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1904.

PREHISTORIC REMAINS, WITH DRAWINGS, NEAR TENDA, ITALY.

The following letter, containing information of much interest, has been received from our valued Associate, Cavaliere W. P. Jervis, F.G.S., dated Turin, 30th June, 1903, is here inserted, and was to have been read at the meeting of the Institute on Monday, May 9th, 1904, but time did not permit of this, which the Editor regrets.

DEAR SIR,

“Let me allude to the well known discovery of human skeletons of prehistoric date found in a cave in Eocene (nummulitic) limestone on the coast between Menton and Ventimiglia.

“They have found about 800 drawings cut on the polished glaciated chlorite schist near Tenda, in four adjacent little valleys, close to the summit of the Maritime Alps. They are marvellously well preserved, and rubbings of a great many of them have been taken. I conversed on the subject with Sir Thomas Hanbury, and went to Genoa, where I had a lengthy conversation on the same matter at his house, which was very instructive and interesting.

“Although several competent men have occupied themselves on this question, these drawings present too ample a field for the hateful word *hypothesis*, which is the upas tree of science, for, being so unique as yet, it is still impossible to conjecture as to the race of our fellow-men to whom we may attribute them.

“The greater proportion of the figures represent rural, peaceful, agricultural life—men ploughing with yokes of two or more oxen, and accompanied by a boy, who leads the oxen. The ploughs are such as are still used in primitive parts of Italy, as are the yokes on their necks. There seems to be a genealogical connection. Then the other animals represented are *domestic forms*. Curiously enough most of the work is represented from *above*, but the men are seen at *full length*.

“The late Prof. Issel said that these figures are rather meant as *symbols of thought* than as drawings. I suggested to him that if the rubbings (taken by an intelligent, but unscientific person), instead of being classified according to forms, had been represented in the position in which they are engraved on the rock, we might be led to discover

the object intended to be conveyed, perhaps indeed find definite words, but not letters of any alphabet. Should such be substantiated, we might be led to a more distinct notion of these ancient people. The rubbings are reproduced with the utmost skill and accuracy, nothing is wanting but the proper arrangement, and there is yet time to do that also. Mr. Bicknell has been most conscientious in his task.

“If uncertainty exists as to the people by whom these engravings were so carefully made, we learn that the authors at least were quite unacquainted with any art representations, and had never seen the roughest artistic work. They are the result of uncultured genius.

“But as to their age we can form some definite clue. There are likewise representations of arms, such as tomahawks, strikingly akin to Pacific Island forms, arrowheads of various short designs, showing the precise manner of fixing as the prehistoric people so generally adopted. Then there are short, straight daggers, evidently of bronze, being far too long and slender for us to imagine them to have been made of stone, like the arrowheads were. This seems to me to prove sufficiently that a tribe or race of men is indicated as having preceded the bloody and cruel Roman conquests, at least of these poor mountaineers. The representations of bronze, perhaps even ironwork, find a date even subsequent to what is generally called the Neolithic age. For though stone implements were employed by many of these Alpine mountaineers, *from want of knowledge of metallurgy, which is really the reason why simple people were obliged to have recourse to them*, these metal arms might have been obtained at the coast from merchants trading from some southern country.

“There are figures of wheels, and many undesirable objects, but all is carefully executed. Issel presumes that it is the work of successive generations of men. The most remarkable objects to my mind are men shown in excellent positions, throwing tomahawks to a considerable distance; for not only is this instrument shown while the man's arms are still uplifted, but a faint straight line connects the man's arm with the weapon, while at short equal distances this line is divided by a firm circular mark. This I interpret to signify the trajectory, as likewise the number of units of distance to which the man was able to throw the weapon itself. There is here ample

scope for specialists, and for comparison with analogous work in other countries, for this is unique as regards Italy. Is it not the beginning of a grand prehistoric chapter of research ?

“ Hoping that this will find you in perfect health, and thinking of new studies on the ocean bed.

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ W. JERVIS.”

The Meeting then closed.