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Poetry.

TO THE PRISONER.

I pity thee, poor prisoner,
Thy gloomy cell within,
Though now perhaps thou sufferest
But justly for thy sin.

Methods thou sittest in silent grief,
The hard heart broken down;
Deep penitence upon that brow,
Once hardened by a frown.

If so, though pity may not pass
Thy grave to smooth that brow,
Yet couldst thou read one human heart,
'T would cheer thee even now.

'T would lighten up those dreary walls,
Make soft that gloomy bed,
And hope, sweet prophetic, would pass,
Back through the door she fled.

I am a prisoner, too; but oh!
May no such crimes as thine
Within a dungeon's gloomy walls,
This body e'er confine.

From the Scientific American.

THE AGE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

At the meeting of the Polytechnic Association of the American Institute, reported in another place, Dr. Stearns read a paper on the geologic period at which the human race was created, which was listened to with the greatest interest. The following is an abstract of the paper:—

The great truth that comes out with most prominence from the multitude of facts collected by geologists, is the creation of successive races and species of animals which have slowly succeeded each other through immense periods of time—constantly advancing from simpler to higher forms of organization.

Nearly all the rocks that form the crust of our own globe were deposited at the bottom of seas and lakes, constituting formations ranging in geographical extent from a few rods to thousands of miles, and varying in thickness from a fraction of an inch to many thousand feet.

When we find one of these rocks deposited upon another, we cannot resist the conclusion that the upper rock has been deposited after the lower one, and thus the relative ages of the rocks are positively ascertained. Now, in the oldest rocks that contain organic remains, we find the lowest forms of life. For a long time the only inhabitants of this earth were small

fish. The seas swarmed with them in immense multitudes; certain species lived, multiplied, and gradually became extinct; these were succeeded by others, and thus species followed species in long succession, their shells falling to the bottom of the ocean, and forming rocks which were miles in thickness. These rocks were slowly raised above the level of the sea by those undulations which are constantly taking place in the crust of the earth, and as they were broken and turned up on their edges, we can now measure their thickness with a rod and line.

After the shellfish had existed alone for a period sufficient for these deposits to be made, fishes were created, and the next strata of rocks in the ascending scale are filled with shells and bones of fishes mixed together. After the fishes came the reptiles, then the mammalia, and last of all man.

The evidence of man's existence in the geologic history of the earth are all confined to the immediate neighborhood of the surface, indicating his comparative recent appearance, but discoveries made within two or three years carry his origin to times far more remote than had before been supposed. These evidences are of two kinds: first the bones of man; second, his works.

Among the works of man that are found buried in the earth by rocks which have formed over them, are utensils of various kinds, for war, for cooking, &c.; excavations, the wounds inflicted by man in the bones of other animals; and buildings either isolated or in cities. The most famous of the buried cities that have been found is Pompeii, in Italy. This city with its inhabitants in the full tide of life was suddenly buried by ashes and mud thrown out from the volcano of Vesuvius in the year 79 of the Christian Era. So completely was it buried that it disappeared utterly from the face of the earth, and its plica was lost to human memory. In the year 1713, excavations led to the accidental discovery of its suburbs, and the whole has since been exhumed. The skeleton of a natural was found at this point and the skeleton of a miser with his big gold clutched in his hand. "Buried

cities have also been found in Scotland, California and other countries.

Until very recently, all the remains of man or of his works that had been discovered were above the drift formation. The drift is that mass of rounded boulders and gravel which covers most of the surface in this part of the world, a very fine specimen of it may be seen in Broadway, opposite the city hospital. It was evidently not deposited, like the stratified rock, at the bottom of the sea, and there is some doubt as to the mode of its formation, but geologists now generally suppose that it was brought down by ice from the cold polar regions. The melting of the ice seems so to have chilled the waters of the ocean in this vicinity so as to kill all the fishes that inhabited them.

Now, within a few years many discoveries have been made of human remains in the drift, either carrying back the age of the human race, or bringing forward the age of the drift. In South Carolina, two human skeletons have been found in a bog iron ore, almost wholly transformed into oxide of iron. In California, stone chisels, arrow heads, mortars, and pestles, are found just above the placer formation—the formation that contains the gold. In many places in Europe human bones have been found in caves associated with great quantities of bones of extinct animals, the animals having been killed by the very savage men who lived in the caves and carried in to be eaten. Many of the animals found in regions now temperate are tropical animals, such as the hippopotamus, rhinoceros, &c., and this evidence, with that furnished by the plants, shows that the temperature of some portions of the earth was at one time much higher than it is at present.

The discoveries of human remains in the drift prove, as I have said, either that the drift is newer or that mankind is older than had been supposed. Which of these is the case cannot yet be determined but the present indications are that it will carry back the origin of man to earlier geologic periods. All the new evidences, however, coincide with the oldest opinion that man was the latest as he is the highest in the creation of God.