OUR WESTERN CORRESPONDENCE.

Blowers in the Cars—John Bull's Line—The Grain Mart of the World—Douglas Men on the Track—The Iron Horse and other Cattle—The Future of the West—A North and South Pole Railroad.

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Aug. 9, 1860.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—The route westward over the New York and Erie Railroad is so familiar to your readers that I shall say nothing about it, further than to add my meed of commendation regarding the excellent dust-excluding and ventilating arrangements to be found in the "ladies' car" attached to the express train. It is a great comfort to travel in a carriage thus fitted-up; if the public were properly schooled in these matters, they would soon make railroad managers sensible, by the most convincing of all proofs—the pocket—that it is futile to think longer of cramming forty or more persons into those flying abominations, the unventilated railroad cars. Travelers would learn quickly to discriminate between lines in this respect, and would best patronize those which supplied oxygen the most liberally. It might be as well for the railroad dignitaries to recollect that unmarried men have lungs as well as those blessed with "better halves;" and that as they pay the same fare, the aforesaid ventilating apparatus should be applied to the gentlemen's cars as effectively as to those of the ladies.

I went by the way of Buffalo and the Great Western Railroad of Canada. No sooner was that line reached than the hand of "John Bull" was apparent. The track was better ballasted and boxed over; the stations neater, and the signal apparatus on a more complete scale than we generally have such things "on our side of the fence." As far as could be judged from the motion of the train, the alignment and surface of the track must have been in very fair order. Take it altogether, this line is quite creditable to our neighbors. They have had some ugly accidents on that road, however, in their time, as many of your readers may recollect.

Night-fall brought us to Detroit, and next morning found us rattling along towards Chicago—that wonderful city of the West. It is wonderful indeed, even for American progress, when we recollect how few years have elapsed since it was a marshy waste, but that now it is the greatest grain mart in the world! If the railroads of Illinois have not been very profitable investments for their stockholders, they at least have built up Chicago and made the State what she is now—one of the finest agricultural countries of America; so that the resident stockholders may well afford to regard their share subscriptions as so many donations to improve property; and viewed in this light, they have been amply repaid. It is a question, however, if "Cousin John," over the water, would consider the increased prosperity of Chicago, and the State generally, sufficient indemnification for the "pile" that *he* sunk in the great Illinois Central Railroad. A union depot would be a great convenience in that town: it is a perfect nuisance to have to go half across the city from one terminus to another and pay for the undesired omnibus joltings too, even if you have a through ticket, which I was verdant enough to suppose covered all expenses of carriage of "self and baggage" to the end of the journey.

I took the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad to the last-named city. Our express train was almost empty in consequence of an excursion train which left the city just after us, filled to overflowing with the admirers of Judge Douglas, who were to hear him speak at Joliet. Though the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN deals exclusively in machinery and is *some* on "wire-working" too, it is not just the kind of machinery or wire-working that is used in president-making; so we will leave the politicians cheering themselves hoarse in the cars at Joliet, and proceed on our way. Nothing worthy of note occurred on the trip, except that we knocked over a horse and a cow at different points on the road, in the most artistic manner. The engineer (I presume) is an adept in this department of his business, and fully sure of the "stand-up" qualities of his engine when engaged in an encounter of this sort; for I don't think he even blew his whistle to check the speed of the train on nearing his unsuspecting antagonists, one of whom was instantly thrown *hors de combat*, and the other (I suppose) considerably *cowed* in spirit by this very striking occurrence. I did not see the cow, but as I chanced to be looking out of the open window, I saw the discomfited horse struggling on his back in the ditch, and that was the only way I knew what had occurred. A little while after this, however, while at a station, a bystander said to the engineer: "I expected that the cow you struck would have thrown you off the track." Possibly we may have forestalled the butcher in some other instances; but western engineers take no notice of such trifling obstacles as stray cattle. Can they be called cow-ards?

Five weary days on the Missouri river between St. Louis and Kansas City! O, those miserable-looking little river towns, with their squalid, listless population! Every man, woman and child is a peripatetic advertisement of "fever and ague on short notice." Yet—if we are to believe the assertions of men interested in the growth of these gloomy spots—*all* these pigmy places are destined, at some future time, to be the mammoth and magnificent termini of important railroads or the shipping ports of vast sections of highly-improved country. A western man will stand a good deal of talking till you say anything against his own town; then he's *up*! Tell him it is Paradise or the nearest approach to it that is practicable here below, and he "chimes in" with you; but demur at all to his laudations of his favorite, and he at once conceives a very poor opinion of your mental caliber, especially in the art of "prospecting." There are, of course, some exceptions—some go-ahead places; and considering its very infantile years, Kansas City has shown as much vigor as any. I never saw a more unfavorable town site; yet by great exertions and the heaviest grading I almost ever met, the inhabitants have done much to remedy the evil. They certainly have shown most indomitable energy, but I fear the present generation will not be repaid for their outlay, though I hope such courage as they have shown may not go unrewarded. It was its geographical position with regard to the western and south-western trade that caused it to be selected; it is a great pity that Wyandotte City (close by) could not have been fixed on instead, because one-fifth of the money that has been spent on Kansas City would have made Wyandotte City a fine town; but the territory was not then open to settlement.

The people of Kansas are projecting a railroad from this town in a northerly direction to tap the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad; you would never guess the name they have selected for this little line. Nothing less than the Galveston (Texas) and Lake Superior Railroad! They are great on nomenclature, any way. I suggested a change to a name still more imposing and quite as appropriate as the one chosen, namely, the North Pole, Kansas City and South Pole Railroad; the proposed line is just as much a "link in the chain" on the one road as it is on the other.

E. M. RICHARDS.

HOW TO POISON WHALES.

A paper has just been published (in England) by Professor Christison, on the result of some experiments suggested as long ago as 1831, by Messrs. W. and G. Young, of Leith, for the capture of whales by the means of poison, the agent being hydro-cyanic or prussic acid. The subtle poison was contained in tubes, in quantity about two ounces. Among other difficulties, one was to discharge the poison from the tubes at the right time. After various trials, the plan fixed upon was to attach firmly to each end of the harpoon (near the blade) one end of a strong copper wire, the other end of which passed obliquely over the tube, thereby securing it in its place; then through an oblique hole in the shaft, close to the upper end of the tube, and, finally, to a bight in the rope, where it was firmly secured. By these means the rope could not be drawn tight (as it would be when the harpoon attached to it struck the whale) without crushing the tubes; the poison would then enter the whale, and death ensue. Messrs. Young sent a quantity of tubes charged with the poison by one of their ships engaged in the Greenland fishery, and on meeting with a fine whale the harpoon was skillfully and deeply buried in his body; the leviathan immediately "sounded," or dived perpendicularly downwards, but in a very short time the rope relaxed, and the whale rose to the surface quite dead. The men were so appalled by the terrific effect of the poisoned harpoon, that they declined to use any more of them.

INTERESTING CORRESPONDENCE.

We present the following letters from our correspondents, and shall be pleased to receive any practical suggestions which any of our readers may have to make in regard to any of the statements or inquiries contained in them. Correspondents sending such suggestions, however, will please to particularly comply with the request embodied in the note published at the head of our column of "Notes and Queries":—

DEAFENING WALLS.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—Having read an article in your valuable journal of the 4th inst., headed "American Architects—Attention!" it struck
of walls &c., might be effectually accomplished and at a small expense by an aerated paste of plaster-of-paris, poured into the spaces between the walls or floors; this would set immediately, and I think the cells would prevent sounds passing through. The paste might be, I think, aerated so that the substance would be very light.

J. M.

St. Johns, N. B., August 20, 1860.

[This may answer very well between walls, but it would be rather expensive, we think. Between floors, it would be liable to crack, and, in the course of a few years, would cause any house to become very dusty.—EDS.

STICKY INDIA-RUBBER GOODS.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—India-rubber goods frequently stick together in this warm climate. Even fine silk coats delicately covered with india-rubber will, when hanging up in the wardrobe, stick together, wherever parts come in contact. Can this be remedied? Is there anything that will harden particular parts that seem to have dissolved and to have thus become very tenacious. If there is, please inform the public through your paper.

W. H.

Mobile, Ala., August 24, 1860.

[Here is an important subject for the manufacturers of such goods. There is a great defect to be remedied, and an improvement must be made to obviate the evil.—EDS.

COATING FOR PATTERNS USED IN MOLDING.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—I take the liberty of asking you what is the best and cheapest article to coat iron or wooden patterns, for molding in sand, for brass or iron castings. We have generally used beeswax, but find it very expensive, and are anxious to get something that would cost less and equally answer the purpose.

E. W.

St. Johns, N. B., August 22, 1860.

[We really are not acquainted with a substitute that is any better than wax; perhaps some of our readers may be able to furnish one.—EDS.

NATURAL VARNISH TREE.

MESSRS. EDITORS.—There is in the south part of this cape, a small tree which on being bored like the maple, exudes about one quart of natural varnish in each season. I mixed some alcohol with it, and it made a beautiful varnish for wood; but it turned white when wet. What shall I put with it to make it impervious to water; and if it should prove successful, what would it be worth (per barrel) in New York?

G. S.

Jacksonville, Fla., August 16, 1860.

[We cannot tell what would be the value of such a varnish in this city; that would all depend on its quality. All varnishes made with alcohol, or with alkalies, are liable to become whitish-opaque, when subjected to the action of water. Varnishes made with boiled linseed oil are not affected in that manner.—EDS.

BLASTED WHEAT.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—Will some of our scientific friends tell us the cause of wheat being "blasted" when sowed as a succeeding crop to corn, while it flourishes as a succeeding crop to *oats*; does corn exhaust the qualities of the soil for wheat more than oats? This interrogation I know belongs to agricultural journals, but is it not also a scientific question? An answer will much oblige an old subscriber.

S. C. C.

Brush Creek, Iowa, August 20, 1860.

[We do not know why wheat should be blasted when it succeeds a corn crop and not an oat one, and there is not a scientific person in the country who can tell. But is our correspondent sure that such really is the case? We rather think that this is a popular prejudice prevailing in some portions of the country, without any solid foundation in facts. This question requires further investigation. In Illinois and other States, good wheat crops have been obtained in succession after those of corn.—EDS.