

Mammalian and Cave Relics.

My dear Sir,—Although far enough from “Grays Thurrock,” I could wish Dr. Falconer could look over my specimens of “mammalian fauna” collected in the caves here. Besides that cave on which a paper was read by me at Oxford, and where Dr. Falconer showed me the kind attention of an older student of geology, and another cave, of which an account was read in my name at the Cambridge meeting, I have this summer met with a third cave containing the usual remains, mixed with the same flint-chips, and opened another barrow in that locality in which these latter specimens occur.

By the way, I do not think a very curious notice of flint-chips which I discovered in my professional reading has yet appeared in print, except from my pen, and where it was not likely to come before students of science. Most are aware that in the 5th chapter of Joshua, verses 2 and 3, mention is made of “the knives of flint,” with which he re-circumcised the children of Israel; but I do not think the following record is patent, because it occurs only in the Septuagint, which often *enlarges* on matters only briefly noticed in the Hebrew text. In Joshua xxiv. 30, it is written, “And they buried Joshua in the border of his inheritance, and *they placed with him in his tomb (query a tumulus?) the flint-knives with which he had circumcised the children of Israel; and there they are unto this day.*” The italics show the Septuagintal amplification of the Hebrew text.

It is impossible not to put “this and that together,”—I mean the chips in our tumuli and his,—and not to speculate upon the *possible* fact that religious rites had to do with the interments of these, and no other implements. I by no means would say I think it was so; but the fact is the parent of the thought. I wish Dr. Falconer could inspect my collection of bones. One “undecided point” I should like to discuss with him, namely, the comparative age of these mammalian bones, and of the great quantities of *other* bones usually found here nearer the surface, or on the surface of the red mould with which the caves are filled. Besides the bones of sheep, and swine, and horses, in what Buckland called the churchyard state, there are plenty of fish-bones, and some curious ones too, that puzzle most of my scientific friends, upon a personal inspection.*

Would it be too much to ask you to say where I can “beg, borrow, or get” the notice of the Torquay cave, so as to have an accurate account of the exact position, and state of the flint-chips found there? Some of us—myself for one—live in places so out of the world, that we are practically denied access to sources of trustworthy information near at hand to all metropolitan students.

I want the doctor's opinion, too, as to the date of the breaking up of the usual *older* stalagmitic crust, the thick remains of which adhere to the sides of these caves. I fancy my *fish*-bones were under this in one instance.

I am, Sir, ever yours faithfully,

GILBERT N. SMITH.

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* Are any frog-bones? In the Heathery Burn cave there were lots of frogs' bones, which were called fish-bones until the specimens were sent to me for inspection.—ED. GEOL.