

chain of abandoned workings, occupying a region about thirty miles long and five wide. From these two locations came all the copper used in the fabrication of thousands of the implements and ornaments found throughout Wisconsin and adjoining states. The successive glacial periods distributed detached pieces of this metal, known as float or drift copper, over an area, according to Prof. Salisbury, of about six hundred miles north and south, and seven hundred miles east and west, with the Lake Superior copper region at its northern edge.

Various descriptions of the methods of aboriginal copper mining in the Lake Superior region have been published. Among these are a number in which the authors have carried to a ridiculous extent their fanciful conceptions of the engineering skill exercised by the natives in obtaining the metal. As a fair sample of some of the exaggerated statements contained in these reports we may quote Schoolcraft who refers to these workings as:

"Vestiges of ancient mines so important in character, that modern miners have paused in astonishment to behold"—Hist. Ind. Tribes, v. 5, 395.

This statement is mild when compared to the wild guesses and conclusions of a score of other writers, most of whom had evidently never visited the region.

The following extract from a recent report of Dr. W. H. Holmes, present director of the American Bureau of Ethnology, who made a careful investigation of the district, removes all doubt as to the character of the workings and of the methods employed by the Indian miners:

"The Lake Superior copper occurs in veins, bounded on either side by the hard metamorphic rocks making the upper peninsula of Michigan. The action of the atmosphere and of the acids from decaying vegetation upon the mineral, having produced a partial disintegration of the gangue, or rock in which it is held, the glacier scooped out deep troughs or channels in the rock thus softened. Often these depressions were only partially filled with drift, leaving more or less of the copper-bearing rock exposed as a wall on either side.

"Aboriginal mining in this region had its beginning in the hammering or cutting off of portions of the metal thus left visible; when the level of the gravel was reached, it was cleared away to follow the wall downward. From this it was but a step to removing the loose material in order to reach the copper vein at the bottom; and soon it was discovered that wherever one of these partially filled trenches occurred, copper was to be found beneath the gravel, whether any of it could be seen on the surface or not.