The Skeleton in Armor.

Professor Anderson was correct in saying that the skeleton, immortalized by Longfellow, was discovered at Fall River, Mass., in 1881; and not in 1871, as Mr. Beauchamp states on p. 36 of your last number (Jan. 9, 1891).

The actual date of the discovery was April 30, 1891, and the earliest account of it was published in The American Magazine, vol. iii, p. 434 (August, 1897). This was copied into Barber’s “Historical Collections for Massachusetts,” p. 128; and from that source Col. Stone transferred it to his “Life of Brant.” This may account for Mr. Watson’s having omitted Stone from his list of authorities.

Subsequently, in 1899, several other skeletons were discovered in about the same locality, near the boundary-line between Fall River and Tiverton, R.I., accompanied by precisely similar objects as the first. The original skeleton, which had been preserved in the Museum of the Troy Athenæum (“Troy” was the old name of Fall River), was destroyed by a fire about the year 1848. Some of the relics discovered with the skeletons disinterred in 1899 are now to be seen at the Redwood Library in Newport. These different discoveries of similar interments, some years apart, have occasioned the confusion of dates.

A few years ago a skeleton was discovered at Centreville, on Cape Cod, with a brass breastplate precisely like the one originally found in 1831. This is described by Henry E. Chase in the “Smithsonian Report,” 1885, p. 902.

It is worth noticing, that besides the “flat, triangular arrow-heads of sheet copper,” to which Mr. Beauchamp refers as having been recently found in the Iroquois district of New York, similar in shape to those made of brass disinterred with the skeleton in 1881, like objects, also made of sheet brass, have not infrequently been met with in other localities (see Abbott’s “Primitive Industry,” p. 420; Jones’s “Antiquities of the Southern Indians,” p. 351; Report of the Peabody Museum, ii. p. 792, iii. pp. 35, 156; Reports of Long Island Historical Society (1879-81), p. 40; Smithsonian Report, 1889, p. 861).

We learn whence the Indians procured the brass of which these arrow-heads were fabricated, from the account given in Underhill’s “History of the Pequot War” (“Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society” [ed. series], vol. vi. p. 17), who tells us that a Dutch trader was prevented from bartering with the Pequots on the ground that they were to be supplied in part with “kettles, or the like, which make their arrow-heads.” Sir Ferdinando Gorges, earlier than this, had complained about “discourder persons,” who sold the savages “arrow-heads and other arms” (“Description of New England,” Ibid. p. 70).

The earliest notices of the Indians often speak of their arrows as being headed with brass. This was the case with those taken up and sent to England in the first encounter of the Pilgrims.