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LECTURE.

Friday, June 28th, 1867.

COLONEL PHILIP J. YORKE. F.R.S., in the Chair.

PRIMITIVE WARFARE: ILLUSTRATED BY SPECIMENS FROM THE MUSEUM OF THE INSTITUTION.

By Colonel A. LANE FOX, Grenadier Guards.

ALTHOUGH it is more in accordance with the purposes for which this establishment has been organised, that the Lecture-room should be devoted chiefly to subjects of practical utility connected with the improvement of our military system and the progress of the mechanical appliances, the organization, and general efficiency of our Army and Navy, than to the efforts of abstract science, yet the fact of your possessing in the three large apartments that are devoted to your armoury, one of the best assortments of semi-civilized and savage weapons that are to be found in this country, or, perhaps, in any part of the world, is sufficient to prove that it is not foreign to the objects of the Institution that the science of war should be ethnographically and archæologically, as well as practically, treated.

The requirements of our advancing age demand that every vein of knowledge should be opened out, and, in order to make good our title to so interesting a collection of objects as that comprised in, what may very properly be called our ethnographical military department, it should be shown that, whether or not the subject may be considered to fall within the ordinary functions of the Society, our Museum is made available for the purposes of science.

The age in which we live is not more remarkable for its rapid onward movement than for its intelligent retrospect of the past. It is reconstructive as well as progressive. The light which is kindled by the practical discoveries of modern science, throws back its rays, and enables us to distinguish objects of interest, which have been unnoticed in the gloom of bygone ages, or passed over with contempt.

Men observe only those things which their occupations or their education enable them to understand and appreciate. When a savage is introduced on board the deck of a European vessel, he notices only those objects with the uses of which he is familiar—the sewing of a

coat, a chain or a cable at once rivets his attention, but he passes by the steam-engine without observation, and if a work of art is forced upon his notice, he is unable to say whether it represents a man, a ship, or a kangaroo!* So in past ages the flint implements of the drift, the parents of all our modern implements, whether for war or handicraft, must have been carted away in hundreds, unobserved, and in ignorance that these inconspicuous objects would one day be the means of upsetting the received chronology of our species.

Whilst, therefore, we devote our energies chiefly to progress, and fix our attention upon the present and future of war, it cannot fail to interest those who are actively engaged in the duties of their profession, if we occasionally take a glance backward and see what recent discoveries have done towards elucidating its origin and early history.

It might, perhaps, assist a right understanding of the principles on which the weapons and implements of savages deserve to be studied, if I were to notice some of those great questions respecting the origin of our species, and man's place in nature, which the investigations of science have been the means of raising in our day. I need hardly say that the rude implements, which I am about to describe, are of little practical interest in themselves, as models for instruction or imitation. We have no need of bows and arrows in the existing state of war, and if we did require them, the appliances of modern times would enable us to construct them in far greater perfection than could be acquired by any lessons from savages. These weapons are valuable only, in the absence of other evidence, from the light they throw on pre-historic times, and on those great questions to which I have alluded, and from their enabling us to trace out the origin of many of those customs which have been handed down to us by past generations.

As, however, the discussion of these interesting subjects would lead me into matters that are hardly suited to the Lecture-room of this Institution, I must pass over the consideration of them with a few brief remarks.

In so doing, I may appear to postulate some opinions upon points that are still the subject of animated controversy in the scientific world. But it would require a far broader field of investigation than is here afforded me, in order to treat these inquiries successfully, and to adduce all the evidence that would be necessary to support the hypotheses put forward; and I am anxious to devote no greater space to these preliminary remarks than is necessary to point out some of the main features of interest that are involved in the particular study which forms the subject of my lecture.

We are apt to speak of the creation of the universe as a thing of the past, and to suppose that the world, with all the varied life upon it, previous to man's appearance, having been created for his especial happiness and supremacy, was afterwards left to his control and government. But this view of the subject belongs to an age in which the laws of nature in their all-sufficiency and completeness were but little

* Beechey's Voyage to the Pacific, p. 298. Oldfield's Aborigines of Australia. Transactions of the Ethnological Society, vol. iii, new series, p. 227.

pointed tusks, and will attempt to pierce the side of a boat with them.* The needle fish of the Amazons is armed with a long pointed lance.† The same applies to the sword-fish of the Mediterranean and Atlantic (Fig. 49), which, notwithstanding its food is mostly vegetable, attacks the whale with its spear point on all occasions of meeting. There is an instance on record of a man, whilst bathing in the Severn near Worcester, having been killed by the sword-fish.

The weapon of the sword-fish is used as a spear-head by the wild tribes of Cambodia, and some idea may be formed of its efficiency for this purpose, and of the confidence with which it is used, by the following account of an attack on a rhinoceros with this weapon, by Mons. Mouhot.‡ He says:—

"The manner in which the rhinoceros is hunted by the Laotians is "curious, on account of its simplicity and the skill they display. They "had bamboos, with iron blades, something between a bayonet and a "poignard. The weapon of the chief was the horn of a sword-fish, "long, sharp, strong, supple, and not likely to break. Thus armed, "we set off into the thickest part of the forest, with all the windings "of which our leader was familiar, and could tell with tolerable cer-"tainty where we should find our expected prey. After penetrating "nearly two miles into the forest, we suddenly heard the crackling of "branches, and rustling of the dry leaves. The chief went on in "advance, signing to us to keep a little way behind, but to have our "arms in readiness. Soon our leader uttered a shrill cry, as a token "that the animal was near. He then commenced striking against "each other two bamboo canes, and the men set up wild yells to pro-"voke the animal to quit his retreat.

"A few minutes only elapsed before he rushed towards us, furious "at having been disturbed. He was a rhinoceros of the largest size, "and opened a most enormous mouth. Without any sign of fear, but "on the contrary of great exultation, as if sure of his prey, the "intrepid hunter advanced, lance in hand, and then stood still waiting "for the creature's assault. I must say I trembled for him, and loaded "my gun with two balls; but when the rhinoceros came within reach, "and opened his immense jaws to seize his enemy,§ the hunter thrust "his lance into him to a depth of some feet, and calmly retired to "where we were posted." After the animal was dead, the chief withdrew his sword-fish blade, and presented it to Mons. Mouhot.

The narwhal has a still more formidable weapon of the same kind (Fig. 50). It attacks the whale, and occasionally the bottoms of ships a specimen of the effect of which attack, from the Museum of the Institution, is now exhibited (Fig. 51). The Esquimaux, who, in the accounts of which they give of their own customs, profess to derive much experience from the habits of the animals amongst which they live, use the narwhal's tusk for the points of their spears. Fig. 52

* Beechey's Voyage to the North Pole, pp. 91, 94.

† Bates—Naturalist on the Amazons, vol. ii, 141.

‡ Travels in the central parts of Indo-China, Siam, Cambodia, and Laos, in 1858–9, by the late M. Henri Mouhot, vol. ii, p. 147.

§ It is to be observed that this is not the rhinoceros's usual mode of attack.

represents a nuguit from Greenland, of the form mentioned by Crantz; it is armed with the point of the narwhal's tusk. Fig. 53, from my collection, has the shaft also of narwhal's tusk; it is armed with a metal blade, but it is introduced here in order to show the association which existed in the mind of the constructor between his weapon and the animal from which the shaft is derived, and for the capture of which it is chiefly used. The wooden shaft, it will be seen, is constructed in the form of the fish, and the ivory fore shaft is inserted in the snout in the exact position of that of the fish itself. At Kotzebue Sound Captain Beechey* found the natives armed with lances composed of a walrus tooth fixed to the end of a wooden staff (Fig. 54). They also employ the walrus tooth for the points of their tomahawks (Fig. 55). The horns of the antelope are used as lance points by the Djibba negroes of Central Africa, as already mentioned, and in Nubia also by the Shillooks and Dinka.† The antelope's horn is also used in South Africa for the same purpose.‡ The argus pheasant of India,§ the wing-wader of Australia,‖ and the plover of Central Africa,¶ have spurs on their wings, with which they fight; the cock and turkey have spurs on their feet, used expressly for offence. The white crane of America has been known to drive its beak deep into the bowels of a hunter.** The Indians of Virginia, in 1606, are described as having arrows armed with the spurs of the Turkey, and beaks of birds††. In the Christy collection there is an arrow supposed to be from South America, which is armed with the natural point of the deer's horn (Fig. 56). The war club of the Iroquois, called GA-NE-U-GA-O-DUS-HA, or "deer-horn war club," was armed with a point of the deer's horn (Fig. 57), about 4 inches in length; since communication with Europeans, a metal point has been substituted (Fig. 58). It appears highly probable that the martel-de-fer of the 15th and 16th centuries, and which is also used in India and Persia, may have been derived, as its form indicates, from a horn weapon of this kind. Horn points suitable for arming such weapons have been found both in England and Ireland, two specimens of which are in my collection.‡‡ The weapon of the sting ray, from the method of using it by the animal itself, should more properly be classed with serrated weapons, but it is a weapon in general use amongst savages for spear or arrow points (Fig. 59), for which it has the particular merit of breaking off in the wound. It causes a frightful wound, and being sharply serrated, as well as pointed, there is no means of cutting it out. It is used in this way

* Beechey's Voyage, p. 252.

† Journal of the Archæological Association, vol. iii, p. 25.

‡ Ibid. vol. iii, p. 26.

§ Swainson's Habits and Instincts of Animals, p. 141.

‖ Gregory's Expedition to the North-west Coast of Australia, vol. 32—Royal Geographical Society's Journal.

¶ Denham and Clapperton's Travels, p. 20.

** Narrative of the Canadian Exploring Expedition, by G. H. Hind, p. 316.

†† Captain John Smith's Sixth Voyage to Virginia in 1606; Pinkerton, vol. xiii, p. 36.

‡‡ See Cuming on Weapons of Horn, Journal of the British Archæological Association, vol. iii, p. 27.