

a state of preservation as we are informed most of them are, is nevertheless, in present interest and importance, over-matched and dwarfed by your collection of prehistoric copper utensils. This department may be said to be new. Anterior to the present decade, and to the time when your Society began to form its collection, there were but a small number of prehistoric copper implements known to have been discovered in this country. These were widely scattered, making an insignificant figure in collections of prehistoric remains, and naturally claiming and receiving very little study or attention from antiquaries or historical students. But the large number of copper implements which you have recently brought together, found within the limits of Wisconsin, amounting, at your last annual report, in 1878, to one hundred and ninety different articles, a few of them bearing the indubitable marks of having been cast in moulds, besides forty ornamented beads, apparently made from thin sheet copper, give to this department a new significance and a fresh interest.

These implements are classified as spear or dirk-heads, knives, chisels, axes, augurs, gads, and drills.¹

The value of this collection to your Society consists in the means it furnishes of illustrating the prehistoric period of Wisconsin. The question therefore which forces itself at once upon the attention is this: Were the makers and users of these copper implements the same people who were in occupation when the country was first discovered by Europeans? Or were they of an earlier race, which had passed away, and their places become occupied by the American Indian? While there are some intimations in your publications that these copper tools must have been made by an earlier and superior race, no elaborate defense of this view has appeared in any paper published by the Society, which has come to my notice. It is undoubtedly wise not to propound or adopt a new theory, until the means of establishing and defending it are ample and undeniable. The old maxim, *festina lente*, may be safely adopted in settling a question like this. In

¹ The bulk of the prehistoric remains belonging to the Society, both of stone and copper, were collected by Frederick S. Perkins, Esq., of Burlington, Wis., and are a noble monument to his persistent energy and zeal in this department. His method is described in *Collections of Wis. Hist. Society*, Vol. vii., pp. 70-73.