

## IV.

NOTICE OF THREE SMALL BRONZE BLADES, OR INSTRUMENTS BELIEVED TO BE RAZORS, AND A BRONZE SOCKETED CELT IN THE MUSEUM OF THE SOCIETY; WITH REMARKS ON OTHER SMALL BRONZE BLADES. By JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., Sec. S.A. Scot.

Some time ago my attention was called to this peculiar class of minor bronze antiquities, and I read a paper on the subject in April 1863, which was published in the "Proceedings of the Society," vol. v., describing a singularly shaped and apparently unique bronze implement (Fig. 1) found at Kinleith, near Currie, in the immediate vicinity of Edinburgh, which I had then the pleasure of presenting to the Museum of the Society. (For the sake of reference, the figures of the bronze implements described in that communication are repeated here):—

This double bladed bronze relic, found at Kinleith, I considered to be in all probability an ancient depilatory instrument or razor, and analogous in character to the double edged implements of bronze, of nearly similar length of blade, found in Ireland; three specimens of which are preserved in the valuable Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, and another and larger specimen in the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin. (The accompanying woodcut (Fig. 2) gives a representation of the largest of these implements, copied from the catalogue of the Royal Irish Academy, 1861.) No bronzes of a kind similar to these Irish implements or razors were known to have been found in Great Britain until a very recent period, when one was discovered in the island of Anglesea, along with bronze tweezers, beads of amber, &c., and is thus referred to by Mr Albert Way, in a letter with which he was kind enough to favour me:—

"Since I had the pleasure of corresponding with you regarding the relic of bronze from Kinleith, my brother-in-law, Mr Stanley, who lives near Holyhead, and has always a keen eye on any antiquities there or in Anglesea, has sent me several objects found in that island, a string of large amber beads, a pair of bronze tweezers, numerous bronze rings, such as abound in Ireland; some other bronze relics of

very Hibernian character, and a bronze 'razor.' I believe no specimen has been found out of Ireland; but the ancient ornaments, &c., found in Anglesea, and on the shores of those parts of North Wales, bear

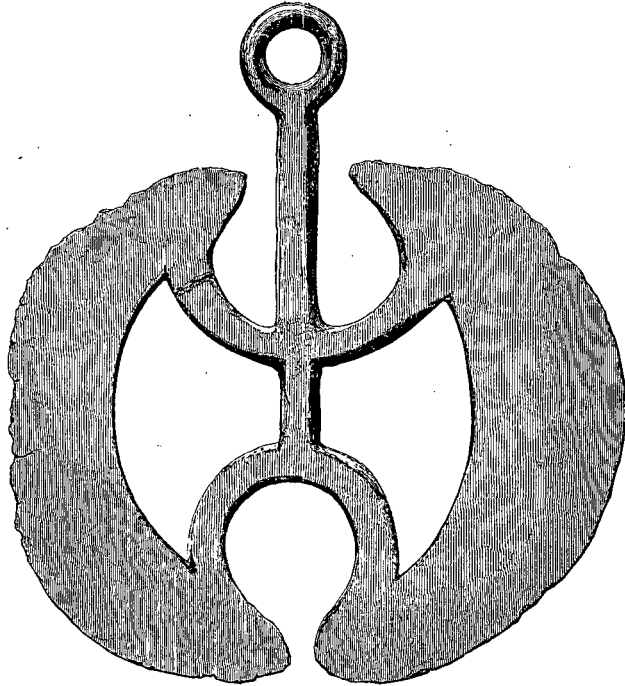


Fig. 1.—Bronze Implement found at Kinleith, Mid-Lothian.  
(Scale, size of original.)

a strong resemblance to Irish relics of their class respectively, and confirm the supposition that the marauding Irish were occupants of these districts."

Mr Way sends me a sketch of the bronze relic (an enlarged copy of

which I exhibit). It corresponds in general character and size to the bronzes found in Ireland, the blades, however, are more rounded above, the divided points being less separated from one another, and the posterior points less distinctly barbed than in the Irish specimen (Fig. 2). It has the same round perforation below the bifid extremity, but has this peculiarity, however, and difference from the Irish as well as the other specimens to be described, that the fissure between the points of the blades opens into the rounded hole itself. From the thicker tang or handle two parallel longitudinal grooves or lines run upwards in the middle of the blade.

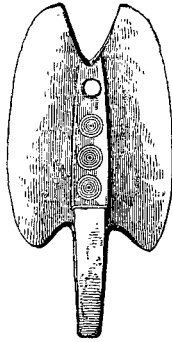


Fig. 2.—Bronze Razor (as supposed), from Museum of Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. (Scale, one-half of size.)

Since my former paper was read I have noticed among the collection of smaller bronzes in our Museum three relics closely allied, or indeed almost identical in character, to the bronzes found in Ireland; and the special object of this communication is to bring these under the notice of the Society, as they appear somehow to have been overlooked in the published catalogues of the Museum. Indeed, I have not been able as yet to find any notice of them in the Minute-books, or among the MSS. papers, and Mr M'Culloch, whose services have been brought under requisition, states that after a

careful search, he has been quite unable to find any account of them among the papers of the Society. Luckily, in the course of the search, a water-colour sketch was found, which gives full-sized figures of these three bronzes, so exactly delineated, that it would appear as if the bronzes themselves had been simply laid on the card, and their outlines drawn around them. This sketch associates with them a bronze socketed celt, showing on one side of the neck the remains of a loop, which has been broken off; and as the length of the sides of the celt are slightly unequal, an obliquity is thus given to its face. The colour of the metal of these different implements also corresponds closely, as shown in the drawing. It was, therefore, an easy matter, from these various peculiarities, to select from the collection in the Museum of the Society this identical celt, and on comparing it with the full-sized drawing, it was found exactly to correspond; the celt, like the others, having been outlined from the original itself. The yellowish green colour of the tarnish or *æru*go of the celt, and the three small bronzes was also exactly similar, the character of the yellowish bronze being apparently the same in all. These different objects are numbered in the original drawing in such a way as apparently to show a relation between the celt and the other bronzes; the largest bronze blade being marked as No. 1, the celt No. 2, and the two smaller bronze blades Nos. 3 and 4. They would appear, therefore, to have some connection with one another, and were probably all found together. (The annexed drawings of these bronze relics, to a scale of half the size of the original, will show their general character, Fig. 3, 1-4.)

The bronze blades are apparently somewhat ruder in character than those found in Ireland, at least than the example figured before (Fig. 2), but in other respects they closely correspond, as well as to the one described by Mr Way; and although they are much chipped and injured, it is easy to see that they have had a sharp edge on each side, the blades being double. The stem or handle is the thickest part, being about a tenth of an inch in thickness, and the centre of the bronze plate is also generally thicker than the rest of the blade, the metal being thinned gradually away towards the edges all round; and, with the exception of the groove on No. 1, none of them show any traces of ornament.

The largest specimen, No. 1, measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in total length, the

blade being 2 inches in length, and the handle  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch; and the blades are  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in greatest breadth; it seems to be more rounded in its general outline than the others, in this respect resembling the one found in Anglesea, and described by Mr Way. A simple, shallow groove, probably for ornament, runs up the centre of the plate from the handle towards the forked extremity, in the line of the more distinctly defined

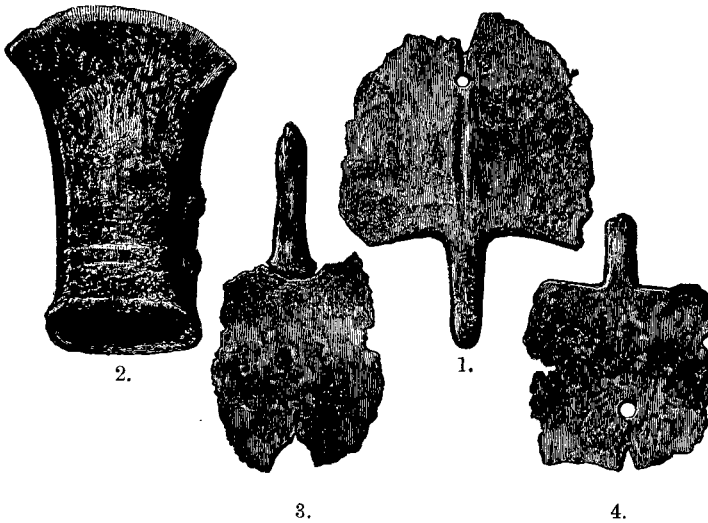


Fig. 3.—Bronze Implements or Razors, and Socketed Celt, from the Museum of the Society. (Scale, half the size of the original.)

middle rib or ornamented projection of the Irish example (figured before, Fig. 2). The other and smaller examples show less of this central projection, and are devoid of ornamental markings of any kind. The next in size, No. 3, measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in total length, the blades rather more than  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch in greatest breadth; the handle has been broken across at its junction to the blade. The third speci-

men, No. 4, is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in total length, the blades being  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch long and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch in greatest breadth. The blades of all of them are much chipped and broken, still their correspondence in character with the Irish examples is distinct enough; they project but slightly backwards, however, on each side of the handle, and terminate above in a forked or

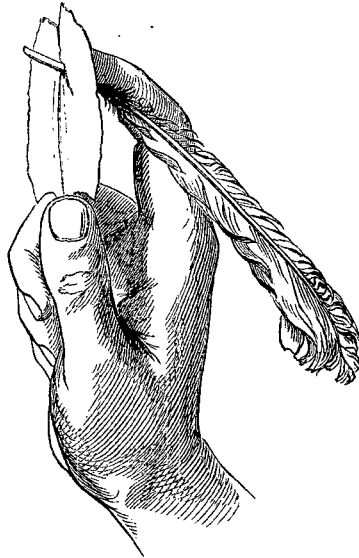


Fig. 4.—Bronze Implement (Fig. 3, No. 1) from Museum, showing how it may have been held for use. (Scale, one-half of size.)

notched extremity with blunt edges, the points of the double blades apparently running slightly outwards on each side. Two of these bronzes are pierced, as in the Irish specimens, with a small round hole near the forked extremity farthest from the handle. In No. 3, however, this perforation does not exist.

I have already stated my opinion that this small round opening may have been simply for enabling the bronze to be suspended, for convenience

or ornament, as well as for the purpose of preserving the sharp edges of the blades from being blunted. It appears to me, however, it might in addition, be possibly of another use,—assisting in the firmer holding of the blade, by having a small twig, the shaft of a feather, or a pin passed through it, on which the forefinger could rest, while the tang of the bronze was held between the thumb and the second finger, and in this way give a facility for using the blade as a depilatory instrument, in adapting its edges to any part of the face (Fig. 4). This supposed additional use of the round opening, would do away with the difficulty of believing it was intended merely for suspension, which meets us in the case of the bronze described by Mr Way, in which the cut or fissure between the points has been made to run into this round opening itself. It may also be noticed, that in the bronze (Fig. 3, No. 4, figured before), in which there is no round opening, you have the points of the blades more apart or separated from one another, so that the point of the forefinger could be easily hooked on the blunt edges between them, and thus render the presence of any opening unnecessary; while in the other cases, as also in Mr Way's specimen, the points of the blades are so close together that no finger-point could be introduced between them, and in these the round opening is present, to allow of the introduction, it may be, of the twig or pin on which the finger could rest, when the razor was required for use. None of the tangs or handles of these relics show any appearance of having been fixed to any kind of additional handle; they have apparently been used by being simply held between the thumb and fingers. Such an arrangement for the use of these bronzes as that now suggested, would also make them correspond somewhat to that of the Kinleith bronze (Fig. 5), and to those found in the lake-houses of Switzerland, where the forefinger may have been simply hooked over the upper part of the blades.

The celt (Fig. 3, No. 2) measures rather more than  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in greatest length, and about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches across the face, which is a little oblique, from one side of the celt being slightly shorter than the other. It is quadrilateral in shape towards the socket, the socketed part being oval; its neck is surrounded by a slight projection or collar measuring rather more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in breadth; besides this, it is destitute of any ornament; the sides or edges are slightly bevelled, and it shows on

one side the remains of the loop which has been broken off a little below the neck. This somewhat quadrilateral or square-necked style of socketed celt is apparently a common variety among those found in Scotland.

These three bronze implements are of considerable interest, as well from their comparative rarity as from their being apparently found along with this rather rude form of socketed celt, a testimony in all pro-

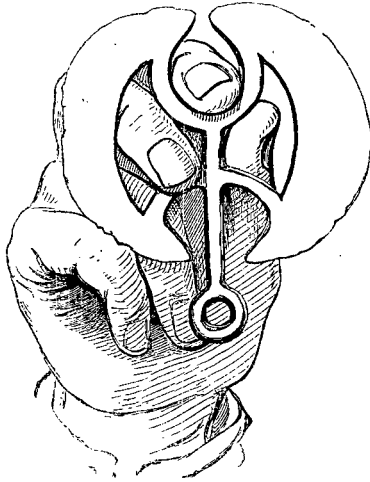


Fig. 5.—Bronze Implement from Kinleith, showing how it may have been held for use. (Scale, one-half of size.)

bability to their great antiquity; and still more, from the possibility of their having been found in Scotland, and so far as I am aware, no other specimens of an exactly corresponding kind have been found here. Indeed, it seems to me not unlikely that the local interest attached to them, from their probably having been found in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, had caused the water-colour sketch to be made, and presented along with the articles themselves, to the Museum of the Society, at a time when these relics, apparently so rude and uninteresting, with no intrinsic beauty or value to recommend them to the virtuoso or the mere collector, were probably considered of very little interest by our



antiquaries, for it is difficult to conceive how they could otherwise have been passed over altogether in silence; no record whatever existing in the Minute-books or MSS. of the Society, as far as I have been able to discover, to show they had ever been exhibited or presented to the Museum; indeed, it is only from the possession of the water-colour sketch, and the bronzes themselves, among the less prized antiquities in the collection, that we learn anything of their relation to one another, or even of their existence. Had these relics, therefore, not been found in Scotland, it is difficult to fancy that any sketch would have been made of them, when presented to our Museum; or indeed that any trouble of this kind would have been taken, with such apparently little valued relics of the past.

Mr Way believes the curious double-bladed bronze implement found at Kinleith, to be distinct in character from the double-edged blades or razors found in Ireland, and also, I should fancy, from those now described. He considers, however, that the Kinleith bronze may be analogous to those found in the lake-houses of Switzerland. It was, therefore, with considerable interest, as bearing on this question, that I observed among the varieties of bronze implements figured by Dr Keller in his report on Pfahlbauten (published in the "Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft, in Zürich," Band xiv. Heft 6. Pfahlbauten—Fünfter Bericht (Taf. 11, 25, 26), 1863), one that seemed to me to bear a relation both to the straight double-edged bronze blades found in Ireland, and to the more crescentic-shaped Swiss bronzes, or "half-moon images," as they have been styled, discovered in the lake-houses, as well as to the Kinleith bronze. In this specimen, which was found at the pile-dwelling of Castione, in the province of Parma, the double blades are not crescentic in form, but nearly straight, or only very slightly rounded in outline: they terminate in a forked extremity above, and project outwards below, on each side of the handle, like these just described (Fig. 3), and those found in Ireland; the central space between the blades, however, is latticed with open work, continued upwards from the open worked handle below, which apparently terminates, like that of the crescentic-shaped blades, in a ring. It also corresponds nearly in size to both of these kinds of bronze blades. Of the class of double-bladed bronzes we have, therefore, these of a ruder

kind, found principally in Ireland, but also in Wales, and probably also in Scotland, formed of a simple plate of bronze, pierced only by a single round opening at the upper part of the blades, and with a simple tang or handle below; next this curious straight double-bladed instrument to which I have just referred, with the handle and space between the blades latticed with open work; and lastly, those with crescentic-shaped blades, the double blade being formed simply by the turning up of the points of the crescent, and the latticed or open worked handle attached to the middle of the crescent below. The Kinleith bronze being apparently a variety in form, its central part between the two blades is also cut into open work, and the simpler handle terminates in an open ring below, like those found in the lake-houses of Switzerland.

Mr Way, I believe, is inclined to think there is considerable probability in the view taken by some antiquaries, that the specimen described by himself, as well as the Irish ones, have been the points of missile weapons. If I may venture to call in question the opinion of so accomplished an antiquary, it seems to me they would have been better fitted for arrow-heads had they terminated in a single, more pointed extremity, instead of double points; and the small circular aperture near this extremity of the blades, would still farther weaken the point of a missile weapon, not to speak of the rather curious fact, that in the instance mentioned by Mr Way, the bronze relic was found along with bronze tweezers and other articles, more suggestive of the toilet than of an offensive weapon.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since this paper was read, Mr Way has published, in the "Archæologia Cambrensis," No. XLVI. for April 1866, a full account, illustrated with figures of the ancient relics found in Anglesea, of which the bronze relic referred to above formed a part, and in this communication he states the opinion of Sir Samuel Meyrick, who considers that the Irish double pointed "bronze arrow-head (as he styles it), appears to have been formed on the same principle as those of the Boiesgians in South Africa, part of which being poisoned, remained in the wound, for in this way only can I account for the division at the point, and the perforation in which it terminates." One of these poisoned arrows is figured in Skelton's Illustrations of the Armour, &c., at Goodrich Court, vol. ii. plate 148, fig. 5. Mr Way, however, makes the following comment on these remarks:—"It must be observed that there is no apparent similarity of form in this bifid African missile, as compared with the Irish relics."

Mr A. W. Franks, of the British Musuem, in his valuable descriptions of the plates of the "Horæ Ferales," figures in plate vi. a specimen of these Irish double-pointed bronzes now in the British Museum; but although he places it side by side with arrow-heads, he designates it as "a bronze arrow-head, or possibly cutting instrument," and refers to Wilde's catalogue of the Irish Academy Collection, where they are conjectured to be razors, showing, as it appears to me, that he is by no

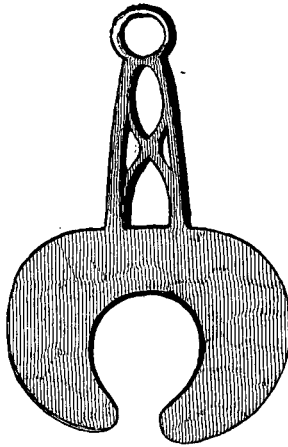


Fig. 6.—Bronze implement, found in the remains of a Lacustrine habitation at Steinberg, near Nidau, Switzerland. (Scale, one-half of size.)

means very decided as to these relics being arrow-heads, but rather leans to the view of their being cutting instruments or razors.

In the paper on the Kinleith bronze I pointed out its general resemblance in size and analogous character to some of the bronze blades of a crescentic form found in the lake-houses of Switzerland (Fig. 6); and have since been favoured with a letter from Dr Ferdinand Keller of Zurich, the well-known historian of the "Pfahlbauten," and an Honorary Member of our Society; referring to the remarks in my paper, on the curious crescents formed of clay and stone, which I was

inclined to consider as pestles or grinding instruments, and also to the small crescentic-shaped blades of bronze, he writes me as follows:—

“I have read with great interest your remarks on a bronze implement in the ‘Proceedings’ of your Society. As you refer to a passage in my second report on ‘Lake Dwellings,’ I take the liberty of communicating to you some further particulars on the subject in question.

“Both on *terra firma* and in the lake-dwellings of the Lake of Neufchatel objects of stone or clay have been found which bear a striking resemblance to a crescent, and positively cannot have had any practical use. They are accurately described and figured in my second and fifth reports on ‘Pfahlbauten.’ I considered them as having a symbolical significancy, and am still of the same opinion, although I do not object to any other view concerning them.

“At the same time small bronze objects were found in the above-mentioned places, which bore a certain resemblance to the former. In the work of Gozzadini, entitled ‘Di un Sepolcreto Etrusco scoperto presso Bologna, descrizione del Conte Giovanni Gozzadini,’ Bologna, 1855, I saw that similar bronze objects had been found in Etruscan graves, and were described (p. 44) with great learning by Professor Rocchi as being nothing else but razors. (Intorno l’antichità dell’ uso di Radersi la barba.) As I said in my reports, I doubted whether I should conform to this opinion, which certainly appeared very plausible. But as several of these bronze implements were not sharpened, but perfectly blunt, I preferred considering them as mere ornaments in the form of a crescent. At present, after having seen and examined many specimens of various forms, I am inclined to agree with the Italian antiquary and yourself. Last summer I produced six specimens before our society and declared them to be razors. These tools were cast; and afterwards sharpened like the knives and swords of bronze, by hammering, like the scythe.

“I am persuaded that a personal inspection of the crescents made of stone or clay would convince you that they cannot have served as grinding instruments or pestles, the pedestal being too weak for such a purpose, and only made to support the rest in an upright position. The mixing of fragments of quartz with the clay was intended—firstly, to give the clay greater consistency, and to facilitate the operation of forming

such figures or pots; and, secondly, especially in the case of pottery, to prevent its cracking when exposed to the fire. At the present day the inhabitants of some parts of the Apennines are still in the habit of mixing quartz fragments with the clay used for cooking utensils. The latter are hardened, as in the time of the lake-dwellings, not in potters' ovens, but in open fires, and are not to be distinguished from that ancient pottery. I am in possession of such pots, which were made only last year. In the Roman *mortaria* the stone fragments are not distributed throughout the mass, but are only seen on the inner surface of the vessel."

(" *Gozzadini*, Nos. 10 and 16, Tav. VI.—Sono due strumenti sottilissimi, già perfettamente levigati, col taglio nella parte convessa soltanto. La forma loro singolare e la sottigliezza, il corto ed esiguo manichetto che non potrebbe tenersi se non con due o al più con tre dita e non saldamente, la parte concava senza taglio anzi quasi sempre conorlo, che potrebb' esser fatta per appoggiarvi l'indice e il medio a stringere contro il pollice l'istrumento per adoperarlo anche in tal guisa, inducono a ricercarne un uso speciale e non commune alle coltella. Quindi per le particolarità sopradette sembrando poco adatti a tagliare ed opportuni a radere, mi corse dapprima alla mente avessero potuto servire ai congiunti del defunto *per radersi lachiuma* in segno di lutto. Poscia mi suggerirono anzi l'idea che quelli potessero essere, non solo pei capelli ma anche *per la barba*, i rasoï degli antichi Italici non anche dimostrati dai monumenti, ni illustrati dagli archeologi," &c. &c.)

Dr Keller kindly sent me sketches of these two bronzes, which show a slight variety in form from the usual crescentic double-bladed bronzes, in which the handle springs from the middle of the convex blade below; while in these crescentic-shaped blades figured by Gozzadini there is a short tang or handle, also terminating in an ornamented ring, which is attached just below or behind the outer or convex edge of the blade, near the extremity of one of the horns of the crescent; the inner or concave outline of the crescent being blunt, so that the finger might rest on it, while the outer or convex border is brought to a fine edge. By this arrangement, however, the bronze has more of the character of a single-bladed knife or razor. I may mention that these relics were also found associated with tweezers.

All antiquaries are familiar with the straight long razor-shaped blades of bronze, ornamented with engraved patterns of galleys and other objects, which taper rapidly towards one extremity, and terminate in a recurved or curled loop of bronze. These relics have been found abundantly in Scandinavia, and figures of them are given in the illustrated Catalogue of Antiquities preserved in the Royal Museum of Copenhagen. Figures of similar specimens, found in the northern countries of the Continent, are given in plate x. of the "Horæ Ferales;" and Mr Franks, in his valuable descriptive letterpress, states these "knives or razors are probably later in date than the other implements (figured in the plate). Objects exactly similar, but made of iron, have been found with Danish remains in Ireland; the designs on them are peculiarly Scandinavian, being often representations of their long galleys or ships."

These single-edged bronze blades, then, seem to be totally different in character from the double-edged varieties I have been describing, and none of the double-bladed or bifid bronzes have been found, as far as I am aware, associated with any Scandinavian remains, while they are discovered along with the remains of Celtic races in Ireland, Wales, and shall I say Scotland; the analogous forms of bronzes of a more elaborate character being found in the lake-houses of Switzerland, which antiquaries believe have in ancient times been also in the occupation of a people of Celtic race. These two varieties or classes of small bronze remains may, therefore possibly, be not so much the relics of a different age, as of two distinct families of men; the Northman and the Celt.

It might be curious to learn what are the characters of the various instruments more recently used for depilatory purposes by the different races of men, whether savage or civilised, and to see whether they would throw any light on the supposed use of these small bronze blades which we have been considering; but on this subject I am unable to say anything, and shall simply, in conclusion, refer to a Razor from China, which was kindly sent to me by a friend (a figure of which is given in the annexed woodcut, Fig. 7).

This Chinese razor is formed of a piece of steel, triangular in shape, which curiously enough corresponds nearly in length to the blades of the ancient bronzes we have been describing. The middle of the back

part of the blade is the thickest, and the metal becomes rapidly thinner towards the front or edge of the blade. There is a small short tang or handle which projects slightly backward, at the extremity of the narrower point, or apex of the triangular-shaped blade; this tang is pierced by a pin which connects it to the handle; and the handle is so cut, that when the blade is opened and drawn back the tang is held firmly in its place. The blade measures nearly 3 inches in length by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inch in greatest breadth; and the wooden handle, which is grooved in front to receive the sharp edge of the blade when it is closed, measures  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length.

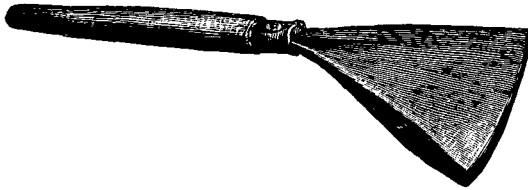


Fig. 7.—Chinese Razor, with wooden handle. (Scale, one-half of original.)