CHRISTMAS.

"Dark and dull night, flie hence away,
And give the honor to this day,
That sees December turn'd to May.
If we may ask the reason, say
The why and wherefore all thing here
Seem like the Spring-time of the year?
Why do's the chilling Winter's morne
Smile like a field beset with corne?
Or smell like to a meade new-shorne,
Thus on a sudden? Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be."

These lines from Herrick's Christmas Carol of over 200 years ago, very aptly suggest the social as well as the religious bounty of the day, and convey a suitable invitation to those who would enjoy both. As the coming of the Lord gave true life and luster to the human race, so the commemoration of that glorious event in the aspiring thankfulness of the heart, in its unostentatious vibration to the calls of charity, in its productive thoughtfulness, and generosity of good works admiring good words—"See December turn'd to May," Christmas is the glory of the Christian year, and is associated in the mind's eye, wherever civilization has penetrated, with the most loving memories—with the impressionable days of childhood and their indescribable delights—with manhood's domestic maturity and its hard won rewards, hearty enjoyment and useful open-handedness which, at this season, loses the title as well as the style of charity; and with the irrepressible thankfulness of old age, and all its serene hopes of an hereafter conjured up by the anniversary of the Redeemer's coming. The vicissitudes to which empires and peoples—all things earthly—are subject, the revolutions which great political parties inspire and invite, the dangers into which the rivalries and ambition of great leaders and rulers may plunge their adherents or subjects, trying national ordeals such as that through which our Republic has so gloriously struggled, may from up over man's destiny, or break in at one time or another upon this or that nation, to diminish the whole-hearted universality of bliss and enjoyment natural to the season, and loosen to some extent, if not sunder, temporarily the chains of love and hospitality which should bind the Christian world. These, however, are but the exceptions, and yet they serve their usefulness in reminding us of the weakness or dependency of man, and proving more emphatically the necessity of that Christian inspiration, the departure from which produces all our unfraternal exigencies.

But, the exceptions apart, we expatiate on the crowding and genial reminiscences and customs of Christmas—the Christmas of civilization, the Christmas of the centuries, upon the blessed memories of which the heart feeds up with freshness and fervor—for, as John Milton says,

"Yet the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heav'n, eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace."

and indeed must the heart be into which Christmas does not bring a gleam of sunshine. Outside of the beautiful religious feelings associated with the period, all that is gay and festive of earthly things—mirth and music, joy, love and good fare cling to it. It is the social topic in man's annual pilgrimage, and the summer of the Christmas heart is more than repays for wintry impediments of December's snows and storms. Archdeacon Hare thinks it was a worthy practice of our worthy ancestors to fill their houses at Christmas with their relations, while nature was dreary out of doors, "to keep the pulses of their hearts in proper motion." The custom, however, he suggests, is only appropriate among people who have hearts, rather heartlessly adding, "It is bad taste to retain it in these days, when everybody worth hanging

"Oublie sa mere
Et par bon ton se dégeûe d'être père."

We cling to the belief that there are as good hearts, and as many of them in the world, as in the days of our "worthy ancestors," and consequently deem the old custom as appropriate as ever. If humanity forget their mothers, and ignore their fathers—which we are not willing to believe—it surely is not the mission of a clergyman to encourage the practice, or disountenance those customs which create attractive affections under, and an abiding respect for the parental roof. Good customs incite and perpetuate geniality, mutual respect, and elevation of sentiment. Is it not consoling to think that there is at least one period of the year at which all other feelings give way to those of amity—that there is one altar, as it were, of reconciliation, where all may meet, recognize and rejoice. If even the customary benison of the day is from the lips outward, there is a flattering unction in the hope and desire conveyed, which we do not willingly or merely credit to the effect of custom. It is true, the soft word turneth away wrath. No matter from what quarter the salutation comes, the giving and the taking of it is a good custom; and all the better for being at this time of the year, as it the more forcibly indicates, if it does not carry out, the grand design that man should trust and hope in man; and that, in all its cold and dim, the resuscitation of the head and heart is only found in the and heart of our fellow-men. It is healthy to keep up the good old customs, which are so full of poetry and enjoyment. The memory of these days is often the greatest blessing which lingers in the mind, chastening our thoughts with the feelings and pleasures of innocent and happy days, and guiding us from evil by calling up the faces of good and pure people, in connection with whose virtues we could not dare to think an ill.

Let us refresh our minds, then, with the customs which simultaneously link the nations in a chain of good nature at this Holy Christmas time. In all the old nations of Europe the festival is celebrated with great honor and a variety of pleasing customs; and in the United States hundreds of thousands of Christmas trees were set up last night, burdened with the expectations of merry, draped and illuminated with loving, tasteful and coy mystery; and were disclosed to the juveniles amid excited speculations and happy laughter.

Christmas eve is the day of culminating preparations. Here is a refreshing glimpse of good things to be used from Christmas to Twelfth Day, which shows that we have not much, if at all, improved on the table-customs and appetites of two centuries ago: Now, says Stevenson, in his "Twelve Months" (1661), "Capons and hens, beside turkeys, geese, ducks, with beef and mutton, must all die; for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with a little. Now plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth. Now a journeyman cares not a rush for his master, though he begs his plum porridge all the twelve days. Now or never must the music be in tune, for the youth must dance and sing to get them a husband while the aged sit by the fire. The country gland leaves half her conches, and must be sent again if she forgets a pack of cards on Christmas eve. Great is the contention of holly and ivy, whether master or dame wears the breeches; and if the cock do not lack wit, he will sweetly lick his fingers." A jolly time there used to be in our own earlier days, amid the other customs of the day being the brewing and drinking of lamb's wool. This beverage is made by roasting apples over a bowl or tankard of ale, spiced or otherwise to suit the taste, until the former melt and drop into the latter. From Herrick we may see that the Christmas Wassailers over two centuries ago buried their noses in the same decoction.

"Next crowne the bowle full
With gentle lambs wool;
Adde sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of all toes;
And thus ye must doe
To make the wassaile a swinger."

It is a Shakespearean and a goblin-haunted liquor, too; for does not *Puck* tell us

——"sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dew-lap pour the ale."

If the apple was the fruit of the tree of knowledge, by which our first parents fell, and by which was brought "death unto the world and all our woes," it is also linked with the joys commemorative of the capability of redemption. It was a custom, says Hone—and doubtless is—to wish health to the apple-tree. Herrick enjoined his celeo porrries to—

"Wassaile the trees that they may beare
You many a plum and many a peare;
For more or less fruits they will bring
And you do give them wassailing."

But the custom was especially designed for the apple tree, and Brandee tells us that it was customary at the close of the last century for the country people in some parts to sing a wassail song, and, dancing round the apple tree, throw the toast from the bowl to it in order to propitiate a fruitful year.

In Italy it is the custom of the peasant-minstrels of the Campagna and Calabria to salute the shrines of the Virgin Mother and to frequently stop out of respect to St. Joseph, to play their wild notes before the shop of a carpenter. In her "Legends of the Madonna," Mrs. Jameson alludes to the effect of these time-honored customs on the art of Italy illustrative of this festival. The painters paid more attention to the manners of their own time and country than to that of the Nativity or Judea. "These Pifferari, with their sheepskin jackets, ragged hats, bagpipes and tabors, were evidently the models reproduced in some of the finest pictures of the Bolognese school." As a striking proof, she instances the famous Nativity of Annibale Caracci, in which a picturesque figure in the corner is blowing on the bagpipes with might and main. As a fast precludes a feast, in Rome and generally throughout Italy, a collation is taken at noon, and the one meal allowed on fast days is taken in the evening. The friends of each family are invited and partake of a supper, consisting of fasting fare, dressed with oil. There is great animation in Rome, Venice, Milan, Florence and indeed throughout Central and Northern Italy, but Naples makes Christmas eve a specialty. It is a very ancient custom to hold a grand fast on this day, and a visitor to that city some few years since gives a vivid description of the scene: Two days before Christmas there may be seen pouring into Naples, from the whole surrounding country, and even from distant parts of the kingdom, and of course from all the adjacent islands, vast loads and boat loads of every species of vegetables, chiefly, however, broccoli, which are piled up in mountains all along the streets and squares. Cauliflowers, too, are most abundant. Dried figs are laid out under arches and pavilions formed of vegetables, and built up with imposing symmetry. Every variety of fish may be seen; but the peculiar luxury and delicacy of the season is the capitone, the name given to a very large kind of eel caught at Comacchio, near Ferrara. It may well be called the peculiar luxury and delicacy of the season, for it is never brought to Naples except on this one day, and only on this one day throughout the whole year is it eaten. Of fruit, whether fresh gathered or dried, there is, of course, no lack. The feast of fish necessitates a flow of liquor, and the Neapolitan fasters become exceeding enthusiastic, and after supper they parambulate the streets and squares, letting off, as is an holiday custom, guns and pistols, squibs, crackers, and whatever demonstrative defonsive there may be at hand. When a family invites a relative or friend to supper on Christmas eve, the invitation is understood to extend to dinner the next two days.

The religious ceremonials in the Eternal City form the High Mass in the American Church of St. Biagio, before sunset on the eve, to the grand display in the St. Maria Maggiore, the Pontifical mass at St. Peters, and the return of the holy crib to its special chapel, are of the most impressive and magnificent character.

In the Paston correspondence, illustrating the times of the era of the houses of York and Lancaster, we find many suggestive allusions to the keeping of Christmas. We there learn that "it draweth fast unto Christmas, on which time every true Christian man should be merry, jocund, and glad." From a letter of Margery Paston, informing her husband that she sent with a wondrous curiosity his eldest son to Lady Morley's, "to have knowledge what sports were used in her house in Christmas next following after the decease" of her husband, we find that "there were none disguisings, nor larpings, nor lading, nor singing, nor none loud disports; but playing at the chess, and chess and cards; such disports she gave her friends leave to play, and none other." We see by Collier's "English Stage," that a play ordered for the coronation of Queen Mary was postponed from October, 1553, to make part of the Christmas revels. In the "Art of English Poesie" (1589), Puttenham, alluding to the ballad-singing and minstrels of that age, and of the description of "small and popular musickes sung by these Cantabankes, upon benches and barrel-heads," indicates the character of the ballads by which the "common" Christmas revelers were excited. For the most part they were "stories of old time, as the tale of Sir Topas, the reporter of Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, Adam Bell, and Clymme of the Clough, and such other old romances and historical rimes, made purposely for the recreation of the common people at Christmas dinners, and bridales, and in tavernes and alehouses, and such other places of base resorte."

This, this species of entertainment was not wholly confined to "common people at Christmasse dinners," or to "places of base resorte," we may infer from another passage, in which Puttenham says that he has written for pleasure a brief romance "in short and long meetres, and by breaches and divisions—*a style* to be more comodiously sung to the harp, where the company shal be desirous to heare of olde adventures, and valiannces of noble knights in times past." His themes were the same as those sung by "those Cantabanqui," but then he was "one of Q. Elizabeth's gent. pensioners at a time when the whole band consisted of men of the ancientest birth and fortune," which made him at least a "courtly writer."

The Christmas carol is of very ancient date, and some interesting collections of these joyous and popular songs have been made. A couple of verses translated by Mr. Douce, from a very old Anglo-Norman carol, indicates the pervading spirit, cheer and generosity of all:

"Lordlings, in these realms of pleasure,
Father Christmas yearly dwells;
Deals out joy with liberal measure,
Gloomy sorrow spoil dispels;
Numerous guests and viands dainty
Fill the hall and grace the board;
Mirth and beauty, peace and plenty
Solid pleasures here afford.

"Lordlings, 'tis said the liberal mind
That on the needy much bestows,
From Heaven a sure reward will find;
From Heaven whence every blessing flows,
Who largely gives with willing hand,
Or quickly gives with willing heart,
His fame shall spread throughout the Land,
His memory thence shall ne'er depart."

One of the rigmarole Christmas revels has come down to our day, which, in slightly different forms, is enacted in barns and lime-kilns and any sheltered place, and which is supposed to have been invented after the return of the Crusaders from Palestine. It is called "St. George." The characters are St. George, the Dragon, a Turkish Knight, an Egyptian King, and sometimes Father Christmas, a doctor and a hobby-horse. The role of Father Christmas, who is armed with a cudgel, is to preserve order, and see that decorum prevails at his festival. He is a sort of master of the ceremonies, and thus announces himself:

"Here comes I, old Father Christmas,
Welcome, or welcome not,
I hope old Father Christmas
will never be forgot."

St. George of course is the hero, and is intended to convey an idea of the invincibility of the English national character. He has a terrific combat, two up and two down, long drawn out withal, and dispatches the *Turkish Knight*, slaughters the *Dragon* twice, overcomes everything he meets, and to use a South-Western phrase, expressive if not elegant, whips his weight in wild cats generally. He fully appreciates himself thus:

"Here comes I, St. George,
That worthy champion bold,
And with my sword and spear,
I won three crowns of gold.
I fought the Dragon bold,
And brought him to the slaughter,
By which I gained fair Sabra,
The King of Egypt's daughter."

At the close the Saint takes up a collection.

The Christmas festival is one of great cheer and unity, as well as of religious observance in Ireland. It is a custom in Irish Catholic families to sit up till midnight on Christmas eve, in order to join in the devotions of that hour. "The ceremonies of the religion," says Gerald Griffin, "have a more splendid and imposing effect than the morning Mass, which in cities is celebrated soon after the hour allotted to, and long before daybreak." On Christmas day the Irish exchange gifts which are termed "boxes." The salutation everywhere is: "my christmas box on you." The houses are dressed with branches of holly interwoven with ivy leaves. All the relatives of a family assemble at the house of the "head," and keep up the time in mirth and festival, congratulations on the successes of the year, and words of hope and cheer to those who have fallen in fortune; while the youth display their gifts, sing, dance and amuse themselves with healthy hilarity. Mixed up with the natural vivacity of the Irish circle at such and every other festival there are thoughts and feelings which the very enjoyments suggest respecting those who once partook of them. The all-pervading sentiment which evokes these tearful feelings in the midst of enjoyment inspired one of the most beautiful of modern Irish ballads by Martin Melbermott; the opening stanza will be sufficiently suggestive of the whole:

"When round the festive Christmas board, or by the Christmas hearth,
That glorious mingled draught is poured—wine, melody and mirth!
When friends long absent tell, low-toned, their joys and sorrows o'er,
And hand grasps hand, and eye-lids fill, and lips meet lips once more—
O! is that hour 'twere kindly done, some woman's voice would say,
Forget not those who're sad to night—poor exiles far away."

There are few households among the people of Ireland that have not some relative to be remembered on such an occasion—some exile far away.

The readers of "Marmion" will quickly call to mind the vividly delicious description of the good old customs of the Christmas in Scotland—of the grim boar's head crested with bays and rosemary, the hage sirloin, plum porridge, savory goose, and the "good brown bowls"—when Power and Ceremony laid aside the rod and rule, and brought such cheer as lasted "the poor man's heart through half the year." In France and Spain jollity and religious exercises commemorate the day, but it is less of a public festival than New-Year's day.

Poetry gleams and sparkles with scintillant praise and memory of the Yule log, and the fun and frolic embarked within its radiating glow. Sir Walter Scott calls to mind the wild customs of the early Dance at Iol, from which we have the word Yule. The humor of the Dance at table displayed itself in pelting each other with bones; and Torfeus tells a long and curious story, in the history of Hrolfe Kraka, of one Hottus, an inmate of the Court of Denmark, who was so generally assailed with these missiles that he constructed out of the bones with which he was overwhelmed a very respectable intrenchment against those who continued to make him a mark for their fun. The dances of the Northern warriors round the great fires of pine trees are commemorated by Olaus Magnus, who says they danced with such fury, holding each other by the hands, that if the grasp of any failed he was pitched into the fire with the velocity of a sling. The sufferer on such occasions was instantly picked out and obliged to quaff off a certain measure of ale, as a penalty for spoiling the king's fire. The descendants of these Scandinavians still enjoy the Yule log, and the ale and clasped hands, but all in a less ferociously gleeful style.

Christmas is the most joyous portion of the year in Germany, and preparations commence for it as early as St. Nicholas Day, in the first week in December—about the time when the Sons of St. Nicholas congregate in this our goodly city of New-York, and after discussing a plenteous board, smoke their long pipes and genially listen to the praises of the Dutch. The children look forward with much anxiety to the coming of the Christ-Kindchen the rewarding genius of all good children. On Christmas Eve they sing:

"Oh to-morrow is a glorious day!
How happy we shall be!
The Christ child is not far away—
We'll see the Christmas Tree!"

When the Christ-Kindchen's bell rings to day there will be an exultant thrill all through young Germany, the expectant troops will run, leap and tumble over each other into the room; there will they stand delighted at the prospect for a moment, and hunting up the presents designed for each, thankfully embrace the giver. In Sweden they have their Christmas lights, as in Ireland. Frederika Bremer when in America lovingly conjured up the Christmas services in the gray morning twilight, the cottages in the pine woods with Christmas candles shining through the windows, the peasant sledges with their merry bells, the good country folks in their warm costume, the children with their beaming glances, and, surrounding and rising above all like a blessed atmosphere, the powerful hymn, "Hail to this Lovely Morning Hour." "Yes," she exclaimed, "that was Christmas life and Christmas joy."

A custom pertains to Norway of sending a gift—a brooch or trinket—stuffed into a truss of hay, which somewhat illustrates the saying of "seeking a needle in a bundle of hay." A beautiful custom with the Norwegians is the giving a dinner to the birds to-day. On Christmas morning every gable, gateway, barn door and paling is decorated with a sheaf of corn, fixed on a pole. Even the humblest peasant will save up by the handful something for the birds, which if not pecked on this day is allowed to remain to help them through the Winter. There is a lesson in this from which many might take a thoughtful lesson. Let us finish our rapidly-woven garland as we began, with a blessing on and a belief in holidays, and the hope that all good children of small and large growth may have pleasant memories and incitements to further good by the judicious rewards which have crowned their past endeavors.

CHRISTMAS EVE—THE STREETS AND STORES.

A muddy, sloppy, slushy Christmas Eve is dismal enough in doors or out-o'-doors, but it is more than so out-o'-doors. For there are sights in the streets to be seen on Christmas Eve that are not witnessed on any other day of the year. Many persons do their Christmas shopping days before the Eve's arrival, but these are persons who have plenty of greenbacks always at command, and can afford to take time by the forelock. Others are not as fortunate in this respect, and are obliged to wait until the Eve of Christmas comes, when they sally forth to make purchases of "all sorts" and prepare for a proper enjoyment of the commencement of the holiday season. Let it rain, snow or blow as much and fiercely as it may, purchases must be made and people will go out to make them, for certain it is that sellers will not come to them to have them made. Now, there have been rainier Christmas Eves than this year's, but it is a matter of doubt whether the streets were ever more unpleasant and uninviting to pedestrians than on last evening. And yet the Bowery was literally crammed with people from long before dark until midnight, despite the efforts made during the morning and afternoon by hurly and blustering Pluvius to drive them back to their dwellings.

This Bowery of ours—the old Dutch folks who lived here in "long syne" called it the *Bouerie*—is a great institution, and we can't afford to lose it. On parade-days it is immense; on Christmas Eve it is a vast kaleidoscope, in which thousands of every aged human beings are the principal figures. There were Christmas trees too—here, there, everywhere, last evening. In the windows, in the door-ways, on the sidewalk, on men's shoulders, in women's arms, dangling from sign posts—everywhere was seen the inevitable and highly-prized Christmas tree. Then there were sidewalk merchants, female and otherwise, who did a tip-top business notwithstanding the insufferableness and anything-but-delightful character of the weather. At the junction of the Bowery and Grand-st. it was as much as any robust man could do to push his way through the crowd which beset that place for five or six consecutive hours. It was not the every day down town going and up-town-returning crowd; it was a Christmas Eve crowd—an immense concourse of people come out to lay in their holiday stock of goods.

The policemen stationed there did their best to show that they were capable of making herculean efforts and of keeping the immense concourse in good order; but it was an occasion for defeat and not success. To increase the interest of the "performance," every boy who had secured a horn tooted away to his heart's content—the music of the instrument helping to make the confusion that abounded as close as possible. The cause of such noise and hurly-burliness at this place was the confluence here of four streams of people—one from Grand-st. east, one from Grand-st. west, and the other two from the Bowery, north and south—four great streams which came together, forming a perfect whirlpool of laughing, hooting, tooting, cursing and perspiring humanity.

There were similar scenes, however, in many other streets of the city. Down town did not monopolize them all, for far away from the point described, away up on the Third, Sixth, Eighth and other avenues, were to be seen great crowds of people rushing hither and thither, quite pell-mell at times, everybody bent on the mission of purchasing Christmas goods. Such a display of evergreens has seldom been seen in this city. A seller of these, who had a great wagon load of them stationed near Abingdon-square, said he had come all the way from Byram Bridge to sell "lots of 'em." Whether he was a good business man or not we cannot say, but true it is that he was not long in disposing of his heirlooms. The sheep-keepers had perfected every arrangement calculated to supply any demand that might be made upon them by purchasers. The windows of their stores were decorated in the richest style of art, each one being, in itself, a complete curiosity shop. Into these establishments poured an immense throng of Christmas-loving people—not the richest people of the city, by any means, but people who expend what they can afford to for the completion of the Christmas festival, jolly as cheerfully as their more wealthy neighbors. Here was done a splendid toy business, and the venders of articles in that line certainly had no cause to grumble for any lack of patrons. Jumping-jacks, acrobatic monkeys, fidgety witches, drums, "tooters," mewing kittens, leaping frogs, saccharine soldiers, and a thousand "and so forths," were disposed of with a briskness which certainly showed that business was lively at least, if not profitable, which, by the way, we have every reason to believe it was. Saturday night in Grand-st. is an experience not to be understanded. It is a night of crowds—a night of rumbers, pushings, elbowings and collisions. But it is nothing compared to a Christmas Eve on the same street—a fact which the "oldest inhabitant" of that locality will not gainsay. The dealers in poultry and laces and dry goods of all kinds always make most extensive preparations for the coming of the holidays, but it did seem as if this year on they had outdone all previous efforts. The windows were decorated in the most elaborate manner with every kind of cloth, ribbons and fancy fabrics, quite enough to make the eyes of even the most fastidiously tasteful ladies fairly twinkle with fresh delight.

To retire from the Bowery: This street is famous for its saloons, at which the festive German, with his frau and little ones, is wont to spend many of their evenings. There are bands of music in many of these places, which, together with the indispensable lager and Rhine wine, constitute the principal attractions of these social retreats of those who possess the "sweet accent." In order to make them more attractive last evening and during the holidays, the proprietors have spared no pains, no art, no expense in decorating them with evergreens and other emblems of the Christmas-tide. The walls, the entrances, the chandeliers—in fact, wherever hemlock and laurel and other specimens of verdure could be placed, the hand of the decorator has been displayed. The Old Bowery Theater, too, and the Stadt Theater, were also put in order, and presented a very handsome appearance, peculiarly appropriate to the Holidays.

Any effort to make mention of all the places of decorative interest along the Bowery and other streets and avenues through which we passed, could not possibly be successful, and it can only be said that hundreds of stores were seen which were most tastefully fitted up, and everywhere was found evidence that the old-time appreciation of the Christmas festival was fully as universal as ever.

Shopping on Broadway at night on ordinary occasions don't amount to much. The stores usually close so early that those who do shopping on this thoroughfare must do it in the day time. Last evening, however, many of the stores above Canal-st. remained opened until late in the evening, to accommodate persons who, owing to the immense rush, had been unable to make purchases during the day. The book-stores were extensively patronized, and some of them were especially arranged inside so that they could look their prettiest during the merry Christmas time. The crowds were larger as the occasion seems to require, and were scarcely outvied by those before described.

And all the time while all this was going on out-o-doors the girls and boys were at home hanging up their stockings and preparing to go to bed, so that Santa Claus, their good old friend, might have an opportunity to come and stuff their hose with all sorts of desirable things. Every little fellow went to bed with his heart filled with great expectations, which ere this, it is to be hoped, has been fully realized.

THE MENAGERIE AT BARNUM'S.

Persons who were born and who have lived much in rural districts know that the arrival of a "wild beast show" in those parts was always an event of signal importance. On its first appearance in a village the whole town used to be turned upside down. Every dog in it felt himself impelled, by instinct, to refrain from food, and drink, and sleep, while the animals remained in the neighborhood, and to devote himself exclusively to barking his living best. It is pleasant to know the dogs of the Elizabethan age did just the same. Master Slender asks "sweet Anne Page" whether there are not bears in the town, because the dogs are barking so. Consternation reigned among the elderly female persons of the place, with whom the idea was ever present of an escaped lion in the larder, or a boa constrictor in the best bed. But it was quite otherwise with the youngsters, because boys have, for the most part, a tendency to zoological research, and the menagerie represented to them, to some extent, the wonders of which they have already pored something from their books. It is nothing to say that one can learn more about Zoology from a single visit to a menagerie than from a year's poring over books, but there can be no gain-saying the fact that a view of the living animals is an important aid to the student student of that science. His book learning stands him in good stead when he comes to have a personal interview with a giraffe or a cockatoo, and, although such meetings are more interesting, as well as more instructive, when they occur in a zoological garden, where the animals have some scope for their natural movements, than in a close menagerie, yet there is much practical knowledge to be acquired by visiting the latter. The best school of this kind that we have had here for some time past, is the Van Amburgh collection, which is now conveniently arranged for public inspection upon the floors of Barnum's Museum, and to which many new and important additions have been made since it was last exhibited in this city.

On entering a menagerie, the observant visitor is apt to be struck, in a general way, by the air of protest with which the larger carnivorous beasts resign themselves to captivity. The first animal in this row of strongly-barred cages on the lower floor of the Museum is what the label calls a white Himalaya Mountain bear. The bear is very obvious, but not the white, for he is of an ashy brown hue, approaching purple. His action is very eccentric, betokening a mind more or less unhinged by the tedious tragedy of life. Smaller than our own "sweet bear," the grizzly bear, he yet somewhat resembles that mythic monster in form and in action. He sits for hours on his capacious haunches, like a great dog and rocks himself to and fro as if his health required a systematic adherence to the precepts involved in the "Swedish movement cure."

The spotted hyena in the next cage reminds us of an ugly dog with a human sneer upon his malignant nose; but with all his ferocious looks he is an arrant coward.

Two very magnificent specimens of the Bengal tiger, male and female, are there in the next cage. They are evidently young, but have already developed into a size and beauty and power over which captivity seems to have thrown no withering spell. They countermarch past each other, with regular pace, the whole length of the cage, sometimes throwing themselves down suddenly with the graceful ease of a "harmless, necessary cat."

There are a couple of dark lions here—young American citizens of African descent—and, like many such of the lesser race, born in a state of bondage. The silver-striped hyena in the next cage is very much of a rough in appearance, with his pug nose and heavy shoulders. Far more pleasing than this bear to look upon are the two Indian sloth-bears in the next cage. Beautiful, graceful creatures are these, of that branch of the antelope genus called the bovine, from having certain peculiarities about them common to the ox tribes. The specimens here, although remarkably fine ones, have not yet reached their full growth.

One of the finest specimens of the camel-leopard, or giraffe, is the lone one that nibbles here from a manger placed in a corner where the ceiling meets the angle of the wall, nigh overhead. How tantalizing for a hungry giraffe to be turned into that stall, with no other manger for a mile! The very paltry and contemptible imitator of the lofty giraffe is to be seen in the stall of the adjoining corridor. Every now and then he stretches up his neck and looks haughtily around him, as though he would say, "See what a giraff I am! Behold in me a lineal descendant of the two camelopards, male and female, that formed the principal attraction in the traveling show of old Mr. Noah!" Darwin's "Origin of Species" would be interesting to this exaggerated goat if he could but read. As it is, he only pokes out his head and spits at us after the manner of his kind, and then his cousin, the black alpaca, who lives in the stall with him, also pokes out his head and spits, and tries to look like a giraff.

A pair of South American ostriches, who dwell hard by, have very gentle and winning ways with them. The plumage of these one birds bears a strong general resemblance to hair, and it is parted with great regularity down the middle of the neck and back, as if with a comb. We watched one of them at her table, though, and saw that she did up her back hair with her bill, and then it recurred to us how many a gay young *demoiselle* of New-York society would run up a much bigger bill than that for general fixing of hair.

Passing by the South American lama, and Peruvian goats, let us pause for a moment before the zebras. This poor fellow is blind of both eyes, but his teeth appear to be in excellent working order, for he munches without cessation at his fodder, and the result is that few asses—even of the abdominally stripe—can show a more fully developed stomach than this jackass of the zebra stripe can. It is a pity that the zebra is the untractable donkey that he is. Could we only train and make a steeple-chaser of him, here would be a new and grand attraction for Jerome Park.

Our friend of former days, the tapir, has grown immensely in stature and girth since we last had the pleasure of an interview with him. The keeper is very proud of him, and well he may be, for the animal's condition is superb. He has a good deal of growling to do yet, however, for, in his native South American forests the tapir attains a great size. Some naturalists consider him to be the representation on this hemisphere of the elephant belonging to the other.

Taking off our hats to the sacred cow of Burmah, who is munching hay in a very worldly manner in company with a giddy young deer, let us pause a moment to contemplate this pair of fine African pelicans. They are much finer birds than the dusky pelicans of this hemisphere. A part of their snowy plumage is tinged with flesh-color, which is the more remarkable because they subsist wholly upon fish. This tinge extends to the head, where it imparts to old Mr. Pelican an appearance of baldness that makes him look very tax-paying and respectable. They have a curious way of throwing back their heads, and gaping with their enormous beaks, as if to be prepared for such a contingency as a shower of fishes.

The most hideous of quadrupeds in the collection is the Japanese maskin swine. A pig of the most utterly disgusting features is he, with knobs all over his face like those that grow upon gnarled trees. The flop-ears of the brute are nearly big enough for door-mats.

The Abyssinian ibex is a fine young specimen of his kind, but not nearly so noble an animal as the one that was in the same show when last here. That great mountain goat was a stunner, with a fringe of hair hanging down from his breast to below his knees. He died very suddenly.

Three spotted axis deer near invite the observation of the visitor. There is no more beautiful species of the cervine division than the axis, which is called the spotted hog deer by the white inhabitants of the British East Indies. It is easily domesticated, and, with care, might be acclimatized to the latitude of Central Park, to the attractions of which it would be a pleasing addition.

A large mass of ragged, black hair, with a slimy, flexible nose poking out from it, and no visible means of support in the way of legs, constitutes the fatuous-looking creature called the Poonah Bear—otherwise long-lipped bear. "Those lips, those noses!" as Mr. Artemus Ward says, and, excepting these and the hair, but little else to note with regard to this ursine gentleman from Poonah. Not far from him are a couple of cousins of his from Thibet, long-legged, active-looking bears with very little coats.

The Brazilian Tigress is a terrible, beautiful creature, though it could have been more correct for the managerial labellist to have stenciled her down a jaguar. That is the more generally accepted word for the South American branch of the leopard family, of which this is one. Compare with her the Senegal Leopard in the next cage. There is a great similarity between the two creatures; but there is one mark by which you can always spot the difference between the leopard of the two hemispheres. The marks of the American leopard, or jaguar, consists of broken rings, between the petached segments of each of which there is a spot. The rings on the leopard of the East are likewise broken and irregular, but the spot in the inner space is wanting.

Yonder lies a fair specimen of the puma, long an inhabitant of the Van Amburg asylum for dangerous characters. She is severely maimed as to her right forepaw, that being the member that suffered when she went to play with a steel trap and—put her foot in it.

The two young lions here do not call for any special notice. They look very amiable, and will doubtless make some noise in the world when they are old enough to roar. The Florida alligator, who lies, bloating and squat, at the bottom of a railed-in tank, must not be treated coldly. He is well worth looking at.

On the next floor above there are specimens of the peccary, or American wild boar, a fierce little pig, who, with his tusks and his grunt, is well entitled to the epithet of a rip-snorter, a new, and elegant, *nom de ménagerie* with which we have here the pleasure of presenting him.

There is a very perfect and beautiful specimen of the lynx in this department. It is the true lynx, though frequently denominated by the labellist as the wild-cat from the Rocky Mountains. The lynx was supposed by the ancients to possess the power of seeing through solid masses of masonry. He was the first *clairvoyant* of whom we have any record.

There are some small monkeys here who lie huddled, three of them, upon the body of a poor little, naked, Mexican dog, who looks, indeed, as though he came there a stranger and they took him in, but, having no clothes to give him, did the best they could under the circumstances. Far different from these amiable little monkeys is this truculent-looking Hamadryad baboon, baboon, called, by way of sensation, the "lion slayer." Certainly he is a very powerful brute, very ferocious, and homely to a fault, but unless he is provided with cutlery when in the sweet jungles of his nativity, and knows how to use the same, we really do not see how he could have any chance in a rough-and-tumble fight with the "mongrel of the forest." The face of the Hamadryad is flesh-colored to a very humiliating extent, so much so, indeed, as to set one seriously a-thinking over that disagreeable theory broached by Mr. Darwin about the far back times, when there were monkeys, but no men.

The kangaroo from Australia is but a small specimen, but you can guess, from looking at him, what a kangaroo is capable of being if he only gets a fair chance.

The African jackall here is a sneak, a varlet, and a cutiff cur, and very similar in other respects as well as in these to his cousin the coyote, or small gray wolf of the American plains, who also figures here. It is a pity to explode the fine old oriental tradition about the jackall acting as provider to the lion, by guiding the latter to the fair of his prey. Saadi, in his "Gulistan," has a pleasant little fable on this subject. The jackall was asked, "whence this intimacy of yours with the lion?" to which he replied: "I live upon the leavings of that noble lord, and it is when lying within the verge of his puissant shadow that I feel myself most secure from my foes." "But," pursued the interrogater, "Since the lion protects you, and his patronage depends upon your good offices in his behalf, how is it that you keep a certain distance from him, as I notice that you do?" "Ah!" replied the jackall, "it's all very well for a fellow like me to keep near the lion, but not quite so near as to be within reach of his paw!"

A very beautiful little creature in this room is the civet-cat, a natural perfumer of some renown from the African wilds. It looks very intelligent, and has a tremendous long tail.

Although a time-honored feature of Barnum's Museum proper, yet the Happy Family is distinctly a branch of the menagerie, especially now that it has been re-organized, and placed upon a footing of improved and extended arrangement. The three cages comprising the little colony are occupied, as of old, with a very miscellaneous set of lodgers. There are a number of those quaint little long-snouted, long-tailed, creatures here, the coates, improperly set down as ant-bears by some labellmate of the cages. They are the commonest creatures to be seen in collections of wild animals. There is a large baboon here, and a great number of smaller monkeys contribute their grimaces to the harmony of the household.

We are acquainted with a man, once connected in the show business, a large and very powerful man, and he is lame for life now from the bite of a savage and herculean ape, which made its teeth meet in his thigh, as he was in some way engaged about it. There is a black dog in one of these cages, with his tail twisted so exactly into the form of a letter A, that he would furnish a capital subject for any artist who furnishes quaint initial designs for illustrated books. There are cats here, and tortoises, which may account for the tortoise-shell cat. What says Mr. Darwin to *that?* "Origin of species," yoh know, and why not of "variety?" A great array of birds, chiefly of the parrot family, is on show in this room; large macaws in variety, and Australian cockatoos. Here, in a cage by himself, is that curious Indian bird, the gigantic crane, or adjutant. He is the scavenger of the streets in Eastern cities, as the turkey-buzzard is in some of our American towns. Here we have, too, a small ibis, in a cage all by himself, between a flamingo on one side and a turkey buzzard on the other. The fancy poultry come out very strong here, and in one cage there is a hen who, having lost her beak by misfortune of some kind, shows a face bearing an awful resemblance to that of a human creature.

The Gordon Cumming collection of skins, horns, and other trophies collected during his lifetime, and which is on exhibition here, is a collection full of interest to the naturalist.

BALLOON ASCENSION.

There will be a balloon ascension this afternoon, between 3 and 4 o'clock, from the City Hall Park.

FIREMEN'S BALL.

The New-York Firemen's Association will give a ball this evening at Irving Hall. The Association is composed of officers and members of the old Volunteer Fire Department.

THE MARKETS.

With more poultry and a larger stock of extra fat beef and mutton than ever before, it has not been a difficult matter for the marketmen to dress off their stands and stalls in superb style. Washington Market, of course, was the center of attraction for those wishing to obtain the best bargains, and a person trying to get through it was forcibly impressed with the opinion that some underground or elevated railway, or other device, was needed for its relief, the just being as great as at the corner of Broadway and Fulton-st. Peddlers complained that the crowd swept their customers away, it being impossible to stem the current.

It was not uncommon to hear the shrill voice of some vendor announce that there was room around his stand, but the vacant spaces were few and far between. In this market quantity rather than fine quality is the rule; still, some of the butchers' and poultry stands were well set off with fat beef and mutton, also turkeys of large size and extra fatness, some of them weighing 20 to 25 lb. and marked for $10 each. There was an immense stock of all kinds of poultry with a fair amount of wild game, and the raid upon the huge stocks of geese and turkeys—those birds especially selected for Christmas—scarcely lessened the piles, though a perfect army of them would be encountered marching away, approach the market from whichever point one would. A little observation showed stacks of boxes from which the piles were replenished as needed. Turkeys from all parts of the country, according to freshness, ranging from 20 to 25c. ℔ lb., with a few of the larger birds selling at 26c. There was a disposition to sell, if possible, the warm rain being opposed to the keeping of such stock. Fat geese brought nearly as much as turkeys, though generally selling at 20@22c, with some poor stock at 16@18c. Ducks sold about as turkeys, while chickens were neglected, though offering at 18@20c., with a few extras selling at 22c. ℔ lb.

Fulton Market could not boast of quantity, but some of the poultry, mutton and beef was remarkably fine. The only attempt at a display of extra fat beef was by P. Ottman, whose stand was well set off and rendered quite ornamental with wreathes, rosettes, &c., hanging from the fat quarters of Kentucky bullocks. Some of the poultry stands were rendered attractive by the enormous turkeys, we