

Miscellaneous.

Correspondence of the Scientific American.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 12, 1850.

Our mechanics and scientific men in this section are still looking out for Mr. Paine with his wonderful machine for obtaining light and heat from water. It was announced that he was coming on with all his apparatus to demonstrate the facts. He has written a long letter to the "Union," in answer to objections to his alleged extraordinary invention, but if he wishes to convince the public that he has actually made the discovery, the best way for him to accomplish his purpose is to produce the invention. Certainly, public exhibition and demonstration would put an end to the dispute.

The members of Congress from Michigan have received copies of a resolution passed by the Legislature of the State, instructing them to use their influence in the passage of an act granting to the heirs of Moore and Hascall a renewal of the patent for their harvesting machine for the further term of 14 years from the 28th of June, 1850. It is set forth that the importance of the invention has induced the patentees to make many and great improvements, whereby the abilities of the machine have been much increased, so that they are now enabled to harvest, thresh, clean, and deposit in the sack, from the grain standing in the field, from 20 to 25 acres of grain per day, which could not have been done by the machine as originally invented.

Owing to the large number of private claims which have been standing for 20 years, there can be no reasonable hope that Congress will attend to applications for the renewal of patents. If the patentees of the harvesting machines succeed in getting a renewal on the ground of improvements, there will be hundreds of similar applications.

I understand that the Patent Committee will report a resolution offering a suitable remuneration to any scientific person who shall discover the means of rendering the Capitol and Patent Office Buildings impervious to moisture.

As soon as the excitement in Congress shall have subsided, so that members can attend to other matters, I hear that an experiment for the purpose of showing the strength of Remington's Bridge will be made on a large scale. By an experiment recently made in Alabama, three pieces of yellow pine, one inch square, formed into a bridge, bore a weight of 2900 pounds. It appears a rather tough story, but "seeing will be believing."

An ingenious artist here, after a long trial, thinks he has succeeded in obtaining portraits in oil by the photographic process equal to any in London, about which so much has been said.

In your official list of patents of last week, you speak of the re-issue of a patent to R. S. Stewart, assignee of Moses Chase, deceased. Now this Mr. Chase is in the land of the living, and may be seen at his house in Baltimore. It is curious how the Patent Office obtained the news of his death.

The wooden sleepers for railroads are about to be used in this section as being much cheaper than that of stone. A saving of fifty per cent. can be made. I see that during three years, the expenses of the Providence and Worcester Railroads together, embracing 166 miles of track, with wooden sleepers, were more than \$11,000 less than those of the Lowell road of 53 miles of track, with stone sleepers.

At the new finishing shop, at our Navy Yard, there is a vertical upright boring machine, capable of boring a cylinder of ten or twelve feet in diameter, and also arranged for chucking and turning, by the use of a horizontal self-acting slide rest, 16 feet long. Also a planing machine capable of planing 9 feet wide, 8 feet high, and 22 feet long.

Some of the papers here are lauding an alleged newly discovered oil, by a Dr. Marshall, of Pa., which, it is said, possesses peculiar and valuable properties, as a single ounce will go further in oiling machinery than a quart of

common oil. I may be mistaken, but I think this discovery is not very recent. It is wonderful, however, how far a little "editorial oil" will sometimes go.

The Equestrian Statue of Gen. Jackson, composed of the brass cannon taken by him at New Orleans, is nearly completed. It will be placed in Lafayette Square.

Dr. Dick and the Christian Citizen.

Three weeks ago we published an article about Dr. Dick, the Christian Philosopher. In that it was stated, from an extract taken from the "Christian Citizen," subscribed with Dr. Dick's name, that he had never received any money from any of the American publishers of his works, with the exception of some trifling sums from Messrs. Harper & Brothers, of this city. Elihu Burritt has published quite a long article on the subject of the old philosopher's poverty, and we have no doubt but he is in penury, as we have already stated. Basing our remarks upon the authority of Mr. Burritt, and the article in his paper, we hinted to our publishers, that they should do the honorable thing in the matter. In reply to our call for contributions, we have been informed by Mr. Pratt, of the firm of Pratt, Woodruff & Co. large publishers, of this city, that the firm of Robinson & Pratt, publishers at Hartford, Ct., negotiated through Eli Burritt, the brother of the learned blacksmith, with Dr. Dick, and paid him \$500 for his work "Mental Illumination," and \$300 for his work on "Covetousness." It is our desire to publish truth only. We do not know how to reconcile the article in the Christian Citizen with these statements. It is very evident that there is "something wrong," and the matter should be set right before the public. In this one case, we have a fact stated, that Mr. Burritt received for Dr. Dick's work, second hand, as large a sum as was paid him by English publishers. Whatever credit belongs to the American publishers, should be given fairly and above board.

The London Literary Gazette states that "Dr. Dick is now 72 years of age, and is in a state of obscure poverty, with heavy claims upon resources scarcely adequate to his own wants." Whatever opinions may be expressed respecting the money Dr. Dick has received for his works, or the way of helping him, there surely can be no question about giving it for a good purpose, when it is to relieve such a worthy man.

Iconographic Encyclopedia of Science, Literature and Art.

The fourth part of this great and good work, published by Rudolph Garrigue, Barclay street, this city, is now issued. The plates are truly pictures of Natural History in all departments. As this is a work from the German, we must state, that no people have done so much in this department as the German, and their patience, habits of investigation, and deep thinking are admirably displayed in this work.

Acoustics is treated in this No., (especially that part which relates to music) in a way peculiar to a people so highly distinguished for musical attainments. We will have time to give some extracts from this work, at a future period, but at present we must say and say it sincerely, that the plates alone are worth the price. \$1 per No.

"The Scientific American now comes to us in a most beautiful dress. Every artist and mechanic, as well as every student of science, should subscribe for it, and carefully preserve it on file. It is in quarto form, adapted for binding.—[Bath Advertiser.]

We hope the editor of the advertiser is on the Swift road "to fortune and to fame."—This paper, by the way, is an excellent independent daily, and has the elements of success in it, "dealing in facts and principles and not to a depraved taste for exaggerated fiction or low ribaldry.

California Gold.

Independent of amounts brought by passengers, there have been \$3,800,000 California gold received since the month of last June. The last news from San Francisco states that provisions were very high, and a great deal of disease raging, such as scurvy, but that great quantities of gold were yet found on all the important rivers.

Inversion of Babies.

The most outrageous and infamous of all the wild practices of which nurses are guilty, and of which nursery maids avail themselves to get rid of nursing or attending to their young charges for a short time, is that of holding children by their feet their heads pendant to the earth, and swinging them to and fro! This is the common practice of Irish nurses and servants. (I hope that I may not be charged with slander.) I vouch for the fact; not a child of my own—and I have six—having ever escaped this treatment, notwithstanding every watchfulness. I know it to have occurred in numerous families.—When reprimanded for such conduct, the reply of the nurse always is—"Sure we do it in Ireland to put the children to sleep." (sleep.) How many cases of hydrocephalus, marasmus and nervous diseases are thus superinduced, it is impossible even to surmise.—[Medical Journal.]

[Some may entertain doubts regarding the correctness of the above, but we can endorse its truthfulness, with the exception of two words "common practice." We know however that it is practiced.]

Prof. Barry's Tricopherous.

Among the many tonics that are sold for beautifying humanity there is none that we can so highly recommend as the use of Prof. Barry's celebrated Tricopherous for the hair. The change produced in a person's hair by the use of this Tricopherous is truly astonishing. The most perverse locks on the most uncultivated heads are rendered comely soft and easy to manage by the use of this celebrated tonic. The nature of this preparation is such that by applying it to a person's head the hair becomes soft and the head free from dandruff without the use of filthy oils which many use to the destruction of the most ornamental part of their person (the hair).

Prof. Barry's office is 137 Broadway where all orders are promptly filled. Price single bottle 25 cts. The usual discount to the trade.

Supernatural Knocking.

A "Knocking at the Door," at nights which has alarmed the good people of Rochester, who attributed it to spiritual agency, is explained in the American Journal of Science by Professor Loomis, as the effect of the vibration of a dam over which water falls. Professor Loomis describes this vibrating as producing sounds like a loud knocking on the doors and walls of buildings, and gives a particular account of the phenomena, as observed at the dams of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; East Windsor, Conn.; Springfield Mass; Northampton, Mass.; Gardiner, Maine, and Hartford, Conn. He attributes the vibrations to the friction of the running water which falls over the dam, and shows how these sounds are transmitted to a distance by the earth, and produce that sudden and alarming knocking sound in dwellings. Professor Loomis has pointed out very simple and easy methods of checking this vibratory action in the dams, and the people of Rochester who have been troubled by an invisible spirit will find it easily exorcised by mechanical means.

New Theory of Cholera.

Mrs. Willard has published a pamphlet about Cholera wherein are stated a few things which are well worthy of attention. It states that what is termed collapse is want of respiration. The lungs being unable to act with sufficient vigor, are filled with carbonic acid and nitrogen, and can receive no oxygen from the atmosphere; and the blood, no longer oxygenated, no longer imparts vitality, becomes dead, its fibrin and serum separating. The first curative step is to discharge, the bad air from the lungs, and replace it with that fit for respiration. For this purpose she advises that the patient be placed in the open air, with the face against the wind, and to be supported in an erect posture, and then by suddenly stooping, and pressing the hand upon the lower part of the chest, to respire forcibly, and then suddenly rising, and raising the arms from the sides, to inspire as forcibly as possible. She mentions cases in which this gave immediate relief.

Mercantile Library Association.

We are glad to perceive that the Mercantile Library Association have made further arrangements for useful lectures during the winter. The first and second of the series will be delivered on Tuesday evenings, Jan. 22 and 29, by Ralph W. Emerson; subjects—"England," and "London." They will be continued on the following Tuesday evenings, by R. H. Dana; subject—"Woman." E. P. Whipple, subject—"Character." Rev. Wm. Ware; subject—"Florence;" and Rev. Dr. Bethune, subject—"Holland and the Hollanders."

The well known character of the above named gentlemen is a sufficient guarantee that the lectures will be highly instructive and interesting. Our young men will do well to secure tickets for the course at an early day, or they will miss an intellectual treat of the rarest kind.

Down of the Eider Duck.

The down of the Eider Duck is one of the most singular and curious products of nature; it is beautiful and soft, and is the best non-conductor that is known. It is so firm and elastic that a quantity which can be pressed between the two hands, will form a garment which is little more than the weight of a few feathers, but which retains more heat than a blanket. The resort of these birds is the wild cold regions of the North. The God of Heaven has provided its down for the benefit of the inhabitants of those regions.

Plank Roads.

This kind of road is now an important feature of American enterprise. There are nearly 1000 miles of in this State, and the progress of them is onward. Utica and Oswego plank road unites the Valley of the Mohawk with Lakes Oneida and Ontario, and opens up a most interesting district of country to the advantages of convenient commercial transit. We look upon plank roads in America as a new and important feature for social and commercial benefit to our people.

The U. S. Dry Dock at Brooklyn.

This great work is completed, and last week the sloop-of-war "Dale," was docked in it. It is one of the greatest works in the world. It was planned and all the greatest difficulties (and great they were) overcome by Mr. McAlpine, C. E. It was finished by Mr. C. B. Stewart, C. E., recently appointed. Mr. McAlpine earned for himself a great and deserved fame by this work.

Half a Century.

There has been quite a controversy in some papers, about whether 1850 was the beginning of this half century, or not, many supposing that 1849 completed the first half. To talk much about these things on paper, is a waste of good ink and good sense. The man who believes that time commenced with the year 0, must be a cyphering genius, and the only way to treat him is to let him revolve round in his own circle.

Books.

We have made arrangements with Mr. Griffiths, the author of the work upon Naval Architecture, noticed in our last week's number, to supply all who may wish, the work as it is issued. The price is 75 cents per number—can be sent by mail to any part of the country. We would also state, in addition, that whenever our readers wish any of the works noticed by us from time to time, we will always supply them at the prices given.

Water-proof Blacking.

Geo. R. Townsley, of Springfield, Mass., has invented a new article of blacking, which renders boots entirely impervious to water, and is also susceptible of a fine polish. It is the best article of water-proof blacking we have ever used, and we would recommend it to the public.

John B. Patch has recovered of the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad \$2500 for damages received in 1847, by the breaking down of a bridge at Athol, over Miller's River.

The trial of a number more of Astor Theatre rioters, has commenced and one has been sentenced to State Prison.