

I.

NOTES (a) ON A HELMET FOUND AT ANCRUM MOOR, (b) ON HELMETS, AND (c) ON A STONE AXE (NEW GUINEA). BY PROFESSOR DUNS, D.D., F.S.A. SCOT., &c.

(a) Several years ago the helmet now on the table was found at Ancrum, Roxburghshire. Before it came into the hands of the Rev. James Baikie, a former New College student, now minister at Ancrum, it had lain for a long time on a stone in one of the gardens of the village. By exposure to all kinds of weather a thick rust had covered it. "It was found," says Mr Baikie, "on the side of a sloping scaur leading down to the Ale Water, and on the surface, or partially embedded in it. How it had been exposed the man from whom I got it could not tell me. There is much wood about the place, with some fallen trees, and it may have been unearthed by the uprooting of these. The ground is mostly leaf mould."

When our Secretary, Dr Christison, told me he had heard of the "find," I was interested in it more perhaps because it recalled a long forgotten experience, than because of any real value in the specimen itself. More than fifty years ago I had a week's botanical ramble over Ancrum Moor and the near outlying district, when, once and again, I heard references to pieces of armour and weapons of war having been discovered in the same neighbourhood. These were popularly believed to have belonged to soldiers who had fallen in the battle of Ancrum Moor, A.D. 1545. Most Scottish Border-men have even yet satisfaction in recounting the defeats of their English neighbours when raiding the Border counties, and in belittling those of their own countrymen on English Border ground. So recently as the time just referred to, Border shepherds and tradesmen could repeat the biting words of "Bell the Cat" when informed that the English Generals Evers and Leyton were on their way to take possession of Teviotdale,—“If they come to take seizin of my lands I shall bear them witness to it, and perhaps write them an investiture with sharp pens and ink.” The threat was fulfilled in 1545 on Ancrum Moor—sharp swords the pens, the enemy's blood

the ink. Taking this state of feeling into account, the first look at the helmet and the locality in which it was found are almost sure to suggest the date 1545. The question is thus raised, Are materials available for ascertaining what may be called the time-range of special patterns of pieces of armour? Assuming that there are, and also that changeful fashion has in all ages ruled in military as in other social circles, the question in connection with this helmet arises, Were those worn by English soldiers about the middle of the sixteenth century of this shape?

Now, when a single stone axe or a fragment of a bronze implement suggests questions like these, we grudge neither precious time nor painstaking research in trying to answer them. This seems to me to justify a somewhat full notice of the Ancrum Moor helmet. Be this as it may, it is not forgotten that even a single specimen might become both a key to, and an illustration of, the art of an epoch. There has been much pleasure and some unexpectedly interesting information in bringing the specimen now before us into this somewhat exaggerated light. "The helmet (fig. 1) is a variety of the form which succeeded the closed or visored helmet, and may very well be as early as the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Its distinctive features are the protuberant hollow "comb" or crest and the projecting "shade" to cover the eyes, which are made in one piece with the skull-cap, while the neck-guard is riveted on and the cheek-pieces hinged to the sides of the skull-cap. It answers closely to the casque of a demi-lancer's suit of armour of 1535 figured in Skelton's *Illustrations of Ancient Armour*, vol. i. plate xxii., and may (so far as the date goes) have been worn by a man-at-arms in 1545, which is the date of the battle of Ancrum Moor."

(b) In matters of this kind much depends on the method of inquiry. I have found it useful, in trying to trace the early history of phases of art, social customs, domestic habits, and the like, to take as a starting-point any reference to them by Pliny the younger. The 7th of the thirty-seven books of his well known History opens thus:—"It seems fit, before we pass from the study of the nature of man, to indicate the origin and authors of things invented by man."¹ His reference to the soldier's

¹ C. *Plinii secundi Historia Naturalis*, lib. vii. c. 57.

helmet is brief and dogmatic—"The Lacedæmonians invented the helmet."¹ The brevity of his remarks on other matters is often equally conspicuous. Thus, for example, as to the use of the razor,—“Scipio Africanus was the first Roman who shaved every day.”² Pliny's period is a good starting-point from which to trace the fashion of the helmets both of earlier and later periods. As regards those of the former, they are represented in low relief on ancient monuments, or in early Egyptian painted figures, or described in the Homeric poems and Roman literature, or referred to in Bible history. And as regards those of the

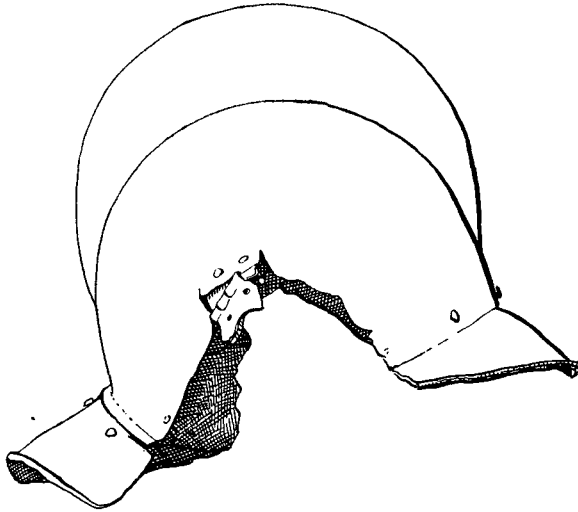


Fig. 1. Helmet found at Ancrum Moor. (‡.)

latter, mediæval literature is rich in references. That recent literature is richer still, we need only name the works of Meyrick, Skelton, Gough, Lacroix, Boutell, Cutts, Hewitt. From the same sources much information may be got touching both material and shape. Some were made of leather, as the head-piece of Ulysses, and the brown-hued helm of the twelfth century, some of iron, as that now before us. Most were of brass or bronze—"Hector of the gleaming helm";—"Goliath had a

¹ *Op. cit.*

² *Op. cit.*

helmet of brass upon his head." The head-gear referred to in the Beowulf fragment was "a high martial helm, adorned with gold." As regards shape, the earliest of all were the simple cone and the cone with crest; later, the simple calvarian and the calvarian with crest, the morion or open helmet, the close helmet with visor and bevor (the former covering the upper and the latter the lower parts of the face, held on by straps from the ear-pieces, and tied under the chin), and the Saxon helmet with nasal—a narrow piece from the brow covering the nose, a fashion early introduced and continued till late in the fourteenth century. As to crests, there is a generalisation worth noting in the third vol. of Wilkinson's *Ancient Egypt*, p. 353. "The Egyptian helmet," he says, "had no crest. The Greek crest was copied from the mane of a horse; and in illustration of this we frequently find the scales or cheek-pieces of the helmet made to imitate the ears of that animal, which, when raised and turned up, project from the upper part on either side." There might be more than one crest on the helmet. Thus Agamemnon's:—

"Then on his brow his lofty helm he placed,
Four crested, double peaked, with horse hair plumes
That nodded, fearful, from the warrior's head."

Goliath's head-gear has been referred to. The Scripture references are many and interesting. Their great antiquity and the historical incidents associated with them make them worthy of notice. Moreover, they shed light on more than the art of these early times: "Goliath had a helmet of brass on his head and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of his coat was five thousand shekels of brass,"—1 Sam. xvii. 4, 5. The brave young King of Judah, Uzziah, who warred with great success against the Philistines, Arabians, Mehunims, and Ammonites, is represented as having supplied the three hundred and seven thousand which he rallied against them with shields, and spears, and helmets,"—2 Chron. xxvi. 13, 14. By a bold use of figurative language, the poet-prophet Isaiah introduces the word in connection with equipment for great deeds in a sphere crowded with great thoughts and grand convictions—"put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation on the head,"—Isa. lix. 17. Another national teacher thus rallies, as if

by trumpet-call, the friends of freedom to great endeavours—"Order ye the buckler and shield and draw near to battle, harness the horses and stand forth with your helmets,"—Jer. xlvi. 3, 4. Another gives a graphic list of the allies of Tyre, as joining its army and hanging their helmets in the city,—Ezek. xxvii. 10. Saul armed David with his armour, and "put an helmet of brass on his head,"—1 Sam. xvii. 38. Other references might be quoted.

To trace the history of the helmet from its earliest form is more interesting than at first thought it might seem. There is a good illustration of this in Meyrick's important work, *Costume of the Original Inhabitants of the British Islands*, London, 1815. Of the ancient Briton he says,—“On his head was placed the Irish capa, or caban, or cappan (*i.e.* cap), which derived its name alike from Irish caban, or cabin, and the British cab or hut, the hut being made in the form of a cone, with wattles stuck in the ground and fastened together at top, a shape preferred by the Egyptians, and adopted by many nations. It is somewhat singular that the form of this ancient pointed cap is to this day exhibited in what the Welsh peasantry call *cappan cyrniacyll*, the horn-like or cornute cap, made of rushes, tied at the top and twisted into a band at the bottom, exactly in the form of a cone, and like the ancient cabins,”—p. 11. “This,” he adds, “was the prototype of the early Irish helmets. The Britons improved on it by lowering the top and making a projecting poke over the forehead to protect the eyes.”

In my boyhood a head-piece similar to Meyrick's prototype was worn by boys in the Border fighting-game of “Scotch and English.” The prototype was made of the common rush (*Juncus effusus*), three or four of which were plaited—*plissé*—into a narrow band for the brow. At right angles to the band, rushes were attached lengthwise, which, when brought together at the top, were tied, and thus gave the cone. The weapons wielded by the juvenile warriors were the sharp green sword-blades of the water Iris (*I. pseud-acorus*), or oftener, as more easily found, the leaves and stems of the common docken (*Rumex obtusifolius*). This once common game is now, I believe, relegated to the realm of folk-lore. The subsequent forms, in which the prototype was lost, have been referred to in the preceding remarks. Perhaps the simplest,

yet most serviceable form of these was that recently found on Ancrum Moor.

(c) ON A STONE AXE (New Guinea).—When this Axe came into my hands I was told “it had come from the South Seas, perhaps from New Guinea.” This was the only information to be had regarding it, and it occurred to me that it might be worth while to try to learn something touching its original ownership and locality. In the course of some research and a good deal of reading, relative chiefly to implements in use in the islands of the immense region known as Oceania, I got what was sought for. The reference, however, in the title of this note is not to the “Island,” but to the “New Guinea Ethnographical Province.” “The more warlike and enterprising tribes,” says Ratsel in his *History of Mankind*, “dwell in East New Guinea; they are far superior to the natives of the interior, the stupid Dorese, and the good-tempered, cunning Papuas of the south-west coast. This character extends to the inhabitants of the neighbouring islands to the east and north. Between the Bismarck and Solomon Islanders, too, there is a great agreement of character: they are strong, coarse, warlike, but at the same time capable of work and receptive education. In some distinctive details, such as the use of coloured bask and grass for ornament, the Solomon Islanders agree with New Guinea. The Trobriands, D’Entrecasteaux, and other Islands southward to Teste form, with easternmost New Guinea, one ethnographical province. Here we begin to find a higher proportion than in New Guinea of population partly straight-haired and fair-skinned, with such specific features as the loin-cloth made from the *pandanus* leaf, the working of small disks of spondylus-shell for ornament, the peculiar mode of inserting the axe-head, navigation highly advanced, and cannibalism. Some of these characteristics mark the transition from East New Guinea to the most westerly regions.” This implement (fig. 2) is an axe from the islands just mentioned. Ratsel gives a figure of one which is in the Christie Collection, from D’Entrecasteaux, a good representative of that on the table, though perhaps of more recent make, if the ornamentation of the haft be assumed to warrant the inference of later date.

In making some jottings for this note, I was struck with the vast

amount of information which may come to cluster round a single specimen if its history be worked out on scientific lines. Take, for example, this stone axe. The statement "it had come, perhaps, from



Fig. 2. Stone Axe, in its wooden handle, from New Guinea.

New Guinea" turned attention to the one of the four great geographical divisions in which New Guinea is included, both as an island and as the centre of an ethnographical province, namely *Melanesia* (the other

three being *Malaysia*, *Micronesia*, and *Polynesia*). Each of these divisions has its ethnological problems touching origin, epochs and range of migrations, effects of miscegenation on language, or colour, or cranial features, and the like. There are some suggestive words in connection with this in Flower and Lydekker's recent work on *Mammals, Living and Extinct*. "There are," they say, "probably few, if any, islands of the Pacific in which the Papuan element does not form a factor in the composite character of the natives." The statement may be equally true as regards the implements. Taking New Guinea as the region in which the Papuan element has its highest expression, and finding proofs of Papuan migrations in so many islands of the Pacific, we might expect that implements in use there would be found in the other related islands—in, however, a numerical decrease, in proportion to the distance from the centre of distribution. Indeed, would it not be very much in this case as with birds? There are local centres in which species and their varieties occur in great numbers; but the numbers diminish as the area of distribution widens, until the species are represented by a few stragglers far away from their usual habitats, and among species of an entirely different area. The illustration may be taken for what it is worth. All I wish to indicate is, that not unlikely, say, the boomerang was present in one part of Melanesia and this axe in another, even before any Papuan element reached them; and as regards this axe, that the D'Entrecasteaux people had left off the use of palæolithic forms, and put in their place this somewhat picturesque implement of neolithic time. In other words, if the comparatively low phases of handiwork generally conspicuous in the weapons and industrial implements of the great island itself had included axes similar to this one, their area of distribution would not have been limited, as this is, to one or two small islands. Now, this appears to warrant the inference that it was in use in these islands before the Papuan element referred to by Flower and Lydekker had reached them. Moreover, the pattern seems to me more suggestive of Malaysian than of Melanesian origin and art.