

and archæologists, have been assumed to relegate the earliest traces of the existence of our race to a period so immensely remote, as to startle and confound the boldest imagination ; an antiquity of hundreds, nay, thousands of centuries being demanded for man. These discoveries have at least proved beyond a doubt that man was an inhabitant of Europe, not only when the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, the reindeer and other arctic fauna inhabited the south of France, but also when the lion, the hyæna, the hippopotamus and other animals now peculiar to tropical countries, ranged as far north as Great Britain.

This question of the antiquity of man is, however, of no direct interest to the glottologist, except in so far as it gives a greater lapse of time for the great changes which language must have undergone since its birth. He is more concerned in inquiring whether there be any evidence as to the intellectual capacity of the first of our race, to whose existence these records bear witness.

What manner of men were they, then, of whom we have the earliest traces ; the contemporaries of the mammoth and other extinct animals ? The river-drift gravel-beds of the Somme, the subterranean cave-dwellings of Germany, France and Great Britain, the older among the lake-dwellings of Switzerland, the shell-mounds of Denmark, all give the same answer : the first men were tool-makers and tool-users. Their tools were, to be sure, of the rudest description ; but they have outlasted the remains of the men themselves. The direct evidence as to the personal structure of primeval man is confined to a few remains of bones, more particularly to two portions of skulls. Of the more ancient of the two, the Engis skull, considered by Sir Charles Lyell to be undoubtedly coeval with the mammoth and other pleistocene mammalia, Prof. Huxley* says : "It is, in fact, a fair average human skull, which might have belonged to a philosopher, or might have contained the thoughtless brain of a savage."†

The nature of the stone axes and arrow-heads, the flint-flakes, the bone awls, &c., unearthed by these discoveries, is sufficiently familiar to the general reader, and it is only necessary to state that the earliest specimens consist of unpolished stones, rudely chipped to the required

* *Man's Place in Nature*, p. 156.

† The antiquity of the other relic, the Neanderthal skull, which is "the most pithecoloid" of known human crania, is not so well established ; and Prof. Huxley himself says (*Man's Place in Nature*, p. 159), that "the fossil remains of man hitherto discovered do not seem to take us appreciably nearer to the lower pithecoloid form."