Poetry, Miscellaneous and Tales.

AN ANGEL IN THE WAY.

The following is one of those very pure classical productions, which now and then, at great intervening intervals, are given to the world to enlighten, and please, and instruct. It imparts a lesson which would, if generally adopted, impose upon mankind a system of morals which would tend to their advantage, their happiness, and their honor. The poem appeared originally in Fraser's Magazine, but the author's name is not known:

Fair the downward path is spread,
Love and light thy fleeting guest,
Fruit is blushing o'er thy head,
Flowers are growing beath thy feet,
Mirth and Sin, with tassing hands,
Wave thee on, a willing prey;
Yet an instant pause—there stands
An angel in the way.

Heed the heavenly warning—know
Fairest flowers thy feet may trip;
Fruit, that like the sunset glow,
Turns to ashes on the lip;
Though the joys be wild and free,
Though the path be bright and gay,
Even mortal eye can see
An angel in the way.

Will thou drown in worldly pleasure?
Will thou have, like him of old,
Length of days and stores of treasure,
Wisdom, glory, power and gold?
Life and limbs shall sickness waste,
Want shall grind thee day by day;
Still to win thee God hath placed
An Angel in the way.

Trusting all on things that perish,
Shall a hopeless faith be thine?
Earthly idol wilt thou cherish?
Bow before an earthly shrine?
Meet rebuke to mortal love,
Yearning for a child of clay;
Death shall cross thy path, and prove
An Angel in the way.

When the prophet thought to sin,
Tempted by his heathen guide;
When a prince's grace to win,
Prophet lips would fain have lied;
Even the brute the same controlled
Found a human voice to say,
"Master, smite me not!"—Behold
An Angel in the way.

So, when Vice, to lure her slave,
Woos him down the shining track,
Spirit hands are stretched to save,
Spirit voices warn him back.
Heart of man! to evil prone,
Chafe not at thy sin's delay:
Bow thee humbly down, and own
An Angel in the way.

POEM ON WEBSTER.

At the late celebration in Boston of the birthday of Daniel Webster, the following poem, which was written for the occasion, was recited by Oliver Wendell Holmes:

When life hath run its largest round
Of toil and triumph, joy and wo,
How brief a storied page is found
To compass all its outward show!

The world-tired sailor tires and droops;
His flag is dust, his keel forgot;
His freshest voyages seem but loops
That float from life's entangled knot.

But when within the narrow space
Some larger soul hath lived and wrought,
Whose sight was open to embrace
The boundless realms of deed and thought;

When stricken by the freezing blast,
And nation's living pillars fall,
Their storied page, how vast,
A word, a whisper can recall!

No medal lifts its fretted face,
Nor speaking marble chants your eye;
Yet while these pictured lines I trace,
A living image passes by:

A roof beneath the mountain pines;
The cloisters of a hill-girt plain;
The front of life's embattled lines;
A mound beside the leaking main.

These are the scenes; a boy appears;
Set life's round dial in the sun;
Count the swift arc of seventy years—
His frame is dust, his task is done.

Yet pause upon the noontide hour,
Ere the declining sun has laid
His blanching rays on manhood's power,
And look upon the mighty shade.

No gloom thus stately shape can hide,
No change unarrows its brow; behold!
Dark, calm, large-fronted, lightning-eyed;
Earth has no double from its mould!

Here from the field by valor won
The battle smoke had rolled away,
And bared the blood-red setting sun,
His eyes were opened on the day.

His hand was but a shelving strip,
Black with the strife that made it free;
He lived to see its banners dip
Their fringes in the Western sea.

The boundless prairie learned his name,
His Words the mountain echoes knew,
The Northern breezes swept his fame
From icy lake to warm bayou.

In toil he lived; in peace he died,
When life's full cycle was complete,
Put off his robes of power and pride
And laid them at its Maker's feet.

His rest is by the storm-swept waves,
Whom life's wild tempests roughly tried,
Whose heart was like the streaming caves
Of ocean throbbing at his side.

Death's cold, white hand is like the snow
Laid softly on the furrowed hill;
It hides the broken seams below,
And leaves its glories brighter still.

In vain the envious tongue upbraids;
His name a Nation's heart shall keep,
Till morning's latest sunlight fades
On the blue tablet of the deep!

Beautiful Incident.

Among the innumerable amusing and touching episodes which daily mingle with the brilliant and seeming life of Paris, we find the following little gem set in mart by the French papers:

"About 9 o'clock in the morning a little boy of twelve, whose jacket of white cloth and apron ditto distinctly indicated that he followed the profession of pastry-cook, was returning from market with an open basket containing butter and eggs on his head. When he had reached the vicinity of the church of St. Eustache, the little fellow, who could only with difficulty make his way through the crowd, was violently jostled by a stranger who was passing, so that his basket tipped and fell to the ground with its contents. The poor lad, when he saw his eggs all broken and his butter tumbled in the kennel, began to cry bitterly and wring his hands. A person who happened to be in the crowd that had gathered around the little fellow, drew a ten sous piece from his pocket, and giving it to the boy, asked the rest who stood grouped around him to do the same, to make up the loss occasioned by his accident. Influenced by his example, every one present eagerly complied, and very speedily the boy's apron contained a respectable collection of coppers and silver. When all had contributed their quota, our young Vatel, whose distress had vanished in a moment, as though by enchantment, warmly thanked his new found benefactors for their kindness, and forthwith proceeded to count the sum he had received, which amounted to no less than twenty-two francs and thirty-five centimes; but instead of quietly putting this sum into his pocket, he produced the bill of the articles he had lost, and as its total amounted only to fourteen francs, he appropriated no more than that sum; and then observing in the group that surrounded him a poor woman in rags, the gallant little fellow walked right to her and placed the remainder in her hands.

Certainly it would have been impossible to have shown himself more deserving of public generosity, or to have acknowledged it in any handsomer manner; hence the boy's noble conduct was greeted with the applause of the crowd, who were delighted to find such delicacy and propriety of feeling in so young a bosom.

Cremation.—The New York "Evening Post," in an enlightened article on this subject, suggested by the affecting case of Mrs. Pfeil, of Milwaukie, says: "We have never heard of any other example of disposing of the dead in this country, by the act of man." The editor had forgotten the case of Col. Laurens, which is an illustrious example furnished by a native born American.

Henry Laurens, President of Congress, was a native of South Carolina, and took an early part in opposing the arbitrary claims of Great Britain at the commencement of the American Revolution. While on his way to Holland, whither he had been sent by Congress to negotiate a loan, he was captured by the enemy and remained many years a prisoner in England. He returned to America in 1783, and died at Charleston in 1792. He directed his son to burn his body after his death, as the sole condition of inheriting an estate of sixty thousand pounds sterling. His will concluded with the following request, *which was complied with.* "I solemnly enjoin it on my son as an indispensable duty, that, as soon as he conveniently can after my decease, he cause my body to be wrapped in twelve yards of tow cloth, and burned until it be entirely consumed, and then collecting my bones, deposit them wherever he may think proper." And we have somewhere seen a letter, written by an accomplished daughter of his, in which she approves of this mode of disposing of her father's remains.

Punch says that the reason why editors are so apt to their manuscripts rejected, is because they receive so many numbers of evil communications.

A Day with the Insane;

A VISIT TO BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

Some celebrated philosopher thinks we are a world of lunatics, differing only in degrees of insanity. He came to his conclusion, doubtlessly, upon contrasting the comparatively rational and consistent deportment of the so-called insane, who are confined within the walls of the madhouse, with that of the so-called sane, who stride the earth at large, carrying with them their bundles of crotchets and pet hobbies, and thrusting them in the face of all they meet without stint or mercy.

To some extent, undoubtedly, the theory of this philosopher and his disciples is true. By far the largest half of insane in the world are to be found without the confines of the lunatic asylum. But they manage to preserve so much "method in their madness" that they are considered perfectly "harmless" and so permitted to go at large, very much to the detriment of simple, honest people, who listen to their warped, perverted teachings.

Prompted by my thirst for viewing human nature in its every form, I took the steamboat "King Philip" a day or two since, with "permit" in hand—so politely given me by Mr Kellock—for "Blackwell's Island."

The steamboat was crowded with its usual motley groups. Some like myself going merely as "lookers on in" Bedlam; but the greater part as applicants for the bounty of our charitable city.

One poor creature, brought in the cabin by a gentlemen and placed by the stove, looked as though she could scarcely live to leave the boat. She was emaciated to the last degree, and her hollow cough and the two bright spots upon either cheek told the disease.

She sunk down in her chair, too feeble to look around her or heed the uncomfort of her own situation. Inutted her hood, and brushing off the snow and wet from it, hung it to dry. Her shoes were twisted through and full of holes, and I thought as I arranged a place on the stove hearth for her to dry her feet, "What would some of the Fifth avenue fine ladies say to having their delicately shod feet as wet and cold as this poor consumptive's?"

I learned her history. The gentleman who came with her and left her had brought her over several years ago to her youth and health as nurse to his children. But the youth and health gave way, and growing to be only a burthen instead of help in his family, she was given over to the tender mercies of strangers, like a sick, worn out horse turned adrift—So goes the world.

Bellevue took her in, and when she leaves Bellevue it will be in a pine coffin.

There was a fresh looking young Irish with her three months old baby that laughed and crowed for all the world as impudently and self-complacently as though it were the President's son, and had been born in the august White House instead of in the city Poor House, the worse than orphan child of a poor Irish help girl.

She had been married—the child had its legitimacy to be proud of, if nothing else. The young mother had the proof of that with her. Her story was the type of hundreds of others. She had been in a "good place" for several years, when in an evil hour she married "her lady's" coachman. The man was wild, and like too many of the "fast" men of the present day who are above this renegade husband in station. This young wife was deserted, her husband going to parts unknown, and his son and heir was born in Bellevue. Unable to work with the child in her arms, the sad young mother was then going to Blackwell's Island Alms House to rear the child.

There were several other melancholy looking women with small babes in their arms on board, who were, without doubt, bound on the same errand. I did not question them, however, of their histories.

I had never before been in the Insane Asylum upon the Island, and what struck me at first sight most forcibly, throughout the whole large building, was its cheerful, airy aspect, and the perfect neatness and order of all its appointments.

Many of the apartments seemed to me somewhat overfilled. In fact, the physicians complain of want of room. Large and commodious as the building is, with its off building, called "the Lodge," where the more violent are kept, still more room is required for the accommodation of its increasing numbers.

I was surprised by the preponderance of foreigners among the inmates, and of these I should judge the greater portion were Germans.

With few exceptions, these poor, unfortunate victims of warped faculties and delusions, were apparently careless and happy—laughing, singing, and many of them industriously sewing. They are all—the female portion—supplied with plenty of sewing work, as well as other and various means of diverting the mind. The insanity of many is nothing more than an absence of mind or idiocy, and there it is hard to teach anything useful. They live on, mindless as a fool, apparently with little more consciousness of life than an oyster. Some of these poor "lack-brains," however, are imitative, and sew, or attempt other modes of industry or recreation as they see others.

My little boy, who was with me, seemed to attract universal attention in the female departments. He was nearly devoured with kisses, and squeezed to death with hugs. One blowsy-looking dressed, with hair standing out in all directions, like the "quills upon the fretful porcupine," manifested her philoprogenitiveness in so boisterous a manner that she had to be interfered with by one of the stout, kind-natured nurses. The girl showed no disposition to relet, but resigned her captive with a laugh, while she frisked off to another part of the long hall.

These halls, of which each story of each wing has one, with their long rows of little rooms to the right and left—each room containing a snowy spread bed, chair, &c—are well warmed and ventilated, and afford ample room for recreation and exercise, and their inmates for the most part, to all appearance, as happy and as their nurses or visitors, almost seem to have met there merely to pass a pleasant morning, or to while away an afternoon. But alas! the doors leading to each other are locked, the nurses, physicians, &c., being each provided with a key, and the poor inmates are only prisoners!

In one room in the main building, which was filled with German women, who were engaged for the most part in sewing, a poor, forlorn-looking creature, with a countenance of considerable intelligence, but with an expression of the deepest melancholy, was sitting in a corner apart from all. During the time I was in the room, she never raised her eyes from the floor, and when I returned, upon passing through the room, she was sitting in just the same position, with her eyes still fastened upon the floor. She was to have been married, and the man to whom she was engaged, married another.

In the same room I noticed a woman of about thirty, who most once have been very handsome. She possessed a highly ideal, poetry-loving head, and her insanity must have resulted from some great blow to her highly strung organization. She sought occasion to talk with me, and upon questioning her she answered in very beautiful language, with a slightly German accent, that she had been in the Institution for three years, and that her little son was with her, &c.; and then she related to me a most pathetic story of the capture of her son by some itinerant Italian musicians, and how she followed them from Germany to Italy, and at last succeeded in recapturing him and bringing him to this country. And kissing my boy, she enjoined upon me of all things not to trust him a moment out of my sight. She spoke again of her joy at finding her son, and said he was in the next room.

Poor creature! that was *her* delirium; her son—if she had ever had one—had never been in the building. I could not ascertain the cause of her insanity, but very probably it might have resulted from the loss of this very child, upon whom she talks in such beautiful, pathetic language.

I found several other very interesting cases; one in the long hall of the story below, especially, interested me exceedingly.

She could not have been over seventeen or eighteen years old, and with her slender form possessed one of the most spiritual looking faces I ever saw. The expression of her soft brown eyes was gentle in the extreme, and most painfully appealing.

I was looking at her in pity for her beauty and helpless state, when she came up to me and asked me if I came from the city. I told her yes, and then she asked several other questions, all of which I answered in a tone that must have told her of my deep sympathy for her, for the tears started to her gazelle-like eyes and she took me by the hand and said—"Come with me."

She led me into one of the neat little rooms opening out of the hall.

"Is this your room?" asked I.

"Yes," said she, as she sat down upon the snowy bed and motioned me to take a chair close beside her. "I do not like to stay here, and you look kind and good. Won't you get me something for me to do at some milliner's store, and then I can go away?"

Upon my questioning her she told me she had no mother or father, and no friends in all New York. Much more she told me that was very interesting and pathetic, among the rest that she had been only six weeks there and had been brought there for her health; that she had been sick and it had made her crazy, but that she was well now and wished to go away.

Poor girl! upon questioning one of the nurses I found that she had been but a few months married and had been placed there by her husband, who was her constant visitor, but in her delusion she entirely ignored him. I could not learn whether he had formerly been kind to her or what was the cause of her derangement.

I was very much indebted to the kindness of Dr. Lansing, one of the resident physicians, who gave me much of his time and much information, showing me the objects worthy of note in the library, etc., among which were some very curious drawings with pen and ink by some of the inmates of the asylum. A design for a record was perfectly marvelous in its intricacy, variety and exactitude of execution.

These poor warp-brained creatures, shut out from the rest of the world, have their pleasures as well as their pains in that little world of their own. Great care is taken to provide them with suitable recreations, and music is one of their chief sources of delight. A concert came off a few evenings since, I was told, that would have done credit to a band of rational musicians.

Whilst in the parlor, during my visit, I heard some very fine music by a pale, melancholy looking young German. He played some complicated German airs, and then struck off into some delightful waltzes, which I had never heard.

"Those were Labitzky's, were they not?" asked I.

"No," he replied, "they were by Lanner, but they are in Labitzky's style." He conversed in very good English on music, asking me very politely to play.

They have their "Mario," too; I heard him sing some national air with much spirit and feeling. Poor fellow! he is a victim to love. The girl he was going to marry got separated from him in the ships as they were coming to this country.

Among the patients are many who are eminent examples of perversions of the phrenological organs; among the most conspicuous of which, are those of perverted self-esteem, such as the woman who imagines herself the President's wife, the President himself, Prince Albert, the husband of Jenny Lind, the Queen of Ireland, &c., &.

When I was ready to return home, I found the "King Philip" had returned from Ward's Island and left Blackwell's for an hour or more. We, therefore, took passage in one of the little ferry boats.

The ice, of which the river was full, drove us back several times, but the captain, a regular old "brick," who had served in the Indian wars in Florida, under "Zack" and the renowned "Ralph Ringwood," or Gov. Duval, was not to be daunted. He watched his chance, waited for the tide, and followed down in the wake of a great cake of ice—large enough to mill down an army—amusing me as we went along with narrations of his adventures in Florida.

We landed at Sixty first street, and there encountered a Penitentiary ferry-boat with their Zebra-clad oarsmen, and the "Black Maria." This mysterious vehicle was full of convicts, amongst whom was a woman in blue, hat, stockings and shoes, and dead drunk. She was lifted out of the vehicle and laid down in the bottom of the boat by the "boys."

Down the pathway from the office above, came a woman with a baby in her arms, both woman and baby crying to the extent of their lungs. Poor thing! her husband was one of the convicts who had been "sent up" for six months.

TENNESSEE RAILROADS.

Report of the Commissioner of Roads.

In compliance with a resolution adopted by the Legislature, Col. F. G. Payne, Commissioner of Roads, yesterday submitted to the Senate, through the Governor, a report of "the condition, progress, and probable future prospects of the railroads in this State entitled to State aid." The report is somewhat lengthy, and aside from its statistics, is devoted mostly to a description of the various important trunk lines, their condition, prospects, and contemplated future connections. We shall endeavor hereafter, as soon as we are able to extract from it, to give a condensed sketch from the report—the facts contained in which are of moment, and cannot fail to be interesting to every reader. From a tabular statement of the various roads entitled to State aid, their length in Tennessee, distance completed, amount of State aid granted, amount received, etc., etc., we copy the following recapitulation, showing the entire liability of the State, and the number of miles of road completed, in progress, and in contemplation likely to be completed:

	Miles of Road in Tennessee.	Miles finished.	State aid granted.	State aid received.
W. Tenn. road	152.63	52.63	$24,000.000	$1,350.000
M. Tenn. road	271.64	173	5,435.000	2,900.000
E. Tenn.	400	125	6,500.000	1,650.000
Total	1,013.03	351.03	$47,935.000	$5,857.000

There are twenty-two different enterprises enumerated in the report, for which the above liabilities have been incurred, present and prospective, the total cost of which, when completed, in this State, is estimated at $35,000,000—more than double the State liability. They are as follows, with their length of road in Tennessee:

IN WEST TENNESSEE.

Memphis and Charleston, (Memphis to Stevenson,) 87 miles; Mississippi and Tennessee road, (Memphis to Grenada,) nine and eight-tenths miles; Memphis and Ohio road, (Memphis to Paris,) 130 miles; Mobile and Ohio road, (Mobile to Cairo,) 114¾ miles; Mississippi Central and Tennessee, (Canton, Miss., to Jackson, Tenn.,) 48 miles; Northern road, (Nashville to Hickman,) in West Tennessee, 97 miles; making a total of 470.08 miles in West Tennessee, all of which roads are in an active state of construction and progressing rapidly, and all but one or two have been granted bridge aid, in addition to the $10,000 per mile.

IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE.

Nashville and Chattanooga, 134 miles; Tennessee and Alabama, 125 miles; McMinnville and Manchester, 34½ miles; Central Southern, Columbia, and Decatur, 45¾ miles (not yet commenced;) Louisville and Nashville, 46¼ miles; Edgefield and Kentucky, Edgefield to Henderson, Ky., 48 miles; Southwestern (McMinnville and Danville, Ky.) 86 miles; Winchester and Alabama, (Deckard's Depot, on the Chattanooga road to Cantonville, Ala.) 23 miles; Nashville and Northwestern, (Middle Tennessee) 87 miles: making in all, in Middle Tennessee, 577¾ miles. But three of the roads here mentioned, the two first and the last, are in an active state of construction; and none of the others, with the exception of the Louisville and Nashville, have yet let any portion of the work to contract.

IN EAST TENNESSEE.

East Tennessee and Georgia Road (Knoxville to Dalton) 112 miles, finished; East Tennessee and Virginia, (Knoxville to Bristol) 130 miles, in active construction; Knoxville and Charleston (Knoxville to State line) 56 miles; Knoxville and Kentucky (Knoxville to Danville) 50 miles; Western and Charleston (Athens to Blue Ridge Road) 30 miles; Cleveland and Chattanooga, 30 miles; and Cincinnati, Cumberland Gap and Charleston, 36 miles; making a total of 490 miles in East Tennessee. Of the four last mentioned roads, only one, the one last mentioned, has let any of their work out.

There are other roads in the State, entitled to aid, but the Commissioner estimates that the amount of aid demanded will not exceed the amount granted in the above roads, calculating that the chances are about equal for a failure of some of the roads enumerated, to come within the provisions of the act, and for any of those not mentioned to do so.

[Nashville Banner, 31st Jan.

Invention of Printing.

The following account of the invention of printing is given by an ancient German chronicler of the name of Trithemius, who appears to be personally known one of the three persons who clearly seem to have the best title to be called the inventors of printing.

"At this time, in the city of Mentz on the Rhine, in Germany, and not in Italy, as some have erroneously written, that wonderful and then unheard-of art of printing and characterizing books was invented and devised by John Gutteneberger, a citizen of Mentz, who, having expended almost the whole of his property in the invention of this art, and on account of the difficulties which he experienced on all sides, was about to abandon it altogether; when, by the advice, and through the means of John Fust, (or Faust,) likewise a citizen of Mentz, he succeeded in bringing it to perfection. At first they formed (engraved) the characters or letters in wooden tablets or blocks of wood, and in this manner they printed the vocabulary called a 'Catholicon.' But with these forms [blocks] they could print nothing else, because the characters could not be transposed in these tablets, but were engraved thereon as we have said. To this invention succeeded a more subtle one, for they found out the means of cutting the forms of all letters of the alphabet, which they called matrices, from which matrices they cast characters of copper or tin of sufficient hardness to resist the necessary pressure, which they had before engraved by hand. And, truly, as I learned thirty years since from Peter Opilio (Schoeffer) de Gernesheim, citizen of Mentz, who was son-in-law of the first inventor of this art, great difficulties were experienced after the first invention of this art of printing, for in printing the Bible, before they had completed the third quarter-sion (or gathering of four sheets,) 4000 florins were expended. This Peter Schoeffer, whom we have above mentioned, first servant, and afterwards son-in-law to the first inventor, John Fust, as we have said, an ingenious and sagacious man, discovered the more easy method of casting the types, and thus the art was reduced to the complete state in which it now is. These three kept this method of printing secret for some time until it was divulged by some of their workmen, without whose aid this art could not have been exercised; it was first developed at Strasburg, and soon became known to other nations. And thus much of the admirable and subtle art of printing may suffice—the first inventors were citizens of Mentz. These three first inventors of printing, (vindices,) John Gutteneberger, John Faust, and Peter Schoeffer, his son-in-law, lived at Mentz, in the house called Zum Jungen, which has ever since been called the printing office."

The invention of Schoeffer, which, whatever might have been its first mechanical imperfections, undoubtedly completed the principle of printing, is more particularly described in an early document, which is given in several learned works on typography, as proceeding from a relation of Fust. It is as follows: "Peter Schoeffer, of Gernsheim, perceiving his master Fust's design, and being himself ardently desirous to improve the art, found out (by the good providence of God) the method of cutting (*incidendi*) the characters in a matrix, that the letters might each be singly cast, instead of being cut. He privately cut matrices for the whole alphabet; and when he showed his master the letters cast from these matrices, Fust was so pleased with the contrivance that he promised Peter to give him his only daughter Christiana in marriage—a promise which he soon after performed. But there were as many difficulties at first with these letters as there had been before with the wooden ones, the metal being too soft to support the force of the impression; but this defect was soon remedied by mixing the metal with a substance which sufficiently hardened it." John Schoeffer, the son of Peter, who was also a printer, confirms this account, adding, "Fust and Schoeffer, concealed this new improvement by administering an oath of secrecy to all whom they intrusted, till the year 1462, when, by the dispersion of their servants into different countries, at the sacking of Mentz by the Archbishop Adolphus, the invention was publicly divulged."

Mobile Thugdom.—The Natchitoches Chronicle of the 2d inst., just to hand, informs us that Mr. Ellison had his hand shot off, and his arm shattered to the elbow, in firing a salute in honor of Democratic victory, the Monday previous. At the same time, Mr. Holdridge's hand was burned. It has been ascertained by inquiry that the powder was purchased by a Thug and wrapped up in a copy of that Know-Nothing sheet, the Red River Republican. The matter is to undergo judicial investigation. [Baton Rouge Comet.

To Cure Corns—Infallible.—Seek the unfortunate toe in camphene until it is "corned," and "*touch her off!*"

Leap Year.—The ladies of Paterson, N. J., have been declaring their rights and privileges, and last week designed and carried out a sleigh ride, to which they invited the young gentlemen, paying all expenses etc., themselves. This sort of woman's rights does not seem very objectionable to the other sex.

Sundry Smuggling Contrivances.

In the days when high-heeled French were the pride of fashion, there was a shoemaker in London who made a fortune by the sale of the best Paris boots at a price which all his fellow-cordwainers declared ruinous. He undersold the trade and obtained troops of customers. These boots must be stolen, said his rivals; but there was no evidence that they were; certainly they were not smuggled boots, for any one could satisfy himself that the duty was paid upon them at the Custom-House. The shoemaker retired from the business with a fortune. A forwards his secret was accidentally discovered; although he had paid duty for the boots, he had not paid for everything that was in them. There was a heavy duty payable on foreign watches; and every boot consigned to him from Paris had contained in its high heel a cavity exactly large enough to hold a watch. The great profits obtained by the trade in smuggled watches made it possible for the tradesman, when he had filled up their heels, to sell his boots under prime cost. This was worth while, again, because, of course, by the extension of his boot-trade, he increased his power of importing watches duty free.

Some years later, an elderly lady and a lap dog traveled a good deal between Dover and Ostend. It came to be generally suspected by the Custom-House that her travels were for the purpose of smuggling Brussels lace, then subject to exceedingly high duty; but neither the examiners of her luggage, nor the female searchers at the Custom-house, who took charge of her person, could, by the narrowest scrutiny, find matter for a single accusation. At last, when she was about to decline the smuggling business, this lady accepted a little bonus a Custom-house officer to make him master of her secret. Calling to her side the lap-dog, who was to all strangers a very snappish little cur, she asked the officer to fetch a knife and rip the little creature open. Like a few of the dogs (which have sometimes even proved to be rats) sold in the streets of London, it gloried outwardly in a false skin; and between the false skin and the true there was space enough to provide a thin cur with the comfortable lodgings proper to a lady's pet, by means of a warm padding of the finest lace. In the reign of Louis the Eighteenth—it may be noted by the way—very fierce dogs were trained to carry valuable watches and small articles under false skins across the frontier. They were taught to know and avoid the uniform of a Custom-house officer. Swift, stunning and fierce, they were never to be taken alive, although they were sometimes pursued and shot.

Not very long ago, a great number of false bank notes was put into circulation within the dominions of the Czar. They could only have been imported; but although the strictest search was made habitually over every vessel entering a Russian port, no smuggling of false notes was discovered. No clerk is meant to be the scrutiny at Russian Custom-houses, that the ship captain, who is bound to give an inventory of every article on board, may fall into unheard of trouble if he forgot so much as his own private canary bird. There was an English captain once at Cronstadt who, by accident, forgot to enter a fine turtle upon his list. He told the leading Custom-house official plainly and honestly of his unfortunate omission, and the functionary, who was a good-natured man, saw no plain way out of the difficulty. He recommended that the matter should be glossed over by assuming that the turtle was intended for the Emperor. The captain did, therefore, declare that, if he had not entered the turtle, it was because it had been brought expressly as an Englishman's gift to the Czar, and to the Czar the turtle was dispatched accordingly. Soon afterwards there arrived a government messenger inquiring for this most courteous of captains who brought the gracious thanks of the Czar Nicholas, together with the gift of a gold snuff-box, embellished with the imperatorial cipher set in diamonds. Instead of fine and persecution, these were gifts and honors for this lucky sailor. But when afterwards, some other trading captains, acting as they imagined, cunningly upon the hint, brought turtles to exchange for snuff-boxes, his astute majesty quietly made the turtles into soup, but declined by any act of exchange, to add snuff-boxes to the articles of Russian trade shipped at the port of Cronstadt.

Now to go back to the forged notes. Accident brought also that mystery to light. Several cases of lead-pencils arrived one day from England, and were being examined, when one of them fell out from a package, and the custom-house officer, picking it up, cut it to a point, and used it to sign the order which delivered up the cases to the consignee. He kept the one loose pencil for his own use, and a few days afterwards, because it needed a fresh point, cut it again and found that there was no pencil. And pencil-chip into the cedar brought him to a roll of paper nested in a hollow place. This paper was one of the false notes, engraved in London, and thus passed into the dominions of the Muscovite.

During the last epidemic fever which displayed itself in this country in a rage for antique furniture, much of this was imported from the Netherlands. A shrewd Dutch tradesman very much preferred an order for sofas and chairs to an order for sideboards or tables. Horse hair, he knew, was plentiful enough in England; the duty upon tax, however, was excessive, and by an arrangement entered into with his English agent, it was understood that tea should be used, instead of hay or horse hair, as the stuffing of all cushions attached to furniture transmitted by his house. In this way there was a fortune made.

Origin of Leap Year.—When Julius Cæsar, that old Roman illustrator, of whom you have heard, undertook to reform the computation of time, he ordained that the year should consist of 365 days except the fourth year, which should consist of 366 days—the additional day to be reckoned by twice counting the 25th day of February, which was the sixth calend of March. Hence the name, from the Latin words, "bis" and "sextus," sixth. The calends (whence our calendar) or first day of the month were reckoned backwards to the ides, thus: the first day of March was the first calend; the 28th of February was the second calend of March, February 27th the third, and so on.

The Julian year, which by this rule was reckoned at 365 days and six hours, was found not to be exactly, but to exceed the length of the solar year by 11 minutes, which error, would, in 131 years, amount to an entire day. It was, therefore, corrected by Pope Gregory, in 1582, who intercalated eleven days from the Julian computation—being an excess or gain over the solar time. Out of this correction has grown the distinction between old and new style. The Gregorian or new style was introduced into Germany in 1700, and by act of Parliament into England, 1752, just one hundred and three years ago, the 21 day of September (O. S.) of that year being reckoned as the 14th (N. S.) under the Gregorian system. Although the Bissextile is retained with its obsolete impact, we intercalculate the 20th of February every fourth year for Leap Year, and for still greater accuracy, make only one Leap Year out of every four, even every century years, as—the years 1700 and 1800 were not Leap Years; nor will A. D. 1900 be reckoned as one; but the year 2000 will be Bissextile. And that is the way Leap Year became to be an "institution." [Wash. Star.

Rise and Fall of Kingdoms.—Middleton, in his life of Cicero, speaking of the opinion entertained of Britain by that orator and his cotemporary Romans, has the following passage: "From their riddles of this kind, on the barbarity and miseries of our island, one cannot help reflecting on the surprising fate and revolutions of kingdoms: how Rome, once the mistress of the world, the seat of arts, empire, and glory, now lies sunk in sloth, ignorance and poverty, enslaved to the most cruel as well as the most contemptible of tyrants—superstition and religious imposture—while this remote country, anciently the just and contemptible of public Romans, is become the happy seat of liberty, plenty and letters; flourishing in all the arts and refinements of civil life; yet running, perhaps, the same course which Rome itself had run before it—from virtuous industry to wealth; from wealth to luxury; from luxury to licentiousness of discipline and corruption of morals; till, by a total degeneracy and loss of virtue, being grown ripe for destruction, it falls a prey at last to some hardy oppressor, and with the loss of liberty, losing everything that is valuable, sinks gradually again into its original barbarism."

Intelligence of a Dray Mule.—A pupil of the Abbe Sicard gave the following extraordinary answers: "What is gratitude?" "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." "What is hope?" "Hope is the blossom of happiness." "What is the difference between hope and desire?" "Desire is a tree in leaf, hope is a tree in flower; and enjoyment is a tree in fruit." "What is eternity?" "A day without yesterday or to-morrow; a line that has no ends." "What is time?" "A line that has two ends; a path which begins in the cradle and ends in the tomb." "What is God?" "The necessary being; the sum of eternity; the mechanist of nature; the eye of justice; the watchmaker of the universe; the soul of the world." "Does God reason?" "Man reasons because he doubts; he deliberates; he decides. God is omniscient; he knows all things; he never doubts; he therefore never reasons."

Truisms.—Borrowed garments seldom fit well.

Haste often trips up its own heels.

Men often blush to hear what they are not ashamed to act.

Pride is the flower that grows in the devil's garden.

Vices are drowned in the wine-cup than in the ocean.

He who buys two many superfluities, may be obliged to sell his necessities.

The heart of the miser must be touched with a hot iron before any warmth be produced.

He who talks most, often has the least brains.

Never patronize a scandalist; letter let thy silver and gold rust in the till.

An old blacksmith by the name of Sledge, on being asked what had become of "his darter Jane," replied that the "darned critter" got a wedding boot on her last week, and went away and got married. A weld ing heat is good.

Wolf Island.—The Commissioner of the General Land Office has decided that Wolf Island, which is situated in the Mississippi river, below the mouth of the Ohio river, is within the jurisdiction of the State of Missouri, as originally surveyed and returned by the Surveyor General at St. Louis, and not within that of the State of Kentucky, as was claimed some years since. The lands in the island heretofore withdrawn from sale, have been ordered into market again on and after the the third Monday or 19th day of May next. We understand that the examination and Reporter of the Surveyor General, on which this decision is based, afford conclusive evidence that the main channel of the river, which is made the boundary line between the States of Missouri and Kentucky by the treaty of 1783 with Great Britain and the act of admission of Missouri as a State, passes on the east side of the Island. [Washington Union.

Decay of English Power.

In a copy of the Illustrated London News, dated Dec. 22, 1849, we find one of these articles in which English papers sometimes speak unwholesome truths to the ears of John Bull. After quoting the picture of a New Zealander in a remote age of the future, sitting upon a ruined arch of London Bridge and moralizing upon the fate of the once mighty empire become as much a thing of the past as those of Rome, Greece and Assyria, he enumerates the "signs of decay," the causes that threaten English supremacy, and says:

Although our empire stretches to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south—though we have our hands in Asia, our feet in Africa, our arms in America, and the South Pacific Ocean, our own peculiar territory is but a small spot in a remote corner of Europe. We have only held that corner by the enormous sacrifices we have made. It was our ambition to become a ruling power—giving the law to the world—and we became so; but it was at a cost of a debt of $800,000,000, that pauperises our people. Our wealth grows out of a perpetual and billious revelry upon the energy of all classes. In addition to this stupendous evil, we share the effeteness of all Europe—There is but one empire within European boundaries that is not worn out and pauperised by debt and extravagance: that Empire is Russia; and she is the enemy of all the rest, and desires to rise upon their ruins. Destiny seems to have traced her path as it has traced ours. The Sclavonian races will inevitably be the new lords of Europe. The Anglo Saxon race must be contented to be the lords of the larger and more splendid inheritance of America and Australia. In this case what becomes of the empire of Great Britain? It falls to the ground, and exists only—like other Powers and Dynasties of the world—in the bones and dust of its sons and successors, transferred to a new soil, and enjoying privileges, blessings and opportunities from which their forefathers were excluded.

Let those who dream of a perpetual Britain, think upon these things. The signs of decay are around us on every side. In our full we shall have few friends, no sympathy, no love; we have not comported ourselves so humbly and so as to be faithful in the exercise of sympathy or aid from any quarter. Our very excellence has made us foes; and our violence and cupidity have estranged the nations. We may have peopled the earth; we may have spread far and wide our arts and our arms—our commerce and our civilization, but we have not had standing room for our pretensions. Events are more powerful than we are. We must, sooner or later, yield our place to the more prudent, the less contaminated, and the more vigorous offshoots of our race, and consent to occupy the easy chair of our senility. Nor is there anything to regret in this. What is there in our corner of the globe that it should for ever expect to give law to all others? The civilization that is removed to a distance, and the population of our people can exert itself as well on the banks of the Ohio, or the Mississippi, as on the banks of the Thames; and rule the world from the White House at Washington, with as much propriety as from the Palace of St. James.

We live, indeed, in a remarkable period of the world's history—period in which new empires take the place of old ones with wonderful rapidity, and in which old empires are paying the penalty of transgressions against the laws of morality and social well being, committed by them during many generations. Europe has enjoyed power and has abused it, and the sceptre of the world's dominion is passing from her grasp. Civilization, as of old, is following the course of the sun, and the destiny of humanity will work themselves out in a new field and on a larger scale. The world is, as it were, starting afresh, and from a more favorable starting-point. The lover of humanity can but hope that the new civilization which may arise will take warning from the errors of the old; and that in the hour and fall of empires, humanity itself will merge from each change in brighter hope, more and justly more peaceable and more religious, and doing as much as man can do to aid the coming of the prophesied time, when "the people shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; when nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, nor learn war any more."

The Eloquence of Cotton.

The materials of eloquence are certainly very abundant. Every now and then, a fine speech on some unrecognized topic surprises us into a discovery of the hidden stores of thought, that await the magical touch of a master mind. Burke made a great speech on the hardy battles of the Englanders, and Webster found inspiration in steam engines. Sir Humphrey Davy was inspired to a description of the nature of gas, and the poet Wordsworth was famous for taking any common topic and investing it with the hues of creative fancy. Our countryman, the Hon. Wm. Elliot, Commissioner of South Carolina to the Paris Exhibition, has made an address before the Imperial and Central Agricultural Society of France, on cotton, which judging from the extracts which we copy from it, we should say, that cotton ought to be hereafter considered a legitimate subject for literary and oratorical treatment. "We have authentic information," says Mr. Elliot, "going to prove that the Sea Island cotton, which, in our opinion, should be exclusively known as the gossypium Barbadense, was cultivated in South Carolina as early as the year 1790, and can it be a matter of indifference to you, gentlemen, to know that the field selected for the first experiment in the culture of the fine material in Carolina, includes the very spot where Jean Ribault (the pioneer of French discoveries in America,) planted his column of stone in 1562 and claimed the territory for the crown of France!

"On that very spot on which Ribault planted the standard of France, as marked down on the charts and maps of Ludovicus, now preserved in the Imperial Library, the cotton seed from Anguilla came first to be planted: which, improving from year to year under the joint influences of the climate and culture came to supply the raw material for the most favorite cotton fabrics, and has thus proved the nidus of nursery bed from which Algeria has drawn the seed, from which she has raised these beautiful specimens of Sea Island cotton now on exhibition on the Palais de l'Industrie, and which rival the finest specim