

mid. We know, moreover, that iron was equally unknown in Central America, and that by similar tools—untempered by the addition of tin, which the Egyptians early learned to mix with their copper,—the highly sculptured monuments of Mexico and Yucatan must have been wrought by native artists. I have had no opportunity of testing the real hardness of such tools, but I observed the edges of some of the ancient implements found at Ontonagon to be dented, just as well-hammered copper would be, by a blow of unusual force; and it is not improbable, that when due opportunity for examining into this question is furnished, the art of the ancient metallurgist will be found to have amounted to no more than the inevitable hardening of the copper, consequent on the laborious plying of it with the oft repeated strokes of his stone hammer to bring it to the desired shape. The difference which this makes on the wrought copper is abundantly familiar to the copper-smith, and also to the engraver on copper, though it is less likely to be known to the miner, working with his keen iron tools only upon the virgin metal in its native ductile state.

It seems specially worthy of note that the evidences of various kinds thus adduced to prove the existence at some former period of a mining population in the copper regions of Lake Superior, seem also to indicate that their labours had come to an abrupt termination. Whether by some terrible devastating pestilence, like that which appears to have exterminated the native population of New England, immediately before the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers; or by the breaking out of war; or—as seems not less probable,—by the invasion of the mineral region by a new race, ignorant of all the arts of the ancient Mound-builders of the Mississippi, and of the Miners of Lake Superior: certain it is that the works have been abandoned, leaving the quarried metal, the laboriously wrought hammers, and the ingenious copper tools, just as they may have been left when the shadows of the evening told their long-forgotten owners that the labours of the day were at an end, but for which they never returned. Nor during the centuries which have elapsed since the forest reclaimed the deserted trenches for its own, does any trace seem to indicate that a native population again sought to avail themselves of their mineral treasures, beyond the manufacture of such scattered fragments as lay upon the surface. Such a rude manufacture is, however, traceable among the Indians, even far to the north of Lake Superior. Mr. Henry found the Christinaux of Lake Winipagon wearing bracelets of copper; and such employment of this metal—simple as its manufacture is—may, perhaps, prove to be the remnant of arts pertaining to a higher civilization, once widely diffused over this continent.