

LOCAL AND OTHER MATTERS.

THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION.

Reference has been made formerly in these columns to Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon's exceedingly interesting work *Queen Moon and the Egyptian Sphinx*. The volume is the result of diligent study of the antiquities of Yucatan and much research on the vast field of archæology. The learned author traces the origin of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Chaldea and India back to Central America, where the Maya empire once flourished. He furnishes proofs, by portraits carved in stone, that there was communication between western Asia and the American continent at least as early as five hundred years before the birth of Christ, and gives the Maya version of the destruction of the land of Mu, Plato's Atlantis.

Every chapter of the book has a fascinating interest to all who seek knowledge about the remote past which is veiled to mystery. For instance, Dr. Plongeon proposes a very plausible answer to the puzzling question of the origin and meaning of the name the Asiatic people give to that country. The Hebrews called it Mizraim, and the Assyrians Muzur, and so on, forms of some word of which the letters M, Z and R form the radicals. None have hitherto been able to find the etymology of the word, but Dr. Plongeon says with confidence that it is of American origin. In the Maya language, he says, the origin of the word is found and means "to uproot trees," a name appropriate to Egypt, where the trees have been cleared off by the foundations of the Nile, carrying debris all over the country.

Speaking of the relationship between the Maya language and the Chaldean, Dr. Plongeon finds traces of the former even in the sacred literature of the Hebrews. He says that from the time the Semitic tribes established themselves in Assyria, the ancient tongue was forgotten and became the property of the learned classes almost exclusively, as Latin was in the West in the middle ages. In the seventh century B. C., Ashurbanipal tried to revive it and ordered copies of the old treatises to be made and also an Assyrian translation. It seems, however, that later even the "wise men" had forgotten the language. Thus, when at the banquet of Belshazzar, a mysterious writing was discovered on the wall, only Daniel could interpret it. It has generally been supposed that these words were Chaldean, but Dr. Plongeon asserts that they are pure Maya, having the meaning that Daniel gives to them. In the ancient American dialect the words would be: "Manel, Mane, tec, uppah," and are thus explained: "Manel," thou art past, or finished; "mane," thou art brought, or welyheo; "tec," light, not ponderous, and "uppah," thou wilt be broken in two.

In the same way, the author finds in the dying words of our Savior, a

sentence in the old American language. In the Gospel it is rendered: "Eli, Eli, lamah sabachthani," which none of those standing near the cross seems to have understood. Dr. Plongeon says it is Maya and writes it thus: "Hele, Hele, lamah zabac tani," of which the interpretation is: "Now, now, I am fainting; darkness covers my face," equivalent to the dying words recorded by John: "It is finished."

Dr. Plongeon does not profess to present theories but aims at placing ancient America in the historical rank that belongs to this continent. His labors in this direction must be considered epoch-making. He has certainly turned the key to the gates of knowledge, and when the vast field beyond shall have been sufficiently explored to furnish a safe foundation for theories, it is probable that much of that which now is stamped as scientific fact will be known in another light, and that much mystery will remain no longer. We believe that both Biblical history and Book of Mormon history will receive new corroborative evidence, perhaps not enough to convince those who prefer to doubt, but sufficient to still more strengthen the faith of believers and to render "agnosticism" without excuse. To Latter-day Saints Dr. Plongeon's archæological labors are especially gratifying, because they seem, so far, to be to the Book of Mormon and to the revelations by the founder of the Church, what the efforts of Egyptologists and Assyriologists have been to all believers in the history and doctrines of the Bible.

A CHRONICLE ERROR.

Thursday's San Francisco Chronicle, in an editorial on President McKinley and the Utah Jubilee, dwells on the fact that the chief magistrate of the nation, for his own sake as well as the good of the people, ought to become familiar with every part of the country over the destinies of which he has been chosen to preside, by visiting each great section of the land, north, south, east and west, and adds, with regard to Mr. McKinley:

He has never crossed the plains and the Rockies, nor studied the resources and needs of the coast. With all due respect to him it is time he had. There is something more of the Republic than can be found in two days' journey from Washington, yet one might think otherwise from the indifference of nearly all our Presidents to the western states.

The Chronicle is right in saying that a chief magistrate should visit each main section of the country, in order to become familiar with its people and their needs. But it is in error in saying that the present occupant of the White House "has never crossed the plains and the Rockies." President McKinley has done both. True he was not so prominent then as now; but he had been in Congress, though he was not at the time referred to, it being a "Democratic year." Hon. Wm. McKinley, now President,

visited Utah on a western trip, remained in Salt Lake City several days, being the guest of Wm. L. Pickard, Esq., of this city, and during his stay he manifested much interest in the resources and development of this part of the country at least. So the President is not altogether without information on the West from personal observation; but another visit after a lapse of seven or eight years would be of advantage to him and to the people, and certainly each great natural division of the country has an equal claim on the personal attendance of the President at its notable events such as the Tennessee centennial, the Utah Jubilee, and the Omaha Trans-Mississippi exposition.

CITY TAX LEVY.

The finance committee of the City Council appears in pretty good form this year on the recommendation for the city tax levy for 1897. Last year the Council had to take the matter up in a special meeting, the committee making no recommendation. There was a proposition to increase the tax rate to nine mills, but the Council rejected it, making it seven mills. This year the finance committee figures that the seven mills will not only be sufficient to meet the general expenses of the city for the next year, but also will include a one-third mill tax to devote to a public library. Hence there will be no increase in city taxes this year, notwithstanding a falling off in the assessed valuation of property.

Upon the showing presented by the figures, the present Council exhibits an improvement in business administration from that of the few years immediately preceding, in the way of economy at least. In the present Council there are members with very objectionable ideas, from the taxpayers' standpoint, on the handling of municipal finances; but by considerable watching and stirring, and occasional "kicking," on the part of others a majority has been brought together for preventing those ideas being carried into effect. It is further to the credit of the present Council that, whereas they had a load of \$75,000 or more to clear up from the debts of the previous administration, that has been disposed of, and according to the estimate now made the next administration will start out with a balance of cash on hand if continued care is exercised.

There is no doubt but that a perfect administration would have been still more economical; that extravagance has not been eliminated entirely; that some reductions agreed upon early in 1896 have not been made. But considering the warring interests that have appeared, and the many and strong attempts to mulct the city in large amounts through contracts and otherwise, the majority of the Council deserves much credit for what it has accomplished in this line. While the News has had conservative criticism for the Council when it felt that public interests required, especially in the direction of those members not inclined to strict probity and economy, it also feels to commend freely the