

An Hour with the Editor

PRE-COLUMBIAN AMERICA

Almost nothing is known with any certainty of the history of America before the time of Columbus, and only very vague guesses can be made as to the degree of civilization attained by its people, except in a few instances. The voyages of Eric the Red and the other Norsemen are themselves shrouded in obscurity, and the story of them does not pretend to tell anything about the people of the land. There is a Welsh tradition of an early settlement of a colony from Wales on the Western Continent, but much doubt exists as to its authenticity. The Indians residing in what are now the United States and Canada have no historical records. So far as can be learned, they had been living from time immemorial in the primitive conditions in which they were when the European settler came; and the fact that their tribal customs were well established shows that they were the result of centuries of development. What traditions of the past had been preserved at that time, we have no means of knowing, for the relations between the Europeans and the Indian tribes were not such as to invite confidence, and at any rate the North American Indians do not seem to have concerned themselves with much that had happened before their own day. Of mythology they preserved a vast store, and running through very much of it is the story of a great catastrophe to local incidents, the imperfect understanding of Indian languages which most Europeans have, the absence of an intelligent interest in the mythology on the part of those who had the opportunity of learning it at first hand, the natural reticence of the race, the influence of the early missionaries, who discountenanced a belief in the stories that had come down from the past, all combined to destroy the recollection of the ancient mythology and even of the traditions of great events. For an example of imperfectly remembered incidents, it may be mentioned that the Millicite Indians of New Brunswick have a tradition that there was once a great earthquake that lasted for a long time, and after it was over the St. John river was changed from a series of lakes to a stream bordered by many low-lying flat areas. That is all that seems to have been preserved of the incident in anything like an historical way; but there is the myth of Glooscap, which seems to relate to the same thing. Glooscap corresponded to the Hiawatha of the Dakotas, the Spioiw of the Skagits, and other semi-divine beings, who aided the Indians in the day of their great adversity. But there is not the least use in trying to make anything resembling history out of those myths and legends. They only establish the antiquity of the race which has preserved them, and clearly indicate that North America was populated previously to the last great geological change. In a previous article it was pointed out that, according to the estimates of the United States Geological Survey, the northern ice-cap, which now covers the islands of the Arctic Archipelago, extended as far south as the place where St. Paul and Minneapolis now stand as recently as 7,000 years ago. There is no difficulty in believing that America was settled at that time, but, on the contrary, it is hard to think it was not. The myths suggest that it must have been peopled before the ice-cap had extended as far to the south as it was at the time mentioned.

No subject is involved in greater doubt than the origin of the Indians of the Western Continent. As yet nearly every investigator has approached the examination of the subject with a pre-conceived idea that mankind originated in the table-lands of Central Asia, and went out therefrom to the occupation of the rest of the world. In any investigation a preconceived idea militates against impartial research. As the latest writer on this question says, the evidence in favor of a migration from America to Asia is quite as strong as that in favor of a migration from Asia to America. The conclusion reached by this writer is that the race that was living on the Continent, when Columbus came, had been here at least 25,000 years and not more than 200,000 years. He arrived at this opinion by estimating the time necessary to permit of the development of the various languages, racial characteristics and grades of culture. During comparatively recent years considerable work has been done in the way of classifying the several aboriginal languages. This is a process that is necessarily slow, and often it is found that languages, which appear at first examination to be totally distinct, on closer investigation prove to be of the same stock. Up to the present it has not been possible to reduce the number of apparently distinct languages on the American Continent below 133, of which 56 are spoken in North America proper, 51 in South America and 26 in Mexico and Central America. This classification disregards the various dialects of the same language. If these were reckoned the number would be very greatly increased. No satisfactory theory for the existence of such a great variety of speech has ever been suggested; but the remarkable freedom of each language from words taken from other languages suggests that such civilization, as the various tribes had reached, was attained at a time when there was very little intercourse between them. It also seems to show that America has never been the seat of widely extended empires, such as existed in Europe, Asia and Africa.

As a general rule such traditions as the Indians tribes have preserved of their origin assign it to some place in the North. In this respect the similarity between them and the races of southern Asia and Northern Africa is very marked. The paths of most of the great races of mankind seem to have been along the Meridians, but whether they would be found

to converge at the North Pole, if we could trace them, is a matter of pure speculation. It is worth mentioning that the pyramid-builders of Egypt and Central America both assigned their origin to the North, and there is something of a resemblance between the hieroglyphics of the Nile valley and those found in Yucatan. These points of resemblance furnish rich food for thoughts, which those who are interested in such things can follow at their leisure. They are worth remembering, because not only as this series of articles develops, but in one's general reading, facts are sure to be brought out, which seem to fit in with the theory that the pioneers of civilization on both Hemispheres came originally from the same region, and arrested their southward steps on both divisions of the earth's surface in about the same latitude, that is just a little north of the zone of equatorial heat. That there may have been migrations to America from Europe and vice versa is not at all improbable; but it may be said with some claim to accuracy that the earliest traces we have of the ancestors of the people who were dwelling in the New World, when Columbus discovered it, show them to have been a race who had reached in certain localities a state of civilization high in some respects, and that they were people who had migrated southward to the homes they then occupied.

In attempting to deal with pre-Columbian America, we find ourselves face to face with problems that seem insoluble. Take for example that presented by the Eskimos. It is said by some persons, who have been much in contact with the Alaskan Eskimos, that they claim to have come from the north. On the other hand there seems to be a great deal of evidence that they lived in the region just west of Hudson Bay before migrating to their present homes. The Eskimos seem to prefer to live on the border of the region of perennal ice, and if it is true, as has been pointed out above, that 7,000 years ago Arctic conditions reached south of the latitude of Winnipeg, it is very easy to believe that at that time the Eskimos lived much further south than they now do, and that they followed the retreating ice to their present homes. This is a more tenable explanation of their residence in the north than that commonly received, namely that they were driven there by enemies. If the latter were the case, it is difficult to see why the homing instinct, so common to all mankind, has not long ago led them to migrate to the south.

ENGLISH SOVEREIGNS

When John died, his son and successor, Henry III., was only nine years of age. The lad appears to have inherited many of the objectionable qualities of his father, although he was not personally wicked. His worst characteristic seems to have been his faithlessness to his promises; but when we consider the circumstances of the case, this does not appear quite as black as it otherwise might. We ought not to look at Thirteenth Century events through Twentieth Century glasses. Ideas prevalent then, and held by men of the highest character, would not be entertained now by any but extremists. Society was in a formative stage, and so also were political and religious institutions all over Europe. The papacy aimed at political supremacy, and employed its spiritual powers to that end without compunction. The new doctrine of the divine right of kings was finding expression especially in France, and the foreign nobles, who surrounded the young English king, filled his mind with this idea. The Church in England was steadfastly asserting its right to freedom from temporal control, and was disposed to resent any interference from the papal see. The English baronage was determined to curb the powers of the king. The merchant guilds were learning to appreciate their power and realize that their place in the body politic was scarcely less influential than that of the nobles. The promulgation of the Great Charter and its annual renewal, notwithstanding the attempts of John and Henry to evade it, was accustoming the people to the idea of liberty within the law. Learning was reviving and philosophy was finding a new impetus in the writings of Roger Bacon. Yet it is impossible to read the story of the early years of Henry's reign without realizing that there was great uncertainty in the minds of all men on every subject pertaining to the welfare of the nation.

It is to be remembered that John had resigned his crown to the legate of the Pope and had received it again as the Pope's vassal. This made the Pontiff the overlord of England, and according to the principles of feudalism, nothing that the king could do was valid, if it lessened in any degree the authority vested in his overlord. Therefore the Pope was within his rights, as they were then understood, when he refused to recognize the Great Charter as binding, and declared the king absolved from his oath to observe it. In John's time, and afterwards in Henry's, the Charter was often proclaimed and the sovereign swore to observe it, but invariably the Pope declared the new proclamation void and that the oaths of the kings were not obligatory upon them.

At this time a strong religious movement swept over England. It originated abroad and was set on foot by St. Francis of Assisi. Something like anarchy prevailed in the land during the minority of Henry, and the people sought in religion the consolation which their distressed political condition seemed to demand. It may be mentioned in passing that nearly all the great movements in the development of British institutions have been preceded by a strong religious revival. During these years

the minds of the people seem to have been in a state of preparation for what was to come. Until Henry proclaimed himself of age in 1227, Hubert de Burgh, Earl Marshal, administered the affairs of the kingdom. He was a strong and just man, and things would have gone well with the country, if it had not been for the constant interference of the papal legates, who claimed the right to control affairs on the ground that England was only a vassal kingdom. Louis of France was looked upon as the pattern of monarchs, and he was a staunch upholder of the principle of divine right, to which Henry gave willing assent, although every concession wrested from him by barons or people was obtained under duress and therefore void. In 1238 when things were at their worst, there appeared upon the stage of English politics, a man whose name is worthy of all honor.

Simon de Montfort was born in France, and his father was of that country. His grandmother was Amicia Beaumont, a sister of the Earl of Leicester, and from her he inherited the earldom. Being of distinguished family, he was regarded as a proper husband for King Henry's sister, and after his marriage with her he was entrusted with the government of Gascony, the sole remnant of what had formerly been the vast territorial main of the English kings on the Continent. He seems to have been a man of passionate temper, with a strong sense of justice, and unbounded courage, although inclined to be overbearing. He was at first distrusted by the baronage and people of England because he was looked upon as a foreigner, and he was continually quarrelling with the King, whose tyrannical exercise of power he would not condone. Gradually he gained the confidence of the nobility, and when in 1258 the King's debts grew so burdensome that something had to be done to meet them, Montfort called the barons together at Oxford, and there was then laid down for the first time the fundamental principle of parliamentary government, that there should be no grant of supplies until there had first been a redress of grievances. What were known as the Provisions of Oxford were passed and agreed to by Henry and then money was voted to meet his most pressing demands. When this had been done, the king forthwith appealed to the Pope to be relieved of his promise, but the prelate ordered the questions in dispute to be referred to the king of France for arbitration. That monarch decided in favor of Henry's contention, although he held the Great Charter to be binding. Thereupon under the leadership of Montfort, the barons revolted and after a sharp struggle the King and Prince Edward were captured. Thenceforth until his death Montfort was the virtual ruler of England. In 1265 he summoned a parliament, and for the first time in the history of the kingdom the boroughs were asked to choose representatives. In this parliament the barons, the knights of the shire and the representatives of the commonalty assembled to decide national affairs upon an equal footing. While the principle of parliamentary government did not originate with Montfort, for it had been recognized as existing from time immemorial, it is to him that the people of England owe the establishment of the Commons as the third Estate of the Realm. In the Parliament of 1265 prelates, earls, barons, knights of the shires and representatives of the boroughs assembled and therefore we shall not be far astray if we fix that as the date of the beginning of parliamentary government as it exists today. Unfortunately for himself and for the country, the barons soon came to have fears of Montfort's intentions. He kept the King and Prince Edward in captivity, and it was charged against him that he meant to place the crown upon his own head. Edward escaped and headed a rebellion, and at a battle, which took place at Evesham in 1265, Montfort was defeated and slain. It was two years before peace was restored to the kingdom, and that result was due to the resolution and honorable course displayed by the Prince.

Personally Henry contributed nothing to the welfare of his kingdom. He was ambitious without resourcefulness. He aimed at restoring the power of his house upon the Continent, but lacked the ability to carry out his plans. He was religious and yet dishonorable. He had all the stubbornness that sometimes goes with weak minds. His long reign would have been wholly inglorious, if it had not been for the fact that the genius of Montfort was equal to the needs of the hour, and in spite of his opposition was able to establish English institutions upon a basis, which, though often rudely shaken, was never destroyed. His reign may be described as one in which great things were done, but without any aid from him and in spite of his bitter opposition.

IMMORTALITY.

An English magazine has had a sort of symposium on the question, "Is immortality necessary?" This is much as if it should ask, "Is a comet's tail necessary? For if there is such a thing as immortality, no question of necessity can arise. The remarkable thing about the symposium is not so much that the question was asked, as that a number of distinguished men professed to be able to answer it. The result was a wide difference of opinion, and that part of the English-reading public, which looks to the guidance of the magazine referred to, must remain in doubt as to whether or not it is necessary for man to have a life after death.

The belief in or aspiration for immortality is seemingly as old as human nature itself

and as universal. When at night we look up to the stars and see the glorious constellation of Orion resplendent in its majesty, we are, if we know the story attached to it, looking upon one of the proofs that centuries ago mankind believes in a future life. The burial customs of almost all aboriginal tribes are to the same effect. It is quite true that a universal belief in a thing does not prove the existence of the thing itself; it does not even make out a scientific prima facie case for it. All the universal sentiment shows is the existence in human nature of a demand for another life, a demand that is as much a part of our nature as anything else. From this Dr. Joseph Cook argued in his once famous lecture, "Does Death End All," that we are logically bound to infer a future existence. He claimed that there was nothing in nature for which a complement was not to be found; in other words, that nature never does anything by halves. Thus when she made gills for fishes, she made water with air in it, whereby the machinery of the gill could operate; or, if you like, having made water with air in it, she proceeded to make animals with gills to utilize the air. So he argued from the fact that there is a universal expectation of immortality we may infer immortality. The value of this species of argument is open to doubt, although in physical science the practice is to infer the unknown from the known.

One of the objections taken by some of the contributors to the symposium is that the eternal existence of an individual would be intolerable. This is not an argument one way or the other. It may be conceded that any conception of existence, which we may be able to form, would be of a state, which, if indefinitely prolonged, would be insupportable; but none of us is able to project his imagination into the future and picture even in his own mind what an eternal spiritual existence would be. Of one thing we may rest assured, namely that if there is such an existence we will be adapted to it. Ancient philosophers have found themselves confronted with the same thought as is now advanced as though it were something quite new, and the result was the evolution of the doctrine of Nirvana, which means the final deliverance of the soul from transmigration. Nirvana is specially associated with Buddhism, but it is not materially different from the doctrine of Moksha, which is of Brahmanic origin. Brahman is the final absorption of the individual soul in that Ultimate Cause, which is said to mean eternal happiness. One sect of Buddhists claimed that, as according to the teachings of the Brahman the Ultimate Cause originated in the Void, it followed that the result of Moksha was extinction not only of the individual soul but of the Ultimate Cause itself. Traces of this thought of absorption are to be found in the teachings of Jesus, but not any of the doctrine of extinction.

Another objection is that the ideas of eternal existence is incomprehensible but this does not seem to be necessarily true. The idea of the absolute extinction of anything now existing is much more difficult to believe. It is doubtful if the human mind is capable of grasping the idea of absolute non-existence. Most of those persons, who argue against immortality, proceed upon the assumption that the burden of proof does not rest upon them, and that if they make a simple denial, it becomes the duty of the believer in a future eternal existence to demonstrate it. This is absolutely unscientific. We know that there is such a thing as an individual entity; that is, each person knows that he has a personality. That personality is as real as his hand or his arm or any part of his physical nature. The burden of proof that this personality ends with the existence of the body, as such, rests upon the person who alleges that it does. We know that the body does not absolutely cease to exist. The materials of which it is composed may be utterly changed, but they continue to exist, and science demands that we shall admit that they exist eternally. Science also demands that we shall admit what it calls the Conservation of Energy, which, stated in popular language, means that force is never extinguished but only becomes latent or transformed, as the case may be. Surely, then, if we are asked to admit that matter and force are eternal we might also admit that our personalities are eternal. What is the difficulty about the latter which does not also confront us in respect to the former?

It is not intended in this article to examine into the proofs of immortality, but only to point out the fallacy of some of the objections raised against it. Immortality may be inconceivable; but so also is mortality. Our very existence is so inconceivable that some philosophers have denied that we have any actual existence. Matter is so inconceivable that some philosophers deny that there is such a thing as matter. Force is absolutely indefinable. We only know that it exists. Some of the contributors to the symposium could not accept the idea of immortality for the reason that if they admitted it in the case of man, they could not deny it to animals. This presents a more serious difficulty; but the answer to the objection seems to be two-fold. We have no reason to suppose that the energy, which finds expression in animal life is not eternal, and we do not know what it is in man which survives the process of death, nor by what means it is enabled to survive it. We are taught that "the gift of God is eternal life," and possibly if we understand just what that means, we would find our objections to the doctrine of immortality vanish very speedily.

A Century of Fiction

XIX.

(N. de Bertrand Lagin)

Eduard Douwes Dekker

Most of us have had our indignation thoroughly aroused at the reports of the pitiable conditions existing among the natives of the Gold Coast of South Africa. There has been a great deal said about the unhappy state of affairs there, and a great deal written; and the abuses still go on, and the helpless natives are robbed, tortured and put to death without any interference from the onlookers, who profess deep anger and grave concern, but hesitate to extend a hand to help the sufferers. Exactly the same conditions existed some years ago in the Islands of the East Indian Archipelago, as exist in the Gold Coast today, only in the former case the Dutch were the taskmasters responsible for the ill-treatment of the natives. For nearly three hundred years Dutch burghers, knowingly or unknowingly, had accumulated great wealth at the expense of the life-long toil and premature death of the Malays of the Far East. These natives were subjects of the ruler of Holland, but were totally under the domination of their chiefs, whose word was their unquestioned law. While the Dutch agreed to protect the natives they gave carte blanche to the tribal rulers, to whom were paid premiums on whatever their provinces could furnish to the Dutch market. To all intents and purposes the natives were the slaves of the chiefs, having no control over their own persons or their own property. Therefore in this land of plenty existed such horrible suffering as the result of ill-treatment and extortion, that the indignation of a worthy champion was aroused, and the outcome was a book which was to the people of Holland what Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was to Americans.

The writer of the book, the champion who took up the cudgels on behalf of the miserable Javanese, and other natives, was a Dutchman, Eduard Douwes Dekker, born in Amsterdam in 1820. When a lad of seventeen he was sent to the Dutch colonies, and remained there for twenty years in the employ of the government. He was given ample opportunity for studying the conditions of the country; and he used every means in his power to stem the abuses practiced, and to give the suffering natives some redress. His opinions and his mode of procedure did not please his fellow officials, and when reports were sent home, his government was even less pleased. He was advised to change his tactics and hold his peace, and his conscience would not permit him to advance his own interests at the expense of those whom he wished to aid, and he sent in his resignation and returned to Holland.

Then, under the stress of emotion, he began to write a record of his experiences among the Javanese. The book, in the guise of a story, was eloquent with pathos, lurid with tragic descriptions, and bitter with invective against those responsible for such criminality. He styled his story "Max Havelaar," and wrote under the pseudonym of "Multatuli" (Who has suffered much). The book caused such a stir in Holland that its author became famous and money flowed in to him from the sale of the work. Every Dutchman read it and professed incredulous indignation, but because Dekker would not declare himself politically, telling everyone that he wrote in the interests of neither party, but only as the champion of humanity, the cause he espoused was not taken up by the government, and nothing was done to better conditions in the East. So keen was the author's disappointment and chagrin that he became an exile from his own land, and went to live in Germany, where he died in 1887.

He has written many other books, principally in the form of stories and dramas, but all dealing with social and political problems. He was a versatile writer, his style is vigorous and well-sustained, and his books are full of vivid descriptions, tear-compelling in their pathos, and delight inspiring in their beauty.

An Idyll from Max Havelaar

This little sketch concerns itself with the affairs of two native families, and especially the son of the one who is betrothed to the daughter of the other. While they are still children, the boy's father suffers from the oppression of the chief of his tribe, who continually robs him until he forces the old man, who has nothing left, to try and escape from his jurisdiction. He is overtaken, however, and brought back, beaten and thrown into prison, where he dies. His wife dies, too, of grief, and Saidjah, the lad, is left alone. He is now fifteen, and makes up his mind to go away and find work. He bids goodbye to Adinda, the girl to whom he is betrothed, promising to return and make her his wife at the end of "three times twelve moons." He does return with money and trinkets and hope beating high in his breast, only to find the home of his friend destroyed and Adinda and her family gone.

For when the district chief had taken away Adinda's father's buffaloes—Adinda's mother died of grief, and her baby sister died, because she had no mother and no one to suckle her. And Adinda's father, who feared to be punished for not paying his land taxes, had fled out of the country and taken Adinda and her brothers with him." An insurrection follows, and during it Adinda is slain.

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