

The year after Newton's death, a work entitled the "System of the World" and professing to be by him, was published, giving in English, a kind of popular account of his discoveries. Nearly 140 years afterwards, in 1867, doubts of its genuineness were expressed in Knight's English Cyclopædia, but apparently no further inquiry was made. This book had been reprinted and bound up with an English translation of the Principia, giving the impression that it was part of the Principia. A member of the American Association, having discovered in the book a huge mathematical blunder, in calculating the attraction of two spheres, very properly reported his discovery to the mathematical and physical section, and created a very lively discussion.

By good fortune I had both books in my possession, the English "System of the World," dated 1731, and the Latin Principia in the standard edition of the present day. This proved that the former was no part of the Principia, and the enormity of the blunder settled the question about genuineness raised in the Encyclopedia. Newton could not have made it. It was of the same character as that sometimes made by a school boy at an examination, when he calculates that the interest on \$300 for 6 months at 6 per cent is about \$72,000.

I may add as exemplifying that science is independent of nationality, that the standard edition spoken of, was a reprint of the edition published about twelve years after Newton's death, with a commentary, also in Latin, by two Frenchmen, PP. Le Seur and Jacquier, priests of the Gallican order of Minims, that it was edited by them at Rome, and dedicated to a French Cardinal, Rohan.

The second instance occurred at the same meeting and was more interesting. For about thirty years previously English text-books on optics had been stating and even lamenting, especially after the invention of the spectroscope, that Newton had never used the slit instead of the round hole for the admission of light on the prism in the formation of the spectrum. I happened to have a copy of Newton's "Opticks" and knew that the statement was wrong. He mentions very particularly the advantages of the slit. But I was afraid to write about the error. For, surely, I thought, there must be many eminent men of science in England who know of it, and if they think it unnecessary to make a correction why should I interfere? It cannot be so common as it appeared to be.

The late Dr. Rowland, of Johns Hopkins' University happened to be exhibiting his concave gratings with their beautiful effects in the resolution of the spectrum, when a prominent scientific man, after prolonged inspection, expressed the usual regret about Newton. After that I immediately wrote a short note to a weekly scientific magazine; but with