

Science Notes.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION AT IPSWICH.

THE presidential address at the "great scientific picnic" took the form of an historical sketch of the life and work of the British Association, a subject with which Sir Douglas Galton is eminently qualified to deal, having attended the meetings for forty-six years and served as a general secretary for a quarter of a century.

Whether or no the term "scientific picnic" was invented by those who invented it as a reproach, it may be taken as evidence that the Association is fulfilling one at least of the objects which its original promoters had in view, *i.e.*, "to promote the intercourse of those who cultivate science in different parts of the British Empire with one another and with foreign philosophers, and to obtain a more general attention to the objects of science, and a removal of any disadvantages of a public kind which impede its progress."

Paying his tribute to the memory of Professor Huxley, the President remarked that it was at a meeting of the British Association at Ipswich, forty-four years ago, that Huxley and Tyndall first met. Both were afterwards Presidents of the Association.

The migratory nature of the Association is an important feature, and it has, during the sixty-five years of its existence, met in all the principal towns of Great Britain and Ireland, and once in Montreal. During the early years of its life it had to contend with obstacles which will never again vex the souls of those who attend congresses, for its first meetings were held before the development of railways.

An enumeration even of the greater useful undertakings carried through by the Association would occupy far too much space, but a few conspicuous instances may be given. For example, one of its early successful attempts to assist commercial enterprise by means of scientific knowledge was an inquiry into the tidal movements in various places, and into the adjustment of the form and capacity of ships to the various conditions affecting them.

Again, in 1842, when the Government gave up the maintenance of the Royal Observatory at Kew, it was offered to but declined by the Royal Society. The British Association then carried on the work for nearly thirty years, finally relinquishing it to the Royal Society, who received a sum of money for its support from Mr. Cassiot.

Moreover it must not be forgotten that everything that has been done by the Government to assist the geologist, the engineer, and others, the making of surveys and maps, has been begun largely at the instigation of the British Association.

Almost every year a new section is added to the Association and new members are enrolled, but still it appears that science is not appreciated by the nation at large. Large numbers of students are well trained for research, and in spite of the numerous fields where their work would be of the utmost utility, they find difficulty in obtaining employment. It was suggested by the President that this lack of appreciation for science was partly due to the position of the Government towards it. Though the Government aids it with money, it does not confer honours on eminent

scientific men as it does on politicians, on the army, and the navy. Yet the success of the army and the navy rests on the effective applications of scientific knowledge. He might have added with Professor Roberts-Austen that the Government might stimulate research by endowing it, instead of following such a course as that of spending a million on the *Magnificent*, and leaving it to private enterprise to discover of what metal it should be constructed.

Notes on Art.

TWO MADONNAS.

NO comparison between the Madonna of Holbein and that of Raphael is possible, because the aim of the two was completely different: and so, in looking at one and then the other, one receives that fascinating impression of the scope of human idea which is produced by a specimen of the two most widely different methods of approaching the same subject. Raphael painted a vision; his work was more than he knew; his Virgin was not a Jewess, any more than she was a Tuscan; she was a type of all that his soul had drunk in of beauty and holiness.

Holbein, on the contrary, produced a work which has immortalised a certain event in a worthy, but not otherwise notable family. His picture is a record, and meant to be so. Most people know that it was a thank-offering from a father whose child had been, as was thought, by miracle restored to health through the intercession of S. Mary the Virgin. The idea is beautiful and lovable from its very tenderness and simplicity. The very heart of the straightforward, honest Flemish life is here.

The central figure is the most beautiful woman that the Netherlander's mind could conceive of: upon her he has lavished his best work, his most exquisite detail. Her wavy flaxen hair streams from beneath a crown of glittering gems; her scarf is of silk-gossamer, fine, and of the loveliest flame tint. Her robes are heavy and rich, all her attributes those of a Flemish queen in her goodliest array; she could never have belonged but to one people and to one period, and this the artist probably intended. His aim was to show Mary and her Child as forming the soul and the centre of the family heart and life—accepted, worshipped and beloved. By a most tender and delicate stroke of fancy, she holds in her arms not her own Royal Babe, but the fragile and sickly heir of the rich man who kneels at her feet. The Christ—a fair picture of plump and innocent childhood, stands beneath, in the midst of the grateful family, His little hand extended in blessing, taking, as it were, the place of the ailing child, that he may be healed.

That the execution of the picture is perfect it is needless to say. Every detail is of the highest excellence; and yet to us who are of another nation and of another century, it makes only an indirect appeal, because it belongs so exclusively to its own. And here, it seems to me, comes in the weak point of realism. "Paint Christ and His Apostles as though they belonged to us and our century," cry the realists—Uhde and his school—forgetting that what is most characteristic in this age is precisely what cuts it off most emphatically from the next. Where you cannot

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