REAL ESTATE LYING IDLE.

DISUSED PARCELS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CITY.

SOME HELD FOR INVESTMENT PURPOSES—THE OLD GOELET HOMESTEAD IN BROADWAY, AND OTHER INTERESTING PLACES.

There are many parcels of idle real estate in this city the circumstances of whose passive condition are interesting. Some of them are fine old dwellings which have stood for some time unoccupied, or they are old buildings with a past. Others consist of vacant plots in neighborhoods where enterprise has developed the surrounding properties. The causes of this condition are various. Litigation in various forms has "tied up" many a good property. Family feud or the caution of a testator may be at the bottom of other exhibits of the character. A family whim, a desire to hold on for better prices, the spirit of pure investment, death and other causes may be traced as factors in this condition.

In relation to this the brownstone, severely simple architecture of the tree-environed old mansion at the northwest corner of Nineteenth-st. and Broadway comes naturally into the mind. Nearly every New-Yorker knows that this is the old Goelet house, in which Peter Goelet lived and died. Upon his death his sister, Mrs. Hannah Gerry, mother of Elbridge T. Gerry and Mrs. Frederick Gallatin, occupied the house until she died, about a year ago. Since then the old house has remained vacant, save for the presence of a caretaker. It is now on the market. Its owner is Mrs. Gallatin. The place will be sold when an investor shall be found who will erect a big building on the site.

Not far from the old Goelet mansion is the Lorillard Spencer house, at the southeast corner of Fifth-ave. and Sixteenth-st. It has stood vacant for three years. It is a four-story dwelling, the first story being of brownstone and the others of brick. There is scarcely a private dwelling now left occupied in the avenue between Fourteenth and Twenty-third sts. This stretch of street, in which old New-York families once lived and made their houses known for old-style entertainment of guests, is now practically given over to business. The Lorillard Spencer house is for sale, and is to be converted into or supplanted by a place of business at the first good opportunity. The only dwelling of importance yet remaining in this part of Fifth-ave. is the Marshall O. Roberts brownstone double mansion at the southeast corner of the avenue and Eighteenth-st. This is occupied in the winter by Mrs. Vivian, who was formerly Mrs. Marshall O. Roberts.

MRS. STEVENS AND THE BUTCHER.

Mrs. Paran Stevens's intense nature received a great shock when, some fifteen years ago, she walked into Henry H. Tyson's meat market, at the southeast corner of Fifth-ave. and Forty-fourth-st., and peremptorily ordered Mr. Tyson to "get out." Inasmuch as he had an unexpired lease of the property, he respectfully declined to vacate the premises "instanter." This refusal, of course, aroused the wrath of Mrs. Stevens. But the butcher hied him to one of the executors of the Paran Stevens estate, and learned from Mr. Melcher that Mr. Stevens, an exceedingly prudent man, had tied up his real estate possessions in so clever a way that his wife could have no word to say about that piece of property, and that he had left her, when she should become a widow, to find it out.

Mrs. Stevens had not yet found it out. So she departed in a rage, and within forty-eight hours the sign "This Property for Sale" appeared nailed to the big willow tree which still stands as the sign of "The Old Willow Tree," a liquor place in the frame building adjoining the meat-shop, and itself part of the Paran Stevens property.

Mrs. Stevens, to her great disgust, soon did "find out" that all this property was in the control of two executors, and even her objections did not move Mr. Tyson. The meat-market still remains, a one-story structure. And so does "The Old Willow Tree." Of the market Mr. Tyson is still the lessee, while Mrs. Stevens died unable to get rid of that "horrid butcher." The property is not yet in the market. It is said to be tied up by litigation. The erection of the Delmonico building at the northwest corner of the avenue and Forty-fourth-st., and of Sherry's new place at the southwest corner, with the coming opening of the big Manhattan Hotel near by, the new and enlarged Hotel Renaissance at Fifth-ave. and Forty-third-st., the development of Forty-third and Forty-fourth sts. as the habitation of clubs with fine new homes near by the old meat market—all make this Paran Stevens property extremely valuable.

The whole block bounded by Madison and Vanderbilt aves. and Forty-third and Forty-fourth sts. is vacant land. It belongs to the New-York Central Railroad Company. It will undoubtedly remain vacant until that corporation sees fit to utilize it for extension or other purposes.

Although the old two-story structures on the block in which the Hotel Normandie stands at Broadway, Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth sts. may be torn down by the Hobart estate for the erection of the new hotel projected by young Walter Scott Hobart, it is said to be still an open question whether the big hostlery will be put up after all. For a quarter of a century the bulk of this block has stood as it is to-day, when it has at least quadrupled in its value over what it was in 1870, about which time the elder Walter Scott Hobart, a San Francisco gold-mine owner, invested some $300,000 in the property designated as the site of the talked-of hotel. He had intended to take in the ground now occupied by the Hotel Normandie, so says General Ferdinand P. Earle, its proprietor, and make the whole block the site for the finest hotel in the world. His death some four or five years ago left the project untouched. The son may now carry out the plan of the father.

The old Hotel Royal site, at Sixth-ave. and Fortieth-st., looking out upon Bryant Park, is one of the valuable idle pieces of property in the city, and it is the most ill-favored in present appearance. The mass of débris associated with death in its most shocking form still remains from the day of the fire early in 1892, when several human beings were burned to death. The property was purchased recently by John B. Cole, who, weary of the round of transmuting granite and limestone into wealth, thought he would try the hotel business, not as proprietor, but as owner. He bought the site and engaged an architect to prepare plans for an up-to-date hotel twelve stories high. Poor health, due to overwork, has now compelled him to abandon that enterprise, and therefore the property is now again in the market for sale. The site is out of the present longitude for hotels in this town.

THE MATTHEWS PROPERTY.

Professor R. Ogden Doremus lived in a high-stoop two-story frame house some fifteen years ago, next door to where the Florence now stands, at the northwest corner of Fourth-ave. and Eighteenth-st. It was one of a row of frame dwellings of the same pattern in the avenue between Eighteenth and Nineteenth sts. The Florence and the land on which it stands belong to the estate of Edward Matthews, one of the best known real-estate men of his day. Dying, he left three heirs. These are Professor Brander Matthews, and his two sisters, Mrs. Peter T. Barlow and Miss Florence Hallett Matthews. The adjoining plot north of the Florence and constituting the rest of the real estate on the Fourth-ave. front between the two streets, also belongs to the Matthews estate. This site is vacant. It is 131 feet in the avenue by 150 feet in Nineteenth-st. Here it was that the old cyclorama, with its views of famous battlefields, stood for many years.

When the cyclorama proved no longer paying, a few years ago, the circular structure of corrugated iron was torn down, and since then a high board fence has kept the vacant plot from the public eye. According to Watson Matthews, the agent of the property, the estate considers this the best site in the city for a fine downtown hotel, to be run in conjuction with the Florence and is holding on to it with that end in view. The American Lithographic Company, which is erecting what is already a thirteen-story building across the way, at the southwest corner of Nineteenth-st. and the avenue, tried to get the Matthews property for its present purpose, but Watson Matthews said "No," "because," explained he the other day, "a lithographic establishment would make too much noise and supply too many pungent odors; besides, the sight of workmen at the windows would not be a good thing for tenants of the Florence House to gaze upon." The cyclorama people paid $21,000 annual rental, Mr. Matthews says, and he declares that the spot will yet see the ideal downtown hotel, especially if the underground railroad shall be run under the surface of Fourth-ave., and even if the cable or electricity shall supplant the slow-footed horse as the car motor for the Fourth-ave. surface railroad, which leads to and from the Grand Central Station.

The row of four-story brick dwellings on the west side of Fourth-ave., between Twentieth and Twenty-first sts., once belonged to the estate of William B. Astor. It went to one of the collateral heirs, said to be the Langdon group. Now that the policy of long leases and improved property have become features of the Astor management in real estate, it is rumored that these old-fashioned dwellings will soon give way to the spirit of improvement, and that a big new building will be erected here.

The only vacant plot of John Jacob Astor property in this city, as stated by one of its real-estate experts, is that 175 feet in Fifth-ave. and 100 feet in Fifty-fifth-st., at the southeast junction of the two. This is directly opposite the old St. Luke's Hospital site. Its value has been greatly enhanced of late years by the proximity of the Rockefeller, Flagler and other rich men's homes. The purchase by the University Club, at the northwest corner of Fifty-fourth-st. and the avenue, of a site for its new home, with an annex running through to Fifty-fifth-st., has added still more value to this idle Astor real estate. And now that Governor Morton has purchased the fine old Dodworth house in the avenue, a door from Fifty-fourth-st., with a view to expending a large amount of money to fit it up for his home from September 1 next, the Astor investment is the beneficiary of still another financial accretion. A big wooden sign announces that the plot is to be cut up for the erection of private dwellings. An agent of the property states that a fine apartment hotel may be put up there.

Imbedded in the brownstone front of the four-story and basement dwelling at No. 5 West Twenty-second-st. is a white granite slab bearing these words:

> In this House S. F. B. Morse
> Lived for Many Years,
> And Died.

There is a one-story extension on the east of this dwelling, which the inventor of the electric telegraph used for his library. The vacant shelves are still concealed behind walnut doors. The windows of library and dwelling are closed by shutters, and only a caretaker is in charge of the building. The house has been vacant for some time. It is probable that ere long the famous old place will give way to a modern business building extending through to Twenty-third-st. The site is extremely valuable for that purpose, and there is more money in it for that use than for any other. A tree in the area and clambering vines on the brownstone front remain as reminders of the day when the inventor had them planted for his pleasure.

DESERTED OLD CAR STABLES.

One of the largest pieces, if not absolutely the largest parcel, of real estate worse than vacant is to be seen in the unoccupied stables of the Sixth Avenue Railroad Company in Sixth-ave., between Forty-third and Forty-fourth sts., and extending a third of the way toward Fifth-ave. Since the corporation sold out to the Metropolitan Traction Company, more than two years ago, this vast plot of land, with a ramshackle and unsightly two-story brick structure on it, has stood waiting some action, according to the sign "For Sale," which appears on the outer walls. But no purchaser has yet been found. The company thinks the property may be the site for a big department store. It sold a slice of the huge parcel to the Association of the Bar of the City of New-York, whose new marble home, extending from Forty-fourth to Forty-third st., is soon to be opened with a reception to Lord Russell of Killowen. This sale made the two streets known as a clubhouse district instead of a stable rendezvous. The result was that the remaining property of the company at this point rose in value from $2,000,000 to $2,500,000, an increase of 25 per cent at a bound. The question now is what effect the proposed railroad of the Metropolitan Traction Company in Forty-third and Forty-fourth sts. will have on this increased valuation and in hastening the erection of a new big building. The clubs which are swinging themselves vigorously against the railroad scheme declare that the tracks and the horse-cars will ruin the streets for clubhouse purposes, and will, accordingly, cause a depreciation of property values there. The company is pausing to see which way the cat shall give signals of jumping.

At the northwest corner of Madison-ave. and Fortieth-st. there has stood tenantless for three years the old home of Edward Haight, who died some two or three years ago, having accumulated a large fortune in the stone business. The dwelling is a four-story brownstone structure, with mansard roof, surmounted by a dome. Its front on the avenue is 34 feet and its depth is 125 feet. An unoccupied house next it, which was cut off from it after Mr. Haight's death, and still belongs to the estate, has a front of 17.6 feet. There is a three-story brick stable in the rear, standing on Fortieth-st., its dimensions being 25 by 50 feet.

During the last years of his life Mr. Haight lived near Irvington-on-the-Hudson, while he rented his city dwelling. He wanted to sell this property, but he placed a greater value on it than good judges held to be the correct one. The price estimated by him is still held by the executors of his estate, while a rental of $13,000 a year is demanded for the large house and $3,000 for the smaller one. This expected rental is considered by good judges to be the reason for the tenantless state of the old Haight mansion, now divided into two. The property is for sale.

The opinion prevails that the New-York Athletic Club has purchased all the vacant land in Sixth-ave. between Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth sts. for the site for its splendid new building now being erected there. This is not so. The southeast corner of Fifty-eighth-st. and Sixth-ave. is still owned by John W. Condit, of Acker, Merrill & Condit, who lives at No. 23 West Fifty-eighth-st. This property is 100 by 100 feet. Inasmuch as Mr. Condit has recently placed a mortgage of $140,000 on this property, being estimated at 4 per cent on $3,500,000, it is reported that this action is the preliminary one to the erection of a big building on the site, since the land alone, so real estate experts say, would not stand so large a mortgage.

At the northeast corner of Sixth-ave. and Fifty-sixth-st. is a one-story frame liquor-place and next it is a livery stable office. In front of this property cab-drivers and their vehicles take their stand, and the environment is considered by property-owners as a detriment to adjoining real-estate values. This property belongs to the Sparks estate, the plot being 100 feet, or four numbers, in the avenue and seventy-six feet in the street. While the plot affords a splendid opportunity for improvement, it is impossible for the executors of the estate to sell it or to improve it until one of the heirs, now under age, shall reach his majority. This will come in the present year, and real estate men who are "posted" on the situation are hustling to make a commission out of it. More of them will now, presumably, join the brigade of the eager ones.

A two-story brick building used as a riding academy at the southeast corner of Fifth-ave. and Ninetieth-st. is to give way in time to a fine dwelling. A practically idle property, covered with one and two story old buildings, awaits improvement at the southeast corner of Fifth-ave. and Sixtieth-st., across the way from Central Park. It is in the market.

YE OLDE LONDON STREETE.

Ex-Judge Hilton has filed plans for the improvement of Ye Olde London Streete, in Broadway, a stone monstrosity erected on the site of Harrigan & Hart's old theatre after the fire which consumed it. This is for the conversion of the place, however, into a spot for the entertainment of those who delight in the exhibition of sparring and other external manifestations of the manly art of self-defence. It has long been vacant. Its destiny is demolition in behalf of something better.

There are several vacant plots in Broadway, above Fifty-fifth-st. These are held for investment purposes mostly. A large vacant plot is that owned by a brewer. It is at the southeast corner of Broadway and Fifty-ninth-st. That, too, although for sale, is in the market for a marked advance over the purchase price. A big hotel would be well placed there. So would a fine apartment-house.

The possibility of tying up a piece of property through a will is well illustrated in the instance of the Stevenson parcel, in Second-ave., near Nineteenth-st. The New-York Skin and Cancer Hospital, which recently purchased the property at the northeast corner of the avenue and the street for a site for an annex to itself, tried in vain to secure the Stevenson dwelling and land adjacent on the north, so as to obtain a sufficiently large plot. Miss Matilda A. W. Stevenson, whose father had conveyed this and other real estate to his wife, it on her death to go to the two daughters, one of whom is Miss Matilda, was willing to sell the four-story brownstone-front house which her father had built, but her mother and her sister, who had died, in succession had made wills, with the result that the bank which was ready to loan money on a mortgage to be given by the hospital authorities, upon asking to see the will, declined to advance the money upon the plea that Miss Matilda could not give a clear title. Hence the property now stands tenantless and shored up in consequence of the demolition of the other buildings, while Superintendent Constable of the Department of Buildings has ordered the southern, rear and front walls to be torn down and rebuilt, because of their dangerous condition.

The interesting part of all this is that old Mr. Stevenson, a paralytic and said to be feeble in mind, still lives and is cared for by his daughter, Matilda, in Brooklyn. His condition is such that he can make no change in the real estate situation affecting the property. Besides, having conveyed the property to his wife, and she being dead, Mr. Stevenson could do nothing in the case.

The most valuable corner in this city, outside of Wall-st., is supposed to be that bounded by Fifth-ave., Broadway and Twenty-third-st. Aside from the Cumberland Building, which occupies the southern part of this plot, the land is covered with one-story and two-story modern structures.

Exclusive of the Cumberland property, the plot is owned by Amos R. Eno. It is said that Amos F. Eno, his son, who has charge of his father's real estate interests, fairly laughed at the late Austin Corbin when he offered $500,000 for it. The plot is two feet in Twenty-third-st., 143.6 feet in Broadway, 132.4 feet in the avenue and 58 feet from Broadway to the avenue at the Cumberland line. This gives over 4,000 square feet. Mr. Eno is said to receive $65,000 annual rental from this property, or 6½ per cent on $1,000,000. This would be at the rate of more than $250 a square foot.

DENIZENS OF THE WOOD LOVE HIM

A VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER WHO SUMMONS AT HIS WILL SNAKES, SQUIRRELS AND WILD BIRDS.

Rockbridge, Alum Springs, Va., Sept. 15.—If Kipling were here he would write of another and elderly Mowgli, local genius of this green valley, with its cordon of hills and outlying rocky summits. Thomas Hostetter is his name, and his age is absolutely uncertain. He thinks he is about eighty-five years old. The wrinkles on his bronzed face rival in number and complexity those of Lotl's mummy. His

A VIRGINIA SNAKE-CHARMER.

eyes are small and deep-set. He lives somewhere amid the crags and blackberry bushes several miles to the north of this place, in the neighborhood of Collierstown, Va.

He suddenly appeared here the other morning with a well-fingered and time-worn fiddle slung over his shoulder, and a huge kohinoor of an alum diamond in his hand. He said he paid $10 for his violin ever so many years ago in Lexington. He seemed confident of the value of the gem, which only stern necessity compelled him to sacrifice for $1, and which the writer bought in the hope of drawing him out. He said his wife was dead. His nine children were all married or scattered. He had never been to a city and was absolutely unversed in knowledge of any life but one—that of the deep wood, with its multitude of silent creatures. Their habits and language were an open book to him.

The old man had innumerable little packages of rattlesnake rattles stuck into every conceivable receptacle of his clothing. It seemed that the snakes had come to regard him without animosity. He had acquired an insight into their habits and when he did not see them with his wornout eyes he simply sat down on a log and beguiled them out of the nooks and crannies to his feet. He had no Hindoo "tomtom" wherewith to charm the snakes, and apparently exerted no influence upon them other than that which close sympathy always begets. Doubtless they had learned to regard him much in the light of a sorely overgrown and distorted brother.

The writer came across him one dewy morning seated crosswise on a log with a six-foot rattler coiled contentedly at his feet. Not until the stranger appeared on the scene did that flickering tongue protrude or those angry eyes glitter. The two seemed to be simply enjoying a quiet wood-talk as the claw-like hand of the man stroked down the diamond patches on the snake's shiny back. Hostetter apparently did not think this situation at all out of the common. He had known rattlesnakes and black-snakes and moccasins so long and so intimately that any less of sociability between him and the reptiles would have seemed strange to him. So powerful was his influence over the coiled serpent at his feet that a little further endearment even reconciled the snake to the writer's presence at a reasonable distance.

When in the woods at night Hostetter always sleeps by the side of a convenient fallen tree, and it is no unusual thing for him to wake up in the morning and find a poisonous reptile slumbering between his legs or warmed into deep sleep on his body. He said that the blacksnakes in the mountain meadows actually coil themselves around the legs of cows and milk them, and that the cows actually grow fond of this unnatural milking and come to the same spot in the field each day at the same hour and low for the snake.

Uttering an inarticulate sound, midway between a sob and a groan, Hostetter sent the snake into the bushes.

"Let me see you bring a squirrel into your lap."

He sat down on the spreading roots of a pine tree and gave utterance to a subdued chorus of chirrups and squeaks in minor keys, and soon the wood seemed to be filled with the pattering of little feet, and the queer old man became the motionless centre of a cluster of bushy brown and gray squirrels. They raced up and down his legs and arms, sniffed at the opening of his bulging pockets, and only avoided the smoke of his pipe. Again, with a sound half inarticulate and a half-gesture, he dismissed the nimble-footed throng.

"Can you call the wild turkeys, Hostetter?"

The old man seated himself again with his back to a tree, and the writer wandered off into the deep shadows. Scarcely was this done before a familiar "gobble, gobble" was heard, and then after five minutes' silence the notes were repeated. A twig snapped and soon through the leaves the beady eyes of a wild turkey peered with hanging comb and one foot lifted. Again a low "gobble, gobble," and the leaves divided and the stately bird strutted directly to a place beside the old man and stared without blinking into his face.

THICK MOSS HIDES THE GOLD.

From The Los Angeles Herald.

W. Sam Clark, an old resident of Alameda County, Cal., who went to Alaska several months ago in search of a fortune, made a tour of that country, and has sent a report to his friends. He tells of the great suffering among the men, and how they long to come home. "I would not encourage any one to come to Alaska this year," says Mr. Clark. "This land of glaciers has its surface rubbed and scoured and its golden seed scattered until every stream and brook will show 'color'—hence the cry that all Alaska is gold, and the metal is to be found from the grass roots down, but not in quantities that will pay to work, except in a few localities. When the quartz veins of the country are found and the gold belt discovered and marked on the maps, then it will be time enough for men from civilized parts to come and locate their small twenty acres in this vast land. The moss blanket, in places several feet thick, will hide for years to come from the prying eye of the miner its golden color. There is room for all, but gold for few."

A rival to the old lady who lately received a gift from the Queen for being the mother of seven soldiers has been found at Old Southgate, near London. She is Mrs. Skeats, whose six sons have all done good service as policemen. George has been twenty-nine years in the city force, Caleb twenty-six years, Henry twenty-five, Ben twenty-five, Tom twenty-four, all in the Metropolitan Police; and John twenty-four years in the Berkshire Constabulary. Ben and Tom have in addition served in the army. Their only sister, afraid, perhaps, of seeming singular, was married to a policeman. The old lady herself is eighty-two years old.—(London News.

AQUARIUM NEARLY READY.

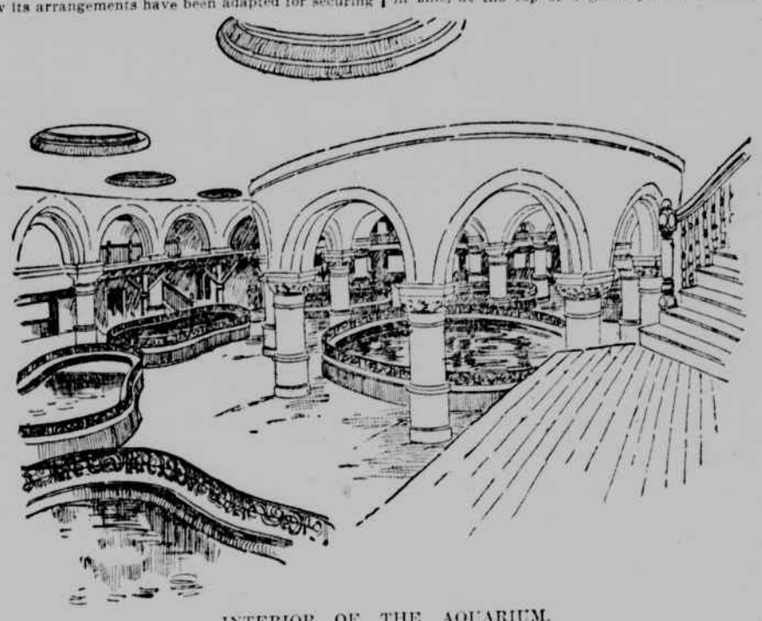
OLD CASTLE GARDEN'S DOORS TO OPEN AGAIN IN THREE MONTHS.

QUEER VARIETIES OF SEA LIFE FOR THE PUBLIC TO GAZE UPON—LOOKING FOR A WHITE WHALE.

The big, round building that stands on the North River side of Battery Park, Castle Garden, of old the immigrant's door to the New World, for months has given little outward token of the changes that were going on inside its dun and forbidding walls. The New-York public knew in a way that it was being transformed into an aquarium, and has been kept informed from time to time of the unpleasantly numerous delays that have so protracted the completion of the undertaking. The plans for the Aquarium began in 1893, and the public is prone to lose interest, to a great extent, in any enterprise that takes nearly as long as it does to build a modern cathedral. But the Aquarium is fast approaching its long-deferred completion. The contracts for the last considerable piece of work have recently been given out, and Dr. C. H. Bean said a few days ago that if no more unforeseen and vexatious delays occurred to block his plans the Aquarium would be opened to the public in about three months.

A HIGH AND AIRY STRUCTURE.

A Tribune reporter last week visited the building that will in all probability become one of the show places of the city. Thus far nobody has been admitted except workmen and those who have special permits. But notwithstanding this fact, the interior of the Aquarium already presents a fairly finished aspect. The details of the plans have been published many times, so that all that is necessary here is to give some idea of how the place impresses one and how its arrangements have been adapted for securing



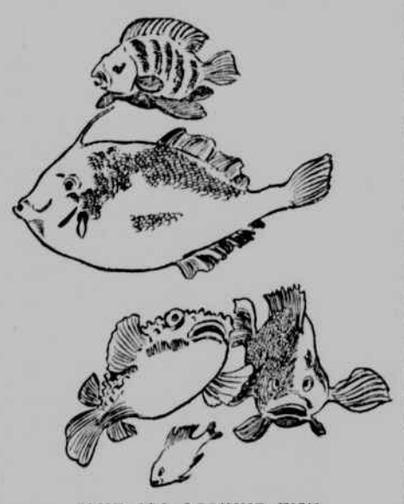
INTERIOR OF THE AQUARIUM.

the best results from the point of view both of the scientist and the general sight-seeing public. The first impression one receives is of the height and airiness of the structure. Nothing intervenes to break this effect between the floor and the dome. The light is so admitted as to be diffused as much as possible instead of allowing it to fall directly from the windows. In the centre of the pavement is the big pool, in which the water is nearly six feet deep. The amount of water it holds exceeds that contained in the whole salt water exhibit at the World's Fair. It amounts to something like 55,000 cubic feet. Around the big pool are smaller pools of various sizes. None of these pools are covered, and as the water is beautifully clear every movement of the fish can be distinctly seen by the observer.

Around about the sides of the hall are placed the small tanks, scarcely large enough to be called anything more than cases. Three sides of these cases are tiling, but the fourth, of course the one toward the spectator, is of glass. The surface of the water in these cases is above the heads of the people on the floor, so that one experiences rather a queer sensation in looking up at the surface of the water—quite as if one were really in it, save that one is perfectly dry. The upper gallery tanks have not yet been built. This work is the last to be done. It will probably be two months before it is finished, and the remaining month before Dr. Bean plans to open the building to the public will be devoted to perfecting many small details of the interior structure.

MANY FISH IN THE POOLS ALREADY.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Aquarium is not yet open, it has already laid in a good part of its stock of attractions. At the present time there are in the pools, large and small, about forty-five different kinds of fish. All of these are of the sort to be found in our own waters. In fact, most of them were taken no further away than Sheepshead Bay. They seem to thrive well in their artificial home, and every effort is made to make the conditions that surround them as much as possible like those they enjoyed before they came into captivity. The water for the salt-water fish is taken from a well sunk under the building. When Dr. Bean proposed this method of securing a salt-water supply it was thought to be impracticable by many who gave their attention to the problem, but the success of the enterprise has abundantly justified the risk that was taken at first. One thing, however, has to be excluded from big tanks. There can be no sand bottoms,



SOME ODD LOOKING FISH.

because, if they were allowed, it would not be long before the pipes would be so choked as to be absolutely useless. In other things it is attempted to provide such a bottom as the fish are most fond of in nature. The result is what an Irishman might call some pretty "marine landscapes." The water in all the tanks is kept constantly changing, fresh water running in at one end as fast as the stale runs out at the other.

Perhaps the most showy fish just now in the big pool is a young shark. He is a beauty, about four feet long, but he is not of the man-eating variety. He has a mate who is not quite as big as himself, but who is getting there rapidly. Dr. Bean is planning to get a white whale later on, but it is somewhat difficult to capture them, as they are seldom or never found in the waters of this climate. Next to the sharks, perhaps, the most interesting specimens in the big pool at present are several weakfish. The interest attaching to them is of a scientific character for the most part, although they are pleasing to look at. It seems that weakfish are extremely sensitive creatures, and that until Dr. Bean succeeded in accomplishing the feat they had never been kept alive in captivity throughout a winter. Three of those now in the Aquarium, however, survived the rigors of last winter, and are very lively fish just now.

CAME ALONG UNINVITED.

One of the most peculiar marine creatures in the whole collection is one who was neither invited nor desired to join the happy family. He is a good-sized eel, and one fine morning he appeared in the tank wherein disport themselves two or three dozen big pickerel. Thereupon an investigation followed, but nobody about the Aquarium could be brought to admit having put the eel in the tank. The only conclusion possible was that he came in through the water pipe. He was small enough to accomplish this at the time, and, of course, he was small enough to get out again, too. But he didn't, and before he availed himself of his privilege he grew so big that he had to stay, whether or no. And as nobody objected to his presence, there he is to-day.

Others of the varieties on exhibition are the bass, perch of many sorts, landlocked salmon, lake trout, puff fish, and the strange and ugly sea-robins, so-called on account of their color and the fins, that look something like wings. There are many varieties, about forty-five in all, and, besides, lobsters that have spent most of their young and tender lives in the Aquarium. There are also several kinds of crabs that travel in any direction with facility. Of these the hermit crabs are sure to please the crowds most. The hermit crab is the monkey of the Aquarium. Many of these creatures have been in the Aquarium for a long time, some of them more than two years. Additions are constantly being made, and by the time the building is opened, about the middle of December, Dr. Bean expects to have about eighty different varieties to show the people who have been waiting so long to see them. In the waters that wash our own coasts there are said to be more than one hundred different kinds of fish.

In any reference to the marine creatures that are to find their homes in the tanks of old Castle Garden, one should not forget to make mention of the horseshoe crabs and the "killies." These two are the scavengers of the Aquarium. The big crabs are in the large pool, and, moving constantly over the bottom, they keep it as clean as if it were polished every day. In the smaller tanks the "killies" perform a like service.

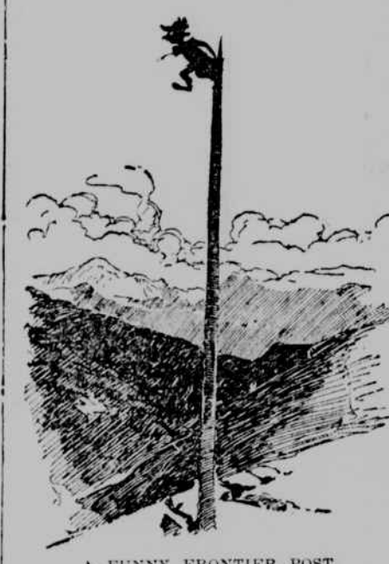
It is safe to say that when the Aquarium is at last opened its patronage will be great.

A MILITARY JOKE.

SIGNOR CRISPI AS DRAWN BY AN ALPINE SENTINEL.

The famous statesman of Italy who has shared with Bismarck and Gladstone the dubious distinction of being so frequently caricatured that books have been made on the subject, with hundreds upon hundreds of illustrations, might have comforted himself with the reflection that once he had retired from the stage of public affairs he would be let alone by the artists. But the features of "Ciccio" continue to crop out in the most unexpected places in the oddest way. Having ceased to provide the pictorial journalists of Rome with material, for a while, the ex-Prime Minister of Italy has become the object of an Alpine soldier's satire. Our illustration shows his appearance as he swings fitfully, in zinc, at the top of a great post erected on the Franco-Italian frontier. The soldiers in those remote stations have little to do, and not long since one of them, on the French side of the border, produced the silhouette of our cut. It is a ludicrous thing, but very clever. It is striking in itself. It is also amusing as the work of a peculiarly situated soldier.

The little "postes" of the frontier are in most cases stationed far up among the mountains, away from the villages. There the soldiers live a monotonous existence in primitive dwellings and with few of the comforts that usually go with even the severest barrack life of a large town. Their cabins are described as resembling a man-of-war in the arrangement of the bunks. The Italians rub along on the baldest of accommodations, their shelters being as bare as the rocks amid which they are placed. The Frenchmen are a little more ingenious in modifying the hard conditions of their life. But upon both sides there is little upon which the men can wreak themselves; they watch each other across the line with a vigilance that has been keen ever since the establishment of the Triple Alliance, and when this grows tedious they play jokes upon one another in the vein indicated by the zinc portrait of Signor Crispi. The effect of this outlandish flag, turning slowly about on its staff in the chill Alpine breeze, is original enough. Such a standard would be the last thing the traveller would expect to see flung out against the clear blue sky. He might think it an annoyance, a blot upon an otherwise heroic landscape. But the soldiers, even those who are the countrymen of Crispi, shout with glee over the thing. They vote the clever Frenchman a man of genius and a benefactor of their isolated little company.



A FUNNY FRONTIER POST.

IMPROVED METHOD OF ELECTRO-PLATING.

From The London Standard.

An invention which promises to be of great importance to the electro-plating trade has been brought to our knowledge by Messrs. A. S. Smith & Sons, Walsall. Hitherto articles on which a deposit of metal is desired have had to be suspended in the electrolyte by means of wires, and after remaining in the solution for a stated time they have been taken out in a dull or unpolished condition, and subjected to another process for polishing or burnishing them. By this invention, it is claimed, wiring is done away with, and no "moppers" (polishers) are required. What this means as a saving in the cost of plating any practical plater will understand. In addition to this, it is stated, three to four times the amount of work can be turned out in the same time as heretofore.

The system, we understand, has been in operation in Messrs. Smith & Sons' workshop for the last seven or eight months. One important advantage is that no interference with the existing arrangements of vats, solutions or dynamos is involved. All that is required extra is shafting to be placed over the vats, for the purpose of supplying motive power. The process is not suitable for the plating of such articles as teapots, trays, art work and the like; but as regards 75 per cent of all plateable articles, we are informed, whether the deposition required is of nickel, copper, brass, tin or zinc, a perfectly bright and lustrous surface is given, with a thicker, more malleable and more lasting deposit than heretofore by means of the apparatus in question.

The articles are placed in large quantities in a revolving hollow container—theoretically there is no limit to the quantity, but practically it may be found advisable not to have more than 90 or 100 pounds at a time—and this container is suspended or supported within the electrolytic bath, and during the time the deposition is taking place is subjected to a rotary movement varying from fifteen to fifty revolutions per minute. The container, which is mounted centrally upon a long, insulated metal sleeve, is made of non-conducting material, and its walls are perforated in such a way as to allow the fluid to circulate freely through it, and to act upon the work contained therein. The sleeve, with the container carried by it, is fixed to a central metal rod or box, supported by metallic bearing brackets, clothed in wood or other suitable insulating material, and fitted at equi-distant points in its length with copper contact arms. These latter are mounted in such a manner as to always be in intimate contact with the articles placed in the container, acting as channels for the passage of the electric current to the negative pole of the generator.

The anodes (or positive terminals) are slung upon their supporting rods around the inside walls of the vat in the ordinary manner, or in rows to get more anode surface, as the case may require, so that there is nothing in the interior of the container to interfere with the continued rolling movement of the articles placed therein. The electric current is sent through the solution and back to the generator by means of the articles being plated (the cathodes) through the contact arms or their equivalents, and thence through the sleeve and the insulated rod or bar to the negative pole of the generator. Messrs. Smith do not claim for the invention that it does away with the processes preparatory to ordinary plating. To get good results the work has to be prepared at least as carefully as it used to be under the old system, and the more careful this preparation the better are the results. The invention is provisionally protected, and application has been made for full letters patent made in all the principal countries of the world.

SELLING TO THE CROWD.

A DISCOURSE ON THE GENTLE ART OF AUCTIONEERING.

A VETERAN OF THE ROSTRUM TELLS HOW HE ESTIMATES FOR OWNERS AND "KNOCKS 'EM DOWN" TO HOUSEKEEPERS AND OF THE MANY TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

There is an adroit art in auctioneering, and when it comes to getting rid of a large stock of second-hand furniture at a public bidding all the cunning of the fox and the sagacity of the lion are needed by the auctioneer to conduct his sale to a successful issue. Then, too, however bright an auctioneer may naturally be, it takes long years of experience for him to master his field of work and to become so skilled as to be able to avoid the many pitfalls before him.

The best-known furniture auctioneer in this city is Captain Edward S. Wilkins, who is one of a famous family of auctioneers of that name. Morris Wilkins, his brother, of E. H. Ludlow & Co., is generally known as the oldest real estate auctioneer in New-York. Philip R. Wilkins, another brother, now dead, was another well-known crier of, "What am I offered?" and, "Last call—sold." He was a member of the firm of A. H. Muller, P. R. Wilkins & Co. Captain Wilkins earned his title as a sea captain. As he puts it, he was familiar with all the ports of the world, and had anchored everywhere except around the North Pole. Twenty-five years ago he abandoned the sea, after thirty-three years of life on the wave, and began his career as an auctioneer with E. H. Ludlow & Co. He is now well beyond threescore years and ten, but he is as lively as a cricket and as cheery as one of Cheeryble Brothers.

SOME SALES OF THE PAST.

"Can I tell you something about furniture auctioneering?" replied Captain Wilkins to a question the other day, as he paused in the abandoned corridor of the St. James Hotel, where he was arranging for the sale of the furniture of the famous old hostlery. "I think," he went on, as he took a seat on a dust-covered sofa, "I can tell you more about it than any man in New-York. I have been at it for twenty-five years. Just think of the hotels whose furniture I have sold out! There was the Union Square Hotel, of which Andrew J. Dam was proprietor. Then there was the Metropolitan Hotel, and the Southern Hotel, in Cortlandt-st., between Broadway and Church-st., south side. I also sold out the Winchester, in Broadway, east side, at about Thirty-third-st. Then there was the Hotel Maurice, where the Seymour Building now stands, at Fifth-ave. and Forty-second-st. I conducted the sale also at the New-York Hotel two years ago last spring, and the only article missing out of the whole sale was a pair of lace curtains sold at 50 cents.

"Then there have been big private sales which I have conducted. There was the Nathaniel Griswold sale at Fifth-ave. and Thirty-fourth-st., and then there was the Carey sale at Madison-ave. and Thirty-fourth-st. At the Almon T. Griswold sale I sold a statue of Zenobia, by Miss Hosmer, to Mrs. A. T. Stewart not long before her death. They sent a truckman to get it and the fool put a crowbar under the foot and broke it off. I could tell you of many big sales for private persons, but life is too short.

HOW THE CROWD IS HANDLED.

"I want to tell you one thing, young man. I never lose anything. That pair of lace curtains is the only thing I recall that I ever missed. How do I manage it? Well, take it here in this hotel sale, for instance. I go to the top and work down. I put a numbered tab on everything, from No. 1 up. I measure each carpet and put a tab on it. I measure the hall carpets and tab them. When the sale comes off everything that is taken away is checked with a porter's check, so that if anything is missing it can be traced to the particular porter who took it away. Not a piece of furniture can be taken from the hotel without its check. Of course, a catalogue is made up, and everything, when sold, is checked off on that.

"How do I handle a crowd of bidders when the sale is on? Well, I know pretty nearly who the dealers are and who are the housekeepers. I give the housekeepers a chance as against the dealers every time. The housekeepers are not up to tricks of the trade. The dealers are. What sorts of tricks? Bless you, there is no end of them."

Captain Wilkins paused a moment as if to determine where to begin, and then with an intensity born possibly of his thirty-three years' experience on deep waters, he fairly ejaculated: "Would you believe it? I have known dealers to come to a sale with a lot of oakum in their pockets or under their clothes, and then slit a hair mattress here and there with a knife and then stuff the oakum into it. Housekeepers are looking out for hair mattresses. They bid on this particular mattress and the price goes up beyond what the dealer wants to pay. The mattress is knocked down at a fair price, and then this conscienceless scoundrel, or possibly more than one of them who are in the job, will pull out the oakum and, holding it up, will exclaim: 'Do you call this a hair mattress?' Of course that kills the sale and the mattress has to be sold over again. Can such things be? Well, certainly—but not with me. I would expose the job for I would be 'on to' it. Why, such dealers will take off the pendulum of a clock, hide it and then pretend that the clock is imperfect. You have seen these beds that turn up at the side? Well, these fellows will unship one side of the bedstead where the side lifts up, so that it will look broken and they can bid it in for a song.

TRICKS PLAYED ON THE AUCTIONEER.

"Are jobs ever put up on the auctioneer by the dealers? No end of them! One way is for a number of dealers to look over the lot and make up their minds what they want. Then they will go to a grog shop around the corner and throw dice for chances. They agree, of course, that the rest shall not bid on the chances of the others."

"Can you break up such a combination?" Captain Wilkins was asked.

"Certainly," was the terse reply.

"How?"

"Run 'em."

This "run 'em" is a great test of the auctioneer's shrewdness. Captain Wilkins explained it in this way: "Instead of allowing a bid on an article which ought to bring $6 to begin at 75 cents, with raises of 10 or 15 cents, which would take fifteen minutes of my time and make the article go for a third of what it ought to bring, I call out '$2 I am offered—$2.50—$3,' and by that time a legitimate bidder will take it up. Then my task in that line ends. I know that the bidding will go along all right. If I don't strike it right,