

and to inquire, as I did, of the experts whether this were so, and what the actual effect might be expected to be.

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February 1.

#### Alpine Strain in the Bengali People.

In the concluding paragraph of a short notice of my book, "The Indo-Aryan Races," part i., published in NATURE, November 23, 1916, the reviewer writes:—

"The author might with advantage return in his next venture to the original problem of the origin of the Bengalis. He should probably discard Risley's theory of Mongoloid infusion in favour of some early entry of an Alpine strain. If he can establish this doctrine he would do useful service to Indian ethnology" (p. 227).

This is exactly what I have endeavoured to do in chap. ii., entitled "Indo-Aryans of the Outer Countries." After giving my arguments for discarding Risley's classification of the Gujratis, Marathas, and Coorgs as Scytho-Dravidian in type, and the Bengalis and Oriyas as Mongolo-Dravidian, I trace the broad-headed elements among these peoples to one common source, the *Homo alpinus* of the Pamirs and Chinese Turkestan (pp. 65-71), and later on try to reconstruct the history of the gradual migration of the Alpine invaders from Central Asia over Gujarat, Deccan, Bihar, and Bengal (pp. 75-78). How far I have succeeded in my attempts is for others to judge. I may take this opportunity of adducing fresh evidences relating to the presence of *Homo alpinus* in Central Asia and of Alpine strain in the Bengali people. In his account of "A Third Journey of Exploration in Central Asia, 1913-16" (from the *Geographical Journal* of August and September, 1916, p. 29), Sir Aurel Stein writes of the bodies of men and women dug out of graves in the ruins of the Lon-lan site:—

"It was a strange sensation to look down on figures which, but for the parched skin, seemed like those of men asleep, and to feel brought face to face with people who inhabited, and no doubt liked, this dreary Lop-nor region in the first centuries A.D. The features of the heads closely recalled the *Homo alpinus* type, which, judging from my anthropometric records, worked up by Mr. T. A. Joyce, still supplies the prevalent element in the racial constitution of the indigenous population of Chinese Turkestan, and is seen in its purest form in the Iranian-speaking tribes near the Pamirs."

During the last Christmas holidays, while excavating an old monument near Balurghat, in the Dinajpur district in Bengal, I and my colleagues of the Varendra Research Society had an excellent opportunity of comparing different ethnic types in Bengal. Every day there was a large gathering of men, including high-caste Hindus, Musulmans, Rajbamsis, Mundas, and Santals. The Rajbamsis of the locality are easily distinguished from the rest by their Mongoloid physiognomy, and the Rajbamsis, Mundas, and Santals are all distinguished from the other Hindus and Musulmans by scanty hair on the face. It is, therefore, not possible to explain the origin of the bulk of the Bengalis from an admixture of Mongoloid invaders like the Rajbamsis of Varendra and the Mundas, Santals, and other allied tribes classed by Risley as Dravidian and myself as Nisada. Two other elements in the Indian population, the Hindusthani and the Dravidian of southern India, are both long-headed. So, to explain the presence of broad-heads among the Bengalis, we may very well postulate an Alpine strain. The newly discovered Aryan languages of Turkestan will throw fresh light on the problem.

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#### SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND.<sup>1</sup>

"SHAKESPEARE'S England" is a very remarkable book, and a credit to our time. It could have been produced in no other. Indeed, it could only have been produced within the last few years, so much is it the outcome of the research in ever so many directions which has been going on of late. It is sad, of course, that it should make its appearance in the middle of the great war, and yet there is something fine and fitting about this. It does not to-day jostle with a motley crowd of ephemeral, flimsy, and flashy tributes. And it has a solemn majesty and solidity which make it worth while, even at such a time, and in virtue of which it will survive even these heavy troubles.

As the first words of the preface justly say, the description of "Shakespeare's England" was a task worth carrying through, even if Shakespeare had never lived. But it is also a contribution of great importance to the understanding of Shakespeare. If Shakespeare was in one sense "not of an age, but for all time," in another he was most essentially of his age. He is emphatically Elizabethan. He could not have been what he was, or written as he did, either a very little earlier or a very little later; either in the days of Wyatt and Surrey, or in those of Milton and Marvell; either in the storm of the Reformation, or in the storm of the Civil War; either before the Tudor expansions, or after the Stuart disillusionments.

To understand him we require to understand his age, and though even a complete knowledge of that marvellous time will not give us Shakespeare, yet it will greatly aid, condition, and correct our ideas of him. And these two remarkably ample and learned volumes tell us how full and exhaustive our knowledge must be. They form, perhaps, the greatest tribute ever paid to Shakespeare. They are wonderfully complete and, for what they give, wonderfully cheap.

To produce them, the labour of a host of specialists has been laid under contribution. All the greater and lesser arts and sciences are dealt with in turn: Theology, Law, Medicine, Poetry, Music, Painting, Acting, Dancing. "The Court, the Camp, the Schools," the Navy, the Army, Sport, Learning and Commerce, Heraldry and Coinage, Rogues and Vagabonds, Bulls and Bears (not of the Stock Exchange, it is true, but of the ring), Astronomy, Astrology, Alchemy—each has its chapter or its section. The illustrations, which are abundant, are excellently chosen and reproduced, and are in themselves at once a delight and an illumination. *Ex pede Herculem*. One of these appears with this article.

It is not possible within the compass of a brief review even to indicate or inventory half of the wealth to be found in this ample thesaurus. Readers of NATURE will perhaps turn to what is said of the Sciences and of Medicine, of Agriculture and of Gardening. If Bacon had really

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of his Age." Vol. i., pp. xviii + 546. Vol. ii., pp. x + 610. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1916.) Price, two vols., 25s. net.