

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

BORDA'S ASSASSINATION.

Uruguay is not a very large country, having less than a million population; but it has cut quite a figure in history the past fifty years, chiefly due to its almost continuous disturbed condition. Now it comes to the fore again with the assassination of its president, as noted in the telegrams of August 25. The killing of the chief executive there, however, does not attract such attention as did the assassination of Senor Canovas, for the reason that it was the work of individual hatred, while Canovas was slain by one of a very considerable body of people who believe in the murder of those whom they dislike, and thus make the Spanish event the indicator of a danger which threatens the most civilized governments. The Uruguayan president was an ambitious man, had made many political foes, and lived in constant fear of the assassin's weapon. He was of a nation whose people put a light value on life, and whose rulers, whoever they are, must possess much of the fierce and despotic to obtain and retain power. The only wonder there is that with the enmity that exists between the political factions, the Uruguayan affair did not amount to a revolution instead of being confined to individual killing. Yet it is not certain that a revolution will not be the outcome of the shot that killed President Borda.

THE PEACE MEETING.

This week the thirty-first anniversary of the Universal Peace union is being celebrated by a four days' assemblage at Mystic, Conn. The society has for its platform the most radical advocacy of peace; that is, that war never should be resorted to among a civilized people, as there always is sufficient sense of justice in the civilized nations to arbitrate disputes so that the right will be reached. Doubtless this proposition is true, and could be made effective if nations would only seek to do the right thing; but they will not. Nevertheless the peace unions are performing good work in establishing theory at least, so that when the time comes for a superior Power to inaugurate an actual reign of peace, the intellect of the people will be educated to recognizing it as the typical condition for man to dwell in.

A BEFUDDLED THEORIST.

The American Naturalist for August gives a brief abstract of a theory, or supposed theory, of Charles Morris, presented in a paper read before the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and published in the academy's proceedings. Mr. Morris assumes to offer a theory of the origin of life on our planet—a subject that always has been a puzzle to evolutionists, who generally have not cared to make an attempt to solve it, but have been content to work out a scheme of the development of organisms from lower to higher forms. Mr. Morris's theory forth in the Naturalist, is:

"There was a time in the earth's history when chemical inaction prevailed, on account of high temperature and unfavorable physical conditions, but, on the formation of an ocean of highly heated waters, holding in solution a variety of elementary substances and

simple compounds, chemism grew active, and became more energetic as the waters increased in depth and in variety and volume of their contents. Many complex minerals were very likely then formed and deposited as rock formations. As the ocean became freed from its abundance of foreign material inorganic chemistry decreased, until now it has practically ceased, oxidation having reduced nearly all substances to a state of chemical fixity.

"As the waters of the primeval ocean slowly cooled, and inorganic chemism declined in activity, organic chemism probably set in, aided by the solar rays. The material for this new phase of action had been prepared and existed abundantly in the water and air. It may have had its origin in an early reaction between carbon dioxide and the elements of water, yielding the hydro-carbons; and subsequently between these and nitrogen, yielding the far more complex albuminous compounds.

"Many of the preceding mineral molecules were quite complex in composition, and it is reasonable to suppose that still more complex molecules arose under conditions restraining the activity of oxygen. Seed forms of organic substance may have first appeared—simple carbon compounds. These would serve as the basis of more complex molecules, and there may have been a long-continued process of deoxidation and formation of higher carbon and nitrogen compounds until true organic matter appeared and the chemistry of life came fairly into play.

"Further the author remarks that 'the conditions favoring the development of organic material were transitory, and no longer exist. Organic chemistry emerged from a vitally active stage of inorganic chemistry. It could not well arise from the existing passive stage of inorganic chemistry.'

This affords a striking illustration of peculiar fitness in the challenge to Job, chapter 38, verse 2:

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

It is surprising that such a statement as that of Mr. Morris should receive serious consideration in a scientific journal. His first statement is a contradiction of scientifically demonstrated fact; the allegation of an existing condition when a high temperature and chemical inactivity prevailed together must make every chemist smile at its ignorance. Yet on his misstatement in regard to scientific knowledge, Mr. Morris assumes to build up a theory which in itself is a conglomeration of meaningless phrases, to befuddle those who are unlearned and who mistake an excess of verbosity for erudition. This pretended theory of the origin of life is about as extreme an example of frothiness in language as can be found. Perhaps it was meant as a huge joke on the scientists who had to listen to it; certainly it was if one of them believed a word of it.

A BIGOTED NEWSPAPER.

The following is an editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle of the 24th instant:

"The Mormon Elders who are assigned to the duty of securing converts in the Southern States often get a taste of martyrdom in the pursuit of

their work. The Southerners don't believe in any new doctrines, and they generally object in a forcible way to the luring away of their young women to the new Zion in Utah. The latest protest was made in South Carolina, and it took the form of stripping and flogging the Elders. This method is generally so effective that the victims of it show no signs of further zeal for the spiritual welfare of the sisters whom they have labored with."

There are not many papers of influence in the country that are so extremely bigoted as to utter the foregoing. As to the fact of the alleged mobbing which the Chronicle justifies, that journal may have been misled by a dispatch which was a canard. But there are several other errors which our cotemporary and not the dispatch is responsible for. One of these is that the Mormons teach a new doctrine, which is not the fact unless Christianity be new. Another is that Mormons lure young women or anybody to Utah, which is not done. We do not expect the Chronicle to be fair editorially to the Mormons. Recently it made the statement that if it were informed of its error it would retract charges against the people of Utah. The information was furnished in a form that left no question of the errors made, but there was no retraction or correction. The Chronicle is altogether too bigoted on the Mormon question to be either honest or truthful.

IN BRITISH INDIA.

The reports that come from British India are far from giving an assurance that England will not have a very hard task to reduce the rebellion. Already the Khyber pass is in complete possession of the natives, who are pressing forward in hordes upon the British posts which, though manned by brave soldiers, yet have too small garrisons to resist for long. It is true that with characteristic British vigor reinforcements will be sent forward, and where the imperial troops come in conflict with the rebels the latter will find some very ugly business on their hands. Yet the uprising is of such a general character in appearance as to suggest that there is more than an impulsive native rebellion. This causes the belief that the sultan of Turkey is at the bottom of the trouble. If he is not, then the British will subdue the insurrection much more easily than would be the case otherwise. But if it should really come out that the sultan has done this business, the English will have a very hard time in pacifying their Indian possessions, but won't the British make it awfully hot for the Ottoman in Constantinople! It would be a master stroke for the enemies of Turkey if they could fasten on the sultan the blame for the rebellion in British India.

THE AIR MOTOR.

It is now shown as plainly as any undeveloped thing can be, that air is about to become a prevailing motor, at least in certain lines of mechanism. A New York writer states that on the third track between the other two tracks on a section of a street railway of that city, the air motor is being arranged, preparatory to being applied and given a practical test. The motor is said not to differ very much in appearance from the locomotive with which we are all familiar, having about the same sized cab and something resembling the huge cylindrical boiler, which, however, in the case of the air