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FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1906.

THAT SHIPBUILDING CONTEST AGAIN.

Taking exception to certain remarks of ours concerning its attitude on the shipbuilding contest recently won by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company the esteemed Norfolk Landmark says:

"The Landmark is not a thick-and-thin shouter for the Navy Yards. It has always held that the private yards should have a liberal share of the construction work, but has favored having at least one ship under construction all the time in every government yard suited for building."

"We did not 'make much of the fact' that the keel of the government-built battleship Connecticut was laid a month later than that of the Louisiana, built at the Newport News private yard. We simply noted the fact in fairness as did one of our Newport News contemporaries. It is presumable that when the private yard began to build the Louisiana, it had the plans of the ship well enough in hand to proceed with the work. The private builders would hardly have laid the keel just to look at it."

"The Press does not deny that the government is restricted by law to the eight-hour day in its Navy Yards, and cannot require any employee to work longer than eight hours in one day. If an employee works longer, he does so as a favor, as it were, and must receive extra pay. The system of payment by the hour reduces the handicap, but it is clear enough that the government, restricted to the eight-hour day, was hampered in comparison with the unrestricted private yard. The truth of this statement is proved by the steady opposition of the private yards to the suggestion that work done for the government, as well as work done by the government, shall be restricted to a legal limit of eight hours a day."

"This paper never called for the 'test' which has been made. We never expected it to result otherwise than as it has resulted. It demonstrates what was known: that under present unequal conditions, the private shipbuilders can turn out a ship at considerably less cost than the government. They might do it at less cost even under equal conditions. Private contractors could doubtless operate the Postoffice Department more economically than the government. The question involves more than the bare consideration of financial saving at the moment."

While we did not specifically classify the Landmark as a "thick-and-thin shouter for the navy yards," in the few general remarks with which we closed our comment on the incident, we judged from the zeal it displayed in stretching out mattresses for the discomfited naval constructors to fall on, that it was not altogether an unprejudiced observer of the little tilt which has come to a close. We accept its disclaimer, however, and will strike its name from what it seems to regard as an obnoxious list.

As to the merits of the Landmark's contention regarding the eight-hour day, we are still unimpressed. As we have already pointed out the navy yard might have put on a double shift of men, if time could have been gained by that expedient without materially increasing the cost of the vessel, since payment by the hour removed that feature of the contest from consideration.

We did not refer to the fact that the Louisiana's keel was first laid,

because we had discussed the question at length once before and had explained so that we thought everybody understood the situation, that the Brooklyn navy yard had its plans in hand and authorization to build, nearly two months before the local yard was invited to submit a bid upon the sister ship of the Connecticut. Our contemporary cannot be so dense as to underestimate the importance of that advantage; certainly not when it is remembered that the ordering and accumulation of material is one of the main features of turning out a ship on time. It is hardly fair to charge a three months start as a handicap, and no one but the naval officials themselves were to blame for the delay the Connecticut's keel.

We agree with our contemporary that financial saving at the moment is not the prime consideration, but when Uncle Sam can get better ships at a cheaper figure and on better time than from his own yards, why should any one, save the man who has a selfish personal interest in the navy yard, object?

AS TO THE MEXICAN RIOTS.

A dispatch from Washington says that the State and War Department are worried over the unique situation developed by the riots at Cananea, as the case is without precedent and the officials are not certain what course should be pursued. Naturally the Mexican government is jealous of the invasion of its territory by American, and consent to pursue, Indian hands across the border has been difficult to secure.

Diligent search among the archives of the departments at Washington has revealed the fact that from time to time there have been conventions or agreements between the United States and Mexico providing for the reciprocal crossing of the frontier by the troops of the two nations. The last one of this kind was signed in Washington on June 4, 1896, and provided that troops might cross the frontier when on a "hot trail" and in pursuit of hostile Indians. The Mexican Government was reluctant to sign this agreement and took every precaution to limit its life, and Article 9 provided "that this agreement shall remain in force until Kid's band of hostile Indians shall be wholly exterminated or rendered obedient to one of the two countries." Kids band having disappeared as a hostile force, this convention, of course, is a dead letter.

A similar convention was signed in Washington June 20, 1890, and in that case it was provided that the agreement should be terminable by either party after four months' notice and in no case was it to remain in force for more than one year.

It is to be hoped that the situation is well in hand and that there will be no more disorders. If American troops have crossed the border without due authority, the administration should hasten to make the necessary reparation even without waiting for a request to that effect from the Mexican government.

AS TO POISONOUS MEDICINES.

Printers' Ink is responsible for the following statement in connection with the patent medicine crusade: "A tabulation of all cases of accidental poisoning, and of injury or death from the misuse of medicines, as reported in the newspapers of the United States during the ten months ending May 1, 1906, refutes the statements sometimes made that 'patent medicines' are 'killing the people.' Of all accidents it is shown that 56.89 per cent are due to miscellaneous poisons, 40.61 per cent to non-patent medicines and 2.52 per cent to 'patent medicines.'"

If the statistics are trustworthy it is pretty conclusively shown that the crusade by those reformers who have spent so much time in trying to put patent medicines out of business, is not quite broad enough. It certainly ought to embrace the dangerous concoctions involved in those mixtures which were prolific of nearly twenty times as many cases of actual poisoning as were the much criticized proprietary articles.

According to dispatches from the English capital Londoners seem to have boycotted the products of the American meat packers, if but consumers would do likewise it would prove more effective in bringing about the necessary reforms in packing than have a dozen inspection laws. Statutes are made to be evaded and ignored and the beef combine is a powerful and wealthy aggregation. Its most vulnerable point is the pocket, nerve, and it could be brought to time quicker along that line than along any other.

Perhaps the meat trust is not worrying so much over the nominal cost of eight cents per head for inspection, as it is over the loss of profits from diseased meats which under the new system would be condemned and thrown on the rubbish pile.

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YEARS OF THE EARTH

THIS WORLD OF OURS COUNTS THEM BY THE MILLIONS.

Various Calculations by Which the Famous Scientists Have Endeavored to Figure Out the Age of the Planet Upon Which We Live.

The time has admittedly gone for attempting to "reconcile the facts of nature," to use a recognized phrase, with the chronology of the Bible, which makes the age of the world rather less than 6,000 years.

Indeed, in the Egyptian rooms at the British museum the visitor can see for himself objects which go back to an authenticated period long antecedent to 4000 years B. C., and great is the wonder produced on the minds of those who first make their acquaintance.

In that same department, among the mummies, there is what is in many respects the most striking of the exhibits in the department—the body of a man who belongs to the stone age. It lies in an accurate representation of the peculiarly shaped grave in which it was found, and it has been in consequence somewhat irreverently nicknamed "the man in the pie dish."

The particular interest in that corpse, which men, women and even children look upon without the least thought or suggestion of the fear or horror usually inseparable from death, is that it is unquestionably the oldest exhibit in the museum, and scientists have been rather struck by the fact that the authorities of the great institution in Great Russell street have not, so to say, taken the bull by the horns, boldly labeled that exhibit as dating from 50,000 B. C. Thus with one single stroke of the pen Bishop Usher's Biblical chronology is multiplied by about nine, and it may be that an even higher number would be required to satisfy the requirements of the age of that particular specimen.

How long has the earth been a planet capable of supporting not only human, but all forms of life?

In an address Lord Kelvin once delivered on the subject he gathered together the opinions of various scientific men which cannot but be of interest to every thinking being. Darwin, in his "Origin of Species," stated that, "in all probability a far longer period than 300,000,000 years has elapsed;" while later on, in the same book, he wrote: "He who can read Sir Charles Lyell's grand work on the 'Principles of Geology,' which the future historian will recognize as having produced a revolution in natural science, yet does not admit how incomprehensibly vast have been the last periods of time, may at once close this volume."

Lord Kelvin himself—then Professor William Thomson—later made an attempt to calculate the length of time during which the sun has been burning at its present rate, and in that connection he wrote: "It seems on the whole most probable that the sun has not illuminated the earth for 100,000,000 years and almost certain that it has not done so for 500,000,000 years. As for the future we may say with equal certainty that the inhabitants of the earth cannot continue to enjoy the light and heat essential to their life for many million years longer unless new sources, now unknown to us, are prepared in the great storehouse of creation."

It is a remarkable evidence of the acute perception of Lord Kelvin's mind, as of the rare prevision of his intellect, that the last words—"unless new sources, now unknown to us, are prepared in the great storehouse of creation"—should have been added to that remarkable sentence.

As an example of the very extraordinary range of time given to the age of the earth, consider the following statement from Professor Jukes' "Students' Manual of Geology." He wrote: "Mr. Darwin estimates the time required for the denudation of the rocks of the weald of Kent, or the erosion of space between the ranges of chalk hills known as the north and south downs, at 300,000,000 years. It may be possible, perhaps, that the estimate is a hundred times too great, and that the real time elapsed did not exceed 3,000,000 years; but, on the other hand, it is just as likely that the time which actually elapsed since the first commencement of the erosion till it was nearly as complete as it now is was really a hundred times greater than his estimate, or 300,000,000 years."

Professor Phillips in a lecture at the University of Cambridge considered the rate of erosion between the ranges of the north and south downs to be rather one inch a year than Darwin's estimate of one inch in a hundred years, so that on mere geological grounds he reduced the time to about a hundredth. Calculating, however, the actual thickness of all the known geological strata of the earth he came to the conclusion that life on the earth's surface may probably date back to between 38,000,000 and 96,000,000 years.

Professor Sollas of Oxford, working on new principles applied to the stratified rocks, reduced this time, very considerably, for he wrote, "So far as I can at present see, the lapse of time since the beginning of the Cambrian system is probably less than 17,000,000 years, even when computed on an assumption of uniformity, which to me seems contradicted by the most salient facts of geology."

What are the data, it will naturally be asked, on which calculations of this magnitude are made? Among the most important are the consideration of the underground heat which is constantly being conducted out of the earth—in other words, the cooling of the earth—the speed at which the earth rotates on its axis as well as physical properties of rocks at high temperatures.

The loss of heat by conduction was

Lord Kelvin's first argument for limiting the age of the earth. He found that if the earth had been losing heat in the past "with approach to uniformity for 20,000,000 years the amount of heat lost out of the earth would have been about as much as would heat by 100 degrees centigrade a quantity of ordinary surface rock of 100 times the earth's bulk. This would be more than enough to melt a mass of surface rock equal in bulk to the whole earth. No hypothesis as to chemical action, internal fluidity effects of pressure at great depths or possible character of substances in the interior of the earth, possessing the smallest vestige of probability, can justify the supposition that the earth's upper crust has remained nearly as it is, while from the whole or from any part of the earth so great a quantity of heat has been lost."

By considering the cooling of the earth and by tracing backward the process of cooling Lord Kelvin came to "a definite estimate of the greatest and least number of million years which can possibly have passed since the surface of the earth was everywhere red hot." This estimate he expressed in the following words:

"We are very ignorant as to the effects of high temperatures in altering the conductivities and specific heats and melting temperatures of rocks and as to their latent heat of fusion. We must therefore allow very wide limits in such an estimate as I have attempted to make, but I think we may with much probability say that the consolidation cannot have taken place less than 20,000,000 years ago, nor more than 40,000,000 years ago, or we should now have more underground heat than we actually have."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

BLACK ROD OF THE LORDS.

His Last Public Appearance as an Executive Officer.

Black Rod is an important and picturesque functionary of parliament. He is at once the policeman of the house of lords and the parliamentary messenger of the sovereign. He executes the warrants issued by the upper chamber for the arrest of the persons who have been adjudged guilty of a breach of its privileges or a contempt of its dignities. But in these days the curiosity of the public or its love of sensation is never piqued by the appearance of Black Rod in the role of a policeman. Indeed, it is nearly a century now since a poor, trembling wretch stood, in the custody of Black Rod, at the bar of the house of lords, charged with having outraged its awful majesty. He was a tradesman of Westminster.

One winter evening, after he had put up the shutters of his shop, he strolled across Old Palace yard to hear a debate in the house of lords. He had with him an umbrella, which he deposited in the charge of one of the doorkeepers before he entered the strangers' gallery. He never saw the article again. Another stranger, yielding to a too common weakness of frail humanity, carried it off while its rightful owner, trusting of the might of the imperial parliament to protect, at least within its own sacred precincts, the property of its subjects, was drinking in political wisdom from the lips perhaps of the Duke of Wellington.

The tradesman of Westminster was naturally indignant over the loss of his umbrella, but the expression of his feelings assumed a form highly subversive of the ancient privileges of parliament. He actually issued a process against the doorkeeper of the house of lords for the recovery of the value of the lost article. This was more than the house of lords could stand. One of its doorkeepers summoned to appear as a defendant in a court of law! Black Rod was dispatched to arrest the daring shopkeeper, who was brought forthwith to the bar and soundly rated by the lord chancellor on his presumption in outraging the dignities of the house of lords because of the loss of a miserable umbrella. Happily he was not consigned to the tower. He humbly apologized for his conduct, promised to take no further action against the doorkeeper and after another severe reprimand was escorted by Black Rod to Old Palace yard and there discharged. That was the last public appearance of Black Rod as the executive officer of the house of lords.—London Chronicle.

Butterfly Farms.

Most people when they look at a magnificent cabinet of butterflies, gleaming and glowing with a hundred iridescent hues, think that each butterfly was caught by hand—caught after a chase of a mile of two under a net or a hat. As a matter of fact, butterflies are raised on little farms, like chickens. There is such a steady butterfly demand that it pays men to raise them. These men, experts in the employ of museums, as a rule, know larvae as a chicken farmer knows eggs, and they have no difficulty in selling at a good profit all the butterflies they grow. The stock room of a butterfly farmer is a rare and beautiful sight. It is a room of glass filled with sunshine, and in the brilliant light hundreds of the loveliest butterflies flutter and float. In the profound silence their colors seem to sing, so bright are they, so splendid.—Minneapolis Journal.

Despotism of Jewels.

Coquetry and the fashion of unstable forms cannot explain the despotic attraction that precious stones exercise over our senses. Their fascinating power has never ceased. They subjugate and enslave even the most austere, and man esteems as priceless the charm of their yoke. Art strives to discover original reductions, to create virgin enthusiasms, to enrich with new tremors the subtle gamut of our sensations, but without being able to detach us from these necklaces, bracelets and jewels.—Paris Eclair.

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