XXIII. *Conjectures concerning the Instruments called Celts.*
By R. P. Knight, Esq. F. A. S.

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AN accurate and circumstantial account of a great number of these instruments, found at different times and in different places, together with the various opinions of the learned concerning the uses for which they were intended, has been published in the fifth volume of the *Archaeologia* by the late Dr. Lort. Many hundreds of them have been discovered in almost every part of the British islands; many, also, though not so many, in France; one only, and that probably carried thither, in Spain: and none in any of the more southern or eastern parts of the Roman empire: unless, indeed, we admit those which Count Caylus says were sent to him from Herculaneum:^a but as this buried city has been, from the time of its discovery to the present day, the common source, from which every Italian dealer in antiquities derives his wares, especially those of his own manufacture, and as none ever found their way into the Royal Museum of Portici, or came to the knowledge of those vigilant directors and superintendants of the subterranean researches, Camillo Paderni and Father Antonio; or to that of the no less watchful observer of their results, Sir William Hamilton, we may safely conclude that the Count was imposed upon; and that these articles, sent to him from Naples, had either been brought there from the north-western parts of Europe, or, what is more likely, made there on purpose for him: since cast-works, such as these invariably are, may be counterfeited, so as to deceive more skilful judges than he was, even by less dextrous and experienced artists than those of Naples and Rome.

^a *Recueil d'Antiquités*, Vol. II. p. 321—33.

The circumstance alone of none being found in the south-eastern provinces of the Roman empire, affords a sufficient refutation to the opinion of Hearne, adopted by Dr. Lort, that they were Roman chissels for cutting and polishing stone; since all the great stone quarries, worked by the Romans out of Italy, were in those provinces; nor do we any where read of a single slab or column being brought to adorn Rome from either Gaul or Britain, where these instruments are principally found. The greatest part of them likewise having been fixt by grooves into their handles, and not having their handles inserted into sockets,^b could not possibly have resisted the blows of the hammer, applied, as they necessarily must be, in hewing stone: nor are the sockets of those of a different pattern strong enough for such use. Annexed to the socket, too, there is frequently a loop, by which it was tied to the shaft or handle inserted in it to prevent its falling off;^c so that it must have been employed in some purposes that would render it liable to become loose; which is not the case with a chissel, since every blow applied to the extremity of the handle would tend to fix it, as a wedge, more firmly in its socket. They were, therefore, occasionally at least, employed in some more irregular and desultory exercise, in which they were brandished or whirled about, so as to cause the heads to fly off, unless so secured.

It does not appear that the inhabitants of these islands, or of the adjacent parts of the continent, were, any more than those of America, acquainted with any other metals, than gold in its native state, till they received them from the more civilized nations of the south and east: for though they supplied the Phœnician merchants with tin at a period beyond the reach of history, they seem to have supplied it in the ore; no implement or ornament of their own manufacture having hitherto been discovered in that material, though such numbers of different kinds have been found in gold. Their primitive weapons and working tools were of flint, or the hardest stone that they could procure; and the forms of them, being pointed out by the uses for which they were intended, nearly the same in all countries.

^b See *Archæolog.* Vol. V. Pl. VII. VIII. & IX.

^c *Ib.*

The most necessary, and consequently the most common, were those of the axe and adze, each consisting of a stone, usually about six inches long, ground to as fine an edge at one end as the brittleness of the material would allow to be useful, and tapered off to a point at the other; so that, when fixt upon the shaft, either with the edge perpendicular for an axe, or horizontal for an adze, every blow stricken with it might drive it, as a wedge, more tightly into the bandages which held it, or fix it more firmly in its hole or socket.

When the commerce of the Phœnicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and Romans, supplied better materials for their tools, it was natural for them to preserve the same forms, with such improvements only as such materials would naturally suggest; whence, I presume, arose the British and Gallic Celt, as well as the American Tomahawk; both probably applied, as occasion required, to uses equally various and general, both military and domestic, to which both are equally adapted. The first and second articles, exhibited in the annexed plate, (Pl. XIII.) of the same size, are of a hard calcareous stone of a greenish colour, the one (fig. 1.) found in the north of Italy, and the other (fig. 2.) in the island of Jamaica. The third, (Pl. XIV.) found in Hampshire, is of flint;^d and a comparison of them with the Celts published in Plates VII. VIII. IX. and X. of the fifth volume, will illustrate the opinion here stated; which is confirmed by some of them having been found in brass cases, exactly fitted to preserve the fineness of the edge;^e and still more by one described in Mr. Whitaker's History of Manchester;^f which had enough of its ancient wooden shaft remaining to shew that the form of the whole had been that of a small axe.

The

ΑΞΙΝΗΝ εὐχαλκον, ελαϊνῷ ἀμφὶ πελεκῶ,^g

which Pisander takes from under his shield to attack Menelaus in close fight, appears to have been a small light axe of this kind, wielded with one hand; while the ΠΕΛΕΚΤΣ ΜΕΓΑΣ, or great axe, employed

^d The specimens engraved in Plates XIII. XIV. are in the collection of Mr. P. Knight.

^e See Archaeol. Vol. V. Pl. VII. Fig. 2, 3, 4.

^f Vol. I. p. 84.

^g Il. N. 612.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Plate XIV

J. B. B. sculp.

then, as it is now, in hewing timber, required both. As metal was, however, in the early stages of civilization, extremely scarce and valuable, both were probably attached to the shaft in the same manner, either by being inserted in a perforated, or fixt upon a pointed piece of wood, placed transversely on the top of it, and the whole held together by bandages; which may explain the task employed by Penelope to try and baffle her suitors, since found equally effectual in trying and baffling the learning and sagacity of critics and commentators: for as the same word is occasionally employed to signify the axe entire, and the shaft or mounting only, without its metal head,^h there can be little doubt of its being employed in the latter sense in the passage in question;ⁱ and that the twelve axes in a row, through which the rival lovers are to shoot an arrow, as Ulysses used to do, are the mountings only, through the perforations of which, prepared to receive the heads, the dart was to pass.

^h See Il. N. 612. Ψ 851, &c.

ⁱ Od. T. 573.