

## II.

NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICAN BORED STONES, OR PERFORATED STONE BALLS, AND A HAFTED STONE AXE FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM ; WITH NOTICE OF CAVE PAINTINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA. By CHARLES BELL, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., LATE SURVEYOR-GENERAL, CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

These notes are merely given in accordance with a request made when the specimens were offered for the acceptance of this Society. There is not the least intention to go beyond depth into the subjects they illustrate. Recent access to European collections of such relics, and to the literature referring to them, thoroughly confirms most of the conclusions arrived at during forty years observation of people lately emerged from the stone age in a far distant land, but the difficulty is as yet to distinguish between that which may be new and that which might be mere reiteration of views already so ably worked out by Scottish and other antiquaries of late years.

It may be briefly stated that these bored stones were picked up near Cape L'Agulhas, the southern extremity of Africa. They are poor specimens compared with what might have been brought home, had there been less hurry and more room in packing up luggage, but they are curious as showing the mode of manufacture.

Similar stones are found in South Africa under old grave cairns, or on the surface where sand has been drifted or soil dislodged ; one was discovered by a road engineer at a depth of about fifteen feet in a bed of drift clay and boulders, supposed to have been deposited many ages ago. It was about 6 inches diameter and well made.

These stones are still in use by a people who may be fairly supposed similar in many respects to those primeval inhabitants of Britain who, from not being so well known, are properly and conveniently styled *Allophylia*, until they can be more specifically classed in separate grades. Meanwhile, it seems hardly possible to hit on a more feasible method of studying them than under the reflected light cast by knowledge of the mental development, physical type, and general condition of their existing representatives.

The manufacture of such stones is now seldom seen. The supply to be picked up, a long descended inheritance, is generally sufficient for present wants, but a credible eye-witness who has observed the process says that any hard stone, water-worn, or otherwise reduced to a spheroidal shape, so as to need little external chipping or grinding, is generally selected, and that the hole is pierced from both sides by patient tapping with any other hard stone having a point, such as the natural cleavage of silicious strata gives. One of these specimens, evidently the rejected failure of a bungling workman, shows this, but the broken one tends to prove that after such boring by concussion the aperture has been finished by turning either with a long narrow stone, or with a stick and sharp sand and water.

Bored stones are only used at present as weights on the stick by which such food as bulbs, roots, or ant eggs are unearthed from the hard sun-baked soil. The stick, which is a little longer and thicker than an ordinary walking cane, has a rough chisel-shaped point, and is thrust loosely through the orifice of the stone, and there wedged fast by any bit of wood that happens to be at hand. It thus becomes a very effective implement.

The European idea of the use of such stones as whorls appears untenable. At least there is nothing known in South Africa tending to support it. There is no purpose or want of the aborigines to which a bored stone could be applied as a whorl, and for which any stone of equal weight would not be equally applicable, and far more easily suspended. That same degree of intelligence which prompted resort to such aid in braying thongs or twisting fibres, would probably have led to the form of a disc which, besides being more effective, would have been much more easily perforated. When mere fashion is not a motive, the savage is not inclined to expend any unnecessary trouble on tools or weapons, and it cannot be supposed that mere fashion prescribed one and the same form of whorl stones all over Africa, Britain, and other lands, in the infancy of mankind. Theories as to their use should be founded on that peculiar applicability which might account for the labour expended.

One very plausible suggestion points to their use as striking weapons, and it may be that such was the fact, for bored stone hammers and axes are well known, although nearly any hard stone of like size and weight

would serve as a hammer. Yet the broad truth remains, that bored stones are not fit for violent contact with hard substances; they cost too much trouble in making to be rashly used in that way; a chance blow might leave the wielder of the stone-headed war-club comparatively powerless; and if, when much more easy and effective means of fitting handles to stones were in practice, and mere fashion not in question, there was such a wide-spread propensity to prepare a brittle material for hard knocks by boring a large hole through its centre, it perhaps may be acknowledged that the human intellect made at least one general stumble in its earlier steps.

The war-club theory may, however, be much strengthened by the exhibition of such a specimen as that now placed on the table for inspection, having been lent from the Woodcock Museum, Anstruther. It has a large bored stone on the striking end of a four feet handle, socketted by gum or other cement, but the evidence is somewhat affected in this particular case when it is acknowledged that nothing is known of its antecedents. It looks like a war-club of the South Sea Islands.

It may be assumed that the object of bored stones was to obtain much weight in small bulk, and from the present use of the article we have an indication of the direction in which we may guess onward without much risk.

As the bored stone gives impetus to the digging stick, so may it have added strength to the stab of the hard wood, or stone-headed, or bone-tipped spear in close conflict with the larger animals of Africa, as well as in the old Caledonian forests, while the bored stones of smaller size might have given force to the light assegai, or javelin, cast at lesser game. Stones of extreme bulk might even have been used like the wooden block that weights the lance hung amid foliage shadowing the narrow game path to the water, ready to drop on the spine of the animal below, at a touch of the looped twig, on his way to drink.

This guess may be verified to a considerable extent. Such stones are often found in the same graves with weapon points. Observers who may have future opportunities might note particularly their respective places, and whether the axis of the stone is in the direction of weapon point, as well as what are the positions of the smaller perforated stones hitherto supposed to be large beads. From a number of such observations, data may be

obtained for an estimate of the probability that the stones were part of the favourite weapons of the buried warrior, connected with the points by a wooden shaft, long ages ago mouldered into dust, hardly to be noticed now, under the most favourable conditions, by the keenest practised eye.

General attention to Allophylian relics in South Africa has only been very recently aroused by the discoveries of quantities of arrow-heads and other flint weapons and implements, and also a place of their manufacture, near Cape Town, by Dr Dale, the Superintendent General of Education in the Colony, and like finds by other gentlemen resident on the eastern frontier. A small collection, which might have been exhibited here to-night, was given to a friend, who sent it to that well-known antiquary, the late Mr Flower. Although mostly, if not uniformly, unpolished, and perhaps slightly inferior in elegance of shape, the type is exactly similar to the same class of European relics. In fact, the resemblance is so close, that no one need be surprised to see, ere long, some bold thinker pointing to a similitude of appliances and habits of individuals of many a genus of lower animals, such as birds, however far apart on the face of the globe, and talking of the infancy of mankind as if the human intellect had emerged by like progress everywhere from the dominant rule of mere instinct pertaining to his peculiar physical organisation.

*Australian Stone Axe.*—There seems to be little better use in starting or following up such vague speculations; but it does seem wonderful that it requires a very critical eye to find any difference between this Australian Celt and one of primeval British manufacture; and the temptation to think of possible causes leading to the adoption of that form universally, or, at least, at the antipodes of Britain, is almost irresistible.

Letting that point pass, it may be observed that the specimen is of some value, as being well authenticated, and as showing even better than the former specimen in the Museum the mode of handling by a withe.

That now presented was lately brought from South Australia by Charles Gray, Esq., of Nareeb-Nareeb, who settled on that river a great many years ago, and observed on its banks a rock singularly marked, which in every way aroused so strongly his juvenile recollections of the Pulpit Rock at Johnny Doo's hole, in the Billowness near Anstruther, that he was convinced the same causes, whether natural or artificial, had been at work on both stones, although so far apart. He afterwards found

the aborigines deepening the hollows in the Nareeb-Nareeb rock by using it as a grindstone for their axes, and obtaining one of them, he kept it until a few weeks ago, when he tried it on the Pulpit Rock, and thoroughly confirmed his own ideas on the subject. Then the axe itself was presented to a friend much interested in the question, and it is now, under subsequent permission of Mr Gray, offered for acceptance by this Society.

High spring tide and deep snow on the occasion lately chosen for a visit prevented an inspection of the cave and rock. They must have been a considerable distance from the shore at the time when the aborigines took shelter and ground their weapons and implements there, if they ever did; but the spot, though damaged by sea encroachment and quarry blasts, deserves a visit in connection with the idea thus originated; and if that idea, however modified, can be substantiated, it may lead to the discovery of many like localities that have never hitherto attracted notice, and thus there may be opened a new source of information, throwing further light on our dim pictures of the British Allophyl.

*Cave Paintings.*—At last meeting, after the reading of the remarks on sculpture in the Weems of Dysart, mention was made of animal figures somewhat similar to those which are to be seen in cave dwellings in many places in South Africa. The only scrap left of a collection of copies is now produced. It is so very inferior, that it probably owes its escape to rejection, when the others were borrowed or taken away; but still it shows the peculiar talent of catching the characteristic outline of each animal intended to be represented, and may compete in that respect with the very ancient carvings of reindeer and other outlines on bones of the old drifts.

The lower sketch is from an original not more than 250 years old, for the broad brim of the Boer is represented and his horses, the latter with a deer-like tendency in outline, showing them to be bushman work, influenced by the habit of drawing game.

In Africa the talent seems to be peculiar to the bushman race. Among the Bechuana and Kaffir tribes, and even among that better developed, yet distinct people, much resembling the bushmen, namely, the Hottentot, the artistic faculty tends to modelling, but with very inferior results as regards the observant copying of the natural original.

Ethnological notes on the distinguishing marks of a true bushman are beyond the scope of this brief notice. They are such as can only be

traced by an old observer, but by him they may be marked even down among descendants of mixed race for many generations. It may be sufficient to urge the very necessary caution against confusing the study of a section of mankind, especially interesting from its extremely primitive aspect, by admitting notes of passing travellers, by whom mixed negroes, Malays, Hottentots, Bechuana, and Balala of all tribes driven to bushman-like life in the desert by crime, war, or witch doctors, are spoken of under the general name of Bushmen.

All the Bushman Cave drawings are silhouettes in ferruginous clay, now indurated, and it may be added that there is no recollection of any symbols, and that all the various animals drawn may be recognised and are known; none are mythic, with one exception—the unicorn. He stands among the other game, and the confident belief in his existence, and assurance that he will be found exactly like the supporters of the royal arms of Scotland, is an acknowledgment by the old South African pioneer sportsmen of the general fidelity of the bushmen artists. The argument runs thus:—"The existence of the unicorn is proved by the Bible, for it speaks of him. It is nonsense, if not much worse, to say the description may apply to the one-horn rhinoceros. The bushmen painted the rhinoceros, and the Bible shows him, as well as two unicorns coming out of the ark, just as the bushmen drew them, and the English have the unicorn on the first leaf of their Bibles too. Now, how could the bushman have drawn a unicorn without seeing it? It must be in Africa, and will be found yet some day."

Accordingly, nomadic graziers, sportsmen, and traders long kept ears and eyes on the stretch, but an enterprising trading explorer named Scoon, a Scotsman, was probably the last man engaged in actual chase of the unicorn. About forty-five years ago, he was wont to tell us at the outspan fire how he saw one among a herd of game, and was determined to have it dead or alive, how he chased it for two or three days, half killing all his horses, and that when it fell to a lucky shot he found the horn was on one side, evidently the remainder of a pair. The bushman's unicorn is still undiscovered, but it is reasonably supposed to be no myth, being merely a gemsbok in profile, one horn concealing the other.

It is hoped that these remarks have not been extended beyond a reasonable length under the circumstances, and that they are sufficient to illustrate the specimens as requested.