Ravencliffe Cave.

II.

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THE exploration of caves which have been used by man as habitations or otherwise is always a fascinating pursuit, and rarely fails to add somewhat to our knowledge of the past. At the same time the conditions, natural or artificial, are rarely such as allow the investigator to read the story of its successive occupations. It is but seldom that stratification tells the story in consecutive and well-arranged chapters as was the case at Kent's Cavern, near Torquay. There the layers succeeded in clear sequence from the Palæolithic period up to a few centuries ago. All that was needed was some indication of the length of the intervals between the various periods, and this may yet be forthcoming from such a site.

In the Ravencliffe Cave we have just the same mixture of periods, though the occupation of the cave itself does not seem to date beyond the Neolithic age; but the relics of most recent date are even more modern than those of Kent's Cavern.

The Neolithic remains include two fine stone axe blades (see plate iii., top illustration), a number of flint scrapers and other tools, fragments of pottery, rubbers and hammers of quartzite or other stone; and, in addition, there are bone instruments, which in all probability belong to this period.

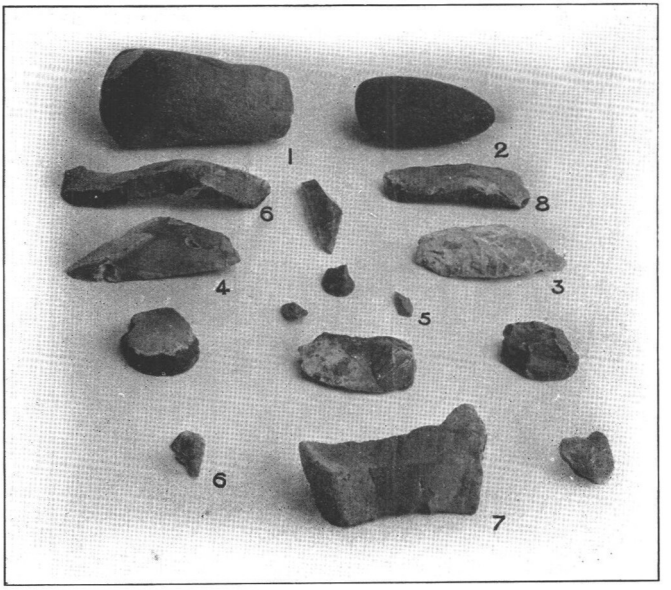
The larger of the two stone axes (plate iii., fig. 1, top illustration) is a stout square-shaped tool, polished only near

the cutting edge; the main part of the body is rough, and pitted so regularly and evenly as to suggest intentional bruising. In any case, the roughened surface would make a firmer hold for the wooden handle. The smaller axe (plate iii., fig. 2, top illustration) is of a more elegant and symmetrical form, and presents an entirely different aspect.

The flints have no very uncommon features. They include a good number of scrapers, mostly of the short, rounded type found commonly in Derbyshire. One scraper, however, is of the duck's bill type (plate iii., fig. 8, top illustration), carefully chipped not only at the rounded fore-edge, but along the two sides also. One or two knives are also notable for their serviceable appearance (plate iii., fig. 4, top illustration). The condition of the flints as to colour and patination is very diverse; the colours are black, translucent honey colour, and some pieces are grey. The patination shows less variety, one or two implements having a white cloudy tint; but the majority of the chipped surfaces are practically unchanged, either in colour or condition.

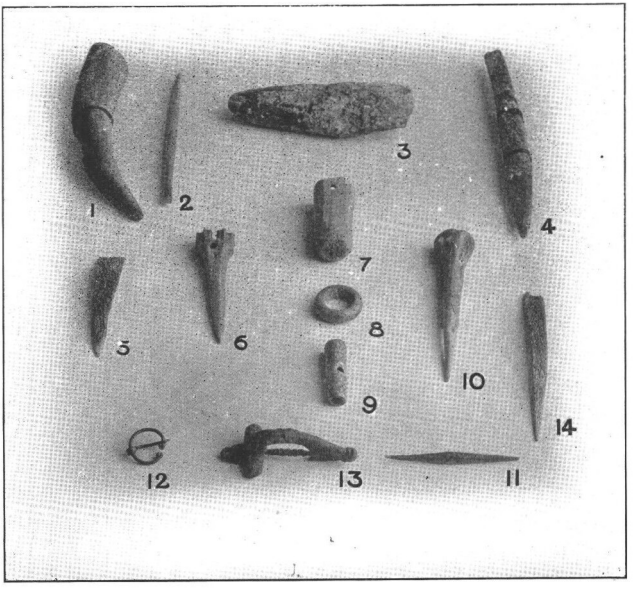
The pottery consists entirely of small fragments, two or three inches long at the most. As a rule, it is of the roughest make, portions of the edges and bases of small urns, with here and there remains of ornament of the usual barrow style. One piece, from the lip of an urn, has the overhanging edge that is a characteristic of many of the cinerary urns from the barrows of Yorkshire; in the present case the fragment has impressed thong lines on the upper part, and the body of the vessel has vertical incised lines. This type of pottery can be attributed with fair certainty to the earliest Bronze age, if not strictly to Neolithic times. Our knowledge at present is hardly definite enough to make a more definite statement. One feature of the discovery may have some importance in determining the lapse of time since the articles were deposited in the cave. A good many of the relics, such as the larger stone axe, pieces of the pottery and the bone

I.



3.—Spoon-shaped flint implement. 7.—Rude implement of chert, with worked edge.

II.



6.—Awl made from sheep's metapodial bone. 8.—Bone ring.
10.—Awl made from splint-bone of horse. 11.—Bronze awl.

implements, have a fairly thick coating of stalagmitic deposit. In the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to do more than state this fact; no useful deduction can be drawn from it.

The bone instruments are interesting, though it is not easy to determine their uses in all cases. A large bone implement (plate iii., fig. 3, bottom illustration) might be described as a cold chisel; it narrows towards one end, which is sharpened into a narrow cutting edge. Another long narrow tool (plate iii., fig. 2, bottom illustration), somewhat like a thin lead pencil, almost exactly resembles a modern modelling tool, with flat spatulate ends cut diagonally. Assuming it to be contemporary with the pottery, it is with just such a tool that the ornamental lines on the latter might have been made. It must be confessed, however, that the appearance of this implement is very different from that of the rest, and it might well be much more recent. The general aspect of some of the bone tools recalls those from Harborough Cave,[1] but they are hardly of the same age, and do not present the same well-defined types that sufficed to date the Harborough specimens with some certainty. In all probability the bone tools belong mainly to the same age as the pottery fragments—*i.e.*, the barrow period; but this is rather an instinctive opinion than one founded on evidence. Two pointed strips of bone (plate iii., figs. 5, 14, bottom illustration) recall the use of similarly shaped bones by the Swiss lake dwellers, who, by binding a number of such bone strips together, made a rude kind of comb that might well serve usefully in weaving. The one piece of bone that has any ornament upon it is a kind of toggle (plate iii., fig. 9, bottom illustration), a tube about two inches long, with a small hole pierced through it, and having cross-hatching covering nearly the whole of the surface. It might well have served as a kind of button to fasten a garment. This specimen

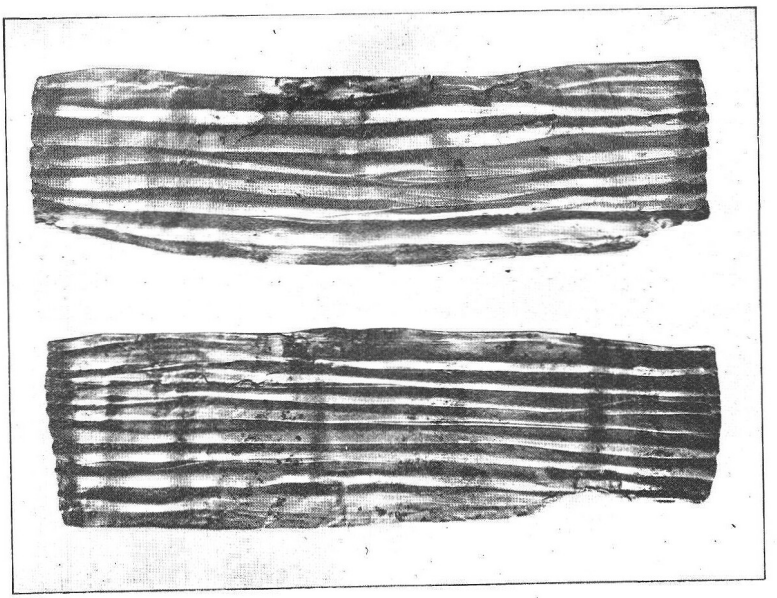
1 Figured in *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, vol. xxii., p. 136, and vol. xxxi., p. 97, of this *Journal*.

recalls rather the somewhat inartistic productions found in British villages of the Roman period. Like the spatulate implement before mentioned, its surface has a different aspect and patina from the other pieces, and it may well be that these two bones are of Roman date. A few fragments of pottery do unquestionably belong to the Roman period, and have none of the rudeness of the local British make of this time. One small fragment of highly finished brown ware would be assigned to the factory at Caston, in Northampton.

Roman influence, however, and no doubt Roman relations also, are shown fully as definitely by the presence of two bronze brooches, which are of typical forms. The first of these is of the crossbow type (plate iii., fig. 13, bottom illustration), the bow a simple arch, with slight rib, and terminating in a knob with a collar; the cross-bar is transversely ribbed, and in the middle the pin works on a hinge. There can be little doubt that the ribbing is intended to indicate the prototype of this brooch, in which the whole of this now solid cross-bar was a coiled wire forming a spring for the pin. From the middle of the cross-bar, in the present example, projects a tab of bronze, pierced with a hole and destined for a chain which held this and the companion brooch together, a device frequently seen, particularly in the Late Celtic brooches. The second brooch of this find is a small penannular ring brooch (plate iii., fig. 12, bottom illustration), of bronze also. The ends are in the form of melon-shaped knobs, and the pin is now a good deal bent, possibly its original form.

The objects, however, found in the cave which are of most intrinsic value, and are, at the same time, the most puzzling to explain, are two gold bands, alike enough to be called a pair. They are ridged lengthwise in somewhat rude fashion, and the edges of the metal are lapped over on the back. No means of attachment to any garment or other object is now to be seen, and it is most difficult to suggest what purpose they can have served. The nearest analogy that I know is to be found in a gold band in the museum at Nantes. This

is figured in "Parenteau," *Inventaire Archeologique* (Nantes, 1878), pl. 61, No. 1. This is stated, on page 2 of the same volume, to have been found with copper axes under "roches druidiques," at Saint-Père-en-Retz. If the Ravencliffe bands have any relation to these Brittany examples, it would point to their being of the early Bronze period, an attribution fully



Gold Bands.

borne out by their inherent qualities of style. In fact, it is by no means unlikely that the gold bands are the contemporaries of the stone axes and the flint flakes found in the Ravencliffe Cave. The evidence of the barrow finds would fully bear this out.