

XVII.—*Notes on the Cervus Megaceros (Megaceros Hibernicus).*

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THE Irish elk, so called from the number found in Ireland, has been found in the Shandon Cove, near Dungarvan, County Waterford, associated with the remains of *Elephas Primigenius*, *Cervus tarandus*, &c., and in the Ballinmintra Cave near Cap-pagh, also in the County Waterford, associated with rude stone implements. Broken bones have been found in some of the crannogs or lake dwellings and in the luscas or artificial caves, County Donegal; while they are said to have been found in Esker gravel near Dunmore, County Galway.

The larger "finds," however, are in boggy flats, but in such places generally many more heads than skeletons occur, as if the heads had been drifted by water and harboured together in some sheltered place. This seems to have been the case at Ballybetagh, near Kilternan, County Dublin, where the heads of over 110 male deer have been found; often two, three, or more, close together, without any of the other bones. Similarly, in the flats adjoining the Shannon, the heads and some few bones will be found together, more often than whole skeletons. Furthermore, female heads are rarely recorded in such places: this, however, may be due to the hornless heads having been passed over, they being supposed to be "only horses' heads;" but, at the same time, if such accumulations are due to driftage, the horned head should drift much more easily than the hornless. Such accumulations, however, may be passed over, as the principal object of this paper is to draw attention to the "finds" where the elks evidently died and were buried. In the low bogs and flats of the County Limerick, skeletons are numerous but scattered about. This might be expected, as in the older time large tracts of that county must have been swamp, in which the deer may have become pounded; but in other places there are small patches of bog, in which many skeletons occur together. I know of such places in Clare, Kilkenny, Kildare, Carlow, Wexford, and elsewhere, but will only draw special attention to some of those in Carlow and Wexford. In the County Carlow, near Old Leighlin, three skeletons of male deer were found in a small boggy patch in the drift, the patch being roundish and scarcely more than 100 feet in diameter. The bog of Ask, a little N.E. of Gorey, County Wexford, is about half a mile long, and on an average 150 feet wide, and in the deepest portion a number of

skeletons were found. The exact number I could not find out, or if any of them were females. But at Kilowen, a few miles to the N.E., there is a nearly round boggy patch, less than 200 feet in diameter, in a hollow in the marl, that was full of a friable black mixture of peaty stuff, clay, and sand, on about two feet of clay. The "Kilowen elk hole" was drained about thirty years ago, and the black stuff carted away, and the skeletons of nine deer found. About a fifth of the black stuff was left in the south portion of the hole, and during 1882, while sinking a water hole for cattle, a tenth skeleton was found, while it is probable there are more in the undisturbed portion. The man who removed the "black stuff" stated to me that nearly all the skeletons were in the clay under the "black stuff." The last found was, however, entirely in the "black stuff." It has been stated that human remains were also found here; this, however, I find is incorrect.* Captain Woddroffe, the owner of the place, states he remembers two or three hornless heads in the lot.

It appears to me there are unexplained peculiarities about these Irish finds. *First*, there is the old question, why should there be such a number of the elk found in Ireland, while other mammalia are comparatively rare? *Second*, why is it that in these small boggy patches such numbers of skeletons occur together? And *third*, why is it that female skeletons are scarce compared with the number of those of the males? In answer to the first and second, I have made suggestions in the "Geology of Ireland," chap. xvii., but those suggestions do not appear to me to be perfectly satisfactory; and in regard to the third, it is commonly answered, that the female skulls are ignored as valueless, or as only "old horses' heads." This I believe in part to be true, but not entirely so, as some years ago I wanted to possess a female skeleton, and although I had a keen man looking for one in the county Limerick, it was two years before he found it. Furthermore, in no place elsewhere, except Kilowen, County Wexford, could I get a statement positively made that hornless heads had been found in connection with skeletons.

It however has occurred to me that there ought to be sportsmen, students in natural history, who are acquainted with the "deer at home," that should, from observation of their habits, be able to throw some light on the subject. In regard to the *first*, it might be asked, when the moose and reindeer migrate in hard weather where do they go to? also, do they frequent islands in which at times they may be pounded by the ice breaking up early, thus causing many to die in a limited area? *Second*, where are such deer wont to feed in early spring?

* It would appear that the man who sold the old bones from this place mixed with them human bones he had stolen elsewhere.

do they frequent small grassy, swampy places, in which they could be easily impounded? And *third*, do the males and females emigrate together? also, are the males the more numerous of the two? or rather, do more males than females die at certain periods of the year, as is the case with salmon?

It seems peculiar that the elk remains occur more frequently in the clay under the peat than in the peat. This is a subject I, a short time ago, specially enquired into, on account of my friend, the late Dr Leith Adams, denying they were ever found in peat. The results of my inquiries were, that although they are not found in peat as often as I imagined, yet sometimes they undoubtedly are in it above the clay.