

The Family Circle.

THE EMPTY NEST.

I saunter all about the pleasant place
You made thine pleasant, O my friends, to
me;
But you have gone where laughs in radiant grace
That thousand-memored unimpulsive sea.
To storied precincts of the Southern foam,
Dear birds of passage, ye have taken wing.
And, ah! for me, when April walis you home,
The Spring will more than ever be the Spring.
Still lovely, as of old, this haunted ground;
Tenderly, still, the Autumn sunshine falls,
And gorgeously the woodlands tower around,
Freak'd with wild light at golden intervals;
Yet, for the ache your absence leaves, O friends,
Earth's lifeless pageantries are poor amenities.
William Watson in the "Peacock"

WHICH WAS WISER.

Two men toiled side by side from sun to sun,
And both were poor;
Both sat with children when the day was done,
About their door.
One saw the beautiful in crimson cloud
And shining moon;
The other, with his head in sadness bowed,
Made night of noon
One loved each tree and flower and singing bird,
On mount or plain,
No music in the soul of one was stirred
By leaf or rain.
One saw the good in every fellow man,
And hoped the best;
The other marvel'd at his Master's Plan,
And doubt confessed.
One, having heaven above and heaven below,
Was satisfied;
The other discontent lived in woe,
And hopeless died.
—Sarah K. Bolton.

A DISCOVERY IN EGYPT.

In his lecture to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Professor Flinders Petrie, had a remarkable story to tell. He has discovered the remains of a new race of people whose history has to be fitted into the evolution of Egyptian civilization. The story of this great find was preceded by some interesting details of the district he had been working in, a region between Ballos and Negadeh, about thirty miles north of Thebes. This is a limestone plateau cut through by the Nile Valley, down which that river in pre-historic times used to roll in a mighty flood eight or nine miles in width and over a hundred feet in depth. The plateau is full of the remains of paleolithic man, in the form of beautifully worked flints, some of which showed their enormous age by the black-brown staining, while others 5,000 years old by their side, had hardly a trace of weathering. The explorers found here a town and temple, devoted to the worship of the god Set, which Mr. Petrie identified as the Ombi of Javensal's fiftieth satire a discovery which cleared up an obscurity in the Roman writer that had long puzzled scholars. The great "find" took place within a quarter of a mile of this Egyptian town. Here Mr. Petrie came upon the sight of another town whose remains, to their astonishment, showed no trace of anything Egyptian. In the series of cemeteries connected with it, nearly 2,000 graves were excavated, in which "not a single Egyptian object was found, not one scarab or cartouche, not one hieroglyph, not one piece of usual funeral furniture, a head-rest, a kohl-pot, not one Egyptian bead, not one god, not one amulet, not one single piece of Egyptian pottery, such as was found abundantly in the neighboring Egyptian town." Careful investigation established that this race belonged to the period between the 7th and 8th dynasties that is, about 3,000 B.C. They were, Mr. Petrie believes, invaders of the Libyan-Amorite type, who at this period swept into Egypt from the west, dispossessing the inhabitants on that side, and living there in a state of entire separation from the Egyptians. Their method of burial was peculiar. No bodies were mummified or stretched at full length. All were contracted, with the knees bent up to the arms. The fact

that the head was nearly always severed from the body, and the hands often removed, and that the marrow was extracted from the bones, pointed to "ceremonial cannibalism," the custom being to eat some part of the body that the virtues of the deceased might pass into the living. The skulls were those of a people with well developed heads, capable of great things, with thin hooked nose, high forehead, great strength of eyebrows, and straight teeth. Their physiognomy was fine and powerful, the stature being frequently over six feet. The women had long wavy hair, of which some well preserved specimens were found. In art and civilization they were in some directions far advanced, in others singularly backward. There was no writing, and their drawing and sculpture were very rude. Metal was well known. Copper chisels and needles were found, and traces of highly carved bed frames with bulls feet. Stone working was a favorite art, abundance of beautifully-formed vases in all varieties of stone being found. In pottery especially these people excelled, their red vases, exquisitely coloured, being in advance of any Egyptian ware. All these were made by hand, the potter's wheel being completely unknown. This showed the rigorous exclusion of the race from the Egyptians, for had they kept some of the latter as slaves, even these would have been sure to have taught them the use of the wheel. Professor Petrie's general conclusion was that the remains had much in common with those of the Amorites in Syria. Both came from the Libyan people inhabiting the North of Africa, who, about the period of the close of the sixth dynasty, threw off two great branches, one of which found its way into Syria, and the other, marching westward, subdued this portion of Egypt of which he had been speaking, had destroyed the inhabitants, but had been unable to make their way further north on account of the determined front presented to them from Memphis. The district they occupied seemed to have been more than a hundred miles in length, opposite to the great Oasis and the Western Oasis.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

Some time ago various newspapers of Europe and America contained the startling intelligence that the star which guided the "Wise Men" would again appear. This star was connected with that celebrated one which, 318 years ago, suddenly disappeared from the constellation of Cassiopeia, and it was found that this star of 1572 had previously appeared in the years 1264 and 945, and—if counted back—must have appeared in the year of the birth of Christ. If these facts were well established, we must certainly expect the star to appear again in our days. We should then see a new body in the heavens, entirely unlike any fixed star, to be seen in full daylight, which would, in a short time, again disappear.

Every astronomer in recent times has asked hundreds of questions on this subject. Is it true that the star of Bethlehem will again appear? Is it periodical? Is its place in the sky appointed? The next question is, What really happened in 1572?

It was a few months after St. Bartholomew's Night. Tycho Brahe, the great observer of those days, tells us that. "One evening, as I was watching the heavens in my accustomed manner, I saw to my great astonishment, in the constellation of Cassiopeia, a brilliant star of unusual clearness." This was on November 11th, 1572. Three days before the star had been seen by Cornelius Gemma, who spoke of it as "this new Venus." In December of the same year, its luster began to wane, and in March, 1573, it had entirely disappeared, leaving no trace. As to the stars of 945 and 1264, we have no authority except that of the Bohemian astrologer, Cyprian Lowitz. No historian mentions them, and the Chinese Chroniclers, who watched all ap-

pearances in the sky with great care, do not speak of them. Even granting the appearance of these stars to have been a fact, their resemblance to the Star of Bethlehem is doubtful. It is true that by counting back we come to the year 630, 315 and 0; but the star should have again appeared some time between 1830 and 1851.

With regard to the Star of Bethlehem there are five assumptions. 1. It had no existence, and the entire statement is a beautiful oriental fairy tale. 2. The fixed star, seen by the Wise Men, was Venus, at the time of its greatest splendor. 3. It was a periodical star like that of 1572. 4. The phenomenon was occasioned by a conjunction of planets. 5. It was a comet. Of these assumptions, the most probable is the second. That it was a periodical star is scarcely likely, for Ptolemy and Ma-tuan-lin would have spoken of it. The fourth statement was suggested in 1826 by the German astronomer Ideler, and repeated by Encke in 1831. In the year 3 B.C., there were conjunctions of the planets, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn, on May 24th, September 3rd and December 5th, but on none of these days were the planets nearer together than a degree, so that the Wise Men must have been very near-sighted to take them for one star. The fifth assumption is also not to be considered, for people already knew how to distinguish a comet from other stars, and besides, we have no knowledge of a comet at that time.

For all these reasons we have not the least occasion to expect the return of the Star of Bethlehem at the close of our century. And even if such a star should appear it would simply be the twenty-sixth such case observed in historical times, and the interest attached to it would be purely astronomical. — *Translated for Public Opinion from the article by Camille Flammarion in the Stuttgart Deutsche Revue.*

A STORY OF A RING.

Travellers in India need to be very wise or very cautious to withstand the persuasions of gem vendors, who besiege them on all sides. Sir William Gregory says that he once met on a steamer a gentleman who wore a very remarkable ring, at which he could not help looking. "I see, sir," said the wearer, "that you are looking at my ring. I bought it in Ceylon. Pray look at it and tell me what you think its value should be." "It is a very finely colored and perfect stone," said Sir William, "but I'm not much of a lapidary, and I could not possibly put a value on it." "Well, make a guess," said the stranger. Sir William remembered a sapphire ring in his own family, which was valued at a hundred pounds, and he guessed the same price for the stone before him. "You are right, sir," said the other. "That was exactly the price demanded for it; but I got it more reasonably. I was on deck when we were leaving Ceylon, and a well-dressed native came up to me and said, mysteriously, 'I have no false jewellery to offer you, sir, but I have come aboard to sell a very fine ring, the property of my brother, who if he does not sell it to-day, will have to go to jail.' He unrolled the ring from one covering of rags after another. 'I want a hundred pounds for it,' said he, 'and its cheap at that.' I said I would not give so much. He insisted on its cheapness. I said I could not consider half that price. We kept on talking, and his price continued to drop until the screw began to move, and the boatswain to cry, 'All strangers ashore.' He turned to me with a look of supplication and said, 'Well, what will you give?' 'What I have in my hand,' said I. It was half a crown. Take the ring," said he. 'May it relieve your brother from going to prison,' was my valedictory salute, as he hurried away. "This is the story of the ring I wear, and I have found that my friend was no loser by the transaction, for the sup-

posed stone is glass, the supposed gold of the setting is brass, and the whole is worth about eight or ten pence."

NATURE'S TEMPLE.

Nature's Temple is not a hueless monotonous structure like the pyramids of Egypt. It is richly decorated. Every stone is painted with fair colours, accurately toned and in perfect harmony. Not a rock that peers above the surface of the earth, but is clothed with the rainbow tints of moss and lichen, and wreathed with the graceful tendrils of fern and wild flower. And when the living hues of plants are absent there is compensation in the bright reflections of the heavens. The mountain ranges of northern Europe are destitute of the emerald verdure of the Alps, but they are covered instead with purple light as with a robe, and gather out of the sky at sunrise and twilight hues softer than the plumage of a dove, and more brilliant than the petals of the rose or violet. Even works of human art are decorated by nature with a picturesque glory of light and colour in keeping with her own landscapes. Like a loving mother she takes back into her bosom the building that man has abandoned, and clothes its garish nakedness with a Joseph's coat of many colours. The castle or the abbey left untenanted falls into ruins; but nature whose profound peace succeeds all strife of man, and whose passive permanency mocks his false perishing creeds—steps in to claim her reversion, and wherever her soft finger touches there new beauties spring up and shame the artist's proudest triumphs. His frescoed walls are obliterated with brighter pictures and nobler lessons of wall flower and peony: and over his sculptured arches and leafy capitals she twines her ivy in shapes of living grace such as no art of man can imitate. *Rev. H. MacMillan, LL.D.*

THE SENSES.

Dr. Alexander Whyte, Edinburgh, has been lecturing recently on the "Holy War." He concludes his lecture on Ear Gate thus: "Shakespeare speaks in 'Richard the Second' of 'the open ear of youth,' and it is a beautiful truth in a beautiful passage. Young men who are still young men, keep your ears open to all truth and to all duty and to all goodness, and shut your ears with an adder's determination against all that which ruined Richard—flattering sounds, reports of fashions, and lascivious metres. 'Our souls would only be gained by the perfection of our bodies were they wisely dealt with,' says Professor Wilson in his 'Five Gateways.' And for every human being we should aim at securing so far as they can be attained, an eye as keen and piercing as that of the eagle; an ear as sensitive to the faintest sound as that of the hare; a nostril as far-scenting as that of the wild-deer; a tongue as delicate as that of a butterfly, and a touch as acute as that of the spider. No man ever was so endowed, and no man ever will be: but all men come infinitely short of what they should achieve were they to make their senses what they might be made. The old have outlived their opportunity, and the diseased never had it; but the young, who have still an undimmed eye, an undulled ear, and a soft hand; an unblunted nostril, and a tongue which tastes with relish the plainest fare—the young can so cultivate their senses as to make the narrowing, which for the old and the infirm encircles things sensible, widen for them into an almost limitless horizon."—*Great Thoughts.*

Rev. Dr. George Matheson, of Edinburgh, when intimating the appearance of his pulpit of Rev. W. J. Macdonald of St. Brycedale Free Church, Kirkcaldy, remarked that by the irony of fate the two most original men he knew were of the Free Church. Mr. Macdonald and Rev. Hugh Black, of Paisley.