

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00629639 6

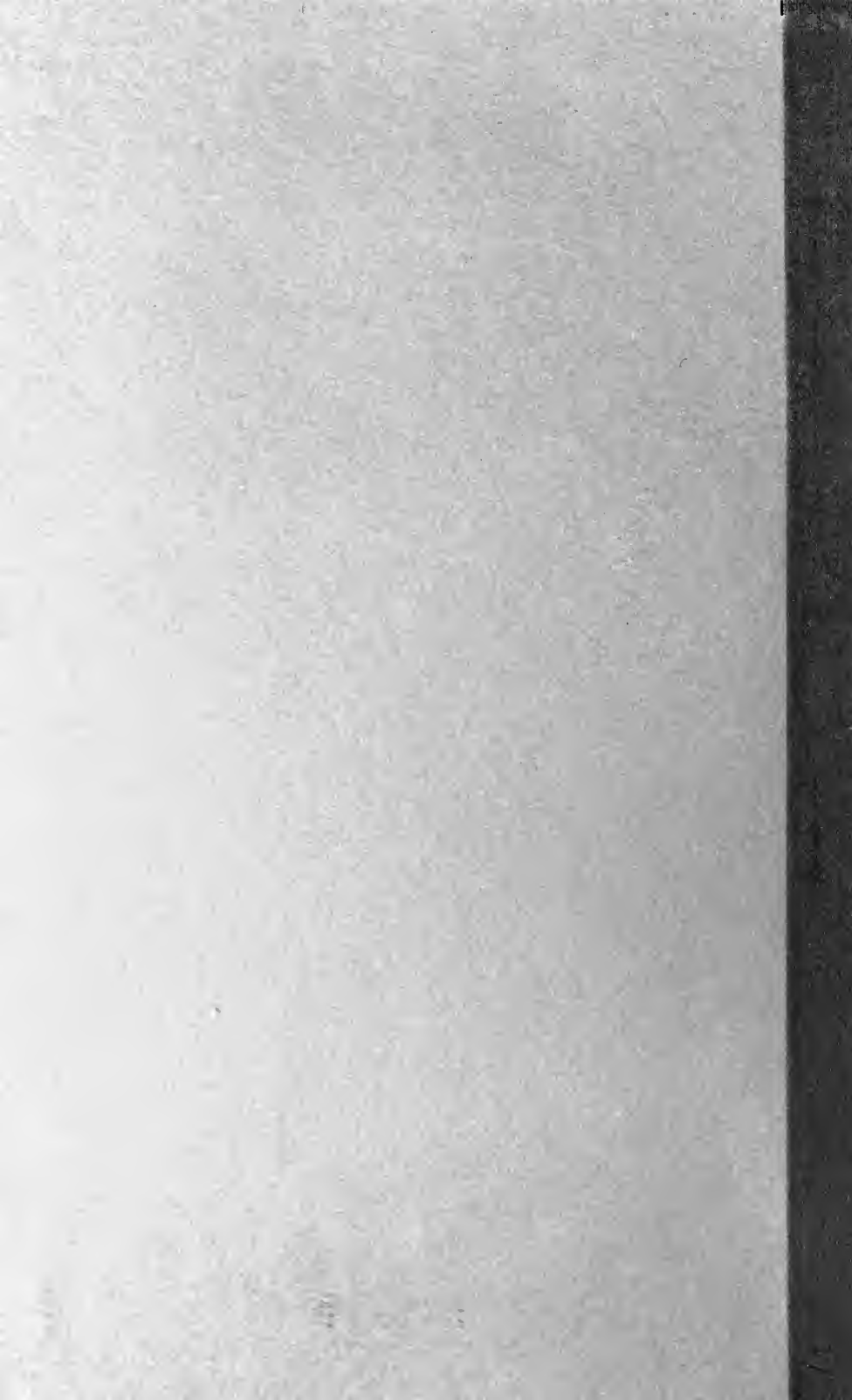
Rau, Charles

The stock-in-trade of
an aboriginal lapidary

E

98

I4 R3



THE STOCK-IN-TRADE



OF

AN ABORIGINAL LAPIDARY.

[MISSISSIPPI.]

BY

CHARLES RAU.

REPRINTED FROM THE SMITHSONIAN REPORT FOR 1877.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1878.



THE STOCK-IN-TRADE

OF

AN ABORIGINAL LAPIDARY.

[MISSISSIPPI.]

BY

CHARLES RAU.

REPRINTED FROM THE SMITHSONIAN REPORT FOR 1877.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1878.

E
98
IAR3



1136682

THE STOCK-IN-TRADE OF AN ABORIGINAL LAPIDARY.

(Mississippi.)

BY CHARLES RAU.

In an essay entitled "Ancient Aboriginal Trade in North America," which was published in the Smithsonian Report for the year 1872, I attempted to trace the beginning of a division of labor among the former inhabitants of this country. I expressed the opinion that certain individuals, who were, by inclination or practice, particularly qualified for a distinct kind of manual labor, devoted themselves principally or entirely to that labor, basing my conjecture on the occurrence of manufactured articles of homogeneous character in mounds or in deposits below the surface of the soil. There is little doubt, for instance, that there were persons who devoted their time chiefly to the manufacture of stone arrow-heads and of other articles produced by chipping, among which may be mentioned those remarkable large digging tools described by me several years ago,* and the oval or leaf-shaped implements made of the peculiar hornstone of "Flint Ridge," in Ohio. These latter, which bear much resemblance to certain palæolithic types of Europe, were first noticed by Mr. E. G. Squier, who found, many years ago, a large deposit of them in a low mound of "Clark's Work," in Ross County, Ohio. An excavation, six feet long and four feet wide, disclosed about six hundred specimens, which were standing edgewise, forming two layers, one immediately above the other. The deposit extended beyond the limits of the excavation on every side, and hence the actual number of specimens has not become known.† Since that time deposits composed of objects of corresponding shapes and of the same material have been discovered, generally under the ground, in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Kentucky; but the area of their distribution may be much greater. Dr. J. F. Snyder has described the Illinois deposits in the Smithsonian Report for 1876.‡ That of Beardstown, in Cass County, is of special interest. It contained about fifteen hundred leaf-shaped or round implements, arranged in five horizontal layers, which were separated by thin strata of clay. According to Dr. Snyder, another deposit, said to have consisted of three thousand five hundred specimens, was

* A Deposit of Agricultural Flint Implements in Southern Illinois, Smithsonian Report for 1868, p. 401.

† Squier and Davis: Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley, Washington, 1848, p. 158; representations of the objects on p. 214.

‡ Deposits of Flint Implements, p. 433.

discovered in Fredericksville, Schuyler County, in the same State. Smaller subterranean deposits of flint arrow-heads, cutters, &c., have been met with in various States in the eastern half of this continent, the articles showing in many cases no traces of use whatever, and generally exhibiting a symmetrical order in their arrangement. Such facts naturally lead to the supposition that flint-chipping formed a special profession, and, furthermore, that the objects found in these hiding-places, or "caches", constituted the magazines of the aboriginal craftsmen. The deposit of Clark's Work, it should be stated, has been thought to owe its occurrence in a mound of peculiar structure to superstitious or religious motives, and thus to partake of a sacrificial character. This view, however, whether correct or not, has no bearing on the point in question, namely, the production of the chipped articles by way of trade.

The carved stone pipes, representing imitations of the human head, of quadrupeds, birds, &c., which were found in great number by Messrs. Squier and Davis in a mound of the group called "Mound City," not far from Chillicothe, Ohio, illustrate the highest development of early aboriginal art in this country.* Their production required much skill and patient endurance, and hence we may infer that the manufacture of stone pipes formed in past times a branch of industry which was chiefly carried on by persons who possessed an extraordinary talent for this peculiar kind of work. There are to this day pipe-makers among the Ojibway Indians, and probably among other tribes.

In corroboration of the foregoing, I may state that certain handicrafts were practised to some extent by the North American Indians at the time of their first intercourse with the whites. "They have some," says Roger Williams, "who follow onely making of Bowes, some Arrowes, some Dishes (and the women make all their Earthen Vessells), some follow fishing, some hunting: most on the Sea side make Money, and Store up shells in Summer against Winter whereof to make their money."† These remarks, of course, relate to the New England tribes, with whom Roger Williams used to associate; but a later writer, Lawson, gives a similar account of the Southern Indians, among whom labor was doubtless still more systematized, considering that they had attained a somewhat higher degree of civilization than their Northern kinsmen. It is known that until within late years the manufacture of arrow-heads was practised as a profession by certain individuals among several Indian tribes..

I will now proceed to describe a deposit of aboriginal manufactures, which illustrates the subject of division of labor among the earlier inhabitants of this country better than any other discovery of kindred character with which I have become acquainted.

In the spring of 1876, Mr. T. J. R. Keenan, of Brookhaven, Lincoln County, Mississippi, presented to the National Museum a collection of

* Ancient Monuments, &c., p. 242, &c.

† A Key into the Language of America (London, 1643); Providence, 1827; p. 133.

jasper ornaments, mostly unfinished, which had been found in Lawrence County, in the same State, forming a deposit of a very remarkable character. Being desirous of learning the particulars of this discovery, I addressed a letter to Mr. Keenan, and obtained from him the desired information. The deposit was accidentally discovered on the farm of Anthony Hutchins, situated on the east side of Silver Creek, about one mile distant from Hebron church, in the northeastern part of the above-named county. While Mr. Hutchins's son was engaged one day in July, 1875, in ploughing a cotton-field, entirely free from pebbles and stones of any kind, a grating of the ploughshare attracted his attention, and upon examination he found that he had struck the deposit, which appeared originally to have been buried two feet and a half below the surface, filling an excavation of about eighteen inches in diameter. The arrangement of the articles constituting this deposit will be described hereafter. They all consist of jasper of a red or reddish color, which is sometimes variegated with spots or streaks of a pale yellow. But few of these objects, which were undoubtedly designed for ornament, may be considered as entirely finished.

The following is an inventory of the specimens sent to the National Museum by Mr. Keenan:

1. Twenty-two pebbles of jasper, showing no work whatever. They are irregular in shape and mostly small, being from half an inch to an inch and one-fourth in size.

2. Twelve rudimentary ornaments of different forms, brought into shape by chipping.

3. Three polished pieces with narrow grooves, showing that cutting was also resorted to in the manufacture of the objects.

4. Two hundred and ninety-five beads of more or less elongated cylindrical shape, measuring from one-fourth of an inch to three inches in length, and from one-fourth of an inch to one inch in thickness. Though they are polished, they exhibit but rarely a perfectly regular cylinder form. Ten of them show the beginnings of holes, in most cases at one end.

5. One hundred and one round beads of a more compressed or discoidal shape. They are from one-eighth to five-eighths of an inch long, while their diameters vary from one-fourth to three-fourths of an inch. They are polished, and only five of the number exhibit incipient holes.

6. Nine polished ornaments of elongated flattish shape, showing an expansion on each side (like Fig. 10). They measure from an inch and one-fourth to two inches and one-fourth in length, and from three-fourths of an inch to an inch and one-fourth in width across the middle. One specimen is partly drilled.

7. Two specimens of similar character, but expanding on one side only (Fig. 11). They are from an inch and a half to two inches in length and seven-eighths of an inch wide across the middle.

8. One large ornament showing two expansions on each side (Fig. 12). A more minute description will follow.

9. Two small animal-shaped objects. They are about an inch long and well polished.

10. Two semicircular polished pieces, probably designed to be worked into the shapes of animals.

There are four hundred and forty-nine pieces in all. Mr. Keenan has kept for himself sixteen specimens, and four had been disposed of before he became the owner of the collection. One of the latter was drilled entirely through. Hence the entire deposit consisted of four hundred and sixty-nine objects.

From the character of the inventory just given several inferences may be drawn.

There can hardly be any doubt that the deposit constituted the stock-in-trade of some aboriginal manufacturer of ornaments of jasper, which he made from pebbles of that material.* He shaped them by the operation of chipping before he proceeded to grinding, and he likewise applied the method of cutting in the manufacture of the articles. The cutting, however, was done after the piece had been reduced to a certain shape by grinding. The drilling of the beads and bead-like ornaments was the final process in their fabrication. This fact affords an additional proof that in this country stone objects requiring perforations were brought into perfect shape before the drilling was commenced. The same rule prevailed in Europe, as every one knows who has studied the stone antiquities of that part of the world.

The accompanying illustrations represent, in full size, typical specimens of the different classes of wrought articles composing the deposit.

Fig. 1.—A jasper pebble, chipped into the form of a cylindrical bead. The smooth surface of the pebble has not entirely disappeared.

Fig. 2.—A long, comparatively slender piece, designed for a bead. It shows the chipping very distinctly, though the sharp edges have been removed by grinding.

Fig. 3.—Polished cylindrical† bead (undrilled).

Fig. 4.—Very regular and well polished cylindrical bead of a fine red color (undrilled).

Fig. 5.—Long and slender bead, apparently not entirely ground into shape (undrilled).

Fig. 6.—Large cylindrical bead, which exhibits a rather rough surface, the traces of chipping not having been entirely removed by the grinding process (undrilled).

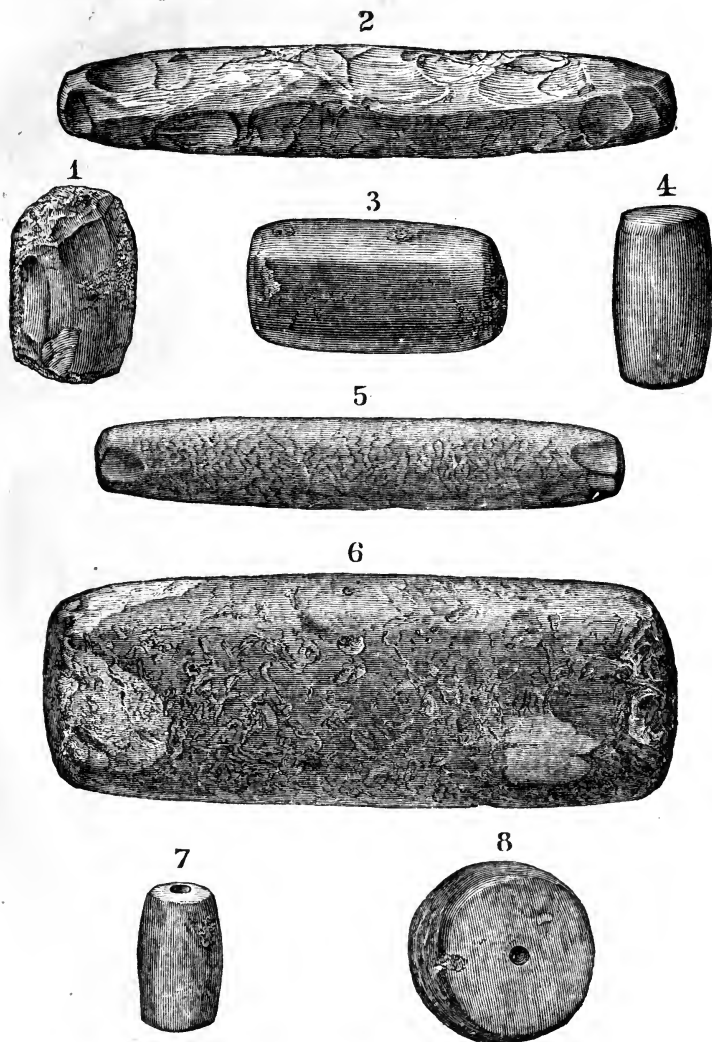
Fig. 7.—Small cylindrical bead, polished, but not regular in shape, and showing at one end the beginning of a hole, which forms a cylin-

*According to Mr. Keenan's express statement, no jasper pebbles occur in the neighborhood of the place where the ornaments were entombed. They must have been brought from a distance.

† In this description of ornaments the term "cylindrical" must not be taken in a mathematical sense, as I merely intend to indicate by it an approximate resemblance to a cylinder.

dricul cavity nearly three millimeters in diameter and two millimeters in depth.

Fig. 8.—Polished bead of discoidal shape, with incipient holes at both ends. One of the holes is merely indicated by a small depression; the other forms a cup-like cavity of two and a half millimeters diameter and two millimeters depth.



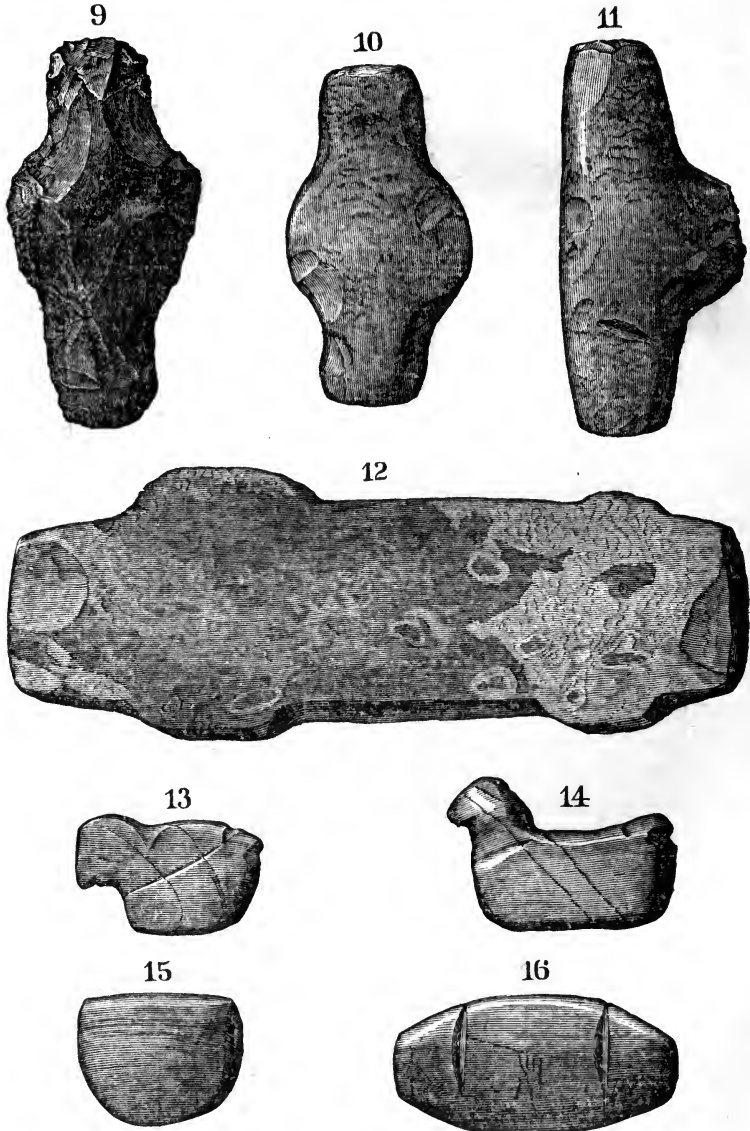
Jasper ornaments from Mississippi ({}).

Fig. 9.—Ornament of elongated flattish shape, with an expansion on each side. It is unfinished, having been brought into shape by chipping alone.

Fig. 10.—Object of the same form; well polished, but not absolutely regular in outline. There can be no doubt that the ornaments of this description were intended to be drilled in the direction of the longitudinal

axis. A broken specimen of the collection shows the commencements of holes at both extremities.

Fig. 11.—Polished ornament of similar character, exhibiting an expansion or projection only on one side (undrilled).



Jasper ornaments from Mississippi (}).

Fig. 12.—Large polished ornament of elongated flattish form, with two expansions on each side. The object is irregular in outline, the expansions being larger at one extremity than at the other. It is three-fourths of an inch thick in the middle. A longitudinal perforation was doubtless intended.

Fig. 13.—A small, flattish, bird-shaped object, made of beautiful cherry-red jasper, and well polished. The wings are indicated on both sides by slight grooves.

Fig. 14.—A similar polished object of dark-red jasper, in which the bird form is less distinctly expressed. Indeed, the maker may have purposed to represent some quadruped. It would be unprofitable to speculate on the use of these two carvings. They probably were merely toys, though it is not impossible that they had a totemic significance, or were designed to serve as charms. They could not well be worn about the person, and I doubt whether it was intended to perforate them.

Fig. 15.—A polished semicircular piece, perhaps designed to be worked into the shape of a bird; its size is exactly the same as that of the original of Fig. 13.

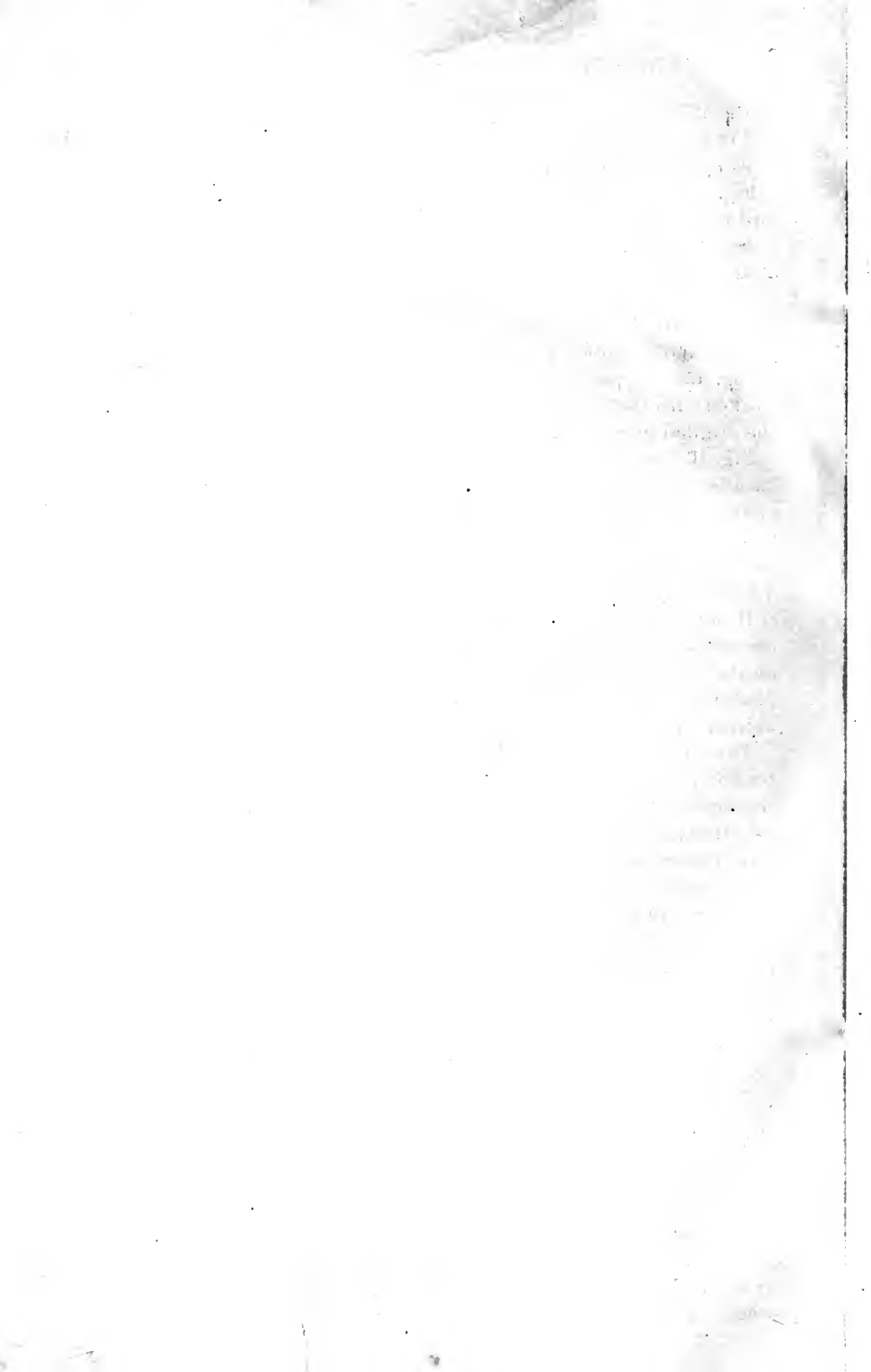
Fig. 16.—A polished piece, of a compressed oval shape, showing two parallel incisions in the direction of the minor axis. They were evidently made with a sharp flint tool. It is probable that this specimen illustrates a stage in the manufacture of a small animal-shaped trinket, like those already described, the piece being almost too flat to be made into a bead of cylindrical form.

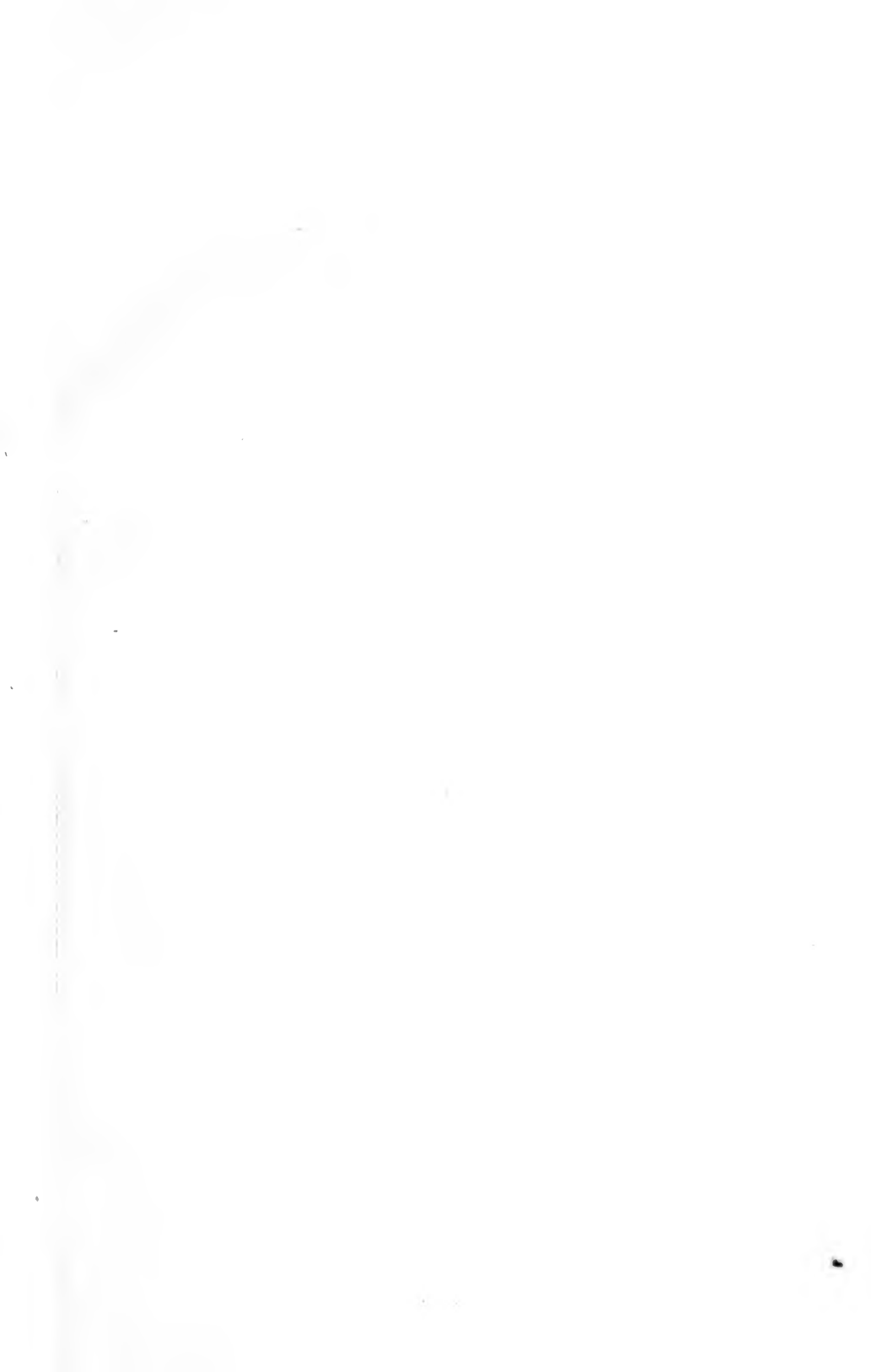
It now remains to be stated in what manner the objects forming the deposit were arranged. The large piece, represented by Fig. 12, lay flat on the bottom of the hole; the long and massive cylindrical beads were placed on end, on and around it, as closely as possible, and the smaller objects were spread over them in a rather promiscuous way.

The owner of the articles here described, we may suppose, had no intention of leaving them buried in the ground; he would some day have recovered them, had circumstances permitted. Death, captivity, or removal to another part of the country, from which he never returned, may have frustrated his design. The deposit in question shared the fate of many others which have been preserved to our time, in order to add, as it were, to our knowledge of the former occupants of this country.

It would be a vain endeavor to offer any conjecture as to the age of the deposit. The objects appear absolutely fresh, not showing the slightest alteration of the surface. Jasper, however, is a very hard substance, capable of resisting the influences of exposure for ages. On the other hand, there is nothing that would militate against a comparatively recent, though pre-Columbian, origin of the deposit.

It must have been a very difficult task to work a stone as hard as jasper without the proper appliances, and we cannot but admire the skill, and, above all, the patience of the artist or artists who fashioned the ornaments from such an obdurate material. Yet it is known that even at the present time mineral substances of equal hardness are shaped and perforated in the most primitive manner by tribes occupying a very low position in other respects. The execution of such work is but a trial of endurance, a quality displayed in an eminent degree by uncivilized man when his mind is bent upon a definite purpose.







E
26
I4R3

Ray, Charles, 1826-1887
The stock-~~i~~-trade of
an aboriginal lapidary
<Mississippi>
Washington,
Gov't Print. Off.
(1878)

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

