

Although it is a little more than three hundred and fifty years since Canada became known to Europeans, and considerably less than that since the greater portion of this province afforded homes to pioneer settlers from the Old World, our knowledge of aboriginal life-history here is, in many respects, surprisingly deficient.

From living descendants of the old race nothing satisfactory can be gleaned. The traditions they possess, and which are mainly fabulous as a matter of course, contain little or nothing that affords any clue either as to the manner in which their ornaments, utensils and implements were produced, or the uses to which many of these articles were put. Neither do we gather as much as is desirable on these points from the writings of those who had good opportunities to examine and describe during the early periods of European settlement.

With regard, therefore, to objects that compose almost every archaeological collection worthy of the name, it may be said of many that, whether as to the processes by which they were fashioned, or as to their ultimate applications in savage economy, we are almost totally ignorant.

Aboriginal relics may be conveniently classified thus :—

- 1st. Those of which we know the mode of production and their uses, *e. g.*, arrow heads.
- 2nd. Those of which we know the mode of production, but are uncertain as to the use, *e. g.*, so-called breast-plates, and banner stones.
- 3rd. Those of which we know the use, but not the mode of production, *e. g.*, certain kinds of finely drilled beads.
- 4th. Those of which we know absolutely nothing.

European aboriginal relics are classified as palæolithic or neolithic, according to their degree of finish, the latter being of more recent origin and of superior workmanship. In this country, however, no such distinction can be made, for we find the rude and the more elaborate forms in various degrees of finish, in such circumstances as to indicate that all were made and used by the same people contemporaneously.

Many of the more elaborately formed and highly finished were, no doubt, for ceremonial, or, as we would say, for holiday use, the material and construction precluding any belief that economic utility was a consideration with the makers.

Again, many of the weapons we agree to call by specific names were, in all probability, applied to a variety of uses. Just as the dexterous backwoodsman finds in his trusty jack-knife a chisel, a spoke-shave, a scraper, a bit or gimlet, and even a saw, the Indian had in his spear or arrow-head that which would serve a variety of purposes. With the same weapon that slew his prey, he could skin the animal and cut it up. For excising a scalp, cutting thongs, severing a twig, smoothing handles or boring holes, his flint weapon would answer admirably.

A weapon found in considerable abundance is known as a "skinning knife." No doubt the article in question may have been employed in the manner indicated by this name, but it is quite certain that the main purpose of such instruments was warlike. They were chiefly used as tomahawks, or battle-axes, having been attached to handles by means of sinews or thongs. They are invariably made decreasing slightly in size from the edge to the head, so that when bound to a handle every blow administered would tend to tighten their hold. Occasionally these are found of exquisite finish, being perfectly symmetrical and highly polished.

It seems to be very evident that certain persons in each tribe devoted their time in great measure to the manufacture of implements which they no doubt gladly exchanged with others possessing less mechanical ability for the results of the chase, but we have no means of ascertaining the comparative values placed upon the various articles.

To the women, in all likelihood, was allotted the making of earthen vessels, fragments of which are of such frequent occurrence here and there all over the Province, and it must be acknowledged that they evinced considerable taste in modelling and ornamenting their pottery. Unlike the process of building in a coil, as employed by some of the more