

HISTORY SECTION

**THE STONE AGE**



A ROUGH STONE picked up at the river's edge was the first weapon and the first tool used by man. Scientists tell us that this happened about 300,000 years ago. Whenever it

was, we may imagine a man into a more useful shape. He was the first great inventor. With him began what scientists call the Old Stone Age or the Paleolithic Age.

The discovery that flint would flake off, leaving sharp edges,

climbing down from his tree home, and finding a nut too hard even for his strong teeth. He picks up a stone and crushes the nut. Perhaps it is not fit to eat. But he forgets that in the joy of having invented the first hammer.

Then man began gathering stones, round ones to throw at birds and small animals, and heavy ones to crack oysters and nuts. Perhaps he cut himself with a sharp stone and so discovered the first knife or hatchet.

Some thousands of years later, the descendants of those early tree dwellers became dissatisfied with the shape of their stone tools and weapons. One of them succeeded in chipping a piece of flint

must be ranked as one of the great discoveries of that early world. It enabled man by means of his improved weapons to wage a successful battle against wild beasts, and to obtain food by hunting large game. Thus he developed the energy and confidence which enabled him to make further steps forward in civilization.

For perhaps 150,000 years the rough chipping of flint for spears, hatchets, knives, and arrows continued. The workmanship became finer, and new tools were invented for scraping flesh from skins and for drilling and cutting bone and horn. Soon these last materials began to be used for weapons, along with



stone. Rude fish-hooks were made and arrows with barbed points. This was the age of the Cave Men.

Later still came the New Stone Age or Neolithic Age, when men learned to grind and polish the rough edges of their flint tools and weapons, so that a knife would cut more easily, and a spear be driven into an animal more surely.

Last came the discovery of metals, chiefly copper and tin, which ended the Stone Age altogether and ushered in the Age of Bronze.

It is largely through the study of such old flint weapons found in all parts of the world that scientists are able to trace the story of early man. But in many parts of the world the use of stone implements continued into modern times. The American Indians were using stone pointed arrows when America was discovered by Columbus in 1492.

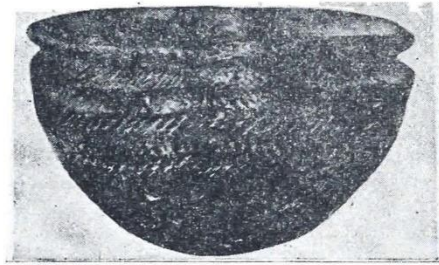
Among the relics which are believed to date back to the Stone Age are the monuments of huge rough stone found in great numbers in many parts of the world. They consist usually of large single stones set on end in the midst of a plain, or of groups of such stones arranged in circles or squares, or of stones set side by side with a third stone bridging the top.

Often these monuments show signs of having been rudely hewn by prehistoric architects, and occasionally drawings and carvings of mysterious symbols appear upon them. Many of them are believed to mark the burial places of noted chiefs, while the circle-stones may have been the meeting places of the skin-clad clans.

England and France are particularly rich in these relics, the most famous of which is the stone combination called Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain in England. Important examples of this earliest form of the builder's art are to be found in India, Northern Africa, South America, and some of the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

Frequently these monuments stand far removed from any stone deposits. How such huge blocks of stone were transplanted and set up by primitive man will probably always remain a mystery.

On this page is shown a picture of a bowl made when our remote ancestors had just learned to make pottery. The hands that so cunningly shaped this bowl, with its graceful curves and herring-bone decorations, withered into dust untold centuries ago, for this bowl, dredged up from the Thames river in England, dates from the far-off Neolithic Age.



*A Relic of the Stone Age*

On page 25 are shown pictures of implements which were made when men had already taken several great strides along the rocky path of civilization. The flint knives and arrow heads shown in 1, 2, and 4 are great improvements over earlier implements, for they have been chipped by pressure. Flint, the stone from which many of these implements were made, is so brittle that bits of it will snap off when a hard piece of bone is firmly pressed against it. This process, one of the triumphs of the New Stone Age, produces a far keener cutting edge than the older method of chipping flint by blows with another stone. The polished stone axes and hammers (3), and the bone needles and harpoons (5) give further evidence of the progress of this period.