

The Lower Palæolithic Implements of Sligo.

WHEN we published in *NATURE* an account of the discovery of Lower Palæolithic Implements in Ireland, we expected that the announcement would give rise to a certain amount of disturbance among the more old-fashioned archaeologists of that country, but we did not contemplate, or believe it possible, that this announcement would result in the appearance (*NATURE*, Nov. 5, pp. 652-3) of such a series of statements as that to which Prof. Macalister and his associates have been so unwise as to append their signatures. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact, as is clear from the particulars published in *NATURE* (Nov. 5), that these investigators have not even correctly located the site at Rosses Point, Sligo, where the collapsed rock shelter exists, the details of which, as given in *NATURE* (Aug. 20), are preserved in excellent photographic and other records, which are to be made public shortly in the memoir to be published by us, but have mistaken the promontory of The Rosses for Rosses Point, which constitutes the northern projection of the former. Prof. Macalister and his associates clearly indicate in their note in *NATURE* that they visited this spot unknowingly, and thus failed to observe the collapsed rock shelter—or the Raised Beach of powdered shells. In view of this faulty observation it is not surprising to find that these investigators state that “there is no Raised Beach . . . in the district.” This claim, however, is in direct opposition to the opinion expressed in the Geological Survey Memoir, “The Counties of Sligo and Leitrim,” p. 27.

Prof. Macalister and his associates are clearly, therefore, engaged in the abortive task of attempting to criticise a site which has not been dealt with by us. When they were confronted with the fact of the discovery of palæolithic implements in (a) a rock-shelter, and (b) Boulder Clay in Sligo, the only course they could take in order to support the ancient order of archaeology was quite obvious. All they imagined must be done was to deny that the rock-shelter is ancient, and that the specimens found in it, and in the Boulder Clay, are humanly flaked. It is true that these are matters open to discussion, but we have confidence that competent archaeologists, not unscientifically determined to deny the presence of palæolithic implements in Ireland, will give little heed to the arguments and assertions of Prof. Macalister and his associates. In fact, all those with the requisite knowledge enabling them to give a judgment of value upon the matter have, without one exception, at once accepted the Sligo specimens as of human origin.

As an example of the confusion of thought of our opponents, it may be pointed out that in neither of our notes to *NATURE* did we refer to the Mousterian culture as of Early Palæolithic age. Yet we are informed that such a relegation is untenable. We fail, also, to appreciate the relevance, or importance, of the statement that Mousterian artefacts are not as a rule of impressive size. Do our critics wish to suggest that this prevents the Sligo specimens from being regarded as of this age, and further, do they claim that the examples of very large implements from High Lodge, Suffolk, and other places, including Le Moustier itself, are also barred from a Mousterian status? As for the assertion that the change of colour produced on the surfaces of stones by weathering is not to be described as ‘patination,’ this is a dogmatic claim—unsupported, as are most of the statements contained in the note under discussion, by any evidence.

It is not for us to explain why the palæolithic people of Sligo chose to flake limestone into implements, or to give reasons why the efforts of Prof. Macalister and his associates failed to produce a conchoidal fracture in this material. But the fact remains that the ancient people did both these things, not once but many times, as may be seen by an examination of the material collected in Sligo, and exhibited at the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries of London until Dec. 6.

We, of course, regret that our critics failed to find any artefacts when visiting the Sligo coast, but this is possible of explanation on two grounds: either that the previous searching was so thorough as to leave nothing to be found, or—as is more probable—because Prof. Macalister and his associates did not know what to look for and preserve. It is not necessary for any demonstration to be given of the manner in which the Sligo specimens were flaked, as a study of these by anyone familiar with the flaking of stone will show clearly, and beyond any question, that the method described in *NATURE* (Sept. 24) was indeed carried out in ancient times. Further, it is to be doubted—even if such a demonstration were given—whether Prof. Macalister and his associates would understand it. They are evidently unfamiliar with the Mousterian technique by means of which Levallois flake-implements were detached from prepared cores. The Sligo method—with two minor differences—is absolutely true to type, yet our critics describe it as ‘complex.’ This it may appear to them, but it is otherwise with archaeologists who have made a study of these matters.

Prof. Macalister and his associates, with a thoroughgoing disregard of ordinary scientific procedure which would have necessitated an examination of the Sligo specimens before passing judgment upon them, nevertheless do not shrink from inferring, in the columns of *NATURE*, that they are of natural origin. On the other hand, their supporter, Mr. Warren, regards the same specimens, with the exception of those found in Boulder Clay at Ballyconnell, as made by man. This, to say the least, is unfortunate, especially in view of the inherently bad case which our critics have to defend. Lastly, we may direct attention to Mr. Warren’s statement that, apropos of the Sligo material, there is “no passable resemblance in any one of these flakings to any form of prehistoric implement, either palæolithic or neolithic.” This strange claim is indeed a classic example of the truth of the saying that given sufficient rope, certain people are bound to hang themselves. Anyone interested in this matter who has visited the exhibition of the Sligo specimens at Burlington House will, we have no doubt, agree with us that Mr. Warren, together with Prof. Macalister and his associates, have suspended themselves in a very thorough and fatal manner.

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Manoilow’s Blood-test for Sex.

IN *NATURE* of Nov. 5, Mr. Perkins makes a valuable contribution to the study of chemical manifestations associated with sex, but he gives an erroneous impression of Dr. Manoilow’s work on sex-identification by blood-tests in two respects. (As I am in possession of a recent review of this work by Manoilow himself, which it is hoped to publish soon, I am able to correct these wrong impressions.) In the first place, the workers mentioned by Perkins are mostly disciples, who have merely either applied