

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING CREATIVE READING.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Genung has a good chapter in his "Practical Rhetoric," on what Emerson calls Creative Reading. Reading creatively "while the reader is receptive, while he is being acted upon by what he is reading, he is at the same time originaive, vigorously acting on the same subject-matter, shaping it into a new product, according to the colour and capacity of his own mind." Genung thinks "the habit of reading creatively is what distinguishes the scholar from the book-worm, the thinker from the listless absorber of print."

Here is a good test that every reader may apply to himself. A scholarly reader reads creatively and makes a new product out of what he reads. He creates while he reads. A listless absorber of print simply absorbs. He is a sponge. His mind is passive: it is merely being acted upon, and perhaps the stuff that acts upon it is not always wholesome. Are there not a good many listless absorbers of print in this country? Is the print that many people absorb during holidays healthful?

Creative reading is the only kind that is of much use to teachers, clergymen, lawyers, statesmen and all that class of readers who have to work on the minds of their fellow-men. A preacher may absorb all the books on earth, but if he cannot create a sermon and deliver it his reading is of no use to himself or anyone else. A statesman may absorb Burke but if he cannot defend his policy and attack his opponents absorbing even Burke will not do much for him. A listless legal absorber of Blackstone may find his clients few and his fees small if he cannot create something to say about his own cases. Mere absorption of print is not of much practical use to any man who has to earn his bread and butter. If each of us had ten thousand a year we might absorb print as a pastime and not hurt anybody but ourselves. The number of people in this country, however, who have ten thousand a year is somewhat limited. The great majority of those who read have to read for some special purpose. That special purpose usually is to make an impression of one kind or another on our fellow-men. No one can make much impression as the result of his reading unless he reads creatively.

The material for creative and instructive reading is within the reach of everybody that wishes to read constructively. A preacher may take a sermon from Spurgeon, or some other noted sermon-maker, read it carefully, examine its plan, and then make a better plan himself—if he is able. Alongside of Spurgeon's sermon edifice build a better one of your own—if you can. That is constructive reading, and it is a much better kind of exercise than listlessly absorbing what Spurgeon or any other man may say about a text.

Lawyers have fine opportunities for constructive reading. A member of the bar might take Sir Charles Russell's speech before the Parnell commission, or his speech in the Maybrick trial, and after studying it, carefully construct a better one himself. Of course he might. Why not? Anyway the attempt would do him good. He would have a fine, healthful exercise in constructive reading.

The great debate on the Jesuit Estates Bill would furnish invigorating exercise to any constructive reader for months. He might begin with Sir John Thompson's speech and tear it into tatters. Having utterly demolished the Minister of Justice he might pay his respects to Mr. Mills. Going over all the speeches in this way would brace up the intellect amazingly. Praising a speech that you like and denouncing one that you don't like has no educational effect. An idiot can do that. Constructing a better speech than the one you like and demolishing the one you don't agree with, is the kind of exercise that makes brain power.

Somebody might take a little healthful exercise on Principal Grant's great Imperial Federation speech. It is a good speech, constructed according to the plan on which brilliant Imperial statesmen usually build their speeches. The Principal touches his points rightly, neatly, happily, sometimes humorously, and when he has said just enough on each one, moves on. Would that all speakers could move on. Somebody who doesn't believe in Imperial Federation might educate himself a little by demolishing the Principal's effort. Merely calling Imperial Federation a "fad" does not educate anybody to any great extent.

There is nothing mysterious about what Emerson calls creative reading. Reading a speech in that way you simply work your own intellect as you read and create another speech out of the same material and other material suggested. Of course if there is nothing in the speech and it suggests nothing or if you have no intellect to work you cannot read that speech creatively.

You read a sermon on a given text. As you read, and examine, and think you see just how another sermon can be made on that text, you make it. That sermon is what Genung would call a new product and you get the new product by reading creatively. Sometimes the product isn't quite as new as you think it is.

Two things are absolutely indispensable to creative reading. The one is reading matter out of which something can be made and the other is a mind able to make something.

Can anything useful be made out of much of the stuff that the reading public devour? Would any sane man ever think of using it for any good purpose? What could you do with the matter of the ordinary paper cover? Creative reading

would soon purify our literature. Round to make something useful out of everything they read people would soon turn their attention to reading matter out of which something useful can be made.

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS.

FROM THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE LATE MR. THOMAS HENNING.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF NICÆA

may be considered the most significant, as well as the most enduring monument of the Oriental Church at large. It was held in the year 325 at Nicæa, or Nice, in Bithynia, in Asia Minor, not far from Constantinople. Three hundred and eighteen bishops assembled at the call of the Emperor Constantine, who presided on the occasion, and exercised an important influence in the decisions at which the council ultimately arrived. "It was the earliest great historical event, so to speak, which had affected the whole Church, since the close of the Apostolic age. Then for the first time the Church met the Empire face to face." There are three characteristics which were fixed in the Council of Nice and which it shared more or less with all that followed. (1) It is the earliest example of a large assembly professing to represent the voice and the conscience of the whole Christian community. Its title at the time was in contradistinction to all that had gone before, "The Great and Holy Synod." (2) Another characteristic of a General Council first exemplified at Nice is stated in the well-known words of the twenty-first of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, "General Councils may not be gathered together but by the commandment and will of princes." This is implied in the meaning of the word General Council. An Ecumenical Synod is just an "imperial gathering" from the whole Empire. This secular character, thus stamped upon the institution of councils from the first, they never lost. (3) It was shown by this Council, as in all the others, that assemblies of this kind may err, and have erred in their decisions. This will be made plain enough before we have done with them.

The occasion of this great meeting was the Arian controversy. Arius, the founder of Arianism, was a Presbyter at Alexandria in Egypt, and had promulgated opinions incompatible with the Divinity of the Saviour. He publicly taught that the Son had, before the commencement of time, but not from all eternity, been created out of nothing by the will of the Father, in order that the world might be called into existence through Him. He also maintained that, as Christ was the most perfect created image of the Father, and had carried into execution the Divine purpose of creation, He might be called Theos and Logos, though not in the proper sense of these terms. These doctrines led to controversies which were carried on with a vehemence which we cannot understand. All classes took part in them. Bishop rose against bishop—district against district. So violent were the discussions that they were parodied in the pagan theatres. Every street corner of the city of Alexandria and afterwards of Constantinople, was full of these discussions—the streets, the market places, the drapers, the money-changers, the victuallery. Ask a man "How many oboli?" he answers by dogmatizing on generated and ungenerated being. Inquire the price of bread, and you are told, "The Son is subordinate to the Father." Ask if the bath is ready, and you are told, "The Son arose out of nothing." To discuss these abstract and metaphysical questions then, the representatives of the Christian Church from every part of the Eastern Empire and from a few places of the Western also, met together in the summer of 325 at Nicæa, not far from the present city of Constantinople.

The orthodox side was represented by the Alexandrian bishop, Alexander, and his deacon, Athanasius; while the opposition was represented by the three Bithynian bishops, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicæa, and Maris of Chalcedon. An attempt at the solution of the difficulty was made by the production of an ancient creed which had existed before the rise of the controversy. It was proposed by Eusebius, of Casarea, in Palestine, and forms the basis of the present Nicene Creed which is daily repeated in the service of the Church of England. After prolonged discussion and many modifications the following was agreed to as the Creed of Nicæa:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things both visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made—both things in heaven and things in earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, went up into the heavens, and is to come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. But those who say "There was when He was not," and "before He was begotten He was not," and that "He came into existence from what was not," or who profess that the Son of God is of a different "person," or "substance," or that He is created, or changeable, or variable, are anathematized by the Catholic Church.

Constantine not only received the decision of the bishops as a divine inspiration, but issued a decree of banishment against all who refused to subscribe the Creed. Arius himself disappeared before the close of the Council. His book "Thalia" was burnt on the spot, and the penalty of death decreed to any one who perused his writings.

Two other questions occupied the attention of this Council, but we only name them. One was the Paschal Controversy, i.e., the question whether the Christian Passover (Easter) was to be celebrated on the same day as the Jewish—the 14th day of the month Nisan—or on the following Sunday. The Council decided in favour of the latter practice.

Another question this Council had to settle was that of the Melitian heresy. In the Christian world of the third century a controversy arose out of the persecutions which tended to embitter every relation of life, viz, the mode of treating those who, in a moment of weakness had abjured or compromised their faith. Melitius was Bishop of Lycopolis, the present capital of Upper Egypt. He had taken the severe view of the cases of the lapsed whilst his Episcopal brother of Alexandria, Peter, had leared to the milder side. Each set up his own Church and succession of bishops. The Council settled the dispute by effecting a compromise, an arrangement displeasing to Athanasius.

Twenty canons or laws were laid down by this Council, the twentieth of which related to worship. It enjoined that the devotions of the people shall be performed standing. Kneeling is forbidden.

REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES IN EGYPT.

The two large July gatherings held in London, England, by the Victoria Institute, are considered to have been of much importance. The President, Sir G. G. Stokes, Bart., President of the Royal Society, took the chair at both, and on each occasion the members crowded the large hall engaged to the doors. At the first meeting, Professor Sayce's account of his examination of the library brought by Amenophis III. from Assyria to Egypt, thirty-four centuries ago, was given. The Lord Chancellor delivered an eloquent speech on the occasion, and M. Naville, the discoverer of Succoth-Pithom, Bubastis, and other places of great historical importance in Egypt, characterised the discovery described by Professor Sayce as one of the most important, and perhaps really the most important, of this century; and the Victoria Institute's members were not slow in recognizing the value of their fellow member's work. At the second meeting, the members assembled to welcome M. Naville on his arrival in England after his discovery of the site of Bubastis, and his exploration thereof. The business of this meeting was commenced by the election, as members, of several who applied to join the Institute as supporters, including His Excellency Count Bernstorff, and several Australian and American associates, after which M. Naville himself described his own discoveries at Bubastis, for the first time in England, his last visit to England having been previous to those discoveries. The Society of Arts having most kindly placed their apparatus at the disposal of the Victoria Institute, he showed, by lime-light, the photographs he had made on the spot.

M. Naville commenced by quoting the prophecy of Ezekiel against Egypt, because it contained the names of the leading buried cities, the recovery of the records of which he is so desirous to obtain; and here we may be permitted to digress for a moment to call attention to the fact that the authoress of the last published work in regard to the East declares that this prophecy has not been fulfilled according to the prophet's words. Strange that the greatest and most successful Egyptian explorer of modern times should go to this very prophecy for light to enable him to find that which others have failed to discover! Taking the last city named, he described how he found Pibseth-Bubastis, how each day's excavating work brought him new relics, new inscriptions; how he found Rameses II., in the nineteenth dynasty, had, as usual, blotted out the names of previous Pharaohs, and put his own name on everything, even on a statue of a Pharaoh of the fourth dynasty; and how, by careful comparison, aided by the fact that Rameses II. had not been quite thorough in his appropriations, he had discovered which Pharaoh of the fourth dynasty the statue represented. He came to the conclusion that Bubastis was founded at least as early as in the reign of Cheops, between whom and Pepi, of whose influences there were traces, 500 years intervened, 800 years after there was a transformation of the city in the twelfth dynasty; in the fourteenth dynasty there was the invasion of the Hyksos or Shepherds, who, from the statues of great beauty found, and from other evidences, must have been a highly cultivated people, who, he considered, must have come from Mesopotamia. Dr. Virchow considered that their monuments represented Turanians, and Professor Flower considered them to represent people of a Turanian or Mongoloid type, but that did not mean that the population itself was Turanian. Their worship and language was of a Semitic type, but the statues of their kings showed that they were not Semites. M. Naville added, "It was then what it is still now; and I believe that the conquest of Egypt by the Hyksos is not unlike what would happen at the present day if the population of Mesopotamia overran the valley of the Nile; you would have masses in great majority of Semitic race, speaking a Semitic language, having a Semitic religion, and being under the command of Turks, who are not Semites but Turanians."

M. Naville, having referred to the head of a Hyksos king, which he had sent to the British Museum, added that he had found two statues of Apepi, the Pharaoh of Joseph, and inscriptions in regard to the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and many others of high interest. But it would be impossible to refer to the mine of interesting matter to be found in this paper, and we can only congratulate the members of the Victoria Institute on possessing it; it is certainly worth the whole year's subscription to possess this one paper. M. Naville, in concluding, said: "I cannot dwell at great length here on the events of the Exodus, yet I should like to mention that the successive discoveries made in the Delta have had the result of making the sacred narrative more comprehensive in many points, and in one especially in showing that the distances were much shorter than was generally thought. I consider it important,