

QUOTATIONS

POPULAR SCIENCE¹

IN the December number of *The Popular Science Monthly* Dr. William Morton Wheeler, of the American Museum of Natural History, has an article on "The Origin of Slavery among Ants." Such a jumble of sesquipedalian words and false analogies it would be difficult to find even inside the covers of a work on physiological psychology. We shall quote some sentences taken almost haphazard as specimens of the turgid nonsense so pompously pieced together by this pretentious sciolist. He writes on the most nebulous questions with an air of dogmatic infallibility which he himself would resent in a decree of Pius X. He is a type of a class of men rapidly growing in the United States, shallow-brained and half-educated, and intoxicated with the exuberance of their own barbarous phraseology.

Lest we should leave ourselves open to the suspicion of unfair criticism we shall give illustrations of this fellow's ridiculous jargon. As will be easily seen no Irish hedge school-master discussing Virgil's birth in a port-manteau in the pages of Carleton's romances ever did perpetrate more puerile attempts to parade an aggregation of inane verbosity. "Slavery or dulosis," he tells us in the opening sentence of his second paragraph, "is a rare phenomenon among ants." What was the motive for introducing the word *dulosis*? It is derived from *doulos*, the Greek word for slave, and means precisely the same thing as slavery. Was it introduced to show that the

author had some knowledge of Greek, or was it interposed to clarify his meaning and make science popular? *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. Many persons are so constituted that they worship the unknown and "It's all Greek to me" has come to be synonymous with ignorance. In this way Wheeler throws dust in his reader's eyes and conceals the scantiness of his knowledge.

Here is another example of a vacuum filled up by a compound Greek word: "An eminently predatory species thus comes to live in intimate *symbiosis* with workers of an alien species which are said to function as slaves or auxiliaries." Symbiosis is derived from the Greek preposition *syn*, meaning together, and the word *bios*, meaning life. The writer's idea is that these predatory species live in communities, or in common. But in order to inject a Greek word, parade his erudition, and confound the reader he has recourse to a barbarous circumlocution, an absurd tautology which when literally translated into ordinary language reads: "An eminently predatory species thus comes to live in intimate common living," etc. The two passages examined are taken from the same paragraph. Immediately afterwards we stumble on the literary gem: "The colony grows apace, the workers increasing in number, size and *polymorphism* with successive broods." Similar vaporings meet the vision at every stage of the article.

Wheeler is a blatant bigot, a hater of Christianity, a man who out-Herods Herod and out-Haeckels Haeckel. He dwells with pride on his monkey ancestry and he is not without many of the apish instincts of the orang-outang. Animalism as opposed to intellectualism is his philosophy. He has long dwelt among stuffed mastodons and ichthyosaurs, and his mind, dwarfed by his environment, has no higher ideal than an antheap or a skeleton. If he undertakes to explain the highest spiritual attainments of man or to interpret the most complex forms of social organization he goes for light to the *hænatococcus* or to the mosquito. Logic is utterly discarded by him. He knows as much about the laws of dialectics as, to use Luther's

¹ This comment on the work of one of the most distinguished American naturalists exploits a point of view which readers of *SCIENCE* probably regard as obsolete. The editorial article is immediately preceded by an autograph letter, which, as translated, reads: "To our beloved children, the writers and readers of *The New World*, published in Chicago, under the auspices of the Most Reverend Archbishop of that city:—We impart with cordial affection our apostolic benediction and invoke for them every good and salutary gift in the Lord. From the Palace of the Vatican, 6th day of April, 1907.—PIUS X., Pontifex Maximus."

expression, a cow does about a new gate. But like all sciolists he is absolutely cocksure in his views, especially when settling for all time a great religious or moral problem. Young students, we are told, as they see him strutting across the museum campus are wont to recite Goethe's famous lines:

Who's that stiff and pompous man?
He walks with haughty paces,
He snuffles all he snuffle can,
He scents the Jesuit's traces.

Referring to a certain form of parasitism he writes: "It is not confined to ants and other social insects, but has analogies also in human societies (trusts, grafters, criminal and ecclesiastical organizations)," etc. Ecclesiastical organizations are classified with trusts, grafters and criminal hordes! Whither are we drifting in America, when a pigmy scientist can dare to write thus in a magazine that is widely read even by Catholics? Did not Voltaire and the Encyclopedists by writing cheap science in the nastiest form, like Wheeler, undermine Christianity in France? And if the Catholic body in this country supinely submits to be traduced and caricatured by every addle-pated scientist who, by pull and lobbying, lands himself in a position for which he has no visible qualifications, the enemies of religion, encouraged by such impunity, will redouble their efforts to supplant the kingdom of God by the Worship of Mammon and materialism.

Is the Catholic Church a parasite in the United States? Then Marquette was a parasite in Illinois. Who was a greater benefactor of our sovereign state than he? From the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Alaska to the Gulf, almost every county has its shrine that commemorates the heroic sacrifices and the imperishable services of priests to civilization and the commonwealth. Was Archbishop Carroll of Baltimore, the great patriot and the intimate friend of Washington, a parasite, or Archbishop Hughes, Lincoln's friend and ambassador to Europe, a parasite? Were the sisters of our religious communities, who ministered during the civil war to the boys in gray and to the boys in blue with the undis-

criminating catholicity of their devoted hearts, parasites? Is the Catholic Church in Chicago at the present hour, educating as it does 100,000 children, thus saving the city more than \$3,000,000 annually, parasitical? But what does Wheeler care about all these striking facts, these sublime spiritual achievements compared with the gyrations of a queen bee or the evacuations of a *Formica rufescens*?

The Popular Science Monthly has long been a peril to Catholic faith and morals. We know Catholic homes in which the faith has been blunted in boys and girls under twenty years of age through contact with that shallow organ of materialistic evolution. Catholic fathers and mothers would never place it within reach of their offspring did they know the deadly moral poison that pervades many of its pages.—*The New World*.

ASTRONOMICAL NOTES

THE PLANET MARS

DISCUSSION as to the conditions for intelligent life on Mars continues to hold the attention of the public. Many of the magazines and daily papers have contained articles on the subject. Professor Percival Lowell is the central figure in this discussion. He holds the center of the stage not less for the brilliant manner in which he has presented his views to the public, than for the enthusiasm and skill with which he has carried on his observations.

The recent Lowell expedition to South America, under the direction of Professor Todd, well known for his extended travels in search of the eclipsed Sun, has added to the general interest. A site was selected on the desert pampa, at a moderate elevation, near Iquique, Chile, where the conditions were found to be exceptionally favorable. Mars, when on the meridian, was within a few degrees of the zenith. Special effort appears to have been made to keep the public informed of the details of the expedition, and the announcement was early made that photographs had been obtained showing the canals double.

What may be regarded as the human side of the problem undoubtedly appeals strongly to