

# SCIENCE.

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1886.

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## COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

THE EXERCISES which have just been concluded at Cambridge are memorable. Age is not that of which we can usually boast in this country, but it is a source of genuine pride to be able to chronicle the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our oldest and greatest university. Founded when the colony was yet a child, Harvard has grown with the nation's growth. From a provincial theological training-school in 1636, living on a colonial grant of four hundred pounds (increased in 1638 by the bequest of John Harvard), it has become in 1886 a many-sided university, expending the annual income of five millions of dollars; and even now its abilities do not keep pace with its desires and its opportunities. Its past and its present, and we trust its future too, are linked with all that is great and noble in our country's history. This splendid story has been fitly told and commemorated during the formal celebration by the chosen orators and poets, and as Harvard enters on her new quarter-millennium the good wishes of the country are with her. May she ever hold her place in the front rank of our great educational institutions.

THE MOVEMENT IN FAVOR of appointing women as members of the board of education in New York city is gaining force, and the prevailing belief is that it will be successful. It is reported, with how much accuracy we do not know, that New York, Brooklyn, and Buffalo are the only cities in New York state that have no female representatives on the school-boards, and Mayor Grace is said to be inclined to favor the new departure. The whole matter is in his hands, for he will shortly have the appointment of successors to the outgoing members of the present board. We fancy that the principal obstacles in the way of the innovation will be political rather than sentimental. It is hardly probable that any of the members whose terms are about to expire will want to be set aside; and even if they should so desire, there are plenty of male candidates, as is usual in New York city, for the places thus

made vacant. Under the circumstances Mayor Grace's position is a difficult one, but great pressure is being brought to bear upon him to appoint at least one woman to a vacancy. Numerous petitions to that effect are in circulation, and they are being signed by the most intelligent and influential class of citizens. A large proportion of the female teachers have signed these petitions, and among the host of prominent names appended to them we have noticed those of the president and a large number of the faculty of Columbia college, such clergymen as Bishop Henry C. Potter, Dr. Henry Y. Satterlee, Dr. Howard Crosby, Father McGlynn, and Rev. Heber Newton, and men like William E. Dodge, Senator Evarts, Felix Adler, Joseph H. Choate, and Charles A. Dana.

THE CITY OF HAMILTON, Ontario, has a prosperous society, the Hamilton association, devoted to philosophical and scientific studies, which has lately issued a respectable collection of Proceedings. Besides the inaugural address of the president, the leading papers are: 'On birds and bird matters,' by Thomas McIlwraith; on 'Early Greek philosophy,' by the Rev. I. W. A. Stewart; on 'A remarkable land-slide near Brantford, Ontario,' by J. W. Spenser; on 'Burlington Bay and the city drainage,' by C. S. Chittenden; on 'Race identity of the old and new worlds,' by William Glyndon; on 'The early home, separation, and re-union of the Aryan family,' by the Rev. E. L. Laidlaw; and on 'Some evidences of commercial transactions in prehistoric times,' by William Kennedy. These are all well-written and scholarly papers, evincing much learning and thought. Unfortunately, with the exception of those of Messrs. McIlwraith, Spenser, and Chittenden, none of them are based on original observation, or add anything to the world's stock of knowledge. Hamilton, near an important dividing-line of formations and climate, is singularly well situated for the study of geology and the biological sciences. It was also, not long ago, a noted centre of the Indian tribes, and some fragments of these still remain in the neighborhood. Its district, therefore, offers a particularly inviting field for the study of American archeology and ethnology. It

is disappointing to find that these advantages have been so little utilized by an association numbering evidently members of marked ability. They will do well to bear in mind, that, in the publications of a scientific association, one paragraph describing the results of original investigation is likely to be worth more than many pages of compilation.

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DR. WILLIAM A. HAMMOND has been amusing a medical association with some humorous accounts of his experience with cocaine. He is reported to have said that there is no danger of the formation of a cocaine habit. Dr. Hughes, writing in the *Medical review*, takes a different view, and in his summing-up claims that cocaine is a tonic and stimulating exhilarant of considerable power in melancholia, mental depression, and nerve weariness, being more rapid and at the same time more evanescent in its action than morphia. He distinctly says, moreover, that, when used to excess, it intoxicates, and converts melancholia into mania, and that its continuous use is difficult to break off; that it is a dangerous therapeutic toy, and ought not to be used as a sensational play thing; that it will probably help to fill rather than to deplete the asylums, both inebriate and insane, if it should come into as general use as the other intoxicants of its class; that as an intoxicant it is more dangerous, if continuously given, than alcohol or opium, and more difficult to abandon.

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THE FRIENDS OF TECHNICAL education in the New York public schools are evidently not permitting themselves to be discouraged by the disposition by the board of education of the special committee's report on that subject, of which mention was made in *Science* (viii. No. 195) at the time. At the meeting of the board of education last week, a communication was received from the Industrial education association, of which Gen. Alexander S. Webb is president, and Miss Grace H. Dodge vice-president, offering to make a practical test of the value of instruction in certain branches of manual labor, by giving instruction to a number of public-school children this year during school hours and under school discipline. The number of pupils that can be accommodated by the association in their building at No. 21 University Place is, in industrial drawing and modelling, forty; in carpentry, twenty-four; in sewing, forty; in cooking, forty-

eight; in domestic economy, three hundred. In addition to this offer, it was stated that a series of lectures on industrial education is to be given at an early date, and will be open to public-school teachers. The proposition of the association is a generous one, and will serve admirably for a beginning in this important matter. We trust that the committee on the course of studies, to which the communication was referred, will recommend that the offer be accepted, and the necessary arrangements made for carrying it out.

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WE HAVE POINTED OUT from time to time the important bearing that the study of local institutions has on historical science in general, and have found frequent evidence of a growing appreciation of this fact. To be sure, the best of things may be carried to excess, and this probably has given rise to the complaints that have been made by some critics, that this 'history of the town-pump business' is being overdone. We believe, however, that such critics are mistaken, and forget that the chroniclers of the fortunes of the town-pump are not writing a history in the broad sense of the word, but are furnishing accurate data for wide-reaching historical generalizations. A recent reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, writing of Mr. Gomme's book on 'The literature of local institutions,' may be quoted as giving evidence on this point. He says that Mr. Gomme holds the opinion that many of the English boroughs existed long before their earliest charters, which were royal confirmations of existing customs, not the creation of something new. "This, in our opinion," he continues, "does not admit of doubt. The battle now rages between those who hold them to be survivals from the time of the Roman occupation, and a strong and learned body who affirm that the evidence we have points in most cases, though not in all, to their being of Teutonic origin. We feel assured"—this is the significant sentence for our purpose—"that, if all corporation and manorial documents were made accessible, the war would soon come to an end."

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A CIRCULAR from Prof. Geo. H. Cook, state geologist of New Jersey, announces the formation there of a state weather service, after the kind of those already existing in other parts of the country. Two hundred volunteers are desired: they will be supplied with forms for records, and with certain publications of the signal office. Instru-

ments have to be, for the present at least, bought by the observer. In the list of prices, the rain-gauge is marked at \$1.25, and we doubt whether it can be of desirable accuracy at so low a price. It is strange that states as advanced as New York and Pennsylvania do not join their neighbors in meteorological work.

THE EXPERIMENT of making optional the attendance at the daily chapel service at Harvard college is being watched with interest by college authorities all over the country. Professor Peabody, the Plummer professor of Christian morals, and his five coadjutors, took charge of the chapel service on Oct. 3, under the new regulations; and now Dr. D. G. Lyon, Hollis professor of divinity at Harvard, writing in last week's *Independent*, tells of the new plan and its results so far as they have already been developed. The chapel services are more interesting and more inspiring than they ever were, for now no student attends who does not go from choice. The average attendance is between 400 and 450, as against about 600 under the compulsory system, but the gain in force and spirituality is enormous. Professor Lyon assures us that so far the predictions of the conservative party, which opposed the change, remain unfulfilled, and he firmly believes that they will remain so.

A RECENT NEWSPAPER REPORT (*Chicago journal*, Oct. 26) tells the story of a remarkable case of fracture of the spine and cord. Mr. Andrew Hamilton was 'coaching' some college men in the gymnasium, and, while showing some simple performance on a low cross-bar, dropped about four or five feet on the mattress. By some peculiar wrenching of the neck, he cracked the fifth cervical bone and compressed the spinal cord. From that moment on, the whole of the body below the neck was completely insensible; nor could he move a single muscle, except to contract two fingers on each hand. He had to call the attendant to open the hand. He was kept alive on milk, which was poured down the mouth; and his body was supported by floating it on a rubber sheet in a tub of water. His mind was perfectly clear; he talked, read the daily papers, and even consulted his professor on reading a mathematical work. This continued for fourteen days. He then broke down, and died on the sixteenth day after the fall. It seemed hardly possible that life should continue, and the brain go on acting, if the cord were

severed, and yet the post-mortem examination showed plainly that the cord was reduced to a mass of pus.

FROM OHIO comes a report that the authorities in that state propose to construct an intermediate penitentiary to which shall be committed prisoners sentenced for the first time or for short periods, in the hope that their reformation may be effected. That this is a thoroughly practicable plan is shown by the success of the Elmira reformatory in New York state, under the efficient management of Mr. Brockway. The harm done to convicts who are imprisoned for the first time by confining them together with older and hardened criminals can hardly be estimated, and Ohio is taking a step in the right direction. Its example should be widely imitated, and probably will be when the results of the experiment are made known.

THE SEVENTH ORIENTAL CONGRESS, held at Vienna last month, was thoroughly successful, and its proceedings were deemed of sufficient interest to warrant general notice in the newspapers. The congress numbers about five hundred members, three hundred of whom were present. They came from all quarters, — Japan, China, India, Persia, Arabia, Asia Minor, Egypt, Tunis, and every country of Europe and America. Vienna is so situated that many eastern representatives could conveniently be present. The official languages of the congress were German, French, English, and Italian. Latin was permissible, and by special permission some papers were read in Arabic. The list of members of the congress comprises the names of all the great professors of oriental languages in Europe. The members from this country are not many, and among them are Professors Briggs and Brown of Union theological seminary, Haupt of Johns Hopkins university, and Dr. William Hayes Ward. The congress was divided by the committee on organization into five sections, — 1°, Semitic, which was subdivided into a section for Arabic and one for the Semitic languages other than Arabic; 2°, Aryan; 3°, African; 4°, central and east Asian; 5°, Polynesian, — of which the Aryan section was the most interesting. This section passed a resolution asking the government of India to make a thorough and systematic survey of the languages of India. By invitation of the King of Sweden the next congress will be held at Stockholm in August, 1888.