

COTTON THREAD.—In our article upon the manufacture of cotton thread in this country, published on page 345 of our current volume, we stated that the price of Coats's English thread, so well known here, "speedily ran up to four times its old rates in consequence of the high price of foreign exchange." The Coats cable thread, of a beautiful quality, is now manufactured from long staple Egyptian cotton, a fine sample of which is now before us. The quotation price is given at \$1.50 per dozen—which is not much higher than the best American qualities. This subject is one of general interest to our people, and we may hereafter refer to it.

CALIFORNIA WINE CULTURE.—The vintage of California is estimated this year at over six millions of gallons—so much for the present. The crop of wine per acre is from 650 to 1,000 gallons—according to quality and growth. The number of acres fitted for the growth of wine was estimated by Hon. Wilson Flint, President of the California Wine Growers' Association, and stated to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, to be twenty millions of acres. Others there have named five millions. Taking the least estimate and the minimum yield, we have the capacity of the possible future yearly wine crop of California at 3,250,000,000 gallons.

NEW MECHANICAL ACTION OF STEAM.—An English inventor says:—"It is claimed that the expansive force of the steam acts equally on the two pistons, and forces them apart with the power due to the area of the pistons and the pressure of the steam, and that the force thus exerted on both the pistons is united and conveyed to the crank shaft; whereas, in steam engines of the usual construction, with a piston working in a cylinder, half the force exerted is always acting on one of the ends of the cylinder."

DUBLIN INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF ARTS AND MANUFACTURES, 1865.—We have received from Mr. P. L. Simmonds, a notice of this exhibition. It will be opened in May, 1865, and will remain open till the end of October. Exhibitors may obtain full information by addressing Mr. P. L. Simmonds, House of the Society of Arts, John street, Adelphi, W. C., London, England.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences has recently elected the following foreign honorary members:—M. Charles, the mathematician, of Paris, in place of the late Baron Plana; Prof. Bunsen, of Heidelberg, in place of the late Heinrich Rose; and Otto Strure, of the Imperial Observatory, at Pulkora, in place of the late M. Ostrogradsky.

The Detroit (Mich.) *Advertiser* says the low stage of water in the Western lakes is something remarkable. A fall of about two feet has recently taken place, and the water is now four feet lower than in 1861. At some of the ports on Lake Huron it is now difficult to make landings where formerly there was water to spare.

EXHIBITION OF INDUSTRY AT STETTIN.—We have received from Charles J. Sundell, Esq., U. S. Consul at Stettin, Prussia, a notice of an industrial exhibition free to all nations, which is to be held at that place next spring. Articles will be received during the month of April; they will be duty free, but a small charge will be made for the space which they occupy in the building.

EAST SAGINAW, Mich., contains 45 steam sawmills and 47 salt works, with 20 smaller sawmills on the tributaries of the Saginaw. These forty-five mills have fourteen gangs and fifty-two mule saws, and cut during the year 1864 about 125,000,000 feet of lumber.

IRON ore has been found at Cape Race, Newfoundland, and large quantities are said to be situated along the coast. This will of course account for the remarkable variations which occur in the compass off the coast.

MR. HAMMOND, of South Carolina, is dead. He it was who first applied the term "mudsill" to stigmatize Northern mechanics.

MANY of our business firms are now using the postal money order as a medium for paying bills in different parts of the city.

M. DU CHALLE, of gorilla notoriety, is continuing his explorations in Africa, and has shipped a living specimen of those animals to England.

COAL DUST.—There is a company organized in this city to manufacture fuel out of the dust of coal. They have discovered a process by which the dust is formed and kept in a solid compact mass, and their experiments prove it to be a very valuable fuel. It burns freely and thoroughly, and gives out as much heat as solid anthracite. The coal dust, we understand, can be purchased at the mines, where there are immense quantities of it hitherto unused, for the small price of forty cents per tun, or one dollar per tun if sifted, and it is estimated by the very intelligent persons engaged in the enterprise, that a tun of solidified coal dust can be sold at from four to five dollars a tun.—*Philadelphia Bulletin.*

THE ladies of Paris, not content with dyeing their hair red, now dye their lapdogs to match the color of their dresses. Green dogs, yellow dogs and sky-blue pugs are all the rage. Wealthy parties have sets of lapdogs of all colors. A purple lapdog would be an addition to a fine landscape!

A CONFECTIONER in this city got up a Thanksgiving cake for the Ladies' Home Mission, which was ten feet long, 22 inches wide and 16 inches thick. To make it, it took 1,000 eggs, 175 lbs. of flour, 125 lbs. of sugar and 80 lbs. of butter.

Desultory Reading.

The author of "Waverley" remarks somewhere in that work, that a feeble and indecisive habit of mind is produced by desultory and omnivorous reading. An English critic denies this, and insists that the author himself a direct contradiction to his own assertion. The writer also refers to Pliny, who, according to his nephew, made a sensible observation on reading—that there is no book so bad or so foolish as not to supply something worth recollecting. But then how few books were within the reach of Pliny, the uncle! Pope read everything, and so did Warburton, from the fathers of the church to the last pamphlet by old Dennis. Milton, we are told, spent his youth in poring over romances, and his poetry, remote as his subjects are from those which fill the pages of such compositions, is thoroughly instinct with their spirit; even in hell an acute critic remarks, he finds a corner to bring in Charlemagne and all his peerage fighting in Fontarabia, against the forces sent from Biserta upon Africa's shore. In the temptation of our Saviour we are presented with Agrican and Gallephrone, and Angelica the fair. Nay, when disclaiming the themes of his early favorites as frivolous, he does it in their own language, and tells of impresses quaint, bases and trappings, gorgeous knights at tilt and tournament, etc. Hobbes used to say that he never read books "lest they should make me as foolish as those who do;" and yet the man who translated Thucydides in youth, and Homer after he was eighty, the sturdy champion in a thousand controversies, must have been a most various reader.

After all, as a witty writer has well remarked, little people like to lurk behind great names—to defend their own propensities, by proving them in some degree analogous to the powerful minds of the world. Whatever may have been the habits of some great men, the remark in "Waverley" is founded in good sense. The idea is finely illustrated by the late Prof. Bush, in an early oration, wherein he enforces with great clearness and ability the evils of an unsettled mode of study, and even insists that the moral tendency of desultory reading is pernicious. This may be found in the inadequate and unsatisfactory memoirs of that eminent scholar, published soon after his death in 1859.

Unlimited Glass.

Fitz-Hugh Ludlow, in his overland trip to California, found between Utah and the Humboldt Mountains a large desert composed, as he says, of "sand of snowy alkali." He describes it as one of the most dismal and forbidding spots that was ever traversed by the foot of man; but in view of the extension through it of the Atlantic and Pacific railroad he suggests an interesting possibility as to its future use. He says (*Atlantic Monthly*, p. 616):—"In its crude state the alkaline earth of the Desert is sufficiently pure to make violent effervescence with acids. No elaborate process is required to turn it into commercial soda and potash. Coal has been already found in Utah. Silica exists abundantly in all the

Desert uplifts. Why should not the greatest glass-works in the world be reared along the Desert section of the Pacific Road? and why should not the entire market of the Pacific Coast be supplied with refined alkalis from the same tract?"

This opens up a pleasant prospect. Glass, unlimited glass! A desert of soda and sand, with coal underneath! Glass-works of some thousands of miles in extent, the materials ready mixed, and the furnace, as it were, ready to be lighted up!

NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS.

ATLANTIC MONTHLY.—The *Atlantic* for December is one of the most interesting numbers of this valuable periodical that has been issued during the year. A perusal of its pages is refreshing after the dull and tedious commonplaces of other magazines, or the pert flippancy of smart writers in the ephemeral literature of the hour. Such writers as Mrs. Stowe, Caroline Chesebro, Edmund Kirke and O. W. Holmes, such poets as Longfellow and Whittier, write frequently in the *Atlantic*, and each number has, in addition, articles from other celebrities in the literary world.

The *House and Home Papers* of Mrs. Stowe abound in hints and suggestions on domestic reform, not the least important one of the series alluded to is that upon domestic cookery. No habit of daily life is more important than feeding the body, but with us the old adage falls true, "Heaven sends meats but the devil sends cooks." Mrs. Stowe appreciates the French system of serving food in an appetizing manner, and cooked with a "toothsome" flavor. Our own want of economy as well as slovenliness in this respect are properly enough deprecated.

The *Atlantic Monthly* for 1865 promises to be more attractive than in years gone by, for with a more extended circle of readers a change in its general conduct seems shadowed forth. By this we mean an effort on the part of the editors to render it more attractive to the general reader; as an instance, the *House and Home Papers* are prominent. We hope the magazine will have a long addition to its subscription list.

THE ERICSSON TURRET IRON-CLADS.—Mr. Isaac Newton, First Assistant Engineer in the United States Navy, has recently written a pamphlet on the turret iron-clads, and has forwarded us a copy. We have been interested in its perusal; for the statistics of what foreign powers have done and are doing in this way are compared with our own progress, the results being clearly and concisely stated. We commend the pamphlet to our readers as affording instruction on one of the most interesting topics of the day. Mr. Newton's address is 14 and 15 Studio Building, Boston.

POWDER.

Most persons, probably, suppose that in consequence of the prevailing war the manufacture and consumption of powder in this country must have been greatly increased. But we are assured on good authority that the reverse is the case. The consumption of powder in time of peace is far greater than during war. Gunpowder being an article contraband of war its exportation is prohibited; consequently the immense foreign trade which manufacturers have been for years accustomed to supply, is wholly at an end.

It is a curious circumstance connected with the powder business, that while our Government is in great need of the article, at the lowest prices, it employs the most direct agencies to raise the prices and impede its own supplies. Thus the Government places very large duties, payable in gold, on the raw materials, and then lays heavy revenue taxes on the manufactured article. As the Government is a principal consumer it thus puts itself to the delay and expense of fixing and collecting taxes from itself. One of the results of this foolish plan is to elevate the prices of the raw materials to such a degree that the manufacturers are required to take unusual risks, and employ about three times as much capital, in the supply of their orders, than was formerly needed, and without substantial increase of profits. Under these circumstances, if the wants of the Government cannot be readily supplied, it has no one to blame but itself.