

NOTES ON CERTAIN OBJECTS OF STAG'S HORN USED FOR  
HAFTING STONE IMPLEMENTS OR WEAPONS.

Illustrated by two examples in the collection of Mr. W. J. BERNHARD SMITH.

AMONG relics of the earliest period, those of bone, stag's horn, or the like materials, may be pointed out as deserving the consideration of the archæologist; this special class of vestiges of rude races, by whom the British Islands were occupied at a remote prehistoric age, does not appear to have received the attention which it may well claim, so as to combine the scattered examples in some order of scientific arrangement. We therefore gladly avail ourselves of the friendly communication by Mr. W. J. Bernhard Smith, of two remarkable specimens in his possession, and bear tribute, with renewed gratification, to the constant kindness and liberality with which his varied stores of olden times have always been available for our information.

It is scarcely needful to advert to the obvious fact, that within the narrow range of the objects of bone and horn which occasionally fall under observation, we must seek for vestiges of the earliest races, and of approaches towards the artificial appliances of daily life in an age of incipient civilization. In the rude conditions of the first settlements of peoples, whether in our own islands or elsewhere, man's first necessities, in regard to tools, weapons, or mechanical aids of any description, would necessarily be supplied from those materials which were most readily attainable, such as horns and bones of any animals which had served as food or were captured in the chase. Weapons formed of these materials may seem indeed, as our friend Kemble has observed, to belong to the earliest periods, and to be as old if not older than stone weapons. The adaptation of bone, as one of the most acute archæologists of our day remarks, belongs to all ages, sometimes used by itself, sometimes as the recipient of other materials. It has been indeed continued to our own times. "The employment, however, of



Fig. 1.—Haft found in Wychwood Forest, Oxfordshire, formed of the horn of the extinct red deer.



Fig. 2.—Haft formed of the horn of the extinct elk.

Objects of Horn, supposed to have been used for hafting stone implements.

In the Collection of Mr. W. J. BERNHARD SMITH.

Scale, half-size linear.

so brittle and unsuitable a substance as bone, by itself, for axes or cutting instruments requiring strength, implies a state of society when man was unacquainted with the use of metals, or unable to obtain them by commerce."<sup>1</sup>

As regards the implements of such primitive materials, comparatively rare, and found only under exceptional conditions, in dry graves and caves, or in turbaries, we may refer the reader to the series portrayed in Plate 1 in the *Horæ Ferales*, recently published under Mr. Franks' auspices, to the few examples noticed and figured by Dr. Wilson in his *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*,<sup>2</sup> and to other like relics in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, described and illustrated by Sir W. R. Wilde.<sup>3</sup> The late Mr. Bateman, in his explorations of barrows in Derbyshire, constantly met with portions of deer's horns, occasionally in a state indicating the intention of applying them to certain mechanical uses. On one occasion only he appears to have disinterred a hammer of such material; namely, in a barrow on a ridge near the village of Biggin, known as "The Liffs;" in this grave-hill Mr. Bateman discovered human bones, horses' teeth, &c., and in the centre an octagonal cist, in which lay a skeleton, the knees drawn up, indicating the antiquity of the interment; and near them lay "a hammer-head ingeniously constructed out of the lower part of the horn of a noble red deer; one end of this instrument is rounded and polished, the other is cut into a diamond pattern, somewhat similar to the wafer stamps used by attorneys." Near the shoulders lay a pair of boar's tusks, arrow-heads of flint, flint celts and spears, &c.<sup>4</sup> Our present purpose, however, is to offer a few notices of relics of deer's horn, intended to serve, as Mr. Franks well designates them, in the passage above cited, as "the recipient of other materials."

We are not aware that any object of the same precise description as those now brought under our notice by Mr. Bernhard Smith, has heretofore been described as found in the British Islands. In continental collections such relics are comparatively of common occurrence; examples of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Franks, in *Horæ Ferales*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i., second edition, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> Descriptive Catal. Roy. Irish Acad., Animal materials, bone, horn, &c. See the weapons and tools figured at p. 258,

and the remarkable semi-mineralized horn of a very large red deer formed into a pick or tool, figured *ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup> *Vestiges of Antiqu. of Derbyshire* p. 42.

“*instrumens Celtiques en corne de cerf*” in great variety, and also various implements in bone, found in Picardy, are figured by M. Boucher de Perthes, in his *Antiquités Celtiques*.<sup>5</sup> Herr Lindenschmit has given well characterised specimens both of axes and hafts of stag's horn, from the museums at Hanover, Schwerin, Munster, &c.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Franks<sup>7</sup> has selected for the *Horæ Ferales* examples found in the Seine at Paris, in the valley of the Somme near Amiens, and in Lake dwellings in Switzerland—the Pfahlbauten, first noticed through the sagacity of our friend, Dr. Keller.

We may cite especially the memoir by our learned friend, the President of the Antiquaries of Zurich, which appeared in 1854, in the *Transactions* of that Society,<sup>8</sup> with remarkable illustrations of the contrivance of hafting by means of pieces of stag's horns; the specimens there figured were discovered in the early part of that year at Meilen, on the northern shore of the Lake of Zurich. Nearly two centuries ago an example of the stag's horn haft for weapons of stone had been noticed in France, in some remarkable interments brought to light in 1685, at Cocherel, in Normandy. Montfaucon has preserved the interesting narrative of M. de Cocherel, by whom the discovery was made;<sup>9</sup> the bodies had been deposited in rudely formed cists of slabs of stone; under the skulls lay stone axes, in one instance of green oriental jade, a fact deserving of note, since the like exotic material has occasionally occurred in the Swiss Pfahlbauten. There were also pointed objects of bone, supposed to have served as lance-heads, &c., one of them being formed of the bone of a horse, with arrow-heads of bone and stone, but no metal was noticed. M. de Cocherel described also a curious relic:—“*Un morceau de corne de cerf qui fut trouvé au même endroit avoit servi pour y insérer une de ces haches; cette corne avoit un trou à l'un des bouts pour y ficher un manche de bois.*” It is to be regretted that Montfaucon has

<sup>5</sup> Tome i., p. 278, ch. 14, pl. 1—6. Printed in 1847, and published two years subsequently.

<sup>6</sup> Lindenschmit, *Die Alterth. uns. heidnischen Vorzeit*, Heft 5, Taf. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See *Horæ Ferales*, pl. i., p. 131.

<sup>8</sup> *Die keltischen Pfahlbauten in den Schweizerseen*, beschr. v. Dr. Ferd. Keller, *Mitth. der Antiqu. Gesells. in Zurich*, Band ix., p. 77, pl. 2. The mode

of hafting stone implements in wooden handles, as used by the occupants of the Lacustrine dwellings, is well illustrated in Dr. Keller's fifth memoir, in the same series, Band xiv. pl. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Antiqu. Expliquée*, tome v. pl. ii. p. 194. The jade axe was seen by Montfaucon, who alludes to the virtues of the stone “*contre l'épilepsie et la nephretique.*”

not given representations of this or of any of the objects noticed in this interesting narration.

Of the two remarkable relics brought under our notice by Mr. Bernhard Smith one (see woodcut, fig. 1) is formed, as we were informed by the late Professor Quekett, of a portion of the horn of the red deer, of an extinct species (*Cervus elaphus*); it is stated to have been found in 1856, with human remains and pottery of early character, at Cockshoot Hill, in Wychwood Forest, Oxfordshire, a district replete with vestiges of ancient occupation, and adjacent to the line of the Akeman Street, as shown in a map accompanying the View of the Ancient Limits of the Forest, by Mr. Akerman, published by the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>1</sup> It measures about 5 in. in length, and 2 in. in diameter. At one extremity there is a cavity, shown in the woodcut, in which, by comparison with other like objects of horn, it appears probable that a small celt or cutting implement of stone was inserted; the horn is also pierced at mid-length, as supposed, to receive a handle; the size of this perforation may appear somewhat insufficient for secure adjustment to a haft of wood, or even to one of bone or other material, metal excepted. Our lamented friend, Kemble, however, who was present at the meeting of the Institute in January, 1857, when a notice of the discovery was first communicated, had no hesitation in regarding this object as a haft for an implement of stone, in like manner as those with which he had been familiar on the continent. He expressed his opinion that it is an object of singular interest, and observed that it was the only one, to his knowledge, noticed as found in this country.<sup>2</sup> However rare in the British Islands, the want of examples, as Mr. Kemble truly remarked, may probably be due only to the want of more careful observation. He submitted to the Institute, on that occasion, a series of his own drawings of objects of the like class which had fallen under his observation in museums in Germany and other countries.<sup>3</sup> As regards the nature of the haft which may have been used with such appliance of

<sup>1</sup> Archæologia, vol. xxxvii. p. 424. Mr. Akerman describes several barrows, in or near Wychwood Forest, which were examined about 1848; *ibid.* p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Archæol. Journ., vol. xiv. p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Amongst these interesting illustrations of the use of the horns of the deer and elk, were a coultter of red deer's

horn, at Mecklenburg; an axe-head, in the Hanover Museum (*Horæ Ferales*, plate i. fig. i.); an axe of elk's horn, at Berlin; and a remarkable object of stag's horn grooved along the edges for the insertion of small flint flakes affixed by black mastic or cement, so as to form a cutting edge.

deer's horn, it may be stated that specimens found by M. Boucher de Perthes, in the valley of the Somme, had not only the cutting implements of flint still fixed in their extremities, but the wooden handles of oak or birch-wood occasionally accompanied these appliances of a rude and primitive race.

The second specimen, more recently obtained by Mr. Bernhard Smith (fig. 2), consists of a portion of the horn of an extinct species of elk (*Megaceros Hibernicus?*), cut off immediately above the burr. It is to be regretted that the place of its discovery is unknown. Mr. Bernhard Smith is of opinion that it may have been from the drift strata, the surface being much worn, as if in rolling amidst shingle; numerous minute portions of quartz, moreover, were to be discerned in the superficial crevices or cavities. It measures rather more than 5 in. in length; the perforation for the haft measures about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. in diameter, and it may deserve notice that on one side it is of oval form, on the other it is more nearly circular. At the end, where a tine appears to have been cut off, in like manner as another has been near the burr, there is a cavity supposed to have been intended for the insertion of a small celt or chisel of stone; the injury which the object has undergone by attrition has probably damaged the edges of this end of the horn, and thus the original fashion of the cavity in question is less distinctly shown. It is, however, possible, that this object of elk's horn may have served only as a maul or hammer.

The relics to which, with Mr. Bernhard Smith's friendly permission, I have endeavored to invite attention, are not undeserving of the consideration of the archæologist, although comparatively inferior in interest to implements of deer's horn recently discovered in Central France, and of which some have been secured through the energetic negotiations of Professor Owen for the British Museum. Amongst relics brought to light in the caverns and the sheltering recesses under cliffs in the department of the Dordogne, by the explorations of M. Lartet and Mr. Henry Christy, are to be seen many implements or weapons fabricated of the reindeer's horns. The evidence of the remote antiquity of man, derived from these recent researches in ossiferous caves, may be classed with the most important scientific discoveries of our times. They prove that savage man, of

what has been designated the "unground and unpolished Stone Period," was able, in advance of the use of metals, to carve on deer's horns and grave on stone representations of animals, his contemporaries, especially the reindeer, now extinct in that region. The striking relics, for instance, found in the ancient Perigord, include a long dagger formed out of a single horn, the handle representing the body of a reindeer not unskillfully carved ; there is also a spear, bearing in partial relief the heads of a horse and a deer, whilst upon other objects appear animal forms, supposed to pourtray the Aurochs, the *Bos primigenius*, with other singular traces of the arts of design in times of such rude antiquity. The numerous relics from the Bruniquel cave lately secured for our national depository through the timely mediation of Professor Owen, have brought this remarkable class of remains within our reach ; they present, doubtless, a chapter of the unwritten History of Man, of inappreciable instruction and interest, not less to the Ethnologist than to the Antiquary.

ALBERT WAY.