

## I.

A DESCRIPTION OF SOME NEO-ARCHAIC OBJECTS, FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF SCOTLAND, RECENTLY ADDED TO THE MUSEUM. BY SIR ARTHUR MITCHELL, K.C.B., M.D., LL.D., FOREIGN SECRETARY.

What I propose in this communication is to give a brief description of a few neo-archaic Scottish objects, which have been recently added to the Museum. They have an archaic character chiefly in respect of a certain rudeness in their form and purpose; but they are in reality not archaic, having all been made and used in this country by persons of this time. They have, therefore, been called neo-archaic, and the study of them throws light on the study of many objects which are really archaic.

After describing the objects, I shall endeavour very briefly to disclose how the study of such objects may prove advantageous. So far as I

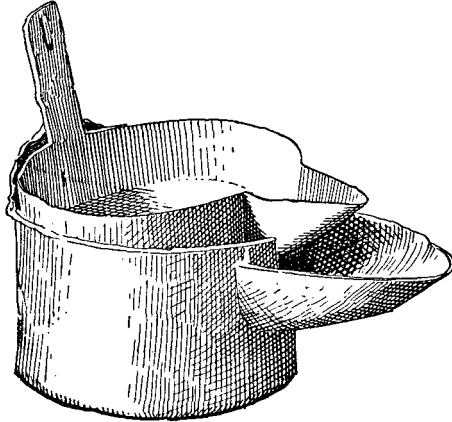


Fig. 1. Table Cruisie. (½)

know, the Scottish Society was among the first to recognise their value, and the consequence is that our National Collection is becoming rich in them.

*Cruisie*.--This is a two vesseled cruisie of exceptional form (fig. 1). The under

vessel to receive the drop is of thicker iron than usual, and has a flat bottom, so that it can stand on a table. The upper vessel for the oil and wick is, on the other hand, smaller and lighter than usual. Unfortunately it is broken, and there is nothing to show whether there was any arrangement for hanging it. From Lethan, Nairnshire (1880), where it was called a Table or Student's Cruisie.

*Stone Cruisie Mould.*—From Shetland. Has moulds for a one light and a two light cruisie. This last is a rare form. I have only seen one specimen, now in the Scottish National Museum.

*Street Lamp.*—An oil lamp with two wicks used in lighting the streets of Paisley, prior to the introduction of gas in 1824, with its so-called trimming wire

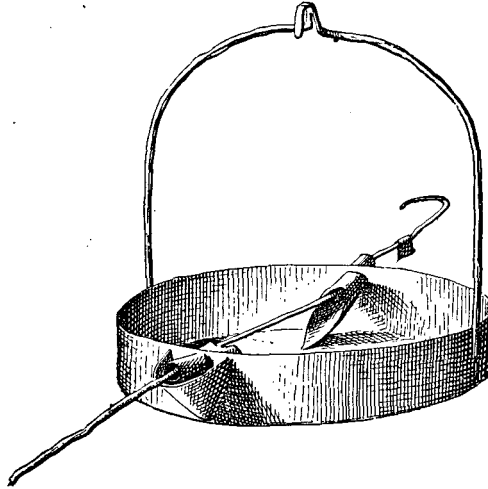


Fig. 2. Street Lamp Cruisie. (½.)

(fig 2). It came to me in 1880, through Mr Kirsop, Glasgow, who obtained it from Mr Geo. R. Hislop, of the Paisley Gas Works.

*Tinder Boxes.*—1. Received from Unst in 1880. It is a simple box of tinned iron, without a handle or any arrangement for a candle. It was taken by the lady who gave it to me from the shelf above the kitchen fire-place, where it had remained for a good many years after it ceased to be used. It contains the original strike-a-light and flint. The latest made tinder boxes in Scotland would probably be of this simple character.

2. Another tinder box from Kirkcudbright, like the one just described, but smaller. It also contains the strike-a-light and flint which were actually used with it.

3. An oval, japanned tinder box, quite recently made in Birmingham, and ex-

ported for use by gold-diggers, shepherds in the Colonies, etc. It contains the flint and the strike-a-light which went with it. Its form makes it suitable for being carried in the pocket.

4. A tinder box made of part of a cow's horn, used by the Lewis fishermen. It contains the flint used with it, but not the strike-a-light. The cork, for keeping the tinder dry and in its place, appears to be new.

The fishermen of Caithness are also known to me to have made their tinder boxes of pieces of horn.

*Peer-man of Wood and Iron.*—For holding two splinters of resinous fir (fig. 3).

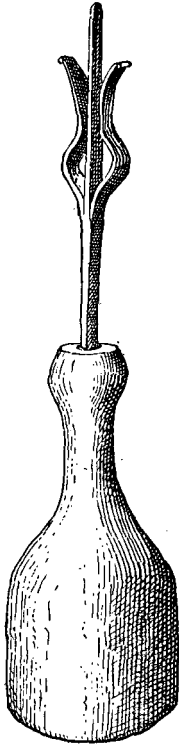


Fig. 3. Peer-man for two  
Fir Candles. ( $\frac{1}{4}$ .)

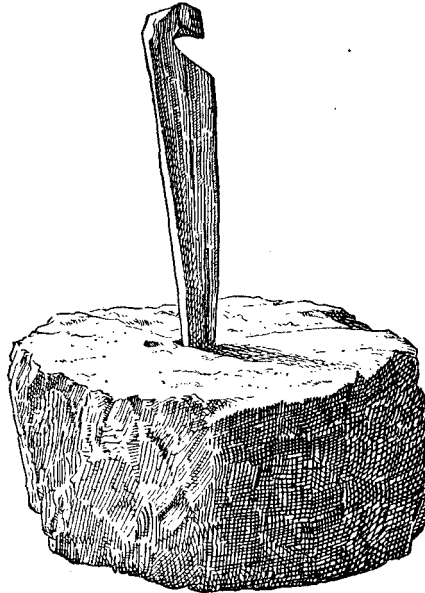


Fig. 4. Spindle of Wood and its Whorl of Peat, for spinning tippetts of horse-hair for fishing hooks. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

Made and used in Dufftown, Banffshire, within the last 40 or 50 years. Looks, as it really is, quite modern. The old man who had it made for his use, and

who read by the lighted fir splints it carried, had sons in the south reading at the same time by gas light.

*Basket or Cradle for holding the Store of Resinous Fir Splints.*—This basket or cradle is kept constantly hung in the large open fire-place of the cottage, some distance above the fire, which is on the hearth. The splints are thus dried, so as to burn more brightly, and they are at hand for use when needed. We have two of these now in the National Collection, quite like each other. The addition has a value in showing that the contrivance is not exceptional or accidental, which might have been suspected had there been only one specimen.

*Spindles.*—Two very rudely made spindles from Fetlar, with a knob at the upper end, instead of the notch which is usual in better made spindles. When I got them, more than 30 years ago, they had been quite recently made—one of them by a boy whom I found cutting a steatite whorl.<sup>1</sup> The dark coloured one I found in actual use.

As a general statement, I think it would be correct to say that roughly or coarsely made spindles are of later date than those which show a better finish—the result, probably, of their being made when this mode of spinning was ceasing to be practised, and when the character of the spindle was consequently less considered.

*Whorls.*—1. Whorl of steatite from Fetlar, very roughly and said to have been quite recently made. It was in actual use when I got it. It may be regarded as a specimen of the whorl dying out by degradation.

2. Another interesting whorl of steatite from Fetlar, which is known to have been recently made, and which shows the same want of care in the finishing. It is larger and heavier than the one just described, and has a hole admitting of a much thicker spindle. It also may be regarded as a whorl showing the rudeness of finish, often seen in an implement which is ceasing to be in common use, and which illustrates a death by degradation.

*Spindle and Whorl of exceptional character and use.*—The whorl consists of a round disc of peat, 4 inches in diameter, and  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches thick. The spindle is a piece of soft wood,  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, roughly worked into shape, deeply notched at the upper end, and tapering to a point at the lower end, which is inserted into the peat whorl (fig. 4).

It is used for spinning “*tippets*” of horse-tail hair for fishing hooks, and this explains the shortness of the spindle, because there never will be any considerable length of spun material to be wound on it. It also explains the exceptional weight of the whorl.

It was given to me in 1879 by Mr Gilbert Goudie, who brought it from Dunrossness in Shetland.

The use of a bit of peat for a whorl in spinning horse hair “*tippets*” has its counterpart in the use of a small potato as a whorl when spinning wool. A whorl of this last kind, which I saw in actual use, is in the Museum.

On this subject, see a paper by Dr W. Ivison Macadam, on “Spindles and Whorls of unusual weight,” in vol. xv. of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, p. 148.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Past in the Present*. 8vo, Edin., 1880, p. 1.

*Scutcher*.—From Tیره—received in 1880 (fig. 5). The extreme length of the implement is about 26 inches, of which about 18 inches go to the blade, and about 8 to the handle. The width of the blade is about  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches, its thickness at the

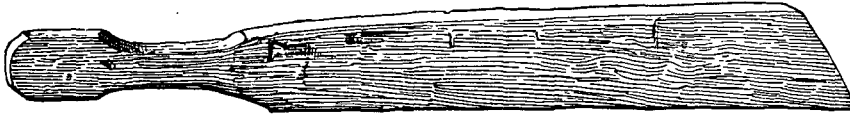


Fig. 5. Lint Scutcher of wood. ( $\frac{1}{4}$ .)

rounded back being  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch, the other edge being sharp. One face is quite flat, and the other rounded. It is made of teak, probably a piece of a wrecked ship.

*Spatha of bone*.—I exhibit another implement (fig. 6), though not Scottish, which might perhaps be taken for a scutcher. It came to me from the Faroe

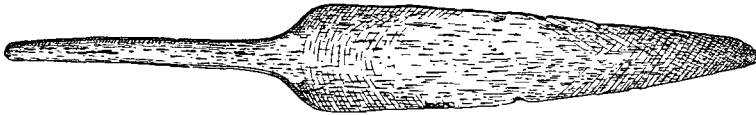


Fig. 6. Spatha of Bone from Faroe Isles. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

Islands, in 1883, as “an instrument formerly used there in weaving.” Its length is  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches, of which  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches go to the handle.

It is not a huge knife-like implement, as the Tیره scutcher is, with a straight blunt rounded edge, and a straight sharp edge. The blade begins at the handle with a width of nearly 4 inches, and goes tapering down to a width of 1 inch at the end, which is more or less rounded. It is equally sharp on both edges. It is not quite flat on either side like the Tیره implement, but the faces at the lower end rise in a gentle curve throughout the whole length of the blade.

The undoubted scutcher which I have described comes from Tیره, and it happens that there was exhibited in 1884 an implement from the same place with a considerable resemblance to the implement from the Faroe Islands, and which may, like it, have been “used in weaving.” It weighed  $10\frac{1}{4}$  ounces, and was 25 inches long, 10 of the inches going to the handle. The thickness of the blade at the junction with the handle  $\frac{3}{8}$ , and at the point  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch. The thickness of the handle at the butt was  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch, and its greatest width 1 inch. The blade was sharp on both edges. I cannot show this implement, as it was sent back to Inveraray.

*Wool Comb*.—Comes from Tیره, and does not differ from the other specimens of the wool combs in the Museum.

*Heckle*.—This heckle comes from Tیره, and was used in the preparation of flax

for being spun. I am told that flax was grown in Tiree, 60 to 70 years ago, and was manufactured into yarn and cloth in the Island.

*Flax Mallet.*—From Tiree, in 1883 (fig. 7). It is 18 inches long,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches going to the handle. The part used in beating the flax is a cylinder of wood about

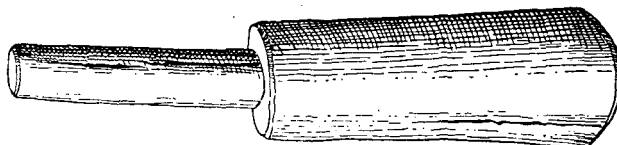


Fig. 7. Flax Mallet from Tiree. ( $\frac{1}{8}$ .)

$3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. It is not, however, a true cylinder, being fully  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch less in diameter, where it joins the handle, which, indeed, is only a cut down part of the block out of which the implement was made.

*Stone fastened to the Horns of a Cow.*—1. Flattish stone with deep notches opposite each other, on two sides, found at Inveramsay, Chapel of Garioch, Aberdeenshire, and said to have been fastened between the horns of a bolting cow or bullock.

2. This is a pierced bit of steatite, apparently the fragment of a steatite vessel, which was tied to the horns of a cow in Shetland, to prevent her from butting or bolting.

That pierced bits of stone were more or less habitually used in Shetland for this purpose is shown by our having several specimens in the Museum.

*Snuff Querns.*—1. The upper stone, nearly round, is about 1 inch thick, and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. It has a central hole and a driving hole, both holes passing through the stone.

The lower stone, which is not round, having two segments struck off the circle at opposite sides, is about 18 inches in diameter, and less than 1 inch thick. In the centre there is a hole filled with wood, and from this an iron pin projects, which serves to keep the upper stone in position.

This quern was given to me by Mrs Edmonston of Bunes, in 1880, who informed me that it had been quite recently in use in the island of Unst. It is said to be kept on the knee when being worked, and a bit of a sheep's horn is said to be generally used as the driving handle.

2. In this second specimen of the snuff quern, the upper stone is  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and the lower, 16 inches in diameter. Both are about 1 inch thick. As in the first specimen described, the upper stone has a central hole and a driving hole, both going through the stone, and the lower has a central hole, which, I am told, was at one time filled with wood to support an iron guiding pin.

The upper stone, which has been broken, the parts being now clasped together with wire, appears to be older than the lower stone, and my information is that such is the case, the original lower stone having been broken and replaced by a fresh stone.

This quern also comes from Unst, and was also sent to me in 1880. It was then said to have been recently in use.

*Craggans*.—1. The first of these is a Craggan of quite exceptional size, fig. 8 being 14 inches high and 14 inches in diameter at its widest. It comes from Tiree, where it was quite lately used as a store vessel for oil. It is said to be 130 years old, but I believe it will be safe to make a considerable deduction from this figure in guessing its true age.



Fig. 8. Craggan from Tiree. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ .)

There is already one large Craggan in the Museum, coming also from Tiree, but it measures only 11 inches in height and  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter.



Fig. 9. Small Craggan with lid from Tiree.

2. The other Craggan is also from Tiree (fig. 9), and is known to have been quite recently made. It is very small, and its interest lies in its having a lid.

Hitherto, Craggans have chiefly come from the island of Lewis, but the national collection now contains several from the island of Tiree and one from Skye.

*Cupping Horn.*—From North Mavine, Shetland. At the time I obtained it—of 1866—it was in regular use. The skin was scarified with a razor, the mouth in the horn was placed over the scarifications, and a partial vacuum created by

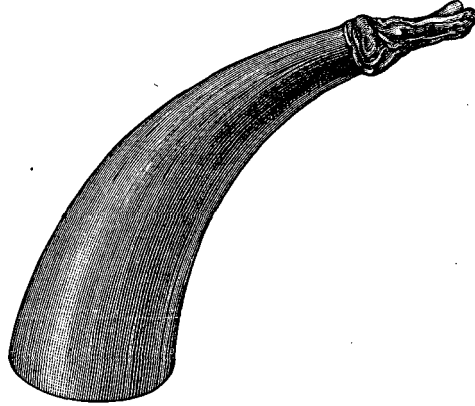


Fig. 10. Cupping Horn from North Mavine, Shetland. ( $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

sucking the air out with the mouth, the tongue closing the horn by pressing on the softened piece of gut tied round the small end. A finger was then easily made to replace the tongue.

There are three specimens of this object now in the Museum, all from Shetland, showing that it was a contrivance regularly in use.

*Needle used in making Casies and Straw Creels or Baskets.*—Sent to me by Mr M'Cormack, Wick, in 1880. Said to be at that time in common use in Shetland, and to have been in use in Caithness not long before.

I have in conclusion four other objects to notice.

1. A stone Ushabti with Egyptian Hieroglyphics well cut on it though much obliterated by weathering on one side. Ushabtis are much less common in stone than in wood, and this is the only specimen in stone in the Museum. Miss Murray read the inscription and found it to be: "The overseer, the Osiris, the chief lector-priest . . . Pedu . . . O these Ushabti, if it is decreed, if it is adjudged to do the works, Pedu-comen-apt, deceased, to do any work which is to be done in the Under-world, may all obstacles be cast down in front of him. It (the figure) is ready when you call. Be ye ever watchful to work, to plough and sow fields, to fill with water the canals, and to carry sand from the East to the West."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vi., *Book of the Dead*, Budge's Translation.



The point of interest in this object is the fact of its having been found in a field near Wardie, while ploughing, in 1865.

2. Two casts—one in plaster of Paris and the other in hard cement—of a Carib stone weapon found circa 1859 on Carzield Farm, Kirkmahoe. The first was given to me in 1868 by Dr Grierson of Thornhill, and the second was given to me in 1879 by Mr Gibson of Dumfries. The same story accompanied both.

It seems to me extremely probable that both of these objects reached the place in which they were found in manure. It would be a joke to think of them as relics of an Egyptian occupation of Wardie and a Carib occupation of Kirkmahoe. But large conclusions in Archaeology have been founded on evidence nearly as trifling.

3. The third object I have to notice is a model of a wooden lock from the Faroe Islands, showing exactly the same mode of construction as the locks which have been found in use in the Western Islands of Scotland.

An interest attaches to many objects from the circumstances in which they are found, and this is true of—

4. A coral bead or ornament found in a shell mound in South Uist. It was sent to me in 1870 by the late Mr Robert Gray, F.R.S.E., who called it coral without hesitation.

The fifth object, or rather perhaps I should say objects, which I have to describe is—

5. A bone knife and fork, which I found in Dean Swift's Asylum in Dublin, where they were used by the inmates not a great many years ago, when the insane were not treated as they are now. The fork is not of much interest to us here, but the knife has considerable interest from the fact that it might easily be taken for a specimen of the *spatha*, used in Scotland to drive home the weft in weaving broad tapes in the primitive loom, which has been described in our *Proceedings*. It has the shape of such an implement, and the polish of one which had been long in use.

What I have said, in describing these objects, suggests my asking whether we can properly regard them, or any other such rude implements or contrivances, as representing stages in an evolution from still ruder contrivances, and so onward to others having a like purpose, which exhibit both more skill and greater knowledge in their character, design, and execution. Taking the different ways of getting light, for instance, we may start with the hard resinous fir splinter, and go on to a solid fat in the candle, to a liquid fat or oil in the cruise, to a volatile oil in the paraffin lamp, to a fixed gas, and to imponderable electricity. There may be a look of evolution here. The agent gets less and less solid, till at the end it is without weight. But the resinous fir splinter at the one end in no way led to a discovery and use of solid, liquid, and

volatile fats or oils, nor did the fixed gas at the other end lead in any way to the discovery and use of lighting by electricity. The passage from the resinous fir to the volatile oil, the fixed gas, and electricity mark a great advance of knowledge; but the steps of the progress do not spring out of each other, and do not exhibit the phenomena of evolution.<sup>1</sup>

They might conceivably do so, however, that is, the progress from a very rude contrivance to one less rude, and so on to one that displayed great skill and high finish, might disclose real interdepending steps, and in such a case the term evolution might be applicable. This might happen, however, without implying that it had taken place under the operation of a Law, and certainly without meaning that it was a result of increasing mental power in those who made and used the improving contrivances. Men who have nothing to depend on for their light but resinous fir, or tallow candles, may be as strong intellectually as those who read and work by gas light or by the electric light. The last are assumed to live in times of greater knowledge, but it would not follow that they had a greater capacity for knowing.

Let me show what I mean when I say *living in times of greater knowledge*. I point to the fact that as generation succeeds generation it is born into a growing accumulation of knowledge. Man's environments go on changing for the better.<sup>2</sup> Our ancestors were ignorant of many things which are now known. The accumulation of knowledge into possession of which they came was less than that into which we came, but greater than that into which their ancestors came. Man is now born—widely over the world—with a great possession represented by the conquests of mind, and to each succeeding generation this is a greater and greater possession. How different is this possession in our

<sup>1</sup> Indeed volatile oil followed, instead of leading up to, the fixed gas. It would no doubt have preceded it, if volatile oils had been cheap and abundant before 1824. Nearly all the ways of getting light which I have enumerated are in use concurrently at this moment. In certain circumstances even solid fat is found more suitable than gas or electricity.

<sup>2</sup> The nests or homes of high civilisations, or of environments of a high order, have varied and are still varying, but not now with the same emphasis as formerly, in consequence of the greatly increased facilities of communication.

time even from what it was in the time of our grandfathers! Yet if our grandfathers reappeared among us we all believe that they would quickly, easily, and intelligently fall into the present order of things. Have we any reason to believe that it would be otherwise with the grandfathers of our grandfathers? And can any one fix, or even suggest, the point, going backward, at which the belief must change? May I not safely assert that nothing has yet been reached which Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Paul could not comprehend as fully and easily as we do? Man *may* be destined to acquire powers of a very high order—man on earth, I mean. He *may*, indeed, have been growing into his present high position in the ages that are past. But, as yet, we have *no proof* that such a progress will take place or has taken place. It is this want of proof, which I desire to emphasise. Can any one affirm it as proved that there ever was a time when there did not exist, somewhere on the earth, men of as good mental capacity and of as good bodily build as any who now exist on the earth? It seems to me that we may accept it as true, that there never was such a time, if we limit our inquiry to the historic period—from the most remote down to the present day; and hitherto nothing has been discovered, which proves that it is not, or at least that it may not be, equally true of prehistoric times.

In our day what I have been calling the environment of man, that is, everything surrounding him which is the outcome of man's scientific and intellectual labour in the past, is of a much higher character, and covers much more of the earth's surface, than ever before. But the growth of the environment in quality and quantity does not involve a corresponding general growth either in man's mental or in his physical powers. I repeat that there is no evidence or proof of any such growth. There is nothing to show that men and women, who have had as their servants such things as the steam engine, the telegraph, and the telephone, beget children with a storage of power due to the high character of the environment in which they—the parents—have lived.

Indeed, is it not true that in the progeny of such favoured persons there are weaklings or "*shotts*," just as there are in the offspring of less favoured persons? We can never fairly or fully examine such a question,

as that to which I am now alluding, if we lose sight of the very important fact in anthropology; that the human animal without fail breeds "*shotts*," just as sheep do. All animals, indeed, from man downwards, give birth in reproduction to some badly or imperfectly constituted beings. This is a fact of the first importance in the study of man, yet it is often altogether forgotten, and seldom remembered as it ought to be. It is rare, as every one knows, to see a brood of chickens, or a litter of pigs, in which there is no weakling, whatever may be the quality of the parents. The best, as well as the poorest, flock of sheep inevitably yields some "*shotts*." All the progeny even of *pedigree* cows and mares are not of equally high class, and it may be counted on that some of them will be poor and useless. So, too, it is with the progeny of man. We are certain to have weaklings always with us in our towns, as well as in our gardens, fields, and cattle-folds. The great possession of scientific achievements into which the parents of these human weaklings were born has certainly evolved no answering greatness or power in them. Almost all of them are incapable of understanding the wonders that surround them. They not only do not understand them, but they cannot do so. Nevertheless, they walk along streets lighted by electricity, send telegraphic messages, speak by the telephone, and travel by steam-power on land and water.

These weaklings—these imperfectly constituted beings—the dregs of humanity—are incapable of understanding the marvels in their environments; but I pass from them, to ask by how many of those, who do not come into their class, and who cannot be regarded as thus incapable, are these marvels really understood? I have asked by how many, but should I not have rather asked by how few? Not more than a small percentage is a quite safe answer. All of them are constantly deriving countless advantages from the wonderful things in the midst of which they are living, but the vast majority are in a darkness, which may be called complete, as to the real nature of the things which go to make up their environment.

If it be true, as I have stated, that many are incapable of understanding them, and that but very few even of those without this incapacity do actually understand them, we can scarcely feel surprise at

finding, as we do, that the vast changes which have taken place, and which are taking place, in our environments are the outcome of the intellect and energy of a mere handful of men. The multitude has no direct part or share in bringing about the result. Let the production of such rare men as Newton, Watt, Kelvin, and Edison come to an end, and there would be an end also to the accretions of knowledge. There would at least be an enormous fall in the rate of growth.

There is not, as yet, any known reason for supposing that these creative men do not appear at the top of a classified reproduction, just as the weaklings appear at the bottom. Their appearance there is not due to any law of evolution. Man's offspring is always made up of beings imperfectly constituted, of beings having the average constitution, varying, of course, within a certain range, and of beings with a constitution superior to the average and thus endowed with potentialities above their fellows. These last mainly give shape and growth to our environments.

Then it has further to be remembered that the exceptionally strong among the beings reproduced, who are the leaders among men, are much less numerous than the exceptionally weak, who appear *as crowds* in the slums of great cities, but are to be found everywhere. These last, who start with a low viability, have a hard fight for existence, and many of them die off early in the struggle. In consequence of this, and of some grading up in the vast multitude lying between the exceptionally weak and the exceptionally strong, the average quality in the reproduced is maintained—in other words, the species is maintained. This, indeed, is the chief result of a survival of the more fit in the struggle for existence. The average, however, goes on reproducing both the exceptionally weak and the exceptionally strong, as well as those of average quality, and this occurs, alike in animals and plants, as a feature of the natural history of reproduction when not under guidance or control.

If the views I have been expressing, or even a considerable part of them, be substantially true, how little stands between a highly civilised people, and the possible beginning of a reversion to what we call savagery! I say *what we call savagery*, because it is extremely difficult to define what is really meant by a state of savagery. And this suggests the re-

mark in passing, that it is a curious and interesting fact—not necessarily, however, in any close relation to my subject—that we have no very old account of a people or tribe living in a state of savagery like that, for instance, of the Aborigines of Australia. There is no reference to the existence of such savagery in the Bible. Nor is there any reference to it, so far as I know, in the inscriptions of Assyria or in the Homeric poems.

I offer no apology for briefly uttering these thoughts, which my subject suggested. They might easily be elaborated, but I content myself with barely presenting a few of the views and facts, round which any such elaboration would proceed. Anthropology cannot be separated from Archæology, and it seems to me to be useful to show the connection when the opportunity presents itself. It is the business of Archæology to disclose the condition of early man—taking help, of course, from every quarter. Whether it will ever do so, I cannot tell. But the hope that it may lead to that fulness and precision of knowledge which we all desire to see reached, has certainly risen, since the methods of its study have been brought more into line with the methods of the study of other branches of science.