



NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 5, 1848.

The Smithsonian Institute.

We have had a perfect shower of communications sent us respecting the opinions and suggestions we have already made as to the application of a portion of Smithson's bequest. One gentleman of great respectability belonging to Kentucky, suggests to us the propriety of calling for an appropriation of "\$20,000 per annum to test the value of inventions, \$1500 for the best treatise upon education for the masses, \$1000 for the best commentary on our government, with suggestions for improvement in its organization, \$1000 for the best treatise on national intercourse and the best means to advance our national prosperity."

"Suppose now," he says, "the above premiums yearly contended for by hundreds, what an amount of light would be shed upon these subjects—what a mass added to the volume of the knowledge of man." Great truths are these. Surely a better and more profitable way of expending the funds than collecting broken earthen pots and Indian wallets "made long before the flood." The gentleman referred to, says "that a Board of Decision might be selected by the Senate, any member to be at liberty to nominate." A wise suggestion too, and no objection can be made to it.

Smithson left his fortune for the express purpose of advancing *knowledge*, and the appropriation of any part of this money to foster a useless and ambiguous science like Archæology, is a mal-appropriation of Smithson's sacred bequest.

Explosions of Steam Boilers.

Never within our recollection has there been a period marked with so many lamentable steamboat disasters in our country as the past four months. First we heard of the conflagration of the Phoenix on her passage up the Lakes on the 21st of last November, with the loss of 101 lives. Scarcely had the wail of that catastrophe faded from our ears when we heard of the bursting of the boiler of the steam ferry boat at Wheeling, Va., where two lives were lost. Not many lives to be sure, but can we, or dare we put a price upon the life of a single human being, or can we estimate the value of it. But this event was only a prelude to another, and one of the most heart rending and soul sickening accidents that ever occurred. The steamer A. N. Johnson, on her first trip last month from Cincinnati to Wheeling, blew up with a tremendous explosion, and God only knows how many perished. One account in the Cincinnati papers stated that eighty three had perished and another that "more than one hundred lives were lost," probably nearly two hundred. It is not possible for us at present, and probably we never will arrive at the true number who perished there amid one of the wildest scenes of human destruction that was ever witnessed. There were seen the dead and dying, and heard the wild shrieks of brave men, lovely women and helpless children, as the flames closed around them and they sunk to rise no more. The Cincinnati Commercial Advertiser stated from a description of one who witnessed the disaster, that there were some saved who in the delirium of their sufferings begged to be shot, and others called for axes to end their sufferings. We can feel for these, we know something of the intense torture of such pains. "On the shore and in the adjacent cornfields were to be seen the most frightful spectacles.—Heads, trunks and limbs scattered around." What a soul melting accident. But the end is not yet. On the evening of the 9th of last month on the Ohio river also, a few miles below Gallipolis, "the steamboat Blue Ridge blew up with a tremendous explosion," and thirty passengers are reported to have perished. Three days before this event the steamboat Planter on the Illinois river, burst her boilers and five persons were instantly killed and a number dangerously wounded. And

alas, "the end is not yet." We learn again by the Mobile papers of another sad accident.—On the 18th ult., the steamboat Yallabusha on her passage from Red River to Mobile, was entirely destroyed by fire at Donaldsonville, and it is supposed that forty passengers lost their lives. We have not yet been informed of the real cause of the disaster.

Thus by these six catastrophes probably no less than four hundred lives have been destroyed. What a hecatomb of human victims. Philanthropists and fellow countrymen, we bid you look into this charnel house—this pile of murdered victims, enough to astonish heaven and frighten earth—and we ask of you, "are such sacrifices of human life to be tolerated much longer—does not their cruel and sad deaths demand from us an *investigation* at least into the causes. We profess to be the most civilized nation in the world, let us act up to that profession and not look upon such sacrifices with the callous indifference of barbarians.

Every one of the accidents related, are reported to have been the result of recklessness and carelessness. We perceive that information has been called for by the U. S. Senate respecting explosions in steam boilers, from the Commissioner of Patents, but surely there is not a Senator in Congress who is so ignorant as not to know that we have already an abundance of information regarding the causes of explosions, and the best plan for Congress to adopt to prevent such wholesale destruction of life, is to appoint a Committee with power to send for and examine witnesses who can testify to the causes of explosions, the evils of our present ill regulated steamboat system, and give all requisite information respecting the best mode of remedy for such events.—The Cincinnati Atlas says, "if investigation is commanded by law over the body of a single individual stricken by death in our streets, the necessity more strongly exists where an hundred are destroyed upon our rivers by carelessness or defective machinery." Yes, and the city of Cincinnati will not clear herself of criminality unless she moves with a strong and righteous will in the matter and make some atonement by future carefulness for the human blood that has lately tinged with a deeper stain the turbid waters of the broad Ohio.

We believe that there are Engineers Associations in almost every city on the Ohio and Mississippi, and we have now before us the Constitution of the St. Louis Association.—These associations grant diplomas to Engineers who have been examined and have exhibited a thorough knowledge of their profession. They were established for the purpose of preventing ignorant men from occupying situations as engineers, who were incompetent for the difficult task. The objects are good, but these associations have been inefficient and they want remodelling in every respect. We do not know whether Cincinnati has such an association or not. She certainly should have one, and an efficient one it should be. The press of that city has not been backward to speak boldly in the matter, and we only come forward to hold up their hands. All men of humanity and men engaged in scientific pursuits in this quarter of our continent, are of one mind in regard to the course the State of Ohio ought to pursue at present in the matter, that is investigation, thorough, serious and careful investigation.—We will call attention to this subject, in relation to the causes of explosions next week, and present some important information upon the subject.

Death of Doctor Wells.

Dr. Wells, of Hartford, Connecticut, the discoverer of sulphuric ether to produce unconsciousness of pain in dental surgery, put an end to his existence in this city on the 25th inst. under the most painful and humiliating circumstances. We seldom call attention to such cases, but we cannot forbear to notice with regret the death of a man of no ordinary scientific attainments and one whose name is now associated with "Pneumatic Medicine," and always will be, as he undoubtedly laid its foundation. Ether and chloroform are certainly both injurious to the nervous system if taken frequently, and Dr. Wells had too fre-

quently indulged in etherization and in a fit of temporary mental aberration committed the sad act already mentioned. Such circumstances are indeed humiliating to human nature.

American Iron Ore.

The valley drained by the waters of the Housatonic River, which falls into Long Island Sound, contains valuable beds of iron ore and the same Geological formations extend north to Canada, up the valley by Pittsfield and North Adams in Berkshire, Mass. The quality of the ore is considered good. In Connecticut it supplies 16 blast furnaces. In Massachusetts there are 7 furnaces smelting the same kind of ore, and in Dutchess and Columbia counties in this State a number of furnaces are supplied with it also. In Dutchess county at the Amenia ore bed, the white carbonate of iron has lately been discovered among heaps of refuse ore, thus showing that but little sound knowledge was possessed by those working the bed.

North of Pittsfield, Mass., some valuable ore beds have been opened and one in Dutchess county in this State. The cost of digging these ores is \$1 per ton and the price for the ore delivered at the furnace is generally \$3.50 and sometimes as low as \$1.50 where the charcoal is high. Charcoal costs from \$5 to 7.50 per hundred bushels and it takes about 150 bushels to the ton. All the iron furnaces in Massachusetts have the hot blast. They make one third more iron, and although prejudice is in favor of the old way, it is as good, if not better, than that made by the cold blast.

Two furnaces are building in Poughkeepsie on the North River, to which ore is to be transported from the beds on the eastern line and smelted with anthracite coal. There are two furnaces of the Stockbridge Iron Company 32 feet high, and 8 feet across the boshes, that smelt 18 tons per day and will soon do more—they use charcoal only. Ore from the State line will soon be carried to be smelted at Hudson on the North River, by anthracite, as charcoal is becoming scarce. There is a great deficiency of scientific skill among those who conduct the mining and smelting of these ores. A large quantity of most beautiful Hematite ore was once sent from Maine to one of the Berkshire furnaces and condemned by the smelter because it did not smelt just the same as the kind that he had been accustomed to work at.

In early times these ores were reduced in Connecticut in forges, and the Indians were once employed to pack the ore in leather bags and carry it to the bloomeries.

At Kalamazoo, Michigan, a rich bed of ore has lately been mined and a furnace put in operation. The metal produced has been reported to us as being equal to any of the Eastern blasts. It will at least be found more profitable than the speculative gold mines said to have been discovered in that State.

Iron Mine.

A valuable iron mine has been lately discovered on the Farm of John Bremner two miles from Emaus, on the Lehigh Mountain, also veins of the sulphate and sulphuret of iron. The veins of the pyrites are about 1 foot thick run east and west and stand up like a wall. Veins generally run from Southwest to Northeast. The iron mine is of very rich ore, yielding 82 per cent and of the kind called Pleasant Magnet.

Yours, &c. W. E. B.

Consumption of Wood by Locomotives.

Few of our readers, we presume, are aware of the immense quantities of wood consumed by the various railroad companies between Albany and Buffalo. The Utica and Schenectady consume about 25,000 cords of 2 ft. wood per annum; the Auburn and Rochester road, about 15,000 cords; and the Tonawanda road, 8,000 cords. The other roads consume probably, from 30,000 to 35,000 cords—making the whole amount upwards of 80,000 cords per annum. This immense draught upon our "woods and forests," must soon cause an advance in the price of fuel; indeed: the price of wood has been steadily advancing in this place for the last year or two, and will soon come to be as important an item in household expences as it is to cities.—*Batavia Times.*

Honor to whom Honor is due.

No sooner has chloroform been discovered, than numberless names are put forward as the original inventors, in order to rob the real discoverer of justly deserved merit. Thus it is now rumored that Liebig and Dumas and some others discovered it before Professor Simpson. It is just the same with every invention, and there are some who would refuse James Watt the honor of having built the first complete steam engine and Fulton the first successful steamboat, because steam had been known before and had lifted the lid off some tea-kettle. In like manner too has the inventor of the Electric Telegraph had the same ungenerous opposition. We do not like to see envy or avarice do injustice to inventors. The man who puts any new invention into successful operation, should never meet with selfish opposition, but alas for poor human nature, such men are just the very persons whom the world keeps always kicking.

Western Manufactures.

It is contemplated, the Chillicothe, Ohio, Gazette says, to erect an establishment there for the woolen manufacture in all its branches.

In Zanesville, Ohio, there is one cotton factory and arrangements are completed for the establishment of a new Rolling Mill. There are also manufactories of glass, stoneware and a number of other articles in Zanesville.

A bill is before the Ohio Legislature for the establishment of the Ten Hour system, something like the New Hampshire bill.

In Newport, Kentucky, we have been informed, there is a silk factory in healthy operation. Satins in pieces, handkerchiefs and scarfs and sewing silk, are manufactured of a superior quality and made from cocoons grown in that state. In looking on the map of the United States and comparing our climate with the silk growing regions of the old world, we are convinced that too little attention is paid by us to the culture of silk. We shall call attention to this subject again.

Western Enterprise.

HARMAN, (Washington Co.) OHIO.

DEAR SCI.—A company has been formed here recently for the purpose of manufacturing Buckets and Tubs upon a large scale, and will probably employ some 20 to 30 hands.—A culvert is also nearly completed around the dam at the mouth of the Muskingum, for hydraulic purposes. It is contemplated to put up a saw mill the coming season. The "Marietta Ship Company" have a fine brig on the stocks, nearly completed. The vessels built by this company, on the banks of the Ohio, 1800 miles above "salt water," will compare with your Eastern craft for model, speed, material, style of finish, and for cheapness.

Yours, &c. S. T. J.

Mr. Kinney, member of the Legislature of Mass., from Royalston, is anxious to establish a law for the punishment of suicide. He proposes that all self-murderers shall forfeit their bodies for dissection.

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