

not perfect, for the shooting stars are probably made up of the material of the comet itself, and there is at least one instance in which a respectable comet (Biela's) has entirely disintegrated into shooting stars, many of which the writer saw fall upon the earth in November, 1886.

Such are shooting stars. They fall noiselessly and there is no certainty that any portion of their remains has ever been distinguished from the rest of the earth.

But besides these swarming minnows of space are the larger fish. These are large fragments of matter, less numerous, of course, than the little ones. These also sometimes encounter the earth. Then the fortunate observer sees a brilliant light, as the outside of the aerolite is rendered incandescent by its friction with the air, a violent explosion commonly follows, and in many cases fragments of the visitor weighing from a few ounces to five hundred pounds bury themselves in the earth and are dug out by curiosity seekers or scientific students.

It is interesting to note that these bodies, while bringing no chemical element not previously known, yet are of such composition and structure as to be readily recognized by experts.

The principal metallic constituent is iron, the other portions being mostly of a stony character. Twenty-five of the seventy or more elements have been found in meteors. They greatly resemble certain stones of volcanic origin, but there are insuperable objections to the theory that they proceed either from terrestrial or lunar volcanoes.

They are simply dwarfed, misshapen worlds. When they fall upon the earth the result is much the same as if the earth were to fall upon a body many trillion times as large as itself. It is bad for the smaller body.

Large collections of meteoric fragments have been collected for museums, that at Harvard University being easily the most interesting in America.—F. S. LUTHER.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN SCOTLAND.

DR. R. M. WENLEY

A most interesting article appears in the *New World*, by Dr. Wenley, on "The movement of Religious thought in Scotland 1843-96," which has attracted the attention of the Church papers. The following extract gives his summing up of the Presbyterians outside the Established Church:

"Concerning the last days, then, the first important change is the shifting of the centre of theological interest from the Church to the dissenting communions. It may turn out that certain fortuitous circumstances, which are too well known to need specification, have not been without effect here. The truth remains that Professors A. B. Bruce, Marcus Dods, A. B. Davidson, S. D. F. Salmond, George Adam Smith, J. Iverach, James Orr, and James Mackintosh, with Principal Fairbairn, Drs. James Denney, James Stalker, James Kidd, John Watson, and last, by no means least, Robertson Nicoll, as well as some few others less widely known, are outside the pale of the State Church. Within it new interests appear to have arisen, as we shall see in the sequel. In any case, younger men of the stamp of Drs. Denney and Kidd, or of Mr. D. M. Ross, or of Professors G. A. Smith and James Mackintosh, have not yet made their presence felt. At the same time, the contemporary theologians inhabit an atmosphere differing from that in which Service, the Scotch Sermonists, and the Glasgow Hegelians for the most part flourished. Their teaching can scarcely be termed reactionary; it is rather mediating. That is, it is not so much concerned with criticism of the past as with restatement of old doctrines along lines produced by modern inquiry; yet at the same time it is not unrestricted by a devotion, always sincere, occasionally pathetically so, to the central belief in the divinity of Christ. Professor Smith, for example, notwithstanding his acceptance of the higher criticism, is among Scotland's most evangelical preachers; Professor Orr, notwithstanding his vast knowledge of recent thought, especially in speculative philosophy, is among the doughtiest champions of the things that believing Christians deem unshakable, no matter how much he may differ from them in rejection of some antiquated superstitions; he even finds time to hold a Protestant lectureship, and from its vantage point to fulminate against Papacy. Orthodoxy, in short, is speaking with a fresh if not altogether strange voice.

Attention is being concentrated, not, it is true, upon creeds about Christ, but upon Christ Himself always with a completely pervading acceptance of His divinity in the most rigid sense of this term. The spiritual monism of Hegel which render all sons of God, and conceives of Christ as differing from other great men only in degree and not in kind, has been summarily rejected. On the other hand, the historical method and the doctrine of evolution, with all their characteristic implications, have found acceptance. In the persons of her leading theologians, Scotland does not now stand where she did fifty years ago, but she still witnesses for the supernatural nature of Christianity. It seems to me that this development is an important one constructively. It is a result of the growing perception that Darwin and Wallace, and modern thought generally, have no more swept away man's spiritual nature and life than Copernicus or Lyell was once supposed to have done."

THE INDIANS ON THE WEST COAST.

BY M. SWARTOUT.

Little is known of the Indians upon the west coast of Vancouver Island. Men have lived among them, have married their women, and yet have failed to ascertain whether they have a religion or not, what is the significance of their great festivals, called "Potlatches," and many of the rites performed by them.

Their past history is lost. We know not whence they came or whither they go. The west coast tribes bear some resemblance to the Japanese whilst many of their customs are distinctly Oriental, and furnish many illustrations of the customs mentioned in the Scriptures, but beyond this we know but little.

Speaking generally these Indians are honest, more so than a similar community of whites. Perhaps a salutary regard for the law and a dread of confinement has something to do with this characteristic, for beyond this excellent virtue, they do not seem to be possessed of many moral qualities.

And yet, when one considers their traditions, their religion—or superstitions—their manners of living, and the debasing influence of the worst elements of civilization, which have readily found their way amongst them, we may well wonder that there is so much that is good and lovable as there is.

They live in large houses, with no floor, and, at least in the older structures, with a flat or slightly sloping roof. These lodges, called *mah us* or *mah h-tee* have no partitions, but around them, inside, is a raised portion upon which the bed is made. Each corner, and possibly each side as well, if the house is large enough, is occupied by a family with its fire built upon the ground, the smoke finding exit through an aperture in the roof.

The younger generation is beginning to build modern houses, but—with rare exceptions—all houses are the scene of disorder and dirt, whilst the older ones are used as well for drying and smoking fish, the principal article of diet of the ancients.

Outside the houses the canoes, which they always use for travelling in this land of water stretches, are drawn up out of the reach of the surf and securely fastened at night lest an unusually high tide carry them away.

When night falls all remain inside, except an occasional straggler, and the numerous curs that infest every village. A cheery fire is made, the supper is cooked and eaten and then they stretch themselves out upon their reed beds, cover themselves with blankets and go to sleep.

At the first peep of dawn they arise and, one by one, creep out side and squat down upon the beach, or grass, covered with a blanket, and wait for the sun to rise. This duty they never fail to observe and their belief is that if they fail in thus worshipping the sun they will not be blessed with long life, which is their chiefest hope.

They also worship the moon, and the devout among them at the beginning of each lunar month, leave their houses and hide themselves in the depths of the forest, or upon the sea shore, and spend the time in supplication.

Some do not know of any greater god than these luminaries; but some are aware of the existence of a Supreme Being, uncreated, who is the Creator of all things, and to whom even the sun and moon are but servants.

A favorite place of worship also is in the sea, bathing the body or swimming in the water, at the earliest dawn, or in the depth of night, shouting out incoherent prayers in a loud voice. There is also much virtue in rubbing the body with twigs or the rough branches of various trees, whilst their petitions are being made.

These prayers are almost, if not quite, invariably, offered for material benefits, such as health, long life, success in sealing, fishing, etc. In fact, in order to be a successful whale hunter, not