

CHESS IN NOVA SCOTIA.

We are pleased to learn that several clubs have lately been organized in this Province for the practice and encouragement of the game of chess. One club has just been formed at Windsor with very encouraging prospects, and we understand that another is about to be inaugurated at Acadia College, Wolfville. We cordially wish them and similar associations every success, as we believe that they are likely to confer permanent benefits of considerable value on the community at large. Chess has long been acknowledged to be the most intellectual of games. It is played in every civilized nation in the world, and has for many ages been the delight of emperors, kings, warriors, philosophers, and mankind in general. The mental exercise involved in the practice of the game affords a most valuable training to the reasoning and calculating faculties; hence it has even been proposed by some enthusiasts to include chess as a necessary branch of an ordinary school education. We doubt whether the general adoption of this view would commend itself to the majority of our readers, but we have no hesitation in saying that we highly approve of chess being encouraged among the young, for, apart from its intellectual benefits, it is well calculated to serve as a powerful counter-attraction to the numerous games of chance, (for the most part associated with gambling), which are unfortunately so prevalent at the present time. We are, in fact, so thoroughly convinced of the many advantages to be derived from the practice and study of chess, that we have resolved to devote a portion of our space to furthering its interests, and to this end, have arranged with an experienced player to conduct a regular chess column, which will commence with the New Year. As we believe that this will be the only chess column in the Province, we trust that we shall receive the hearty support of all devotees of the game.

COMMERCIAL UNION.

What Commercial Union means is incidentally, but not inaptly, described in the *Week*, as "the egregious folly of reducing Canada to the condition of an outlying province of the United States, in order to induce the Americans to take full possession of the Canadian fisheries."

Every one knows that Commercial Union is a political party-cry, adapted in lieu of some of the others we mentioned last week, which have not served the turn of their originators so well as might have been desired. At the same time, it is not wholly and entirely insincere. There is no doubt a considerable section of malcontents who have persuaded themselves that it would be a finer thing to be citizens of the United States than Canadian and British subjects. The pains and ingenuity displayed by these folks in leading up to this question, in manufacturing history in advance to tell upon it, and in assuming positions, of the facts of which they know nothing, constitute a curious, if unpleasant study.

We are not concerned to dwell much upon loyalty to the British connection, though that tie saves a politician-ridden country from a very serious addition to the turmoil the politicians would revel in putting it to. The tie is not over-strong, such as it is it is more to our advantage than otherwise, and it is certainly not burdensome. The *Toronto Globe*, a very different sheet now to what it used to be under George Brown's management, professes indeed a super-righteous horror of our being a British Province, but there is no difficulty in tracing its maledictions to the inspiration of the enemies of Canadian autonomy. Some departments of certain Provincial Governments are systematically worked in the interests of annexationism, but we doubt if the sentiment assumes anything like national proportions, or expresses anything like a national desire.

The dismal forebodings of a portion of the Canadian press that the interests of Canada are to be sacrificed wholesale by the extremely able men who compose the British and Canadian contingents of the Fisheries Commission, are entirely gratuitous. It is simply talking of what it knows nothing about, and the wish is evidently father to the thought. Sensible people who decline to be manipulated and excited by the wire-pullers, will quietly await disclosures in this direction when they are due. The probable early future of American politics no doubt shadows forth considerations which may render negotiations far from easy, but we may, perhaps, venture a modest doubt that circumstances will combine to evolve Annexation quite so happily as the pessimists hope and desire.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSE.

Mr. Norman Lockyer read last month before the Royal Society a paper embodying a theory which is described as "of the most novel and far-reaching character." "All self-luminous bodies," Mr. Lockyer tells us, "are composed of meteorites, or masses of vapor, produced by heat brought about by condensation of meteor swarms, due to gravity." "This," says a reviewer of the paper, "is the nebular hypothesis in its broadest possible statement," a proposition with which we can scarcely agree. "The broadest possible statement" seems to us to consist in the original postulate of the direct aggregation of suns and planets, from the rotation and concentration of masses of vapor, and Mr. Lockyer's theory to be little more than the interpolation of a new term in the series.

It is the converse of a process with which we have of late years become familiar in theological discussion. When we substitute for the crude idea of spasmodic creation the grander processes of evolution, we only set back the initiative of the Deity. If we are to substitute aggregations of meteorites for the concentration of great vortices of nebulous vapor, we only interpolate an intermediate condition, the meteorite being, according to our conception of the hypothesis, the first product of the concentrated vapor; the sun or planet the ultimate form.

Nevertheless, Mr. Lockyer's theory possesses the value of a definiteness, to which well-known astronomical phenomena lend a high degree of probability. We know that meteorites exist in cosmical space in incredible numbers. Those which enter the earth's atmosphere, and are ignited and dissipated in their passage through it, are estimated at 20,000,000 in the twenty-four hours. But, besides those involved in the Solar System, which are to some extent so distributed, and, so to speak, kept in position, as to afford the spectacle of regularly recurring phenomena, such as the August and November showers, it must be remembered that the Solar System has its own proper motion, so that the earth can never twice occupy the same position in space.

Modern observation of comets has thrown a good deal of light on the subject, but the composition and motions of the rings of Saturn, which are now known to consist of infinite numbers of small bodies, seems to illustrate, as it were under our very eyes, some of the cosmical processes of formation, one of which might perhaps be imagined. Saturn is, on a very small scale, in the state of elemental turmoil, which characterizes the Sun. Being on so much smaller a scale, cooling and condensation are no doubt proportionately advanced. The acceleration of condensation increases density, and, consequently, attraction. A higher power of attraction would, it may be supposed, slow down the revolution of the rings, which may be eventually attracted to the body of the planet. Impact would sustain combustion, and it would seem probable that if, in the course of countless ages, the rings should be absorbed, Saturn may some day shine for a time with vastly augmented power, heat, and light. It does not seem improbable that Jupiter may have passed through this stage, and may owe his present effulgence to the bygone absorption of rings, or of some form of meteoric nebulae of enormous extent. These are, of course, the merest speculations, but they are not out of accord with phenomena of which we may be said to have some knowledge. They are, moreover, fitted to the special case of Saturn, the only heavenly body exhibiting, so far as we know, the peculiar phase of rings. The supposed more general mode of condensation is admirably described in the review we have before us, but we have not space for it in this notice of the subject.

Mr. Lockyer's hypothesis is meantime received by the Royal Society with a reserve, which is no doubt wise. Yet meteorites and gravity are all that it postulates, "and these are known to exist and to act in certain cases in the way that the hypothesis requires;" and it may fairly be assumed that the existence of meteorites postulates the existence of the supposed nebulous vapor from which they themselves are found. We shall scarcely in our day get behind the vapor, or the perhaps still farther back ether, or whatever human understanding may elect to call the ultimate possible to it.

CIVIC REFORM.

Turning off the water from premises where the water-rates still remain unpaid after notice is, in many respects, a justifiable measure, but during the prevalence of epidemics, or in the summer months, when there may be danger to a whole neighborhood from choked and unflushed drains, this remedy should be applied with due caution. Landlords are primarily liable for these rates, and they are a lien upon the property, but by a wise and liberal provision, landlords who furnish the authorities with a list of their tenants, at a certain time each year, are relieved from the responsibility for the water rates which are assessed or charged against the tenants. Having complied with the law in this respect, they materially conclude that they have no further responsibility in the matter, and such is the evident intention. Some day, however, they awake to find that this idea is a serious mistake. The tenant fails to pay the tax, and the water is turned off. A tenant who is unable to pay the water rates, may also leave his landlord in the lurch, and either before or at the end of his term, vacate the premises. A new tenant takes possession, and, finding the water turned off, applies to the landlord, who sends word to the collector to have the water turned on. Back comes the information that the water will not be turned on until the rates have been paid, and so the poor landlord, in order to keep his new tenant, has to pay up the back rates. This construction of the law, if not absurd, is certainly unjust, and must cause the legally defrauded landlord to have anything but kindly feelings for the act or the officials who so unjustly construe it.

The civic officials may have no option in the matter, and, if such is the case, it would be expedient to have the act amended, in this respect, as speedily as possible.

While we are on this subject, we might pause for a moment to glance at the manner in which civic elections are conducted. It would naturally be supposed that the office of alderman, with no pay attached, would be a prize but little coveted except by a self-sacrificing citizen who was wishing to serve the community at the expense of personal comfort. In fact, that the office should seek the man, and not the man the office.

In reality this is far from being the case, and we have known candidates for the apparently unthankful office of alderman to spend large sums of money to secure their elections. As there is little honor attached to the office, it would almost appear that the main incentive is "boodle," and, as the elections are now conducted, there is almost a certainty that a "bondle" candidate will secure his election even if opposed by a prominent citizen with a large interest in the community. Poll tax receipts are secured, and men voted on them; drinks and refreshments are supplied at open houses; dozens of cabs with well-fed drivers scour the city for voters; and the candidate with his friends is on hand to personally secure his votes. In fact, bribery and corruption are now so openly and successfully practised in civic elections that it would seem necessary, if the honor of the City Council is to be maintained, to pass an act unseating and disqualifying any alderman against whom corrupt practices should be proven.