Miscellaneous.

Correspondence of the Scientific American.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 23, 1849.

As the struggle for the Speakership is now over, and the Car of Congress on the business track, I trust that the train will be put through by daylight. Owing to the long delay in the organization of the House, the applicants for office have been subjected to great inconvenience and expense. On conversing with many of them I find that they have left a sure though moderate business at home, for the purpose of coming up to the Metropolis to try their chance in the political lottery. This is the rock on which they have been wrecked. It was the advice of plain old William Cobbett, "Stick to the shop;" I hope therefore that those honest mechanics who have been deluded by deceptive promises to leave their benches and hammers, in the hope of getting a desk at Washington, will forthwith return home and *continue* to be respectable and useful members of society. I perceive that a "Yea and Nay" telegraph has been put up in the Pennsylvania Legislature. Such a machine has been frequently brought before Congress, but the members do not feel comfortable at such an idea—they may have fears that the next invention brought forward, will be for them to stay at home, and make their speeches and do their voting by telegraph.

A heavy consignment of the new double eagles have arrived at the Treasury Department for the payment of officers. A good result of coin of a large denomination is, that it leads to economy—the possessor does not like to exchange them. The gold dollars are much sought after—they are certainly much better for the workingman than plasters. The great influx of California gold may have a tendency to advance the value of real estate; and it may have a tendency, an injurious one, of inducing a luxurious mode of living, with all its attendant evils. The precious metals imported from Mexico to Spain, produced lamentable results—it is our duty as a people not to follow their example. *

Profits of Public Slaughter Houses in France.

In all cases where these have been built in France, the revenues have been such as to make such constructions good speculations. At Paris, in 1847, the gross revenues were 1,200,000 frasnc, nearly; the expenses, including employees, repairs, water, lighting, &c., were not 140,000 francs, leaving 1,060,000 francs.—In the town of Havre, the abattoirs (slaughter-houses) are built upon 18½ year leases, and yet the proprietor makes money by his speculation. At Caen, the abattoirs produce a net revenue of 24,000 francs to pay the interest of a capital of 301,000 francs. Everywhere the results are about the same; nor can there be any reason to doubt that in America the results would be equally favorable. The butchers of Paris, at first, violently opposed the establishment of the abattoirs; but now they are so convinced of their utility and commodity, that they would almost as vigorously oppose any return to the former system. Indeed, it must evidently be to the interest of the butcher that his meat be killed in the most perfect condition, to insure its preservation, and to satisfy the public that every precaution is taken to insure a supply of wholesome meat.

Cotton Experiments in Australia.

An experiment of half an acre of land has been tried with cotton seed at Maitland, Australia, which is thus described by the Maitland Mercury:—"About the 7th of September, 1848, the seed was sown as it was obtained from the government gardener at Sydney. They were planted much in the same way as Indian corn—two seeds in each hole, the holes three feet apart, and four feet between each row of holes. In a few cases both seeds germinated and grew, but in the great majority only one plant appeared above ground, while in a few cases both seeds have perished. Shortly after the plants appeared, they were attacked by a grub, which at first threatened to destroy the crop, but passed away without doing serious damage. The young cotton crop continued to grow steadily, and in due time flourished vigorously, the plants attaining a general height of from three feet six inches to four feet, and many reaching to five feet high, branching out into bushy plants, and bearing perhaps on an average 30 pods, some being much less, and others reaching 50 pods; and it was remarkable that the hot winds of the season, some of which have been unusually scorching, produced no apparent effect on the cotton plants, not even making the leaves flag for the time. The plants appear to continue in flower for a long time, or at least these have done so, and at the present time when the earlier flowers have changed into pods, and a few are here and there bursting open and showing the cotton wool within; there are still a large number of flowers in bloom on different plants, in their various shades of white, yellow and pink.

Chocolate and Broma.

Broma, an admirable preparation, alike agreeable to the well or sick, has acquired a reputation which we think it certainly deserves. A few years since, a great manufacturer of broma, Mr. W. Baker, of Dorchester, Mass. sought the opinions of medical gentlemen of distinction, for the purpose of having an unobjectionable food for invalids, and he was assured that he had fully succeeded. Hospitals infirmaries, and households generally, should always be provided with it. When gruel, arrowroot, barley, starch, rice, farina, and many other things ordinarily resorted to for patients, are of no utility, broma is sometimes relished. It is believed that those who use it as a daily beverage will have manifest dietetic advantages over the consumers of tea and coffee. We see it stated that during last summer, those individuals who were habitually using chocolate or broma, neither had attacks of cholera or dysenteric affections, while others in the same families, taking their daily potations of tea, coffee, or simple cold water, were the sufferers, if any. We cannot vouch for the truth of this but it has recalled to mind the statement that the oil dealers in London have been free from cholera or the the choleroid symptoms. And it has been farther observed here in Boston, that persons who were taking codliver oil for chronic difficulties during the prevalence of the late epidemic, were not effected by it. Vegetable oil in the first instance, and animal oil in the last, taken internally, would appear by these statements to have secured those who took them from the shafts of the pestilence. It is certainly a point, well worth while to determine, whether the chocolate drinkers, have been secure in other infected cities.

[The above is from the Boston Medical Journal. We must say that all the Bromas and and what not, that we have ever tasted, have not been able to make us fall out with our favorite coffee. Many things have been the means of preventing cholera, so many indeed, that it is a great wonder that any persons took it, those who did, surely, were not acquainted with Broma.

Definition of the Universe.

Baron Jach, an eminent astronomer, computes that there may be a thousand millions of stars in the heavens, and then, to illustrate or describe the immensity of the universe, he says:

"If we suppose each star to be a sun, and attended by ten planets, (leaving comets out of the calculation,) we have ten thousand millions of globes like the earth within what are considered the bounds of the known universe. As these are suns to give light throughout all these systems, we may infer that there are eyes also to behold it, and beings whose nature, in this one important particular, is analogous to our own.

"But even this is exclusive, probably, of millions of suns, bosomed in the unknown depths of space, and placed forever beyond our ken, or the light of which may not have had time to travel down to us since the period of their creation."

But this is not a very satisfactory illustration; for "what are his one thousand millions of stars and ten thousand millions of globes, with the uncomprehended and incomprehensible numbers that actually exist?"

The best definition of the universe, says the Washington Globe, and one that can never be improved, has been given by Pascal, whose fame is so great and so well deserved as an able eloquent, and intrepid advocate of Moral and religious truth, against error, intolerance, and imposture; and as a man profound in science and in the learning of his day as he was, he is comparatively little known. His definition is, that the centre of the universe is everywhere and the circumference of it nowhere; which is at once astronomically exact and unimprobably concise and elegant:

"We will proceed to illustrate this. Our planet, the earth, for instance, is a centre, according to Pascal; then we will imagine a point so remote from us that a telegraphic despatch, conveyed at the rate of nearly two hunthousand miles per second, would not reach it in less than ten milions of billions of years, expressed in figures thus: 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. Now this inconceivable remote point would be a centre also, and any other point a million times as remote; but the circumference is not even approached in any degree, for there is none.

"No matter what may be the magnitude of a thing finite in its nature, and circumscribed by limits, and metes, and bounds, it cannot constitute even an atomic portion of what is its nature infinite, and which is circumscribed by no limits. Therefore, the whole solar system, or the whole of the universe itself, as far as the telescope has reached it, will not bear as great a proportion to the stupendous whole as one drop of water would bear to all the water, fresh and salt, on our globe.

"Baron Jach, or his commentator, says that 'there are suns placed so far beyond our ken that the light of them may not have had time to travel down to us since the period of their creation?

"To this we subscribe, omitting the word "down," which is not astronomically used; for there is no up or down in the case. Those suns are so much "down" to us as we are to them. And we will add, that whilst there are stars or suns whose light has not yet reached us, there are others whose light can never reach us, supposing no obstacle to its transmission, except distance.

"To illustrate further the total absence of any kind of proportions or relations between things finite and things infinite, it may be observed, that a million of billions of years, which would be a period of time utterly inconceivable by human faculties, is certainly not the smallest appreciable or conceivable part of eternity; the proof of which is, that an immortal being, having arrived at the end of that term, would be no nearer the end of eternity that he was at the beginning of the term. He would have made no progress whatever, nor can any be made."

Fattening Animals.

A memoir was read to the Academy of Sciences, at Paris, by MM. Dumas, Boussingault, and Payan, "Of researches on the fattening of animals, and on the formation of milk." These philosophers announce their belief that fatty matters are formed in plants alone; that they thence pass, ready formed into the bodies of herbiviri, entering the chyle duct by the lacteals, and so passing into the blood; that the first degree of oxidation forms stearine or oleac acid; a further degree produces the margaric acid which characterizes fat; a still further degree the volatile fatty acids—in opposition to Liebig, who traces the origin of fat to the sugar or starch of the food. In confirmation of their views, they show that hay contains more per cent, of oleaginous matter than is produced in the butter from a cow fed on this hay; and that cows fed on roots, poor in fat, produce much less butter. They advance an influenoe, which bears much on rural economy, that a cow eliminates twice as much fat from a given quantity of food as does an ox; and hence the commerce of milk and butter deserves a high degree of attention. Some relative experiments on fattening pigs bear out the same general principles.

The Cholera Expenses of New York City, for 1849 were, $55,372. The expenses in 1832 were no less than $117,687.

Holden's Magazine.

This popular cheap publication has appeared to us in a new dress and commences the New Year much improved. Among its contents for January is a portrait of C. W. Holden, deceased, who was founder of the work, accompanied with a biography of him. Mr. H. was a generous, upright and persevering young man, and his loss is lamented by all that ever knew him, especially by those who best knew him.

The Magazine is to be conducted in future by Wm. H. Dietz, Esq., and to retain the name that has characterized it as the best monthly ly Magazine at a dollar a year, published in America. Bound volumes of the last year's numbers are new ready and for sale at $1,50—each neatly bound in gilt. Office of "Holden's Magazine," 109 Nassau street. Subscription price $1 per annum: published monthly.

Spirit Drinking in Great Britain and Ireland.

From the excise returns, just issued, the following sumary of the consumption of spirits in the three kingdoms, for the half year ending 5th July, is taken:—England, 4,107,000 gallons; Scotland, 3,239,000; Ireland, 3,091,000 gallons; total 10,437,000 gallons—giving an annual comsumption to each individual of the population according to the census of 1849 of, in England. 4 pints, Ireland, 6 pints; Scot land, 20 pints.

[This shows that Scotland drinks five time more whiskey than England, in proportion to the inhabitants, and more than three times that of Ireland. It is deeply to be regretted that the clergymen in Scotland take so little interest in arresting the evils of intemperance. There are no emigrants that come to this city who are so liable to get drunk as the Scotch, and there are none, we believe, so intellectual, intelligent, and more highly respected than the moral class among them. Intemperance is fast destroying their moral character. We hope that this will reach the heart of many in that country.

News from California.

The Empire City arrived here from Chagres on Christmas morning. She brought news of an enormous rise in the price of provisions. The laborers had struck for $10 per day; they formerly got $8. The elections have taken place and have passed off, as among ourselves, with animation but quietness. Great numbers are glad to get back, and are coming as fast as they can, and as they are able. Many who were in good situations in this city are playing heavy tragedy to masons, viz., carrying the hod. It may do them no harm, because it is very honorable, owing to their being better paid than for members of Congress, namely $10 per day.

Fire and Storm.

Last Saturday was one of the most stormy days ever experienced in this city. A number of houses in the course of erection, were blown down and a number of vessels have been wrecked on our coast. The large Sugar Refinery of Messrs. Woolsey on the East River, took fire and was entirely consumed. About 200 men have been thrown out of employment. The loss is about $600,000. This large work was well prepared for fires, having the water in every floor, but all was in vain to arrest the destroyer.

A Fact Worth Remembering.

The best method to sell Patent Rights or to bring an invention into notice is to have an engraving or description of the same published in the Scientific American. The expense is but trifling and the benefits derived are manifold. Hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of patent rights and machinery have been sold by publishing descriptive engravings of inventions in the Scientific American, and it is not too late to make more fortunes in the same way.

The great coal field at Ballycastle Ireland, has been opened by an English Company. It may be said, that the whole manufacturing and other improvements in Ireland have been commenced either by English, or Scotch companies.