

I.

NOTES (1) ON SMOOTHING STONES NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM, (2) ON CURE STONES, AND (3) ON AN ADZE OF SHELL.
By PROFESSOR DUNS, D.D., VICE-PRESIDENT.

I. *Smoothing Stones*.—An intelligent young weaver, from whom I obtained one of the smoothing stones on the table, said—"That which I now use is of hard wood, but my grandfather had smoothing stones both of bone and of iron." The remark gives a good illustration of the readiness with which old customs adapt themselves to altered circumstances, and yet keep traces of their origin and scope. The mode in which the term "stone" continues to be associated with the article when it consists of a different material, as wood, bone, or iron, indicates the historical precedence of the stone. The smoothing stone was and is the tool employed by the weaver to give an equal and partially glossy surface to his fabric, while yet on the so-called "lay," or thick, broad, flat beam on which it is first spread. These stones, once very commonly used in Scotland, are now fast disappearing. A friend, in a district where a few years ago one or more might have been found in the possession of every weaver, writes—"I have been trying to get you a weaver's stone, but have not yet been successful." Again, three months later, "I cannot lay my hand on one weaver's stone. The

rural wabster is now here a man of the past, and his tools have vanished with him." It occurred to me that it might be well to make a record of the use of these stones, to collect a few specimens before they wholly disappear, and to hand them to the Society, if it care to have them.

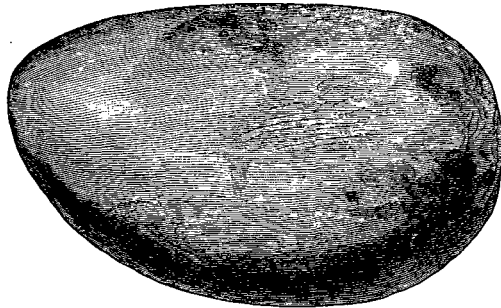


Fig. 1. Smoothing Stone from Berwickshire (4 inches in length).

The specimen (fig. 1), is the rudest of the set, being only a rolled pebble of coarse quartz, coloured by the presence of a little iron. No attempt has been made to smooth the natural surface, beyond what would be produced by use and the hand of the weaver. It is from Berwickshire.

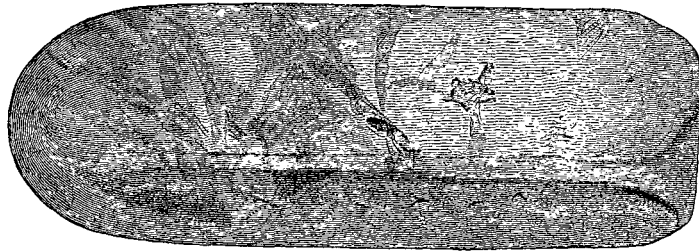


Fig. 2. Smoothing Stone from Glencairn (5½ inches in length).

No 2, from Glencairn, Dumfriesshire (fig. 2), is of heavy spar, and has been subjected to a good deal of polishing both on the flat surfaces and at the ends. It is known to have been in the same family for more than 100 years.

Nos. 3 and 4 are from Linlithgowshire. The former (fig. 3) is of gypseous alabaster, and had for a long time been in the possession of a

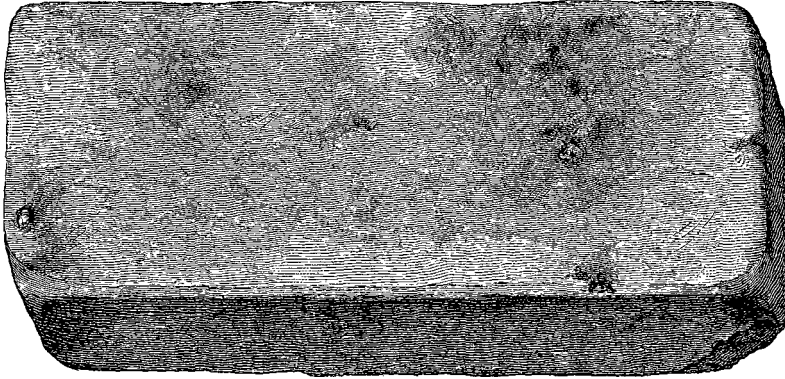


Fig. 3. Smoothing Stone from Hilderston ($5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length).

family of weavers who for generations lived at Hilderston, a farm near

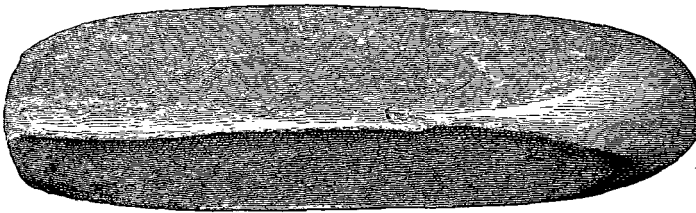


Fig. 4. Smoothing Stone from Bathgate ($3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length).

Torphichen. The latter (fig. 4) is black band ironstone (clay carbonate), and has had some care bestowed on its shape.

No. 5 has been long in my possession. I can, however, only hazard a guess as to its use. It was called a shoemaker's stone. I am inclined to

think it had been employed in the process of tanning, and, though not

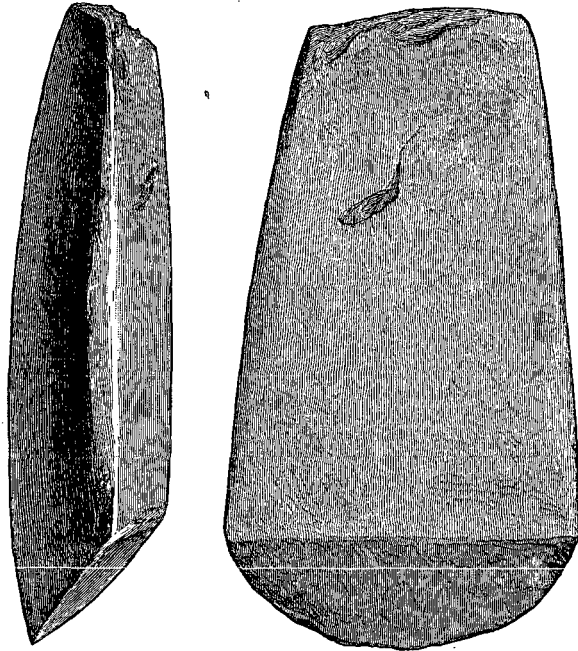


Fig. 5. Front and side views of Smoothing-Stone, locality unknown
(5 inches in length).

now in use, it most likely served the same purpose as the stretching tool or slicker, which used to be of stone.

A stone of this sort is in use at the present day among some of the wild Indian tribes of the United States. The Rev. M. Eels, an agent of the Indian Bureau, reporting on the Twana Indians of the Skokomisk Reservation on Paget Sound, near the head of Hood's Canal, Washington territory, says—"The deer or elk hide is soaked for two days, and the hair removed by scraping it with rough iron. It is then soaked half a day with the deer brains, in hot water, over a fire—the deer brains being

rubbed over it, something like soap. It is then stretched *and rubbed with stones* until it becomes soft and pliable, when they dig a hole in the ground, build a fire of rotten wood or cedar bark, stretch the skin over it, and cover it with blankets, thus smoking it, after which it is fit for use."

II. *Cure Stones*.—In referring to these I purposely keep clear of discussions touching the feelings which underlie their use. The subject is one of great interest, and open to most extensive and varied illustration. Certain aspects of it have been scientifically, and yet very graphically, described and illustrated by our Secretary, Dr Mitchell, in his paper "On various Superstitions in the North-west Highlands and Islands of Scotland," published in vol. iv. of the "Proceedings" of the Society. Sir James Simpson dealt with yet other forms of superstition in his paper, which has closer bearings on these Notes—"On some Scottish Magical Charm Stones, or Curing Stones." Dr Mitchell says of "charms"—"In the Lewis these are common, and are still much used, but more for the diseases of cattle than of men. I have presented to the Museum of Antiquities two which were recently in use." Sir James' object chiefly was to describe "two or three of the principal curing-stones of Scotland" which have long been in the possession of certain historic Scottish families. The vulgar use of cure stones, especially in connection with the diseases of cattle, is only incidentally referred to.

More even than the smoothing stones have cure stones fallen into disuse, and they are yearly becoming more and more rare. One of my Highland students informed me some time ago that they are known to be employed still by old people, who, however, try to conceal the fact from educated people and strangers.¹

¹ I am indebted to P. Miller, Esq., 8 Bellevue Terrace, for the following interesting record of the recent use of the cure stone in Clackmannanshire:—"I remember when a boy, say about 1820, that one of our family suffered much pain from a 'whitlow' in the thumb, which was tedious and long in healing, all the more so that there was a large piece of proud flesh on the sore. Several local applications had been used, but the healing process went on very slowly. The old matrons coming about strongly advised that Mrs Ferguson's 'adder stanes' (cure stones) should be applied to hasten the cure. The owner of them was an old and infirm person, but her daughter came and performed the operation. It was made by herself by gently stroking the diseased

The cure stones now on the table have been for many years in the possession of Mr John Campbell, Ledaig, near Loch Etive, by whom they are highly prized. *Clach Leigh*, or Stone of Medicine, seems to be a bit of clay ironstone, with a greenish tint from the presence of chlorite. Mr Campbell got this stone from Archibald M'Donald, farmer, whose grandmother, born in 1745, was the last who used it. Mr Campbell remembers this woman well. She died at the reputed age of 102. *Clach Leigh* was kept in the best chest or press in the house, carefully rolled up in the best piece of dress, and when taken to the sick, it was wrapt in the best plaid belonging to the family. It was believed to be efficacious in all sorts of human ailments, and was in use over a very wide district. The stone was put in the hand of the patient, and, says Mr Campbell, "the amount of clammy sweat which gathered round the stone indicated the extent of the cure."

Clach Ruaidhe, or the Red Stone, had for generations been in the possession of Mr Campbell's family. It was used by his grandmother, in whose day (towards the close of the first half of last century) it was much in vogue for rubbing the udders of cows when hardened and inflamed by disease.

Clach Spota's, the maculed or spotted stone, was obtained from Mr M'Coll, Ledaig, who is still (1879) alive, and above eighty years of age. It had been in M'Coll's family for generations, and was used, over the whole district, thumb with the stone in a slow measured manner towards its extremity. Then the stone was applied all round the thumb in the same way. These operations were gone over several times by the operator, and the onlookers were as silent and as intent in witnessing them as medical students usually are at an operation in the Infirmary. Some days after, the operation was repeated in the same formal way. The 'stones' were carefully wrapped up in some soft sort of cloth and kept in a silk bag, which was tied in a napkin. They were reported to be an heirloom in the family, who owned them, and had been handed down from one generation to another. The belief was that their efficacy in promoting a cure depended in a great measure on their application being made, on the diseased member or body, by the owner of them. They were considered very precious, and we were scarcely allowed to touch them, as the handling and touching took away their healing virtues. The stones were round, about an inch in length, and the thickness of a sparrow's egg at the broad end, of a dark grey colour, and having a very smooth polished surface, just like a very choice pebble that one often meets with on the sea-shore, which I have no doubt they were."

for rubbing horses suffering from stoppage of the urine. This is the only stone of the three that at once takes one's attention, and around which it can be easily imagined superstitious feelings might gather. It has evidently been used as a hammer. It is a bit of rather coarse black basalt, and may have received its present form by the action of the water on the shore or in a stream. To me the most interesting thing about it is the very curious manner in which it is, apparently, cracked. The cracks, I have no doubt, are older than the time when it was used as a hammer, and are natural. Yet, I am informed that its use as a cure stone ceased when it became cracked, as it was believed the latent virtue then left it. The crack in this instance was analogous to the flaw which appeared in the *Clach-na-Bratach*, or Stone of the Standard, one of the charm stones described by Sir James Simpson :—" On the eve of Sheriffmuir (13th November 1715), of sad memory, on Struan consulting the stone as to the fate of the morrow, the large internal flaw was first observed. The Stuarts were lost ; and clan Donnachaidh has been declining in influence ever since."

III. *On an Adze of Shell.*—This implement was obtained by the late

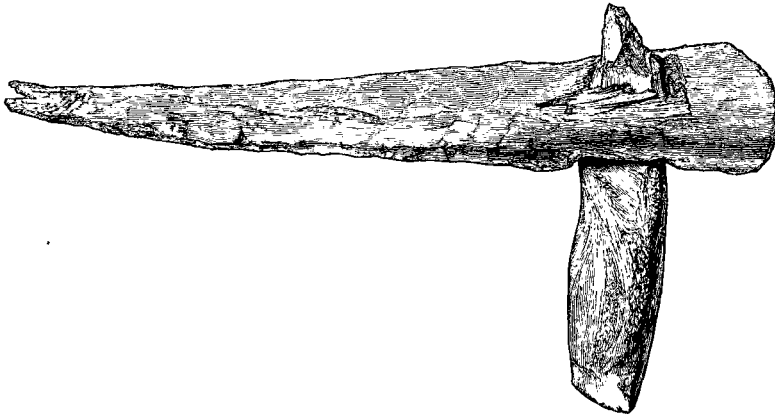


Fig. 6. Adze of Shell from New Guinea (18 inches in length).

Dr Mackintosh Mackay, during his sojourn in Australia, from some traders

with New Guinea. I show it to the Society as another added to the rapidly increasing illustrative instances of the adaptive ingenuity of uncivilised man—as man. Taking the material that come readiest to hand, he fashions it into forms which best serve his ends. In this case he has made his adze out of the edge fold of a huge shell (*Tridacna gigas*). In a paper by Dr Comrie, in the “Journal of the Anthropological Institute” (1876), entitled “Anthropological Notes on New Guinea,” he says: “At Lepon Island, adzes made from *Tridacna* shell were obtained similar to those in use at Nalan and some of the Line Islands.” In Mr E. T. Stevens’ work, “Flint Chips”—a descriptive catalogue of the contents of the Blackmore Museum, Salisbury—mention is made of “several shell hatchets, in use in Melanesia and elsewhere, some of which are in the original handles.” In the Society’s Museum are three small “Celts or Adzes of a thick, hard shell (*Pyrrula* ?), from Barbadoes.” The adze now under notice is in the original handle, 18 inches in length, which bears marks of having, most likely, been formed by a tool of the same sort. The hole in the handle for the tool has been so formed as to give a slight obliquity to the sharp-cutting edge. The adze-head, formed of the shell of *Tridacna gigas*, measures 9 inches in length, and 2 inches in width across the cutting edge.