

THE NEW GENESIS.

A SCIENTIFIC MEMO.

The sun had risen high into the heavens transfiguring a thousand cloudlets into isles of the blest, and making old Earth ashamed of herself for looking so young and gay, in spite of an age which even the family Bible had marginally noted as not less than 4004 before the Christian era. All this pomp of light and all this miracle of time-killing came and went, yet the whole thing ended in nothing so far as this important memo. is concerned. There need not have been any sun at all, and, if there had been, he need not so have displayed himself in the open theatre of the sky. It was with the coming of the stars that history began to be made, for it was on the starry evening of that very day, when the sun-mocked earth sobered down from her unbecoming frivolity, that we assembled as a mixed but united party. We were not infidels, though we were of different ages; nor were we loose characters, though one of us, hereafter called by the name of his favourite, but, as he contended, unintoxicating wine, was temperately fond of Maderia bottled in 1840. We were, I say variously assorted. Two of us were Fellows of the Royal Fraternity (respectively known as the senior and junior scientists), three of us picked up a genteel but not luxurious living by writing science for trans-marine magazines, two were men of property, and two were genuine men of the world, who openly admitted that in what they flatulently called "the rugged programme of life" there ought to be a place somewhere, if not too near for unaffected and undemonstrative piety; in plainer words, for a piety that knew its own quiet corner and quietly kept to it.

We met for a purpose. We met to displace Moses, or whoever he was, and to write a new account of creation. We met as men of progress. If we could get the account of creation right, we could either ease off the heavy end of the Commandments or leave Gentile morality to fashion and to fire (I hope I do not illiterate too strongly) its own ethical canons. I know there should be another "in" in cannon, in order to justify the use of the term "fire," but men who are interested in cosmogony will never willingly stoop to the details of orthography. We wanted to put Moses right. We wanted to come out in a row of figures that creation itself could take some pride in. Not for the world would we part with the Bible, as infidels would. We simply wanted to open it with a statement worthy of modern research and calculation. We went round to each other's houses in order that we might revise the Bible under various social conditions,

knowing—as the magazine members of our company put it—that a good deal depends upon environment and atmosphere.

We fearlessly began with the very first verse of the Bible. We were gallantly led by the junior scientist, who said, in a high tone:

"Gentlemen, we must rise to the greatness,—I will even add, to the sublimity—of the occasion."

We all cried, "Hear, hear," Madeira said it twice.

The junior was encouraged. He said that though he had reckoned upon practical unanimity, he must admit he "had not counted upon such ebullience of reconstructive feeling." Some of us did not quite follow his meaning, so we loudly repeated, "Hear, hear," an excellent cry whenever you are in a situation of unintelligibility.

"What I propose," said the junior, "is that we advance not only with boldness, but with precision. "Science," he continued, "is not content to replace one generality with another. We must come to figures."

"Certainly," said the men of property.

"Have you any figures to suggest?" I inquired.

"I hope not," said the junior; "I have no figures to suggest. I have figures to announce and to insert."

"Just what we want," said Madeira. "The very ticket in fact."

The junior continued: "Gen. i. 1, should read thus: Fourteen hundred and eighty-two billions of ages ago there was a sth—"

"Where?" Madeira suddenly exclaimed.

"A puzzler," said I.

The junior was fretted. "Sir," said he, fixing his excited eyes on Madeira, "in great speculations we must assume something—"

"I think not," was my interruptive reply, "we want to account for things, not to assume them. Remember," I continued, being encouraged by the kindly smile of the senior scientist, "the people expect us to give them clear and credible statements."

Maderia supported me. I wish he had used a more suitable expression, but I am bound to report him verbatim, I must do him justice. "If," said he, "we assume anything, why not assume the whole hog!"

One of the magazine writers echoed "Hog."

The junior then said, "if you prefer it we can dismiss the term 'stir,' and substitute the word 'motion'—there was a motion." there was a motion."

What was there to move?" the senior scientist benignly inquired.

"Another puzzler," said I, and, corrupted by the manners of Maderia, added "and a choker too."