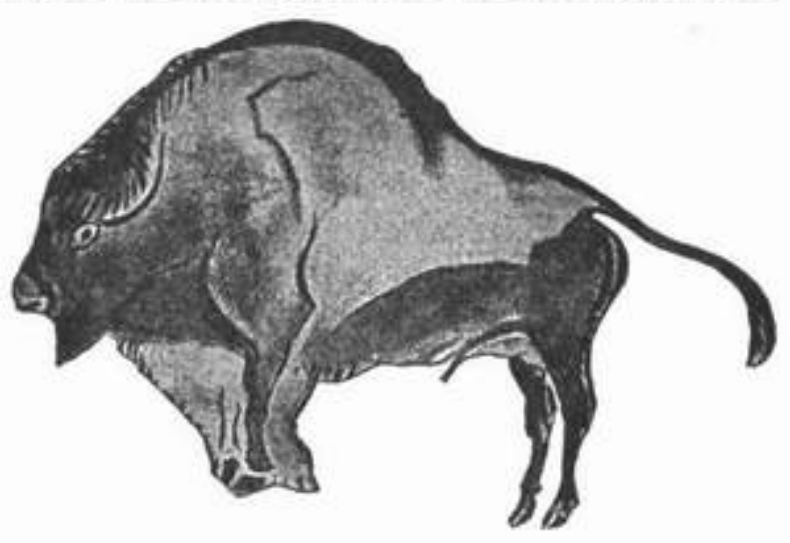
Chapter One - Prehistoric Times

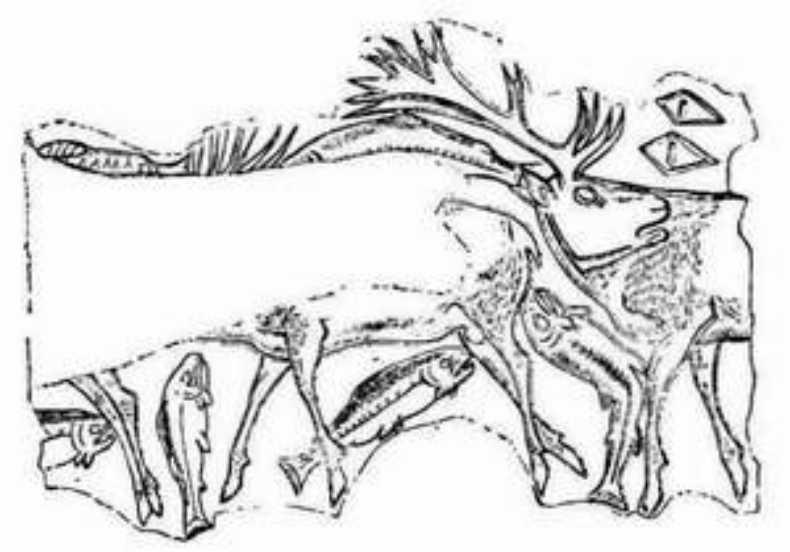


Cave-Painting Of A Bison - It is about five feet long.

A. The Old Stone Age

History really begins when men were civilised enough to set down a record of their actions by cutting marks in clay and stone, or by writing on paper and parchment. They first began to do this about six thousand years ago, and we find them in these records already living in great cities, masters of arts and crafts, and divided into humbly- and nobly-born, poor and rich, all subjects of powerful kings. But perhaps you will be curious enough to ask whether we know anything about men's lives before written History begins. Yes, we know something about that too, and our knowledge is the result of much clever and patient study of the remains left by those very, very distant ancestors of ours, such as their own bones, the bones of the animals they hunted or tended, bits of their pottery or clothing, and, perhaps the most interesting of all, the wonderful drawings which they scratched on bones or painted on cave walls. The study of pre-historic man is by no means complete yet, but we can at least take a few glimpses at the long, long ago.

The first glimpse shows us the earth as it was from thirty to twenty thousand years ago, and you will hardly want to go further back than that! The oceans and continents had not yet taken the shapes that we know to-day. The land masses were less broken up by seas. The climate of Europe in those far-off days varied in a mysterious way.

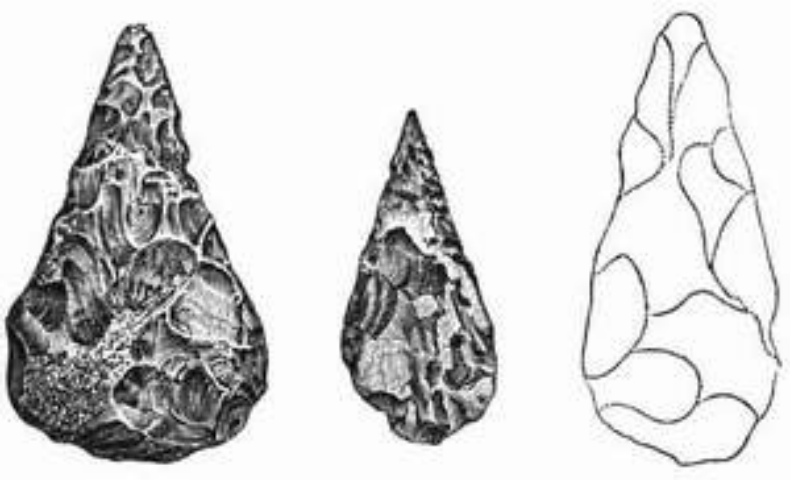


Reindeer And Salmon, Cut On A Piece Of Stag's Horn

For centuries it would be much hotter than it is to-day, then a long period of cold weather would set in, there would be endless snow-storms, till a thick sheet of ice covered the "top" half of our hemisphere, and even seas froze. Men would slowly retreat south before the advancing, pale-blue ice-wall, till a milder age returned. Under such conditions Man made little progress for thousands of years. You can think of the people of the early Old Stone Age, as it is called, as squat and hairy, with long, powerful arms and short, thick legs. They have low foreheads with a ridge over the eyes, chins that slope backwards, flat, broad noses and long, thick lips that barely cover their enormous teeth.

Man Of Early Old Stone Age Making Flint Implement.

If they wear anything at all, it will be some animal's hide. While the women perhaps look for roots and berries, eggs or shell-fish worth eating, the men spend a good deal of their time hunting—for that is the main source of their food—various types of hairy elephant and rhinoceros, hippopotamus, the huge saber-toothed tiger, the boar, reindeer, bison and elk. At first their weapons were stone or wooden clubs and stakes.



Old Stone Age Flint Hand-Axes

Old Stone Age Spear-Head

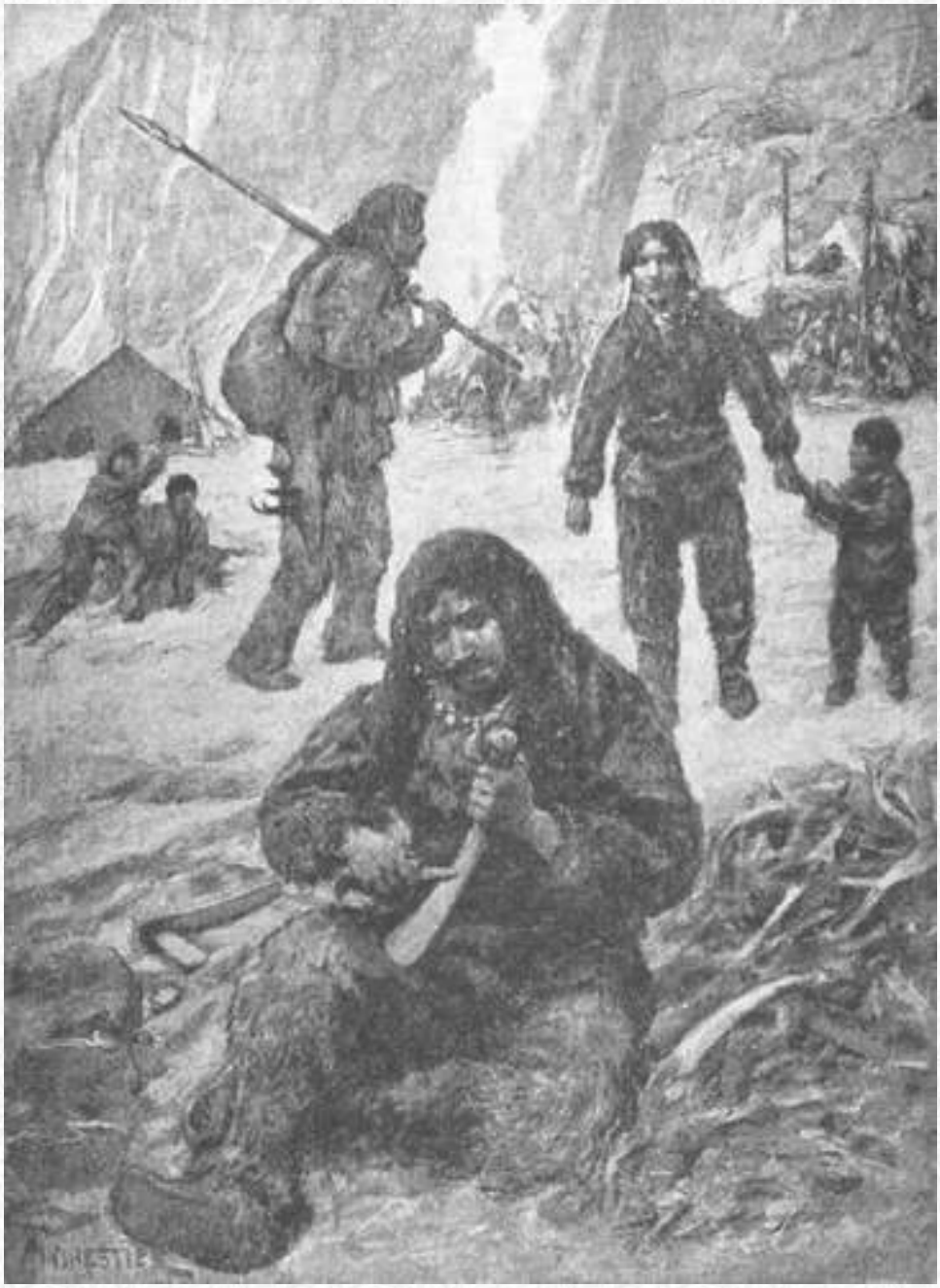
Then they learned how to knock sharp-edged flakes off flints and fasten them with sinews and vegetable fibers into the split top of a branch so as to form a spear. The core of the flint lashed to a stout stick would form a rough hammer or axe. You may not think such weapons would be of much help, say, against a monster tiger or a fifteen-foot-high elephant, but often the quarry was first lured into some trap or pit. The meat was roasted, for there were no pots of any kind for boiling or even storing water. But men had already made the tremendous, all-important discovery of Fire. Thanks to that, they could survive the bitterly cold weather that often prevailed for long periods, they could lighten the darkness with torches, make their food more enjoyable, harden the points of stakes and wooden spears, and scare away the tiger that prowled round the camp at night.

How the Old Stone Age people produced fire we can guess from the methods used to-day by primitive tribes, who in many respects have not risen above the level of the earliest men. By studying the habits of such tribes, we get much clearer ideas of how the first men lived. The usual method of making fire among such people is to twirl a stick very quickly, either between the hands or by means of a thong, in a hole in a block of wood. The friction heats the tiny splinters that break off, till they burst into flame. It is also possible that quite early on some genius discovered that a shower of sparks could be produced by striking a flint against certain metallic stones, and that dried moss could be set alight in this way. This method, much later improved into the flint, steel and tinder outfit, became the usual way of producing fire right down to modern times.

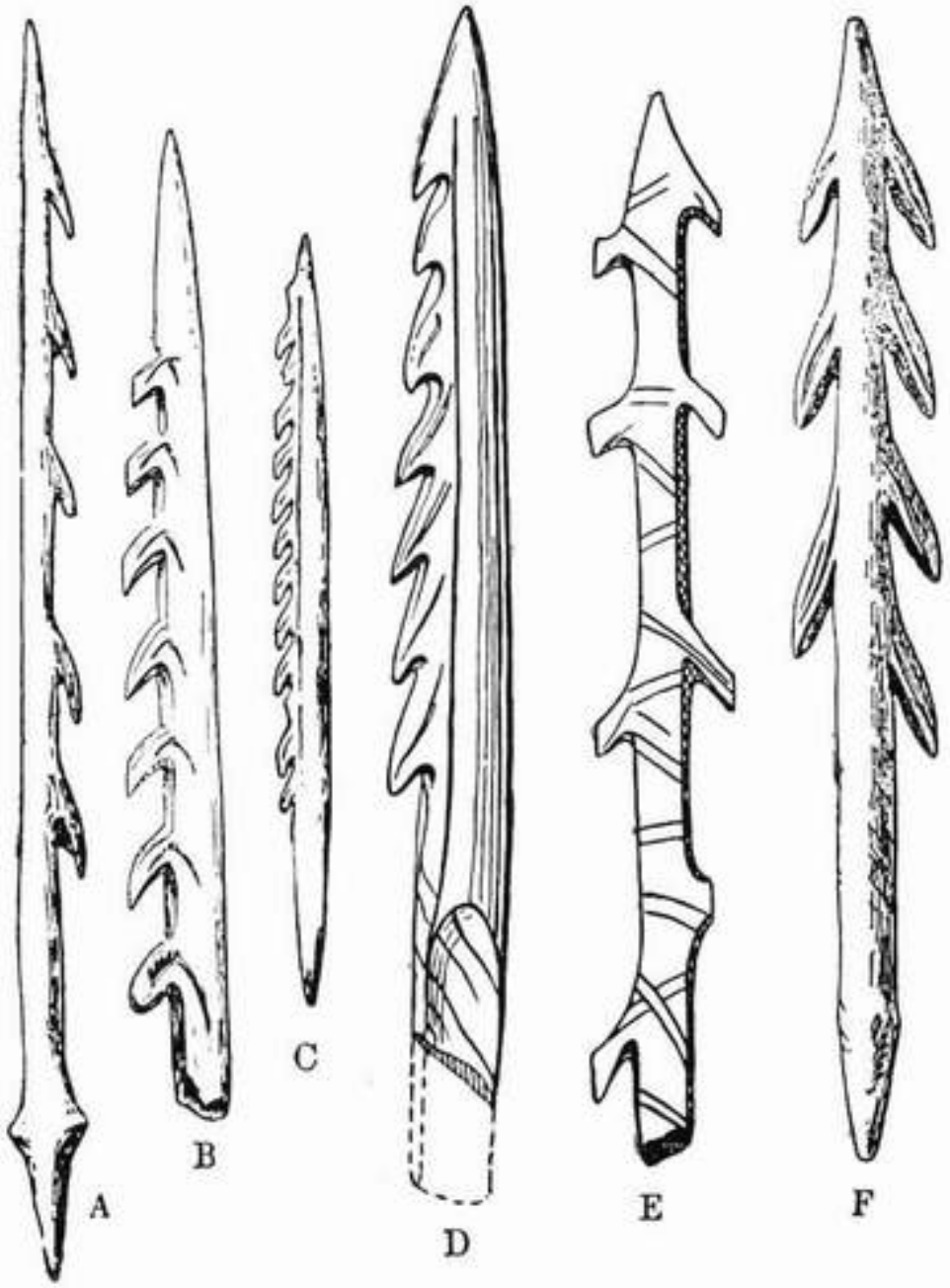
There seems to have been little difference of race at this period; men looked pretty much the same

everywhere. And we do not see signs of fighting on any large scale. Settlements were usually made on the banks of rivers (for remember that there was nothing to carry water in), particularly if there was a good supply of flints near by.

Point Of A Wooden Spear, Old Stone Age



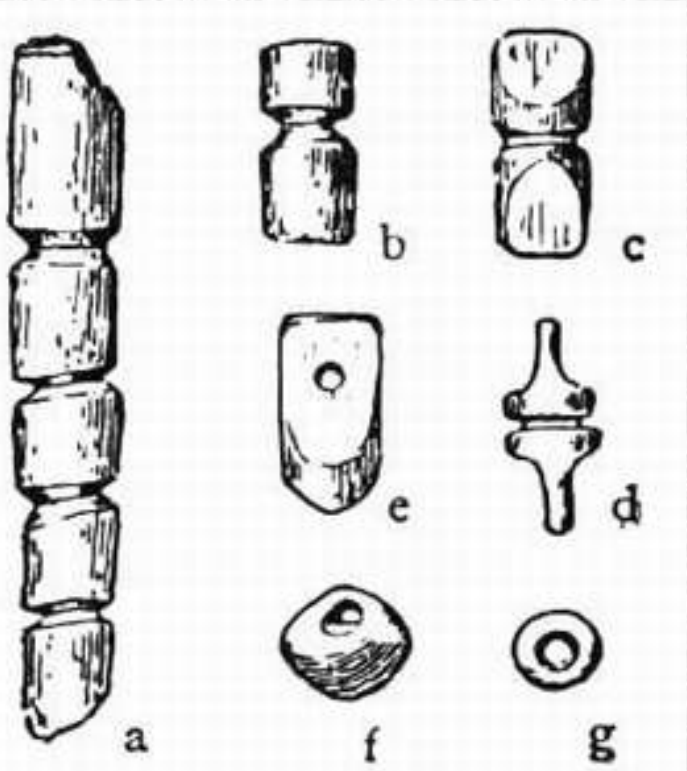
People Of The Later Old Stone Age During One Of The Shorter Ice Ages



Bone Harpoon Heads, Late Old Stone Age

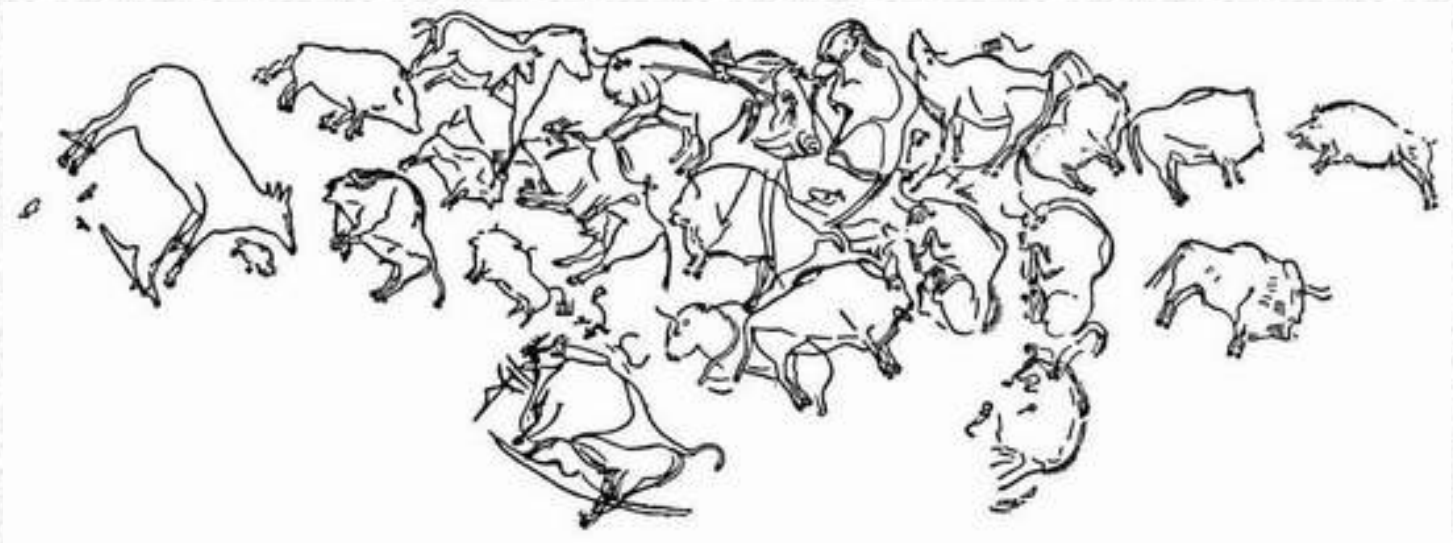
Man, in this age, lived an entirely open-air life. In wet, stormy weather a rough sort of shelter might have been built by sticking a few boughs into the ground at an angle, and weaving twigs between them, but this would be more of a windscreen to protect the fire than a hut to live in. People at this period were sometimes buried underneath their hearths, and so we find their bones along with those of the animals they had eaten.

After this glimpse of the earliest men, we must leap in Time over something like ten thousand years. Even after this jump, we are still in the Old Stone Age, but great progress has been made, perhaps because of the more temperate climate which Europe now enjoyed, though occasionally there were still short spells of bitterly cold weather.



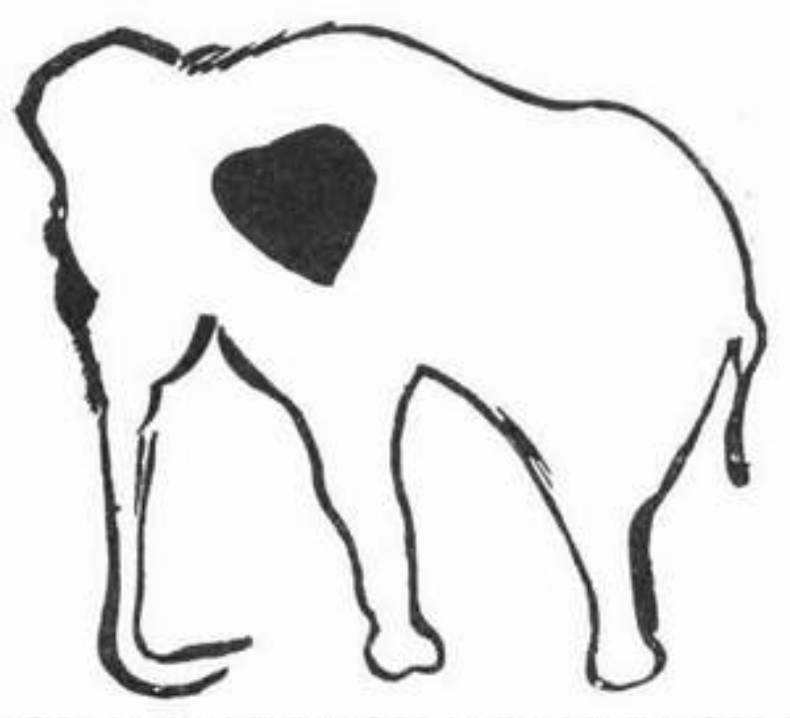
How Beads Were Made In The Later Old Stone Age

The people of this period are less hairy and ape-like than the early folk, and their bodies are more upright, smooth and slender. Their chins and foreheads are fairly straight and they have longer noses. They still wear skins, but there is some attempt to shape them to the figure with rough sewing, done with bone needles and thongs. For though flint tools are now well-shaped, this is chiefly an age of bone-tipped weapons and tools, of a high standard. The reindeer is the most important animal of this period, and there is a good deal of fishing with harpoons. Men and women were now vain enough about their appearance to decorate themselves with necklaces and bangles of shells or animals' teeth, and with tufts of feathers. Sometimes they lived in tent-shaped huts, sometimes, when it was cold, in caves from which, often, they would first have to dislodge monster bears or lions.



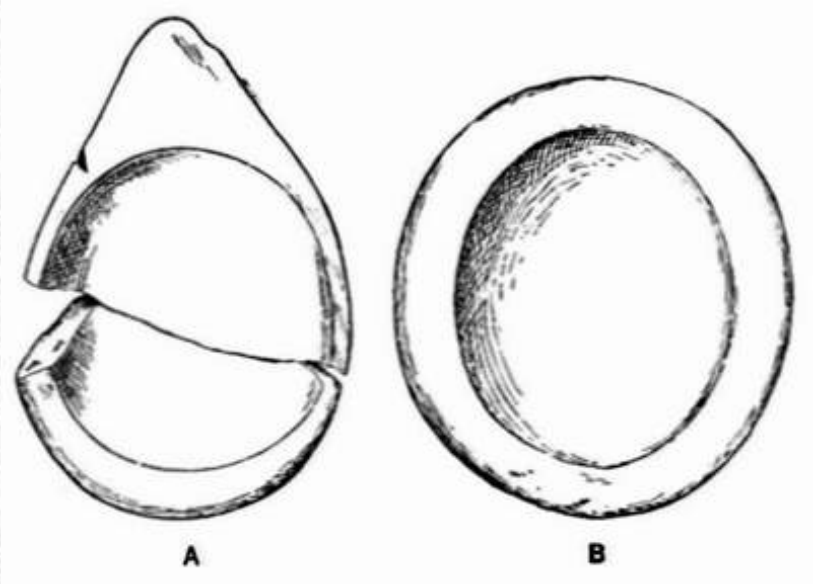
Carved Outlines Of The Altamira Cave-Paintings

What makes us realise most vividly that already Man had made wonderful progress in some ways, are the marvellous wall-paintings, chiefly of animals, that have been found in such cave-dwellings. The finest of these are in southern France and northern Spain.



Painting Of Elephant, With Heart Marked

In the Altamira caves, near Santander on the north coast of Spain, the roof of a cave is closely covered with drawings of many bison, together with a few wild horses, boar and deer. The figures are about five feet long, coloured mainly in black and red, varied here and there with browns and yellows. The main lines of the drawings are actually carved out of the rock. The animals are shown strong, alert, vigorous, in all the poses which the hunter knew so well. And this gives us the clue to their meaning. They are not there for decoration. In many cases they are in a part of the cave which is hard to get at and which could never have been used to live in. Now in some cases the position of the animal's heart or a weak spot in its spine is specially marked. As we have reason to think that there were witch-doctors in those days, it seems very likely that these drawings were used in some magic rites before a great hunt. Near some of the paintings have been found tools for carving the outlines, animals' shoulder-blades which had been used as palettes, materials for making paint, and hollowed stones to contain the grease which must have been the fuel of the earliest lamps. For without a clear, steady light these drawings could never have been made.



A. A Sandstone Lamp, Old Stone Age (After Riviere. X 1/3.)
B. An Eskimo Stone Lamp For Comparison (After Hough, X 1/3.)

Apart from such paintings as these, figures of animals have been found so deeply carved on cave walls that they are almost statues. There are also quite a number of small but excellently cut statuettes of animals, especially of boar. Late in this period we find quaint paintings of hunters who seem to be using bows and arrows, and there are also little carved figures of women.

It is rather early yet to start the history of Britain, which, for most of the Old Stone Age, was not yet even an island. But you may like to know that the skull of one of the very earliest men in the world was found at Piltdown by the river Ouse, in Sussex; while relics of the later Old Stone Age were dug up in Kent's Cavern at Torquay, south Devon, at Cresswell Caves, near Derby, and at Paviland Cave, in south Wales, near Swansea.

Exercises

1. With the help of your Geography books, etc., compare early Old Stone Age men with Australian "blackfellows" and late Old Stone Age men with Eskimos and Red Indians.

2. What use would the reindeer be to early Man apart from food?

3. Draw the bison on p. 1 and colour it in red and black.

4. Find out about the cave-paintings in Rhodesia.

B. The New Stone Age

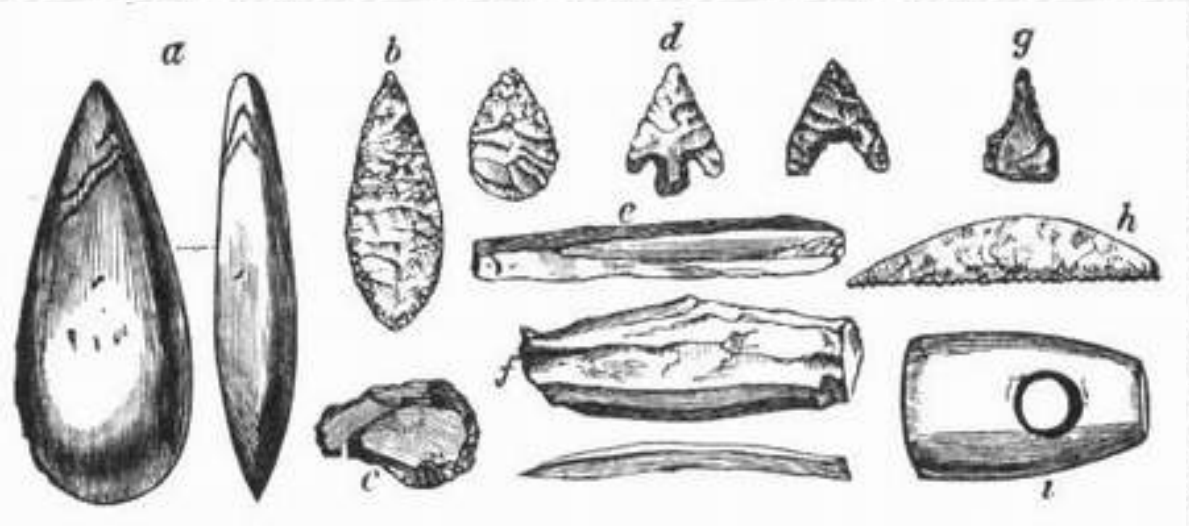
Again we must make a Time-jump, and when we look at mankind once more, again, what great changes we see! We have reached a period some eight thousand years ago. By this time the land and sea masses of the globe have, roughly, their present outlines, and the British Isles are separating from the Continent. The climate of Europe is now temperate, there is a good deal of rain, and this produces long belts of forest, and many lakes and marshes. Men begin to show the main divisions of race. One type, the Mongolian, with straight black hair, yellow skin and slanting eyes, occupies most of Asia and America. The Negro type, with black skin, flat nose and thick lips, inhabits Africa south of the Equator, and similar people are in south India and Australia; while Europe, the Near East and north Africa are inhabited by races whom we may call "white" for convenience. These latter can be further divided up into fair northern people and dark southerners, as long as we remember not to separate them too sharply, as they frequently overlap.

As for the great change in people's lives, we can sum that up by saying that Man has become a Farmer! He keeps cows, sheep, pigs and goats, and he uses their milk. He has given up hunting horses for food, yet he has not begun to use them as he did later. But the dog has obviously been his friend for a long time, and goes with him into the gloomy depths of the forest when he hunts the red deer, the bison, the giant ox, the wild boar and the fox. We can only guess how animals were first tamed. Perhaps young ones were caught and kept as pets.

People usually lived on bare hills like the Downs of south England. There was too much forest and swamp on the flat ground for people who had to graze cattle. Up there they made settlements in huts which consisted of circular pits or low stone walls covered by a thatched roof shaped like a bell-tent. These settlements were surrounded by stockades into which the cattle were driven at night to prevent them from straying, and to protect them against bears and wolves. (Much later, when the ugly habit of organised warfare was developed, there were elaborate trenches and high banks as well as ramparts of wood. You will find as good examples of these huge earth-works in Dorset and Wiltshire as anywhere in Europe.) You will not see much water on the Downs, and where it was not easy to get it from lower levels, they made artificial dew-ponds, lining a shallow pit with clay to form a moisture condenser.

A New Stone Age Settlement

(Near these earthworks terraces are sometimes found, down the hill-side. These, like the earthworks, belong to the Iron Age (p. 22).) But we know definitely that men already grew corn in the New Stone Age, another great advance on the Old Stone Age, and one which led directly to improved civilisation, as we shall see later. Now there are in various parts of the world wild plants corresponding to all our grain crops. People must have discovered that the seeds of these were a satisfying food. It must also have been observed that a seed planted in the ground produced a plant next year which yielded many seeds. Some thrifty soul thought it worth while to save a few seeds and bury them in a cleared patch of ground, and after carefully tending the green shoots next spring, he (or was it she?) was rewarded in autumn with a little crop of corn.



New Stone Age Implements, Including Forms Also In Use - In The Following Early Bronze Age

- *a, stone celt or hatchet;*
- *b, flint spear-head;*
- *c, scraper;*
- *d, arrow-heads;*
- *e, flint flake-knives;*
- *f, core from which flint flakes are taken off;*
- *g, flint awl;*
- *h, flint saw;*
- *i, stone hammer head.*

For all this digging, shovels made from the shoulder-blades of deer, and picks made from their antlers, were used. Apart from polished, ground, and sharp-edged spear - and arrow-heads, very serviceable axes and hammers of this period have been found, the stone heads carefully shaped and finished, and drilled with smooth holes (a great advance, this) for the handles. The latter too have the right sort of curve, and are made of "elastic" woods. Strips of wood have been found with small triangles of flint fixed in a line, and this suggests saws. With tools like these, very profitable days could be spent down in the forest. You will find good specimens of these in the London museums.

You have probably asked already, "How did they carry and keep their water and their milk?" And the answer is, in earthenware bowls, for the use of pottery (and with it the practice of cooking) is another improvement on the Old Stone Age. Earlier on, leather bottles were used, and these were sometimes lined with clay, if they were leaky.

New Stone Age Earthenware Jar

We can imagine the clay lining one day going quite hard, because of some form of heat, and this is perhaps how the first jars were made. The study of primitive pottery, of the shapes and decorations, and traces of the contents, has constantly provided important clues for those who seek to solve the mysteries of early civilisation.

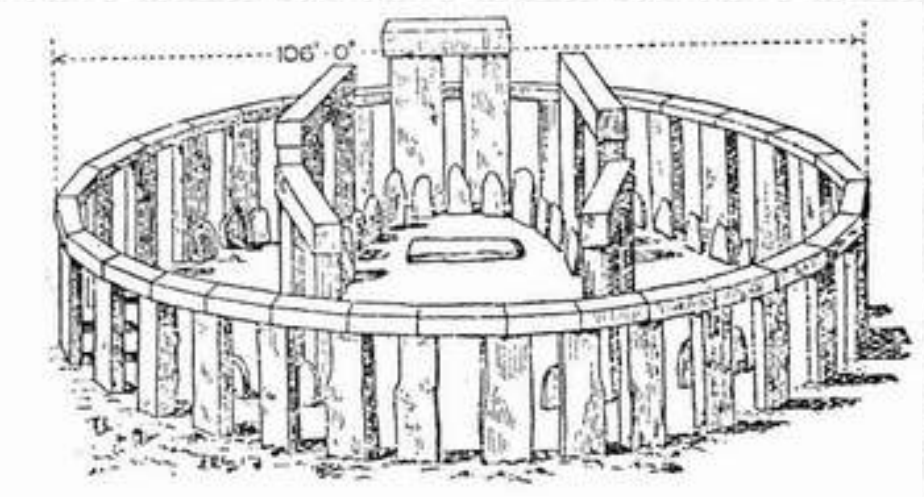
Late in this period spinning and weaving were practised, both with wool, and linen made from the flax plant. It is not easy to guess how these arts were invented. But we know that baskets were made, and plaiting is a simple form of weaving. However, it is a long step from that to the loom.

It is also late on in the New Stone Age that we first come across Lake-Dwellings. Instead of settlements on low hills, we find large groups of people living on lakes and big rivers. Stakes were driven into the lake or river bed and large wooden platforms built on these, connected with the shore by a gangway. On the platforms they built their huts. The lake-dwellers are hardly likely to have been merely farmers. They must have lived more by hunting and fishing, gathering nuts, fruits and herbs in the great forests of that age.

Lake-Dwellings Of New Guinea

We can trace a long chain of lake-dwellings through the Swiss and Italian lakes, south-eastwards down the Danube and north-westwards along the Rhine, through northern France and Belgium, to England, Scotland and Ireland. There was a lake-village at Glastonbury, east Somerset, as remains clearly show, and the English soldiers who hunted the rebels in Ireland in 1603 found many such settlements. They are common to-day in the East Indies.

These features of the New Stone Age, improved tools, crops and cattle, cooking, weaving and pottery, bring it nearer to life as we know it. And there is no big, mysterious gap between the end of the New Stone Age and the present day. We know from drawings of circles and crescents that people were already observing the sun and the moon, as we should expect farmers to do. And we have reason to think that they were already beginning to study numbers and to consider some lucky, like twelve, because it split up so conveniently, and others unlucky, like thirteen, because it was so very awkward.



Stonehenge As It Was

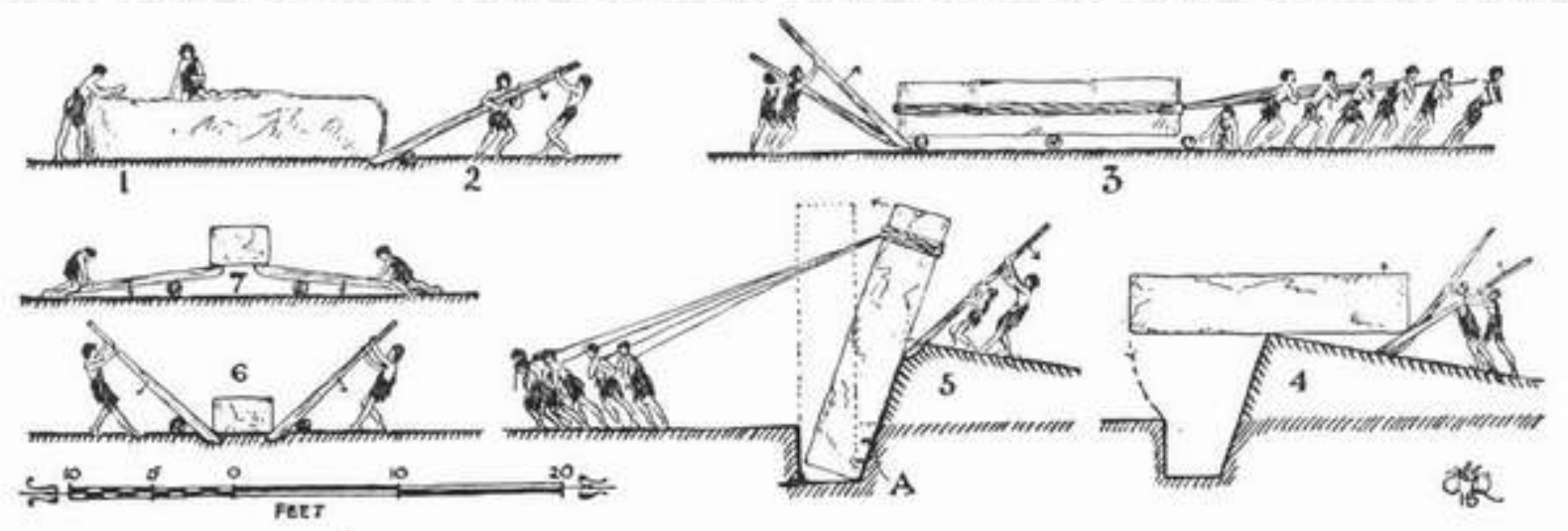
But we still have to deal with the most impressive relics of this age, namely, circles of large stones, surrounded by earthworks and approached by stone-edged avenues. It so happens that by far the largest and most magnificent of all these monuments known to us was set up at Avebury, a few miles west of Marlborough, in east Wiltshire. But it was almost entirely destroyed not so very long ago by two farmers, who wanted the stone! There are other famous circles at Carnac, in Brittany. But the one you are most likely to see for yourselves is Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, in Wiltshire. It is partly in ruins now, so it will be simpler to describe it as it was over three thousand years ago. Inside an earthen rampart a hundred yards across, which was approached by a perfectly straight avenue five hundred yards long, stood thirty tall blocks of stone arranged in a circle. The tops of these were linked by a circle of flat blocks, and these lintel stones were joined to each other and to the uprights by tongues and slots carved on the stones.

Within this massive outer ring was arranged a second circle of small, separate blocks. Further in still stood, in horse-shoe formation, five pairs of tall blocks, each with its lintel stone, the central trio being taller and larger than all the rest. Within this horse-shoe lay another, composed of small separate blocks again. And finally, within this small horse-shoe lay a large flat slab of sandstone.

The large blocks are made of local stone, but the smaller blocks and the flat stone came from Pembroke in south Wales. There are three other stones which must be mentioned. One is some little distance down the avenue, the other two are inside the earthwork, but away from the big stone circle. A person who stood and looked down the avenue over the first stone at dawn on June 21st (or the longest day) would see the sun rise. Facing the other two stones, he would, in one case, see the sun set on June 21st, in the other he would see it rise on Dec. 21st (or the shortest day). We can assume that Stonehenge was a temple, and that it was connected with Sun-worship. Those who built it must have taken their religion very seriously.

Clustered thickly round Stonehenge are the burial mounds which are a special feature of the New Stone Age and of the first metal-using age (the Bronze Age), which immediately followed it. The New Stone Age mounds are in the form of a long oval, sometimes as much as a hundred yards long, surrounded by a low stone parapet, and some have a stone corridor leading to a stone cell inside the mound, where the actual burial took place. The round barrows, which belong to the Bronze Age, are much smaller and are

shaped like a bowl turned over.



Building Stonehenge

They often contain the ashes of a cremated body. Only important people, of course, were buried with so much trouble.

You will no doubt wonder how the people of the New Stone Age, with their simple civilisation, could have cut, transported and set up the huge blocks of which Stonehenge is composed. For the uprights of the outer ring are twelve and a half feet high, and the cross-section of the lintel stones is, roughly, a three-foot square, while the uprights at the centre of the "horseshoe" are no less than twenty-two feet high.

Late New Stone Age And Bronze Age Hut - The remains of a number of such huts may be seen in south-west Cornwall

Marks on the blocks show that stone and not metal tools were used. By means of poles, used as rollers and as levers, the blocks could slowly have been hauled along by teams of men pulling their hardest at long ropes. Embankments would be built up to the hole in which the stone was to rest. The end of the stone would be levered and rolled till it dropped over the side of the embankment into the hole. Then, by ropes fastened to the top of the stone, it would be pulled upright. A similar method could be used to place the lintel stones.

All the same, it was a tremendous engineering and building feat, which would present difficulties even to modern builders. When we remember that even larger and more numerous blocks were used at Avebury, we need not wonder that many learned men believe that these earliest temples of ours were built under the direction of settlers who brought with them the higher civilisation of the Bronze Age, passed on from Egypt, perhaps, or Crete, about which we are next to read. Lately marks have been noticed on the Avebury stones which may be carvings. At any rate, it is a curious thing that near Stonehenge there are three hundred round burial mounds, and only two long ones. As Pepys, the famous diarist, wrote in the report which he drew up for Charles II after they had visited Avebury and Stonehenge, "Hard to tell, but may yet be told."

Exercises

1. Look up in your dictionary:—palaeo-lithic, neo-lithic, mega-lithic, dolmen, menhir, barrow.

2. Find out from maps and guide-books about the pre-historic remains nearest to where you live or where you are going for your next holiday. Make your own drawings of them.

C. The Bronze Age And The Early Iron Age

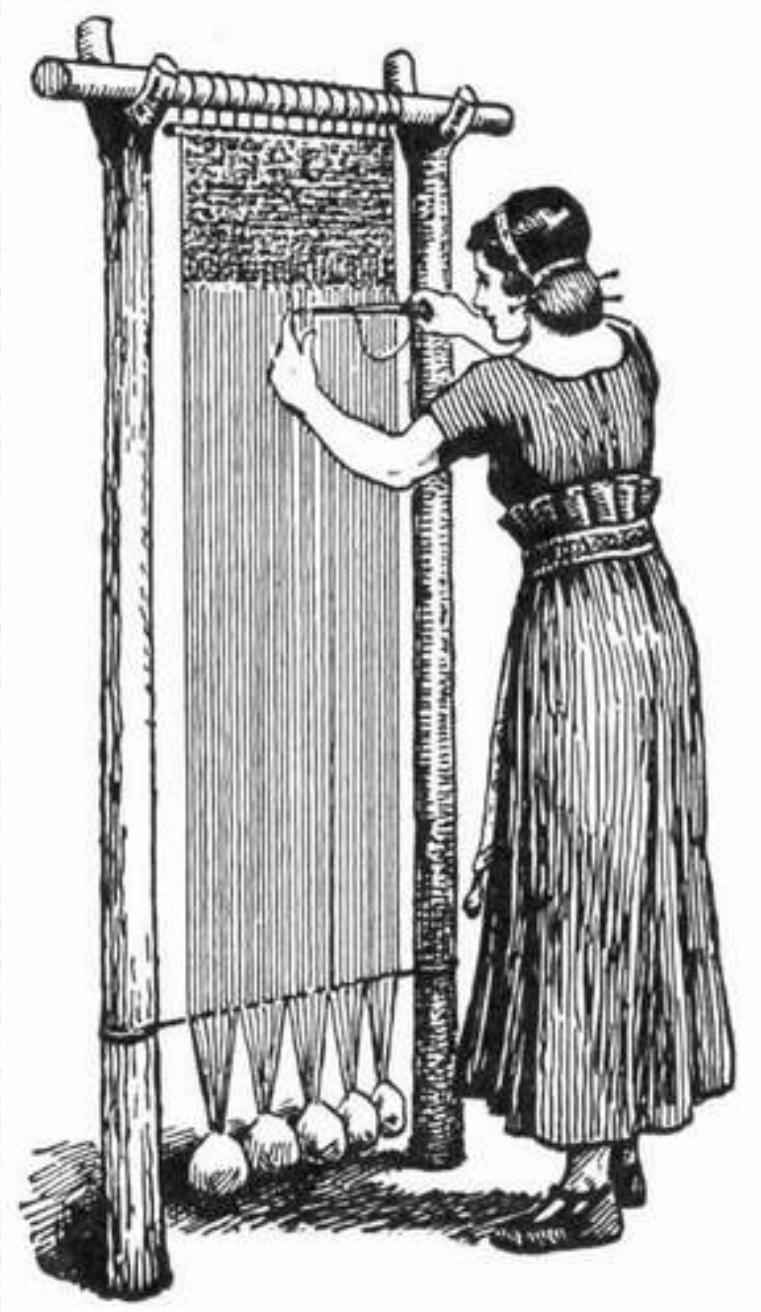
We still have to move one stage further towards civilisation before we can begin real History with the stories of separate countries, based on written records. A special feature of this period is the invention of implements with metal heads or blades. The first metal used for practical purposes was copper, which is often found in a state sufficiently pure to enable it to be used at once. It is also soft enough to be hammered or bent into shape when cold. We can imagine that one day some pieces of copper ore were accidentally put into a fire and so melted. The flat and shiny piece of metal which resulted would be curiously examined and perhaps twisted into a shape. And so Man discovered a new and very important art. Now a form of tin is often found near copper ore. Some of this tin must have been combined once with copper by some coppersmith, who noticed that the alloy made a much stronger metal. And so the Bronze Age began. Gold had been discovered earlier, but it was long used only for ornament. Iron came into general use later, and being a much more serviceable metal for hard use, it gradually ousted bronze.

By this time the ass, the horse and the camel had been tamed to bear man and his burdens, and cattle were used for ploughing. The use of rollers, for moving heavy weights, gave some clever mechanic the idea of

the Wheel, one of the most important of human inventions. So carts came into use, and chariots too, for this was a great age for warfare; and one of the first uses to which metal was put was the manufacture of swords and daggers, apart from spear- and arrow-heads and shields. Trading too grew more extensive owing to the development of the sailing-ship. As in the case of all the early inventions, we can only guess what happened.

Bronze Age Dagger

One day, when there was a strong breeze, a man, in the hollowed tree trunk which was the earliest type of boat, may have thrown a skin over some spear or harpoon which was sticking up out of the boat. And he found, to his surprise, that he was moving without any effort.



Bronze Age Woman Weaving

He might have noticed that the skin was flapping merrily in the breeze, and being an intelligent fellow, he put two and two together. He fixed his spear more carefully and stretched the skin out. And so, perhaps, began the art of sailing, which reached its height in the "tea-clippers" of seventy years ago, with their acre of spread sail.

Costume Of The:

1. New Stone, 2. Bronze, 3. Early Iron Age.

While most of Europe was still in an early stage of civilisation, covered with dense forests, with no good roads, seas and rivers were the most important highways. There was a brisk traffic along the Mediterranean and up the coasts of France and Spain to Britain and the North Sea, while good use was made of the larger French and German rivers. As we shall read in the next chapter, civilisation first began to make rapid progress in the countries adjoining the east end of the Mediterranean.

Early Iron Age Hut - The walls are of clay over basket-work, the roof of thatch. It has two "windows."

Slowly, in the course of centuries, the greatest centres of civilisation moved further and further to the west. During the period we have now reached, after 1000 B.C., the wares of the Near East, particularly vessels, weapons and tools of bronze were exported to western Europe in return for metal ores. And with these oriental cargoes came new arts and new ideas.

What did people in Western Europe look like in the early metal ages? In the Bronze Age men wrapped a square piece of cloth round their bodies from under their arms down to the knees, and kept it in place with a belt tied round the waist. In cold weather they wore cloaks, pinning the top ends round the neck. The women wore a short-sleeved bodice and a long skirt, tied round the waist. All wore moccasins, and the men had leather stockings too. Both sexes used long pins to keep their hair up. In the Iron Age, men wore a short-sleeved vest and a kilt or trousers with bright tartan designs, and sometimes a cloak. Women wore a long frock with short sleeves. Both sexes wore their hair in long plaits, and were fond of metal bracelets and collars decorated with bright enamel. In both the Bronze and Iron Ages men wore long moustaches, but shaved the rest of the face.

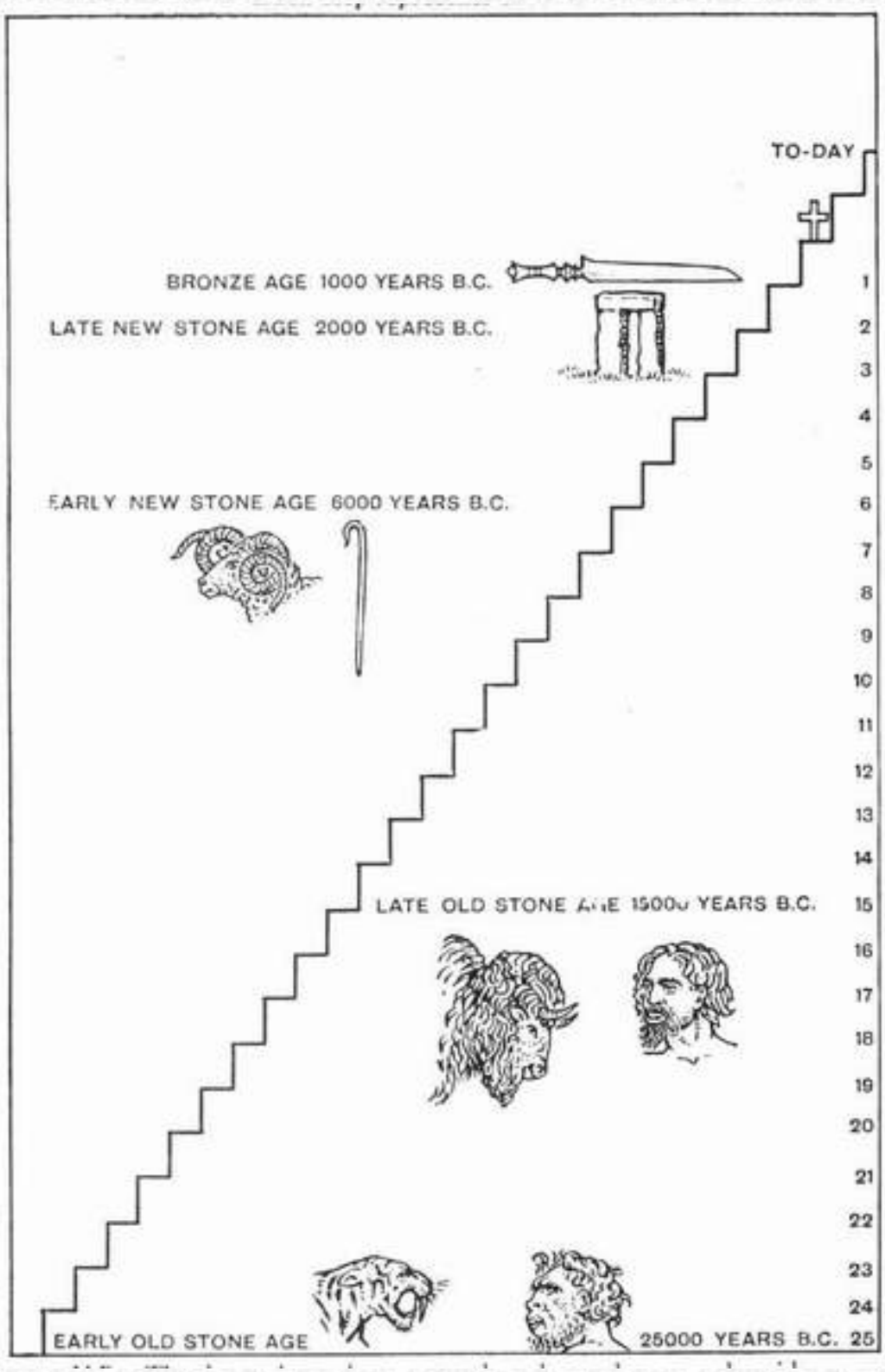
And now, for a time, we must leave western Europe, still half-hidden in the mists before the dawn of History, and travel to lands in the East where great cities and temples already stood, shining clearly in the morning sun.

Exercises

1. Look up in your dictionary:—celt, torque, domesticate, starboard.

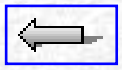
2. Describe the prehistoric implements in your local museum and how they are arranged. Why are there so many of stone, so few of copper and practically none of iron?

3. Compare Robinson Crusoe's life on the island with that of a Bronze Age man. What advantages had Crusoe?



Time Diagram For Prehistoric Ages In Europe. - Each step represents 1,000 years. The dates given above

are to be taken only as rough guides.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