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OLD SCANDINAVIAN CIVILISATION *among the* MODERN ESQUIMAUX.

By E. B. TYLOR, D.C.L., F.R.S., V.P. Anthropol. Inst.

[WITH PLATES VI AND VII.]

(Read June 12th, 1883.)

THE Esquimaux race, in the state in which they became known to the civilised world in modern times, are usually regarded by anthropologists as stone-age savages, representing an early stage in the development of civilisation. In many respects this may be right, as the Esquimaux tribes from Greenland to Behrings Straits were undoubtedly found using stone implements and living as rude hunters and fishers. My present object, however, is to call attention to the fact that some of their arts and customs cannot be treated as of native development, or as properly belonging to savage life. On the contrary, they seem to be of civilised origin, and probably to have been borrowed from the Scandinavians during the long period when the Esquimaux were in intercourse with them, between A.D. 1000–1500.

Some details of the condition of the Esquimaux when they first came in contact with the Europeans may be gained from the passages in old Scandinavian chronicles referring to the Skrällings, or dwarfs (Old Norse *skräl* = little), as the usual opinion appears quite reasonable that these little people must have been Esquimaux, although met with so far south of the modern habitat of the race. The sources of information are the sagas of Eirek the Red and of Thorfinn Karlsefni, published wholly or partly in various collections, and to be found conveniently in the “*Antiquitates Americanæ*” (Copenhagen, 1837). Eirek’s discovery of Greenland was about A.D. 982, but no mention is made of natives; indeed, it has been thought that the Esquimaux may not have migrated so early into that inclement region (see Waitz, “*Anthropologie*,” Vol. III, pp. 300, 303). It was in A.D. 1004 that Thorvald’s coasting expedition met with the Skrällings far south, at Kjalarnes (Keel-ness), which is considered to be Cape Cod. In this New England district they evidently formed a considerable population. The name given them by the Northmen to indicate their small stature, as well as the description of their dark colour, ugly hair, great eyes, and broad cheekbones, fit with the build and features of the Esquimaux rather than of other American tribes. That they brought furs to barter, and did not understand iron hatchets, proves nothing, as this might have been true of Algonquins or other of the so-called North American Indians. But the Skrällings had peculiarities of culture which are characteristic of the Esquimaux, but not of the neighbouring tribes. They paddled in skin canoes (*húdh-keipr*), apparently each holding three men;

they hurled their spears with war-slings (*val-slöngva*), a term which would perfectly apply to the wooden spear-throwers; they seem to have had the large ball-like blown-skin floats attached to their harpoons; some of them carried vessels with a mixture of marrow and blood for provision, a habit which agrees with the eating of raw meat which has remained common among the Esquimaux till modern times, and to which, indeed, they owe their name of *Eskimantsic* or "raw-flesh eaters," given them by the Abenaki Indians, and in the mouths of the French colonists passing into *Esquimaux*.

The old Scandinavian colonies in Greenland existed for centuries side by side with a nomad Esquimaux population. But the white men dwindled, and at some time in the fifteenth century, when intercourse ceased with Europe, their settlements probably ceased to exist. Doubtless the Scandinavians were partly killed off by the Esquimaux, but there is also reason to believe that some of the last survivors became merged in the Esquimaux population. This probability has been connected, not unreasonably, with the occurrence among the natives of some families whose larger build and more European feature distinguish them from the ordinary Esquimaux.

It was early in the eighteenth century that the Scandinavian missionaries reopened the long-dropped intercourse with Greenland.<sup>1</sup> The natives had by no means forgotten the old times when the Northmen had lived in their land; they called them *Kablunat*, a name they still give to Europeans. It seems even as if they remembered their own Old Norse name of *Skrälling*, for they sometimes called themselves *Karalit* (sing. *Karalek*), which they said was not a native word, but a name given to them by the former Christians, and as Cranz reasonably argues, this is the broken-down form which the Norse word *Skrälling* would naturally assume in an Esquimaux mouth (Cranz, "Historie von Groenland," Barby, 1765, pp. 331, 337). The modern Greenlanders have among their traditions, collected by Dr. Rink in his "Eskimoiske Eventyr og Sagn" (Copenhagen, 1866), several which record their recollections of the old Northmen, and which give an idea of the quarrels, murders, and retaliations between the two races, which were one main cause of the extinction of the white men. Our present business is to consider the condition of the Greenlanders as the Danish missionaries found them in the eighteenth century, and to examine how far their then arts, customs, &c., may be considered as adopted from the mediæval Scandinavians. The chief descriptions are:—1. Hans Egede,

<sup>1</sup> The voyages of Frobisher and Lindenau need not be taken account of, as probably not having had any effect on the condition of the Esquimaux.

“Det Gamle Grønlands nye Perustration eller Naturel-Historie,” Copenhagen, 1741; (the English translation published under the title “A Description of Greenland, by Hans Egede,” London, 1818, is very incorrect, and only gives fragments of the illustrations). 2. David Crazz, “Historie von Groenland,” Barby, 1765.

As the most striking illustration of ancient European influence on the Greenlanders, may be noticed the dress which the modern Europeans found them wearing. Fig. 1 (Plate VI), representing part of a native group of men and women playing football, is taken from Egede. Like other engravings of last century books of travel, its figures, attitudes, and dress are somewhat conventionalised in European style; nevertheless, for the present argument, it is preferable to better modern drawings, and its details can be compared with Egede’s careful description of native costume, which may be relied on for the particulars of garments worn when he first arrived in the country, for he mentions the linen, cloth, and new fashions since introduced by the missionaries and traders. Egede’s account (cap. xi) runs as follows:—

“*On the Greenlanders’ Costume.*—Their garments consist mostly of reindeer-skin, sealskin, and also bird-skins, very neatly dressed and fashioned. The men-folks’ costume is of this model; the tunic is like a jacket with a cowl, which serves them as a hood. It reaches nearly down to the knees. Some have a lappet before and behind. Their breeches are quite small, and reach not entirely over the loins, which is for convenience of getting in and out of their small boats. Next the body they have not linen, but turn in the hair of their jackets to be the warmer. Outside the jacket they have a peculiar sea-jacket, which is of sealskin with the hair stripped off, and will keep the water out when they go to sea in their small boats. Between the sea-jacket and the innermost jacket they wear either a linen shirt, or in default one of dressed sealskin, which also helps to keep the water from the inner jacket. They have besides, jackets or shirts of striped stuff or linen, as well as of blue or red cloth, but made up after their own fashion, which they buy from our people or the Dutch, and parade in them when they are in the country: likewise breeches of the same sort. Their hose or stockings are made of reindeer or sealskin, but they now mostly use woollen hose, white, blue, and red, which they also get by trade with us. Shoes and boots they have of black, gold, or red dressed and tanned sealskin, very neatly sewed, without heels, but gathered before and behind, and they fit very well on the legs and feet. The women’s costume differs from the men’s only in being wide and high on the shoulders, with large high hoods. The married women with

children have their jackets especially wide and roomy, that they may carry their small children within on their backs, and they use no other cradle or swaddling-clothes for them. They have two pairs of drawers, one pair inside reaching over the thigh. These they never take off, but lie with them on at night; but the outside breeches reach to the knees. These they are not wont to wear in summer, but only in winter when they are out, not when they are in the house, for they pull them off as soon as they come in. They have double jackets, one inside next the body, of reindeer-skin, with the hair turned inward, and another outside, which is also of thin-haired and smart-coloured reindeer-skin, or, in lack of this, of sealskin, edged and bordered with white within the seams, which looks smart. Their shoes are like the men-folks, but their boots have wide tops like our men's boots."

Cranz's account (Book III, Part 1), published some years later, mostly follows Egede, but adds a few points of detail. He notices that the tunic or jacket is sewn on all sides like a monk's robe, so that they thrust in their arms first and then pull the garment over their heads like a shirt. He speaks of the bird-skin jackets being worn as shirts, with the feathers inside, and says that the thin-haired reindeer over-jackets had now become so scarce that only the richest women could parade them. The stockings, he says, are of the skin of seal-fetus, and the heelless shoes of smooth black tanned seal leather, drawn together above with a thong drawn through the thick sole. Well-to-do people had come to wear woollen stockings, hose, and caps. Fig. 2, Plate VI, is reduced from the engraving in Cranz (Plate III). The more modern Greenland dress, traceable from this early form with some modification, is depicted in Rink's work above mentioned. (English versions of Rink's writings have been edited by Robert Brown, under titles "Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo," London, 1875, and "Danish Greenland," London, 1877.)

It is evident that this costume differed utterly from the rude fur cloaks of the Fuegians in the Antarctic cold region, and indeed from any savage or low barbaric American dress. On the other hand, their coats with hoods, shirts, breeches, stockings, shoes, and boots, form, taken together, a mediæval European costume. The inference is here considered to be that the Greenlanders, early in the eighteenth century, were wearing the costume of the old Scandinavians, in which, however, for want of woollen and linen, the material throughout had come to be skin, fur, &c., and the fashion had been in some measure adapted to suit the peculiar conditions of Polar life. It is in part through the use of such highly-developed clothing, that the Esquimaux have been enabled to live in comparative comfort in their rigorous climate.

Another appliance by which the Esquimaux were enabled to live in some comfort in the Polar regions was their blubber lamp. Wanting trees, and requiring the scanty supply of drift-wood for implements and furniture, they had practically no fuel or means of lighting except fat and oil, especially seal-blubber, burnt in the lamps in question. The family compartments of a Greenland house are drawn and described by Cranz, each provided with its half-moon-shaped potstone lamp, with a wooden vessel beneath it to catch the overflowing oil, placed on a low wooden stool, and with a potstone kettle hung over it by four cords from the roof, in which all the cooking was done. The lamp was fed with blubber or train oil, and along its straight side moss, rubbed small, served for a wick, which burned so brightly that with so many lamps the house was not only lighted but warmed. Fig. 1, Plate VII, shows an Esquimaux lamp of potstone, now exhibited by Dr. Rae, brought home by him from Repulse Bay, while fig. 2, Plate VII, is taken from Nordenskjöld's "Voyage of the Vega," Vol. II, p. 22, being in use among the Chukchi of North-East Asia, the western limit to which Esquimaux life has spread. The wooden foot and drip-vessel mentioned by Cranz are drawn in Fig. 3, and the curved lamp-trimmer belongs to both. Now no lamps of this kind—in fact no lamps at all—were known to the indigenes of America, not even to the comparatively cultured Mexicans and Peruvians. On the other hand, open dish oil lamps, the same in principle as those of the Esquimaux, may be traced all across Europe and Asia. The collection of General Pitt Rivers contains some specimens, and I exhibit a modern North Italian brass one, bought within a few weeks in the market of Pallanza. In Scotland, made in iron, they were till lately the regular house-lamp, under the name of *crusie* (French *creuset*). They are often made with two dishes, the lower one to catch drippings of oil, as is shown<sup>1</sup> in fig. 4, Plate VII. It is interesting to notice the name *collie* given to these lamps in Shetland (see A. Mitchell, "The Past in the Present," p. 101). This is apparently the old Scandinavian word *kola*, "a small flat open lamp." The word is to be found in the Cleasby-Vigfusson "Icelandic Dictionary," with passages cited—among them one from the Old Laws of Norway ("Norges Gamle Love," Vol. II, p. 247), which is especially to the present purpose. It is a law that men are to have lights either in lanterns, or in *kolas* of stone or brass (*eda i kolum a stæni eda æri*), or in lamps. Now the Greenlanders' name for their lamp is *kollek*, remarkably corresponding with

<sup>2</sup> The figure is taken from a specimen presented by Dr. Garson to the University Museum at Oxford, and intended to form one of the series of lamps in the Pitt Rivers collection.

the Scandinavian term. This was well known to Egede, who noticed among words which he thought the Greenlanders had borrowed from the Old Norsemen, "*kollek*, a lamp, which in Norse is called a *kolle*." If this etymology is sound it much strengthens the present argument, but it is necessary to mention that an Esquimatx dictionary has a different etymology for the word *kollek*,<sup>1</sup> which if true would negative the notion of its Scandinavian derivation.<sup>2</sup> But etymology apart, the fact remains that the Greenlanders doubtless saw in the houses of the old Scandinavians lamps of the simple dish kind, by imitating which and substituting moss for the linen fibre wick they would obtain Esquimaux lamps: It should be noticed that kettles, &c., carved out of the steatite known to us as potstone, or *lapis ollaris*, were well known to the Scandinavians, who called this stone *talg-sten* (tallow-stone) (see Hylten-Cavallius, "Warend och Wirdarne," Part II, p. 190). It is thus likely that the Greenlanders may have learnt from the Scandinavians the art of working potstone both into kettles and lamps. If so, the use of these would spread from Greenland over the whole Esquimaux district. It is worth while to notice that Dall's examination of the shell-heaps left by tribes more or less Esquimaux in the Aleutian Islands, seems to show that in the earliest periods lamps were unknown to these tribes, but eventually came into use, rude in pattern, but on the principle of the Esquimaux lamps (W. H. Dall, in "Contributions to North American Ethnology," Vol. I, Washington, 1877).

It remains to call attention to miscellaneous points of culture among the Greenland Esquimaux, which likewise look as though adopted from the old Scandinavians. Few habits are more notable among the early Icelanders than their habit of reciting satirical verses against one another, which led to such murderous quarrels that laws were made punishing makers of "nith-songs" with exile. When the Scandinavian missionaries came, in the eighteenth century, to Greenland, they found in full vogue the custom of singing satirical songs, long almost discon-

<sup>1</sup> Erdmann, *Eskimoisches Wörterbuch*; *kollek*, the uppermost over anything; *kollit*, a lamp, because this in the Esquimaux house is raised above the floor; small lamps which stand quite on the ground are also called *allek* (i.e., undermost). Among the other Greenland words which Egede claims as borrowed from the Northmen is *koanek*, the plant angelica, which in Norse is *qvaun*; and *nisa*, porpoise, Norse *nise*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. G. Brown Goode, United States Commissioner at the International Fisheries Exhibition, who was present when the paper was read, has since communicated the fact that the Cape Cod fishermen, chiefly of English descent, used, till within the last fifty years, simple lamps of the kind here discussed, fed with dog-fish or shark oil; a few of these old lamps exist, and they are called *koil* or *kyle*, a word corresponding both to the Scandinavian and Esquimaux forms.



tinued in their own country. Egede describes the native singer accompanying himself by beating a drum, a circle of bystanders chanting the chorus. Of the songs thus performed the chief are satirical poems, and when one man has a grudge against another he will challenge him to a kind of duel of such songs, which is, so to speak, fought out before the assembly till one gives in. This was their common way of vengeance (Egede, cap. xv.; Cranz, p. 231). Rink gives a picture of a Greenlander singing a nith-song, and specimens of the songs themselves, as, for instance, one ridiculing a certain Kukouk, who was no good as a hunter, but wanted to make friends with the whites. It begins thus, the chorus alternating with the strophes:—

- Bad little Kukouk, *Imakaiya haiyð*,  
 (Chorus) *Imakaiya ha*.  
 He takes care of himself, *Imakaiya haiyð*,  
 (Chorus) *Imakaiya ha*.  
 He wants to travel away from the land, *Imakaiya haiyð*,  
 (Chorus) *Imakaiya ha*.  
 With a great great ship, *Imakaiya haiyð*,  
 (Chorus) *Imakaiya ha*.

&c., &c., &c.

The resemblance of the custom of satirical songs was so self-evident to the Danes, that Rink actually calls them *nidvise*, the very term he would have used in describing the customs of his own Norse forefathers (Rink, "Eskimoiske Eventyr," Vol. II, p. 138; "Danish Greenland," p. 150).

It remains to quote from Egede what is by no means the weakest evidence in the present argument—his account of the Greenlanders' games. The young people, he says, have games or pastimes among them in the evening." They have a little piece of wood with a hole in one end, to which they attach by a thread a little pointed peg, and throw it up to catch the wood on the point in the hole. Now he who can twenty times running hit the hole and catch it on the pin has won, but he who cannot hit twenty times running has a black mark made on his face for every time he misses.<sup>1</sup> They have besides another game, which is nearly of the nature and purpose of cards and dice: namely, they have a little piece of wood pointed at one end with a peg in it. When they sit down to play, and each has staked what he thinks proper, one gives the aforesaid piece of wood a turn with his fingers, and whoever its end points to, he has won, and draws to himself all that the others have put down, at which they continue as long as they like. Ball-

<sup>1</sup> I learn from Mr. Vigfusson that the black mark on the loser's face still belongs to Scandinavian boys' games.



playing is their most usual sport, especially by moonlight, and they have two modes of playing. When they have divided into two parties, one casts the ball to another who is of his own party; those of the other party strive to get the ball from them, and thus it goes on by turns among them. The other mode of playing ball is that they set up two marks, 300 or 400 paces apart; dividing as before into two sides, they assemble in the middle between these goals, where they throw down the ball and kick it with their feet each toward his own goal. He who is quick on his legs and can get the ball before him, comes first to the goal and has won. Thus, they say, the souls of the dead play ball in heaven with a walrus' head, when the aurora is seen, which they hold to be the souls of the dead." (Egede, cap. xv; Cranz, Book III, Part 3). Here, then, we have four games. One is a simple kind of bilboquet, like our cup-and-ball played with the point only. One is gambling with a teetotum or revolving pointer. Of the two ball games, one is ordinary football; the other, where each side tries to get the ball from the other, is what in Old England was called hurling, and this correspondence appears still more in Egede's drawing, where the players are seen to be matched in pairs, one of each party, one laying hold of the other to prevent him from getting the ball to the goal (see Strutt, "Sports and Pastimes," s.v. "Hurling.") It will be agreed that the rude Esquimaux never could have invented for themselves this set of four Old World games. In all probability they learnt them from the Europeans during their four centuries of intercourse in the Middle Ages. Here I leave the subject for the present, trusting that further inquiry may separate more exactly the original Esquimaux culture from such effects of contact with the white men as are brought into notice in this paper.

*Description of Plates VI and VII.*

PLATE VI.

- Fig. 1. Group of Greenlanders playing football, showing the native dress. From Hans Egede, "Det Gamle Grønlands nye Perustration, &c." (Copenhagen, 1741).
- „ 2. Greenland man and woman, showing native dress. Reduced from Cranz's "Historie von Groenland" (Barby, 1765).

PLATE VII.

- „ 1. Esquimaux lamp of potstone, brought by Dr. John Rae from Repulse Bay. *a* side view of lamp; *b* top view of lamp; *c* section of lamp; *d* trimmer, also of potstone.
- „ 2. Lamp of burned clay in use among the Chukchi of North-East Asia, brought home by Nordenskjöld. From the

“Voyage of the Vega,” translated by G. A. Leslie (Macmillan, 1879). By permission of the publishers.

Fig. 3. Section of the Chukchi lamp, stand, and trimmer. From the same source. *a* the oil; *b* the moss wick; *c* the foot; *d* the basin under it; *e* the wooden trimmer-stick.

„ 4. Scotch dish oil-lamp, or *crusie*.

#### DISCUSSION.

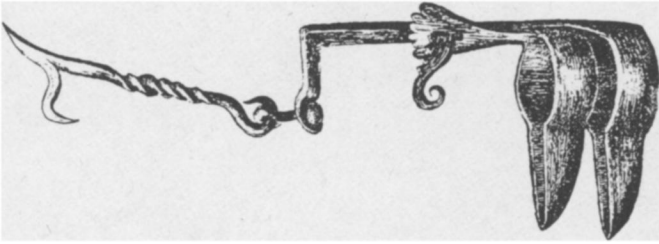
The PRESIDENT remarked that as this was the first occasion of Mr. Tylor's appearance at a meeting of the Institute since his appointment to the Curatorship of the Oxford Museum, he must offer the congratulations of the members of the Institute to that University, and express their earnest hope that this appointment, combined with the munificent gift of General Pitt Rivers's collection, might be the inauguration of a new era in the cultivation of anthropology in this country.

With regard to the subject of the paper, it was evident that there could be only three hypotheses as to the origin of the civilised customs among the Esquimaux which Mr. Tylor had described to the meeting. They must have been independently evolved, or they must have been derived from Europe or South Asia by way of Behrings Straits, or, as Mr. Tylor suggested, they were learned from the early Scandinavian settlers. Something might be urged in favour of each of these hypotheses, and therefore the subject before the meeting was an important one for discussion; its solution involved some of the principles lying at the root of this branch of anthropology.

The President also expressed the thanks of the meeting to Dr. Rae for kindly lending the Esquimaux lamp with which Mr. Tylor's paper was illustrated, and read a letter from that gentleman stating his great regret at not being able to be present at the meeting.

Mr. WALHOUSE observed that earthenware saucers, with a small peak and notch for receiving an oil-wick, closely resembling in shape and size the brass example from North Italy exhibited by Mr. Tylor, were commonly used all over Southern India as receptacles for oil-lights. They were used in houses, bazaars, temples, &c., usually placed in triangular niches in the walls. The same sort of little earthen platters were often found abundantly, along with other earthenware, in kistvean and prehistoric graves. Large brass lamps, with several notches for wicks round the rim, nearly resembling in general form Dr. Rae's Esquimaux specimen, were also used in the temple services, as well as clusters of small brass saucers arranged on stands in diminishing circles; examples, the speaker thought, were to be seen in the India Museum.

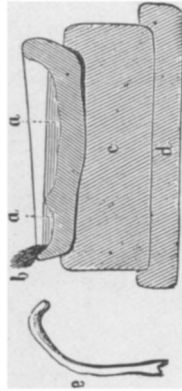
Mr. BERDOE asked the author if he did not think it probable that the source of evolution of the saucer-shaped lamp of the Esquimaux, and others of the same shape, was some shallow shell,



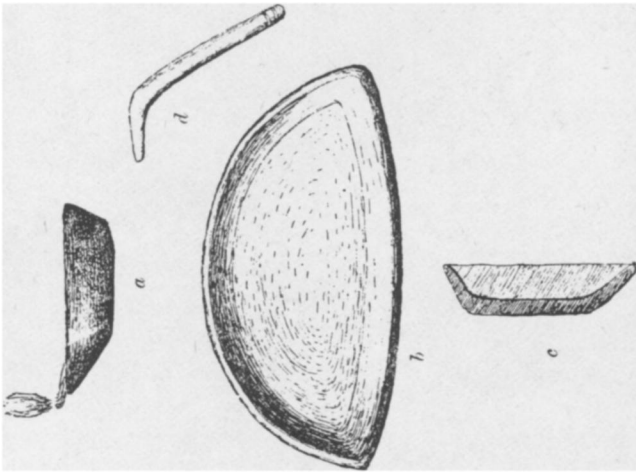
**FIG. 4.**



**FIG. 2.**



**FIG. 3.**



**FIG. 1.**

OIL LAMPS FROM (1) REPULSE BAY, (2 & 3) NORTH-EAST ASIA, AND (4) SCOTLAND.

and if he could give the meeting any facts bearing on this question.

General PITT RIVERS, Mr. A. TYLOR, and Mr. RUDLER also joined in the discussion, and the AUTHOR briefly replied.

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*On a PALÆOLITHIC FLOOR at NORTH-EAST LONDON.*

By WORTHINGTON G. SMITH, F.L.S., &c.<sup>1</sup>

[WITH PLATES VIII TO XXIII.<sup>2</sup>]

I FIRST noticed the thin stratum of flint, in some places full of Palæolithic implements and flakes, and termed by me a "Palæolithic floor," in the beginning of 1878, on the south side of Stoke Newington Common, London; later in the spring I observed a similar stratum in the fields and market gardens on the north side of the Common, and eventually in many other places for three or four miles to the north, south, and west from this centre. On June 25th, 1878, I read a brief paper before this Institute, calling attention to the implements found by me (many *in situ*) at Stoke Newington, Shacklewell, Lower Clapton, and many other places. At the same meeting I exhibited a broken implement and flakes found by myself at Grays Thurrock, and others from West Tilbury, in South Essex,

Until 1878 only one implement had been found in an excavation in this district: this was lighted on by Mr. Norman Evans at Highbury in 1868, and is figured in Mr. John Evans's "Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain," p. 525. This is a kind of side scraper, and is undoubtedly derived from the "Palæolithic floor," as I have since seen the "floor" in section at the spot where the instrument was found, and I have seen the implement itself, which exactly agrees in colour and sharpness with other implements from the same neighbourhood. Moreover, I have one found by myself almost exactly like it.

Two other implements had been found in the streets: one on the Lower Clapton side of Hackney Downs, in 1866, by Mr. G. H. Gaviller, and the other in Dunlace Road, Lower Clapton, by Mr. Anscombe; the latter instrument is in the Museum of Practical Geology, Jermyn Street.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read before the Anthropological Institute by Mr. W. G. Smith on June 26th, 1883, and has since been brought up to the present date (January, 1884) by the author.

<sup>2</sup> These plates have been supplied by the author. Some of the illustrations have already appeared in "Nature" or in the "Transactions of the Essex Field Club," while others have been prepared by Mr. W. G. Smith for this paper.