

economic cost is a necessary price for profligacy. The trouble is that such a point of view entirely overlooks the plain truth that the present comparatively low cost of raw materials of great economic importance contributes directly to the capacity of society to strengthen the social institutions on which the survival of future generations must surely depend. Those who think that it is virtuous to mine as little ore as possible, or to spend uneconomic sums of money on recycling, should ask themselves the question whether future generations will be better served by a little extra ore still to be recovered or by the development of, say, educational services (scientific research included) which, in their funny way, can be still more durable. And this, of course, is where the economic forces of the market are relevant as an arithmetical representation of the determination of social priorities. In a properly ordered society, to incur an extra cost of, say, £1 million now is to deprive society a hundred years from now of something in excess of £500 million of economic and social capital. Is this prudence or profligacy? May it not be much preferable that those who would make provision for the future in the exploitation of raw materials should spend their energies on making sure that the balance between supply and demand is accurately struck? There are plenty of targets to attack, like the protectionist devices behind which the United States petroleum industry shelters and the system of tax allowances which has made the price of metals in the United States uneconomically low (which is as much a folly as would be an artificial increase in price). Unhappily, as if dazzled by the bigger philosophical questions with which it has struggled, the Materials Science Board has nothing to say on this important issue—instead, it merely delivers the delphic opinion that the market is inadequate.

Creation in California

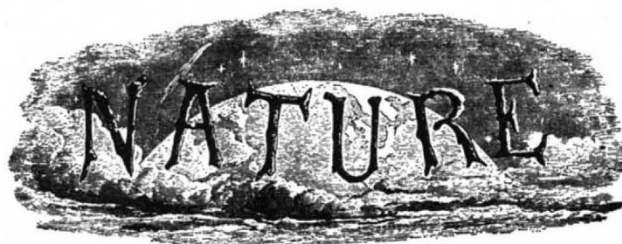
THE State Board of Education in California seems bent on an especially foolish course in its policy for approving science textbooks for use in the state schools. For the past three years, the board has been complaining that a new structure for the curriculum in California, and especially that at the junior high school level, allows no room for the teaching that the Earth was created, in the best biblical tradition. Fundamentalists on the board have argued that this is unfair, and that the teaching of the doctrine of the Creation should have equal place in the curriculum with the teaching of evolution. The result is that several large American publishers, conscious as they always are of the importance of a statewide adoption in California, have been busily modifying proposed textbooks along the lines suggested by the board. In one modified textbook, now a candidate for adoption in California, there appears the sentence "Many scientists think the Earth was formed with the rest of the solar system millions of years ago. Others believe in special creation of the universe, not nearly so long ago." Elsewhere (in another textbook by the same company) appears the statement "Scientists call this slow change to a new species evolution. Others do not accept the theory of evolution."

By all accounts, the issue of whether these textbooks should be used in Californian schools will be decided on

November 4. The issue is of course absurd. Even religious scientists no longer find it necessary to their position to deny the essence of the doctrine of evolution. And although there are many important questions about the details of the evolutionary process to be understood, especially at the molecular level, Darwinism occupies a place in science at least as strong as that of Newton's laws—no doubt there are many reinterpretations and refinements to come, but nobody in his senses can deny that the doctrine of evolution is an exceeding powerful means of relating such a variety of phenomena that it deserves to be called the truth, if in other than scientific circles, such a term is needed.

In all the circumstances, it is entirely disingenuous of the California State Board of Education to pretend to itself that sentences of the kind now being included in the textbooks submitted for approval are anything like a representation of the balance of considered opinion. Moreover, this is not a conflict in which a brave and embattled minority can reasonably be expected to restore Creation to the status of a scientific theory. To pretend otherwise is to misunderstand not merely the status of Darwinism but the nature of science. And who in any case is the minority? The State Board of Education in California has been indecently reticent on that subject. Who are the others? In the hope of helping to clarify the board of education's mind, *Nature* is prepared to send a free subscription to *Nature* to the first ten scientists working or teaching in a field of science bearing on the evolutionary question who are prepared to affirm that present observations are in their opinion inconsistent with the now commonly accepted views of Earth and species evolution. Applications must be received before October 30 and must give the present occupation of the applicants, who must be actively employed in the science department of a university. A list of names (if any) will be published.

100 Years Ago



THE British Association Meeting at Brighton has already begun to bear fruit in that town. A desire has been aroused among several of the inhabitants to know more of Natural Science, and a course of science lectures in the Dome, chiefly to working men, has been projected. But the ladies have taken the initiative, and the germ of a Ladies' Educational Association has already been planted. Prof. W. F. Barrett has been invited to give the first course of lectures on Experimental Physics. The introductory lecture on the "Study of Natural Knowledge," was given last Friday afternoon, when, in spite of the wet, upwards of 50 ladies assembled. Miss Goulty, of 2, Sussex Square, Brighton, to whom it is right to add the effort is mainly due, has permitted the use of her spacious schoolrooms for these lectures. The second lecture on "Magnetism" will be given to-morrow (Friday) afternoon.

From *Nature*, 6, 523, October 24, 1872.