, in inland localities, they erected rude structures, partly underground, and not very unlike some of the chambered Tumuli. We know that at the present time some savage races, such as the Kamshatdales, possess winter dwellings very much like some tumuli; and a tomb is often looked upon as a dwelling for the dead, hence we may infer that their houses were not unlike their tombs.

The dress of the Neoliths was chiefly of skin, but they manufactured rude textile fabrics of flax, straw, and probably of wool.

Their cutting tools were all of stone, and often of great beauty. Many of the celts are polished or ground smooth, and this, amongst other features, at once distinguishes this age from the Palæolithic. The arrow-heads are often exquisitely fashioned, and the marvellous delicacy of their workmanship can only be fully appreciated by those who have spent years in the practical study of stone weapons. Bone and wood, of course, were largely used.

The staple commodity for cutting-tools was flint, and they carefully sought out the localities where the best material existed. One of these is Brandon, in Suffolk, where the same bed of flint which was used by these old people is still worked for the manufacture of gun-flints. The remains of the old flint-pits are still extant, and they afford a striking example of the attainment of great ends by simple means. Many of them are forty feet deep, and their diameter at the top is not less than ten yards. From the bottom of these pits galleries were driven. These huge works were carried out by the aid of no better weapons than stone celts, and picks of deer horn.

Their pottery was very coarse, the clay being ill-worked, badly