

used by the Indians for grooving the shafts of their arrows. All arrows of the primitive Indians are found with three grooves from the arrow's shoulder, at the fluke, extending to, and conducting the air between, the feathers, to give them steadiness. These grooves, on close examination, are found to be indented by pressure, and not in any way cut out; and this pressure is produced, while forcing the arrow, softened by steam, through a hole in the tablet, with the incisor of a bear set firmly in a handle and projecting over the rim of the hole as the arrow-shaft is forced downward through the tablet, getting compactness, and on the surface and in the groove a smoothness, which no cutting, filing, or scraping can produce. It would be useless to pass the bow-string through the tablet, for the evenness and the hardness of the strings are produced much more easily and effectually by rolling them, as they do, between two flat stones while saturated with heated glue."

Thus, Mr. Catlin's experience is rather unfavorable to the supposition that the pierced stone tablets mentioned by me were used in condensing bow-strings. Yet, after all, they probably served for some similar purpose, which may be clearly defined hereafter by continued examination and comparison. I regard them as implements, and not as objects of ornament or distinction.*

The greenish slate is frequently the material of another numerous class of Indian relics of enigmatical character. I allude to those curious articles bearing a distant resemblance to a bird, which are pierced at the base with diagonal holes, evidently for suspension, the traces of wear being distinctly visible. They probably represent insignia or amulets. I have also heard the suggestion that they were used for removing the husk of Indian corn.†

Of much rarer occurrence than the articles thus far enumerated in this section are perforated implements somewhat resembling an axe with two cutting edges, or, more often, a double pick-axe, which, doubtless, were provided with handles and worn as badges of distinction by the superiors.‡ These objects are for the most part elegantly shaped, but of small size, and cannot have been applied to any practical use, their material, moreover, consisting generally of soft stone, more particularly of the greenish slate in question. It is evident, therefore, that they fulfilled a symbolical purpose, and were employed in the manner just mentioned.

* The Smithsonian Report for 1870, which has appeared since the above was written, contains, among other ethnological matter, an account of an exploration of mounds in Kentucky, by Mr. Sidney S. Lyon. Among the contents of one of the mounds was "a black stone with holes through it." *I have seen this kind of an instrument*, says Mr. Lyon, *used by the Pah-Utes of Southeastern Nevada, for giving uniform size to their bow-strings.* (p. 404.)

† A group of these singular objects is represented on page 239 of the "Ancient Monuments."

‡ Schoolcraft gives on Plate 11, Vol. I, of his large work, two colored half-size representations of such implements, which he calls "maces."