

notices. It states that in a room in the large spire of the cathedral of Strassbourg, then belonging to Germany, was preserved the first press, with which Gutenberg had printed his books.

DR. H. A. HAGEN.

Cambridge, Dec. 20.

### Reineke Fuchs in political economy.

It is a pity that the recent discussion in *Science* on political economy should end in a kind of mutual triangular contempt. The questions raised are extremely interesting, and especially in the view which Mr. James seemed to take at first; that is, whether we can consider such questions entirely aside from their effect on human character. So far as the principles of political economy are concerned, is it right to lie, cheat, steal, rob, and murder, provided, of course, that one is not caught red-handed. This seems to be the teaching of orthodox political economy, and it is well to state the result plainly. In Goethe's version of the old story, Reineke was successful, and at last became chancellor of the kingdom. But there remain some sentimental people, generally poets, clergymen, and women, who will not believe in Reineke.

ASAPH HALL.

Washington, Dec. 22.

### A new meteoric iron from West Virginia.

Through the courtesy of Dr. H. C. Torrey, U.S. assayer in New York, I have come into possession of a mass of meteoric iron weighing about 240 grams, said to have been found near Charleston, Kanawha county, W. Va. It is evidently a fragment from a larger mass, as on no portion of its surface does it present any appearance of the crust invariably forming the exterior of an iron meteorite.

It belongs to the megagrammic order of Shepard (the Grobe lamellen of Brezina's new classification), and closely resembles the Sevier county (Tennessee) iron. Its structure is coarsely granular or crystalline, having distinct rhomboidal crystals embedded in the mass. Thin laminae of schreibersite are sparingly distributed throughout, but not in such a manner as to produce the common type of Widmann figures. When a polished surface is etched, it shows a somewhat tessellated arrangement of the figures formed by alternate bands or blocks of kamacite and plessite; but the blocks are irregular in outline, and somewhat wedge-shaped, with rounded sides and angles. Instead of presenting a homogeneous surface, these blocks seem to be cemented together like those of the Arva iron, the distinguishing features of these two falls being confined principally to two points, so far as relates to their general appearance upon an etched surface: viz., the schreibersite shows conspicuously in stone laminae or blocks in the Arva, and only in scattered thin leaves in the West Virginia; and the former is especially subject to oxidation in spots, while the latter seems to be free from them, and it also receives a higher polish, and shows a little lighter color. It was found in 1883, and other pieces are said to exist in Kanawha county. Its time of fall is not known. The British museum possesses a 2,699-gram mass of iron, stated to have been found in Greenbrier county, W. Va., sufficiently contiguous to Kanawha to imply that both irons may have formed part of the same original mass.

In answer to a description of my iron sent to Mr. Davis of the British museum, Mr. D. expressed the

opinion that such was the fact, which is confirmed, in my judgment, by his minute description of the museum iron above referred to, which, like my own, is wholly wanting in any thing like a crust. A further comparison with the Sevier county iron shows a like identity in all respects except in the graphitic content, which seems lacking in the West Virginia masses, but altogether so close in appearance and structure as to suggest that both might have come from one original mass. This inquiry must remain a mere suggestion, not fully to be solved even if the separate analyses should closely agree. It is to be hoped for, and yet possible, that fragments may yet be found showing the natural crusted exterior, and that we may learn whether these fragments were all found at one spot, or at such distances apart as to indicate the bursting in mid-air of an iron meteorite, and the scattering of its fragments over an extended line of flight. Of its chemical constitution and the circumstances of its fall, we are quite ignorant.

S. C. H. BAILEY.

Cortland-on-Hudson, N.Y., Dec. 21.

### The English sparrow.

Apropos to the discussion on the merits and demerits of the English sparrow pest, it may be interesting to the readers of *Science* to know a little of the way the bird is viewed in England. The London *Academy* says, "It is hard for a lover of birds to approach the 'sparrow question.' Sparrows are found to do more harm than snakes or tigers. Nature's thieves and vagabonds, they are. This is the verdict of every one who investigates the matter. They drive away birds which do more good, and little, if any, harm. For every noxious insect they destroy, they consume more corn than one likes to calculate. A Cheshire farmer, indeed, estimates the loss to England, due to depredations of sparrows, at £770,094 in a year, and this loss is on the increase. No amount of sensationalism can find any countervailing advantage. The careful and long-continued experiments of Colonel Russel in Essex show that sparrows do unmitigated mischief, and the experience of our colonies and of the Americans confirms the facts beyond cavil. There is really nothing to be said for the sparrow. He carries destruction with him wherever he goes, and leaves devastation to mark his increase. From every point of view, he must be looked at as the enemy of man. Either he must give way to us, or we to him; and just now his power is such that he seems in a fair way to become here, as he has already become in Australia, a factor in politics.

"The Colorado beetle can never commit such ravages as the sparrow is certain to do wherever he is allowed to go on unchecked. Love him as we may for his personality, he ought everywhere to be exterminated with the utmost vigor, for there is no limit, in the course of nature, either to his reproductiveness or to the mischief which he causes. We in England have little conception of the scourge he has proved to be wherever he has been naturalized in foreign lands. It is none too soon to have the question put before us clearly, for every day its importance must become greater." There may be some points in this that are overdrawn and exaggerated, but the general tenor of the notes shows that the pest is giving trouble in its native home as well as here.

RALPH S. TARR.

Washington, D.C., Dec. 18.