

NOTICE OF TWO HAMMER-STONES (*BARKSTEIN*) USED IN THE PREPARATION OF DYE FROM *TORMENTILLA* IN THE FAROE ISLES, AND OF A FAROE BISMAR. [SPECIMENS EXHIBITED.] By T. N. ANNANDALE.

The Barkstein.—Throughout the Faroe Islands yellow sheepskin leather, tanned with a decoction of the roots of the common tormentilla (*Tormentilla potentilla*) instead of bark is much used for shoes. The roots are scraped up from under the moss with the hands, well dried in the air, and pounded in a peculiar mortar. This mortar consists merely of a piece of rock which is naturally level, but circular pits are soon produced in it by the action of the pestle. They are about four inches in diameter at the top and slightly funnel-shaped, and they vary in depth with the time for which they have been used. The rock chosen is sometimes on the sea-shore but usually inland; occasionally a flat-topped boulder is used. There is, as a rule, only one such mortar for each village.

The pestle or "barkstein" at the present time is nothing more than a roughly oval stone, more or less flattened from above downward, and slightly polished by the action of the sea. These stones vary considerably in size, but on an average are about 6 inches in length, 3 inches in breadth, and 2 in depth. They are gathered at certain places on the coast, and are never—the people say—artificially smoothed except by use.

In the last generation the "barkstein," although not differing otherwise, was provided almost invariably with a wooden handle, which fitted into a hole drilled with a steel point to the depth of about an inch and a half in one end of the stone. The handle was simply jammed into the hole,—never tied or fastened in any way. Such stones are rarely, if ever, used nowadays.

When the roots are to be ground, the stone is grasped by the centre, brought down on a handful collected in one of the pits, and rotated smartly upon them for some seconds. It is then lifted, the roots are pressed together into a ball, and the same process is repeated until a fine powder is obtained. The powder is boiled in water, and the leather is steeped in the decoction. The best leather is hung up in the smoke of the kitchen fire for many years before it is used. It is then smoothed and stretched over the same stones with which the roots were ground, and sewn into shoes. The men's shoes have white strings, and the women's red or blue.

The stones are sometimes used also for breaking up peat before it is put on the fire.

Both the specimens now exhibited were obtained at Kvivig, a large village on the west coast of Stromoe. Both specimens have been used, but a handle was specially fitted to No. 2 (which has a perforation in one end) by an old man, who remembered making them for his mother when a boy. The photograph showing the women using the barkstein at the rock-basins produced by their use was taken at Saxen, a smaller village a few miles north of Kvivig. These implements, in an archaeological sense, are hammer-stones, and in the absence of their story might have been classed among the prehistoric implements of that nature. They are oblong beach pebbles of igneous rock, selected for their size and shape to be easily grasped in the hand and wielded as crushers. No. 1 is 5 inches in length by 3 inches in greatest breadth, and 2 inches in thickness, flatter on its broader than on its narrower faces, and rounded on the ends and edges. It is greatly abraded and slightly fractured on both ends by use. The abrasion also extends along the sides, and to a slight extent on the broader faces. No. 2 is more rounded in its general form. It measures $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth, and

$1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in thickness. It is similarly abraded at both ends and also along one of the narrower sides, but differs from No. 1 in having a hole $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter sunk in the line of its longer axis to the depth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in the centre of one of its ends, in which a wooden handle $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length has been jammed.

The Bismar.—In every Faroese cottage, except in the largest villages, at least one “bismar” or weighing-beam is kept, although it has been illegal for some years to sell anything by bismar weight. They are usually weighted and graduated up to twenty-four Danish pounds, and a “bismar pound,” meaning twenty-four Danish pounds, is a common expression among the people. Dried fish and woollen goods are roughly weighed by bismar before being sold to the storekeeper, who weighs them in a regular weighing-machine stamped by the inspector. The beam itself is of wood, graduated in half-pounds by means of little metal nails. The weighted end is made separately, and weighted either with lead or with old scrap-iron. The indicator is either of wood with a string loop, or, as in this specimen, of sheep’s horn, tied with whale’s sinew. Old bismars are rarely met with in the Faroes, but there is in the Oxford Museum a specimen from Stromoe which is at least a hundred years old. The weighted end of this specimen is made from the butt of a matchlock, weighted with old nails. Most of those now in use have been made within the last ten years.