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TORONTO, FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1878.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

THE memorable meeting of the British Association at Belfast, in the summer of 1874, when Dr. Tyndall took advantage of his position as President to give a world-wide exposition of his materialistic views, has been more than paralleled in interest, by the fiftieth conference of the "German Association of Naturalists and Physicians," which was held at Munich, last September. On no other occasion has there been a more august assemblage of scientists, than at this jubilee meeting. At the first two sittings, papers were read by Professors Nügel and Hæckel in favor of the doctrine of evolution in its most extreme form. It was contended by both, not only, that the province of mind extended from animals to plants, but that in our conception of the nature of mental operations, it behoved us to pass over from the organic to the inorganic world. So urgent was Dr. Hæckel in his advocacy of these views, as to propose their immediate introduction into the system of common school instruction. "It is a question," he said, "for the educators, whether the theory of evolution should be at once laid down as the basis of instruction, and the protoplasmic soul be assumed as the foundation of all ideas concerning spiritual being." It is not to be wondered at, that the outspoken confidence with which these sentiments were uttered, should have created much excitement not only within the Conference but throughout Germany. They were not, however allowed to pass unchallenged. At the third sitting, Professor Virchow, whose name during the last thirty years has been intimately linked with the progress of physiological discovery, and who is universally acknowledged among scientists as one of the first authorities in every department of anthropology, while he holds distinguished rank as a publicist and statesman, delivered an address in which he very earnestly protested against the spirit of dogmatism, manifested in their conference and prevalent in scientific circles. The opportuneness of this protest, when so many men of science, fascinated by

the splendid results of their investigations, have been led to overstep the limits of knowledge possible by their experimental methods, and to press their speculations on the public, as if they were established truths, will be generally admitted, especially by those interested in Christian apologetics. It was the protest of a scientific Luther against the errors of his brethren. It was rather, the warning of a father, concerned for the dignity of the family, but vexed with the vagaries of his children. It was all the more valuable, as being the protest of one, who had as little predilection in favor of religious dogma as any of those present, and who could say that he was quite ready to receive the very boldest of the petted theories, even the doctrine of spontaneous generation, when he could find evidence to substantiate its truth. There can be little doubt, that a position of historical importance awaits this discourse of Dr. Virchow. The attention of the British public was first called to it by the Prussian correspondent of the "London Times." It has since been translated into English. A review of this translation has appeared in one of the British Quarterlies. And passing reference in several leading journals, indicate the beginning recognition of its value. No apology is needed for submitting the following brief outline to our readers:

Dr. Virchow began by congratulating his brethren on the freedom they now enjoyed as men of science. The first meetings of their conference were held in secret session, and they did not dare to publish the names of the Austrian delegates. But the addresses of Drs. Nügel and Hæckel, to which they had listened at the previous sittings, were ample proof that they had now all the freedom they could desire. He deprecated, however, the abuse of this liberty. He was not opposed to speculation on the basis of science. The scientific imagination had opened the way to the most splendid discoveries. But it was to be remembered, that like the discovery of America by Columbus, when he was seeking a path to the Indies, the results obtained were frequently quite different from those anticipated. It was very important, accordingly, that they should note accurately the line of demarcation, between the speculative province of science, and the domain which she has actually won and fully settled; and that in their communications to the public they should plainly mark this distinction. No one could be more anxious than he was, that the public mind should be saturated with scientific knowledge. "Every new fragment of knowledge," he says, "works within men, begets new ideas, and new trains of thought." The material progress of the age is thus stimulated. Even mental philosophy is constrained to acknowledge her indebtedness to physiological research. We are thus enabled to discriminate more precisely, that part of our being which is purely mental from that which is purely physical. On the other hand however, if speculations and theories were palmed off under the guise of scientific truth, the danger was great of science being brought into contempt, and its proper influence seriously injured. In an especial manner, it was folly to talk of introducing their speculations into the schools for the people. Young minds would not pause on the discriminating lines that might be drawn. "What we know and what we only suppose, blend themselves, as a general rule, so completely into a single picture, that what is supposed appears to be the principal thing, and what is known seems the accessory."

"In respect to the evolution theory: it could not have escaped noticed, and it was worthy of the most serious consideration, that Socialism had established close and sympathetic relations with it. But notwithstanding this ominous confederacy, if we were convinced, that the evolution theory was a doctrine perfectly established, 'from that moment,' he says, 'we could not dare to feel any scruple about introducing it into our actual life, so as not only to communicate it to every educated man, but to impart it to every child, to make it the foundation of our whole ideas of the world, of society, and the State, and to base on it our whole system of education. But in reference to this theory, what are the facts? Dr. Virchow maintains: 1. The last shred of evidence which the doctrine of spontaneous generation seemed to have in its favor, perished with the exposure of the true nature of the now well known *Bathylus*. 2. It was a mere phantasm for any one to characterize movements, in the lower forms of life, or in the inorganic world, as having the nature of mental operations. 3. There was no reliable evidence in support of the opinion that man existed in the tertiary period. 4. The Darwinian theory of the origin of man is as yet a mere hypothesis, on which the progress of investigation, instead of confirming it, has tended rather to cast doubt. 'The old troglodytes, pile-villagers, and bog-people prove to be quite a respectable society. They have heads so large that many a living person would be only too happy to possess such. Our French neighbors indeed, have warned us against inferring too much from these big heads. In spite of the size of the brain, their nerve-substance may have remained at a lower stage of development. This,

however, is but the sort of familiar talk which is brought in as a kind of prop to weak minds. On the whole, we must really acknowledge, that there is a complete absence of any fossil type of a lower stage in the development of man.'

In the preface to the English translation of this address, written by Dr. Virchow, he observes, that with few exceptions, his protest has met with cordial assent from German naturalists. It is a salutary lesson to theologians, not to be too hasty in making concessions to sceptical opponents.

PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLIES.

DURING the past fortnight General Assemblies have been held in various parts of the world. The Churches of Australia and New Zealand have had their annual gatherings. In England, Ireland, and Scotland, the Assemblies have either just risen or are now in full blast. Scotland has without doubt been during these weeks in a state of ferment, and we look forward with keen interest to the perusal of the debate in the Free Church General Assembly on the famous Professor Smith case. The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of America, of the Presbyterian Church (South), and various Synods, such as that of the Reformed Church of the United States, have met and transacted their business. The Assembly of our own Church will soon convene in the neighboring city of Hamilton. It is cause of rejoicing that there is nothing but peace within the borders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. There is no *fama clamosa* on hand this year, and we anticipate an Assembly that will accomplish much work in further consolidating the Union, in adopting a book of polity, and in promoting the cause of Christ both at home and abroad.

Meanwhile there are some things to which we wish to refer in connexion with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (North) of the United States.

The very unusual event took place of the Moderator of the last Assembly not being able to be present and to preach the opening sermon. Distance had something to do with this, as it devolved upon the Rev. Dr. Eels of San Francisco, Cal., as Moderator to open the present Assembly and to preside until relieved by the appointment of his successor. In the absence of Dr. Eels, the Rev. Professor Morris, of Lane Seminary, the last Moderator, preached a sermon distinguished by its eloquence and ability, after which the Assembly by an almost two-thirds vote elected as Moderator, the Rev. Professor Patton, D.D., of the Chicago Theological Seminary. The new Moderator of this great Church deserves some notice at our hands.

Professor Patton was born in Bermuda Islands in January, 1843, and is therefore only thirty-five years of age. He was educated in Toronto University, and if we mistake not received part of his theological training in Knox College. At all events, he spent some of his vacations in missionary work in the district superintended by the Rev. Mr. Gray of Orillia. Owing doubtless to these early associations, and also to his superior advantages as a student at Princeton, he laid the foundations of that learning which has already brought him to the front rank as a scholar and theologian. The career of Professor Patton is an instructive one, and we give it