

Of all the startling theories which have at one time or another been put forward with regard to meteorites, none probably is more extravagant than that recently promulgated by Sir William Thompson, the late President of the British Association. In his Presidential address last year, this eminent philosopher maintained that the origin of life on our globe, and the introduction from time to time of new species, might be referred to the arrival of meteorites, which, being fragments of other worlds upon which life already existed, had carried with them the germs or seeds, or even "living animals or plants," to populate our globe. This theory, in reality, in no way evades the difficulty as to the origin of life, and has been unhesitatingly rejected by the scientific world. It is summarily disposed of by Mr. Forbes, because "the now generally received theory of meteors teaches us to regard them as bodies which have been revolving, probably for countless ages, in spaces destitute of atmospheric conditions requisite to sustain life; and, secondly, because the meteorites with which we are acquainted have, in their descent, had their external surface actually melted by the intense heat produced by the friction and oxidation of the air; so that the very supposition that any vegetable or animal being, seed or germ, could by any possibility retain its vitality, or reach the reach the earth unconsumed, seems in the very highest degree improbable."

#### Deaf Mute Education.

The issue of the first annual report of the Ontario institution for the Deaf and Dumb, brings under review what has been done in the sister Province to aid and instruct a class having large claims upon the sympathy and protection of the community. The pioneer of deaf mute education in Ontario was Mr. J. B. McGann, who commenced a school in Toronto in June, 1858, and, having removed to Hamilton in 1864 continued the school there till July, 1870. During this time about 180 deaf mutes came under instruction, and much interest in the work was excited throughout the Province. The Ontario Institution at Belleville was formally opened to pupils on the 20th of October, 1870, and the reports of the Inspector and Principal now before us indicate the progress made during the first year. At the outset, four teachers were appointed and the school was divided into four classes. A fifth teacher was soon added, and now that the number of pupils in residence has reached 110, it is proposed to form a sixth class to be placed under the charge of an educated young lady, herself a deaf mute, who is qualifying for the task.

For a first year, this statement of the members in attendance may be regarded as foreshadowing a successful career for the Institution. Nevertheless, it appears that there is much to be done in order to bring all the deaf mutes in the Province within reach of instruction, for it is computed by the Principal, Mr. W. J. Palmer, that there are certainly not less than 250 in Ontario who have not yet been sent to the Institution. The reason for this neglect is apparently the poverty of the parents, who are unable to pay for the maintenance of their children at the school, and are thus unable to avail themselves of the Government provision of their education. Inspector Langmuir remarks that in order to enable every deaf mute of school age—seven to nineteen—to be placed under instruction three methods are open for selection. First, the enactment of a law requiring every municipality in which there are deaf mutes, whose parents are unable to send them to the institution and support them whilst there, to

pay for their transfer to and from the school, and to defray the expense of board. Secondly, to make the institution free to all, without any charge for board on the part of the government. Or, thirdly, to make the education of all deaf mutes in the Province compulsory. At present, parents or friends who are able to pay for the board of pupils are charged the cost of food, half the stipulated amount being required in advance. Parents unable to pay for the board of their children must apply to the council of the county, township, town or village in which they reside, and if the municipality becomes responsible for the board of the child, it is admitted into the school. The question of the ability or inability of the applicant to pay is determined solely by the municipality. If the children are orphans and without means of support, they are boarded, clothed and educated at the school, at the expense of the government, on the application of the municipality in which the orphan resides. According to this classification, the 107 children in the institution on the 30th of last September were supported as follows:—54 by parents or guardians, 45 by municipalities, and 8 by the Province as orphans. The inspector observes that as only 16 counties have complied with the provisions of the law,—seven in a prompt and efficient manner and eight only partially so, conclusive evidence is furnished, if the present method of admission is to be continued, of the necessity of the legislature requiring every county to support in the institution the children whose parents are unable to bear the expense.

In some few cases the fault is with the parents who keep their children with them for the sake of their manual labour. In such cases there is evidently a necessity for state interference and the application of the principle of compulsory education, as the children thus unhappily kept back from instruction must grow up in a condition of the most deplorable ignorance and brutishness. If the Institution were made board free and the whole cost defrayed by Government, a large additional amount would have to be expended on maintenance; though this would perhaps be a less serious matter than permitting nearly two thirds of the class for whom the institution has been provided to lose the benefit of instruction entirely.

Among other features of interest in the report, we notice that a farm and garden are attached to the institution, and it is proposed to have a workshop erected that will afford room for carpentering, shoemaking and tailoring. A drawing master attends for the instruction of those whom the Principal believes to evince a taste for the pencil; and in other ways, it is sought to give the pupils opportunity for the development of their powers. Mere scholastic training will be a poor gift to the pupils, unless they are put in the way of earning their own living at some industrial pursuit after leaving the institution. There seems no reason why deaf mutes should not become proficient in mechanical employments such as cabinet-making, shoe-making, and tailoring. The attempts made in this direction at the school have proved highly successful, the eight male pupils engaged at the carpentering trade taking a great interest in their work, and executing all the repairs and improvements necessary about the buildings and premises. As for the learned professions, deaf mutes are obviously under too great disadvantages to compete successfully with those enjoying all their faculties. One interesting exception is noted by Principal Palmer. The Messrs. MacDellan, barristers and attorneys, educated at the Deaf and Dumb Institution in Glasgow, have followed their profession at Belleville for several years with marked success.—*Gazette*.