

Girard has bequeathed to the French Association for the Advancement of Science a capital sum of 100,000 francs (£4,000), the interest of which is to be devoted every five years to the encouragement of researches into the antiquity of man, with special reference to geological time.

Some very interesting papers were read before the Liverpool Astronomical Society recently. Miss E. Brown, discoursing on sunspots, said astronomers had been struck with the wonderful display of sun-spots that had occurred during the last two years. In November, 1882, there had been most surprising outbursts, and in one of the spots recorded by Mr Roberts the measured area was no less than 3,261 millions of square miles, so that fifty-five globes, each of the size of the earth, could have passed through side by side with some thousands of miles to spare!

Electric Light.—The spectrum of the voltaic arc consists of the continuous ribbon spectrum of the white hot solid carbons, and certain bright lines due to the glowing vapours of the arc. The light is rich in the blue or actinic rays so productive of chemical action, and hence it is, perhaps, that Dr. Siemens found it so effective in forcing fruit and flowers by light, in lieu of the sun. It helps the development of chlorophyll; and perhaps the electricity itself has also something to do with assisting growth, apart from the light, for several French experimenters have found that electrified soil and air seem to foster plants better than unelectrified. It is remarkable, too, that young bamboo shoots grow very rapidly after the thunderstorms which usher in the Indian monsoons.

With a reflecting telescope of three feet six inches diameter, Mr A. Connor, an enthusiastic amateur, has been taking some wonderful photographs of celestial objects. As a star photograph sometimes occupies as much as an hour and a half in the taking, even with the most sensitive plates, it was necessary to keep the objects focussed stationary, by applying clock-work machinery to the instrument. This long duration of the action of the feeble light from stars so remote that they cannot be seen by the naked eye, has the effect of impressing the chemical surface so that the invisible is pictured. It is evident that this opens out a new field of research, and must be a powerful auxiliary to the labours of the astronomer.

A New Cure For Cancer.—Information of one more remedy alleged to possess special virtues in curing "cancer" reaches us through a correspondent in Brazil. Dr. Ignacio Alcibiades Vellozo, of Recife, Pernambuco, introduced the remedy to notice, and in a communication to the *Journal de Recife* gives his experience of its use. He states that the plant which is popularly known by the name of "alvelos" belongs to the Euphorbiaceæ, and is indigenous to Pernambuco. He alleges that a magistrate who was suffering from epithelioma of the face, and who had returned to his estate, despairing of relief, was entirely cured of his disease by the topical application of the juice of this plant. Dr. Vellozo learning this was induced to apply the same remedy on two patients at the Hospital Pedro II.—One a case of cancrroid of the nose, the other of epithelioma of the lip—with the result that the first patient was completely cured in forty days, and the second in less than two months, much to the surprise of the other professional men of the establishment. Such results he thinks justify a trial of the remedy, especially in uterine cancer. The action of the juice of the plant, as others of the same natural order, is irritating, producing a spreading dermatitis without much pain; and the application of the cut stem or juice of the fresh plant to the diseased part is said to result in destruction of the morbid tissue which is replaced by healthy granulations—doing the work, in fact, of the chloride of zinc paste.—*'Lancet.'*

M. Pasteur made an interesting communication to the Paris Academy of Sciences on February 26, relative to canine madness. He stated that the disease could be communicated to a dog by inoculation with fragments of marrow or of nerve taken from a mad dog. He also stated that he had rendered twenty dogs proof against the disease by inoculating them with a modified virus.

Progress.

The lectures delivered by Mr. Charles Bright in many parts of New Zealand have caused the best impression. Mr. Bright is one of the most eloquent and cultured lecturers in the Australasian colonies. He is the very personification of courtesy and good feeling, not the least successful part of his work being due to the strong personal sympathy he excites in his audience. His lectures have rendered material service to the cause of Freethought.

A Wellington contemporary contains the following:—"The Wellington Freethought Association appears to have made good progress during the short time it has been in existence. It was on the 21st May last year that, by an advertisement in the local newspapers, some twenty persons interested in Freethought principles assembled in a shop in Cuba Street, and then resolved to form what is now known as the Wellington Freethought Association. Premises were subsequently taken in Courtney Place, where the first meeting was held on the 17th June. It is now twelve months from that date, and the Association, finding that the membership had increased rapidly, and that public interest in Freethought matters is more aroused, have found it necessary to take larger and more commodious premises. They have, therefore, secured the lease of the Princess Theatre (late Salvation Barracks) for a term of three years, and intend to open the same next Sunday, the 15th instant, under the name of the Lyceum. As several well-known speakers intend to deliver addresses on this occasion, the opening ceremony will no doubt prove to be of an interesting nature. It must be gratifying to the members of the Association to know that their number now exceeds 100, and that they take possession of their new premises entirely free from debt. They possess a splendid library of some 500 volumes, containing some rare and valuable works, 200 of which were presented by an honorary member. The whole of the main hall of the theatre is fitted up with proper sitting accommodation, and the side-rooms are furnished as library, reading, committee, chess-room, &c. Amongst the belongings of the Association is an excellent piano, and a singing class has been formed in connection with the society.

WELLINGTON FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

This letter was received too late for insertion in our last number:—

Tory Street, 22nd May, 1884.

SIR—Since our last correspondence to you, the association here have been steadily progressing, our lectures being well attended and new members joining rapidly, some of them, I am happy to say, being Ladies.

We were unable to communicate last month through pressure of business. I now have the pleasure to give you an epitome of our doings since the last report. On Sunday April 6th Mr Jardine gave us a lecture, the subject being "What must we do to be saved," which drew a very large audience. The following Sunday the Wanganui Freethought Band gave us a few selections of music, which were highly appreciated by the audience, and very kindly received by the association. The entertainment was preceded by a Reading from our President, and concluded with one by a member of the association. Sunday, April 20, our President gave us a very interesting reading—Professor Ball's "Glimpses into the corridor of Time."

Mr Charles Bright lectured on Sunday, April 27, Subject:—A Reply to the Question, "what do you give us in its place?" This was given under our auspices at the Theatre Royal, the house being filled in every part. Two lectures on T. Paine and C. Bradlaugh, given at the Athenæum on the Tuesday and Wednesday following, were ably handled. I trust we shall see Mr Charles Bright here again before long, when we can give him a hearty reception in our new Premises, the Princess Theatre, Tory Street, which we are taking on lease for three years from Sunday the 9th June next. The concluding lecture of Charles Bright's was given on Sunday, May 4th "Spiritualism, Occultism, and Science." This drew a very large audience, and the subject seems to have got a very strong hold here, circles having been formed in various parts of the city, and a Society constituted to investigate the phenomena. Sunday, May 11th, Mr. Grey gave us a lecture, "The Clergy and common sense." The following Sunday, Reading from Dickens by Mr. Cole; and yesterday Mr. Grey again, on Spiritualism and Epidemic Delusion. This gentleman handles his subjects very well, and bids fair to be a good lecturer. The lecture called forth much dis-