

that concerning the origin of species, as any two problems can well be ; and it does not devolve upon a writer to speculate upon the one, merely because he has solved the other. Those who have taken the greatest interest in Mr. Darwin's illustrious career cannot have failed to appreciate the admirable forbearance he has always displayed in not allowing himself to digress into collateral topics, however great the temptation to digress may be. All his vast and numerous conquests of thought have been achieved by a rigid adherence to the philosophy of fact ; there is a grand consistency in the maintaining of a method, according to which pure speculation is nowhere permitted to assert itself, excepting in so far as it is absolutely necessary. Surely it would be a deplorable thing were "the epoch-making book" allowed to present a gratuitous deviation from this method, merely in order to plunge into a sea of *à priori* conceptions where inductive verification is as yet impossible. The passage quoted by Prof. Tyndall is adduced by Mr. Darwin only in order to show that so far as the doctrine of the transmutation of species is concerned, the evolution theory supplies us with "just as noble a conception of the Deity" as does the theory of special creation. Regarding the more ultimate question, everyone must say with Dr. Tyndall, "What Mr. Darwin thinks of the introduction of life I do not know ;" and this, I take it, is just the condition in which the author of the "Origin of Species" should allow his opinions to take their place in history. In short, those who censure Mr. Darwin for his praiseworthy reticence regarding "the far higher problem of the essence or origin of life, upon which science as yet throws no light,"\* would do well to consider the beautiful example of scientific caution that is afforded by the manner in which this very subject is treated of in the concluding pages of the last edition of the "Origin ;" and I am sure that I am only expressing the opinion of the majority of Mr. Darwin's admirers when I say, that whatever our ontological views may happen to be, we all unite in sincerely hoping that, in subsequent editions, he will not spoil the splendour of his finished work by indulging in speculations as foreign to his subject as they must be unprofitable in themselves.

Aug. 21

A DISCIPLE OF DARWIN

#### Meteors

ON referring to my record of meteors for the 8th inst., I find two meteors nearly at the times mentioned by Prof. Tait (vol. x. p. 305), viz., 10.33 and 10.53. That at 10.33 was, from its position as seen here, unquestionably *not* identical with the one he saw. That at 10.53 may possibly be the same, if by Monoceros Prof. Tait means the constellation commonly marked at Equuleus. If such is the case, a calculation, rough as the data necessitates, would give for the meteor's height at the beginning 144 miles ; at the end, 87 miles.

I have of course had to assume a path for the northern station, but as the radiant point was indicated, and one point of the meteor's course, I had not much choice in the matter.

Birmingham, Aug. 24

THOS. H. WALLER

#### ANOTHER NEW COMET

THE following communication, dated Mr. Bishop's Observatory, Twickenham, Aug. 20, has been sent to the *Times* by Mr. J. R. Hind, F.R.S. :—

"We have received to-day from M. Stephan, director of the Observatory at Marseilles, telegraphic notice of the discovery of a comet this morning by M. Coggia, in the constellation Taurus, the position of which is thus given :—

"August 19, at 14h. 33min. mean time at Marseilles.—Right ascension,  $59^{\circ} 29'$  ; Polar distance,  $62^{\circ} 55'$ . Motion towards the south-east. The comet is faint.

"The comet discovered at the same observatory by M. Borrelly, on the 25th of July, I observed here last night as follows :—

"August 19, at 9h. 27min. 38sec. mean time at Twickenham.—Right ascension, 13h. 32min. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ sec. ; Polar distance,  $17^{\circ} 21' 42\frac{1}{3}''$ .

"It does not appear, as yet, to have materially decreased in brightness."

\* "Origin of Species," p. 423, 1874.

#### THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION AT BELFAST

BELFAST, Tuesday Night.

BELFAST is quite the centre of Irish industry, and one of the most progressive towns in the kingdom. People are living who remember it with less than 20,000 inhabitants ; now it has near 200,000. As a proof of industry and thrift, it offers a good example to the rest of Ireland. The Association has not met under very favourable circumstances, for unfortunately at this moment no less than 20,000 men in the town are on strike, and somewhat less than 15,000*l.* a week is withdrawn from circulation. A smaller town with a less elastic population would be paralysed, and the influence of the strike is sufficiently felt as it is. The population of the town is very mixed ; it is not true Irish. Belfast is less Irish either than Dublin, Cork, Galway, Derry, or Limerick. There is a large leaven of Scotch and Scoto-Irish, who have indeed the merit of a thrifty nature, but who lack many of the good qualities of the Irish ; among others, their hospitality. The thrift of these people has caused the hotel and lodging arrangements to be carried out in an abominable manner. We have been shamefully fleeced. One hotel charges a sovereign a night for a bedroom, others half as much ; in any case, members of the Association are charged at least double the ordinary prices. In final despair we were driven to inquire at a small coffee-shop whether they had a room ; the people replied that they had ; but that if we were a member of the Association we must pay ten shillings a night, the ordinary price in that house being about two shillings. When people travel from a distance, and sacrifice time, money, and rest, to do the work of the Association, and not as pleasure seekers, it is rather hard to be swindled because you happen to be a member of the Association.

The Sections have been well filled, and have had plenty of pabulum in the form of papers and verbal communications. Section A has been divided into two Departments, and it is probable that one or two of the Sections will have to sit on Wednesday. The addresses were quite up to the average. Among the more interesting papers were those of Mr. Huggins, On the Spectrum of Coggia's Comet ; Prof. Wiedemann, On the Magnetisation of Chemical Compounds ; Dr. Carpenter, On the *Challenger* Deep-sea Dredgings ; and Mr. E. J. Harland, On a Screw-lowering Apparatus for Ships. The expected fight about the *Eozoön Canadense* did not come off. The specimen and apparatus room is well filled. Among the more interesting objects we observe Prof. Barrett's apparatus for showing the elongation of iron, cobalt, and nickel by magnetisation, Mr. Braham's heliostat and ruled glass used in experiments on light, and Mr. Roberts' illustrations of columnar structure, artificially produced. The Thursday *soirée*, on the other hand, was singularly devoid of exhibitions of any kind, and the Ulster Hall was extremely crowded, both causes tending to make the evening drag rather heavily. There were several excursions on Saturday, and there are many prepared for Thursday, the principal being to the Giants' Causeway. The Mayor, who has throughout been very active in forwarding the interests of the Association, has issued invitations for a trip round the coast on Thursday, for which purpose he has engaged one of the fine Fleetwood mail steamers.

The Association meets next year at Bristol, Sir John Hawkshaw, C.E., F.R.S., being President-elect ; Glasgow is to be the place of meeting in 1876, an influential deputation having attended the Association to urge upon it the claims of that city to the honour of its presence. Plymouth will probably be the rendezvous for 1877.

The following is the financial statement of the Association for the past year :—