

metallic characters, this opinion may be considered as very probable, especially when supported by the account which is given of some of the native tribes of the north-western parts of America, who, though little civilised, have applied to domestic purposes the native copper with which their country abounds. It is also known, that, at a very early period, domestic utensils, and instruments of war, were made of a compound of this metal and tin: even during the Trojan war, as we learn from Homer, the combatants had no other armour but what was made of bronze, which is a mixture of copper and tin. Macrobius, who wrote in the fourth century, informs us, that when the Etruscans intended building a new city, they marked out its limits with a coultter of brass, and that priests of the Sabines were in the habit of cutting their hair with a knife of the same metal*. The Greek and Roman sculptors executed fine works of art in porphyry, granite, and hard other minerals, by means of their copper instruments. The great hardness of the ancient copper instruments, induced historians to believe, that the ancients possessed a particular secret for tempering copper, and converting it into steel. There is no doubt the axes and other ancient tools were almost as sharp as steel instruments; but it was by a mixture with tin, and not by any tempering, that they acquired their extreme hardness. Axes, and other instruments of copper, have been discovered in the tombs of the ancient Peruvians, and also in those of the early inhabitants of Mexico. These were so hard, that the sculptors of these countries executed large works in the hardest greenstone and basaltic porphyry: their jewellers

G 3

cut

* Macrobius, Saturnalia, lib. v. cap. 19. p. 29. 512.