

# SCIENCE.

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1886.

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## COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

THE LARGE NUMBER of persons who are interested in the subjects of prison labor and prison management generally look forward to the second annual report of the national bureau of labor with great interest: for it has been announced that in this report Col. Carroll D. Wright, the able and experienced chief of the bureau, will give the results of his investigations, made personally and by special agents, into the question of labor in prisons in all its forms and its relations to labor outside. In his circular of instructions to agents, Colonel Wright enumerates four systems of prison labor in the United States, and defines them, — the contract system, the piece-price system, the public account system, and the lease system. The inquiries made cover the kind, grade, and value of the goods produced, the number of hours of daily labor required, the number of convicts employed in productive labor, the number of free laborers necessary to perform the work, and the average wages of free laborers. Colonel Wright also wants to know the number of convicts idle or employed in prison duties, the aggregate number, their average age, the average length of sentences, the amount received by convicts for working over-time, and the receipts and expenses of the institution. The inquiry is meant to throw light upon the following points: 1°, the influence of the labor of convicts upon free labor; 2°, the influence of the various systems in use upon the criminal; 3°, the general conditions under which the work is carried on. This question of convict labor is a wide and complicated one, concerning which we need, above all else, to know the exact facts, inasmuch as it has of late taken on a political aspect as a result of the representatives of certain classes of the community. We can trust Colonel Wright's ability and integrity to procure and lay before us these facts.

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THE POPULAR GENIALITY of Mr. Grant Allen's scientific writings has perhaps seldom found so appropriate a theme as the one discussed by him in the October issue of the *Fortnightly review*, —

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a theme, by the way, not at all suggestive of a scientific article; namely, 'Falling in love.' The article was called out by the following sentence in the address of the president of the anthropological section, Sir George Campbell, at the recent meeting of the British association: "Probably we have enough physiological knowledge to effect a vast improvement in the pairing of individuals of the same or allied races, if we could only apply that knowledge to make fitting marriages, instead of giving way to foolish ideas about love and the tastes of young people, whom we can hardly trust to choose their own bonnets, much less to choose in a graver matter in which they are most likely to be influenced by frivolous prejudices." The question is a serious one; for it raises the issue whether the time-honored instinct of falling in love is a useful one or not; whether an artificial system of pairing would accomplish the object, the amelioration of the race, better and more directly.

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Mr. Grant Allen decides that this most involved exemplification of the universal selective process is thoroughly efficient: for we cannot fall in love with everybody alike; and the person with whom we do fall in love, as is shown by the fact that in nine cases out of ten it is a reciprocal affection, is to some extent our physical, moral, and mental complement. In this way too close likeness is avoided, and the great means of betterment — variation — is insured. Moreover, it is the biologically excellent traits that are sexually attractive, — youth, beauty, strength, health. So strong ought our faith to be in the efficiency of this curious, vague, and unfathomable instinct, that it should be our aim to discountenance all but marriages on the principle of spontaneous affection. It is the marriage on the basis of money, of rank, or other practical reasons, that results in deterioration. In short, the old theme of the novelists and poets is justified against the rather crass precept of the modern scientist. But a word for the latter should be added. It is, that, without any artificial interference, the public sentiments, so influential in the guidance of the sexual selections, can be unconsciously guided into the channels which science points out as the best. Science should and

can not prevent people from falling in love; but can it not so influence public opinion as to make falling in love even a more efficient and beneficial process of selection than it now is?

THAT THE LAWS which now exist for the protection of the ignorant, both poor and rich, against quacks and charlatans, are totally inadequate to that end, must be painfully evident to every one who keeps himself at all informed on the general news of the day. It is not long ago that one death was caused by the application of kerosene, and another by the fluid extract of the St. Ignatius bean. Within the present year a strong, robust farmer in middle life, and apparently having a long life before him of usefulness and enjoyment, was, within ten hours after the application to the lip of strong potash and chloride of zinc by one of these harpies, dead from the absorption of this corrosive poison. The first two cases mentioned were brought to a successful issue in the courts; the judge holding, that if a person publicly practising as a physician, on being called to a sick person, prescribes with foolhardy presumption a course of treatment which causes death, proper medical assistance being at the time procurable, he may be found guilty of manslaughter, although he acted with the patient's consent, and with no ill intent. There is no more important legislation than the regulation of the practice of medicine; and it is to be hoped that the medico-legal societies or some other organizations will prepare laws which will drive from the country the thousands of impostors who are to-day living and growing rich upon the credulity and ignorance of the people.

AMERICAN ARCHEOLOGISTS might conveniently be divided into two classes, — those who dig, and those who do not dig. The diggers seldom get beyond the range of articles which they or some one else has dug up: the non-diggers rely chiefly on the chroniclers or contemporaneous historians for their facts. It is seldom that we meet with a man, who, like Mr. Maudslay, combines the best features of the two schools. At a recent meeting of the Royal geographical society, he gave an interesting account of his exploration of the ruins and site of the old Indian pueblo of Copan. This place was apparently unknown to Cortes, who passed near it in his celebrated march to Honduras. Our author argues from this that it was uninhabited at the time, — a deduction that does

not seem to us altogether safe. At all events, the place is not mentioned by any early writer, and the first account we have of it is in a letter from the licentiate Diego de Palacio, an officer of the Audiencia of Guatemala in the year 1576. Copan, in the usual sense of the word as applied to the village which has been built amidst the ancient ruins, is situated just within the western boundary of the republic of Honduras, on the right bank of the Copan River. Mr. Maudslay went to work in a truly methodical and scientific way, and the results of his research are in some respects remarkable.

ALTHOUGH PROFESSOR FROTHINGHAM has left Baltimore to accept a chair at Princeton, the Johns Hopkins university is not to be without an instructor in archeology this winter. Prof. Rodolfo Lanciani is announced to give a course of six or more lectures during the current academic year, probably in January next, on Roman archeology. Professor Lanciani, though still a young man, has made a wide reputation for himself, and is one of the very first authorities on Roman archeology. He has been for some years inspector of excavations at Rome, and professor of archeology at the university there. He is a leading member of the Roman archeological commission and of the Pontifical archeological society. He has followed with great care the very important excavations that have, since 1871, laid bare so large a portion of the ancient Latin capital. In 1880 he published "*I comentarii di Frontino intorno le acque e gli aquedotti, sylloge epigrafica aquaria*," — a work which was crowned by the Academy of the Lincei. This book forms but a part of Professor Lanciani's great critical and historical work on the topography of ancient Rome, on which he has been at work for a long time.

A CASE OF GREAT INTEREST and importance has just been decided in Brooklyn against the municipal authorities. In 1881 the legislature of the state passed what is known as the 'plumbing law,' by which the plumbing and drainage of all new buildings were required to be done under the direction of the board of health. For the guidance and instruction of the plumbers, rules and regulations were established governing the construction of the works referred to in the law. Some of the plumbers violated these rules in various ways, among others by putting in iron pipe of a less thickness than was permitted. Although such a

violation was made a misdemeanor, it was found that houses might be constructed with serious defects; and, before any legal measures could be taken, the houses would be occupied, and the health of the occupants imperilled. In order to assist the health department in the enforcement of the law, the city works commissioner passed a rule that Ridgewood water should not be furnished to any new house until the plumbing-work was completed in accordance with the sanitary rules. For five years this rule has been enforced, and has been of great aid to the health officials in their endeavors to have houses properly sewered. Recently a row of houses has been constructed in which the soil-pipes were of light iron, in violation of the law; and, as the health department would not accept the work, no water could be obtained. On an application for a mandamus to compel the city to furnish water, one of the judges of the supreme court granted it, although the soil-pipes are of such weight as not to comply with the regulations. He holds that the city must grant permission to introduce water entirely irrespective of the regulations of the health department, and that, if any of these are violated, there is a remedy provided by the law. The result of this decision will be to embarrass the health department, temporarily at least, although ultimately it will doubtless find some way of speedily punishing offenders against the law.

IT SEEMS THAT the 'bogus butter issue,' as the politicians call it, is not confined to the United States. A similar agitation to that recently witnessed here is taking place in India; and a bill dealing with the adulteration of *ghee*, or clarified butter, hurriedly drawn and introduced in response to the urgent demands of the native community, has recently been passed by the Bengal council. The scope of the measure is very broad; and it applies, not to Calcutta only, but to all municipalities in the province. The result will be, it is hoped, the subsidence of the panic which has prevailed for several months. The reason for the panic is apparent, for *ghee* enters into the composition of every kind of cooked food used by all classes of the natives, and its adulteration with beef or pork fat meant loss of caste to Hindoos, and defilement to Mohammedans. So great has the panic been, that the wealthier natives have been importing *ghee* from Persia, while those unable to afford that have been abstaining altogether

from cooked food. The subject has attracted such general attention, that it will probably be dealt with as part of a general act, applicable to all India, to prevent the adulteration of food.

#### THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE COAST SURVEY.

THE administration of President Cleveland presents no greater enigma than the contrast between the high standard of public fidelity which its head has infused into most branches of the public service, and the unending succession of personal quarrels, charges, and counter-charges which he has allowed to discredit the administration of the coast survey, and impair its character and efficiency. The present condition of that work is such as almost to make us forget that there was a time, and that within the memory of every reader, when it was the model branch of the civil service, enjoying a world-wide reputation for the perfection of its organization, the standard of its work, and the character of its assistants, and cited by the advocates of reform as an example of what the civil service might become under an improved system of appointment to and tenure of office. One wanting to know on what system a scientific bureau ought to be administered cannot do better than study Bache's administration of the coast survey, and note how he combined the greatest liberality with the most scrupulous regard to the forms of law, the responsibilities of a public officer, and the requirements of a disciplined service.

Fifteen months have now elapsed since this dream of perfection was suddenly interrupted by the alleged discovery of grave irregularities and the forced resignation of a superintendent. Men were not unprepared for the latter result. It had become widely known that physical and mental infirmity, intervening at the end of a long and honorable career in the public service, had incapacitated the superintendent for the proper execution of his office; but wise and thinking men reserved their judgment when they were assured through the public prints that general corruption had eaten into the vitals of the organization, and that the work made famous by Bache had become a nest for speculators of the public funds.

The first act of the administration after learning of the seemingly demoralized condition of the survey was the appointment as superintendent, of the man on whose report of irregularities that office had been made vacant. For such an appoint-