

LITERARY NOTES.

Two missionaries have recently crossed the Atlantic from England, bent on different errands, and having few opinions in common. It may be worth while to consider, for a moment, their chances of success. The reception which Prof. Tyndall has met in the metropolis of New England must be very gratifying to the lecturer, as it is certainly creditable to Boston. To have come in contact with so thoughtful a man—the incarnation, as it were, of the scientific spirit of the age—cannot be without its effect upon the intellect of the nation. Whether this influence will be abiding or not, remains to be seen. Boston arrogates to herself the title of the Western Athens. Like her prototype, she is vain, opinionative, egotistical. Even Prof. Tyndall's success may not be so complete as we hope it will be found to be—for here the parallel holds good—seeing that the Athenians of the west, like their predecessors, are accustomed to spend their time “in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.” We can even imagine the Mutual Admiration Society “certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics” encountering the Professor, in an air of astonishment, with the query—“what will this babbler say?” The novel aspect in which scientific truths were presented appears at once to have arrested the minds of the hearers. “In the wind of winter,” said Prof. Tyndall, “the aspect of the soap-bubble exhibits all sorts of reflections. Why is it coloured? Why are these colours of different kinds? Why is it necessary to blow the bubble out so large before the colour appears?” These and many other questions filled his brain. All at once it flashed upon him that this colour depended upon the thickness of the film. He immediately sought to determine numerically the relations between the thickness of the film and the production of the colour. The phenomena instanced seem trivial but they are important enough for the object in view to infuse not so much the knowledge of science as the scientific spirit into the minds of the auditory. “Now,” said he, “I wish to test the powers of concentration of this audience. I wish you to get into the brain of Newton and to acquaint yourselves with the means by which he determined this relation.” The peculiarity of this kind of instruction is that it concerns itself with method rather than matter. Instead of cramming the mind with facts, it seeks to train it to investigate and digest them for itself. It has been objected to the modern scientific method, that it is antagonistic to religious truth,

and that Prof. Tyndall has laid himself open to animadversion, by widening the breach. It is to be regretted, undoubtedly, that in a period of transition, like the present, there should be even the appearance of collision between science and faith. The efforts at reconciliation hitherto made have not been so successful as they have been earnest and laudable. That the solution of these difficulties will ultimately be reached there can be no doubt; meanwhile we have no right to cast upon men of science the entire responsibility. Whilst we are yet in the midst, we must be content to let every earnest man struggle by his own path-way to the light. Let it only be conceded that the road each selects for himself is a provisional one, and that truth is the goal each is endeavouring to reach, and we have every motive for charity in reviewing the opinions of others. To Prof. Tyndall, the experimental method of science seems alone secure and reliable, he may appear to place too much confidence in it, but he is far too earnest, having advanced so far upon his journey, to doubt or look back. We sincerely deprecate, therefore, the efforts made by some well-meaning people to prejudice the popular mind against science and its apostles. We understand that a very excellent association in Ontario have invited Dr. George Macdonald and Mr. Froude to lecture in Canada, we trust that some of our literary institutions will consider it their duty to bring Prof. Tyndall amongst us. The impetus such a visit would certainly give to the growing intellect of the Dominion ought to be a sufficient motive for the invitation.

Mr. James Anthony Froude comes to America, avowedly with a mission. Having proposed it to himself, he consulted his friends and was further encouraged by their efforts to dissuade him. The English historian appears to have got the notion into his head, that America is the only proper ground for a rational consideration of Ireland's grievances. From a Canadian experience of the subject, we are inclined to think that Mr. Froude is mistaken. At any rate there appears no reason why the editor of *Fraser* should undertake a special journey to New York, during this inclement season of the year, in the character of an arbitrator. We can only call to mind one other volunteer of the sort, with whom civility forbids us to compare Mr. Froude. When Anacharsis Clootz was welcomed at the bar of the French National Convention, as “the ambassador of the human race,” he presumably understood the object of his mission; we are not quite sure that Mr. Froude has the advantage of his great predecessor in this respect. He appears to entertain the idea, that Americans are specially interested in the emancipation of Irishmen. He even proposes that the United States' Government should be constituted a