

THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN IN SOUTH AFRICA.

(Paper kindly furnished by George R. McKay, Esq., of East London.)

The question of the antiquity of man has excited great interest during the last thirty years. How long ago is it since man existed on the earth, or, to narrow the question, how long ago is it since man first trod this, the site of East London? I do not pretend to have solved the problem: the very utmost I can do is to set down a few facts connected with the subject, which anyone at East London can verify in half an hour's walk.

Let it be assumed as correct: First, that the generally received opinion at the commencement of the present century, that the earth was created less than six thousand years ago, has been pushed back year by year till this period of six thousand years has become an infinitesimally small factor in an unspeakable number of years; Secondly, that the necessities of all human races have caused marked divisions in their progress, which we not very satisfactorily define as the ages of stone, bronze, and iron.

Some years ago, in opening a quarry, a very large mound of shells was discovered on the left bank of the Quigney river at its junction with the Buffalo, where the mound formed a rounded bluff which extended up to where the Harbour Works stable now stands, and was one hundred and fifty feet long and forty feet in depth. It was covered with vegetable soil, with trees growing on it, just like the section yet remaining is to-day. The Harbour Works engineers have removed upwards of three hundred and seventy-five thousand cubic feet of these shells to fill up the lagoon behind the East Training Wall. Any one examining what remains of this mound will find it composed principally of limpet, mussel, oyster, holiotus, and other shells of edible species, with bones of fish and birds as well as of antelopes, hippopotamus, and other mammalia, layers of ashes, fragments of charcoal, and pieces of coarse pottery. No stone implement has been found, but stones showing the action of fire are common.

There can be no doubt that this spot was occupied by many successive generations of human beings, to permit of the accumula-