

if one has the strength of soul, brings a spirit to us. I feel the blow as I get more distant from it. While she lingered I could not hope for it to last, and now I could crave any of the latest signs of her breathing—a weakness of my flesh. When the mind shall be steadier, I shall have her calmly present—past all tears."

One of the most nobly pathetic things which the book affords is the contrast between the splendid activity, joy in the natural life of youth, and delight in strenuous sensation of the early days, and the deprivation and helplessness and enforced inactivity of old age. Perhaps the most poignant expression of it is to be found in his last letter to Leslie Stephen, then at the point of death. "We who have loved the motion of legs and the sweep of the winds, we come to this. But for myself, I will own that it is the Natural order. There is no irony in Nature." And a month or two earlier he had written, "I find nothing to regret in the going, at my age, and only a laughing snarl as I look about upon the deprivations which make the going easy".

I am of the generation that came too late to know Meredith personally in his prime, and had such veneration for him that the desire to look upon and speak with him was repressed as being too much in the nature of a curiosity shared by the vulgar, and an intrusion upon dignified and sorrowful old age. When I read the passage which I have just quoted I was glad from my heart that I never availed myself of any of the chances that offered to bring myself personally to his notice or invade his solitude. I remember one day in the early Spring of 1904 (and possibly the very day on which that letter to Stephen was written) I was coming down Boxhill beside his cottage and saw the grand, forlorn old figure seated in his donkey chair turning in at the gate of the cottage. I had every excuse to speak to him, for Admiral Maxse had spoken of me to him, and I was one of the last who had seen that old friend of his alive. But a sense of decency and reverence held me back; I looked upon him with awe, as though I had come unawares upon something that should have been sacred, mysterious and veiled. He was of all living men the one I most revered. Half of me longed to go and kneel at his feet; the other half, and what I am glad to think now was a truer instinct and a greater reverence, held me back; and I paused out of his sight till the little procession had turned in at the gate. And I can never be glad enough that I did so, when I think that on that very day he may have written those tragic words, "We—we come to this".

The happiest things that the world gave him were probably his friendships with women, from the devotion of his wife and daughter to the numerous friends that he made in old age, especially among the young and beautiful of the coming generation. Most notable are his letters to Lady Ulrica Baring in her girlhood, to Mrs. Walter Palmer, to Lady Lewis and her daughters, to Mrs. Christopher Wilson, Mrs. Meynell, and his daughter, Mrs. Sturgis, both before and after her marriage. One could fill columns by quoting from them, but they are things to be read in their entirety. One perfect utterance, addressed to Lady Lytton, may, however, be quoted, since it is complete in itself and contains a universal message:

"There is no consolation for a weeping heart. Only the mind can help it, when the showers have passed I might be of use in talking with you. As it is, I do not know how far you have advanced in the comprehension of Life. I can but pray that you may be strengthened to bear what blows befall you, and ask for fortitude. This is the lesson for the young, that whatever the heart clings to lays it open to grief, of necessity in such a world as ours; and whatever the soul embraces gives peace and is permanent. But that comes to us after many battles—or only to the strong mind which does not require them for enlightenment."

It is curious to notice how deep his early unpopularity had bitten into Meredith's soul, so that it was long before he realised the genuine reverence and devotion with which he came to be regarded by a whole

generation of men of letters. Apparently he never believed it until long after it was an accomplished fact; could not understand that the world should really take any interest in him or pay much heed to his voice, even at the time when his teaching and outlook upon life were influencing all that was best in the younger generation. It is consoling to think that he did realise this before he died, and that although he had long outlived the age when recognition or applause could be of much value to him, the address of congratulation on his eightieth birthday did reveal to him unmistakably the place he held in the hearts and esteem of his fellow-men. I think that the final impressions left by this admirable collection of letters on the general reader will be one of profound gratitude to his friends and to those whose task it was more intimately to care for him. He was entirely dependent on them for his human happiness; they stood in place of the larger world; and they fulfilled their privilege and their trust in a manner which, seeing the response it evoked from him, must have been more than its own reward.

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#### LETTERS FROM WILDER SPAIN.

BY COLONEL WILLOUGHBY VERNER.

##### THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE REVISITED.

(In two letters.)

**D**URING the past week I have had staying with me the Abbé Henri Breuil, the famous professor of human palæontology in Paris, whose recent discoveries of rock-paintings in Wales, in company with Professor Sollas, of Oxford, have attracted so much attention. Last spring the Abbé paid me a visit at Algeciras with a view to examine the cave which I described in the *SATURDAY REVIEW* last autumn, and I took advantage of his visit to this country to show him my notes on the explorations we had made together. Since these shed a little light on several of the things which puzzled me, and probably some of my readers also in my former letters, I shall now, with the Abbé's approval, endeavour to describe what we saw.

After the issue of the Annual Report of the College of Surgeons in 1910, in which the bones found in the cave were described "as belonging to a remarkable race of pre-historic man", I received letters from various quarters asking for further particulars. Professor Arthur Keith's references to my cave in his lectures on "The Evolution of Man" in 1910 and his paper on recently discovered remains of pre-historic man which he read before the British Association in 1911 brought me further inquiries. Lastly the articles in the *SATURDAY REVIEW* attracted the attention of others. When, in 1910, I first succeeded in penetrating into the depths of the cave, although I had, like many people, heard of the Bushmen's drawings in South Africa and of certain interesting discoveries in Central France and Northern Spain of a somewhat similar nature, I had never seen a scientific report on the subject. But subsequently I was shown at the British Museum the remarkable sketches and photographs which illustrate the various monographs by the Abbé Henri Breuil on the caverns he had explored during recent years. Foremost among these were the marvellous drawings of bison and other animals in the cave of Altamira near Santander in Northern Spain, published in 1904. From a study of these it was perfectly clear that I had been fortunate enough to hit upon what might possibly prove to be a useful link in the history of the mysterious race of rock-artists who have left records of their skill in such widely separated points on the earth's surface as Western Siberia, France, Northern Spain, Oran in Northern Africa, the Sahara, and last and strangest of all, near the Cape of Good Hope.

Of peculiar interest to me was a remark I came across in one account of these cave drawings in France to the effect that no doubt some day the pre-historic race who drew the pictures would be traced through Spain and across the Straits of Gibraltar to the caves in Northern

Africa. For my subsequent discovery in the Serrania of Ronda, some five hundred miles south of Santander and about half that distance west of Oran, was a proof of the accuracy of this forecast. Since 1910 similar discoveries near Albacete, some three hundred miles east of my cave, have forged yet another link in the chain of communication from Périgucux in France to Algiers.

From all I read it seemed that without question the proper person to explore my cave and form a just opinion of the value of its contents was the Abbé Breuil. It was therefore with no little satisfaction that last November I received a letter from M. Breuil, written from the Institut de Paléontologie in Paris, saying he would much like to visit my cave and asking me if I would conduct him thither. Before many days I had arranged for the Abbé to come to me in the spring.

Mindful of the difficulties I had experienced in gaining access to the cave on former occasions owing to the lack of suitable appliances, I impressed upon the Abbé the importance of having plenty of ropes and some rope-ladders, and this more especially since I was naturally unaware of the degree of proficiency in rock climbing possessed by him and his companions.

So it came about that in the middle of March the Abbé arrived at Algeciras, having been engaged in examining a series of recently discovered rock-shelters near Albacete, Velez Blanco and Jaen, on his way from Paris. With him came Dr. Hugo Obermaier, a Bavarian savant, also a professor at the Institut de Paléontologie of Paris, and Señor Juan Cabré, from Madrid. Cabré is a most skilful young artist and photographer, who has already done much excellent work with the Abbé in various caverns and rock-shelters in other parts of Spain.

On 20 March we started on our expedition and established ourselves in a small house within two hours' march of the cave. There had been unusually heavy rains and floods in Andalusia during the months of January and February, the actual rainfall in the Sierras, where we proposed to work, having been over thirty inches between 1 January and 1 March. Hence I was fully prepared to find the caves extremely wet, but here we were agreeably surprised, for we found them considerably drier than on any previous occasion when I had visited them. Our equipment was complete. For climbing we had one rope-ladder of 50 feet, two of 40 feet, and 160 feet of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Alpine rope, also plenty of spare rope and stout cod-line. For lighting up the caverns we had brought six acetylene lamps, and for photographing the pictures two half-plate cameras and the necessary appliances for colour photography. Also we had 300 mètres of tracing paper wherewith to obtain accurate impressions of the marvellous drawings. It took some time to convey this mass of equipment and stores up the 300 feet of steep broken rocks which, after we had unloaded our donkeys, separated us from the entrance to the cave.

Throughout the process of rigging up our ladders and ropes it was interesting and instructive to compare the actual heights and depths as well as the widths of the subterranean ravines and gullies, as now ascertained by the inexorable accuracy of ladder-lengths and fathoms of cordage, with the estimated dimensions made two years before, when all that lay before us was unknown and wrapped in the profound gloom of the shadows of the crags. And here a surprise awaited me. Thus what I had described as a "clear drop of twenty feet" from the "window" to the first landing-stage below took over thirty feet of rope-ladder, whilst the second precipice at the end of the steep slope below it required the whole forty feet of our second ladder.

Having crossed the ravine and reached the foot of the opposite cliff, we soon got a line up it, with the aid of which we rigged up our third ladder. Here again we found a fifty-foot ladder none too long to enable us to climb a crag I had estimated to be forty feet. We now passed a cod-line from the "window" to the summit of the cliff we were on, and hauled across our long Alpine rope and made fast the end to a great mass of stalagmite, which I described as "a natural bollard"

in my second letter of last autumn. We found to our surprise that the total width from the "window" to the entrance of the gallery where we stood took about one hundred feet of rope, or about double what I had reckoned the span to be in the dim uncertain light last year.

Once the line was across it was a simple matter to slip on a block and traveller and thus establish a flying bridge. The rest was easy enough; all the weighty cameras, tripods, acetylene lamps, tins of carbide, extra ropes and other accessories were quickly run across the deep gully, which at the actual point of passage is over seventy feet in depth, and before long we had assembled the whole party at the entrance to the gallery leading to the main series of caverns containing the pictures.

As it is the intention of the Abbé Breuil to publish an illustrated monograph on the pictures and symbols we saw in these caverns, I shall confine myself here to describing the general explorations of the cave and to giving a few explanations of matters which perplexed me sorely on the occasions of my earlier visits, and which may perhaps equally have perplexed those who read my letters.

It is superfluous to dilate upon the intense fascination of visiting such an extraordinary place with a man possessed of the Abbé's knowledge and experience, and I will merely say that his explanations of some of the most mysterious of the problems which had presented themselves in former visits were as ready as they were simple and as simple as they were convincing. Thus the curious rings and circular pits of clean flaked limestone which I had noticed in the arched roofs of the caverns and galleries, which may be described as inverted "pot-holes", he ascribed to water action in remote ages and to torrential water action. With regard to the vexed problem as to how people could see to draw the mystic signs and pictures in spots where it was quite certain no glimmer of light could ever enter, he was positive that the draughtsmen must have had artificial light, "and good lights too", and he assured me that his many explorations in other similar caverns had led him to this conclusion. He justly ridiculed the fantastic theory that these pre-historic races could "see in the dark", as has been lightly advanced by some, and pointed out the absurdity of such an idea. He admitted that wild animals and certain wild tribes can, no doubt, see far better than can we when the light is bad, but that is a totally different matter from "seeing in the dark". As to the signification of the weird marks and "letras", he could give no opinion. But he had met with very similar ones in other caverns and rock-shelters, and in some instances they bore signs of being the earlier forms or indications of drawings of a more complete nature.

With reference to the pigments employed, he agreed that the black was some preparation from charcoal, and that the red and the yellow were some forms of ochre. But what I had described as "slate-blue" he pointed out to me was really black which had been coated with a crystallised lime deposit and thus acquired a somewhat blue tint. With this one exception he gave his approval to all that I had written last year, which naturally was extremely gratifying.

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### THREE TALES.

BY LORD DUNSANY.

I.—FURROW-MAKER.

HE was all in black, but his friend was dressed in brown—members of two old families.

"Is there any change in the way you build your houses?" said he in black.

"No change", said the other. "And you?"

"We change not", he said.

A man went by in the distance riding a bicycle.

"He is always changing", said the one in black, "of late almost every century. He is uneasy. Always changing."

Command; and when the play was done Charles Kean courteously sent to congratulate him. Macready's answer was that all messages must be sent to him through his solicitor. Apropos of this same Royal performance we read in his diary that on receiving the Royal order he "intimated" to the Queen's messenger that if he was to play for two nights it must be in some other character than Hotspur.

But the occasion of this article is less Macready the actor than Macready the man, as revealed in the celebrated diaries.\* Putting aside the interest of these remarkable pages as throwing light upon life and letters in the period between 1830 and 1850, they are a really amazing study of the prig in difficulties. Macready was a born moralist, and his distemper was aggravated by his profession, and the thoroughness with which his practice frequently contradicted his principles. "Reflected", he writes 6 August 1833, "on Bulwer's recommendation of kicking as a cure for calumny. I look calmly and dispassionately on the irrationality of such reprisals. . . . Where an insult is offered you by an unworthy person, your best triumph is an exhibition of utter indifference; the sting is harmless, if the flesh it wounds is not in an inflammatory state." This was Macready who took his infamous manager, Mr. Bunn, by the throat in '36; and filled London with placards of the "Age": "Great Fight: B—nn and M—y". Oh, the anguish that followed! "My character as a gentleman is fallen from its high estate", he moans; and later he breaks into the following lament: "What may be the further result of this most miserable forgetfulness of decency, pride, and station on my part I cannot tell; but, if it were for ourselves to judge of the proportioning punishment to crime, I should be disposed to say my sufferings have exceeded my offence. I know, however, that it is not so—that the great law of morality fits the torture to the crime, and I, at the age I have reached—My God! My God! Can I ever be forgiven? Can I ever think without sickening shame of my *insane* conduct? Forgive me, oh my God! And you, my blessed and beloved children, pity while you condemn this intemperate ebullition of your unhappy parent, who has so deeply sunk his own reputation and thereby prejudiced your interests". Here is the real agony of a proud, fastidious man, the fervour of whose cry alone redeems it. A prig of so tragic an intensity is very rarely a great man. Macready never laid violent hands upon his managers and critics after this; but he was no wiser in accepting and aggravating a quarrel. We must partly lay to his account the unhappy seventeen citizens of New York shot down in the riot from which Macready barely escaped with his life. Yet he was full to the end of wise maxims and bitter repentance for violence and passion.

Needless to say, Macready was the perfect husband and father. His happiest hours were at home. His love for his wife and children was as intense as his remorse for Mr. Bunn. Away on tour in April 1835 he hears of a slight illness at home, and writes: "Received a letter from dearest Catherine telling of darling Willie's head. The news quite struck me down, making me quite faint and sick". On this same tour, as often happened in spite of his near escape from positive ugliness, he was troubled with the advances of a lady. "This evening", he writes, "I was surprised with a billet-doux, which ought to have found its way to the fire before me, instead of suggesting amusement to my vanity and curiosity. It is harder for a player to be a wise man than for most of his fellow creatures." Macready does not seem once to have yielded to, or even felt, the temptation to be faithless. On the moral character of the stage in his day he writes with wisdom and candour: "It is not my thought or wish to throw a stone at frailty; but I feel the slang of the Press on the unimportance of private character to a performer to be as false in fact as it is disgusting in principle. All are so far honest or hypo-

critical as to render virtue homage by applauding it in a theatre; and what mind of common decency but must feel pain at listening to asseverations of purity, sentiments of delicacy, and solemn protestations of truth and fidelity, which Heaven is called to witness and record, from a wanton's lips?"

Macready's care and conscience in the practice of his profession were undoubted. He seemed perfectly to know that he lacked the dæmonic genius of Kean; but he easily outdistanced every contemporary in the intellectual quality of his interpretations. He had to a wonderful degree the power of self-criticism. Few days are allowed to pass in the diaries without his own dry and impartial comment upon his performance of the evening. These criticisms are inhumanly detached. Opening the diaries at random we read: "Acted Macbeth to a very fair house, but indifferently; there was a want of self-possession in the performance that caused an exuberance of physical effort which never can have a proper effect when perceptible to an audience. There were precipitation and stress throughout". Macready, by continually watching himself in this critical manner, was continually improving. He seems to have left little to instinct or inflation. He disdained to act merely from a full stomach: "Rose late", we read in the diaries, "and omitted dinner in order to have my powers more at command during my performance". All was carefully read and prepared, even his "bursts". He brought to his study of great parts a mind stored from the best books, classical and modern. He was a great reader; and he narrowly observed men and women. Had he looked upon them less as the opportunity for moral reflexions, he would have better profited from his observation. Always he was a moralist first; anything else afterwards. He moralised not only upon great matters, as when he fell so furiously upon Mr. Bunn. Any little mistake or incident of the road might serve. Thus we read in the diaries: "I gave too much to the porter at the coach; this is a very silly fault, and a wrong to any poor creature that may need one's charity". When Macready lay too long in bed in the morning, he would walk to town as a penance, "redeeming part of the day from general censure by using it in the wholesome exercise of the body". This is an exasperating, but not altogether an unlovable man; and in the bulky diaries, covering nearly twenty years of his active life, we may know him even better than we know Johnson—almost as well as we know Pepys.

#### LETTERS FROM WILDER SPAIN.

BY COLONEL WILLOUGHBY VERNER.

#### THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE REVISITED.

(Second and concluding letter.)

AMONG the many problems which had confronted me when exploring the cave during the last two years was the presence of such enormous masses of broken pottery in certain branches of it. These fragments were not strewn broadcast, but were to be found in heaps amid the deep wet soil of the slopes adjacent to some of the subterranean pools in the lower portions of the galleries or branches of the larger caves. Although the vast majority of the broken fragments we came across gave but little idea of the size or shape of the vessels of which they had once formed a part, now and again we found a portion of the lip or the shoulder of a jar, and from these, as well as from fragments in which were pierced handles capable of carrying a rope, it was possible to reconstruct roughly the form of the originals. These jars must have been of two sizes and roughly spherical in shape, with diameters of ten to fourteen inches, and necks two to four inches high and five to seven inches wide, and must have been capable of holding two to five gallons, weighing when filled twenty-five to fifty pounds. We found the remains of some of these in recesses near the pools, placed in a manner suggestive of collecting water as it dropped from the limestone crags above. These large jars

\* "The Diaries of William Charles Macready." Edited by William Toynbee. Two vols. London: Chapman and Hall, 1912. 21s. net.

were all of rough brown pottery. There were also remains of smaller ones, evidently used as drinking-cups,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches deep. These were in black pottery and very much thinner. All these signs pointed to the fact that at some prehistoric period these caverns had been used for collecting and storing water. Probably enough in those remote times an adequate water supply in these desolate hill-tops ranked high among the wants of the inhabitants, and it would be easy to imagine occasions, during wars, for example, when women and children, and likely enough the men also, might have sought safety in the remote recesses of these intricate caverns, when a good store of water would be absolutely indispensable. At any rate, as the Abbé Breuil aptly remarked, no men would carry such heavy earthenware jars about these slippery crags in the darkness "pour s'amuser"! Hence there can be little doubt that pre-historic man was in the habit of "laying down" a good supply of water much as his latter-day descendants, if they are wise, fill their cellars with wine. This pottery is, in the opinion of experts who have seen fragments of it, of a very much later date than are the wall-paintings and the human bones, and it has been ascribed to some re-occupation of the cave, possibly in the Bronze Age, since the style of the pottery is similar to that known to be of the Bronze period. The Abbé gave his opinion that the pottery, although pre-historic, undoubtedly belonged to an age long subsequent to that when the first occupants of the cave existed. He also called my attention to the significant fact that in the more remote caves, where we found both human and animal remains, there was no broken pottery, save in a single instance. This was one of these small drinking-cups, which was found by us in such dramatic circumstances that they may be worth recording. In one of the smaller branches of the lower cave, and within about eighty yards of the spot where I had found most of the earliest human remains, an enormous mass of rock had become detached from the roof above and fallen on a heap of lesser rocks below in such a manner as nearly to fill up the whole chamber, leaving at places only the narrowest passages between it and the surrounding walls. The Abbé took one side of this mass of wall and I the other, examining as usual, with the aid of our acetylene lamps, every cave and cranny for human remains, and every smooth piece of rock for "letras" or drawings.

The big central mass, which measured perhaps twenty feet by thirty feet, was at places perched on other fallen masses, leaving small sinuous passages between them, often too small to enter and at other places only a foot or two in height. Crawling and worming ourselves through these, when almost exactly under the centre of the great mass of fallen rock we reached opposite ends of a small pool of clear water, less than a foot in depth. The Abbé called to me to come to his side, and, crawling round through the soft wet mud and shallow puddles to where he was crouching, he showed me a small black bowl placed on a rock alongside the deepest part of the pool, obviously by somebody who had been in the habit of drinking there. On trying to lift the cup we found it had become attached to the stalagmite formation, and in fact formed part of it on one side. In his attempt to detach it, he was fain to break off and leave a large fragment behind. This cup is now in the British Museum.

Naturally enough, the point upon which I was most anxious to obtain the Abbé's opinion was on the general accuracy of the "readings" which I and my companions had given of the drawings of animals, reptiles, and much else. As might be expected, we found a considerable difference when we examined these drawings with brilliant acetylene lamps compared with our previous inspections of them by candles and small lanterns. One of the first things we now saw was that in many places there were a series of pictures, one on the top of another, obviously drawn at different periods, and this alone accounted for the

difficulty that we had found, and that everybody will always find, in deciphering many of these ancient wall paintings. Thus it was that where, to my unpractised eye, I saw only one drawing before me, he demonstrated that I was looking sometimes at no less than four, superimposed one on another, a red on a yellow, a black on a red, and at places some rough rock-carving over all. The Abbé assured me that this habit of drawing one picture on top of an earlier one was to be seen in almost every place he had visited, notably in the famous caves of Altamira. He then, with wonderful skill, picked out the general outline of one picture thus drawn on top of another, indicating with his finger the shape and form of certain lines which to the uninitiated conveyed so little. Rapid as were his movements, and difficult as were some of these indications to follow, it was marvellous how, out of the seeming chaos of black, red and yellow markings on the fissured and stained rocks, he would create an animal, and how, when once he had done so, it stood out from all else around it, clear and unmistakable. It all seemed so plain when he thus made it clear to me. In some instances he showed me where I had misread a drawing owing to this confusion of figures, but he instantly identified every drawing we came across from the sketch made by me during the last two years, which I had shown him prior to our visit.

Especially interesting was his reading of the drawing which I had likened to that of some great aquatic reptile or Plesiosaur, of which a rough sketch was given in the SATURDAY REVIEW. This, under the bright light now cast upon it, resolved itself into two or possibly three super-imposed pictures, the main features of which were a big horned beast about four or five feet in length with a huge serpent over twelve feet long drawn along its back, the two combining to make the uncanny creature with long projecting neck and tail which had puzzled us so much. We got good photographs of these, as well as a tracing of the whole rock surface, which the Abbé intends to reproduce in his monograph. Perhaps, however, the most interesting of the Abbé Breuil's explanations was why the best and most elaborate drawings were made in small caverns difficult of access and hidden away in unlikely corners. This particularly applied to the small cavern with the mass of drawings which I described in my fifth letter last year. He is convinced that this place and others of a like nature were selected by pre-historic man for the very reason of their remoteness and consequent privacy, and were of the nature of a "sanctuary" or "holy place" of sorts which were not to be seen every day or by everybody. When asked whether he imagined that the cave-dwellers often visited such places, he replied, "Probably, now and again, at intervals, much as some people go to church".

As already stated, we found the caves very dry this year, whilst at other times there had been continuous streams and small cascades of water dropping from the roof. Another local change we observed was of a totally different nature. Upon reaching the famous gallery where we had first discovered the pictures we became aware of the fact that since our last visit others had penetrated into the cave. For on the smooth pale yellow rock surface of the arched roof, almost immediately above some of the most interesting of these marvellous drawings, and surrounded by others which had thus endured for countless thousands of years, we found fresh marks obviously made by the greasy smoke from candles. That these were not accidental was proved by a name of four nine-inch letters drawn with candle soot. True, we were seeking for traces of the handiwork of pre-historic savages, but this new discovery was beyond words. Well did the Abbé remark, "Vraiment, c'est brutal, c'est un véritable sauvage"! To which sentiment, I feel well assured, all who read this, save the savage himself and his miserable companions, will agree. Subsequent inquiries have proved that "the savage" hailed from Gibraltar, and that, in defiance of my earnest request that the place might be left untouched until I could arrange for its proper exploration by scientific men (a request which, I may add,

had been most chivalrously observed by others who were most anxious to view its wonders), he had elected to follow up my trail and commit this gross act of vandalism. The shame that one feels that such a thing could be done by a fellow countryman is at least mitigated, for me, in that the culprit was not a British officer. It is some consolation to add that the Abbé has been at great trouble to remove these traces of modern barbarism, and that he has succeeded in doing so without in any way damaging the pre-historic drawings which they defiled so wantonly. But the name of the criminal will endure for all time, for the Abbé found it cut deep in the surface of a sheet of rock in another part of the cavern!

Since it was important to ascertain the actual extent and form of the many ramifications of the cavern, I undertook the task of making a rough survey of it, and with the aid of a compass to observe directions and a long "garrocha", or bull-herd's stick, to measure distances and heights, I completed this in about three days. In the course of this work several very interesting facts were ascertained; the most important being that in bygone ages there had been unquestionably easy access to the cavern at a point over a hundred yards from the present entrance. This was demonstrated beyond doubt, an external cavern about thirty-five feet in depth almost meeting one of the long subterranean caverns, the mass of rock separating the two being only a few feet in thickness, and both passages being almost on the same level. Here Professor Obermeier and Señor Cabré set to work vigorously to dig down and endeavour to recover some trace of the ancient passage, but without avail. But in this work they came across several neolithic implements, bone arrowheads and borers, and a mass of broken red pottery with ornamented patterns, neither of which we had found hitherto. Some idea of the extent of the caverns may be gathered from the fact that their linear measurements amounted to over one thousand yards. Their vertical range was not great, the lowest portion where I found the dwarf's bones being only about one hundred and fifty feet below the entrance, whilst the highest portions were not much more than eighty feet above it.

The net results of our explorations this year were thus the determining of the limits of the cavern by following up every branch until barred by masses of stalagmite or rock. At the very furthest extremity we came upon a circular shaft about twenty feet across and not less than a hundred and fifty feet in depth, judging from the time taken by falling stones to reach water at the bottom.

Among fresh drawings discovered the most remarkable were those of some huge fish, one over five feet in length, drawn in black with remarkable vigour and showing a peculiar tail with a sharp pointed upper fluke and a rounded lower fluke like the rudder of a sailing lifeboat.

We also came across many traces of the occupation of the caverns in pre-historic days by the long-extinct cave bear. The Abbé had described to me how these beasts were wont to leave the marks of their claws on the walls of the caves where they dwelt, since they were in the habit of feeling their way in the total darkness, and he had assured me that we should find traces of them where the passages were narrow or tortuous. And so it proved, for we came upon many of their claw-marks in bunches of "fives". At one place they were some seven feet above the floor of the cavern, evidence of the size and reach of these beasts. But what impressed me more than all else I had seen in this mysterious cave, more than the bones of the dwarfs or the weird symbols or even the wonderful drawings, was the fact that at places these sharply cut claw-marks had, without question or any possible doubt, been made by the bears at some time subsequent to the days when the artists had been at work. For there unmistakably before our eyes we saw these ancient drawings in black sharply cut across and at places obliterated by the claws of these wild beasts, who disappeared

from the face of the earth ages ago. Had these claw-marks been made by bears during any known period of our history the Abbé assured me that we should also have found similar traces of the brutes on the floor of the cavern wherever there were more recent surfaces of rock. But of such marks there were none, which he declared was proof positive that the marks we saw were made in pre-historic times. As I looked at these weird evidences of the presence of savage beasts in these remote depths in the heart of the mountain I recalled the words of Professor Sollas, in his fascinating book on "Ancient Hunters", when he describes how a traveller in these unrecorded ages of our earth's existence who ventured to take shelter in a cave "might encounter the terrible cave bear, larger than any existing species, or an animal still more terrible, no other than man himself!"

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### "COON-CAN."

By W. DALTON.

IT has been quite interesting, and somewhat amusing, to read the various far-fetched theories which have been published in sundry newspapers, during the last few months, as to the origin of the so-called "new" card game of Coon-Can, and particularly as to the derivation of the name. The popular idea seems to be that the game was recently invented in America, and that it was called Coon-Can because any "coon can" play it. This explanation of the name is distinctly ingenious, although hopelessly wrong. Then one writer indulged in flights of fancy of his own, and attempted to give a sort of Eastern flavour to the game by spelling it "Kuhn-Kahn", and he actually published a short treatise on it under that title. Yet another writer endeavoured to work up a connexion between the game of Coon-Can and an improper French dance of the last generation known as the "Can-Can". I need hardly say that one and all of these theories are mere guesswork, and very wide of the mark.

The modern game of Coon-Can is nothing more nor less than an adaptation of the old Spanish game of Conquian—derived from the Spanish word Conquien—"with whom". The game was taken over by the Spaniards to Mexico, where it is largely played at the present time under the slightly altered name of "Conquain".

Mexico was the real home of the game, but it soon spread to the neighbouring American States, especially Texas, where it has become a sort of standard card game. From Texas it no doubt spread to other States, but, as far as I know, it never became popular in the Eastern States, and certainly it never did so in New York. The fact that no American text-book on the game, and no authorised code of laws, was ever published, proves conclusively that it was never taken up by the New York clubs.

As regards the name, the transition from Conquain to Coon-Can is so obvious that no historical research is necessary to explain how it came about.

We have no record as to when, or by whom, Coon-Can was first introduced into England. It made its first bow to the public at the Bath Club in Dover Street. It would seem that the card-playing members of the Bath Club, like the Corinthians of old, are ever on the look-out for some new thing. To them we owe the introduction of Auction Bridge into England. Now we are indebted to them for Coon-Can, and who can say what further benefits—or the reverse—they may have in store for us.

Coon-Can took some time to become generally known in England. It was played for a short time at the Portland Club for high points, but then the committee stepped in and decided, quite rightly, that it was a gambling game and opposed to the rules of the club, and it was promptly forbidden. It was also seriously played for a time at the Travellers' Club in Paris, but there it died a speedy and natural death. It has really no pretensions to rank as a club game—that is, as a