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3. Celtic Sword Blades.

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Finally, is Mrs. Langloh Parker a reporter capable of refraining from asking leading questions, colouring what she is told, and so on? Let me call attention to the following passage (p. 79): "Though we may say that actually these people have " but two attempts at prayers, one at the grave and one at the inner Boorah ring, " I think, perhaps, we are wrong. These two seem the only ones directly addressed " to Byamee. But perhaps it is his indirect aid which is otherwise wished. Daily " set prayers *seem to them* a foolishness and an insult, rather than otherwise, to " Byamee. He knows; why weary him by repetition, disturbing the rest he enjoys " after his earth labours?" The italics are mine. To me this seems a bad case of colouring. Or else the *Euahlayi* have been proselytised. R. R. MARETT.

Archæology.

Lang.

Celtic Sword Blades. *By Andrew Lang.*

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In *L'Anthropologie* (May-August, 1906, pp. 342-358) M. Salomon Reinach presents a new interpretation of a strange Greek passage on the badness of Celtic iron. The passage (Polybius, ii., 33) is familiar to all. The author describes the victory of the Consul, C. Flaminius, over the Insubres, in 223. The Gauls, he says, used large iron swords, which bent at the first stroke, and were useless if the warrior had not time to straighten them with his foot against the ground. The Roman officers therefore gave to their front rank the pikes of the *triarii*; the Celtic swords doubled up against the pikes, and the Romans gave the point with their swords. Polybius does not say that these tactics were adopted in any other battle.

The story is puzzling, for the Gauls had long been in the age of iron, yet it seems that they would have found bronze more serviceable than pointless sword blades of bad iron.

Plutarch, in his *Camillus*, represents the Celtic swords as equally bad more than a century earlier; Camillus therefore arms the Romans in harness of iron. Plutarch may follow Polybius, or may have erred for the same reason as M. Reinach supposes Polybius to have done. Modern authors have credited Livy with a similar statement, but there is no such passage in Livy. If Plutarch merely follows Polybius, Polybius is the only authority for the badness of Celtic iron.

In 1774 a captain of cavalry, de Segrain, remarked that Polybius must be speaking of a single occasion, for a people like the Gauls would not have conquered far and wide, and resisted Rome so long, with such worthless weapons. The fact would be impossible, unless the iron of other races were equally bad; and if it were, why did these races abandon the use of bronze?

The explanation of M. Reinach is that Polybius, though he was "an historian of the first rank," and though he was born only eight years after the battle which he describes, introduced a mere ætiological myth. It was common to destroy the objects buried with the dead man—to *kill* them as he was killed—perhaps to set the spirits of the objects free that they might accompany the spirit of their dead owner. Many doubled-up Celtic swords are found in graves. The hypothesis is that people finding these spoiled swords in tombs supposed that they had been spoiled in battle, and that their doubling up thus caused the defeat of their owners. But doubled-up *bronze* spear-heads are common in graves, and no myth avers that *they* were spoiled in battle. Again, all the grave goods would equally be injured, not the swords alone.

Polybius, being confessedly an historian in the first rank, can scarcely have adopted an ætiological myth, supposed to have been evolved in his own time, and introduced it, as a matter of fact, with an account of a corresponding change in Roman tactics, into his description of a single battle. If he had no literary source of information, being born in 215, he would learn as much about this battle from the talk of his seniors as a man born in 1753 would gather from survivors about

the battle of Culloden, fought in 1746. But he had a literary source, in Fabius Pictor, who had fought in the Gallic war.

There is a passage descriptive of a battle of about A.D. 1000, in the Eyrbyggja saga, in which a hero has to straighten a beautiful sword of bad metal, with his foot, whenever the blade strikes on armour. Is *this* borrowed from Polybius? If Polybius really introduced a perfectly new myth, with fanciful details, into his history of an event perhaps forty years old when he wrote, his character as a first class historian is totally lost. Herodotus did nothing so fantastic.

M. Reinach finds the rapid evolution of the myth curious "in the full light of history and from the pen of so great an historian as Polybius," and it is no less curious that the doubled-up spear heads of bronze, found in tombs, did not generate a similar fable, while no myth arose from the other broken grave goods which, as M. Reinach says, were brought to Rome from Corinth.

The passage in Polybius remains a puzzle, and certainly should not be advanced as proof that Celtic iron sword blades were universally execrable.

ANDREW LANG.

Archæology: Pyrenees.

Cartailhac.

Les mains rouges et noires de la grotte de Gargas. By E. **4**
Cartailhac.

La grotte de Gargas, commune d'Aventignan, Hautes-Pyrénées, est bien connue. Sa situation au voisinage de Montréjeau et de Luchon la rend accessible à tous les touristes. M. Félix Regnault, de Toulouse, y a recueilli à diverses reprises d'admirables spécimens de la grande faune quaternaire, notamment des ours de tailles diverses, des hyènes, une panthère, un loup qui ont enrichi le museum de Paris et que M. Albert Gaudry et M. Boule ont décrits.

Plus récemment M. F. Regnault a exploré un large foyer, depuis longtemps entrevu, qui lui a livré des vestiges fort intéressants du séjour de l'habitant primitif de la vaste caverne. M. l'abbé Breuil et moi nous avons pu examiner ces trouvailles et reconnaître que cette station humaine est l'une des plus anciennes des Pyrénées. Elle correspond à cette ample période post-moustiérienne qui comprend le facies d'Aurignac et dont l'importance est plus considérable qu'on ne le supposait naguère.

M. Regnault dans une récente visite à la grotte eut son attention attirée par quelques traces rouges sur un point de la paroi. Il constata que c'était un groupe de mains et s'empressa de signaler cette découverte à la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris.

Averti par M. Regnault et sa communication ayant informé le public, je me suis empressé d'aller observer le fait nouveau dans une grotte qui est propriété communale, louée à un fermier toujours à la disposition des visiteurs.

Le fait était naturellement exact et très curieux. Mais ma surprise fut grande et ma joie peu ordinaire de constater que, dès l'entrée, le pourtour de la grande galerie principale offrait de nombreuses traces semblables.

La grotte de Gargas apparaissait comme une des plus remarquables de la série des cavernes ornées de peintures. Ses peintures offrent une physionomie exceptionnelle. Elles complètent nos connaissances sur l'art et les mœurs des paléolithiques dans une mesure très inattendue, comme M. l'abbé Breuil et moi nous essayerons de l'exposer dans une notice qui suivra notre publication sur la grotte de Marsoulas (Haute-Garonne).

Les mains de la grotte de Gargas ne sont pas uniquement rouges, bon nombre sont noires et dans plusieurs groupes on voit des unes et des autres rapprochées systématiquement, semble-t-il.