

basin was not excavated during the greatest extension of the ice-sheet, which, as shown by the striæ on the higher ground, passed directly across the valley. But in the bottom of the valley the striæ point up the lake, and this fact makes it probable that the excavation of the basin was the work of local ice, in other words, that it dates from a time when the valley-glaciers had ceased to coalesce. The islands near the upper end of the lake are wrought out of hard Corniferous sandstone and Water-lime exposed on the crown of the Cincinnati anticline. This hard barrier, Prof. Newberry believes, opposed an obstinate resistance to the passage of the glacier, and was consequently left in comparative relief.

The Ohio geologists without exception appear to be sub-aërialists, and indeed, the scenery of the State—such as it is—could hardly admit of any other explanation. It would not be easy to connect valleys of some hundreds of feet in depth with faults of less than a yard.

Of the palæontology of the Reports, we need only say that it is a remarkable proof of the enthusiasm, energy, and success of the late Prof. Meek and the naturalists who assisted him, several of them without any compensation. The publication of the Survey as a whole marks an epoch in culture as well as in material progress, in which all the well-wishers of the State must rejoice.

OUR BOOK SHELF

History of Nepāl. Translated from the Parbatīyā, by Munshi Shero Shunker Singh and Pandit Shri Gunānand. With an Introductory Sketch of the Country and People of Nepāl, by the Editor, Daniel Wright, M.A., M.D. (London, Cambridge Warehouse; Cambridge, Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1877.)

THE Cambridge University Press have done well in publishing this work. Such translations are valuable not only to the historian but also to the ethnologist; perhaps more so to the latter than the former, as the very myths with which a people are apt to adorn their own history may become, in the hands of a cunning ethnologist, a clue to their racial connections. Dr. Wright's Introduction is based on personal inquiry and observation, is written intelligently and candidly, and adds much to the value of the volume. The coloured lithographic plates are interesting.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

The First Swallow at Menton

THE first swallow arrived here alone in the rain on Monday, March 19. It entered the best room of the *curé* by one of the windows which chanced to want a pane, and the good old man immediately removed a pane from the other window, by which the swallows have been in the habit of going in and out. I did not hear of the arrival of this summer resident until the 23rd, when I immediately paid it a visit. It is still solitary but not uncomfortable; it flits about the room from place to place, and from nest to nest, twittering very contentedly; and when a bright hour comes it flies out, where, sporting in the sun it soon makes a hearty meal. But it has arrived decidedly too soon, for it has found as yet mostly wet and rather cold days with snow-covered mountains for its immediate surrounding. Such, however, is the climate of this place, difficult to conceive by untravelled Englishmen, that I at this moment bask outside in the sun, soothed by the singing of birds, surrounded by flowers and butterflies, and the green trees with their golden fruits. I am in

the midst of summer, and yet I have but to turn my head, and there, close at hand, are the mountains white with snow.

The coldest weather we have had this winter began with this month. The only time I have seen ice was on the morning of March 1. (On the preceding night, I see by a letter to NATURE, vol. xv. p. 399, that the thermometer at the Stonyhurst Observatory went down to 9° F., the lowest temperature there recorded during the last sixteen years.) That morning, cheated by the serene stillness and the bright sunshine, I, before getting out of bed, resolved to make a journey to the sea-side—a distance of about three miles. A lunch was immediately packed up and the donkey of the *curé* borrowed for the occasion. As soon as I descended into the valley—Cabrolles, consisting of some dozen houses, all the dwellings of peasants, and hung on the mountain side like so many birds' cages or birds' nests on the back wall of a court, open only to the south, is 300 feet above the level of the sea, and enjoys a climate superior to that of the much-vaunted Menton. I am, however, the first *étranger* who has ventured to brave the isolation, the inconvenience, and want of accommodation.—Well, as I have said, on descending into the valley, a change of temperature suggested that it would be preferable to have my Italian cloak around me, instead of carrying it before me on the donkey. Proceeding a little farther, I saw with astonishment large quantities of ice in the torrent, and in turns of the road looking northward, icicles, thick as my arm—which, however, is one of the thinnest—hanging from the rocks. Still I went forward quite irrationally, carried along solely by the force of the impetus with which I started, for, as I approached Menton, I had to make way in the face of a biting cold wind. But I would certainly have shivered over my cold lunch among the rocks or ruins at Cap Martin, had not my progress received a check at Menton, in the for the moment irritating discovery that the key of the provision-bag had been, I may now say providentially, lost. I accepted the hospitality of a kind English clergyman, who gave me a nice warm lunch, after which I slowly wound my way back to my mountain retreat, where I dwell almost as completely removed from the winter visitants of these shores as is the now lonely swallow from its companions, the summer visitants, which have not unwisely made a halt somewhere by the way.

After this long digression I must return for a moment to the swallows of Cabrolles. They live in the rooms with the people, attaching their nests generally to the beam which supports the ceiling. On their arrival, whether it be by night or by day, they enter at once and take possession of their old habitations. Madame Valetta, an old woman of seventy-three, has two or three times given me a graphic account of how, when she was a young woman and had her husband by her side, they were both frightened almost to death one night by something which from time to time gave a flap-flap against the glass of the window. Madame, however, summoned courage to urge her husband to get up and open the window, which, though "all of a shake," he did, when whish! very like a spirit, a weary swallow glided past him and was the same instant peacefully reposing in its nest.

DOUGLAS A. SPALDING

Cabrolles, près de Menton, France,
March 24

Coal Fields of Nova Scotia

IN his address to the Iron and Steel Institute (NATURE, vol. xv., p. 462), Dr. Siemens stated that the area of the Coal Fields of Nova Scotia was 18,000 square miles, and the production in 1874 1,052,000 tons. If Dr. Siemens will refer to Dr. Dawson's "Acadian Geology," the Reports of the "Canadian Government Geologists," and Brown's "Coal Fields and Coal Trade of Cape Breton," he will find that he has greatly overstated the area of the Nova Scotia Coal Fields. From these sources, which I believe are perfectly reliable, I make out that the whole area of the Nova Scotia Coal Fields does not amount to 1,000 square miles, distributed over the following counties:—

	Square Miles.
Cumberland	250
Pictou	34
Cape Breton	194
Victoria	6
Inverness	40
Richmond	10
	534