

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF BARON LIEBIG.

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES A. JOY.

It was my good fortune, a few summers ago, to spend a week with Baron Liebig, at a quiet inn on the banks of Lake Geneva, in Switzerland, and to be his constant companion in his rambles through the vineyards and lovely walks of that enchanting spot; and one day, the conversation turning upon some of the incidents of his early life, I asked him to relate to me how he happened to devote his attention to chemistry, and to what circumstances he owed the kind interest bestowed upon him by Gay-Lussac.

The genial old man sat down upon a bench in a protected nook, and related to me the following incidents: He was the son of very poor parents, who could ill afford to keep him at school, and he had a narrow escape of being put at a trade; but, while yet a lad, having heard that the Minister of Instruction, in Darmstadt, had it in his power to aid meritorious children by a government stipend, he went to the palace, and after several failures, finally succeeded in obtaining an interview with this grand personage, and in securing sufficient assistance to enable him to go to the Gymnasium. The Director of the Gymnasium was in the habit of visiting the school on stated occasions, and of asking each boy what he purposed to make of himself, and of receiving the usual answers: "a musician," "a doctor," "a lawyer," etc.; and when he came to Liebig, the reply was always ready, "I mean to be a chemist, Sir;" to which the Director uniformly answered, "you stupid boy, there is no such profession as chemist." But Liebig persevered, and while at the University, was so fortunate as to make a very important discovery of some new cyanogen compounds, and with specimens of these preparations in his pockets, aided by some friends, he set out for Paris. He was then about twenty years of age. In Paris he sought out one of the members of the Institute, and showed him his specimens, and the Professor offered to exhibit them to the Institute, and to present the subject for discussion; but it was a long time before he fulfilled his promise, and poor Liebig went regularly to the Monday meetings of the Academy, hoping to hear his name mentioned, but always went away disappointed. One day, however, the subject was duly presented, and attracted great attention; and after the adjournment several members remained to talk to the boy, for he was still a boy, and to inquire into his history; among them was a kind man in the prime of life, who asked him to dine with him on the following Thursday to meet some of the chemists of Paris. The man who thus proposed to befriend the unknown chemist must have given his name and address, but Liebig was so embarrassed and flustered by the occasion that he forgot it entirely, and although he asked the janitor and several persons who were left in the room, he could obtain no clue, and so Thursday went and came, leaving Liebig in a state of desperation. A few days afterwards, meeting casually the member of the Institute who had presented his paper, the latter exclaimed at once, "Why did you not come to the dinner that Baron Von Humboldt gave for you on Thursday? He invited Arago, Gay-Lussac, Thénard, and several of the first chemists of the city, in order to interest them in you, and you did not come." Liebig did not wait to hear more, but rushed off to the residence of Von Humboldt, to apologize and to explain the occasion of his absence.

Von Humboldt took the matter good naturedly, and at once accompanied his young protégé to Gay-Lussac, who, to oblige his friend, took him as a pupil into his laboratory, and from this moment Liebig's career was secured.

The kind interest of Von Humboldt started him on the path which he has since pursued to the highest distinction; and when, a few years later, the famous book, "Agricultural Chemistry," was published, we find it dedicated to his great patron and friend, Alexander Von Humboldt. Liebig has not forgotten his obligations to the French, and we can understand with what eloquence of language and sincerity of emotion he uttered the following words at a recent meeting of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences, in reference to the future relations of Germany and France:

"The Academy seizes this moment to declare openly that there exists no national hatred between the German and Latin races. The peculiar character of the Germans, their knowledge of languages, their acquaintance with foreign people, the past and present state of their civilization, all tend to make them just toward other peoples, even at the risk of often becoming unjust toward their own; and thus it is that we recognize how much we owe to the great philosophers, mathematicians, and naturalists of France, who have been in so many departments our masters and our models. I went forty-eight years ago to Paris to study chemistry; a fortuitous circumstance drew upon me the attention of Alexander Von Humboldt, and a single word of recommendation from him caused M. Gay-Lussac, one of the greatest chemists and physicists of his time, to make to me, a young man of twenty, the proposal to continue and finish, with his co-operation, an analysis which I had commenced; he introduced me as a pupil into his laboratory; my career was fixed after this. Never shall I forget the kindness with which Arago and Thénard received the German student; and how many compatriots, physicians, and others, could I not name, who, like myself, gratefully remember the efficacious assistance afforded to them by French men of science, in finishing their studies! An ardent sympathy for all that is noble and grand, as well as a disinterested hospitality, forms some of the most noble traits of the French character."

THE odor of the herb pennyroyal is shunned by fleas, and a few of the leaves will drive them away from any room or person. Other plants of the mint species are said to have the same useful characteristic.

Coal Hoister and Conveyer.

Mr. Joseph Green, of New York City, assignor to himself and George Stancliff, also of New York, has recently patented an apparatus for hoisting and conveying coal in gas works, goods or shipping docks, etc., which is an ingenious piece of mechanism. We can at this time give only the outline of this invention, so that our readers may gain some idea of its working.

The bucket is self locking, and when filled is hoisted up to a truck running upon a slightly inclined railway. As soon as the bucket reaches the truck, it is automatically locked thereto, and, by the continual winding up of the rope, the truck and bucket are drawn along the track till they reach a pin placed in the side of the track, over the place where it is designed to drop the coal or other material. This pin trips a lever which unlocks the bucket, and allows it to discharge. The motion of the hoisting drum being then reversed, the truck carrying the bucket rolls back along the slightly inclined railway by virtue of their gravity; and when they reach the point at which the bucket must be lowered, the bucket is automatically unlocked from the truck and falls, to be again refilled, and so on. The apparatus works with great smoothness and uniformity, and is undoubtedly a valuable improvement.

PLUCKY SUSAN, OR LUCK AT LAST.—A LEAF FROM THE LIFE OF A WESTERN INVENTOR.

[From the Jancsville (Wis.) Gazette.]

You think I'm nervous stranger? Well I am
If 'twasn't for making silly people talk
I'd get right off this pokish train and walk
From here to where I'm going—Amsterdam.

That's where I live, you see. As for Lacrosse—
(Excuse me, neighbor, I must talk or bust)—
Since I've been there it's three years certain, just:
And now to laugh or cry is just a toss.

"Married?" Why, yes, that's where it is, you see;
I've telegraphed her I was strong and well,
And coming to her; but I didn't tell
That I was rich. I thought I'd let that be.

It's too good luck, this is, to last, you know
And, stranger, if I wasn't kind of rash,
I'd bet my bottom dollar that we smash
Before—but, shaw excuse me, I'll go slow

You see, when we were married, Sue and I,
I was a good mechanic, and not poor
Until I struck it, as I reckoned, sure,
In an invention I was working sly.

All I could make went into that concern;
And people called me crazy for it, too,
And said I'd better stick to what I knew;
But folks will talk, and have to live and learn.

In all this world I had but one friend then,
But she stood by me nobly, through and through,
And said 'twould come out right at last, she knew—
One woman stanch is worth a dozen men.

'Twas tough sometimes, though, when a loaf of bread
Stood on the table—all the meal we had—
I should have gone, alone, quite to the bad;
But, through it all, my Susan kept her head.

'Twas her advice that sent me off at last—
She said she'd work her fingers to the bone
And live for twenty mortal years alone,
Rather than give it up—thank God, that's past

A hundred thousand and a royalty
Is what I've got for going far away;
She cheered me by her letters every day;
A million could not pay such loyalty!

She knows I'm coming; but she doesn't know
That I am rich; and she will be there, too,
Dressed in her best—her best, my poor, dear Sue
I'll bet a hundred 'twill be calico!

"'P' dress her now?" You bet it!—but go slow,
This luck's a heap too good to last, I fear;
I shan't believe it till I'm fairly there;
The train may smash up, easy, yet, you know.

The only reason, if it don't, will be
That I'm so strongly thinking that it will.
I'm nervous, say you? Just a little, still
The luck is none too good for Sue, you see.

Hello! we're here!—there's Sue, by all that's grand
Stranger, excuse me, sir, but would you mind
To go ahead and tell her I'm behind?
I'm choking: see my eyes—you understand.

A New Steam Boiler.

This improvement is based upon the idea that uninterrupted circulation of the whole body of water in a boiler is a barrier to obtaining the best results in producing steam in such boiler. The introduction of diaphragms or partitions or their equivalents, which shall form separate water compartments in steam boilers, such compartments being so arranged that the heated gases and products of combustion, in their course from the fire box through tubes or in contact with surfaces to the "up take," shall come in contact with surfaces of a gradually decreasing temperature, the variations in temperature of such surfaces being caused by the division of the body of water within the boiler by means of the diaphragms or partitions or their equivalents, constitutes the general character of the invention.

The inventor states in this specification that, in adopting this principle, he is aware that he is running in direct opposition to the generally received theory, as the effort has heretofore been to produce just what he endeavors to prevent, a general circulation of the whole body of water from which the steam is generated. In locomotive boilers he employs three series of tubes, through which the heated gases pass in their course to the up take, by diaphragms or partitions. These series of tubes are separated. The diaphragms ob-

struct, if they do not entirely prevent, the circulation of the water, and the products of combustion will, in their course to the smoke box, pass over surfaces or through tubes of gradually diminishing temperature. The sediment naturally settles in a lower compartment from whence it may be readily removed by having a large man hole or two hand holes in the bottom of the shell. The water which fills the water legs of the boiler will consequently be nearly or quite pure. A flue, connected with the fire box, is made to divert a portion of the heat before it enters the flues of the water space, and conduct, it through the steam drum. By this means the steam is thoroughly dried and superheated before it is taken out of the drum for use.

A valve regulates the quantity of heat which enters the superheating flue. This valve is operated by the expansion and contraction of a rod (or upon the Thermostat principle,) in the steam drum. A valve connected with this rod also regulates the draft, through the upper series of flues.

The heated gases and products of combustion which are allowed to pass through the steam drum are returned, and made to pass through the second series of fire tubes. A valve damper, by the opening of which a direct draft from the fire box to the stack is obtained, is also used. In starting fire in the fire box this arrangement is of much importance. Orifices through the diaphragms allow the feed water to pass upward from the lower to the upper series of tubes, and return chambers are placed intermediate between the series of tubes.

The inventor of this steam generator, Mr. Nathaniel M. Blanchard, of Spuyten Duyvil, New York, has thus boldly struck out a new path. The reasons which have led him to reject the principle of general circulation are not given in his specification, although in that connection they would certainly have been interesting.

A Patent Schemer Foiled.

A few days ago, says the *Washington Patriot*, Marcus P. Norton, of Troy, presented to Mr. Wilson, the clerk having charge of the records of patent assignments in the Patent Office, what purported to be a release of certain rights, held by F. J. Ransford and Peter Low, in an application for a patent for a "post office post marking stamp," which was rejected in 1859, and which Norton has recently been endeavoring to get permission from the office to renew.

This document was dated July 20, 1859, twelve years ago, but bore undoubtable evidence of being of much more recent origin. The paper was fresh, clear, and bright, and the folds were not even settled, but, as released from pressure, sprung open, like newly-folded paper. In addition to this, the writing of the body of the document, the signatures of the parties and the witnesses were all in one hand, slightly disguised, but recognized at once as Norton's. It is said that even the color of the ink was not set, but that it grew blacker after the paper was filed in the office.

Mr. Wilson, of course, did not record such a document, but laid it before the Commissioner, who at once called upon Mr. Norton for an explanation. He admitted that it was not the genuine assignment, but claimed it to be a copy, of which he failed to produce the original.

Commissioner Leggett still holds the paper, but has taken no steps in the matter beyond issuing the following order:

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, August 23, 1871.

Until further orders Marcus P. Norton will not be permitted to examine any papers, look into any files, or transact any business in the Patent Office, except by and through some respectable and accredited attorney.

M. D. LEGGETT, Commissioner.

Re-appearance of Les Mondes.

The whole scientific world will rejoice at the re-appearance in Paris of Abbé Moigno's weekly journal *Les Mondes*, after its discontinuance pending the siege and the troublous times that followed. The good Abbé opens the new number with an address "To my dear readers," in which he casts some reproaches upon the scientific men of France who have set such a bad example to the Communists: "One of our greatest sorrows, our most poignant shame, was that all of the acts, of which we have been the witnesses and the victims, have been committed in the name of science under the command of monsters who knew not the first elements of science, not even of letters. What an odious spectacle to see a young doctor of 1867 making requisitions, by force and threats, of all the sulphur, phosphorus, bisulphide of carbon, petroleum, and other inflammable material!" The Abbé says that he was never in better health, and will be able to enter upon his weekly avocation with renewed vigor and "with entire confidence in the generous support of his readers."

We trust that no further interruption will occur in the publication of this valuable journal.

School for Engineers.

The East River Ferry Company, of this city, has established a school for the improvement of the engineers of the company. The school has a session twice in each week, and after the regular lessons are finished, a short time is devoted to the discussion of any matter pertaining to the steam engine or to steamboats, which may be suggested by a member of the class. All candidates for the position of engineer are in future required to undergo a searching examination. Employés of the company who are anxious for promotion have the privilege of attending the school. The institution is under the management of Superintendent Spears.

WATERMELONS are very injurious for debilitated and nervous people, but good for persons of full habits and torpid livers.