

IV.

NOTICE OF A COLLECTION OF FLINT IMPLEMENTS FOUND IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF FORDOUN, KINCARDINESHIRE, NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM. BY THE REV. JAMES BRODIE, MONIMAIL.

In the neighbourhood of Fordoun a good many specimens of flint implements have been found. The arrow-heads are of different forms, and vary in size from half an inch to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. They are known among the peasantry by the name of "fairy arrows," and were valued by the ploughmen not as antiquarian curiosities, but as means by which they were enabled to strike fire for the matches with which they kindled their tobacco-pipes. A fine hatchet was lately found; and after having been kept for some time, was broken into pieces for distribution among the smokers in the neighbourhood.

Being aware that both ethnologists and geologists have had their attention turned to the prehistoric remains of Western Europe, the author of the present notice, happening to be in the neighbourhood of Fordoun last year, applied to an intelligent labourer, who for want of health had been obliged to relinquish the occupation of a ploughman, and take up that of a mole-catcher, to purchase as many specimens of these early manufactures as he could procure, and to collect as much information in regard to the places in which they were found as he could easily ascertain. It is principally from the reports furnished by this collector that the following statement has been drawn up:—

About a mile from the parish church of Fordoun there are the remains of a Roman encampment. A ditch, about 7 feet deep, and 10 or 12 feet wide, encloses a somewhat irregular parallelogram, 90 paces in length by 50 in breadth. A small stream runs past, from which water had formerly been drawn to fill the ditch.

Taking this encampment as our starting-place, about half a mile to the south-east, we come to Auchenyoeh, a farm where a few years ago, in digging a foundation, some antique hatchets were found. Two were formed of stone and one of bronze. A mile farther to the east, at a place called Waterlair, there is a large cairn still remaining. A smaller cairn

was removed some years ago, in the centre of which was found a bronze vessel, now in the possession of J. Nicholson, Esq., Glenbervie. Near this cairn is a field, in which at a former time a number of arrow-heads were found. At a place a little distance off a good many chips of flint were found, which seemed to have been struck off in manufacturing arrow-heads.

Proceeding eastward, along the south side of the Water of Bervie, we pass several places where arrow-heads have been found. On the same side of the river, about a mile and a half from its mouth, there is a farm called Pettie. At this place, some time ago, a little knoll was ploughed up, where a large collection of chips was discovered. No finished implements were found among them; but in the neighbourhood a number of arrow-heads have been picked up, and a hatchet of blue flint was also found.

Retracing our steps, and proceeding again from the Roman (?) camp in an opposite direction, about half a mile to the west, we come to Cairnton, where there was a large cairn of earth and stones, which is now removed; and a little farther on is Cairn-beg, where there was a smaller cairn. On that farm the ploughmen, in the year 1842, took a fancy to collect arrow-heads, and in one season gathered about a hundred.

On the same side of the stream, farther up its course, similar specimens have been found.

The places we have referred to are all on the south side of the river. On the north side a good many arrow-heads have been gathered. These in general differ very remarkably in form from those that have been picked up on the south side. They are of an ovate or lozenge shape. They are very neatly finished, but without barbs. In general they are thinner, in proportion to their size, than those found farther to the south. At the farm of Pitcarles, on the north side of the river, a great many chips were found, indicating a place where these implements had been fabricated. In that neighbourhood the collector was told that a good many arrow-heads had been picked up, all of which were of the ovate form, and without barbs.

A great many of the chips which seem to have been broken off in forming the arrow-heads, bear evident traces of having been fragments of water-worn pebbles. We are therefore led to conclude, that the materials

from which these implements were fabricated must have been collected on the sea-shore. There seems to be no bed of flints, like that found in Aberdeenshire, indicating the remains of a stratum of chalk.

The arrow-heads, as we have already remarked, belong to two distinct classes, those with barbs and those without them. The specimens of the first class, collected during last winter, amount to twenty. All of them were found on the south side of the Water of Bervie, with the exception of the small one that stands last in the third row, at the right hand. Since writing this, I have been informed that, at Kinneff, on the sea-coast north of the Bervie, where this specimen was found, many similar ones have been gathered. The specimens collected of the second variety amounted to seven. All of these are known to have been picked up on the north side of the river with the exception of two. The place where these two were picked up was not ascertained.

The river is a small stream, which is easily fordable. It might serve very well to mark the boundary between the grounds of two friendly tribes, but would be of no avail as a defence for those who sought to repel the invasion of a foe.

Having stated the facts that have been ascertained in regard to these implements, and the localities where they were found, we may now advert to the inferences which they suggest.

In the first place, the marked diversity of form which these relics exhibit leads us to suppose that the district was formerly occupied by two tribes, who made use of implements of different forms. At the same time, the nature of the boundary dividing the two localities in which they are found, leads us to conclude that these tribes lived in harmony, keeping within their respective boundaries, and having due regard to the rights of their neighbours. This of itself may be regarded as indicating a considerable degree of comparative civilisation.

A difficult and interesting question follows. Why did the ancient inhabitants of Scotland employ arrows pointed with flint? Some seem inclined to attribute the practice to their ignorance of the mechanical arts. With that idea we cannot concur. The formation of these implements implies more than ordinary skill. We cannot suppose the fabricators of them to have been unacquainted with the use of splinters of bone in pointing arrows for the ordinary purposes of the chase. There must

have been some peculiar object in view which led them to point their arrows with flint.

The number of arrow-heads found in the neighbourhood of sepulchral cairns suggests the idea of their having been principally used in battle.

The loose way in which they must have been connected with the shaft leads us further to infer, that the intention of their fabricators was not merely to inflict a painful wound, but to leave the imbedded flint rankling in the flesh of their enemies. Taking all circumstances into consideration, we are led to conclude that the use of the flint arrow-head, though it may be condemned as cruel, was undoubtedly a very ingenious device.

If we suppose that the Roman camp at Fordoun and the sepulchral cairns at Cairnton and Waterlair were contemporary, which, of course, is merely conjectural, the circumstances we have mentioned afford evidence of a very determined resistance on the part of our forefathers to the Roman invaders.

The remains of the Roman encampment show plainly that it must have been a place of great strength, erected for defence against a daring and dangerous foe.

The farm at Cairnbeg, where in one season a hundred arrow-heads were picked up, seems to have been the site of a battle. As all the arrow-heads belonged to the barbed variety, though the greater part of them wanted the projection between the barbs, as if they had been rudely or hastily constructed, we are further led to suppose that the Caledonians contended with an enemy who made use of weapons of a less durable nature than the flints employed by themselves. This characteristic is applicable to the Romans.

The monumental cairns erected in the neighbourhood may be looked on as a proof that the natives either remained masters of the contested field, or that they returned at an after time to pay the homage due to the slain. Similar remarks might be made in regard to the cairns and field at Waterlair.

The well-known fact, that though the Imperial legionaries made incursions into the territory north of the Forth, they did not retain their conquests, has been accounted for by Gibbon, in his account of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by supposing that the invaders retired

because they found the climate cold, and the country barren ; we may with equal probability infer, that one of their reasons for retreating was their finding that a flint-headed arrow, shot from a Scottish bow, was a weapon by no means to be despised.

The flint implements found at Fordoun differ very widely from some at least of those that have been found in the valley of the Somme. Many of those collected from the latter locality, in the eyes of those who are uninitiated in geological research, exhibit no appreciable evidence of any design having been employed in their fabrication. The arrow-heads from the neighbourhood of Fordoun are well fitted for awakening our admiration, more especially when we look at the hatchet and consider the nature of the tools employed in their manufacture. We look on them as affording evidence of the mechanical skill of the Scots in the ages that preceded the introduction of metals, similar to that which the invention of the steam-engine gives of their ingenuity at the present day.

It is also to be kept in mind, that the descendants of those warlike tribes who so boldly resisted the Roman invaders, were among the first of the independent races beyond the boundaries of the Empire who embraced the Christian religion ; and ecclesiastical historians tell us that they made such progress in learning and theology, that Scotland was looked upon as a centre from which the truth of the gospel spread abroad even into continental nations, and that many of the German races were first brought under the influence of Christian civilisation by missionaries sent out by the Scottish Church. Whether we look to prehistoric times, or to the early days of the Christian Church, Scotsmen have no reason to be ashamed of the origin from which they spring.