

II.

NOTICE OF REMAINS FROM THE ANCIENT LACUSTRINE HABITATIONS OF SWITZERLAND; AND FROM THE DRIFT OF THE VALLEY OF THE SOMME. BY GEORGE J. ALLMAN, M.D., REGIUS PROFESSOR OF NATURAL HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, F.S.A. SCOT. (WITH EXHIBITION OF SPECIMENS.)

Professor Allman gave an interesting and minute description of the curious remains of ancient habitations recently discovered in various Swiss lakes, dividing them into classes from the diversity of the objects found beneath their ruins. He exhibited a stone weapon and some charred grain which had been found there, and contrasted the former with specimens of the flint hatchets found in the drift in the valley of the Somme, which he also exhibited, pointing out the greater size and rudeness of the latter, and drawing the conclusion from the various facts which he detailed, that the remains found in the drift along with the bones of extinct animals must be held to prove the very great antiquity of the deposits, and of the existence of men at the time.

Dr John Alex. Smith, in some remarks on this communication said, he was not inclined to concur altogether in the views thus advocated, as he considered the greater apparent rudeness of the flint weapons found in the drift was due simply to the material of which they were composed, chipping being the easiest and best way of bringing flint into shape for a weapon of any kind; and he brought forward various facts to show the possibility of the results described, having been caused by agencies not requiring by any means the theory of an immense antiquity for the race of man. M. Boucher des Perthes himself, in his valuable and elaborate work, the "Antiquités Celtiques et Antediluviennes," from the wonderful changes recently caused by the sea, and observed by himself in the Somme valley, such as the complete filling up and altering of the bed of the river, &c.; considers that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to

determine the age, and length of time, occupied in the formation of these alluvial deposits.

After referring to an interesting communication by the late Dr Hibbert, published in the "Edinburgh Journal of Science,"¹ Dr Smith said there was but little reason to doubt that man himself may have been the exterminator of the last decaying families of some of those extinct animals whose remains have been found in the gravel-beds; as we know he was, of these more recently extinct that lived down to our historical times—the bear, the wolf, and the beaver. Indeed this view has been ably discussed by the late Professor Fleming in a communication to an early number of the "Edinburgh Philosophical Journal,"² without his considering it at all necessary to assume a greater antiquity for the human race, than that commonly given by the best expounders of the Sacred Scriptures.

Professor Simpson also expressed his opinion that the question of the assumed very great antiquity of the human race must as yet be regarded as an open one. Mr Joseph Robertson, Lord Neaves, and Dr D. H. Robertson took part in the discussion.

¹ See Edin. Journal of Science, vol. v. New Ser., 1831, p. 50, "On the question of the Existence of the Rein-Deer during the twelfth century, in Caithness, by S. Hibbert, M.D.," &c.

² See Edin. Phil. Journ., vol. xi. 1824, p. 287. "Remarks illustrative of the Influence of Society in the Distribution of British Animals." By the Rev. John Fleming, D.D., &c.