Manners and Monuments of Prehistoric Peoples

by The Marquis de Nadaillac

Translated by Nancy Bell (N. D'Anvers)

Translator's Note

The present volume has been translated, with the author's consent,from the French of the Marquis de Nadaillac. The author and translator have carefully brought down to date the original edition, embodying the discoveries made during the progress of the work. The book will be found to be an epitome of all that is known on the subject of which it treats, and covers ground not at present occupied by any other work in the English language.

Nancy Bell (N. D'Anvers).

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Contents.

CHAPTER I The Stone Age: its Duration and its Place in Time.

The nineteenth century, now nearing its close, has made an indelible impression upon the history of the world, and never were greater things accomplished with mre marvellous rapidity. Every branch of science,without exception, has shared in this progress, and to it the daily accumulating information respecting different parts of the globe bas greatly contributed. Regions, previously completely closed, have been, so to speak, simultaneously opened by the energy of explorers,who, like Livingstone, Stanley, and Nordenskiold, have won immortal renown. In Africa, the Soudan, and the equatorial regions, where the sources of the Nile lie hidden; in Asia, the interior of Arabia, and the Hindoo Koosh or Pamir mountains, have been visited and explored. In America whole districts but yesterday inaccessible are now intersected by railways,

whilst in the other hemisphere Australia and the islands of Polynesia have been colonized; new societies have rapidly sprung into being, and even the unmlting ice of the polar regions no longer checks the advance of the intrepid explorer. And all this is but a small portion of the work on which the present generation may justly pride itself.

Distant wars too have contributed in no small measure to the progress of science. To the victorious march of the French army we owe the discovery of new facts relative to the ancient history of Algeria;it was the advance of the English and Russian forces that revealed the secret of the mysterious lands in the heart of Asia, whence many scholars believe the European races to have first issued, and of this ever open book the French expedition to Tonquin may be considered at present one of the last pages.

Geographical knowledge does much to promote the progress of the kindred sciences. The work of

Champollion, so brilliantly supplemented by the Vicomte de Rouge and Mariette Bey, has led to the accurate classification of the monuments of Egypt. The deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions has given us the dates of the palaces of Nineveh and Babylon; the interpretation by savants of other inscriptions has made known to us those Hittites whose formidable power at one time extended as far as the Mediterranean, but whose name had until quite recently fallen into complete oblivion. The rock-hewn temples and the yet more strange dagobas of India now belong to science. Like the sacred monuments of Burmah and Cambodia they have been brought down to comparatively recent dates; and though the palaces of Yucatan and Peru still maintain their reserve, we are able to fix their dates approximately, and to show that long before their construction North America was inhabited by races, one of which, known as the Mound Builders, left behind them gigantic earthworks of many kinds, whilst another, known as the Cliff Dwellers, built for themselves houses on the face of all but inaccessible rocks.

Comparative philology has enabled us to trace back the genealogies of races, to determine their origin, and to follow their migrations. Burnouf has brought to light the ancient Zend language,Sir Henry Rawlinson and Oppert have by their magnificent works opened up new methods of research, Max Muller and Pictet in their turn by availing themselves of the most diverse materials have done much to make known to us the Aryan race, the great educator, if I may so speak,of modern nations.

To one great fact do all the most ancient epochs of history bear witness: one and all, they prove the existence in a yet mre rete past of an alr eady advanced civilization such as could only have been gradually attained to after long and arduous groping. Who were the inaugurators of this civilization? Who ware the earliest inhabitants of the earth? To what biological conditions were they subject? What were the physical and climatic conditions of the globe when they lived? By what flora and fauna were they

surrounded? But science pushes her inquiry yet further. She desires to know the origin of tire human race, when, how, and why men first appeared upon the earth; for from whatever point of view he is considered, man must of necessity have had a beginning.

We are in fact face to face with most formidable problems, involving alike our past and future; problems it is hopeless to attempt to solve by human means or by the help of human intelligence alone, yet with which science can and ought to grapple, for they elevate the soul and strengthen the reasoning faculties. Whatever may be their final result,such studies are of enthralling interest. "Man," said a learned member of the French Institute, "will ever be for man the grandest of all mysteries, the most absorbing of all objects of contemplation."[1]

Let us work our way back through past centuries and study our remote ancestors on their first arrival upon earth; let us watch their early struggles for existence! We will

deal with facts alone; we will accept no theories, and we must, alas, often fail to come to any conclusion,for th present state of prehistoric knowledge rarely admits of certainty. We must ever be ready to modify theories by the study of facts, and never forget that, in a science so little advanced,theories must of necessity be provisional and variable.

Truly strange is the starting-point of prehistoric science. It is with the aid. of a few scarcely even rough-hewn flints, a few bones that it is difficult to classify, and a few rude stone monuments that we have to build up, it must be for our readers to say with what success,a past long prior to any written history, which has left no trace in the memory of man, and during which our globe would appeal to have been subject to conditions wholly unlike those of the present day.

The stones which will first claim our attention, some of them very skilfully cut and carefully polished, have been

known for centuries. According to Suetonius, the Emperor Augustus possessed in his palace on the Palatine Hill a considerable collection of hatchets of different kinds of rock, nearly all of them found in the island of Capri, and which were to their royal owner the weapons of the heroes of mythology. Pliny tells of a thunder-bolt having fallen into a lake, in which eighty-nine of these wonderful stones were soon afterwards found.[2] Prudentius represents ancient German warriors as wearing gleaming CERAUNIA on their helmets; in other countries similar stones ornamented the statues of the gods, and formed rays about their heads.[3]

A subject so calculated to fire the imagination has of course not been neglected by the poets. Claudian's verses are well known:

Pyrenaeisque sub antris Ignea flumineae legere ceraunia nymphae.

Marbodius, Bishop of Rennes, in the eleventh century, sang of the thunder-stones in some Latin verses which have come down to us,and an old poet of the sixteenth century in his turn exclaimed,on seeing the strange bones around him

Le roc de Tarascon hebergea quelquefois Les geants qui couroyent les montagnes de Foix,Dont tant d'os successifs rendent le temoignage.

With these stones, in fact, were found numerous bones of great size,which had belonged to unknown creatures. Latin authors speak of similar bones found in Asia Minor, which they took to be those of giants of an extinct race. This belief was long maintained; in 1547 and again in 1667 fossil remains were found in the cave of San Ciro near Palermo;and Italian savants decided that they had belonged to men eighteen feet high. Guicciadunus speaks of the bones of huge elephants carefully preserved in the

Hotel de Ville at Antwerp as the bones of a giant named Donon, who lived 1300 years before the Christian era.

In days nearer our own the roost cultivated people accepted the remains of a gigantic batrachian[4] as those of a man who had witnessed the flood, and it was the same with a tortoise found in Italy scarcely thirty years ago. Dr. Carl, in a work published at Frankfort[5] in 1709, took up another theory, and, such was the general ignorance at the time, he used long arguments to prove that the fossil bones were the result neither of a freak of nature, nor of the action of a plastic force, and it was not until near the end of his life that the illustrious Camper could bring himself to admit the extinction of certai species, so totally against Divine revelation did such a phenomenon appear to him to be.

Prejudices were not, however, always so obstinate. For mre than three centuries st ones worked by the hand of man have been preserved in the Museum of the Vatican,

and as long ago as the time of Clement VIII. his doctor, Mercati, declared these stones to have been the weapons of antediluvians who had been still ignorant of the use of mtals.

During the early portion of the eighteenth century a pointed black flint, evidently the head of a spear, was found in London with the tooth of an elephant. It was described in the newspapers of the day,and placed in the British Museum.

In 1723 Antoine de Jussieu said, at a meeting of the ACADEMIE DES SCIENCES, that these worked stones had been made where they were found,or brought from distant countries. He supported his arguments by an excellent example of the way in which savage races still polish stones,by rubbing them continuously together.

A few years later the members of the ACADEMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS in their turn, took up the question, and

Mahudel, one of its members,in presenting several stones, showed that they bad evidently been cut by the hand of man. "An examination of them," he said, "affords a proof of the efforts of our earliest ancestors to provide for their wants, and to obtain the necessaries of life." He added that after the re-peopling of the earth after the deluge, men were ignorant of the use of metals. Mahudel's essay is illustrated by drawings, some of which we reproduce (Fig. 1), showing wedges, hammers, hatchets, and flint arrow-beads taken, he tells us, from various private collections.[6]

Bishop Lyttelton, writing in 1736, speaks of such weapons as having been made at a remte date by savages ignorant of the use of metals,[7]and Sir W. Dugdale, an eminent antiquary of the seventeenth century,attributed to the ancient Britons some flint hatchets found in Warwickshire, and thinks they were made when these weapons alone were used.[8]

FIGURE 1

Stone weapons described by Mahudel in 1734.

A communication made by Frere to the Royal Society of London deserves mention here with a few supplementary remarks.[9]

This distinguished man of science found at Hoxne, in Suffolk, about twelve feet below the surface of the soil, worked flints, which had evidently been the natural weapons of a people who had no knowledge of metals. With these flints were found some strange bones with the gigantic jaw of an animal then unknown. Frere adds that the number of chips of flint was so great that the workmen, ignorant of their scientific value, used them in road-making. Every thing pointed to the conclusion that Hoxne was the place where this primitive people manufactured the weapons and implements they used, so that as early as the end of last century a member of the Royal Society formulated the propositions,[10] now fully accepted, that

at a very remote epoch men used nothing but stone weapons and implements, and that side by side with these men lived huge animals unknown in historic times. These facts, strange as they appear to us, attracted no attention at the time. It would seem that special acumen is needed for every fresh discovery, and that until the time for that discovery comes, evidence remains unheeded and science is altogether blind to its significance.

But to resume our narrative. It is interesting to note the various phases through which the matter passed before the problem was solved. In 1819, M. Jouannet announced that he had found stone weapons near Perigord. In 1823, the Rev. Dr. Buckland published the "Reliquiae Diluvianae," the value of which, though it is a work of undoubted merit, was greatly lessened by the preconceived ideas of its author. A few years later, Tournal announced his discoveries in the cave of Bize,near Narbonne, in which, mixed with human bones, he found the remains of various animals, some extinct, some still native to the