

Miscellaneous.

Instinct.

Among the architectural operations which are in progress amongst us, we have noticed few with more interest than those of a neighbor pigeon, who seems to believe in "the right to labor;" he is evidently no communist, but decidedly fond of an isolated household. Extracting straw after straw from one of the lofts of a store in our rear, the pigeon has been conveying its spoil to a snug nook in a projection of the roof, and building a nest for its coming progeny. It was amusing to perceive how warily the industrious little builder consulted circumstances. If the merchants who occupied the store were busied in hoisting crates of goods to their upper lofts by means of a pulley, in the little penthouse which afforded the pigeon a shelter, the bird quietly bided its time for resuming operations. The straw from which its supplies were procured, were mostly in the third story of the building; yet the pigeon did not straightway ascend to its nook above after having chosen its straw, but fitted away for a brief space, in order to reconnoitre and to ascertain when it might be safe to resume operations.

A strange thing this forecast of animals.

Instinct, says the Naturalist, is the operation of the principle of organized life, including both animals and vegetables, by means of the exercise of certain natural powers.—Reason is the operation of the principle of intellectual life, by the exercise of certain acquired powers.

But why may not God have imparted both to animals and vegetables a motive power which is in essence one and the same? When we consider the diverse developments of human reason, as for instance in the Hottentot, the Anglo-Saxon, and the American Indian of our own day, we may, in some measure, perceive how vastly a brutal or a vegetable organization must modify and limit the exercise of reason, provided reason should have been in any degree imparted to these organizations. "But the brute does not improve from age to age?" Nor would the human race progress, if they were furnished only with the brains and skulls of ourang-outangs.

Conscience and progressive reason are the grand distinctive attributes of man. These make him an accountable being—and "a little lower than the angels."

And yet scintillations of reason may have also been communicated to inferior orders in creation. **

A World's Fair in America.—The N. Y. Mechanics Institute.

At a meeting held at the M. I. Rooms on the 14th inst., the following resolution was offered by the President, the Hon. Zadoc Pratt, and adopted.

"Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to consider the expediency of holding, in the city of New York, in the year, 1852, a World's Fair, for the benefit of the Mechanics and Artisans of this and other countries."

At the meetings which have been held subsequent to the above, a determination to carry out the spirit of the Resolution has been manifested, as the subject has always engaged the attention of members, and formed the subject of conversation. This is an enterprise we would wish to see carried out, and we hope the Mechanics Institute will do a great deal to bring it about. The Mechanics Institute holds its regular meetings every Tuesday evening at No. 105 Bowery.

Spontaneous Heating of Iron.

Cast iron when brought into the air after it had been for many years under salt water, has become red hot. In June, 1836, some cannon balls were raised from the ship Mary Rose, which sunk in a naval engagement near the Isle of Wight, in July, 1545, nearly 300 years before. These balls all became hot on exposure to the air, and fell to pieces. The cast iron gratings, after being long immersed in the porter vats in the large breweries of London, grow hot when the porter is drawn off, from a similar cause.

Sailing of the Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin.

The Advance and the Rescue, the vessels fitted out by the munificence of Mr. Henry Grinnell, of this city, for the Arctic expedition, in search of Sir John Franklin, sailed last Friday, at noon, for their destination among the icebergs and eternal snows of the North. These vessels are under the regulations of the navy, in order to ensure discipline and provide against desertion. It is hoped, however, that there will be no necessity for enforcing those laws, for the brave fellows who volunteered upon this hazardous service have done so more for glory than for meager considerations; and it was a touching sight to behold those ships sail down the bay, with the benevolent object in view of extricating from frozen seas, a man and brother, though of another country and clime, at the risk of sharing a similar fate themselves. Since they went away it has been reported that Sir John Franklin is safe—but it is doubtful news.

Irradiation of Light.

It is a curious fact, that if the same letters of the same size precisely are painted on two boards, the one white on a black ground, and the other black on a white ground, that the white letters will appear larger, and be read at a greater distance than the black. This is owing to what is called the irradiation of light. It depends on this, that the impression made on the bottom of the eye by bright objects extends a little wider than the actual portion of the organ struck by the light, and invading the space occupied by the darker objects, makes the brighter appear larger than they really are.

Chinese Newspaper.

There was lately exhibited in the Salles des Conferences of the Assembly, a copy of a new journal, the *Moniteur of Pekin*. It is written in the Chinese language, and printed with great care on very fine paper. It appeared in the Chinese capital on the 1st of January, 1850, and arrived in Europe by the last Indian mail. This first number contains, among other imperial documents, an ordinance of the Emperor Tao-Kouang, forbidding any of his subjects to emigrate to California or the State of Costa Rica.

Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanics Arts.

By reference to our advertising page, it will be observed that the third annual exhibition of this Institute is designed to surpass all the former ones. The exhibition will continue four days, and no doubt it will be worthy of the city of Baltimore. The Maryland Mechanics Institute is a chartered Institution, it has a great number of members, men of worth and talent—men who are capable of making any Institution respectable.

The Republican Weaver.

This is a bird of India and South Africa which lives in communities, sometimes to the number of one thousand. Their villages or towns, for such they really are, are constructed with a beautiful regularity, there being many entrances to them, each of which forms a street, having rows of nests on each side, at about two inches distance from one another. The nests are constructed with great skill. Year by year the birds add to the size of their town, until the trees at length break down under the weight, then a new site for a settlement is sought.

Blackbirds in Arkansas.

These destructive birds are annoying the farmers of Arkansas. The Van Buren Intelligencer states that an immense and unusual number have invaded that part of the country, destroying the young corn so effectively that many farmers are compelled to keep a hand in the field with a gun to fright them off. When a flock lights on a field, it is almost destroyed at one sweep. Many fields of young corn have been entirely destroyed by these birds, and the owners have been compelled to plant over again.

Letters.

Scotland, with but 2,628,957 inhabitants, and no commercial centre, no political metropolis, and but little foreign commerce, sends 38,669,169 letters in a year.

A Snake Fight.

I had often heard that the King Snake would kill all other kinds of snakes, but never saw it verified until last Sabbath morning.—While riding to church I discovered a King and a high land Moccasin Snake, each about five feet in length, engaged in a fight; the King Snake was twisted around the other about midway his length, three times, and had the Moccasin's mouth in his, and seemed to be biting and pulling as though he wished to twist his head off. There was some blood running down from the Moccasin's head, and it was perfectly motionless and seemed to be dead. My presence did not disturb them. From this time on I kill no more King Snakes. I presume all Southerners know what is called the King Snake, he is black and covered with small yellow specks. Yours, E. J. C. Centreville, Miss.

The Mississippi River.

The Mississippi drains an area of 300,000 square miles; and the total amount of water discharged per annum in cubic feet is 8,092,118,940,000. The amount of sedimentary matter in the Mississippi water is estimated at about one twelve hundredth part, by measure, of the whole volume discharged per annum; and since the alluvia deposits in the delta are estimated to have been wholly deposited by the Mississippi and its tributaries, the least possible time upon these hypotheses, required for the deposition of the delta would be 13,648 years. The water discharged in the same time would fill a sea 850 miles square, and one mile deep.

Singular Trance.

A young woman named Ann Cramer, living near Bristol, England, has been in a trance for nearly 13 years. She has taken no solid food during that period, and all the nourishment which she has received has been liquids administered by mechanical means. She is 25 years of age, and has been visited by a great number of medical gentlemen, who, however, hold out no inducement of her recovery.

Iron Furnaces in Scotland.

We learn by the North British Daily Mail, that there are as many furnaces now standing still in Lanarkshire as there are in Pennsylvania, but not from the same cause—a strike for wages being the cause of the cessation in Scotland. Out of 55 furnaces there are 33 idle, and the reduction in the yield of pig iron is about 4,000 tons weekly. The consequence is that prices are beginning to get up.

The Way to Beg.

It is often easier to obtain favors from the pride than the charities of men. A shrewd preacher, after an eloquent charity sermon, said to his hearers: "I am afraid from the sympathy displayed in your countenance, that you may give too much. I caution, you therefore, that you should be just before you are generous; and wish you to understand, that we desire no one who cannot pay his debts to put anything in the plate." The collection was a rousing one.

Clear as Mud.

Transcendentalism is the spiritual cognoscence of physiological irrefragability, connected with conscientious ademption of incolumbent, spiritual, etheralized contention subulatory connection.

Specimens of Australin gold, mixed with the same *quartzoes detritus* which accompanies the metal in other auriferous districts, have recently been received in England.

The Ottoman government have dispatched an admiral and about fifty engineers, officers, and ship-builders to Bussorah, to make a dock, build ships, and launch a fleet in the Gulf of Persia.

The Plymouth Town-Council, Eng., are about to lay down a quantity of glass pipes, jointed with gutta percha, as an experiment, for the conveyance of water.

Pavements of broken asphaltite rock, dipped in mineral tar oil, have been adopted in Paris. The new material gives great facility of traction, absence of noise, economy, and salubrity.

An Introduction to the Water Cure.

By T. L. Nichols, M. D., published by Fowlers & Wells, Clinton Hall. Price 12½ cents. These enterprising publishers are continually illuminating the public mind with new and interesting theories in relation to the efficacy of water as applied to the eradication of disease, and any one who reads the digest of cases cured under this treatment, cannot, without disputing the authority, deny that a close application of cold water will invariably effect a radical cure of almost the entire catalogue of ills to which human flesh is heir to. We have no objection to any system of practice which tends to alleviate suffering from disease, much less a system so simple as the water cure. It is difficult however to overthrow the "regular's" by any milk and water theories, such as have from time to time sprung into a sickly existence by newspaper puffs or eloquent recommendations of one hundred physicians, a few old women, combined with testimonials of character from ex-Aldermen and Justices of the Peace. There may be, and really is, virtue in the free use of pure water, and no subject can be more important than cleanliness, every person should bathe summer and winter, especially in crowded cities, where every exhalation of breath carries into the lungs a greater or less quantity of fetid air. Bathing keeps the pores of the body well open for the passing away of unhealthy matter.

After all, people sicken and die, and so far as our observations extend, the doctrines of Hippocrates, Galen, and their successors, are more to be relied upon, as a general thing, in severe cases, than all the pill-box doctors, Graefenberg theories, *a la* Presnitz, clairvoyance, chrono-thermalism, Hahnemannism, and all other isms combined. If disease does not increase more in proportion to the population than formerly, the new theories may not be disadvantageous to the public health, only so far as the patient places reliance upon a remedy to the exclusion of one of more virtue, and thereby pay the penalty of their credulity.

The work in question, like most of Fowlers & Wells' publications, is well written and clearly printed upon good paper.

The French at Rome.

The unfortunate expedition to Rome appears to have cost the French army a greater loss from fever than on the field of battle. From official returns, just published, it appears that no less than 14,848 soldiers were attacked by the marsh fever of Rome, and that 781 of these attacked died. The wretched condition of the soldiers, who, for several months, were allowed to remain without either bed or covering, appears to have been the chief cause of the prevalence of fever to so great an extent. At one period more than one-eighth of the whole army was in hospital, and the average mortality was exactly five per cent. The fevers were of the same kind as those which prevail amongst the French troops in Africa; but it is worthy of remark that miasmatic fever is daily becoming less frequent in Africa, from the attention to drainage, &c., whereas to all human appearance, it will never disappear from the Campagna Romana under the fostering care of the church.

Works on Science and Art.

DICTIONARY OF MECHANICS, ENGINE WORK AND ENGINEERING.—Part 10 of this work, contains articles on Electric Light, Electro Metallurgy, Electricity, Ransom Cook's Electro Magnetic Ore Separator, which appeared in Vol. 4, Sci. Am.; Elevators, Embossing Machines and Engine Work. It is a good number. Published by Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., New York.

ICONOGRAPHIC ENCYCLOPEDIA.—Part 8 of this splendid work is now issued by the enterprising publisher, Rudolph Garrigue, No. 2 Barclay street. It contains 20 steel plate engravings of maps, and 80 pages of letter press. This work is very neatly executed. It is a copy from the German, or it could not be got up here for three times the money. The plates have many German names, but they all explained in the letter press.

The Cuba expedition has performed the masterly act of conquering Cardenas, on the coast. The booty gained was three boxes cigars.