

V.

NOTE OF TWO BRONZE SWORDS, RECENTLY FOUND UNDER MOSS
AT SOUTH UIST. BY CAPTAIN F. W. L. THOMAS, R.N., CORR. MEM. S.A.
SCOT.

An interesting *find* has occurred in South Uist lately. Two leaf-shaped bronze swords were dug up at Iochdar (pronounced Io-cher), which is the north-west end of South Uist, when cutting peats. On Mr MacRory sending me the information, I addressed some questions to him, and his answers are to the following effect:—

“The depth of the peat was 10 or 12 feet.

“The swords were at the bottom of the peat, and upon the soil (boulder clay).

“An arm of the sea comes within 100 yards or so of the site of the place where the swords were found; it is on the east side of the main road leading to South Uist. One house is very near the place.

“The shape is exactly like the drawing you enclosed of the swords found at Arthur's Seat (copied from Pre-Historic Annals). Length, 24 inches; pointed breadth of blade at broadest, $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch; tapering towards both extremities; $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch near the handle. No guard. The

handles, I was told, were covered with wood, which, of course, crumbled to dust when touched. There was a leather sheath, but they did not care much about it, thinking the weapons were *gold*.

"I am in possession of one of them; it is the smallest, and I intend keeping it as a curiosity. The man who found them has the other; it is longer and heavier than mine.

"No marking nor engraving."

This discovery has important bearings. I have established (to my own satisfaction) that the stone monuments of the Outer Hebrides were placed before the peat was there, and I had myself found the charcoal ashes of a fire over which the peat had grown ten feet, but which peat bank was brought to the water's edge by the subsidence which is now taking place of this group of islands. The peat, on *weathering*, shows a laminated structure; and assuming that each lamina represents a year's growth, the whole peat of Lewis may have accumulated in 900 years, and in the Uists in 1200 years. But, without accepting these results of calculations absolutely, it may be safely assumed that peat is geologically and anthropologically a very recent production, and these bronze swords support that view.