ON CERTAIN TYPES OF STONES USED BY THE ABORIGINES.

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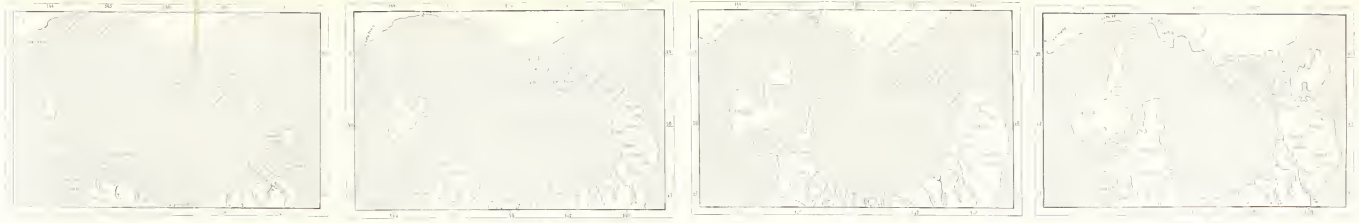
There are in North-west Tasmania two distinct types of the Aboriginal relics, usually called Hammer or Pounding Stones, but regarded by Dr. Fritz Noetling as "sacred" or "magic" emblems. The photographs of several in Dr. Noetling's collection appeared in an early issue of the "Tasmanian Naturalist," also in the "Weekly Courier," Launceston, of September 19th, 1907.

The stones of type 1 are thick and heavy, usually convex on both surfaces. Those of type 2 are thinner and lighter, usually flat on both surfaces. If any convexity exists it is very slight. Both kinds are more or less circular in outline, but very frequently are longer in one diameter than the other, and the thickness often varies when taken at different portions of the circumference. The largest example in my possession of the first type measures 5½in. x 4½in. x 1¾in. in thickness, and weighs 3lbs. avoirdupois. One in possession of a friend is much larger, weighing 5¼lbs.; another turns the scale at 4¼lbs., a third at 3¼lbs. It is somewhat curious, as they all come from the same district, that there should be this regular gradation of 1lb. in weight. The 3lbs. example just alluded to has been slightly treated on each of the longer sides by chipping or hammering, and the centre of both upper and lower surfaces bears marks of repeated hard blows, causing a rough hollow of an inch or rather more across, but not more probably than 1-16in. in depth, although the dints are very perceptible to the touch, and can be distinctly seen without a lens.

The smallest example I have of this type measures 4¼in. x 4⅛in. x 1¾in. in thickness, and weighs just under 2lbs. About half the circumference appears to have been chipped or hammered, and then rubbed

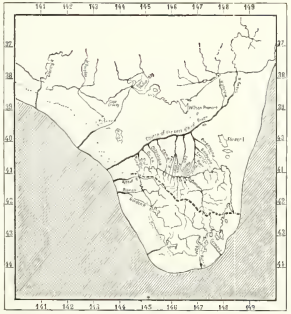


THE SUBMARINE PHYSIOGRAPHY OF BASS STRAIT.

FIG. 3

The Post Glacial Volcanoes of the Bassian Isthmus.

Fig. 2



The Post Glacial River System of South-East Australia.

Pl. I.

Glaciation of Tasmania

The Post Glacial Volcanoes of the Bassian Isthmus.

smooth; part of the remaining circumference has been roughly chipped and left without any smoothing process, while the remainder is in its natural state.

I will state here that the type just described is not necessarily of greater diameter than those about to be touched on; indeed, the smallest of type 1 are much less than the largest of type 2; but in those of similar diameter the greater weight is always with the first group.

The largest of the second or flat type measures 5in. x 5in. x 1⅛in. in thickness, and weighs 2lbs. 3oz.; the edge has been much worked by chipping or hammering, and the stone is almost a perfect circle. The object of the natives in working at the edges of these stones appears to have been to get them as circular in outline as possible, although whether this was done to please the eye or with some ulterior purpose we have no means of knowing. All the circumference except about 1¾in. has been worked in this case, and the centres of both surfaces bear marks of having been hammered upon.

The smallest I have of this flat type is a very nice light specimen of an ounce or so under 1lb., measuring 4¼in. x 3¾in. x ¾in. in thickness, though the latter dimension varies slightly, in one part being ⅝in.; the circumference has been treated all round except for about ¾in.; one surface is very slightly convex, and in this small dints caused by hammering can be felt with the finger-tips; the other surface is smooth.

While searching the site of an Aboriginal camp I noticed the edge of a stone projecting above the surface of the ground in an oblique direction. On raising this carefully it proved to be one of the flat type, measuring 4¾in. x 4in. x 1⅛in. in thickness, and weighing 1lb. 10oz. Although the circumference had been worked upon considerably for three-quarters or so of its entirety, the specimen had not been made very circular, as will be noticed by the measurements. There were slight marks of hammering in the centres of both surfaces; but what rendered this specimen peculiarly interesting was the fact of it throwing light upon the use to which some at least of this class of stone was put. In the centre of one surface can still be seen some of the red ochre which was pounded upon the flat surface of the stone, and which has been

preserved from erosion by being buried underground. As many lumps of ochreous earth are found at the old camps, and as it is known from records that our natives made use of this as a pigment when pounded and mixed with grease, it is evident that some of these flat stones were used for breaking down the lumps upon, which accounts for the dints in their centres. The other specimens that I have were all found upon the surface, and having been exposed for so many years to the action of wind and rain, it is not at all remarkable that no traces of colour should be found upon them.

The strangest looking specimen is one that was obtained from the neighbourhood of the Upper Mersey, and appears to be the half of an irregular oval stone which has been fractured; the piece measures 4¼in. x 3¾in., and varies in thickness from 1½in. at one edge to ¾in. at another. It weighs 1lb. 11oz. A portion has been split off from each side, but not from the end, so that the semi-circular part of the circumference which remains projects each side in an ear or "lug," giving the stone a very fantastic appearance. This "lug" projects about ⅜in. on one side, and rather over ½in. on the other. The circumference which remains has been worked by chipping or hammering.

Besides these I have the segment of an exceptionally large and heavy stone of the flat type; this portion measures about 5½in. across at circumference, and tapers to a blunt end; the thickness varies from 1⅜in. to 1in., and the weight is 3lbs. 10oz., so the original must have been of a great size. The edges have been worked as usual, but in addition they appear to have been subjected to some kind of smoothing process, as if rubbed with water on another stone. The flat surfaces, too, have smooth streaks across, as if produced by rubbing upon another surface. This appearance may, however, have been caused by the friction of the loose dry sand upon which the fragment was found.

The material of all specimens of both types appears to be diabasic, which is so frequent on this coast. The usual colour is a light grey flecked with numerous small dark fragments, the fresh fracture showing a bluish tint.