

SWINDLING BY MACHINERY.

We do not know who is the inventor of the system of machinery described below, but he or they managed to obtain possession of large sums of money by the operation of it, which, fortunately for the Government, was nearly all recovered. We once read an account of a machine, used in a Paris gambling-house, which operated by smothering the "unfortunate-fortunate" winner after he had retired for the night; the top of the bed, wherein he was reposing, descended by a screw working through the ceiling above, and thus extinguished him. The apparatus was detected by one person who refused to be "put out," and he escaped by the window and brought the detectives to the house immediately. Modern gamblers are more polite; they are averse to the shedding of blood, and therefore confine their irrepressible genius to simply robbing without the possibility of failure. Annexed is a description of the apparatus used in Cleveland, Ohio, to rob Paymaster Cook, whose case was recently noticed so generally by the press. Conlisk, one of the men concerned in "fleecing" the paymaster Cook, was a frequent visitor to Cleveland, and occupied rooms in the third story of the Parsons Block on Superior street. The rooms occupied by Conlisk consist of a sitting-room, where the gambling was done, and a bed-room. The sitting-room was furnished in the usual manner, and had a faro table near the windows, and a draw-poker table in the center of the room, with chairs placed to each. The walls and ceiling of the room are papered with paper of a star pattern. Directly over the rooms are two other rooms, also occupied by Conlisk, but not furnished. A portion of the flooring has been removed in the room immediately over the gambling-room, and a small hole bored through the ceiling of the room below, above each of the tables. As the holes come directly through the center of a star pattern in the paper, they are scarcely distinguishable from below. Each hole is so placed as to enable a person applying his eye to it, to look directly into the hand of the player seated in the chair. An ingenious telegraphic signal machine was discovered communicating between those holes in the room above and the chair of the gambler in the room below. A wire, having a handle near the hole, passed along between the flooring of the room above and the ceiling of the room below to the corner of the gambling-room and bed-room. It enters the bed-room and passes down in the corner, being concealed by a strip of board nailed up and papered over. It then passes under the floor of the gambling-room to the table, where a small piece of the flooring has been cut away close by the table leg, where the left foot of the gambler would be placed whilst playing. There it terminates in a spring and hammer, concealed by the carpet. The method of working this invention for robbing by machinery seems to have been as follows: The victim to be operated upon finds two chairs drawn up to the table. In one of these the gambling thief seats himself, at once placing his foot over the telegraph hammer. The victim is obliged to take the other, which is placed in the proper position for playing. The gambler's accomplice in the room above stretches himself on a mattress, with his eye at the peep-hole—and one hand grasping the telegraph handle. The hole is so placed that he can look directly down into the hand of his victim. As soon as he sees the cards he telegraphs their description according to an arranged code of signals by pulling the handle, when the hammer strikes the desired number of raps on the sole of the gambler's boot or slipper, the sound being muffled by the carpet. Of course, it is easy to see that the man who sits down to play with such a gambler is robbed as surely, completely and systematically, as if he had been bound hand and foot, and delivered over to a highwayman; and of the two robbers, the highwayman would be the more decent man.

It will thus be seen that the gambling mind is equal to all emergencies. There are gamblers in this city, and it behooves those persons who are fond of throwing away their money, to consider the above paragraph well, for if they be not robbed through the agency of the method described, they may be assured that some other plan equally forcible, will be put in practice, whereby they are surely, but not slowly, deprived of their money. We read in the

"Vicar of Wakefield" that poor Moses (son of the vicar) was badly taken in by a sharper who represented himself as of the reverend "persuasion," and did the inexperienced youth out of a promising colt which the worthy vicar hoped would bring him a large sum of money. The "spectacles in shagreen cases," the only equivalent received for the beast, operated quite as well as the best machinery for the purpose; even they, however, did not prevent the same swindler from enveloping Moses in his toils a second time, if our memory serves us.

The systematic pursuit of gaming as a passion, and not as a profession, in England and France, during the last fifty years, led several men of more than ordinary mathematical abilities to make accurate calculations of the real chances of various games. In doing this it was discovered that, in all cases, the "banks" so arranged their games that there could be no positive fair play. In *rouge et noir*, which was once a very fashionable game in the gambling hells of this country, the certain and inalienable advantage of the banks against the players, made by a peculiar rule of the game, amounts to about 1½ per cent. on all the moneys staked on one event—or to about 100 per cent. per hour against each steady player! And this deadly odds neither skill nor calculation on his part can in the slightest degree divert. The vice of gambling assumes as many different aspects, as a chameleon does colors. There are individuals in this city who live by commending various unseaworthy watches to public favor, and who make an immense profit by swindling countrymen who come to this city. There is such an establishment near the Museum, but the cries of the auctioneer are likely to be hushed for a time, as we saw, the other day, a stalwart policeman pacing up and down in front, for the purpose of warning off all persons in danger of being "fleeced." Wrath and futile anger were depicted on the faces of the sharpers, while the expression on the countenances of the pseudo-purchasers, who are hired as decoys, was ludicrous in the extreme. There is no law, it seems, that will reach their cases.

PITTSBURGH PETROLEUM TRADE.

The most complete account of the American oil regions and history of the petroleum trade, heretofore published, appeared in the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* in an article on page 122, Vol. VI (new series), and in a series of articles commencing on page 20, Vol. VII. This rock-oil business is one of the great wonders of the age. As a branch of trade it is continually growing in importance. For many years we have been sending the "staff of life," in the form of bread materials, to the Old World; we are now sending them light, in the form of oil obtained from the rocky cells of our Western valleys. The rapid rise and great extent of the petroleum trade in Pittsburgh has been set forth in a very interesting manner in a late report by Mr. Thurston, published in the *Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle*, as presented to the "Oil Exchange" in that city. From this we condense the following particulars:—

Not a barrel of petroleum had been landed at Pittsburgh three years ago. Within that space of time two millions of barrels have been delivered on the wharves of that city. The value of this quantity, unrefined, amounted to \$8,000,000; when refined, \$17,000,000; two-thirds of the quantity were refined, in Pittsburgh and its vicinity. There are 60 oil refineries in that city, in which 600 persons are employed, and which, in buildings and apparatus, represent a capital of \$1,000,000. In these refineries 1,200,000 bushels of coal are consumed annually. From nothing this petroleum business has arisen in three years to be second only in importance to the iron trade of Pittsburgh, simply because it is the center of the oil-producing region of the United States, and possesses superior facilities for importation, exportation and refining.

PHILADELPHIA.

From the recent message of Mayor Henry, we obtain some interesting facts relating to Philadelphia. The receipts into the City Treasury in 1862, amounted to \$4,003,472, from usual revenue, and from credits and other sources, the total was \$7,336,376; the payments were \$6,302,672. The entire funded debt of Philadelphia is \$24,864,841. Registered taxes for

1862 amounted to \$3,097,863, of which nearly four hundred thousand dollars have not been collected. Building has been prosperous, as 2,154 new dwelling-houses, 80 stores, 58 factories, and 115 other structures were erected in 1862, being an increase of 619 over the previous year. At the present time Philadelphia contains 94,000 dwelling-houses. It seems that the city is but imperfectly supplied with water, although vast sums have been expended upon water wheels and steam engines for pumping it from the two rivers, the Schuylkill and Delaware. The water of the latter has been found rather impure for domestic use, and the Schuylkill cannot be relied upon for a full supply. Wherever plenty of good water can be obtained by gravitation, although it may have to be carried a long distance and the original cost is great, still it is the best way to furnish water for a large community. The city of Glasgow in Scotland, used to be supplied with water pumped by Cornish engines from a river and forced a distance of two miles. Within four years, a copious supply of better water has been carried by gravitation (as in New York), a distance of forty miles, and the old system has been abandoned with the most favorable results. There have been fewer deaths in Philadelphia than in the previous year, and crime has decreased. The quantity of gas made was 656,987,000 cubic feet; there are 427 miles of street main gas-pipes and 101 miles of service pipe in use. On the whole Philadelphia is a great city and is in a prosperous condition.

Manufacturing Items.

At the Builder's Iron Foundry, Providence, R. I., four tons of shells are cast each day, and cannon as fast as they can be finished. Fifteen eleven-inch guns have already been cast, six of which are nearly finished. The specific gravity and tenacity of each gun are ascertained by the department at Washington, from samples of the material taken from each casting. A new air furnace of a capacity of twenty-five tons, similar to the one now in use, has been constructed, also a pit, preparatory to casting thirteen-inch cannon, which will be commenced soon.

Preparations are being made at the Fort Pitt Works, Pittsburgh, for the construction of a twenty-inch gun. This gigantic piece of ordnance will require for the rough casting between 75 and 100 tons of metal. The solid shot for it will weigh 1,000 pounds.

In Lowell the cotton mills are mostly stopped. Out of more than 12,000 looms there are little more than 1,000 running. At the Lowell machine-shop (Andrew Moody, Superintendent) some 750 hands are now employed, turning out a vast amount of work. This is the most extensive establishment in New England for building cotton machinery, turbine wheels, mill gearing, machinist's tools, locomotives, paper machinery, castings, &c., and this business never was in a more flourishing condition.

Rice's new wire mill at Holyoke, Mass., is just about commencing operations, and will employ 100 hands. The old wire mill has been sold to the Hampden cotton mills, and is to be immediately filled with cotton machinery.

L. L. Brown & Co., of South Adams, Mass., have machinery nearly completed for making paper from wood.

The Adams (Mass.) *News* says that a careful review of the statistics concerning the manufacture of writing paper in Berkshire county, shows that there is invested within that county, in mills and machinery, \$923,000, employing 1,180 persons, and producing an annual value of \$2,000,000.

LAUNCHES.—On the 17th ult., the new steamboat *City of New London*, was launched from the shipyard of John Englis & Son, Greenpoint, L. I. Her length is 225 feet, breadth 36 feet, depth 12 feet. She belongs to the Norwich and New York Transportation Company. Messrs. Englis & Son also launched on the 21st, from their yard foot of Tenth street, East river, this city, a steamer for James T. Sanford, Esq., to ply between Boston, Mass., and Bangor, Maine. Her length on deck is 245 feet, breadth of beam 34 feet, depth 12 feet 3 inches. The ship-building business in New York was never more prosperous than it is at the present moment.