DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

'AN AMBITIOUS PARADOXER.'

History tells us of a man whose great pride and boast it was that he had once been kicked by the Duke of Wellington. Mr. Stephen H. Emmens, whose advertisement appears in Science of February 19th, seems to be moved by a like ambition, only, the great Duke being dead, he has to get men of lower rank to perform the ceremony. Only thus can I explain his advertisement in which he cites a number of names of scientific men, my own among them, as having written in such a manner 'as to show that they regard his arguments and mathematical demonstrations as incapable of refutation.'

I have never even seen Mr. Emmens' book, and experience taught me long years ago that any attempt to cure that special mental condition of which he is a victim by reasoning or explanation was futile. I therefore have long ago made it a rule neither to address any argument or comment to that class of people, nor tell them what I think of their vagaries. To fill the cup of Mr. Emmens' happiness, I shall only add that he is entitled to the highest place in the class to which he belongs.

S. Newcomb.

FORMER EXTENSION OF GREENLAND GLACIERS.

From Professor Tarr's letter in the last number of Science, under the above heading, it would appear that he is disposed to insist upon an erroneous interpretation of the views of Professor Salisbury and myself after the error has been explicitly pointed out. It appears that on the basis of my general inference "that the ice formerly so extended itself as to reach the coast over about half its extent, while in the remaining portion the ice fell short," Professor Tarr inferred that the area which he studied fell within the portion in which the ice did not reach the coast. He further assumed that the augularity of outline which he observed in a region which had been glaciated was the angularity from which we inferred non-glaciation. In the editorial in the *Journal of Geology*, to which he refers, it was explicitly pointed out that the region between Disco Island and Melville Bay, within which Professor Tarr's studies lay, was regarded by both Professor Salisbury and myself as having been glaciated in general. Only some of the higher peaks which were not visited by Professor Tarr, and which rose to heights greater than any observed by him, and some lee faces were excepted. It was also pointed out that the topography of the region was not classed by us with the rugged unsubdued type from which we inferred non-glaciation. On the contrary, we looked upon it as being partially subdued, and as indicating partial glaciation, a view which is precisely consonant with the determinations of Professor Tarr, and is substantially confirmed by them. Professor Tarr has thus unwittingly emphasized, by his attempt to place us in error, the fact that the difference between a wholly unsubdued and a slightly subdued topography can be detected by passing observers with no better facilities than a coasting vessel and good field glasses. When his photographs shall be published it will remain for glacial experts to determine whether the topography gives indication of the feeble glaciation that took place and was detected by us, or not, and whether experienced students of glacial topography can reasonably be expected to catch and correctly interpret such indications in passing or not. I predict with the utmost confidence that expert judgment will at once classify the topography studied by Professor Tarr precisely as Professor Salisbury and myself classified the topography of the general tract in which it is embraced. I feel confident that Professor Tarr will not be sustained in calling the topography of the upper Nugsuak peninsula unqualifiedly 'rugged' and 'angular,' but that, on the other hand, it will be pronounced partially subdued and obviously glaciated. I think it will then become evident that Professor Tarr's error lies, first, in a lack of sufficient care in interpreting our statements, and second, in identifying the feebly glaciated topography, which he studied, with our unsubdued topography, and in assuming that the topographic effects of glaciation cannot be detected even where some measure of ruggedness —even a large measure of ruggedness in the common gross sense of the term—may remain.

It was pointed out in the editorial that I recognized an extension of ice in the general region of Professor Tarr's studies essentially

equal to that which his observations imply, and that in this particular he has added to my determinations the confirmation of specific evidence.

T. C. CHAMBERLIN.

TWO EXTRAORDINARY BRITISH PATENTS.

PATENT No. 14,204, granted 27th October, 1884, by Her Majesty's Commissioner of Patents to Harry Fell, Mercantile Clerk, of South Norwood Park, is described as a 'New Method for getting Gold from Wheat.' The complete specification is as follows:

"That in the steeping of the mixture of half, measure, 'the whole wheat straw cut into fine square snips the width of the straw and half' the grains in a jar of ordinary cold water "I let the steep remain still for ten hours at a temperature of fifty-nine degrees Fahrenheit varying with temperature, and then straining off the liquor into a shallow pan of some such cool substance as china or earthenware, I leave this liquor to stand in this pan for yet twenty-four hours at sixty degrees also varying with temperature; these durations of times of ten hours and twenty-four hours speaking for a very inferior brown straw much knocked about and the grains those, of a very good quality, of red wheat; and then catch up the skim on a cylinder of some such cool substance as china or earthenware," and then let this skim dry, so getting some results of films of Gold."

The simplicity of this process for getting gold from wheat is as extraordinary as the language used in describing it; the above being a literal transcript, including the peculiar use of punctuation marks. The specification occupies two pages in quarto form and can be had at the Patent Office, Sale Branch, 38 Cursitor street, Chancery Lane, for two pence.

The second of these curious patents is numbered 1919 and bears the date 2d February, 1889. It is described as an 'improved means of detecting the presence of gold and silver underground,' and was granted to Samuel Adams Goodman, Jr., of Tyler, in the county of Smith and State of Texas, U. S. A. This specification also occupies two pages and is accompanied by a plate representing an ordinary glass bottle containing a solid body and a liquid, corked and sealed with wax; to the cork is fastened a string terminating in a loop.

Mr. Goodman, farmer, of Texas, makes the following statement:

"The object of this invention is to enable precious metals to be discovered by a process of divination; and it consists in a composition which has a strong attraction and affinity for gold and silver, the attraction resembling somewhat that of magnetism. In carrying my invention into practice, I place the composition in a vial or flask, seal it tightly and suspend it by means of a string. The composition referred to is made up of gold, silver, quicksilver and copper, the ingredients being placed in a small vial or flask, together with a quantity of dilute nitric, or tartaric acid or pure alcohol. * * *

"In using my gold and silver finder the instrument is held, preferably by the thumb and forefinger of the right hand and steadied with the left hand; it should be held steady but not cramped. Then, if there are any precious metals in the immediate neighborhood, the flask will be attracted by such metals and will move towards them at first and will then vibrate, thus indicating the presence of the metal sought for.

"To protect and conceal the contents of the flask, I cover it with paper, cloth or tin."

This is substantially the whole claim, in securing which Mr. Goodman was assisted by A. M. and Wm. Clark, patent agents of 53 Chancery Lane.

It is satisfactory to note that Texan farmers write English much more clearly than London mercantile clerks.

Western farmers are hereby warned against attempting to get gold out of their wheat by the Fell process and against seeking for precious metals by the Goodman method. But seriously why are patents granted to persons making such absurd claims?

H. CARRINGTON BOLTON.

COMPLIMENT OR PLAGIARISM.

THE following letter is sent for publication, at Mr. Lefevre's request, by Professor Beman.

MESSRS. BEMAN AND SMITH,

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.

GENTLEMEN: I have just seen your reply to Dr. Halsted on page 275 of the current number of SCIENCE.

Much as I regret the unhappy chance that led to the furthest association of my name with that deplorable controversy—being a rational and just man—I do not reproach you, even for omitting to state the intrinsically trivial nature of the parallelism of that sentence in my book with a sentence in Sandeman's preface to his *Pelicotetics*. It was entirely proper to make