XVII.—*On some of the Weapons of the Celtic and Teutonic Races.**By JOHN YONGE AKERMAN, F.S.A., Secretary.*

Read May 29, 1851.

IN submitting the following remarks to the Society of Antiquaries, I must, at the outset, declare that my object is rather to review the evidence we possess, than to offer any conjecture or theory of my own. It will be by all allowed, that the careful bringing together of facts already known, but scattered and disconnected, must, at all times, tend to assist archæological research, and save the trouble and tedium of referring to detached notices bearing on the subject of our inquiry.

The remark of Bacon, that antiquities are like the fragments of a wreck thrown ashore by the waves of the ocean, is especially applicable to the more minute objects which engage the attention of the archæologist. The fragmentary evidence we thus obtain in the examination of the weapons and utensils of past ages, though often meagre and unsatisfactory, yet assures us that from this evidence our deductions must often be formed, and that in them alone we must seek for the information which is denied us by the historian. Sometimes, however, we find the monumental evidence at variance with historical recital; sometimes both agree in a manner to satisfy and delight the inquirer, and open to a wider retrospect; but frequently the objects which have been spared by time serve only to perplex us, especially when they do not agree with the descriptions of ancient authors, or they suggest to us the necessity of further research, comparison, and inquiry.

In the infancy of nations, the weapon which served the purpose of the hunter in the chase, or which was applied to the ordinary uses and requirements of every-day life, was doubtless the only arm of a barbarous people in the time of strife. The stone hatchets, hammers, and lance-heads of the primitive races of Britain, resemble very closely the weapons found in various other parts of the world; and thus we perceive that man in his primitive state has availed himself of the same resources throughout the whole habitable globe. In all countries the stone axe and the hammer have been found. The examples on the table comprise axe-heads from New Zealand, from Mexico, from Ireland, from various parts of Great Britain, and also from Australia, the inhabitants of which have never attained to the use of the bow. The two examples here exhibited, were presented to me by Mr. Gould, the eminent ornithologist, who brought them himself from that country. One is

formed like the stone hatchet of the primitive European races, and the mode in which it is fixed in its handle is doubtless identical. The other is constructed of a fragment of flint embedded in a concrete mass, in which is inserted a wooden handle.

Stone Axe from Northern Australia.

Size 1-6th.

Stone Hammer from Western Australia.

Size 1-6th.

The period which has been termed by antiquaries the Bronze Age should be subdivided, for the weapons of bronze which have come down to us, differ so much in character, that the arms of two remote nations could scarcely be more dissimilar. Thus, for example, the bronze weapons, which consist of a very broad and short blade fitted into a handle of wood, are evidently the work of an age long anterior to the leaf-shaped sword, of which so many examples have been discovered. There is an identity of character in the more primitive weapon which the antiquary cannot have failed to remark, throughout the whole of Europe once peopled by the Celtic tribes. I need cite but a few specimens. The first four are examples found in Celtic barrows in North Wilts,^a the fifth was discovered in France, and the sixth in Switzerland.^b

^a *Hoare's Ancient Wiltshire*, plates xiv, xv, xxiii, xxvii, and xxviii. Representations, on a reduced scale, of these curious primitive weapons, are given in my *Archæological Index*, plate v, figs. 40—43. A weapon of the same construction was found in a barrow at Blandford in Dorsetshire. Others of similar form have been discovered in the barrows of Derbyshire by Mr. Bateman.

^b *Art-Helvetische Waffen und Geräthschaften aus der Sammlung der H. Alt-Landammann Löhner in*

All these are evidently the first attempts of a barbarous people to convert and apply metal to some purpose of necessity or utility. Now, the leaf-shaped swords were really effective weapons, and the spear-heads, so often found with them, still more so. That they are casts from the weapons of a more civilised race there cannot be a doubt.

We have abundant testimony that the earliest weapons were formed of brass, but whether the swords of the Jews in early times were fashioned of that metal we have no evidence; it seems probable that they were, and, if so, their spear-heads would also be of brass. The huge spear of the Philistine, whose assault was nearly fatal to David, was formed of brass.^a The lines of Hesiod,—

Toῖς δ' χάλκεα μὲν τεύχεα, χάλκεοι δέ τε οἴκοι,
Χαλκῷ δ' ἐργάζοντο· μέλας δ' οὐκ ἔσκε σίδηρος.

Op. et Dies, Lib. i. 149, 150.

indicate the primitive use of brass.^b Homer everywhere speaks of brass weapons; and the lines of Lucretius,

Posterius ferri vis est ærisque reperta,
Sed prius æris erat quam ferri cognitus usus,

have been often quoted. But, though the poet tells us this, there is no precise information as to the time that civilised nations first used iron and cast aside their brass weapons.^c We have the testimony of Pausanias as to the ancient use of brass. The spear of Achilles, which he says was preserved in the temple of Minerva at Phæsus, was both armed and shod with brass; and from the same writer we learn that the sword of Memnon, in the temple of the Nicomedenses sacred to Esculapius, was formed entirely of that metal.^d

Thun, beschreiben von F. Keller; Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zurich, Zweiter Band, taf. ii. Zurich, 4to. 1844.

^a Samuel, ii. xxi. 16.

^b Virgil was of course fully aware of the use of brass in the fabrication of arms in the heroic ages.

Æratæque micant peltæ, micat æreus ensis.—Æn. vii. 743.

^c Cassiodorus tells us that Belus invented the iron sword!—Belus ferreum gladium primus produxit: à quo et bellum placuit nominari. Variarum, lib. i. c. xxx. See Eustathius on Homer's Iliad, π. for the epithets of Mars, χάλκεος Ἀρης, ὁ σίδηρος Ἀρης.

^d Βέβαιοι δὲ καὶ ἄλλως μοι τὸν λόγον ἐν Φασηλίδι ἀνακείμενον ἐν Ἀθηνῶν ἱερῷ τὸ δόρυ Ἀχιλλέως, καὶ Νικομηδεῦσιν Ἀσκληπιοῦ ναφῷ μάχαιρα ἢ Μέμνονος, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ἢ τε αἰχμὴ καὶ ὁ σφυρωτήρ, ἢ μάχαιρα δὲ καὶ διὰ πάσης χαλκοῦ πεποιήται. Lib. iii. c. 3. A brass spear-head and a sword were found in the tomb of Theseus. Plutarch in Theseo, c. 35.

Now, there cannot be a doubt that the priests took care to show to the votaries at these temples weapons of considerable antiquity, and then obsolete; indeed Pausanias, who flourished in the reign of Commodus, remarks, a little further on, that in the heroic ages weapons were universally fabricated of brass.^a

Polybius describes the swords of the Gauls in their encounter with the Romans in the year of Rome 531, B.C. 223. Their weapons, he says, were large and blunt, and their shields mere targets, while the swords of the Romans were small and sharp, and their bucklers covered their bodies effectually. When the Gauls struck at their enemies their swords bent like a strigil, and they were necessitated to straighten them by placing them under their feet before they could give a second-blow.^b This description has been supposed to apply to badly-tempered iron swords, but it appears rather to refer to the leaf-shaped brass weapons of which so many examples have been preserved. If we bend one of these swords we shall at once perceive the appropriateness of the historian's simile.^c

The question as to the time when civilised nations resorted to the use of iron is only connected with our present object in so far as it affords us some indication of the period when the iron age may have succeeded that of brass in Gaul and Britain. We have occasional glimpses in Herodotus, which assist us a little in the inquiry, though not sufficiently to enable us to pronounce with certainty. Speaking of the Ethiopians, he says, the very manacles of their prisoners were made of gold, brass being of all metals the most rare among them.^d Here we are justified in assuming that brass at that time was applied to all those uses to which iron was converted at a later period. In another place, however, he says that the weapons of the Massagetæ, in the days of Cyrus, were made of brass,^e adding nevertheless that their

^a If we could receive the narrative of Quintus Curtius as literal history, we might attach some importance to the speech which this author puts in the mouth of Darius,—*ferro geri bella, non auro*, lib. v ; but it is allowed that Quintus Curtius flourished in the days of the emperors, when the use of iron had become general. It may be safely inferred, however, that in the time of Alexander the Greek weapons were of the latter metal.

^b Αἱ τε μάχαιραι ταῖς κατασκευαῖς, καθάπερ, εἴρηται πρότερον, μίαν ἔχουσι μὲν πρώτην καταφορὰν καίριαν· ἀπο δὲ ταύτης εὐθέως αποξυστρουνται, καμπτόμεναι κατὰ μήκος καὶ κατὰ πλάτος ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον, ὥστε, ἂν μὴ δῶ τις ἀναστροφὴν τοῖς χρωμένοις, εἰρεῖσαντες πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἀπευθῆναι τῷ ποδὶ, τελέως ἄπρακτον εἶναι τὴν δευτέραν πλὴγὴν αὐτῶν. Lib. ii. c. 33.

^c While this sheet was in the press I have been informed by M. Troyon that he has discovered in Switzerland, with remains of the Celtic period, iron swords answering more fully to the description of Polybius, and certainly anterior to the Roman dominion.

^d Thalia, xxiii. lxxii.

^e Ὅσα μὲν γὰρ ἐς αἰχμᾶς, καὶ ἄρδεις, καὶ σάγαρις, χαλκῷ τὰ πάντα χρέωνται * * * * * σιδήρῳ δὲ οὐδ' ἀργύρῳ κρέωνται οὐδέν, οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ σφί ἐστι ἐν τῇ χύρῃ. Clio, ccxv.

country, though it abounded in gold, did not produce *iron*. Plato observes that iron and brass are the instruments of war,^a a remark which, coupled with the notice of Herodotus just quoted, favours the conjecture that in the fifth century B. C. iron weapons had begun to supplant those of brass among the civilised nations of antiquity.^b

Tacitus, in the *Manners of the Germans*, says it was evident from the arms of these people that iron was rare among them ; that few of them had swords and lances ; and that the greater part were armed with a description of short spear or javelin called *framea*, which served them either as a dart or in close conflict. This *framea*, he tells us, had a narrow short head of iron.^c But in the second book of the *Annals*, Germanicus is represented addressing the Roman soldiers, and contrasting the long unwieldy spear of the barbarians with the Roman pilum.^d We may account for these discrepancies in the fact that the great historian had a higher object in view than such details, — that his principal design in the *Annals* was to exhibit a model to his countrymen in the person of Germanicus, and in his description of the Germans to paint simple manners and rude virtues, which the Romans affected to despise.

The firm establishment of the Roman power in Gaul and Britain, if it did not obliterate all traces of nationality, doubtless led to the adoption of the weapons as well as the chief habits of the conquerors. It is well known to the antiquary that the ancient Britons observed the rite of cremation more frequently than that of sepulture. In this respect the Roman practice of cremation, which had become universal at the time of the subjugation of Gaul and Britain, must have already assimilated to that of the conquered, and it is admitted on all sides that we cannot distinguish in this country the uninscribed sepulchre of a Roman from that of a Romanised Briton. These remarks are necessary, because they account for the want of those indicia which are furnished by the sepulchral remains of the period

^a Σίδηρος καὶ χαλκὸς, πολέμων ὄργανα. De Legibus, xii.

^b We must not, however, overlook the fact that iron and brass are mentioned together in various parts of the Old Testament ; vide, inter alia, Gen. iv. 22, Deuteron. xxxiii. 25, and 2 Chron. xxiv. 12. Iron alone is mentioned in 1 Kings, vi. 7 ; 1 Samuel, xvii. 7 ; 2 Samuel, xiii. 7 ; Job, xli. 7.

^c Ne ferrum quidem superest, sicut ex genere telorum colligitur. Rari gladiis aut *majoribus lanceis* utuntur : hastas, vel ipsorum vocabulo, *frameas*, gerunt, angusto et brevi ferro, sed ita acri et ad usum habili, ut eodem telo, prout ratio poscit, vel cominus vel eminus pugnent ; et eques quidem scuto frameaque contentus est. De Morib. Germ. c. vi.

^d Nec enim immensa barbarorum scuta, *enormes hastas*, inter truncos arborum et enata humo virgulta perinde haberi, quam pila, et gladios, et hærentia corpori tegmina. Annales, ii. 14.

we have next to discuss. From the Roman tombs we never obtain arms, and in the effigies of some of the sculptured sepulchral stones, such as those found at Watermore near Cirencester,^a we see nothing which would not accord with the period of Cæsar's invasion, though these memorials are, in fact, as late as the days of the Antonines.

Let us therefore turn to those authors who speak of that mighty confederacy known as the Franks, a people of cognate habits with those races who are said to have effected so great a change in Britain at a much later period of history, and whose arms and dresses were no doubt at one time very similar. Sidonius Apollinaris, who flourished in the middle of the fifth century, gives us a very graphic picture of those warriors. He describes the fierce glance of their blue eyes, their shaven heads with the hair left as a crest at the top, their belted loins and bare knees, their skill in casting the axe, and their being trained to arms from their earliest years :

Ad frontem coma tracta jacet, nudataque cervix
 Setarum per damna nitet, tum lumine glauco
 Albet aquosa acies, ac vultibus undique rasis,
 Pro barbâ tenues perarantur pectine cristæ,
 Strictius assutæ vestes procera coërcent
 Membra virûm, patet his altato tegmine poples,
 Latus et angustum suspendit baltheus alvum.
 Excussisse citas vastum per inane bipennes,
 Et plagæ præcisse locum, clypeosque rotare
 Ludus, et intortas præcedere saltibus hastas,
 Inque hostem venisse prius : puerilibus annis,
 Est belli maturus amor : si forte premantur,
 Seu numero, seu forte loci mors obruit illos
 Non timor ——— ^b.

Procopius, a century later, describes the axe with which the Franks fought, and their manner of fighting. Among the hundred thousand men led by Theodebert into Italy there were only a few horsemen about his person, and these were armed with javelins only. The remainder consisted of infantry, with neither bow nor javelin, but armed with hatchets, swords, and bucklers. The hatchet had a broad blade and a short handle, and occasionally a shower of these discharged at the enemy cleft their shields and rendered them defenceless.^c

^a Archæologia, vol. XXVII. plate XIV.

^b Sidon. Apoll. Paneg. in Majoriano.

^c Bell. Goth. lib. ii. c. 25.

Agathias, the continuator of Procopius, says, "The arms of the Franks are very simple: they wear neither coat of mail nor greaves, but their legs and thighs are defended by bands of linen or leather. Their cavalry is inconsiderable, but they are formidable on foot; they wear a sword on the left thigh and carry a buckler. They use neither bow nor sling, but they are armed with double axes (πελέκεις ἀμφιστόμους) and angones (ἄγγωνας), with which they do most execution. These angones are of a length that may be both used as a javelin or in close fight against a charge of the enemy. The staff of this weapon is covered with iron laminæ or hoops, so that but very little wood appears, even down to the spike at the butt-end. On either side of the head of this javelin are certain barbs (καμπύλαι τινὲς ἀκίδες) projecting downward close together as far as the shaft. The Frank soldier, when engaged with the enemy, casts his angon, which, if it enter the body, cannot be withdrawn, in consequence of the barbs. Nor can the weapon be disengaged if it pierce the shield, for the bearer of the shield cannot cut it off because of the iron plates with which the staff is defended, while the Frank, rushing forward, jumps upon it as it trails on the ground,^a and thus, bearing down his antagonist's defence, cleaves his skull with his axe, or transfixes him with a second javelin.^b"

In all these accounts, we have a particular mention of the *bipennis* or double axe, but in the last only is a description of the *angon* or barbed javelin. Each description is minute and circumstantial, and appears to have been derived from the personal observation of the writer. In the lines of Sidonius Apollinaris there is evidence that truth has not been sacrificed to poetical description. We see the fierce Teuton in his characteristic arms and costume; even the banded leg and bare knee remind us of the peculiar clothing of the limbs of the figures in the illuminations of our Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.

^a We learn from Plutarch, that Marius caused his soldiers to fasten the heads of their pila with two pins, one of them of wood, which on the weapon being cast, broke on the impact, and trailed on the ground so as to embarrass the enemy. It is difficult to conceive how this was effected if the spear-head was fastened by a socket. A very singular javelin with a shifting head is described in Grettis Saga, quoted by Bartholin, Ant. Dan. lib. ii. cap. 7.

^b Agathias, lib. ii.—Vegetius, lib. i. c. 2, informs us, that in his day the barbarians were armed with two or three javelins, a weapon which had fallen into disuse among the Romans. He states that those once used by the Roman soldiers had triangular heads a foot long, that when skilfully cast they would penetrate a coat of mail, and that if they entered the buckler they could not easily be extracted. The Danes and Anglo-Saxons continued to use them. In Olaf's Tryggvasonar Saga, the king is described as using three of these javelins: Olaf Konungr þa er hann sa at Eiríkr Jarl var kominn i fyrirumit a Orminum, skaut konungr til hans þrimr kesium skamskeptum, *i. e.* Rex Olaus Comitem Ericum in-navem suam, serpentem dictam, ascendisse conspiciens, tres hastas brevioris ligni in eum emittit. Bartholin. Antiq. Dan. lib. ii. c. 7.

The discrepancy between the accounts of Procopius and Agathias,—the first stating that the Franks were chiefly armed with swords and axes, and the latter describing the *angon* as the principal and most effective weapon,—can only be reconciled by the conclusion that at this period the Franks altered their mode of warfare and had adopted the *angon* from some other nation, for it is impossible to conceive, that, in the very circumstantial description of the shape and use of that formidable weapon, given by Agathias, he has drawn upon his imagination. Yet in the very many Frank cemeteries which have been explored on the continent of Europe no well authenticated example of the *angon* has been found, while numerous spears without barbs, resembling those found in England, have been discovered. Dr. Rigollot observes, that there are in the Museum of Antiquities at Amiens, specimens of javelins. found in Merovingian graves, which may represent the *angon*; but, from the drawing with which that gentleman has favoured me, I am led to a different conclusion. In the example in question the blade is not unlike those of the spears found in our Anglo-Saxon graves, without barbs, and with a cross-bar below the cusp like a boar-spear. Nor is that found by the Abbé Cochet, in the cemetery at Londinieres, more satisfactory; neither of the objects answer the minute description of Agathias. Examples of barbed javelins were found at Selzen, but they do not answer the description of Agathias.* In England, though many Franks must have found a settlement in this island in the decline of the empire, no spear of the kind described by the historian has ever been discovered, but several examples of the iron axe, of a shape similar to those met with in Merovingian cemeteries in France, have been found in the tumuli of Kent.

* Ducange, voce *Angon*, strangely enough identifies this weapon with the axe. He could not have read the description of Agathias. Gregory of Tours does not mention the *angon* distinctly, but he says that, when the Franks pillaged the basilica of Agen, the hands of some of them were scorched by a mysterious fire, while others, separated from their companions, pierced themselves with their own javelins—*propriis se jaculis sauciabant*. Hist. Franc. lib. viii. c. 35.

The description of the spear of Thorolf, in *Egil's Saga*, in some respects answers to that of the *angon*, but it is evidently different in others: “Kesiú hafði hann (þorolfr) i hendi fiodrin var tveggia alna laung ok sleginn framm broddr ferstrendr en upp var fiodrin breid. falrinn bædi langr ok digr. Skaptid var eigi hærra en taka matti hendi til fals ok furduliga digrt, iarteinn var i falnum ok skaptid allt jarnvasit. þau spiot voru kollut brynþvarar; i. e. Thorulfus hastam manu tenuit, cujus ferrum duas ulnas longum, in mucronem quatuor acies habentem desinebat, pars vero quæ manubrium proprior erat, lata fuit; interstitium inter mucronem et hastile, longum et crassum erat. Hastile non longius erat, quam ut prædictum interstitium attingi posset manu (erectâ extremo hastilis in terram defixo). Interstitium oblongum fuit et ferreum. *Lignum laminis ferreis circumdatum erat*. Istius modi hastæ dicebantur Brynthvaræ.” Bartholini, Antiquitates Danicæ, lib. ii. cap. 8.

By the kindness of Mr. Rolfe of Sandwich I am enabled to exhibit three examples of the francisca, or "taper-axe." No. 1, he informs me, was found in the burial-place explored at Ozengel, near Ramsgate, in 1845. That marked No. 2 was discovered in a grave at Coombe, in the parish of Wodensborough, midway between that place and Ash, near Sandwich. With it were found a bronze dish, fine specimens of glass, and a sword of extraordinary size and beauty. The axe, being an unsightly object, was thrown aside as worthless! No. 3 was dug up at the corner of Richborough Castle field, near the cottage, about twenty years ago, by labourers employed by Mr. Rolfe to search for foundations of a period subsequent to the Roman possession. Its shape differs from that of the francisca, and resembles those of the axes in the hands of the figures in the Bayeux tapestry.

No. 1.

No. 2.

No. 3.

Anglo-Saxon Axes found in Kent, size $\frac{1}{4}$.

Other specimens of the francisca will be found on the table ; among them is that already exhibited by Mr. Roach Smith at a previous meeting, presented to that gentleman by the Abbé Cochet, by whom it was discovered in France. But the object deserving our especial attention is the iron head of a very small axe, exhibited by Mr. Acton. It was found at Colchester, and in shape so closely resembles that of the francisca, that we may regard it as a not inappropriate illustration of the lines of Sidonius Apollinaris, already quoted, in which the Frank is described as trained to the casting of his favourite weapon from his earliest years.

Small axe found at Colchester,
size $\frac{1}{2}$.

Francisca from a cemetery at Londinieres,
size $\frac{1}{4}$.

The axe, however, is more commonly found in the Merovingian graves, and but seldom in those which have been opened in this country. Indeed the number of weapons discovered in the ancient graves of France far exceeds that in the graves of the fifth and sixth centuries hitherto explored in England; a circumstance which may be accounted for by the fact that the Frank warrior scarcely ever laid aside his arms, especially the axe, which we are told received the name of *Francisca* from its being the favourite and peculiar weapon of this people. Clovis, on some occasions, appears to have used it with terrible effect. A story is told by Gregory of Tours which shows that the axe was the favourite weapon of the Franks of all ranks, and that it was rarely out of their hands. The soldiers of Clovis, among their other violences, had plundered a sacred edifice of a valuable vase; the Bishop sent a messenger to the King to entreat that it might be restored. "Come with me to Soissons," said Clovis to the messenger, "and we will see if it can be recovered." They proceeded to the city, where the monarch's troops were dividing the spoil, and the vase was at once pointed out and given up; but a Frank, more daring than the rest, presumed to dispute the surrender, and struck the vessel with his axe. The messenger departed with the much-prized though probably ruined object, and Clovis appeared to overlook both the injury and the insult; but the next year, at a review of his troops, he singled out the vase-breaker, whose arms were in an unsoldierlike condition. Seizing the soldier's axe, he threw it on the ground, exclaiming, "Thou alone art unworthy to appear before me; thy spear, sword, and axe, are useless." The man stooped to recover the weapon which had been plucked from his hand, and Clovis, with a blow of his own axe, struck off his head, saying, "It was thus thou dealtest with the vase at Soissons."^a

Nor is this the only narration of the historian of the Franks which illustrates the use of their favourite weapon, a use in which Clovis was well skilled. Regnacaire, King of Cambrai, and his brother, having been defeated and made prisoners, were brought bound to this savage, who first bitterly reviled them for submitting to bonds, and then with his axe himself struck off their heads.^b The son of Sigebert having, at the instigation of Clovis, slain and despoiled his father, brought the trea-

^a Sic tu apud Suessionias in urceo illo fecisti.—Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. ii. c. 38.

^b He reproached them with their tame submission to bonds unworthy of the Frank nation. "Cur humilisti genus nostrum, ut te vinciri permitteres?" was the stern demand. "Melius est tibi mori; et elevatam securim capiti ejus defixit." Then turning to the brother, he continued, "Si tu solatium fratri tribuisses, alligatus utique non fuisset; similiter et hunc securi percussum interfecit."—Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. ii. c. 42.

sure he had thus acquired in a casket to the King's agents, who, as he stooped to shew it them, cleft his head with an axe.^a

We have already alluded to the discovery of the axe in the Merovingian graves and in the tumuli of the Anglo-Saxons or Franks established in Britain, and explained its constant occurrence in the former. In the tomb of Childeric, discovered by accident at Tournay, in the year 1653, and of the contents of which particulars are given by Montfaucon after Chifflet, were found many objects of the greatest interest, highly characteristic of the age in which they were deposited. There was the skeleton of a horse with a portion of its trappings; a spear-head; a sword with one edge only; gold fibulæ, differing somewhat in form but resembling in construction that exhibited to the Society by Mr. Chalmers in 1850; a crystal ball of the size of a small orange, an object so often found in graves of minor importance of this period; and lastly an axe head of iron, but not a *bipennis*, not the *πέλεκυς ἀμφίστομος* of Agathias, but resembling in form the axe-heads found in France and England.

Dr. Rigollot, in a very able article on the arms and ornaments of the Teutonic races,^b remarks, that though many of the axes found in the Frank graves differ in form, they all have but one cutting edge. He then notices that the writers who have followed Gregory of Tours, Aimoin, Hincmard, and Flodoard, have employed the same terms in speaking of this weapon—*francisca quæ vocatur bipenna; bipennem suam quod est francisca*, &c.^c On this I would remark, that, although Sidonius Apollinaris used the word *bipennis*, and the Greek writers the still less equivocal term *ἀμφίστομος*, I do not think they furnish us with direct proof that the *francisca* was in reality double-edged. In the classical ages *bipennis* was obviously the name given to the double-edged axe of the Asiatics, and this term, originally used for the weapon wielded in war, would, in all probability, in after times be applied to any axe thus used, of whatsoever shape it might happen to be. Our own language

^a The wretched parricide brought the treasure in a casket to the emissaries of Clovis, remarking “in hanc arcellulam solitus erat pater meus numismata auri congerere.” “Immitte manum tuam usque ad fundum, ut cuncta reperias,” said they. “Quod cum fecisset,” continues the historian, “et esset valde declinus, unus elevata manu *bipennem* cerebro ejus inlisit.”—Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. ii. c. 40.

^b *Récherches historiques sur les Peuples de la race Teutonique*, &c., Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie, tome x^e. p. 121.

^c Isidorus speaks of this weapon as “*Secures quas Hispani ab usu Francorum, per derivationem franciscas vocant*.”—Lib. xviii. c. 8. It is noticed by Suidas s. v. “*Ἀγγωνες ἐπιχώρια δόρατα παρὰ Φράγγοις*—sic Franci hastas in sua regione usitatas vocant. See Pachymeres, lib. vi. c. 30, where mention is still made of this weapon by the name of *angon*.

furnishes many examples of the use of terms long after they have ceased to be applicable.^a

Let us now turn to the *Anglo-Saxons*, whose arms and dresses must in many respects have resembled those of the Franks. In various drawings in our Anglo-Saxon MSS. we see military figures with short tunics, bare heads and knees, and their legs defended by bands. These, however, do not cover the thigh like those worn by the Franks, but reach only to the knee, or rather to just below it. Most of them are armed with barbed javelins, with a cross-bar below the blade, like that of the now obsolete lance once carried by our sergeants of foot. The accompanying representation is from the psalter in the Harleian Collection, No. 603, p. 56 B. in the British Museum.

^a In the time of Alexander the Great it was the weapon of the Barcanians, an Asiatic people, of whom there were two thousand men in the army of Darius,—“Barcanorum equitum duo millia fuere, armati bipennibus levibusque scutis cetræ maxime specimen reddentibus.”—Q. Curt. lib. iii. c. 2. Vegetius, so late as the days of Valentinian, speaks of it as a naval weapon, which may be used for cutting the cordage of vessels,—“Securis, habens ex utraque parte latissimum et acutissimum ferrum.”—Lib. iv. c. 46. I do not mean to dispute that the bipennis was known to our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. The illumination of the Fine Psalter, Harl. MS. No. 603, would lead us to infer that it was; but I submit that it was not the common and favourite weapon of the Teutonic races. The ordinary military weapon was the narrow or “taper axe,” of which more hereafter. By some writers the “twybill” is supposed to be the *bipennis*; but the name “twybill” is not yet obsolete in the West of England, where it signifies a bill-hook with a cutting edge at the back. The term *bill* obviously implies a rostrated, and not an axe-shaped, instrument.

MS. Harl. 603.

The destroying angel is represented launching his barbed javelins at a group of armed men below. His attack is doubtless executed in the manner most common to the Anglo-Saxons, which we may infer did not differ from the charge of the Franks, as described by Agathias in the passage above quoted. It will be perceived that the three weapons answer the description of the angon, and are dissimilar to those commonly discovered in Anglo-Saxon graves.

Spearheads from Anglo-Saxon Graves.

I was at first disposed to consider this barbed javelin as a mere conventional representation of the Anglo-Saxon artist; but after reading the account of Agathias, already quoted, I am led to conclude that it is not altogether fanciful, but that there must have been good grounds for its being almost invariably drawn of that shape. I confess, however, that I am totally at a loss to reconcile it with the fact that nothing of the kind has ever been found in our Anglo-Saxon tumuli, or in the graves of the Merovingian cemeteries, of which considerable numbers have now been explored by French antiquaries. Enough has been discovered in the graves of the two nations to show that they were a people of cognate habits, and that their dress, arms, and personal ornaments, were, in many respects, precisely similar. There are, however, some peculiarities which distinguish the Frank from the Anglo-Saxon remains. The axe, as already observed, is rarely discovered in the latter, but in the former very frequently, as are also very large knives, which do not occur in the Anglo-Saxon graves; a fact which in some measure negatives the supposition of Dr. Rigollot, that they are the weapons which, according to the mediæval rhymers, Gotfridus Viterbiensis, gave the Saxons their name:—

*Ipse brevis gladius apud illos Saxo vocatur,
Unde sibi Saxo nomen peperisse notatur.*

In fact, our researches at present tend to shew that the Saxon, even in those rude times, had become less bellicose after his location in Britain. The excavations in Merovingian cemeteries appear to indicate that every Frank was a soldier, while very many Anglo-Saxon graves contain the small knife only, not a warlike weapon, but the simple and anything but formidable instrument with which the occupants once divided their

daily food. Few of the many barrows in East Kent which I assisted Lord Londesborough in opening in the year 1841 contained swords, many had knives only, and some skeletons were found unaccompanied even by the knife; not a single axe was discovered.^a Excavations which I have on several occasions made in the tumuli of the South Downs, beyond Lewes, have led to the same result, the remains indicating a people of pastoral habits in quiet and undisturbed possession of the soil.^b

Now, in the cemetery of Bel Air, explored by M. Troyon,^c a number of weapons was found, and in the tombs of Selzen^d an equally warlike assemblage, as remarked by Dr. Rigollot. This is seen from the list which he gives, and which I here add, as affording a remarkable contrast to the contents of Anglo-Saxon graves:—

- 1st Grave. Two javelins and a large knife or short sword.
- 2d „ A spear and a javelin.
- 3d „ A large sword.
- 4th „ A large sword, a large knife, a spear, and two javelins.
- 5th „ A sword and a large spear.
- 6th „ An axe and a knife.
- 7th „ An axe, a spear, and a large knife.
- 8th „ A large knife.
- 9th „ An axe, a spear, a javelin, and a very large knife.

The large knives, it will here be seen, often accompany the sword; they have but one edge, and towards the hilt are two grooved lines, which an eminent French antiquary conjectures may have been intended occasionally to hold poison.^e These weapons are supposed to be the “*cultri validi*” or *Scramasaxes* of Gregory of Tours, and were well adapted to the close conflict which the Franks so much preferred.^f

^a Archæologia, vol. XXX.

^b The extensive cemetery at Fairford in Gloucestershire, explored by Mr. Wylie, has afforded no example of the axe or the large knife.

^c Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zurich. 1841.

^d Das Germanische Todtenlager bei Selzen. Mainz. 4to. 1848.

^e It was with such weapons that Fredegond armed her agents employed to murder Childebert,—“*duos cultros ferreos fieri præcepit; quos etiam caraxari profundius et veneno infici jusserat.*”—Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. viii. c. 29. See an account in Bede, lib. ii. c. 9, of the attempted murder of Edwin, King of Northumbria, by an assassin armed with a poisoned dagger, which was long enough to pierce the interposed body of the loyal Thane, and wound the King.

^f In the battle in which Clovis slew with his own hand the Gothic king Alaric, the historian describes the Goths as commencing the conflict with missiles, and the Franks as rushing at once to close fight: “*confligentibus his eminus, resistunt cominus illi.*”—Greg. Turon. lib. ii. c. 37. Vegetius informs us that the Romans had often suffered from the arrows of the Goths: “*Contra Gotthos milites nostri multitudine sa-*

They appear, from the position in which they are found in the Merovingian graves, to have been worn depending from the girdle, as was doubtless the short sword found in the tomb of Childeric at Tournay.

As regards the axe, although so seldom discovered in the graves of the Anglo-Saxons, there is good reason to suppose that it was a favourite arm with that people, and that it continued in use down to the period of the Norman invasion. At the memorable battle of Hastings the weapons opposed to the arrows and lances of the Normans were darts of various kinds, sharp axes, and slings;^a and the author of the "Chronique de Normandie" tells us, that when the Normans feigned a retreat the Saxons, quitting their entrenchments, pursued them eagerly, each with his axe suspended from his neck.^b Now the weapon which could have been thus carried, must have been furnished with a very short handle,^c like those of the Franks as described by Procopius; and, if we do not find examples of it so frequently in the Anglo-Saxon graves, we ought not to conclude that it fell into disuse; on the contrary, it rather appears to show the changed habits of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. The character of the Frank had greatly altered even before the termination of the Merovingian dynasty; and it is but reasonable to suppose that a people whose country was protected by the sea would become even less bellicose. Although the fatal field of Hastings was so stoutly contested, the entrenched position of the Saxons showed that they were perfectly sensible of the formidable military character of their adversaries, and it is very obvious that during nearly the whole day they acted almost entirely on the defensive. There was no want of personal courage, but an evident consciousness of inferiority in military discipline and resources. Like their kindred race, they fought on foot, and appear to have been

gittariorum sæpe deleti sunt."—Lib. i. c. 2. The different modes of fighting of races of Teutonic origin is very remarkable.

^a Illi contra fortiter quo quisque valet ingenio resistunt. Jactant cuspides, ac diversorum generum tela, *sævissimas quasque secures*, et lignis imposita saxa.—Gesta Gulielmi Ducis Normannorum, &c. Hist. Normann. Scriptores Antiqui, p. 201.

^b Et sitost comme les Anglois les virent fuir, ilz commencerent a poursuivre *chascun la hache à son col*.—Ext. de la Chronique de Normandie. Rec. des Historiens, tome xiii. p. 235.

^c In the Bayeux Tapestry, however, the Saxons are represented using axes with long handles. In the Saxon Chronicle, sub anno m.xxix. we find that Cnut gave to Christ Church, in Canterbury, the haven of Sandwich, and the dues thereof on either side as far as a man standing on a ship at flood tide could cast a taper-axe on shore,—*ƿpa þ̅ loc hƿenne þ̅ ƿlœt bȳð ealpa hehƿe ȝ ealpa ƿulloƿe. beo an ƿcƿ ƿlœtȝende. ƿpa neh þan lande ƿpa hit nȳxt. ȝ þan beo an mann ƿtanbe of þamp ƿcƿe. and habbe ane tæpeƿ æx on hƿ*
* * * The lacuna is compensated by the words of the charter itself,—*ƿpā mæȝ ān tæpeƿ-æx beon ȝeƿoppen ūt of ðam sƿipe ūp on ðæt land*, &c.—Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici, vol. iv. p. 24.

insensible to the value of the horse in battle. They neglected also the bow, like the Franks, and trusted to darts and javelins. This mode of warfare appears to be described in several Anglo-Saxon writers. In the verses composed on the victory of Æthelstan at Brunanburh we have the following lines :—

þær læȝ fecȝ mæniz,	There lay soldiers many,
ȝarum aȝeted,	With darts struck down,
ȝuma norðerna,	Northern men,
ofer ȝeȝlð ȝcoten.	Over their shields shot. ^a

And in the Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving :—

þon ȝar ȝetȝum	When the gar shower
ofer ȝeȝlð-hreadan	Over the shield's defence
ȝceotanð ȝendað	Warriors send. ^b

Also in the poem on the Day of Judgment :—

Ne þearf him onðrædan	Need not dread
ðeopla ȝrælar,	The shafts of devils,
æniz on eorðan	Any on earth
ælda cýnner	Of the race of men
ȝnomra ȝar-ƿare,	The armed course of foes,
ȝif him ȝoð ȝeȝlðeð.	If him God shieldeth. ^c

Riddle xxviii. of the same collection commences :—

Min heafod is	My head is
homepe ȝeþunen,	With hammer beaten,
rearo-pila punð,	With war-darts wounded. ^d

And is less obscure, for here the word *pila* leaves us in no doubt as to the description of weapon alluded to. In the lines above quoted ȝar may mean an arrow, but it is more likely to signify a javelin,^e since it is evident that the Anglo-Saxons were not

^a Saxon Chronicle, sub anno DCCCCXXXVIII.

^b Codex Exoniensis, p. 42.

^c Ibid. p. 49.

^d Ibid. p. 497.

^e This word *gar* appears to be identical with the Danish *geir*, which in the Runic Lexicon of Magnus Olavius is described as “verutum vel nomen gladii in mucronem acuminati;” and this author attempts to identify it with the *framea* described by Tacitus : we may suppose, however, with Bartholin, that the weapon was not a sword but a spear, which could be used in close combat or thrown to a distance. This kind of short spear was a favourite weapon with the people of Teutonic race : it was well adapted for that horrible sport of tossing infants, in which the Danish pirates delighted (see Bartholin, *Antiq. Danicæ*, lib. ii. c. 9), and of which the Scotch are accused by Hoveden, in his account of their invasion of England in the reign of the first William.

partial to the bow as a weapon of war, and appear to have looked upon the arrow as the appropriate missile of the robber, or of one who lurked in ambush, as we may infer from the following lines:—

ƿcýls ƿceal cempa,	A shield for the soldier,
ƿceapƿ ƿceape,	A shaft for the robber,
ƿceal bƿýðe beaz,	A ring for the bride, ^a
&c. &c.	&c. &c.

In some Anglo-Saxon cemeteries a greater number of weapons has been discovered than in others, and this has led to the inference that a garrison had once been maintained on the spot; yet, even in these cases, but few relics have been found to justify the supposition that the individual in whose grave they were discovered, had been a soldier; the spear would rather appear to indicate the rank of the deceased. It was carried on foot, when it served as a staff, and on horseback, in either case serving as a defensive weapon. Thus Saint Cuthbert, when he visited Melrose, dismounting from his horse, gave his travelling-spear to a servant and entered the abbey to pray.^b That the spear was a symbol of power and authority among the Teutonic races we learn, not only from Tacitus, but also from the historian from whose pages I have so frequently quoted in the course of these remarks. When Gonthram made over his kingdom to Childebart he delivered to him a spear, saying, “This is the token that I give to thee the whole of my kingdom.”^c

At the risk of fatiguing the Society with these details, I shall, in conclusion, venture on a few remarks on the largest description of sword found in the Frank as well as in the Anglo-Saxon graves. The blade of this weapon is often nearly a yard long. One of the finest examples which has ever come under my notice is that found at Fairford, in Gloucestershire, and recently exhibited by Mr. Wylie, of that town. Its length, including the handle, is just three feet, the blade broad, two-edged, and pointed. It is highly probable that this sword, in the decline of the empire, was not peculiar to the Franks and Saxons.^d Except that the blade is

^a Codex Exoniensis, Gnomie Verses, p. 341.

^b Casusque contigit, ut cum illo proveniens equo desiluisset, ingressurusque ad orandum ecclesiam, ipsum pariter equum et *hastam, quam tenuerat manu*, ministro dedisset, nec dum enim habitum deposuerat secularem.—Venerabilis Bede, De Vita et Miraculis S. Cuthberti, c. vi. Compare the Canons enacted under K. Eadgar,—Deóplic ƿæðð bôt bīð . þ̅ lǣƿeðe man hīȝ ƿǣpna aƿeȝe, etc.

^c Hoc est indicium quod tibi omne regnum meum tradidi.—Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. vii. c. 33.

^d The sword of Otger the Dane is thus described by Mabillon, in the Acta Sanctorum:—“Hujus verò spathæ quæ Otgerii dicitur, à summa lamina longitudo est trium pedum, et pollicis unius; secundum capulum et glandem, pollicum septem: summæ laminæ latitudo trium pollicum, in acumine unius et dimidii; totius

pointed, it would answer the description which Tacitus gives us of the swords of the Britons in the time of Domitian. And here I may be permitted to observe, that, even if the historian wrote from actual information, the words *sine mucrone* are not intended to describe the swords of the Islanders as absolutely pointless. Common sense obliges us to propose a different meaning, and to suggest, that what Tacitus really meant was, that the British sword was not adapted for thrusting, the point being obtuse compared with that of the swords of their enemies. The same explanation suggests itself on reading the account which Polybius gives us of the swords of the Gauls, already quoted at the commencement of these remarks.

The great length of the blades of the Anglo-Saxon swords favours the belief that they were originally the weapons of horsemen. We see weapons precisely similar by the sides of the equestrian figures sculptured on the monuments to Roman stipendiaries; a similar sword is, however, held by a standing figure on a well-known sepulchral monument discovered in London. The large knife-shaped weapons found in the Frank graves suggest at once their use by a people who fought on foot, and in the manner already described; but in the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries they are never met with, although large swords, like those of the Franks and those discovered in the cemeteries of Switzerland^a and Livonia,^b are repeatedly found. Further researches among the grouped tumuli of this island may possibly shew why the larger sword was preferred by a people whose very last struggle was maintained on foot against a race whose chief strength was in their cavalry.

With these remarks I conclude; but I cannot do so without expressing my

spathæ pondus est quinque librarum cum quarta parte." This predilection of the Teutonic races for huge weapons continued for a long time. Gulielmo Pugliese thus describes the swords of the Sueves brought into Italy by Pope Leo IX. in the year 1053.

Præminet ensis;

Sunt etenim longi specialiter et peracuti

Illorum gladii percussum a vertice corpus

Scindere sæpe solent.

The use of such long and powerful swords doubtless led to the adoption of the long knife already noticed. Vegetius speaks of the large and small swords used by the Romans in his days, — *gladios majores quos spathas* vocant, et alios minores quos *semispathas* nominant. Lib. i. c. 15.

^a Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zurich, 1841. Description des Tombeaux de Bel-Air, par Frédéric Troyon.

^b Die Gräber der Liven; ein beitrage zur Nordischen Alterthumskunde und Geschichte, von Johann Karl Bähr. Dresden, 1850.

earnest hope that others may hereby be invited to discuss at length a subject so interesting. The comparisons here instituted shew at least the value of monumental researches in connexion with the study of an important chapter of our national history. It must be seen that without such comparison many obscure points will remain unexplained, and that, though historians may give us the outlines of events, many details are wanting which, imperfectly alluded to by them as unimportant, are in our time worthy of minute inquiry, and may be illustrated by the evidence which archæology supplies. It rarely happens that the sober and candid inquirer ends where he began,—rarely that he does not stumble on facts which have hitherto remained unnoticed; and still more rarely that he fails to derive some satisfaction from the hope and belief that he has led the way to a better acquaintance with the subject he has undertaken to illustrate.

30 *April*, 1851.

J. Y. AKERMAN.

MS. Harl. No. 603, p. 30.