

THE AGE OF A PYRAMID.

MODERN scholarship seems destined to win its most signal triumphs through the application of a careful scientific method to its researches into the past history of our race. It multiplies its aids, extends the range of its evidences, and, by looking far beyond the field of the old chroniclers, is at last able to correct their discrepancies. Where the records of earth are at variance, it consults the unerring stars, and fixes the chronology of events more wisely than the historian who wrote only a few generations after their occurrence. The German astronomer, Hansen, was one of the first to determine the day and hour of an ancient battle by calculating the eclipse of the sun which occurred at the same time; and now the French Egyptologists, profiting by the remarkable astronomical knowledge of the Egyptians, are applying the same methods of verification, with wonderful success, to the hieroglyphic records.

At the meeting of the French Academy on Inscriptions, on the 7th of April, M. de Sauley read a paper in regard to a discovery by the scholar Chabas, which for the first time introduces a positive date into the oldest Egyptian history. Hitherto, the distinguished Egyptologist, M. de Rougé, has only succeeded in establishing three dates with absolute certainty—the years 1300, 1240, and 962 B.C., the last of these being the taking of Jerusalem by Sheskonk I., the *Shishak* of the Bible. But two or three months ago M. Chabas was fortunate enough to succeed in reading a doubtful *cartouche* (royal name, inclosed in an oval figure) in the famous Ebers papyrus, a fac-simile of which was published last year. It proved to be the name of the Pharaoh, Menkeres, the Mycerinus of the Greek historians, and the builder of the third or smallest pyramid at Gizeh. Attached to the cartouche was an astronomical note, stating that the heliacal rising of the star *Sothis* occurred in the ninth year of the reign of Menkeres.

The ancient Egyptians had the habit of signalling important political events by some contemporaneous astronomical phenomenon. Many of the latter could scarcely be identified or determined now; but, since we know that their *Sothis*, is our star Sirius, we are easily able to fix the rare periods of its heliacal rising. This is the astronomical term used when a star, after being in conjunction with the sun and invisible, emerges from the light sufficiently to be seen just before sunrise. M. Chabas immediately took his discovery to the astronomer Biot, who made the necessary calculations, whence it appears that the heliacal rising of *Sothis*, in the ninth year of the reign of Menkeres, must have taken place between the years 3007 and 3010 B.C. M. de Sauley stated that he had made the calculation independently, and with precisely the same result. He was entirely convinced of the correctness of the date. As the first assured step towards establishing, if only in its general outlines, the chronology of the ancient Egyptian empire, this discovery is of incalculable importance. It fixes the age of the third pyramid of Gizeh at about 4,880 years, and antedates by fully 1,770 years the earliest accurately ascertained point in ancient chronology.

These detached epochs are like so many solid piers in the flood of time, and, though still too far apart to be bridged, they furnish secure resting-places for the historian. It is not too much to expect, that when the aid of astronomy is called to the investigation of the Assyrian as well as the Egyptian records, we may restore the chronological chart of both empires from the silent testimony of the heavens.

TWO RAVENS A MATCH FOR A FOX.

THE Giants' Causeway (according to the Londonderry 'Standard,' which gives a lengthy and graphic description of the occurrence) a few days since was the scene of a combat of the most extraordinary nature: "Some carrion had been deposited on the rocks near the sea, and the fox, evidently with the intention of making a meal off one of two ravens, which had been attracted to the spot by the putrid mass, curled himself up apparently asleep, close to the carrion. The ravens, however, regarded him with suspicion for some time, and finding that Reynard was not likely to sheer off, and probably unable longer to withstand the effects of what to them was no doubt a grateful and seductive aroma, they, by their threatening attitudes, left little doubt in the minds of the numerous spectators that they intended to bring the matter to an issue.

The two ravens eventually advanced, and one of them took his stand at Reynard's head, and the other at his tail. The latter led the attack by assailing Reynard's brush, the other immediately afterwards following suit by a powerful tap on his head. Reynard feigned indifference to these polite attentions during a few rounds, trusting no doubt that his persecutors would become emboldened and indiscreet, and, at the same time, place themselves within his reach.

Indiscretion, however, is not a prominent characteristic of the *corvus* family, and after a few more applications alternately on the head and tail, the position became uncomfortable, and the fox began to show fight; but the ravens followed up the assault, first snapping at one and then the other. It was stated the warfare was carried on for more than two hours in this way, and on the whole the balance was against the fox, which, in the words of our contemporary, was much dragged and weakened, but became more reckless as the fight waxed hotter.

At this juncture they had worked or fought up to the edge of the rock on which the carrion had been deposited. The raven at the enemy's tail had again tickled him, and, after doing so, the one at his head gave him a fearful pinch, upon which the fox turned after him with great fury. The one at his tail again performed, and during the passage of the fox after the other raven, gave him a sound onward thud, accelerating his speed so much that he lost his balance, and tumbled into the water, amid the plaudits of the spectators, and the exulting croak of the ravens."

GENERAL NEWS.

THE Christian Sunday has been substituted officially in Japan for the "Ichiroku" as the national day of rest. From the 2nd of April Government offices were closed on the first day of the week. Saturday afternoon is in the public offices also observed as a half holiday.

THE Duke of Nassau, a Protestant, dispossessed since 1866 by the Prussians, has just accomplished a noble act of munificence and charity by giving the only palace he still possessed in Wiesbaden to be used as a place of worship by Catholics whom some Freemasons, calling themselves Old Catholics, have lately deprived of their church.

THE French pilgrims proceeded, on the 5th May, to Santa Maria Maggiore, to see the sacred remains of Pius V., the outer lid of whose coffin is on that day annually opened, and wherein he may be seen in his crystal *chasse*, robed and crowned, his long snowy beard flowing over his breast.

HIS Holiness has sent 1,000 francs towards the reconstruction of the facade of the Cathedral of Florence. The Holy Father is also having repaired, at his own expense, the part of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, which was threatened with ruin, and which is decorated with the most venerable mosaics in Rome. A commission of four Roman architects watch over the works.

NANO NAGLE, the saintly founder of the Presentation Sisters, is not inattentive to her children of the present day. On the contrary, she has lately given another instance of her powerful protection. On Sunday, the 23rd of April, a fire broke out in the neighbourhood of the Galway Presentation Convent. Whilst the adjoining houses were wrapped in flames, the holy Sisters called on their patronesses to protect them from the scourge, in honor of her approaching centenary. Suffice it to say, that their prayers were heard. A large coach factory, lately erected, and twelve cottages were burnt to the ground. The good Sisters are giving all the assistance possible to a dozen homeless families.

A NOTEWORTHY sign of the times is the establishment of Catholic scientific societies. A Catholic "Victoria Institute" has recently been founded at Brussels, with 453 members; and a similar society has just been founded at Rome with the promising title of the "Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas," which appeals to philosophers, theologians, and physicians. It seems to be "under distinguished patronage," and already reckons among its members eight cardinals, 20 archbishops, and 240 "professors, doctors, theologians, and philosophers." Both the Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas and Scientific Society at Brussels, are to publish periodical reviews.

THERE are very extraordinary accounts from Sicily of recent convulsions of nature and odd meteoric appearances. At Carleone there was an earthquake, accompanied by the appearance of a pillar of unearthly light. Padre Secchi, at Rome, instructed the Syndic to inform the population he expected the earthquake from the warnings of his instruments. In the district of Cefalu, in Sicily, a whole village was swallowed up lately, but no one perished, the inhabitants being warned of their danger by subterranean noises and the gradual sinking of the houses. As usual, they are petitioning the Government for leave to rebuild on the same spot.

FATHER BURKE, the illustrious Dominican, in sending his contributions for the promotion of Irish studies in the Catholic University, speaks in warm terms of commendation of the cultivation of the olden tongue. The following passage from his letter deserves attention and remembrance: "Some of the greatest scholars of our day seem to think the study of our most ancient Celtic language to be as important and necessary to literature as the cultivation of Latin and Greek, perhaps even more important to the philologist, because of its greater antiquity. It will ill beseem us Irishmen to lag behind in this study, because doubly easy and interesting to us: first, because it is still, thank God, a living, spoken language in many parts of our island; and, secondly, because it is the language of our fathers, of many glorious saints and sages, and poets and warriors, and of the faithful people whose glories and sufferings make the history of our land."

THE Baron Felix Loe has been condemned to imprisonment in a fortress for six months. The Baron, it is almost idle to say, is well known in Germany and elsewhere as an active philanthropic Catholic layman, and the news of his incarceration will be received with profound regret—and, we may add, with profound indignation. Baron F. DeLoe had been actively engaged in collecting means for the support of the persecuted clergy of Germany. By affording relief to the latter he was supposed to encourage them in their so-called rebellion.

AN enormous wild boar was being hunted recently in the wood of Fave, belonging to the Count Benoist d'Azy, near Nevers (Nièvre), and was struck by a ball, when it dashed forward, and bursting through the hunters, started off at a great pace, pursuing its headlong course for three hours, followed by a troop of horsemen, and passing through the village of Chorin, to the great terror of the inhabitants. Soon after it entered a field in which a laborer was at work, who did not see the animal until it was too close for him to make his escape. He therefore stood firm and, as the beast rushed to the attack, struck it a well-directed blow on the head with a hoe and killed it on the spot.

"We have heard so much lately of the disgraceful want of liberty, which is experienced by Protestants in Spain," says a writer in the London 'Weekly Register,' "that we naturally like to know what is the exact number of Protestants who are subjected to this infamous tyranny. The best authenticated reports are surprising. It appears that 4,000 is the outside of the number of all kinds of Protestants in Spain. And this, too, after more than a quarter of a century of eager and affluent proselytism. Bibles have been sent by ship-loads to Spain; tracts have been distributed throughout the country; missionaries have done all they could; and yet, spite of the sympathies of innumerable tourists, Spanish Protestants only number 4,000. We are gravely asked to alter the religion of Spain, to introduce there the divisions of our country, solely to gratify these few bewitched Spaniards, and the tourists who call themselves Protestants. A concession has been made, on the part of the Spanish Government, in the direction of admitting