MR. CURTIS ON FEMALE NOVELISTS.

The Fourth Lecture of the course on English Fiction was delivered on Friday evening in Clinton Hall, by Mr. GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. The audience was too large for the hall.

Mr. CURTIS began by saying that in Robert Plumer Ward's novel of Tremaine, which used to be very much read by what were called superior young ladies and young women of mind, it was stated that the hero held "everything masculine, even though it were her "sense, to be a derogation from the female character." "We would forgive you," he had been known to say to Madame de Staël, "being so much wiser than our-"selves, but with such wisdom we cannot forgive "your petticoats." In that respect we were all Mr. Tremaines; we never forgave the petticoats. It might be very unfair and ungentlemanly and unmanly, but men in general regarded literary women very much as the faculty regarded quack doctors. They remembered Mrs. Hannah More and shuddered. Blue was the loveliest of colors in the female eye and the most becoming upon the female figure, but blue upon the female foot made Mr. Tremaine pause. He never thought of Cinderella's foot, airy in azure silk, but only of Mrs. Jellaby's in heavy indigo woolen. Mrs. Hannah More was probably the particular woman in history whom it would be repugnant to most men to think of marrying. She was, in fact, not so much a blue-stocking as an entire pair of blue pantaloons. Yet few women had done more good. She was a prose translation of Florence Nightingale. She was a nursing mother of morals and manners, too, and even tilted at the French Revolution in a little work called "Village Politics," which served at least to show her good will, very much as if she had charged the French army with a darning-needle. With the $150,000 which she made from her writings she established schools, and though we might joke about stockings, hers was a prodigious life in its devotion, its persistency and its results. And despite Mr. Tremaine and his immense family connection, we might be sure that Sir Walter Raleigh, who laid his cloak in the mud before Elizabeth, and Charles Lamb's friend who helped the old apple-woman over the kennel, and Sir Philip Sidney, whose whole life was a compliment to women, would freely forgive the petticoats of Mrs. Hannah More. Mr. Curtis explained this panic at petticoats in print, by the old doctrine of the spheres. M. Huc, the missionary, in his book on China, said that the intelligent natives whom he saw were hugely delighted with a remark of his, and declared that it was the best joke that had ever been heard in China. The remark was that women, too, had souls. And looking back through our English literature, we found it singularly Chinese in this respect. Except in Shakespeare and a few of the dramatists and an occasional prose-writer, no simple and humane feeling was expressed for women. There was always plenty of adulation, splendid epithets, fulsome flattery of Daphnes and Chloes sitting upon clouds somewhere. We must go all the way back from Jeanie Deans to Shakespeare, to find a really noble woman in literature. It was one of the greatest characteristics of that supreme genius that, in an age when courtly courtesy and perhaps gratitude compelled him to compliment Queen Elizabeth, he created Miranda and Cordelia and Ophelia. Shakespeare had done for women what all other authors together had not done; his women were possible women; as we read we recalled the Cordelias and Mirandas and Ophelias that we knew, and we loved and reverenced them more for that splendor of portraiture. Shelley told all when he said in Julian and Maddalo:

She was one of Shakespeare's women.

After Shakespeare, men complimented women in sonorous bombast, and made laws by which they were treated as serfs. Men and women agreed in their novels in describing all the women either as fools or Nell Gwynnes. In fact, where in the whole range of English fiction did we find a really noble portrait of a really noble woman? We quarreled with Thackeray's women, as if every other novelist had supplied the most admirable specimens. But Fielding's Amelia, his chief heroine, was only a little, simple, constant, tender and teary woman—the grandmother of Thackeray's Amelia. Richardson's Pamela was a Cockney Diana, but she was not a fine woman. No man could seriously respect a woman who, like her, finally married a man who had insulted her in every grossest way. Amiable and well-behaved women there were, of course, in abundance. Miss Burney's Evelina was formally good—according to the Queen Charlotte standard. And in going through the books of Mrs. Bray, Miss Ferrier, Miss Jane Austen and Miss Edgeworth, the reader felt like a girl sitting with her governess." The society was suffocatingly well-bred. The books were not representative books. And nothing showed the difference between Scott and Shakespeare so profoundly as their comparative opulence in the creation of women. Scott's women were often uncertain and unlike; few were positively excellent and immortal. But each imagination of a woman rose in the firmament of Shakespeare's mind, pure and separate and perfect as each planet in the sky. There was a sad fact in this lack of real women in literature. Women could be painted and could paint themselves as pretty puppets only when they were generally considered to be so and had accepted that general estimate. The utmost moral of the female novel before our own day was a kind of confirmation of the Chinese theory. The English female writers of the last century had a superficial solemnity but no real earnestness, as if they had been tossed upon the great waves of passionate experience. And why should we men, Chinamen that we were, complain of this inferiority of everything feminine in literature? Who had told women to mind their teacups and take their faith from us. The Sultans were our fathers. We either complimented them or insulted them by condescendingly talking out of the Primer. Why could not Oliver Goldsmith, simplest and sweetest of men, have painted us the Jessamy Bride, whom he knew and loved, instead of Sophia and Olivia Primrose? Yet Sophia and Olivia, and the whole Primrose family, had a better chance for contentment, as society was arranged, than any other kind of woman. We had lived to little purpose if we had not learned that every woman of strong character, great intelligence, fine and fastidious taste, a nature demanding unusual scope, and a heart capable of all that made the love of woman the theme of poetry and the substance of history, felt the want of a career. We all knew such. He had known them in quiet country places, cornered by circumstances that glared upon them like hungry hyenas until they ate their own hearts out and died. He had known them in the brilliant bustle of cities, frantically gay, fiercely bright; but it was a live coal in a vase that consumed while it lighted. They tried to find this career in a hundred ways. Most women married, and did the best they could in that way. We suddenly heard that Venus had married Vulcan, and we were all aghast. That splendid girl! That gross man! "Every woman, then, has her price," we said bitterly. Perhaps so; but the young Mars whom Venus loved, with whom Heaven was easily possible, who marched triumphant through her life with waving banners and pealing trumpets, had marched away—away to some Iris with rainbow eyes, away with that young heart and the bloom of that young life. The story was older than Ariadne and Bacchus, and newer than the last novel. He did not wonder that Venus married Vulcan, but he wept at the wedding. Other women took to literature, and called upon the world to stand and deliver its sympathy, as reduced gentlemen in the old time took to the road and demanded your money. Many pined in utter apathy, caring for nothing, asking for nothing, hoping for nothing—quietly despairing. Every man found some of these classes within his own experience. It was impossible not to see this great sadness, this tragedy of the female heart; but it did not get into literature until lately. Did they suppose it was only benevolence that sent Florence Nightingale to the Crimea? Florence Nightingale chafing with unsatisfied and unoccupied powers, was a spectacle as sad as an unstrung harp. But Florence Nightingale directing the hospitals at Scutari; Florence Nightingale asking an official for beds, and, when delayed by stupid official formality, ordering the soldiers to break down the doors of the storehouse; Florence Nightingale blessing and blessed by lonely and forsaken soldiers, and night and morning held to heaven upon the prayers of England and the Crimea, was not a spectacle that saddened, but that inspired, and every noble man thanked God for the sight. Or could he here forget another woman who found in Rome her country and a like career, who saw every day for weeks the flower of the world's capital perish upon its walls, and through long nights and days smoothed the pillows of those who found it sweet to die for their country? If we honored Florence Nightingale could we forget Margaret Fuller? Or could he forget that figure of immortal grace, that story of woman's devotion which was worthily the chief poem in the literature of a people that especially honored woman? Did he not know that as long as the heart was loyal to loveliness, so long would it repeat Evangeline's story? This protest against the limitations of feminine life which Florence Nightingale expressed in the Crimean cause, this consciousness of the mean position which woman had occupied in literature both when she wrote and when she was written about; the mingled cry of pain and indignation at the long, long woe of woman, as if the whole sex had been doomed for the fault of Eve in the garden; this religious democracy which claimed that a woman should be honored as a woman, even as a man was honored as a man, found at last its expression in the most searching and prodigious novel ever written by a woman—the Jane Eyre of Charlotte Bronte or Currer Bell. Mr. Curtis told the sad, familiar story of Charlotte and her sisters; how the studious, pious father left his motherless children to fate at home, and to starve at school, and then to play the part of Gov- "rendful dummy in the English game of "ences—that [illegible] went to Brussels, and came back life; how Cha[illegible]ing in the pitiful parsonage, alone, to find her sisters [illegible] Yorkshire hills; how the two there among the d[illegible] said to her, "You cannot pale, pining sisters [illegible]ng if she is not beautiful," and how she held [illegible] little square paper books "have a heroine inter[illegible]s and wrote her heart close to her near-sighted [illegible] a plain woman more into Jane Eyre, and did make [illegible] English fiction. interesting than any beauty in [illegible] sisters published—Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, announced the [illegible] which was beginning to be surmised, that English [illegible]ural life was not all green lanes and velvet lawns; that [illegible]al England was not one vast placid pasture, and [illegible] Englishmen one vast flock of sheep placidly pasturing upon it. More clearly than any English stories that were ever written they revealed the great shadow in the lovely picture of English country life. A little shy governess from Yorkshire, with soft lightish brown hair, a reddish complexion, a wide mouth, a broad, square and overhanging forehead, hands like birdclaws, and so short-sighted that she could see nothing that was not close to her eyes, but with the sweetest light in those eyes, and a radiant heroism beaming all over the little face, shining over the corpse of a lost youth which lay in her memory as heaven shines over a grave, this woman came and shook the world by the heart and said: "This is Jane Eyre; no goddess, but a "governess; she owes none of your sympathy, if you "give it, to the red of her cheeks or the yellow of her "gold, but everything to the integrity and loyalty of "her character." For it was not only its vivid characterization, its startling and brilliant description, its fiery glow and passionate pathos, nor the novelty of the plot, nor the skill of the story; but its profound humanity, its quiet scorn of the conventional accessories of success in fiction, its bold faith in human nature, its perfect freedom from dandyism and dilettanteism and its tone of religious earnestness without cant or meanness, which instantly gave Jane Eyre that hold of the heart which it would not let go. Jane Eyre was the coming-up of an immense ally to the great battle of humanity which the Literature of Fiction, headed by Dickens, was already fighting, and the little shy, brown-haired governess with the subtle truthfulness of a woman's instinct, hailed Thackeray as her leader, and rode into the field showing his colors. It had lately been Mr. Curtis's duty to look over the whole ground of cotemporary English fiction, and he was amused at the quantity of women's novels which he had read in the last few months. But, with the sole exception of Mrs. Gaskell's, they all seemed to him second-rate. The lady of all his acquaintance of the most surprising novel-reading power, confessed that she could not keep up with the supply. The semi-annual approach of the sprightly Mrs. Gores and the Mrs. Marshes, with their second-hand pathos, and the Miss Kavanaghs, whose Heart's-Ease made the head ache, and the Miss Yonges and Miss Sewells and Lady Georgiana Fullertons and Mrs. Trollopes and the nameless crowd beyond, reminded one of the appalled servant at the ball, who announced Mr. Digby Waters, Miss Waters, Mr. Waters, jr., Miss Jemima Waters, Mr. Augustus Waters—until seeing an endless flood of Waters still pouring in, he exclaimed in hopeless dismay, "and more of the same." Every morning's newspaper was that servant, for the pen of the ladies flew as nimbly as their needle. Nathalie was a fair type of this immense drift of female fiction—a pallid imitation of Jane Eyre, but so palpably unreal that it seemed strange that it could have succeeded so soon after the blazing burst of the original upon the world. Like the innumerable host around it, it was only a piece of literary worsted-work. Nobody wrote reviews of these novels; there was nothing to be said about them. One fancied the amiable authoresses tired of crocheting, and so taking to this cruel work. They had great fluency, pens that run sentiment freely, and so they wrote on, sheet after sheet, in the pleasant Summer day, until life and nature were thoroughly worsted and the embroidery was complete. The moral of these novels was suspicious, because it was not pure; it was the temporal beatification of virtue. They remembered what the teacher told Miss Jane Eyre, when her "benefactress," Mrs. Reed, sent her to Lowood School—"I have a little boy younger than you who knows six psalms by heart, and when you ask him which he would rather have, a gingerbread nut to eat or a verse of a psalm to learn, he says: 'O, the verse of a psalm. Angels sing psalms.' Says he, 'I wish to be a little angel here below.' He then gets two nuts in recompense for his infant piety." The moral of life was not of this kind. The industrious apprentice did not always end as Lord Mayor, and many an idle apprentice died in a comfortable bed, leaving vast supplies of gingerbread nuts for small boys who wished to be little angels here below. The great value of Jane Eyre in the fiction of to-day was the splendor of its vindication of woman as woman, deprived of all the accessories which generally inveigled interest. It was pure character which triumphed in the book. Its strong indignant tone was the wail of a thousand hearts in a thousand homes where they were aliens and Parias. It was intense with subdued passion to that degree that no other novel seemed passionate. Nowhere else in prose fiction did we find such identification of the individual with the landscape as in the description of the pictures that interested Jane Eyre at Mrs. Reed's, and those she afterward painted at Mr. Rochester's. It was the Yorkshire loneliness of desolate hills, pressing through Miss Bronte's heart and mind, and finding the scenery of that mind its own reflex. She wrote her later novels looking from her window upon the churchyard in which her sisters were buried. She married toward the close of her short, sad life, and the name of Nichol would be carved upon her tombstone. She always lived among the Yorkshire hills, and surely to every woman who honored her sex, her feet, like those who bring glad tidings, were beautiful upon those lonely mountains. Contrasted with the splendors of de Staël, and with the lurid brilliancy of George Sand, and with all the flickering, fading gleams of the English female novelist, her light shone pure and planetary. It was by that light that female character had been ennobled. It was to that calm power that the literature of England would long be indebted for a truer tone and the lives of Saxon women for a sweeter inspiration.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE MARCH MAGAZINES.

In *Putnam* for this month the most important article relates to "Our Sea-Coast Defense and Fortification System." The writer maintains that in case of a war with France or England, we should be subject to far more formidable grand descents than would have been attempted at any previous time. Such operations would be the principal feature in a war with France, which, with its powerful navy and unequaled army, would require but a slender accession of means to reproduce its Crimean army upon the shores of the United States. From England we should be more exposed to naval bombardments, besides attacks on the ocean and field operations in Canada. For the former we are deplorably unprepared. Without efficient sea-coast batteries, our marine frontier is exposed to the power of an enemy, who might lay city after city in ashes, or exact the extreme of tribute. A seaport population, though numbered by millions, could in itself effect almost nothing against a bombarding fleet. "By heavy guns, duly placed in sea-coast batteries, and by them alone, can any impression be made on such beleaguering, bomb-speeding pachyderms. Imagine a hostile fleet coming up the Narrows, and no forts, no batteries, to obstruct its progress; all New-York, taking to muskets and field-pieces, sparrow-shot and shillalahs, pitchforks and tape-scissors—worse than the Celestials turning summersets-of-war! Verily, of little use are the million 'strong arms and stout hearts' in such a case; of little defensive force, a wall of human flesh, against thirty-two-pounders and ten-inch shells! Truly, it were better that Sandy Hook, the Narrows, Bedloe's, Ellis's and Governor's Islands should settle this matter with iron than Wall street with gold. New-York is worth defending in the best possible manner; and an insurance on our many seaport towns is certainly worth the nation's solicitude." The article is rich in statistical data, and at the present moment must be regarded as seasonable. St. Augustine is the subject of an interesting biographical and critical sketch, written with knowledge and impartiality. Macaulay's recent volumes call forth some discriminating comments. The number, on the whole, has a graver aspect than usual, but brightens up toward the close, especially in the "World of New-York," which is lively and readable.

The illustrated articles in *Harper* comprise a series of sketches of the mountain scenery of the Juniata from the pen and pencil of the artist T. Addison Richards, a description of Commodore Perry's first visit to Japan, a chapter on "Whales," setting forth the romance in the history of that celebrated beast, and passages of Eastern Travel by an American. Several original contributions precede the story of "Little Dorritt," which occupies a considerable portion of the number. The editorial lucubrations are devoted chiefly to a discussion of the character and influence of domestic society in this country, a pithy collection of foreign literary gossip, and strictures on Macaulay's account of the Massacre of Glencoe.

The Editor's Table of *The Knickerbocker* opens with a wintry picture of the country M thirty degrees below zero by the ever-welcome "Up River" correspondent, F. W. S. "A Day among the Ice" continues the frozen harmony, describing a trip to Rockland and Highland Lakes, to witness the cutting and preparation of ice for the New-York market. Among the regular contributions, is a paper on "Old Habits compared with New" giving some agreeable reminiscences of the social customs of a past age, a humorous caricature of the "Yankees about the Astor-House," and a successful attempt to extract a marrowy article out of the dry bones of Blackstone's Commentaries.

PUBLIC MEETINGS.

DINNER OF THE ST. DAVID'S SOCIETY.

The members of the St. David's Society celebrated their Sixteenth Anniversary on Saturday evening by a dinner at the Metropolitan Hotel. Mr. WM. MILES, President of the Society, presided, and Mr. G. W. GRIFFITHS occupied the Vice-President's chair. Seated on the right and left of the President were the Presidents of the St. Andrews, St. Nicholas, St. Patrick, St. Jonathan, (New-England,) and St. Tammany Societies, together with several leading merchants and citizens of New-York. The dinner was prepared in Messrs. Delands best style, and gave general satisfaction.

With the removal of the cloth the PRESIDENT arose and said that while fully sensible that the Society might have found one more able to administer their affairs than he was, he had aimed to do his duty to the best of his ability [Applause]. The Society was in a very prosperous condition, and had been, as he hoped it would continue to be, the means of affording timely assistance to many poor but worthy Welshmen [Applause]. Mr. Miles then read letters from Horatio Gates Jones of Philadelphia, and Com. Ap Catesby Jones, apologizing for their inability to be present.

The regular toasts were then given:

I. *The Day*—Commemorate it in honor of Cambria and of the Cambrian race.

Drank with honors. Mr. JAMES JONES sang "The Blind Minstrel," the company joining in the chorus.

II. *Wales*—While memory holds her empire, so long shall our hearts cling to thee.

Drank with three times three. Mr. ARTOMMAS, the celebrated Welsh harpist, in response performed several Welsh airs upon his harp, and was most enthusiastically applauded.

III. *The Queen*—May her intercourse with the nations of the earth be as friendly as her relationship with her own subjects is happy.

This toast was warmly received, and followed by "God save the Queen." Mr. COATES leading, and the company joining in the chorus.

IV. *The President of the United States*—the federal head of the free nations of America. Elected by the suffrages of the entire people, he is both the guardian of the rights of the citizen and the protector of the national honor.

Three times three greeted this toast. Mr. JONES sang "The Flag of our Union," with great applause.

V. *The Memory of Washington and the Patriots of '76.*

Drank in silence.

VI. *Our Sister Societies*—Their mission is to do good, their motto is humanity. We welcome their representatives to our festive board, and tender them the hand of true fellowship.

Drank with honors.

Mr. NORRIES, President of the St. Andrew's Society, in responding, said that these annual meetings to keep up the memory of their patron saints, afforded him much pleasure. They served to promote kindly feeling toward each other, and to bind stronger the bonds of our common humanity. [Applause.] He gave:

The Sons and Daughters of Wales, at home and abroad, ever distinguished for industry, intelligence, and independence of spirit.

Mr. STUART, President of St. Patrick's Society, being next called upon, said that they had got the wrong Paddy in him. While very grateful for their kind reception, he was unaccustomed to public speaking until after 12 o'clock. [Applause.] In fact, he was not yet up to the right pitch. [Laughter.] He would offer:

The Descendants of St. David—Having sprung from a noble ancestry, their conservative and consistent principles will always prove a safeguard for the institutions of their adopted country.

Mr. VAN WAGNEN, President of the St. Nicholas Society, in responding, complimented the Welsh people for their love of liberty, their frugality, their hospitality, and the possession of all those qualities which go to make up good citizens. Among all the peoples of Europe who send their thousands to these shores annually, none were more welcome or more deserving of respect than the Welsh. In conclusion, he gave,

St. Winnifred's Well—For emblem of the soothing balm which the true Welshman never fails to administer to a brother in sorrow or in penury.

Mr. BONNEY (St. Jonathan) of the New-England Society, was next called upon. He said, although a stranger among you, we of New-England have no especial faith in any Saint [Laughter]. We have, as a body, claimed to be all Saints ourselves [Applause]. Therefore, in a society of Saints, there would be none who would wish to be the leader. The speaker went on to commend the custom of thus annually meeting together to talk over old times; and he thought that it could not fail to serve a beneficial end. The man who did not love the country of his birth, could not love the country of his adoption [Applause]. He offered in conclusion,

The St. David's Society—Its high prosperity evidences alike the excellence of its objects and origin, and the merits of its administration.

The PRESIDENT read letters from the Presidents of the St. George's and German Societies, regretting their inability to be present.

Mr. DRAPER responded to the Charitable Institutions of the city and State, in one of his happy speeches, and Mr. JONES responded to the toast of the Press. Other toasts, speeches, and songs followed, and the company separated at midnight, well pleased with the Anniversary of St. David's Day.

COMMITTEE ON ORDINANCES.

The Committee on Ordinances of the Board of Aldermen, Mr. ELY, Chairman, met on Saturday at 2 p. m., at the City Hall. Mr. John E. Devlin appeared for Messrs. Carrol & Cranston, and urged awarding to them the contract for removal of city offal for the ensuing five years. These parties put in their bid offering $3,700 per annum for the contract. He claimed that this was the highest *bona fide* bid. Mr. G. A. Forbes's bid of $4,000, he insisted, emanated from some parties who put in the three highest bids, and was a combination to defraud honest bidders. Mr. Forbes and his sureties, he further claimed, were not competent to justify and execute the contract. He desired another meeting in which to prove these facts, which was granted. He meanwhile stated that Mr. Carrol was at present removing the city offal for nothing under permission granted by the Mayor on the 2d of last January. Some preliminary statements were heard showing the incompetent character of the bids of Joseph Lacy, George A. Scherff, and John Reed. It was announced that an ordinance to protect the Corporation against future combined and fraudulent bids would be laid early before the Board.

MEETING OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

The Chamber of Commerce held a special meeting on Saturday last at the Merchants' Bank, Wall street, to resist the proposed abolition of the Harbor Encroachment Commission. The Chair was occupied by P. Perit, esq. Resolutions expressing the objects of the meeting were reported and adopted, and the following gentlemen were appointed a Committee to proceed to Albany on Wednesday next to lay the facts in the case before the Legislature:

George Griswold, Thomas Tileston, Royal Phelps, James Lee, Wm. H. Aspinwall, E. D. Morgan, Peter Lorillard, John C. Green, G. W. Blunt, John D. Jones, H. K. Bogert, M. H. Grinnell, E. E. Morgan, John David Wolfe, James F. Freeborn, A. B. Neilson, Russell Sturgis, Thomas Suffern, A. A. Low, J. De Peyster Ogden, David Ogden, P. Perit.

MARINE AFFAIRS.

On account of the storm of Saturday night, the boats of the Boston lines did not leave at 4 p. m., their regular hour. The C. Vanderbilt for Stonington, and State of Maine for Fall River, went out yesterday (Sunday) at 6 a. m. The Connecticut for Norwich went on the same day at 8 a. m. The C. Vanderbilt took with her for the Plymouth Rock, which has been for a long time at City Island, a sufficiency of fuel to enable her to come to the city. She is alive at high water as she lays, and will leave when the wind proves favorable for a good tide.

FOR EUROPE.

The steamship Atlantic, Capt. Eldridge, sailed on Saturday, for Europe, with 45 passengers. Among her passengers was the Hon. G. M. Dallas, the newly appointed Minister to England. A large number of the personal and political friends of Mr. Dallas assembled on the pier to bid him adieu, and as the vessel left the dock they gave him three times three hearty cheers. He is accompanied by his family, who will remain with him in England during his stay in that country. Mr. G. W. Beach also went out in the Atlantic as bearer of dispatches from the Secretary of State to the United States Legation at London.

BRIG WM. F. SAFFORD.

The brig Wm. F. Safford, recently sunk at the gas-house wharf, Brooklyn, has been raised by Capt. Myers, the wreckmaster, and was yesterday taken into the adjoining slip, where the work of pumping her out was to be commenced to-day, (1st inst.) Coroner Hanford and his assistant, Mr. Brush, in compliance with the requisition of the Court, abandoned his claim to jurisdiction over the vessel, and gave up the job of raising her to Capt. Myers, the representative of the owner and agent.

WRECKING IN NEW-JERSEY.

Mr. Laird introduced in the Senate of New-Jersey on Thursday, a supplement to the act concerning wrecks. It provides that hereafter the appointment of the several Commissioners of Wrecks of New-Jersey shall be made by the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas of the respective counties in which the districts are now located—no such appointment, however, to be valid without the approval of the presiding Judge of the Court in which such appointment is made. All Commissioners shall continue in office five years. Each Commissioner is required to make an annual report to the Secretary of State, containing a full statement of the number of lives lost, and the masters and vessels wrecked. The Commissioners shall receive $5 for each day necessarily employed in the duties of their offices, and each boatman shall be allowed $3 for each day, and $4 per day for the use of a surf-boat, to be paid by the owners of the vessel or cargo—their agents or others claiming the property saved.

A BRIG ASHORE.

To the Editor of The N. Y. Tribune.

SQUAN VILLAGE, March 2, 1856—8 o'clock a. m.

SIR: The brig Linden of New-Orleans, with sugar and molasses for New-York, came ashore at 2 o'clock this morning about one mile north of Squan inlet—her bows on the beach. Crew all saved.

E. PEARCE.

There are no other vessels ashore on the beach north of this brig.

CITY ITEMS.

Spring arrived on Saturday morning, and, in the words of the almanac, "about these days look in the "country papers for Bryant's poem, 'The Stormy "March has come at last.'" The day was typical and characteristic of the most boisterous and disagreeable month of the year. The sunrise was that of May; the early morning a fair specimen of latter April; the midday fitful and uncertain as November; the afternoon full of driving snow that seemed a continuation of the great storm of January; the evening snowy, blowy, thawy, sloppy, and otherwise the incarnation of bad weather; and the whole day was one of those never seen in any other month than March. Yesterday morning the Sierra Nevada of Broadway, newly whitened with the snow, fairly represented a bird's-eye view of the Andes, a figure made more real as the sun's rays created innumerable rivers along the slopes which combine to form Amazons and La Platas in the brimming gutters on either side. But for the additional snow the streets yesterday might have been passable; but the half melted sposh which covered the pavements to the depth of two or three inches was too formidable for any man not driven forth by some relentless necessity. Yet the sun was warm and the air tolerably mild, except where chilled by our street mountains of snow; and were these mountains removed, as they should have been a month ago, we might—without doing very great violence to the facts—chronicle the opening of Spring.

But, whether the weather be fair weather or no, some of the fruits of Spring will be in full perfection this week. The goddess of Fashion, the only divinity universally worshiped in New-York, will certainly arrive, whether escorted by Flora or Boreas. Her times and seasons are as certain, and her rules as rigorous, as those of Fate. The man or woman who dares to appear on Broadway, the day after her advent, in the apparel of last month, is a marked individual, and may expect any number of hard looks and cold shoulders from the butterfly throng who sacrifice comfort, and often health and life, at the shrine of the gay goddess. Already her priests and priestesses are preparing her way, and the grand "opening day of the Spring Fashions"—an event not inferior in importance to a Presidential Inauguration—is close at hand; already the myriads who look to that day as *the* day of the year are extemporizing a litany: "From rain, "from snow, from bleak winds, and foul streets, O "propitious goddess, deliver us."

THE FROZEN CROTON PIPES—DEPTH OF THE FROST.—The depth to which the frost has penetrated the earth, even here in this city, is almost beyond belief—in fact is quite so. We presume that very few persons have any idea that the water-pipes are frozen solid four feet below the surface, and that all the superincumbent mass of earth is as cold and as hard as an iceberg. Yet that is true—we can believe it, because we have proved the fact. We measured yesterday in an excavation on the east side of a north and south street, near Broadway, above Canal, the depth of the frost. The Croton water lead pipe was frozen solid four feet below the underside of the flag-stone, and the earth from two to four inches lower, making a total depth of four feet six inches of frozen earth, which is composed of a mass of clayey loam, gravel and pebble stones, very compact. The plumber who opened the above excavation assures us that he finds the pipes frozen at the same depth in various parts of the city. In one place in Thirty-fifth street he had to build a large fire on one of the iron branch pipes, after taking off four feet of frozen earth.

Never since the Croton water was introduced into the city has there been as much difficulty as now with frozen pipes. The water is stopped in hundreds of houses, to the very serious inconvenience of the occupants, who are waiting anxiously for a warm day to set the stream running again. What effect will a dozen warm days have upon the pipes imbedded in frozen earth four feet deep? Some of them will not thaw out in a month. Rather cold comfort, to be sure, for a parched man waiting for a drink, but we cannot help it; that is the depth of the frost—over four feet by our own actual measurement.

"What are we to do for water?" is the almost universal question. We can only answer, wait patiently. June will come in time, and that will surely bring the water—provided the pipes are not burst. Many, perhaps the majority, have frozen up and stopped since the weather has grown mild, and people have neglected to keep the water running, thinking the danger all over. It will not start again until there is a long term of thawing weather.

What remedy for the difficulty can the Croton Department apply before another Winter? It would be a Herculean task to take up all the pipes and lay them below the frost limit, which must be fixed hereafter in this city at five feet. Is there not some other remedy? What would it cost during such a freezing term to shut off the water at the reservoir every night, and inject the pipes full of steam, until all the remaining water was raised above the freezing point? It certainly would not be a very costly or troublesome job so to warm the water that it would not freeze, even while running in pipes imbedded in frozen earth, because a very slight stream left running during the night has kept the pipe open in many places where the earth is frozen solid all around them.

The subject is one in which all our citizens are deeply interested, and one which should receive the immediate attention of the Croton Department. It is even worthy of consideration whether the pipes cannot all be thawed out now by steam, thus saving the enormous expense of the work now in progress of digging down at each house and thawing them by fire or boiling water. Besides, what a blessing it would be to many poor families to be restored at once to the benefits of copious streams of pure water.

Let us have a thaw by steam.

The March Session of the Common Council will be commenced this evening. The subject of the proposed City Hall plans is promised. It was settled in the late Common Council that the Hall should be erected in the Park, but the question of an up-town City Hall is earnestly revived. This evening is appointed in the Board of Aldermen for the consideration of the claims of Mr. Seagrist to the seat of Ald. Drake. The majority report sustaining Ald. Drake and the minority report of Ald. Varian in favor of the claims of Mr. Seagrist, have both been printed. The new contract for the removal of offal and nuisances from the City will come up for confirmation.

Mr. Charles H. Wolfe of Philadelphia lectures at the Stuyvesant Institute this evening on Kansas.

CITY MORTALITY.—We learn from the report of the City Inspector that there were 380 deaths in the city during the last week, namely: 63 men, 59 women, 128 boys, and 130 girls—showing a decrease of 7 on the mortality of the week previous. There were 12 deaths of bronchitis, 44 of consumption, 27 of of inflammation of the lungs, 4 of congestion of the lungs, 15 of dropsy in the head, 4 of typhus fever, 8 of disease of the heart, 11 of inflammation of the bowels, 8 of inflammation of the brain, 7 of palsy, 4 of small-pox, 34 of convulsions (infantile), 11 of croup, 38 of scarlet fever, 24 of marasmus (infantile), and 9 of measles. There were also 2 premature births, 40 cases of stillborn, and 5 deaths from violent causes. The following is the classification of diseases: Bones, joints, &c., 2; brain and nerves, 75; generative organs, 4; heart and blood vessels, 17; lungs, throat, &c., 169; old age, 6; skin, &c., and eruptive fevers, 57; stillborn and premature birth, 42; stomach, bowels and other digestive organs, 49; uncertain seat and general fevers, 17; urinary organs, 2. The nativity table gives 288 natives of the United States; 47 of Ireland; Germany, 24; England, 11; and the balance of various European countries.

The vitrol throwers are again at work, and several complaints have recently been made to the police by ladies who have had their dresses ruined while leaving places of amusement. On Saturday evening, the wife of Dr. Kennedy, while returning with her husband to the Union Hotel from "Laura Keene's Varieties," had an elegant dress completely ruined by some persons who threw vitrol upon it. The police for some weeks have been on the lookout for the miscreants, but as yet no arrests have been made.

FALSE PRETENSES—SWINDLING A PAWNBROKER.—A man named Willard Greene was arrested on Saturday by Officer Baldwin of the Eighth Ward Police, charged with defrauding a Mrs. Prusser of Bond-street out of a diamond ring valued at $75; also with attempting to defraud Mr. Cudlip, pawnbroker, out of about the same amount. It appears that he received the ring from Mrs. P. with the understanding that he would pledge it and hand her the sum loaned on it. He then took the ring to the pawn-shop of Mr. Cudlip and there pawned it, receiving a sum of money and a pledge-ticket. The money he kept, but handed the ticket to a friend, who redeemed the ring. He then went before a Commissioner and made oath that he had lost the ticket, and afterward called on Mr. Cudlip for the ring, and because he could not get it, Mr. C. having parted with it, he sued Mr. C. and obtained judgment for $65 or thereabouts. The whole operation being discovered, he was taken before Justice Flandreau for disposition. It is said that a similar game has recently been carried on to some extent.

DARING BURGLARY IN BROADWAY.—The store No. 44 Broadway was entered by burglars on Saturday evening and robbed of about $5,000 worth of silk goods. It appears that about 9 o'clock in the evening a porter, who sleeps in the upper story of the building, heard some person walking on the roof, and called in Policeman Riley of the First Ward. The officer, on proceeding to the roof, discovered 46 pieces of rich silks, the property of three different firms who carried on business in the building, but saw no thieves, they having escaped, in some way unknown to him, and carried off with them about $600 worth of the goods. It is supposed that they had secreted themselves in the store during the day, as the locks on the front doors were found to have been undisturbed.

FELONIOUS ASSAULT WITH A PISTOL.—Officer Jourdan of the Lower Police Court on Saturday afternoon arrested a man named Charles Neary, charged with a felonious assault upon the person of Caroline Moescher, at the bar-room No. 470 Pearl street. It is alleged that Neary discharged a pistol loaded with powder and ball at Caroline's head, but fortunately he missed his mark, and the ball lodged in the wall of the room. Neary was taken before Justice Welsh and held to bail in $500 to answer the charge.

MAYOR WOOD IN THE MATTER OF THE JOHN W. CATER.—In the case of Marvine agt. Wood, we learn that the referees to whom the matter was submitted, finally made their report to the Court last week. Their decision is that Wood shall pay some $8,000 damages, and nearly the same amount of costs. It will be recollected that just on the eve of the election at which our model Mayor was elected, *The Courier and Enquirer* gave the public some rather astounding revelations in reference to certain California transactions had between Fernando Wood, of this city, and Mr. E. C. Marvine, of Auburn. These allegations, we were then told, by the Mayor and his friends, were entirely false, got up simply for the purpose of levying black-mail on Mr. Wood. After a careful hearing and investigation, however, a decision is at last arrived at, which declares the charges of Mr. Marvine—alleging that he had been defrauded of a large amount of money by Fernando Wood—to be true! And further, that Wood is legally bound to pay about $15,000 to straighten the matter out! We are told that the testimony of the witnesses and speeches of the counsel in this case are in the hands of one of the most indefatigable of our citizens, who proposes to submit it to the public for the purpose of letting the political friends of Mr. Wood officially know just what kind of a man he is. The speech of Curtis Noyes, made in this case, cannot fail to make Fernando Wood the next Governor of the State of New-York. We trust the work will be speedily issued.

[Sunday Dispatch.

To the Editor of The N. Y. Tribune.

SIR: Can you inform the public if the Police do duty on Saturdays, and if so where they are to be found?

About half past 3 o'clock this afternoon, as my little daughter and myself were passing through Houston street to the Bowery, on reaching the corner of Second avenue, a man came up behind me, seized hold of my arm with one hand and with the other wrenched my portmonnaie from my hand. I screamed with fright (which seemed to afford pleasure to two men standing near by me, on the corner, at the time, who I believe were associates of the thief.) After he had obtained his booty, he ran up Second avenue, and up First street to the Bowery; a car passing up at the time, he jumped on, and thus escaped. I followed as fast as I could with my little daughter, crying "Stop, thief," hoping to meet with or see some Policeman, but, as usual when wanted, they were not to be found. On my reaching the Bowery, a gentleman stopped me, and on learning the circumstances, said he had been searching for one for himself for the past half hour, but without success. So I was obliged to console myself with his suggestion, that Mayor Wood had called them down to deduct their three days' pay. Respectfully yours,

New-York, March 1, 1856. Mrs. C. W., First street.

SUICIDE.—Mr. Arthur Benish, a German machinist, 30 years of age, committed suicide at his boarding house, No. 309 Houston street, at 1 o'clock yesterday morning, by taking cyanuret of potash, and died fifteen minutes after taking the poison. Grief, on account of the recent loss of his wife, is said to have led to the commission of the act. Coroner Gamble held an inquest on the body.

SCALDED TO DEATH.—Eleanor Roberts, a child 6 years of age, died yesterday at the residence of her parents, No. 196 Elizabeth street, from the effects of scalds received the day previous from a kettle of boiling water falling over her. An inquest was held upon the body by Coroner Gamble, and a verdict of accidental death rendered.

BURNED TO DEATH.—An infant daughter of Mr. Henry, residing at No. 221 Twenty-fourth street, was burned to death yesterday, her clothes having accidentally caught fire from a grate. An inquest was held upon the body.

ARREST OF YOUNG GAMBLERS.—Thirteen boys aged from 14 to 17 years were arrested on Saturday night for gambling at the rum-hole of Mike Nolan, No. 76 Jackson street. They were locked up by Justice Brennan for examination. Nolan, the keeper, was also arrested and held to answer.

ALLEGED RIVER THIEVES.—Two men, named Jas. Clark and Jas. J. Worth, were arrested yesterday, charged with having stolen the mainsail of the schooner Ohio, lying at anchor in the Wallabout, and selling the same for half its value to John Fitzpatrick, a junk-dealer of Delancy street. The prisoners were taken before Justice Brennan and committed to await examination.

ALLEGED DISORDERLY HOUSE.—A charge of keeping a