

IV.

NOTE ON THE SHELL-MOUNDS OF SUTHERLAND. BY LAWSON
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On the links which extend between the Meikle and Little Ferries, there exist numerous remains of the Stone age, in the shape of hut-circles, tumuli, and shell-mounds; and these are generally at a height above high-water mark of only from ten to thirty feet. Near Skibo there is a shell-mound where my friend the Rev. Mr Joass picked up many manufactured flints. Near the Little Ferry I found many of these shell-mounds, corresponding in every particular, save that of size, to the Danish Kjökken Möddings. The shells were all adult specimens, and each heap was generally composed solely of one kind, although this was not invariably the case; while the varieties were confined to the oyster, mussel, cockle, limpet, and periwinkle, the shells of the razor fish occurring occasionally, and very rarely an astarte. The shells of the oyster were of a very large kind; and although a smaller variety of this bivalve is now abundant on the west coast of Sutherland, I am not aware that the oyster occurs at all on the east coast. The mussel shells were quite similar to those now found in the mussel scalps of the coast, but they were invariably broken at the thin edge in a manner which seems to me to indicate human labour. The arrangement of these shells; the fact that the inner layers were almost free from sand, and were occupied by a blackish loam; the occurrence amongst them of pieces of bone, and worked fragments of chert, quartz,

and flint, all led me to the conclusion that the mounds were not accidental, but the remains of the food of a prehistoric people. In one I picked up a beautifully worked but unfinished spear head of flint, covered with *patina*, indicating considerable antiquity, which had probably been lost by the ancient armourer when nearly completed; for it wants but one more skilled stroke to chip off a remaining portion of the original nodular surface, in order to make a perfect weapon; it is in the glass case along with a finished weapon from a tumulus, and another broken specimen picked up in the links. (These flint weapons are now presented to the Society, along with various specimens of the shells, &c.) These primeval weapons are identical in material and style of manufacture with some from the shores of the Cape of Good Hope, shown last year by Professor Busk at the meeting of the International Congress of Prehistoric Archæology.